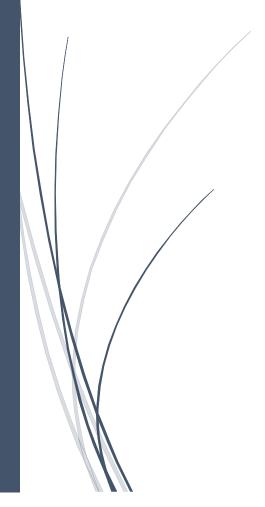# The Performance of the Strong Female Character

English 10. Semester Project

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Abstract:

This thesis paper discusses the strong female character archetype found in Hollywood movies and the different iterations of this female character trope. To investigate and discuss the strong female character archetype examples such as Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games (2012)* and Diana Prince from *Wonder Woman (2017)* will be analyzed and discussed as strong female characters. The strong independent female character will be investigated through the literary scope of character complexity and the cultural scope of gender performativity, to see if the strong female character is strong due to its often masculine nature. The combination of literary characters presented through visual culture and analyzed through a cultural scope seeks to prove both positive and negative cultural impacts this character archetype is capable of bringing with it as possible female icons and role models.

The first part of this analysis will deal with Katniss Everdeen as an example of a true strong female character, an iteration of the strong female character that embodies both masculine and feminine character traits. This iteration of the strong female character archetype that Katniss portrays embraces both masculinity and femininity, as it is a highly complex character that focuses on the inner values of the character. This complex and balanced form of the strong female character presents the character archetype in a positive manner, that places both masculine and feminine character traits as equals, as it finds strengths and weaknesses in both. As Katniss portrays this true strong female archetype it is concluded that this iteration of the character archetype must be seen as the healthiest and most complex version of the strong female character and the ideal role model.

 The second part of the analysis and discussion of the strong female character deals with Diana Prince 'aka' Wonder Woman, as an example of the traditional strong female character. This version of the strong female character does not portray the same balance between gender traits as the previous version shown through Katniss, as this version is predominantly masculine in nature and mostly favors masculine character traits. This part of the analysis also questions the slight sexualization of Wonder Woman and the meaning behind the narrative setting of WW1, as this presents a strong female character fighting both to heroically end the horrors of war and the toxic view of the patriarchy.

The thesis paper concludes that both the traditional and the true version of the strong female character archetype must be seen as good or healthy, whereas the true version is the rarest and most complex version of the character archetype. In its discussion of the strong female character archetype, the paper finds that even though the traditional strong female character may be good and healthy enough, then it does come with the risk of making the character too masculine and in turn portraying masculinity as superior and femininity as being inferior.

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Introduction:

Hollywood movies have been presenting us with a plethora of strong and iconic characters throughout the years. Many of which have been strong female characters such as the strong superpowered heroine or the tragic sci-fi protagonist who fights for survival and the safety of her loved ones. This creation and presentation of the strong female character seems to have developed drastically throughout the years, which ultimately leads to one questioning the portrayal of said female character trope. How is the strong female character portrayed and why is it portrayed in this particular way? And are there other ways of creating and presenting this strong female character trope? These are some of the questions that this paper will be dealing with as it will investigate two female Hollywood protagonists from popular movies such as *The Hunger Games (2012)* and *Wonder Woman (2017)*. The concept of the strong female character is a rather broad concept with a rather questionable execution. This paper will be looking at this character trope and will try to shine some light on the nature of the strong female character, as this character trope might not seem to be what it claims to be. The performance of the strong female character might not be as feminine as one might think, as many recent strong female characters have been scrutinized for their performance as such. One might find that the strong female character may just be the traditional strong male action hero in disguise, as the strong female character often tends to be oversexualized or made too masculine. This is one of the major problems that this paper will try to uncover, the rather masculine nature of the strong female character and the cultural impact of these strong female characters. Can we even call strong female characters strong females if they are just males in disguise? The analysis of Katniss Everdeen and Diana 'aka' Wonder Woman in this paper will try to uncover some of the intricate details of the strong female character archetype, as well as look into multiple iterations of said character archetype investigating whether or not these different portrayals are good or bad, healthy or unhealthy literally and culturally speaking.

