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**Feminism in Suzanne Collins's Trilogy
The Hunger Games**

Bachelor's thesis

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Olomouc 2021

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma “Feminism in Suzanne Collins’s Trilogy The Hunger Games” vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne

Podpis.....

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Elizabeth Allyn Woock, PhD. for her guidance, encouragement and valuable advice. I would also like to thank my family and my husband for the necessary emotional support.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins is a dystopian novel that depicts its main female character in a way that can be seen as that its focus is on the depiction of feminism and femininity, but also with a focus on differences between masculine and feminine features of a character. Moreover, the depiction of gender, gender roles and sexuality of the main protagonist is also important in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. More attention will be paid to the freedom of the individual characters with focus on their gender performance and their relationships, emphasizing feminine features and gender roles that the society tends to assign to women. In this context, the aim of the work will be to examine how gender performance and specific gender features are depicted in the analyzed trilogy of *Hunger Games*.

Suzanne Collins is a screenwriter and a novelist who started her career in 1991 writing children's stories. The first book of the trilogy *The Hunger Games* was published in 2008. The second book *Catching Fire* was published in 2009 and it was followed by a third book *Mockingjay*, which was published one year after.¹ The idea of writing *The Hunger Games* trilogy came up to Collins while watching TV as she was suddenly struck by the fact that there was no distinction between a reality show and a report from the Iraq war. The author later revealed in an interview published in the New York Times that her main reason to write the trilogy was the attempt to highlight the absurdity of the war conflict.²

The books have gained their popularity amongst adults as well as young readers. Due to the film adaptations, the story of Katniss has reached an even wider audience. The world of *Hunger Games* is the mirror to our lives. It is a criticism of the capitalist society, thus the word Capitol is used metaphorically speaking to denote the capitalist consumer driven society.

The story of *The Hunger Games* is set in the post-apocalyptic state of Panem, somewhere in North America in an unspecified future. Panem is divided into 12 districts which are being controlled, threatened and restricted by the rule of the wealthy Capitol, the main city. The purpose of the annual *Hunger Games* is to secure the relations with other districts and remind people of the power of the Panem

¹ "Suzanne Collins Biography," Biography, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://www.biography.com/writer/suzanne-collins>.

² "Suzanne Collins Talks About 'The Hunger Games,' the Books and the Movies," The New York Times, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/18/books/suzanne-collins-talks-about-the-hunger-games-the-books-and-the-movies.html>.

government. The story has a first person narrator, the main character Katniss Everdeen, a 16-year-old girl from District 12. She recollects the story via feminist eyes. Katniss replaces her sister in the games and becomes the symbol of revenge against the Capitol. The first person narration was used purposely to highlight the female power in the story. The author uses direct and indirect speech, interior speech and retrospective storytelling techniques. *The Hunger Games* emphasizes political issues of nations, such as revolution, dictatorship and male superiority.

The thesis focuses on the analysis of the character Katniss Everdeen and aims at defining the elements which shape her gender identity. My work will include a close reading analysis with a special focus on the depiction of femininity and masculinity, but also on gender and relationships, including the character's sexuality performance. The analysis will mostly focus on the first book of the trilogy as the development of Katniss's character and her fluidity of gender is the most apparent and her identity undergoes huge changes as she volunteers as a tribute for the Hunger Games. I will explore how the approach and depiction of feminine features of the protagonist affects the gender performativity and the perception of gender of both sexes in the novels. I will focus to present the gender and sexuality of the main characters in the studied works, and to present and analyze their gender performativity based on their behavior.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this theoretical part of the work, we will introduce the terms feminism and feminist theory. This will include a brief historical development of the feminist movement, including the three waves of feminism with main focus being on the third wave. In this context, we will define the term intersectionality and we will also deal with the concept of gender and gender roles and the role of society and culture in the development of one's personal identity and gender.

2.1 Feminism

Feminism is a relatively modern term that is generally understood as a movement that represents the need to advocate for women's rights and equality. In a broad sense, the feminist movement and its activists focus on the elimination of inequality between the two sexes, men and women. However, the meaning of this term has varied over time. It was first used in 1837 by a French philosopher named Charles Fourier, but it was originally only used to refer to feminine qualities and traits in behavior.³ For example, we can consider sensitivity or empathy being characterized as being mostly a feminine quality, but also passivity and submissiveness can be seen as feminine traits in opposition to mostly masculine traits of courage and independence. Later, the definition of feminism has evolved and it became associated with equal rights, including also political rights, and opportunities for women.

Women always had to fight for their position in society, they were deprived of their rights in the past but in some parts of the world the situation remained intact. Feminism as a movement can be divided into three historical waves, each of them being prominent in a different era and having goals that represented the needs and struggles of women at that time. The first wave of feminism was prominent in the 19th and early 20th century. Women at that time were expected to stay at home and take care of their husband and children. The feminists of the first wave wanted to change this belief and show that women were also capable of other things, such as having an opinion on their own. The feminists and their activities were mainly focusing on women's rights to vote and to own property. It is believed that the first wave of feminism in the United States

³ "From Suffrage to Sisterhood: What Does Feminism Actually Mean?," Dictionary, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/womens-movement-what-does-feminism-actually-mean/>.

was ended by the passing of The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920 and it guaranteed all American women the right to vote and they could participate in political life.⁴

The second wave of feminism, which was prominent in 1960s to 1980s, broadened its focus from voting and property rights to include and deal with many other issues women were struggling with, such as inequalities in workplaces, but also domestic violence, marital rape and reproductive rights. The activists of the second wave criticized the society and institutions being male-dominated. The era can be characterized by for example bookstores or restaurants that were owned by the feminists and were used for meetings and discussions. The result of this movement can be seen in the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which abolished the disparity in wages of men and women and ensured that women are given equal pay for the equal job. Also women were given the right to use birth control and the sex-based discrimination of women at schools was prohibited by passing of the Education Amendments of 1972 ensuring that women had the right to education.⁵

The second wave of feminism can be seen as a reaction to the end of the World War II that meant that women had to return back home to fulfill their roles as mothers and housewives. This idea that women could only find fulfillment through their children and housekeeping was criticized by Betty Friedan, a feminist writer and activist. Her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, was influenced by her own experiences as she found herself being unhappy with her own life while being a housewife and taking care of her children.⁶ In this feminist manifesto Friedan states that all that women hear from the society around them is that they “could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity.”⁷ The true feminine fulfillment was generally considered to be married, have a nice house in the suburbs and a few children to take care of. Friedan however argues that this is not everything women need to live happily ever after and many women found themselves struggling and unhappy but afraid to admit their dissatisfaction.⁸ With this in mind, we can see that this book was at

⁴ “Feminism,” New World Encyclopedia, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/feminism>.

