REALITY COLLAPSES, "REAL OR NOT REAL?": THE THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES OF COMPROMISED AUTHENTICITY IN SUZANNE COLLINS' *MOCKINGJAY*

by

Brittany C. Pailthorpe

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Approved by:

Dr. Richard Leeman

Dr. Dan Grano

Dr. Ashli Quesinberry Stokes

ABSTRACT

BRITTANY C. PAILTHORPE. Reality collapses, "real or not real?": the theoretical consequences of compromised authenticity in Suzanne Collins' *Mockingjay.* (Under the direction of DR. RICHARD LEEMAN)

This thesis proposes the theorization of the consequences of what I deem compromised authenticity, in this hyper-mediated age. Drawing from the work of scholars concerned with the growing anxiety over the tension between the authentic and the inauthentic, I argue that the third and final novel in *The Hunger Games* trilogy describes the complexity of one's fate after notions of the real holistically break down. I contend through *Mockingjay*, that when authenticating strategies meant to reaffirm authentic identity, authentic memory, and authentic morality, are compounded, the aim of holding onto the broad conception of the authentic is to prevent reality collapse. By utilizing the nuanced body of literature on authenticity, critical work on *The Hunger Games* universe, and instances in the novel that support my claims, *Mockingjay* illustrates, through the rhetorical nature of authenticity, the costs of the increasing disappearance of binaric distinctions. I detail the consequences of our movement towards a world with a frightening fluidity of the real/not real experience where original notions of the authentic being the true self, true history, and true morality, are mutilated and rebuilt.

DEDICATION

To my fellow Tributes—my cohort, for their continued support, and unwavering friendship. To my District—my Mom, my Dad, my family, and my friends, for their constant reassurance, patience, sacrifices, and pride. To my Dalton—Dr. Dan Grano, who taught me to always look closer. To my Cinna—Dr. Rich Leeman, who always kept me humble and focused, and helped make turn argument into more than I ever imagined it could be. Most importantly, for Bill—my Prim, my Haymitch, my Finnick, my Gale, my Peeta, my Katniss, my harshest critic, and my greatest champion.

Everyone who believed I could win, are these Game's true Victors.

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CHAPTER 1: MOCKINGJAY AND THE "MODERN MALAISE"[1] OF AUTHENTICITY

Throughout the latter half of *Mockingjay*, after his rescue from the unspeakable tortures of the Capitol, Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen, and the other soldiers of District 13, play a game to assist in Peeta's recovery. This new game is both alike and unlike the namesake competition with which readers of *The Hunger Games* trilogy are familiar. Unlike because the "'Real or Not Real'" game does not demand the reaping of 24 girls and boys from the twelve districts.[1] It does not require that previous Hunger Games winners mentor the new children up for slaughter, nor does it make those children perform for their continued existence through material and monetary sponsorship. In 'Real or Not Real,' stylists and prep teams do not aesthetically turn the tributes into expendable commodities, building them into complex products of Capitol power, fabrication, and desire. 'Real or Not Real' does not culminate in throwing those prodded, molded, exploited, and terrified youth into a constructed arena, as more than 70% of the population are forced to watch while the children fight to be the only survivor. 'Real or Not Real' is not as explicitly involved, competitive, shocking, or institutionalized as Panem's Hunger Games, but the reason for the game's existence is just as disconcerting

[1] The phrase "modern malaise" is adapted from seminal author Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity.*

and equally vital to understanding the communicative power of Suzanne Collins' young adult dystopian novel.

Although Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *Mockingjay*, characterizes 'Real or Not Real,' as a game, it does not technically fit that definition. It is a reality litmus test for Peeta, who asks or states something about a happening—e.g., "'Most people from [District] Twelve were killed in a fire'"—and receives a reply to verify or correct his memory: "'Real. Less than nine hundred of you made it to [District] Thirteen alive.'" [2] Katniss Everdeen engages in an intrapersonal version of this as well, for her name and destroyed District are the only things about which she remains consistently certain. The 'Real or Not Real' test is thus an explicit allegory for the increasing slippage between reality and false construction that Katniss and the other characters experience throughout the whole of *Mockingjay.*

Mockingjay

Contextually, *The Hunger Games* trilogy is a series of first person dystopian young adult novels written by Suzanne Collins. They take place in the pseudo-North American futuristic fictional nation Panem. We meet seventeen-year old Katniss Everdeen just before she volunteers to take her sister Prim's place in the murderous pageant the oppressive Capitol calls the Hunger Games. Twenty-four girls and boys ages 12-18 are reaped from the twelve districts. Stylists and prep teams turn the tributes into expendable commodities, building them into complex products of Capitol fabrication, desire, and power. They are then put in a constructed and controlled arena, forced to survive in any way they can, until only one emerges as victor.

In *Mockingjay*, the 75th Annual Hunger Games are over. As Katniss is broken out of the Quarter Quell arena, a war between the rebels and the oppressive Capitol erupts. The rebels are scattered throughout Panem's twelve districts, their numbers growing, and are helmed by the President of District 13, Alma Coin. District 13, the previous purveyor of the war in the pre-Hunger Games Dark Days, is the host of Panem's nuclear weapons. After being leveled three quarters of a century prior, District 13 has rebuilt into a mechanized communistic underground society. Untouched because of their arsenal, the citizens of Thirteen work and live with only two goals: to survive and to win the revolution.

Katniss is told this fantastic tale of survival and abandonment, of secrecy and ambition, by a combination of the former head-game maker and designer of the Quarter Quell arena Plutarch Heavensbee, his assistant Fulvia, Kat's oldest friend Gale Hawthorne, fellow victors Beetee and Finnick Odair, and former mentor Haymitch. The novel opens after this cast, and indirectly all the Soldiers of Thirteen, ask Katniss to assume the role of the Mockingjay—the image appropriated from her token pin that will serve as the symbolic signpost for all rebels fighting the Capitol. The reader moves with Katniss through her destroyed District and the materiality of ashes, as new and old memories crash upon her and the smell of blood and roses permeates the former Everdeen home. A white rose on Katniss' dresser reminds her that the leader of the Capitol, President Snow, is never finished twisting her perceptions and threatening everyone she seeks to protect. After Katniss negotiates the conditions of lending her likeness--most notably gaining the promise that she may assassinate Snow--Katniss agrees to wear the costume that her slain stylist Cinna created for her. The novel follows

Katniss as she seeks to fulfill Cinna's wish that Snow be destroyed and, ultimately, end the pain to which The Capitol and their ideologies subject her and the people that she loves.[3]

Rationale

Mockingjay is an incredibly nuanced novel that contains many transformative characters, commentaries on present social ills, and interpretations of the complex processes of balancing and merging binaric tensions. The film adaptations of the first two novels and the first half of the novel under study, *The Hunger Games,*[4] *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*[5] and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1,*[6] have been extremely successful, grossing over two-and-a-quarter billion dollars worldwide[7] Sixty-five million copies of the trilogy are in print, with over 50 million sold in over 51 languages worldwide.[8] Critical scholars have already analyzed a wide range of communicative conceptions exemplified in both the *Hunger Games* novels and the films, including political power,[9] femininity,[10] race,[11] identity,[12] surveillance culture,[13] performance,[14] metaphor,[15] and morality.[16]

The number and range of such studies convincingly establish that this billion dollar phenomenon is a powerful force for both culture and theory.[17] *The Hunger Games* trilogy presents characters and situations that transcend cultural barriers and comments on supremely futuristic human concerns. Those consequences are, as in all dystopian tales, a reflection of fears and flaws within contemporary society that spiral into dramatically negative social, political, and cultural shifts, which together become the new unsettling standard.[18]The trilogy is a significant piece of cultural entertainment and an assessment of society that prompts audiences to think critically about the appropriation of

image, the phenomenon of reality television, the social repercussions of capitalistic ambition, power inequities, marginalization, exploitation, and our human relationship conceptions of trust, love, morality, and home. This list is far from exhaustive, and each has and could be the subject of its own essay, thesis/dissertation, forum, or book. Each focus can contribute significant and poignant interpretations and illustrate concepts that rhetorical academics of communication, literature, sociology, history, and psychology have utilized to further understanding within the context of their fields. Despite these varied scholarly emphases, however, almost every analysis, either implicitly and/or explicitly, raises the issue of authenticity. Working from the critical perspective of communication studies, I propose to focus on the growing topic of authenticity.

I will argue that *Mockingjay* provides a unique opportunity to synthesize existing theoretical concerns, applications, and consequences of the authentic/inauthentic dialectic. A critical rhetorical analysis of the novel may potentially illuminate some of the implications that a loss of the distinction between what is fabricated and what is natural may hold for our current social fabric. The novel may warn that authenticity versus inauthenticity are concepts that permeate every facet of individual and collective life, and that when the illusions of such binaries break down, so may the veracity of our physical and aesthetic experience. A rhetorical critique of *Mockingjay* may suggest the efficacy of analyzing more fully the discourse of authenticity that dystopian literature provides.

Function of Generic Criticism

In order to cement this study in the field of communication studies, and not English, I must reiterate the significance of the consideration of genre for rhetorical critiques. Although this thesis will utilize a close reading of *Mockingjay* to investigate

how the concept of authenticity works within the novel, it is not a study concerned supremely with language, narration, or metaphor. Traces of literary criticism will always appear in communicative evaluations of novels, since the novel, as a form, is dependent upon literary devices in order to function.[2] Yet more central to this thesis, is the reiteration of the function of generic criticism.[3]

Function, firstly, is not to be confused with the simple identification of common generic elements. Though certain features, explained in the proceeding sections on Young Adult Dystopian fiction (YADF), help to create patterns and taxonomies of content, the rhetorical critic's task is not finished once these elements are identified or unidentified.[19] The function of a generic critique is then, more than just a process of documentation and indexing. The manifestation of genre occurs not solely by the hand of an author or publisher, but as a complex cultural co-construction. These functions speak less to whether a text fulfills or strays from taxonomic conventions, and more instead to the situations and audiences that facilitate, recognize, and make meaning with and from them. Rhetorically, genres are complex products of typification and reoccurrence, that audiences employ to make meaning of forthwith, and often communal, concerns. This rhetorical notion of co-construction, contradicts the rigidity of a top-down author-to-audience constitution of a set of conventions they believe their text adheres to.[20] Genre, as Carolyn Miller explains, "is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with

[2] Gunn and Frentz, in their 2008 study on Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*, acknowledge the importance of understanding the novel as a form, and still critique its rhetorical power, while situating their research in communication studies.

[3] This argument has a long and tumultuous history in communication studies. For a contextualization of the theoretical contributions see seminal essay "Genre as Social Action," by Carolyn Miller, as well as the critical psychoanalytic work of Joshua Gunn.

the recurrent," and although requires the evaluation of form, and a personal fulfillment, genre must also make that move to a commonality of social motivation.[21] A generic critique then facilitates the critic, to investigate the psychical constitutions that texts signal in audiences, and which audiences seek out within texts.[22] A relationship of meaning making that, for *Mockingjay*, is much more nuanced with a consideration of YADF.

This proposal begins with a review of the relevant literature on the evolving issue of authenticity, how scholars define it, in which contexts, and how it will be thought of in my proposed study. Next is a sketch of dystopian young-adult literature, how the sub-genre operates, and how it is either explicitly or implicitly concerned with the loss of the authentic. The proposal concludes with an outline of the plan for analyzing *Mockingjay* and the idea of the authentic, and a brief projection of chapters.

Authenticity

The Oxford English dictionary defines authenticity as "the fact or quality of being true or in accordance with fact; veracity; correctness. Also…accurate reflection of real life, verisimilitude."[23] The second definition varies little from the first, as do the third and fourth, and the half-dozen sub-definitions among those. If only it were that simple. However, "authenticity," Jason Edward Black writes, "is a sticky subject."[24] For the texts, people, social processes, and the scholars that consider it, 'sticky' is one of the two most apt words, since issues of authenticity carry traces of the individuals, cultures, and economic systems that they are meant to reaffirm, contest, and embody. These traces are both symbolic and material, and have tangible consequences for those who must reconcile them.[25] The concept is also frustratingly "fickle,"[26] since academic definitions

of the authentic are numerous and inconclusive, and dependent for their meaning upon both the context in which the word is used and its application. These definitions of authenticity are often unconvincingly certain or purposively ambiguous, and all share a resistance to a linear, stable, and bound explanation.[27] Due to its holistic ubiquity, authenticity is one of few defining principles of modern humanity[28] that requires constant attention and revaluation in this rapidly changing era of hyper mediation.[29]

One way scholars combat this woolliness is to form definitions of authenticity that reflect the schools of thought within which the scholar is operating.[30] Regardless of whether the article aligns with ideas born of the Frankfurt School, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Kant, or Heidegger, or a specific tradition such as post-modernism, post-structuralism, Marxism, post-humanism, hermeneutics, or transcendentalism,[4] authenticity literature always critically examines past, present and future concerns amidst contested sociopolitical, rhetorical, and ethical waters.

Some scholars navigate those waters by bounding their definition of the authentic to the traditions of their field.[31] For this proposed study, I consider authenticity to be "inherently rhetorical."[32] The tension between the authentic and the inauthentic in contemporary culture is not just an issue but a strategy, deployed with the objectives often constituting certain audiences[33] to whom ideologies, identities, and experience are then sold. [34] This appeal is found in the literature examining tourism,[35] museum culture,[36]

[4] All scholars cited in this proposal, adopt one of the perspectives cited here. For a review of most positions as authenticity relates solely in communication theory see Hardt. For an interdisciplinary literature review similar to the one in this proposal see Molleda and Funk, Gross, and Wuber. For how authenticity is dealt with in critical collections on *The* Hunger *Games* see the introductions to *Of Bread, Blood and* The Hunger Games, The Hunger Games *and Philosophy*, and *Space and Place in* The Hunger Games.

and music,[37] where authenticity is simply viewed as a means of persuasion to ensure veracity or to ensure that veracity will be received.

Metatheorectical Commitments

In addition to the element of rhetoric, meta-theoretical considerations help to better illuminate academic orientations to the issue of authenticity. The practice of axiology, or "the study of values," seeks to question how much the values of the critic shape the way the authentic manifests within certain critiques. Individual and societal assumptions are woven within every fiber of the texts that we analyze.[38] This is not to say that studies on constructing perceived authenticity for improving consumer experiences are for the love of the bottom line.[39] Rather, those spoken and unspoken axiological considerations are so intrinsically tied to the way we form definitions of authenticity that it is difficult to demarcate where values stop and a reality apart from rhetoric, or authentic knowledge and authentic being, begins.

Given my declaration that for this proposed study authenticity will be considered a rhetorical appeal, then ontology, or "the study of the nature of reality," raises the question as to how the reality within my critique and *Mockingjay* is created, constructed, and maintained.[40] For some scholars, and for this proposed study, to arrive conclusive a nature of reality from the distinction between what is authentic and inauthentic, is both impossible, and undesirable. Epistemically speaking, if we work under the assumption that authenticity is rhetorically constructed, then knowledge of what is authentic and what is not comes into being through persuasion, education, material objects, and all channels of communication. That knowledge is continually shaped and reshaped by our

ontological status of being in the world.[5] Some scholars see authenticity as a way to examine these concepts in order to challenge false ideals[41]or ways of investigating how things like language make it infinitely harder to theorize a concept like the authentic.[42] This thesis will operationalize authenticity by not attempting to define it, but to investigate its function. I will analyze how the rhetorical concept of authenticity operates within *Mockingjay,* or how authenticity then functions in the novel. Central to this thesis will not be to reinvestigate or reinvent the ontological meaning of authenticity, but to detail how *Mockingjay* adds to the complexity of the concept in this era of hypermediation. I will argue that to be authentic, and to be inauthentic, is to deal with what is constructed as well as what is material, and the potential disorientation from the constant negotiation between the tangible and the symbolic.

Attempting to define authenticity without a consideration of both the material reality as well as the socially-constructed and rhetorical reality, particularly for *Mockingjay,* seems unproductively incomplete. The purpose of this thesis will not be to arrive at a definitive definition of the concept of authenticity, but to consider how a cultural phenomenon like *Mockingjay* speaks to a concern over the ever-changing notion of the authentic/inauthentic dialectic. My purpose is to explore how authenticity functions in conjunction with the functions of genre within this text. Due to the focus on function rather than detection and definition, a sensitivity to both the constructed and the material natures of authenticity will offer a more holistic critique that prompts the theorization of larger, modern implications.[43] Next I will identify the common features of authenticity

[5] Funk, Gross, and Wuber, also discuss metatheoretical commitments to better contextualize the concept of authenticity in "Exploring the Empty Plinth: The Aesthetics of Authenticity." Information about ontology, epistemology, and axiology derive from their explanations as well as material from *Straight Talk about Communication Research Methods* by Davis, Powell, and Lachlan.

that are identified by scholars of the concept, and highlight the disorientating tendency of the spaces between those characteristics to contradict and collapse upon another. Not all orientations and types of critique agree upon the definition of the following categories, but they do consistently touch upon either while discussing the authentic. Scholars' analyses contain some jarring breaks and a multitude of subtle nuances about this term, still, conceptions of the authentic usually fall into each or both of the following categories: the true-self, and reality vs. fiction.

