# TRAUMA IN YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIA:

# PURPOSE AND POTENTIAL

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

Drew University in partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree,

Doctor of Letters

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Madison, New Jersey

May 2018

ABSTRACT

Trauma in Young Adult Dystopia: Purpose and Potential

Doctor of Letters Dissertation by

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The Caspersen School of Graduate Studies
Drew University May 2018

Following the work of Eric Tribunella, who argues that American children's literature uses the traumatization of characters to show how these characters become mature adults, I show how young adult dystopian fiction likewise portrays trauma as necessary to character growth. The protagonists' sacrifice and loss of innocence is necessary to create a democratic society. By engrossing readers in the trauma that the characters undergo, readers learn to be more sympathetic to people and situations different from them, and in turn to engage themselves in democratic change. I also show how educators can utilize these texts to guide students through the reading of dystopian fiction and promote the development of empathy, fostering a focus on the common good rather than individual good.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to every survivor of trauma. We made it. Keep going.

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**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Sandra and Walter for pushing me to greater depths of understanding and exploration.

More thanks than words can convey to Dr. Elizabeth Kimball who is the very definition of mentor in every way.

Thanks to Tim for the endless cheerleading and Samara for the endless empathizing, this never would have finished without either one of you.

Special thanks to Dana, no one finds joy the way that you do, thanks for constantly reminding me how.

Thanks to my family, all of you, Lichtmans and Myers' for your endless love and support.

Most of all, thank you to my husband Max for your unending support, compassion, love, all those meals you shoved in my face when I forgot to eat, all the times you fed the cats when I was writing, and your absolute joy in what I do which makes me move forward.

## Preface

On February 14, 2018, as I was doing edits on this dissertation, a teenage gunman killed seventeen people and wounded fourteen others at the Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. After ten days of news coverage, those details are burned into my brain. Within days of this tragedy (an event which was so incredibly publicized and filmed that it felt eerily as if we as consumers of media were watching the killings as members of the Capitol), many of the students of Stoneman began to protest America's gun laws. They formed a group called Never Again MSD, have organized a march on Washington in March, and lead rallies for better gun control, all within ten days of the shooting. Whether or not you agree with their goals, these students survived trauma, and became activists because of it. In some ways, we can consider the very climate of America's current culture to be traumatizing to teenagers. They have drills in schools to learn how to deal with active shooters; many live in cities where poverty and violence are part of their daily life; and they have a strong presence on the internet, where verbal abuse and harassment run rampant.

How does this relate to trauma in literature? Reading literature about trauma can help today's youth form better responses to trauma, more empathetic responses that focus on the concept of a common good, but there don't seem to be any psychological studies focused on that currently. What I can say is that today's students seem to be more active, along the lines of the student protests of the 60s and 70s, while the popularity of dystopian young adult literature has soared. While I cannot formally link them, I can however see numerous references to dystopias in tweets when students talk about fighting back; I see things like "1984 wasn't supposed to be a guidebook" on Facebook from younger family members. In fact, if you search the Never Again twitter, you find references to *The Hunger Games*. A tweet from @JenAnsbach reads, "I'm not sure why people are so surprised that the students are

rising up—we've been feeding them a steady diet of dystopian literature showing teens leading the charge for years. We have told teen girls they are empowered. What, you thought it was fiction? It was preparation." These dystopian trilogies are a reference for today's teenagers to explain their own culture and why they became activists. They are making connections to literature without scholars or scientists directly researching it or putting it into studies.

This instinct to protest so quickly after the tragedy shows how resilient trauma survivors can be and what they can accomplish. At the very end of this, people have the capacity to choose how they react to trauma and a lot of that has to do with what and how they've been exposed to it before. As younger generations grow up and emulate the responses they have seen in teenagers today, we have an obligation to give the best tools to become active on their own behalf, which means that teaching empathy becomes a way to guide our students toward resilience and active participation in their democratic society.

## Introduction

The final social impact of the popular series *The Hunger Games* is hard to gauge right now as its influence is still being felt amongst young adults. It's one of the bestselling series of all time and spawned a movie series that has some of the highest grossing female fronted action films of all time. Countless young adults have latched onto the story of Katniss, as well as the stories of other young adult dystopias, such as *Divergent* and *Uglies*. Each of these series engages trauma and sacrifice as core themes, both valuable and necessary aspects of young adult literature, and their popularity suggests that the trauma constructed by the authors resonates with young readers, and therefore warrants further critical consideration. In this dissertation, I use narrative and trauma theory to argue that the construction of trauma through the development of the protagonists helps the young reader mature. The very act of reading about trauma in fiction can create more empathetic readers. At the end of this dissertation, I will show why young adult fiction that incorporates trauma should be taught to teenagers.

Trauma studies have mostly been focused on Holocaust literature, but the same theory can be applied to young adult dystopias as well. In one of the foundational texts of trauma theory, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," Cathy Caruth argues that "in its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (181). We see this form of trauma in the experiences of the protagonists of *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and *Uglies* trilogies, making them particularly relevant examples of how trauma theory can be applied to young adult fiction. Caruth's definition has been developed by many scholars since its publication in the nineties, although

her trauma theory originated in psychoanalysis (Balaev 1). Because fictional characters created by an author cannot be psychoanalyzed, current trauma theory has moved away from such a rigid exploration through only psychoanalytic theory, as Michelle Balaev asserts, "A single conceptualization of trauma in literature will likely never fit the multiple and often contradictory depictions of trauma in literature because texts cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory, and society" (8). Representations of trauma in literature reflect a wide range of experiences including those of the young adult. Laurie Vickroy, emphasizing Balaev's concept of trauma in literature, speaks directly about fiction that portrays trauma and how it "incorporates varied responses and survival behaviors within the characterization of survivors" (130). In this dissertation, I adopt a method suggested by Vickroy of analyzing the construction of characters via the trauma they suffer, which she explains "has a range of causes and effects" (131). Her analysis "moves away from a focus on internalized isolated psychic elements found in the traditional trauma mode and toward an alternative trauma model that considers the interaction of social and behavioral constructs associated with trauma" (Vickroy 131). In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, trauma is not constructed from one single narrative, but from a series of traumatic representations, which will be examined through the social and behavioral constructions within the text, echoing Vickroy. By using narrative theory to read trauma through the lens of the character, I use both narrative and trauma theory without needing to treat the characters as real people, avoiding the psychoanalytic problem.

Eric Tribunella in his book *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature*, argues that trauma in young adult literature "matures" the young adult reader (xiv) as it "induce[s] maturation" in the characters (xxii). Tribunella's conditions of maturity gained by trauma guide my research. He introduces these seven stipulations of

maturity, seen below, "Adults can in fact be adults without demonstrating some or any of these qualities, but a *mature* adult embodies most or all of them… the narrative of traumatic loss is used to induce maturation along these lines for both child protagonists and readers" (Tribunella xxii). Tribunella is not arguing that we should actively traumatize children and young adults as a way to "induce" them into maturity. What he is arguing is that the stipulations of this type of achieved adulthood require conformation to societal norms as well as the sacrifice of one's self. His traits are useful in examining this type of maturity plot, as I come to call it. I adopt these traits of a matured character as a framework to analyze the characters in these three trilogies, focusing first in depth on Katniss. His characteristics include seven stipulations:

> [1] Mature adults are sober, or what we might call serious. They are not tossed to and fro by emotional volatility. They can do without, and they do not complain when they are required to do so…
>
> [2] Mature adults are responsible. This involves exhibiting good judgment, demonstrating organizational skills, and appearing generally competent to manage one's affairs… Being responsible sometimes involves being responsible for others…
>
> [3] Mature adults are knowing. This is in contrast to what is commonly meant by the "innocence" of children…[Which is] largely their ignorance, usually enforced…Children are supposed to be ignorant of matters related to sex and sexuality, death, extreme forms of violence and brutality, the drudgeries of daily life, and the extent to which other people and the world are actually deeply antagonistic to one's own interests and well-being. Mature adults…are supposed to be aware of all of these things, although not so keenly that they are overwhelmed or debilitated…

> [4] Mature adults are experienced… Mature adults have done things and know how to do them. They experienced the world and life, especially the difficulties and unpleasantness associated with both… they can fend for themselves. They have also done difficult things or survived difficult circumstances, and their demeanor when encountering new or unfamiliar situations reflects this experience.
>
> [5] Mature adults are also law-abiding… [Which] involves recognizing the individual and common good of observing laws and customs. It involves being ethical, and it connotes being upstanding and moral… Being law-abiding signals this devotion to community order and submission to the way of things…
>
> [6] Mature adults are hard working… Ideally, their work is physically strenuous, though sometimes intellectual work can be experienced or represented as physically strenuous as well. The key dimensions of hard work are time and effort. Mature, hard-working adults expend both conspicuously.
>
> [7] Mature adults are heteronormatively gendered. One of the key things a child must grow up into is a man or woman, so to be a mature adult means to identify unambiguously as one or the other and to enact clearly conventional manhood or womanhood… (Tribunella xxi-xxii)

This set of seven characteristics of mature characters acts as guideposts in establishing what I will henceforth refer to as the maturity plot. Using these aspects of sacrifice and loss with the development of the young adult characters leads them to an adulthood. These traits can be compared to the narratives of the heroines of the three chosen trilogies. One of these traits is problematic because rebellion is the purpose and goal of these dystopias, therefore "law-abiding" does not apply to these characters. As each heroine is subject to a dystopian

government, their morality comes from defying the law, not abiding by it. My analysis will still look at the quality of each character being ethical and upstanding.

I will begin with an in-depth analysis of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. I will start by examining how the novels of *The Hunger Games* create and promote the concepts of sacrifice and trauma, including how Katniss departs from Tribunella's definition of maturity due to extensive trauma and then reverts to it again in the end. From there I will analyze how this maturity plot plays out in the *Divergent* and *Uglies* trilogy, showing how the *Uglies* trilogy achieves Tribunella's definition of maturity, but then moves beyond it into a more empowering type of maturity, while *Divergent* does not manage to achieve the maturity plot, let alone move into another type of maturity. Beyond just holding the characters to Tribunella's traits, I will also evaluate each society the protagonist resides in that which changes based on her actions, in order to show how the sacrifice of the female protagonist is necessary to societal maturation as well. These books teach their readers that sacrifice and loss of innocence is necessary in a society in order for citizens to become more aware of and focused on the idea of sacrificing for the common good. Finally, I will explore why this theme of sacrifice should be taught to young adults in both high school and college. This exploration will also show how different types of maturity can be expressed and used in teaching young readers about trauma literature.

Tribunella refers to the type of maturity he is talking about as "melancholic" maturity. While he admits that there are other types of maturity as well as other ways for characters to achieve it, his definition serves as a starting point for analyzing these traits within science fiction dystopias and how these traits are used to portray trauma. Not to mention, melancholic maturity specifically applies to maturity gained under such trauma; trauma being synonymous in this case with loss. Tribunella explains

> To conceive of the melancholic as weighted or slowed down mirrors notions of the mature adult as calm and contemplative, having been rid of the exuberance and joy of youth. What I call melancholic maturation is the process of loving and losing objects, which effects the incorporation of qualities belonging to those objects and thus the transformation of the one who loses them into a melancholic adult… To describe mature adulthood as characterized by melancholia is not to say that a mature adult cannot express happiness or mirth or feel contentment or pleasure… However, the mature adult demonstrates a restraint and thoughtfulness that tempers joy and liveliness. It is to be, like Atticus [Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird*], preoccupied with important, complicated, and unhappy things. Validation of maturity clearly comes with a price, although as we saw with Jody [from *The Yearling*], it also comes with a payoff, either in the privileges of social validation or the survival of the self, the family, or the nation. (Tribunella xxv)

While this explanation gives us a good idea of the traditional melancholic maturation (primarily of male protagonists) that Tribunella is specifically illustrating, two of the female protagonists we are looking at fail to achieve a payoff and the third only finds comfort in her own power moving beyond the maturity plot. However, all three become the sacrifice or loss needed to push a melancholic maturation of their society, which does see a payoff from their trauma. The idea that there is a social benefit from Tribunella's definition of maturity also holds true for the three trilogies I examine, which is why his depiction works as a starting place for analyzing the type of maturity achieved.

Tribunella wraps up his book by writing about the purpose of melancholic maturation in culture, not just in literature, and how we use literature to create melancholic maturity within our society. He concludes

> Ultimately, I claim that the experience of melancholia is a fundamental condition of what is considered maturity in modern American culture. Rather than merely the signs of a mood disorder that debilitates the ill, the low-grade symptoms of melancholia are in fact what characterized the mature, sober, and responsible adult. To achieve this effect, melancholia must be induced, and the history of American children's and young adult literature both records and enacts this mass inducement of the melancholic condition… Understanding the processes by which American culture seeks to produce mature adult citizens helps us to realize the costs associated with those processes, and while not necessarily alleviating the pain or necessity of undergoing melancholic maturation, studying this phenomenon might provide some solace for those who've experienced it and some insight into those who resist. (Tribunella 134)

Tribunella's ultimate claim is that melancholic maturity is a constant aspect of United States literature and United States culture. His idea that we've been using this device of loss as a way to induce maturity is what I am focused on exploring. In his claim, he states that melancholic maturity can happen through the exposure to literature that embodies it, thus helping the reader attain maturity through the experiences of the character. I concur that the current contemporary young adult dystopias interpolate melancholic maturity to mature their readers, but I contend that they also interpolate melancholic maturity as a means by which society can change through the traumatization of its young adults, thus suggesting that change is possible through activism or fighting back against inequality. I also suggest that "melancholic maturity" is not necessarily the most beneficial maturity for a character to attain, instead an elevation of melancholic maturity into a form of resilient maturity means the character ends up in a better place.

Pointedly, Tribunella sees this maturity in terms of masculinity, but not as something that occurs only in male characters specifically. Since the protagonists of the three trilogies are all female but are compared to Tribunella's melancholic, masculinity-based maturity, I want to emphasize his observations of it in both female and male characters. He explains

> Some of this might seem like a way of describing manhood, but Ma Baxter [mother character in The Yearling] demonstrates these qualities of mature adulthood, as does, for instance, Marmee in Alcott's Little Women. Both women manifest a seriousness or air of gravity; both certainly are responsible, knowing, and experienced; and both are clearly hard working, law-abiding, and heteronormatively gendered. These examples indicate that the qualities I have listed are not only prescribed for or enacted by men. (Tribunella xxxiii)

Tribunella recognizes that the qualities he lists in character are primarily conforming to masculine standards, but also asserts that this type of maturity can be achieved by female characters, because United States society seems to evaluate maturity based on masculine traits, rather than feminine ones. He explains further:

> In cultural contexts in which an impression is given concerning the mutual exclusivity of masculinity and femininity, it is masculinity that is coded as looking like mature adulthood, while those men and women who failed to enact masculinity, or who enact conventional femininity, are left to be patronized, infantilized, or otherwise dismissed as silly, dependent, less confident and, indeed, less emotionally *mature*… Since masculinity looks similar to maturity, and maturity is produced by and requires strict discipline, femininity can then be imagined or constructed as undisciplined and therefore easier, less effortful, or less costly. Of course, this puts women in particular in a bit of a bind, since they rather than men, are required to

> perform of femininity more distinctly, while that performance is largely opposed to what counts as maturity. (Tribunella xxiii)

Tribunella doesn't outline what "performing femininity" might look like, but it is not on his list of traits, therefore making each protagonist achieving a masculine based maturity, a maturity our culture values where the feminine maturity is not valued or held to the same achievable traits. Katniss, Tally, and Tris exhibit the maturity needed to be considered culturally mature in the U.S. However, this also raises the question of a reader's appropriate responses to achieving maturity in a society that abuses its citizens. The examination of how trauma affects the young citizens of a country can directly affect how a young adult functions within their community as an adult. With Tribunella's assertion that these traits tend to be found in a more masculine character, it seems that social change is only created within dystopias when the protagonist achieves masculine traits without actually being male. This would imply that the reader is being taught that they need to exhibit masculine traits in order to affect social change as well. I examine how female characters subvert the masculine melancholic maturity that Tribunella outlines more in chapter two, specifically in the section "The Power of the Female Protagonist."

**Defining Narrative**

Besides the frameworks of trauma literature that I describe above, I also rely on narrative theory to inform my analysis. A working definition of what narrative is comes from a foundational text in narrative theory by prominent narrative theorists James Phelan and David Rabinowitz who state:

> Our default starting point is the following skeletal definition: *Narrative is somebody telling somebody else, on some occasion, and for some purposes, that something happened to someone*

> *or something*… The focus on narrative as *purposive* means that we are interested in the ways in which the elements of any narrative (e.g. character, setting, plot structure) are shaped in the service of larger ends. The focus on narrative as *multileveled communication* means that we are interested not simply in the meaning of narrative but also in the experience of it. ("Narrative as Rhetoric" 3) (italics in original)

Narrative theory analyzes the way the text is specifically written by focusing on the choices the author made when constructing plot and character among other aspects. Specifically in young adult literature, these elements are chosen by the author in order to help the reader process and mature. In each of the three trilogies, I examine how the characters develop, how they are traumatized, and what the traumatization leads to in the maturation of the character following Tribunella's framework and expanding on it. I do so in order to consider how the books affect a reader. The focus for me from this definition is on the exploration of how a fictional narrative can relate to the human experience, thus explaining the purpose of trauma in a young adult dystopia. I argue that trauma in a young adult narrative exists to help the reader make sense of the world. By engrossing readers in the trauma that the characters undergo, readers learn to be more sympathetic to people and situations different from them, and in turn to engage themselves in democratic change

Narrative theory is a way of exploring the effect the story has on the reader and how the author purposefully constructed events, characters, and plot to have an effect. A close reading of what Susan Collins has created in *The Hunger Games* allows us to trace the conclusions the story brings us to and by examining the development of the characters we can also see the intended reactions or emotions. Finally, narrative theory allows us to explore common themes in all three trilogies. Story leads to the development of readers as they analyze and process the character's journey, as David Herman tells us, "stories are accounts

of what happened to particular people—and of what it was like for them to experience what happened—in particular circumstances and with specific consequences. Narrative, in other words, is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change" ("Introduction" 3). As Herman says, narrative and story are used as a way to find meaning in our own experience, thus narratives are written with the purpose of helping to explain our own experiences through the textual exploration of similar traumas. Echoed by Martha Hixon in her article on a young adult novel by Diana Wynne Jones, Hexwood, she explains, "Story is the way we as human beings give meaning to ourselves and our relationships with others and with the universe itself. Narrative is the basis of memory, in which we store these meanings within our consciousness as individuals and as a race" (264). Story itself is part of how we grow and understand our own experiences, by using literature as part of our processing. Narrative theory uses this way of understanding texts to explore how a text is written and what is going on in it. Added to trauma theory, it provides deeper understanding of the impact of young adult fiction–and its importance.

Narrative theory has been taken on with particular interest by scholars of literature for young adults and children as Hixon explains more specifically that "young adults, and the books written for and about them, are keenly interested in growing up or in achieving autonomy through the development of an individual sense of self and how that self connects to the world in which the young adult is expected to function" (251). For her, young adult literature is devoted to helping young adults navigate through their own growth by reading about how others have grown. Based on Hixon's idea, trauma written into young adult novels must therefore have a reason behind it. Other scholars make the claim that the purpose of young adult literature and the purpose of those that write it is to show young adults how to grow, as elucidated by Roberta Trites when she says that "YA novels are

teaching adolescents how to become adults because that is their function" (80). This growth in the novel then helps the reader mature by showing them how it can be done. By using narrative theory, I examine how the narrative, and specifically the characterization, explores and draws on trauma to mature the characters. Tribunella asserts that trauma in literature is a way of exposing young adults to trauma without traumatizing them directly, "the experience of trauma for protagonists, and the vicarious experience of it for readers, is imagined as useful, and hence instructive, as a map or method for becoming a mature adult" (Tribunella xxix). Trauma is useful as a literary device to help the reader both mature and learn how to survive the trauma of growing up as well. However, when the trauma in a narrative goes beyond the maturation steps that Tribunella references, what happens then? This dissertation will take Tribunella's idea one step further and explore what excessive trauma does to maturity and its purpose for the author, as well as how we can use the effects on the reader to teach.

**Narrative Theory as a Way of Reading**

With Phelan and Rabinowicz's definition of narrative in mind, using a close reading to analyze the characterization seems like the clear path forward. The purpose of why a character is traumatized lies within what's been written by the author, not in external observation. By closely examining what the author has written, we can see how and why each heroine is traumatized and the end lesson they arrive at. As Phelan and Rabinowitz note,

> our approach assumes that texts are designed by authors (consciously or not) to affect readers in particular ways… [and] that since reader responses are ideally a consequence of those designs, they can also serve as an initial guide to (although,

since misreadings are possible, not a guarantee of) the workings of the text. ("Narrative" 5)

By examining the "workings of the text" we can see how each author has constructed their traumatized character over the narrative of three novels. The study of narrative helps us understand what the author has done to construct the character and make determinations based on these constructions. In a young adult novel, the evolution of a heroine through trauma shows us the effects of trauma on young women protagonists in order to help the readers process trauma. To that end, my reading of the three novels that comprise *The Hunger Games*, followed with a less close reading of the *Divergent* and *Uglies* trilogies has an eye toward specifically analyzing and examining the characterization of the protagonists. Herman adds to my explanation of this process when he points out that, "a fine-grained textual analysis can illuminate how narratives represent the moment-by-moment experiences of fictional minds, as well as the coloration that those experiences acquire from the characters' broader cognitive and emotional stances toward situations and events" ("Cognition" 247). The development of each character and how the events of the book change them is an important part of a narrative theory based analysis.

I examine the characters, Katniss, Tally, and Tris as they are portrayed in three novels. Each protagonist has a trilogy in which her story is told and the character matures. I understand the trilogies as complete narratives, as the character's story does not end in one book and in most cases, the reader is left with a cliffhanger about the hero that is followed up in the next book with the character's personal narrative concluding in the third book. In all of these trilogies, each character's narrative continues through all three books and concludes in the third book. Because I examine the three protagonists and their role in each story, I should point out that I have tried to avoid analyzing the characters as if they were

real people. Characters are written in a specific way for a specific purpose, even though as Phelan and Rabinowitz point out, "the art of realistic fiction consists of conveying the illusion that the characters are acting autonomously even as their actions serve the implied author's overall purpose" ("Character" 113). I speak of each character moving toward the final book in a cohesive way as if she were acting autonomously. There are necessary conditions for capturing a useful character as Maria Nikolajeva lays out,

> Among the foremost conditions that classic poetics (e.g., Aristotle or Lesing) put on literary characters, we find consistency and unity. Consistency implies that a literary character cannot have contradictory traits. Neither can characters behave in a manner incompatible with what has already been revealed about them, in description, actions, or the narrator's comments. Normally we place a higher demand for consistency on literary characters than on real people. Since children's literature is generally didactic, we place still higher demands for consistency on children's literature characters. Characters must be understood from the text alone; therefore, any radical deviation in the way a character is presented will be perceived by readers as an artistic flaw.
>
> Unity presupposes the character to be an artistic whole that is appearing to the readers as a single, complete, and structured individual, which is naturally different from real people. It also implies that none of the character's traits revealed to us are accidental, that they are all indispensable for our understanding of the character. (128)

As theorists indicate, characters are necessarily constructed to fit into a type, a format that both maintains a structure and written personality while still allowing for the fact that the character must mature and change. For example, in chapter two, I will examine the use of a

protagonist who has her memory altered between each book in the trilogy, Tally Youngblood in *Uglies*, and what that means for accepting and trusting that the character is the same construct as before. Authors must create characters that seem realistic or representative of real people while making sure the chosen traits of the character can accomplish the plot. Characters are very important in children's and young adult literature, as they tend to be what the readers latch onto the most.

Characters are used in multiple ways in a narrative, including as the focus and as a plot device, but the primary purpose of characters in these specific narratives is to embody a point or lesson the author is trying to make. Phelan and Rabinowitz explain that, "the mimetic component of character may or may not alter over the course of a narrative, but, if it does, the change will typically be tied to the thematic functions of the character and hence to the thematic purposes of the narrative" ("Character" 115). They stated this earlier in their scholarship as well, noting that "characters do resemble possible people, [but] they are artificial constructs that perform various functions in the progression, and they can function to convey the political, philosophical, or ethical issues being taken up by the narrative" (Phelan and Rabinowitz "Character" 111). In other words, the way the character reflects or represents a construct of a real person and how the character is portrayed as growing and changing through the story serves to illustrate the author's lesson or purpose. As stated above, narrative in general is used to help people learn and grow as confirmed by the Herman quote from above. To reiterate his words, "stories are accounts of what happened to particular people—and of what it was like for them to experience what happened—in particular circumstances and with specific consequences. Narrative, in other words, is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change" ("Introduction" 3). Although this quote seems to deal with characters as people, it's only because the easiest way

to refer to them is as if what we learn about them in the actual text can be read as accounts, even though they are fully constructed by the author. Literature, the stories in it and the specific narratives are used to understand the human experience and young adult literature in particular is primarily used to impart lessons, "young adults, and the books written for and about them, are keenly interested in growing up or in achieving autonomy through the development of an individual sense of self and how that self connects to the world in which the young adult is expected to function" (Hixon 251). Therefore, the young adult novels that this dissertation deals with are attempting to put forth ways for the reader to connect and relate to an idea, a way to make sense of their own experience by reading a fictional other's experience. As I have noted, in addition to helping readers develop empathy for others, reading about another's experience helps the reader process their own or gives them insight into an experience they may not have had yet. Thus, some aspect of each of these trilogies is working to help the reader understand their own experience with trauma or understand traumatic experiences very different from their own in order to mature them by giving them insight into other people's experiences.

As I explain at the beginning of this introduction, Tribunella's seven steps of maturity serves as a useful framework for analyzing the author's depiction of trauma, because the use of trauma in children's and young adult literature is used to mature the reader through the effects on the characters. Tribunella addresses this purposeful use of trauma:

> Irrevocable loss, especially of something dear, is experienced as a trauma, so American children's literature turns time and again to that which is traumatic as a way of provoking or ensuring the development of children. The striking recurrence of this pattern suggests that children's literature, and indeed American culture, relies on the contrived traumatization of children—both protagonists and readers—as a

> way of representing and promoting the process of becoming a mature adult. (Tribunella xi)

The concept of loss, death included, is something that is used in both young adult and children's literature as a way of making sure that the younger readers are affected by and aware of traumatic loss before it happens to them. Thus the protagonists of the three trilogies experience trauma and loss as part of their own growth process, although each trilogy presses the trauma beyond the trauma associated with becoming a mature adult and past that into a representation of post-traumatic stress disorder.

What this idea does not allow for is the expansive use of trauma used in dystopia and what happens to characters who are traumatized beyond maturity. Trites responds to this omission in relation to power dynamics, observing that, "although the primary purpose of the adolescent novel may appear to be a depiction of growth, growth in this genre is inevitably represented as being linked to what the adolescent has learned about power. Without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow" (Trites x). Powerlessness and trauma are intertwined in these novels and what Katniss, Tally, and Tris learn about their own power, their own helplessness, and their own losses are what truly drive the individual narratives. Each heroine experiences events of loss and powerlessness, which traumatize and affect them. As Carrie Hintz asserts, the juxtaposition of a teenager's personal issues with dystopia, "is meant to help adolescent readers cope with difficult political and social ideas within a context they can understand: their own narrative of development" (263). Presenting characters who are enduring and surviving trauma while they mature is the purpose of young adult dystopias. This idea is also noted by Amy Elliot who explains that "contemporary children's trauma literature seeks to represent unspeakable atrocities and their effects to a young audience in order to teach readers to empathize with

and respond to people (or, tragically, themselves) in traumatic situations" (180). Scholars agree that the purpose of trauma within a YA or children's narrative to educate and mature the reader. The construction of each protagonist in the chosen trilogies will show the maturation of the character through the experienced trauma.

Besides examining the character development of the protagonists, I also examine their relationships with other characters and how those depictions show the character's perception and difference in perception from the created world. Nikolajeva notes, "literary characters are normally depicted in their interaction with other characters, since our interest in fiction is primarily based on its treatment of human relationships" (110). Reading about how characters respond to other characters and the things that other characters see about the protagonists is important to the examination of how a character is constructed. For example, seeing a secondary character describe the main character as having a trait that the main character does not recognize in herself is a way of seeing how the author is portraying the character to the reader. As Robyn Warhol puts it, "we come to know a character by seeing examples of who and what she is *not* and by understanding how she is perceived by other characters, even as we attend to the attributes and functions assigned to her" (120). The reactions of other characters to the protagonist affect how we perceive a character, and this indirect understanding through the eyes of other characters increases our empathy, our conception of character as nuanced, and thereby view them as realistic.

All three protagonists share the seven traits of maturity identified by Tribunella, but they are all working toward a lesson the author has chosen to have them exemplify. Part of narrative theory on character is the examination of the traits that represent the character. As Page explains, "in itself, exploring character is a wide-ranging area in narrative theory that can employ a plethora of models and perspectives… [the most valuable would be an]

approach which traces how a character's traits are established" (193). Thus for this dissertation, I read the character's development, their traits, and their interactions with other characters. This method will allow us to analyze the purpose of each heroine. As Phelan and Rabinowitz state, "In just about every case, the progression will tie the change in character to the thematic component of the narrative" ("Character" 115). They tell us that the purpose of the narrative can be seen in an examination of the protagonist's journey. This focus will allow me to come to a conclusion about the purpose or lesson each author is conveying with their use of trauma in their trilogy, a shared purpose in portraying the traumatization of young women. In turn, this purpose can inform the teaching of YA literature and in particular the role of trauma in character development.

**Feminist Narrative Theory**

Because the three protagonists I will be discussing are all identifiable as young women, it is valuable to analyze their story through feminist narrative theory. Each author chose to make their hero female-gendered, so that it is specifically a young woman that suffers trauma through the course of the narrative. As I've already established, characters are only constructs according to many scholars, including Robyn Warhol who writes:

> For both narrative theory and feminist criticism, however, remembering that characters are not people is crucially important. Characters are marks on the page, made up of the alphabetical characters that spell out "who" they are. They have no psychology, no interiority, no subjectivity. Characters are representational effects the novelist creates in structuring the novel. (119)

However, the gender of the character is part of the author's choice and all three authors chose to make their protagonists teenage females. It is not insignificant that each character's

experience is that of a young woman experiencing trauma. Because all three stories are told from a female point of view—with *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* told directly by the girls' voices and *Uglies* told in third person narration with a focus on Tally—each narrative can be examined as a young woman's experience or the rendition of the young adult woman experience. Despite each narrative taking place within a fictional storyworld, the characters are identified as young women in our own understanding of gender roles. Page explains, "feminists would argue that the telling as well as the analysis of narratives are human activities—activities that necessarily entail gendered assumptions and practices" (189). It is impossible to distance the effect being a woman has on the text itself, and since the ideas of gender roles, the concept of being a young adult woman, must be borrowed from our current understandings of women's roles, the entire narrative is then colored by having a young woman talk about her experience being traumatized as a way of illustrating the author's lesson. The main characters being young women must somehow fulfill or aid the author in making their purpose clear. Page notes that this development, "[means] that scholars now try to ask a more diverse range of questions that take into account the shifting and localized ways in which gender might be of importance to particular narratives" (191). The examination of how the gender roles work within each trilogy is implicit in the close reading. Because the focus of the story is on young women's experiences and their ability to survive trauma, our focus becomes the female perspective. With this in mind, the knowledge that the characters are young women by our own definitions of gender roles becomes complicated, because while they seem to follow psychological conceptions of women, as we understand it, they exist in a fictional world, one where the gender roles have not necessarily been defined as different from our own. These assumed gender roles make analysis tricky,

but the mere fact that each narrator is a young woman is subject to scrutiny and will be part of the close reading.

It is also worth noting that unlike many dystopian young adult trilogies with male protagonists, each society in the trilogies does change. Dystopian trilogies with male protagonists up to this point have never ended up with the society changing positively; *The Maze Runner* trilogy for example, ends with the main protagonist finding out that he's been working for the government all along and must flee the society rather than be able to change it. Even in older dystopias that are taught in high school to young adults, like *Brave New World*, *1984*, and *Fahrenheit 451*, the society does not change; rather each protagonist must run away from society or conform to it. In all three of the trilogies analyzed here, the young women are able to become symbols for change and lead each society to change for the better. It seems significant that the young women are able to create change while young men cannot. The examination of the protagonists as young women characters, the traumatization they endure, and how each author has created these aspects of the narrative will show us the significance and impact of trauma in each series of books.

**Moving Forward**

To start, we'll look at *The Hunger Games* trilogy through both Tribunella's framework of "melancholic maturity" and the lens of narrative theory, while focusing on how these traits create the "traumatic maturity plot" that induces maturity in both the character and the society. We'll also look at how Tribunella's traits don't hold up under repeated trauma of a character and what happens to each trait, how Katniss achieves maturity and finally how she reverts in a negative way back into Tribunella's melancholic maturity. Next, we move into an analysis of how trauma literature can affect the reader and what the impact of sacrifice on a

democratic society is which will lead us into an examination of the two other trilogies, *Uglies* and *Divergent*, to see how the authors conform or diverge from this traumatic maturity plot as well as how this type of literature ties into affecting the reader. Finally, I'll give examples of how this important topic of trauma in literature can be explored in high school and collegiate teaching.

## Chapter One: Examining *The Hunger Games* Trilogy

In order to understand the role of trauma and narrative play in the development of maturity, we need to start by looking at how Tribunella's seven traits apply to *The Hunger Games* trilogy and examining the development of these traits as they form what we may call a maturity plot. Tribunella outlines the traits of serious, responsible, knowing, experienced, ethical, hard-working, and heteronormatively gendered as being essential to the development of his outlined melancholic maturity (xxi-ii). A close reading of where *The Hunger Games* trilogy demonstrates these traits as Katniss achieves maturity will provide us with a start to understanding how this development works and what potential effects it might have on the young adult readers. Tribunella also finds trauma literature, specifically children's and young adult trauma literature, to serve a necessary (and disturbing) cultural role. He claims that "childhood and children themselves are imagined as the very objects that American culture sacrifices both to generate a sense of progress and potential and to construct an adult citizen characterized by melancholia" (xxxv). It is this cultural need for loss that is of relevance as we think of Katniss and her experiences in this trilogy. In addition to revealing the aspects of maturity identified by Tribunella, the trilogy also shows the process through which those traits are eroded and altered by her continued exposure to trauma.

At the beginning of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, protagonist Katniss Everdeen has already experienced loss which means she already possesses several of the maturity traits Tribunella identifies. She has experienced the loss of a parent and the physical shutdown of the other parent, which has helped her develop the maturity she has when we first encounter her. Starting with *The Hunger Games*, continuing in *Catching Fire*, and concluding in *Mockingjay*, the trilogy allows us to trace the development and deepening of Katniss' maturity as she confronts the demands of the narrative. The entire trilogy is told in first person narration so

readers are only told Katniss' thoughts, experiences, and events from her perspective. This strategy requires readers deduce things about Katniss from the ways the author describes other characters' reactions to her as well as the things Katniss herself tells the reader.

This strategy also allows us to see first-hand – and empathize with – the damage of the repeated trauma experienced by Katniss. The main traumatic events occur in the Games, with the final trauma that sends her away from maturity and into catatonia being the death of Prim, the person she has worked from the beginning of the trilogy to save. Prim's life is generally the quest object, as explained by Nikolajeva, "A younger sibling may be the object of the protagonist's love and care, occasionally even the quest object" (122). In this sense, I would argue that keeping Prim safe is the main purpose or goal of the trilogy. Although keeping Prim safe is ultimately a quest that Katniss fails, Prim is also the sacrifice that leads Katniss to attempt to guarantee a world without children being used as battlefield fodder, whether in the Hunger Games themselves or without. This final loss prevents Katniss from being able to display maturity until her exile forces her back into Tribunella' melancholic maturity traits in the epilogue, but this sacrifice of her self forces her society to stop the Hunger Games for good and treat its citizens more ethically. Katniss is the final sacrifice or loss that forces her society to "mature" and move forward with different goals, but at the cost of her own autonomy and the removal of her ability to make choices about her future. Because of the popularity of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, it is the best known example of sacrifice achieving maturity in a dystopia.

**Tribunella's Trait of Seriousness Becomes Practicality in *The Hunger Games***

Serious or sober is the first trait listed by Eric Tribunella as being something achieved by a maturing character. Tribunella defines a character who has achieved the trait of seriousness as:

> [Characters who achieve maturity] are not tossed to and fro by emotional volatility, and they are not overly effusive. They can do without, and they do not complain when they are required to do so. They demonstrate pronounced stability and self-restraint. This is the stoicism of the mature adulthood in contrast to the rambunctiousness of children, who are thought to be loud and boisterous, but this involves more than simply a quiet calmness. Mature adults possess an air of gravity, as though they realize the importance of life or the magnitude of the moment. (xxi)

This trait is shown in Katniss almost immediately in the narrative, as she leaves to hunt before the reaping, she explains why she doesn't publicly speak out against the Capitol or government of Panem, "[In reaction to the Capitol's control] I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 7). Katniss is describing specific self-restraint and seriousness, especially rare in a girl of sixteen. Katniss has learned to exude an aura of stoicism. This stoicism is a matter of survival, as to show anger against the Capitol in District 12 would endanger her and her family. Being angry that the poor of District 12 can enter their names into the reaping extra times for more food, but the rich have enough to survive without doing so is yet another sign of the injustice suffered, but again, Katniss is stoic about it. She mentions that, "[Gale's] rages seem pointless to me, although I never say so. It's not that I don't agree with him. I do. But what good is yelling about the Capitol in the middle of the woods? It doesn't change anything. It doesn't make things fair. It doesn't fill

our stomachs" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 17). Katniss is portrayed as very practical and matter of fact. The way things are isn't fair, but she understands this and accepts it, breaking the rules by hunting only to make sure her family can survive. Katniss doesn't stand in the woods yelling about how unfair things are; she is not effusive or emotionally volatile when we begin the trilogy. In short, Katniss has already achieved the mature trait of seriousness that Tribunella attributes to adults.

We see this begin to change at the reaping when Prim is chosen for the Games and Katniss explodes forward to take her place. However, even after her outburst of emotion in volunteering, she resumes her stoicism as her sister clings to her, "'Prim, let go,' I say harshly, because this is upsetting me and I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reapings tonight, everyone will note my tears and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 28). Still serious, Katniss knows she must maintain her stoic facade in order to survive. She handles herself as an adult, accepting of her fate and restrained in her overt emotional reaction. Thus, the serious character trait shifts into a method of survival, not just a symbol of her having achieved maturity through the traumatic loss of her father and her mother's deterioration.

