

Lady Hero Defined: An Exploration of the Female Protagonists
in the Works of Robin McKinley and Suzanne Collins

by
Carly Elaine Davis

A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College

Summer 2015

Lady Hero Defined: An Exploration of the Female Protagonists in the Works of Robin
McKinley and Suzanne Collins

by
Carly Davis

APPROVED:

Dr. Martha P. Hixon
Department of English

Dr. Maria Bachman, Chair
Department of English

Dr. Janis Brickey
Department of Human Sciences

Dr. Philip E. Phillips, Associate Dean
University Honors College

Abstract

The lady hero as a character in young adult fantasy fiction must be redefined and explored in order to separate these protagonists from the traditional male hero and female characters. By analyzing Robin McKinley's lady heroes Aerin and Harry from *The Hero and the Crown* and *The Blue Sword*, respectively, and Suzanne Collins's protagonists Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* series, we see that Joseph Campbell's hero's journey can be adapted for a female. Although the lady hero completes the quest that Campbell lays out, she also faces issues that only women in a male dominated society can understand. These conflicts push the lady hero to transform from an isolated girl with low self-esteem to an accomplished and respected woman, equal to any man. McKinley's lady heroes are the template to which Katniss Everdeen is compared and contrasted in this study. Ultimately, despite major surface differences, I determine that Katniss follows in the footsteps of McKinley's paradigmatic lady heroes.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Background of the Novels.....	10
Biography and Critical Review of Robin McKinley.....	10
Biography and Critical Review of Suzanne Collins.....	14
Chapter III: Family and Appearance.....	19
Family Life.....	19
Social Isolation.....	24
Physical Appearance.....	27
Chapter IV: The Lady Hero's Journey.....	31
Departure.....	31
Initiation.....	37
Return.....	42
Chapter V: Conclusion.....	46
Works Cited and Consulted.....	50

Chapter I: Introduction

A casual comparison of heroic characters in stories from different parts of the world yields few surface similarities, but when extraneous details are discarded and the stories are boiled down to their bare bones, striking core resemblances appear. These common themes, or archetypes, include characters, such as The Wise Old Man, The Mother Goddess, and The Trickster, as well as motifs such as spring as a time of new beginnings, a fall from heaven, and a battle between good and evil. The hero archetype can be found in the tales of every culture, piercing through the barriers of geography, time period, and ethnicity, although the hero's surroundings change with every culture and time period. The evolution of his story from the epics of ancient Rome and Greece into modern fantasy fiction seems to have created a completely different character type for modern audiences, yet close analysis shows that heroes in modern fantasy still embark on the hero's journey and maintain heroic attributes.

There are various definitions of a hero, most often only fully applicable to a certain literary genre, such as the tragic hero, superhero, and romantic hero. Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* provides the criteria used to define a hero for this thesis, but the young adult fantasy fiction genre, which is the genre into which the books under discussion here fall, shares many attributes with the fairytale genre, and Max Lüthi's definition of the fairytale hero in his book *The Fairy Tale as Art Form and Portrait of Man* illuminates the differences between fairytales and young adult fantasy fiction. Lüthi discusses certain characteristics of this particular hero, saying, "[T]he fairytale hero is in an extreme position, an outside position, thus isolated or easily isolatable and therefore relatively easy to draw into a central or an extreme opposite

position” (136). He adds that although the fairytale hero “departs from home, [. . . he] is not one who returns to his point of origin, like the title figures of epics” (136), thus separating the fairytale hero from the mythological hero Joseph Campbell defines. Lüthi specifies that although this “is primarily true for the masculine hero, it is an appropriate characterization of many heroines, as well [. . .] Whoever succeeds in marrying a prince automatically enters a new world” (137), another marked difference from Campbell’s hero’s journey, in which the return to the hero’s origin is the purpose of the transformation undergone on the quest. Finally, the fairytale hero, “even if he is a dragon-slayer, is time and again shown as one in need of help, often as one who is helpless [. . .]. He has no specific abilities” (137). In contrast, Campbell’s hero, too, obtains supernatural as well as human aid, but he is not helpless and does have specific abilities: he is innately good, physically strong, and possesses attributes that qualify him for the completion of his assigned quest.

Joseph Campbell, an important literary critic working in the mid-20th century, influenced the creative process of artists, filmmakers, and writers, as well as the critic’s process, by combining the findings of psychological studies with the study of mythology. Campbell’s work as a writer, public speaker, and editor earned him the National Arts Club Gold Medal of Honor in Literature in 1985. He created the term “monomyth,” which is the hero’s journey that is the same in every culture, and sets out the criteria for identifying such characters in his book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, published in 1949, including various attributes that clue the reader in to the presence of a hero character in a literary work. By treating the hero’s journey as representative of both an individual’s as well as a culture’s growth, Campbell opens the door for others to build on

his theories and utilize his ideas in original works. One of the major elements he identifies is the hero's rise from insignificance to power, which is important because key character traits, such as humility, compassion, and determination, develop in the course of this transition as the hero deals with adversity within his family and seeks solace in unexpected places. Campbell asserts that "the child of destiny has to face a long period of obscurity. This is a time of extreme danger, impediment, or disgrace" (280) and "[t]he myths agree that an extraordinary capacity is required to face and survive such experience" (281). Another major aspect is the form of the actual journey the hero undertakes in the course of the story. Campbell states that "whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narrative of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit [. . .]: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return" (27-8). During this journey, the hero will have the opportunity to display his strength, both emotional and physical, in high risk/reward situations. The ultimate goal of the journey is to achieve a kind of self-actualization for the hero and for the nation the hero represents.

Although Campbell qualifies a hero as "the man or woman" who completes the hero's journey (14), he clearly makes a distinction between the roles of men and women, saying, "Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know" (97). Literary history is dominated by male heroes, for example, Hercules, King Arthur, and Superman; yet there have been female heroes in literature as well: Atalanta in Greek mythology, Brunhild from Viking lore, and Fa Mulan in Chinese legend. This is especially true of the fairly

recent development of young adult fantasy fiction, which has a good number of female heroes as well as male ones, and the list is growing quickly; the female heroes included in this study are just a few examples.

Only in the last few decades have female protagonists been recognized as truly heroic because, in contemporary Western culture, the hero character is still traditionally male, never mind that a specific gender, while implied, is not stressed in Campbell's definition of a hero's journey. Anna Altmann provides a different perspective on Campbell's definition, saying, "Quest stories are stories of winning selfhood and of claiming a world. [...] The heroic quest is a fundamental human reality that women as well as men live through and express" (150). Instead of accepting the masculinity typical of the hero as a requirement, Altmann urges readers to apply the template found in hero tales to stories with female protagonists undertaking a heroic journey in modern fantasy fiction. In these stories, the fulfillment of the journey occurs regardless of gender, necessitating the recognition of the female hero as a legitimate literary character. Lynn Stuart Parramore cites *The Hunger Games* trilogy as proof that the era of the "Young Girl in literature [as] She-Who-Waits" is over, and "the path is opened for independent, strong-willed and admirable heroines" ("Heroine With A Thousand Faces").

Of course, strong female characters in literature always have existed, and the rise of the lady hero defined in this paper has its roots in Elizabeth Bennet, Jo March, and Jane Eyre. While the three women I have just mentioned lead interesting lives that pushed social boundaries, they did not kill dragons or fight battles at the risk of their lives. The almost-lady heroes of modern fantasy fiction, such as Lucy Pevensie in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and Éowyn in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord*

of the *Rings* series, are each an integral part of stories dominated by male figures, but they are not the primary saviors of their worlds and, therefore, do not embark on the hero's journey. Yet all of these women pushed the boundaries for acceptable behavior for women in literature just a little further, making the appearance of the lady hero in recent young adult fantasy possible.

Christine Mains discusses the limitations of Campbell's view of female heroes in her article "Having It All: The Female Hero's Quest for Love and Power in Patricia McKillip's *The Riddle-Master* Trilogy." Mains states that "it is certainly possible to use Campbell's monomyth as a critical framework for analyzing the quest of the female hero of fantasy and even many traditional fairy tales, to invert all of the gender roles of the monomyth" (25), but, she argues, some of his comments indicate "a distinction between male and female roles which is not necessarily inherent in [. . .] the narrative structure he proposes" (25). She references Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope's book, *The Female Hero*, saying, "[B]efore the female hero's quest can begin, she must slay the dragons confining her within her patriarchal community [. . .]: 'the myth of sex differences, the myth of virginity, the myth of romantic love, and the myth of self sacrifices'" (Mains 26). According to Pearson and Pope, "The female hero cannot expect to have it all, to gain both independence and love on the journey that she has begun" (qtd in Mains 27), but Mains comes to the conclusion that this "negative outcome is not necessarily the destiny of the female hero in a fantastic world" (27). Mains admits that "[i]t seems difficult, although not impossible, to reconcile personal power with loving relationships, to be both a scholar-wizard and a nurturing wife" (33). She comes to the conclusion that the protagonist in Patricia McKillip's *Riddle-Master* series obtains "a relationship of equality

and union with a partner who is a soulmate” (33). I see the lady hero’s struggle for both love and equality as part of her journey that Campbell does not address and agree with Mains that obtaining both is possible for the lady hero.