The True Self

The concept of authenticity is often thought of as the status of uncompromised being. "Authenticity," Frosh writes, "can be defined…in the broadest sense as 'true to one-self,' a project of ontological fidelity"[44]which refers to the status of being the wholly uninfluenced or uncompromised intellectual and material self. Authenticity in this sense is, romantically speaking, to never wane in the face of conflicting ideals, and so to act, speak, create, and produce only what is within a creatures' truth.[45]

For scholars, the object of that truth, where it derives from, how it is interpreted, how it is defined, and whether or not it is even attainable, is embedded within the tension between the authentic and the inauthentic.[46] Even with the use of the word 'self,' this conception of authenticity is never limited solely to personal identity. Objects, organizations, and relationships also have concerns about adhering to certain personhoods, values, and versions, and/or the perception of such loyalties to them.[47] For seminal author and existentialist Taylor, an adherence to the true-self is not only quixotic, but paradoxical. A person's truth or nature does not exist apart from the social and rhetorical realities that gave birth to it, and trying to critique that constant true nature of

being without considering how that nature is built, or what knowledge and values continually shape it, is unproductively reductive.[48] One may still be authentic despite the one-time contradiction of what is within that creature's truth. [49] Most scholars, whether they do or do not follow an existentialist line, take issue with the notion of truth as genuineness, since questions about what that truth actually is yields no definitive answers.[50]

To some, the authentic as the true-self is a means to withstand the empty aims of capitalism or to unearth the distinctions between an individual's vision and one that is driven by the masses.[51] This tension between passion or art and money manifests most clearly in examinations of pre 1980s to modern Hip-Hop culture.[52] In this perspective, to be authentic is to not engage in a false consumerist-driven self-display, even if the result requires disregarding one's audience.[53] Authenticity is also a popular rhetorical commodity that "is a fundamental form of currency in contemporary media and promotional culture."[54] The prominence of marketing authenticity grows as communication is increasingly meditated. This conceptual turn, from the just notions of the true-self to what is materially real or fake, has grown dramatically since the advent of reality television.[55]

Reality and Fiction

Authenticity's second set of characteristics concerns itself with the distinction between what is true and what is false, or what is reality and what is fake. Though the line between reality and fiction—or the separation between what is actual or natural and what is constructed—is the basis for every sub-definition of the authentic, this definition is sometimes disregarded as immaterial to the philosophy of authenticity because what is

regarded to be the true-self is already designated as real.[56] The advent of reality TV, however, has helped reveal a concept of the authentic that addresses the idea that investigating the authentic as only the true-self is longer adequate.[57] The discourse integrates dimensions of binaric materiality to highlight that reality, as well as the communication of the true-self, may appear authentic, but is not necessarily so. Authenticity also refers to the basic materiality of people, objects, and places.[58] In varying contexts and historical moments, these two definitions possess a ratiotic capacity wherein the discrepancy between reality and fiction and the adherence to the true-self matters more or less depending on the text. I anticipate that for *Mockingjay*, this balance will be extremely important, since both philosophical origin points and all the contexts of consumerism, identity, mediated spectacle, and surveillance, serve as inspiration for the novel.[59] Scholars especially note the importance of understanding the reality TV phenomenon if one is to then begin to understand and describe what the authentic communicates in popular culture.

Reality TV, Surveillance, and Control

Ouellette and Murray seminally define reality TV as an "unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real."[60] The "real" here are non-actors or celebrities in non-scripted shows[61] in "constructed preconfigured environments"[62] acting out their lives on-screen.[63] Reality shows extrapolate characteristics from daytime talk, Candid Camera, game shows, and news programs that emphasize the real by placing non-actors in sensational or emotional circumstances, and then depend on the audience to anticipate unpredictable theatrical conclusions.[64] This

"claim to the discourse of the real"[65] has long since dissipated from the psyche of audiences. Audiences now know, and generally accept, that what is on-screen is not a simple retelling of the events as they happen, but is rather a discursive construction derived from that material.[66]

Authenticity in the universe of reality TV is thus unnervingly paradoxical on two levels. The first is that it functions to convey something exciting and spectacular to the audience, but not so far as to tip into the realm of disbelief.[67] Throughout the whole of *The Hunger Games* trilogy we see examples of this façade working on some (the citizens of District 2 and the Capitol most aptly). The contrived spectacle of the Hunger Games and other propaganda are shown continuously on an Orwellian feed controlled by the Capitol.[68] In Panem, much like American consumer culture, most understand the contrivance of the videos, but do not have means or the desire to contest what is shown. One consequence of the first paradox of reality TV involves how media can be weaponized to wield power.[69]

Andrejevic reiterates this "reality of contrivance"[70] while explaining the second paradox of authenticity in reality TV: surveillance is not a non-intensive extractor of the real.[71] Much like the use of 'self' in sections prior, despite what the word surveillance may suggest, this method of visual investigation fails to capture not only the 'reality' of what is being watched, but the labor put into creating what appears to be effortless truth. "The work of being watched"[72] refers to the labor necessary for the production of reality TV, as well as the labor required of the participatory actors and voyeuristic audiences.[73] Interactivity is a concept that Collins persistently explores in her novels, to the point that every citizen, Capitol or rebel, has a hand in the way society operates.[74] Interactivity,

however, is not meant to be confused with motivated action, to which a starving citizen of District 12 cannot hold the same stake in the hegemony of the Hunger Games as a citizen of the Capitol. Instead, it is meant to relay how current society consents to these potentially problematic trends, and how hard it may be to retract that accord once it has become normalized.[75]

Fragmentation, Contestation, and Performance

"In its multiple facets," Funk, Gross, and Wuber contend, "authenticity thus presents itself as both increasingly significant and teasingly elusive"[76] when examined from a constructivist position. Their edited collection attempts to deconstruct the aesthetics of authenticity, or the perceived characteristics of the authentic, and sorts them into the beginning categories of "fragmented, contested, and performative."[77] Their argument for these themes are reiterated in the sections above, with the most important extrapolation that although fragmentation, contestation, and performance are all socially constructed, they infiltrate discourses that have material consequences for people and the social systems we constitute. Fragmentation refers to the multiple aspects that make up authenticity and the concept's potential to connect seemingly disconnected features. Contestation relates specifically to power, an aspect alluded to above in the context of market forces and mediation, but Funk et al. argue that identity is subject to a host of conflicts "between Self and Other," which translate into material structural inequities.[78] Performance then refers directly to how authenticity is communicated, and how it is manifested as the result of a series of conscious and unconscious choices. Whether or not authenticity in *Mockingjay* reaffirms these categories, thinking about fragmentation, contestation, and performance may facilitate new insight into how they function within a

text to create complex meaning. I hope to not only identify these elements, but perhaps to describe how the characters within the novel negotiate these tensions to retain or discover the veracity of their experience.[79]

I, too, argue that the concept of authenticity is continually shifting; making the concept one that is open for negotiation.[80] This is not to say that the authentic and the inauthentic are relativistic interpretations that have no discernible origin points.[81] On the contrary, I concur with other scholars, most notably Dickinson and Funk et al., that authenticity can be a point of convergence or divergence for a subject, text, group, society, etc., that continually influences and shapes individuals' social selves.[82] Authenticity is a concept that interprets both the corporeal and symbolic body, reimagines the limits of embodiment,[83] and prompts new perspectives on place and space.[84] The goal of this proposed study is not to write a universal and definitive set of statements about what authenticity *is* or *is not*. The literature suggests that we are slipping farther and farther away from attaining a single definition of authenticity.[85] As Funk et al. conclude, "this insight, however, should not stop us from ascending and exploring the empty pedestal of authenticity"[86] and from attempting to unsuccessfully streamline a shambolic vocabulary.[87] I argue that while *Mockingjay* may not illuminate an essential nature of authenticity—which itself may or may not exist—the novel does provide a complex avenue for furthering an exploration of how the tensions surrounding the authentic/inauthentic dialectic are negotiated and understood in popular culture. Next, I will draw connections between the relationship between this emerging 'definition' of authenticity and the genre of YADF.

Young Adult Dystopian Fiction (YADF)

Like authenticity, the elements of the literary dystopia are highly contested and culturally significant.[88] The main function of the dystopian genre is to hone-in on that (in) ability to question social norms before they become naturalized[89], and to suggest ways to interfere with a future that humans should hope will remain just a construct of science-fiction.[90] Dystopias include, in various doses, warnings,[91] elements of punishment,[92] environmental catastrophe,[93] and a script, or blueprint, to fix social ills,[94] since the present (or our future), is a nightmare we should all hope to avoid.[95]

Yet in dystopias, this nightmare is seen as a complex failure or misdirection that is never the direct result of a tyrannical government or natural disaster. Instead, threads of those problems are woven into a sheet of holistic commentary on more abstract issues that contribute to larger systems in peril. Reoccurring themes are issues of community[96] individuality,[97] loss and displacement[98] and the repercussions and future of capitalism.[99] "When a dystopian vision fails," in society or fiction, "it fails because it misunderstands the nature of the contemporary state" and the potential path of the themes above.[100] YA dystopian fiction, like the issue of authenticity, is thus an inherently rhetorical literary genre, one that names the specific audience it calls upon.[101] The main turn between YA dystopias and ones for children, is the framing of hope and despair in binaries. A true dystopia intended for children is rare, since the turn from just an element of hope[102] and a "balance between pessimism and optimism"[103] inherent to the dystopian cannon, often tips too far into the genre of utopia.[104] This emphasis on the nuances between hope and despair opens space for YA dystopias to be deliberative calls to action[105] and like the characters within the novels, for audiences to question unquestioned concepts.[106] Yet

implicit and explicit to every element of YA dystopian fiction is the issue of authenticity. The tension between the authentic/inauthentic is manifest within the form of the novels and the stories themselves, specifically by the way of voice, narratives of technology, and the call for social action.

Authenticity in YA Dystopian Fiction

Authenticity and Voice

The narrators of YA dystopian novels often speak in first-person, are within the target age of the demographic, and are at the heart of the conflict.[107] These protagonists often contemplate issues of internal and social identity and struggle with the transition of child to adult. Children in YA dystopian novels, as in *The Hunger Games*, often serve as metaphors for innocence, loss, and abuse of power.[108] Through voice and plot, children are tasked with reversing, or not repeating, the mistakes of their parents.[109] Within the vein of authenticity, these themes appear in the form of authorial tension. Scholars note the importance of recognizing necessary appropriation, and whether or not an adult author can speak or not for young adults and children. In some dystopian YA novels, to become an adult is to become the static self.[110] That authentic identity in YADF is not only an unattainable ideal, but is sometimes a falsehood, since teenagers are only striving to become one of a set of unquestioned pre-sanctioned identities.[111]

Authenticity and Technology

Anxieties about how technology, medicine, science, and modification can challenge ideas of authenticity are a reoccurring theme within the realm of dystopian fiction.[112] In the broadest terms, these fears are of the unknown and unforeseen consequences of technology and the environment, and how that may or may not affect the

values of human relations.[113] Technology is at the core of dystopian concern with authenticity, and pertains to hyper-mediation and an overall loss of real, material experiences. When technology seems to eradicate the material, technology is situated within mediation and virtual reality. "Memories," Sturken writes, "form the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self,"[114] and YADF equates a loss of authenticity with the interference of memories through technology. This tension is so prevalent that warnings against unforeseen questions of fabricated memories and cyborgs appear in most young adult dystopian fiction novels.[115] This genre investigates and challenges the narrative of technological progress,[116] where such challenges come in the form of a call for action.[117]

Authenticity and a Call for Action

"The heart of the idea of authenticity," Holt writes, "is the injunction for the unique individual to take ethical responsibility for how one decides to live life."[118] To be authentic is to be moral in modern society,[119] and to recognize that sometimes action is required to preserve and prevent a collective moral social fabric from erosion and corruption.[120] The YA dystopian novel goes one-step beyond identifying and exaggerating the modern threats to morality, by suggesting to its reader *broad strategies* to fight against them.[121] This aspect of YA dystopias, often called a script or a blueprint,[122] does not manifest as a series of explicit steps to undo mistakes. Instead, these strategies suggest that the power to morally, economically, and emotionally do better, is one society already possesses.[123] For *Mockingjay,* this rhetorical appeal for action surrounding the issue of authenticity may not manifest as a list of specific actions to take, but instead be comprised of broad retrospective examinations[124] about what

discourse or behavior constructs the authentic/inauthentic dialectic, and how increasingly complicated this concept has become.

Projection of Chapters

In the sections above I have blended various definitions, conceptions, and applications of authenticity as they currently stand within research in communication studies, cultural studies, media studies, technology studies, and sociology. I have synthesized the most recent and relevant work that describes issues involving the authentic encompassing notions of the true-self, reality and fiction, and as a series of aesthetic characteristics. I then sketched the genre of YADF, and how elements of voice, narratives about technology, and calls for intervention, can all be traced both implicitly and explicitly, to issues of authenticity. In this study, I propose to examine how authenticity is explored rhetorically in *Mockingjay* through a close textual analysis of the work using these three foci.

Authenticity, as previously outlined, will be defined as a combination of notions of the true-self, reality and fiction, and aesthetics. Apart from the authentic/inauthentic involving a creature's truth, what is real and what is fake, and how the aesthetics of fragmentation, contestation, and performance, improve our understanding of veracity and truth, authenticity for this thesis will not have a set definition. I hope to streamline a function of the construct at its conclusion, but choose to begin and end the analysis without a set definition. The analysis will include multiple readings of the novel, analyzing line by line until authenticating strategies develop.[125] I will argue that these strategies cement *Mockingjay* as an exemplar of the YA dystopian genre by suggesting steps to prevent a loss of the authentic. Each of the succeeding three chapters will focus

on one of the broad strategies: examining first identity, then memory, and finally, morality. The concluding chapter (Chapter 5) will theorize how authenticity operates within *Mockingjay*, what the dystopian generic elements of voice, technology, and deliberative action communicate in this novel, and connect the findings to the larger social fabric.

CHAPTER 2: AUTHENTIC IDENTITY

Before I sketch how all of the elements of *Mockingjay* suggest ways the characters seek to authenticate their identities to recover the distinction between what is real and what is not, I must briefly outline the meaning of authentication and "identity" for this analysis. Reiterating from Chapter 1, my aim is not to arrive at any fixed or contained definition of the authentic, which may or may not exist.[126] Rather, my objective is to understand the complexities of authenticity within *Mockingjay,* and better apprehend the psychical, cultural, economic and moral aspects of this ubiquitous and fiercely rhetorical concept. These complexities manifest themselves as a series of authenticating strategies[127] "which are used to evoke semblances, feelings, or ascriptions of authenticity," in the novel.[128] The world Collins' creates necessitates the constant deduction of "meaning from events, people,"[129] objects, places, histories, and values. The characters employ meaning "as evidence in determining what is authentic," and what is not.[130] According to Beverland and Farrelly, the motivations behind authentication vary from person to situation, and although authenticity is what people, cultures, and histories all desire, the need and process of authenticating can be overwhelmingly diverse.[131]

The authenticating strategies in *Mockingjay* are not only many, but are downright labyrinthine. This is so much the case, that almost every example used to explain how identity is authenticated can also be used to understand the authentication of memory and

morality. Virtually every example has the potential to overlap, extend, and contest all the themes, all of which are themselves pivotal for understanding the overarching notion of the authentic in the novel. To examine every nuance of every challenge and response to authenticity would be to weave a virtually impenetrable web. Instead, for this analysis I will examine the most compelling, telling, and layered examples of authenticity-seeking in the novel. The immediate consequence to *Mockingjay's* fluidity and depth of meaning is what I will call *compromised authenticity.*[132]

Every piece of media, every traumatic flashback, every question of what is right and what is wrong, slowly compromises Katniss' and the other characters' belief in their veracity of experience.[6] Authenticity may be compromised "only when one has an idea about" the aspects of their authentic experiences that are being challenged.[133] To experience authenticity being compromised is to feel a shift in any aspect of the present, past, or future that makes the subject question their sense of self, their memories, and/or their sense of knowing good from evil. What compromises authenticity for Katniss may or may not similarly affect others. Feelings of compromised authenticity may wane as shock subsides, or elevate as new information is learned. To stop these slippages, *Mockingjay* suggests a series of authenticating strategies that may be termed identity, memory, and morality, the first of which will be explored in this chapter.

When an identification strategy is employed, the person or audience seeks "cues to identify the drivers,"[134] or saboteurs of authenticity. On the novel's first page, Collins

[6] Compromised authenticity is what I call the beginning stages of the slip between reality and fiction in the novel. These terms are inspired by all of the work on authenticity cited in this thesis, but resembles Erickson's concept of "experiential degradation," most closely. Although her context differs, and is contained to the experience of outdoor recreation, the core of both concepts are similar-that something triggers a feeling of inauthenticity. Compromised authenticity speaks more to how negotiated and permeable a slippage in the sureness of authenticity is.

establishes Katniss' need for such cues,[135] markers, or "standards"[136] that can identify the authentic.. "The bricks of the chimney," Katniss explains, "which collapsed in a charred heap, provide a point of reference…How else could I orientate myself in this sea of gray?"[137] This continual process of orientation manifests itself in *Mockingjay* sometimes as docile as an intrapersonal '*that's odd,'* to literal and emotional declarations of "not being able to tell illusion from reality."[138] In this analysis I identified the themes by finding literal cues from the language in the novel and symbolic constructions of marking authenticity.

Like McLeod, "I set the criteria for what constitute[s] a symbol of authenticity…as being any appearance of the terms, "true," "real," (…any deviation of the word such as "realness") and "authentic,"" concepts already within the authenticity literature, acute reflections of anxieties in contemporary culture[139] and individual "existential needs."[140] In *Mockingjay,* "reference points"[141] take the form of almost anything that can be symbolically invested, from objects,[142] people, events, hopes, or feelings. Much like the strategies that the reference points constitute, there is no universal temporal logic as to how and why they are called upon, nor is there a limit to the reach of their functions. Katniss calls upon one of her most complex markers, the pearl Peeta gave her in the Quarter Quell, to function as a material placeholder for Peeta's lips, "a cool kiss from the giver himself," and a reminder that she had indeed survived the 75th Hunger Games.[143]

When authentic identity, memory, or morality is compromised, those doing the authenticating have a "chameleon-like ability to adapt to, or morph across, changing surroundings by drawing on particular" combinations of "strategies, and cues to

achieve"[144] a halt, a reversal, or simple comfort. Although the strategies meant to authenticate identity are detailed first in this analysis, there are instances where all sub-strategies are employed simultaneously in a singular moment. When authenticating notions of identity, Collins calls upon five sub-strategies: the broad distinctions between human and other, identity as the self, the co-construction of identity, and the self as other. As these sub-strategies are discussed, an important observation to emerge is that in *Mockingjay* the most common nuances of each sub-strategy, are materiality, place, technology, information, temporality, and the natural/constructed binary.