This means that when the trilogy begins, Katniss has already achieved maturity as Tribunella defines it in terms of her seriousness trait; however, as the trilogy continues and she is further traumatized, this trait changes and is eventually replaced by emotional volatility. Uri Margolin addresses this issue of character within literary analysis, noting that:

> For the purposes of literary analysis it is useful to group the kinds of properties a character can possess into several dimensions: physical; behavioral (action-related) and communicative; and mental, with the latter being further subdivided into perceptual, emotive, volitional, and cognitive. "Character" in the everyday sense

> refers to one segment of the mental dimension: enduring traits and dispositions to action, in a word, personality. (72)

The shift in how a character's traits are applied to events in the narrative are used to show growth; the wording and growth in the words chosen by the author are used to show, in this case, how the trauma has affected Katniss' ability to embody the trait of seriousness in the way that is required of melancholic maturity.

Katniss is also careful about how she is portrayed during the televised sections of her introduction into the first Games, but she begins to show her anger at how the Capitol treats her and the other tributes. When the Gamemakers don't pay attention to her during a display of her skills that will rank her survivability in the arena, she snaps, "Suddenly, I am furious, that with my life on the line, [the Gamemakers] don't even have the decency to pay attention to me… Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers' table" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 124). Katniss' temper gets the best of her and she cannot remain sober. This trait begins to show more and more as she learns how much the Capitol has versus how little her own District is allowed. Thus Katniss' trait of seriousness changes to become more emotional and driven by her hatred of injustice. She does begin to complain about the circumstances she is in and stops having self-restraint. She begins to react in volatile ways, rebelling against the expected behavior, but moments of seriousness still are shown, as when the first Games begin and Katniss heads into the woods to find water, "I'm about to panic when I remember the rabbit I startled earlier today. It has to drink, too. I just have to find out where" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 187). The character trait of seriousness has evolved into practicality. This shift in trait means that Katniss is no embodying Tribunella's melancholic maturity any longer; the trauma of being inside of the arena has changed her maturity from melancholic to survivor.

This practicality comes into play when she begins to think about the Games for what they are supposed to be, entertainment rather than instant death, which means they want some of the children in the arena to survive. Katniss is also aware that she is being filmed at all times and the audience's perception of her will matter to her survival:

> it has probably been difficult for the cameras to get a good shot of me. I know they must be tracking me now though… Until I work out how I want to play [overhearing Peeta working with the Careers], I'd better at least act on top of things. Not perplexed. Certainly not confused or frightened. No, I need to look one step ahead of the game. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 198)

This practicality, the knowledge that both what she does and how she appears to the viewers, will help her survive is more evidence of how she has adapted the seriousness trait to be more useful in her situation. She becomes a survivor, using emotional outbursts to manipulate the audience's perception of her. She is aware that rebellious reactions will get her killed, but outbursts of emotion will make the Gamemakers less likely to kill her, because she's providing good entertainment. Instead of showing no emotion to protect herself, she uses smaller rebellions in ways that move her beyond the seriousness character trait as Tribunella describes it and into a survivor mentality.

The most prominent of these is when she convinces Peeta to eat poison berries so that they both die, knowing that the Gamemakers must have a victor to parade around. Katniss has used the cameras on her and Peeta to her advantage by showing a relationship between them that she does not feel. When they announce that she or Peeta will have to die, again, Katniss makes a calculating decision to eat poison berries with Peeta, "Yes, they have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 418). She recognizes how to use the nature of live film

against the Capitol but doing so means she and Peeta are in danger by forcing the Gamemakers to go back on their word that only one of them can survive, a danger her trait of practicality didn't realize was a possibility. Despite Katniss staying recognizably mature, the trauma continues and she muses her decisions with hindsight, "Funny, in the arena, when I poured out those berries, I was only thinking of outsmarting the Gamemakers, not how my actions would reflect on the Capitol. But the Hunger Games are their weapon and you are not supposed to be able to defeat it" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 435). Katniss has openly defied the Capitol with her berry trick, a trick a stoic, resigned character would not have chosen.

The seriousness trait becomes survival; however, she then discovers that her survival instincts have endangered everyone she cares about:

> [President Snow] is still smiling… but his eyes, just inches from mine, are as unforgiving as a snake's. That's when I know that even though both of us would have eaten the berries, I am to blame for having the idea. I am the instigator. I'm the one to be punished. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 442)

Katniss will have to demonstrate self-restraint in order to survive. Thus this trait, despite remaining survivor in nature, changes shape again, with the character becoming very somber and realistic. She cannot be volatile or people will die. This pressure on the trait leads to emotional outbursts behind closed doors, as she cannot openly express emotions, much in the way someone in an abusive relationship cannot openly express emotion. As Vickroy explains, "Communities and societies can perpetuate the isolation felt by trauma survivors… because communities want to protect themselves from vulnerability, avoid what survivors have suffered, and prevent survivors from sharing their experience with others" (132). While this quote relates to the psychology of real communities, the literary community of Panem

echoes this avoidance and prevention. Katniss will not be allowed to be honest with her experience, because to do so would undermine the control the Capitol has over the citizens.

**The Trait of Survival Impairs Katniss in *Catching Fire***

As the narrative continues in *Catching Fire*, this trait having become survival-based in nature due to the silencing of her emotions, Katniss shows more and more of an inability to play by the Capitol's social rules, an inability to not be emotional. Despite the threats made against her family and her resolve to play along, Katniss ends up not being able to help herself. When she and Peeta tour the Districts, she cannot stop herself from saying something to District 11, the District where Rue lived, "My allotted time for speaking has come and gone, but I must say something. I owe too much. And even if I had pledged all my winnings to the families, it would not excuse my silence today" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 74). At this point, the trait of seriousness that had shifted to survival is overtaken by the trait of ethical. Katniss' need to follow her own moral code in the face of injustice overtakes her twisted seriousness trait. She cannot remain silent and stoic, nor would doing so be a sign of maturity. It is at this point that the two traits become conflated; they seem to war with each other as Katniss struggles to protect those around her, while being true to her own ethical code.

When Katniss learns that her playacting has not been enough to shield the people she loves from punishment, she is not upset. Instead, she says, "The main thing I feel is a sense of relief. That I can give up this game… That if desperate times call for desperate measures, then I am free to act as desperately as I wish" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 92). Her serious side recognizes that being stoic and surviving is no longer enough. Serious and practical are shifted, as ethical becomes the first trait that matters. As President Snow cracks down on her District, burning buildings and beating the citizens, Katniss tries to avoid

making things worse. The next Games are announced and they will send the victors of the past 74 Games back into an arena to kill each other (Collins, *Catching Fire* 208). Her reaction is not serious, but emotional, a reaction to trauma that has come around again. As Vickroy emphasizes, "The social environment influences the causes and outcomes of traumatic experience in a variety of ways. It not only forms the circumstances out of which trauma is created, but can also provide or refuse the needed support for healing" (132). In this case, the trauma she suffered in her first Games is not only being denied healing by the community, specifically the government of Panem, but Katniss is being forced back into the trauma.

Her re-traumatization in the second Games removes her ability to be practical and instead regresses her into a primarily rebellious, emotionally volatile character. As she preps for the second Games, she is angry and unable to keep her emotions in check, lashing out at people around her, even Peeta, "'What are you so angry about?' Peeta asks… "Forget it," I say with a shake of my head. "It's a lot of things… Darius. The Games. Haymitch making us team up with the others," I say" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 277). Katniss is struggling to stay calm and focused. Her trait shift from seriousness to survival has vanished and her practicality is overridden by her emotional responses. This regression of a mature trait is directly related to the re-traumatization she is experiencing. While the initial losses and trauma suffered did mature her, the continuous trauma has shifted her maturity into rebellion and emotion. When sent to perform for the Gamemakers this time, she fashions a dummy out of supplies and writes the name of the deceased previous Gamemaker on it, who was murdered for allowing the berries trick to happen (Collins, *Catching Fire* 285). Katniss even understands that she was rash but could not seem to stop herself. She wants accountability and being serious or focusing on surviving are no longer enough.

**The Shift from the Survival Trait to Resilience in *Mockingjay***

Once back in the Games, Katniss goes into survival mode until she is rescued by District 13, which is where the last book, *Mockingjay* picks up. Katniss' character traits in the last book have all changed drastically because she has been repeatedly traumatized and struggles to function. District 12 was firebombed and Katniss' home is gone. She tries to make sense of everything that has happened:

> What series of events led me to be standing in the ruins of my city? This is hard because the effects of the concussion [Johanna] gave me haven't completely subsided and my thoughts have a tendency to jumble together. Also, the drugs they use to control my pain and mood sometimes make me see things… I use a technique one of the doctors suggested. I start with the simplest things I know to be true and work toward the complicated… I must look on the verge of some kind of breakdown.. This won't do. Not when they're finally weaning me off the medication. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 4-5)

Katniss embraces a moment of seriousness here, in order to keep herself together and stay off the medication, but the trauma continually breaks in and affects how she reacts. This response is important in the portrayal of survivors, because showing the varied responses to trauma helps the reader understand that there is no one way to recover and heal. Vickroy explains that:

> Understanding responses to trauma requires examining aspects of psychological functioning within the social or cultural environment that may suppress acknowledgement of trauma. Fiction that depicts trauma incorporates varied responses and survival behaviors within the characterizations of survivors. (130)

Based on Vickroy, different responses to trauma not only illustrate the difference between survivors' reactions but show how different reactions are acceptable ways of healing or moving forward into processing because there is no normal or standard way of reacting. The difference in Katniss' ability to continue to fight, even as she struggles to get through her days in District 13, is a portrayal of resilience and emphasizes that Katniss' maturity has moved beyond the melancholic maturity described by Tribunella. Vickroy's assertion that multiple portrayals of trauma are necessary does not negate the specificity of Tribunella's traits, as his list can be depicted in different ways, including in the change of these traits to show growth. These varied responses include Katniss finding dark humor in her situation, a coping mechanism she shares with Joanna. Being "serious" as Tribunella describes it is no longer an option if Katniss wants to live. Collins is showing multiple forms of responses to trauma in both Katniss and in other characters, such as Finnick, while showing that District 13 is also repressing Katniss' ability to fully recover because she is the Mockingjay.

District 13 does have therapists and Katniss is declared "mentally disoriented" after her ordeal in the Games (Collins, *Mockingjay* 22). Despite this, Katniss is pressed into service as the Mockingjay despite them letting others who are recovering, such as Finnick, rest. The time and space allows the other characters time to heal. Finnick has been in the hospital while Katniss has been training to be the Mockingjay, a respite denied her and she recognizes how he has healed some:

> [Finnick] looks down at his legs as if noticing his outfit for the first time. Then he whips off his hospital gown, leaving him in just his underwear.. "Why? Do you find this"——he strikes a ridiculously provocative pose——"distracting?"

> I can't help laughing because it's funny, and it's extra funny because it makes Boggs look so uncomfortable, and I'm happy because Finnick actually sounds like the guy I met at the Quarter Quell. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 94)

Finnick has regained his ability to joke and is slowly coming back from his trauma, but in this moment, Katniss is being sent into battle so they can film her being the Mockingjay. Finnick has more years of trauma, but he is given the space to heal, allowing him to regain his sense of humor, but also to reach out to Katniss through humor and try to bring her positive feelings. Because Finnick is allowed this space, he is later able to help Katniss as well.

At this point, embodying the serious trait would not be mature, because the trauma requires action of Katniss, not stoicism or acceptance of her fate. As Tribunella further defines seriousness, "the mature adult demonstrates a restraint and thoughtfulness that tempers joy and liveliness" (xxv). Seriousness, a muting of joy or laughing would not allow for healing and although Katniss gets to experience this with other survivors, she herself is not allowed to break down, as seen when District 13 prepares for a bombing by having everyone go to the underground bunkers. Katniss is dismayed that she must not show emotion:

> Recent events have had little effect on Plutarch's mood. He still has a happy glow from Beetee's success on the Airtime Assault. Eyes on the forest, not on the trees…
>
> "Katniss, obviously this is a bad moment for you, what with Peeta's setback, but you need to be aware that others will be watching you."
>
> "What?" I say. I can't believe he actually just downgraded Peeta's dire circumstances to a setback.

"The other people in the bunker, they'll be taking their cue on how to react from you. If you're calm and brave, others will try to be too." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 165)

Even after all that she's been through, Katniss is not allowed to show her emotions; she is denied the ability to be anything but serious. District 13 is proving to prevent her healing just as the Capitol did, going back to Vickroy's comment on communities either helping or hindering. This inability to heal forces Katniss into worse and worse reactions, thus never returning to seriousness, instead showing resilience as a form of maturity. Maturity is achieved through resilience at this point. Irene Visser talks about this in regard to *The Whale Rider*, but the concept also can be applied to *The Hunger Games* trilogy. She notes that "resilience is a major element in the positive adaptation to traumatic events or experiences. Resilience is at present not sufficiently incorporated into trauma theory, even though…it is acknowledged in psychiatry today as a common and healthy psychic response to trauma" (Visser 124). Resilience is then regarded as a positive reaction to trauma, although it does not remove the amount of damage done by the trauma itself. Resilience is then the trait that Katniss has exhibited, the ability to move forward in opposition to the Capitol regardless of emotionally volatility or the need to survive.

The trait of seriousness that Tribunella outlines becomes resilience after repeated traumas. Katniss' ability to move forward and aid the rebellion, even though she's not given the same healing space as others, shows that resilience is a form of maturity. Resilience prevents her from becoming so damaged that she cannot keep going. This resilience also leads to Katniss finding small joys, "Prim a doctor. She couldn't even dream of it in 12. Something small and quiet, like a match being struck, lights up the gloom inside me. This is the sort of future a rebellion could bring" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 176). Katniss is able to recognize Prim's new goal to become a doctor as a direct result of the rebellion Katniss has

helped to inspire and continue to be resilient, although she still needs assistance from other survivors to move forward. Finnick's ability to heal allows him to aid Katniss in finding ways to endure:

> Finnick and I sit a long time in silence, watching the knots bloom and vanish, before I can ask, "How do you bear it?"
>
> Finnick looks at me in disbelief. "I don't, Katniss! Obviously, I don't. I drag myself out of nightmares each morning and find there's no relief in waking." Something in my expression stops him. "Better not to give in to it. It takes ten times as long to put yourself back together as it does to fall apart."
>
> Well, he must know. I take a deep breath, forcing myself back into one piece.
>
> "The more you can distract yourself, the better," he says. "First thing tomorrow, we'll get you your own rope. Until then, take mine."
>
> I spend the rest of the night on my mattress obsessively making knots (Collins, *Mockingjay* 183)

Katniss seeks out advice and activity that will enable her to endure the trauma. Finnick, having endured years of manipulations and traumas at the hands of Snow and the Capitol government, has experience and can provide a path forward, a way to cement her path as resilience. It is Finnick again, who brings her back to resilience when a mission is undertaken to rescue Peeta (and Finnick's love, Annie) from the Capitol:

> As I explain our situation, [Finnick's] initial agitation mysteriously ebbs. "Don't you see, Katniss, this will decide things. One way or the other. By the end of the day, they'll either be dead or with us. It's…it's more than we could hope for!"
>
> Well, that's a sunny view of our situation. And yet there's something calming about the idea that this torment could come to an end. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 195-6)

Once again, Finnick shows her how to control her emotional outbursts and be more mature about reactions, to see the logic in being resilient. This shift in character trait is important because it shows how important it is for trauma survivors to keep moving forward and learn to deal with their pain. Once Peeta is returned and he's been so abused and drugged that he is delusional, Katniss struggles to deal with his reactions to her, which reveal to the reader how Katniss views herself:

> It takes a long time before I get to the bottom of why I'm so upset. When I do, it's almost too mortifying to admit. All those months of taking it for granted that Peeta thought I was wonderful are over. Finally, he can see me for who I really am.
>
> Violent. Distrustful. Manipulative.. Deadly.
>
> And I hate him for it. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 271)

This quote tells the reader more about Katniss' character than just seeing how she views herself; the audience may instead see her as brave or resilient. The reader knows Katniss as strong, often scared and impulsive, but not good at manipulation or lying. As a character, the reader would not use those words to summarize Katniss, but this quote shows how the character thinks about herself, shows how little she values herself or how badly she thinks about herself and now she has assumed that Peeta used to have rose colored glasses when he looked at her, not that he's been altered to think the worst of her. It's easier for her to internalize it and blame it on the person she thinks she is, someone not important enough to be the Mockingjay. She is still unable to be completely resilient when it comes to Peeta.

However, Katniss is more functional than most, able to pass the soldier training in order to be allowed into the field for the push toward the Capitol. Because Katniss has learned resilience and survival techniques from Finnick, she is able to bring those ideas to help Johanna. Katniss brings Johanna a bundle of pine branches to remind her of home.

Katniss finds pine needles to remind Joanna of her roots, "She lifts the bundle to her nose and takes a tentative sniff. "Smells like home." Tears flood her eyes" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 298). Resilience is not just characterized by Katniss being able to go on, but to help others, tying directly into the trait of responsibility. It is this resilience that allows her to go on through the fight to the Capitol, as members of her squad die around her, but this resilience fails her when Prim is killed.

After Prim is killed, whether by Snow or Coin, the trauma overtakes her and her loss, the loss of the sibling she has protected since the beginning of the trilogy proves to be too much for Katniss and she is once again labeled "mentally disoriented" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 411). However, just as before, she is not allowed to heal, but instead is to execute Snow. She wanders the Capitol building and reflects on whether the Capitol or District 13 ordered the bombing that killed Prim, "Children are precious to 13, or so it has always seemed. Well, not me, maybe. Once I had outlived my usefulness, I was expendable. Although I think it's been a long time since I've been considered a child in this war" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 420). Not being considered a child means that Katniss has achieved maturity in the eyes of other adults and she is subject to the expectations of other adults. She is presented as feeling empty though, even her resilience taken away from her as they prepare her to shoot Snow. Katniss is suffering and is honest about it, "I can't believe how normal they've made me look on the outside when inwardly I'm such a wasteland" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 427). The death of her sister has emptied her; when she shoots Coin instead of Snow, she tries to commit suicide, but is prevented by Peeta (Collins, *Mockingjay* 435). Katniss' trial ends with her being exonerated because of shell-shock; her mental state is still labelled as disoriented and she's exiled to District 12.

The resilience that was taught to her continues on though and eventually, she begins to take care of herself again. Katniss ensured there would be no more Hunger Games and living consciously in District 12 comes back slowly, "It is the old Katniss' favorite kind of day. Early spring" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 450). She is no longer the same person, but she can recognize old enjoyable moments, which eventually shifts into her opening up and beginning to live again, to hunt, to do more than survive. The purpose of this changing trait is to show the reader that melancholic maturity is not the end of things, that even after trauma, you can be mature in other ways. Because of this, the trait of resilience is more important to healing and surviving than the trait of seriousness. However, in the epilogue, Katniss appears to be reverting back to the melancholic maturity, returning to the trait of seriousness where she can "do without, and … not complain when … required to do so" as Tribunella identifies it (xxii). She does not participate in the new government; she doesn't express an interest or even any exposition in how Panem has changed other than that the Hunger Games have been ended. By showing readers this changing trait, the author shows that achieving melancholic maturity is not the only type of maturity and resilience can be an important step in the process of maturing. However, because of Katniss' exile and the traumatic loss of Prim, she reverts back into this socially acceptable form of melancholic maturity, which is unfortunately not a great representation of resilience.

**Exploring Tribunella's Trait of Responsibility in *The Hunger Games***

Responsibility, as defined by Tribunella, means that the character can take care of herself and is viewed by others to be competent and reliable (xxi). He goes on to further define it as "being responsible sometimes involves being responsible for others, thereby applying the competencies of mature adulthood to the care or well-being of those less

capable" (xxi). Katniss displays this trait almost immediately, as her mother became unable to take care of them when Katniss' father died. As in most children's and young adult literature, the parents cannot be present if the character is to grow and Collins' decision to have Katniss' father be dead and her mother emotionally absent follows this pattern that Nikolajeva has observed. Nikolajeva asserts that:

> To initiate a physical, emotional, and spiritual growth in the character, children's authors have to remove the parents, either permanently, by death, or temporarily, in the form of physical or emotional absence… in fiction, parents seldom play any significant role in the child character's development. If they do, they have a negative role, denying the child physical and spiritual freedom and thus preventing independence and growth. (117)

In this case, Katniss is given more responsibility for her sister and mother than is typical in Panem. It also raises the interesting question for the reader of whether you can have two present parents and grow, since the absence of them seems so necessary for trauma or the cause of trauma. Katniss does not look favorably on her mother, who collapsed into depression when Katniss' father was killed in a mining accident. She muses, "I try to remember that when all I can see is the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest, I'm not the forgiving type" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 10). Katniss resents being forced to grow up before her time and resents the need to be the family caretaker. Katniss already fits the criteria of having responsible as a trait and feels that she is Prim's caretaker, which means that she naturally takes Prim's place to protect her when Prim is called for the Hunger Games. To Katniss' disbelief, "[Prim's] chances of being chosen so remote that I'd not even bothered to worry about her. Hadn't I done everything? Taken the tesserae, refused to let

her do the same?… With one sweep of my arm, I push her behind me. "I volunteer!" I gasp. "I volunteer as tribute!"" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 26). This characteristic seems as though it might be normal for siblings, but the trauma of the Hunger Games is such that even Katniss describes her action as abnormal, "Family devotion only goes so far for most people on reaping day. What I did was the radical thing" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 31). Peeta's brothers will not give up their lives for him, only Katniss is so responsible for her sister that she will take her place, showing that this trait of responsibility goes beyond just providing for her family. This follows somewhat along with traditional narrative patterns that Nikolajeva has examined, "A younger sibling may be the object of the protagonist's love and care, occasionally even the quest object" (122). Prim's safety is indeed the quest object, the focus of Katniss' goals. Katniss' own life comes secondary to her sister's.

Katniss' trait of responsibility begins to extend in the arena, as she feels responsible for Rue and eventually, Peeta. Rue is her responsibility because Rue reminds Katniss of Prim. She explains, "I can almost hear Haymitch groaning as I team up with this wispy child. But I want her. Because she's a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 244). Katniss has come into the arena alone and has promised Prim she will try to survive, but adopts Rue as a surrogate Prim to care for while they both try to get through the games. Katniss' overwhelming trait of responsibility has her take on Rue because Rue's safety is up to her. Katniss exhibits this trait as she returns to where she has left Rue after foraging:

> I turn and head back to the stream, feeling somehow worried. About Rue being killed, about Rue not being killed and the two of us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone, about leaving Prim alone back home. No, Prim has my mother and Gale

> and a baker who promised she won't go hungry. Rue has only me. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 257-8)

In the immediate moment, Katniss is responsible for Rue because she cannot save Prim. When Rue is killed, Katniss does not blame herself, as she does with later deaths. She accepts that the death of Rue is first the fault of the boy who killed her, but primarily the fault and responsibility of the Capitol, who has created the Hunger Games. Katniss is deeply affected by Rue's death, "I can't bring myself to leave her like this. Past harm, but seeming utterly defenseless. To hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 286). At this moment, the notion of an external trait of responsibility becomes a consideration, expanding Tribunella's definition of individual responsibility and family responsibility to those within a community as well. In this quote, we are also shown how this trait of responsible applies to leadership. The responsibility a government has to its people does not involve starving them or condemning their children to murder and death games in Katniss' eyes. The Capitol is not being responsible for its citizens, but the next book explores this lack of responsibility more.

Rue is killed and Katniss buries her in flowers, feeling that Rue deserves more than to just be lifted away. In return, a gift meant for Rue is given to Katniss: bread from Rue's District 11. This moment is unique in Panem culture and Katniss acknowledges the power of another District gifting her food, "For whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who's not your own" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 289). Katniss has inspired a feeling of responsibility in the people of District 11, a responsibility to thank her for the honor and protection she showed toward Rue. This is also the first time the Districts have felt beholden to each other, with a responsibility to one another instead of being pitted against each other.

When the Gamemasters announce that two tributes from the same district can both be declared winners if they are the last survivors, Katniss immediately transfers her trait of needing to be responsible for someone onto Peeta. He is severely wounded, but she stays with him, despite this violating her survival instincts and the trait of seriousness that was just examined. She's aware this may not have been the best decision, "I've made myself far more vulnerable than when I was alone. Tethered to the ground, on guard, with a very sick person to take care of. But I knew he was injured. And still I came after him" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 319). There's a chance they can both survive the games and that is all that matters to Katniss, not winning, not hunting down the other tributes, but surviving and helping others survive too, even if it seems unlikely. This causes her to attempt to go after the cure to Peeta's blood poisoning, used to entice her to the center of the arena. Peeta does not want her to go, but her trait of responsibility to him allows her ethics to drug him against his will and go after the meds. Katniss assumes responsibility for those who are seen as weaker than her, something that is shared by others and ties into her moral code, which I talk more about in the section on the trait of ethical. This aspect of the trait of responsibility that Katniss feels is shared by Thresh, who spares Katniss' life when he finds out that she tried to protect Rue:

> Conflicting emotions cross Thresh's face. He lowers the rock and points at me, almost accusingly. "Just this one time, I let you go. For the little girl. You and me, we're even then. No more owed. You understand?"
>
> I nod because I do understand. About owing. About hating it. I understand that if Thresh wins, he'll have to go back and face a district that has already broken all the rules to thank me, and he is breaking the rules to thank me, too. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 350)

Thresh has a responsibility to his district, but also to the memory of Rue, in his mind, to not kill Katniss in this moment. This idea of responsibility and owing is something that Peeta does not quite understand, "He let you go because he didn't want to owe you anything?" asks Peeta in disbelief. "Yes. I don't expect you to understand it. You've always had enough" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 356). Something about being poor and forced to barter has made Katniss embody this trait of being responsible for who she owes, a concept that Peeta doesn't necessarily understand because he's never had to owe anyone before. It is the very trauma Katniss has suffered that has made her responsible; it is a responsibility of owing those who provide you with goods and services that her government has failed to recognize. She latches onto this responsibility for Peeta and carries it with her to a toxic level in the last book, but for now, she is unwilling to let him die, so she uses deadly berries to force the Gamemakers to bring the Game to a close. At the end of the book, Haymitch alerts Katniss to the fact that the Capitol is displeased by her trick with the berries and if she doesn't play along that she was madly in love, she's putting everyone she loves in danger (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 433). This begins to alter her trait of responsible in an obsessive direction.

**The Trait of Responsibility Lays on the Capitol as Well in *Catching Fire***

The twisting of Katniss' responsibility trait becomes toxic as she feels responsible for all the death caused by the Hunger Games and the rebellion. This starts out as reasonable concern for her family because Snow has directly threatened them, making her responsible for their fates:

> How stupid I've been to think the Capitol would just ignore me once I'd returned home! Maybe I didn't know about the potential uprisings. But I knew they were angry with me. Instead of acting with the extreme caution the situation called for, what have I done? From the president's point of view, I've ignored Peeta and

> flaunted my preference for Gale's company before the whole district. And by doing so made it clear I was, in fact, mocking the Capitol. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 34)

Snow's visit brings home the truth to Katniss, that anyone she interacts with can and will be used against her. Katniss is unable to truly try to get on with her life, instead being forced to carry on with the facade required of her by Snow. She had a few weeks trying to recover from the first Games she was a part of, but then is forced to realize that she doesn't have the space to heal, because she's not safe. This responsibility for those she cares about, including Peeta, keep her helpless, but also cause her to retreat from Peeta and not be honest with him about what they are facing. Peeta and Prim become the focuses of Katniss' responsibility trait, and to a lesser extent, Gale, her mother, Haymitch, and others. Her ability to be responsible for them is shattered when she realizes that her act with Peeta has not been enough. She feels as if the burden of being a puppet has been lifted:

> The main thing I feel is a sense of relief. That I can give up this game. That the question of whether I can succeed in this venture has been answered, even if that answer is a resounding no. That if desperate times call for desperate measures, then I am free to act as desperately as I wish. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 92).

She cannot protect anyone and as such, is not responsible for those who are in danger. She may have ignited the fire, but the embers were there and all she can do now is try to get away. Her plan to escape also goes south, but her feelings of responsibility lay squarely on the shoulders of the Capitol at this point.

Peeta and Katniss both realize that the Capitol is not embodying the trait of responsibility for its own actions, that a government has a responsibility to its citizens and that the Hunger Games and the death of the children in it are deaths to be laid at their feet, not at the feet of the victors. Both Peeta and Katniss react badly to the second judging of

their skills during the second pre-Games events, but Peeta reveals to Katniss that he was much more aware of the situation than she thought:

> "Actually, I painted a picture of Rue," Peeta says. "How she looked after Katniss had covered her in flowers."
>
> There's a long pause at the table while everyone absorbs this. "And what exactly were you trying to accomplish?" Haymitch asks in a very measured voice.
>
> "I'm not sure. I just wanted to hold them accountable, if only for a moment," says Peeta. "For killing that little girl."
>
> "This is dreadful." Effie sounds like she's about to cry. "That sort of thinking…it's forbidden, Peeta. Absolutely." (Collins, *Catching Fire* 289)

Peeta recognizes that the Capitol was responsible for killing Rue, not the boy who committed the act, but the Capitol for having a place where children are made to kill other children. In this quote, the readers also see that the Capitol refuses to be responsible for its own Games. The denizens of the Capitol are not allowed to think of their own responsibility or culpability in the Games. That thinking is not permitted, making the citizens of the Capitol controlled by the government as completely as the districts. The Capitol is not responsible. Vickroy, in talking about trauma, explains that, "societies, communities, or families may want to preserve stability or be willing to sacrifice victims for other goals [by ignoring or silencing them]" (131). Trauma treated as entertainment, victors of such Games treated as heroes, is not a governmental stance that takes responsibility for its citizens' well-being. Panem sacrifices all of its citizens to its own agenda of subjugation. The Hunger Games, for Katniss, is the symbol of the Capitol's cavalier attitude toward its citizens' lives and her drive to eliminate them comes from this lack of responsibility.

**How the Trait of Responsibility Overwhelms Katniss in *Mockingjay***

The trait of feeling responsible for those she loves twists in the third book as Katniss begins to feel responsible for all the death that has occurred during the Hunger Games, as well as all the deaths that occurred through the rebellion. She vacillates between putting the blame on her and the blame on Snow. It is revealed that District 12 was bombed and it doesn't exist anymore, which puts Katniss solely in the position of feeling responsible:

> I stick to the road out of habit, but it's a bad choice, because it's full of the remains of those who tried to flee. Some were incinerated entirely. But others, probably overcome with smoke, escaped the worst of the flames and now lie reeking in various states of decomposition, carrion for the scavengers, blanketed by flies. *I killed you*, I think as I pass a pile. *And you. And you.* (Collins, *Mockingjay* 6)

Despite Katniss having recognized earlier that the government of Panem was responsible for the deaths, the obliteration of her district has pushed her back into thinking that the deaths of everyone who lived there are her fault. She cannot escape this thought. She has failed to protect people she loved, but there was never a way for her to protect everyone. This repeated trauma has twisted the trait of responsible into an overwhelming responsibility for all deaths during her tenure as a victor.

In order to combat her feeling of not being able to protect anyone, what she can do is become a symbol for the rebellion and take on the responsibility of what that means. She tells Prim about her decision, "'Tomorrow morning, I'm going to agree to be the Mockingjay," I tell [Prim]. "Because you want to or because you feel forced into it?" She asks. I laugh a little. "Both, I guess. No, I want to. I have to, if it will help the rebels defeat Snow"' (Collins, *Mockingjay* 40). Katniss' trait of responsibility has again shifted direction, this time to feeling the need to topple Snow specifically. Being the Mockingjay will make her important enough in the war and in the government to follow to have a bit of control over

what the government is responsible for in regards to its citizens, blending the idea of governmental responsibility with personal responsibility, a direct link toward showing Katniss as an activist.

This new concept of responsibility, needing to help force social change, also makes Katniss demand to be the one who gets to kill Snow personally, but this revenge responsibility is shared by Johanna:

> Suddenly, [Johanna] has my wrist in an iron grip. "You have to kill him, Katniss."
>
> "Don't worry." I resist the temptation to wrench my arm free.
>
> "Swear it. On something you care about," she hisses.
>
> "I swear it. On my life." But she doesn't let go of my arm.
>
> "On your family's life," she insists.
>
> "On my family's life," I repeat. I guess my concern for my own survival isn't compelling enough. She lets go and I rub my wrist. "Why do you think I'm going, anyway, brainless?"
>
> That makes her smile a little. "I just needed to hear it." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 298)

Katniss is not just responsible for killing Snow as revenge for herself or her district, but for the other victors who were also traumatized and abused by him. This emphasizes not only the trauma suffered by our protagonist, but those in the same situation and, as seen above, lets the reader see the different reactions to trauma through different characters, as well as how the government has created the trauma.

However, this focus on one responsibility has caused Katniss to forget about other responsibilities. Peeta has been altered by tracker jacker serum and is trying to find his way back from the delusions that were inflicted on him, something that Katniss suddenly

recognizes she feels responsible for, having ignored that responsibility because it was too overwhelming:

> Realizing with shame that my fixation with assassinating Snow has allowed me to ignore a much more difficult problem. Trying to rescue Peeta from the shadowy world the hijacking has stranded him in. I don't know how to find him, let alone lead him out. I can't even conceive of a plan (Collins, *Mockingjay* 314).

Katniss' new larger sense of responsibility leaves her unable to seek a solution to the far-too-close-to-home problem of Peeta. In this case, through the help of others, Peeta is taught to ask about what he remembers, to discover if it truly happened or not, an example of how trauma cannot be dealt with in isolation.

The act of being responsible is not just a character trait, but influences the decisions that Katniss makes as she moves forward. She has a mental list of everyone who died in the rebellion, who she personally feels are deaths that can be attributed to her, despite knowing and believing that Snow is primarily responsible. This responsibility is also a danger to her, which she recognizes:

> I feel the arena all around me. It's as if I've never left, really. Once again I'm battling not only for my own survival but for Peeta's as well. How satisfying, how entertaining would it be for Snow to have me kill him. To have Peeta's death on my conscience for whatever is left of my life. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 340).

Her recognition of how deeply she is affected by the deaths of those she feels responsible for only continues to affect her and becomes overwhelming toward the end of trilogy.

The trauma is not making her mature, the traits are not moving her toward a necessary maturity, instead the trait of responsibility cripples her, leading us to recognize again that overwhelming trauma pushes the character past melancholic maturity. Katniss

cannot wrap her mind around a concept of responsibility that lets her function, "To believe them dead is to accept I killed them. Okay, maybe not Mitchell and Boggs—they died on an actual assignment. But the others lost their lives defending me on a mission I fabricated. My plot to assassinate Snow seems so stupid now" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 378). Katniss second guesses herself and the decisions she made to fulfill her need to kill Snow, fixating on the idea that his death will end the war and the Hunger Games. When Prim dies, Katniss loses her grip on reality. The object of her quest and the person who Katniss was supposed to protect was destroyed; she has nothing to cling to except making sure that the Hunger Games cease, that there is never a war like this again. Even after preventing the Games and being released to go home, her being responsible is what haunts her and makes her unable to return to society:

> A terrible nightmare follows, where I'm lying at the bottom of a deep grave, and every dead person I know by name comes by and throws a shovel full of ashes on me. It's quite a long dream, considering the list of people, and the deeper I'm buried, the harder it is to breathe. I tried to call out, begging them to stop, but the ashes fill my mouth and nose and I can't make any sound. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 446)

While Panem has embraced the end of the Hunger Games and taken responsibility for feeding and caring for all of its citizens, Katniss' role as the Mockingjay and her murder of Coin haven't turned her responsibility into a positive or healthy trait. Katniss is damaged by her feelings of responsibility; her own health sacrificed to change her society. The trait becomes toxic, but Tribunella's definition of responsibility is picked up again by Katniss after she has children when she assumes the accepted social role of responsibility for her children out of necessity, not out of choice, which I discuss more in the "heteronormative" section.

**Tribunella's Trait of Knowing in *The Hunger Games***

Knowing is the third characteristic listed by Tribunella, although perhaps "aware" would be a better word. He defines this trait as:

> Children are supposed to be ignorant of matters related to sex and sexuality, death, extreme forms of violence and brutality, the drudgeries of daily life, and the extent to which other people and the world are actually deeply antagonist to one's own interests and well-being. Mature adults, on the other hand, are supposed to be aware of all these things, although not so keenly that they are overwhelmed or debilitated… This is another way of saying that mature adults are supposed to be 'realists' rather than 'idealists.' They are to see the world as it is rather than as it should be. (xxi)

This trait is hard to distinguish in a dystopian fiction, as the characters, even the children, are often aware of the "violence and brutality." Panem is no exception; the Hunger Games ensure that every child is very aware of the realities of death as their life is at stake once a year as soon as they hit twelve years of age and they are forced to watch the Games whether or not they've been chosen (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 22). In fact, it can be argued that Katniss' mother isn't knowing, because she becomes "overloaded and debilitated" when her husband is killed in the mines and cannot care for her children, forcing Katniss into the role of caretaker (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 32). Knowing is simply part of growing up in one of the poorer districts in Panem. However, what Katniss knows changes throughout the series and her knowledge of violence and brutality becomes more pronounced, as well as her knowledge of how the rest of Panem truly sees their position. As far as knowing about sex and sexuality, Katniss appears to be aware of where babies come from, although not interested. While I write more about this in the heteronormatively gendered section, Katniss

is not interested in procreating and her shame from kissing Peeta comes from the public nature of the cameras as opposed to a sense of shame about the kissing itself.

In the first book, it is also established that Katniss knows how to murder, although she sees it differently from Gale, "'You know how to kill.' 'Not people,' I say. 'How different can it be, really?' says Gale grimly. The awful thing is that if I can forget they're people, it will be no different at all" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 48). This assumption on Katniss' part is almost an innocence, as she doesn't yet know what the murder of a person will do to her. She is knowing, but not yet a murderer, which changes the knowledge of taking a life. Katniss has killed animals to keep her family alive, but she has not killed for fun and as the books go on, the knowledge of killing weighs on her, but relates so heavily to her own moral judgement that I've discussed it in the "ethical" section instead.

