

NEGOTIATING FEMININITY: TOMBOY GENDER PERFORMANCE IN THE WRITINGS
OF TAMORA PIERCE AND SUZANNE COLLINS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
DISCUSSION OF GENRE	5
TEXT SUMMARIES	8
THE TOMBOY TRADITION	10
TOMBOY CHILDHOOD	14
ALANNA’S CROSS-DRESSING YEARS	21
Characteristics of Children’s Cross-Dressing	21
The Emphasis on Heterosexuality	27
COMPULSORY HETERONORMATIVITY WITHIN TOMBOY TRADITION	29
LEARNING FEMININITY	32
Attracting the Gaze.....	32
Using Feminine Props	35
Difficulties Performing Feminine Behavior.....	47
HETERONORMATIVE ENDINGS.....	55
CONCLUSION	60
WORKS CITED.....	64

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the gender performances of two young adult heroines, Alanna of Trebond and Katniss Everdeen, who, respectively, appear in Tamora Pierce's *Song of the Lioness Quartet* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* series. As tomboys, Alanna and Katniss follow Michelle Abate's tomboy arc: in childhood, they each have a tomboy phase where they engage in stereotypically masculine activities; after puberty, they learn how to conform according to the feminine gender prescriptions of their societies; and in adulthood, they seek heteronormative relationships. In order to understand how gender operates within these series, I draw on the theories of Judith Butler, who discusses how gender is created through repeated discursive acts, known as "performance." I examine the ways in which gendered feminine clothing and behaviors allow the characters to be socially perceived as "masculine" or "feminine," and I contend that the tomboy tradition allows for a "safe" subversion of gender without upsetting hegemonic heteronormativity. I assert that Alanna's cross-dressing phase allows for multiple ways to examine how gender performance can be learned, and Katniss's performance demonstrates how feminine clothing and behavior can be used to both attract and manipulate the patriarchal male gaze. Their depictions through each stage of the tomboy arc draw from, and complicate, ideas of gender within patriarchal cultures, and I argue that an examination of their performances allows for alternative ways of understanding female subjectivity.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Sharon. You are an inspiration, and I would not be where I am in life without you. Thank you for always believing in me.

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INTRODUCTION

In literary studies, “performance” describes how gender roles are created. Contemporary understandings of gender have been greatly influenced by the writings of Judith Butler, a feminist and queer theorist who explores the way in which society constructs gender roles. In her 1990 preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler posits that “being female” is actually a series of “discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex” (xxxix). As a result of her work, the word “performance” has been used to describe the dynamic between society and the individual that shapes the way gender is perceived and articulated: for example, society approves certain gender ideals as being appropriate for women, and women are gendered feminine when they perform discursive, cultural acts. As a result, Butler contends that gender is not fixed on a woman’s body or a man’s body but rather constantly articulated by an individual’s performance of gender: “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effect that it names” (*Bodies that Matter* 2). While this concept of gender may seem to divorce performance from the body, it is important to realize that the body also plays a significant role in the formulation of gender. In a patriarchal society, the body must be recognized as belonging to one “sex” or another, and according to Butler, the ultimate goal of performance is “to materialize the body’s sex, [in order] to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative” (*Bodies that Matter* 2). This means that performance is a series of acts that make, for instance, women socially

recognized as being female, and the ultimate goal of such recognition is to support heteronormativity.

Literature allows for the interrogation and critique of social institutions, such as gender, and, specifically, the genre of young adult literature allows for an exploration of how adolescents learn gender roles. According to Roberta Trites, author of *Disturbing the Universe*, teenagers become aware of social mores from various hegemonic institutions, and she asserts that the genre of young adult literature explores how adolescents relate to the various social institutions that affect their lives:

But 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, including [...] social constructions of sexuality, gender. (3)

This idea of negotiation underscores the concept that identity, especially gendered identity, is not fixed; rather, young adults construct gendered identity based on the repeated articulation of performative acts. A biologically female body is merely one component in defining one's sex; in order to be gendered feminine, adolescents learn gendered clothing styles and behaviors.

In this thesis, I will examine the gender performance of two young adult heroines, Alanna of Trebond and Katniss Everdeen, who, respectively, appear in Tamora Pierce's *Song of the Lioness Quartet* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* series. These two characters follow Michelle Abate's tomboy character arc: they each have a tomboy childhood of female masculinity,¹ they learn how to conform according to the gender prescriptions of their societies,

¹ Judith Halberstam uses the term "female masculinity" to describe masculinity performed by women.

and they engage in heteronormative relationships in adulthood. After masquerading as a boy for half of her life, Alanna learns how to balance stereotypical femininity with her career as a knight. Katniss is a teenage girl thrown into the public spectacle; in order to survive and keep her loved ones safe, Katniss performs feminine behavior and pretends to have a relationship with a fellow tribute, Peeta. While the motivations prompting these two characters to adopt femininity differ, I argue that both authors deploy stereotypical feminine clothing and heteronormative behaviors as props to become gendered feminine, and their portrayals allow for a subversion of the conventional understandings of female subjectivity.

As young adult literature, these texts explore the relationship between adolescents and social structures, and by providing alternate depictions female subjectivity, the texts allow readers to consider the ways in which both masculinity and femininity can be incorporated into feminine identity. Although the inclusion of heteronormative endings might seem normative instead of transgressive, the conclusions of both series are significantly short when compared with the sections allotted to the tomboy childhood and lessons in femininity. A non-heteronormative ending might have prevented these series from becoming a part of mainstream young adult speculative fiction; instead, the series can include subversions of gender within the bulk of the texts as long as the epilogues reaffirm heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, the ways in which Alanna and Katniss play with both masculinity and femininity suggest a transgression of patriarchal values, and although both characters learn models of stereotypical femininity (which aid them in their endeavors), they never completely conform.

To establish my claim of how these characters follow a tomboy arc, I will first discuss how Alanna's and Katniss's childhoods align with Michelle Abate's discussion of the tomboy tradition. In her book, *Tomboys*, Abate discusses how literary tomboys often follow a predictable

character arc: pre-pubescent tomboys are allowed to play with gender, pubescent tomboys are expected to conform to conventional gender norms, and in adulthood, they marry and have children (xix). I argue Alanna and Katniss follow a similar arc, and I contend that Pierce and Collins draw on tomboy traditions because the tomboy trope in children's literature signals a character that has masculine characteristics but does not identify with being a boy. In order for Alanna and Katniss to complicate gender roles, the reader must be aware that these girls still identify as female. According to Butler, gender is used to support "defining institutions [...such as] compulsory heterosexuality" (*Gender Trouble* xxxi), and I will demonstrate that both authors' insistence in aligning the characters with the tomboy tradition challenges gender without subverting heteronormativity. The discussion of this phase of the character arc will include an exploration of the tomboy tradition and children's cross-dressing.

Secondly, I assert that Alanna and Katniss conform to feminine gender roles as young adults. Patriarchal cultures teach girls that femininity is focused on attracting the male gaze, and I will draw on Laura Mulvey's discussion of how women in cinema are carefully styled to become objects for the gaze. Both characters learn that feminine props, such as gendered clothing and behavior, allow them to attract the gaze and be socially recognized as female subjects. Alanna learns about feminine props because she desires the male attention, but gender roles are forced on Katniss when she enters the Capitol. Katniss eventually learns to adopt feminine performance only because she understands that manipulating sponsors will keep her and Peeta alive.² My discussion of the gender conformity phase will be split into three parts: a background about the hegemonic normalization of the tomboy tradition (which may explain why both protagonists pursue heterosexual relationships), an exploration of how feminine clothing

² Katniss is forced to participate in a televised gladiator death-match called the Hunger Games, and the most successful participants receive aid from sponsors. She works the system by performing a type of femininity that would attract the attention of the viewership.

develops both characters' femininities, and an examination of how both characters have difficulty performing feminine behavior.

Finally, I contend that the series have similar heteronormative endings because the tomboy tradition that Abate discusses usually ends with the protagonists giving up their tomboyishness. Although heteronormativity is a defining aspect of the arc, the endings of both series are extremely short when compared to the other phases. In addition, both authors complicate the portrayal of marriage and motherhood. Alanna happily accepts the role of a wife but only after she negotiates a marriage that would not cause her to lose the freedom her knighthood permits. Katniss is in a committed partnership with Peeta, but the ending's dark tone suggests that assuming traditional gender roles does not always provide the stereotypical, literary healing from trauma. The endings call for a critique of gender expression, and this discussion will explore alternative formations of female subjectivity.

DISCUSSION OF GENRE

In addition to understanding how young adult literature allows for the exploration between the individual and society, it is important to consider Pierce's and Collins's texts as part of the genre of speculative fiction. Although Pierce's series is classified as fantasy and Collins's series is science fiction, both address similar thematic issues because fantasy and science fiction are "sister genres" in the larger grouping of speculative fiction (Fichtelberg xiii). According to Susan Fichtelberg, author of *Encountering Enchantment: A Guide to Speculative Fiction for Teens*, speculative fiction "encompass[es] the fantastic in different ways" by "ponder[ing] the question, 'What if...'" (xiii). While fantasy stories include magic, and science fiction are based on science, Fichtelberg maintains that these genres, as part of speculative fiction, share many characteristics: "[they] stretch so far beyond the boundaries of what is known, they require a

willing suspension of disbelief exceeding that required for realistic fiction; they feature stories with strong plots; and they speculate on myriad possibilities, unrestricted by reality” (xiii-xiv). Fichtelberg’s inclusion of the word “possibilities” underscores the idea that speculative fiction permits the reader to explore alternate constructions of reality different from the known and experienced realities of our world.³ Through the inclusion of magic or futuristic technology, speculative fiction allows for a hypothetical inquiry into how humans would be affected if reality were different.

The speculative nature of Pierce’s and Collins’s series allows readers to consider the possibilities of gender bending in worlds where certain aspects of patriarchal cultures seem exaggerated, and this encourages readers to question if such gender subversions can be possible in contemporary institutions. The concept of possibility exploration is what Margaret Atwood considers to be a key component how speculative fiction questions gender: “SF narratives can also interrogate social organization by showing what things might be like if we rearranged them. Sometimes they are used primarily as a way of reconsidering gender structures” (62). Since speculative fiction focuses on the “what if,” authors can create situations in which characters play with gender performance. For example, Pierce’s series takes place in a magical, medieval world in which women are not allowed to have agency or a career. Alanna’s gender bending creates an opportunity for her to become a knight and enjoy freedom within marriage, and as a result, this novel reflects the second-wave feminist agenda of 1980s literature. Female adolescent readers can examine how Alanna rebels against a restricting patriarchal culture and becomes a career woman who has a family. Collins’s series permits readers to see how the contemporary obsession with reality television could be pushed into future extremes in which contestants fight

³ Another critic, Farah Mendelsohn, contends that while young adult speculative fiction allows for a questioning of institutions, this genre often reinforces heteronormativity (131).

for their lives. Katniss's performance demonstrates that television, like any medium, can be manipulated so that viewers see what the producers want. She creates a vision of femininity to win support for her cause, and many of her viewers never realize that her performance had been carefully created.

Nevertheless, speculative fiction characters can be transgressive in some instances and prescriptive in others. Elyce Helford's discussion about the nature of speculative television shows also applies to speculative fiction as well. Helford, editor of the book *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, argues that speculative media, such as television shows, allows for widening possibilities in some constructions of gender roles but also reinforces patriarchal notions of gender as well: "To be sure, speculative programming is far more about the present than the future—it is descriptive rather than predictive" (5). Helford discusses how television shows like *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Ally McBeal* portray strong female characters who are not tied to traditional women's roles as wives and mothers; however, she notes that while these characters challenge conventional roles, they are all styled in a way that would appeal to the patriarchal male gaze (Helford 5-6). Speculative television reimagines women's roles as long as these women are also sexually appealing to heterosexual males.⁴ As a result, the speculative nature enables some questioning of gender as long as other patriarchal norms are reinforced. The emphasis on heteronormativity could be a result of the backlash against the rise of the LGBT movement in the 1990s, and the prescriptive natures of the shows permitted a "safe" reconsideration of heterosexual female subjectivity (resulting from the influence of second-wave feminism) that would not challenge hegemonic institutions.

⁴ *Xena: Warrior Princess* has a lesbian subtext as well. In the show, Xena has relationships with men, but the series also suggests she has relationships with women, such as her sidekick Gabrielle.

The phenomenon of being both transgressive and prescriptive occurs within Pierce's and Collins's novels. Although Alanna's and Katniss's performances of gender have subversive qualities, their depictions are, also, simultaneously prescriptive. Both girls are styled—willingly, in Alanna's case, and unwillingly, in Katniss's case—to appeal to the male gaze.⁵ While their achievements are defined by many elements, such as their courage and leadership abilities (which are culturally considered to be masculine traits), much of their successes as female characters still hinge on their abilities to be physically appealing to male characters. The endings of both series reinforce heteronormativity but allow for some subversion. Alanna does not give up her career to become a wife. Katniss has children with Peeta, but the dark tone of the epilogue questions whether the performance of traditional gender roles leads to happiness and healing.