⁵ “What is the Difference Between First Second and Third Wave Feminism,” Difference Between, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://www.differencebetween.com/what-is-the-difference-between-first-second-and-third-wave-feminism/>.

⁶ “Feminism: The Second Wave,” National Women’s History Museum, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/feminism-second-wave>

⁷ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 15.

⁸ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 18-19.

her times very ambitious and controversial and still is very influential among the feminist movement as it encourages women to seek fulfillment and to not rely on traditional roles of women in the society.

Furthermore, Friedan's opinions and the so called "problem that has no name"⁹ express the social status of married, bored, mostly middle or upper-class women who expect more from their lives. It seems clear to me that with that approach it is easy for a woman of that time to lose her identity and feel helpless and alone, confined to her house in the suburbs and household duties including childbearing. I would in my perspective expect such development in terms of the approach to the expectations and pressures of the society at women at that time that women would want their career lives too, not only matriarchal style of living. They slowly realized that they have a desire for something more, a desire to achieve more in life than just to take care of their husband and children. Thus, this desire to be capable of doing more for the society and the world is a direct result of this development and the society's influence on the individuals and their identity.

Third wave feminism, so called "post-feminism," has started in the early 1990s and continues up to the present. It fights for the failed beliefs of the second wave feminism. However, the focus is shifted from political correctness and female rights to the individual self, highlighting the problems of lower-class women, but also focuses on women of other races than white. Women participating in the third wave and fighting for their beliefs come from many various social, ethnical and religious backgrounds.¹⁰ This brings up the term intersectionality or intersectional feminism. The first two waves of feminism were concerned with middle-class women that were white; however intersectionality of the third wave of feminism broadens the focus as it also includes women of color, as well as women of different social background. This means that intersectionality encompasses not only the connection between race and gender, but also tries to include and describe the overlapping of different kinds of discrimination based on women's age, religion, class and ethnicity.¹¹ Third wave feminists also challenge

⁹ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 20.

¹⁰ "Feminism," New World Encyclopedia, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/feminism>

¹¹ "What does intersectional feminism actually mean?," IWDA, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://iwda.org.au/what-does-intersectional-feminism-actually-mean/>.

female heteronormativity and they try to pursue the acceptance of different sexual orientations.¹²

One of the greatest challenges young feminists face these days is finding their own place on the ground of the already established feminism movement. Amber E. Kinser, a professor of communication at East Tennessee State University and a feminist writer, in her paper “Negotiating Spaces for/through Third-Wave Feminism,” argues how and even if the third wave feminism activists can influence current political or economic situation, taking into consideration the previous waves of feminism, as well as how their new and fresh thoughts and approaches reflect the current needs of the feminist movement and current affairs that the world and women face. Kinser states that “young women and girls are attempting to paint a place for themselves in the feminist landscape even as that landscape is colored and textured by a postfeminist ideology, [...]”¹³ I think that this statement can be interpreted as that the third wave feminists are mostly growing up in a society that has always respected them and given them their equal rights, which has strongly influenced their views on feminism. Thus, they may feel there is no need to be a feminist and advocate for equality and women’s right as they grew up already talking freely about freedom and equality of sexes and they have never experienced the inequality and oppression the previous feminists had to fight against.

However, I think that they should acknowledge their privilege of living in the world that respects women and their rights as well as their sexuality and even the LGBT community issues that are even more prominent and discussed nowadays. None of this though could be achieved without the previous waves of feminism and the activity and persistence of women that wanted to make sure that women of the next generation are going to be treated equally and with respect regardless of their sex, race, religion or social status. I believe that the new feminists of this era should respect and value the work and achievements of the previous generations, but also learn from their mistakes and try to develop the feminist movement with their own thoughts and experiences that reflect the problems of current society and challenges women have to deal with. On the other hand, their work and contributions should be also treated with respect and be valued by the previous generation of feminists.

¹² “A Brief Look at the Four Waves of Feminism,” *The Humanist*, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://thehumanist.com/commentary/a-brief-look-at-the-four-waves-of-feminism/>

¹³ Amber E. Kinser, “Negotiating Spaces for/through Third-Wave Feminism,” *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 134, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317084>.

As we have already mentioned, the movement of feminism went through many different stages, each of them having many significant personalities that influenced further development of the movement. One of the most important figures of the third wave has to be Judith Butler, a gender theorist and feminist activist, who brought very fresh and new thoughts and ideas to the movement. In her well-known and groundbreaking books, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993), she explores the idea that gender is a social construct and a direct result of socialization process.¹⁴ Butler states that the term 'woman' was created artificially and it carries certain qualities and requirements woman is expected to satisfy, but this concept of binary relation between the biological sexes, but also between masculinity and femininity, however completely ignores some possible variation of gender that is the lesbians or transsexuals who challenge the concept of heterosexuality. This new approach later on influenced the foundation of the queer theory.¹⁵

Butler furthermore suggests that "If one is 'woman' that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, [...] because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities"¹⁶ Thus, as far as I understand it, a woman is not born being a woman and having feminine traits and feminine behavior straightaway. Rather, a woman becomes a woman based on the influence of the society around her and the expectations she has to fulfill to comply with the anticipation that surrounds her and is following her since the day she was born with certain physiological features that automatically classified her being a part of one of the two categories that represent a particular biological sex.