Aside from the broader concepts of "knowing" that Tribunella outlines, Katniss has a sense of what it means to owe someone, as owing a debt is more important when you have very little. We saw this aspect as responsibility in the previous section, but this applies to the trait of knowing as well. Being saved from starvation by Peeta burning bread and tossing it her becomes an overarching idea of Katniss owing Peeta her life, sometimes by saving his and sometimes by sacrificing her own. This concept of knowing what it means to owe begins in the first book when Katniss recites a memory of Peeta:

> To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed. And more than once, I have turned in the school hallway and caught his eyes trained on me, only to quickly flit away. I feel like I owe him something, and I hate owing people. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 39)

Peeta's kindness allowed her to feed her family and keep them alive, it inspired her to look to the woods for food, and it helped her to keep Prim alive. There is no true repayment for that, but that knowledge of owing Peeta does depict their relationship and Katniss' desperation to save him in later books with a clear purpose. Her trait of knowing drives her character goals. Later in the book, we see this concept again when Thresh spares Katniss' life because she cared for Rue:

> "Lucky [Thresh] didn't catch you, too," says Peeta.
>
> The memory of the feast returns full-force and I feel sick. "He did. But he let me go." Then, of course, I have to tell him. About things I've kept to myself because he was too sick to ask and I wasn't ready to relive anyway. Like the explosion and my ear and Rue's dying and the boy from District 1 and the bread. All of which leads to what happened with Thresh and how he was paying off a debt of sorts.
>
> "He let you go because he didn't want to owe you anything?" Asks Peeta in disbelief.
>
> "Yes. I don't expect you to understand it. You've always had enough. But if you've lived in the Seam, I wouldn't have to explain," I say….
>
> "It's like the bread. How I never seem to get over owing you for that," I say.
>
> "The bread? What? From when we were kids?" He says. "I think we can let that go. I mean, you just brought me back from the dead."
>
> "But you didn't know me. We had never even spoken. Besides, it's the first gift that's always the hardest to pay back. I wouldn't even have been here to do it if you hadn't helped me then" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 355-6)

Katniss' life and by extension, Prim and her mother's' lives were in danger and Peeta gave them food. He doesn't understand what he did, because he's always had enough food that burning the loaves to throw to her didn't really affect his life or his ability to eat. This

concept of owing someone who has saved you, even if they don't know it is more poignant for Katniss because she had nothing to give back and the debt seems so wide. The same concept applies with Thresh and what we were told about life in District 11 by Rue. Thresh owes Katniss for protecting someone from his district, for protecting a twelve-year-old girl that was part of his community. His district sent her bread and that means she was owed her life, at least once. This concept of owing in the midst of trauma is harder to parse out, but it has a bit to do with power. Thresh had Katniss' life in his power and he instead spared her to pay off his debt to her, life for life. This idea that power can be about reciprocation and shared knowledge of trauma is echoed in Visser who asserts that trauma creates community; the shared experiences of Thresh and Katniss, despite being in different districts unites them and gives them a common ground, creating a sense of community through shared trauma. I talk more about this shared trauma in the "ethical" section.

**Knowing as a Trait of Empathy in *Catching Fire***

This trait of knowing is illustrated in knowing how human beings work. This understanding of how to keep people safe directly opposes the knowledge of how to more efficiently kill people that is demonstrated by both the Capitol and the team of Gale and Beetee. Haymitch is someone who Katniss knows because she understands how he thinks; he serves as almost an older version of Katniss, a cautionary version of her, but also a useful version:

> Now a new kind of confidence is lighting up inside of me, because I think I finally know who Haymitch is. And I'm beginning to know who I am. And surely, two people who have caused the Capitol so much trouble can think of a way to get Peeta home alive. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 244).

Katniss knows who Haymitch is at his core and how he became a victor because she thinks like him. That knowledge can be put to the task of getting Peeta out of the second Games alive. This trait of knowing someone makes people more sympathetic to the motives and lives of others. This sympathy is then echoed when Katniss starts to understand the reactions of the Capitol to the Quarter Quell placing the old victors back in the arena. She realizes:

> I think of what Peeta said about the attendant on the train being unhappy about the victors having to fight again. About people in the Capitol not liking it. I still think all of that will be forgotten once the gong sounds, but it's something of a revelation that those in the Capitol feel anything at all about us. They certainly don't have a problem watching children murdered every year. But maybe they know too much about the victors, especially the ones who've been celebrities for ages, to forget we're human beings. It's more like watching your own friends die. More like the Games are for those of us in the districts. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 246)

Knowing someone means you care whether they live or die and the Capitol citizens are realizing for the first time that those who go into the Games are people, people they care for because they know them. Here is a very basic and clear social rule, knowing others, putting yourself in their shoes forces you to know them as other human beings. It's a version of empathy and it's one that the citizens of Panem are seeing clearly. It's not just the citizens of the Capitol seeing the victors as people they know, but the district citizens seeing the Capitol denizens not as monsters, but as people. Katniss has this compassion, but her ability to revert to survival when threatened is also a form of knowing. One that she recognizes that Peeta lacks:

> "And no one in this arena was a victor by chance." [Finnick] eyes Peeta for a moment. "Except maybe Peeta."
>
> Finnick knows then what Haymitch and I know. About Peeta. Being truly, deep-down better than the rest of us. Finnick took out that tribute from 5 without blinking an eye. And how long did I take to turn deadly?… The people in this arena weren't crowned for their compassion. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 333)

In her mind, Peeta is somehow better than Katniss because he hasn't tried to kill anyone and he would attempt to defend himself with words first. Even though Katniss knows that what she is doing is in defense of her life and Peeta's life, she considers herself to be worse at being human because she can and does kill. She knows that survival is more important than negotiation and what Collins' emphasizes is that Katniss' way allows her and Peeta to stay alive.

**The Power and Problem of Knowing in *Mockingjay***

The aspects of being knowing or knowledgeable take a different turn in *Mockingjay*, as she is able to compare District 13 to the Capitol, or rather Coin to President Snow. Because Katniss has known starvation and neglect at the hands of her government, she is able to recognize how similar decisions are being made in District 13 when she finds her prep team imprisoned and tortured. It affects Katniss because of how it affects her mother:

> It takes her a minute to place [Katniss' prep team of Flavius, Octavia, and Venia], given their current condition, but already she wears a look of consternation. And I know it's not a result of seeing abused bodies, because they were her daily fare in District 12, but the realization that this sort of thing goes on in 13 as well" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 59).

They have not found themselves in a place with benevolent leadership, merely an alternative government that doesn't immediately want to kill them. This holds true and Katniss, exhibiting this trait of knowing so much about the abuses of a governing body recognizes right away that she and those around her are in danger:

> "I guess we've all been put on notice," I say.
>
> "What? No. What do you mean?" asks Fulvia.
>
> "Punishing my prep team's a warning," I tell her. "Not just to me. But to you, too. About who's really in control and what happens if she's not obeyed. If you had any delusions about having power, I'd let them go now…"
>
> "Perhaps we're a little more necessary to the war effort than you give us credit for," says Plutarch, unconcerned.
>
> "Of course you are. The tributes were necessary to the Games, too. Until they weren't" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 60-61)

Katniss knows that just like the Capitol, she is only worth something alive to Coin until she becomes a liability which makes this knowledge dangerous. She is not in different circumstances here than she was as a victor after the Games, merely another pawn to Coin, just as she was to Snow, someone to be controlled and used to keep others under control. There are not great differences in her situation here, and this type of knowing keeps her on edge and aware of her own safety. Her trait of knowing makes her aware of the dangers around here, even in a place that is supposed to be a refuge from the Capitol.

Katniss also discovers her true value and understands how important she is, not as a person, but as a symbol for those who have begun to rebel in the other districts. It is only by being among the people who have been injured in the rebellion, in knowing them as people in front of her, that Katniss comprehends who she is to them:

> I begin to fully understand the lengths to which people have gone to protect me. What I mean to the rebels. My ongoing struggle against the Capitol, which has so often felt like a solitary journey, has not been undertaken alone. I have had thousands of people from the districts at my side. I was their Mockingjay long before I accepted the role.
>
> A new sensation begins to germinate inside me. But it takes until I am standing on a table, waving my final good-byes to the hoarse chanting of my name, to define it. Power. I have a kind of power I never knew I possessed. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 107-8)

Katniss can finally see the power she has as the catalyst of the rebellion. In seeing this power, it cements her thinking of these people as her responsibility and enforces the idea that they are a community, brought together by the trauma of being subservient to the Capitol and the Games. Authority figures being something to rebel against is a common theme in young adult literature according to Trites, "in the adolescent novel, protagonists must learn about the social forces that have made them what they are. They learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function" (3). This moment is Katniss recognizing that the social forces have given her the power to be a leader, even while her freedom is repressed and controlled by Coin. This knowing, Katniss' ability to see her own power over the situation allows Katniss to make decisions based on what she thinks is right, instead of decisions based on what she is afraid of or is expected of her. This knowledge changes the character to become more active in her rebellion instead of trying to keep those she loves alive; she extends this knowledge to everyone who is fighting along with her, whether they are present or not.

However, that amount of pressure is unsustainable and she has to know what she needs to function in order to provide the Mockingjay for her community. Her knowledge of what is happening to Peeta becomes crippling as the trait of knowing becomes unbearable:

> It's impossible to be the Mockingjay. Impossible to complete even this one sentence. Because now I know that everything I say will be directly taken out on Peeta. Result in his torture. But not his death, no, nothing so merciful as that….
>
> "She's figured out how Snow's using Peeta," says Finnick.
>
> There's something like a collective sigh of regret from the semicircle of people spread out before me. Because I know this now. Because there will never be a way for me to not know this again. Because, beyond the military disadvantage losing a Mockingjay entails, I am broken. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 190-1)

Katniss reaches her limit of where knowledge is useful and inspiring, into the spiral of fear and guilt because of what she knows. She can only perform her function of rebellion inspiration if she is not broken and Peeta's torture breaks her. After he has been retrieved and she's aware that he was tortured into hating her, even then she is functional, but the knowledge that she cannot help him or stop what is happening to him is too much; it is knowledge of trauma that is too damaging to create maturity.

Peeta's return allows Katniss to function again, but she knows the truth of sacrifice and loss, something she will never be able to handle fully again. She and the other victors know that safety is a lie, which shows the difference between the knowledge base of victors and the citizens who didn't fight in the Games. Johanna makes this clear when she talks to Katniss:

> "They've got this head doctor who comes around everyday. Supposed to be helping me recover. Like some guy who spent his life in this rabbit warren's going to fix me

> up. Complete idiot. At least 20 times a session he reminds me that I'm totally safe."
>
> I manage a smile. It's a truly stupid thing to say, especially to a victor. As if such a state of being ever existed, anywhere, for anyone. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 257)

Katniss, and Johanna, and the other victors by extension believe that there is no safety in their world and there may never be again. This concept of safety is something they want to provide others by ending the Games permanently, but this knowledge that there is no safety doesn't stop what's happening.

The lack of control over her circumstances is made even more clear when Coin sends the tortured and mentally unstable Peeta to be on Katniss' squad as they invade the Capitol. As Peeta has tried to kill her in the past, Katniss knows that her value as the Mockingjay has ended. She reasons, "But if Coin sent Peeta here, she's decided something else as well. That I'm of more use to her dead than alive" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 305). For all her knowledge, Katniss doesn't understand what she's done to suddenly become disposable. Boggs fills her in on what the reader has probably recognized, but gives implicit exposition that Coin is not a new beginning or new government, she is the old one with a new face:

> "Sometime in the near future, this war will be resolved. A new leader will be chosen… if your immediate answer isn't Coin, then you're a threat. You're the face of the rebellion. You may have more influence than any other single person," says Boggs. "Outwardly, the most you've ever done is tolerated her."
>
> "So she'll kill me to shut me up." The minute I say the words I know they're true. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 310)

Katniss recognizes that there will be no changes to the world because Coin is the same type of murderous and vengeful that Snow has proven to be. Once again, Katniss' survival revolves around her ability to pretend, but she also recognizes her own power in her trait of

knowing. When Coin suggests holding a last Hunger Game, Katniss already knows that the survival of the community that she has become a part of, those who rebelled to stop their children from being murdered is dependent on her actions. When Snow meets with Katniss and shows her the truth of the bombs that killed Prim, Katniss already knows that Coin is attempting to destroy her:

> And finally there's [Snow's] assessment of Coin. What's irrefutable is that she's done exactly what he said. Let the Capitol and the districts run one another into the ground and then sauntered in to take power. Even if that was her plan, it doesn't mean she dropped those parachutes. Victory was already in her grasp. Everything was in her grasp.
>
> Except me…
>
> Suddenly, I'm thinking of Prim, who was not yet fourteen, not yet old enough to be granted the title soldier, but somehow working on the front lines. How did such a thing happen? (Collins, *Mockingjay* 421)

Knowing Coin, knowing the horrors of what she has done, what Snow might have done, what the Hunger Games were and Coin's desire to have another Game, make it clear to Katniss what she must do. Her trait of knowing about the trauma that Coin has enforced, the trauma that will continue decides Katniss' hand and she kills Coin because of what she knows about the woman and what she knows about a society that depends on the murder of children for order.

Katniss has used her knowledge and trait of knowing to persevere until too much knowing overwhelmed her. Although the culmination of her knowledge was eliminating Coin in order to ensure a beneficial future for the children of Panem, Katniss' knowing becomes too mentally taxing. After being returned home, she seems unaware of any

knowledge outside of her immediate surroundings, which appears to be a way to heal. Her knowing reverts to the simplistic view of Panem she started with, a lack of knowledge outside her immediate circumstances. Once again, she falls into line with Tribunella's melancholic maturity, but to the detriment of the active fighter for justice type character that we saw before.

**Tribunella's Trait of Experienced and How It Differs from Knowing in *The Hunger Games***

Tribunella relates the trait of experienced to the trait of knowing, as knowing comes from experience. However, it is different in that being experienced is not just being aware of bad things happening but knowing the consequences. He states:

> Mature adults have done things and know how to do them. They have experienced the world and life, especially the difficulties and unpleasantness associated with both… They have also done difficult things or survived difficult circumstances, and their demeanor when encountering new or unfamiliar situations reflects this experience. (xxii)

The first example of the experienced trait is when we discover Katniss has had the experience of hunting and living off of the woods. This trait seems to embody useful skills or being adept at taking care of both one's physical and mental health in order to be a productive or useful member of society. The key part here is Tribunella's emphasis on surviving difficult circumstances and continuing on. We saw a great deal of that within the "knowing" section, but the experienced section would seem to also embody the idea that once a character has experienced something, they have learned enough to not be caught by it again. Katniss herself does not display this particular trait in the beginning; she is not

experienced enough to see how Snow manipulates her and those around her or how war truly works.

After Peeta and Katniss have been chosen for the Hunger Games in the first book, they go to the Capitol to prepare. The night before the Games begin, Katniss finds Peeta on the roof. Peeta is reflective of who he is and who he can be in light of the circumstances surrounding them in the Capitol and what is being asked of him as a tribute. Katniss doesn't quite understand what Peeta is asking of himself, as she doesn't feel that analyzing the circumstances is important:

> "My best hope is to not disgrace myself and…" He hesitates.
>
> "And what?" I say.
>
> "I don't know how to say it exactly. Only… I want to die as myself… I don't want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I'm not… Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to… to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their games," says Peeta.
>
> "But you're not," I say. "None of us are. That's how the Games work."
>
> "Okay, but within that framework, there's still you, there's still me," he insists.
>
> (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 171-2)

Peeta sees the ethics of the situation and a deep desire to not become a monster, to not lose his own identity even while his body is under attack. He has seen something or experienced something that makes him want to maintain his own personality and not be ashamed of his actions, while Katniss doesn't understand beyond the survival aspect of it. Her experiences allow her to shrug off the deep questions of identity and rejection of what the Capitol stands for in order to focus on keeping herself alive. However, later in the second book she is able to see his point. Their experiences together have taught her to see him not as an adversary,

but to understand that the Capitol is the true enemy. Katniss' ability to understand Peeta's desire to remain himself even in the face of enforced murder after shared experiences in the Games echoes the concept of trauma creating community. Peeta and Katniss' relationship tends to unite them more than alienate them and this relationship illustrates the need for trauma survivors to find others who have suffered similarly. A focus on the creation of tight bonds and the dynamic of support between the two characters makes the community stronger because, as Visser states, "collective identity is a crucial factor in the trauma process" (110). Although Katniss herself is heavily related to by the audience of Panem and the districts at large through the shared trauma of being forced to put their children through the Hunger Games, as well as the subjugation and starvation enforced by the Capitol, the relationship between Peeta and Katniss is what first draws people to her becoming the Mockingjay.

**Being Experienced Relies on Shared Trauma in *Catching Fire***

The sense of community grows, not only between her and Peeta, her and the other starving districts of Panem, but between her and the other victors. Haymitch acts as the typical adult voice of wisdom, even though Collins has subverted this trope by making him an alcoholic and therefore not completely wise. He brings up the idea that Katniss is not yet experienced enough to truly fight the Capitol:

> "But remember, until they change the rules, I could only hope to get one of you out of there alive," he says. "I thought since he was determined to protect you, well, between the three of us, we might be able to bring you home."
>
> "Oh" is all I can think to say.
>
> "You'll see, the choices you have to make. If we survive this," says Haymitch. "You'll learn." (Collins, *Catching Fire* 83)

Haymitch is speaking from his own experience, his own dealings with the Capitol in order to mature Katniss and make her aware of the level of manipulation she's dealing with, thus trying to force her to be more mature, or at least experienced enough to recognize what's truly going on. Katniss doesn't entirely understand yet, still not being experienced enough, and we see her inexperience when she's forced to wear a wedding dress to the interviews before the second Games:

> I'm confused because, while [the victors] all are angry, some are giving us sympathetic pats on the shoulder, and Johanna Mason actually stops to straighten my pearl necklace.
>
> "Make him pay for it, okay?" she says…
>
> This is the first time I realize the depth of betrayal felt among the victors and the rage that accompanies it. But they are so smart, so wonderfully smart about how they play it, because it all comes back to reflect on the government and President Snow in particular. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 301)

Katniss has been focused on how she feels about being chosen again for the Quarter Quell, but she has not thought outside of her own experience to what others might be experiencing. This trait shifts to become more empathetic, but it starts with being able to understand the victors and their point of view. Finding empathy through shared trauma is based entirely on a shared trait of experienced amongst the Game victors.

**How Experiences Can Lead to Empathy and Lack of Trust in *Mockingjay***

Another place Katniss lacks experience is in the cruelty of war. She doesn't use her previous experience to think like a soldier, instead she thinks like a hunter until she is able to see differently. In other words, she sees things that directly affect the situation and not ways the situation can be altered or manipulated. When she is visiting a hospital in a district that is

directly fighting the Capitol, it is blown up after she gets away and her lack of experience in thinking like someone at war startles her:

> I remember all those years in the woods, listening to Gale rant against the Capitol. Me, not paying close attention. Wondering why he even bothered to dissect its motives. Why thinking like our enemy would ever matter. Clearly, it could have mattered today. When Gale questioned the existence of the hospital, he was not thinking of disease, but [the bombing]. Because he never underestimates the cruelty of those we face. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 117)

Now Katniss sees how having experience in thinking like the enemy, training yourself to understand them might become useful. This change goes against Katniss' previously established characterization though, as Katniss often sees compassionate ways to settle things in opposition to the war-like mentality of Gale, as seen in the "Ethical" section.

The trait of experienced is fully achieved in *Mockingjay*, when she realizes the extent to which Coin is using her as well, but the proof of this trait is when she lies easily to those attempting to control her actions. She speaks of herself in third person:

> Actually, Katniss isn't complaining because she has no intention of staying with the "Star Squad," but she recognizes the necessity of getting to the Capitol before carrying out any plan. Still, to be too compliant may arouse suspicion as well.
>
> "But it's not all pretend, is it?" I ask. "That'd be a waste of talent." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 301)

She pushes back just enough to make them think she believes them, demonstrating that she knows how to get around their manipulations and achieving this trait, however short lived this maturity ends up being.

Katniss has experience with trauma and pain but recognizes that she can use it as a tool to find out who was responsible for Prim's death, Snow or Coin. Previous events showed her how to hang on, "I'm hoping the pain will help me hang on to reality the way it did for Peeta. I must hang on. I must know the truth about what has happened" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 419). Using pain to stay lucid enough to find out who has killed her sister shows again her ability to experience things and learn from those experiences, but at this point the trait becomes toxic. Katniss' desire to survive only lasts so long and she turns to suicide, as her experiences and decisions are too much for her to live with, despite accomplishing her goal of ending the Games. The trait of experienced becomes the most detrimental, even as she exhibits it clearly:

> I go ahead and eat the food, take the pills, rub the salve on my skin. I need to focus now on the manner of my suicide… The surveillance makes almost any suicide attempt impossible. Taking my life is the Capitol's privilege. Again. What I can do is give up. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 438).

She's finally realized how much power the Capitol has over her and that even her own life is not under her control. Her experiences have drained her but let her know that dying is not her choice to make. At this point, being experienced has created maturity and knowledge, but removed her ability to continue on because the reality of the future is that she will never be able to choose.

The final note on experience as a trait comes after Katniss has been sentenced to exile by the people she saved from Coin's plotting and Snow's government. Plutarch takes her home and is insightful in a way she hadn't thought about before:

> "Are you preparing for another war, Plutarch?" I ask.

> "Oh, not now. Now we're in that sweet period where everyone agrees that our recent horrors should never be repeated," he says. "But collective thinking is usually short-lived. We're fickle, stupid beings with poor memories and a great gift for self-destruction. Although who knows? Maybe this will be it, Katniss."
>
> "What?" I ask.
>
> "The time it sticks. Maybe we are witnessing the evolution of the human race. Think about that." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 442)

There is a chance that the experiences of the Hunger Games will change things for the better for humanity. Katniss's use of her own experiences and how those experiences affected her society directly change the way the government will be moving forward. The government becomes based on representation of all districts and the Games are abolished permanently. Their collective experience shapes their culture moving forward. However, Katniss is exiled from this new "experienced" society. She is not consulted about how to proceed and in fact, her experiences have left her so damaged that she has to re-learn how to function in society. In fact, her experiences make her deathly afraid for her children, unable to enjoy their births or life. The trait of experienced brings her back to Tribunella's melancholic maturity in a stunted form.

**The Primacy of the Trait of Ethical in *The Hunger Games***

The issue with Tribunella defining this trait as "law-abiding" is that each of these trilogies takes place within a dystopia, where to obey the law is to be unethical. Because of this issue, I've chosen to focus my examination on the character trait of moral or ethical. He himself defines law-abiding in a way that does not exist in Panem, "[Law-abiding] involves recognizing the individual and common good of observing laws and customs. It involves

being ethical, and it connotes being upstanding and moral" (xxii). Katniss follows a moral code very clearly through the trilogy; she does not condone the murder of children and works to right that wrong. The common good of community comes from the small ways Katniss breaks the law; at first in order to provide food for herself and her District then later to work toward a community that does not murder its children or starve its people. Thus, I do consider her to have this trait, even though she is not technically law-abiding, she does work toward a common good.

For a great deal of the trilogy, Katniss' ideas of ethics or the ethical treatment of other human beings is shown in opposition to Gale's views. Gale appears to embody the other side of rebellion, while the government of Panem is an example of what is done when a government lacks ethics. The need for an antagonist is a constant in young adult literature according to Nikolajeva, "The adolescent protagonist needs a parent authority at hand to revolt against it" (119). While we can see the government of Panem, characterized as the Capitol led by Snow as the antagonist authority, Gale's views on how the rebellion should take place also serve as antagonistic to Katniss' ethics and help the author illustrate the point that a lack of ethics can occur on both sides of a rebellion.

The beginning of this comparison starts right at the beginning, with Katniss recognizing that Gale's anger toward a more privileged member of District 12 is not worth it. Children from poorer families must take on "tesserae" or put their name into the reaping more often in exchange for extra rations of grain and supplies. The daughter of the mayor, Madge, does not have to apply for tesserae, causing animosity in Gale, even though the truth is that the government punishes those who are poorer than others:

> Gale knows his anger at Madge is misdirected. On other days, deep in the woods, I've listened to him rant about how the tesserae are just another tool to cause misery

> in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the seam and those who can generally count on supper and thereby ensure we will never trust one another. "It's to the Capitol's advantage to have us divided among ourselves," he might say if there are no ears to hear but mine….
>
> His rages seem pointless to me, although I never say so. It's not that I don't agree with him. I do. But what good is yelling about the Capitol in the middle of the woods? It doesn't change anything. It doesn't make things fair. It doesn't fill our stomachs. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 16-17)

Katniss is stoic, not prone to raging aloud about their fate; instead she embodies both the serious and ethical traits by focusing on the hunting to provide for her family. The wild exhibitions of emotions are not useful to her, and she understands that Madge is not to blame for the situation, so she is not cruel to her. Gale on the other hand, despite knowing that Madge is not responsible, takes his anger out on her simply because she is a closer target than the actual people who control the access to food. Katniss is principled enough to not blame others for their beneficial standing in a country that treats its citizens poorly. This duality of reaction to the government, Gale's rage versus Katniss' stoicism comes up more in *Mockingjay*.

Another aspect of ethics that comes up in the first book is the condemnation of the Hunger Games themselves. People are killed for speaking out, but that does not mean that the other districts accept what is being done to them. Despite living in a world where their children are taken from them once a year, Katniss volunteering to take Prim's place makes the citizens of District 12 refuse to play along for one moment. Katniss recognizes what a big moment it is for them to acknowledge her:

> To the everlasting credit of the people of District 12, not one person claps. Not even the ones holding betting slips, the ones who are usually beyond caring. Possibly because they know me from the Hob, or knew my father, or who have encountered Prim, who no one can help loving. So instead of acknowledging applause, I stand there unmoving while they take part in the boldest form of descent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 28)

Katniss notes that it is probably a personal connection to her or her family that may have pushed her district to publicly display that they are not pleased with her going to the Hunger Games. They demonstrate that the ethics of the society they live in does not help them, does not follow their needs, and that they do not want to be a part of it. This also shows Vickroy's assertion that the society around the traumatized protagonist has a direct effect on how the protagonist recovers and recognizes their own trauma (137). Katniss' immediate society rejects the Hunger Games, while the broader society of the Capitol enjoys and celebrates it. The bond between Katniss and the denizens of District 12 makes Katniss aware of how close she is to the people in her community, which makes the bombing of District 12 in the later books even more of a blow to Katniss. Her community accepted her; they would have let her heal and their condemnation of the situation shows Katniss that her own moral code is right.

Despite having been a hunter, Katniss' first kill in the Games doesn't affect her immediately, because of Rue's death at the same time. Later on, when she is able to think about it the immediacy of her situation allows her to push the thoughts away, "Numerous animals have lost their lives at my hands, but only one human. I hear Gale saying, "How different can it be, really?" Amazingly similar in the execution. A bow pulled, an arrow shot.

Entirely different in the aftermath. I killed a boy whose name I don't even know" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 294). This clarifies the difference for Katniss, that killing another human being is not easy when you live with the knowledge or the violation of her own moral code. The act of killing is the same, but the aftermath is not. Gale compared it to shooting an animal, but Katniss cannot push away the realization that she killed a person, who may have had a family, which lines up with Trites' expressed view of death in some young adult literature, "part of what seems to force many adolescent characters into their recognition of death's power is the seemingly gratuitous nature of some deaths… in YA novels, adolescents learn about their own mortality by witnessing the death of someone who is not necessarily going gently into that good night" (120). All the deaths in the first book could fall under that category, but the death of Rue and Katniss' retaliation killing of Rue's murderer drive home what it truly means to take a life. The ethics of a government forcing children to kill other children in order to survive yourself is monstrous.

**Morality in both Katniss and Panem in *Catching Fire***

The second book brings the victors back to an arena to fight each other. After finding out the news, Katniss' first reaction is to gather all of her immediate loved ones and run away into the woods, but she soon realizes that those left behind will suffer, even if she manages to convince everyone to go with her. There might be a better way of moving forward and she realizes that's fighting, "If people have the courage, this could be an opportunity. [Gale]'s also right that, since I set it in motion, I could do so much. Although I have no idea what exactly that should be. But deciding not to run away is a crucial first step" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 149). This concept, of trauma creating a sense of unity among the survivors, leads toward the concept of joining forces to fight instead of retreating. The

concept of staying to fight is not something commonly examined in trauma theory according to Visser:

> Unlike what is currently the dominant idea in trauma theory, social fracture, alienation, and a weakening of social cohesion, are not the only, nor perhaps even primary characteristics of trauma. In fact, while trauma may cause divisiveness, it can also lead to a stronger sense of belonging and can in fact *create* community. (109)

Visser is showing us a new point about the strength of community when surviving or enduring trauma, one that is seen clearly in Katniss' decision. Katniss makes the decision to help and eventually become the Mockingjay in order to help save her immediate community. The shared trauma of starvation and being subjected to the Hunger Games has created a community around Katniss and she feels responsible for those who are not only in District 12 with her, but those who are rebelling against the Capitol in other districts. Her community is comprised of those people she feels agree with her or are on her side. Her code of ethics requires that she stay and fight, in order to try and help the citizens she is responsible for in the rebellion she ignited. Her moral code has naturally progressed. Who she is as a character is someone who takes care of others, which she realizes when she gets to know the victors, "The more I come to know these people, the worse it is. Because, on the whole, I don't hate them. And some I like. And a lot of them are so damaged that my natural instinct would be to protect them" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 281). She recognizes a kinship between her and the other damaged victors, while she is responsible for them, the way they have been treated by Snow is not how a government should operate. This realization speaks to how Katniss' moral code requires her to be responsible for others, as seen in the section on the trait of responsible. We can also see that Katniss' trait of ethical and her trait of responsible are tied directly to each other, which means that when one of the

traits become toxic or emotionally damaging, so does the other. However, because the trait of ethical is slightly different, Katniss' moral code stays intact throughout the books. Independent of her ability to function, Katniss can still figure out whether or not something is ethical.

Because the citizens in the Capitol are also controlled, by not being allowed to speak against the government, by being encouraged to focus on the Games as entertainment, and by being spoiled with excess food, they have not comprehended the true horrific nature of the Games. Katniss recognizes how barbarous the Games are, as does Peeta:

> "I don't want [the other victors] as allies. Why did Haymitch want us to get to know them?" I say. "It'll make it so much harder than last time. Except for Rue maybe. But I guess I never really could have killed her, anyway. She was just too much like Prim." Peeta looks up at me, his brow creased in thought. "Her death was the most despicable, wasn't it?" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 282-3).

Rue was twelve years old when she was killed, but due to the nature of the Capitol, the citizens didn't feel it as keenly as the rest of the districts. Katniss and Peeta know that the younger the tribute, the more appalling the death because the older a child is, the better chance of survival they have, but also this is a loss of potential in such a young person. The victors are all older, but the citizens of the Capitol are more effected by their being forced into the Games again because they have been treated as heroes. To further emphasize the horror of what the Capitol citizens are witnessing, since the murder of children hasn't, Peeta claims that Katniss is pregnant in order to really make the Capitol citizens see how barbaric and in violation of an ethical society the Games truly are. Katniss realizes what Peeta has done, "Even the most Capitol-loving, Games-hungry, bloodthirsty person out there can't ignore, at least for a moment, how horrific the whole thing is. I am pregnant" (Collins,

*Catching Fire* 309). What this also forces Katniss to realize is that the citizens of the Capitol are spoiled and complicit in the Games, but also able to be shown what is wrong about the Games. Finding an ethical way of dealing with rebels could have been achieved. The citizens of the Capitol are not on board with a pregnant Katniss being killed in the Games or with their victors being taken from them which means some part of them understands that death is not entertainment, but a loss. The knowledge that the citizens can be horrified by the Games humanizes them for Katniss more.

It is with this knowledge, the knowledge that those people who continue the Games are to blame for the fact that the government does not allow for basic human rights that reminds Katniss who she is truly fighting. This emphasizes the knowledge that Panem's code of morals as a government is not ethical. This realization comes from Haymitch's reminder to her before she entered the second arena:

> "*You just remember who the enemy is*," Haymitch says. "*That's all.*" Haymitch's last words of advice to me. Why would I need reminding? I have always known who the enemy is. Who starves and tortures and kills us in the arena. Who will soon kill everyone I love.
>
> My bow drops as his meaning registers. Yes, I know who the enemy is. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 456)

The enemy is not the immediate threat; the enemy is not the other victors in the arena. This drives home Visser's point about trauma creating community. The victors are a community and once the second arena ends with Katniss rescued by District 13, she bonds with the other victors in a way she can't with those who haven't been in the arena. Her moral code comes from what she knows and what she sees, which means she cannot get on board with

Gale's revenge-based mentality. This opposition in their viewpoints comes into sharper focus in *Mockingjay*.

**Becoming the Mockingjay in Order to Fulfill a Moral Obligation in *Mockingjay***

Much of *Mockingjay* focuses on Katniss refining her ethics versus Gale's as well as looking at the comparisons in governmental ethics between Coin and Snow. Katniss finds similarities between District 13 and the Capitol almost immediately in the beginning of the last book. She will never be done until the government is held to the same ethical standards she holds herself to. She expresses:

> What they want is for me to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay. It isn't enough, what I've done in the past, defying the Capitol in the Games, providing a rallying point. I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution… I won't have to do it alone. They have a whole team of people to make me over, dress me, write my speeches, orchestrate my appearances—as if *that* doesn't sound horribly familiar—and all I have to do is play my part. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 12).

Katniss can see the echoes of how she was paraded around as a tribute in what they want from her as the Mockingjay. District 13 is not a savior or an authority that will save the day, they are another side of the coin. Leadership is never all bad or all good and Katniss being asked to step into a leadership role is based solely on who she is, but who she is already recognizes the problematic nature of what she's being asked to do.

Coin and District 13 are another form of government, but not a better one, which is brought home to Katniss when she finds out that her old prep team has been starved and tortured for taking an extra piece of bread. This brings her back into conflict with Gale's

perspective, as he thinks the prep team got what they deserved and argues against her defense of them:

> "Are you actually defending them?" He slips the skin from the rabbit in one quick move. That stings, because, in fact, I am, and it's ridiculous. I struggle to find a logical position. "I guess I'm defending anyone who's treated like that for taking a slice of bread. Maybe it reminds me too much of what happened to you over a turkey!" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 65)

Katniss is able to use past experience to explain why she feels that District 13's reaction to her prep team was unethical, but she's unable to convince Gale, who is too focused on hatred for those who were pampered by the Capitol. Katniss is able to see those in the Capitol as other humans and to recognize that they deserve ethical treatment as well. She empathizes with her prep team, even as she realizes she cannot keep them safe:

> I want to tell [Octavia] it's okay, that I'll see that Coin never hurts her again. But the multicolored bruises flowering under her green skin only remind me how impotent I am… "Katniss is not going to hurt us," [Venia] says quietly but firmly to Octavia. "Katniss did not even know we were here. Things will be better now." Octavia gives a slight nod but doesn't dare look me in the eye. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 73)

The consequences of abusing your power are not trust or allegiance, but fear. Katniss does not want the society built after the Capitol falls to be built on fear. She is aware that everyone must come together, work together, and in that, she embodies Visser's idea that trauma creates community.

In a counterpoint to that, Gale is still focused on killing as many people as possible, something Katniss knows and has experienced as being amoral. Her stance on the ethics of

fighting a war comes directly from her experience, the two traits again blending together to express her horror at the weapons Beetee and Gale have created:

> "So, it'd be easy for you? Using that on people?" I ask. "I didn't say that." Gail drops the bow to his side. "But if I'd had a weapon that could have stopped what I saw happen in Twelve… if I'd had a weapon that could have kept you out of the arena… I'd have used it." "Me, too," I admit. But I don't know what to tell him about the aftermath of killing a person. About how they never leave you. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 81)

The point here is that Katniss knows that taking a life is not an easy fix to a problem, but Gale sees the only way forward to be an eye for an eye. The mitigation of his point is that here he speaks to use weapons to stop mass murder, to end the Games. However, his thinking continues down those lines and develops into striking first, rather than defending, a response to violence that Katniss cannot agree with:

> At some point, Gail and Beetee left the wilderness behind and focused on more human impulses. Like compassion. A bomb explodes. Time is allowed for people to rush to the aid of the wounded. Then a second, more powerful bomb kills them as well.
>
> "That seems to be crossing some kind of line," I say. "So anything goes?" They both stare at me—Beetee with doubt, Gail with hostility. "I guess there isn't a rulebook for what might be unacceptable to do to another human being." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 217)

This line gives a clear view of who Katniss is and where she stands on the idea of using compassion against other people; the concept of ethics in war is something Katniss struggles with throughout *Mockingjay* and her frequent struggles with figuring out what is acceptable to

do to another human being always falls on the side of not killing people unless forced to. She remembers the deaths of miners in District 12, including her own father, when she thinks about letting people die in a closed off mountain as Gale suggests, "I want everyone in that mountain dead. I'm about to say so. But then… I'm also a girl from District 12. Not President Snow. I can't help it. I can't condemn someone to the death [Gale]'s suggesting" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 239). Gale wants to blow up the entrances and leave people to die, similar to a mining accident and Katniss' experiences with mining accidents make her unable to see that as a moral way forward. She does not want Snow or his moral code to guide anyone's steps forward. When they move to take the mountain fortress called the Nut, Katniss is weary of trying to explain why certain things are immoral in war:

> I don't petition to join the fighters, not that they would let me. I have no stomach for it anyway, no heat in my blood. I wish Peeta was here—the old Peeta—because he would be able to articulate why it is so wrong to be exchanging fire when people, any people, are trying to claw their way out of the mountain. Or is my own history making me too sensitive? Aren't we at war? Isn't this just another way to kill our enemies? (Collins, *Mockingjay* 247)

Here, she argues with herself, trying to understand why she's not ruthless in destroying the opposing side, but it shows her own compassion. Most importantly, it shows how her own trauma has made her more compassionate, a concept not addressed in most trauma theory. Compassion as a trait coming out of a traumatized character is not unheard of but bears recognition. Katniss' entire moral code is deeply affected by the trauma she's suffered and Collins chose to have her be compassionate in the midst of her own trauma. She tries again and again to explain to Gale why she feels that his way of waging war is unethical:

> "But that kind of thinking… You could turn it into an argument for killing anyone at any time. You could justify sending kids into the Hunger Games to prevent the districts from getting out of line," I say.
>
> "I don't buy that," he tells me.
>
> "I do," I reply. "It must be those trips to the arena." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 259)

Katniss can back up her perspective of the trait of ethical with experience and knowing, while Gale, who has not experienced the arena, bases his morality on his anger, showing that the trauma of the Games made Katniss compassionate and the lack of experience made Gale vengeful. When the concept of killing those who rush to aid the wounded comes true and Prim is killed, Gale may finally recognize the dangers of his way of thinking, but the one thing he cares about is her opinion, which has been irrevocably damaged. It is clear that there are faults in the vengeful way of things, the collateral damage, not just Prim's life or Katniss and Gale's relationship, but the way that hatred affects everything around it:

> "Was it your bomb?"
>
> "I don't know. Neither does Beetee," [Gale] says. "Does it matter? You'll always be thinking about it."
>
> He waits for me to deny it; I want to deny it, but it's true. Even now I can see the flash that ignites her, feel the heat of the flames. And I will never be able to separate that moment from Gale. My silence is my answer (Collins, *Mockingjay* 428)

The consequences of not having acceptable moral limits with war means that you can destroy your own side. When it becomes clear that Prim being on the front lines and being killed was clearly a decision made by Coin, as she was the only one who could have approved a young girl being there and the bombs were developed by Beetee and Gale, Katniss recognizes that a world that sacrifices its children is not a world worth fighting for

and she struggles to keep herself moving forward. The lack of moral code in both sides drives Katniss to realize how her trait of ethical must guide her actions if she is to stay true to herself in the way that Peeta wanted to stay true to himself in the beginning.

