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“As long as you can find yourself, you’ll never starve”: Green Consciousness in The Hunger Games Trilogy

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While The Hunger Games trilogy is clearly commenting on governmental control, corruption, the exploitation of labor, and capitalism it is also providing commentary on the role of nonhuman nature in the Western consciousness and our treatment of the earth. The Capitol symbolizes humankind’s ultimate break from nonhuman nature and a need for reverence for the earth. Katniss represents a renewal of the connection between human and nonhuman nature and an appreciation for the earth’s gifts. Katniss and the mockingjay symbolize the strength and resilience of nonhuman nature and the Capitol’s inability to control human and nonhuman nature. The overthrow of the Capitol is a cautionary tale against mistreating and exploiting the resources of the earth, including both human and nonhuman nature. This paper will investigate the aspects of green consciousness and ecofeminism in The Hunger Games trilogy. I will examine Collins’ (2008, 09, 10) choice to interrogate the existence of dualisms within the trilogy. Next, I will provide an ecofeminist analyze of the Capitol and Katniss and show how these characters are warning us (the Western world) against our current path, and encouraging us to return to a more respectful way of living.

“As Long As You Can Find Yourself, You’ll Never Starve” Green Consciousness in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy

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THESIS STATEMENT

While *The Hunger Games* trilogy is clearly commenting on governmental control, corruption, the exploitation of labor, and capitalism it is also providing commentary on the role of nonhuman nature in the Western consciousness and our treatment of the earth. The Capitol symbolizes humankind’s ultimate break from nonhuman nature and a need for reverence for the earth. Katniss represents a renewal of the connection between human and nonhuman nature and an appreciation for the earth’s gifts. Katniss and the mockingjay symbolize the strength and resilience of nonhuman nature and the Capitol’s inability to control human and nonhuman nature. The overthrow of the Capitol is a cautionary tale against mistreating and exploiting the resources of the earth, including both human and nonhuman nature. This research investigates the aspects of green consciousness and ecofeminism in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. First, I will examine Suzanne Collins’ (2008, 09, 10) choice to interrogate the existence of dualisms within the trilogy. Next, I will provide an ecofeminist analyze of the Capitol and Katniss and show how these characters are warning us (the Western world) against our current path, and encouraging us to return to a more respectful way of living.

GREEN CONSCIOUSNESS and ECOFEMINISM

Green consciousness incorporates an understanding of, and respect for, nonhuman nature that has been generally disregarded as less important than, or subservient to, humankind. It is “a holistic worldview, and one that offers alternative conceptions of human and nonhuman subjectivity, of human’s relationships with each other and with nonhuman nature” (Caputi 2011: 40).

Although green consciousness and ecofeminism both believe in the equality of women and other marginalized groups, ecofeminist principals are based on the parallels between the treatment of women in patriarchy and the treatment of nonhuman nature.

ANALYSIS



Figure 1. Katniss' Mockingjay Pin

Rejection of Dualisms

- Collins’ characters subvert the hegemonic “tradition of gender characteristics as rigid complements eliminating overlap” (Plumwood 1993: 50).
- Katniss is the main breadwinner for her family, she hunts, she is opinionated and of the three main characters (Katniss, Peeta, and Gale), Katniss is the least obsessed with obtaining a romantic partner.
- Peeta subverts hegemonic concepts of “masculinity”; he is an artist, he has no hunting skills, and he is more in touch and open with his feelings than Katniss. Peeta’s character shows a valuing of traditional “feminine” characteristics, particularly because he is the romantic partner Katniss ultimately chooses.

The Capitol

- The Capitol of Panem is constructed around the ideology of logical positivism.
- Logical positivism “assumes that valid, verifiable, hence positive, knowledge of the world derives ultimately from experience obtained through the senses or by experiment and interpretation” which “claims to be objective” (Merchant 1996: 60).
- The Capitol thrives on this subject-object duality, which creates a “philosophy of domination” (Merchant 1996: 61). Because an “active controlling subject [the Capitol] is separate from and dominant over a passive controlled object [the districts], the scientific rationale of objectivity can legitimate control over whatever has been assigned by culture to a lower place in the ‘natural’ order of things” (Merchant 1996:61).



Figure 2. The katniss plant for which *The Hunger Games* heroine is named.



Figure 3. The Greek Goddess Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt.

Katniss Everdeen

- Katniss is named for an edible root. Her father tells her “As long as you can find yourself, you’ll never starve” (Collins 2008:52). Indeed, the katniss plant is what ends up saving her family’s lives after the death of her father.
- Katniss demonstrates self-sufficiency, and knowledge about the earth and nonhuman nature.
- Katniss shares many similarities with the Greek goddess Artemis, “who, more than any other [...] embodies hunting and the world of wild nature” (Stange 1997:136).

- Katniss is not interested in “battling” nonhuman nature, but coexisting; she sees nonhuman nature as something to learn and understand, not conquer. Conversely, the Capitol, which is interested in controlling human and nonhuman nature is unable to successfully do either.

CONCLUSIONS

The Capitol’s fate should serve as a warning to the Western world. The way we treat the earth and our treatment of human and nonhuman animals is not sustainable. We lack an understanding of the importance of respect for human and nonhuman life. Katniss shows us that a valuing of life and of the earth’s resources will endure much longer than our current valuing of domination and control. We need to recognize *The Hunger Games* trilogy’s messages about respecting human life and nonhuman life, and the disturbing amount of similarities between the Capitol citizens and dominant Western culture.



Figure 4. Katniss Everdeen as played by Jennifer Lawrence in *The Hunger Games* film (2012).

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