

AN ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF KATNISS EVERDEEN FROM THE HUNGER GAMES

Un análisis arquetípico de Katniss Everdeen de “Los Juegos del Hambre”

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Abstract

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy invites to reflect on the exchange of gender roles metaphorically performed by a female and male protagonists who play the warrior as well as the family protector roles. From a myth-critical theoretical framework and applying psychoanalysis in literature methodology, this article will provide a feminist analysis of *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2020) focusing on how the protagonists, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark, deconstruct gender stereotypes. Peeta Mellark will be regarded as a future man who supports gender equality while Katniss Everdeen will be considered a representation of goddesses' archetypes applying Carl Gustav Jung's (1970) approach on archetypes and collective unconsciousness as well as Jean Shinoda Bolen's (2010) theories of feminine psychology based on Greek goddesses archetypes.

Keywords: comparative literature; myth criticism; gender theory; feminism; psychoanalysis.

Resumen

La trilogía de *Los juegos del hambre* de Suzanne Collins invita a reflexionar sobre el intercambio de roles de género que metafóricamente llevan a cabo los protagonistas femenino y masculino cumpliendo el rol de guerrero/a así como de protector/a familiar. Desde un marco teórico mitocrítico y aplicando la metodología del psicoanálisis en literatura, este artículo proporcionará un análisis de cómo los protagonistas Katniss Everdeen y Peeta Mellark deconstruyen los estereotipos de género. Peeta Mellark será considerado un hombre del futuro que apoya la igualdad de género mientras Katniss Everdeen será una representación de los arquetipos de diosas aplicando la aproximación a los arquetipos y al inconsciente colectivo de Carl Gustav Jung's (1970), así como las teorías de psicología feminista de Jean Shinoda Bolen's (2010) basadas en los arquetipos de diosas griegas.

Palabras clave: literatura comparada; mitocrítica; teoría de género; feminismo; psicoanálisis.

1. *The Hunger Games*, a Dystopian Science Fiction inspired from Roman Gladiators and Greek Mythology

The Hunger Games is a trilogy of dystopian science fiction and adventure novels written by the American author Suzanne Collins. The first novel was entitled *The Hunger Games* (2008) and it was followed by *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). The novels became successfully popular and they were adapted to the cinema. The film series were distributed by Lionsgate and produced by Nina Jacobson and Jon Kilik. They starred Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen, Josh Hutcherson as Peeta Mellark, Elizabeth Banks as Effie Trinket and Donald Sutherland as President Snow, among others. The Director of the first film was Gary Ross, however, Francis Lawrence directed the subsequent three films.

The difference of Directors can be perceived because the first film looks more epic with a more natural environment and humanist characters behavior while there is a more apocalyptic and purely science fiction and action atmosphere as well as a more sensationalist acting in the last three ones. Four films were released from the three novels: *The Hunger Games* (2012), *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013), *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1* (2014) and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2* (2015).

All of them set records for the opening day and received positive reception from critics. In this study, on the one hand, the protagonist of the story, Katniss Everdeen will be analyzed using the novels to pay attention to the potential and poetics of quotations related to the futuristic representation of gender roles in young people. And, on the other hand, the music and images of the film adaptations will be used to comment on the messages they contained that can be compared to the archetypes and collective unconscious theories.

The setting of *The Hunger Games* is an apocalyptic future in which society suffers from a historical decay and citizens have become slaves of the government. The history of Panem is described in the first pages of *The Hunger Games* first novel:

“The history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. [...] Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. [...] The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games” (Collins, 2008: 18).

North America has suffered from a collapse in the institutions and the new so-called Panem guarantees peace to its citizens as long as youngsters pay tributes risking their own lives. Suzanne Collins took inspiration from different sources to write *The Hunger Games*: her father’s

experiences in the Vietnam war, reality television, the Iraq war, Roman gladiator games and the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. In an interview for the *NewsTimes* she declared:

“A significant influence would have to be the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. The myth tells how in punishment for past deeds, Athens periodically had to send seven youths and seven maidens to Crete, where they were thrown in the Labyrinth and devoured by the monstrous Minotaur” (Everett, 2008: 2).

Like in the Myth of the Minotaur where young people were sacrificed, in *The Hunger Games* youngsters have to kill other young people from different districts to entertain the audience. It is not by chance that the name of the country where the story takes place is called Panem, it is a reference to Roman “Panem et circenses”¹. *The Hunger Games* criticizes the society of spectacle in which we live. Presidents of countries organize wars and make people from different places or races kill each other. President Coriolanus Snow represents the patriarchal man of war who obliges people to kill each other or die of starvation. He transmits Katniss the negative philosophy of: “It’s the things that we love the most that destroy us” (*Mockingjay* film, part I, 2: 22).