TEXT SUMMARIES

Set in the medieval fantasy realm of Tortall, Pierce's *Song of the Lioness Quartet* offers many opportunities to consider how clothing and performance make Alanna “feminine.” When she is young, Alanna does not masquerade as a boy because she wants to become male; rather, she wants to enjoy the freedoms that patriarchal culture grants to men. Thus, she dresses as Alan, a knight-in-training, while still identifying as female. After earning her knighthood, she plans to reveal her identity. In the first two books of the quartet, *Alanna: The First Adventure* (1983) and *In the Hand of the Goddess* (1984), she successfully masquerades as Alan, but as she matures into young adulthood, she becomes curious about women's clothing and female desire. In the second novel, *In the Hand of the Goddess*, Alanna secretly dresses as a woman and has a relationship with Prince Jonathan. After she is knighted, her sex is accidentally revealed during a public swordfight in Court, and in the third novel, *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man* (1986),

⁵ Laura Mulvey writes about the male gaze in her discussion of how women in cinema are objectified to appeal to the desires of male viewers.

she becomes a shaman of a nomad tribe. As she lives among the tribe, she feels confusion about her femininity, and her struggle to balance feminine gender performance with her knightly duties is something she reconciles in the last novel, *Lioness Rampant* (1988).

When Alanna is younger, she dreams of being an unmarried warrior whose only desire is to have adventures, but in the last two novels, Alanna considers marrying. Because she spends most of her life behaving and living like a boy, Alanna worries that her lack of femininity makes her undesirable to males. The disagreement between Alanna and Jonathan regarding Jonathan's marriage proposal leaves Alanna questioning not only her femininity but also her choice to be a knight. Alanna excels at fighting but also desires to have a feminine lifestyle, and she yearns for a way to be both feminine and a warrior. Alanna discovers that she has an identity that incorporates aspects of both masculinity and femininity, and the series ends with her negotiating a marriage with her second lover, George, in which she can become a wife without giving up her knighthood.

Katniss also navigates a liminal space between childhood and maturity. She regularly hunts in the woods that border her home in District 12, and she provides food to both her mother and sister, Prim. In the first novel of the trilogy, entitled *The Hunger Games* (2008), Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place in a gladiator-type death match called the Hunger Games. The Hunger Games is an annual televised event in the country of Panem, which is comprised of an elite Capitol controlling twelve poverty-stricken districts. The Capitol institutes the Hunger Games as punishment for the districts' rebellion 74 years prior to the start of the first novel, and each district sends one male and one female champion, known as tributes, to compete in hopes of winning extra food and supplies for that year. Since the Capitol televises the event to all of Panem, Capitol stylists provide makeovers for the tributes to make them more attractive.

Television appeal is a survival strategy for the event; popular tributes receive gifts from Capitol patrons, and oftentimes these gifts allow tributes to succeed in the Games.

In order to earn sponsorship, Cinna (a Capitol stylist) and Haymitch (the only surviving District 12 victor) teach Katniss how to use femininity to appeal to a Capitol audience. Katniss and the male tribute, Peeta, are portrayed as “star-crossed lovers,” which is an unheard-of strategy. Although they had little interaction prior to the Games, Katniss convinces the audience that she loves him. This survival tactic influences the Gamemakers to deem them both victors, which defies the one-champion rule.

In the second novel, *Catching Fire* (2009), Katniss must perform a strict code of femininity in order to protect her loved ones from harm. Although Katniss displays the gendered behaviors of a heterosexual girl in love, she also fears the consequences of desire because emotional entanglements could leave her vulnerable to loss. Even as she tries to suppress her desire, she feels attraction to two males, Peeta and Gale, and she discovers that the show of love she pretends to have with Peeta actually fosters romantic feelings.

In the third novel, *Mockingjay* (2010), Katniss becomes a rebellion icon in a conflict between the Capitol and the districts. The series ends with Katniss playing a crucial role in districts’ rebellion, but Katniss loses many loved ones in the process. Although *Mockingjay* ends with Katniss and Peeta having a family, the tone of the epilogue is grim, which suggests that traditional heteronormative gender roles are not enough to ease past trauma.

THE TOMBOY TRADITION

Alanna’s and Katniss’s portrayals at each series’ beginnings establish them as girls who perform masculinity. As tomboys, the characters can address subversive gender ideas in a context that is acceptable for Western society. According to Judith Halberstam, author of *Female*

Masculinity, the tomboy phase in girl's life is considered acceptable because it is not a threat to heteronormativity: "Tomboyism generally describes an extended childhood period of female masculinity. If we are to believe general accounts of childhood behavior, tomboyism is quite common for girls and does not generally give rise to parental fears" (5). Tomboyism permits girls the opportunity to experiment with masculinity and femininity without negative social stigma. However, this phase is socially acceptable only in childhood: "We could say that tomboyism is tolerated as long as the child remains prepubescent" (Halberstam 6). At the onset of puberty, heteronormativity causes girls to mature out of this stage and learn conventional feminine gender roles.

In mid-1800s American culture, tomboyism became popular among the middle and upper class because it allowed girls opportunities to strengthen their bodies in childhood, which would prepare them for their future gender roles as wives and mothers. In her article, "Launching a Gender B(l)acklash," Michelle Abate discusses how tomboyism emerged as an alternative version of femininity in response to the American pre-Civil War ideal of the Cult of True Womanhood, which had guidelines that proved to be problematic to women's health: "The Cult of True Womanhood was interfering with the ability of these middle- and upper-class white figures not only to be productive wives but also to be reproductive ones" (45).⁶ According to Abate, the changing medical attitudes about how the Cult of True Womanhood affected women's health led to reconsiderations of femininity. Tomboyism emerged as a way to encourage girls to live healthier lifestyles: "[Tomboyism was] a new code of female conduct that stressed proper hygiene, daily exercise, comfortable clothing, and wholesome nutrition, it was designed to boost the health of middle- and upper-class white women" ("Launching a Gender B(l)acklash" 45).

⁶ Abate writes that the Cult of True Womanhood stressed a lifestyle in which women refrained from physical activity.

Again, exercise was one key shift between Tomboyism and the Cult of True Womanhood, and even in contemporary depictions of tomboyism, an inclination for outdoor play is still a defining characteristic of this phase.

Although embracing masculine activities for girls would seem counterproductive in reaffirming traditional female gender roles, Abate discusses how the historical evolution of tomboyism reinforced heteronormativity. Abate acknowledges that while later concepts of tomboyism were sometimes “seen as challenging [...] heteronormativity,” during the 1840s and 1850s, tomboyism emphasized the healthiness of a lifestyle that was previously deemed appropriate for only middle and upper class boys; by allowing girls to engage in a similar lifestyle, the girls would be prepared for the physical challenges of childbirth later in life (“Launching a Gender B(l)acklash” 45). Because tomboyism prepared women physically for conventional roles as mothers, tomboyism was promoted in literature because the healthier lifestyle supported the hegemonic institutions of the era.

Although tomboyism was accepted in the mid-nineteenth century, it is important to note that societal fears about homosexuality caused some backlash against this phase, and understanding the motivations behind the backlash may explain why tomboy literature emphasizes gender conformity. Abate writes that in the late nineteenth century, Freudian theory greatly influenced the way that sexuality was perceived, and as a result, there was social concern that acting masculine would cause girls to want to be boys: “As a result, tomboyism went from being seen as an effective preparatory stage for marriage and motherhood to a potential breeding ground for lesbianism” (*Tomboys* xxi). Even into the 1990s, Abate notes that tomboyism was thought to be “a firm indicator” that a girl would become a lesbian (*Tomboys* xxi). Although the

societal fears did not stop tomboy characters from appearing in literature, such social anxieties could help explain the need to depict characters that abandon the phase at the start of puberty.

While there was some backlash against tomboyism, the tomboy tradition remains an acceptable stage in a girl's life in both American culture and literature. According to Abate, tomboyism underwent a "critical reconfiguration" due to second-wave feminism and the way "essentialist views of gender" have been rethought (*Tomboys* xxiii). In the nineteenth century, a "tomboy" was a girl who took on boyish traits, but in the late twentieth century, it became both acceptable and "routine for girls to wear pants, play sports and have short hair"; since these characteristics are commonplace for contemporary society, Abate argues that many girls fall into the "spectrum of tomboyishness" (*Tomboys* xxiii). Similar to how the phase had been encouraged in the mid-1800s, tomboyism is now being promoted again as a positive period of a girl's life: "Very often it is read as a sign of independence and self-motivation, and tomboyism may even be encouraged to the extent that it remains comfortably linked to a stable sense of a girl identity" (Halberstam 6). Indeed, the emphasis on having a "girl identity" (instead of a boy identity) is a key concept in the current acceptability of tomboyism. The tomboy phase is permissible because it lasts only a brief amount of time, and the girls still identify themselves as female; as a result, the tomboy tradition exists because it does not challenge hegemonic, heteronormative values.

Both Alanna and Katniss view socially prescribed forms of femininity as restricting, and as children, they experiment with masculinity because they desire a lifestyle that Halberstam describes as the "greater freedoms and mobilities [sic] enjoyed by boys" (6). Indeed, the reader can identify Alanna and Katniss as being tomboys because both characters exhibit traits that are culturally identified as being tomboy characteristics. According to Abate, these traits have not

only been characterized in literature but have also been “codified” by psychologists in a “Tomboy Index” (*Tomboys* xvi). Of all the characteristics associated with tomboyism, the three most relevant to the discussion of Alanna and Katniss are “a proclivity for outdoor play (especially athletics), a feisty independent spirit, and a tendency to don masculine clothing” (*Tomboys* xvi). At the start of both series, Alanna and Katniss demonstrate their feisty spirits by rejecting femininity and participating in masculine activities.

TOMBOY CHILDHOOD

The beginnings of both series suggest that Alanna and Katniss gravitated to the tomboy lifestyle during childhood because their mothers had little influence on their identities: without a role model for learning femininity, the girls had opportunities to learn stereotypically masculine activities from father-figures. Abate discusses that the motherless tomboy is a literary trend dating back two centuries: “Countless nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives present tomboy characters who have been orphaned or otherwise lack a maternal influence in their lives,” and this lack is usually “seen as the cause or impetus of tomboyism in many narratives” (*Tomboys* xviii). In traditional tomboy stories, the lack of a mother to instill conventional gender roles allows a young girl the freedom to partake in activities not considered feminine: “Without mothers to indoctrinate them in traditional gender roles, they [tomboys] are able to define these elements for themselves” (*Tomboys* xix). Both Pierce and Collins suggest that the lack of a relationship between the protagonists and their mothers is influential to the protagonists’ identities. Katniss’s mother rarely appears within the series and Alanna’s deceased mother is barely mentioned. Without a model of femininity to confine them to the domestic sphere, both protagonists have the opportunity to play outdoors, and outdoor play is a defining characteristic of tomboys.

The opening scenes in *Alanna: The First Adventure* clearly portray Alanna as a tomboy because her mother's absence allows her to partake in activities that are traditionally gendered masculine. At the start of the novel, it is apparent that Alanna grew up without a mother, but she never mentions that her mother died in childbirth until much later in the novel (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 96). If Alanna's mother had lived, Alanna would have been encouraged to learn feminine activities, and thus, Alanna's father wants to send her to the convent to learn how to become a lady. When Alanna and her twin brother, Thom, discuss liking various activities, Alanna shows disdain for gendered feminine activities, such as "sewing and dancing," and she talks about how she would rather engage in masculine activities, such as "tilting, fencing" (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 2). Tilting and fencing are traditionally masculine sports, and she dislikes that her gender does not allow her the opportunity to participate in these activities. Her desire to engage in knight's training corresponds to contemporary ideas of athleticism, and thus, her adamant desire to pursue masculine activities—as well her feisty desire to reject conventional femininity—develops her as a tomboy.

Alanna's superior fighting skills demonstrate that individuals can perform the gender roles of another sex. Coram, the family's sergeant-at-arms, trains both children until Alanna becomes a palace page at the age of ten: "Coram had taught her at first because to teach one twin was to teach the other, poor motherless things" (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 12). Here, Coram's motives for training Alanna emerge out of pity for her lack of a mother. She and Thom participate in activities together, and Coram does not want to separate them even though girls may not become warriors. Despite Coram's initial reservations, he gladly instructs her because she demonstrates talent: "Then he began to enjoy teaching her. She learned quickly and well—

better than her brother” (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 12). Her ability to learn how to fight demonstrates that biological sex does not predispose individuals to gender roles.