Undoubtedly, Butler's ideas on gender are groundbreaking and still very influential as she introduced the idea of gender fluidity which connects to what we have already said about the queer theory in the previous paragraphs. Butler states that "gender is in no way a stable identity ..., rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time."¹⁷ She argues that gender is performative which means it undergoes small changes

¹⁴ "Judith Butler," Britannica, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Judith-Butler>.

¹⁵ Britannica, "Judith Butler."

¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 6.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

and is affected by a situational context that influences the behavior and performativity of a human. Thus, I think that gender can be seen as a direct result of the influence of the society and it cannot be created without the influence and involvement of the society. Everyone creates their own identity, their own gender not based on their biological sex which is predetermined, but based on the surroundings and people they are in contact with, that means their family and friends. This theory thus allows us to explain the existence of many different kind of gender, not only the typical ones, masculine or feminine, but also one can present themselves as both masculine and feminine, but also as a non-binary, omnigender or as a transgender person.

Feminism builds upon various philosophical, political, moral theories concerned with gender inequality encountered by women. Stevi Jackson, a professor of Women's studies at the University of York, states that "Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women's lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. [...] Feminists refuse to accept that inequalities between women and men are natural and inevitable and insist that they should be questioned."¹⁸ This statement can be also interpreted in a way that feminism represents the effort to end the sex oppression of women. As we have said before, in the past it was believed that women's position is tied to taking care of the household and children.

As Jackson said, feminist theory tries to analyze the influence of the surroundings and the society that shapes women's nature, but also challenges it brings to be a woman, such as expectations to get married and have children. In addition to this, I can see a more recent expectation that women have to face appear and it is connected with natural development of the society. This new requirement includes having a successful career at work but at the same time still fulfill the previous requirement that women are expected to meet, that is to be a good wife to their husband and a good mother to their children. In my opinion, this could be considered a bit contradictory or a hard to meet condition. A successful career mostly means many years of hard work and most women tend to delay having children, some also choose to not have any children at all. To sum up, I honestly find being a woman in today's world very challenging due to many different expectations that I find sometimes very hard to fulfill while also trying to find my own place and identity and live a happy and stress free life which for me also includes enjoying life, having friends and a happy family to

¹⁸ Jackson, Stevi, and Jackie Jones, eds., *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 1.

take care of, but also having a reasonable career and a job that has a positive impact on the society.

The role of women is still however ingrained in society as a mother not as a breadwinner. The main vision of feminism, from my understanding, is the freedom from social stigma, freedom from an established order and expectations of society, freedom to act as righteous individuals, capable to fulfill the same tasks as men at the workplace while receiving not lower but equal pay as men that are fulfilling the same tasks. The same applies to situations in the ordinary life, such as men being able to fully take care of their own children but also, as I would like to point this out, to go on a full time paternity leave without the society judging and pointing fingers. I feel like that in this case of the father going on a paternity leave it is still the mother of the child who is being judged and despised by the society for her decision to not take full time care of her own child and rather go back to work. On the other hand, the father is being praised for such simple tasks as feeding, bathing the child and simply just keeping the child alive until the mother comes home after a full day at work. Even then it seems to me that the father is mostly presented just as a babysitter, not as a parent, at least not on the same level that the mother is being presented on. The social expectations of woman fulfilling the role of a mother and caregiver are still present in the today's society. The mother is still portrayed as the main parent who is responsible for the main part of care including feeding, changing the diapers but also the bed time routine. However, it would seem to me that this regressive attitude towards maternity/paternity leave is changing rapidly and the current world is becoming more open to new approaches and views on gender roles.

2.2 Gender Roles and Society

In order to classify people into different categories, but also into particular gender roles, we need to use stereotypes and analyze their usual behavior and characteristic features. Collins's novel *The Hunger Games* introduces us to the character of Katniss Everdeen. She is a 16-year-old girl that lives with her mother and younger sister Primrose in the District 12, the poorest district of Panem. As a result of an unsuccessful war that the districts led against the Capitol, every year each district has to send one boy and one girl as their tributes to fight for their lives in the Hunger Games. As only one of the twenty-four children aged twelve to eighteen can become a winner, the rules are simple. Kill or be killed. Katniss volunteers when the lottery chooses her sister, and replaces her. Katniss however is not a typical 16-year-old girl and soon the Capitol starts to see her as a threat that has to be silenced and controlled as she could be able to influence people in the districts and cause unrest and riots that could lead into an uprising against the Capitol. Katniss tries to break the barriers built by the social system and break away from the set stereotypes by behaving in nonstandard and unpredictable ways and rebelling against the expectations of the society she lives in. The following section deals with gender roles in Hunger Games.

As we have stated before, Judith Butler states that gender is performative, that means that the society and its expectations have a strong influence on one's gender expression. In some social constructions, individuals may choose their preferred biological or social gender, however this is not the case of the United States.¹⁹ This is also not the case of Panem where people in the districts are expected to look and act in certain ways that correspond with their biological gender, at least for the official occasions in the districts such as the annual reaping where the tributes for the upcoming Hunger Games are selected. On the other hand, these expectations disappear when it comes to division of labor between the two sexes, especially in District 12 where even women are expected to for in the mines.

These requirements to conform to the stereotypical behavior are however not so much expected in the wealthy districts and of course in the capital city of Capitol where people are living in luxury and are free to wear and do whatever they want as long as they do not offend the president and his government. I believe that this has a lot to do

¹⁹ Carol C. Mukhopadhyay and Tami Blumenfield, "Gender and Sexuality," in *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Nina Brown et al, (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2020), 232.

with money and its power to change people's perception of the world, but also the perception of one's behavior, which is also connected with the way we perceive one's gender performance. In other words, gender reflects who we are in terms of our behavioral patterns that include the way we act and behave, but also how we talk, react and deal with different situations. It is something that lies within individuals. Katniss acts as an independent woman, she provides for her family and takes on the role of her father who was killed in a mine explosion, but is forced to conform to the society's expectations once she becomes a volunteer for the Hunger Games and a certain behavior is expected from her in order to gain some sponsors for the games and increase her and Peeta's chance of winning.