In the midst of that struggle, we come to the final question of an ethical society and what Katniss expects from her society moving forward. Coin wants to hold a final Hunger Games with the grandchildren and children of the old Panem government. Katniss wonders:

> Was it like this then? Seventy-five years or so ago? Did a group of people sit around and cast their votes on initiating the Hunger Games? Was there dissent? Did someone make a case for mercy that was beaten down by the calls for the deaths of the districts' children?… All those people I love, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in an attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 432)

Katniss is left to feel that there are no ethics left, that people will continue to destroy children as retribution. There will be no change unless she makes it so that they cannot move forward in the same ways as their predecessors. Her need for compassion has failed, but she doesn't turn her back on it, instead she guarantees there will be no more Hunger Games by killing Coin (Collins, *Mockingjay* 434). Katniss has fulfilled her main goal, to end the Hunger Games permanently. However, the cost to her was great and she cannot rejoin society, because she understands that parts of society will always lack compassion:

> I think that Peeta was onto something about us destroying one another and letting some decent species take over. Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences. You can spin it any way you like. Snow thought the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control. Coin thought the parachutes would expedite the war. But in the end, who does it

> benefit? No one. The truth is, it benefits no one to live in a world where these things happen. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 440)

This might be said by Katniss, but these words are also Collins' message to the readers. In order to stop injustice and immoral decisions by your government, sometimes you must sacrifice yourself, you must fight back. Despite Katniss being so deeply affected by her various traumas, she pushes on in order to secure a place in her world where children aren't sacrificed and she does so by sacrificing herself. Her society will be more ethical, will hold itself to standards that don't include retribution and vengeance, at least for a time.

We've seen how the blending of the various traits always boils down to Katniss' code of ethics. Katniss' trait of ethical develops throughout the novels, but unlike the other traits does not become toxic, rather it becomes a burden to bear, constantly holding her society and those around her to ethical standards. Katniss maintains her ethics until the end, never removing herself from the basic concept she exhibited in the beginning: using children to fight battles or keep citizens under control is immoral. This trait remains with her through the epilogue.

**Hard-working in *The Hunger Games***

While the trait of hard-working seems to go hand in hand with responsibility, Tribunella differentiates it by defining a mature adult versus a lazy adult, "One might be hard-working and yet irresponsible with the income generated from that work, or one might be responsible without needing to work hard… Mature adults are never bored, nor do they overindulge in leisure… The key dimensions of hard work are time and effort" (xxii). A mature adult then works hard for the betterment of their own self and those they are responsible for. Katniss taught herself to hunt for her family, learning through trial and error

and educated herself on what else could be forged from the forest. The hard work of becoming an accomplished hunter was necessary to her survival, as she explains:

> The woods became our savior, and each day I went a bit farther into its arms. It was slow-going at first, but I was determined to feed us. I stole eggs from nests, caught fish in nets, sometimes managed to shoot a squirrel or rabbit for stew, and gather the various plants that sprung up beneath my feet. Plants are tricky. Many are edible, but one false mouthful and you're dead. I checked and double-checked the plants I harvested with my father's pictures. I kept us alive…. What we didn't absolutely have to eat, I began to trade at the Hob. It was frightening to enter that place without my father at my side, but people had respected him, and they accepted me. Game was game after all, no matter who'd shot it. I also sold at the back doors of the wealthier clients in town, trying to remember what my father had told me and learning a few new tricks as well. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 62-3)

Although this quote can only tie into Katniss' trait of seriousness, the hard work she put into finding methods of survival for her family echoes Tribunella's concepts of masculine melancholic maturity, a focus on providing for one's family even at the sacrifice of your own. Katniss finds methods of making sure her mother and sister can continue on, a responsibility she takes seriously and worries about what will happen to them without her hard work.

**The Physical Response to Working Hard in *Catching Fire***

Katniss also exhibits physical hard work beyond just hunting, in her willingness to improve herself. While her desire to survive motivates this effort, inspired by her need to protect Peeta in the second Game, it doesn't negate the amount of hard work she must put into training:

> But after a few days, we agree to act like Careers, because this is the best way to get Peeta ready as well. Every night we watch the old recaps of the Games that the remaining victors won… Every morning we do exercises to strengthen our bodies. We run and lift things and stretch our muscles. Every afternoon we work on combat skills, throwing knives, fighting hand-to-hand; I even teach them to climb trees. Officially, tributes aren't supposed to train, but no one tries to stop us. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 221-2)

This training regime makes Katniss a fiercer opponent, but also gives her purpose and drive, the time and effort spent being an investment in her own future, and in her ability to give Peeta a future as well. Working hard to protect others is shown again and again as a character trait in Katniss.

**The Mental Effort of Working Hard in *Mockingjay***

There is another aspect to working hard and that involves doing mental labor to keep one's self healthy enough to be responsible. The physical aspects of hard work and effort don't negate the mental effects of the trauma Katniss has suffered:

> During the day, I've been given clearance to hunt as long as I take a guard along and don't stray too far. In the thin, cold mountain air, I feel some physical strength returning, my mind clearing away the rest of the fogginess. But with this mental clarity comes an even sharper awareness of what has been done to Peeta. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 227)

It is telling that the time and effort put into physical exertion forces Katniss back into thinking about the trauma Peeta is suffering from, and her inability to help him. The mental work of keeping yourself healthy and recovering from trauma is not being done, even as Katniss does work to keep herself physically healthy.

While the hard work, both mental and physical is necessary, the break from the hard work and the trauma is just as important, which is seen at Finnick and Annie's wedding in District 13. There is work in this moment as well, the work done to allow joy in the middle of a war and Katniss recognizes the importance of it, "Dancing transforms us. We teach the steps to the District 13 guests. Insist on a special number for the bride and groom. Join hands and make a giant, spinning circle where people show off their footwork. Nothing silly, joyful, or fun has happened in so long" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 265). This departure from hard work is also necessary to the mental work of healing the community. It does the hard work of bringing together the districts in harmony, having them know each other more so that their community is stronger.

After having her ribs broken, Katniss opts for a procedure that will hurt more, but will allow her back onto the field to fight sooner, showing her endurance as the trait of hard-working. She and Johanna band together to prepare for the invasion on the Capitol:

> They made it clear I would have a difficult couple of days. But I told them to go ahead.
>
> At dawn, [Johanna] drags me out of bed, determined to get to training.
>
> "I don't think I can do it," I confess.
>
> "You can do it. We both can. We're victors, remember? We're the ones who can survive anything they throw at us," she snarls at me. She's a sick greenish color, shaking like a leaf. I get dressed. We must be victors to make it through the morning. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 276-7)

Drawing on her own hard work to win the Games, her physical and mental fortitude, Katniss pushes through pain and exerts herself in order to be allowed to join the fight toward Snow, the driving force of her and Johanna's suffering. Katniss' hard work has

possibly become unhealthy at this point because she could give in to her trauma and remain behind, however it is clear that leaving work up to others has never been a character trait of hers.

As Katniss pushes into the Capitol and the traps laid there for the soldiers, she continues to work hard to keep herself going, despite exhaustion and severe depression:

> All I want is to lie down on a nearby green plush sofa and go to sleep. To cocoon myself in a comforter made of rabbit fur and goose down. Instead, I pull out the Holo and insist that Jackson talk me through the most basic commands—which are really about entering the coordinates of the nearest map grid intersection—so that I can at least begin to operate the thing myself. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 344)

Katniss doesn't even attempt rest or respite from the death all around her, instead her hard work consists of fulfilling her goals. Katniss is never portrayed to be anything other than someone who works hard and this trait only comes to include her mental work as the series goes on. Her community on the other hand does the hard work of continuing on without her once she has been sentenced and creates a new government that includes representation of all the districts.

The hard work that Katniss picks up at the end is that of mentally healing. This trait does not fluctuate the way the other traits do, as it is more a trait about willingness to work hard rather than an internal personality conflict. Eventually, Katniss and Peeta begin the hard work of developing a life together, but a relationship and children is not shown to be something Katniss wants, more like something she assumes she should accept, as we see in the "heteronormatively gendered" section. Katniss' trait of hard-working is shown as a permanent part of her characterization, even though we are not given examples of it in the epilogue.

**Being Heteronormatively Gendered in Panem in *The Hunger Games***

Being heteronormatively gendered seems to be the only option in Panem. At no point are we shown a same sex relationship as anything more than friendly. The possibility is not spoken about in the text. We do see that Katniss is unwilling to procreate though in the beginning, which is part of Tribunella's definition. He tells us that:

> [being] a mature adult means to identify unambiguously as [man or woman] and to enact clearly conventional manhood or womanhood. To be heteronormatively gendered also means that one takes another heteronormatively gendered person of the other's sex as one's sexual and romantic object, or at least demonstrate an interest in doing so. Similarly, it means that one should procreate or at least demonstrate a willingness or ability to procreate. Either way, this outcome should seem likely or inevitable. (xxii)

Although the outcome of getting married and having children is presented as the inevitable path, even to the point that Katniss and Peeta use a fake romantic relationship to help themselves stay safe during the first Game, Katniss is very clear that she does not want this accepted ending to her life. In fact, Katniss rejects the notion of having children in the first book, however at the end of the trilogy, she and Peeta do have two children which isn't related as being her choice. Peeta and Gale are her only two romantic interests and her regard or affection for other female characters is presented as maternal. No relationships other than heteronormative ones are written about, but Collins' primary focus does not appear to be on romance at any point.

Katniss herself recognizes that marrying a man and having children is expected of her, but her focus is not on romance or even the future beyond survival. She recognizes the

danger in having kids, because they would someday be put up for participation in the Games and that doesn't interest her:

> "I never want to have kids," I say.
>
> "I might. If I didn't live here," says Gale.
>
> "But you do," I say, irritated.
>
> "Forget it," he snaps back…
>
> …where did this stuff about having kids come from? There's never been anything romantic between me and Gale… Besides, if he wants kids, Gale won't have any trouble finding a wife… It makes me jealous, but not for the reason people would think. Good hunting partners are hard to find. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 11-12)

Katniss does not think romantically about Gale, but she recognizes that heteronormative relationships are the only expected ones. In the entire book, there are no portrayals or even suggestions of non-heteronormative relationships.

**The Rejection of the Heteronormatively Gendered Relationship in *Catching Fire***

However, Katniss is not interested in conforming to the heteronormative goal of reproducing. In fact, she actively rejects it as well as rejects the idea of being married completely when she and Peeta fake an engagement to make sure the illusion of their relationship is being publicized. This depresses Katniss, because she feels that a choice has been taken away, "Of course, I could do a lot worse than Peeta. That isn't really the point, though, is it? One of the few freedoms we have in District 12 is the right to marry who we want or not marry at all. And now even that has been taken away from me" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 55). Her contention is not that she wants to marry someone else, but more that she has no choice in the matter or any matter involving her own romantic life. She has never wanted the heteronormative marriage and children conformity, "Even if I had killed Peeta in the

arena, I still wouldn't have wanted to marry anyone. I only got engaged to save people's lives, and that completely backfired" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 224). Katniss is not interested in contributing children to a world that sends them into death games, which means she has spent her life focused on providing and caring for her family, not on her future plans. This concept of survival taking precedence over everything else is the core of who Katniss is and this does not waver throughout the trilogy.

Peeta attempts to remind Katniss about the lives and people outside the arena, the life they could return to, by trying to get her to think about her future possibilities. This doesn't work, as Katniss has never wanted a traditional heteronormative life, instead she's opposed to procreating and is actively trying to keep Peeta safe by sacrificing herself.:

> But as I stretch out on the sand I wonder, could it be more? Like a reminder to me that I could still one day have kids with Gale? Well, if that was it, it was a mistake. Because for one thing, that's never been part of my plan. And for another, if only one of us can be a parent, anyone can see it should be Peeta. As I drift off, I try to imagine that world, somewhere in the future, with no Games, no Capitol. A place like the meadow in the song I sang to Rue as she died. Where Peeta's child could be safe. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 427)

What's important about this is that she doesn't see herself as the mother of his children, she doesn't even view herself as surviving at this point; her entire focus is to change the world enough for Peeta to survive and have children who don't have to participate in the Hunger Games. Her feelings are not part of the scenario she is envisioning.

**Conforming to a Heteronormatively Gendered Future as Regression in *Mockingjay***

While Katniss does not herself focus on romance, she's aware that it can be used to distract her from the pain she is feeling. She lets Gale kiss her when she is confused over

Peeta's addition to their fighting unit. Gale can tell she's not doing it for more than distraction though, "[Gale] examines my face closely. "What's going on in your head?" "I don't know," I whisper back. "Then it's like kissing someone who's drunk. It doesn't count," he says with a weak attempt at a laugh" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 232). Katniss is not kissing Gale for romantic or even manipulative reasons, but only to remove herself from the situation, which has become unbearable to her. Again, her focus is not on the possible future or even on the boy she is kissing, but solely on the fear she's experiencing.

In the last chapters of the series, Katniss overhears Peeta and Gale talking about her, discussing who she'll choose after the war is over, with Gale defining her character succinctly, "Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can't survive without" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 385). Above all, this drives home the expectation that Katniss will make a choice in a love triangle that she herself is not interested in. Katniss is focused on survival and the survival of those she loves and this conversation angers her because it drives home that the two of them think of her as a survivor above all things when she has only tried to protect those she loves:

> A chill runs through me. Am I really that cold and calculating? Gale didn't say, "Katniss will pick whoever it will break her heart to give up," or even "whoever she can't live without." Those would have implied I was motivated by some kind of passion… There's not the least indication that love, or desire, or even compatibility will sway me… As if in the end, it will be the question of whether a baker or hunter will extend my longevity the most. It's a horrible thing for Gale to say, for Peeta not to refute. Especially when every emotion I have has been taken and exploited by the Capitol or the rebels. At the moment, the choice would be simple. I can survive just fine without either of them. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 386)

This is the only moment where Katniss contemplates a life alone, other than planning her own death. She doesn't consider other options, just the absence of a relationship at all. She has moved away from the necessary mature response of procreation and husband. Also driven home is that Katniss is aware of how much her relationships have been manipulated by her experiences in the Games; she has never been allowed to naturally develop an interest in someone; Gale was someone she was denied and Peeta someone who was forced on her. The characteristic of heteronormativity has been altered by trauma, which is echoed by Vickroy, "survivors might live with a fragmented memory or a diminished sense of self, or might feel alienated" (131). Katniss certainly does not feel loving toward, but rather responsible for Gale and Peeta. This would seem to imply that heteronormative relationships or relationships in general become secondary when trauma is a factor. On the other side of that is the *Divergent* series, where the heteronormative relationship becomes something the characters grasp onto in order to survive, which I will discuss in that section.

Katniss does have children, as seen in the epilogue. However, this choice seems to negate her own autonomy and authority by having her have children with Peeta, despite her fears. The wording use implies that she only procreated to make Peeta happy, "It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 454). Katniss conforms to the expected role, but she does not seem happy about it, a twist created by the trauma she endured. Katniss does not appear to have what would be called normal attraction to boys her age, instead her maturity in the aspect of romance is stunted and she only picks Peeta because he endured what she did, not necessarily because she feels romantic about him.

Heteronormative in this case is extremely problematic; as Katniss has children contrary to what she herself wants. Perhaps trauma itself twists heteronormativity, as certainly in Panem it is the expected outcome for people. There is the suggestion that dystopias do not allow for exploration of sexuality because the focus is on survival, but to deny the existence of other types of love is a severe disservice to the genre.

**Wrapping Up *The Hunger Games* Trilogy's Close Reading**

Seeing these traits shows us, as readers, that Katniss begin the book already exhibiting many of these characteristics: serious, responsible, knowing, ethical, and hard-working. Thus, Katniss can be said to be, despite her age, almost a mature adult by Tribunella's definition. Her traumas beginning the book, taking on the role of parent to her family after the death of her father, embody the necessary trauma and loss Tribunella says is necessary for maturation. The traumas that go on after this mature her in other ways, moving away from Tribunella's definitions and emphasizing the purpose behind the portrayal of Katniss' extensive trauma, because as Vickroy stresses "fiction thus explores trauma as the crucible of human growth and survival" (148). Tribunella's application of this concept to young adult literature specifically means that "the prominence of children's books about trauma suggests that there remains a sense that children need trauma, or that trauma is useful, as a means of promoting or achieving mature adulthood" (xxvii). *The Hunger Games* books with their focus on trauma and maturity, the denial of maturity, and the focus on methods of emotional survival are created to teach a lesson, to show readers that survival is possible. Tribunella's form of melancholic maturity is achieved, but not maintained by Katniss as she finds resilience a positive trait. In fact, in the epilogue, Katniss regresses back into the socially acceptable melancholic maturity by having children and voluntarily

remaining in exile. She never again participates or fights for the ethics in her society, which means that the power she got from taking these traits further does not stay as part of her characterization.

We also see how society shifts in direct reaction to Katniss' role as Mockingjay. There is a focus on who she is as part of a community of rebels, as opposed to dealing with her trauma alone. Her role, her portrayal of symbol and as Snow's scapegoat incited the community to rebel against the status quo and the Hunger Games. Thus, Katniss' society, her community of those she shares trauma with, matured directly due to her sacrifices and her traumas. It is an argument that another person could have become the Mockingjay, but the book specifically is about her taking on the role, and the rebellion choosing her as their spokesperson even back in the first book. Her mental and physical health was sacrificed for the rebellion to have an effective symbol to keep pushing through and achieve a society not based on the starvation of its citizens and the murder of its children. We see in both Vickroy and Tribunella an examination of trauma as both transformative and necessary. Despite this quote referencing novels by authors other than Collins, Vickroy sums up the purpose of trauma in literary characters:

> Contemporary novels… demonstrate the capacity of trauma and literature to engage the reader's empathy by closely examining the personal and community contexts of trauma and its psychological ramifications. These texts provide narrative means to articulate trauma's effects even when disassociation may occur or when victims face denial and hostility in the social environment. Fiction thus explores trauma as the crucible of human survival and growth. (148)

Vickroy emphasizes both the empathy inspired in the reader as well as the further goals of the reader determining their own reactions to those around them who have been

traumatized. Trauma is necessary to our culture or rather, the ability to understand trauma and empathize can be created through reading trauma-based literature. Tribunella also finds trauma literature, specifically children's and young adult trauma literature necessary to American culture when he states:

> It is as though literature has replaced the rod as a way of disciplining children, with literary loss used to provoke maturation, group identity, and ultimately individual and collective survival while dramatizing the ways children's bodies and children themselves are perpetually lost in the process of development. (134)

Tribunella can then be said to see trauma literature as defining both the physical and mental maturity process of children and young adults. These elements change the way the reader sees and accepts their own world. Katniss' struggle is not just a traumatic narrative, but a tool for provoking maturity and empathy in its reader. The maturity of her society and the creation of a sense of community, a direct result of her trauma, can then be seen as a valuable path toward inspiring the reader to fight back against an immature or unethical society. The reader can view Katniss' sacrifice as inspiration to become active against their own society's shortcomings. Katniss' sacrifice of herself as a mature productive member of society directly helps the community that developed from the shared trauma. Her inability to return and her giving in to the social norms of having children sacrifices her in order for society to continue.

This example of the maturity plot, the gaining of Tribunella's traits in order to achieve melancholic maturity enables Panem to move forward in a melancholic fashion while the society is actually regressing the protagonist away from a healthy outlook into an imprisoned state of maturity, by which I mean that Katniss is trapped by the social expectations of maturity in a negative way, unlike what we see in the *Uglies* trilogy. The final

chapters of the book remove autonomy and choice from Katniss, forcing her into exile and into a heteronormative relationship she was very clear that she did not want. This disempowerment of the main character means that there are other ways to achieve and then move past Tribunella's outlined maturity plot.

**Moving Forward**

Now that we've established the basic dystopian maturity narrative, we can move on to other examples of this type of story and the possible effects on readers, or the potential for teaching it in such a way as to have an impact on its readers. Katniss as an example of a disempowered protagonist in the common maturity plot opens the way for us to explore how other authors have concluded the maturity plot, specifically in *Uglies* and *Divergent*. In recognizing what is happening in each trilogy, we as educators can steer the discussion and exploration of our students in such a way to foster specific impacts and insights. We know that literature has an impact on the reader, and by creating teaching plans that specifically aim to provide learning goals that help foster insight into how sacrifice works in a student's real life, we help them mature in a way that benefits our entire culture by focusing on the common good, instead of a self-absorbed mentality.

## Chapter Two: Exploring How Literary Sacrifice Can Affect Young Adult Readers

The purpose of young adult literature that focuses on and represents trauma is to expose the reader to trauma, in a way traumatizing them without having them fully be impacted by trauma. Tribunella argues that as a society we can see trauma both literary and actual, in the form of loss which all children experience (loss of a stuffed animal, a grandparent, or loss of their child body) as necessary for a child to grow into an adult who wants to participate in and aid the community. We see this process of maturity in young readers who have read *Harry Potter*. In a 2014 study, young people who had read the entire *Harry Potter* series were found to be more able to empathize with groups of people outside their own base of awareness, specifically that people who had read *Harry Potter* and absorbed his treatment of marginalized groups were then able to be more accepting of marginalized groups in their own society (Vezzali, et al.). Readers of *Harry Potter* were able to directly apply the concepts of embracing those from groups outside of one's experience to their own real-life interactions. The study emphasizes that in some cases, the application of embracing marginalized groups was done as a way for the reader to distance their connection to the negative character or villain's way of thinking (Voldemort in this example) in order to align with the hero's way of thinking. In other words, the reader wanted to be accepting of others the way that Harry Potter the character was and they wanted to make sure they did not sympathize with the way that Voldemort thought of and treated those who were different than him. The importance of this finding is too broad to cover in just in one dissertation, but it bears repeating that literature has an impact on the reader and that impact can change how they interact with other people. It wasn't just the ability to see other stigmatized groups that changed, but the ability to see others' perspectives in general, a component of empathy, that was improved, "it should be noted that, although we found that the effects of story reading

on out-group attitudes were allowed by increased perspective taking toward stigmatized groups, story reading may have increased participants' general ability to take the perspective of others" (Vezzali, et al.). Thus, reading fiction improves daily interaction, by giving the reader knowledge of how others may think differently, decide differently, or experience differently. This concept of fiction being the medium through which we teach empathy is necessary because it removes real life marginalized groups from the situation, so that broader concepts of inclusion and acceptance can be taught without specific topics and their inherent stereotypes. The study explains:

> Since many fantasy novels do not explicitly refer to any type of real group or category, they address general issues of prejudice in an indirect way, thus overcoming the barrier of direct and explicit attempts to modify out-group attitudes, which can precipitate people's defensive reactions and are subject to political correctness. (Vezzali, et al.)

The fact that the trauma and the interaction with marginalized groups takes place entirely outside of a students' reality gives them leeway to accept the overall themes, without belittling specific prejudices the student may have internalized in their life. For example, a teacher trying to explain that prejudice against people with HIV is wrong may encounter students that already have a bias against people with HIV, but by showing how Harry treats werewolves as a separate issue, the student may come to be more empathetic of those with HIV on their own. They are able to make connections without having to specifically question their own belief system. In short, fiction is less threatening and thus more able to work as a tool to promote community and remove prejudice. It was suggested by the study that readers of *Harry Potter* were better able to understand the two sides of the gay marriage debate and relate the AIDS epidemic in the 80s to the werewolf curse and in fact, the study

directly correlated empathy with homosexuals and refugees with exposure to the *Harry Potter* series (Vezzali, et al.). Those readers were better able to translate the fictional world directly into empathy and sympathy in the real world. Exposure to fictional trauma then becomes necessary in order to create empathy and empathy is necessary in creating members of society who work together, rather than against each other.

**Sacrifice in American Culture**

The concept of needing a sacrifice in order to create social change is seen in both literature and our American culture. Throughout our history, it has taken one or a few people making a stand and being sacrificed to create greater change. When we think of great monumental societal change, we think of those who were sacrificed to ensure that change. This sacrifice is not always a physical one but can come in many forms. However, Danielle Allen claims that sacrifice is necessary to democracy:

> Of all the rituals relevant to democracy, sacrifice is preeminent. No democratic citizen, adult or child, escapes the necessity of losing out at some point in a public decision…
>
> But sacrifice is a special sort of problem in a democracy. Democracies are supposed to rest on consent and open access to happiness for their citizens. In the dreamscape of democracy, for instance a la Rousseau, every citizen consents to every policy with glad enthusiasm. No one ever leaves the public arena at odds with the communal choice; no one must accept political laws or suffer the imposition of laws to which she has not consented. But that is a dream. An honest account of collective democratic action must begin by acknowledging that communal decisions inevitably benefit some citizens at the expense of others, even when the whole community

> generally benefits. Since democracy claims to secure the good of all citizens, those people who benefit less than others from particular political decisions, but nonetheless accede to those decisions preserve the stability of political institutions. Their sacrifice makes collective democratic action possible. (28-29)

The very concept of sacrifice for the common good is woven into the fabric of our communities and government. In order to have a democratic society, it is necessary for those within society to accept that they will have to sacrifice what they feel is best for a common consensus, which seems to be an idea that has faltered in recent political times. Something many people are unable to accept is the idea of sacrificing one's own opinion or point of view to the decision or desire of the masses, looking to allow people to pursue their own ideals of happiness, whether or not they line up with yours. Instead, such people demand that everyone live according to how they believe life should be lived, disallowing others from living as they would chose. The concept of sacrifice that works towards a common good, allowing your vote to not mean you dictate the result and accepting the result if what you voted for isn't chosen is necessary for a society in which everyone has a say. The necessity of people voluntarily sacrificing themselves in this way for the common good is key to pursuing an empathetic and ethical community.

These dystopian trilogies exaggerate the consequences for not allowing citizens to have a say in their country and focus on the uniformity and selfishness that transforms into oppressive government. By reading them, we can see and examine the potential consequences of a society that does not embrace the sacrifice inherent in allowing voting, putting these societies in comparison to our own supposedly democratic government draws parallels. Allen writes of democratic government:

> Democracy is not a static end state that achieves the common good by assuring the same benefits or the same level of benefits to everyone, but rather a political practice by which the diverse negative effects of collective political action, and even of just decisions, can be distributed equally, and constantly redistributed over time, on the basis of consensual interactions. The hard truth of democracy is that some citizens are always giving things up for others. Only vigorous forms of citizenship can give a polity the resources to deal with the inevitable problem of sacrifice. (29)

Sacrifice is then necessary to create redistribution of benefits, making sure that while some percent of the population, but not the same people will always be sacrificing, the act of participating or understanding what the common good is makes the act of sacrifice easier to accept. When one party or group is unfairly required to make all the sacrifices, such as those in poverty for example, in time members of that group will develop hostility and distance, eventually leading to rebellion. However, "vigorous forms of citizenship" may very well look like activists marching against political decisions they disagree with in order to be sure that decision making is redistributed in such a way that the need for sacrifice is not the burden of one single group.

Then clearly, this concept of prevalent sacrifice in order to make sure things are redistributed equally, so that no one group is forced to give up every time is also recognizable in how a society matures. More conversations between different groups, the recognition of how different groups have been forced to sacrifice in the past, and a move toward making the sacrifices equitable is how a society grows through the years. A society that cannot do that will be overthrown and reworked by those who have had to sacrifice too much and for too long, as we saw in *The Hunger Games*, but also in our own nation's history and countless others who ended up in civil wars. Sacrificing for the common good or to

fight against a government or ruling body that has forced too much sacrifice is inevitable. Sacrifice being necessary to a community is clearly a theme in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, as well as the idea that when a community has been asked to sacrifice too much, they rebel against the those who only take without giving. In order to prepare the generations to come after us, we ask the citizens to accept the idea of sacrifice, or as Allen puts it:

> We now see that citizenship, in contrast, is the practice of attending to the losses that produced the bottom line, and of negotiating both our status as one another's mainstays and the need for taking turns at losses as well as gains. Not only decision makers, but also citizens themselves have to cope with the losses of others suffered for the good of the whole. Since the entire citizenry is implicated in networks of gain and loss, its members all share responsibility for resisting the corrosion of trust. Here the central question emerges: What approach to loss in politics is compatible with working to sustain networks of democratic trust over the long-term? Trust is not something that politicians alone can create. It grows only among citizens as they rub shoulders in daily life…
>
> We teach our children, "Don't talk to strangers!" in order to protect them from dangers. But democracy requires vulnerability before one's fellow citizens. How can we teach children, as they begin to near adulthood, to develop countervailing habits that allow them to talk to strangers? (48-49)

The need for sacrifice is unavoidable, but there are unethical groups that continue to require the sacrifices of everyone other than them. What Allen suggests is that by getting to know those outside your primary group, understanding different ways of living and pursuing happiness, we as citizens become more willing to sacrifice for those unlike ourselves. In short, it is necessary to practice empathy, find ways to see others as part of our community,

rather than different from us. Sacrifice is acceptable to us only when we understand those we are sacrificing for.

If this concept of sacrifice within democratic societies, and primarily within American society is so prevalent, why is it written about in contemporary literature? Because as our literature, purposefully written for young adults, continues to expose the reader to trauma for the purpose of creating empathy, this genre has the weight of inspiring activism as well. From empathy can come a desire to live in a society that includes and cares for everyone, not just those on one's economic, racial, or educational lines. Shared trauma creates that shared community, as we saw in *The Hunger Games*. The rise in modern activists, young adults willing to protest against injustice and inequality has come out of a tradition of current literature that tells them, you can make a difference. Your sacrifice can mean change; it can overcome the status quo. These books, specifically the dystopias, tell the reader that change comes from within the society, within themselves.

**The Power of a Female Protagonist**

It is worth mentioning again that all the dystopian young adult trilogies that create change in the society (or attempt to) have female protagonists. In dystopian trilogies with male protagonists, such as *The Maze Runner*, society doesn't change; the protagonist escapes the dystopia to form a new society, as opposed to fixing something that was wrong with the old one. Even in older classic single novel dystopias, such as *Brave New World* or *1984*, the male protagonist doesn't change society; *Brave New World* has John first remove himself from society then hang himself because he got caught up in the culture again and *1984* has Winston give in to the dystopia, aligning himself with Big Brother. It is worth noting that *The Handmaid's Tale*, another canonical dystopia although not a trilogy, but one with a female

protagonist, ends with the society changing even though the fate of the main character is unknown. As this change is only alluded to by historians looking back on the society, this book is not a direct example of society changing due to the female protagonist.

With this knowledge, perhaps it bears examining what it is about the sacrifice of young women that we find so conducive to the changing of society. There's a history certainly; the concept of sacrificing a young female virgin to a volcano in order to gain peace is an old tale. All three of our protagonists are virgins when the trilogy begins and *Divergent* is the only trilogy where it's understood that Tris is no longer one when she dies. This may tie into the myth that the girl who gives up her virginity is no longer a worthy sacrifice, thereby explaining why the change in society comes with so many narrative structural issues. However, these are issues on the periphery of this work, although ripe with ideas and further research angles.

These questions also harken back to Tribunella's view of melancholic maturity being fulfilled by attaining masculine traits as opposed to feminine ones, which only leaves the conclusion that female protagonists must achieve masculine traits, but without being male, since actual male characters do not create social change. This suggests that a female reader also must assume these masculine traits if they are to achieve social change, but troublingly, it also suggests that change only comes from masculine reactions to loss. As we see this maturity achieved in *Uglies*, Tally is able to choose her own path afterward, in opposition to the conclusion of *The Hunger Games*. Tally can enter or leave society as she chooses, unlike the exile faced by Katniss. This achievement of masculine traits frees Tally while it traps Katniss even though both characters end up forcing their societies to mature as well. *Uglies* therefore becomes a representation of how empowering melancholic maturity can be while

*The Hunger Games* serves as an example of how melancholic maturity can be limited by excessive trauma.

### ***Uglies*** **Trilogy**

In the previous chapter, we saw how the sacrifice of the matured, typically female, protagonist, is necessary in order to create social change. Katniss' sacrifice of her freedom and ability to make choices in her life ended with the death of Coin even while that death ensured the future of her society. However Katniss is relegated to a marginalized role due to her actions and also her trauma. The established maturity plot in *The Hunger Games* trilogy follows the pattern of: the protagonist achieves maturity and is then sacrificed to create a new society that is based on the ethics of the protagonist, without allowing her a role in the new regime. As we see the patterns and necessity in American culture to use trauma as a maturation technique, we see a less incapacitating example of using trauma to mature a character in the *Uglies* trilogy. The *Uglies* trilogy follows the maturity plot, but instead of disabling the protagonist at the end of the trilogy, or forcing her to assume a normal societal role, *Uglies* allows the protagonist the freedom to assume a guardian role of her society without rejoining it. Tally Youngblood suffers loss and disempowerment. However, in the end she chooses not to re-enter society and be tied to a place that once abused and dissected her, instead becoming a guardian of the wilderness. Unlike Katniss, she is not mature when the story begins, allowing her to attain full melancholic maturity over the course of the trilogy.

The main issue with Tally achieving maturity is the narration because she is removed from the situation by the third person limited narrative. Tally is not the narrator and that choice was probably made because she would be unreliable due to her mind being wiped at

the beginning of the second and third books. Either way, her maturity happens at a distance and through the lens of an external narrator. Another issue is that Tally's memories are altered first by her surgery to become pretty (which inhibits her ability to think critically and be anything other than pliant with authority) which happens between *Uglies* and *Pretties* and then her surgery to become special (which makes her a devoted foot solider to Dr. Cable and gives her fluctuating emotions, primarily rage and a superiority complex) which happens between *Pretties* and *Specials*. Both surgeries happen "off screen" and create a new character from an established character, which helps the reader understand the character as the same Tally from the previous books. Margolin explains:

> Normally, characters will identify themselves from the inside (the mental dimension), so that as long as they preserve their memory of past experiences they will think of themselves as the same continuing individual, even if their body is radically transformed….
>
> Conversely, a character with amnesia cannot establish continuity with any previous person stage, while to his world mates his sameness is assured because of physical continuity. Hence decisions about what constitutes sameness of character provide a major source of narrative interest and reader engagement. (75)

The character of Tally in the *Uglies* trilogy must then be considered carefully as to whether she is genuinely the same throughout the books, and what that difference means for the narration itself beyond having an unreliable third person narrator who is nevertheless identified as the same narrator from the previous book. Westerfeld seems to remove the narration from Tally precisely in order to circumvent the issues with her amnesia/mental alteration as well as use her to show maturity specifically. In short, this distance in the narrator's construction actually lends itself to the idea that the surgeries Tally undergoes are a

metaphor for adolescent growth in general by showing her actions as something the reader is viewing, instead of reading her thoughts. By remaining distant from the character's thoughts, she exists as an object who is acted upon by the plot and never makes the narrative untrustworthy, the way it is in *The Hunger Games* where we only have Katniss' perspective and experience. The one time we see Tally's words, in her epilogue message sent to the cities and Shay, all of the traits of Tribunella's melancholic maturity are borne out. We see that Tally has achieved this melancholic maturity, but chosen a different path, rather than return to her city. Because Tally is shown to achieve this type of maturity, both societies she involves herself with are able to show the same type of maturity.

In other words, the maturity attained by Tally is also echoed in the two cities she comes into contact with, her first representing the city controlled by Dr. Cable's machinations and the second Diego, a looser, more open-minded sanctuary city. In Dr. Cable's city, maturity is doled out to the citizens when they reach a specific age with only those who perform emergency or problem solving based jobs (doctors, teachers, EMTs) permitted to exist with their brains intact. This limiting of maturity can be seen as symbolic of school or a teenager's experience of their parents' rules. In opposition, Diego is where citizens can choose how they live. The ending of *Specials* puts them at war, representative of Tally's own war to recover herself and her moral code from the multiple ways her brain has been altered against her own will. In the end, both cities become places where people can choose their own appearances and their own minds, rather than being subject to brain lesions that control their emotions. Several groups actually strike out and begin communities in the wild. This freedom reflects Tally's own freedom to choose her path moving forward, unlike Katniss who is put on trial and exiled.

Unlike Katniss, Tally doesn't begin the trilogy with any of the traits listed by

Tribunella. This means that she develops the melancholic maturation outlined by Tribunella over the course of the trilogy. The purpose of her achieving this maturation doesn't end with Tribunella's definition, as Tally moves beyond his melancholic maturation into a form of maturity that she chooses, rather than one chosen by her society. In the beginning, Tally is established as a child relatively quickly, "But nothing had been beautiful since Peris turned pretty. Losing your best friend sucks, even if it's only for three months and two days" (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 3). Tally's focus is on her friendships and waiting to turn pretty, an advancement toward adulthood understood in her city as the next step toward adulthood. Being forbidden from taking the next step is a denial of being allowed to grow up and join the adult society. Unlike Katniss, who has been forced to mature due to the loss of her father, Tally is still young and evolves to maturity in ways that demonstrate Tribunella's traits, however she is traumatized beyond that due to the constant loss of memory and self. The first time we are introduced to her, she is sneaking out to see her friend Peris, breaking the rules in a very childish way, which is exacerbated when she realizes that the scar she and Peris bound their friendship to had been removed when he was made Pretty:

> "They took it away."
>
> "Of course they did, Squint. All my skin's new."
>
> Tally blinked. She hadn't thought of that.
>
> [Peris] shook his head. "You're such a kid still." (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 18)

Westerfeld establishes that society considers maturity to be achieved once a person is made pretty and joins the adult community across the river, but also when they stop playing tricks and settle into their pre-made life. As far as the traits go, Tally is not serious, responsible, knowing, or experienced yet. She may be ethical, but she currently breaks the rules. She cannot yet be hard working, as her age group is not given a job in this society. In regard to

the last trait, Tally develops heteronormatively gendered relationships with David in the first book and then Zane in the second and third. Her progression through the traits is linear through the trilogy.