In her book, *Into the Closet: Cross-Dressing and the Gendered Body in Children’s Literature and Film*, Victoria Flanagan provides an explanation for why biology does not prevent girls from being able to participate in the same activities as boys. Flanagan centers her discussion on children’s cross-dressing narratives, such as Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness Quartet* and Disney’s *Mulan*, and explores how female characters can learn masculinity. Flanagan draws on Butler’s discussion of gender to explain why tomboy characters who cross-dress, such as Alanna, can perform masculine gender roles: “Gender is presented within these narratives as an amalgam of socially prescribed behaviors that must be learned and acquired, or temporarily adopted, as opposed to existing naturally” (26-27). Since masculine behavior is not biologically inherent, female characters can pretend to be boys because they can replicate boys’ behaviors. Alanna behaves like a boy because she wants to learn to fight, and once she starts training, she proves that her female body does not prevent her from becoming proficient. Pierce’s portrayal suggests a disassociation between gender and biology: Thom’s sex does not predispose him to being a good fighter just as Alanna’s biology does not prevent her from being able to learn. Considering how the young adult genre explores the negotiation between adolescents and social institutions, the text has the potential for encouraging a young female readership to question socially perceived notions of gender. Pierce’s novels were originally published in the 1980s, which may explain why this series has a stronger emphasis on a second-wave feminist agenda than Collins’s series, and thus, Pierce’s readership—spanning almost thirty years—would be reading these books in an era where feminism has called for a rethinking of women’s gender roles.

Katniss also embodies many of the tomboy characteristics, such as the preference for masculine, outdoor activities and a “feisty spirit”; indeed, many of these attributes become enhanced once she learns to care for her family when her mother becomes emotionally absent. Her father dies while working in the mines when she is eleven, but he plays a significant role in the formation of Katniss’s identity. Her identification with her father and the outdoors is especially apparent in *Catching Fire* when Katniss desires to visit a place in the woods associated with her tomboy childhood: “I’m determined, for some reason, to get to the lake. Maybe to say good-bye to the place, to my father, and the happy times we spent there, because I know I’ll probably never return” (*Catching Fire* 134). As a stoic character, Katniss rarely mentions happiness, and her sentimental attachment to a location shows how much her father influences her life.

Some girls become tomboys even though they have mothers, and Katniss’s tomboy phase begins while she is still under the care of both parents. Prior to the start of the novel, she identifies more with her father and outdoor activities. Just as Alanna learns the fighting arts from Coram, Katniss develops her expertise with the bow and arrow under her father’s training. He teaches her how to hunt and forage for food in the woods beyond District 12’s boundaries: “But there’s also food if you know how to find it. My father knew and he taught me some” (*The Hunger Games* 5). These skills not only become useful in providing food for her family but also become crucial fighting skills during the Hunger Games.

After Katniss’s father dies, Katniss metaphorically loses her mother when depression consumes her mother’s life. Her mother’s despondent behavior forces Katniss to take on a masculine gender role as the family provider. Katniss’s identity becomes defined by her ability to care for her family, and embracing a masculine gender role is a survival necessity rather than

an escape from constricting patriarchal gender roles: “Most of it [Katniss’s life] has been consumed with the acquisition of food. Take that away and I’m not really sure who I am, what my identity is” (*Hunger Games* 311). Although Katniss enjoys hunting as much as Alanna does, her motivations are different; for Alanna, hunting is part of a lifestyle she desires, but for Katniss, hunting ensures her family’s survival. The differences in circumstances suggest a difference in tomboy depiction. Katniss is a stereotypical tomboy while her father lives, but his death forces a crucial change in her character. She is no longer playing as a boy, but performing the duties of an adult male. Her performance has a seriousness that differs from Alanna’s. Alanna wants to become a knight, but Katniss needs to act like a man because her family could perish. The tomboy tradition helps readers identify with Katniss’s childhood as being similar to that of other tomboys, but at the same time, the deviation from the tradition also allow readers to understand that her role of a young adult no longer allows for childhood play.

As Alanna and Katniss embrace masculinity, they both reject feminine gender roles. Alanna believes femininity to be restricting because women in Tortall have no agency in deciding their futures. As she matures, she fears that female desire will cost her freedom and make her vulnerable. Katniss also refuses traditional gender roles because she believes that embracing these roles will make her susceptible to the loss that her mother experiences.

Alanna sees feminine gender roles as restricting her from more than outdoor sports: in Tortall, the rules of femininity prevent most women from having agency. As a child, Alanna resists gender conformity because she feels that strict gender rules deny her the opportunity to find her life’s purpose: “‘D’you think I want to be a lady? [...] ‘Sit still, Alanna. Shoulders back, Alanna.’ As if that’s all I can do with myself!” (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 1). Even at the age of ten, Alanna recognizes that femininity in patriarchal cultures is associated with yielding to the

will of males. She resists the lifestyle that her father plans for her to have at the convent, and she displays her first acts of agency by switching places with Thom when the twins are sent, respectively, to the convent and palace. Thom agrees to go to the convent because males in convent care are taught magical arts, and Alanna becomes a page when she takes her brother's place in knights' training.⁷

Alanna rejects femininity without wanting to become male, and she initially resists female desire because she fears its consequences. Eventually, she wants to be acknowledged as a female knight instead of a male warrior: "I just want to be a warrior maiden and go on adventures" (*In the Hand* 11). The word "maiden"⁸ suggests that she avoids the traditional roles of a wife so that she may have the "adventures" that married women in Tortall do not have. In addition, the word "maiden"—as opposed to "female warrior"—hints that she fears her sexuality. In the second novel, *In the Hand of the Goddess*, the Great Mother Goddess of Alanna's world advises Alanna not to fear love. Alanna tells the Mother Goddess that she fears romantic relationships because such connections require exchanging "parts of me" with a lover (*In the Hand* 12). Alanna knows that her father never recovered after her mother's death, and she denies her sexuality because she fears the potential loss of a lover. As a warrior maiden, she can still be identified as a woman without the restrictions of becoming a wife and losing agency.

Alanna's dream to become a warrior fits into the larger tradition of girls within fantasy literature. According to Farah Mendlesohn, author of *The Inter-Galactic Playground*, feminism greatly influenced children's literature, and as a result, "girls could be seamlessly integrated into the traditions of fantasy (see the writing of Tamora Pierce)" (99). Alanna is Pierce's first and

⁷ The implications of Alanna's cross-dressing will be discussed later in the thesis.

⁸ The idea of a "warrior maiden" also draws on the Greek mythology of Artemis, the hunting goddess.

best-known character, and as a result, Alanna is a representative of the ways in which girls in fantasy have been used for feminist questionings of gender.

Both Katniss and her hunting partner Gale act as surrogate parents for their siblings, but their friendship does not cause Katniss to become more feminine in their family-provider dynamic. When Gale jokes that they cannot run away before the Hunger Games reaping because they have to provide for the “kids,” Katniss reflects on her parental role: “They’re not our kids, of course. But they might as well be. [...] And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us? Who would fill those mouths that are always asking for more?” (*The Hunger Games* 9). The delivery of Gale’s joke suggests that the pair act as mother and father to a flock of children, but Katniss’s responsibilities do not cause her to desire the traditional gender role of a mother. In response to Gale’s joke, Katniss immediately replies, “I never want to have kids” (*The Hunger Games* 9). Before entering the Hunger Games, Katniss rejects the conventional feminine gender roles without clearly stating why. At that point, the text suggests she does so because of the difficulties of providing for a family in the bleak world of Panem, but her rejection could also be explained by her relationship with her mother.

For the five years after her father’s death, prior to the novel’s onset, Katniss’s mother slips into a depression and neglects her children. The emotional abandonment not only allows for Katniss to assume a masculine gender role but it also causes her to associate femininity with weakness: “[...] 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” (*The Hunger Games* 8). This passage is significant for two reasons. First, the passage helps align Katniss with the tomboy tradition because the alienation she feels toward her mother has many similarities to the way that tomboys cannot identify with female role models in

their lives. Second, this passage suggests that Katniss rejects traditional feminine gender roles because she wants to avoid becoming vulnerable in the future. In embracing the role of a wife, she knows that she would care about her husband and family, which could leave her susceptible to loss: “That if I do have feelings for him, it doesn’t matter because I’ll never be able to afford the kind of love that leads to family, to children” (*The Hunger Games* 373). Her use of the word “afford” hints at her motivations for rejecting a traditional gender role: her mother’s embrace of these gender roles leaves her exposed to grief and completely dependent on others for survival. Currently, Katniss enjoys freedom and independence when adopting a masculine gender role, and she could potentially forfeit these privileges if she became a wife and mother.

Katniss’s participation in the Hunger Games solidifies her decision to avoid such roles because she cannot protect any potential children of hers from the reaping: “I know I’ll never marry, never risk bringing a child into the world” (*The Hunger Games* 311). She fears that a loss of a child would devastate her, and while she does not explicitly state that these fears have any association with her mother, the text suggests that Katniss fears grief. As a victor of the Hunger Games, she knows that the world in which she lives is cruel and hopeless. If she never has children, she will not feel anxiety during reaping as well as potential loss if her child is selected. Both Katniss and Alanna react very similarly in viewing traditional heteronormative romance as restricting, and they reject desire because they fear that the emotional attachments of a relationship and future children could negatively affect their existences.

ALANNA’S CROSS-DRESSING YEARS

Characteristics of Children’s Cross-Dressing

Alanna’s tomboy depiction has one element that significantly differs from Katniss: Alanna disguises herself as a boy for eight years as she trains for knighthood. During the first

two novels, neither her instructors nor most of her male peers realize that she is a girl that “passes” as a boy.⁹ In addition, Alanna sometimes “passes” as a disguised girl during the years when she “passes” as Alan, which underscores the idea that there is no such thing as an essential identity.¹⁰ According to Halberstam, the idea of “passing” is “unhelpful” in defining gender bending because “passing as a narrative assumes that there is a self that masquerades as another kind of self and does so successfully; at various moments, the successful pass may cohere into something akin to identity” (21). The notion of passing lies in the idea that there is an essential identity that can “pass” as second identity, and when the passer wishes to return to the essential identity, he or she can shed the secondary identity and return to the essential form. The problem with this “narrative” is that essential identities do not exist because gender identity is not “natural.”

An essentialist line of thinking would posit that a female Alanna is natural and that Alan is simply a passed identity, and if this were the case, Alanna could easily resume a feminine identity because she is born, and initially raised as, female. The notion of passing would see the male masquerade as simply a set of clothes that Alanna wears and removes, but Nodelman and Reimer, authors of *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*, would argue that gendered identity is not that simple. While these scholars agree with Butler that gender is a performance, they also argue that gender identity cannot be easily switched because gender must be rearticulated over time: “Gendered identity is not one set of clothes among many that an individual can choose to

⁹ Judith Halberstam writes that “passing” is an ambiguous term within gender studies. Despite passing’s association with essentialism, I use this concept within my thesis because Pierce references “passing” in the second novel, *In The Hand of the Goddess*, to describe when Alanna dresses as a girl during her Alan years.

¹⁰ During her years as Alan, only three characters (including Prince Jonathan) know that Alanna is secretly a girl. When Alanna wants to venture into public spaces as a girl, she disguises her distinctive red hair with a black wig so she will not be recognized as Alan wearing a dress. However, she hides this activity from Jonathan, and this adds a layer of secrecy to her “passing.” Jonathan knows her as Alanna and Alan, but he does not know that she is also the girl wearing the black wig.

put on. Gender is not as voluntary as the [Butler's] analogy suggests nor as superficial. Rather, 'the anticipation of a gendered essence' ([qtd. in Butler] xv) and gender rituals are effects produced over time within cultural formulations of norms" (Nodelman and Reimer 242). Like Butler, Nodelman and Reimer agree that gender is not fixed, but they argue that the changing of genders is not a simple process that a person merely chooses. A person must adhere to the cultural norms of gender, and over time, those performances will produce a gendered identity.

Since the *Song of the Lioness Quartet* can fit into either children's literature or young adult literature, the portrayal of sexuality is handled differently as Alanna matures. When Alanna decides to cross-dress in the first novel, Pierce depicts the pre-pubescent Alanna as having no sexual desire until Alanna becomes an adolescent in the second novel. Pierce's choice to depict Alanna as being sexually inexperienced when she decides to cross-dress reinforces the idea that Alanna chooses to cross-dress only to become a knight; during the Alan years, Pierce's portrayal of Alanna's attraction toward Jonathan reinforces that the idea that Alanna's cross-dressing is not influenced by a desire for women.