Authentic Identity as Human and Other

Conceptions of identity are so intrinsically tied to the issue of authenticity,[145] that *Mockingjay* takes up almost every aspect of the concept imaginable. The nuances of how the characters authenticate the multiplicity of their personal, communal, and appropriated identities are first qualified by a more universal formation of the self. At its most seemingly simplistic level, *Mockingjay* examines individuality in a world where the process of authenticating identity reverts back to the basic distinction between who is human and who/what is not. Regardless of what makes Katniss, Peeta, Prim, Gale, Finnick, Plutarch, Coin, or Snow their brave, broken, innocent, or malicious selves, they are all essentially, at the start of the novel, considered human beings. The shift in Katniss' opinion on the malleable meaning of humanity in a moral sense, will be taken up in the fourth chapter, but the differences between what is materially natural (human) or constructed (not-human) is complicated by Panem's technological and medical advancements. For the "science fictional reality"[146] suggests that even if something is a coherent creature, it is not always authentic.[147]

Capitol Muttations

Muttations, or 'mutts' the characters call them, are usually described as grotesque laboratory beings without any arbitrary "genetically engineered" traits.[148] They are weapons that happen to be creatures, deployed for acts of espionage, terror, and sheer violence. Although each have varying immediate goals, they all inadvertently challenge what it means to be human.[149] Some of the most notable mutts that appear throughout the series are the jabber jays, or birds designed for spying, and used to replicate long passages of human speech,[150] the ravenous monkeys from the Quarter Quell arena in *Catching Fire,*[151] the murderous wolves and deadly trackerjackers from the 74th Hunger Games, and the white human-lizard hybrids encountered in *Mockingjay* in the sewers of the Capitol. Each mutt species, the jabberjays, the trackerjackers, the dogs, the monkeys, and the lizards, fulfills a specific terror function, one that compromises an authentic sense of the human self through terror. The jabberjays, deployed in the Quarter Quell Arena, are meant to inflict psychological damage by mimicking the sounds of Katniss' and Finnck's loved ones shrieking. Jabberjays are essentially living voice recorders that imitate Katniss' sister Prim's, Gale's and Finnick's love Annie's cries so well that Katniss and Finnick believe that the voices are genuine, that their families are in the clutches of the Capitol.[152] The monkeys, meant for strictly physical pain, resemble the sheer talent and brawn of the Capitol's power.[153] Trackerjackers are wasps whose venom causes extreme hallucinations, pain, and fear that incapacitates Katniss for days after she is stung multiple time in her first Hunger Games.[154] Trackerjacker venom possesses an unsettling capacity to compromise authenticity, since it alters subjectivity by distorting the perceptions of the moment, making it very difficult to authenticate the present

experiential self. The dogs and the lizards combine three distinct methodologies of fear: physical violence, psychological violence, and extremely disorientating personalization.[155] Katniss shudders as she explains how:

> No mutt is good. All are meant to damage you. Some take your life, like the monkeys. Others your reason, like the tracker jackers. However, the true atrocities, the most frightening, incorporate a perverse psychological twist designed to terrify the victim. The sight of the wolf mutts with the dead tributes' eyes. The sound of the jabberjays…The smell of Snow's rose mixed with the victims' blood….It's as if Snow's breathing right in my face, telling me it's time to die.[156]

Despite the mutts' purpose and ferocity, Katniss, Gale, Peeta, and her film crew, Cressida and Pollux, escape the lizards in the sewer in the Capitol, though not soon enough to deflect the damage they have done. Assessing herself in relation to the lizards, how Katniss' feels seeing them, them smelling like roses, and the flood and sudden stop of emotions that flow when they overtake Finnick, illustrates the complexities of the process of authentication in *Mockingjay.*

A construct present within the whole trilogy, the Capitol muttations exemplify how disorientating and layered markers and strategies may be. Mutts call upon and elicit physical and emotional trauma that Katniss feels simultaneously on a material, visceral level, "making [her] heart run wild, [her] skin turn to ice, [her] lungs unable to suck air"[157] in the claustrophobic space of the sewer. Katniss eventually recognizes the lizard's lack of humanity through their resistance to mortality, but not before their features make her question what it means to be authentically human. The markers of humanity in mutts are the most disturbing, since pieces of actual people are often used to construct them. In the quote above, Katniss details the most disconcerting of all of these physical markers that compromise authentic humanity: the recycled eyes of the wolf

muttations.[158] This blending is a direct result of the advanced technology in Panem, and an indirect result of complex moral and ethical choices of those in power. Anxieties about how technology, medicine, and science can erode authentic identity in the basic form of human/not human are reoccurring themes within the realm of dystopian fiction,[159] where "eugenics…particularly after the Holocaust," Claeys (2013), writes, "…[are] seen as overwhelmingly negative."[160] This opinion of mutts is circulated even by those who create them. When Peeta is tortured by the Capitol, President Snow and his team of hijackers, are sure to exploit this cultural binary of human/not-human when unraveling Peeta's understanding of Katniss's identity. According to *Mockingjay,* misunderstood identity may be worse than no identity at all "Peeta keeps yelling "A mutt! She's a stinking mutt!"" It is the difficulty in negotiating the symbolic nature of this classification that hurts Katniss and the other characters the most. "Not only does he hate me and want to kill me, he no longer believes I'm human." Often, it is the reversion to the concreteness of materiality that they measure this confusion against: "It was less painful being strangled."[161]

Though the construct of muttations are fundamentally concerned with issues of authenticating one's identity as being "human," mutts also evoke intricate memory work and like almost all examples in this analysis, raise essential moral questions that challenge holistic authenticity. How the characters recover notions of authentic identity, may or may not always begin with this initial human/not human question, but this binary serves as a reference point that continues through the novel as the basis of personal material constructions of the self, and varying co-constructions of identity.

Authentic Identity as the Self

Although I will argue that authentic identity in *Mockingjay* is mainly co-constructed, and that challenges to it usually derive from the one's attempt to reconcile with an other's perceptions, actions, and negotiations of the self, there must be some internal formation of identity that those outside qualifiers align, conflict, and adapt to. As Katniss narrates *Mockingjay,* classic dystopian literary elements of voice point to how she views her personal identity in relation to the world around her. [162] I agree with many scholars' claims that it is next to nearly impossible to have an authentic personal self completely free from memories and moral convictions.[163] Any endeavor to find some internal definitive, essential, linear, or constant self is a task predetermined to fail.[164] This search for identity is often started in the wrong places. "For many of us, and for most of the time," Dickinson writes, "our most pressing and constant concerns are not with formal politics or large philosophical problems, but with our daily habits…The decisions we make…on this most mundane level are the warp and woof of who we are."[165] Supporting Dickinson's contention that identity is grounded in the ordinary, more than the special,[166] characters in *Mockingjay* often try and authenticate identity through the "mundane"[167] tasks and objects that make up their lives.

The novel operates amidst a social revolution, where whatever was considered normal before the 75th Hunger Games, is no longer the norm. Nonetheless, the characters often authenticate their sense of self through objects and practices of their everyday. For Gale, Katniss, and fellow victor Johanna Mason, the serenity of the woods will always be part of their identities. The woods are a place for Katniss to move through confidently. It is the place she can rely on to visit and achieve a better state of mental clarity.[168] Within

the woods, Katniss knows herself and knows Gale, and though Katniss realizes, "it's not exactly the same, given all that's happened and the trackers on our ankles…but it's about as close to happiness as I think I can currently get."[169] But this comforting feeling of authenticating her sense of self via the woods are, much like every marker in *Mockingjay,* often compromised by constructions. The most notable feigned place is the woodland arena of the first Hunger Games, but even spaces[7] that are clearly "man-made"[170] with immoral intentions for their use act as reference points for the authentic self. Beauty is associated with nature and the natural,[8] and though what is beautiful is not always authentic, the rarity of finding true beauty in District 13 that aligns with what the characters believe to be beautiful makes it valuable to the finder.[171] Beetee's "replication of a meadow, filled with real trees and flowering plants"[172] is a notable example of this paradox. Although Katniss knows it is constructed, it still reminds her of home, and who she was before the games.

Being above the claustrophobic underground stronghold that is District 13 gives Katniss and Gale experiential and "natural" reference points for authenticating there true selves.[173] Material objects and feelings from the woods act as beautiful markers of their authentic selves. With "a few mint leaves on [her] tongue…" Katniss "lean[s] back against a rock, soaking in the sounds, letting the scorching afternoon sun burn [her] skin,"[174] reveling in the materiality of her memories that communicate and reify who she knows herself to be in this sacred place. For someone who has no personal belongings in

[7] The terms *space* and *place* are highly contested terms in rhetorical critiques. They are used here to in the simplest sense of a space not having as much meaning ascribed to it as place. Where place becomes more of a construction of the cultural, emotional, and historical feelings attributed to it. For further reading on the nuances of space and place, see Dickinson, Ott and Aioki.

[8] This dialectic of natural/constructed is further problematized as a rhetorical strategy in Starbuck's stores. See Dickinson and Aiello and Dickinson for critical work on this subject.

District 13, the small bag of brush Katniss makes for Johanna, a material embodiment of her life before the war, is enough to make "tears flood her eyes" with reminders of her woodland home, District 7.[175]

In their research on consumers of the authentic, Gilmore and Pine argue that one way by which an object (or commodity) and one's relationship to that object is authenticated is through a process of recognizing "*natural* authenticity," or "that which exists in its natural state in or of the earth; not artificial or synthetic."[176] *Mockingjay* suggests that the experience of seeking *natural* authenticity applies most aptly to the negative associations with muttations and the positive symbolism of the woods.[9] However, objects that help authenticate a sense of the internal self in *Mockingjay* are almost never so cleanly assigned to a positive/negative binary. Important objects such as Katniss' father's hunting jacket, Peeta's locket from the Quarter Quell, and the holo (hologram) device used to navigate the streets of the Capitol, are never static containers of one meaning, memory, or identity. Katniss' hunting jacket may remind her of her father's mining accident, but it also makes her feel safe. Peeta's locket may remind Katniss of the kiss they shared on the beach in the Quarter Quell, or it may cement the guilt that arises from knowing that she is the cause of Peeta's torture.[177] While the holo is a constant reification of her deception to the rest of her Squad, it also represents the infiltration of the symbolism of the Games' into every crevice of her life. In different situations, temporal moments, and states of mind, the materiality of objects in

[9] It must be noted that although Gilmore and Pine's strategies operate in a strictly consumerist frame, they do not tie the applicability of their concepts solely to the market. This reiterates the point of scholars, and my own proclamation in chapter one, that if all authenticity is rhetorical in nature, meant to sell a consumer a feeling of the authentic, the means by which that transaction takes place, can vary. Whether by a pair of shoes, a political candidate, or an experience at a sporting event, scholars on authenticity always connect it to something being sold or deployed.

Mockingjay can alternately ease a compromised state of self, or send the character further into a state of simply not knowing.

Surprisingly, one of the sole exceptions to the complexity of meanings assigned to objects are the players' signature weapons. Katniss's bow and arrows always seem to authenticate her sense of self, very rarely dredging up the questions of moral or righteous action that accompany so many other ones that are stock. When in special weaponry, Katniss reiterates the distinction between what I call a signature weapon, and a layman's weapon. Though Beetee's guns are by no means ordinary, when Gale tries one on, Katniss feels an internal conflict that she never vocalizes when they both use bow and arrows.[178] Katniss observes this tie to signature weapons when Finnick's positively authenticates his internal sense of self. Although Finnick's ties to his trident were forged with his first and second Hunger Games, Finnick's trident illustrates the potential an object has to authenticate a sense of self and perhaps ease or reverse compromised authentic identity. After arriving in District 13 with his love, former victor Annie Cresta, still in the clutches of the Capitol, Finnick merely resembled the man Katniss knows from TV and the Quarter Quell. Finnick's manners, personality, and charisma, not seen since that day, suddenly rush back when Katniss tells him about his weapon. Even if it is only for a moment, "at the word trident, it's as if the old Finnick surfaces."[179]

Collins' utilization of the materiality of objects to recover a sense of the true self is further reinforced by the ascription of life to those objects. The characters give objects meaning, a metaphorical life, and then give the readers a context for the weapons' importance. Collins takes this turn to the material as a resource for authenticity one step farther by giving literal life to objects. The most notable example of this nuanced

emphasis on the relationship between objects and the self is Beetee's re-imagination of Katniss's signature weapon:

> I set the case flat on the floor and undo the latches along one side. The top opens on silent hinges. Inside the case, on a bed of crushed maroon velvet, lies a stunning black bow. "Oh," I whisper in admiration. I lift it carefully into the air to admire the exquisite balance, the elegant design, and the curve of the limbs that somehow suggests the wings of a bird extended in flight. There's something else. I have to hold very still to make sure I'm not imagining it. No, the bow is alive in my hands. I press it against my cheek and feel the slight hum travel through the bones of my face.
>
> "What's it doing?" I ask. "Saying hello," explains Beetee with a grin. "It heard your voice." "It recognizes my voice?" I ask. "Only your voice," he tells me. "You see, they wanted me to design a bow based purely on looks. As part of your costume, you know? But I kept thinking, what a waste. I mean, what if you do need it sometime? As more than a fashion accessory?[180]

The Mockingjay bow serves a specific purpose, one that is very important for the novels' holistic comment on the issue of authenticity and materiality, suggesting that more attention be paid to the functions, lives, and feedback of objects in their creation of the authentic self. Katniss' bow is not simply a static marker of her identity, but through Beetee's design the bow acquires agency, and the ability to interpret choices made by its owner. Undoubtedly, very *2001: A Space Odyssey*,[181] but this connection actually calls for a greater appreciation for the theoretical threads between the material, and the authentic self.

To retain a grasp on identity, when internal and external forces compromise authenticity, *Mockingjay* suggests recognizing humanity and reifying the internal true self through objects and place. For the sake of clarity, these first two sets of sub-strategies were described together, and as separate (as possible) from the notion of co-construction. In line with my earlier word of caution, this organization is not meant to suggest that no aspect of co-construction is present within this first set of sub-strategies. On the contrary,

like the concept itself, every facet of authenticating identity in *Mockingjay* has some element of co-construction. Whether it be as subtle as the incorporation of memory and morality in internally authenticating the self, or as complex as the appropriation of the multiple identities Katniss must negotiate, authenticating identity is just as communal as the process of building it.

Co-Construction of Authentic Identity

Just as an "absolute, genuine, "true" authenticity does not exist,"[182] identity also resists one singular, natural, or linear construction, explanation or "self-realization."[183] Erickson calls for a shift in the way we view identity in relation to authenticity, searching for theoretical explanations that "allow for inconsistency," in our conceptions of who, what, why, and how identities are communicated and constituted.[184] Her tentative solution is to think of authentic identity not as a series of static identities (an example being who/what the people of the Capitol know the Girl on Fire to be), but for "an understanding of self that reflects individuals' subjective sense of their own feelings of authenticity…that inevitably emerge from interactions within the social world."[185] Much like appeals to authentic humanity and the authentic internal "core"[186] via material objects, the co-construction of identity in *Mockingjay* can be either fruitfully or destructively done.

Authentication through co-construction varies methodologically with the situations, people, events, and objects that work to construct a certain identity. If notions of authentic identity are compromised, co-construction may forge the ability of the subject to reconcile those competing notions, and through understanding things that work with "their own concrete and biographically based perspective"[187] discover ways to

authenticate identity. In *Mockingjay*, authentic identity work is a complex process that is coupled with larger appeals to memory, morality, information, materiality, community, and place. Katniss and the others try to recover a sense of their authentic identities through negotiating the authentication of the self as other, the self through others, and within those, the compromised self in lieu of appropriation and modification.

Authentic Identity as the Self as Other

If *Mockingjay* suggests identity can be authenticated through a recognition of the other, then the other must be defined. "Authenticity," according to Funk, Grob and Wuber, has the potential to be "a derivative quality that draws strength from the exploitation of nostalgic alterity in which the Other provides both the source of the authenticity and its antithetical confirmation."[188] That is, a sense of authentic identity is formed, altered, compromised, or found in the recognition of who/what you are because of the recognition of who/what you are not. The beginning of this chapter details how the other may appear, on the most universal level, as non-human. In *Mockingjay,* this degradation of one's grasp of authentic humanity takes a multitude of forms. The most blatant, of course, are Capitol muttations, where their constructed, laboratorial, and monstrous natures are contrasted with the other characters' natural humanity.[189] As authenticity is compromised through the shambolic notions of memory and morality, this binaric distinction between human and non-humans begins to blur, making it harder for Katniss to situate her authentic self against an other she cannot bring herself to honestly define. This eventually culminates in her disavowal of humanity to where she "no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despite being one," herself.[190]

If we peel back the layers of the construction of the self as other to reveal the complexities of the differences between the citizens of Panem and the citizens of the Capitol, then the totality of this declaration is something Katniss is primed for her entire life. Before Katniss and the others from District 12 arrive in District 13, the only other they constantly authenticate their personal and social identities against are those of the Capitol. Starved, poor, and victimized, Katniss and the others from District 12 know themselves by categorical binaries. Where people of 12 are hard workers, those in Capitol are not. Where the people of 12 are constantly hungry, those in the Capitol induce vomiting to go on eating at feasts and parties.[191] Where the people of 12 know only oppression, those in the Capitol permit the suffering in order to keep their "bread and circuses…rolling in."[192] The ultimate circus is the pageant of the Hunger Games, which cements those in the Capitol as other.[10] One either enjoys the Hunger Games, or one sees their horrors. It is important to note that in *Mockingjay*, just as Katniss views the Capitol as other, so too the Capitol citizens are taught to view the Districts and authenticate their identities via this marker of privilege. Timm explains this framing as other as a result of a long tradition of controlling information through an interpersonal social culture, media, and education of those in the Capitol.[193]

Although this is a theme that runs throughout Collins' trilogy, *Mockingjay* complicates this authentication of the self as other in two distinct ways. The first is the introduction of a new "other" comprised of those who occupy and run District 13. If those

[10] The metaphor of 'bread and circuses' comes from Plutarch Heavensbee, the Head Gamemaker of the Quarter Quell and his new Hunger Games, the revolution. Quoting the Latin phrase, it is the explanation of how and why the Capitol keeps its power. The Districts provide the food, goods, and other economic necessities for the Capitol, as well as the entertainment of the Hunger Games, and the Districts consent due to their isolation, the control of technological advancements, and the supply of police from District 2. For more on this political structure see Chapter 4 on authentic morality.

from the Capitol are "the very portrait of excess,"[194] then 13 is, at first, framed as polar opposite. "The compartments had the disadvantage of being underground, the clothing was identical, and the food was relatively tasteless, but for the refugees of 12, these were minor considerations. They were safe. They were being cared for. They were alive and eagerly welcomed,"[195] in a way that the Capitol would never. As Clemente notes, the Capitol and 13 can be considered two extreme styles of government, both that authenticate their actions and choices with the necessity of situation.[196] Where the Capitol most resembles a totalitarian despotic regime, 13, who has been apart from the Capitol since the Dark Days, is an example of a self-sufficient communist society, where frivolity, and embellishment, are frowned upon, and where "waste is practically a criminal activity."[197] Katniss recognizes this shift in intention, but not means, when she arrives in 13: "we know how to be hungry, but not how to be told what provisions we have. In some ways, District 13 is even more controlling than the Capitol."[198] So rigid and focused on survival since an epidemic killed a large portion of their population, citizens of 13 know only necessity and duty. Duty in 13 is not only an ideology, but a physical marker in the form of their imprinted schedule:

> Now the citizens live almost exclusively underground. You can go outside for exercise and sunlight but only at very specific times in your schedule. You can't miss your schedule. Every morning, you're supposed to stick your right arm in this contraption in the wall. (17) It tattoos the smooth inside of your forearm with your schedule for the day in a sickly purple ink. 7:00--Breakfast. 7:30--Kitchen Duties. 8:30--Education Center, Room 17.And so on. The ink is indelible until 22:00--Bathing. That's when whatever keeps it water resistant breaks down and the whole schedule rinses away.[199]

Katniss, of course, ignores these provisions, as the battle between individualism and a controlling societal power is a staple of dystopian fiction. She must, however, "get with the program"[200] after agreeing to be the Mockingjay. Authenticating the self as other

is not necessarily only about choosing a side, but recognizing differences in intention and action.[201] As the novel progresses, authenticating herself through recognizing the differences between the Capitol and 13 grows more and more difficult for Katniss, compromising her authentic identity until she no longer knows "who the real enemy" is.[202]

Modification

The simplest way the citizens of the Capitol and 13 are marked as other are through their physical appearances. A taste of modification can be viewed as expression, or a necessary component of fitting in. Cinna, Katniss's beloved stylist, exemplifies this balance of authenticity and modification. With "simple clothes, short brown hair, [and] just a touch of gold eyeliner,"[203] Cinna is a stark contrast to the rest of the Capitol citizens. Fulvia Cardew, Plutarch's assistant, has silver flowers inlaid in her cheeks. Katniss's prep-team, or the people tasked with, as Gale explains it, "'prettying [her] up for slaughter"[204] since the first Hunger Games, are "only just recognizable by their most striking fashion choices"[205] after being punished and left to fester in 13. "Venia's gold facial tattoos. Flavius's orange corkscrew curls. Octavia's light evergreen skin,"[206] outlandish outfits and permanent jewelry, are just some of the ways Capitol citizens engage in physical modification.