Thesis Statement:

How do Hollywood movies and media present or portray the strong female character? How is the character trope portrayed in the movies *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Wonder Woman* (2017)? What effect does this portrayal of the strong female character have culturally? Is the character trope good or bad? Healthy or unhealthy?

Theory and Methodology:

This section of the paper will include the theory and methodology that is to be used in the later analysis and discussion. This section therefore serves to present and explain the methodology and the different theories that will be guiding the analysis.

Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion:

For some time now the most dominant ways of reading, analyzing, and ultimately interpreting literature and media have been through critique and critical reading. Critique is a dominant way of reading and a critical way of reading. This kind of reading seeks to draw out flaws and failures of a text as it reads between the lines to explain how it fails, why it fails, and what it fails at seeing or doing. This idea of critique and critical reading is described by Rita Felski in her work "The Limits of Critique" where she also seeks to redescribe this dominant way of reading, which we know as critique (Felski, 2015). In this redescription, Felski makes great use of the form of reading called *the hermeneutics of suspicion* which was coined by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (Felski, 2015). This idea and the concept of the hermeneutics of suspicion never really gained speed among the literary critics as Felski argues that these literary critics have been more engaged with the form of critical reading that critique gives rise to. This form of critical reading birthed by critique is what Felski intends to redescribe through Ricoeur as a hermeneutics of suspicion (Felski, 2015).

"As we will see, the idea of critique contains varying hues and shades of meaning, but its key elements include the following: a spirit of skeptical questioning or outright condemnation, an emphasis on its precarious position vis-á-vis overbearing and oppressive social forces, the claim to be engaged in some kind of radical intellectual and/or political work, and the assumption that whatever is *not* critical must therefore be uncritical." (Felski, 2015, p. 9).

Assumptions like these are what Felski seeks to redescribe or redefine as the hermeneutics of suspicion presented by Ricoeur. Ricoeur's phrase, the hermeneutics of suspicion, encompasses a range of diverse techniques with the purpose of scanning through texts searching for any sign or evidence of transgression or resistance (Felski, 2015). Through this notion, it must be understood that this phrase by Ricoeur is a combination of multiple critical practices not just a singular form of critique or practice. This means that critique as a hermeneutics of suspicion transcends basic critical

reading by evolving from being just a literary practice into a much broader concept. Through this notion it must be understood that critique as a hermeneutics of suspicion becomes more of a literary and cultural method rather than just a literary practice. As explained by Felski, "These practices combine, in differing ways, an attitude of vigilance, detachment, and wariness (suspicion) with identifiable conventions of commentary (hermeneutics) – allowing us to see that critique is as much a matter of affect and rhetoric as of philosophy or politics." (Felski, 2015, p.9). In this explanation Felski seeks to clarify that critique as a hermeneutics of suspicion is a critical concept that is made up of more than just literary terms such as propositions and intellectual arguments. It is important to note that this explanation of critique as a hermeneutics of suspicion completely evolves the common understanding of critique as it becomes more than just an ordinary literary practice. It must simply be stated, that through this evolution critique, as the hermeneutics of suspicion, becomes something more similar to a literary and cultural method. It transforms from an ordinary literary practice into this literary and cultural method that is still able to function as a literary practice but at the same time be so much more than that, as it enables itself to apply the idea of critical reading to a much broader spectrum.

Critique as a hermeneutics of suspicion becomes a critical method that is able to deal with more than just literature as it becomes a broader concept that is able to deal with literature, culture, and reality itself. This is the case as critique gains cultural, social, and political agency through this redescription. By understanding critique as the hermeneutics of suspicion it is redefined as a critical method through which we are able to deal with certain subjects with the ability to change them (Felski, 2015). By turning critique into a broader method, it can be argued that it gains more relevance as it becomes able to work in a broader and more varied field as we become able to apply the practice of critique to cultural, social, and literary studies. This method of critique makes us able to critically read, understand, and analyze literature and media and draw out not only literary aspects but also social, political, and cultural aspects as well. This will be exemplified later on in the analysis of Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman, as we become able to draw out and analyze both literary and cultural aspects of the movies.