President Snow’s speech is similar to Donald Trump’s speeches against immigrants, trying to convince a part of the population with the idea that the others –those who are from a different district, like the immigrants- are the enemies. Snow is also a symbol of a sexist man against the strong and powerful Katniss. The feminist messages are explained symbolically in this science fiction as it is common in feminist narratives. Collins is successful in using science fiction to make readers aware of the importance of equality in our historical period of social injustices. Feminist writers like Joanna Russ or Margaret Atwood have also used dystopia to vindicate feminist ideals, this genre seems to be appropriate to create a fiction about a more feminist world as Linda Janes states: “Science fiction [...] offers potentially fertile ground for feminist analysis and practice” (Janes, 2003: 92). In the story Katniss represents a light of hope in a dark and cold civilization in which young people have become slaves who have to fight for their government.

In *The Hunger Games*, tributes are adolescents who are forced -or volunteered- to participate in an annual Hunger Games. The metaphor of the tributes shows the problems that young people have to face in the real world in order to be successful: being obliged to compete, take hard decisions and fight for their rights. The protagonists of the trilogy: Katniss and Peeta - as it happens often in real life teenagers-suffer from brainwashing and even torture by the Capital through the use of hijacking, a type of memory alteration and fear conditioning method. They

¹ Panem et circenses: Latin quotation from *Juvenal* (a.d. 55 to 60–circa 127 Decimus Junius Juvenalis Roman poet and satirist).

Definition of panem et circenses: bread and circuses: sustenance and entertainment provided by government to appease public discontent. Source: Merriam Webster Dictionary.

have to overcome their fears, become aware of the evil side of those who abuse of their power and search for their own identity and be able to give love in a hopeless world where they are surrounded by hatred, illnesses and death. Katniss and Peeta's loving relationship shows some of the complexities of human soul in which there are doubts, fear and mistrust.

Due to the high interest that their personalities raise, which correspond to archetypes, and at the same time, offer original and updated models of behavior in which the traditional gender roles are exchanged, a study of their gender roles seemed to be an innovative idea within the field of literary criticism using the methodology of myth criticism based on psychoanalysis. During our research on the character of Katniss Everdeen we realized that her brave and strong personality and characterization had been compared to the archetype of the Greek goddesses Artemis and we found that Jean Shinoda Bolen (a disciple of Gustav Jung) had even explained our hypothesis. Katniss Everdeen is a warrior more than a goddess in the novels, however, for Bolen all men and women have a divine inner part, and therefore, her goddess nature needed to be highlighted to show the feminist empowerment can this character offer.

This paper is going to offer an analysis of the gender roles of Katniss and Peeta to deconstruct male and gender stereotypes. Then, an analysis of the psyche of Katniss Everdeen including Peeta as an important part of her own psyche. And finally, a comparative study of Katniss with Artemis, Athena and Persephone goddesses supporting our arguments with Bolen's interpretations.

2. *The Hunger Games* protagonists defying gender roles

Katniss Everdeen is a female warrior who is not hypersexualized like other popular female heroines like Lara Croft, Catwoman or Wonder Woman. Everdeen is a powerful and strong woman, she is often shy, not always self-confident and imperfect, nevertheless her imperfections make her a more believable character. Surprisingly, her male counterpart, Peeta—who could be considered her *anima* ² in Jungian terms—is more sensitive, cautious and pure, he is not a *macho*² like in other conventional narratives. She is apparently more masculine than him having the features that have been conventionally considered masculine. For instance, he is never against her freedom and personal decisions, he waits for her to come back to him when she hesitates between him and another lover and he takes care of Katniss' family while she fights and protects him when he needs help.

² Male characters are often portrayed with a personality that shows a strong sense of masculine pride, power or strength, an exaggerated masculinity.

The author might be trying to show that the traditional idea of the male hero as the bravest one and the female character as passive is no longer believable due to the fact that nowadays many men are also responsible for the family like Peeta. Peeta plays a masculine and, at the same time, a feminine role in the story. Peeta's masculinity and femininity has been an object of discussion in studies about gender representations in *The Hunger Games*. In "The Appearance of Gender in the Main Characters in *The Hunger Games*: Gender Analysis". Choerul Anam and Febri Taufiqurrahman argued that Suzanne Collins's intention was to show that the role and nature or behavior of a person can change according to current needs and used Judith Butler's theories to analyse the characters of Peeta and Katniss.