In the beginning of the trilogy, Tally rebels against her society out of fear, showing us that her character is more focused on fitting into her accepted role and assuming a typical melancholic maturity than on fighting back against an inequality. Those feelings of pushing back against her government's unethical treatment of its citizens only come later when she becomes knowing and experienced. Westerfeld sets her up as someone who starts out by breaking the rules in minor ways, which leads to her eventual development in breaking the rules to change society. An example of this initial sense of Tally as someone who flouts the rules while still remaining within social expectations is when she feels left behind by her best friend. She seeks him out in his new life, despite it being forbidden for those who haven't turned sixteen and made pretty to cross into the town. Her own actions worry her:

> This wasn't like being busted for "forgetting" her ring, skipping classes, or tricking the house into playing her music louder than allowed. Everyone did that kind of stuff, and everyone got busted for it. But she and Peris had always been very careful about not getting caught on these expeditions. Crossing the river was serious business. (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 7)

Tally is shown as slightly nervous about crossing into New Pretty Town, but is drawn to her friend; in order to feel like she's still a part of his life, she breaks the rules. Tally's minor rebellion is a symbol of what's to come. One of Tally's major weaknesses throughout the trilogy is that she is constantly trying to fit in and do what is expected of her, while realizing that she never does feel that she fits in. In other words, unlike Katniss' open rebellion and disgust for her government, Tally truly does want to be a good member of her society, but

her very nature and her fear of loneliness leads her to rebellion. These maturity traits develop over the course of the trilogy as we will see in the smaller close reading of *Uglies* which follows.

**The Absence of the Seriousness Trait Until the End of the Trilogy**

Tally never displays the trait of seriousness early in the book as most of her reactions to things are referred to as immature. Tally's development of the traits seems to come hand in hand with her relationship to Zane, which begins in the second book *Pretties*. As established in the previous chapter, Tribunella defines serious as not being emotionally volatile (xxi). Tally achieves these traits in various places throughout the trilogy, but almost always in conjunction with Zane's influence on her. In the *Uglies* trilogy and due to the many alterations of her mind and body, Tally always experiences mood swings, especially great anger or confusion. These mood swings are symptoms of the changes made to her body against her will, reflecting the growth process for all teenagers. The narrator drives home how this Tally, the memories she has at any given point are her personal reality, "Tally's memories were perfect now, not like when she'd been a bubblehead, confused and muddled all the time" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 8). She remembers Zane and misses him, but her joining Shay's Cutters was not something the Tally Youngblood character from the previous book would have done, so readers know that her beliefs are altered, even as the narrator emphasizes Tally's own faith in what she's feeling. The narrator gives us hints as to what she's been through and what has been taken from her:

> Tally's operation had taken the longest. She'd done a lot of very average things in her past, and it had taken awhile for the doctors to strip away all the built-up guilt and shame. Random leftover emotions could leave your brain muddled, which wasn't

> very special. Power came from icy clarity, from knowing exactly what you were, from cutting. (Westerfeld, *Specials* 10)

The previous versions of Tally found Smoke on her own, helped to develop a cure for the brain lesions, and worked on helping people to escape from the city. Those events don't seem average, but someone who had those events removed or altered to have less significance might say something like that. It is hard to attribute the trait of seriousness to someone who is constantly rewired specifically to react unpredictably, but Tally does achieve this trait when she forces herself in calmness after Zane dies:

> She fought an urge to run blindly through the blackness, destroying everything she could get her hands on, tearing her way through the ceiling and then the next floor, upward until she reached the open sky.
>
> But Tally forced herself to sit down on the floor, breathing deep and trying to stay calm. (Westerfeld, *Specials* 333)

For the first time, Tally does not give in to the burst of aggression or sensation that she has been programmed with, achieving maturity in this trait, only achieved by the loss of Zane and the knowledge that she caused a war.

**The Trait of Responsibility Developing as a Constant Through Surgeries**

Where seriousness seems to be the character trait related to controlling and accepting emotions, responsibility as a trait is more an acknowledgement of what needs to be done and doing it, even if it's unpleasant. At the end of the first book, we see Tally feeling responsible for the destruction of Smoke, although this only fits into the aspect of Tribunella's trait that implies responsibility for others, this moment sums up Tally's first feelings of being responsible for her own actions, a step toward adult responsibility, but not a complete one,

as she still lies to avoid full responsibility, "In that moment, Tally made a deal with herself. Eventually, she would have to tell David what she had unwittingly done. Not now, but someday. When she'd made things better, fixed part of what she had destroyed, maybe then he would understand" (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 322). She knows she has to clean up after her decisions, but she is not mature enough to take responsibility for them yet. At the end of *Uglies*, she decides to let herself be turned into a pretty in order to let a cure be tested on her (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 414). It is her penance for getting Smoke raided. Tally also reveals to David that she was the reason Smoke was invaded and the reader moves into the second book with Tally becoming a pretty and beginning to embrace the trait of responsible, but not fully embracing it yet.

In the beginning of the second book, responsibility goes out the window, as pretties are built to be vapid and party. Tally does develop a sense of responsibility toward Zane and when she realizes that the cure has damaged him, she feels responsible, "The sickening feeling in Tally's stomach redoubled as the realization sunk home: this was *her* fault. She had swallowed the pill that could have kept Zane from this, the cure for the cure" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 335). Zane's life and health become her responsibility, leading to her staying behind with him to be re-captured by Special Circumstance and leading her to focus on him in the third book, after she's turned Special.

Becoming a Special means Tally views herself as superior to everyone else, but she can't let go of Zane, even though she no longer views him the same way (Westerfeld, *Specials* 82). She gets Shay to agree to turn him into a Special so that they can be together, but very quickly recognizes that being a Special or forcing Zane to become one would be wrong, "I don't want this," she said softly. Her stomach was uneasy and the moonlight on the water was too bright, its lines too sharp in her perfect vision. "I don't want to be this way"

(Westerfeld, *Specials* 92). Tally is aware that she's been fundamentally altered and that her perception is different. She's been surgically traumatized into following Dr. Cable's plan and Shay's missions. Something has made her different, but just like in *Pretties*, she begins to question what she's been told, "What did Dr. Cable do to us, Shay? Do we have some kind of special lesions in our brains? Something that makes everyone else look pathetic? Like we're better than them?" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 92). She doesn't buy into the idea that Zane is someone less than her because he's not a special, the way the rest of the Cutters have elevated themselves above the pretties and uglies. Tally's trait of responsibility makes her examine her own thoughts and feelings in light of being forced into being special. Her ability to separate her knowledge of how Zane is from what she's been brainwashed to see is a conflict that the reader has been a part of from the beginning, but the awareness of the character knowing that how she views things is artificial shows us how damaged she's been, but how capable of getting herself back she's become, "Deep inside herself were threads of permanence, the things that had remained unchanged whether she was ugly or pretty or special—and love was one of them" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 95). This consistency can also be seen in the knowing trait, but it is her love of Zane and the responsibility she feels for him that allows her to question what she feels.

Tally also feels responsibility for the war between her City and Diego, considering that Shay and Tally are the ones who melted the City's armory in their quest to get Zane made into a Special (Westerfeld, *Specials* 134). Back at home, Dr. Cable's been given control of the military of their city because she convinced the City Council that Diego was behind the attack on the Armory. There are hovercraft coming to attack Diego and it's their fault as Shay tries to warn Tally, "Tonight we have to help them here, Tally, we have to do whatever we can. And tomorrow, you and I need to go home and stop this war we started." "*War*? But

cities don't…" Tally's voice faded… A few seconds later, the armada overhead opened fire" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 275). Tally and Shay's reckless stunt in the Armory gave Dr. Cable an excuse for starting a war with Diego, and because other cities aren't sure about having a fully cured city, they'll let it happen and see how it turns out. Tally and Shay are responsible for the Armory's destruction, but the alterations that Dr. Cable made to Tally and Shay are the reason they were both so selfishly reckless as to attempt it in the first place. However, Tally and Shay blame themselves, because they made the decision to do it, never mind how they were enabled, "For a dizzying moment she remembered what Shay had said: "*It's all our fault, Tally. Yours and mine.*" She shook her head slowly. What she was seeing couldn't be true. Wars didn't happen anymore" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 279-80). Dr. Cable based all of her manipulation of Tally on the idea that human beings were dangerous because they couldn't be allowed to return to their old ways. The old ways of clear-cutting trees and warring against each other were the downfall of the Rusties and supposedly, the specials were created to make sure that didn't happen again. However, here is Dr. Cable taking her city back to the Rusty days by declaring war on another city, by attempting to destroy another city, even though she's supposed to be above that mindset. She's not trying to save anyone; she's simply trying to be in control and this basic discrepancy in what Dr. Cable expects manages to help Tally recognize her own responsibility and more fully assume the trait.

Zane's life is her responsibility, which is why when he dies in the attack on Diego, Tally lets go of what she thinks is selfishness and focuses on making the world a better place, **"**This was all her fault. She'd coaxed him here to become what *she* wanted; she had wandered around the city instead of watching over him; she had started the war that had torn him apart. This was the final price of her massive ego" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 306). Zane's death sobers her, teaches her that she is responsible for more than just herself, and that her

greatest responsibility is to stop Dr. Cable from waging war. Tribunella asserts that maturity comes with the acceptance of one's responsibility to one's environment (xx). Tribunella also argues that the specific nature of achieving manhood "involves the continued survival of the family, both their literal health and their existence as a coherent unit" (xx). Tally feels responsibility to her city, develops her ethics in freeing people from the brain lesions they've been subject to, and fulfills her own maturity by deciding to be honest and use her alterations to foster the continued survival of her community, a decision she never would have come to without her relationship with Zane who has emphasized the importance of working toward a common good. However, this responsibility also cripples her emotionally, as she no longer feels that she has a place within her own society, which we will see in examining her final letter to the reader.

**The Problem with the Trait of Knowing in an Amnesiac Character**

In opposition to the trait of responsible, the trait of knowing in the *Uglies* trilogy is problematic because of the shifting mental state and memories of the narrator. Every book we have a narrator whose mind has been altered against her will and it is what she knows that breaks through to return her to herself. Westerfeld seems to emphasize that there is a core of who we are, even altered against our will that defines us and gives us the option to get through any trauma done to us. In fact, this loss of body and mind ties directly into Tribunella's concept of maturation:

> Growing up involves not only psychological development, but also physical, bodily change… I claim that we can understand the process of maturation as one in which the child's very body is perpetually being lost to the child as that body changes and develops. Therefore, these narratives of love and loss can be read as dramatizing the

> relation of loss that one experiences with one's own body, thereby assisting children with mastering that physically bewildering relationship by providing a story that reflects their experience of perpetually "losing" the body that is always in flux. (xxxvii)

Thus, Tally's loss of self and body can be seen as the growth process itself. In fact, because she is able to reclaim parts of her memory and self, she mimics the loss of outgrowing one's body and childish thoughts as well. She knows herself and what she believes in, which allows her to mature even though her own emotions have been manipulated. She even reflects on how innocent she was in the beginning, "Now she saw tricks for what they were: a way for uglies to blow off steam until they reached sixteen, nothing but a meaningless distraction until their mutinous natures were erased by adulthood, and the operation" (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 360). Her society has kept people from making their own decisions through the brain lesions, but now Tally has matured enough not to want that type of law-abiding life. She knows that her government is not working to keep people free but keep them caged.

In the first book, Tally only begins to see the limitations of her own city after joining the Smoke community. However, the trait of knowing has given her a glimpse into another way of life and Tally no longer finds the idea of becoming pretty to be as much of a draw as it once was:

> Tally would be pretty right now, high up in a party tower with Peris and Shay and a bunch of new friends at this very moment. But the image in her mind didn't give Tally the thrill it usually did; it just fell flat, like a song she'd heard too many times. (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 250).

Tally has sacrificed her old life to come here and save Shay from a life that Tally was convinced harmed the wilderness and her city, but now she is content with the life she sees

around her. After making this revelation, Tally finds out from David's parents the truth about the pretty surgery. Nearly everyone who becomes pretty has lesions on their brain; the only exceptions are those with jobs where they are required to react quickly like paramedics or doctors. Being made pretty doesn't just make you attractive, but your brain is altered. Although Tally has already made her peace with staying, this new knowledge deeply affects her. Smoke exists as a community of people who have not been mentally altered, which is why their city is so eager to track them down. This new form of the knowing trait changes her ethics.

Just like adolescents, as the body changes, so does the mind, but this is reflected in *Uglies* by being changed and conditioned without your own knowledge, "Well you'll be growing up soon." A chill went down Tally's spine at the words. To Dr. Cable, "growing up" meant having your brain changed (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 307). This quote is both a terrifying statement based on the surgery, but also a commentary about how getting older involves changing how you think about your position in general. We see the results of the surgery when Tally reconnects with Shay who has become pretty, mentally and physically. The change in Shay horrifies Tally, who now understands what the surgery truly means for her:

> "Yeah, I know what you mean. But that was all ugly stuff. Crazy love and jealousy and needing to rebel against the city. Every kid's like that. But you grow up, you know?"
>
> "You grew up because of an operation? Doesn't that strike you as weird?"
>
> "It wasn't because of the operation."
>
> "Then why?"
>
> "It was just good to come home, Tally. It made me realize how crazy the whole Smoke thing was."

> “What happened to biting and kicking?”
>
> "Well, it took a few days to sink in, you know."
>
> "Before or after you became pretty?"
>
> Shay went silent again. Tally wondered if you could talk somebody out of their brain damage. (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 394-5)

A baseline for Tally's ethics is established by her realization that giving teenagers brain surgery in order to remove thoughts of rebellion and make them avoid confrontation, as well as become more agreeable toward the government is wrong. Taking choice away from someone is the wrong decision and Tally knows that, which is what stays with her.

Tally becomes pretty by choice at the end of the first book and *Pretties* opens with her life revolving around parties and fun, in short, all the vapid pleasures she wanted so badly at the beginning of *Uglies*, but eventually came to despise. Reading about Tally as a pretty makes it clear that the lesions have taken hold and she is not the same character. Tally has been fundamentally altered and she no longer has feelings for David, or even appears to think about him. However, even in her altered state, she does not fit into the Pretty lifestyle; she does not conform to society. Tally is not empty-headed enough; she questions things and others notice, "Shay's smile returned, and Tally breathed a sigh of relief, still not believing herself. It was the kind of mistake only brand-new pretties made, and she'd had the operation over a month ago. Why was she still saying bogus things?" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 9). Tally makes social gaffs and cannot seem to be as "bubbly," the slang word used by her friends, lost in a sense of vacant interest in surface pleasures. The trait of knowing that she developed in the first book negates her ability to embrace the pretty lifestyle. There's also clear indication that her memories have been twisted, "The smell of the old, handmade sweater brought back their time outside of the city, days of backbreaking work and nights

staying warm by the campfire, mingled with memories of ugly faces that still brought her awake screaming sometimes" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 21). Strangely in the narrative, even while Tally is wishing to stop thinking about Smoke and her memories from there, she is working to get accepted to the only clique in New Pretty Town who are interested in and fascinated by her stories about that time. If she truly wanted to escape the memories, she could join a different clique. The trait of knowing in Tally recognizes that there are good memories in what happened, even if she can't entirely admit it.

Even Dr. Cable recognizes that there is a part of Tally that resists the brain lesions and this makes Tally an asset to her, rather than someone to be considered dangerous:

> "I've always admired your survival instinct, Tally. You were always a good little traitor when you had to be."
>
> "Uh, thanks…I guess."
>
> Cable nodded. "And now it turns out you have more of a brain than I gave you credit for. You resist conditioning very well… Somewhere in there, you're still a tricky little ugly, aren't you? Most impressive. I could use you, I think."
>
> Tally felt a flush of anger, a fire inside her head. "Um, like, didn't you *already* use me?"
>
> "So, you do remember. Superb." (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 132)

Clearly, Tally's ability to shake off her prettiness is a valuable asset to Dr. Cable, but also emphasizes Tally's survival instincts. Just like Katniss, Tally is capable of going along with the current regime if it means that she and her friends are unharmed. Something about Tally's trait of knowing allows her to continue to understand the problems with being pretty or at least struggle to clear her mind. Dr. Cable makes Tally an offer to work for her. Unlike President Snow with Katniss, Cable recognizes that getting Tally on her side would be

beneficial. Of course, Dr. Cable doesn't have the same measure of control over her city that President Snow had, but Dr. Cable has managed to utilize the people who resist her lesions:

> "You're offering me a…job? As a Special?"
>
> "Not a job. A whole new being." Dr. Cable said each word with deliberate care. "You can be one of us."
>
> Tally was breathing hard, her pulse pounding through her entire body… "You think I'd work for you?"
>
> "Consider your other choice, Tally. Spending your life looking for cheap thrills, managing a few moments at a time truly awake. Never clearing your head completely. But you'd make a fine Special… That's why we let uglies play their little tricks—to see who's the cleverest. To see which of you fights their way out of the cage. That's what your rebellion is all about, Tally—graduating to Special Circumstances."
>
> (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 134)

Dr. Cable is making it clear to the reader and Tally that she's keeping an entire population sedated and brainless. Tally is one of the few resisting the control and that qualifies her to police the other citizens. However, the problem with Dr. Cable's vision of keeping people sedated is that it violates Tally's ethics, something that later allows Tally to fight off the surgery. Becoming a special means that Tally would be sent to track down the New Smokies, but her rejection of Dr. Cable's ethics is shown early. This alludes to her trait of ethical, but it is Tally's specific ability to be knowing that brings about this conversation. Even further, we're given a glimpse at why Dr. Cable believes the population needs to be controlled:

> "Why do you do it to pretties? Why change their brains?"…
>
> "*We* are under control, Tally, because of the operation. Left alone, human beings are a plague. They multiply relentlessly, consuming every resource, destroying everything

> they touch. Without the operation, human beings always become Rusties… Outside of our self-contained cities, humanity is a disease, a cancer on the body of the world. But we… *we* are the cure." (Westerfeld *Pretties* 136-7)

This returns us to the lessons of the previous book which explained that the human beings in the prior culture, the Rusties, destroyed the world with their clear cutting and fuel use until they were nearly wiped out by fuel-eating bacteria. Under those circumstances, Dr. Cable's belief seems noble. Human beings need to be controlled because if left to run rampant, they ruin things. This angle of thought is a manipulation as well, because Tally's brain has been altered with the pretty surgery and she doesn't remember what it was like in Smoke or the efforts the settlers of Smoke made to survive off the land without doing too much damage to the wilderness. The problem is also that controlling an entire population without their permission is unethical. The two traits of knowing and ethical are why Tally refuses this position, because she knows that in spite of Dr. Cable's claims, controlling people against their will is unethical.

We can see that pieces of Tally that she truly "knows" remain with her through the surgeries in *Pretties* and *Specials*. We also see this when she has finally broken through being pretty-minded and tried to escape, "Who knew what Special Circumstances would do to her brain when they caught her again?" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 231). Tally knows that Dr. Cable will continue to alter her brain if given the opportunity, but the reasoning now seems to be so that Dr. Cable can control the narrative, or control Tally's story and allegiances. In fact, Tally has been able to rewrite her own brain and recover from the changes made to it during the surgeries, "Tally remembered how her "cure" always seemed to come and go. She'd had to work to stay bubbly, more like the other Crims than Zane. "He's right, Tally," Maddy said. "Somehow, you cured yourself"" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 337). Tally now feels responsible for

Zane's brain damage because he took the pill that caused the nanos to eat away at his brain, all because she was too scared to do it alone. However, Tally's knowing herself is what caused her to fight off the lesions and become able to shake off the manipulations of the brain surgery. Zane also gives her more knowledge of what they're facing, fully maturing her, "Tally, everyone in the city is manipulated. The purpose of everything we've been taught is to make us afraid of change. I've been trying to explain it to David, how from the day we're born, the whole place is a machine for keeping us under control." She shook her head. "That doesn't make it right to betray your friends" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 342). Tally is unable to separate her own responsibility for her actions from the manipulations of the adults running her community, not yet recognizing that they too are responsible for their behavior. On the same point, she is beginning to understand that leaders have a responsibility to their community, an obligation that is not being fulfilled, because of the manipulations and lesions. Dr. Cable believes she is keeping her citizens sedated for their own good, but Tally knows that having a choice is the ethical option; Tally also knows that people have managed to live without lesions and not reverted to the Rusty way of doing things. A more ethical way, and a way that allows for everyone to gain the trait of knowing is to allow citizens in a culture a choice, but monitor the consequences, which is the role Tally ends up taking on at the end of the trilogy.

The plan to cure every one of the brain lesions is part of Tally's knowing, the need to right the wrongs created by taking away people's free will and even though Tally is captured again at the end of *Pretties*, she knows that the cure will happen without her, "And now that the cure had been tested, they could bring it to the city, and to other cities, and eventually everyone would be free. Maybe the city hadn't won, this time" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 364). However, this joy is short-lived as Tally is turned into a special in order to track down and

prevent the cure. Once again though, Tally's knowing that the city is wrong helps her combat the brainwashing they've done, although this rejection of her alterations starts as a focus on Zane. Her love of Zane seems to be the one thing they can't remove from her, "She just needed to see Zane again, and this weird feeling in her bones would go away" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 63). Seeing Zane gives her no comfort, but he does encourage her to use her knowledge to change herself back, "His gaze fixed on her. "You can do it again, Tally." "Do what?" she said. "Undo what they did to you. That's what my Crims are doing—rewiring themselves" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 85). Zane assumes Tally has the knowledge to fight, again, the brain damage done to her. It is Zane that returns her to her "known" self.

The final cementing of the knowing trait happens at the end of the book, where Tally knows that at some point, her society will begin to take over the planet again and cause damage, so she decides to guard against that possibility. She is incapable of living among the people who changed her so much or letting down her guard in case something like the lesions are used again against the community, so she appoints herself guard and lets the cities know, "*We'll be out here somewhere—watching. Ready to remind you of the price the Rusties paid for going too far*" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 372). Tally knows that she no longer belongs in the world of body alteration or even the cities that permitted their citizens to be brainwashed. She knows that she cannot trust other leaders to follow rational limits, so she appoints herself as a balance to their inevitable mistakes.

**The Trait of Experienced Achieved Through Tally's Perceptions of Others**

The "experienced" trait develops in the second book and unlike the other traits, is recognized when she is apart from Zane and meets someone new. Tribunella's definition of experienced states specifically that "[adults] have also done difficult things or survived

difficult circumstances, and their demeanor when encountering new or unfamiliar situations reflects this experience" (xxii). The first time Tally displays this trait is when her old childhood friend, Peris refuses to go with her when she escapes from the City: Peris is what Tally would have been if Dr. Cable hadn't forced her to find the Smoke:

> "But you and me, we're…" Tally's voice caught. She was about to say "best friends forever," but the old words wouldn't come anymore. Peris had never been to the Smoke, had never tangled with Special Circumstances, had never even been in trouble. Everything had always gone so smoothly for him. Their lives had been so different for so long. (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 229)

Peris didn't suffer through what Tally did; their experiences have so sharply divided them that Peris cannot summon the courage to try a new way of life yet. He was made pretty on schedule and lived his life in New Pretty Town only doing tricks because his friends in the Crims did. Tally only wanted to be pretty in the first book to join Peris, but their lives diverged so much that everything Tally went through changed her completely. She doesn't want to be pretty and stay in New Pretty Town, even having been made pretty didn't change her aversion to being controlled:

> "Why am I unhappy?" Tally repeated softly. "Because the city makes you the way *they* want you to be, Peris. And I want to be myself. That's why."
>
> He squeezed her shoulder and gave her a sad look. "But people are better now than they used to be. Maybe they have good reasons for changing us, Tally."
>
> "Their reasons don't mean anything unless I have a choice, Peris. And they don't give anyone a choice." (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 232)

This quote outlines Tally's rejection of Dr. Cable's offer, controlling people without their permission, no matter what good you're claiming to do it for, is wrong. Peris can't see that

because he's never known anything else which shows us how the difference in experiences has changed Tally toward maturity. This moment is when Tally gives up their friendship because she realizes that Peris may have been pretty brained even without the surgery, complacent and willing to do what his city wanted him to, but she could never fit into a society that takes away free will. This suggests that people may chose to go along with their societies' decisions even without the brain surgery, but as Peris does choose a life in the wilderness at the end of the book, we can recognize that perhaps Peris is simply scared here. His lack of experience is shown in opposition to Tally's ability to choose her own course.

Tally also displays this trait in the next section of *Pretties* when she meets Andrew, as she seems to know more and have experienced more that has affected her than he has, giving him an odd innocence she recognizes as not possessing herself anymore. It also positions her to recognize how different his experience and circumstances are from hers, using her knowledge to understand that her city is using Andrew's village as an experiment, positioning themselves as gods to the villagers, "The scientists who exploited these people had been doing so for a long time, and weren't above bringing in specials to shore up their authority. It seemed that challenging the gods was risky business" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 286). Tally is easily able to use her own experiences to recognize that what is happening is unethical, making her even more firmly against the actions her leaders take and aware of the abuses they've been committing. Andrew himself shows her that she has enabled him to grow:

> "When I came here as a boy, I felt the little men crawling inside me and wanted to run back home." He looked at her, still puzzled. "But you wanted to sling a rock at them. You don't know some things that every child knows, but you are so certain about the shape of this… planet. You act as if…" He trailed off, his knowledge of

> the city language failing him.
>
> "As if I see the world differently?"
>
> "Yes," he said softly, his intense expression deepening.
>
> Most likely, Tally thought, it had never occurred to him before now that people could see reality in completely different ways. Between surviving outsider attacks and getting enough food to live, villagers probably didn't have a lot of time for philosophical disagreements. (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 302-3)

Tally's experiences with the world and the knowledge she's been given are in direct contrast to how the villagers live, in direct opposition to what Tally has been taught her whole life is acceptable. The villagers fight each other, kill animals for food, and have no sense of privacy. Rather than seeing the situation as beneficial or research based, Tally sees it as experimentation on the unwilling, much like what has been done to her. In fact, the village is confirmed as the origin of the brain lesions, "This had been the place where the operation had been developed, from which the first test subjects had been drawn. The purpose of the brain lesions was to deter violence and conflict, so who better to experiment on than people caught up in an endless blood feud?" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 314). Tally's experiences mean that she understands the injustices being suffered by Andrew's village. In fact, this helps her build toward her distrust of leadership, which leads to her deciding not to return to the city at the end of the trilogy, but instead to stay and guard against future abuses, to make sure no one ever treats villagers as experimentation fodder again. Her experience shows her that humans will always end up doing something destructive, but that they should be given the choice.

**The Trait of Ethical as Tally Matures**

Directly related to both Tally becoming knowing and experienced is the trait of

ethical. In the beginning of the book, Tally mostly thinks about herself, traditional for a child and in fact, is told she is selfish several times by Shay. Tally herself does not yet possess the trait of ethical, or as Tribunella defines it, law-abiding, stating "children, in contrast [to adults], might break laws because they are immature and hence irresponsible and mischievous, but mature adults are supposed to have abandoned these qualities and become acclimated to the law and devoted to the community" (xxii). Tally does start the trilogy as a child, looking at Tribunella's definition. She performs the childish rebellion of sneaking across the river, and that is how she meets Shay in the first place. Both of them are uglies, fifteen-year olds who haven't received the surgery at sixteen that turns them into a "pretty." All of their friends have already received the surgery and gone on to join the society of pretties across the river, so they band together to wait out the time until they too can join grownup society. Shay, however, rejects the path set forth by the City. One afternoon, Tally begins to put together a visual representation of how Shay might look once she's turned pretty:

> "Shay! Come on. It's just for fun."
>
> "Making ourselves feel ugly is not fun."
>
> "We *are* ugly!"
>
> "This whole game is just designed to make us hate ourselves."
>
> Tally groaned and flopped back on her bed, glaring up at the ceiling. Shay could be so weird sometimes. She always had a chip on her shoulder about the operation, like someone was *making* her turn sixteen. "Right, and things were so great back when everybody was ugly. Or did you miss that day in school?"
>
> "Yeah, yeah, I know," Shay recited. "Everyone judged everyone else based on their appearance…"

"Yeah, and people killed one another over stuff like having different skin color." (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 44)

Shay already knows there is something wrong with the process of becoming pretty. The arguments that Tally makes about creating pretties seem straightforward. In order to eliminate hate and judgment based on appearance, everyone is altered at the age of sixteen to be visually pleasing. Shay doesn't want to be altered; she recognizes that the pretty surgery is simply another form of control. By being made pretty, she's at the mercy of what the doctors do to her. On another level, becoming pretty means removing a level of freedom that Shay has as an ugly and as a child. Becoming pretty means she has to fit into the vapid world of New Pretty Town. This leads the reader to question why the City can't simply educate people instead of cosmetically altering them? Shay's trait of ethical opposes Tally's in order to show the reader that there are problems with the surgery that Tally wants. Tally though, sees none of this. Her greatest wish is to become pretty and meet up with her friend Peris again. Perhaps the lack of family and closeness made Tally feel closer to her friends. Tally isn't sold on rebellion though. Unlike Katniss, she has bought into her society's rules, but her society offers them in a much better package: young pretties party all the time. Shay leads a reluctant Tally into more knowledge and the ethics that come from a different moral code, "I just want to show you something that's my idea of fun, Tally. Before we go all pretty and only get to have everybody else's idea of fun" (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 51). The level of control over their future lives implies there is a lot more to the society than we are shown by the narrative. Shay eventually runs away to join Smoke. Smoke was created as a place where people could simply live out their lives with no surgery or brain alteration, however Dr. Cable is looking to find and destroy this village, bringing everyone under her control through the pretty surgery.

Tally's moral code does not yet see how unethical it would be to reveal Smoke to the City and its soldiers, or rather she chooses to see it as loyalty to her own City as opposed to a question of ethics. Tally rebels out of childishness, something that everyone does when they are an ugly, but when called upon to betray her friends and Smoke, she does it in order to adhere to the necessities of her culture:

> Either Tally infiltrated the Smoke and betrayed Shay, or she'd be an Ugly for life.
>
> "I have to think…"
>
> In close-up, it showed Tally as she looked right now: puffy-eyed and disheveled, exhaustion and red scratches marking her face, her hair sticking out in all directions, and her expression turning horrified as she beheld her own appearance.
>
> "That's you Tally. Forever."
>
> "Turn it off…"
>
> "Decide."
>
> "Okay I'll do it. Turn it off." (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 135)

Tally says yes in order to fit into society; she cannot allow herself to be separate from it, and thus she follows the orders from Dr. Cable to show them where Smoke is, an unethical decision. She is law-abiding now, but when she realizes that, like Katniss, the right thing to do is to rebel, she switches. Tribunella talks about this trait being about finding a common good, but Tally going to betray Smoke is not done for the common good. While Tally is law-abiding, she is not compliant with Tribunella's definition of what law-abiding means. This ties directly into her trait of responsible, shown above. She feels responsible for what happens to Smoke, thus making her develop her own set of ethics, independent of what her government tells her.

Smoke itself is a surprise to Tally, but she puts off activating the tracker that Dr. Cable forced on her, mostly because of social pressure. Tally still hasn't gotten over the desire to be acceptable, either by being pretty or just by fitting in, "Everyone laughed, and Tally felt herself enjoying the warmth of the group's attention… Tally was glad she hadn't activated the pendant yet. She could hardly sit here enjoying the Smokies' admiration if she'd just betrayed them all. She decided to wait until tonight, when she was alone" (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 206). Although this sounds like a childish thought, it is one that clearly lines up with Tally's mentality all along. She wants to be pretty in order to be part of her groups of friends, but out in Smoke, she can have friends without being pretty. She's also learning how much is outside of her own city:

> She wouldn't have traded anything for this moment, standing there and looking down at the plains spread out below. Tally had spent the last four years staring at the skyline of New Pretty Town, thinking it was the most beautiful sight in the world, but she didn't think so anymore. (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 209).

The narrative shows us how Tally's mentality is shifting and then David, the person who led Shay to Smoke reveals to her that he has never lived inside a city and that his parents reversed the pretty operation on themselves. This throws Tally even further off course:

> The Smoke wasn't just a hideout for assorted runaways, she realized now. It was a real town, a city in its own right. If Tally activated the tracker, it wouldn't just mean the end of Shay's big adventure. It would be David's home taken from him, his whole life stripped away. (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 219).

The character truly comes to understand that destroying this village is not just going to affect her desire to be pretty, nor is it just about Shay's rebellion. Smoke is about more than that;

it's about developing a different civilization than the one they live in and developing a set of ethics in how you as a citizen are treated.

Her distrust of the government and her development of her own ethics has been touched on in the sections on the traits of knowing and responsible, but specifically, Tally finds her own code of ethics that does not involve the experimentation or alteration of human beings without their consent. Finding Andrew's village and discovering that her city is using these people as guinea pigs makes her pity the people who live there, "Poor Andrew. His whole world was an experiment, and his father had died in a conflict that meant precisely nothing" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 314). While she starts with pity, this realization, that her government would sacrifice people who are beholden to them, would treat them as less than human, just furthers Tally's sense of what is ethical behavior. Meeting up with Andrew again, Tally realizes that even though she's been brainwashed again, she is still rebelling against the ethics of Dr. Cable and the government, "Do I still challenge the gods?"…The Cutters might be Specials, but over the past few days Tally Youngblood had reverted to her own nature: thoroughly Crim. "'Yes, I still challenge them," she said softly, realizing that it was true" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 162). In "challenging the gods," Tally rebels against the city and the manipulations put in place by its government. She continues to resist their ways of doing things, because she sees it as unethical.

However, it is Shay who brings Tally fully into the realization the Dr. Cable is using them, the specials, to start a war and prevent people from curing the lesions, "'You have to stop trying to run away, and face what we started" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 274). Being cured of the lesions helped Shay realize her part in starting the war between cities, but she must impress this idea upon Tally, especially considering that being cured seems synonymous with having a conscience, or having a code of ethics in regard to others, "Perhaps coming to

Diego, with all its messy discords and differences (and its absence of bubbleheads), had already started to make her a different person. If Zane was right, she was rewiring herself once again" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 291). Here, we see finally that Tally's trait of ethical, of being responsible for other people and your own actions is achieved and that this trait is what causes her to cure her own brain-washing. The importance of developing one's own code of ethics is so strong, that it can turn her into the person she's supposed to be.

It is important to note, that even at the end of trilogy, Tally does not agree to be law-abiding, but rather to hold the government to her concept of ethics. Her embodiment of the trait of law-abiding thus becomes more of an enforcer, rather than a citizen. She is aware, because of her knowledge, her sense of responsibility, but primarily because of her own ethics that the cities cannot be allowed to alter people against their will nor return to the days of the Rusties.

**The Pleasure in the Hard-Working Trait in Tally**

The trait of hard-working, as defined by Tribunella, can be seen in Tally from the second book, *Pretties*, on. While she does not hold a specific job, she does work hard to try and get away from her situation and help others. Tribunella explains that:

> Mature adults are never bored, nor do they indulge in leisure…Ideally, their work is physically strenuous, though sometimes intellectual work can be experienced or represented as physically strenuous as well. The key dimensions of hard work are time and effort. Mature, hard-working adults expend both conspicuously. (Tribunella xxiii)

Tally, as a Pretty, does indeed indulge in leisure, but since that is what her society expects from her, and that she then uses that expected leisure as a cover for hard work, I would

argue that she achieves this trait once she reaches the Smoke in *Uglies*. She discovers the joy in hard work, rather than the joy in leisure that she's expected to assume when she becomes pretty:

> As the days passed, Tally fell into the routines of the Smoke. There was something comforting about the exhaustion of hard work. All her life, Tally have been troubled by insomnia, lying awake most nights thinking about arguments she'd had, or wanted to have, or things she should have done differently. But here in the Smoke her mind shut off the moment her head hit the pillow… (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 229)

Early on, Tally learns that she enjoys hard work and that she is good at pushing forward with work in general. This acceptance of hard work serves her well, since she never feels comfortable with the life of leisure demanded of a pretty and ends up working hard to escape New Pretty Town, which eventually ends up with her trapped in an experimental section of the world. She continues to work toward fighting Dr. Cable, even after being turned into a special, but that falls more under the quality of mental work.

While Tally rewriting herself after each alteration, in *Pretties* and *Specials*, could be considered intellectual hard work, I have chosen to include it in the above addressed traits instead, but it certainly bears mentioning as another large example of Tally's willingness to do hard emotional and mental work. She continues this trait at the end of the book, because she cannot lose this trait and go back to society, she must continue to work hard for the sake of her world, which I examine below.

**The Singular Option of the Heteronormatively Gendered**

Finally, the trait of heteronormative seems to pervade the text with no other options available. Her attraction to David in the first book, her relationship with Zane in the second

and third, and her misery at the loss of her romantic partner in Zane don't offer any other options for romantic relationships. Tally is never portrayed showing interest or even questioning her romantic preference. There's even a joke made about Tally being unaware of romance in *Uglies*, "'Yeah," said Tally. "I know about the birds and the bees." "Sure you do, kid"' (Westerfeld, *Uglies* 182). This specific statement seems tongue in cheek for the author, as it demands we smile at the notion of a sixteen-year-old being fully aware of the birds and bees, and it's also a pun, as Tally is referring to actual birds and bees and the ranger recognizes it as posturing. The heteronormative aspects to the book are made very explicit, with Tally "performing femininity" or rather assuming a feminine role in the beginning by focusing on her appearance (Tribunella xxiii). Tally is only ever shown to be interested in males, David and Zane specifically. Zane, his relationship with Tally and then his death, acts as the catalyst to her achieving maturity almost as a reversal of traditional gender roles in science fiction, with injury or death to a female acting as the motivtion for the male protagonist's journey. It is Tally's loss of Zane that has her embrace her role of guardian, but also assume the masculine type of maturity that Tribunella outlined:

> In cultural contexts in which an impression is given concerning the mutual exclusivity of masculinity and femininity, it is masculinity that is coded as looking like mature adulthood, while those men and women who fail to enact masculinity, or who enact conventional femininity, are left to be patronized, infantilized, or otherwise dismissed as silly, dependent, less competent and, indeed, less emotionally mature. (xxiii)

All of the traits we deal with are "coded" in the sense that the character is seen as having achieved masculine maturity. We see in Tally that losing Zane has created a protector in her, someone who is strong, powerful, and exhibits the other traits Tribunella defines. She

becomes mature and thus assumes the heteronormative role in melancholic maturity, but also rejects it as she is a woman who has achieved masculine maturity.

