

Dystopian Deities: The Evolution of the Female Archetype: From Greek Mythology to *The Hunger Games*

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There are many parallels between the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, and the goddess, Artemis. Their choice of weaponry, the bow and arrow, and their allyship with Nature create a powerful image of a feminine archetype. The dystopian genre is a cataclysmic vision of a potential future, therefore Suzanne Collins, with influence from classical antiquity, shapes a futuristic paradigm of femininity that rejects contemporary models and, instead, derives elements from archaic archetypes of women. This chapter will explore the elements of nature within Greek mythology and *Catching Fire*.

Nature is a hegemonic theme within literature and one that has been associated with feminine culture. Thus, the function of the natural world for the two female figures is imperative when depicting their inherent power. Artemis, as the goddess of wild animals, the hunt and vegetation, claims her authoritarian role within the natural sphere, the partial opposition of the domestic sphere. Chodorow argues that 'the cultural or ideological construction of "woman,"' is within the 'location in the domestic sphere' (Chodorow, 2013 p. 1) then it is plausible that Katniss, a dystopian model for the potentiality of womanhood, reignites the archetypal feminine codes from classical antiquity. The woods in particular are a natural space where both characters amalgamate, Dominguez argues that 'The woods are Artemis/Diana's emblematic space—a wild space opposed to the city, which is the known social space, organized according to a set of rules and conventions' (2020, p. 32). Therefore, the woods have no rigid social order where oppression can be inflicted: rules and gender norms have no power in the emblematic space. Katniss, hence, echoes this as she proclaims, 'The woods have always been our place of safety, our place beyond the reach of the Capitol, where we're free to say what we feel, be who we are' (Collins, 2015, p. 32). The dissonance between the Capitol and the woods is prevalent throughout the trilogy; this separation of societies is highlighted within the second novel when Katniss ruminates: 'I think of Gale, who is only really alive in the woods' (p. 32). This portrays the extent to which Katniss views the woods as a different society, one that does not co-exist with the structural civilisation. Consequently, due to this reasoning, the protagonist can only love Gale within the borders of the natural world. In contrast, she is capable of loving Peeta within the oppressive state of power and the arena. Domínguez argues that 'fake nature becomes the décor in which human wilderness emerges' (2020, p. 33). The arena, an artificial and manufactured attempt at reimagining and creating nature, a space that crosses the binary opposition between the Capitol and nature, conveys how Katniss can remain powerful but also disassociate from the world of District 12, thus her attachment to Gale.

De Beauvoir highlights that 'Nature represents what woman represents for man: herself and her negation, a kingdom and a place of exile, she is all in her guise of the other' (1989, p. 764). The affiliation between nature and woman are intertwined, both Artemis and Katniss rule over their woodland 'kingdom', 'reclaiming nature' (p. 50). The prefix portrays the circular notion of female power within nature, Katniss repossesses the nature that Artemis once ruled. De Beauvoir later argues that 'Nature does not define woman: it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself in her affectivity' (1989, p. 50). Despite the

utopian possibilities of this, Domínguez contends that 'Katniss is the representation of a polluted nature' (2020, p. 32). The 'polluted nature' refers to the artificial habitat within The Hunger Games arena. Collins creates a hybridity of realism and reproduction which reflects the representation of gender and the transcendences of the journey from Artemis to Katniss. The dissonance between the woods within the dystopian setting and the 'jungle' within the arena conveys the unnaturalness of the games' manufactured nature. The latter is described as 'obsolete', connoting a used space that is replaced and less developed. Katniss and Artemis both share a prime relationship with the natural space, the woods. However, I believe that the functionality of the arena acts as a representation of the outdated archetype of the woman, especially the model that would have been seen as the contemporary woman in 2009, the year *Catching Fire* was published. Therefore, the woods are depicted as a place of safety where the protagonist exclaims, they can be 'who we are' (Collins, 2015, p. 5). De Beauvoir states 'The woman who maintained her independence through all her servitudes will ardently love her own freedom in Nature' (1989, p. 673). The woods are a highly significant Artemesian link, thus, it is representing the hegemonic archetype of the woman, one which has Artemis as its great ancestor and influenced the depiction of the dystopian woman.