By modern standards, and the standards of those from 13 and 12, too much compliance and modification over natural humanity is where authentic identity obscures. The citizens of the Capitol, particularly the former Hunger Games stylist and shop owner Tigris, undergo intense body modifications in order to remain fashionable. Tigris' modifications, though among the most extreme Katniss has ever seen, challenge what it

means to be human in the world of Panem and provides a reference point for the self as other:

> Behind the counter sits the strangest person I've ever seen. She's an extreme example of surgical enhancement gone wrong, for surely not even in the Capitol could they find this face attractive. The skin has been pulled back tightly and tattooed with black and gold stripes. The nose has been flattened until it barely exists. I've seen cat whiskers on people in the Capitol before, but none so long. The result is a grotesque, semi-feline mask…She must have had one operation too many and crossed the line into repellence.[207]

This repellence, marked in the example of Tigris and milder but still present in all the Capitol citizens, is a complex process of negotiating the self in terms of other. The differences are amplified and explicit when Collins' puts a select few from the Capitol in 13. It is important to note that this negotiation of personal and other's identity is a complex process of not just Gilmore and Pine's natural authenticity, but the process of authenticating experiences through "referential authenticity."[208] The process of authenticating identity always includes "some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and longings,"[209] where memories fight and twist Katniss's notions of what is authentic and inauthentic, those same memories about vanity within the Capitol are projected upon Tigris and her prep team for no other reason than profiling. Whether her perceptions are fair adds further to the disorientation within *Mockingjay*.

Authentic Identity as the Self Through Others

Although notions of authentic identity are challenged and reified in *Mockingjay* by objects, the self as other, and markers of physical appearance through modification, personal and cultural identity and perceptions of such, are most often authenticated through others. Peeta's, Gale's, Snow's, and Coin's selves are communicated as complex

constructions of history, media, and actions, but it's Katniss's identity that is most notably forged through how others see her. This aspect of the authentication of identity through co-construction reiterates how internal notions of the self are always intertwined with others. Collins' strategically uses the other characters to reify to the reader, and to Katniss, who someone is in relation to others.

The most notable example of the explication of this process is the meeting that immediately follows the epic failure of Katniss's first attempt at making her first propo. Short for "propaganda spots," propos are heavily produced and edited videos that serve immediate governmental purposes, such as distraction or the dissemination of information, or long-term purposes such as a gradual turn in public opinion. Propos can vary in length from a single-second shot of the Mockingjay with smoke behind her[210] to hours such as the propo that intertwines the Victors' rescue mission with Finnick's riveting portrait of President Snow.[211]

It makes sense that Katniss's first propo would be as disastrous as it was, because of her unbridled sense of authenticity. The Hunger Games taught Katniss "that she'll have to appear to be other than what she really is if she is going to survive,"[212] but kissing Peeta during the Victory tour to keep "the star-crossed lover thing"[213] alive and standing on an empty platform with the feigned danger to be created in post-production,[214] are two very different motivations to act. Instead, Katniss's genuineness must be reiterated to her through the confirmation of others:

> "Think of one incident where Katniss Everdeen genuinely moved you. Not where you were jealous of her hairstyle, or her dress went up in flames or she made a halfway decent shot with an arrow. Not where Peeta was making you like her. I want to hear one moment where *she* made you feel something real"….The moments begin to come thick and fast and in no particular order. When I took Rue on as an ally. Extended my hand to Chaff on interview night. Tried to carry Mags.

> And again and again when I held out those berries that meant different things to different people.[215]

Those "different things to different people"[216] come back to us, and authenticate our senses of self. Gale reifies Katniss's strength, bravery, and instincts. With him, in the woods, she is her uncompromised self. Prim authenticates Katniss's identity in a similar way to Gale, but takes it one step farther by reminding Katniss she is more than just the will to survive, her love for her sister authenticates her ability to feel emotion, and most importantly, to hope.

But the portrait of Katniss's authentic self, painted by those around her, is always fragmented. "Rather than a unified inherent quality," Funk, Grob, and Wuber argue, "authenticity reveals it to reside…in the piecing together of disparate elements, an idiosyncratic collage which can serve to construct the authentic beyond… essentialism… and yet may very well lay claim to essential truths."[217] But when notions of the essential or internal self are compromised, others serve to authenticate an identity that may or may not exist. For Katniss, Peeta is, or was, or is, one of her strongest self-referential anchors. Even when he speaks to her in his first interview, regardless of whether he speaks under the direction of the Capitol or not, Katniss finds herself questioning her willingness to trust the rebels. After failing at her first propo she gives her ability to perform "of course…to Peeta. Alone, I can't be the Mockingjay."[218] If it were not for his life still teetering before his rescue, Katniss would have almost no loyalty to her identity as the symbol of the revolution. When he is safe in Thirteen, however, notions of authentic memory and identity for both Peeta and Katniss almost falter completely, and it makes it even more difficult for Katniss to authenticate her identity when others are misguided or ill-informed about who she is or what she has done. This conflict arises through the

strictly positive associations that Delly, the girl from District 12 who gives Katniss her Mockingjay pin, makes about Katniss to Peeta. "Leave it to Delly to spin [Katniss] into something wonderful,"[219] a something that Katniss knows she is not.

Although positive associations that contradict the self are sometimes damaging, negative co-constructions of identity that unjustly amplify flaws inevitably compromise identity. Once a stable, albeit too forgiving, authenticator of Katniss's identity, after Peeta's Capitol imprisonment has changed him,[11] Katniss laments how he can "finally…see me for who I really am. Violent. Distrustful. Manipulative. Deadly. And I hate him for it."[220] Even if those traits are harsh and unfair, Katniss's reference for her potential to be more than those things is now gone, leaving her unsure as to who she really is. Memories, morals, and others can authenticate, and change our minds about the complexities of ourselves. The change in Katniss's understanding of Finnick's sex appeal was co-constructed unjustly by images of him on TV. In this case, information about how the Capitol used him as a sex-slave is enough to make Katniss question how she views people, and herself, in a world rampant with appropriation.

Appropriation

Arguably the strongest example of how authentic identity is compromised is not being able to make sense of yourself, even in relation to others. This occurs when identities are appropriated, so much so that Katniss begins to question her essential self. It is important to note that Collins makes clear that constructing and authenticating identity is never just an intrapersonal and interpersonal process. In Panem, it is just as easy, if not easier, to compromise a sense of authentic identity through media than it is through

[11] Peeta's drastic change is attributed to hijacking. An explanation of how his identity is compromised is detailed in Chapter 3.

others. It seems paradoxical to think that Katniss begins to lose her hold on who she really is when "all despotic regimes *erode* or *suppress* individualism, but fear often functions chiefly as a means of controlling individuals *rather than eliminating* their personal identity."[221] However, Collins suggests that personal identity is something so fragile in the age of hyper-mediation and technology, that the fear is not centered on the aftermath of destruction, but on the uncertainty of how, when, and how quickly that destruction will take place.[222] For Katniss, her bravery is the direct result of the fear that has been instilled in her since birth, meaning it was in Panem and the Capitol that her identity was first born.

This cycle of appropriation is something about which Katniss is acutely aware.[223] To the people in the eleven districts of Panem, Katniss is the Mockingjay. To herself, she is just a product fulfilling a role, a vision, "a persona rather than a person"[224] and a prophet of her future confusion:

> I try to imagine not being able to tell illusion from reality. Not knowing if Prim or my mother loved me. If Snow was my enemy. If the person across the heater saved or sacrificed me. With very little effort, my life rapidly morphs into a nightmare.[225]

The Capitol exploited her long before the games, forcing her to triple the entries of her name in the reaping[12] in order to obtain more grain. As one-half of the star-crossed lovers, she was forced to play a part, to deceive the audience and Peeta, in order to survive. The Girl on Fire is an appropriated identity, taking the bits and pieces of Katniss that could win the games and remaking her, to fashion her appearance to match the Capitol's conception of what a Victor should be. This process of being remade is one that

[12] The "reaping" is the lottery which determines the male and female "tribute" (participant in the Hunger Games) from each District.

is closely tied to issues of authenticity, namely what Nelson calls the "beauty/authenticity double bind."[226] Collins dubs this double bind "beauty base zero," wherein Katniss and the other tributes are made to look beautiful but natural, Katniss explains this process as:

> What a person would look like if they stepped out of bed looking flawless but natural. It means my nails are perfectly shaped but not polished. My hair soft and shiny but not styled. My skin smooth and clear but not painted. Wax the body hair and erase the dark circles, but don't make any noticeable enhancements.[227]

Since the rebels who choose what the Mockingjay is are from the Capitol, this appropriation is almost identical to what Katniss has experienced throughout the whole of the trilogy. She makes the mistake of thinking that "as a rebel…I'd get to look more like myself. But it seems a televised rebel has her own standards to live up to,"[228] standards that her natural self alone could never fulfill. Fear, as mentioned earlier, is not enough to persuade one to let one's authentic identity be appropriated. Even this mistake is not enough to explain why Katniss agrees to be the Mockingjay in the first place.

For Katniss, what authenticates her decision to become the Mockingjay is the knowledge that her slain stylist Cinna wanted her to do so. Cinna always represents the anti-thesis of appropriation in *Mockingjay,* although a slightly unforgiving argument could be made that he had a strong hand in using Katniss to overthrow the regime he hated. Still, what separates Cinna from almost everyone else and everything that has compromised Katniss' grasp on her authentic self is that he always tried his best to preserve her agency. His decision turns into her decision when Katniss feels him and his memory through the materiality of the sketchbook that contains the Mockingjay costume.

Although his memory is incorruptible, Cinna serves as a constant reminder of who Katniss is and who she can no longer be. Cinna, arguably the largest influence on Katniss' authentic self, can only authenticate her identity through memories and material

objects. Despite how strongly Collins proposes materiality can work for uncompromised authenticity, memories of Cinna "being dragged, bloody and unconscious, from the Launch Room before the games"[229] disrupt Katniss' ability to authenticate a positive sense of self. Instead of assigning blame onto the corrupt political system that should assume responsibility for almost killing Peeta, murdering Cinna and Prim, and destroying the goodness in Gale, Katniss asserts ""It's my fault!""[230] for what happened to Peeta and countless others she thinks die for her. Her naivety, particularly when it comes to the Star Squad's invasion of the Capitol, how "the others lost their lives defending me on a mission I fabricated"[231] is not meant to be an expression of conceit.

If anything, Katniss' resolution that she causes more harm than good is an example of how the Capitol's identity, memory, and morality work infiltrates and weakens the fabric of authentic and inauthentic identity. If "successful identification rests upon expressing a similarity of self to one's peers as well as a distinction from members of mainstream society,"[232] then *Mockingjay* suggests that the self, the self as other, and the self as co-constructed are neither wholly myth nor wholly ideal. Instead, Collins novel may indicate that once one begins to lose the conception of the self in relation to their world and the people within it, they may begin to question the nature of their place in their reality—and eventually—the nature of their own reality. Once a hold on authentic identity is compromised, however, memories may serve as a way to re-authenticate the self.

CHAPTER 3: AUTHENTIC MEMORY

When the holder of authentic and inauthentic memories struggles for clarity, struggling to understand their veracity, it calls into question how competing information, memories, and feelings affect the building of relationships, moral actions, and sense of self. Thus, inherent to the process of authenticating the self and others is the process of authenticating memories. This interplay between identity and memory is not one that *Mockingjay* takes lightly. The novel questions how identity and memory are intertwined with notions of authenticity in the era of Hypermediation, a topic that is catching the attention of scholars examining similar modern dilemmas. To such, Fell posits that:

> Whilst the fabrication of memories may facilitate our communications and social integration, what does it do to our selfhood? Do we betray our former self by renouncing our past in favour of the practical gain of effective communication or does this change contribute to our personal growth? To what extent is the present self committed to the promises made by the earlier self? The complexity of this problem cannot be overestimated.[233]

Unfortunately, *Mockingjay* has no solution to Fell's questions. If anything, Collins pushes us farther and deeper into a state of dystopian uncertainty regarding the relationship between memory and the self, and "argue[s] for the necessity of awareness, despite the uncertainties and often painful consequences"[234] that comes with asking questions such as these.

It is imperative to note that memories, whether authentic or compromised, are not static pictures, feelings, or emotions. Memories are possessions just as much as they are

experiences. As such, memories require action to keep them alive. Those actions, whether intentional or not, forced on someone or internally drummed up, make memories build upon one another. Like a giant jenga tower, they are stacked, knocked down, full of holes, and carry intense pressure. Whether memories are from the past, the present, or are a conjecture of the future, they are undoubtedly powerful things.[235]

What makes memory work so powerful in *Mockingjay* is the capacity it possesses to undermine the very veracity of experience. Very similar to the first stage of compromised authenticity, where the self is in question, the failure to sense a strong distinction between what is real and what is fake compromises our sense of authentic memory. Chapter two mainly examines the first definition of authenticity: the true-self. Authentic memory is chiefly concerned with the second definition of authenticity: the difference between what is natural and what is constructed. Although these first two stages of compromised authenticity are examined in sequential order in this thesis, (morality being the third), authenticating strategies are rarely employed so cleanly. Katniss and the other characters do look to authenticate multiple meanings of identity.[236] But when the authenticity of the self is threatened, they often pull on notions of authentic memory when conflicting memories serve as catalysts to their confusion, and/or serve as reference points.

Collins posits three main strategies and a host of compromisers when examining issues of authentic memory. The first strategy is recall, which can either be interpersonally explicit or implicitly triggered by varying in levels of association from reminder to trauma. To combat the confusion brought on by a culture of hypermediation and the weaponization of memory through hijacking, Katniss and the others seek out

truth or unearth falsehoods with the second strategy of learning information. Lastly, the characters combat a compromised sense of memory with the help of others.

Authentic Memory as Recall

One of the most explicit ways Katniss continually constructs and authenticates memory throughout *Mockingjay* is via recall. Katniss' memories fold upon one-another as she continuously compartmentalizes new ones. From the start of the novel, in order to orientate herself to the continuum of the evolving present, she intrapersonally sorts out what she believes to be portions of her reality.

> I use a technique one of the doctors suggested. I start with the simplest things I know to be true and work toward the more complicated. The list begins to roll in my head….*My name is Katniss Everdeen. I am seventeen years old. My home is District 12. I was in the Hunger Games. I escaped. The Capitol hates me. Peeta was taken prisoner. He is thought to be dead. Most likely he is dead. It is probably best if he is dead…*[237]

For Katniss, the fluidity of memory recall both disorientates her notions of self and creates them. They usually always begin with the simplest slivers of ratified authentic existence, her name, her age, and parts of life before the games. As she moves forward with the rebellion, accepting the role of the Mockingjay, and learning more and more about the power of media, her statements of fact slowly turn into questions and answers until the only ones that remain for this exercise are: *"My name is Katniss Everdeen. Why am I not dead? I should be dead.*"[238]

With each new horror—the hospital bombing, the attack on District 13, being shot in District 2—Katniss' happy memories are buried deeper and deeper in her psychical vault of memories. What is usually considered a virtue—Katniss' tendency to live in the present moment, feel the effects of the most recent past, and index them with the rest of negative memories—are what keeps her notions of authentic memory is disarray. Instead

of the usual case with the "positive features [of the past being] inflated and its negative features toned down,"[239] as the Mockingjay during the rebellion of the oppressed nation of Panem, Katniss' recollections include far fewer positive features and far more negative ones. More and more negative memories of witnessing Peeta's fast decline through all stages of compromised authenticity challenge the beautiful ones they have shared. Once Katniss settles onto a compensating conception of an authentic future, she will do anything to see it through to fruition. "All that's left is my promise to kill Snow,"[240] which, until that supposition "becomes present reality,"[241] she communicates it intrapersonally "ten times a day."[242]

Association and Trauma

Although the present events that construct Katniss' index of memories are generally negative (the trips to the woods and Finnick and Annie's wedding being some "'of the few things [Katniss] won't have to pretend,'" to be joyful about),[243] material objects and specific places have a better chance of triggering memories in a positive way. This process of authenticating an object and the memories that accompany it operates on two levels. For Katniss and the characters, material objects or places are authenticated "indexically,"[244] by recalling its attribution of existence and connecting it with some sense of self to situate it in fact. An example of this strategy is often in the act of physically experiencing an object to verify the authenticity of the memories associated with it. In order to be sure that she has kissed Peeta, and to convince herself it will happen again one day, Katniss rolls the pearl he gave her in the Quarter Quell against her lips.[245] "The soft leather" of her father's hunting jacket "feels soothing and for a moment [she is] calmed by the memories of the hours spent in it."[246]

Memories cued by objects are also authenticated "iconically,"[247] where something imitates or resembles the original enough to stir feelings of authenticity as if it were the real thing. Notions of authentic memory are usually never compromised when iconic markers are material objects. Collins suggests that the material dimensionality of memory is one of the few reference points that can be trusted, albeit cautiously. The amount of trust that exists, however marginal, must still be approached with skepticism and caution, notable examples being the mutts and Beetee's meadow.