In her article “The Problem of Woman as Hero in the Work of Joseph Campbell,” Sarah Nicholson blatantly says, “Campbell does not adequately deal with woman as hero” because he “suggested differently gendered roles on the mythic plane: woman as the receptive dreamer, man as active warrior” (189). She explores Campbell’s treatment of women as a symbol of “sex, desire, [and] generative motherhood,” and argues that the woman, therefore, “loses her agency and it is the male who retains it as well as the ability to act as hero” (190). She concludes that “Campbell’s theory leaves the interpretation of mythology open to the sort of process necessary to adequately unravel and rebuild these mythic images of Woman, and her journey of inquiry into humanity and divinity, as living myth” (192). In other words, although Campbell himself focuses on male heroes and places women in specific roles in that male’s heroic journey, Campbell’s framework and ideology nevertheless allows for a female hero to complete the hero’s journey, transforming herself and the stereotypical female roles in the process.

By establishing the definition of a hero and the viability of the application of that definition to women in literature, particularly in young adult fantasy literature, the argument can be made that these female heroes fall along a spectrum of success in fulfilling the requirements stated in Campbell’s definition while remaining relatable and interesting to the reader. Robin McKinley is a pioneer in young adult fantasy featuring a female protagonist, and her novels *The Blue Sword* (1982) and *The Hero and the Crown* (1984) will be referred to in this study as the prototypes of lady hero tales. The recent

explosion of young adult dystopian fantasy is also dominated by female protagonists such as Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010), who also follows the stages found in Campbell's definition and embarks on a journey of finding herself, as suggested by Altmann.

Fiona Tolhurst further defines the types of female protagonists by bringing in Maureen Fries' concept of different classifications, including heroine, which she defines as a damsel in distress who waits for a man to save her; a female hero, a woman who helps a man temporarily; and a female counter-hero, a woman who fights for her own interests and displays a headstrong attitude in relationships and conflict into the discussion (Tolhurst 69-70). Tolhurst adds her own categories of tragic heroine and female warrior-hero (70). I would like to add lady hero to the list of categories.

A lady hero, not simply a heroine or counter-hero, is a woman who completes Campbell's hero's journey for the ultimate purpose of self-discovery but does not lose or exaggerate her femininity throughout the story. The lady hero is not ashamed of the facets of her identity that are stereotypically "womanly" traits, such as sensitivity, compassion, and even domesticity. By the same token, she does not pretend to be in possession of all "womanly" traits and is not ashamed of the stereotypically male traits she might possess, such as physical strength, determination, and leadership. Roberta Seelinger Trites defines feminism "as the premise that all people should be treated equally, regardless of gender, race, class, or religion. [. . .W]hen girls choose [. . .] to be homemakers, they deserve to be treated as well as when they play chief executive officer in their spare time" (2). Trites' definition, coupled with Elaine Showalter's idea that "self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a

search for identity” is the true aim of feminist literature (qtd Trites 2), captures my definition of the true femininity a lady hero should display.

This thesis focuses on the female heroes created by two significant young adult fantasy authors, Robin McKinley’s Aerin in *The Hero and the Crown* and Harry Crewe in *The Blue Sword*, along with Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy. In particular, I compare Katniss to Aerin and Harry in light of Campbell’s hero’s journey pattern to see if Katniss can rightly be called a lady hero or whether she falls short of that definition, unlike Harry and Aerin, who fulfill that definition. The critical theories used to study these texts are primarily those by Joseph Campbell, Anna Altmann, and Jennifer Mitchell, as well as major feminist critics such as Ellyn Lem, Holly Hassell, Christine Mains, and Mary Pharr. I approach this argument as a critical literary analysis of fantasy literature with an emphasis on gender roles and feminist perspective.

Robin McKinley writes for the “girls who do things” genre in children and young adult literature (Sanders 38). Her lady heroes, especially Aerin and Harry of *The Hero and the Crown* and *The Blue Sword*, respectively, are the perfect transition between the very masculine hero Campbell describes in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and modern heroines like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Aerin and Harry kill dragons and fight on horseback with swords, much like the hero Campbell describes, but they also fall in love, struggle with fitting in, and display compassion and empathize in a distinctly “womanly” way. Lynn Moss Sanders states, “Robin McKinley not only emphasizes the values found in most fantasy fiction, courage and honor, she also makes an important contribution to balancing gender roles in young adult fiction and portraying female characters who are both physically strong and smart and courageous”

(38). Thus, McKinley has provided an early paradigm for later lady heroes in girls' fantasy fiction, a paradigm that Suzanne Collins clearly draws from.

Chapter Two of this thesis provides short summaries of each book under discussion to provide context for the analysis of the main characters as female heroes. Chapters Three through Five explore parts of the definition of a hero that are found in almost every heroic adventure and explain how the female heroes in McKinley's novels fulfill this definition while offering a contemporary template with which to evaluate how well Collins's protagonist either fulfills or does not fulfill those specific pieces while still maintaining and celebrating her femininity as defined above. I close with a final look at Campbell's definition of a hero and my own definition of a lady hero and the conclusion I reach for Katniss Everdeen regarding her true classification as either lady hero, damsel in distress, or simply a man with a woman's name.

Chapter II: Background of the Novels

Biography and Critical Review of Robin McKinley

Robin McKinley, born November 16, 1952, grew up in the United States, graduated from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, and completed graduate work at Bowdoin College. McKinley's influence on children's and young adult fantasy cannot be overstated. She tells the stories of young lady heroes almost exclusively, the only exception being *Dragonhaven*, a novel featuring a teenage boy acting as the adoptive mother of an infant dragon. Evelyn M. Perry, author of a *Girl Reader, Woman Writer*, summarizes her lady heroes, saying, "In [McKinley's] work, ordinary girls are capable of extraordinary things; they live with magic but never rely on it, and their honest efforts are rewarded by the salvation of their people and their ultimate sense of belonging" (xvi). Perry also argues that these lady heroes are the product of McKinley's own life experience as a "Navy brat and an insatiable reader" (xiii). Her development of these heroines, in addition to the extraordinary worlds she creates to serve as the setting for these tales, has earned several awards, including the Newbery Award for *The Hero and the Crown* in 1985 and the Newbery Honor for *The Blue Sword* in 1983. She has also written several fairy and folk tale retellings, including two versions of Beauty and the Beast, and versions of Perrault's "Donkeyskin," Sleeping Beauty, and Robin Hood, all of which also feature lady heroes.

McKinley published the first novel of the Damar series in 1982, *The Blue Sword*, in which Angharad "Harry" Crewe, a young woman from a nation called Home, moves to the outskirts of the country after the death of her father to live with friends of her brother who is in the military. She has a strange fascination with the desert and foothills

surrounding her new home, and although she is received warmly, Harry feels more at ease in nature than with her hosts. The native people do not recognize the Home government, which has caused problems in the past, but a new threat from the North brings the Damarians and the Home military together as allies. Corlath, the Damarian king, comes to Harry's house to discuss strategy and terms with the military leaders. The good will between parties is tenuous, and Corlath leaves without reaching any agreement. He briefly glimpses Harry and an undeniable urge to take her with him to his camp in the desert overwhelms him, and he kidnaps her that night using *kelar*, a type of magic passed down through the royal bloodline.

Harry barely protests when she realizes she has been kidnapped, and, despite major language and cultural differences, she quickly forms friendships with Corlath and one of his followers, Mathin. Mathin teaches her their language and how to fight with a sword. The connection forged between Harry and Corlath flares into romance from time to time, but the upcoming war and Harry's training effectively stop any real progress from being made. At the end of her training, Harry competes in the *laprun* trials to prove herself as a warrior, and she wins the title of *laprun-minta* and the blue sword, Gonturan. She is the *Damalur-sol*, the lady hero of Damar, and she has a place on the battlefield during the upcoming war with the North. Corlath and his Riders journey to see Luthe, a mage who seems to live outside time, and Harry sees Aerin, her ancestor, in a vision.

On the eve of battle, Corlath and Harry argue about the role of Homelanders in the war and the northwest pass, and Harry rides away to warn them of the imminent attack and inquire about a weakness in their defenses at the northwest pass. The battle commences and the possibility of victory shrinks. Harry leaves her group of friends and

fighters and has a supernatural encounter with Aerin, her ancient ancestor (whose story McKinley tells in the prequel *The Hero and the Crown*) just before she uses *kelar* to throw the mountain down onto the army of the North and their leader, Thurra. She and Corlath reunite after the battle, and they acknowledge their romantic connection as well as their connection through *kelar*. They live in the City of the Hills, have children, and rule as king and queen of the Hill people.