Cross-dressing is a transgressive act because it disrupts the gendered binaries of male and female. According to Marjorie Garber, author of *Vested Interests*, the liminal space of binaries creates a "third" category; this category is not a completely new "sex" nor is it a "blurred" combination of male and female but rather "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility" (11). Garber uses several examples of "third" articulations in order for her readers to understand that something that is third, like cross-dressers, "puts into question identities previously conceived as stable, unchallengeable, grounded, and 'known'" (13). When Alanna cross-dresses, she challenges the social perceptions of gender. In Tortall's society, women are not trained for knighthood; the only female warriors in the kingdom are the guards for the temple

of the Great Mother Goddess, but these women are socially isolated because they cannot leave the grounds. As the cross-dressed Alanna rides past them, she understands that the “third” identity she has chosen will allow her freedoms the temple guards will never have: “Alanna grinned. Someday she would wear armor too, but she wouldn’t be confined to temple grounds!” (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 19). In using the word “confined,” Alanna’s attitude suggests that she resists the restrictions placed on women in Tortall. Like most patriarchal cultures, women’s gender roles in Tortall confine them to the domestic sphere. She avoids guard training because their duties restrict them to the domestic-like space of the temple. As a tomboy, Alanna plays outdoors, and she chooses knighthood as a way to continue her enjoyment of spaces and careers that Tortall’s women cannot experience.

After she earns her knighthood, Alanna wants to be recognized as a female knight, and she confides this plan to Jonathan after he learns her secret: ““I want to be a warrior maiden and do great deeds. [...] I knew what I wanted, and I didn’t mind taking a risk or two”” (*Alanna: The First Adventure* 209). In talking about risk, she understands that her cross-dressing had been dangerous; she was transgressing not only gender conventions but Tortall’s laws as well. As a “third,” Alanna risks personal danger if she is caught, but once she earns her knighthood, no one can retroactively strip her of it. Then she would be free to be a female warrior without the restrictions that are placed on the temple guards.

While cross-dressing has the potential to upset gender categories, Flanagan argues that children’s cross-dressing greatly differs from adult cross-dressing. Children’s cross-dressing allows for the critique of gender, but it is motivated by gender identification instead of sexual identification. Flanagan analyses texts featuring “female-to-male cross-dressing, such as Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness Quartet*, Disney’s *Mulan*, Russian folktales, and French salon stories” (21-

22). Flanagan argues that girls in literature cross-dress because they want to enjoy the freedoms that masculinity allows boys:

The female-to-male cross-dressing model typically features a young girl living in a patriarchal society which imposes limitations on the behavior of girls and women. In order to escape, she disguises herself as a boy—whereby she discovers a new world of freedom and individual autonomy. (20)

Children's cross-dressing is distinct from adult cross-dressing: the phase does not last long, it does not interfere with a cross-dresser's gender, and it is not associated with sexual fetishism (Flanagan 21). Unlike adult cross-dressing, children's cross-dressing is culturally perceived as divorced from sexual identification. Thus, female-to-male children cross-dressers are not socially stigmatized because society divorces the idealized "innocence" of children from sexuality.

The tendency in children's literature to divorce the portrayal of children from sexuality has been well-documented, most notably by children's literature scholar Jacqueline Rose. In her book *The Case of Peter Pan: or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, Rose argues that children's literature is contingent on the idea that there is a mythical child to whom children's fiction is addressed; thus, adults use children's literature to ground an idealized version of childhood in an attempt to limit actual children, who are the "outsider[s]" of children's literature (2). Since children's sexualities are threatening to an adult's notions of sexuality, the adult "fixes the child" by portraying the child as innocent in order to limit the child's sexuality (Rose 4). Since children are perceived to be "innocent" of sexuality, behavior that would ordinarily be considered sexually deviant if performed by adults is devoid of such an association if performed

by children. Alanna's actions in the first novel fit with Rose's discussion of children's perceived innocence.

Alanna's desire to reveal her secret upon earning knighthood underscores the idea that her cross-dressing phase does prevent her from being feminine. Even though she wants to become a knight and participate in gendered masculine activities, she does not want to continue cross-dressing her entire life. She wants to be recognized as a woman. Thus, cross-dressing is a tool for achieving her goals rather than a lifestyle she wishes to adopt. This makes Alanna's cross-dressing stage similar to other female cross-dressers in children's literature:

Moreover, female-to-male cross-dressing is distinct from the adult transgender arena because of its brevity. [...] Her cross-dressing enables her to improve her gender status (because masculinity is traditionally regarded as superior to femininity), and therefore does not pose a threat to her femininity. (Flanagan 21)

Flanagan uses the pronouns "she" and "her" in order for the reader to understand that these characteristics apply to all the cross-dressing characters she discusses, including Alanna.

Indeed, this phase does not prevent Alanna from wanting to become a woman because she takes secret efforts to learn feminine gender roles while masquerading as Alan. She confides in George's mother, Mistress Cooper, that she would like to learn to dress like a woman because she is curious about feminine gender: "I just—I see all the Queen's ladies wearing pretty things, and I've been thinking lately I like pretty things. I'm going to have to be a girl someday. Why shouldn't I start practicing now?" (*In the Hand* 123). Alanna's use of the word, "someday," suggests that she doesn't identify with being a girl at the present, but she knows that she will be expected to like "pretty things" like other girls do when she reveals her sex. The word "practicing" suggests that she understands that gender can be learned, and she wants to become

familiar with femininity so that she can act like a woman when she wants to be socially recognized as a female knight. Later in the series, the “brevity” of her Alan years and her secret performances of feminine gender allow her to have a smoother transition from a cross-dressed individual into a socially recognized woman. Her cross-dressing tomboy phase influences her adult identity, but not to extent that she would question if she should be a woman.

The Emphasis on Heterosexuality

Pierce uses Alanna’s crush on Jonathan to reaffirm Alanna’s heterosexual identity because Alanna’s cross-dressed characterization runs the risk of becoming a precursor to lesbianism. According to Roberta Trites, young adult literature differs somewhat from children’s literature in that it does allow for “some sort of depiction of what adolescents’ sexuality is” even as it tries to “curb teenagers’ libido” (85). As a result, sexuality in young adult literature sits somewhere in-between children’s and adult’s literature; adolescents’ sexualities are somewhat restricted, but the depiction also allows for some exploration.

Alanna vents her frustration to Mistress Cooper about Prince Jonathan’s seemingly perplexing behavior, and her complaints suggest that she is attracted to Jonathan rather than the ladies at Court. At this point in the series, only Jonathan, George, and Mistress Cooper know that Alanna is cross-dressed as a boy, and Jonathan forces Alanna to dance with the girls at Court to maintain her masquerade. However, Alanna’s tone makes it clear that her cross-dressing is not used to become closer to women: “If I go the social events with him—and he *makes* me go—I have to have every hair in place. [...] I have to dance with all the ladies, as he does, even though no one else has to” (*In the Hand* 123). She does not seek to dance with the ladies because she sexually desires them; she only dances to please Jonathan.¹¹ After finishing her complaints,

¹¹ As a heterosexual cross-dresser, Alanna is similar to Viola, from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, who cross-dresses as Duke Orsino’s page.

Alanna asks Mistress Cooper to teach her how to dress like a girl. Pierce makes it clear to the reader—through Alanna’s frustration, her request, and then Mistress Cooper’s observations—that Alanna is flustered because she unknowingly desires Jonathan: “If Mistress Cooper thought Alanna’s sudden wish to look pretty had anything to do with Jonathan, or with George, she knew better than to say so” (*In the Hand of the Goddess* 124). Because Alanna’s desire to look pretty is inspired by her attraction to males, her cross-dressing is aligned with the “innocence” of children’s cross-dressing rather than adult cross-dressing.

Early in the series, Alanna does not admit that she feels attraction for Jonathan because she views desire as dangerous for several reasons. Her justifications for avoiding a romantic relationship do not ultimately prevent her from finally acquiescing to her desire: “She *wanted* Jonathan’s love. To be honest, she had wanted that love for a long time” (*In the Hand* 140). Although she has a crush on Jonathan for a few years, she does not become sexually active until she is seventeen, which suggests that Alanna waits until she is emotionally and sexually mature.

The emphasis on heterosexuality is an important aspect of young adult speculative fiction. Farah Mendlesohn’s discussion of the characteristics of adolescent science fiction also applies to young adult fantasy because the larger genre of speculative fiction is defined by particular characteristics, such an emphasis on heteronormativity. Mendlesohn notes that for much young adult science fiction, “heterosexuality is compulsory,” and she asserts that many novels featuring female protagonists include romantic endings: “For girls, while more activity is possible and there are more roles to fill, too many of the texts present the possibility of romance as a reward” (134). While female protagonists have the opportunity to diverge from stereotypical gender roles, the endings of these texts reinforce heteronormative relationships. When Pierce portrays Alanna’s marriage to George as a “reward,” readers view Alanna’s “happy ending” as

something that she has earned through her hard work as a female knight. As part of the young adult fantasy genre, readers expect Alanna to find love, and in order for this series to be accepted as mainstream speculative fiction, Alanna must have a heterosexual relationship. The heteronormative ending allows for the subversive nature of the Alanna's cross-dressing years to be socially tolerated because the series falls under the "safe" transgression of tomboy narratives.

COMPULSORY HETERONORMATIVITY WITHIN TOMBOY TRADITION

Heteronormativity is a crucial aspect of socially acceptable tomboy narratives, and understanding how tomboyism fits into hegemonic structures may provide an explanation of why both series follow such a similar structure. These texts promote tomboyism and trouble issues of gender because the endings suggest a return to heteronormativity. Girls can adopt masculine traits as long as they do not desire to become male. Since both Pierce's and Collins's series provide relatively "safe" transgressions, they are allowed within the hegemonic framework.

As previously mentioned, the backlash against tomboyism occurred when the phase was considered to be counter to hegemonic values of conventional femininity and heteronormativity. Abate's discussion of the "critical reconfiguration" of tomboyism—due to the rethinking of "essentialist views of gender"—suggests that the tomboy tradition changed and was then incorporated into the dominant culture (*Tomboys* xxiii). Tomboyism's appropriation into the hegemonic framework allows for a socially acceptable period of transgression as long as the heteronormative ideal is ultimately the end result.

Tomboyism's social acceptability demonstrates the ways in which hegemony incorporates subversive cultural elements and reworks these elements in a way that does not challenge the status quo. Backlash against tomboyism occurred when it became associated with lesbianism. According to Abate, the association between tomboyism and homosexuality was

strengthened by both “the rise of the LGBTQ movement,” and 1950’s and 1960’s “pulp novels” that portrayed tomboy characters as lesbians (*Tomboys* xxi). Since homosexuality is considered to be counter to the hegemonic heteronormative ideal, tomboyism encountered backlash because the phase was perceived to be “an adolescent precursor to” lesbianism (*Tomboys* xxi). The backlash came from hegemonic structures trying to suppress alternative ideologies, and while tomboyism is not considered a subculture, the tomboy tradition was considered a precursor for individuals belonging to queer subcultures.

Dick Hebdige’s discussion of hegemonic naturalization of subcultures’ subversive ideologies may explain how hegemony reincorporated the tomboy tradition and neutralized some of its transgressive qualities. Hebdige draws on Stuart Hall’s discussion of hegemony to argue that hegemony operates within a culture by making subordinate classes feel as if the ruling class’s ideology was their own: “certain social groups” in power control “subordinate groups [...] by ‘winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appear both legitimate and natural’”; since hegemony is not a fixed position of power but rather is a locus that must be “maintained,” Hebdige contends that dominant groups can only stay in power when they “succeed in framing all competing definitions within their range” (qtd. in 16). This means that in order for dominant ideologies to stay in power, they must incorporate and “frame” any subversive ideologies (the “competing definitions”) within the hegemonic framework.

Competing ideologies come from subordinate groups, and the hegemony cannot successfully perpetuate power by forcibly suppressing these groups; rather, by incorporating some of the restructured subordinate groups’ ideologies—which are reformulated in a way that does not challenge hegemonic interests—the hegemony preserves its power by letting the subordinate groups think their interests are being served. Hebdige draws on Hall’s metaphor of

the map to explain how this works through a process of “naturalization”: hegemony “cut[s] across a range of potential meanings, making certain meanings available and ruling others out of the court. [...] It is through this process [...] that *particular* sets of social relations [...] appear to us as if they universal and timeless” (14). Naturalization describes the way that hegemony frames ideologies so they seem commonplace and acceptable. Subordinate groups accept dominant ideologies because these ideologies are tailored to seem “natural” and, by extension, unquestionable. Hebdige’s discussion of hegemony may explain how tomboyism survived the backlash and also the ways in which a reformulated and “naturalized” version of the tradition has been allowed to survive.

As second-wave feminism lead to the “erosion of essentialist views of gender,” Abate says that the tomboy tradition was reformulated so that it became popular and socially acceptable again; she refers to this process as “normalization” (xxiii). This “normalization” is another word for the “naturalization” process. Hegemonic groups neutralized tomboyism’s threat to gender and heteronormativity by incorporating a restructured version of tomboyism into the dominant ideology. Instead of being considered a precursor for lesbianism, the current model of tomboyism is not subversive because it seems “natural” for young girls to play sports and wear pants. These traits are not an indicator of homosexuality because they are now commonplace clothing styles and activities for individuals of both sexes. As long as the girls embrace femininity and heterosexuality later in life, this brief phase of female masculinity during adolescence is socially acceptable.