Tally's relationship with Shay vacillates between different dimensions, the first book ends with Shay and Tally at odds. The second book begins and ends the same way, with their relationship going from friendship to antagonists. The change in their relationship is brought about in the first book because Shay feels that Tally has "stolen" David from her, while in the second book, Shay feels betrayed that Tally gave the cure to Zane and not her:

> "You're supposed to be my friend, Tally. I've done everything for you. I was the one who first told you about the Smoke. I was the one who introduced you to David. And when you came to New Pretty Town, I helped you become one of the Crims. Did it even *occur* to you to share the cure with me? It's your fault I'm like this, after all!" (Westerfeld, *Pretties* 145-6)

Tally has focused all her attention on Zane, someone she didn't know very well, and before that David; from Shay's perspective, Tally has been a terrible friend. What Tally has been through has been traumatic, but she's also inflicted trauma on the person who was supposed to be her best friend. She's prioritized other people above her, got Shay made pretty when it was the one thing Shay never wanted, and lied to her. The narrative seems to suggest that Shay would make a better heroine than Tally, because Tally has been selfish. However, we're aware that Shay gave into being pretty from the moment she was changed and Tally was never able to. Tally, by special circumstance, has found herself in a position of being there to receive the cure and agree to it in advance. At this point, Tally could make an effort to include Shay and work together, but instead she continues to spend time with Zane, making it clear that romantic relationships are the priority for the character. However, the third book ends with them having made peace and resuming their friendship. Although Tribunella

specifically refers to the loss of a queer friend as a loss creating melancholic maturity, Tally and Shay are never presented in an overly intimate way, "The attachment to and subsequent loss of a queer friend in childhood or adolescence is presented as useful means by which to construct productive adult citizens" (Tribunella 3). Tally' reliance on Shay's friendship never becomes romantic and Shay does not appear to represent a loss that could create maturity, because they recapture their friendship at the end of the trilogy.

In the end, Tally and David do not have a romantic relationship, rather they have formed a partnership in order to act as guardians on the earth. Tally is very clear that she has found her purpose and does not need rescuing, "Then [David] sighed. "But it's not like I did a very good job of saving you." "I'm not the one who needs saving, David," Tally said. "Not anymore"' (Westerfeld, *Specials* 368). Tally thus does not assume a wholly heteronormative trait, despite having had a romance arc with Zane, yet she does achieve Tribunella's idea of maturity. It may be that her being female allows her to gain and then move beyond this masculine melancholic maturity, since she is able to escape rejoining society. Katniss is forced to assume a heteronormative role, but Tally's rejection of her society may be permitted because of her remaining single.

**Wrapping Up the *Uglies* Trilogy's Close Reading**

Although the book is clearly an allegory for nature versus technology or surgical alteration, a return to a natural state being the preferred outcome, it also comes with an acknowledgement that maturity brings alterations to its protagonist and demands activism from her. We can clearly see that the creation and suffering through trauma mature Tally. Tally's achievement of maturity enabled the society to follow her lead, while traumatizing her too much to return to the new society, but instead become a sort of guardian to fend off

attempts to return to old habits.

In reading through the trilogy, we can also return to Visser's idea that trauma creates community. Tally's initial pretty surgery creates a unity with Zane, a unity that comes to define her for the rest of the trilogy. This version of Tally latches onto to her tribe of "Crims" as her family, although her bond to Zane is much deeper than that. When she is again mind altered and turned into a Special, it is her affection for Zane that allows her to fight the special impulses forcing her to think of others as weaker. It is the loss of Zane that brings Tally back into a community, as she cannot survive the loss of him alone, but it is also the loss of him that pushes her to stay a special in the wild and not have any more surgeries or rejoin society. She joins David at the end, because he shares her concern for what the societal changes may bring, but truly because he knows her despite the alterations that have been forced on her, "And maybe he had been right. Maybe she didn't have to do this alone… Most important, Tally knew that no matter how her plan turned out, whatever awful things the world forced her to do, David would remember who she really was" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 368). Tally's refusal to reenter the society that created her reflects the ability that both young adults and societies have, by choosing to contribute to their community in their own way.

In regard to Tally's society, it has also changed to evolve and become more mature. The society of "the City" as well as the other cities undergoes upheaval also in responding to Tally and the other special's accounts of what Dr. Cable did. Tally's entire society had adopted her ethical pattern: you don't change someone without their consent. The changes are making their way across the world as well, with Tally having been a catalyst, "Though the cure was already invading other cities, slowly changing the entire continent, new runaways still arrived in Diego everyday, ready to embrace the new system. The old static bubblehead

culture had been replaced by a world where change was paramount" (Westerfeld, *Specials* 360). Thus, Tally's society adopts the trait of seriousness, taking the concerns of its citizens and their desire to not be bubbleheads or pretties seriously. It allows them to make decisions instead of live in mindless frivolity. It adopts responsibility for the damage it has done with its reservations and experiments:

> [The former Cutters] traveled across the wild, gathering up the villagers that the Smokies had released. They were teaching them about technology, about how the world outside their reservations worked, and about how *not* to start forest fires. Eventually, the villagers they worked with would go back to their own people and help bring them out into the world. (Westerfeld, *Specials* 362)

Instead of leaving the villagers ignorant of the technology that has been developed or leaving them as test subjects, they are integrated into the cities and allowed to make their own decisions about rejoining their old villages or joining a city. The developing society is using the knowledge the villagers have developed as well, making their citizens more responsible and aware instead of keeping them trapped in cities. Their inclusion also adds to the societies adopting the traits of knowing and experienced, as they make knowledge available to all as well as learning from past experiences. The society adopts the code of ethics Tally has been fighting for in all the books: no alteration without consent and this extends to the idea of taking care of nature. The amount of changes taking place makes it clear that the society as a whole has become hard working, working to transition over to one that has become mature due to loss and trauma. Tally's achievement of maturity enabled the society to follow her lead.

At the end, Tally becomes a guardian, an empowered protector of the world in contrast to Katniss' damaged life in the epilogue where she is forced to have children. Tally

instead chooses to have a role outside of the society, protecting the environment rather than contributing to the growth of the cities, which she is invited to do by the other characters. Her role is outside of society, but as a powerful outside figure. Her final message to her friends is also the only time Westerfeld has her speak directly to the audience, inviting the reader to Tally's inner circle in the end. Her final message shows all the ways in which she's matured and how the cities will be able to follow that maturity:

> *I don't need to be cured. Just like I don't need to cut myself to feel, or think. From now on, no one rewires my mind but me.*
>
> *Back in Diego, the doctors said that I could learn to control my behavior, and I have. You all helped, in one way or another.*
>
> *But you know what? It's not* my *behavior I'm worried about anymore. It's yours.*
>
> *That's why you won't be seeing me for a while, maybe a long time. David and I are staying out here in the wild.*
>
> *You all say you need us. Well, maybe you do, but not to help you. You have enough help, with the millions of bubbly new minds about to be unleashed, with all the cities coming awake at last. Together, you're more than enough to change the world without us.*
>
> *So from now on, David and I are here to stand in your way.*
>
> *You see, freedom has a way of destroying things.*
>
> *You have your New Smokes, your new ideas, whole new cities and New Systems. Well… we're the new Special Circumstances.*
>
> *Whenever you push too far into the wild, we will be here waiting, ready to push back. Remember us every time you decide to dig a new foundation, damn a river, or cut down a tree. Worry about us. However hungry the human race becomes now that the pretties are waking up, the wild still has teeth. Special teeth, ugly teeth. Us.*

> *We'll be out here somewhere—watching. Ready to remind you of the price the Rusties paid for going too far.*
>
> *I love you all. But it's time to say goodbye, for now.*
>
> *Be careful with the world, or the next time we meet, it might get ugly.*
>
> —*Tally Youngblood* (Westerfeld, *Specials* 371-2)

Breaking down this final message, she learns the trait of seriousness through the loss of Zane, looking at the cities with a critical eye without condemning them. She feels responsible for the wilderness that may be affected by the societal change she created, because she knows and has experienced how expansion and freedom can affect the world. Her ethics prevent her from rejoining the city that gave into Dr. Cable's experiments, instead she will work hard to prevent that from happening to anyone again. Finally, she ends up with David, who was a previous love interest, although the book ends with them only working as a team, rather than embarking on a new relationship. In a lot of ways, the ending of the *Uglies* trilogy empowers Tally by giving her choices, while the end of *The Hunger Games* trilogy traps Katniss in the traditional role she always rejected. Tally is given the authority to make her own choices, while Katniss' are taken away. In that respect, *Uglies* captures a much more resilient trauma survivor protagonist than *The Hunger Games*, fulfilling the maturity plot without crippling the heroine.

Tally is actually a secondary character in a follow up novel by Scott Westerfeld called *Extras*, where we see her acting as a guardian to the wild and taking out those who seek to exploit the environment for profit. She has reunited with Shay and the other specials, creating a community for herself outside of her old city and there's a side plot about her coming to terms with her romantic feelings for David. Tally is happy, showing us a heroine

who has managed to mature from her trauma without being overwhelmed by it, making this trilogy (and possibly its follow up) a more empowering example of this maturity plot.

What the reader can gather from *Uglies* is that even in spite of trauma, one can thrive and achieve new roles and placement, regardless of what has been suffered. In the end, *Uglies* embodies a much more empowered heroine, which then passes on that empowerment to its readers by showing them that unlike Katniss, trauma does not mean you must give in to societal demands, have children, fit into their exile. Instead, you can pick a new way of being. Because of Tally's ability to choose, this book is a much stronger choice in creating activist readers.

### ***Divergent*** **Trilogy**

On the other side of the successful maturity plot in the *Uglies* trilogy is the unsuccessful maturity plot of *Divergent*. To summarize, the maturity plot we witness in both *Uglies* and *The Hunger Games* has both protagonists fulfill at least six of Tribunella's seven traits of melancholic maturity, but experience trauma and loss beyond the usual maturing process and end up sacrificing their own freedom to enact societal change. This sacrifice allows for the society itself to achieve a form of induced maturity. However, after this change, Katniss is exiled, but Tally takes the freedom given to her by her alterations to choose her own path. Both Tally and Katniss do sacrifice and society is changed in ways that make sense to both the narrative and the character that developed, making both trilogies excellent for analysis and teaching as they depict different possible outcomes for those who sacrifice for their societies. In *Divergent* however, plot holes and narrative issues make Tris' final sacrifice seem weakly connected to any societal change and make the change itself seem out of place in the context of the book, which means this failure to achieve the maturity plot

renders the book inadequate to teach.

In the first book, the narrative seems to adhere to the components of the other two examined trilogies, close to the genre and maturity plot we've established. We are introduced to the young female protagonist who is rebelling against her family and society, in this narrative by choosing a new faction and moving away from home. A love interest is introduced. The society that seems to be organized is revealed to be on the verge of war. Tris, the protagonist, begins to grow from the trials imposed on her when she chose a faction different from the faction she grew up in. The five factions that comprise her society are very simplistic: Dauntless, focused on courage; Erudite, focused on knowledge; Abnegation, focused on self-sacrifice, Candor, focused on honesty; and Amity, focused on beauty. These simplistic divisions of society are meant to highlight Tris' difference when she is found to be Divergent, which means she has an affinity for more than one faction. It also moves the protagonist away from the ideals of self-sacrifice at first, instead showing her rebellion from that concept. It is only later that she is shown to re-embrace the concepts of self-sacrifice that Abnegation are portrayed as embodying, but not in a useful way because she takes them on in selfish ways and never actually understands what self-sacrifice is until right before her death.

The series begins with Beatrice Prior, or Tris for short, on the verge of adulthood by choosing where she will begin her life. Her society is divided into five factions and once a year, those who have turned sixteen choose to stay in the faction they were raised in or move to another. Tris doesn't feel that she fits the strict, selfless nature of her faction, Abnegation, and debates moving factions, a choice she keeps secret from her family, "it is on these mornings that I feel guiltiest for wanting to leave them" (Roth, *Divergent* 3). Before choosing a faction, each person is subjected to an aptitude test to see which of the five factions they

might find fitting. During this test, it is revealed that Tris does not fit into one faction; she's Divergent by the fact that she shows aptitude for multiple factions. It isn't a matter of her rebelling, but more a factor of who she is inherently. Despite that, Tris' choice to jump factions rather than stay in parents' faction becomes more defining for her character than her status as a Divergent. She struggles with the decision, struggling to fit into her parents' faction of Abnegation and knowing in her heart that she does not, feeling that she is not selfless enough. At the choosing, she even wavers in deciding to stay in her faction as she is forced to decide, "I am sure that I will choose Abnegation… I set my jaw. I will be the child that stays; I have to do this for my parents" (Roth, *Divergent* 46-7). At the center of the room, forced into a decision, she chooses to switch factions and join Dauntless, "I am selfish. I am brave" (Roth, *Divergent* 47). Because the character has her emotions boiled into one word responses, the repercussions of her choice don't really have an impact on the story, but she knows she has gone against what was expected of her. Unlike Tally rejecting becoming a pretty or Katniss hunting for food beyond the fence, Tris isn't actually rebelling because choosing a faction is expected of all sixteen-year-olds in this society, but she definitely feels that she has rebelled against her parents, "I close my eyes and picture my mother and father sitting at the dinner table in silence, Is it a lingering hint of selflessness that makes my throat tighten at the thought of them, or is it selfishness, because I know I will never be their daughter again?" (Roth, *Divergent* 53). There's also the further complication of one of the factions, Erudite, trying to discredit Abnegation. Tris' choice of Dauntless gives the Erudite ammunition to call into question the practices of the Abnegation and whether they are fit to lead the council, since their own children have decided to leave the faction and them behind. The background feuding of the factions sets up the world the characters are in and through Tris' first person narration and eventually, Four's alternating narration with Tris in the final

book, Roth develops an ultimately unsuccessful maturity plot.

**The Absence of the Seriousness Trait in Tris**

Unlike mature adults, who Tribunella tells us, "are not tossed to and fro by emotional volatility"(xxi), one of Tris' defining character traits throughout the books is her emotional volatility. She never develops the trait of seriousness, but her emotional reactions are part of why she feels she is unfit for Abnegation, "My problem might be that even if I did go home, I wouldn't belong there, among people who give without thinking and care without trying" (Roth, *Divergent* 75). Tris has too many volatile reactions, reactions she doesn't want to give up which is why the chaos of Dauntless appeals to her, so that she never quite achieves the seriousness trait fully. In her last narrated chapter, she does react purposefully, but it's hard to say whether that final moment is a true character change or simply her reaction to dying, "Can I be forgiven for all I've done to get here? I want to be. I can. I believe it" (Roth, *Allegiant* 476). This trait is never achieved in a recognizable way, leaving Tris short, so far in this analysis, of one of Tribunella's defining seven traits in melancholic maturity. It is worth noting that Tris never seems to achieve maturity of any sort before her death, merely making a rash decision that she thinks will solve things without any evidence or reasoning behind the decision.

**Lacking the Responsible Trait, Tris Struggles with Suicide**

The trait of responsible is one that Tris attempts to exhibit but seems to be a foundational trait of the Abnegation in general, as they believe in being responsible for other people. However, it's a trait that Tris struggles to attain and is partially why she leaves Abnegation for Dauntless in *Divergent*. Tris is never "considered reliable by others [or gives]

the appearance of self-reliance" (Tribunella xxi) which means she fails to achieve a second of Tribunella's traits. This trait is something that Tris struggles with from the beginning, "I should comfort him—I should want to comfort him, because I was raised that way. Instead, I feel disgust. Someone who looks so strong shouldn't act so weak… No one has to know that I don't want to help him" (Roth, *Divergent* 74-5). She feels no responsibility to comfort the fellow Dauntless initiate but instead stays quiet, wishing he would shut up too. When Tris leaves Abnegation, she feels that leaving her old life behind is a welcome change (Roth, *Divergent* 75). Missing her old life is only briefly dealt with, but she embraces being Dauntless as much as she can, mostly because she has a goal. By making a new life for herself within the Dauntless faction, Tris is experiencing a normal amount of loss, a socially approved amount of loss. Many other children switch factions at the age of sixteen and the adjustment is common to their wider society. Tris still is not experiencing a larger amount of trauma than any other teenager in her society. Unlike Tally and Katniss, she has not been sent away into an unknown situation and expected to survive, at least not at the same level of survival that Tally and Katniss experienced in the Smoke and the Games respectively. However this "normal" level of trauma also gives her no trait of responsibility, in fact Dauntless seems to encourage the concept of action without consequence.

In the previous two trilogies, the trait of responsible comes back to being responsible for others, Katniss for Prim and Tally for Zane, as that is the easiest way to represent growth in a character, show them gradually caring about the people outside of them. Tris latches onto Tobias as a romantic attachment but doesn't actually seem to feel responsible for him or responsible for herself, which I will discuss more fully in the heteronormatively gendered section.

Tris' ability to embody responsibility is not seen much throughout the second book

until she lets herself be captured by the Erudite in order to stop them massacring other Dauntless members. It is almost relaxing for Tris to be captured and know she is going to die, because she no longer has to fit in with the Dauntless or try to be the person Tobias wants her to be; which makes it worse when Tobias is dragged past her, having sacrificed himself to the Erudite as well. He has a moment to tell her he let himself get kidnapped as a consequence of her lying to him before he's dragged off (Roth, *Insurgent* 338). Not only is this moment clearly manipulative, but Tobias seems to suggest that Tris acts better when she's not worrying about their relationship, because being responsible for behaving in a way Tobias feels is appropriate is exhausting. The fact that Tobias is in danger cuts off Tris' ability to be calm about her own death and instead she starts worrying about him again, but never feeling responsible for his actions. However, the narrative portrays this distance as one of her strengths in that she is never responsible for choices or decisions made by others nor the consequences for those decisions. This portrayal never really works out, as Tris doesn't focus on saving others, instead focuses on her own life. It's similar to Katniss' fixation on making sure all her loved ones survive, but Katniss knows that the only way she can guarantee that is if Katniss herself stays alive to protect them, while Tris feels the opposite. In fact, Tris' fixation on suicide is her way of removing responsibility from herself, removing the trait of responsible completely.

In fact, at the end of the book, Tris essentially decides to commit suicide because of a misguided responsibility toward her brother that doesn't really hold up under examination. A group of characters is attempting to break into the Weapons Lab to release memory serum, but death serum will be released into the air if the room is broken into. Tris' brother Caleb volunteers to be the one to do it, but Tris doesn't feel right about it since it seems that he is only sacrificing himself to make up for trying to get Tris killed in *Insurgent*:

> "Beatrice, if I do this…will you be able to forgive me?"
>
> To me, when someone wrongs you, you both share the burden of that wrongdoing —the pain of it weighs on both of you. Forgiveness, then, means choosing to bear the full weight of it all by yourself. Caleb's betrayal is something we both carry, and since he did it, all I've wanted is for him to take its weight away from me. I am not sure that I'm capable of shouldering it all myself—not sure that I am strong enough, or good enough.
>
> But I see him steeling himself against this fate, and I know that I *have* to be strong enough, and good enough, if he is going to sacrifice himself for us all. (Roth, *Allegiant* 410)

There's a lot wrong with this sentiment, but we also see how Tris is still damaged by what she's been through. She doesn't feel that she's strong enough to forgive him or enough of a good person to forgive him, even though she lied and told him that she forgives him in order to force herself to live up to a higher standard. Caleb participated in what he thought would kill her and now he's sacrificing himself to make up for it. It still doesn't sit right with Tris though, as she herself has attempted to sacrifice her life for others before and she feels responsible for his desire to sacrifice himself now:

> A few weeks ago, I would have volunteered to go on the suicide mission myself—and I did… But it wasn't because I was selfless, or because I was brave. It was because I was guilty and a part of me wanted to lose everything; a grieving, ailing part of me wanted to die…Should I really allow him to die so that he feels like his debt to me is repaid?… I can't even think of an alternative—would I be any more willing to lose Christina, or Cara, or Matthew?… And I don't want to die anymore. I am up to the challenge of bearing the guilt and the grief, up to facing the difficulties that life

> has put in my path. Some days are harder than others, but I am ready to live each one of them. I can't sacrifice myself, this time. (Roth, *Allegiant* 411)

Tris knows that one of the group must brave the death serum in order to complete what they intend to do, but this time she doesn't want it to be her. She's made her peace with her suicidal tendencies and knows she'll have to work on her trauma to move forward, but she's ready to do that. Part of moving forward means letting Caleb be the one to sacrifice himself now, but this attitude changes because she feels responsible for him.

Tris is worried that Caleb is letting himself die for the wrong reasons, that he is suicidal the way she was, because of what she'd done and if that's true, she can't let him sacrifice himself:

> "I guess I feel like it's the only way I can escape the guilt for all the things I've done," [Caleb] says. "I've never wanted anything more than I want to be rid of it." His words ache inside me. I was afraid he would say that. I knew he would say that all along. I wish he hadn't said that. (Roth, *Allegiant* 447)

Tris has been given time to process her grief and come to terms with her own actions as well as what she suffered, but Caleb hasn't. Caleb is choosing suicide over dealing with what he's done and Tris can't handle being the person who convinced him to die. As they run off to the Weapons Lab to get the serum, Tris makes a decision, "I love my brother, I love him, and he is quaking with terror at the thought of death. I love him and all I can think, all I can hear in my mind, are the words I said to him a few days ago: *I would never deliver you to your own execution*" (Roth, *Allegiant* 455). Tris cannot let him sacrifice himself because she has mercy and she feels that it's not right to demand a sacrifice of him in penance, because a sacrifice has to be given willingly. She grabs the backpack from him and heads toward the Lab, where the door has been blown open and she steps past it into the room, the death serum

spraying down on her (Roth, *Allegiant* 458). However, this misguided sense of responsibility seems like just another way for Tris to give up responsibility in the future and takes away any agency she might give to the other characters who agreed to having Caleb carry out the mission. Instead of exploring options, she allows her brother to agree to kill himself, then takes over without discussing other options or discussing it with other characters. Its never shown that her sacrifice was the only option, merely an emotional last-minute decision.

**The Failure to Achieve the Trait of Knowing in Tris**

Because of Tris' upbringing as Abnegation, she begins the trilogy unaware of violence and sex, as Tribunella describes children, "Children are supposed to be ignorant of matters related to sex and sexuality, death, extreme forms of violence and brutality, the drudgeries of daily life, and the extent to which other people and the world are actually deeply antagonist into one's own interests and well-being" (xxi). Tris fits these parameters well; in Abnegation, physical affection is shameful and violence is taboo, "A kiss is not something you do in public." Al, Will, and Christina all give me the same knowing smile. "What?" I say. "Your Abnegation is showing," says Christina. "The rest of us are all right with a little affection in public" (Roth, *Divergent* 82). Tris' ethics revolve around what she was taught, but also what she's learning in Dauntless. The physical side of her relationship with Tobias progresses through the book, but only mentions kissing. As far as violence does, by the end of the first book, Tris has killed someone and is in the middle of a war between factions.

At the beginning of the second book, Tris is already exhibiting symptoms of deep trauma, as her memories of killing Will send her into panic attacks. They make it through the Amity gate because Tobias knows the code, something he picked up in his job working the

Dauntless control room (Roth, *Insurgent* 3). Tobias learned gate codes because he felt trapped, something that Tris picks up on, "The way he talks about getting out—it's like he thinks we're trapped. I never thought about it that way before, and now that seems foolish" (Roth, *Insurgent* 3). Each faction was a prison, not just for those who were Divergent, but for everyone. Locked into their own roles, each faction kept its members prisoners, distracted by immediate decisions and actions, but unable to explore their world, much like the governing bodies in *The Hunger Games* and *Uglies* trilogies. It appears common in dystopias to say that if you distract a population with petty concerns, such as taking care of your own faction, you can keep them from looking beyond those issues.

Regardless, Tris comes to recognize how limited her knowledge was before and her being aware of how fragile she really is leads her to admit that she's still suicidal, "There is a part of me that wants to be lost, that struggles to join my parents and Will so that I don't have to ache for them anymore. A part of me that wants to see whatever comes next" (Roth, *Insurgent* 212). The trauma that has been done to Tris is already too much for her to handle and a solution seems to be death, whether that means doing it herself or simply being reckless in combat situations. Now it seems as though she will keep living through trauma, as there's no sign of things changing. She knows too much about violence and brutality and thus cannot be considered mature in this trait because it leads her to be suicidal, not to move forward.

When the Erudite call for her to surrender in exchange for them ceasing their murder of Dauntless members, Tobias tries to convince her not to go, that she's too important to give up in this way and that he needs her too much, so she lies to him:

> Could I do that? Could I stay here, fix things with him, let someone else die in my place? Looking up at him, I believe for a moment that I could. And then I see Will.

> The crease between his eyebrows. The empty, simulation-bound eyes. The slumped body…
>
> But if I don't go to Erudite, who will? (Roth, *Insurgent* 313)

Tris must be the sacrifice because she can't let someone else do it and she's too damaged to want to survive anyway or seek alternate options. She knows the Erudite will kill her somehow and she leaves knowing that she's giving up Tobias and her friends in order to save them, but this is not being responsible because she doesn't think about what might come next for them nor what her sacrifice truly entails, and also because there's been no guarantee of safety for the Dauntless she left behind just because she's making this sacrifice. On the contrary, there's been no agreement of what will happen after a Divergent surrenders to the Erudite, just a demand and a promise that no more people will be mind-controlled off of buildings, but they'll still have the simulation serum in them and they'll still be in danger. Clearly portrayed is the act of someone who is so far gone that she thinks she's doing something heroic when she's just walking into death. Tris is not knowing and has not learned from her mistakes because at no point does this decision actively save anyone else in the narrative.

She's led to a cell and begins to panic about what she's done, but she also begins to justify her decision to die, "Soon I will honor my parents by dying as they died. And if all they believed about death was true, soon I will join them in whatever comes next" (Roth, *Insurgent* 325). Tris has convinced herself that dying in this way is just as much of a sacrifice as her parents being killed while guarding her, except they made a decision in a dangerous moment to put themselves in harm's way to save her specific life. Tris has not sacrificed herself in an immediately dangerous situation. She still had time to figure out an alternative to sending a Divergent to the Erudite facility, especially since Tobias has allied with the

factionless and intends to invade. Tris is guided by her traumatic reactions and not by logic, and her narrative thus becomes untrustworthy while the trait of knowing is clearly toxic:

> "You have to. You have to survive this."
>
> "Why?" the question forms in my stomach and launches from my throat like a moan. I feel like thumping my fists against his chest, like a child throwing a tantrum. Tears cover my cheeks, and I know I'm acting ridiculous but I can't stop. "Why do I have to? Why can't someone else do something for once? What if I don't want to do this anymore?"
>
> And what *this* is, I realize, is life. I don't want it. I want my parents and I have for weeks. I've been trying to claw my way back to them, and now I am so close and he is telling me not to. (Roth, *Insurgent* 364)

All Tris wants is to slip away from life, but she is not so selfish that she could shoot herself in an alley. She needs to sacrifice herself in a way that she feels like her death meant something, saved someone, the way her parents died for her. Tris has spent most of this penultimate book wishing to be dead and Tobias keeps asking her to stay alive.

Tris marches to her execution and as she takes her place on the table, all of her previous longings vanish and she recognizes that she doesn't believe in the selflessness of letting herself die for someone else:

> And then rising from within me is a single thought:
>
> *I don't want to die*.
>
> All those times Tobias scolded me for risking my life, I never took him seriously. I believed that I wanted to be with my parents and for all of this to be over. I was sure I wanted to emulate their self-sacrifice. But no. No, no. (Roth, *Insurgent* 384)

The narrative has some part of her rise to the surface and realize that while she would have sacrificed herself, she doesn't want to die. However, there's no actual catalyst, no drive to keep herself alive, no reason she has to suddenly change her mind in this moment. This odd realization on her literal death bed seems forced, especially because the narrative has spent the entire second book convincing us that she does want to die. The trait of knowing fails to ever coalesce in her characterization because we are never given reasons for her changing her mind.

**The Incomplete Trait of Experienced In Tris**

With the trait of experienced being so closely tied to the trait of knowing, it only makes sense that it is incomplete and related to Tris' suicidal urges as well. Tris' desire to commit suicide opposes Tribunella's trait of experienced in that adults "can fend for themselves" (xxii) because Tris cannot fend for herself, instead continually putting herself into positions where she might die throughout the second book. Unlike Katniss, who makes decisions and actions based on what will let her survive best, Tris makes decisions based on her immediate emotional experience, thus failing to achieve this trait as well.

Right after Tris graduates at the end of the first book, the Dauntless are controlled with serum, like puppets, and sent into Abnegation to murder that faction. During the course of this battle, both Tris' mother and father sacrifice themselves to save Tris' life. In order to stop the slaughter, Tris breaks into the Dauntless control room, manages to break through Four's mind control and end the simulation that is driving the Dauntless. In the process, Tris had to kill one of her initiate friends. In just a short period of time, Tris' sacrifices go from superficial to permanent and traumatic, but her difference from the rest of society is something about the way she inherently is, not a way she has chosen to be or was

raised to be. At the end, the effect of these sacrifices drive her into a mentally traumatized state where she cannot function. Unlike *The Hunger Games* and *Uglies*, *Divergent* takes the entire first book to force its protagonist into experiencing true trauma.

Taking refuge in Amity gives Tris a brief reprieve, but she's aware of how much has happened, "But mostly I miss the fears of the past few weeks, rendered small by my fears now" (Roth, *Insurgent* 17). Tris understands that things have changed and her eyes have been forcibly opened by the attack on Abnegation by Erudite using those in Dauntless, but it's also just like Katniss, opening her eyes to wider problems and the needs of those outside herself. It hasn't fully sunk in yet, but Jeanine's attack has opened up Tris' world, attempting to mature her the way the violence of the Games matured Katniss. However, Tris is still processing the trauma she has been through and the experience has not made her resilient:

> That evening I return to my room and slide my hand beneath my mattress to make sure the gun is still there. My finger brushes over the trigger, and my throat tightens like I am having an allergic reaction. I withdraw my hand and kneel on the edge of the bed, taking hard swallows of the air until the feeling subsides.
>
> *What is wrong with you?* I shake my head. *Pull it together.*
>
> And that is what it feels like: pulling the different parts of me up and in like a shoelace. I feel suffocated, but at least I feel strong. (Roth, *Insurgent* 23)

Tris is able to try to come to terms with her trauma. It's clear it will be a long process though, as merely holding a gun brings on strong emotions and a panic attack. Unfortunately, she doesn't have the time or space to process, as they have been allowed to stay in Amity, but will be removed at the first sign of violence. The Erudite invade Amity looking for them and recognize Tobias:

> Across the room, a gun goes off, someone screams, and everyone dives under the

> tables or crouches next to the benches.
>
> Everyone except me. I sit where I was before the gunshot sounded, clutching the edge of the table. I know that's where I am, but I don't see the cafeteria anymore. I see the alley I escaped down after my mother died. I stare at the gun in my hands, at the smooth skin between Will's eyebrows.
>
> A small sound gurgles in my throat. It would have been a scream if my teeth had not been clamped shut. The flash of memory fades, but I still can't move. (Roth, *Insurgent* 81)

At the first sign of violence, Tris mentally retreats and freezes up, unable to handle the situation because of what she's already suffered. Her experiences are interfering with her ability to survive. She is only able to act when it involves saving someone else from a bullet, but they all make it out of the Amity compound. Her inability to react in a life-threatening situation has not gone unnoticed:

> "What was that, Tris?" [Tobias] says.
>
> "What?" I say, and I am ashamed of how weak my voice sounds…
>
> "You froze! Someone was about to kill you and you just sat there!" He is yelling now. "I thought I could rely on you at least to save your own life!"
>
> "Hey!" says Caleb. "Give her a break, all right?"
>
> "No," says Tobias, staring at me. "She doesn't need a break." His voice softens. "What happened?"
>
> He still believes that I am strong. Strong enough that I don't need his sympathy. I used to think he was right, but now I am not sure. (Roth, *Insurgent* 85)

Tobias noticed her freeze and it concerned him. His way of dealing with it is to push her, not necessarily something that would help, especially since she doesn't feel that she can be

honest about how shaky she is feeling after the multiple losses she's experienced. She also recognizes that she's gone through enough that she doesn't want to pretend to be tough and impress him; right now she'd rather have his sympathy, but she can't give in to that desire, "I didn't realize until that moment that Dauntless initiation taught me an important lesson: how to keep going" (Roth, *Insurgent* 86). Tris is trying to tap into her survivor instincts but finding it difficult after all that she's been through. She knows that what she experienced in Dauntless has made her stronger and she can rely on that strength for now, until she's able to get a better handle on her reactions, but she still can't admit weakness or embody the trait of experienced in any useful way.

At the end of the second book when they're preparing to fight Erudite, Tris is still unable to really process her grief until she is forgiven by Christina who was dating Will. Filled with self-loathing, Tris struggles to get ready for the fight ahead, but it is Christina who calls her back to herself, who is able to cut through the moment and help Tris process her trauma just a bit:

> "You know what Will would say?" says Christina.
>
> "What?" I say, my voice breaking.
>
> "He would tell you to get over it," she says…
>
> Will had little patience for the irrational. Christina must be right; she knew him better than I did.
>
> And she—who lost someone dear to her that day, just as I did—was able to forgive me, an act that must have been nearly impossible. It would have been impossible for me, if the situation were reversed. So why is it so difficult for me to forgive myself? (Roth, *Insurgent* 460-1)

While this moment helps Tris put things into perspective, she still cannot use a gun. The

weight of it is still too much. There is not an easy recovery for her; she has suffered and must bear the weight of it still. The narrative never has Tris be fully recovered or functional the way she was in the beginning of the first book.

As she moves into the third book, this experienced trait seems to, out of nowhere, benefit Tris instead of impede her. After Tris prevents a group of genetically damaged from stealing death serum, Cara points something out about Tris that she doesn't recognize in herself:

> "So you saved the Bureau," Cara says, turning to me. "You seem to get involved in a lot of conflict. I suppose we should all be grateful that you are steady in a crisis."
>
> "I didn't save the Bureau. I have no interest in saving the Bureau," I retort. "I kept a weapon out of some dangerous hands, that's all." (Roth, *Allegiant* 306)

In *Insurgent*, Tris wasn't good in a crisis. She would freeze and be unable to react because of how much trauma she'd experienced. Suddenly, she's managed to move past a lot of that trauma and become a cool head in crises. Tris has become someone who goes first to eliminate a deadly threat, regardless of whether she agrees with what the threatened source represents. Since she doesn't agree with the Bureau's treatment of the genetically damaged population, she stopped the theft in order to prevent bloodshed, a strange move for someone who froze during gunfire a narratively short period of time ago. The trait of experienced is suddenly a beneficial trait for Tris, despite being crippling at the end of the last book. The narrative cohesion begins to fall apart with this trait.

**The Tricky Trait of Ethical in Tris**

Tris' code of ethics evolves with her knowledge about her society and what is outside of it expands this knowledge, but she doesn't have a set goal like Katniss' wanting the

Hunger Games to end or Tally wanting people to not be physically and mentally altered against their will. Rather, Tris's sense of what is right or how a government should behave evolves through the books. Tribunella's definition of law abiding, "involves recognizing the individual and common good of observing laws and customs. It involves being ethical, and it connotes being upstanding and moral" (xxii). In the beginning, Tris is law abiding, even leaving Abnegation for Dauntless is culturally appropriate despite being hurtful to her parents. However, Tris realizes that the leaders of her community are not being ethical and that obeying the law is dangerous, especially when she realizes the depth of Dauntless rejection of responsibility: one of the other initiates takes out the eye of the top ranked initiate, making him factionless. There is a shift in how Tris begins to think of Dauntless and the faction system. Dauntless isn't just dangerous, but how things are run is slightly immoral. She can't reveal who took the eye of the top-ranked initiate:

> Dauntless have rules against attacking someone like that, but with people like Eric in charge, I suspect those rules go unenforced.
>
> I say, more seriously, "The most ridiculous part is, in any other faction it would be brave of us to tell someone what happened. But here…in *Dauntless*…bravery won't do us any good…"
>
> "One of the lines I remember from the Dauntless manifesto is, 'We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another…"
>
> Maybe the Dauntless was formed with good intention, with the right ideals and the right goals. But it has strayed far from them. And the same is true of Erudite. A long time ago, Erudite pursued knowledge and ingenuity for the sake of doing good. Now they pursue knowledge and ingenuity with greedy hearts. I wonder if the other

factions suffer from the same problem. (Roth, *Divergent* 206)

The politics of how her world works have not been a secret to her, both of her parents worked for the ruling council of the city. Here though, is proof that there is something corrupt about the way her city works. For the first time, the reader is given a glimpse of how the city might be a dystopia, how power is twisted and used wrongly. Tris' ability to hold her tongue saves her here, her Abnegation habits of not speaking up saving her skin, but the ethics of being quiet are questionable. When Tris is able to manipulate the simulations that Dauntless subjects the initiates to and is told to be careful, because the leadership of Dauntless kills off all those they discover who can do so, things get much more serious. Here is the first shown personal impact of the problems in society on Tris. When she is attacked by other initiates jealous of how well she's doing, including someone she thought was a friend, it results in her said friend committing suicide. This moment, and the glorification of the suicide as brave, drives her away from feeling at home in Dauntless. From here, the narrative makes it clear that the factions are dangerous and that Tris herself is in a great deal of danger. Her society does not protect or care for those who join it, the way Abnegation does. In fact, being heartless and lacking ethics may be a way to advance quicker. Tris herself has a vague idea of a moral code, but she lacks the authority to fully realize it or fight for it, especially in the second book where her entire focus is on herself and her wanting to die.