The Hero and the Crown was written after *The Blue Sword*, but it tells the story of Harry's distant ancestor, Aerin, in the time before Home. Aerin is the daughter of the king of Damar's second, mysterious wife who supposedly died of grief just after Aerin's birth because Aerin was not a boy. Aerin grew up as an outsider, both in looks and position, and her cousin, Galanna, jealous of Aerin's status, constantly reminded her of her strangeness. Her cousin Tor and her maid are her only friends. Tor is the heir to the throne and has been Aerin's friend since she was small, but a new relationship blossoms as she grows older. During a particularly brutal illness caused by one of Galanna's tricks, Aerin befriends her father's old, lame warhorse, Talat, and finds part of a recipe for an ointment called *kenet* that renders the wearer immune to fire. She spends the rest of her illness and recovery getting to know Talat, learning to sword fight from Tor, and perfecting the *kenet* recipe.

In Damar, small dragons are common and regarded as pests that must be dealt with carefully, and Aerin takes up the mantle of dragon-killer. She and Talat, covered in *kenet*, slay dragons in neighboring villages, and Aerin feels that she has earned a place of respect in the kingdom. A villager rides to the castle claiming that Maur the Black Dragon is terrorizing his village and begs for help, but the king and Tor must leave to

deal with a possible threat to the kingdom, promising help after they return. Aerin quietly slips away with Talat and the villager to fight the dragon on her own. The horror that is Maur defies any slight comparison to his smaller counterparts with which Aerin is familiar. Her *kenet* provides no safety from the molten dragon-fire, and Aerin would have died if not for Talat's warhorse training and desire to keep her alive.

Aerin kills Maur but suffers terrible injuries, both internal and external, and she returns to the castle a fragile shell of her former self. The trophy head of Maur taunts her, and only Luthe's intervention into her thoughts and consistent urging to come to him for healing saves her from her deathbed. She and Talat leave the castle and journey to Luthe's mountains, a magical place that, like Luthe, stands apart from reality. He heals her with the Lake of Dreams, which produces the interesting side effect of immortality, and he reveals the truth of her mother's mysterious nature and grief at her birth. Her mother's Northern blood carried the magical *kelar*, but Aerin's uncle planned to do evil things. Aerin's mother was not strong enough to stop him, but she hoped that she would have a son who could do what she could not. Aerin and Luthe's relationship develops into a romance, but they both know that Aerin has to defeat her uncle and go back to Damar and Tor for the remainder of her mortal life. Aerin's immortality is tested on her journey to defeat her uncle, and she succeeds just in time to find the Hero's Crown and save her kingdom. She and Tor marry and rule for many years, and when her mortal life ends, Aerin is able to return to Luthe as an immortal because she drank from the Lake of Dreams.

Biography and Critical Review of Suzanne Collins

Suzanne Collins, born in 1962 in Hartford, Connecticut, was the daughter of an Air Force officer and moved around the United States during her younger years. She graduated from Indiana University where she double-majored in telecommunications and theater, and she obtained her masters degree in dramatic writing at New York University. She wrote for the Nickelodeon children's shows *Clarissa Explains It All* and *Little Bear* in 1991 and 1995, respectively, and various other television productions until 2003, when she published the first book in The Underland Chronicles, a five-book fantasy series for middle grade readers that features the adventures of a male hero, a human boy named Gregor, in a hidden land underneath New York City. The series was critically praised and paved the way for her next series, *The Hunger Games*. Her previous status as a New York Times bestseller author skyrocketed to extreme fame when she published the first book in *The Hunger Games* trilogy in 2008. *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* followed in 2009 and 2010, and Collins wrote screenplays to turn the novels into blockbuster movies in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. The overwhelming success of the series is partly due to the shocking subject matter, and partly due to Collins's ability to create a unique yet still admirable heroine in Katniss Everdeen during a time when the popularity of strong female protagonists is on the rise. In their article " 'Killer Katniss' and 'Lover Boy Peeta': Suzanne Collins's Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading," Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel make the claim that "youth literature is [. . .] segregated as 'boy' and 'girl' book genres" (118), but "Collins has proved [. . .] that to write against the grain of gender expectations is not only possible but also necessary" (120).

Collins has said that her inspiration for *The Hunger Games* came from reality television shows and the Iraq War news segments. She saw the desensitization of our culture to war and the positive correlation between shock value and entertainment, and she took that idea to the extreme of teenagers being forced to kill one another while the nation watches with bated breath. She validates the violence in her latest trilogy by saying that the consequences of war should be discussed more freely, and she argues that “If we introduce kids to these ideas earlier, we could get a dialogue about war going earlier and possibly it would lead to more solutions” (“Suzanne Collins”). Shaun Strohmer states that Collins remains “famously reticent about her personal life, giving few interviews and keeping those focused on her writing.” The reviewer connects this to “the fickle and artificial nature of celebrity” in *The Hunger Games*, celebrity “which Collins herself has rejected, predicting that the spotlight will eventually turn elsewhere while she continues to write.” Her background as a military brat and unabashed rejection of the perks of fame shine through in *The Hunger Games*.

The Hunger Games is a dystopian series intended for young adults, set in a post-apocalyptic future in North America, in the country of Panem ruled by President Snow. The trilogy features Katniss Everdeen, a poor citizen of District 12. The books begin 74 years after an attempted revolution of the 13 Districts against the Capitol, in which the nuclear power-centered District 13 attempted to break away from the Capitol’s control with the support of the other districts, but the attempt failed and the Capitol maintains that District 13 no longer exists. The Capitol retaliated by initiating the Hunger Games, effectively shutting down any hope of resistance by forcing 24 teenagers—two from each district— to fight to the death until one victor remains. Each year, the twelve districts

send a boy and a girl between the ages of 12 and 18 to the Capitol as “tributes,” or participants in a widely televised deadly game set up for the amusement of the citizens of Panem. Katniss’s twelve-year-old sister, Prim, is chosen against all odds, but Katniss volunteers to take her place, trusting her best friend, Gale, to look after her mother and younger sister if she dies in the arena. She and Peeta Mellark travel to the Capitol with Effie Trinket, their assigned handler from the Capitol, and Haymitch Abernathy, the only past victor of the Games from District 12.

The Games begin at the Cornucopia, a treasure trove of useful items for which the contestants fight, guaranteeing a bloody beginning. Haymitch warned Katniss and Peeta to stay away from the chaos and focus on finding shelter, but Katniss snags a backpack before fleeing into woods, displaying her independence and inability to follow authority blindly. Despite developing a tenuous friendship during training, Katniss and Peeta avoid each other in the Arena because they do not want to hurt one another. During the fighting Katniss’s only ally, 12-year-old Rue, dies, leaving only a few contestants spread out around the arena, at which point, to stir up audience interest Seneca Crane, the Gamemaker, announces that two tributes will be crowned victors if they are from the same District. Katniss finds Peeta mortally wounded and camouflaged by the river, and she fakes a romantic connection in order to gain sponsors and save Peeta’s life with medicine the sponsors send. The remaining tributes slowly kill each other until Katniss is forced to kill the last tribute, Cato. Suddenly, Crane makes another announcement, this time repealing his previous rule change. Katniss and Peeta decide to commit suicide together rather than attempt to kill each other, but just as they are lifting the poison berries to their lips, they are whisked away and crowned victors.

Catching Fire, the second book in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, begins with the complicated life Katniss leads once back home in District 12 after winning the 74th Annual Hunger Games. Her relationships with Gale, her best friend, and Peeta, her pretend lover, are strained, but her family is not starving for the first time in recent years. However, President Snow sees her attempted suicide and subsequent rise to glory as an act of revolution and fears the effects of disquiet among the people of the districts. The 75th Hunger Games, called the Quarter Quell, demands that tributes be chosen from the existing pool of victors in each district, so Katniss and Peeta enter the arena once again.

Unknown to Katniss, she is the symbol of a widespread rebellion against the Capitol, and her allies among the victor-tributes have plans to rescue Katniss and Peeta from the arena. This book ends with her escape from the Quarter Quell, and her arrival at District 13. The joy of her rescue quickly turns to horror when she realizes that the Capitol has captured Peeta. Katniss does not fully comprehend her value as the face of the rebellion at this moment.

Mockingjay, the final part of the trilogy, depicts first Katniss's struggle to accept her role as the Mockingjay, a symbol for the members of the rebellion to rally behind, and then her attempt to save Peeta and overthrow the Capitol. The trauma of her second round in the arena during the Quarter Quell and subsequent separation from Peeta took a toll on her physical and mental health, and even the mended relationships between Katniss and her sister, mother, and Gale suffer in the backlash. Katniss becomes a figurehead never intended to see front-line battle, but a strike on the Capitol turns into an ideal opportunity to reach the center and overthrow President Snow, and she recovers enough to enter the battle with a small band of fighters to protect and support her.

Katniss and her team brave the cunningly placed traps and chaos of the Capitol, their numbers slowly decreasing. At the city center, she is preparing to finish the mission when she sees Prim with a band of other medical trainees land in the Capitol to aid the wounded. Almost immediately, airborne bombs explode and kill Prim. Katniss's devastation manifests as a withdrawal from her mental faculties more severe than her depression during Peeta's previous capture. While she recovers, Coin, the leader of the rebel movement, plans another Hunger Games, this time using children from the Capitol leaders as contestants.