Since hegemony incorporated tomboyism into its framework, tomboyism is encouraged in society and mass media as long as these portrayals emphasize a return to heteronormativity. Halberstam acknowledges that literature is often used to reinforce traditional gender roles:

If adolescence for boys represents a rite of passage and an ascension to some version (however attenuated) of social power, for girls, adolescence is a lesson in restraint, punishment, and repression. It is the context of female adolescence that the tomboy instincts of millions of girls are remolded into compliant forms of femininity. (6)

In teaching girls stereotypical feminine gender roles, such as becoming wives and mothers, such literature not only manages to marginalize female masculinity but also simultaneously promote the heteronormative and masculine hegemonic status quo. As a result, tomboy literature often follows a predictable character arc: according to Abate, tomboys are taught gender conformity at the start of puberty and are encouraged to marry and have children (*Tomboys* xix).

Even as hegemony naturalizes tomboyism, tomboy literature can still allow for the exploration of counter ideologies and the questioning of the hegemonic framework. Abate remarks that “tomboy taming” does not always occur within every narrative: “Some gender-bending female characters not only retain their tomboyishness but see it as an important facet of their adult personality” (*Tomboys* xx). Although both series end with Alanna and Katniss engaging in heterosexual relationships, each series suggest that the tomboy phase influences their adult lives.

LEARNING FEMININITY

Attracting the Gaze

Hegemonic ideology is present in the ways that Alanna and Katniss learn femininity. Since gender is a social institution, both girls learn how feminine gendered clothing and heterosexual behavior makes them socially recognized as women. Halberstam recognizes that

“gender conformity” is not imposed on pubescent tomboys alone: it is “pressed onto all girls” (6). Even if Alanna and Katniss had not been tomboys, they would have been expected to learn feminine behaviors and clothing appropriate to the social norms of their worlds; however, Pierce handles this period of the arc differently than Collins. Alanna’s request to learn how to dress like a girl suggests that Alanna conforms willingly to feminine gender roles because she desires to attract the male gaze. In contrast, gender conformity is imposed on Katniss in order to attract sponsors for the Hunger Games, but eventually, she uses gender performance to manipulate the spectators, which changes the balance of power within the Capitol.

Both girls desire to attract the male gaze because Western constructions of feminine gender teach girls that this is an important component of femininity. The patriarchal gaze shapes the way that women are portrayed in culture, and patriarchal ideologies teach females that they should desire to look and act a certain way. Laura Mulvey, author of *Visual and Other Pleasures*, contends that women in the cinema are styled to appeal to the male gaze, and although her focus is on women in film, her definition of male gaze and its effect on women is relevant to the way that male gaze operates within society: “The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly [... a woman’s] appearance [is] coded for strong visual and erotic impact so [...] she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire” (19). Gender within patriarchal cultures is used to support heteronormativity, and females are taught that a crucial aspect of femininity is attracting males’ attention. Indeed, attracting the gaze is so important that Nodelman and Reimer discuss how girls’ toys, such as Barbie, reflect this ideology: “Typical teenaged girls, Barbie’s story suggests, are all obsessed with their appearance, with new clothes, with attracting attention from men and other women. These qualities are the ones traditionally associated in Euro-American culture with femininity” (136).

Barbie attracts the attention of males and females using her looks, and her clothes are props to achieve this goal. Certain clothing styles are considered essential, and are thus prescribed, in the articulation of feminine identity.

In addition to movies and toys, the gaze plays an important role in speculative television, and the clothing of heroines suggests that even strong female characters desire the gaze. Helford asserts that sexually appealing clothing often overshadows “women’s intellectual, technical, and/or physical skills” in several 1990s popular television shows, such as *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (6). Xena and Buffy are known for their fighting prowess, but their clothes are designed to attract the gaze. Helford notes that Xena wears a corset and Buffy wears “revealing clothes” as her hair color becomes blonder during the series’ progression (6). The provocative clothing prescribes a particular feminine ideal similar to that of Barbie: it suggests that women must look a certain way to attract the gaze of men and women. The sexiness of these heroines suggests to audiences that within patriarchal cultures, a successful woman is not only skilled at her career; she is attractive to males, too.

Such ideology can be seen in the way Pierce and Collins use gendered feminine props to suggest that Alanna’s and Katniss’s femininities depend on their abilities to attract the gaze. Gendered clothing and behavior are props to perform femininity. According to Nodelman and Reimer, props are tools that help an individual be identified as a certain “type” of person: “‘props’—personal attributes, attitudes, and possessions, for example—are necessary for a character to be recognized as a particular kind of ‘subject’” (159). While there are many definitions of “subject,” Nodelman and Reimer encourage their readers to consider “‘subject positions’” as “conventional ways of being human” (158-159).¹² Therefore, if a woman wants to

¹² Nodelman and Reimer also contend that other factors, such as class and race, affect the way a person’s gender allows him or her to be a subject.

be recognized as a subject, there are certain social conventions that must be followed: she must use specific props—such as gendered behavior and clothing—in her performance. In order for Alanna and Katniss to be recognized as female subjects, they have to use the props that will help them attract the male gaze.

Using Feminine Props

Although Alanna disguises herself as a boy for the first two novels, Pierce demonstrates how she desires the male gaze during her cross-dressing years. As Alanna enters puberty, she becomes sexually attracted to Prince Jonathan. She envies the attention Jonathan shows to other women, and she becomes interested in learning how to perform femininity, which is apparent when Alanna asks Mistress Cooper to teach her how to dress like a girl. Alanna sees how Jonathan's lover, Delia, dresses to become the object of his desire, and on her seventeenth birthday, Alanna dresses like a woman because she wants the male gaze: "Thinking of Delia sent her to the wooden chest she kept at the foot of her bed [...]. She dressed and admired herself in the mirror. She wasn't a beauty like Delia, but she wasn't a hag, either" (*In the Hand* 137). Pierce's use of the word "beauty" suggests that physical appearance is a crucial element in Alanna's understanding of being female. Since a "hag" would not draw the gaze, Alanna derives pleasure from her appearance because she associates femininity with being attractive.

The comparison with Delia underscores the idea that within patriarchal cultures, feminine power is often thought of as competitiveness with other females for male attention. To gain masculine power as Alan, Alanna physically outmatches her male opponents' fighting skills, but to gain power as a girl, Alanna discovers that females use physical attractiveness to compete with each other for potential husbands because martial status is the only power women have in Tortall. Sharon Lamb, author of *The Secret Lives of Girls*, discusses how competition among

girls for male attention is common: “But as girls become adolescents [...] I wonder if the only remaining way that girls can secure power [...] is through becoming someone’s girlfriend [...] a contest about who’s the best heterosexual girl, the most desirable one” (203). While Lamb’s discussion focuses on New England schoolgirls, the trends that she notices apply to Pierce’s novel as well. The competitiveness between Alanna and Delia underscores the idea that adolescent girls learn that femininity is based on rivalry with other females, and Delia gains power by becoming Prince Jonathan’s lover. Alanna wishes to gain feminine power by attracting the male gaze, and although she knows that she does not currently have the ability to match Delia’s level of attractiveness, she feels pleasure knowing that she has the power to attract the male gaze if she wants.

When Alanna disguises herself as a boy, she does not focus on her physical appearance, but in the few moments when she dresses—in secret—as a girl, she evaluates her femininity in terms of “beauty.” In order for Alanna to look feminine instead of like “Squire Alan in a girl’s dress,” Mistress Cooper has to outfit Alanna with feminine props: a dress, a feminine hairstyle, and makeup (*In the Hand* 124). Alanna had not seen herself in women’s attire since puberty, and the first time Alanna sees herself in the mirror and recognizes her reflection as being “female” instead of “male,” she comments on her beauty. Mistress Cooper responds, ““You’ll pass. [...] You’re not as beautiful as Lady Delia, say, or the new Lady at Court, Cythera of Elden,”” and Alanna replies, ““*Nobody’s* as beautiful as the Lady Cythera”” (*In the Hand* 125). In this short exchange, the repetition of the word “beauty” reinforces the idea that femininity is closely associated with having feminine props and looking physically attractive. Also, the ranking among the ladies’ beauties, with Cythera’s surpassing Delia’s, reinforces the idea that femininity is a competition with other women to attract the male gaze.

In addition, Mistress Cooper's comment about Alanna "pass[ing]" further complicates the interpretation of her cross-dressing and learning femininity. Alanna cannot quickly master a feminine gender simply because she is female and adopts feminine props. For many years, Alanna had been dressing and acting as a boy, and so, she is accustomed to masculine gender performance. Alanna cannot assume that she could be able to perform femininity instantly because there is no such thing as an essential female identity to reassume. Her performance as Alan is so convincing that now she can only "pass" as being a girl.

Alanna learns to become feminine just as she learns to become masculine, and Pierce purposefully draws attention to the idea that gender can be acquired when Alanna says, "It's going to be as hard to learn to be a girl as it was to learn to be a boy" (*In the Hand* 126). When she is out in public dressed as a girl, she can "pass" as a female because she physically looks like one, but she still acts like a man. For example, Jonathan realizes that the girl in the black wig is Alanna because her stride resembles a man's (*In the Hand* 138). She "passed" as a woman in appearance, but she has a masculine body language. In order to be socially recognized as a woman, she would have to repeatedly perform femininity, and over time, her performance would allow her to be socially recognized as female rather than "passing" as one.

The passages when Alanna wears women's clothing during her Alan years suggest that dressing like a woman is a form of drag. When she wears women's attire, she disguises her appearance so that she would not be publicly recognized as Alan in a dress: "She even took out the black wig she normally wore in public: there weren't enough violet-eyed red-heads around to warrant her leaving her rooms without some kind of disguise" (*In the Hand* 137). The passage reinforces several things. First, the cross-dressed identity of Alan is Alanna's chosen identity and gender: being a woman is a disguise. Second, the passage also troubles the idea of gender and

passing. Pierce depicts Alanna as a girl passing as boy, but when she disguises herself with the wig, she becomes a “boy” passing as a girl. She travels out in public with Mistress Cooper as the girl with the black wig, and in these rare excursions, she wants to be identified as a girl without simultaneously being recognized as Alan. Yet, when she returns to the palace (the supreme symbol of patriarchal authority in Tortall), she wants to be identified as “Alan” rather than Alanna “passing” as a boy. There are many layers to Alanna’s masquerade, and the text unsettles the idea of gendered identity in moments when Alanna passes as the dark-haired girl.

While Collins also complicates gender performance, it is important to understand how the genre of teen science fiction influences the ways in which both stories critique institutions. Alanna critiques patriarchal institutions by pretending to be a male, but Katniss complicates ideas of femininity without having to cross-dress. This difference between the two series relates to Mendlesohn’s discussion of a crucial difference between fantasy and science fiction:

Science fiction for teens, unlike fantasy, does not fall for the ‘coming out story,’ in which girls hide their sex to compete, or go up against authority to compete. However, [...] there are a number of narratives in which female protagonists revolt [...] against future patriarchies. (115)

Katniss does not have to masquerade as a boy in order to have power in a patriarchal culture; in fact, her power lies in her ability to perform femininity to manipulate the sympathies of Panem.

Katniss also discovers that props can be advantageous when preparing for, and playing, the Hunger Games. Because the opening ceremonies, interviews, and Games are televised across the Capitol and twelve districts, the gaze in Collins’s series operates very similarly to Mulvey’s description of how the gaze operates in cinema. According to Mulvey, women are specifically

styled in films in order to appeal the patriarchal gaze, and the gaze, in turn, encourages a compliant form of femininity because the woman on screen becomes objectified: “The man controls the film fantasy [...] as the bearer of the look [...] and] woman as spectacle” (20). In treating women as objects, patriarchal cultures deny them subject positions, and this reinforces traditional patriarchal power.

The gaze of Panem strips both male and female tributes of subject positions, but the tributes can increase their odds of winning by charming sponsors during the opening ceremonies and pre-Game interviews. Under the coaching of both Cinna (a Capitol stylist) and Haymitch (a former District 12 victor), Katniss learns how to perform a specific type of femininity that will capture the look of sponsors.

In order to understand how Katniss uses femininity to manipulate the gaze and subvert patriarchal control, it is necessary to discuss how the Capitol maintains hegemonic control over the districts. For decades, the Capitol retains power using a method of surveillance similar to that of Foucault’s description of the panopticon, but the event of the Hunger Games draws on older notions of spectacle punishment. Foucault writes that the spectacle of the scaffold was once used by those in power “to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign” (49). During Games, the tributes’ bodies become corporeal symbols for each district; their bodies are the criminals to be punished. Thus, the Games act as televised scaffold in which the tributes’ gruesome deaths remind the Districts not only of their past transgressions but of the Capitol’s absolute control. The Capitol’s spectacle maintains order for decades until Katniss causes the audience to feel sympathy for the condemned. Many Capitol residents do not associate the condemned with the suffering of human beings; for them, the Hunger Games is a reality television show in which they root for their

favorite “characters.”¹³ For the spectators, the tributes are simply objects to be watched, similar to that of the actresses Mulvey discusses. Katniss understands that she is an object of the gaze, and she learns how to manipulate the gaze so that the viewers feel compassion. Katniss uses feminine props to make the audience believe that she is in love with Peeta, and the sympathy she engenders allows them to both survive the Games.