De Beauvoir in his critical analysis in 'The Second Sex' argues 'there is no such thing today as femininity, is it because there never was?' (1989, p. 4). The existence of femininity is constantly adapting and changing through time with what Andrews defines as an 'emergence of growing archetypal representation for women' (2016, p. 73). As aforementioned, Artemis, acting as an 'embodied predecessor' (Butler, 1988, p. 521) has developed many of Katniss' characteristics due to Artemis' influential capability, portraying how gender is malleable and thus can be manipulated to achieve power. Collins shows how gender can be performed, using Katniss' internal stream of consciousness to portray her self-awareness of her malleability by comparing herself to 'dough, being kneaded and reshaped again and again'. Judith Butler proclaims that gender is a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief (Butler, 1988, p. 520). Collins constructs Katniss's identity from a 'stylized repetition of acts' (Butler, 1988, p. 519) to create a gendered hybridity that can be recognised as drawing on the characteristics of Artemis. The parallels between both characters are imperative in analysing the significance of gender performance.

The pattern of Gold within Greek mythology and *Catching Fire* shows the strong link between the two female characters. In the Homeric Hymn (27), Artemis is depicted as "Over the shadowy hills and windy peaks she [Artemis] draws her golden bow". In the climax of *Catching Fire*, Gold is used as a catalytic element when Katniss details how she 'let the arrow fly, see it hit its mark and vanish, pulling the thread of gold behind it' in a rebellious act to destroy the arena. Gold seems to be an Artemesian symbolism that Collins uses to convey emblematic imagery of the predecessor of hybrid femininity. The connotations of the gold element are significant in explaining the construction of gender. Gold, especially the pure element, is incredibly malleable hence why it is combined with different alloys to increase strength and durability. Therefore, it can be easily shaped without breaking which aligns with the 'transformative ability' (Dominguez, 2020, p. 31) of gender. The archetype of a gender that equates both masculine and feminine qualities portray the durability and

strength of gender hybridity. Chodorow refutes the experience of gendered hybridity, stating that the 'views of the multiplicities of gender(ed) experience which include varied axes of power and powerlessness and dimensions of gender which do not encode power' (2013, p. 7). Collins shows how gender hybridity does, in fact, encode power through Katniss' rejection of conventional femininity to become a powerful representative that leads the rebellion against the Capitol. Through gender performativity, Katniss views herself as an actor within the novel, claiming that she is 'one of the stars of the show' (Collins, 2015) conveying the character as her own active agent of identity, gender does not shape her, she shapes gender. Hansen argues that Katniss adapts her femininity in order to survive, stating that Katniss' 'reshaping of her femininity to respond to others' cultural script' (2015, p. 171). De Beauvoir's discussion of women is also relevant here: 'We conceive her as hesitating between the role of object, of Other, that is proposed to her and her claim for freedom (1989, p. 2).

Collins creates fashion and 'the use of textiles to speak when silence is enforced for those who suffer' (Hansen, 2015, p. 3). Thus, fashion becomes a form of propaganda, instrumentalised, and designed by the character Cinna. Katniss becomes the model of rebellion and thus potential freedom. Before the Quarter Quell, Collins depicts the moment where Katniss reveals her burning dress that titles her 'the girl on fire'. Initially, the dramatic makeup accentuates Katniss' feminine looks with 'arching eyebrows, sharp cheekbones, smoldering eyes, deep purple lips'. However, the imagery of fire begins to build and it seems to take its own destructive form. Katniss exclaims 'I do not see a girl, or even a woman, but some unearthly being' as she gazes upon her fiery complexion. The outfit has the capability to destroy the feminine body, creating a shape of something she does not recognise, 'an unearthly thing'. Collins recreates the 'unearthly' form of a woman by taking Greek goddess capabilities and powers, converting and engaging the fashion code of the capitol, to resurrect the archetype of womanhood while literally burning the former model. Where De Beauvoir argues 'They have succeeded in re-creating/... this is what no woman has ever done, what no woman has ever been able to do'(1989, p. 766), we could argue that Collins does succeed in recycling Greek literature's feminine representations in order to highlight the emergence of the hybrid woman, one that does not conform to strict feminine modes but instead creates a new fluid form of gender that enhances women's ability to gain power and mobility in a patriarchal sphere. This empowerment is highlighted through the description 'She is as deadly as fire itself'. Katniss' lack of self-recognition, and the fact that she views herself in the third person as an omniscient narrator might, gazing at her new form, distances her from this new fiery form. The negative connotations of fire as destructive and deadly signify the destruction of identity, however, it also has binary oppositions. For example, in the novel's context, fire is viewed as a form of survival within the games, a source of light and warmth. The effects of gender liminality thus are crucial in order for women to survive. Domínguez argues that the protagonist's 'combination of her looks and her actions express and conform her liminal ethos' (2020, p. 31) Now, 'her body is no longer an object: it is a song, a flame' (p. 706). It is not a destruction of self, but a rebirth.