Katniss discovers Coin's plan, and she outwardly agrees yet secretly plots against the rebel commander. Katniss is given the opportunity to shoot President Snow, already dying and imprisoned, but she shoots Coin instead. She is imprisoned for a few days, but Peeta and Haymitch plead insanity and negotiate her release. Katniss and Peeta are exiled to District 12 where they marry and have children, but dreams of the arena and the rebellion haunt her forever.

McKinley's novels provide standard lady heroes to whom I will compare Collins's protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. All three women follow different paths in vastly different worlds, yet they manage to stay relatable to the readers because they take these journeys to find themselves and their places in society. McKinley and Collins create stories that cannot be called realistic, but they manage to use these alternate realities to describe the struggles that young women face in today's society. In the next chapter, I examine the heroic characteristics these three women have in common in an attempt to determine if Katniss Everdeen is indeed the next generation of the lady hero.

Chapter III: Family and Appearance

The process of overcoming an unfavorable childhood is one of Campbell's requirements for a hero. In the broader picture of self-discovery, the ability to move beyond financial struggles, poor parental examples, and strained relationships with the general public represents an acknowledgment of the factors that shaped the hero during his formative years and the refusal to be trapped by those negatives. Leaving familiarity, even dysfunctional familiarity, is necessary for the hero to separate himself from the factors that have defined him for his entire life so that he can realize that his past does not define him. Later in his journey, "after the long period of obscurity, his true character is revealed" (Campbell 282), and the mistreatment, hopelessness, and helplessness that he experienced early in life rounds out the strength and pride he gains through his heroic journey. Campbell emphasizes a sense of displacement and rejection from the majority of society. This rejection facilitates the hero's self-discovery, which ultimately leads to a breakthrough for his community as a whole. The hero journeys of Aerin, Harry, and Katniss all adhere to this formula, as this chapter demonstrates.

Family Life

In McKinley's Damar novels, both Harry and Aerin have adequate childhoods from the perspective that they never experience desperate need, but neither of them have parents who are active in their lives and provide a model of behavior. In *The Blue Sword*, Harry Crewe's father and mother die before the beginning of the tale, and her military brother is responsible for looking after her. The book's narrator informs us that her mother indulged her when she was young and did not make her learn "womanly"

behavior until her brother left for school, when she “dragged [Harry] into the house, mostly by the ears or the nape of the neck, and beg[a]n the long difficult process of reforming her into something resembling a young lady” (*Blue Sword* 5). Even with the new curriculum, Harry and her mother spent most days outdoors, “to inspire themselves,” and Harry “learned to love books, particularly adventure novels where the hero rode a beautiful horse and ran all the villains through with his silver sword, but her embroidery was never above passable” (5). After her mother’s death, she took over the housekeeping, proving that she could rise to the occasion should a need ever present itself, but her father’s death thrusts Harry’s wellbeing onto her brother, Richard, and he takes her to the military base where he is stationed so that she can stay with a family he has befriended. Harry’s lack of parental guidance and support is emphasized by McKinley’s choice to only provide memories as descriptions of her parents. Harry’s lack of acceptance of her role as a woman in Damarian society can be connected to her mother’s lax treatment of Harry’s domestic education and subsequent death. Harry must overcome her feelings of displacement and find her place as a woman in her heroic journey.

Harry’s lack of feminine influence and education separates her from her peers and lessens her marriageability. In McKinley’s Damar, since a woman’s worth is determined by the social standing of her family, which Harry has very little of, and her marriageability, which is almost nonexistent, Harry is pushed to the outskirts of society. Etiquette, not logic, demands that Harry be placed under the care of her closest male relative after her father dies. She is quite literally taken from Home, her birthplace, and brought to the outskirts of civilization. Her physical isolation now mirrors her social standing.

Aerin of *The Hero and the Crown* has never known her mother because she died soon after giving birth. The rumors she has heard throughout her life only foster a sense of rejection based on her mother's supposed disappointment that she was not a boy. Aerin's mother was the king's second wife, and her Northern background made most of the Damarians wary of her and, by extension, Aerin. Aerin's father, the king of Damar, does not pay much attention to her until she is a teenager, and by this point, Aerin wants more responsibility than her father will give her, creating tension in their relationship because she refuses to obey him but still accomplishes a great deed, forcing him to both respect and punish her.

Furthermore, both Harry and Aerin are rejected by the majority of their respective households. Richard, Harry's brother, is the sibling who fulfills societal expectations, and he tries to make Harry fit into a young lady's mold that goes against her true nature. Although Harry loves Richard and wants to make him proud, she never tries to deny herself in her attempts to make him happy. Ideally, she would get married to a well-off young man, removing herself from Richard's direct care, but, barring that, Richard hopes that she will behave herself and make friends in her new living situation. The unfamiliar territory provides some entertainment for Harry for a short time, but despite befriending the young ladies of the house, she soon becomes very bored. From her appearance to her preferred activities, she sets herself apart from her host family. Although she does not experience any hostile activity, she doesn't fit in, either. She dresses herself every morning, making the servants think she "was certainly a little eccentric" and that "she might try a little harder to adapt to so pleasant an existence" (*Blue Sword 2*). Although Harry knows that some of her actions place her slightly outside the norm, she sees

dressing herself and being “first to the breakfast table” as a compromise between the expectations of the house and her knowledge that, given her way, “[s]he might have screamed [. . .] and run off toward the mountain” (*Blue Sword 2*). She does not make enemies, but she never truly belongs.

Although Aerin is the daughter of the king, her mother’s status as second wife means that Aerin will not inherit the throne, displacing her within her own household. She is royalty, but she will never rule and, therefore, has no real purpose within the castle. Rumors about Aerin’s birth have circulated around the castle for her entire life, and she knows that her mother died after realizing that Aerin was not a boy. Aerin’s deep-seated sense of rejection by her mother permeates her interactions with her royal family and impacts her self-esteem. Her cousin, Galanna, hates Aerin because she is of higher rank than Galanna, and she and Aerin play mean-spirited tricks on each other. Magical power is a major marker of the royal family, and Aerin doesn’t show her powers until much later than usual, giving her already battered self-esteem another blow. Each of these factors places some distance between Aerin and the rest of the household, but she chooses to isolate herself even further, only spending time with Teka, her maid, and Talat, her horse.

The major cause of Aerin’s and Harry’s strained household relationships is their refusal to conform to the expected role of a woman in upper class Damarian society. Campbell does not address this kind of woman in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In her article “The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion,” Ann M. M. Childs states, “The protagonists [of young adult dystopian fiction] are not just battling their governments but also ideas of who and what they are based in stereotypes” (199).

She is talking about young adult dystopian fiction, but the same principle can be applied to McKinley's lady heroes. Childs claims that dystopias "set up oppressive governments using aspects of female stereotypes to control their populations" (198). By replacing "governments" with "families," one can see that the struggle against family expectations of women is revealed as an important piece of the background of the lady hero that Campbell does not address.

By contrast, Katniss in Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy faces extreme poverty and almost complete parental absence. Her father died in a tragic but not uncommon mining accident a few years before the series begins, and her mother slipped into a deep depression, unable to work and apathetic to her family's imminent starvation. Katniss's relationship with her father when he was still alive provides the basis for her success in the series. He taught her to hunt, illegally, and to make her own weapons. He taught her to sing, a major theme in the series, and how to recognize safe plants in the forest. Katniss draws on all of these skills in the Games as well as in her daily life in District 12.

Katniss takes charge of finding food for her mother and sister, Prim, after her father's death. Understandably, her relationship with her mother is strained even after her mother recovers and starts to contribute to the household. In the second and third books of the series, Katniss's mother becomes a source of emotional strength and stability, but by then, Katniss has filled the role of caretaker for so long that her mother does not have a real place as an authority figure. Katniss takes a roundabout journey to finding her identity as a woman that Aerin and Harry do not experience as intensely as Katniss does. As Rodney M. DeaVault points out in his article "The Masks of Femininity: Perceptions of the Feminine in *The Hunger Games* and *Podkayne of Mars*," "[t]he female characters

in Katniss's home district are largely dependent, nurturing, and emotional. Katniss is the only female character who remains unconfined within the domestic space" (191). Katniss rejects "the conventionally feminine role of motherhood, which [she] view[s] as a form of societal enslavement" (192). Her extremely negative view of her mother and women in general changes over the course of the series, but this initial dismissal of any vulnerability makes Katniss an outsider in her own home. To become a true lady hero, Katniss must learn to accept herself as a woman at some point in her hero's journey.

Social Isolation

Isolation from their peers characterizes these women, and the few friendships they cultivate remain at surface level due to the profound innate difference they feel within themselves. Anna Altmann points out that "Aerin [in McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown*] is a marginal figure alienated from the world around her, outside the normal pattern. This is often the hero's starting place" (146). This is also true for Harry and Katniss.

Childs claims that "[t]he female dystopia's protagonist cannot have successful rebellion, deep female friendship, and heterosexual love—doing so prevents the hopelessness and warning of the dystopia from coming through. One of these three things must fail, and it will be the female friendship" because of the cultural thought process "that devalues females based on stereotypes" (199). McKinley's Damar books are not dystopias, but the lack of female friendships can be explained by Childs's reasons. The lady heroes have to fight against what the socially acceptable woman acknowledges as daily life, making friendship with one of these women unlikely.