What makes material association both a compromiser of authentic memories and a strategy to overcome them are the ways it is employed and experienced. Reference points stirred by being in and moving through a particular place can elicit uncontrollable physical and emotional responses. President Snow, a master of knowing how powerful memory work is, takes advantage of every opportunity to materialize to Katniss in the form of roses. "No one will fully understand—how it's not just a flower, not even just President Snow's flower, but a promise of revenge,"[248] a promise that symbolic associations through memory always have the capacity to continue to challenge notions of authentic memory.

This tension between the symbolic and the material, and the material consequences memories have, always arises when senses begin chains of referential flashbacks. Despite how much seeing of the roses "unhinge[s]"[249] Katniss, it is their personal and unmistakable scent that always hits her first, and signals the upcoming emotional onslaught:

> The sickeningly sweet smell hits my nose, and my heart begins to hammer against my chest. So I didn't imagine it. The rose on my dresser. Before me lies Snow's second delivery. Long-stemmed pink and red beauties, the very flowers that decorated the set where Peeta and I performed our post-victory interview. Flowers

> not meant for one, but for a pair of lovers. I explain to the others as best I can. A crew in special suits collects them and carts them away. I feel certain they will find nothing extraordinary in them, though. Snow knows exactly what he's doing to me. It's like having Cinna beaten to a pulp while I watch from my tribute tube…[250]

The smell of roses always elicits a visceral reaction in Katniss that only she experiences, "everyone is breathing the same air. I'm the only one losing my stew because I'm the only one reacting to the odor. Drifting up from the stairwell. Cutting through the sewage. Roses. I begin to tremble."[251] This personalization, a privilege of traumatic information, makes it extremely difficult to guard against the process of traumatic memories, thus further compromising the self. Katniss notices Johanna Mason's aversion to showers, but when Johanna breaks down at the sight of rain, she fights the traumatic memories of being tortured in Capitol with hydroelectric shocks on her own, and loses.[252]

Trauma is an integral part of the first two stages of compromised authenticity detailed in *Mockingjay,* because of how much traumatic events can re-traumatize us through memory, and become integral parts of our identities.[253] This point, at first glance may contradict everything said so far in this chapter, until we remember that memories and trauma for the characters in *Mockingjay* are constructed and experienced in a shambolic, simultaneous manner that constantly changes. "Time heals," Fell explains, "but it would not be able to heal our pains if we insisted on remaining faithful to our original memories and refused to change them, we would be unable to stop grieving over the dead…forgive our loved ones," and forgive ourselves for mistakes and indecisions.[254] The interplay between trauma, temporality, information, identity, and memory is

omnipresent when hypermediation pulls on those nuanced strings of recall and further complicates a grasp on what is real and what is fake in *Mockingjay.*

Authentic Memory as Information

Hypermediation

"Today, the ability to create, manipulate, and disseminate images by means of computers and digital networks has become ubiquitous,"[255] and as a result, almost everything in District 13 and the Capitol is surveilled, re-constructed, and broadcast on the Orwellian Capitol feed. Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of the dissolving distinction between both commands is the way they use the information and mediated images to wield their power.[256] Due to this capacity for media to be weaponized, it is not an accident that the citizens of Panem's authentic individual and collective memory is irrevocably linked to forced ideologies of surveillance, consumption, and media. The potential for the modification and editing of images makes even the simplest statement on screen convoluted. Even in the arena, where the action is captured through surveillance, the labor put into constructing a compelling narrative to reify the Capitol's power[257] complicates notions of authentic events.

Put into practice, the abuse of power through media, and its potential to compromise the ability to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic identities and memories, ranges on a continuum of predictability. The most predictable way hypermediation is weaponized is the almost certain inevitability that mediated images will manipulate a person's conception of what they think happened. Constructing memories through the showing and reshowing of the Hunger Games and a desecrated District 13, for example, are the Capitol's deepest well of consensual power,[258] a power

that is not lost on our heroine who, until she was rescued from the Quarter Quell, thought like most in Panem that District 13 was a wasteland. Despite Gale's ability to recognize the repetitiveness of the footage, without any evidence to disrupt the reality constructed through Capitol propaganda, Katniss believed it to be true. Gale fits Messaris' idea of the knowledgeable viewer, or a visually literate consumer of media, who can "detect… persuasion or manipulation."[259] This lack of literacy, "has to do with the social power of digital networks"[260] and the power of information. When she navigates the miles deep underground stronghold of District 13 prior to and after Peeta's warning that the Capitol plans to bomb the shallowest levels, Katniss marvels at what can be built and kept secret, thus highlighting the precious value of information. Yet even as Katniss lays in her hospital bed or hides in storage closets, the images of Peeta's degradated appearance compete with the flood of new ones she views on the Capitol feed.

Their inside knowledge about the constructed nature of mediated images would, theoretically, make it easier for Katniss and the rest of the rebels to discern between what is real and what is fake. Unfortunately, however, familiarity with the production process instead exponentially increases the uncertainty of the authenticity of the images. Those shots of Peeta lead to extreme disorientation, confusion, and torture for Katniss. The first time she sees him on the Capitol feed, he looks like himself, handsome, confident, and very much alive. In Peeta's second interview seen five days later, the boy with the bread is unnervingly dissimilar. So much so that Katniss asks herself:

> How has he deteriorated so rapidly? What could they possibly have done to him in such a short time? Then it hits me. I replay in my mind as much as I can of his first interview with Caesar searching for anything that would place it in time. There's nothing. They could have taped that interview a day or two after I blew up the arena, then done whatever they wanted to do to him ever since. .."Oh Peeta" I whisper.[261]

Katniss, now aware that her propo filmed in District 8 is replayed over twenty times in a span of days, no longer has temporality as a way to make sense of her memories. Any version of timekeeping, however, is increasingly lost on Katniss, we see this when Katniss realizes how much her sister has changed over the last two years. "Prim sounds about a thousand years old when she speaks,"[262]and acts as the only sound, trustworthy, and stable point of reference for Katniss despite her being the older sister protecting Prim before and after 74th Hunger Games.

Even though Prim's demeanor and appearance has aged, her overall identity is, fortunately for Katniss, never mediated and played back to her sister with the intent to harm or slander Prim's image. Katniss does experience the disorientating and uncomfortable process of negotiating her sense of self through a TV screen. When she first sees herself on camera, as hybrid of the Capitol/District 13/Cinna's vision of the Mockingjay, Katniss does not even recognize herself:

> I'm beckoned over to a monitor. They play back the last few minutes of taping and I watch the woman on screen. Her body seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine. Her face smudged but sexy. Her brows black and drawn in an angle of defiance. Wisps of smoke—suggesting she has either just been extinguished or is about to burst into flames—rise from her clothes. I do not know who this person is.[263]

It is unsurprising that the alteration of her appearance and the image on screen competes with her sense of self, and makes it even more impossible for Katniss to deliver the line written for her. It is only when she is alone again, away from the camera and its filtering of flaws, that she recognizes herself again, "I return to the Remake Room and watch the streaks of makeup disappear down the drain as I scrub my face clean. The person in the mirror looks ragged, with her uneven skin and tired eyes, but she looks like me. I rip the

armband off, revealing the ugly scar from the tracker. There. That looks like me too."[264] Katniss' scars, though considered too authentic by her prep team's standards, are physical authenticators of the veracity of the memories of her experiences. Her appreciation of her scars is, like her inability to perform in scripted situations, a manifestation of her desire to authenticate what is real and what is not.

In true dystopian fashion, Collins' pulls directly from the real example of the production process of reality television in order to negotiate the blurring of the line between authentic and inauthentic memory.[265] Authentic memory is therefore created through both the act of consumption and production of the mediated propos and live feeds. The television sets, to which normal citizens of Panem have no control, are among the only means of direct communication for the rebels and the Capitol. Apart from tangible or bloody attacks, like the bombing of the hospital in District 8, the battlefield becomes the screen. Fellow victor Beetee, the weapons wizard who builds the armaments for the Mockingjay and the rebels, engages in multiple struggles "over the broadcast, both sides realizing that control over this medium of communication means control over reality."[266] Collins' makes it a point to show that obtaining a control over reality in this way has tangible consequences for the audiences that are subject to them. The information that Katniss was alive after the bombing of District 8 would have never been verified if not for the cameras. Paradoxically, the Capitol and District 13 use the false information of Katniss' demise later in the streets of the Capitol to accomplish varying goals. The Capitol of course propagates her death as a victory for the Capitol, belittling her influence and using it as an illustration of a lack of leadership. While, "somewhere in District 13, Beetee hits a switch, because now it's not President Snow but President Coin

who's looking at us. She introduces herself to Panem, identifies herself as the head of the rebellion, and then gives my eulogy," before ending the broadcast on "a heavily doctored" still of Katniss, "looking beautiful and fierce with a bunch of flames flickering behind [her]. No words. No slogan,"[267] there is unbridled power in the mediated appropriation of her image.

Referring to the reality constructed through television further complicates how memories are verified as authentic or inauthentic, most often resulting in an awkward place between the two. But in most moments of clarity, where the barrier between what is actually happening, and what is being said is undoubtedly the truth, the intention behind the telling of memories is much more complex. "It's impossible to be the Mockingjay," Katniss confesses, "impossible to complete even…one sentence. Because now I know everything I say will be directly taken out on Peeta" when it is relayed back to the Capitol.[268] Unfortunately for Katniss, this assertion is accurate, not only because the retribution is motivated by Snow's personal intent to break her, but the way in which he does it. Peeta's hijacking, where his orientation to reality is killed through the manipulation of his memories of Katniss, is fueled by the continued mediation of her image from the rebels. This need to televise her gives the Capitol more capital in their ability to weaponize media to compromise Peeta's memory and identity.

Hijacking

"Recall is made more difficult,'" Beetee explains to Katniss in the aftermath of Peeta's assassination attempt on the Mockingjay after his rescue from the Capitol, "because memories can be changed." Beetee taps his forehead: "Brought to the forefront of your mind, altered, and saved again in the revised form.'"[269] Hijacking is "a type of

fear conditioning. The term *hijack* comes from an old English word that means 'to capture' or ever better, 'seize'…the technique involves the use of trackerjacker venom*"*[270] that, when injected into Peeta at very low doses, challenges the veracity of his memories, particularly of Katniss. They would show him a memory, most of which they have access to through video surveillance, administer the venom and "infuse the memory with fear and doubt"[271] The result is an evil revision of his memories that compromises his relationships and the majority of his sense of self. Hijacking convinces the Boy with the Bread that the girl who infiltrates all of his recent memories and most of the ones he had acquired before the games, convincing Peeta that Katniss is a constructed mutation: "Friend. Lover. Victor. Enemy. Fiancée. Target. Mutt. Neighbor. Hunter. Tribute. Ally. I'll add it to the list of words I use to try and figure you out…The problem is, I can't tell what's real anymore, and what's made up."[272]

Until Peeta is well enough to begin the process of re-authenticating his identity and memories through co-construction, he experiences a total degradation about what is real and what is false. Although this version of the collapse between construction and truth is a contained, weaponized version of the result of all three stages of compromised authenticity, it is just as fearful. Despite Michaud's contention that what make Peeta 'Peeta,'—his memory and sense of self in relation to Katniss—is essentially murdered by the hijacking undertaken by the Capitol,[273] Katniss is not the only person who contributes to his notion of authentic self. This point is imperative for recognizing the contextual power of memory and identity, since despite being trained to react only to Katniss, the limited nature of his life outside of her allows even the most arbitrary associations to challenge his perception of reality.

Co-Construction of Authentic Memory

These seemingly arbitrary associations that are turned from mere memories to a disturbingly modern armament, have no limits, rhyme, nor reason in the way that they connect back to memories of places, objects, people and events. If the team who tortured Peeta are 'hijackers,' then it is only fitting that those tasked with trying to retrieve, rebuild, and remake Peeta into the person he was before his destruction are called the "recovery team."[274] In all actuality, Peeta has two recovery teams. The first are the doctors, who come up with a plan to ease, as much as possible, the damage done by the Capitol. To fix Peeta's hijacking by re-hijacking him, or overriding his new despotic memories with *true* less threatening ones. This brilliant plan to recover Peeta works well enough, to enable the second recovery team to continue this process.

Although Peeta's hijacked memories are an amalgam of true memories and mediated images such as surveillance footage from the Games, the post-Games Victory tour, and surveilled moments from District 12, what aids in his recovery is the antithesis to a mediated existence: an interpersonal one. When Peeta joins the Star Squad, or the squad made up of District 13's most iconic and photogenic soldiers, Katniss becomes convinced that it is a symbol, like Snow's rose, that for President Alma Coin of District 13 the Mockingjay would be "of more use to her dead than alive."[275]

She is right, of course, and her suspicions are confirmed by the rest of the Star Squad, most notably Gale, her squadron leader, Boggs, and Peeta himself. But Katniss decides to fulfill the wishes of her sister and believe that "there's a chance that the old Peeta, the one who loves you, is still inside. Trying to get back to you. Don't give up on him."[276] Their efforts can be viewed as an implicit motivation to prevent Peeta's ultimate

fear about the Capitol, that he would be "just a piece in their Games,"[277] unable to have an authentic self and no possession of authentic memories that constitute it. Before he was hijacked, before the Quarter Quell, and the night before his first Hunger Games, Peeta believed that if he and Katniss could perish without compromising their notions of authenticity, if "there's still you, there's still me,"[278] and their selves that the Capitol could not play, then everything would hurt less and mean more. The way Katniss, Gale, Finnick, Boggs, Cressida, Pollux, and the rest of the Star Squad does this is by playing "Real or Not Real?"[279]

The "Real or Not Real?"[280] game is not technically a game, but a reality litmus test for Peeta. Instead of being shown a memory and re-injected with trackerjacker venom to try and unhijack Peeta by hijacking him once more, Katniss convinces Peeta to simply ask any time he "can't tell what's real anymore, and what's made up."[281] To do this, "Jackson has devised a game called "Real or Not Real"…Peeta…mentions something he thinks happened, and they tell him if it's true or imagined, usually followed by a brief explanation."[282] "Real or Not Real?" is truly an exemplar of the consequences of the second stage of compromised authenticity. Peeta's flashbacks are reenactments of moments of extreme trauma that, when coupled with the method of torture used, induces intense feelings of uncertainty, fear, and violence. Hijacking attacks the sense of self by fundamentally altering how memories are constructed, reified, and called upon. All of the people, places, events, feelings, dreams, etc., that make up those memories, are now a mixture of re-creation and the real. Although, on some level, this refers to the Baudrillardian notion of the "hyperreal"[283] that is taken up again in Chapter 5, this process of authenticating identity and memory is mainly concerned with an assessment of

the authentic self and reality versus fiction, both on a subjectivist and universalist level. Authenticity in *Mockingjay* is ultimately a rhetorical and pervasive concept that is verified and compromised through recall, information, association, trauma, materiality, identity, and others. The last stage of compromised authenticity is the failure to authenticate one's identity and memories in relation to morality.

CHAPTER 4: AUTHENTIC MORALITY

When "information that is communicated to us…" challenges our notions of identity and memory, "our previous beliefs, our previous understanding of the matter in question," and our sense of authentic morality, we are likely to find that such information can "even threaten our established worldview."[284] In order to preserve meaning within her worldview, Katniss relies on symbolic and material reference points that work with her understanding of the present to validate her identity and her memories. Although the phases of compromised authenticity do not always appear in this linear order, the last broad strain of authenticating strategies involves appeals to authentic morality in order to maintain an understanding of what is real and what is fake.

Since the tortures of the Capitol, Peeta is operating in a state of compromised identity, memory, and morality. His instability makes it easier for Katniss to slip further into disorientation too. She still has reference points for identity, memory, and morality apart from Peeta, but in order to access them or ignore the challengers of authenticity inherent within them, Katniss cannot be where he is. Recognizing the effect Peeta's condition has on her, rendering her unfit to be the Mockingjay, the rebels send her into District 2, where her ability to sort out authentic and inauthentic cues is threatened even more. Once Katniss' sense of what is morally right and morally wrong fails, Katniss

exposes her mind, body, and image to irreparable trauma that makes the binaric distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic evaporate almost completely.

To try and prevent this perplexingly foreshadowed and forlorn fate, Katniss and the other characters employ strategies meant to authenticate concepts of intention, character, and gut feelings. If "self-values transcend both the situation and any particular identity," then I agree with Erickson's contention that "self-values implicate more than the perspectives or appraisals of external others; they extend inward from these vantage points to also include the reflective and emotionally grounded appraisals of one-self,"[285] that are bound to be unearthed when the level of traumatic stress and recollections of conflicting identities reach their zenith.

Authentic Morality as Intention

The need for a fluid understanding of the complexities of how authenticity is employed and compromised in *Mockingjay* is dependent upon "one's coherent pattern of emotions, beliefs, and values remain[ing] open to revision and change."[286] Morality, within this thesis, refers to the most basic sense of right and wrong[13] that, like the other two concepts of identity and memory, is negotiated by ties in the web of the internal self, the social self, the economic self, and the cultural self.[287] This thesis treats character as each person's core interpretation of right and wrong, how the others interpret one's authentic self and their past, present, and future conception of oneself in relation to, and as an influencer, of the way they interpret the world around them. This is not to say

[13] This definition was not taken from a specific source but rather the common knowledge of the classic binaric distinction between right and wrong. Right and wrong, in this essay, are not necessarily interchangeable with good and evil, since immorality in *Mockingjay* is more apt a descriptor of the nature of the cruelty. Right and wrong is not wholly universal nor entirely subjective, and the standard for it is continually under question through to the end of the novel.

that the basic concepts of right and wrong apply to everyone, for the ongoing ruptures in morality are the main source of struggle for those in *Mockingjay.* Rather, markers of morality serve as the last remaining set reference points that Katniss and the others appeal to verify their veracity of experience.