Before Katniss arrives at the Capitol, Collins portrays her femininity as underdeveloped. She is not an androgynous character. There are characteristics of her personality that are considered stereotypically feminine, but she chooses not to wear feminine attire because such clothing is not appropriate for hunting. Although Katniss does not want to have children, her concern for Prim’s welfare is feminine because she acts as Prim’s surrogate mother: “I protect Prim in every way I can, but I’m powerless against the reaping. The anguish I always feel when she’s in pain wells up in my chest” (*The Hunger Games* 15). The word “anguish” suggests that Katniss has parental relationship (instead of a sisterly relationship) with Prim: even though Katniss’s life is also in peril during the reaping, Katniss displays feminine behavior similar to the unconditional love of a mother.

However, Katniss’s gender performance is underdeveloped because she relies on her mother to choose a hairstyle and feminine clothes for the reaping. When Katniss returns from the woods, her mother has prepared a bath and provided clothes. Washing “off the dirt and sweat from the woods” symbolizes how Katniss knows that she must switch from masculine performance to feminine for the reaping (*The Hunger Games* 15). She may reject certain aspects of her mother’s femininity, but she recognizes that she needs to be feminine sometimes.

¹³ Collins’s depiction of the Games has many similarities to that of contemporary reality television shows. Contestants of reality television shows often use pathos and ethos to appeal to their viewers through interviews, and this is similar to the strategies Katniss employs in the opening ceremonies and pre-Game interview.

The reaping is televised across Panem, and the district children wear clothes that adhere to the Capitol's standards of masculinity and femininity in case they are chosen. Katniss's friend Madge (who belongs to the highest class in District 12) wears a dress that is more "expensive" and "pretty" than her usual dresses, and her retort to Gale's snide remark demonstrates an awareness that attracting sponsors begins from the moment that spectators see the tributes: "Well, if I end up going to the Capitol, I want to look nice, don't I?" (*The Hunger Games* 12). Katniss employs a similar strategy when she allows her mother to dress her in feminine props. Katniss's braided hairstyle is a feminine prop, and Cinna (a Capitol stylist) considers this hairdo to be valuable in appealing to Capitol spectators: "It's beautiful. Classic really. And in almost perfect balance with your profile" (*The Hunger Games* 64). He does not see Katniss as unfeminine, and he recognizes that she has the potential to learn how to display a femininity that would appeal to a Capitol audience.

In order to attract sponsorship, both previous victors and Capitol stylists coach tributes, and Katniss learns feminine props from Cinna and Haymitch. Unlike Alanna, who learns femininity from a proper female role model, Katniss learns femininity from two men, who symbolize patriarchal authority. Just as Mulvey discusses how men as spectators hold the look and style the woman accordingly, Cinna and Haymitch understand how the Capitol gaze works and advise Katniss. Nevertheless, Katniss knows her role in the manipulation of the gaze; she follows their advice because she recognizes that these gestures will win sponsors' support. When she first arrives at the Capitol, Katniss relies on Cinna's fashion sense to capture the sponsors' attentions during the opening ceremonies: "At first, I'm frozen, but then I catch sight of us on a large television screen and am floored by how breathtaking we look. [...] Cinna has given me a great advantage. No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name" (*The Hunger Games* 70).

Prior to arriving, Katniss is familiar with seeing how stylists decorate tributes for the opening ceremonies and interviews, and at first, she is skeptical about Cinna's plans. Once she sees the Capitol residents' reactions, she understands that Cinna successfully attracts the gaze to her. Katniss's use of the word "breathtaking" acknowledges that Cinna has drawn on Capitol beauty ideals to make her physically appealing, and the comment that spectators will not forget her "look" suggests that Katniss understands that drawing the gaze will work to her advantage. After this moment, Katniss unquestioningly follows Cinna's advice.

To continue attracting sponsors, Cinna styles Katniss in a dress for her interview, and the dress allows Katniss to view herself as feminine for the first time. Katniss dismisses Prim's compliment of "look[ing] beautiful" in her reaping dress when Katniss replies that her reflection looks "nothing like myself" (*The Hunger Games* 15). Her masculine role as family caretaker did not allow her much disposable time or income to spend on stereotypical feminine props, and the dress she wears on reaping day serves only a utilitarian purpose of looking formal. Attracting desire was a luxury, and so she was unaccustomed to viewing herself as feminine. Nevertheless, she sees herself as beautiful and feminine for the first time after Cinna styles her for the pre-Game interview: "The creature standing before me in the full-length mirror has come from another world. [...] Because my dress, oh, my dress is entirely covered in reflective precious gems [...] I am not beautiful. I am as radiant as the sun" (*The Hunger Games* 120-121). In referring to herself as a "creature," Katniss demonstrates that she feels a similar type of alienation from a stereotypical feminine identity as she had when Prim compliments her; however, in her conversation with Prim, she rejects an association with femininity, but in this passage, she embraces it. Although the word "creature" originally develops the idea of estrangement from her reflection, Katniss's later use of the first person "I" suggests that she

accepts this femininity as part of her identity. Also, her evaluation of herself on the beauty spectrum suggests that the Panem ideal of femininity is also based on female competition for the male gaze. Although the names of other female tributes are not mentioned in this passage, the implication that Katniss is more than simply “beautiful”—that she is “radiant”—suggests she looks physically more enticing than other female tributes, which will earn her sponsorship.

In addition to the dress, Cinna also coaches Katniss about other props of femininity, such as acting “cute” during the interview to suggest a girl-like “innocence.” During the interview, Katniss sees Cinna motion for her to twirl, and the reaction of the audience suggests that Cinna anticipates which behaviors would best manipulate the spectators. In that moment, Katniss acknowledges that the girly behavior is a performance that she has never done before: “I’m also giggling, which I think I’ve done maybe never in my lifetime. But the nerves and the spinning have gotten to me” (*The Hunger Games* 128). Katniss feels nervous because she understands the importance in winning the audience’s favor, and as she follows Cinna’s instructions, she learns that stereotypically feminine behaviors are advantageous. The dress and the giggly behavior reinforce the idea that she is an innocent schoolgirl. Such a performance draws the attention of sponsors who desire her, and if the audience feels emotionally connected to her, they will send her aid during the Games. Throughout *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, Katniss wears stereotypically feminine clothes and replicates schoolgirl behaviors to keep the audience’s interest and favor.

While Katniss has initial success performing femininity in the opening ceremony and the interview, Haymitch’s post-interview exchange with Katniss suggests that Katniss only “passes” as feminine because she is still learning the Capitol’s standards of femininity. Katniss thinks that Peeta’s proclamation of love destroys her chances of winning sponsorship, but Haymitch informs

her that Peeta's love manipulates the gaze because the idea of competition transforms Katniss into an alluring object for males: "He made you look desirable! And let's face it, you can use all the help you can get in that department! You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do" (*The Hunger Games* 135). If a significant aspect of feminine gender performance focuses on attracting the male gaze, then Haymitch thinks that Katniss currently does not have the ability to successfully become the object of desire for Capitol spectators. She can "pass" as feminine only with the help of Cinna, Haymitch, and Peeta.

Peeta's proclamation of love makes Katniss desirable because she becomes an object that men want but cannot attain, and whether she loves Peeta or not is irrelevant as long as the sponsors believe she does. Since this novel presumes that heterosexuality is the norm of Panem, male sponsors would support her because they would take pleasure in pursuing the affections of a prized girl, and female sponsors would support her because they desire to see the outcome of a "star-crossed" couple. When Katniss objects to being portrayed as "star-crossed lovers," Haymitch's retort informs Katniss that she needs to learn how manipulation works: "Who cares? It's all a big show. It's all about how you're perceived" (*The Hunger Games* 135). The words "show" and "perceived" reinforce the idea that Katniss is "passing" as feminine; she usually exhibits female masculinity, and image of her as a feminine girl in love a staged production to attract sponsors.

Katniss demonstrates awareness about the limitations of her abilities to "pass" as feminine, which is apparent in her difference in attitude between Cinna's schoolgirl designs and Plutarch's vision of her as a sexy warrior.¹⁴ She recognizes how different outfits suggest various types of femininity, and she realizes that she has learned enough props to "pass" as a schoolgirl:

¹⁴ Plutarch is a former Capitol Gamemaker who sides with the district rebels in *Catching Fire*.

“I can see by the palette Cinna has assigned that we’re going for girlish, not sexy. Good. I’ll never convince anyone of anything if I’m trying to be provocative” (*Catching Fire* 38). Girlish and sexy are two polar forms of traditional femininity, and while Katniss learns how to perform the femininity of a schoolgirl, she knows that she not acquainted enough with the props of sexy femininity to “pass” as a sex icon.

While Katniss acts as a schoolgirl in order to keep her family safe, Collins complicates Katniss’s performance by suggesting that gender performance is not completely a show. In fact, Katniss enjoys wearing the schoolgirl clothes that Cinna makes: “I may have no interest in designing clothes but I do love the ones Cinna makes for me” (*Catching Fire* 39). Katniss does not reject all forms of femininity as antithetical to her; after learning types of femininity that are different than the her mother’s model of motherly/wifely femininity, Katniss learns which types she would like to incorporate into her identity. The schoolgirl femininity is still an act to her because being gendered feminine requires performing discursive acts over time, but Katniss accepts this type.

After Cinna dies, Katniss rejects the portrayal of femininity encouraged by Plutarch because she is uncomfortable with being portrayed as a sex icon. When Plutarch styles her as sexy in the propaganda films, Katniss cannot accept the new image: “They play back the last few minutes of taping and I watch the woman on the screen. Her body seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine. Her face smudged but sexy. [...] I do not know who this person is” (*Mockingjay* 70-71). In talking about her image as a separate persona, Collins suggests that Katniss feels alienation toward this type of portrayal; the sexy warrior is a staged show similar to that of the “star-crossed lovers.” The clothing and the makeup required of the sex icon differ from that of the schoolgirl; whereas she thought Cinna’s dress made her look radiant, she cannot

identify with the sex icon look. Katniss knows she can pass as a schoolgirl, but she believes that the sexy warrior femininity is so antithetical to her personality that she does not feel as if she can successfully pass as this character. Her fears are confirmed when Haymitch argues that such a depiction would detract from her ethos with the districts: “It took the whole of this morning for him to convince the others of my limitations. That I can’t pull it off. I can’t stand in a television studio wearing a costume and makeup [...] and rally the districts to victory” (*Mockingjay* 73). Just as Haymitch guides Katniss through the Games, he also shapes the way she is depicted in the rebellion propaganda. He and Katniss understand that she can successfully pass only specific types of femininities.

Katniss’s acceptance and rejection of certain models of femininity play a significant role in the series’ inclusion in the young adult genre. Roberta Trites argues that young adult literature simultaneously allows for some exploration of teenage sexuality while limiting the sexuality of teenage readers (85). From Cinna, Katniss learns which clothes develop her femininity and sexuality. However, Haymitch (who acts as her surrogate father) deems the sex icon warrior as inappropriate, which suggests that adults curb the sexualities of teenagers. This is especially apparent when Dalton, a high-ranking rebel, remarks that the makeup Katniss wears is unsuitable for a teenager: “Wash her face [...] She’s still a girl and you make her look like thirty-five. Feels wrong. Like something the Capitol would do” (*Mockingjay* 77). Dalton uses the phrase “something the Capitol would do” to condemn Katniss’s premature sexy-femininity as morally suspect because the rebels consider the Capitol to be a site of decadence and corruption. Such a remark sends a clear message to readers: female teenagers should not try to exhibit the sexuality of an adult woman. Certain clothing and makeup is acceptable for the femininity of adolescents, but Collins suggests that sex icon clothing and makeup is inappropriate. Thus, the text allows for

the exploration of certain type of femininity and sexuality but also limits depictions of femininity that is not considered socially acceptable for adolescents.

Difficulties Performing Feminine Behavior

Although clothing enables both girls to “pass” as feminine, Alanna and Katniss encounter difficulties using other props; since they both exhibit female masculinity, they find that stereotypical feminine behavior can be problematic to replicate. As Tortall’s first female knight, Alanna tries to enjoy the freedoms of knighthood while being recognized as a woman. In *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man* and *Lioness Rampant*, she encounters resistance from both men and women who cannot accept a female that does not behave feminine. Katniss, also, encounters difficulties when trying to behave feminine: many of Panem do not believe her production of the “star-crossed lovers” to be genuine. Regardless, she still tries to act feminine in order to manipulate sponsors in her second round of the Hunger Games.