As Childs suggests, Harry's and Aerin's lack of close friends seems to be McKinley's way of separating them from the cultural stereotypes of the women around them. For Harry, any intense ties at Home could cause her to leave her hero's journey incomplete. Harry meets two girls her age at the base, and they get along fairly well. The girls are not overly silly or judgmental, but they do not love the desert that surrounds them like Harry does. Harry has no interest in marriage, unlike her friends, and she would much rather be riding horses than dancing or flirting. She meets Jack, an older officer, and they share a love for the desert, but his age, gender, and military position automatically prevent them from becoming too close.

Aerin finds a friend in her servant, "Teka, maid and nurse, maker of possets and sewer of patches, scolder and comforter and friend, who saw nothing handsome in a well-balanced sword and who always wore long full skirts and aprons" (*Hero and the Crown* 19). Teka raised Aerin, and they love each other, but Teka does not understand or actively support Aerin's need for adventure. Tor, her father's successor, befriended Aerin when she was a child, but he sees the grown-up Aerin as more than a friend. Their relationship gives Aerin resources to hone her skills as a dragon killer, and Tor encourages her to disregard the people who reject her in the castle.

The annual Hunger Games ensure that two people in Katniss's age group in her District leave and most likely will not come back, preventing any real connection between her and her peers. Katniss does not have many friends, but she has always been close to Gale, her hunting partner, best friend, and potential romantic interest. However, her departure for the Games and pseudo-romance with Peeta all but destroys the hope of a romance between her and Gale in the first book, but they remain friends until the last

book of the trilogy. Aside from Gale, Katniss has only a few people she considers herself even remotely friendly toward. As school children, Peeta rescues her from starvation by purposefully burning some bread at his father's bakery and then throwing it out to Katniss while she sat in the rain, too weak to get home. This interaction does not qualify as friendship to Katniss, but it does connect her and Peeta and foreshadows their future interactions during the Games.

One of the major relationships in the series that showcases Katniss's feminine instincts is her relationship with twelve-year-old tribute Rue. While the argument can be made that Katniss is essentially a man in a woman's body, Lem and Hassel point out that "although she feels like a fierce protector when she takes on Rue as an ally, Katniss also feels the force of her own loneliness [. . .] Katniss is simultaneously connected, emotionally available, even while she plots her offense [against the rest of the tributes]" (123). Her relationship with her sister Prim is very similar to her relationship with Rue, and their relationship is more like mother-daughter than friends or siblings. Katniss shoulders the responsibility of Prim's welfare to the extent of volunteering to go into the arena for her when Prim's name is drawn at the Reaping. In contrast, she trusts Gale to take care of her family in her absence, suggesting an acknowledged equality that she does not have with Prim. Her motherly treatment of Prim and Rue seems to contradict the hard, unemotional Katniss, who fights to the death in the Games. The emotional connection she cultivates in the no-win circumstances of the Games reveals the femininity Katniss tries so hard to hide. This femininity is essential for a lady hero, who not only completes great physical achievements, but also exhibits her distinctly womanly attributes proudly.

After she is chosen to be a tribute in the Hunger Games, Katniss gains new parental figures, Effie Trinket and Haymitch Abernathy. Effie is responsible for making sure Katniss and Peeta are as attractive and prepared as possible in order to provide the most entertainment for the Capitol during the Games. Similar to Katniss's mother's apathy during the years after Katniss's father's death, at the beginning, Effie does not really care about Katniss at first, only wanting Katniss or Peeta to win so that her assigned district will be famous, therefore her own life will improve. She feeds, clothes, and encourages Katniss, just like Katniss always wanted her own mother to act, but Effie's ability to detach from Katniss as a human being mirrors Katniss's mother's detachment from reality. As the series progresses, Katniss learns to value Effie for her knowledge of Capitol politics, and Effie begins to create a real friendship with Katniss. Instead of seeing Katniss's life and death as career opportunities, Effie values Katniss's life because she likes who Katniss is as a person.

Physical Appearance

Another similar characteristic McKinley's ladies share is an unusual appearance . The physical changes all three women undergo parallel the changes in their self-esteem and the tasks they face during their quest. Aerin has red hair, which makes her unique in her nation, but her traditionally beautiful cousin Galanna has black hair. Instead of embracing her singular appearance, Aerin allows Galanna to dictate her opinion of beauty and, therefore, of herself. Teka compares Aerin to her mother, saying, "She was no beauty, but she. . . caught the eye. You do too" (*Hero and the Crown* 17). During the course of the novel, Aerin's appearance changes. After the Black Dragon burns her face

and arm, Aerin's hair is darker and her scars, instead of disfiguring her, provide visual interest. She previously has very long hair, but after the dragon, her hair stays about shoulder length. She also grows into gracefulness as she gains self-confidence and stops worrying about her inadequacies.

In her story, Harry is described as "taller than all the women, taller than most of the men" (*The Blue Sword* 6) in her country, and there "was too much strength in [her] face for beauty and in the long bones of the body for beauty" (38). Harry is tall and has golden eyes, but the other women of the house are short with dark hair and eyes. While she is in the Hills, she is surrounded by men until she reaches the *laprun* trials, where the women are "smaller than the Outlanders, and dark of skin and hair" (*The Blue Sword* 38). Her physical appearance catches her kidnapper and eventual lover Corlath's eye, but some of the men at the base like her too, even though she thinks that none of them notice her. During her stay in the desert, she learns to fight and use her body as an asset, and her feelings of isolation decrease, despite her unique appearance in a foreign culture.

In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss never really thinks about her appearance aside from practicality. Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassell describe Katniss as "a female character who balances traditionally masculine qualities such as athleticism, independence, self-sufficiency, and a penchant for violence with traditionally feminine qualities such as idealized physical female beauty and vulnerability" (118). Her mother and sister are blonde and blue-eyed, but Katniss has dark hair and eyes. In her community, her coloring is common, but in her family and among the other contestants in the Games, she stands out. As a hunter, Katniss tries to blend in with her surroundings so that she can sneak up on big prey, but in the Games, she calls attention to herself several times in order to obtain

gifts from sponsors. In her article “Costuming the Resistance: The Female Spectacle of Rebellion,” Amy Montz points out that “[a]s Katniss becomes a Capitol favorite in the Games, she does so as the District 12 girl who saved her sister and as Peeta’s conflicted lover; most importantly, she does so as the silly, sparkling girl aligned with fire. [...] she gives the audience exactly what it wants and thus exactly what she needs to survive the Games” (Montz 143). By hyper-sexualizing her appearance and her feelings for Peeta, she manipulates the audience into sympathizing with her circumstance, and even the staunchest Capitol supporters begin to question the barbaric Games that would separate two lovers. The Capitol’s obsession with appearance disgusts Katniss, but she has to play by their rules for survival, and she manages to do so successfully. In her article “Of Queer Necessity: Panem’s Hunger Games and Gender Games,” Jennifer Mitchell states that the Capitol’s “process of superficial feminization that Katniss undergoes obviously affects her exterior, but also magnifies her unsettled internal sense of self” (134). As Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel discuss in their article “‘Killer’ Katniss and ‘Lover Boy’ Peeta: Suzanne Collins’s Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading,” Katniss “embodies traditionally masculine characteristics—in her role within her family, her behavior, and in her adherence to patriarchal expectations regarding masculinity” (121). She eventually learns to accept and capitalize on her femininity, but her initial discomfort is understandable when placed in context with her positions as breadwinner and protector in her family.

Aerin and Harry exhibit the basic characters of a hero that Campbell describes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. They grew up with little parental involvement and lived on the margins of high society in Damar. Both women felt isolated and alone at

home. They felt they could not connect with girls their own age or family members. Their appearances made them noticeable, but their already peripheral social standing made the strangeness of their appearance another socially limiting factor instead of an interesting way to draw new people in. Katniss also grew up on the margins of society, but instead of being part of the upper class like Harry and Aerin, she faced the possibility of starvation every day. After her father's death, she lost all parental involvement in her life. Her appearance separates her further from her family and sets her apart in the Hunger Games. Therefore, it can be argued that Collins manages to create a character who fulfills these basic hero characteristics established by McKinley's lady heroes in an edgy and modern fashion.

Chapter IV: The Lady Hero's Journey

The definition of a lady hero must encompass her actions as a world-changer.

Campbell's hero's journey formula includes a series of phases and encounters that can be applied to virtually all hero tales, albeit with minor tweaks. The hero's home, as discussed in the previous chapter, provides the necessary impetus for the journey, and "from the umbilical spot the hero departs to realize his destiny. His adult deeds pour creative power into the world" (Campbell 289). Campbell states that "[t]he place of the hero's birth [. . .] is the mid-point or navel of the world. Just as ripples go out from an underwater spring, so the forms of the universe expand in circles from the source" (287). In other words, the hero must leave home in order to save it and himself. Campbell suggests that "[t]he mythological hero is the champion not of things become but of things becoming" (289). The quest gives the hero opportunities to grow into his abilities, and this transformation must occur for the hero to be successful over the ultimate enemy. The lady hero accomplishes the same phases of the journey or quest as fully as the male hero does, as this chapter will demonstrate, using McKinley's lady heroes as examples and analyzing Collins's lady hero to see if she also fits the criteria.