Culture can be regarded as being the main influence on the development of one's gender and how that gender is perceived and accepted by the society. Culture, however, is an invented concept of the society and it is based on certain beliefs and principles. These principles are subjected to constant changes as culture is connected to certain place and time.²⁰ It is easy to accept culture and its traditions in terms of for example clothing and language but gender is still viewed as a deviation from its standard principles, rules by which society is being governed. Another example of this can be music that is undoubtedly regarded as an invented concept of the society, created with an intention to entertain. However, "we struggle with the idea that the division of humans into two and only two categories, "male" and "female," is not universal, that "male" and "female" are cultural concepts that take different forms and have different meanings cross-culturally."²¹ This statement can be also interpreted not only with connection to the two categories stated above, that is the concept of "male" and "female", but also to gender and its variations based on the cultural influences and background that shapes one's performativity of gender.

This thought brings us back to Judith Butler's theory of fluid gender, thus we can say that, based on our previous research, gender and gender division together with gender roles strongly depend on the society's perception of given gender categories that one is forced to fit into and conform to the expectations of the society also with regards to fulfilling the given gender role one accepts. I would say that the fluidity of gender depends on one's ability and willingness to either conform to the expected and desirable gender role accepted by the society or to rebel against these said prejudices and

²⁰ Mukhopadhyay et al, "Gender and Sexuality," 232.

²¹ Mukhopadhyay et al, "Gender and Sexuality," 232.

expectations that are being forced on and individual since the day one is born being of a particular biological sex, that is being born with a certain physical features that distinguish between being a girl or being a boy. However, as we have already stated, one's biological sex is different from one's gender which is formed after the person is born and thus is not predetermined by the chromosomes, but rather is developing based on one's interactions with the particular society that surround them at that particular time of their lives.

Cultural life in Collins' trilogy includes mostly the games together with many other follow-up events, so we can say that mass culture of Panem is being controlled by the Capitol. One of those events would be the reaping that takes place before the actual games and where the tributes, two from each district, are chosen from all the children of the district between the ages 12 to 18. Another event connected to the games and held the night before the start of the games is a televised interview with each tribute. The main purpose of this event is to introduce all the tributes to the people of Panem so they get to know them and therefore can choose their favorites. After winning, the victor leaves for the Victory Tour and visits all the districts to pay their respects to the fallen tributes of each district. The Victory Tour is then finished by a big interview in the Capitol. People in each district are expected to watch all the interviews and live events, as well as the actual games.

To further develop the thought that gender ideology is the product of society and not nature, Carol C. Mukhopadhyay of San Jose State University, together with Tami Blumenfield of Yunnan University comments on the gender roles and states that "the gender division between public and private/domestic, however, is as symbolic as it is spatial, often emphasizing a gender ideology of social separation between males and females..."²² To paraphrase Mukhopadhyay further, the social separation between genders can be understood as having designated rooms for males and females, that would be for example separate lavatories in public spaces, but also a designated sections on trains for women and children. However, it is impossible to totally separate different genders as women have to have access to the public spaces that were originally thought to be dominated by males. Brown et al. further states that in order to have access to the male dominated spaces, women tend to adopt a certain behavior or wear a particular clothing that separates them and creates a division between the public and domestic spaces. This particularly submissive behavior and clothing segregation can be mostly

²² Mukhopadhyay et al, "Gender and Sexuality," 238.

seen in the countries of Far East and in the countries with predominantly Muslim religion.²³

If I may offer an example of the division of gender in our society of the modern world, women may be marked by wearing pink, blue or red whereas men refuse to wear pink as this color is mostly associated with women and is nowadays considered to be too feminine. These days, I feel like this color division is also strongly forced upon the newborn babies since the day they are born as most of the gifts, cards and even balloons come not in a variety of colors, but are offered mostly in a selection of shades of blue and pink for boys and girls respectively. I believe that this approach of the society creates an unnecessary pressure to fit into standardized categories of gender which continues throughout the childhood years and strongly influences the future identity of the child. In my opinion, this however can be avoided, for example by choosing gender neutral clothes and also carefully offering a combination of toys to include both for example dolls but also cars. Another important thing would be to show the child, especially to boys, that it is not a sign of weakness to cry and show their emotions.

The same principle of division may apply to male and female roles in society. Men are believed to carry heavy loads whereas women usually take up the role of the mother in the household. Lois Tyson, a professor of English at Gran Valley State University, states that “traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive.”²⁴ I think that this traditional division of characteristics however does not apply to Katniss as her behavior can be characterized as being mostly masculine. She is able to offer protection due to her experiences in hunting. On the other hand, she also shows her feminine side, especially while interacting with her sister Prim. Thus, her gender role strongly fluctuates throughout the novels and is influenced by the society’s expectations that are forced upon her once she volunteers for the games. At a young age, she was forced to become the breadwinner of her family when her father died and her mother was not able to take care of her and Prim. As a volunteer, she becomes a kind of a celebrity for the people of Panem and is thus expected to behave in a particular way, but also to look more feminine and attractive and fulfill her assigned role of a lady in need.

²³ Mukhopadhyay et al, “Gender and Sexuality,” 239.

²⁴ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 85.

Our perception of male and female roles is highly influenced by the social background. There is certain stigma, presumption that the role of women and men is strictly delimited and shall not divert from its expected norms. From my perspective, femininity is not automatically related to females only, and masculinity is not linked to males solely, so we have to make a clear distinction between sex and gender. Tyson therefore concludes with a thought that “Feminism distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine. In other words, women are not born feminine, and men are not born masculine. Rather, these gender categories are constructed by society [...]”²⁵ Sex is defined as a biological asset of males and females, but gender is socially constructed and depends on many different aspects that influence one’s perception and expression of gender, such as the society that surrounds us, also the way our parent brought us up and beliefs that our parents managed to pass on to us during our childhood, as I believe that it is mainly the experiences of the childhood that shape our identity and have a big impact on who we become as adults later in life.