Humanity, according to Foy, is what morality preserves, especially in extreme circumstances such as war. In war, "a sense of moral obligation" will undoubtedly be tested through the difficult decisions and realizations of character it brings.[288] Those moral obligations are authenticated and compromised when notions of intention and character are under assault. A common thread throughout the scholarship on *The Hunger Games* trilogy suggests that the fundamental distinction between Gale and Peeta are their moral centers, and as such become the determining factor in Katniss' ultimate decision to choose Peeta.[289] This decision is not one Katniss takes lightly, and it is one that haunts her through her continual disorientation through to the last page.[290] It may even be a decision[14] that she has very little control over, since Collins' posits a heroine who cannot reconcile immorality when it is done intentionally, and without much remorse.

When Katniss' notions of identity and memory are compromised, she pulls on very specific markers of morality through intention, character, and gut feeling to authenticate her veracity of experience. Authenticating morality through appeals to intention are irrevocably linked to markers and strategies that validate character, but are dissimilar in certain ways. The examples of the similarities between District 13 and the

[14] Characterizing this as a decision, as if both proposed to her and she accepted one and turned down another, may be an unfair assessment. According to Katniss' morality, Gale betrayed her notions of his authentic character, and as such, made it impossible for her to be around him. By saying she chose one over the other is fulfilling the basic human need to makes sense of situations through clean, almost binaric terms. She grew to love Peeta, Gale chose to blow up the Nut.

Capitol, the events in District 2, the parachutes, and Katniss' final decision to assassinate the President of District 13, Alma Coin rather than President Snow points to the limitations of conflating authentic character with authentic intention. If character is the employment, interpretation, and embodiment of right and wrong, then character, in this thesis, is the constructed, experiential, and perceived holistic conception of the moral self. Violations of character, as opposed to violations of intention, are almost always unforgivable, since authentic intentions do not always contradict character, but a sense of genuine character is always authenticated through intentions.

Intention Through The Capitol and District 13

The nightmare that is the failing grip on reality is split wide open when Katniss sees the true nature of the similarities between the Capitol and District 13. The illustration of the parallel between President Snow and President Coin, Plutarch Heavensbee as Head Gamemaker for the Hunger Games and coordinator of the rebellion, and the eerily-familiar parachutes that kill Prim outside the President's mansion, are among the final sources of reality disorientation for Katniss.[291] Her greatest fears are realized when she is unable to answer the question asked throughout *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*: "Who is the enemy?"[292] Katniss qualifies immoral acts through whether or not the intention behind that act aligns with her universal and personal ascriptions of authentic morality. The similarities between the Capitol and District 13 are described and verbalized to the reader throughout the novel. The similarities in infrastructure, secrecy, and method are apparent, noted and dismissed by Katniss, until "one of her highest values: the preservation of innocent life,"[293] is violated in the same ways by both the Capitol and the Rebels. Katniss's epiphany occurs when she recognizes that the moral

intentions of both are almost identical. Their purpose and agency are identical: to acquire power and keep it through taking life. Though intentions are further indexed by acts that were preemptive or defensive, knowing people would need to be oppressed to achieve every acquisition of power, cements the similarities for Katniss.

Katniss' personal patience for the Capitol citizens is a constant battle that challenges her notions of her own moral self. Their excusal, when granted, is always dependent on the sloppily drawn line between intention and ignorance, a condition that fails to be explained through a clean set of binaric distinctions. Katniss attempts to tease out what she means by intention, although Gale is wholly unconvinced:

> "Katniss, why do you care so much about your prep team?" I open my eyes to see if he's joking, but he's frowning down at the rabbit he's skinning.
>
> "Why shouldn't I?...It's more complicated than that. I know them. They're not evil or cruel. They're not even smart. Hurting them, it's like hurting children. They don't see...I mean, they don't know..."
>
> I get knotted up in my words.
>
> "They don't know what, Katniss?" he says. "That tributes--who are the actual children involved here, not your trio of freaks--are forced to fight to the death? That you were going into that arena for people's amusement? Was that a big secret in the Capitol?"
>
> "No. But they don't view it the way we do," I say. "They're raised on it and--" "Are you actually defending them?"
>
> He slips the skin from the rabbit in one quick move. That stings, because, in fact, I am, and it's ridiculous. I struggle to find a logical position.
>
> "I guess I'm defending anyone who's treated like that for taking a slice of bread. Maybe it reminds me too much of what happened to you over a turkey!" Still, he's right. It does seem strange, my level of concern over the prep team. I should hate them and want to see them strung up. But they're so clueless, and they belonged to Cinna, and he was on my side, right?[294]

Katniss leaves herself pondering more questions instead of taking sides. Her beloved Cinna, although he was from the Capitol, always contradicts the morality of them through his belief that the Hunger Games, and President Snow, were evil. Unfortunately for Katniss, every authentication of morality using Cinna as a reference point is a reliance on memory. The memory of him, as evidenced through her assassination decision, is not enough to verify that hers and others' choices are moral. Although in this exchange Katniss concedes that Gale's points are valid, her inability to reconcile and make sense of morality throughout *Mockingjay* is compromised. The reasons become clear in District 2 why Gale is the main source of Katniss's inability to reconcile moral intention.

Intention in District 2

In an attempt to escape the horrors of Peeta's torture, the Mockingjay is sent to District 2, the final district that must fall before the Capitol is attacked, in order to expedite the war. The rebels have yet to capture the place where Peacekeepers, or Capitol soldiers, are trained, due to the impenetrable nature of the location of their arsenal. Cut into a mountain, 'The Nut' cannot be destroyed from the outside. Instead, Gale suggests a strategy of entombing 'The Nut," a tactic similar to the traps that were abhorrent to Katniss in District 13.[295] The markers of such strategy then trigger memories of mine explosions and images of thousands of citizens dying like her father did, trapped, suffocating, or worse, burning in the same place that would become his grave.[296] "When Coin gave approval for Gale's plan, the rebels launched a heated attack and drove the Capitol forces back several blocks so that we would control the train station in the event that the Nut fell. Well, it's fallen. The reality has sunk in:"[297] the rebels buried the Nut,

just as the Capitol continually forced the fates for the miners, and intentionally burned District 12.

This action in District 2 is the first of several that compromises Katniss' perception of authentic morality. Gale reconfigures Katniss' assessment of herself. The solidarity he offers her as a reference point, her debt to him for having made sure Prim escaped the bombing of Twelve and Thirteen,[298] is now compromised. Before she has a chance to stabilize both her evaluation of herself in relation to Gale's plan and the nightmares and pain recalled by this act of war in District 2, she is filming a propo in the aftermath. In the square, a place to which the only escape from the Nut leads, talking down a Capitol worker pointing a gun at her, she "realiz[es] that this is what all of District 2, all of Panem maybe, must be seeing at the moment. The Mockingjay at the mercy of a man with nothing to lose."[299] Now, though, the scene with the District 2 soldier reinforces Katniss' sense of self through her realization that she is witnessing an endless cycle of violence through unjustifiable intentions—"we blew up your mine. You burned my district to the ground. We've got every reason to kill each other"[300]—and it sets her apart from the Capitol and the rebels. Still, Katniss is unable to negotiate the endless cycle of appropriation to which she is victim, echoing Peeta's worst fear of becoming a regime's "slave": "Peeta. On the rooftop the night before our first Hunger Games. He understood it all before we'd even set foot in the arena. I hope he's watching now, that he remembers that night as it happened, and maybe forgives me when I die."[301] Her struggle culminates in a state of ultimate compromised authenticity for Katniss when she sees herself "get shot on television."[302] Unable to even experience the pierce of a

bullet in real time, her disorientation between reality and fiction leaves her unable to authenticate moral intention.

After the incident in the square, authentic morality ascertained through intention is a constant struggle between perceived moral obligation and social and personal missions. In her heart, Katniss believes that the only way to reorganize her sense of reality is to murder Snow herself. Yet, in order to do this, she contradicts her moral center, and continues to lie to the members of the Star Squad as they risk their lives to infiltrate the Capitol. The justification of this deception is through her pure intention of ending a personal vendetta, yes, but one that will undoubtedly prevent more generations from being manipulated by Snow's regime as Katniss was. This authentication of morality via intention, completed by the Star Squad, actually temporarily stabilizes Katniss' sense of authentic morality by qualifying her lie as one that was never meant to take a life other than Snow's, although the intentions of others also convey permissibility. "It was never intended for all of us to go forward. You just had the misfortune to be with me,"[303] and by definition, a sense of compromised morality through association is one that Katniss accepts via others but not when it comes to her own mistakes.

It seems contradictory to suggest that dishonesty is an act that is difficult for Katniss, since she has been duplicitous since the first games, but lying is also qualified in *Mockingjay* through good intentions. Although she never fully forgives Haymitch for lying to her about saving Peeta and rescuing her sub-par character when he was the one who deserved it, his ultimate intention, to win the war with the help of the Mockingjay, is permissible. But, even in these seemingly black and white examples, the contexts that

whether or not a lie is justifiable may be determined by intention begins to blur, thus compromising her ability to authenticate a sense of morality.

Intention and the Parachutes

Collins poignantly begins the Parachutes sequence with a metaphor of the ground collapsing that foreshadows the chaos that is soon to follow. All who are left of the Star Squad—Katniss, Gale, Peeta, Cressida, and Pollux—find themselves deep in the heart of the Capitol with the rebel forces closing in. After enduring multiple pod[15] activations and the white lizard mutts that may have shattered Peeta's already fragile notions of identity and killed Finnick, Katniss is the closest she has ever been to fulfilling her self-appointed mission to murder Snow. With throngs of evacuating Capitol refugees lining the frigid winter streets, Katniss and Gale fight to find stable ground after a pod activates and causes the Capitol floor beneath them to collapse, leaving nothing but a giant pit and "a vile stench…like rotted corpses in the summer heat."[304] With the rebels not far behind, Katniss pulls herself onto the street and avoids falling into the pit only to see Gale being taken away by Peacekeepers, unable to shoot him while knowing that if she fails she may be the cause of a fate that is "worse than death."[305] Katniss finds herself in front of the President's mansion, his evil confirmed once more by the hundreds of "children [that] form his human shield."[306] A Capitol hovercraft swoops over the children, dropping the familiar parachutes that usually mean aid in the games. They clamor to retrieve them,

[15] Pods are booby traps much like those used in the Hunger Games to physically and psychologically kill the enemy during an invasion attempt. They are scattered in the Capitol streets, turned on by Capitol forces, and are activated by whomever trips them. Much like landmines, a physical interference with the pod, can cause anything meant to kill the enemy. Standard examples are metal darts or poison gas, while more psychological and harrowing pods are ones like the candle wax light, that paralyses the victim in a suspended beam of light, and melts the flesh from their skeleton like a melting candle (similar to the fate of the Nazis in *Raiders of the Lost Ark).*

only to be mutilated by the explosions that emit from half of them. Katniss explains what happens next:

> I can tell the Peacekeepers didn't know this was coming by the way they are yanking away the barricades, making a path to the children. Another flock of white uniforms sweep into the opening. But these aren't Peacekeepers. They're medics. Rebel medics. I'd know the uniforms anywhere. They swarm in among the children, wielding medical kits.
>
> First I get a glimpse of the blond braid down her back. Then, as she yanks off her coat to cover a wailing child. I notice the duck tail formed by her untucked shirt. I have the same reaction I did the day Effie Trinket called her name at the reaping. At least, I must go limp, because I find myself at the base of the flagpole, unable to account for the last few seconds. Then I am pushing through the crowd, just as I did before. Trying to shout her name above the roar. I'm almost there, almost to the barricade, when I think she hears me. Because just for a moment, she catches sight of me, her lips form my name.
>
> And that's when the rest of the parachutes go off.[307]

This immoral act—the murder of her sister, dozens of Rebel medics, and the rest of the Capitol children—severs Katniss' hold on intentional morality. Just as in District 8, when the hospital holding all the wounded was bombed, the parachutes are timed to explode in two stages. Katniss already secretly knows before President Snow makes it clear, that it is the rebels who murdered her sister. The intent, of course, to end the war right then and there, but the war could have been won without the bomb. Without her sister, who served as the strongest reference point for her identity, the memories of her inability to save her, and Snow being the only one whom she believes is truthful, Katniss' overall sense of authenticity is in extreme limbo, suspended indefinitely after the victors vote to have one last Hunger Games.

Intention and the Assassination

Despite the parachutes and the assassination happening in a linear fashion, the confusion in between these two events, which is further complicated by high doses of

morphling and Katniss' loneliness, is anything but linear. Wrestling with the inability to discern what happened, the task of convincing Katniss that it was indeed the rebels who dropped and detonated the parachutes, falls on President Snow. He plays to Katniss' sense of morality, knowing her hatred for dishonesty and love for her sister. Snow makes Katniss question the validity of the people whom she has made her moral reference points. Noting the similarities between himself and Coin, at the last moment Katniss' intentions change, and she murders Coin instead of Snow.[308]

Authentic Morality as Character

All of the examples above demonstrate the role intent plays in authenticating morality, but the biggest challenge and betrayer to Katniss' holistic sense of authentic intentions is Gale. One of her primary markers of identity, memory, and morality, Gale's intent to destroy the Nut, and the intention woven throughout the design of the two-stage bomb, is one that Katniss cannot reconcile and forgive. "Back in the old days, when we were nothing more than a couple of kids hunting outside of 12, Gale said things like this and worse. But then they were just words. Here, put into practice, they become deeds that can never be reversed,"[309] and deeds once carried out, reveal aspects of Gale's character that almost implode Katniss' sense of authentic morality.

To reiterate, I treat character as each person's core interpretation of right and wrong, how the others interpret one's authentic self and their memories of one as an influencer of the way they interpret the world around them. By those standards, Gale's morality is not reducible to the bomb that killed Prim and countless others. But Gale's recognition that he has contradicted "the only thing going for,"[310] him—protecting Katniss' family—is what cements the revelation of his character. It is important to note

that similar to almost all aspects of Collin's novel detailed in this thesis, the building, destruction, and interpretation is never a linear or isolated process. Using Gale as exemplar, small actions throughout the novel indicate that Katniss senses the change in him that took place after she volunteered for the first games.

It is important to note again the differences between authentic character (with which I am concerned) and essential character (which is just beyond the scope of this thesis). *Mockingjay,* though it suggests through Katniss a universal conception of what is moral and immoral, does not conflate authentic character with those ephemeral standards. Authentic character in *Mockingjay,* like intention, identity, and memory, is an interpretation, a measure, a comparison, between the person that one is and what one is being compared to or challenged by. This means that character in *Mockingjay* is an extremely complex and ever-evolving process of characterization that is shaped by temporality, information, the self, and others.

Authenticating character, then, has less to do with what a person does, thinks, feels, or believes is right or wrong in isolation, then it does with the issues forever at the heart of authenticity of "being true to one-self."[311] Challenges to authentic moral character happen when someone violates, contradicts, or questions Katniss' conception of who they are morally. It reinforces Katniss' hold on authentic morality to know that the Capitol is capable of bombing a hospital in District 8 after winning a battle. Her notions of authentic morality are challenged, and sometimes destroyed, when someone who she believes to be incapable of such cruelty does so with malicious or unjustifiable intentions. Coin's decision to drop the bomb on Prim and the others shakes her, but does not contradict her notions of authentic moral character. Gale's hand in the design of it, the

association he forever has to it, whether or not it was his decision to enact it, is an irreconcilable challenge to Katniss' conception of Gale's character.

In order to fully understand how *Mockingjay* suggests ways to access character as a means to authenticate broader notions of morality, the nuances of Katniss' character must be explained. What makes a characterization of Katniss flow more logically with notions of morality rather than identity, is that the majority of her sense of self (her traits, her beliefs, her actions, her emotions) is rooted in supremely moral and ethical ideas. Although Panem's ethics are seriously deficient, as evidenced by the ritual of the Hunger Games, the few ethical virtues that remain within District 12, like charity and a mode of communal survival, are practiced by Katniss and embedded within her moral center. Katniss is extremely instinctual, stubborn, sarcastic, and private. She abhors authority and equates it with oppression, and as a result, resists it whenever she can. Her decisions, thoughts, and feelings are arguably almost always concerned with issues of morality like loyalty, protectiveness, bravery, and self-discipline. Her character is so intrinsically tied to the safety and wellness of her family and friends that when Johanna Mason makes her promise that she will stop at nothing to kill Snow (or whoever the real enemy is), she makes her "'Swear it. On something you care about"… "I swear it. On my life."… "On your family's life," she insists. "On my family's life," I repeat," because her own "concern for…survival is not compelling enough."[312]

Myers argues that what defines Katniss' character, and her inability to reconcile the violation in Gale's, is the non-negotiable taking of innocent life.[313] Although that is undeniably a fair assessment of Katniss's values, I argue that it is much more complicated than just her abhorrence for cruelty. What makes it impossible for Katniss to

forgive Gale, is her inability to separate memories and the contradictions of self that the violations of authentic character prompts.

It is therefore not about knowing whether or not it was Gale's bomb that killed Prim or if Coin was primed to turn the new Panem right back into the old one that fails to authenticate her sense of her own and another's character, it is the suffocating space of that continuous cycle of association that threatens her veracity of experience. She will always associate the bomb that killed Prim with Gale, and all the other deeds, everything else that defines him in relation to her, to those deadly decisions. This uncertainty is what makes the last strategy, authentication of morality through gut feelings, often Katniss' last attempt to make sense of what is real and what is not.

Authentic Morality as Gut Feelings

In *Mockingjay* bomb tremors are only one of many things that "sends shock waves through your guts."[314] Trauma, doubt, and immorality can trigger those little pangs that indicate a disruption in something. When "something feels very wrong" in *Mockingjay,* it may be the physical symptoms of a fear like "the claustrophobia of being so far underground," or a sensational trigger like the reek of trauma in "the caustic smell of antiseptic."[315] The idea that something feels very wrong may also be an important manifestation of self-examination, an instinctual impulse to help negotiate the difference between right and wrong:

> Then what's nagging at me? Those double-exploding bombs, for one. It's not that the Capitol couldn't have the same weapon, it's just that I'm sure the rebels did. Gale and Beetee's brainchild. Then there's the fact that Snow made no escape attempt, when I know him to be the consummate survivor. It seems hard to believe he didn't have a retreat somewhere, some bunker stocked with provisions where he could live out the rest of his snaky little life. And finally, there's his assessment of Coin. What's irrefutable is that she's done exactly what he said. Let the Capitol and the districts run one another into the ground and then sauntered in

> to take power. Even if that was her plan, it doesn't mean she dropped those parachutes. Victory was already in her grasp. Everything was in her grasp. Except me.[316]

Even though the logic above is carefully articulated, it is often those split decisions, where Katniss' "every instinct…screams for [her] to ignore the voice,"[317] whether it be orders, Haymitch in her ear, or President's Snow's fulfillment of his promise never to lie to her, that prompts those feelings and guides her decisions.