Departure

The first phase of the hero's journey or quest is called "Departure" in Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This phase starts with the Call to Adventure, when "[a] blunder—apparently the merest chance—reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (42). Personal discontentment with the current situation is not enough to force the hero from

his familiar surroundings. An invitation has to be presented to him in some form or fashion by a “figure that appears suddenly as guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the biography” (Campbell 46). Political unrest, danger of a loved one, or some kind of magical threat draws the hero from his home to a new place with a completely different culture.

For the lady hero, leaving home may have roots in a lack of interest in domesticity or defying the authority of men. Facing tangible enemies can only happen after she allows herself to make her own decisions. Supernatural aid comes to the hero from “a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass” (Campbell 57). This figure serves as a mentor for the hero as he begins his journey. The lady hero often has a mentor to teach her how to be herself in a patriarchal society as well as a mentor for her physical feats of strength.

Departing from the idea that the hero chooses to go on the quest, McKinley makes Harry Crewe a helpless victim of her Call to Adventure. Despite longing for adventure, Harry does not ever reach out to take it for herself. Corlath, king of the elusive Hillpeople, organizes her abduction and takes her deep into the Hills of Damar. Although her quest was not initiated by choice, her ability to quickly adapt to a foreign situation and her reluctance to return home show her acceptance of the quest. Her search for meaning in the boredom of the domestic routine and even her childhood at Home contrasts sharply with the challenges she faces with the Hillpeople. Although she does not choose to go with Corlath, she does choose to stay with him and his people after he kidnaps her. Her feelings of kinship with the Hillpeople give her a reason to choose them

over her Homelander friends and brother. Although her kidnapping may seem to remove any agency that she might have had, the full effect of Corlath's dominance cannot be drawn from this one example. In the beginning, Corlath's *kelar* sets him above her in the power hierarchy. He uses his magic to force Harry to submit to his will at the beginning of the book, but she finds her own power during the course of the novel and stands her ground against Corlath in the end.

Aerin's quest begins in her home, deviating almost immediately from Campbell's formula, yet her tale is the most similar of the three discussed in this study to the traditional hero story. Training her war-horse Talat and perfecting the fire-repellant ointment, *kenet*, are essential pieces of her quest because they allow her to "serve her people as dragonkiller" and therefore "[find] her own route of initiation into a meaningful role in society" (Altmann 146). She accomplishes both alone, without the knowledge or permission of her father, a feat that would be considered normal and even emotionally healthy if Aerin had been a man. Since she is a woman, her independence is seen as defiance, and the ensuing fight for self-esteem and autonomy in her own home is more meaningful because she is at odds with her loving father.

Aerin's mentors in the castle are Teka, her maid, and Tor, her cousin. Teka loves Aerin, but she does not support her dragon-fighting, and Tor confuses himself with his changing feelings toward Aerin. Both characters accept that Aerin is different than her peers, and they show her the possibilities she could choose for her life. If she follows Teka's advice, she will learn to be a true lady and have to give up her more masculine hobbies. If she depends on Tor too much, she will never become a self-sufficient woman.

Although she ultimately chooses to reject both paths, Tor and Teka provide the clarity she needs to see her life in the castle for what it truly is.

In Collins's *Hunger Games*, the Capitol unwittingly issued Katniss Everdeen's invitation for a world-changing quest when Effie Trinket called Katniss's sister's name at the Reaping. This moment marks the turning point from a difficult but private life in District 12 to a dangerous opportunity to publicly rebel against the Capitol and President Snow. Katniss saves her sister's life with the words "I volunteer" (*The Hunger Games* 22), but in doing so she blindly falls into the public eye without any real concept of how her actions will be perceived and interpreted. She does not comprehend the scope of her quest until much later in her story.

In the same way that Corlath tries to manipulate Harry, Katniss deals with the expectations of male figures in her journey. Her mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, provides some comic relief to the intense and graphic story line with his drunken escapades, but he becomes a valuable ally in and out of the Games. His ability to connect to Katniss and draw out what the audience and sponsors need to see before and during the Games is the key to Katniss's victory. In addition to Haymitch, the mentor Katniss loves to hate, her stylist, Cinna, provides support and advice throughout the series. While Haymitch focuses on her success in the Games and the rebellion, Cinna allows her to be vulnerable and express her fears. He is valuable to Katniss because he does not demand anything of her during a time when Peeta expects her to love him, Haymitch manipulates her into behaving a certain way for the cameras, and her family depends on her to survive. While Katniss does perform the role of love-struck teenager in accordance with Haymitch's suggestions during the first Hunger Games, she is much less malleable during subsequent

confrontations. She realizes that Haymitch cannot look after her interests as fully as she herself can. The lady hero cannot trust anyone else to make life-changing decisions for her. She must direct her own destiny, just as Campbell's male hero must. Katniss transforms from allowing herself to be manipulated for the greater good to choosing for herself how she can best serve her people.

The next two steps in the first phase of the hero's journey are Crossing the First Threshold and The Belly of the Whale. After the hero receives the Call to Adventure, he or she must leave "the limits of [their] present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger" (Campbell 64). At this boundary between known and unknown, the hero faces "the powers that watch at the boundary [. . .]; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades" (67-8). Unlike the familiar conflict of the home world, the threshold conflict gives clear demarcation between the hero's past and future. After the initial confrontation, "[t]he hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died" (74). Campbell concludes that the "passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation [. . .] But [. . .] instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again" (77). This rebirth ends the Call to Adventure phase as the hero changes from the person who existed in a small corner of the world to the person who accepts and responds to different facets of the new world.

Harry crosses the threshold into a new world when Corlath kidnaps her and takes her into the desert. Her first dinner with Corlath and his men opens her eyes to the magic she carries within herself. The transient nature of the Hillpeople's existence translates

into specialized furniture and portable homes. These revelations thrust Harry into a new world, but instead of collapsing without the crutches of familiarity, Harry thrives. Her success in navigating a new and dangerous way of life without the constant supervision of a lover takes her out from under Campbell's imagination of a woman in a hero tale.

For Aerin, the threshold is harder to determine, unlike Campbell's assertion that the threshold should distinctly separate two very different worlds. Certainly her first dragon kill opens her eyes to the challenges of that profession instead of focusing on the glory; however, the moment of separation from her former life and becoming available to participate in an adventure occurs when she eats the surka leaves after an argument with Galanna. During the resulting debilitating illness, she secludes herself because her body cannot withstand any physical activity and her eyesight is severely limited, forcing her to relearn how to participate and receive the world around her as she recovers. This illness can be seen as the traditional frailty of women; however, McKinley uses this frailty as an opportunity for Aerin to reinvent herself. Her slow recovery provides time for her to find Talat and figure out the *kenet* recipe alone, and in the process she learns to accept herself. These skills make the rest of her quest possible. McKinley uses decidedly domestic skills to equip Aerin for her trials. Cooking is generally considered a woman's task, but Aerin participation in this womanly skill is what ultimately allows her to fight dragons unscathed.

In *The Hunger Games*, after the Reaping, Katniss is torn from her home and taken across the country to prepare for the Hunger Games. During the trip and training, she observes the luxuries of the corrupt Capitol. She interacts with the other tributes, which exposes her to the different cultures of the other districts. The exposure to the other

tributes during the days before the Games allows Katniss to gauge her probability of surviving. She chooses to go into the competition without allies, staying true to her independent nature despite the negative public reception from this choice. Her preference for isolation and dislike of drawing attention to herself separates her from the other female tributes who overtly use their sexuality to gain allies and protection. Katniss eventually succumbs to the pressure to use her womanhood to gain sponsors, but only when Peeta suffers a mortal wound. Campbell sees sexuality as one of the only womanly attributes that a woman can utilize in a quest, but Katniss refuses to rely on her gender for success until she does not have another choice.

Initiation

The second phase in the hero's journey begins with The Road of Trials, where "[o]nce having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 81). The hero does the legwork of his transformation during this period. Campbell states:

The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land. (90)

He faces foes of many kinds, both the servants of his greatest enemy as well as "the tyrant," himself.