²⁵ Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 86.

3 ANALYSIS

The following chapter discusses mainly the character of Katniss Everdeen. However, we also mention and analyze the character of the second tribute from District 12, Peeta Mellark. The analysis attempts to find out whether Katniss possesses mostly masculine features or whether she is in possession of some feminine features too and how does the society and their expectations influence her gender performance in particular situations. For the purpose of analysis was used Judith Butler's theory of fluid gender, which I have already explained earlier. The Butler's theory will help us define how Katniss Everdeen's gender fluctuates throughout the work of *The Hunger Games*. Via close reading analysis we can get insight into the work of *The Hunger Games*, however our main focus is on the first book of the trilogy where Katniss's character undergoes the biggest changes and development in terms of her gender.

3.1 Gender Development of Katniss Everdeen

We can observe that Collins does not portray her characters in their standardized forms. The main character of Katniss Everdeen is the embodiment of masculinity in *The Hunger Games*. The author attempts to challenge the readers via altered portrayal of Katniss. Typical heroic qualities are being undermined when Collins uses a female character and sets her as the main protagonist of the story. At the same time she is also the narrator of *The Hunger Games* story, which further emphasizes Collins's effort to put women at the forefront of the whole story. The book carries feminist elements right from the start. Katniss's gender is not fixed but changes throughout the story. The role of men and women seems to be balanced within society in *The Hunger Games*. Therefore, we cannot talk about gender inequality as both men and women take up the same roles. Strength, bravery, independence and self-sacrifice are the most honored values within District 12 in both men and women.

The society of Panem does not have standard expectations from men and women. Both men and women take up the same roles within the society. Females work in mines, which is usually male's profession due to the physical strain. Vivid example of gender equality is Katniss who hunts food for her family. None of her family members can hunt for prey and it was her father who taught her to hunt. She uses bows and arrows skillfully, thus she is being differentiated from other members of society. Even men in Panem wear extravagant clothes and put on makeup. Katniss usually wears

leather booths, hiding her braids behind a cap but sometimes, when it is expected by the society, she also wears a dress. Katniss is a complex character in *The Hunger Games* and goes through various changes in the story. In the first novel, her goal is surviving the games to be able to return to her family whereas in the latter novels she strives for social change. Katniss clearly changes during the story from a woman who fights for the existence of her family to a brave and powerful warrior igniting the uprising in the districts. As Katniss is the sole narrator of *The Hunger Games*, we can only pursue the story via her eyes in the quest for her self-identity.

Altered View on Femininity and Masculinity in Peeta and Katniss

Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark are both citizens of District 12, being the last of all districts located in Panem with the Capitol as the capital city of all districts. The residents of Panem between the ages 12 to 18 are bound to attend games organized by the President of the Capitol, President Snow. These deadly games are supposed to guarantee peace among the districts as it is the Capitol's way of reminding the people of Panem that they are at their mercy and any unwanted behavior and rebellion will be severely punished. "Always close enough to run back to the safety of District 12 if trouble arises. "District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety," I mutter. Then I glance quickly over my shoulder. Even here, even in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you."²⁶ Katniss lives in a state ruled by oppression, overridden by a fear of what the future might hold for her. I believe that this oppression and fear she lives in and that surrounds her and her family had a great impact on the development of her personality as Katniss dwells in her internal thoughts most of the time, thus she does not make many friends. She is a rather silent type.

Katniss is skilled in archery and apart from mostly masculine elements she also took on some features of femininity during her life in the District 12. Katniss is a woman of compassionate and loving nature, but also is much more mature than one would expect from a girl of her age. Peeta on the other hand is expected to represent masculinity more as he is a man. However, we can also see some traits that are mostly associated with being feminine, such as kindness and empathy. He believes in community life and is more open to showing his emotions and feelings. On the other hand, Katniss is mostly presented as being cold and unemotional, or even unpleasant.

²⁶ Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2011), 6.

Katniss describes her life in Panem as hard, however tries to survive and make her life and the life of her family better by hunting animals. However, the citizens of the districts are not allowed to enter the forest where she hunts. It is forbidden and the district is protected by a wired electrified fence to keep passersby at bay, but the fence is not being electrified all the time, so it is possible to escape to the forest that lies behind it. Crossing the fence is against the rules and Katniss is willingly taking this risk to get food for her family. She risks her bare life to keep them alive. This in my opinion shows her caring and sensitive side. She does not show this side of her very often, but when she does, it is mainly around her younger sister Prim. On the other side, this also shows how independent and brave she is while roaming alone through the forest. This act of rebellion of crossing the fence suggests her uncontrollable nature and masculinity traits in her behavior that further develop later in the story.

Katniss expresses masculinity in many different ways. One of the most obvious signs of her being more masculine than feminine is the way she usually dresses. This has a lot to do with her being the breadwinner of her family as she had to take up the role of her late father who was killed in a mine explosion when Katniss was only eleven years old. "I swing my legs off the bed and slide into my hunting boots. Supple leather that has molded to my feet. I pull on trousers, a shirt, tuck my long dark braid up into a cap, and grab my forage bag."²⁷ We can observe that Katniss usually wears male clothes, mostly trousers and a shirt, however, as we learn later, during some occasions, such as the annual reaping, she wears dresses but this happens only rarely and I believe her wearing a dress to a public event is a necessary act in order to conform to the expectations of the society as females are usually expected to wear skirts and not trousers, but also it is expected by the society that they have long hair, wear makeup and act in a feminine way. Thus, when she hides her braid into a cap, we can take this as a showcase of her intentions to disguise her femininity.