The majority of appeals to gut feelings in *Mockingjay* manifest in two ways. The first way, as evidenced in the quote above, are at the very beginning of the need to authenticate experiences, thus prompting a greater investigation into the self, others, or events. A second way, like Katniss' decision to assassinate Coin, is the pang of intuition that act as a last-ditch effort to reify one's authentic sense of right and wrong. These last-ditch efforts usually precede a decision and then an action, in a process that is not always immediate and swift. These feelings are a visceral call for agency that demand attention in immoral situations, an impulse to forgo anything besides one's moral center in times of turmoil, much like the times Katniss faces in *Mockingjay*.

Just like appeals to intention and character, gut feelings are not slave to some overarching universal moral thread. They can only authenticate what that person is capable of, what they believe already. Although Katniss's moral sense is quixotic by modern standards, her memories and identities undoubtedly play a part in their deployment. This complex ring of internal communication may help in understanding Katniss' decision in the vote for one final Hunger Games:

> Was it like this then? Seventy-five years or so ago? Did a group of people sit around and cast their votes on initiating the Hunger Games? Was there dissent? Did someone make a case for mercy that was beaten down by the calls for the deaths of the districts' children? The scent of Snow's rose curls up into my nose,

> down in my throat, squeezing it tight with despair. All those people I loved, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in an attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now."[318]

In the above moment, in making the decision to hold one final Hunger Games, Katniss is contending with a whole host of conflicting debts, loyalties, and memories. After this monologue, and more silent consideration Katniss agrees, "…for Prim,"[319] Collins keeping the exact reasons why private. Based upon Katniss' reasoning, she has at least two identities, an indefinite number of memories, and conflicting moral characters that shape her choice. Why Haymitch agrees with her, may be a more fruitful investigation:

> A furious Peeta hammers Haymitch with the atrocity he could become party to, but I can feel Haymitch watching me. This is the moment, then. When we find out exactly just how alike we are, and how much he truly understands me.
>
> "I'm with the Mockingjay," he says.[320]

Although it is difficult to surmise Haymitch's exact feelings in this instant, I argue that Collin's means this moment to be a rare instance of co-moral trust. Katniss' former/and future mentor may or may not want another Hunger Games, but authenticates Katniss' decision, to do whatever she chooses to do, through a rare display of trust. Katniss may not have known until her arrow forgoes a failing Snow, "and President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony…plunges to the ground dead."[321]

Since gut feelings refers to those internal *pangs,* or the non-descript visceral feelings that something, anything, that most of the time cannot be located, is off,[16] that is one reason why to Collins, materiality may be a very important marker of authenticity. It is one marker whose veracity is sometimes shaky in the wake of challenges by mediation,

[16] There are just as many instances where those gut feelings indicate and authenticate good decisions as well as bad ones. There are also many moments that indicate a correct choice, which the characters then retrospectively stand behind.

technology, and modification. However, when notions of intention and character are compromised, gut feelings are the last in a long line of authenticating strategies, and in a world where visceral feelings are so easily caused by drugs and other stimuli, that even one's gut is compromised, and one's sense of what is real and what is not, finally collapses.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

Throughout this thesis I argue that when notions of authenticity are compromised, *Mockingjay* suggests a series of strategies to guard against the disorientation that follows. When identity is compromised, threatened by technology, appearance, temporality, modification, and intense appropriation, Katniss and the others seek to authenticate themselves through ideas about natural humanity, themselves as, and as opposed to others, and through varying processes of co-construction. When authentic memory is compromised, most notably by hypermediation, trauma, and hijacking, the characters often employ the strategies of learning information and recall. Lastly, when morality is compromised, appeals are made to authenticate intention, character, and intuitive gut feelings to recover a sense of the authentic.

This is an organized, linear explanation, although the process of authenticating identity, memory, and morality in *Mockingjay* is not linear at all. The goal of this complex process is often to authenticate reality.[17] Almost always, Katniss' memory of an event, like singing to Rue before she died in the arena,[18] or the identification of the

[17] In line with Chapter 1, I extend Cloud's definition of reality "as the site of lived experience, the place where the embodied experience of labor generates contradictions with regards to consciousness," and goes beyond consciousness to extend into the constructed realities in *Mockingjay.* Reality is defined also through Haraway's notions of the social and imagined realities that plays off the boundaries between real life and the novel.

[18] Rue, a very important symbol to Katniss, was a fallen tribute that the Girl on Fire had an alliance with in the 74th Annual Hunger Games.

change in Peeta due to hijacking, warrants the employment of multiple strategies simultaneously. When the compromisers are too great in number, appear in the right sequence, or just prey on ones' place in an oppressive society that inhibits a "sound state of mind,"[322] what can result is the inability to discern between what is real and what is fake. No longer knowing what is reality and fiction, indicates that one's sense of identity, memory, and morality are so malleable that they fail to aid in retaining a grip on what is natural and what is constructed. Absent any confidence in one's notion of authenticity, one's reality is exposed to a state of collapse.

Reality Collapse

These two binaries--reality and construct, and genuineness and lies--serve as guides for understanding how Collins' dystopia takes modern seeds and grows them into a meadow of anxiety over the increasing loss of the authentic. Having a hold on one's authentic identity offers "comfort and coherency in a time of discomfort and incoherency,"[323] but by the end of the novel, Katniss fails to articulate who she is apart from the loved ones who are dead, the loved ones that are so profoundly changed, and the people that use her. The vividness of the atrocities Peeta faces during and in the aftermath of his hijacking are so heinous and easily made present, that because Peeta is unable to understand or move past those altered memories, he "lose[s] touch with reality in a full sense."[324] After Snow convinces Katniss of the illogic that he is the one who released the parachutes,[325] the fallen president renders her "incapable of reconciling…conflicting beliefs and values even after a laborious and extended process of scrupulous meditation"[326] and exhaustive methods of authentication.

The culmination of these uncertainties hints that *Mockingjay'*s narrative on the concept of authenticity eventually results in a state of perceptual dissention described as reality collapse. Although this proposed theoretical turn in the discourse of authenticity may seem absolute, it is far from it. Instead, reality collapse is a partial to total state that the characters detail in non-linear, shambolic ways. In Collin's novel, reality collapse mirrors, contradicts, and elucidates themes that are important in current strains of modern communication studies scholarship. Collins suggests that the only coping mechanism to better hold onto notions of authentic identity, authentic memory, authentic morality, and overall distinctions between reality and fiction, is a revival of appreciation of the rhetorical richness of the material.

Materiality and Reality Collapse

The phenomenon of reality collapse is, on multiple levels, inherently rhetorical and strategic. When reality collapse is a side-effect of accidental trauma, it may be much easier to locate, but almost every traumatic experience in *Mockingjay* is maliciously inflicted. Johanna understands how the sight, sounds, and feelings of water trigger horrific memories of her torture inducing states of uncertainty. Katniss is acutely aware of the debilitating effect that the smell of roses and the power that aroma has to invoke feelings of intense pain, anger, and fear, even to the point that she questions whether or not she "imagined" their material presence in her home in District 12.[327] Those who inflict the trauma, mostly the Capitol and the rebels, do so with the ultimate aim of hurting their enemies through a process of stripping a sense of what is real and what is not. If at least one of the stages of compromised authenticity is overcome, and one can locate the source of the disorientation, total reality collapse is prevented. Yet, when the

space between truth and lies is used as a weapon, as it most often is in *Mockingjay*, a steadily increasing state of compromised authenticity that teeters into the inability to discern between what is natural and what is constructed. Thus, reality collapse is longitudinal condition of post-traumatic stress so complex and embedded that repeated bouts of partial collapse, gradually erode Katniss' overall veracity of experience to the point where she never fully recovers.

The ramifications of reality collapse are so great and telling in the age of hypermediation, that theories about the loss of a sense of the authentic are far from new. Reality collapse, as it is described in the post-human tradition, refers more to an inability to discern what is a construct of the mind, and what is created apart from it.[328] Although this is a useful point of origin to begin theorizing this concept as it appears in *Mockingjay*, this post-human take that concerns virtuality is inadequate, since it fails to account for the constructed realities, notably through mediated messages and technology, which happen outside of the mind. Examples of these constructed realities are the produced propos and Hunger Games coverage, the Hunger Games arenas, the Capitol streets loaded with pods, and Capitol muttations. Authentic and inauthentic realities are no longer bound by impermeable binaric spaces of real or not, since labor, control, and trauma facilitate their constant state of flux.

Born from that vein of research, but closer to how the authentic is treated in *Mockingjay*, are the consequences of collective concerns that hypermediation and technology are greatly altering modern life. The genre of YADF is the perfect space to examine issues of authenticity since the novel "populates worlds ambiguously natural and crafted."[329] Our culture that the novel reflects, and the culture that facilitates

Mockingjay's popularity, occupies what Haraway calls the "social reality."[330] Threads of our "lived social relations, our most important political constructions"[331] are what shape audiences' conceptions of genre, and make up audience's reference points for understanding, in YADF, how the content connects to "human malaise[s]."[332] The social reality contrasts with the imagined reality, which is likened to the realm of science fiction, or ideas about technology that are not materially realized in the world where the novel is popular.[333] An example of this distinction is the advancement of medical technology, aviation, and media that fail to occupy the current moment in these realized forms. Collins' novel, part of both the futuristic imagined reality and the current social reality, suggests that the ease of the move from just hypermediation to oppressive social structures' ability to weaponize media is one that requires a reevaluation of the role of materiality in modern culture and theory. In *Mockingjay*, the material acts as both validation and supposition to notions of authenticity, that when coupled with ideas about technology, progress, and the body, work to extend and reify our ideas about what a loss of the authentic may mean for culture. If anything brings the characters back from shaky to stable notions of the authentic, it is a series of material feelings brought on by objects, human to human touch, and visceral experience of pain.

Materiality and Objects

When Katniss questions her memories, identity, or morality, she rubs the pearl given to her by Peeta in the Quarter Quell, across her lips.[334] A physical marker of the Boy with the Bread, it helps her to hold onto the memories of him that are too strong to be supplanted or tainted. The Capitol understands just how much Katniss is irrevocably linked to Peeta, how much Katniss believes him to be a superior person, one that could

not, in a million lifetimes, deserve the type of torture inflicting upon him. In order to hurt the Mockingjay, the Capitol hurts one of the people she holds most dear. A "strategy [that] is very old news to Finnick. It's what broke him…"[335] Knowing Katniss is experiencing the same agony as Finnick, she asks for a way to ease her hurt and disorientation:

> "How do you bear it?" Finnick looks at me in disbelief. "Obviously I don't...I drag myself out of nightmares each morning and find there's no relief in waking. Better not to give in to it. It takes ten times as long to put yourself back together as it does to fall apart….The more you can distract yourself, the better."[336]

The main deflector of Finnick's disorientation is his piece of rope. Finnick shares this strategy with Katniss who surprisingly finds comfort in the scratchy material, "spend[ing] the rest of the night on [her] mattress obsessively making knots."[337] Although Katniss is broken by the knowledge that she is the cause of Peeta's torture and collapse, and "by morning, [her] fingers are sore," through the monotonous predictability of the tying and untying, the comfort of the material keeps her "holding on" to reality. [338]

In current communication studies research, examining the relationship between materiality and authenticity often concerns consumerist goals. Principally, scholars use objects as markers to authenticate a sense of authenticity, and then positively perceive the product.[339] Consumers rarely have difficulties "distinguish[ing] real from fake…or suffering identity crises from declines in traditional markers of authenticity…," consumers are "highly competent…[in] sorting real from fake, creating the genuine through selective use of cues and finding, retaining, reinforcing, reimagining, and creating traditions."[340] *Mockingjay* suggests that it may not be so easy to tell real from fictional objects if an increase of the ubiquity of hypermediation and capitalist values

supplant these abilities. To Katniss, capitalistic material things, or fashionable, luxurious things, hold just as much value as a promise from Snow.

Katniss loves the beautiful clothes Cinna creates for her, but not because of their expensive fabric, nor their status as the hottest commodity in the Capitol;[341] Katniss values Cinna's creations because they are the physical embodiment of his wholeness, his goodness, his talent, and his friendship. Modern capitalistic associations to material objects are grossly exaggerated in *Mockingjay*. Characteristic of YADF, the novel takes threads of these economic and systemic concerns,[342] and reiterates them through the shallowness of the Capitol citizens. Panem is a dystopian capitalistic totalitarian regime that is so product-based, it has the propensities to not only facilitate a loss of the difference between reality and fiction, but also, paradoxically, to reinvigorate appeals to authenticity through materiality. Collins mutilates and rebuilds the binaric, right and wrong functions of objects, through their ability to both collapse reality and recover it. "As surely as the embroidery stiches in Annie's gown were done by Cinna's hand," a material reification of good ways materiality can affirm authentic experiences, "the frosted flowers on… [Finnick and Annie's wedding] cake were done by Peeta's,"[343] giving Katniss an unwelcome material reminder that nothing, even hijacking, is absolute. Although objects often help the characters make sense of what is real and what is not real, forgery and complex associations can increase this slippage more than stabilizing it. Due to this, *Mockingjay* suggests that another way to retain a hold on what is real and what is fake, is the appeal to materiality in the form of human touch.

Materiality as Human Touch

The material act that opens the preceding section, the rubbing of the pearl across her lips, is one that orients Katniss to conceptions of reality. This material touch via an object brings her back from the ledge of collapse, but is not as powerful, it seems, as person to person contact. Triggered by Snow's lizard mutts, whose bone-chilling hiss of Katniss' name "is the proof of how deep Snow's prison went." "….Peeta's," propensity "to respond to the hissing chorus, to join in the hunt"[344] sends him from just a suicidal and homicidally violent state of mind, to one of the most dangerous examples of collapse in the novel.[345] In the wake of this trigger, with his eyes as cavernous as "black pools,"[346] Katniss pulls Peeta back, from what would have certainly been a fatal bout of collapse, through the physicality of a kiss:

> "Leave me," he whispers. "I can't hang on."
>
> "Yes. You can!" I tell him.
>
> Peeta shakes his head. "I'm losing it. I'll go mad. Like them."
>
> .
>
> …It's a long shot, it's suicide maybe, but I do the only thing I can think of. I lean in and kiss Peeta full on the mouth. His whole body starts shuddering, but I keep my lips pressed to his until I have to come up for air. My hands slide up his wrists to clasp his. "Don't let him take you from me."
>
> Peeta's panting hard as he fights the nightmares raging in his head. "No. I don't want to…"
>
> I clench his hands to the point of pain. "Stay with me."
>
> "His pupils contract to pinpoints, dilate again rapidly, and then return to something resembling normalcy. "Always," he murmurs.[347]

As evidence in the effectiveness of the kiss, authentication through material touch is an "active negotiation of real and fantastic elements that leads to a," decision, or a greater understanding, of what is an "authentic experience."[348] Peeta's muscle contractions, and

pupil dilations are material markers of this negotiation. When his body concedes, it signals the end of "the nightmares raging in his head"[349] and the stabilization of reality through touch. Katniss utilizes materiality through touch solitarily through objects and through the physicality of others. Like most positive or productive appeals to materiality, this instance in the sewer is an example of co-constructing authenticity through touch.

This co-construction of authenticity through human-to-human touch is often used as an escape from the disorientation of a collapsing reality. In the wake of Katniss' realization of the severity of Peeta's state of collapse, she finds comfort in the arms of Gale, his "touch and taste and heat remind me that at least my body's still alive, and for the moment it's a welcome feeling."[350] Katniss is aware that this escapist approach through touch is only temporary. Nonetheless, in conjunction with complex emotions, this physicality helps to not only recover a sense of the authentic on its own or instantaneously, but it can clear a psychical pathway to help combat the disorientation of reality collapse. This helps the characters calm themselves just enough to "empty [the] mind and let the sensations run through," them while trying to think lucidly about what is real and what is fake.[351] Most often, the sensations that prevent the totality of reality collapse are those of pain.

Materiality as Pain

One would hope positive appeals to materiality are more effective in sorting out reality from fiction than negative ones. Yet in *Mockingjay*, pain is what always seems to pull the characters out of states of compromised authenticity and collapse: "My finger catches the inside of my bracelet, twisting it like a tourniquet hurting my wrist. I'm hoping the pain will help me hang on to reality the way it did for Peeta."[352] It is within

these spaces that "the very associations," Dickinson argues, "that provide comfort also remind us of discomforting conditions,"[353] making the process of authentication through the materiality of pain an indication of the cyclical destructive nature of the disorientation of reality collapse. Pain can be a marker, signaling in collapse the disconnect between reality and fiction: "a pain stabs my left temple and I press my hand against it….the memories swirl as I try and sort out what is true and what is false."[354] While emotional pain is almost always the enemy of keeping a "fragile hold on the situation,"[355] what makes reality collapse so pertinent in the modern era of simulation,[356] is that due to virtuality, physical pain and visceral feelings are never a trustworthy marker.

Thee Material and the Symbolic

The process of authenticating reality through an appeal to the material mirrors concerns in contemporary critical rhetorical theory.[357] The relationship between the material and the symbolic in *Mockingjay* is one that is wholeheartedly contentious. Since the form of the novel is always coupled with ideas about symbolism, (metaphor in the *Hunger Games* Trilogy being a signpost of critical readings of the books),[358] *Mockingjay* further complicates the relationship between the symbolic and the material in YADF through a nuanced commentary on the authentic/inauthentic dialectic.