In the third book, after a group of characters have escaped the city and reached the outside. This book also adopts the narration of Four as well as Tris. The leader of the Bureau, David, greets them and explains to them that the United States government was able to find human traits, such as cowardice, dishonesty, and low intelligence in specific genes (Roth, *Allegiant* 121). With this knowledge, they removed the genes that were undesirable

from a generation, thinking the next generation would be improved, but removing undesirable traits also removed desirable ones, echoed in the factions, "every faction loses something when it gains a virtue: the Dauntless, brave but cruel; the Erudite, intelligent but vain; the Amity, peaceful but passive; the Candor, honest but inconsiderate; the Abnegation, selfless but stifling" (Roth, *Allegiant* 123). This breakdown of factions seems like an extremely simplified version of human personality, one that has little backup other than this explanation of the arbitrary traits they decided to change. The specific traits they altered eventually became the factions, because the people who were genetically altered were thought of as impure and started a Civil War that wiped out a huge portion of the population (Roth, *Allegiant* 123). After the war, the government set up the Bureau of Genetic Welfare to restore the American genetic code to its previous purity; they set up genetically damaged humans in cities and waited until they produced Divergent, who are closer to the original genetic code than the damaged people (Roth, *Allegiant* 124). The purpose of the Divergent is to create more Divergent and eventually through the generations, fix the problems that were originally created by genetic modification. Tris doesn't buy it though:

> Is that the explanation for Caleb's betrayal—his damaged genes? Like a disease he can't heal, and can't control? It doesn't seem right…
>
> I think of my father, a born Erudite, not Divergent; a man who could not help but be smart, choosing Abnegation, engaging in a lifelong struggle against his own nature, and ultimately fulfilling it. A man warring with himself, just as I war with myself.
>
> That internal war doesn't seem like a product of genetic damage—it seems completely, purely *human*. (Roth, *Allegiant* 127-8)

To Tris, the genetic difference issue sounds like an excuse to elevate some people above

others, and as readers we recognize that Divergent were made to sound like heroes, which leaves the rest of those who fought in their city's war feeling less important. David also reveals that all the cameras set up around the city are also accessible by the Bureau, so they've been watched the whole time (Roth, *Allegiant* 129). Tris finds out that her mother was a member of the Bureau who was sent into the city to solve a problem, which means they watched their agent die and didn't try to stop it (Roth, *Allegiant* 132). Everything Tris has known has been monitored by people who watched her get traumatized again and again, who watched Tobias get beaten by his father, watched the simulations force the Dauntless to kill the Abnegation and they didn't do a thing to help or stop it. No one in the group is coping well with the information about the genetic differences:

> Cara shakes her head. "It's the only thing I am. Erudite. And now they've told me that's the result of some kind of flaw in my genetics…and that the factions themselves are just a mental prison to keep us under control…"
>
> "It's still good that we came out here," I say. "We found out the truth. That's not valuable to you?"
>
> "Of course it is," Cara says softly. "But it means I need other words for what I am."
>
> Just after my mother died, I grabbed hold of my Divergence like it was a hand outstretched to save me. I needed that word to tell me who I was when everything else was coming apart around me. But now I'm wondering if I need it anymore, if we ever really *need* these words, "Dauntless," "Erudite," "Divergent," "Allegiant," or if we can just be friends or lovers or siblings, defined instead by the choices we make and the love and loyalty that binds us. (Roth, *Allegiant* 133-4)

Their entire society has been defined by these factions that labeled them, gave them one group of people that they were allowed to interact with, and controlled their actions, even

their body language and this violates Tris' code of ethics. However, because we haven't been given much understanding of Tris' ethics before this moment, just her desire to be Dauntless and then her desire to suicide, the impact of this statement she makes falls flat.

What the text tells us is that if you are a Dauntless, you look a certain way, you speak a certain way, and you move a certain way. Not only that, but you prioritize differently and you make decisions based on how your one specific faction reacts. The entire system was flawed and based on elevating one type of person, Divergent, above the rest. Not only that, but Tris was forced to kill Cara's brother Will in a war that could have been prevented, for a faction war that is now meaningless. The Divergent weren't meant to save anything, just keep repopulating and creating more. What's even more interesting is how much the narrative negates the impact of all of Tris' traumas on her. She no longer has issues handling a gun, only a single mention of ignoring her throat tightening when she picks it up, and immediately uses it to retaliate against the factionless trying to prevent their escape. Her recovery seems to have happened too quickly and the reader wasn't let in on any of it because of the strange shift in narration between her and Tobias. Now, the big reveal of the Divergent population occurs and we see her comforting others, not trying to process her own reactions beyond simple anger. Very quickly, she's gone from leaning on her role as Divergent to wondering if they need the word at all. There is a failure in creating the character of Tris, especially because her progression and processing of trauma in the first two books was very smooth and understandable. The narrative seems to jump her light years ahead of where she was with very little explanation of how she's worked through her trauma, making her sudden disgust with the conditions of genetically damaged and genetically pure feel forced or at least less important.

The ethics of the Bureau are called into question by the narrative when a GD by the

name of Nita attempts to convince Tobias to help her infiltrate the Weapons Lab. She tells him:

> "Genetically damaged people are technically—legally—equal to genetically pure people, but only on paper, so to speak. In reality they're poorer, more likely to be convicted of crimes, less likely to be hired for good jobs…you name it, it's a problem, and has been since the Purity War, over a century ago. For the people who live in the fringe, it seemed more appealing to opt out of society completely rather than try to correct the problem from within, like I intend to do." (Roth, *Allegiant* 243).

Tobias and Tris have landed in yet another war where one side believes they are superior to others, a world where not everyone is taken care of and if you are the wrong type, you are not considered equal. Tobias' narrative view of the difficult way the GD live on the fringe of government controlled spaces just makes him more depressed, as he's exchanged one difficult situation for another. The situation is summed up by Tobias rather neatly, "The truth changes everything… And here, now, a lie has changed the struggle, a lie has shifted priorities forever. Instead of working against the poverty or crime that have run rampant over this country, these people have chosen to work against genetic damage" (Roth, *Allegiant* 252). Instead of blaming the problems on what it really is, lack of support for everyone and prejudice, the government is trying to fix a problem it created, a bigotry it invented. While this rebellion seems to go hand in hand with the trait of ethical, Nita is secretly trying to steal the death serum to assassinate a bunch of the government workers in order to stop them from continuing the experiments in the cities like Tris'. Neither side seems to be ethical and Tris herself doesn't end up having any larger goal, the way Tally wants to allow choice while protecting the wild and Katniss wants to stop the Hunger Games. Instead, Tris simply pits

herself against David by releasing memory serum to wipe away the knowledge that there is a difference between the GD and the GP, which I'll talk more about in the final section on the *Divergent* trilogy. There are giant holes in this logic, as this does not guarantee any sort of ethical shift for the society.

**Trying to Pin Down the Hard-Working Trait in a Dystopia**

Tris is portrayed as hard working immediately, as within her shift to Dauntless, she must work hard to stay in her chosen faction in order to not end up one of the factionless, "The hard-working adult is in contrast to either the lazy adult, who is imagined as immature, or the playful child who enjoys plentiful leisure or gets bored. Mature adults are never bored, nor do they over-indulgent leisure" (Tribunella xxii). The main issue being that the hard work comes in the form of physical exertion for the sake of bragging rights and nothing is accomplished. Tris doesn't view her initiation as leisure, but it's not working to create or make money in the way that Tribunella portrays the trait of hard-working. In fact, there's no point where Tris is required to support herself with physical hard work. Her shelter, food, and clothing come from others.

The only sort of hard work that could even remotely be assumed to meet Tribunella's definition comes in the second book and it involves emotional labor. Tris and Tobias are put under the truth serum so that Candor can learn the truth of their role in the stimulation that controlled the Dauntless and murdered so many Abnegation (Roth, *Insurgent* 127). In the course of Tris' questioning, she reveals that her greatest regret is killing Will when he was under the stimulation and tried to kill her (Roth, *Insurgent* 151). The source of her greatest trauma is her murder of Will, even though she lost both of her parents. Tris also shot other people, killed them, but having to shoot her friend was the most traumatic. After

being forced into this reveal, Tris walks to the top of the building and finds the burn from exercise to help, "As I climb step after step, and my muscles begin to burn, and my lungs fight for air, I feel the first moments of relief I've experienced in days… I grin at the fierce burn in my legs, in my chest. Using pain to relieve pain. It doesn't make much sense" (Roth, *Insurgent* 154). She's been forced to reveal the trauma that has been holding her captive, but it didn't help her to tell them the truth; she's still burdened by her choice to kill Will and that leads her to flirt with the idea of suicide. This quote shows us the first time she genuinely gives in to the thoughts of suicide because of what she's been through, but she manages to push those thoughts away and return to the ground to seek out Tobias. The hard work shown is the effort it takes her to return to the ground and not jump off a building, but that barely adheres to Tribunella's traits. In fact, hard work seems to be absent from Tris' characterization over all.

**Tobias and Tris' Relationship as the Heteronormatively Gendered Trait**

Tris' only romantic interest throughout the series is Tobias and even after her death, he is never shown with an interest in anyone else. Relationships are primarily male and female, although there is an allusion to a gay couple in the final book that never goes anywhere. Tris and Tobias' relationship is extremely toxic to the point that they never find a balance or trust between them. Unlike Tribunella's explanation of the heteronormative trait, they never discuss or assume they'll have children and Tris' death prevents any sort of future talk. While Tris does assume the heteronormative trait, the relationship portrayed opposes any sort of maturity that might be gained from such a trait. While this doesn't reflect the rejection of a heteronormative relationship the way the end of *Uglies* does or the assumption of an accepted one the way the end of *The Hunger Games* does, the toxicity of the relationship

prevents them from "[demonstrating] a willingness or ability to procreate…this outcome should seem likely or inevitable" (Tribunella xxii). The two characters never reach a point where they are happy together for longer than a day, much less are able to assume a future together.

After they get together in the first book, they spend much of the second book lying to each other, something that comes to a head when it is revealed how much Tris is struggling and how angry Tobias is that she has kept information from him. Even though she has wished that she could be honest with him, she's well aware that he hasn't been forthcoming with her either and she won't be held to a double standard:

> "I wish you trusted me enough to tell me things like that."
>
> *I do trust you,* is what I want to say. But it isn't true—I didn't trust him to love me despite the terrible things I had done. I don't trust anyone to do that, but that isn't his problem; it's mine.
>
> "I mean," he says, "I had to find out that you almost drowned in a water tank from *Caleb*. Doesn't that seem a little strange to you?"
>
> Just when I was about to apologize…
>
> "Other things seem stranger," I say, trying to make my voice light. "Like finding out that your boyfriend's supposedly dead mother is still alive by *seeing her in person*. Or overhearing his plans to ally with the factionless, but he never tells you about it…
>
> Don't pretend this is only my problem," I say. "If I don't trust you, you don't trust me either." (Roth, *Insurgent* 159-160)

Despite what they've been through together, despite the danger they're in, Tris doesn't trust anyone to fully understand her or her choices and she doesn't trust his reactions to her trauma. Tobias trusted Tris enough to let her in on the trauma he was put through by his

abusive father, but not enough to let her know that they were meeting up with his mother.

Later on, when Tobias' abuse at the hands of his father has been revealed to the city, his reaction to being teased about it is portrayed as incredibly over the top: Tobias reaches his breaking point and drags his father to the center of the room, beating him with a belt the way Marcus used to beat Tobias with a belt as a child, to prove a point to the other Dauntless. The narrative makes it clear that beating Marcus is not the best way of dealing with Tobias' abuse issues, but he's only doing it to stop the insults coming his way from the other Dauntless. Tris recognizes her own reactions to trauma in his actions, but she knows that these reactions are not healthy, "I don't know what to say or do around the erratic part of him, and it is here, bubbling just beneath the surface of what he does, just like the cruel part of me. We both have war inside of us. Sometimes it keeps us alive. Sometimes it threatens to destroy us" (Roth, *Insurgent* 242). Tris is aware that they are both damaged, but that neither of them are coming to terms with it in a healthy way; she is even peripherally aware that their relationship is not healthy. The pride and might makes right attitude of Dauntless makes it so that they value people who endure things, not people who are weakened by emotions or trauma. Both Tris and Tobias are part of a faction that would find their reactions to trauma weak, so Tobias had to prove that he wasn't, even though it wasn't a good way to handle the situation. These traumatized teenagers, a sixteen-year-old and an eighteen-year-old, are simply working to get their city back to a safe place; there's no plan beyond that currently.

Tobias may have found a place for himself and fallen in love with Tris, but their relationship is not based on anything healthy. He can't be honest with her, since he won't talk about how he really feels. Tris is also unable to trust him or be honest with him, since she spent the second book lying about what she was going to do. She thought his emotions

got in the way. The way their relationship is portrayed is extremely problematic, as neither of them gets to a healthy point and can't interact with the other one in a healthy way.

However, in the final book things take a turn and through the chapters that Tobias narrates, we see him as the more immature one, unable to tell Tris that he's helping Nita or how it feels when he discovers he's not Divergent. At no point does the relationship move toward a mature foundation. Tobias constantly shields Tris from what he's going through, despite his anger at her whenever she lies to him. Tobias holds Tris to a different standard than he feels he should be held to. Tobias' double standards are a symptom of his past abuse, but this double standard is wearying and even he admits he's more likely to hide information, although he stops short of being able to see how hypocritical that is of him, "Most of my life has been spent keeping information close, turning it over and over in my mind. The impulse to share anything is a new one, the impulse to hide as natural as breathing" (Roth, *Allegiant* 160). Tobias recognizes this fault in himself, but despite this realization, he still doesn't mention his feelings or the trial to Tris. They are both traumatized by what happened to them in the past, and Tris' decision to let herself die in releasing the memory serum forever ends their relationship in a terrible place.

**Wrapping Up the *Divergent* Trilogy's Close Reading**

Tris never fully embraces the traits of melancholic maturity or even the traits of a secondary type of maturity, nor does she fulfill the maturity plot. In the second book, when Tris becomes suicidal but passes it off as self-sacrifice, she is yelled at by Tobias, who sees it for what it really is:

> "I'm not going to pretend to know what's going on with you," [Tobias] says. "But if you senselessly risk your life again—"

> "I am not senselessly risking my life. I'm trying to make *sacrifices*, like my parents would have, like—"
>
> "You are *not* your parents. You are a sixteen-year-old girl—"
>
> I grit my teeth. "How *dare* you—"
>
> "—who doesn't understand that the value of a sacrifice lies in its *necessity*, not in throwing your life away!" (Roth, *Insurgent* 260)

Tris latches onto the concepts her Abnegation parents taught her, but not as a means to protect or create change, but to end her own pain, making her sacrifice nothing more than selfish, which not only makes the plot falter, but alienates the reader. This attitude of self-sacrifice and suicide seems as if it's supposed to be in opposition to the sacrifice Tris makes at the end of the book in the narrative, a true sacrifice in the final book versus the false or dishonest sacrifice in the second book, but with this knowledge of her inability to truly understand what self-sacrifice is, it also raises the question of whether the character ever really decided to live, a question only made worse by the uneven and problematic narration in the third book, as we never get a picture of Tris' perspective for long enough to make the determination of where her decisions are truly coming from.

In opposition to the maturity exhibited by both Tally and Katniss, Tris does not fully achieve maturity, which means her sacrifice and the ending of her narrative achieve a change that doesn't seem sustainable. Over the course of the novel, Tris achieves a few of the traits, but fails to achieve the traits of serious, knowing, experienced, ethical, or hard-working. In fact, her final decisions in the trilogy speak to her lack of knowing and ethics when she assumes she has the wisest point of view. The full plot of *Divergent* moves through Tris' initial process of taking a life, discovering a world outside of her own, and her decision to wipe the minds of the people in the world outside of her city. Tris discovers that the purpose

of her isolated city is to try and fix the genetic damage caused in the past by developing more Divergent people. This experiment has been going on for a long time and several "resets" have occurred, using a memory serum to spread like a virus through the population's memory whenever the Bureau of Genetic Damage doesn't achieve the results they want (Roth, *Allegiant* 382). When the Bureau decides to wipe the memories of everyone within Tris' city in order to refresh the experiment from the beginning, Tris becomes enraged which leads her to turn the idea around on them, deciding to wipe their memories of the GD and GP distinction herself (Roth, *Allegiant* 383). The problem with this issue that is only briefly addressed is that wiping the memories of a single compound where they house the experimental data does not erase the data from the minds of people outside the compound or the computerized records of generations of experimentation, nor could it erase the minds of the rest of the continent or the leaders of the government the Bureau works for, making this plot point incredibly weak. Tris' concept of using memory serum to remove the idea of GD and GP only lasts until the central government calls and asks how the experiments are going. The book specifically tells us that the serum will work throughout this one compound, not further while it also tells us there is a wider government observing this Bureau. Thus, Tris' sacrifice becomes useless, something a character who was portrayed as being very plan-oriented in the final book should have realized. Because of this weak plot point, Tris dies for nothing and the epilogue we get makes no sense in light of the two other facts the book gave us (an outside government exists, and the serum will only affect the compound). These huge plot discrepancies indicate to the readers that the epilogue must be false, making Four either a liar or causing us to distrust the author since we are being told that things changed in such a way that logic/plot does not allow for in much more damaging ways than "suspension of disbelief."

In light of this huge issue, Tris' inability to achieve the trauma induced maturity plot, lacking the traits of serious, ethical, and knowing, means that her sacrifice fails to provide her society the tools to mature itself. If we accept that she did, somehow in violation of the information we've been supplied with, achieve the removal of the prejudice against the GD, her sacrifice still altered the society on the basis of lacking knowing and experience, rather than learning from it. Tris herself is furious to discover her city is an experiment, so her solution is based on making others ignorant of their situation as well, which severely depletes the impact on the reader. Her final thoughts are, "Can I be forgiven for all I've done to get here? I want to be. I can. I believe it" (Roth, *Allegiant* 476). Her own words seem to say that she chose death for her own reasons, rather than to make things better for those who come after her.

Unlike in the other two trilogies and another reason this narrative becomes a failed maturity plot, Tris does not survive the societal shift, making her not just a social and emotional sacrifice, but a physical sacrifice as well. She does not survive, but her sacrifice is glorified, and her actions do cause the society to appear to mature, although not in the same way as both Katniss' and Tally's, because she removes knowledge to prevent bigotry rather than encouraging open knowledge as the path forward. Therefore, her society does not achieve the trait of knowing, as they do not know their mistakes from before and her reasons for removing the memories from the Bureau are not ethical, merely a mirror of what they would have done to her city. In Tris' case, her decision attempts to justify using the same means against the Bureau that they have used against her city, a direct contrast to how Katniss viewed conflict. To compare the success of Katniss, who eliminated the people in charge on both sides who believed in the death of children to maintain community behavior,

we have the failure of Tris to find a solution that doesn't rely on ignorance and misinformation.

The final reason this book does not achieve the maturity plot is that it splits the narrative between Four and Tris. Because the narrative itself is not cohesive and brings us inside the thoughts and actions of a character we have not been present with in the past books, the point of view is frequently confusing. In fact, having so many chapters end on cliffhangers or decisions where we never learn the impact on the character who made them because we're immediately moved into a second character's perspective removes all sense of plot cohesion. Because the narration hops between Tris and Tobias, the cliffhangers in character development or decision-making become quite problematic, as there are never consequences or reactions portrayed by the author for the reader to examine. These issues make the final book so strangely narrated that a comprehensive view of either character is missing. Because Roth has failed to provide a cohesive narrative, the reader loses the beat of the plot and the events that are supposed to be exciting become banal as there's no given impact on the characters.

Due to these three reasons, the confusing perspective of the narrative, the plot holes, and the resolution based on removing knowledge, this trilogy fails the maturity plot. While we are told that the society does mature and things get better for the citizens, the narrator of this change is not our previous protagonist and this change is based on poor plot, making this epilogue feel false to the reader and removing the trust or connection between the reader and the author. This failed maturity plot then fails to teach the reader the value of sacrifice, since the benefits cannot be trusted.

The *Divergent* trilogy represents a failed maturity plot in young adult literature, and by its failure, leads us to the interesting questions of why the protagonist needs to mature to

enable the society to change significantly. I wish I could speak more clearly to the reasons, but it seems clear that without this form of stability, a character who has used loss to mature must be used as a sacrifice, the maturity plot doesn't succeed. That failure then prevents the reader from being affected by the sacrifice in the same way they would react to Tally or Katniss' sacrifice, making this text ineffective for presenting in an education-based context, except perhaps as an example of an incomplete maturity plot. This lack of cohesion may also prevent the story from becoming valued in research, the way *The Hunger Games* and *Uglies* have been.

It is also possible that the focus on the love story in *Divergent* has negated any endurance it might have achieved. Both *Uglies* and *The Hunger Games* treat the love interests as secondary or even tertiary to the main plot. I am not suggesting that a love story cannot exist in a successful maturity plot; Tribunella's trait of heteronormativity is key to melancholic maturity, but perhaps a focus on the relationship between the protagonist and a love interest makes the protagonist unable to fully assume the masculine maturity traits, as these books do adhere to typical heterosexual romance. To fully embrace the masculine melancholic maturity would involve two masculine characters existing romantically, a state actively avoided by the three authors. Tris dies before she and Tobias assume any kind of adult relationship; Katniss is abused into submission, then exiled before assuming a romantic relationship with Peeta; and Tally's love interest dies, leaving her with a potential, but not accepted partner in David. Tally's assertion that she doesn't need to be saved by David almost keeps them apart. It is worth noting that in the follow-up *Extras*, Tally does accept David as a romantic partner, well after the events of the *Uglies* trilogy though. The focus and exploration of the relationship between Tris and Tobias, even his assumption of the role of

narrator seems designed to negate Tris' viewpoint and impact on the reader. This may suggest that a love interest prevents a protagonist from fulfilling the maturity plot.

In reading Holly Blackford's book on why literature matters to girls, we get a glimpse of how this separation of romance and fiction books may have developed. Blackford explains, "this tradition of the American feminine subject coming into being through social realism, and the American masculine subject coming into self through fantasy, is sustained by popular fiction and film, even though contemporary fantasy literature is ripe with complex female characters" (59). Unpacking this quote a bit, we can see that it was traditional for "coming of age stories" which we can extrapolate as stories about growth and maturity were traditionally expressed in different genres for the different genders. Even with the amount of upcoming science fiction with female protagonists, it may be hard to move away from those common lines of writing, making the blend of a romance plot with a maturity plot still a struggle to overcome when an author wants to sell a book. This separation of genre could explain why *Divergent*'s emphasis on the love story detracted so severely from the success of the maturity plot, especially because Blackford's research found that girls tend to reject genres. She explains that "girls often mention their negative response to teen/heterosexual romance when I ask about their general experience of stories – anticipating the cultural expectation [that] they [should] enjoy [that genre]… they also understand femininity as a gendered construction and rebel against [perceived feminine texts as the expected enjoyed genre]" (Blackford 59). Girls who enjoy adventure and fiction may deny their interest in romance, which again may be why the general public embraced *The Hunger Games*, with a protagonist who rejects her love interests' comments on who she'll pick but rejected *Divergent*'s inability to blend genres. However, this question opens up several new inquiries of study and research, which will have to save for my next dissertation.

Despite the popularity of *Divergent* at the time, many people were disappointed with the ending in both the book and movie; I hesitate to cite anything here as the amount of grousing on the internet about the ending of *Allegiant*, both the book and movie, has been overwhelmingly covered. *The Hunger Games* still seems to be used in scholarship while *Uglies* has always been noted as the first dystopian trilogy to feature a female protagonist. *Divergent* may join the ranks of other forgotten dystopias, but at the very least its alienation of the reader and failure of the maturity plot prevents it from being worth using as an example of how young adult fiction can be used to teach empathy.

**Moving Forward**

Now that we've applied Tribunella's traits to three trilogies, we can see the differences in how his melancholic maturity plays out. For Katniss, trauma matured her, but it brought her beyond melancholic maturity. Unfortunately by the end of the book, she was forced into submission through her exile and eventual children, reverting instead to melancholic maturity. Tally achieved Tribunella's melancholic maturity only to reject it at the end, decline to return to her society, and become instead a powerful force to keep her society in check. Tris commits suicide for reasons that don't make sense and the muddled ending keep both the character and her society from actually achieving any sort of maturity. While all three of these trilogies have had varying degrees of popularity, the *Uglies* series does the best job is showcasing the power of resilience as a response to trauma and is therefore the best literary representation of how trauma can become activism. Moving forward, I will discuss the purpose of young adult literature and why teaching this trauma helps turn young readers into more empathetic citizens.

## Chapter Three: The Purpose and Potential of Young Adult Literature

So far, we've looked at young adult literature itself through close readings and studies done on the impact of fiction on readers while also examining the purpose of sacrifice in our society. From here, we will look at the reason both children's and young adult literature are used methodically by adults in society. For educators, this means that the literature we teach has larger ramifications for our students than simply learning how to be successful readers. There are aspects to avoid when teaching, but the overall benefits of teaching traumatic literature show us how literature can change a reader's perception of the real world.

Scholars agree that children's literature and by extension young adult literature is meant to teach a lesson or impart wisdom to its readers. According to Eric Tribunella, this idea stems from the need to separate young adult literature from children's:

> Since the first books specifically for young readers were intended to be instructional, and since the idea of such thinkers as Locke and Rousseau continue to influence the ways childhood is thought about, didacticism remains an essential component of the history of children's literature. (Tribunella 51-2)

The understood purpose of young adult's literature is to impart a lesson, or to fulfill a purpose of teaching something or giving instruction to the reader. Thus, the genre doesn't inhabit a space of pure enjoyment, but strives to accomplish something for the reader's sake. In fact, if we look at Tribunella further, he claims that the genre could not have relied on its own entertainment value:

> Given that the origins of children's literature were so marked by this didactic impulse, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the emergence of young adult (YA) literature in the mid-twentieth century would bear similar traces of the inclination to instruct. Citing its own potentially instructive value would be one way

> to construct a new market of readers, disentangle itself from the main strand of children's literature, and justify its provocative attention to formally taboo or mature material. It seems that the "mere" edification or pleasure of literary innovation and complexity would not have sufficed to ground this new enterprise. (52)

Tribunella is claiming that young adult literature needs to find its worth in teaching lessons and provide some value beyond the joy of story in order to be taken seriously as a genre. Young adult literature must have a purpose, must be written for a purpose, and must be understood as having a deeper literary purpose. If we examine Michael Cart's history of young adult literature, we see that all along this genre was written,

> as cautionary stories, such dystopian fiction can also serve a larger purpose, inviting idealistic teens to examine the logical consequences of illogical human behavior and to consider how their own actions—or failures to act—might affect the future of the planet and humanity. And therein lies reason for hope, or at least cautious optimism. (103)

These lessons adopted by the young adult literary genre, specifically the dystopias, have something to impart or convey to its readers beyond entertainment. Cart posits that this drive is to inspire hope, which I would concur with, but at a cost. Roberta Trites agrees:

> Although the primary purpose of the adolescent novel may appear to be a depiction of growth, growth in this genre is inevitably represented as being linked to what the adolescent has learned about power. Without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow. (x)

The lesson in dystopias may be one of hope, but it seems that Trites is saying the primary lesson is how to deal with one's perceived helplessness. This leads to my claim that *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the *Uglies* trilogy, and the *Divergent* trilogy, like others in this dystopian

genre, inspire activism, or fighting back against unjust or unethical adult structures for a common good. Further along this line of connection is the idea that trauma in young adult literature is meant to assist the reader with understanding trauma suffered not only by themselves, but others. Amy Elliott argues:

> Children growing up in the wake of trauma must navigate adult problems as they encounter their futures. Looking forward, perhaps young adults reading trauma literature will see both the destructive nature of trauma and the healing power of community in order to help fashion a future populated by individuals who can reflect, remember, and progress. (195-6)

Elliot seems to be encouraging the idea that trauma literature helps the reader to react empathetically to trauma and traumatized individuals outside of the confines of the novel. As addressed at the end of each of my chapters, the various portrayals of trauma teach readers several things: first, it teaches that trauma is survivable; second, it teaches readers who have not been traumatized that trauma exists and gives them the ability to see beyond their own experience, thereby making them more empathetic; and third, it teaches them that trauma and loss create growth.

As we saw in the study done on *Harry Potter*, literature does impact and guide our youth. The purpose of these trauma books is intended to impact and guide them, not just through maturity, but through what type of adult and citizen they will develop into, "because the adolescent protagonist is often depicted as at the brink of adulthood, it should come as no surprise that YA fiction would appear to provide a roadmap to maturation for the adolescent reader and that it would blur the line between artistic representation and didactic prescription" (Tribunella 53). The process of maturity can then be examined as possibly being specifically written to guide young adults on their own path. The author has a purpose

to how they represent maturing, a way to help their readers find a path forward. Both Margolin and Nikolajeva express similar ideas. Nikolajeva empathizes that "the impact on the reader is the most essential function of the character" (16) and "in character-oriented narratives, we expect the character to obtain new—presumably higher—moral qualities, mature spiritually, gain knowledge and insights, and so on… In a more sophisticated narrative, the change is implied, and the readers are supposed to draw their own conclusions" (Nikolajeva 64). This emphasizes character construction being created to impact and lead the reader into understanding their own maturity process and their position in their society. Margolin also argues that we as readers are right to look for the purpose behind the characters, "since characters are shaped by their authors to attain certain ends and effects, it makes perfect sense to inquire why and to what end they endowed their characters with this particular selection of features" (68). While this comes from a different angle, it still shows us that authors intend the characterization and specifically the maturation of the character to have an effect on the reader. The reasons why a character is shown to react are chosen to impact the readers' understanding of a specific scene or event in such a way as to allow them to see how and why that reaction happened, thus educating them about reactions to events, in this specific examination, in reaction to trauma.

**Trauma as Activism**

While Tribunella's ideas about maturity are applied to American culture in his argument, each of these books takes place in a future version of America, and thus the idea of creating empathetic American citizens through traumatic U.S.A based young adult literature ties in because all the books are set in a form of American culture. To take Tribunella a step further and go beyond the idea of the character maturing, I introduced the

idea that the society itself matures through the sacrifice of its female protagonist. Tribunella asserts that society must provide literary trauma in order to mature children. I further assert that society itself must experience traumatic loss in order to mature. This then means that the society must take on the characteristics of maturation. The literary sacrifice of children, primarily female children, is necessary to create this change in society or government. It takes the traumatic loss of the female protagonist in these three trilogies to inspire change, an idea that is then passed on to the reader. Thus the readers learn that the only way for society to change or become less unjust is by sacrificing themselves and in short promoting the idea that to change policy or society, a young adult needs to be an active member of the community:

> Understanding maturity as melancholia has implications then for our understanding of children's and young adult literature. When Barbara Feinberg reports that the books her son is forced to read seem "depressing," we can now better understand the full import of this. They should be depressing, because the extent to which they successfully depress him is the extent to which they are working to transform him into a mature adult, and there is a collective stake in making sure this happens. It is not surprising given these formulations that the novel of development would turn over and over again to a narrative of love and loss. These novels allegorize the felt centrality of death and loss to children's maturation, and by narrativizing loss they produce not only a record of various scenarios of attachment and identification, but also a manual for how the readers can and should respond in similar circumstances. Such loss is not nearly inevitable, but also crucial for "proper" development. (Tribunella xxv-xxvi)

Not just proper development, but development in a democratic society that requires sacrifice of its citizens. The collective stake in raising citizens devoted to a common good means that showing them sacrifice as a potential benefit to the masses becomes an important part of teaching young adults.

**The Importance of Teaching Trauma**

The 2014 study that found that reading *Harry Potter* assisted students in being able to emphasize with out-groups, otherwise known as groups of people outside of their realm of knowledge goes further and the study specifically states that:

> For adolescents and young adults, simply encouraging the reading of this type of books may be sufficient to improve out-group attitudes. Eventually, educators can organize discussion groups following the reading so as to reinforce their effects. This way, encouraging book reading and incorporating it in school curricula may not only increase the student's literacy levels, but also enhance their prosocial attitudes and behaviors. (Vezzali, et al)

On a cultural level, teaching these types of texts can create more empathetic, diversity embracing students. The importance of teaching these literatures is thus paramount to fostering an inclusive culture for all citizens.

If *Harry Potter* can teach empathy, it stands to reason that young adult dystopias can also impact the reader similarly, making these dystopias tools to help guide the reader to maturing as a more community-oriented citizen. In light of this information, teaching young adult literature, specifically that which relies on sacrifice and trauma to tell its story, is essential in creating democratic, empathetic citizens who believe in a common good. In short, we should be teaching these books from the viewpoint of the necessity of sacrifice.

I've devised several ways that sacrifice and trauma literature could be addressed in classrooms, both college level and high school level. In the appendix, you will find several assignments, units, syllabi, and readings that may be used to move forward in teaching this important facet of literature.

I would also like to acknowledge that other scholars recognize and encourage the use of trauma in classrooms as teaching tools, ways for educators to teach our students how to explore fiction as a method for self-exploration alongside of how to be part of a community. Christine Jarvis explains:

> There are many televisual and filmatic texts in which young women who are transitioning into adulthood are shown models of courage, intelligence, assertiveness and independence. These texts reflect the multiplicity of roles and opportunities available to girls today. At the same time, there is a high prevalence of stories in which many of the narrative pleasures result from a kind of masochism, in which young women are rewarded with love and affection not for their courage or their achievements, but for suffering, sacrifice and pain.
>
> I think a consideration of these texts has two implications for adult educators. First, it indicates how complex and contradictory teachings about adulthood, maturation and gender operate outside educational institutions, as part of the everyday experiences of reading a book, watching television or visiting the cinema…. Second, it suggests the potential for working with adults to develop the skills and knowledge that will help them to interrogate these texts and evaluate their significance. Adult educators teaching those who work with young adults… may find it useful to explore these texts as ways of helping these professionals consider questions of gender, adulthood, and identity… Adult Educators may also find these texts to be a rich

> source of material for introducing and discussing a range of challenging concepts [including] the relationship between agency and sacrifice. (Jarvis 13-4)

These texts serve as a place to begin discussion, to open up the field of different types of texts to evaluation by the students themselves, not just what you give them in the classroom, but what they consume on their own. The use of young adult literature provides us also with the means to open the door on what the students themselves have experienced.

I have not written yet about the difficulties in addressing trauma to students who have experienced it themselves, as we've seen above, reading traumatic fiction can create outlets and experiences for processing one's own trauma. I do include several assignments that involve writing about minor loss in order to relate it to the trauma in the texts; the technique of "writing to heal" is so proven to help that I consider it basic knowledge at this point in time. Student's own experiences with trauma may assist them in identifying with a character experiencing trauma, which may help them feel less alone by the simple idea of seeing another's perspective, as referenced in Vezzali, et al. This also reminds me of Visser's ideas (See Chapter 1) about how characters experiencing resilience in texts can impact the readers' ability to be resilient. In short, addressing traumatic fiction and then exploring the narrative aspects of the student's own experiences can help as Elizabeth Dutro emphasizes:

> You and I respond together, though, a chorus of voices: schools *have* to be sensitive to children's traumatic experiences, including trauma's psychological impacts. Yes, of course, and literacy educators can be leaders in complicating assumptions and binaries that lurk in the discourse of trauma and children in schools… There's a reason why the narratives of life—life as narrative, counter-narratives, *testimonio*, digital storytelling—are at the heart of some of our most critical processes and practices in literacy research and teaching. We know that stories—how they're told,

> by whom, where, when, and with what stakes—are the textual spaces for seeing who we are and might be, for feeling our way through the world, for shifting or doubling down on our assumptions of how power and privilege function for us and others. Here, too, difficult stories from lives are particularly consequential because we know that difficult experiences are already in the room, whether or not acknowledged, invited, or made to matter in some explicit way. (332)

In short, story and narrative are how we as educators address trauma in the classroom because the stories are already there; we have a responsibility not only to create democratic and ethical students, but to provide the tools to work through the inevitable trauma a person will experience. The following assignments, syllabi, and lesson plans are designed to open up students, and by association ourselves as teachers, to the many aspects of trauma, sacrifice, and loss.

**Aspects to Avoid**

One thing that I touched on briefly in my introduction, but bears repeating here is that students, primarily younger students, tend to treat characters as real live people. However, characters are only what the author has written about them, as Martha Hixon describes:

> Character, like plot, is an artificial construct… descriptive phrases, bits of dialogue, moments of action that forward the plot. The reader puts all these fragments together into a coherent "person" based on his or her perceptions and experiences of people in this real world, thus lending these fictional constructs solidity and meaning. We as readers sometimes forget the implied cooperation between author and reader in establishing this construct, and we also, since we are reading a "finished" work of

> fiction, tend to forget the process of development that the author went through in choosing these textual fragments with which the reader is to work in creating the identities within the story. (256)

Authors have chosen components of human traits to impose on their characters. We glean these meanings from the author's hand, therefore making no act of a character anything other than a chosen path. While this may seem difficult to analyze, examining constructs of human authors, we have more information from literary characters than we do from those real humans around us; we can see the thoughts of a character despite never truly knowing what is going on in another human being's head, which Uri Margolin expands on:

> Characters are abstract in the sense that they do not exist in real space and time, and are more like concepts in this regard. Consequently they are not open to direct perception by us, and can be known only through textual descriptions or inferences based on those descriptions. In fact, they *are* these complexes of descriptions, not having any independent worldly existence. And in order to find out what properties a given character possesses or what claims about him are true, there is only one route to follow: examine the originating text, what is explicitly stated in it and what can be inferred from it according to standard procedures. Since characters are stipulated ("created," "invented"), it makes no sense to ask of their authors how they know that a character is thus and so, or to disagree with them about the makeup of any character. By writing their narratives, authors determine rather than describe the properties of their characters. The semantics of fiction is thus of the say-so variety. X is the case because the text says so. (68)

All the information we need to know about a character and what they experience is in the text. It also serves no purpose to ask the authors what they meant by the way a character

reacts, because the author chose that reaction for a reason. Only by looking at the text closely and the author's choices for the character can we truly understand what the characters are there to accomplish. An important part of teaching these novels and the characterizations within is looking at these choices, as students may not yet be aware that they can and should view characters as authorial constructs.

Students must be very careful to not examine the characters as if they were real people, with real thoughts or feelings. Everything a character says in the text has been chosen by an author. Brian Richardson states:

> Characters in fiction are, after all, words on a page; they are both more and less substantial than human beings. On the one hand, we can know the thoughts of a character much better than we can ever know the mental processes of most people; on the other hand, any fact about them left unsaid by the narrator (did the protagonist have a large mole on her left shoulder?) can never be known. Characters may be elaborately developed or not developed at all; some are three-dimensional, some two-, and some one-dimensional, reduced to a mere function. If a tale requires that a door be opened or a hero stymied, a figure may emerge to open the door or block the protagonist. In such a story, such figures may not be anything more than their function in the work. (133)

In all of these novels, there are characters that simply are not developed because they do not serve a function or because the protagonist doesn't have more interaction with them. It is easy for a reader to assume a character has more going on, but we are only given what is on the page. In fact, the idea that more goes on than what we see in a text is the foundation of fanfiction, which has become a tool of young adults to use in creating the stories they wished had happened to characters, but again, even in that medium, the choices being made are

made by an author. Maria Nikolajeva agrees that characters are not people, nor can they be analyzed as such when she states:

> I find it of overall importance to remind ourselves and our students that literary characters are indeed constructions, fictitious figures and not actual human beings, that they have no will of their own and do not have to behave in consistency with real psychological patterns. It is therefore advisable to avoid analyzing them as if they were human beings, claiming, for instance, "He does this or that because he wants…." Instead, we may put the question why the writer has chosen to let the character act in a certain way, even though the writer may have succeeded in creating a psychologically plausible character. (19)

I disagree that saying "She does this or that because she wants…" is incorrect. When students refer to characters in those terms, they are summarizing what the text has said, including the emotional responses the author has given to the character or the responses the other characters are exhibiting in relation to the protagonist. However, Nikolajeva's point that we are analyzing why an author has chosen to have their character express certain emotions or behave in certain ways shows us how they have created the character. Students should be guided to be very careful in how they analyze and examine characters.