Katniss excels in shooting as well as at using bows and arrows. Her transformation into a man is visible when she becomes a warrior. It is usually men who are warriors whereas women are expected to stay home and take care of the house. She is not scared but rather the dominant type which helps us reveal her masculinity even further. After the death of the father, she takes on both the motherly and fatherly role in the house thus from the early start she emanates masculine and feminine elements. This is even more elevated when her mother suffers from depression after the death of her

²⁷ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 4.

husband, thus she cannot take care of the family. “You can’t leave again,” Katniss says to her mother as she emphasizes the importance of keeping Prim alive. “You can’t clock out and leave Prim on her own. There’s no me now to keep you both alive.”²⁸ Katniss’s gender role fluctuates throughout the novel and she has to accept many different gender roles and assigned positions in *The Hunger Games*. However, as she prepares to leave her district for the games, we can see how she urges her mother to not to fall into her depression once again as she would not be there to take care of them and this would most probably mean she and Prim would die of starvation. She knows that the odds of her winning and coming back home are low, so she is forced to pass on her fatherly role onto her mother.

At the beginning of the training, Katniss relies purely on her strength and independence in the games. Back home, this was all she could be, a hunter and a breadwinner of her family, but she has to start being gender performative during the public events before the start of the games, but mostly in the arena so as to increase her chance to survive as Haymitch, the only living victor of the Hunger Games from District 12, and her stylist Cinna often remind her. “You’re not going to like what they do to you. But no matter what it is, don’t resist.”²⁹ During interviews they force her into wearing a dress, makeup, and she is also coerced into expressing her femininity. Katniss is taught to walk on high heels that are required for the final interview, but also she is reminded to smile more to appear more pleasant and girly.

This in my opinion shows a strong and undeniable influence of the society on the character of Katniss and her performativity of gender as she is forced to change her appearance and behavior for the purpose of the games and in order to maximize her chances of survival. She gives in and plays her role well but I feel like this goes against her own personal beliefs and thoughts. In these kinds of situations, the fluidity of her gender shows very significantly together with the differences between her behavior during the public events and during her private conversations with mainly her stylist Cinna with whom she is not afraid to show her true nature and identity. However, I think it is mainly her public performance that can help her gain some sponsors for the games, so she is advised to act humble and compliment the audience and Capitol as she has problems with answering questions about her and her family without letting people

²⁸ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 41.

²⁹ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 67.

know how much she despises them. Thus, being humble seems like the best way to present Katniss and help her with the audience.

Katniss also shows her sensitivity with Rue, a 12-year-old tribute from District 11. During the games, they become allies and work together on destroying the supplies that are guarded by the Careers, the tributes from the wealthier districts who are trained to participate in the games since their childhood, to prevent any other tributes from stealing them, thus they are trying to starve them. However, during this risky action, Rue seriously wounded and dies in Katniss's arms while she sings her a lullaby. "For a moment, I sit there, watching my tears drip down on her face. [...] I lean forward and press my lips against her temple."³⁰ From my reading, I can assume that Rue reminded Katniss of home and most importantly of her sister Prim who is of same age. Rue awakened maternal instincts in Katniss, but her death also made her realize that the Capitol has to be made accountable for the deaths of all the tributes as they force them to participate in the games and they even consider the games to be a cultural and enjoyable event.

The turning point in Katniss's relationship with Peeta would be the announcement of a rule change that states that there can be two winners of the games as long as they both come from the same district. Katniss finds Peeta who is seriously wounded and she is afraid that he is going to die. "Impulsively, I lean forward and kiss him, stopping his words."³¹ It seems to me that at that point, Katniss realizes that the pretended romance between them can actually help them win as right after the kiss, Haymitch sends them a pot of hot broth to help Peeta heal which can be understood as a reward for playing their roles right. It is clear that she tries to conform to the expectations of the society which means accepting the role of Peeta's lover that she has to play very convincingly. I feel like she finally realizes that Haymitch was trying to help her right from the start when he proposed this idea of making them seem in love. She therefore starts to accept her assigned gender role and starts to change her behavior purposefully to act as she is in love with Peeta.

Katniss tries to take care of him, but the wound is not healing. She therefore decides to go to the Cornucopia where she can get medicine for Peeta, but Peeta begs her to stay with him as he thinks it is too risky to go as the other tributes will be most probably waiting for her at the Cornucopia. "You're not risking my life for me. [...]"

³⁰ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 275.

³¹ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 305.

You go and I'm going, too."³² He is too proud to accept the fact that Katniss is stronger than him. From my point of view, this goes against the masculinity features in him as it is expected by the society that man is the superior partner in a relationship and that he should be the one protecting and taking care of his woman. However, I feel like Katniss does not want Peeta to regard her as being the superior partner, but she would prefer to be treated as being equal in their relationship in spite of different gender roles they are supposed to take and the expectations of the society. Thus, this defies the traditional view of men and women – men as saviors protecting fragile women. It is Peeta who needs help and Katniss is able to provide it, so she takes up the role of the protector in their relationship.

Peeta also possesses some feminine features, although he displays only a few feminine characteristics. Peeta is a great listener and is also capable of showing empathy as years before the games he saved Katniss's family from certain death of starvation. "The boy took one look back at the bakery as if checking that the coast was clear, then, his attention back on the pig, he threw a loaf of bread in my direction."³³ This act of bravery and empathy is well remembered by Katniss as without the burned bread Peeta gave to her, her family would die as after her father's death their situation was bad, there was no money left, thus no food to feed them. He also shows his feminine side when he helps his mother take care of the house, a task which is typically assigned to women. He also shows his fragile side when he heals Katniss stabbed by a bee, showing his gentle, caring nature as well.

Peeta wants to express his masculinity, the image of male protector, fierce and brave. He is a son of a baker, so he comes from a relatively prosperous family unlike Katniss who was on the edge of poverty. He revealed his love for Katniss during the live interview on TV before the start of the first games as Caesar Flickerman, who is hosting the interview, asks if he has a girl back home. "Wining won't help in my case, [...] because... because... she came here with me."³⁴ Katniss at that time was not sure whether he uses it as a tactic to get the advantage in the games or if he truly has feelings for her. Later in the arena she realizes that his feelings must be real. As I see it, this recognition happened when Peeta showed that he was willing to sacrifice his life for her as he told her at the end of the games to kill him so she may live after the earlier rule change has been revoked. In this case, Peeta exhibits his masculine side through bravery

³² Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 321 – 232.