They offered examples of Katniss traditionally and conventionally considered masculinity and Peeta's femininity. According to Anam and Taufiqurrahman Katniss has the masculine trait because she wears pants, she has to practice fighting in the Capitol, she dares to even threaten Peeta when he suddenly says she likes her. She has no fear of anyone, which proves the masculine side of Katniss as being very dominant and dares to fight Cato who is a strong man. On the other hand, Peeta's feminine nature can be seen in how "he takes after Katniss when she is sick because of a poisonous bee sting and when he is attacked by his opponent, causing him to become helpless" (Anam and Taufiqurrahman, 2020: 106).

In Ana Sáez Garrido's dissertation it is defended the idea that Peeta shows an alternative masculinity:

"Peeta is not a feminine character because he embodies a kind of masculinity that differs from the ideal of the hegemonic and prototypical man that Gale represents. [...] Claiming that Peeta is an atypical man is a terrible mistake as it would mean that the model of man he represents is an anomaly which cannot be applied to the real world and whose success as a viable model to follow is not tangible. Therefore, Peeta is not the embodiment of an atypical masculinity but of an alternative one instead" (Sáez Garrido, 2017: 15-16).

In the novel we can see how gender is a social construction because both characters have their male and female side. Probably by including female warriors in the gladiator games and showing that both male and female protagonists have feminine and masculine characteristics the author's aim was to transmit the idea that, in an imaginary ideal future, gender stereotypes will be over and equality will be accomplished.

Both Peeta and Katniss are round characters who evolve throughout the story. As a literary resource, there are ups and downs in the loving relationship between Katniss and Peeta. Peeta's intentions are not always clear in his acts as it can be seen at the beginning of the games when they are in the forest and Peeta collaborates with the villains for protecting Katniss and himself while Katniss prefers to remain alone. Other contradictory moments take place when he gives ambiguous information in the media about his plans.

Surprisingly, the fact that he seems not to have clear ideas and tries to please everyone is precisely one of the characteristics of his personality that makes the love story more intriguing, because the readers sometimes do not know if he really loves her and supports her or not or if he is for or against the established norms. Hypothetically, the reason why Peeta is so obedient to anyone's demands as if he did not have a strong character can be a consequence perhaps, of having suffered ill treatment in childhood. He used to be hit by his mother as a child. Katniss sympathises with him and is shocked when she discovers it, she wonders: "What had she hit him with? My parents never hit us. I couldn't even imagine it" (Collins, 2008: 30-31).

In other superheroes stories, male characters have two women. For instance, in *Spiderman* comic series the hero has got two lovers. In *The Hunger Games* Katniss has two love relationships: one with Peeta and another with Gale. Both men have a conversation in the last film, *Mockingjay-Part II* in which they understand that she will choose whom she prefers. Gale is sure that she will choose the one with whom she will be able not only to survive, but to live passionately. The story is told from the point of view of the female protagonist, which is a clear sign of a feminist perspective. In other novels written by women the protagonists tend to be too much worried about fulfilling their male counterpart demands that they forget about their own interests and needs, however, in *The Hunger Games* the protagonist does not refuse love nor independence and capacity to fight for her people. Katniss overcomes gender boundaries, she learnt how to hunt from her father and is a surrogate mother for her sister Prim. She is masculine and feminine at the same time.

3. An Archetypal/Mythological Analysis of Katniss Everdeen based on Jungian Psychology

Both Peeta and Katniss fight like gladiators and share characteristics of Greek mythological figures, being Katniss Everdeen's personality the one that can be more easily compared to Greek Goddess Artemis archetype. Everdeen has inherited the instinctive patterns of behavior that Carl Jung explained that everybody inherited. The Goddess and warrior archetypes that Katniss represent are universal patterns that are part of the collective unconscious, a universal psyche, which is manifested in dreams and myths and which harbors themes and images that we all inherit.

Katniss Everdeen's psyche can be interpreted following Jung's theories. Jung explained that the human psyche was composed of four components: the ego, the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious and the complexes. According to Jung, the ego represents the conscious mind while the personal unconscious contains memories including those that have been suppressed. Jung divided the human psyche into four component parts:

1. The ego: to Jung, the ego was the representation of consciousness, the part of the psyche where our conscious awareness resides, our sense of identity and existence.
2. The personal unconscious: it is our personality, one's personal growth.
3. The collective unconscious: Jung believed, unlike many of his contemporaries, that all the elements of an individual's nature are present from birth. Jung felt that people are born with a "blueprint" already in them that will determine the course of their lives. In Jung words:

"A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer [...] which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is unborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*" (Jung, 2014: 3).