The redescription of critique as the hermeneutics of suspicion that Felski seeks to clarify and explain presents us with certain questions about critics and how they work with critique. It more specifically questions why critics hastily seek to expose, unravel, and demystify their given subject through

critical interrogation. This unmasking nature of critique places it as the dominant metalanguage within literary studies. This dominant style of critique creates a certain curiosity as Felski raises the question of there being other alternatives, i.e. what kinds or styles of imaginative and/or intellectual alternatives does the dominant style of critique overshadow? (Felski, 2015). Felski argues that the hermeneutics of suspicion includes a more diverse style of critique as it is broader in its nature. The hermeneutics of suspicion is a phrase that introduces a way of reading that is skeptical or suspicious while it also introduces a way of thinking of how and why we read literature and media through the word hermeneutics. The hermeneutics of suspicion is a phrase that sets up skeptical and suspicious reading as a "distinctive and describable habit of thought." (Felski, 2015). It is a method of critique that invites skeptical and distinctive ways of reading as a habit of thought all while the dominant and more common style of critique and critical reading most commonly is hailed for its puncturing and deflating nature (Felski, 2015). The common understanding of critique often tends to be rather negative as its main focus point is to investigate or interrogate its given subject and through that point out its failures and flaws. As Felski states, "We are told that critique needs to become more negative (to avoid all risk of co-option) or more positive (so it can be truly dialectical)." (Felski, 2015, p. 14). Through this statement by Felski, it can be understood that critique can be positive in style and that it is not necessarily negative all the time. By this understanding, as we see critique as the hermeneutics of suspicion, it is to be clarified that critique does not need to necessarily focus on pointing out failures and flaws but also point out good traits and points where the subject succeeds. This is the case as the hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to maintain a form of suspicious and skeptical reading which is not necessarily negative. Ricoeur's phrase and Felski's redescription of critique as the hermeneutics of suspicion is a concept that aims to be both positive and negative in its approach. This is the case as the hermeneutics of suspicion is a critical method and concept that invites and encourages multiple ways of critical reading with a multitude of different approaches (Felski, 2015). The hermeneutics of suspicion as a concept and a method must therefore be understood as a much broader entity in comparison to the standard form or style of critique. This becomes apparent as the standard or common form of critique presents us with a singular style of critical reading with a specific purpose whereas the hermeneutics of suspicion is more varied in style and use since it leaves room for different approaches.

Finally, it is important to understand that the hermeneutics of suspicion, as the critical method that it is, still is highly capable of making use of the more negative practice of critical reading that is found in the standard or common form of critique. It must be understood that the negative path of critical reading is a common route even for the hermeneutics of suspicion but that it is far from the only critical path as it incorporates both positive and negative styles of critical reading. The hermeneutics of suspicion must be understood and perceived as a critical method that welcomes different paths and styles of critical reading as well as different approaches to critical reading and thinking. It is a critical concept that is both positive and negative and by evolving the practice of critique and critical reading into a critical method it broadens the framework in which it is able to function. This broader framework means that the hermeneutics of suspicion goes beneath the surface of the subject/object that it is analyzing as it looks for mistakes and hidden meanings and structures. The hermeneutics of suspicion tends to look for hidden meanings and structures that are ideological in nature. This would also explain the broader framework of the hermeneutics of suspicion and further prove its existence as a cultural and critical method. To emphasize this further we may look at Stuart Hall's definition of ideology interpreted by E.M. Griffin in the work "A First Look at Communication Theory" (Griffin, 2012). In chapter 27 of Griffin's work ideology is explained as "The mental frameworks different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of the way society works." (Griffin, 2012, p. 344). As Griffin interprets the theory of Stuart Hall it becomes clear that ideology as a concept is a way of perceiving society and a way of thinking about or figuring out how society works. By this short and precise definition of ideology as a concept, it becomes clear that the hermeneutics of suspicion functions on this broader framework as it is able to examine and analyze texts and media on an ideological level. This further places the hermeneutics of suspicion as a critical and cultural method as it becomes able to deal with text and media on multiple levels. "Hall defines *ideologies* as the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works." (Griffin, 2012, p. 344). This more detailed explanation or definition of ideology by Stuart Hall paints a greater picture of the ideological framework in which the hermeneutics of suspicion is able to function. It explains multiple of the different levels in which the hermeneutics of suspicion is able to work and function. This seems to further indicate that the hermeneutics of suspicion is more akin to a critical and cultural method, as