Campbell refers to the hero's greatest enemy as "the tyrant" because "[the tyrant] turns to his own advantage the authority of his position" (289). The importance of identifying the true tyrant proves to be difficult in the lady hero's story. Campbell describes the tyrant as "proud [. . .] because he thinks of his strength as his own; thus he is in the clown role, as a mistaker of shadow for substance; it is his destiny to be tricked" (289). The relationship between the two echoes the hero's former self and transformed self. For example, Campbell states:

The mythological hero, reappearing from the darkness that is the source of the shapes of the day, brings a knowledge of the secret of the tyrant's doom. With a gesture as simple as the pressing of a button, he annihilates the impressive configuration. The hero-deed is a contiguous shattering of the crystallizations of the moment. The cycle rolls: mythology focuses on the growing point. Transformation, fluidity, not stubborn ponderosity, is the characteristic of the living God. The great figure of the moment exists only to be broken, cut into chunks, and scattered abroad. Briefly: the ogre-tyrant is the champion of the prodigious fact, the hero the champion of creative life. (289-90)

The tyrant and the hero share similarities, but the hero has learned to embrace change and create life, while the tyrant accepts the status quo and tries to profit from it. The Road of Trials ends with the defeat of the tyrant.

For the lady hero, the Road of Trials includes acts of physical strength and bravery, but her trials also include the struggle for autonomy and position. Keeling and Sprague question the lady hero's ability to be both "'dragon-sayers,' literally taming

dragons through communicating with and physically and emotionally nurturing infant dragons” (14) and, in addition, “to take on the role of the traditional ‘dragon-slayer’ and demonstrate strength through physical power as well as mental cunning” (13).

McKinley’s lady hero’s complete various acts of strength that can be categorized as masculine in nature, for example Aerin kills actual dragons and Harry fights using a sword; however, Aerin also builds a relationship based on equality and love with Tor, the heir to the throne, and Harry single-handedly cultivates trust between the Homelanders and the Damarians. Both “dragon-sayer” and “dragon-slayer” moments make up the lady hero’s Road of Trials.

Harry faces different kinds of trials than do Aerin or Katniss. Harry fights for understanding and acceptance into Corlath’s band of travelers. As she trains, she gains the strength and confidence that Katniss and Aerin build with small battle victories. She wins the *laprun* trials, signifying her status as the best swordsman in the Hills second only to Corlath. McKinley deliberately showcases Harry’s victories in Corlath’s presence because even though Harry and Corlath share the Northerners as a common enemy, the major conflict in the novel is between Harry and Corlath. They are fighting for Harry’s willpower.

In hero stories, the tyrant is usually very distinct, for example the leader of an evil group or the thief that steals an important object. Harry’s status as a lady hero places her in a unique position to face major adversity within her circle of friends, namely Corlath. While Thurra may have been the tyrant of the story if Harry had been a man, Corlath claims that position when he forces her to choose between submission to his illogical wishes and her own intuition and personal knowledge. After her victory at the *laprun*

trials, she disagrees with Corlath's strategy for fighting the Northerners. He does not take her suggestions about the Homelander's involvement and the necessity of a small band at a narrow pass in the mountains, so she leaves and travels to the military base to warn her friends and gather allies. She has the confidence in herself to use her *kelar* power to bring a mountain down onto the Northern leader, Thurra, defeating the Northern army, and bringing legitimacy to her position against Corlath. This disagreement with Corlath cements her sense of self and separates her from his influence.

Aerin's quest seems to take place in stages. She begins by using the skills she learned while she was ill to kill small dragons, considered to be dangerous pests, without her father's knowledge. Although he lets her continue to fight these dragons, her father denies her request to fight with the army on a real mission, and Aerin uses his absence to attempt to kill Maur, the Black Dragon. She barely survives, but she does kill Maur and make it home to recover. As in Harry's case, Aerin's defiance of a male authority figure grants her autonomy. Her father, although lenient, held all the power until she openly defied him. After that moment, despite his efforts to take control and keep her safe, Aerin made her own decisions without needing his permission.

Katniss faces her Road of Trials across three books, while Harry's and Aerin's stories are contained in one book each. Therefore, each of Katniss's books follows a story arc that holds a miniature quest, and the series links these mini quests into a cohesive lady hero's journey. For example, the Road of Trials for the first book begins with the interview before the Games begin and continues until Peeta and Katniss defeat the tyrant by almost committing suicide in order to escape the corrupt Capitol. However, in the perspective of the full series, the Road of Trials begins at the same spot and ends with a

surprising twist when Katniss kill Coin, the leader of the rebellion, instead of President Snow. Altmann suggests that “the hero’s quest is a spiral rather than a straight line” (146), and Katniss’s journey makes more sense with this pattern in mind than with Campbell’s formula.

Katniss defeats the hierarchy of power in District 12 because she is willing to do whatever it takes to keep her sister and mother alive, including hunting illegally and trading with district officials. The second book enforces the idea that the tyrant, the person to blame for the horrors of the Games and mistreatment of the Districts, is President Snow, and Katniss faces every conflict in the first and second book with this perspective. In *Mockingjay*, Katniss’s perspective changes after her sister dies in an explosion planned by Coin, and Coin thus takes on the role of Tyrant that Katniss in her role of Hero must defeat. Katniss faces physical conflict with ease and experience, but being torn from her family, losing Rue, figuring out her complex relationships with Gale and Peeta, rebuilding a relationship with her mother, and coping with the temporary loss of Peeta and the death of her sister all prove to be Katniss’s real struggles on her Road of Trials.

After the lady hero kills the tyrant, the reward she sought becomes a reality. According to Mains, “[T]he female hero, after undertaking a journey towards identity no less difficult than that of her male counterpart, realizes both a sense of her own power within the community and a loving relationship in which both are equal partners” (24). For Harry, the reward is equality with Corlath that leads to marriage, safety for the Homelander and Hillpeople, and the beginning of a friendship between the two groups. Aerin’s reward is the Hero’s Crown, which ensures prosperity for the country when it is

worn by the king, full knowledge and use of her magical power, marriage to Tor, and immortality with Luthie. Katniss won freedom from an oppressive government and a life with Peeta and her children.

Return

The final phase of the Campbell's hero's journey is the Return, and the first step is the Refusal of the Return. Campbell states:

The full round, the norm of the monomyth, require the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds. But the responsibility has been frequently refused.

(167)

Of course, the hero is not a hero unless he brings the treasure back to his people for their benefit. Campbell connects the hero's reluctance to return to his home to the hero's doubt that "the message of realization could be communicated" (167) to people who have not experienced the victory for themselves. After he delivers the "ultimate boon" (Campbell 148), the hero has the Freedom to Live as "the conscious vehicle of the terrible, wonderful Law, whether as butcher, jockey, or king" (207). The hero journey's from a place of isolation, through an unknown land with many dangers, past the fallen tyrant, and into the harmony that the tyrant was keeping from him. He returns to his nation to spread that harmony, and he may accomplish that in whatever way he sees fit. The lady hero faces the same struggle to come back to an old life after experiencing a

transformative journey. Her return often looks like a marriage into a position of political power. Campbell does make a concession for the female hero, saying:

[W]hen the adventurer, in this context, is not a youth but a maid, she is the one who, by her qualities, her beauty, or her yearning, is fit to become the consort of an immortal. Then the heavenly husband descends to her and conducts her to his bed—*whether she will or no*. And if she has shunned him, the scales fall from her eyes; if she has sought him, her desire finds its peace.” (99 emphasis is my own)

On this point, I vehemently disagree with Campbell. He removes all agency and individuality from the woman and disregards any transformation that she may have experienced during her journey. Since self-realization, transformation, and enlightenment are the purposes of the hero's journey, Campbell severely limits the female hero by undermining her choices. Although Campbell did not have a great number of lady heroes to reference, he did have examples he could have pulled from in order to create a female hero definition that acknowledges the woman's free will. Alba Quiñones Endicott makes the point that “[t]he traditional assumption is that girls experience menses as their rite of passage into womanhood and find males who have passed the test of manhood to take care of them. This choice will make their lives complete and give them meaning” (42). She goes on to clarify that this assumption is being over turned, and “a number of authors have written about girls becoming aware of an independent self, separate from that of their fathers or boyfriends” (42). Although the lady hero may return to marry her lover, she enters a relationship of equality and choice, not servitude and force. This is demonstrated in McKinley's and Collins' novels.

The lady hero's "quest for a love that does not require the denial of selfhood is nearly impossible" (Mains 28), unlike Campbell's assumption that the hero will be rewarded with the ideal woman to marry. McKinley manages to tell Aerin and Harry's love stories by giving them a believable progression of first finding their own identities, then agreeing to love another person. Harry chooses to marry Corlath and continue her life with the Hillpeople. She proves that she is a match for him with sword, *kelar*, and courage. Aerin has the unusual condition of both mortality and immortality in one life. As part of her treatment for the injuries she suffered during her fight with Maur, Aerin drinks from the Lake of Dreams and becomes part human, part goddess. She returns to Damar to deliver the Hero's Crown and marry Tor, the king of Damar. Aerin accomplishes a feat that Tor cannot when she defeats her evil uncle and saves her nation.

Katniss chooses to marry Peeta and start a family, a clear departure from her views on family and children at the beginning of the series. Katniss and Peeta experience horrible events together, and they both see value in the other person's responses to these events. Katniss proves that she can have emotional and heartfelt reactions, and Peeta proves that he is strong enough to stand beside Katniss.