³³ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 35.

³⁴ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 151.

and sacrifice as he shows no fear of facing death, thus letting Katniss who he loves win, therefore survive and live her life.

However, it is Katniss who thinks of a plan to save them both as Peeta remarks that “We both know they have to have a victor.”³⁵ This makes her realize that if both of them cannot win then making it seem like they both were to die and leave the Capitol without a winner could maybe change their minds and they could pronounce both of them winners of the Hunger Games. They decide to eat the poisonous berries they have collected earlier in the forest and as they are about to do so, the game makers frantically announce them both as the winners of the 74th Hunger Games.

I am of the opinion that this decision in such a desperate situation shows that Katniss is fully aware of what it would mean to leave the arena without Peeta. She knows she is not able to kill Peeta even though he insists on it and even throws his knife into a nearby lake. It seems to me that at his point Katniss finds out that her feelings for Peeta are much stronger than she ever thought they could be and realizes that killing him is not an option. I think that Katniss’s denial and rejection of her feelings for Peeta has a lot to do with the situation they have to face. The arena that is filled with danger and fear as well as the need to survive which can only be fulfilled by killing the rest of the tributes, is not a place where she would let herself fall in love. This might be the reason for Katniss’s coldness and emotionlessness as she usually has to remind herself to show some affection and feelings for Peeta as it is expected by the audience of the games.

The act of rebellion and resistance against the rules of the Capitol in the last moments of the games however puts both Peeta and Katniss in danger. President Snow is not happy with the ending of the games and Haymitch tells Katniss that they are in trouble. “Your only defense can be you were so madly in love you weren’t responsible for your actions.”³⁶ Katniss does not realize that she became a threat to the Capitol and President Snow when she tried to outsmart the game makers by trying to kill both her and Peeta. Thus, during the interview with Caesar she tries to appear in love with Peeta and when asked about the berries she says that she “couldn’t bear the thought of being without him.”³⁷ This answer is considered by Haymitch as good enough and everybody hopes it is. However, on their way back to their district Peeta discovers that they are in danger due to the berries incident, but also realizes that the romance between them was just a play and a strategical move to help them survive. Katniss however says that not

³⁵ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 402.

³⁶ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 417.

³⁷ Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 431.

all of it was false, but Peeta is still very hurt and does not know how to react to this new information. Katniss also has problems with explaining her thoughts and feelings. This in my opinion has very much affected their relationship as Peeta has no idea what of all the things that happened between him and Katniss was real and what was just a performance for the audience. I believe that trust is one of the most important things in a healthy relationship and Katniss betrayed Peeta's trust and this trust can be only hardly gained back.

Everything changes while Katniss and Peeta prepare to leave for the Victory tour as President Snow visits Katniss at her new home in the Victor's Village where she and Peeta both have their own new houses that they have received after winning the Hunger Games. "I have a problem, Miss Everdeen. [...] A problem that began the moment you pulled out those poisonous berries in the arena."³⁸ President Snow regards this as an act of rebellion which could lead to a potential revolution that would hurt many people. He pretends to care about the well-being of people. The moment Katniss stood up against the Capitol's rules was a milestone that inspired other citizens in the districts to rebel against the Capitol. President Snow threatens her and her family and therefore Katniss promises him that she will do her best to play her role of being madly in love with Peeta to try to calm down the unrest in the districts while touring them and states that "It will be the same on the tour. I'll be in love with him just as I was."³⁹

I believe that at this point Katniss realizes that there is no escaping now, they both are public figures now and their lives are being monitored and controlled. People of Panem will expect updates on their lives during every next Hunger Games. Katniss feels like a prisoner of the Capitol, unable to escape its walls. She realizes that she will have to marry Peeta and Peeta eventually proposes to her. These events in my opinion start a huge change in the development of her identity but also set the ground for her future rebellion and participation in the war against the Capitol and its oppression.

The oppression of the Capitol continues as for the next Hunger Games, the Quarter Quell, the tributes will be chosen from the winners of the previous games. This is to remind the districts that even the strongest are not safe and they cannot compete with the Capitol. Katniss therefore goes back into the arena together with Peeta who volunteers in Haymitch's place. However, as Katniss is unaware of this, there is a secret plan how to save her and other tributes from the arena. A group of rebels from District

³⁸ Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire* (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2011), 22 – 23.

³⁹ Collins, *Catching Fire*, 32.

13, which should not exist as it was destroyed 75 years ago, manages to retrieve her from the arena but Peeta could not be rescued and is now held captive by the Capitol. This in my opinion makes Katniss reconsider her values. She is willing to help the rebels and participate in the rebellion. She abandons the female in her and rather becomes a warrior and a face of the rebellion and revolution the citizens of the districts need. However, she still cares for Peeta and eventually after the war against the Capitol is over she opens up her heart and allows herself to find happiness by his side.”Peeta says it will be okay. We have each other.”⁴⁰

Personally, I think Peeta is an important man in Katniss’s life. Although she feels confused about her feelings for him, she constantly relies on his support. Her vulnerability puts her into the stereotypical position of women, asking for help, relying on their men for support and help. It seems that their relation is rather cooperative than binary. Peeta soothes her when she suffers from nightmares after the games. His willingness to sacrifice his bare life in the arena is the demonstration of his selfless, pure love. On the other hand, I feel like Katniss is also willing to die for him because she believes her pain will drive his ability to fuel the uprising against the Capitol. Her own sacrifice is put into the forefront of her goals, society comes first and her own life is of the latter priority. She shows us her selfishness not only in terms of willingness to save Peeta’s life but in sustaining the justice and morality in the district.

I believe one can safely say that Katniss and Peeta’s relationship alters typical gender norms. Usually women are blinded by the feeling of love and want to give up everything for the one they love. Men are usually confused about commitment and sacrificing their life. Stereotypical symbol of gender for men is usually an attractive, strong, powerful hero whereas women are pictured as fragile and insecure, missing those masculine qualities thus seeking them in the opposite sex. However, it is clear that Katniss is the one who offers protection to Peeta, takes care of him and provides food. On the other hand, Peeta is better at showing his emotions and feelings which is very atypical for a male.