Even after Alanna’s sex is revealed, she wears men’s clothes and has a masculine career, which many in Tortall find controversial. She does not adopt stereotypical feminine behavior, and so she continues to perform female masculinity. The combination of a female body with masculine behavior leaves the men of a Bazhir nomad tribe unsure if they should accept her as a warrior. The tribe leader reasons that if Alanna performs masculinity, then she should prove herself as a warrior in the same trial by combat that the nomads require of their own men: ““She rides as a man, goes unveiled as a man, fights like a man. Let her prove herself worthy as a man, worthy of her weapons and of our friendship”” (*The Woman Who Rides* 18). After winning the trial, the Bazhir accept her and give her the title “Woman Who Rides Like a Man.” In *Lioness Rampant*, Alanna discusses how the “Woman Who Rides Like a Man” is an identity that allows her freedom when she lives among the Bazhir; because they consider her “sexless,” she does not

feel pressure to perform Tortall's conventions of femininity when she lives among them (*Lioness Rampant* 11). She only feels pressure to define her femininity when she leaves the tribe to resume living in Tortall's society.¹⁵ This title reflects the liminal space that Alanna occupies during the last two books; even though she is no longer cross-dressed like Garber's "third," she has a new identity that still contests the boundaries of masculine and feminine gender.

The identity of Alan had been secretly a "third" because cross-dressing disrupts boundaries, but the identity of "Lady Knight Alanna" is even more troubling: her undisguised body makes her socially recognized as a woman, but her masculine behavior is a source of controversy. Although Alanna finds allies who accept her, there are many in the last two books that reject her because she disturbs the categories of gender: "Alanna wasn't surprised to hear him accuse her of blasphemy against the gods for her manner of dress and her way of life—some of the priests at the royal palace had said much the same, when her true identity had been revealed" (*The Woman Who Rides* 18). The "manner of dress and her way of life" refers the way in which Alanna continues to perform masculinity instead of femininity. Since there have not been female warriors in Tortall for centuries, Alanna finds that she to prove her worthiness as a warrior beyond what is required for men. Although she endures the same challenges and tests that men undergo for knighthood, male knights still feel the need to challenge her skills when she returns from her adventures abroad: "From what people had said the night before, she knew Jonathan needed her as a knight [...] That she was female was a source of trouble, but she could balance that by proving—here and now—her abilities were the same" (*Lioness Rampant* 209). As she had done with the Bazhir, she must prove herself worthy to the male knights she had trained with during her Alan years. The use of the word "same" suggests that the knights would

¹⁵ When Alanna resumes living in Tortall's society, she is not "sexless" as she had been while living with the Bazhir. Many in Tortal expect her to act like a woman because she is socially recognized as female.

have accepted the fighting prowess of Alan, but because they know she is female, she must reprove her abilities. This situation demonstrates how deeply ingrained concepts of gender can be: gender does not define ability, but gender shapes perception about individuals' abilities. Alanna proves herself worthy of her title through multiple challenges with male knights, and many accept her as a warrior. Eventually, Alanna earns the respect of many in Tortall through her accomplishments, and she is given the honor of becoming the King's Champion, which is the highest knightly rank in Tortall.

While Alanna finds that she has an easier time earning people's acceptance of her masculinity, criticism about her femininity leaves her doubting whether men will desire her. When Alanna hesitates over Jonathan's marriage proposal, he accuses her of not being able to act as feminine as the Court ladies: "'At least they're *women*, Lady Alanna! [...] And they know how to *act* like women!'" (*The Woman Who Rides* 162). Jonathan's remark implies that females are classified as "women" if they act feminine, and because Alanna challenges his authority—which is seen as masculine behavior rather than feminine submissive—Jonathan suggests that she is not a woman. Indeed, his emphasis on the word "act" directly addresses the issue that Alanna performs masculinity instead of femininity. His criticism of her gender performance leaves Alanna feeling like her construction of femininity is inferior to that of other women at Court, and she angrily informs him that he should find a different potential wife: "'Find yourself someone more feminine, Jonathan of Conté!'" (*The Woman Who Rides* 163). After Jonathan criticizes her lack of femininity, Alanna worries that she will be undesirable to men until she realizes that George desires her: "Jonathan's taunts about her lack of femininity had stung and stuck, and the look in George's eyes when she appeared in a soft lilac wool dress went far toward healing those wounds" (*The Woman Who Rides* 172). The reference to the "look in George's

eyes” suggests that Alanna’s understanding of her femininity lies in her ability to attract the male gaze. When she becomes George’s lover, she feels more secure about her femininity.

Because Pierce’s portrayal of femininity (at that moment) is aligned with how patriarchal cultures teach women that the ultimate goal of femininity is to attract the male gaze, such a passage seems antithetical to the transgressive nature of the text; indeed, this would be the case if it were not for the way that Alanna ultimately comes to terms with her gender as a female knight. At the beginning of *Lioness Rampant*, a fellow warrior named Liam asks Alanna if she considers marrying. She still rebels against the idea because marriage would force her to relinquish her knighthood for a traditional wifely role: ““Give up my shield after working so hard? Spend my time at court or on my husband’s lands? I have no patience for that kind of life”” (*Lioness Rampant* 55). Alanna’s response suggests that she would rather have a masculine lifestyle than consider a conventional feminine life, but in the middle of the book, she tells Liam that she wants to wear dresses because she considers femininity to be a part of her identity: ““I’m female. [...] Why can’t I wear a dress without you deciding I want to give up everything I am?”” (*Lioness Rampant* 109). Liam considers Alanna’s dress to be contrary to her role as warrior, but Alanna thinks that being a warrior does not prevent her from indulging in femininity. She associates wearing dresses with being feminine, and she does not think that such attire will impede her from being a warrior nor will it make her desire a wifely role instead of a warrior’s life.

Alanna struggles to reconcile her masculinity and femininity until the end of the novel when she realizes that her identity already incorporates both. When her magical cat, Faithful, gripes that Alanna cannot make up her mind about being either “*warrior or woman*,” Alanna has an epiphany about how her performance of gender allows her to be both: ““Who says I can’t

have a bit of each?’ she wanted to know. When she realized what she’d said, she began to grin. ‘That’s right—why can’t I? And I’ve done pretty well, I think!’” (*Lioness Rampant* 246). Until this point, she thought that she had to fit into the traditional binaries of gender, but then she realizes that she has found a way to incorporate both masculinity and femininity into her identity. In addition, she no longer fears becoming a wife as long as she could find a husband that would allow her to retain her knighthood.

In this moment, Alanna accomplishes one of the major goals of the fantasy genre; according to Susan Fichtelberg, learning is an important component of the epic fantasy story: “Often this protagonist is a youth who grows from innocence to mastery during the course of the quest” (19). The ambiguousness of Fichtelberg’s comment implies that mastery could apply to various types of lessons, and indeed, Pierce’s portrayal of Alanna’s struggle with gender implies that Alanna, like many youths, must learn to negotiate her place in the world. Although Alanna embarks on several adventures throughout the series, the unifying theme across all four novels has been Alanna’s quest to understand how her identity—with its mixture of masculinity and femininity—fits into the larger social structure. Her depiction at the end of book four implies that she has mastered her doubts about her place in society because she no longer feels the need to be defined in a binary.

In contrast to Alanna, Katniss discovers that feminine behavior is the most crucial prop in manipulating spectators because sponsors will give her food and medicine during the Games if she keeps up the production of the “star-crossed lovers.” She realizes that a display of feminine behavior would be to show romantic affection as she treats Peeta’s injuries, but since she does not feel desire for Peeta prior to the Games, she knows she must fake the emotions of a lover: “If I want to keep Peeta alive, I’ve got to give the audience something more to care about. [...]

Romance. Never having been in love, this is going to be a real trick” (*The Hunger Games* 261). Since she has never had any romantic relationships from which to draw experience, Katniss remembers the affection between her parents and replicates the behavior by kissing Peeta. This scene demonstrates two important concepts: Katniss’s inexperience with heteronormative romantic relationships and her use of feminine props to manipulate the audience.

Katniss’s dilemma demonstrates her lack of sexual experience, which reinforces the conventional femininity of a “good” girl. According to Sharon Lamb, there are certain cultural expectations concerning what adolescents know about sex and sexuality: “There is an expectation that children should be innocent, and that girls especially should be innocent of sexuality” (54). Katniss fits the stereotype of a good girl in that she does not know how to perform romantic feelings to Peeta. Also, this scene demonstrates a moment where Katniss deliberately manipulates the emotions of the sponsors: the audience desires to see a romance because a love story has never occurred in the Games. A romance would keep sponsors’ attention, and they would be more likely to send Katniss and Peeta aid in order to see the drama continue. Although Katniss has never kissed a boy, she recognizes how certain behaviors between couples should look. When she thinks of her parents, she emulates their mannerisms because she understands that such behaviors act as signifiers of affection. Katniss saves Peeta’s life when she performs feminine behavior because she manipulates sponsors into sending them food and medicine.

Although Katniss’s performance of femininity manages to keep her and Peeta alive in the first Games, she must continue to maintain a strict code of feminine innocence in order to convince the Capitol and district spectators that she does not have ulterior motives for manipulating the audience’s affections. At the end of the first novel, Katniss needs less guidance

from Cinna in the art of manipulation. Whereas Cinna had to motion for her to twirl in the pre-Game interview, Katniss can now “read” the signs that certain feminine props create. The pre-Game outfits were aimed at making Katniss memorable, but the post-Game interview dress is designed to make Katniss look as if she is not capable of deceit: “The sleeveless dress is gathered at my ribs, not my waist [...] I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at most. Innocent. Harmless. [...] This is a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary” (*The Hunger Games* 355). Cinna’s design makes Katniss look younger than she really is; he is banking on the idea of children’s perceived innocence because a child would not be thought of as capable of deviant behavior. Because Katniss’s stunt with the berries in the Games defies the one-champion rule, Katniss’s act has the potential to be viewed as defiant against the Capitol. Since the purpose of the Hunger Games is to reinforce the Capitol’s power, Katniss’s life is in danger if it seems like she inspires rebellion. As a result, Cinna styles her as an innocent schoolgirl so she would appear to be incapable of premeditated wrongdoing, and Katniss understands the implications of Cinna’s warning. Before the post-Game interview, Haymitch confirms her suspicions when he advises her to maintain her “star-crossed lovers” performance.

Since gender performance is reiterated over time, Katniss’s performance of a “love-crazed schoolgirl” is sometimes unconvincing (*Catching Fire* 21). In fact, many people, from President Snow to Coin, recognize that Katniss’s performance is flawed: her lack of experience in performing love reveals that she fakes her emotions. Snow makes Katniss aware that her acting did not persuade people in the districts that she was not defying the Capitol: “The people in the Capitol were quite convinced. Unfortunately, not everyone in the districts fell for your act” (*Catching Fire* 21). In calling her behaviors an “act,” Snow reveals that he knows she purposefully deceives the audience, and he also insinuates that Katniss never loves Peeta: “But

perhaps not as taken with the young man as you would have the country believe” (*Catching Fire* 24). Since pretending to have romantic feelings was a crucial aspect of manipulation, Katniss worries that her loved ones will be in danger. Although she avoids desire because she thinks that it would make her vulnerable, she discovers that having emotional attachments to her friends and family makes her equally vulnerable to Snow’s schemes.

Collins further complicates the situation by depicting Katniss as confused when she actually starts having desire for both Peeta and Gale. Snow leverages Katniss’s affection for Gale, and in return, Katniss promises to put on a performance of love toward Peeta that would supposedly appease growing unrest in the districts. Her affection for Peeta seems false until she kisses him in the second Hunger Games: “I feel that thing again. [...] I kissed Peeta about a thousands times during those Games and after. But there was only one kiss that made me feel something stir deep inside” (*Catching Fire* 352). The “something” she feels is desire for Peeta, which Katniss does not expect. Collins’s portrayal of that moment leaves the readers wondering if the stirring was caused by Katniss actually having romantic feelings for Peeta or if she has become convinced by her own act.

When Katniss collaborates with the rebels in *Mockingjay*, Coin and Plutarch decide that that Katniss’s romantic performance is an important strategy in convincing the districts to side with them. They think that Katniss never loves Peeta, but Katniss’s reaction to their discussion suggests that she has unacknowledged desire: “I’m rattled by the turn in the conversation. The implications that I could so readily dispose of Peeta, that I’m in love with Gale, that the whole thing has been an act” (*Mockingjay* 40). If Katniss had only been using feminine props as a way to manipulate Peeta without caring for him, she would not be disturbed by the implication that

the romance had been “an act.” She knows that she uses props to keep them alive, but at this point, her hesitation suggests that she thinks of Peeta as more than a fellow actor.