The hybridisation of gender is represented through the innate attributes of both masculine and feminine that ties Katniss and Artemis together. For instance, Artemis is acknowledged for her protectivity over young women and children: Collins creates a parallel with Katniss' maternal protectiveness of her sister Prim and contestant Rue. Katniss titles it as her 'job to

protect her younger sister' (Collins, 2008, p. 12). Rauwerda argues that this is part of 'the femininity that she does not want as part of her identity but which she cannot extinguish' (2016, p. 187). Thus, Katniss's role as a sacrificial figure for young and innocent women, like Prim, derives from patriarchal behaviours. The hybridity between maternal behaviours and paternal imitations collate to the representation of hybridised gender; Chodorow argues that this maternal instinct 'involves a double identification' (2013, p. 48). In the extract that follows:

I go there now to switch my clothes. Exchange my father's old leather jacket for a fine wool coat that always seems too tight in the shoulders. Leave my soft, worn hunting boots for a pair of expensive machine-made shoes that my mother thinks are more appropriate for someone of my status (Collins, 2009).

The protagonist's ability to manipulate and switch between outfits to either play a masculine or feminine role highlights Butler's argument that gender is performative and fluid. De Beauvoir concurs that 'to identify' with the mother or the father is to alienate oneself in a model, it is to prefer a foreign image to the spontaneous movements of one's own existence, it is to play at being '(1989, p. 61). This reinforces the amalgamation of an Artemesian archetype of gender that is re-introduced in dystopian literature. Katniss aligns more with the patriarchal figure rather than a maternal one due to following her deceased father's footsteps in hunting. The 'death of a parent allows young girls to grow up into roles with (masculine) agency' (Rauwerda, 2016, p. 179). As aforementioned in the previous chapter, the bow and arrow within the dystopian novels and Greek mythology have a deep-rooted phallic symbolism. De Beauvoir suggests that 'She might be tempted to react to the castration complex by rejecting her femininity, obstinately coveting a penis and identifying with her father' (1989, p. 53). Katniss and Artemis, in psychoanalytic terms undergo the castration complex of adolescent boys, thus they take 'revenge by playing the game with her masculine weapons' (p. 743). The masculinised weapon as aforesaid has intense phallic imagery as 'his sexual organ stiffens like a bow' (De Beauvoir, 1989, p. 397). Collins alludes to this phallic imagery by creating an appetite for violence, a sexual craving, as Katniss is 'hungry for an arrow' (2015, p. 86). Moreover, the relationship between sexuality and violence is highlighted further when Katniss states "'I got my father's blood. The kind that quickens during a hunt, not an epidemic'" (p. 17). It is important to analyse the phallic imagery and the sexual excitement with the hunt as this is a stereotypically masculine behaviour, as women are usually the prey, instead, they are the hunters. Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'the libido is not an instinct... it is the general power, which the psychosomatic subject enjoys' (1962, p. 183); hence Katniss uses masculine weapons and sexual controls to derive masculine power from them, thus sexuality within the character of the hybridised woman is quite complex.