To sum up, Katniss is well-known for her distant and mysterious personality. She has endured a lot of pain in her life and thus she refuses to show her true emotions especially to complete strangers. Whereas Peeta is more open with his feelings and acts more friendly than Katniss. He is a skilled communicator, though he is not good at handling weapons. Katniss is determined to protect him because she feels that Peeta is

⁴⁰ Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 2011), 438.

more vulnerable in the arena due to his almost non-existent experience in fighting and hunting. He encourages Katniss to be more open and disclose what bothers her inside. In typical stereotypical settings, it is a woman who has to beg her man to open up to her, reveal his true emotions and feelings. But instead it is Katniss who puts on protective armor, refusing to express how she truly feels.

Reversed roles of Katniss and Peeta break the traditional gender stereotypes that exist in media culture. Katniss refuses her femininity and hates rules. She seems ruthless and always strives to protect the ones she loves. Peeta also rejects the traditional view of masculinity which is expected from him. Therefore, by refusing traditional views of masculinity and femininity, the work of *The Hunger Games* highlights the power of society and its influence on the performativity of gender.

4 CONCLUSION

The main aim of this thesis was to provide a critical analysis of the work of Suzanne Collins in terms of how she approaches the traditional concept of masculinity, femininity and heroism. The work focuses on the analysis of Katniss and Peeta, the two main characters of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Through the analysis of their relationship and behavior we were able to understand how their gender performativity is strongly influenced by the surrounding society and the expectations the society forces them to fulfill in terms of fitting into the traditionally assigned gender roles.

Through Judith Butler's theory of gender fluidity, we were able to understand how Katniss's role changes throughout the story, from the role of a father and a breadwinner for her family, through the role of a mother for her sister Prim to becoming a warrior and a symbol of rebellion for the people of Panem. She takes on different gender roles that depend on what is expected from her at a particular time which proves the theory that gender is socially constructed. Katniss has to adjust to the situation she finds herself in and learns to use gender expectations and her gender fluidity to her advantage, when to be masculine if necessary or when to show her femininity instead, and she is able to benefit from it, especially during her time in the arena.

To sum up, Katniss Everdeen is an independent, strong, self-reliant character possessing both masculine and feminine qualities. Those qualities and the ways she performs them strongly rely on the influence of the society around her as it is the society that shapes her gender and gender performativity. She is the true embodiment of the third wave of feminism as she is the representative of altered social roles of women as she is not fitting into a standardized gender role. *The Hunger Games* serves as the showcase of not only females and femininity but as the showcase of the oppression of humanity as well. The social and environmental struggles are the central themes of the novel apart from the struggle of the main protagonist Katniss Everdeen for self-identity.

6 RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce je prozkoumání role a vlivu feminizmu a společnosti na genderovou performativitu hlavní ženské postavy Katniss Everdeenové v díle *The Hunger Games* od Suzanne Collinsové. Analýza je založena na rozboru chování a romantického vztahu hlavní postavy Katniss s hlavní mužskou postavou Peety Mellarka. Dále se práce zaměřuje na rozbor vlivu společnosti na performativitu genderu hlavních postav a také projevů feminity a maskulinity u těchto dvou postav včetně genderových stereotypů.

První část této práce je věnována stručnému historickému vývoji feminizmu s hlavním zaměřením na třetí vlnu feminizmu, která započala na začátku 90. let. Dále se práce věnuje roli genderu v dnešní společnosti a způsobu, jakým společnost ovlivňuje performativitu genderu v návaznosti na teorii genderu od Judith Butlerové. V další části se práce zaměřuje na analýzu samotného díla *The Hunger Games* skrz ukázky a následným rozbohem jednotlivých ukázek. Tyto jsou analyzovány s ohledem na přítomnost charakteristických rysů pro feminitu nebo maskulinitu u jednotlivých postav a dále je analyzován vliv společnosti a genderových stereotypů na chování a genderovou performativitu postav.

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8 ANNOTATION

Name: Veronika Němečková

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the thesis: Feminism in Suzanne Collins's Trilogy The Hunger Games

Supervisor: Mgr. Elizabeth Allyn Woock, PhD

Number of pages: 35

Year: 2021

Abstract

This bachelor's thesis deals with close reading analysis of Hunger Games Trilogy by Suzanne Collins. The paper aims at analysis of third wave feminism and general feminist features of the main protagonist Katniss Everdeen, but also other relevant characters in Hunger Games via the close reading analysis of all three books by Suzanne Collins. The main purpose of the paper is to discuss and analyze the prevalence of feminism in Hunger Games and the scope of its influence throughout the work. Also the paper will focus on the evaluation of feminine and masculine features of the main characters. The Judith Butler's theory of fluid feminism is taken into consideration during the literary analysis of selected texts.

Key words: feminism, femininity, masculinity, sexuality, gender performativity, gender roles, stereotypes, gender inequalities

8 ANOTACE

Jméno: Veronika Němečková

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Feminismus v trilogii Hunger Games od Suzanne Collinsové

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Elizabeth Allyn Woock, PhD

Počet stran: 35

Rok: 2021

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu trilogie Suzanne Collinsové *The Hunger Games* metodou close reading. Práce se věnuje analýze třetí vlny feminizmu a feministických rysů hlavní postavy Katniss Everdeenové, ale i dalších relevantních postav v díle *The Hunger Games*. Hlavním cílem práce je analyzovat prevalenci a míru vlivu feminizmu v díle Suzanne Collinsové. Dále se práce zaměřuje na feminitu a maskulinitu a jejich projevy v chování hlavních postav díla. Pro analýzu textů a genderové performativity postav je použita teorie fluidity genderu Judith Butlerové.

Klíčová slova: feminismus, feminita, maskulinita, sexualita, genderová performativita, genderové role, stereotypy, genderová nerovnost