4. Complexes, in the Jungian sense, are organizations in the unconscious mind keeping patterns of memories, emotions, perceptions, and wishes, patterns that are formed by experience and by an individual's reactions to that experience. Unlike Sigmund Freud Jung confirmed that complexes came from past experiences which were not only sexual but also from other kinds of traumatic experiences. For people who suffered from mental disorders he focused not only in the past of the patients but he rather focused on the possible future achievements that the individuals were dreaming of.

The Self, according to Jung, was the whole of the psyche, with all its potential included. This is the part of the psyche that possesses the drive toward fulfillment and wholeness. The Self was said to drive the process of individuation, the quest of the individual to reach his or her fullest potential. In fiction as in real life, the person –or character–is constantly fighting for achieving a personal fulfillment.

Jung divided the Self into different parts that he called: the Persona, the Shadow and the Anima. These parts should be integrated so that the individual has a healthy mental state, he called Individuation to these efforts to reach to the wholeness of the Self. According to Jung the *Persona* is an element of the personality which adapts to personal convenience. People uses "masks" like in the theatre in order to survive in certain situations (at work, with friends or family). The Shadow is our negative and dark side, the part of ourself that we are not able to see because it is the part of ourself that we do not accept or dislike. We tend to use the Persona to hide the personal problems of our shadow.

According to Jung, the anima and animus are the contra-sexual archetypes of the psyche, with the *anima* being in a man and *animus* in a woman. Like the Shadow, these archetypes tend to be projected in an idealized way. Everyone looks for the reflection of one's anima or animus

in a potential mate, having things in common and sharing love. Finally, Individuation, to Jung, was the quest for wholeness that the human psyche invariably undertakes, the journey to become conscious of his or herself as a unique and special human being, but unique only in the same sense that we all are, not more or less so than others (Journal Psyche, n.d.).

At this point, using the theories of the parts of human psyche developed by Carl Gustav Jung, the psyche of Katniss Everdeen is going to be analyzed. In the first place, her ego is clearly seen in those moments in which she shows her identity and personality like when she acts as a heroine saving her sister offering herself to fight in the Hunger Games, in order to save her sister's life. In *Mockingjay Part I* Katniss shows her character by supporting Peeta and giving more importance to her lover than to the rules the leaders of the district are imposing her.

The complexes of Katniss can be seen in her traumatic experiences and how she remembers them as well as how many times she hesitates and does not know what she should do. She is not a perfect heroine, she feels unself-confident, hesitates and loses control at overwhelming moments. At the beginning of the trilogy Katniss shows her bravery and capacity of compassion and sacrifice. Being afraid of losing her sister she offers herself as a tribute. She shows her strength with her use of the arrow and her lack of fear when wearing a dress in flames.

However, throughout the novel we can observe her fears when she hallucinates and sees bugs falling into pits, this symbol would explain that she also has a weak part as she is a quite shy person who has fear of being unprotected. Katniss fears that the Capitol may take it out on her family and maybe lock them in jail or execute them.

The collective unconscious can be seen in the female archetypes that Katniss represent: like Artemis Goddess, she is a protector of young children. Also, like Athena, the Greek Goddess of war she protects civilized life and the city. Katniss' Animus is Peeta, they love and support each other. Even if he cannot be reliable at the beginning of the story there is an unavoidable attraction between them, it cannot be easily explained because they look apparently indifferent. However, they feel connected even when they are separated, and as lovers tend to do, they project one's wishes on the other person.

Katniss' Shadow are her fears and lack of confidence. And to conclude her objective of Individuation can be seen at the end of the story when she achieves success, reaches her quest, decides the man of her life and makes a family. As a present day postmodern woman, she fulfills both personal and professional achievements. There is a final element in *The Hunger Games* that coincides with Jungian psychology and it is related to the unconscious collective, this is synchronicity. For Jung, in a synchronicity situation there is a mysterious connection between the personal psyche and the material world, based on the fact that in the end they are only different forms of energy.

There are two synchronicity moments in *The Hunger Games*. These moments are connected by the singing of the Mockingjays, which are special birds that can repeat human

songs.: “They [...] could still mimic a range of human vocal sound [...] Not just a few notes, but whole songs with multiple verses” (Collins, 2008: 43).