Artemis, championing virginity, shares this innocence with Katniss, however, her relationships with Peeta and Gale complicates the image of a pure maiden. The complication indicates an even more hybridised femininity than the predecessor, Artemis. Collins creates a periphery of purity within the female character, as Peeta proclaims that Katniss is 'so... pure'. The ellipsis only creates a further emphasis on the adjective 'pure'. Despite the complex amorous entanglement between Gale and Peeta, Collins intently sustains Katniss' virginity. Therefore, it is imperative that one must analyse the protagonist's

behaviours within the novel when influenced by each male character as Collins highlights the interchanging dynamics of each relationship from the perspective of the female gaze. The reader is left to question if Katniss has the capability to truly be in love, specifically feminine love, or does she reject classical conventions like love?

Thus, Collins positions Katniss in a naturally more masculine role within a relationship to stabilise her hybridised identity. The performed masculine role is prominent in the relationship with Peeta. Collins uses the truncated declarative 'I hunt. He bakes.' Portraying the clear oxymoronic symbolism of performative gender roles and how Katniss rejects them. De Beauvoir argues that the masculine woman 'will become attached only by males she can treat like women' (1989, p. 400). Therefore, the relationship between Katniss and Peeta rejects conventionality and supports the dynamics of hybridised gender, proving why their relationship has more stability than Katniss and Gale's dynamic. Despite Katniss's performative masculine roles, she regresses to what De Beauvoir defines as 'idolatrous love' (p. 707). Collins creates a complex character that 'revolts against herself' (2015, p. 708) in order to save Peeta. As aforementioned, her sacrificial devotions expand to protect Peeta. In the finale of the novel, Katniss is described as self-proclaiming 'I so wanted to protect him' when she is saved by district 13 instead of Peeta. Her role as a protective figure stems from Artemis thus the protagonist sees this as her role, her sacrificial determination to save Peeta is not viewed as a role, but a selfish necessity as Collins states 'I realize only one person will be damaged beyond repair if Peeta dies. Me.' The conflicting elements of Katniss's gender highlight how she views love as a battle. De Beauvoir echoes this but states how this conflict makes man 'consider the love act as a battle' (1989, p. 423), hence regressing to masculine cognitive thinking.

Within the first few chapters, Collins projects the sexual confusion that men offer Katniss. The platonic relationship swiftly evolves into a sexual and jealous dynamic, that both characters inherit. Collins uses the technique of truncated declarative sentences 'Gale is mine. I am his' (2015, p. 9) to further emphasise the jealous possessiveness they exclusively share, as 'Male jealousy is thus simply the desire for exclusive possession (De Beauvoir, 1989, p. 713). This relationship projects how Collins views masculine love as a battle for ownership. The two characters are mutually counting on each other, however, the equality of power seems to destroy their identity as a romantic relationship. Gale seems to be parallel to Katniss in terms of their hunting capabilities and their empowerment through the woods, but these emotions only seem to exist in the woods. It is argued that 'Psychoanalysis like to claim that the woman seeks her father's image in her lover' (De Beauvoir, 1989, p. 702). As aforementioned, Katniss inherits her masculinity from her father, so the characters already seem to equalise. Therefore, Collins critiques conventional love by showing how it can only be sustained if the power dynamic is unbalanced if they are balanced, it becomes a war to claim ownership. Collins depicts their passionate kiss as an aggressive conflict as Gale's hands 'entrap' Katniss. Gale and Katniss' relationship reflects on the tragic love story of Artemis and Orion. There are many variations of this tale, the most symbolic one in relation to the dystopian parallel is the tragic death of Orion, by the jealous brother, Apollo. In each variation of this tale, the ending remains tragic. Collins disrupts this pattern of tragic love, however, sustaining the ability to present how love is a battle for even the strongest of women. Hence why both Artemis and Katniss try to avoid the 'trappings of conventional femininity' (Hansen, 2015, p. 165). This avoidance becomes their weapon, an act of defiance

and defence against patriarchy. Rauwerda argues that 'Choosing not to love, by choosing not to be female, is Katniss's main form of contraception' (2016, p. 175) thus showing the empowerment that free will derives. However, the theme of battle and conflict continues to represent societal war and the conflict between female and male representations and how we exist in society. De Beauvoir concludes 'The day when it will be possible for the woman to love in her strength and not in her weakness, not to escape from herself but to find herself, not out of resignation but to affirm herself, love will become for her as for a man the source of life and not a mortal danger' (1989, p. 725). Collins alludes in the third and final novel of the trilogy, that love for a woman can be conquered.

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