**Note on the Materials**

The syllabi and lesson plans on the following pages are designed for first-year students (probably not literature or education majors), upper-class students, graduate students, and high school students. I have not picked out specific literary criticism to teach alongside these texts beyond what I've worked with here, as the growing body of work on trauma means that more texts are becoming widely available. My works cited can always be

utilized as a resource for critical sources as well. While I use Eric Tribunella's work heavily in my own writing, I do not think his work could be fully explored in a class below the graduate student level. I do think individual chapters of Danielle Allen's book *Talking to Strangers* could be used in an undergraduate setting. However, I would rather let the focus be on the primary texts so that the main source of ideas and exploration comes not from the words of others, but the readers themselves as they discover what can be inside a book for themselves. I also use Michael Carts' *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* as a foundational text. His sections on "Romancing the Retail" and "Back in the Real World" speak directly about the impact of fiction on a reader.

I should also note that I only offer books with female protagonists as part of this body of work. There are many fine examples of male protagonist fronted young adult fiction, but without the female protagonist, these texts fail to create social change. I think the main point of teaching these books from the perspective of emphasizing the push for participation in democratic change is in the character's ability to shift the future of her community instead of escaping it, embracing it, or returning it to a previous form, in the way male-protagonist books seem to end up. I should also mention that these syllabi are presented for teachers teaching students about trauma, not teaching educators. These are basic literary survey classes, an overview of what could be taught from a survey of young adult literature that features trauma with female protagonists.

**Conclusion**

I started this dissertation by examining how narrative and trauma theory could be used to not only examine young adult fiction, but why characterization is such an important part of children's and young adult literature as well as how sacrifice in these genres is used to

create change for the characters. The creation of social change also started an inquiry into how and why female protagonists specifically are catalysts for change in dystopian young adult trilogies. I made sure to clearly state that I was dealing with trilogies, as currently there is not a young adult dystopian trilogy with a male protagonist who creates social change at the end of the trilogy. This aspect of this very specific genre begs the question why female characters are able to sacrifice in a way that creates a shift in their society. To that end, using a very close reading of *The Hunger Games* trilogy as a baseline in examining how the protagonists are constructed and change or mature is the way forward. In order to frame the close reading, I chose Eric Tribunella's seven traits which define his concept of melancholic maturity that has been induced by loss or sacrifice. The seven traits are seriousness, responsibility, knowing, experienced, ethical, hard-working, and heteronormatively gendered. Tribunella states that a mature melancholic adult will have most if not all of these traits in their characterization.

The first chapter opens the close reading of *The Hunger Games* which also includes a comparison to Tribunella's maturity traits, but I correspondingly investigated how each trait was altered by extensive trauma. Tribunella's definition is a useful starting point, but problematic in the face of multiple traumatic events. Tribunella tells us that some loss or sacrifice is inevitable, whether that is the loss of a grandparent or a favorite toy, the loss of a child's body through puberty, or the loss of something greater, a child's innocence or the experience of more severe trauma, but the trilogies I am looking at explicitly use physical and mental trauma to mature their characters. In this close reading, we also saw how shared trauma can unite a community and how the power of resilience is an important aspect of characterization. At the end of that first chapter, we discovered that the excessive trauma had pushed Katniss past Tribunella's definition of melancholic maturity and emotionally

damaged her. In the epilogue, we discover that she has returned to melancholic maturity, not out of maturity, but rather because she was unable to overcome the trauma done to her and gave into her exiled social expectations. This adherence to melancholic maturity makes Katniss and her characterization a useful example for teaching how characters experiencing trauma create social change, but her final situation doesn't embrace resilience or the ability to continue to change things for the better. However, *The Hunger Games* trilogy is still the baseline for these types of dystopias and formulates the concept of the maturity plot, as I call it, where a young female protagonist experiences multiple traumatic events and is able to mature her society as she is matured.

The concept of the maturity plots leads us into the second chapter where I looked at the effect fiction can have on a reader through a study that found that readers of Harry Potter were more empathetic than those who didn't read *Harry Potter*. This study showed a direct correlation between acceptance of marginalized groups based on how the reader empathized with the protagonist, Harry's treatment of marginalized groups. Extrapolating their findings means that fiction can have a beneficial effect on its readers. I also looked at how a democratic society requires personal sacrifice of its citizens in order to further a common good as opposed to selfishness through accepting majority voting practices. These two aspects of fiction and sacrifice show us how important it is to carefully pick the literature that we teach to our students, because what they read has an effect on their maturity and can create empathetic students who develop into citizens who care about the common good while are also accepting of the sacrifice necessary in developing a democratic society. To that end, we come to the close readings of the *Uglies* and *Divergent* trilogies. *Uglies* is a trilogy that ends with the protagonist achieving Tribunella's melancholic maturity but abandoning it to become a guardian of her society from outside of it, rather than becoming a

mature adult within it, which makes *Uglies* the most empowering of the three trilogies we're examining and the best example of the maturity plot to teach. On the opposite end is *Divergent*, which doesn't successfully achieve maturity in its protagonist or its society due to poor characterization and plot holes, making it a poor choice to use for teaching. In closing out the chapter, I examine the differences in *Divergent* that make it an unfulfilled maturity plot and the reasons it may have failed to induce maturity.

The final chapter discusses the value put on young adult and children's literature by adults, namely that literature with traumatic elements can teach the reader about empathy, resilience, and maturity. These elements can be emphasized by teachers when using these texts in a classroom which has the potential to create students who are activists in their community, looking to further the common good. When using these texts, I warn against treating the characters as people, as young adults are more likely to do this rather than to examine the characterization and plot as separate devices.

In the appendix I have added syllabi and lesson plans created to address the concepts of using dystopian young adult literature in the classroom, focusing the high school lesson plans on *Uglies* due to the limited time available to high school units. The college level syllabi have a wider range of texts and all include *The Hunger Games* and *Uglies* trilogies along with other female protagonist-based books that end with a change in society. I was very specific to use this type of text in developing these materials so that any of the conclusions or concepts introduced in this dissertation would apply.

During this entire journey, my purpose was to convince a reader that teaching young adult literature that utilizes trauma in its characterization has a great deal of value in contemporary America. As I wrote my prelude, I recognized that trauma is occurring all over the country to young adults in the form of school shootings, the absence or loss of guardian

figures, bullying, drug abuse and losing friends to overdose, and many many other losses in the reality of today's America. By reading and teaching about traumatic fiction, we can give our students avenues for understanding the multiple decisions they can make when faced with trauma themselves. We can give them tools for making decisions about their own lives without using politics or real-life situations, which they might reject.

In conclusion, I have presented the importance and potential of teaching young adult dystopian fiction in classrooms at various levels of academia. Encouraging empathy and active participation in a student's community can only help them negotiate their own gradations of power, as Trites observed being crucial to the development of a teenager into an adult. Learning how to deal with loss, something that will happen to every young adult as they lose their childhood to become young adults and eventually become mature adults is a valuable skill for anyone to develop and if we as educators can assist in that shift, it is worth our time and energy.

## Appendix: Syllabi and Lesson Plans

**Syllabus for undergrad, first-year college students:**
**This syllabus is paced for a first-year college class. I assign about 75 pages per class period, as the reading is YA literature and not normally a struggle. Each week is blocked out according to what is due, for example on the second week, Chapters 1-7 would have been read prior to the first class that week. The assignments are geared toward first year students as opposed to literature majors, which means I would avoid complicated literary criticism and theory, as most first-year classes are more introductory or are simply seminars built around a theme or concept. Keep in mind these books and readings are only suggestions and that the growing body of work on traumatic literature means that more articles and essays will be available.**
**The intended focus for first-year students is to get deeper into what the effect of the book on the reader could be and why decisions were made about characters or plot. The overall question of "why do we read about trauma?" may guide this course.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Professor Elizabeth Myers | University |
| Literature | Semester |
| Place | Days and Time |

### Young Adult Literature and the Uses of Trauma

Welcome to Young Adult Literature and its Uses of Trauma! Young Adult literature is a relatively recent genre in American history, developed after World War II, when we split up childhood and adulthood, adding a third section of growth: the teenage years. This course will examine how Young Adult literature developed, as well as how it uses trauma and loss to show how its characters grow. Trauma is used to further moral lessons and inspire the reader in specific ways. We will look at multiple novels as well as some literary theory to explore how the themes of trauma and sacrifice are explored by the authors and what the impact could be on the reader.

**Course Goals:**

— Address Young Adult Literature as an emerging genre in the role of literature
—Explore how to relate common themes in two different texts
—In depth analysis of texts, characters, plots and themes with an eye toward criticism
—Ability to find meanings and ideas below the surface reading of a text
—Create pathways for using this analysis in other genres
—Talk about the use of the theme of sacrifice in literature and beyond

**Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

—Analyze young adult literature for deeper themes and meaning
—Discuss the purpose of young adult literature in the context of fiction
—Create analytical essays comparing and contrasting two texts related to a common theme
—Express their ideas in a positive, constructive manner
—Use literary research to examine texts

**Course Readings:**
I highly recommend reading ahead, but because the books are YA novels, they are not difficult reads. I also recommend picking up the novels used; most of these are very easy to find cheaply.
*Young Adult Literature* by Michael Cart
*Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede
*A Wrinkle In Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
*Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld
*The Hunger Games* by Susan Collins (+movie)
*The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

**Materials and Preparation:**
You are to bring the book being read for the day along with any supplemental materials. You need a notebook and pen or laptop so that you can complete daily writing assignments and take notes. If you need to use your cell phone for translation or dictionary purposes, please let me know in advance.

**Assignments and Assessment:**
All Assignments are to be done in double spaced, twelve-point Times New Roman or Garamond font. Papers should follow the current MLA guidelines for formatting, citation and works cited. Assignments are due by the end of the class period the date they are due.
**Participation: 15%** I expect participation in group discussion. Because the best analysis happens when people exchange ideas or talk about the different ways they viewed they book, I put a great deal of emphasis on students having an opinion and expressing it in a constructive manner.
**Homework: 10%** Once per book, I want a paragraph response to something we talked about in class. It can be a question you had that you never got to ask, a point you didn't get to make or wanted to expand on because we ran out of time, a commentary on whether you enjoyed or hated the book, or anything similar in reaction to the text. These do not have to be handed in at the end of a text; they can be handed in during any of the weeks we are reading the text.
**First Paper: 15%** At least 2-3 double spaced pages. See Options.
**Second Paper: 20%** At least 3-4 double spaced pages. See Options.
**Final Paper: 25%** At least 5-7 double spaced pages. See Options.
**Final Exam: 15%** Your final exam will be an essay exam. You will have at least three possible questions to choose from and write until you feel that the essay question has been answered sufficiently. Questions can be on any of the texts covered in this class and will come from our discussions

**Classroom Etiquette:**
Because we are reading about and discussing trauma, some discussions may get heated or upsetting. The founding principal of my classroom is that everyone has a voice and a valuable opinion. If you cannot handle the topic or treating others' opinions with respect, you may leave the classroom.

**Schedule: This is an overview of what we're covering and is subject to change.**

| **Week** | **Paper due dates** |
|---|---|
| **Week 1** | Introduction; talking about YA literature and trauma; Discussion of Cart's history in class |
| **Week 2** | *Dealing with Dragons*: Chapters 1-7, 8-15 |
| **Week 3** | *A Wrinkle in Time*: Chapters 1-3, 4-6 |
| **Week 4** | *A Wrinkle in Time*: Chapters 7-9, 10-12; Cart's section "Romancing the Retail" |
| **Week 5** | *Uglies*: Chapters New Pretty Town-Waiting for David (75), Fight (76)-Spagbol (155); Paper 1 Draft due |
| **Week 6** | *Uglies*: Chapters- The Worst Mistake (156)-Heartthrob (228), Suspicion (229)-The Rabbit Pen (303) **Paper 1 due** |
| **Week 7** | *Uglies*: Chapters- In Case of Damage (304)-Over the Edge (367), Inside (374)-end of book; Cart's section "So, How Adult is Young Adult?" |
| **Week 8** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 1-4, 5-9 |
| **Week 9** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 10-14, 15-18 |
| **Week 10** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 18-22, 23-27; Paper 2 Draft due |
| **Week 11** | *The Hunger Games* movie; **Paper 2 due**; Cart's section "Back in the Real World" |
| **Week 12** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 1-10, 11-20 |
| **Week 13** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 21-28, 29-35 |
| **Week 14** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 36-end; Paper 3 Draft due |
| **Week 15** | **Paper 3 due** |
| | **Final Exam** |

**Paper Assignment Options:**

**Paper 1:**

Option 1:

Talk about an experience you have had with losing an object or belief as a child. What did this loss do for you? For example, if you lost an item did it teach you to be more careful with your belongings? If you stopped believing in Santa Claus, did it make you more distrustful of what your parents told you? Think about how this loss affected how you dealt with losses in the future or how it changed how you deal with the world in general.
Compare this loss to the losses in the any of the texts. How did your reaction to loss compare or differ from the character's reactions?

Option 2:

Examine a character from either *Dealing with Dragons* or *A Wrinkle in Time* and explore what the character achieves, how they achieve it, and what purpose the character fulfills in the narrative. What trauma or loss does the character suffer over the course of the novel and how does the author show us the change in the character's characterization (use specific word choices, events, or even the reactions of other characters to show this change).
For example, if you pick Kazul from *Dealing with Dragons*, explore how her relationship with Cimorene changes her own reactions or directly impacts those around her.

**Paper 2:**

Option 1:

Compare and contrast two of the texts we'd handled in the first half of the class (*Dealing with Dragons*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Uglies*, *The Hunger Games*). You may examine how two books handle a common theme, the difference in the portrayal of trauma or loss, the age of the intended reader and the effect on the narrative, the characters' varied reactions to loss, the endings to the book, or the secondary character interaction. Whatever aspect you choose must be evaluated in both books.
Explore the ways that texts can differ and unite in order to tell the reader something. What is each book saying? Are they saying the same things? What conclusions are you as the reader supposed to reach?

Option 2:

Examine the progression of Tally Youngblood as a character and the decisions she makes in comparison to Katniss Everdeen. How does each protagonist deal with their society and how do they handle initial loss? Do these characters have a lot in common? Which character loses more? Does the difference in narrative type (*The Hunger Games* in first person, *Uglies* in third) change how you read and feel about the book? How does each protagonist start the book? How do they end the book? What do you feel is the intended impact on the reader for each protagonist's journey?

**Paper 3:**

Option 1:

Find a critical article on one of the texts in the last half of class (*The Hunger Games*, *The Handmaid's Tale*) or an article on young adult literature to apply to one of the texts; in other words, a text to agree with or disagree with, but something substantial to engage with about a primary text. All research must be from a credible source and from a peer-reviewed journal. This is a broader assignment, but the article must have a quality that enables you to take a stance on what it says and then prove or disprove its claims with quotes from the book.

Option 2:

Compare the text portrayal of *The Hunger Games* with the movie. Examine how the trauma is portrayed visually in the film in comparison to the book. Does it have the same effect/impact? Think about passages in the book that convey Katniss' reactions and explain how the movie portrays the same scenes. What is the effect on the watcher that may differ from the effect on the reader?

**Potential Final Exam Essay Questions** (all unused paper assignments can also be used as Final Exam questions):

What is the loss in *Dealing with Dragons*? Why would this novel have been chosen for a class on trauma?

Think about the definition(s) of trauma, how do the texts fulfill or not fulfill this definition? Why do you think trauma is so popular in literature?

Which has more impact for you, trauma in a movie or a book and why do you think that might be?

The endings of many of these books set up possible sequels. Why do you think they are written that way? Which of the texts seem stand alone and which seem to be unfinished?

**Syllabus for upper-class students:**
**This syllabus has a bit of an increased reading pace, and I recommend that you include critical essays on the side for a higher-level student. I would assume at this point that they don't need the extra time for reading and can focus more on the content and criticism. I also assume that these are English majors who can handle more complicated paper assignments and work with literary criticism in their papers. Keep in mind these books and readings are only suggestions.**
**The intended focus is to get deeper into not just what the effect of the book on the reader could be and why decisions were made about characters or plot, but also what those choices do and the purpose behind them.**
**The overall question of "what is the purpose of reading about trauma?" may guide this course.**

Professor Elizabeth Myers — University
Literature — Semester
Place — Days and Time

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—Ability to find meanings and ideas below the surface reading of a text
—Create pathways for using this analysis in other genres
—Talk about the use of the theme of sacrifice in literature and beyond
—Explore the broader use of trauma and sacrifice as it affects the reader

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

—Analyze young adult literature for deeper themes and meaning
—Discuss the purpose of young adult literature in the context of fiction
—Create analytical essays comparing and contrasting two texts related to a common theme
—Express their ideas in a positive, constructive manner
—Use literary research to examine texts

—Examine the use of trauma and explore its purpose in young adult literature

**Course Readings:**
I highly recommend reading ahead, but because the books are YA novels, they are not difficult reads. I also recommend picking up the novels used, most of these are very easy to find cheaply.
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**First Paper: 10%** At least 3-5 double spaced pages.
**Second Paper: 20%** At least 5-7 double spaced pages
**Final Paper: 25%** At least 6-8 double spaced pages.
**Final Exam: 15%** Your final exam will be an essay exam. You will have at least three possible questions to choose from and write until you feel that the essay question has been answered sufficiently. Questions can be on any of the texts covered in this class and will come from our discussions.

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Because we are reading about and discussing trauma, some discussions may get heated or upsetting. The founding principal of my classroom is that everyone has a voice and a

valuable opinion. If you cannot handle the topic or treating others' opinions with respect, you may leave the classroom.

**Schedule: This is an overview of what we're covering and is subject to change.**

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| **Week 3** | *A Wrinkle in Time*: Chapters 1-4, 5-8 |
| **Week 4** | *A Wrinkle in Time*: Chapters 9-12; movie; Cart's section "Romancing the Retail" |
| **Week 5** | *Uglies*: Chapters New Pretty Town-Waiting for David (75), Fight (76)-Spagbol (155); Paper 1 Draft due |
| **Week 6** | *Uglies*: Chapters- The Worst Mistake (156)-Heartthrob (228), Suspicion (229)-The Rabbit Pen (303) **Paper 1 due;** Cart's section "So, How Adult is Young Adult?" |
| **Week 7** | *Uglies*: Chapters- In Case of Damage (304)-Over the Edge (367), Inside (374)-end of book |
| **Week 8** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 1-4, 5-9; Cart's section "Back in the Real World" |
| **Week 9** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 10-14, 15-18 |
| **Week 10** | *The Hunger Games*: Chapters 18-22, 23-27; Paper 2 Draft due |
| **Week 11** | *The Hunger Games* movie; **Paper 2 due;** "Sex and Other Shibboleths" |
| **Week 12** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 1-10, 11-20 |
| **Week 13** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 21-28, 29-35 |
| **Week 14** | *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 36-end; Paper 3 Draft due |
| **Week 15** | Episodes of the *The Handmaid's Tale*, final discussion **Paper 3 Due** |
| | **Final Exam** |

**Paper assignments:**

**Paper 1:**

Option 1:

Talk about an experience you have had with losing an object or belief as a child. What did this loss do for you? For example, if you lost an item did it teach you to be more careful with your belongings? If you stopped believing in Santa Claus, did it make you more distrustful of what your parents told you? Think about how this loss affected how you dealt with losses in the future or how it changed how you deal with the world in general.

Compare this loss to the losses in the any of the texts. How did your reaction to loss compare or differ from the character's reactions?

Option 2:

Talk about an experience of witnessing an event as a bystander, something that happened in the news that you followed or had friends who experienced. You can pick anything that had major news coverage, the Olympics, the Fyre festival, etc. As someone who wasn't there directly, how did the news coverage, video footage, or other aspects of the event affect you emotionally or change your opinion in any way? What details did you focus on, what ways did you process or try to understand the event, and what eventually changed in your thinking of the event?

**Paper 2:**

Option 1:

You may compare and contrast two of the texts we'd handled in the first half of the class (*Dealing with Dragons*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Uglies*, *The Hunger Games*). You may examine two books handle a common theme, the difference in the portrayal of trauma or loss, the age of the intended reader and the effect on the narrative, the characters' varied reactions to loss, the endings to the book, the secondary character interaction. Whatever aspect you choose must be evaluated in both books.

Explore the ways that texts can differ and unite in order to tell the reader something. What is each book saying? Are they saying the same things? What conclusions are you as the reader supposed to reach?

Option 2:

Examine the progression of Tally Youngblood as a character and the decisions she makes in comparison to Katniss Everdeen. How does each protagonist deal with their society and how do they handle initial loss? Do these characters have a lot in common? Which character loses more? Does the difference in narrative type (*The Hunger Games* in first person, *Uglies* in third) change how you read and feel about the book? How does each protagonist start the book? How do they end the book? What do you feel is the intended impact on the reader for each protagonist's journey? What is the different in attitude between each character at the

conclusion of the book? Is each book complete on its own or does it need the rest of the trilogy to truly say something to the reader?

**Paper 3:**

Option 1:

Find at least two critical articles on one of the texts in the last half of class (*The Hunger Games*, *The Handmaid's Tale*: the books or the visual adaptations) or an article on young adult literature to apply to one of the texts; in other words, two texts to agree with or disagree with, but something substantial to engage with about a primary text. All research must be from a credible source and from a peer-reviewed journal. This is a broader assignment, but the articles must make a claim that enables you to take a stance on what each of them say and then prove or disprove their claims with quotes from the book.

For example, if you found a text that claimed that the ending of *The Handmaid's Tale* detracts from the overall message, you can agree or disagree with that claim and then find a text to support your position.

Option 2:

Compare the text portrayal of either *The Hunger Games*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, or *The Handmaid's Tale* with the visual portrayal, the movie or tv show. This option will require you to possibly watch something on your own time. Examine how is the trauma portrayed visually versus in the book. Does it have the same effect/impact? Think about passages in the book that convey the protagonists' reactions and explain how the movie portrays the same scenes. What is the effect on the watcher that may differ from the effect on the reader?

**Potential Final Exam Essay Questions** (all unused paper assignments can also be used as Final Exam questions):

What is the loss in *Dealing with Dragons*? Why would this novel have been chosen for a class on trauma? What do you think this is more children's literature or young adult literature based on the trauma within the plot?

Think about the definition(s) of trauma, how do the texts fulfill or not fulfill this definition? Why do you think trauma is so popular in literature?

Which has more impact for you, trauma in a movie or a book and why do you think that might be?

Why do so many popular tv shows or movies involve trauma? Shows like Game of Thrones, Breaking Bad, Stranger Things, Jessica Jones all portray trauma as part of their stories. Even

shows like Rick and Morty and Bojack Horseman have elements of trauma in their plot lines. In most Disney movies, some type of loss takes the parents away from the movie's hero/ines. Why is this such a ubiquitous form of entertainment?

The endings of many of these books set up possible sequels. Why do you think they are written that way? Which of the texts seem stand alone and which seem to be unfinished? In *A Wrinkle in Time*, a dark entity takes over Meg's brother Charles. What do you believe IT is in the text? How does the fear of having Charles taken from her drive Meg's actions?

In *The Hunger Games*, the citizens of the Capitol watch and embrace the Hunger Games as a form of entertainment. Compare that to the way our own media publicizes and portrays tragic events. How does the Capitol's consumption of the Hunger Games footage relate or not relate to our own viewing of news programs and world events?

**Syllabus for graduate students:**
**Because this is a graduate style literature survey course, I've assigned a novel a week, which seems to be standard in the field. I recommend as much literary criticism as you see fit. I've seen classes with no outside criticism, simply book discussion and classes with literary theory alongside every book. Some classes I've been in seem to reserve the theory for papers, which puts the focus on the graduate students to guide the discussions and development of ideas rather than on the professor. The paper assignments are broader and less directed as well.**
**The question "what can we do with traumatic literature and its themes" may guide this class.**

Professor Elizabeth Myers — University
Literature — Semester
Place — Days and Time

**Young Adult Literature and the Uses of Trauma**

Welcome to Young Adult Literature and its Uses of Trauma! Young Adult literature is a relatively recent genre in American history, developed after World War II, when we split up childhood and adulthood, adding a third section of growth: the teenage years. This course will examine how Young Adult literature developed, as well as how it uses trauma and loss to show how its characters grow. Trauma is used to further moral lessons and inspire the reader in specific ways. Think of the original fairy tales and how suffering was used as a plot device to teach the reader a lesson. For example, we will look at multiple novels as well as literary theory to explore how narrative shapes the reader.

Throughout this course, we'll be reading a YA novel a week, standard for most literature graduate classes, but because the novels are often easier reads, other readings will often be assigned alongside of the novels.

**Course Goals:**

— Address Young Adult Literature as an emerging genre in the role of literature
—Explore the themes of sacrifice, loss, and trauma in the context of fiction
—In depth analysis of texts, characters, plots and themes with an eye toward trauma theory
—Create pathways for using this analysis in other genres
—Investigate the relationship between the character's journey and the reader
—Navigate the relationships between intended audience, actual audience, and the text itself

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

—Examine the use of trauma and explore its purpose in young adult literature
—Find the different ways realistic fiction and dystopian fiction portray trauma

—Explore how the effect on the reader is changed by the character's reactions to loss

—Create and defend a point of view on the value of young adult fiction focused on trauma

**Course Readings:**
I highly recommend reading ahead, but because the books are YA novels, they are not difficult reads. I also recommend picking up the novels used, most of these are very easy to find cheaply. E-books are also acceptable.
*Young Adult Literature* by Michael Cart
*Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* ed. Michelle Balaev
*The Hunger Games* by Susan Collins
*Catching Fire* by Susan Collins
*Mockingjay* by Susan Collins
*Uglies* by Scott Westerfeld
*Pretties* by Scott Westerfeld
*Specials* by Scott Westerfeld
*Bitterblue* by Kristin Cashore OR *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah Maas
*Uprooted* by Naomi Novik
*The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
*Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
*The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
*Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede

**Materials and Preparation:**
Bring your laptop and be prepared to take notes.

**Assignments and Assessment:**
There are 2 major papers assigned in this class, a paper halfway through the semester and one at the end; there is also an essay final. You are expected to come prepared to discuss, in detail, the works we are dealing with and contribute to the conversation.
All Assignments are to be done in double spaced, twelve-point Times New Roman or Garamond font. Papers should follow the current MLA guidelines for formatting, citation and works cited. Assignments are due by the end of the class period the date they are due.
**Participation: 20%** I expect participation in group discussion. Because the best analysis happens when people exchange ideas or talk about the different ways they viewed they book, I put a great deal of emphasis on students having an opinion and expressing it in a constructive manner.
**First Paper: 25%** At least 10-12 double spaced pages.
**Final Paper: 30%** At least 15-18 double spaced pages.
**Final Exam: 25%** Your final exam will be an essay exam. You will have at least five possible questions to choose from and write until you feel that you have covered three of them. Questions can be on any of the texts covered in this class and will come from our discussions

**Classroom Etiquette:**
Our conversations and discussions involve trauma and sacrifice. Keep discussions civil and on task.

**Schedule: This is an overview of what we're covering and is subject to change.**

| **Week** | **Paper due dates + Readings** |
|---|---|
| **Week 1** | Introduction; a run-through of Cart's history |
| **Week 2** | *Uglies*; Cart's section "A New Literature for a New Millennium?" |
| **Week 3** | *Pretties*; Balaev "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered" |
| **Week 4** | *Specials* |
| **Week 5** | *The Hunger Games*; Cart's section "So, How Adult is Young Adult?" |
| **Week 6** | *Catching Fire*; Visser "Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies" |
| **Week 7** | *Mockingjay*; Paper 1 Draft due |
| **Week 8** | *The Handmaid's Tale***; Paper 1 due**; Cart's section "Sex and Other Shibboleths" |
| **Week 9** | *Uprooted*; Cart's section "Romancing the Retail" |
| **Week 10** | *Bitterblue* or *Court of Thorns and Roses* (pick one) |
| **Week 11** | *The Hate U Give*; Cart's section "Back in the Real World" |
| **Week 12** | *Speak*; Vickroy "Voices of Survivors in Contemporary Fiction" |
| **Week 13** | Discussion; Paper 2 Draft due; Cart's section "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Literature" |
| **Week 14** | *Talking to Dragons*; **Paper 2 due**; Cart's section "Of Books and Bytes" |
| **Week 15** | Final Thoughts/Discussion |
| | **Final** |

**Paper assignments (all assignments should be done with an eye toward the traumatic aspects of each book):**

**Paper 1:**

Option 1:

Look at the two different societies portrayed in the *Uglies* trilogy and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. How do they handle dissidents in their society? How is each society structured to negate or devalue certain types of citizens? How is the trauma constructed, encouraged, or otherwise approved of by each society?

Option 2:

Both the *Uglies* trilogy and *The Hunger Games* trilogy allude to being a future version of America. Reflect on how these dystopias use traumatic elements from contemporary or past society as references to how things could end up being in the future.

Option 3:

Compare the endings of *Mockingjay* and *Specials*. How does each character end up? What can be said about how each of these trilogies conclude? What has the trauma done to them or how has it affected their epilogue?

**Paper 2:**

Option 1:

*The Handmaid's Tale* was developed into a tv show and then the costumes from the tv show were used in protests across the country. How did the book shape the form of these protests and why are the costumes, also described in the book, such powerful imagery? What ends up being more powerful, the text of the book or the imagery of the tv series?

Option 2:

Using *The Hate U Give* or *Speak*, explore how realistic fiction is also used to portray trauma to young adults. Describe the results of each trauma and the reactions of the characters in the book. Can it be argued that these books are trying to provide guidance on handling these types of situations?

Option 3:

The main theme of both *Bitterblue* and *The Court of Thorns and Roses* is community-wide trauma. Take a secondary character and their interactions with Bitterblue or and explore the difference in how each character handles trauma.

**Potential Final Exam Essay Questions:**

How is the trauma of Meg experiencing IT explored in the book? Why is the loss of a family member a catalyst for Meg's ability to fight back?

Compare *Uprooted* to older fairy tales: how does it work as a "morality lesson"? What could it teach us about trauma? What does it teach us about the use of fairy tales as a way of ethical decision making?

Both *Bitterblue* and *The Court of Thorns and Roses* are part of larger trilogies. Do they feel incomplete or as if the trauma doesn't have as much of an impact because they're part of a larger story? Why or why not?

Why do you believe *Dealing with Dragons* fits (or does not fit) the themes and discussion in this class?

What changes for Melinda by the end of *Speak*? How does the atmosphere of the school change throughout the novel to affect the reader? As an adult reader, how does the portrayal of high school feel to you?

*The Hate U Give* brings up questions of race, trauma, and media reaction. Which of these do you feel was the most impactful for you as a reader? What did you struggle with while reading it?

*The Handmaid's Tale* was written in 1986. Examine Cart's history of YA literature. Are there elements of the book that reflect this distance from our current society?

*The Handmaid's Tale* has a widely-debated ending. Do you think this ending works for the rest of the novel or distracts from it?

Compare *The Hunger Games* trilogy to the *Uglies* trilogy on a specific level: characters, plot, or narrative. Did one of them have more of impact on you than the other? Why do you think that is?

**Lesson plan for high school English unit:**
**As I am not a high school teacher, I have relied on the brilliance of those friends of mine who are. Several of the books used in the previous syllabi are also being taught in high schools, notably *Speak*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Hunger Games* trilogy, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and the first book of *Uglies*. Several other books have been suggested to me as appropriate that I haven't included here: *The Book Thief*, *Weetzie Bat*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Any of these novels (or others) can be substituted, although I have chosen the first book of *Uglies* to form these lesson plans.**
**I have included two levels of lesson plans in two different formats. The first is a shorter term lesson plan based on the reading of *Uglies*. The second format is based on a several week unit and draws on a template from *Understanding By Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.**

| |
|---|
| **Teacher Name: Myers**<br>**Date: Any**<br>**Class/period/level: 10th grade/11th grade/12th grade** |
| **Name of Unit:** Trauma as a Plot Device |
| **Learning Objectives/Focus Questions:**<br>What is the trauma doing within the text? |
| **List high-level thinking questions that will guide instruction, practice, or reflection and/or help constitute formative assessment. Students will consider the following questions:**<br><br>How does the author portray the effects of trauma on the characters?<br>How does the trauma develop through the plot?<br>Are there signposts to guide the reader toward certain reactions? What are they?<br>What words are used to convey how the characters are impacted by the plot progression? |
| **Learning Activities:**<br>Teacher Role:<br>First, students will examine the questions from above, and pick one to work with in conjunction with the novel. Periods will be given to read quietly and work through the book. After specific chapters, students will respond to questions in class or as homework, which will guide their eventual final paper. |

After Chapters:
Shay (end of chapter is 31)
Rapids (end of chapter is 60)
Last Trick (end of chapter is 95)
Ugly for Life (end of chapter is 119)
End of Part 1, Infiltrator (end of chapter is 135)
The Worst Mistake (end of chapter is 163)
Lies (end of chapter is 194)
Heartthrob (end of chapter is 228)
The Secret (end of chapter is 261)
End of Part 2, Burning Bridges (end of chapter is 284)
Run (end of chapter is 318)
Familiar Sights (end of chapter is 358)
Getaway (end of chapter is 397)
End of Book, Down the River (end of chapter is 425)

**Common Core State Standards Met:**

**Reading Standards:**

RL.11-12.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.11-12.3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

RL.11-12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

**Writing Standards:**

WS.11-12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims

fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented

WS.11-12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WS 11-12.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

WS 11-12.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

**CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING** (guided practice/formative assessment/closure)**:** Each section of the paper will be drafted and edited, with evaluation on the parts of construction.

Each paper will be presented to the class in a five minute presentation in order to assess their work with the book. Their paper and presentation will also be graded.

**LESSON REFLECTION**: (Did the lesson meet your objective? If not, how would you change the lesson to improve student learning)

To be done afterwards.

# Understanding By Design Unit Template

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title of Unit** | Trauma as | **Grade Level** | 11th/12th |
| **Curriculum Area** | English/Writing | **Time Frame** | Three weeks |
| **Developed By** | Elizabeth Myers | | |

## Identify Desired Results (Stage 1)

### Content Standards

**Ability to read a text and explore ideas relating to how the book creates action and characterization.**
**Identify how the author moves through themes and lesson within the book (some themes are nature versus technology; trauma as part of growth; adults versus children)**
**Explore how the book *Uglies* describes Tally Youngblood and how we come to understand her as a character**

| Understandings | Essential Questions | |
|---|---|---|
| **Overarching Understanding** | **Overarching** | **Topical** |
| Learn to look for how the author is constructing a text<br>What impact does the text have on the student as a reader, what role are they put in when they read a book? | What is the distinction between a villain and a hero/ine?<br>What does fiction do for a reader?<br>What role does loss play in the book?<br>What lesson is the book trying to tell us? | How do you feel about the characters? Are you drawn to one specific character?<br>What words show you the way you're meant to feel about the events in the book? |
| **Related Misconceptions** | | |
| Characters can be thought of as people<br>The impact on the reader has nothing to do with how the author has written a book<br>Trauma in a book is merely entertainment without purpose | | |

| Knowledge<br>Students will know… | Skills<br>Students will be able to… |
|---|---|
| How to examine a work of fiction for clues as to the author's overall lesson or purpose.<br>How to write a paper that explores their point of view as a reader | Look through the text for examples that make a point for them about what lesson they believe the book is trying to impart<br>Write a paper that captures their relationship with a text<br>Plan, draft, and edit a narrative paper |

| Assessment Evidence (Stage 2) | |
|---|---|
| **Performance Task Description** | |
| **Goal** | Complete a paper exploring their relationship with the book |
| **Audience** | Teacher |
| **Product/Performance** | A three-page, five paragraph paper that explores |
| **Other Evidence** | |
| First, they will create responses to various sections of the text in class and as homework. Second, they will develop a thesis about the book and then work on sections of a paper. Through the development of a thesis, introduction, conclusion, and body paragraphs, the student will be evaluated on all of the pieces of an essay before they put the pieces together. | |
| **Learning Plan (Stage 3)** | |
| **Where are your students headed? Where have they been? How will you make sure the students know where they are going?** | The students are headed toward developing a paper based on their interpretation and analysis of the book according to broader seen themes, focusing on the portrayal of trauma and working with how the theme of trauma works within the themes of such a nature versus technology, the use of a seeming utopia becoming a dystopia, how maturity is portrayed. Through the lesson, I will examine and grade their writing progress and assess their comprehension through their writing. |
| **How will you hook students at the beginning of the unit?** | Explain the use of trauma in literature or film and see if the students can discuss why this might be important or popular. |
| **What events will help students experience and explore the big idea and questions in the unit? How will you equip them with needed skills and knowledge?** | Smaller writing assignments will build a thesis that they will then develop into a larger argument or exploration of a theme within the idea of trauma in Uglies. Along the way, we will discuss techniques for reading, analysis, and paper development. |
| **How will you cause students to reflect and rethink? How will you guide them in rehearsing, revising, and refining their work?** | AT each stage, they will need to make sure their thesis is coherent and says something about what takes place in the book in regards to trauma. They will have to develop a definition of literary trauma and explore the various types of trauma that Uglies includes. |
| **How will you help students to exhibit and self-evaluate their growing skills, knowledge, and understanding throughout the unit?** | Through editing and exploring, also peer review and analysis through worksheets and even group work on thesis development. |
| **How will you tailor and otherwise personalize the learning plan to optimize the engagement and** | Students will work individually and in groups. They will complete in class work, participate in discussion, and do peer review worksheets to further understand what is required of them. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **effectiveness of ALL students, without compromising the goals of the unit?** | |
| **How will you organize and sequence the learning activities to optimize the engagement and achievement of ALL students?** | Start with reading and then move to discussion, then move to a written response to each section read to make sure that all students are responding to the text. From there, each student will develop a thesis from the written responses that are shared with the class. |

Template From: Wiggins, Grant and J. Mc Tighe. (1998). *Understanding by Design*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ISBN # 0-87120-313-8 (ppk)

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@JenAnsbach. "I’m not sure why people are so surprised that the students are rising up- we’ve been feeding them a steady diet of dystopian literature showing teens leading the charge for years. We have told teen girls they are empowered. What, you thought it was fiction? It was preparation" *Twitter*, 18 Feb. 2018, 4:42 p.m., twitter.com/JenAnsbach/status/965385962925813761

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VITA

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Educational Institutions:

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|---|---|---|---|
| Secondary: Harriton High School | Rosemont, PA | High School Diploma | 5/2000 |
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| Drew University | Madison, NJ | D.Litt in Writing, Literature, and Teaching | 5/2018 |