Harry and Aerin, two of McKinley's "girls who do things," complete an expanded hero's journey. Not only do they complete the steps in Campbell's journey, they also contend with the issues of finding a place in a male-dominated society and finding an equal to love. As a modern female protagonist, Katniss follows in their footsteps, and although her battles are outwardly very different—no dragons or magic—she fights against an oppressive system as an underdog and finds love in the process. Each woman

brings back hope to her people, and then she chooses how she wants to spend her time and with whom she wants to spend it.

Chapter V: Conclusion

For young adults, the demand for books starring strong female characters that appeal to both boys and girls has grown substantially in the last fifty years. As women have gained increasing equality in politics and the workplace, the traditionally passive female characters cannot fulfill the new expectations society has for the ideal woman. Robin McKinley helped to fill this void with her books about “girls who do things” which she started writing in the late 1970s. Sometimes the pendulum swings too far from ultra-feminine to ultra-masculine in the search for the believable strong woman. Anna Altmann questions whether McKinley’s female heroes are simply “heroes who are only nominally women [. . . that] leaves the reader with [. . .] a male figure dressed up as a woman” (144). This question sparked my interest in comparing McKinley’s lady heroes, two of my favorite characters, to a more contemporary example of a strong leading lady in literature, Katniss Everdeen.

By examining Joseph Campbell’s classic definition of a hero and modifying it into the definition of a lady hero to address the issues that women face, this study can answer Altmann’s query. McKinley’s female protagonists are two of the first true lady heroes to appear on the scene of young adult fantasy fiction. McKinley’s influence on this genre can be seen in the explosion of young adult literature featuring anti-passive girls, for example Patricia McKillip’s Riddle-Master trilogy, Tamora Pierce’s Song of the Goddess series, Veronica Roth’s Divergent trilogy, and Marie Lu’s Legend trilogy, to name a few.

Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy, another series that finds its roots in McKinley’s ground-breaking work, presents a very different female protagonist. Katniss

is emotionally detached, hardened by a terrible living situation. She is the stand-in for her late father, forced to fill the role of provider and protector after his death. Nevertheless, using the definition of a lady hero derived from Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and feminist and literary critics such as Anna Altmann, Christine Mains, Fiona Tolhurst, and Alba Quiñones Endicott, I determined that Katniss is also a lady hero. She exhibits the basic characteristics of Campbell's generic hero such as a less-than-ideal family background, isolation from her peers, and striking physical features, and she completes the Departure, Initiation, and Return phases detailed in Campbell's hero's journey. In addition, she struggles to obtain and maintain her personal identity and individualism in a male-dominated society while still making emotional connections with Haymitch, Rue, Peeta, Gale, and her family.

Attempting to change the gender of Campbell's hero provided insight into his definition's limitations of women. Campbell places women in specific roles in his formula for the hero's journey, such as the Sacred Goddess and the Temptress. The overall message seems to be that men have more versatility as characters because they can choose their fates. Obviously, Campbell does not state explicitly that women are incapable of making meaningful choices, but the subconscious message that women must submit in a male-dominated culture is evidenced by his lack of any women who actually complete the full hero's journey. Today, his half-hearted claims that his hero's journey can be complete by both men and women demands some revision. Although the specific trials in a lady hero's quest may look different than a male hero's quest, she can still undergo personal transformation in order to gain a reward that will benefit her people.

My definition of a lady hero can be applied to many other works in young adult and even children's fantasy fiction. The recent popularity of dystopian series for young adults often feature female protagonists, such as Tris Prior in the *Divergent* trilogy and June Iparis in the *Legend* trilogy. Both of these series end with a twist that would be interesting to analyze with the lady hero definition. Shannon Hale's fairytale retellings, for example *The Goose Girl*, present the protagonist with far more agency than the original folk tale, introducing a kind of hybrid between my lady hero and Luthi's fairytale hero definitions. Juliet Marillier's *Sevenwaters* series features female characters who are more traditionally feminine than Katniss, Aerin, and Harry combined, yet they still manage to complete enormously important quests with far-reaching consequences. Kristin Cashore's *Graceling Realm* novels are reminiscent of McKinley's *Damar* novels and Pierce's *Tortall* books, but her leading ladies are slightly edgier. Cashore plays with power structure, giving her characters a more obviously political agenda.

These are just a few examples of the numerous novels that feature female protagonists on some kind of quest. In her Newbery acceptance speech in 1985, McKinley says:

I wished desperately for books like *Hero* when I was young: books that didn't require me to be untrue to my gender if I wished to fantasize about having my sort of adventures, not about wearing long, trailing dresses and casting languorous looks into pools with rose petals floating in them as the setting sun glimmers through my translucent white fingers and I think about my lover who is off somewhere having interesting adventures.

This desire inspired her own very popular lady heroes, and a whole generation of girls who no longer have to wonder where to find a girl they can relate to in literature. Both McKinley and Collins manage to tell fantastical stories with believable protagonists who can connect with young girl readers despite the marked differences between 21st-century Western culture and Damar and Panem. Katniss, Harry, and Aerin embark on journeys of self-discovery and hope for their homelands. Harry's acceptance of another culture leads to her acceptance of herself. Aerin learns to see the truth of others, and she grows into a self-confident woman. Katniss survives the unimaginable and still opens herself to life and love. The reader celebrates their victories and mourns their losses, and these lady heroes stand as proof that struggles through hardship yield the personal and meaningful reward of finding one's place in the world.

Works Cited and Consulted

Primary:

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008. Print.

---. *Catching Fire*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2009. Print.

---. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2010. Print.

McKinley, Robin. *The Blue Sword*. New York: Penguin Group, 1982. Print.

---. *The Hero and the Crown*. New York: Penguin Group, 1984. Print.

Secondary:

Altmann, Anna E. "Welding Brass Tits on the Armor: An Examination of the Quest Metaphor in Robin McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown*." *Children's Literature in Education* 23.3 (1992): 143-56. Print.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd ed. Novato, California: New World Library, 2008. Print.

Childs, Ann M. M. "The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion." *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*. Eds. Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014. 187-202. Print.

Devault, Rodney. "The Masks of Femininity: Perceptions of the Feminine in *The Hunger Games* and *Podkayne of Mars*." *Of Bread, Blood and the Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Ed. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. London: McFarland and Company, 2012. 190-98. Print.

Endicott, Alba. "Females Also Come of Age." *The English Journal* 81.4 (1992): 42-47. Print.

- Keeling, Kara, and Marsha Sprague. "Dragon-Slayer vs. Dragon-Sayer: Reimagining the Female Fantasy Heroine." *The ALAN Review* 36.3 (2009): 13-17. Print.
- Lem, Ellyn, and Holly Hassel. "'Killer' Katniss and 'Lover Boy' Peeta: Suzanne Collins's Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading." *Of Bread, Blood and the Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Ed. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. London: McFarland and Company, 2012. 118-27. Print.
- Lüthi, Max. *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*. Trans. Jon Erickson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. Print.
- Mains, Christine. "Having It All: the Female Hero's Quest for Love and Power in Patricia McKillip's Riddle-Master Trilogy." *Extrapolation* 46.1 (2005): 23-35. Web.
- McKinley, Robin. "Newbery Medal Acceptance Speech, 1985." *Robinmckinley.com*. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.
- Mitchell, Jennifer. "Of Queer Necessity: Panem's Hunger Games as Gender Games." *Of Bread, Blood and the Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Ed. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. London: McFarland and Company, 2012. 128-37. Print.
- Montz, Amy. "Costuming the Resistance: The Female Spectacle of Rebellion." *Of Bread, Blood and the Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Ed. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. London: McFarland and Company, 2012. 139-47. Print.
- Nicholson, Sarah. "The Problem of Woman as Hero in the Work of Joseph Campbell." *Feminist Theology* 19.2 (2011): 182-93. Print.

- Parramore, Lynn Stuart. "Heroine with a Thousand Faces: The Rise of the Female Savior." *Alternet*. 8 Apr. 2012. Web. 2 Feb. 2015.
- Perry, Evelyn. *Girl Reader, Woman Writer*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2011. Print.
- Pharr, Mary. "From the Boy Who Lived to the Girl Who Learned: Harry Potter and Katniss Everdeen." *Of Bread, Blood and the Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Ed. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. London: McFarland and Company, 2012. 219-28. Print.
- "Robin McKinley." *Something about the Author*. Vol. 229. Detroit: Gale, 2011. 123-129.
- Rosenbaum, Judy. Rev. of *Robin Mckinley: Girl Reader, Woman Writer* by Evelyn M. Perry. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36.3 (2011): 353-55. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.
- Sanders, Lynn Moss. "Girls Who Do Things: The Protagonists of Robin McKinley's Fantasy Fiction." *The ALAN Review* 24.1 (1996): 38-42. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.
- Strohmer, Shaun. "Suzanne Collins." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Lawrence J. Trudeau. 355. Detroit: Gale, 2014. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 10 June 2015.
- "Suzanne Collins." *Bio*. A&E Television Networks, 2015. Web. 12 Aug. 2014.
- Tolhurst, Fiona. "Helping Girls to Be Heroic?: Some Recent Arthurian Fiction for Young Adults." *Arthuriana* 22.3 (2012):69-90. Web.
- Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997. Print.