Citing Zizek as their inspiration, Rose and Wood make it clear that even in an era of hypermediation and simulation bent on challenging what constitutes the real and what does not, "the symbolic requires the real,"[359] in every assessment of authenticity. Even torture and drugs that are meant to eradicate the material, depend upon a foundation of the material in order to compromise identity, memory, and morality. Morphling, the universal anesthetic that numbs the body as well as the mind, uses images, objects,

feelings, and fears of the past, present, and future, to protect the user from treacherous emotions and hallucinations.[19] Whenever Katniss's hold on reality begins to slip, a morphling tablet, drip, or injection, blocks, albeit temporarily, the oncoming hysteria: "morphling dulls the extremes of all emotions, so instead of a stab of sorrow, I merely feel emptiness. A hollow of dead brush where flowers used to bloom,"[360] it is the feeling of the inability to viscerally feel much of anything at all.

During episodes of reality collapse, such as Katniss and Snow's conversation about the parachutes, or when Katniss kills Coin instead of Snow, morphling is "not enough to right things,"[361] and the disorientation remains after the high wears off. Morphling has a transparently addictive quality, comparable to most drugs that addicts use as means to escape the present,[20] but unlike Haymitch's alcoholism, morphling represents a symbolic half to the whole of the experience of reality in *Mockingjay.* Markers and strategies that successfully authenticate identity, memory, and morality are sometimes described symbolically as morphling, numbing the pain of their horrific reality. This attribution, in private moments like Katniss seeing Peeta on television for the first time, speaks to Collin's treatment of the relationship between the material and symbolic leading up to and during reality collapse. "I drink in his wholeness, the

[19] Morphling is similar to trackerjackers venom in that it produces powerful hallucinations, but it is meant to distract or deflate feelings of anxiety or fear, while trackerjacker venom is meant to induce anxiety and fear.

[20]Addicts are called morphlings in *Mockingjay.* Though beyond the scope of this thesis, the concept of addiction in *Mockingjay*, mirrors the conversation surrounding addiction in our lived reality. Katniss often battles with excusing traumatized victims for their addictions (like Johanna) with those who she feels should be able to hold themselves together, (Haymitch). Alcohol and morphling are treated very differently in the Hunger Games universe begging new questions about the role of prescribed drugs versus self-obtained ones.

soundness of his body and mind. It runs through me like the morphling they give me in the hospital, dulling the pain of the last weeks"[362] but not erasing it.

"The symbolic and material features," within the novel, "interpolate and compel, but also limit and constrain specific actions and identities…" [363]of the characters through a complex process of association and mistrust. Collins frames the symbolic, through hundreds of meaning laid markers. Morphling, the arrow that was meant for Snow,[364] and the pageant of the last Hunger Games, are sites that have the potential to co-opt and corrupt the real they signify and open up opportunities for the abuse of power. The material in *Mockingjay*, "unlike the symbol, which always points outside itself to some meaning that is not in the symbol,"[365] leaves less space for appropriation, and a stronger sense of control. Baudrillard claims that "order always opts for the real,"[366] i.e., whether or not the intent is to simulate or remain within the symbolic realm, the material and the symbolic always intertwine. The power of this relationship between the material and the symbolic in *Mockingjay* is that it wrestles with everything above, and in the process, has a profound effect on Katniss.

The symbolic and the material work in-tandem during one of the novel's only examples of the prevention of total reality collapse. After killing Coin instead of Snow, Katniss', in a state of complete disorientation, is thrown into her old Training Center suite that will be her prison cell for an indiscernible amount of time. Without a stable sense of temporality, still unsure of her actions, Katniss is in isolation, knowing "the surveillance makes almost any suicide attempt impossible."[367] Katniss' "fire mutt"[368] body is her enemy in this room. Seeing the tattered nature of her skin "brings back the memory of the pain. And why I was in pain. And what happened just before the pain started. And how I

watched my little sister become a human torch."[369] The containment of the pain to the realm of the symbolic, further collapses her sense of reality. Betraying Katniss by surviving the night, her body is a material marker of the cycle of appropriation she was, and perhaps still is, subject to. Her natural reaction to thinking about the horror of being symbolically and materially coopted once more, is to authenticate her sense of reality through singing.[370] The physical act of singing grounds the meaning of songs like, "The Hanging Tree," and "The Meadow Song," into the material, and authenticates reality for Katniss.

Implications for Critical Cultural Theory

What does this insistence on the reinsertion of the material in order to prevent, ease, or reverse reality collapse mean in the current context of critical cultural rhetorical theory? At its most basic level, it mirrors trends in critical cultural work that insist on the importance of possessing a sensitivity to the role of materiality in shaping rhetorical practices and experiences.[371] Specifically, this "emphasizes not only the significance of authenticity but also it physicality,"[372] and how notions of the authentic are constructed and normalized in the material. The novel acts "as a material space [that] not only provides the cultural resources for living in the everyday, it is the site of that living."[373] *Mockingjay* serves as a symbolic (the content) and material (the book, tablet, or phone) site that reinserts the importance of the materiality of the mundane, while exploring modern audiences concerns about authenticity in complex ways.

Authenticating strategies, compromised authenticity, and reality collapse, all work through genre and the many theoretical constructs of authenticity to speak to 21st concerns about the integrity of the authentic within the current social fabric. The

conversation about the function of genre criticism for modern theory continues through the related concepts of symptomatic texts, the Burkean concepts of representative anecdotes, equipment for living, and the propensities of the YADF genre that exemplify these functions though the generic tropes of voice, narratives about technology, and a call for action.

Genre, Symptomatic Texts and Equipment for Living

Mockingjay, can be what Dubrofsky calls "a symptomatic text."[374] An extension of the concept of the psychical functions of genre,[21] symptomatic texts "reflect, rearticulate, and participate in larger cultural discourses," about certain communicative and rhetorical functions of the concept of authenticity. Collin's novel is a response to a cultural moment, where anxieties over the loss, ubiquity and contested nature of the authentic, helps to weave a larger web of related theoretical orientations that all add something to the theorization of reality collapse within *Mockingjay.* If "symptomatic texts" are "texts that tell us about the larger culture in which they exist,"[375] then there is a dire anxiety building over authenticity in lieu of the self, hypermediation, postmodernism, and commodification. *Mockingjay* does not fall into old patterns of moral panic, and instead makes new arguments about how technology must be approached in a less deterministic manner. The novel makes a greater argument for the shift in the dominant narrative of progress, that humanity is not evolving fast enough, and our propensity for cruelty is wielded through technology, not because of it. In *Mockingjay*, reality collapse can also be thought of as the end result of a challenging dominant narratives of progress, a space to reinvestigate the commodification of

[21] See Chapter 1.

revolution, or as a blueprint to guard against the increasing loss of the authentic in modern life. Since the broad functions of generic critiques are to investigate the psychical constitutions that texts signal in audiences, and that audiences seek out within texts.[376] This proposed relationship of meaning making is inherent in *Mockingjay* due to the rhetorical nature of YADF to always act as equipment for living.

In his seminal series of essays detailing the Burkean concept of synecdoche or the representative anecdote as a method of media critique, Brummett[377] conceptualizes a way to analyze almost any type of media as equipment for living.[378] The representative anecdote includes varying "way[s] of thinking, talking, and acting that incorporates training, hierarchies, processes, and values…that it cannot be conceived as under the control of human agents"[379] Recognizing a representative anecdote is to then recognize "a culture's values, concerns, and interests"[380]that plague a people temporally, morally or existentially, and to understand how media can provide the necessary vocabulary or symbolic tools to act productively in the personal manifestations of those problems in daily life.[381]

The YADF generic signpost of the script or blueprint, which gives the reader a vocabulary or set of tools to begin to examine and fix current social ills,[382] is incredibly telling when theorizing the meaning of the complex anxiety over authenticity in *Mockingjay.* If a reversion to the material is the way to recover a stable sense of authentic experience in our hypermediated age, then *Mockingjay* gives the reader a complex set of equipment for living through authenticating strategies. If these strategies are employed, the reader can recognize the mundane, normalized tasks and processes that may lead to such an overwhelmingly oppressive society. The novel provides a set of tools to use

when sorting out reality and fiction in a world where the power of media is increasingly and unsettlingly pervasive.

Hypermediation

"If our memories of the past including our own beliefs, values and commitments, can change depending on the power of a new communicative input, where is the guarantee that promises will be kept, that debts will be paid, and contracts fulfilled?"[383] In the era of hypermediation, Fell argues, "there is no such guarantee,"[384] making it imperative that a modern considerations of media and the authentic use both the notions of the true self and reality and fiction as they stand in scholarship and popular culture. The overarching strategy to recover a veracity of experience is an appreciation of the material, but more so, reality collapse suggests how fragile and reversible a future may be when reality is indiscernible from fiction. Although the question of reality versus fiction invites postmodernist and Baudrillardian thought, specifically the notions of the *hyperreal*, reality collapse is very different from a status of mediated postmodern hyperrealism. "If hyperrealism means anything," Storey contends, "it cannot with any credibility signal a decline in people's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality."[385] Instead, the hyperreal helps to point to a postmodern turn to the duplicity of meaning, and the conditions under which the collapse between reality and fiction happen.[386] Thus the equipment for living in a hypermediated age is to, in postmodern fashion, arm oneself with knowledge and information, resist appropriation, and retain control over the meanings of the mediated messages we create and consume. *Mockingjay* cautions audiences that a world devoid of universal meaning is one where the authentic dissolves. Although *Mockingjay* rejects binaric distinctions and challenges notions of

universal identity, memory, morality, and meaning, it "fill[s] a void in the postmodernist argument of an inherent universality that is not a complete contradiction,"[387] through a reversion to the importance of the material.

Mockingjay argues for the dissolution of binaric distinctions, and it is unsurprising that modern consumerist research on the consumption of reality TV support such dissolutions. Contemporary viewers desire to "negotiate situational duality…seeking balance between the natural narrative and the manipulated narrative."[388] When the Capitol destroys the possibility of this negotiation through a bombardment of propaganda and the longitudinal framing of surveillance as truth, hypermediation becomes the strongest threat not just to the holistic construct of authenticity, but to those whose lives are shaped by the belief that the authentic is a social ideal. As a rhetorical strategy, authenticity in Panem is something that is highly sought after, yet the culture that facilitates that demand makes it almost unreachable. Rather than dismissing everything that is constructed, *Mockingjay* suggests ways to navigate the mediated messages and advancing technology without threatening notions of authenticity, or allowing it to become a means for control. *Mockingjay* warns that our ability to "experienc[e] contradictions as resonant and engaging, rather than bewildering or confusing,"[389] is disappearing. Greater attention to how dominant narratives of technology and hypermediation become dominant may prevent the weaponization of media in the future. Of course, President Snow and The Capitol do not obtain and maintain their power through media alone, but an awareness of how a loss of the material contributes to it is something a reinsertion of the role of the material may postpone or prevent. The act of consuming and disseminating information through media is one that is never passive.[390]

The novel insists that to recover a sense of reality is to prevent the rhetorical power of authenticity from being so strong that it socially oppresses the masses into believing that truth is a construct that is never open for negotiation. *Mockingjay* gives the reader tools to holistically authenticate reality in order to keep the process of negotiating messages one that includes agency rather than passivity.

This dystopian lamentation of a loss of democratic exigence is one that helps to reassert the role of the individual in postmodern life. "Appeals to authenticity," King argues, "often mirror a larger cultural struggle between powerful institutionalized voices and marginalized communities over the issues of representation and identity"[391] in reference to a certain moment or process in cultural history. These appeals increase exponentially in Panem where appropriation, inequality, and the misuse of technology are commonplace. Thus political, societal, and hierarchical institutions construct authenticity in regards to public memory to legitimize or resist dominant ideologies held by such groups.[392] The Capitol weaponizes memory through propaganda, surveillance, and hijacking, pinning the collective against the individual until the result is reality collapse. *Mockingjay* both reclaims and laments the loss of the role of the individual (or the true self through voice), through private and public experiences that are grounded in the material.

Collins suggests that the return to communal experience of the material is a strategy to recover the individual in a state of compromised authenticity.[393] The novel reinforces how communal appeals to the materiality of person-to-person touch helps to retain a hold on what is real and what is not by contrasting it with the claustrophobia of loneliness. Loneliness seems to invigorate reality collapse, calling new attention to the

dystopian tendency for oppressive regimes to "erode or suppress individualism" in order to maintain power.[394] Despite the luxury status aloneness acquires when one's life that is constantly surveilled,[395] being alone and loneliness are two discrete concepts in *Mockingjay* that represent the tension between public and private. The novel mirrors the concern over the blending of the public and private spheres in critical cultural theory, and suggests ways to combat it by recognizing that what is collective always fulfills individual needs. Reality collapse happens when the public and private is blurred so much that individual needs are unmet or uncertain. These complex notions of the compromised self and the compromised collective in *Mockingjay* both reinforce and contradict the postmodern anxiety over the jailing of the self and society via metanarratives.[396] These metanarratives, or overarching universal ideals that guide the self and society through life, not only feed into notions of the loss of the individual, only but for the ability for the individual to carry out an authentic dissentient action or revolution.

Dystopian Call for Action

Mockingjay suggests much on the topic of revolution, but mostly couples it with the destructiveness of capitalistic ambition. "The recovery of authenticity should begin with an understanding of the historical tension between individual and the state,"[397] the economic system that that state adheres to, and the ramifications of the pervasiveness of those economic ideals. This struggle between the metanarrative of capitalism, and the metanarrative of an authentic life apart from commodities, is one Collins continuously highlights throughout her novel. Katniss often relies on large metanarratives of her symbolic power as the Mockingjay to frame herself as hero in order to legitimize her

choices and the choices of others. Simultaneously, Katniss herself acknowledges the commodification of her image and the appropriation of Cinna's vision to sell another ideology.

In addition to the relationship between the "individual and the state,"[398] or the postmodern self in the modern world, issues of authenticity inherently concern the disconnect between "the working class and the dominant forces in society. Here the emphasis must be on discovering and elaborating how individuals cope with the conditions of domination or oppression. The process that has shaped society,"[399] in the oppressive state of Panem, is one of extreme capitalism, where everything is a commodity. Collin's YADF novel calls on its audience to reevaluate the role of commodification in modern society, and think about how the change from the "production of things to…the production of information,"[400] is not so absolute. Instead, a culture based on both the production of things and the production of information, or the production of anything that limits agency, is one that also limits the potential for social change.

Capitalism in Panem is in its most extreme form when the Districts themselves are oppressed not because of some religious or ideological doctrine of inferiority. Rather, the Capitol needs to control the Districts to control the supply of their resources.[401] In *Mockingjay,* the material can be as destructive as it is productive, preventing reality collapse while facilitating the conditions that make reality collapse possible. Although the commodification and shallowness of things causes concern in *Mockingjay,* the novel especially calls attention to the commodification of information, because that in turn, commodifies everything. This coupling of the worth of things and information provides a

commentary on modern culture, in true dystopian fashion, Panem is an exaggerated reflection of the potential oppression of capitalistic ambition.

Through the broadest symbolism of the rebels supplanting the Capitol, Collins calls on the young adult audiences to think about the changing uses of the material in modern culture. This call to recover authenticity in our capitalistic hypermediated Western culture is so time sensitive that Collin's entreaty may be too late. The clock may have run out for two reasons. The first is that the process of the revolution in *Mockingjay* is one that is an unbreakable cycle of the commodification of social action. Katniss, and her journey until the time she decides to kill Coin instead of Snow, can be interpreted as a true, authentic break in this cycle where she constantly rebels against the system in order to preserve the authentic. In this vein, killing Coin is an act of pure agency. With little ability for lucid deliberation in the moment, Katniss follows her instinct to overcome the enemy of freedom and equality that is found in everyone hungry for power through oppression. Or, as evidenced by Katniss's final dissent into reality collapse, this action is a "micro-struggle"[402] that Cloud argues never overthrows a system, but only temporarily shifts its means and leaders. Destroy the capacity for a system to displace a system, and capitalistic oppression will operate in the same way. Katniss recognizes the similarities between the Rebels and the Capitol, so much so that Collin's call for action may have been over before it began.

The second reason it may be too late is the paradoxical notion of cautioning an audience about the pervasive and destructive nature of capitalism through a text that is a fierce commodity. *The Hunger Games* trilogy may actually have only one overarching purpose: to make Collins and Scholastic money. All other reasons--entertainment, art,

community, social criticism—feed into the mother motivation of generating revenue. I argue that *Mockingjay* is a novel that draws attention to the concern over the loss of the authentic in modern society, while the authenticity of the dissemination of story itself is in question. Fisher notes the loss of the claustrophobic nature of the novel in its film adaptations. The medium of film is unable to capture the authenticity of Katniss' disorientation in the way the first person narration does in the novels.[403] A pessimistic observation may be that the commodification of *The Hunger Games* brand disrupts its call for the authentic in the exactly the manner the novel warns against. Although *Mockingjay* calls for a "revival of political participation in an attempt to break through the stages of alienated existence and the inauthenticity of being in the world, which are reinforced continuously by a climate of advertising and media communication,"[404] this may itself be an example of the very communication Collins' novel warns about.

Final Conclusions

Mockingjay accepts certain characteristics of the postmodern tradition while rejecting others. The novel warns readers of a world where mediation, capitalism, and appropriation, are the root of the destruction of the authentic when, as a text, it is a product meant to make profit by the same means that the novel lambasts. The theoretical construct of reality collapse may be one that is inevitable, but if the material is rediscovered in culture and scholarship, reality can reaffirm the positive potential of the rhetorical nature of authenticity.

However, the material is not a foolproof way to contain the trauma of reality collapse, nor does it erase the conditions that make it possible. At the end of the novel, when "the arenas have been completely destroyed, the memorials built, [and] there are no

more Hunger Games,"[405] Katniss and Peeta try and preserve the reality of the pain they have experienced by grounding their memories in the materiality of a book. Even though the book acts as a stabilizing reference point for their histories, it remains closed to Katniss and Peeta's children until some unforeseen time when their innocence can no longer be protected from the past of their parents. In this sense, authenticity, reality, the material, and all of the concepts discussed in this thesis may aid or abate the crawl towards a collapsing reality, which can only be recovered through the material. But, like Katniss and Peeta's book, that material reality can still be coopted, edited, opened or closed.

Unfortunately, Collins' heroine provides us more questions than answers about how to guard against a state of collapsed reality. I hope that other cultural critics will continue to investigate the conditions which make reality collapse possible, and to continue to investigate the concept of authenticity though all of its forms. Although all dystopian novels warn people of events, governments, conflicts, and ideologies that "alienate individuals from each other, and 'destroy' society by undermining institutions of mutual support,"[406] *Mockingjay* ponders whether all that is needed to survive the plights of modern and future times is to look to the material and others for such support.

"Real or not Real?...Real."[407]

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