it does not just look through and analyze texts and media on a literary level but also on a cultural level as it becomes able to find and unmask hidden ideological structures and meanings within its given subject of analysis.

Gender Performativity – The Act of Genders:

Each and every day in our lives we all perform different roles to manifest ourselves within society. The different performances we fulfill, act out, and encounter every day make us who we are and teach us how to perceive ourselves and others. The different performances that we encounter appear in a variety of different shapes and sizes such as the roles of teacher and student or husband and wife. We also encounter more noticeable performances such as actors performing the roles of characters in movies and theaters. We all act out different performances to fulfill our respective roles within society and some of us might share similar roles and performances but one performed act that we all do on a daily basis is the performance of gender. This is a topic that Judith Butler tackles in her work "Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex" where she argues that gender is a performative entity and explains its performative aspects. Butler presents the argument that gender is part of us as humans and that it is a biologically determined factor but that it includes performative aspects (Butler, 2011). This presents the idea that even though our gender is biologically determined at birth we are still able to perform the role of the opposite gender, which Diana 'aka' Wonder Woman will exemplify later on in the analysis. This practice of gender performativity must therefore be understood as a concept or practice that is made up of specific determiners that rule over the perception of the masculine and the feminine. These determiners that rule and regulate the perception of genders and the different performances of genders are created socially. It must be argued that it is the norms within a given society that end up acting as the determiners of gender performativity. By this understanding, it must be argued that the normative constraints of society have the ability to govern, produce, and regulate bodily beings and our perception of them (Butler, 2011). On that note, it must be stated that different societies or different parts of a given society might have their own set of normative social constraints that govern and regulate their perception of gender and bodily beings.

The notion of gender performativity that Butler presents finds its roots in Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of habitus. This is apparent as Butler's notion of gender performativity presents gender as an

entity or a concept that is socially constructed, perceived, and understood. Gender performativity as a concept or practice presents the idea of the individual being able to wake up in the morning and pick their gender like it was just a piece of clothing that they then remove when they go to bed at night. This understanding of the individual willfully and consciously picking out their gender must be said to be far from what the idea of gender performativity really is. The notion of gender performativity is more fittingly described by Butler as the following, "Such a willful and instrumental subject, one who decides on its gender, is clearly not its gender from the start and fails to realize that its existence is already decided by gender. Certainly, such a theory would restore a figure of a choosing subject – humanist – at the center of a project whose emphasis on construction seems to be quite opposed to such a notion." (Butler, 2011, p. 10). Through this quote and explanation by Butler, it can be understood that the concept and the idea that gender performativity is to be seen as a non-deliberate act and as an act that is fabricated and performed subconsciously. This non-deliberate and subconscious act or performance is based on and regulated by the social norms and normative restraints that govern the perception and understanding of gender.