In the first film of *The Hunger Games* Rue -Katniss’ friend-teaches her to whistle a song so that birds respond to her and they can find each other into the woods. The first synchronicity moment takes place when one of them sings the song and is responded by the bird, and that way the other can know where to find her friend. In *Mockingjay Part I* Katniss sings the same song that Rue taught her and the Mockingjays answer her singing the same melody, then, suddenly, in another place far away from her, all the young warriors sing the same song. Everybody sings the song, even the birds. They are all connected. This is a case that reflects the collective unconscious and synchronicity theories. Also, from an ecocritical point of view it could be considered that humans can connect with nature through birds that sing back at them.

4. Goddesses Archetypes that Katniss Everdeen represents

Jean Shinoda Bolen, psychiatrist and Jungian analyst, following the ideas of archetypes and collective unconscious by Jung, believes that the archetypes in psychology imply “behavior instinctive patterns comprised in the unconscious collective” (Bolen, 1984: 18). Shinoda Bolen in *Goddesses in Everywoman* (1984) mapped seven feminine archetypes. Bolen used characters from ancient Greek mythology to explain the different types of women in history and present day. This theory in which Greek Goddesses provide images of women was born from therapy sessions with women and their own personal experiences. Jean Shinoda Bolen has considered Katniss Everdeen, as one of her modern-day examples of “Artemis women”.

The imagery of Katniss with her bow and arrow evokes the imagery of Artemis, associated with hunting. Katniss enjoyed when her father taught her to hunt with a bow and arrow. Katniss has both instinct and skill; her arrows fly where she sends them. After her father’s death, Katniss becomes the sole provider for her mother and sister” (Bolen, 2014: 31). Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt and the Moon, the rival and the sister (Bolen, 2010: 43). She is a personification of the independent, competitive woman with a sense of sisterhood, quick to act, to punish and protect.

According to Shinoda: “Those who embody the Artemis archetype have a sense of equality with men, a sisterhood with women and an affinity with nature. Artemis energy is active in feminists, environmentalists, activists and therapists motivated to help the vulnerable. Artemis also has a spiritual or mystical way of seeing: moonlight vision”. Katniss Everdeen is also able to help the weaker ones, she sacrifices her life for her sister, she has a sisterhood relationship with Rue and supports, protects, and encourages Gale –who is her best friend- and Peeta, her lover.

For Shinoda this archetype gives a woman the innate ability to concentrate intensely on whatever is important to her. On the darker side, her emotional distance from others brings on a merciless quality. She has a ruthless, competitive, justice-focused energy. At the beginning of the novel Katniss shares with the Artemis archetype the fact that she is not interested in becoming a mother. She says: "I never want to have kids" (Collins, 2008: 10). Katniss becomes more able to love at the end of the story when she accepts the love of Peeta and has children with him.

Katniss has also some characteristics of the Athena archetype. Athena is the Goddess of Wisdom and Craft: the logical, self-assured woman who works well with men and power and is ruled by her head rather than her heart. "With more head than heart she fights for women rights avoiding comparisons with men" (Bolen, 2010, 69). Katniss is more sensitive and intuitive than the Athena type that Shinoda Bolen describes, she takes care of others and expresses her weaknesses. However, she has a similar concept of "father's daughter" to Athena archetype. "A Athena stays as the "father's daughter" and is not very interested in the relationship with her mother" (Bolen, 2010: 72-73).

In the novel of *The Hunger Games* it is clearly described how much Katniss admires her father, she learnt about plants and hunting with him, however she affirms that she has not been able to forgive her mother completely because when her father died she had a depression and did not take responsibility of Katniss and her sister. Shinoda Bolen explains that the archetype of Athena woman has to improve her relationship with her mother.

Katniss Everdeen shares attributes with Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. Like Persephone, Katniss gets to know hell, war and dead people, and from that experience she recognizes her own shadow and learns from it. She moves from the deep subconscious to the daylight realms of consciousness. Like in Persephone's myth she has to adapt to the eternal cycle of Nature's death and rebirth.

To conclude, from a critical perspective *The Hunger Games* could be considered a feminist novel because the heroine is a powerful adolescent who fights for survival and justice. The female characters, Katniss representing Artemis, Athena and Persephone, as well as Rue, who represents the archetype of the scapegoat because she saves Katniss' life, sacrifices herself for her and dies. Notwithstanding, the disappointing ending does not seem to be completely feminist because Katniss kills President Alma Coin instead of exterminating President Snow as she claimed she was going to do.

The crowd finally kills the president as a revenge. What is the moral of the story? Fight against violence by using violence? A twenty first century story could use more democratic and peaceful messages. In the end Katniss and Peeta raise their children in the fields and there is a clear promise of a peaceful future, however myths may evolve in a more democratic and philosophical way as the Ancient Greek philosophers initiated but not reproducing the violence of patriarchy and wars.

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