While Alanna’s lack of feminine performance leads her to wonder if she is unfeminine, Katniss’s performance causes her to question if her feelings are a part of the show or an indicator of underlying attraction. Katniss’s analogy of the “Crazy Cat” game suggests she understands that Snow’s manipulation has triggered some sort of emotional response that she cannot articulate: “Crazy Cat has become a metaphor for my situation. I am Buttercup. Peeta, the thing I want so badly to secure, is the light. [...] But the one thing that sends Buttercup into a tailspin is when I leave the light on but put it hopelessly out of his reach” (*Mockingjay* 153). Peeta is the object of her desire, and Snow uses her affection for him as a way to incapacitate her. At this point, Katniss is unsure how to define her emotions. The dire situation of the Games causes her to simulate the signs of an intimate couple, but when she starts to feel desire, she is unsure if the emotion between them is part of the act or if she actually cares about him as a lover.

HETERONORMATIVE ENDINGS

The last stage in the tomboy arc ends with the girl assuming the traditional roles of wife and mother. Abate notes that many literary works that often use tomboyism to critique gender often end with the girl giving up the phase in order to get married (*Tomboys* xx). As a result, a tomboy figure is subversive in youth but conforms to stereotypical femininity in adulthood. The endings of Pierce’s and Collins’s series follow the heteronormative pattern: Alanna plans to marry George, and Katniss is in a monogamous relationship with Peeta.

While the beginning and middle stages of both series include many opportunities for subversion of stereotypical femininity, the endings do not complicate gender in the same fashion. Since hegemonic forces limit texts that do not promote heteronormative endings, both series—as

part of mainstream young adult fiction—would not include endings that do not suggest heterosexual relationships. However, the authors’ depictions of traditional feminine roles have some subversive qualities. Alanna negotiates a marriage in which she is not confined to her husband’s lands like other wives in Tortall. Katniss and Peeta raise children together, but the dark tone of the epilogue suggests that the trauma she experiences taints the way she views motherhood.

The epilogue of *Lioness Rampant* reinforces traditional feminine gender roles and patriarchal authority. Alanna’s comment to George in which she says, ““I want to be yours,”” reinforces patriarchal perception that women are the property of their husbands (*Lioness Rampant* 307). Such a statement seems antithetical to Alanna’s desire (for the majority of the four novels) to roam without a husband’s imposition. Alanna wants not only a knight’s freedom but also a wife’s lifestyle, and the language of her comment suggests that she has to surrender some of that freedom to have both. When George asks if she loves him ““enough to wed with me,”” Alanna is not scared of becoming a wife, and when he asks if they will have children, she says is ““proud to”” become a mother (*Lioness Rampant* 307-308). Although Alanna has feared becoming a wife and mother because her parents’ relationship ends in tragedy, she willingly assumes conventional roles at the end of the series. This may suggest that marriage within patriarchal cultures requires women to compromise; although Alanna proves that female subjects can have careers, Pierce’s portrayal also suggests that a woman has to give up some freedoms if she wants a family.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that while Alanna compromises as wife, George also compromises as a husband. When George asks if marriage means that she would ““give up roamin’ and settle down”” in his home of Pirate’s Swoop, one look from Alanna makes

him aware that she does not want to give up her knighthood; in response, George compromises and says, “Well, to roam with me along” (*Lioness Rampant* 308). Such a concession suggests that George must also surrender to Alanna’s wishes. Pierce directly addresses the idea that such a union creates the possibility of reimagining traditional gender roles: when George jokes that he has “tamed myself a Lioness,” Alanna replies, “I wouldn’t call it *tamed*, laddy-me-love. The lady of Pirate’s Swoop shouldn’t be *tame*” (*Lioness Rampant* 308). Traditional femininity in Tortall means that women submit completely to the will of their husbands, but Alanna and George have reformulated the idea of marriage. Alanna belongs to him, but in other ways, George belongs to her. The series ends with a reaffirmation of heteronormativity, but Alanna continues to reconfigure the feminine gender roles.

The last chapter and epilogue of *Mockingjay* reinforces heteronormativity, but the dark tone of the novel suggests that perhaps conventional gender roles cannot lead to happiness in a bleak world. Katniss and Peeta are in a committed relationship, and while the text suggests that they are married, Collins never uses the word “marriage” to describe their partnership. This lack seems significant especially considering that the two characters pretend to be married since *Catching Fire*, but they do not participate in any ceremony during the course of the series. In the epilogue, Katniss enacts the roles of wife and mother, but the lack of the word “marriage” implies that perhaps even the assumption of traditional gender roles cannot provide the “happy ending” that hegemony suggests marriage brings.

Katniss’s favorite childhood song, “The Hanging Tree,” foreshadows the idea that lovers suffer greatly in the misery of Panem. Katniss reveals that the line about the hanging man waiting for his lover to die disturbs her: “But then you wonder if he meant for her to run to him. To death. In the final stanza, it’s clear that that’s what he’s waiting for. His lover, with her rope

necklace, hanging dead next to him in the tree” (*Mockingjay* 125). Prior to the Games, Katniss rejects the hanging man’s intentions, but after experiencing the horrors of the Games, she sympathizes with the man’s motivations: “Or maybe he thought the place he was leaving her was really worse than death. Didn’t I want to kill Peeta with that syringe to save him from the Capitol?” (*Mockingjay* 126). Both the Games and then the eventual war traumatize Katniss and Peeta, and there are moments when she would rather see Peeta dead than hurt. She sympathizes with the hanging man because she knows that living under the rule of the Capitol would be so difficult that death would seem like freedom.

Even after the war ends and Katniss returns with Peeta to the ruins of District 12, the couple must live with their trauma; while the ending supports heteronormativity, trauma complicates the idea that conventional gender roles heal them completely. Both characters seem to suffer from a type of post-traumatic stress disorder, but they find comfort with each other. Katniss feels desire for Peeta again, and she realizes that a relationship “would have happened anyway” because the longing she feels for Peeta at the end of the series feels deeper than the superficial behaviors she had faked during the Games (*Mockingjay* 388). Using imagery of renewal, Collins suggests that the relationship has the potential for healing their wounds: “What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses” (*Mockingjay* 388). Since a relationship with Peeta can offer a more hopeful future than one with Gale, Katniss understands that her choice is the best outcome.

Although Katniss feels happiness with Peeta, there are aspects of her life that cause her anxiety. As previously stated, Katniss is against having children for various reasons, and as a result, she feels fear when she becomes pregnant: “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” (*Mockingjay* 389). In patriarchal cultures, motherhood is often idealized as blissful, but her panic suggests ambivalence about whether or not motherhood can provide her with the traditional “happy ending.” Katniss accepts Peeta’s love because the relationship leads to renewal, but she stills feels unsettled about being a mother. The image of her children playing on the Meadow seems like a symbol of hope, but Collins’s depiction suggests that even with rebirth, the world retains some of the darkness of the previous generation: “My children, who don’t know they play on a graveyard” (*Mockingjay* 390). She still feels uncertainty about the future. Even though the tyranny of the Capitol is over, she cannot let go of the anxieties that she carries throughout her life. In traditional literary endings, motherhood is usually depicted as a healing process, but Katniss worries that she will have difficulty explaining to her children about her role in the Games and rebellion. However, Collins suggests that her relationship with Peeta will help Katniss through this; even when she feels doubt and fear, “Peeta says it will be okay. We have each other. And the book [a family heirloom]. We can make them understand in a way that will make them braver” (*Mockingjay* 390). The ending suggests that Katniss still struggles to reconcile her past, but even in the grimness, she finds comfort in her relationship with Peeta.

Both Alanna’s and Katniss’s depictions allow for alternate models of female subjectivity. According to Karen Coats, the subversive nature of children’s literature allows for the exploration of how gender can be reassessed:

The female subjects of children’s literature help us understand what forms female subjectivity might take, what possibilities may be open [...] adopting antinormative, and anti-identitarian stance toward the structures of authority they confound and confront. (118)

While the endings of both series do not subvert heteronormativity, the portrayals of both Alanna and Katniss do allow for alternative considerations of female subjectivity.

Heteronormativity does not necessarily require a femininity that loses agency or feels the perceived “bliss” of motherhood. Both characters are considered feminine even as they deviate from the norm.

CONCLUSION

Tamora Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness Quartet* and Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* series follow a similar character arc to the tomboy tradition that Michelle Abate discusses. As children, Alanna and Katniss identify with masculine activities, such as hunting, and they reject the conventional femininities of their worlds because they associate femininity with weakness. Their feistiness and outdoor play identify them as being tomboys, and both their mothers’ absences greatly influence their attitudes toward femininity. Collins’s depiction suggests that Katniss has the luxury of being a tomboy while her father is alive, but his death forces her to become the family provider. While Alanna has the freedoms to “play” at being a boy, Katniss’s responsibilities make her character transition from tomboy to pre-adult.

Also, there are aspects of Alanna’s tomboy phase that differ greatly from Katniss’s childhood. During her pre-pubescent years, Alanna decides to cross-dress as Alan to experience the freedom patriarchal cultures allow boys, and Pierce’s portrayal of Alanna’s desire for Prince Jonathan during her pubescent years firmly aligns Alanna’s cross-dressing as gender identification instead of sexual identification. As Victoria Flanagan writes, cross-dressing in children’s literature provides characters the opportunities to rebel against the restrictions of patriarchal culture, and since children’s cross-dressing does not imply that the characters want to become male, the female cross-dresser usually resumes a feminine identity at the end of the

phase. Indeed, Alanna plans to reveal her sex once she earns her knighthood, and once she becomes a female knight, she does not masquerade as Alan again.

Judith Butler's discussion of gender performance provides a way to understand how Alanna and Katniss become feminine during the gender conformity phase of the tomboy arc. Butler writes that gender is created through repeated discursive acts, and both Pierce and Collins use gendered feminine clothing and behavior to make Alanna and Katniss fit their worlds' models of conventional femininity. During her Alan years, Alanna secretly learns from Mistress Cooper how to dress and behave like a lady of Tortall because she desires Jonathan. Pierce demonstrates that gender is a social construction because Alanna learns masculine behavior as Alan and feminine behavior as Alanna; Alanna's ability to transition from Alan and back to Alanna underscores Judith Butler's ideas that gender is not fixed on the body.

Even during her first years as a female knight, Alanna has yet to master performing feminine behavior, and her breakup with Jonathan leaves her questioning her femininity. Alanna's struggle throughout the series reflects one of the main conflicts in young adult literature; Roberta Trites writes that adolescent literature often shows the struggles that teenagers undergo as they negotiate their relationship to social institutions. Alanna's efforts to understand the masculine and feminine aspects of her identity parallel the troubles of many teenagers, and her decision to pursue a career instead of starting a family represents a dilemma that many young women face.

While Alanna wants to learn feminine behavior, Katniss is forced to fit the Capitol's standards of femininity as she prepares for the Hunger Games. Laura Mulvey describes how actresses are styled to appeal to the patriarchal male gaze, and Collins's portrayal of Katniss's situation suggests that Katniss is objectified in a similar fashion. Katniss's mentors, Cinna and

Haymitch, coach her on how to develop an image of femininity that will earn her sponsorship during the Games. While Katniss enjoys some feminine clothing, she has difficulty replicating stereotypical feminine behavior toward her fellow tribute Peeta, but she manages to convince a majority of Panem that she loves him. Although she can “pass” as schoolgirl feminine, she has difficulty passing as a sex icon, and Collins’s depiction suggests to teenage readers that certain types of femininity are inappropriate for adolescents.

Although both series allow for subversion of gender categories during the first two phases of the tomboy arc, the conclusions of both series reinforce heteronormativity. The genre of young adult speculative fiction usually includes heterosexual romances, and as mainstream series, these texts depict endings where Alanna and Katniss assume traditional feminine roles. Pierce’s portrayal reinforces patriarchal ideals when Alanna admits that she wants to belong to George, but George’s compromise also suggests that he surrenders himself to her. Pierce’s second-wave feminist agenda can be seen in how Alanna manages to have both a career and a family as Tortall’s female knight.

The ending of Collins’s series suggests that Katniss carries the trauma of both the Games and the rebellion into her adult years. She and Peeta have children together, but the grim image of her children playing on a meadow above a graveyard hints that the traditional role of motherhood does not provide the healing that usually occurs in literature. This is significant because it allows readers to consider alternative portrayals of traditional feminine roles.

As young adult literature, Pierce’s and Collins’s series provide readers with depictions of strong-willed girls who learn to negotiate their identities within restricting patriarchal cultures. Both Alanna and Katniss subvert traditional constructions of gender through the first two phases of the tomboy arc, and their transgressions allow readers to see that a female identity can

incorporate aspects of both masculinity and femininity. Even as they resume conventional feminine roles, the authors provide alternative models of female subjectivity. Alanna's and Katniss's depictions add to the conversation about how the tomboy arc and gender performance operates within young adult literature.

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