The concept that is gender performativity is to be understood as governed and regulated through a society's social determiners and the power of its normative constraints. Gender performativity is therefore to be understood as an act that is non-deliberate and as what Butler describes as a "reiterative and citational practice" (Butler, 2011). By this definition, gender performativity is to be seen as a concept that constructs gender on the basis of repeated social acts. This means that the repeated social acts are gendered and that they give credit to the existing genders individually. These social acts are gendered through the norms and the normative power and constraints of a given society. Genders become entities or constructs that are accredited by the social norms that exist within a given society. By this notion, gender performativity must undoubtedly be understood as a reiterative and citational practice. Gender performativity as a concept and a citational practice must be perceived and understood as practice and a performance that is discursive in nature. This presents the idea that gender performativity is a discursive practice that functions in relation to the regulatory norms of sex. Gender performativity is presented as a concept that is made up of a combination or rather a collaboration between non-deliberate acts and social determiners that work together to constitute the materiality of the body in a performative fashion to ultimately materialize the sex of the body (Butler, 2011).

Materiality will be reassessed by the power that stems from the social norms in a given society. It is through the bodily movements and actions that materiality is to be rethought. This notion argues that gender will not be able to be understood as a cultural construct that is understood by an individual's body or its given sex. It argues that gender presents the idea that normativity determines how sex is to be understood and that the materiality of the body is unthinkable apart from the regulatory norms of materialization (Butler, 2011). As stated by Butler; ""Sex" is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility." (Butler, 2011, p. 13.). The notion of performativity of gender is to be interpreted not as an act but rather as a reiterative power of discourse to bring into existence the phenomena that it is able to regulate and constrain. It is the construal of sex as a concept or an aspect that is no longer a bodily given construct of gender but rather as a cultural norm that is able to govern the materialization of bodies (Butler, 2011).

The socially constructed and regulated concept of gender performativity must be argued to be a social entity that defines the male and female gender. Gender performativity defines gender, based on the idea of what is considered as being masculine and feminine. Masculinity and femininity can be said to be the spectrum in which gender performativity works and functions as it is the idea of the masculine and the feminine that defines gender. This idea of the masculine and the feminine and the spectrum in between where gender performativity functions must be argued to be constructed based upon the social norms and constraints that are present within a given society. This notion of gender performativity working within the masculine and the feminine and the spectrum between the two can be argued to be the factor that adds an almost act-like status to sex and gender. This act-like status that gender performativity provides to the idea and perception of gender must of course be seen and understood as being constructed and regulated by the social norms and constraints of the given society. To further explain this act-like status provided by gender performativity then it must be noted that it is constructed through the social understanding of gender and the social regulation of gender. Through this notion, it must be argued that it is the different understandings of gender that gender performativity is truly able to provide gender with this act-like status and ultimately turn gender into a performance.

Gender performativity must be understood as a concept that is a combination of biology and psychology as it combines the fact of gender, which is biologically determined from birth, with the psychological understanding of identity and the individual. This combination of the biological and psychological aspects of gender and identity is what truly enables the performative side of gender performativity as it makes gender a more intricate matter as it is not just a biologically given. This performative aspect of gender is of course highly regulated by the social norms and constraints that exist within given societies. "Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity." (Butler, 2011, p. 91). As explained by Butler the social constraints and the social norms function as the driving factor for gender performativity. So instead of being a hindrance to the performative aspects of gender the norms and constraints of a given society must be accredited with sustaining performativity. This understanding of gender performativity presents the notion of the social norms and constraints that govern it as being part of a larger group culture. This larger group culture contains its own set of norms and constraints that govern and regulate the understanding, materialization, and manifestation of gender. This larger group culture has its own set of social norms as mentioned earlier but within this larger group culture, a variety of different sub-cultures exist. These sub-cultures branch out from the social norms of the larger group culture and gain their own set of sub-cultural social norms and constraints that dictate how gender is perceived and performed. These sub-cultural social norms present multiple ways of gender performativity as they all have their own set of social norms that govern, constrain, and regulate the performativity of gender. Through this idea of a variety of sub-cultures existing within a larger group culture, we are introduced to the existence of a multitude of different gender performances and gender perceptions, like the cultural differences between the Capitol and the 12 districts in the Hunger Games narrative universe. This also presents the idea that we as individuals are able to choose the social norms and constraints through which we will be performing our gender and through which our gender will be perceived and understood.

The larger group culture should perhaps be seen and understood as the mainstream group culture in which a variety of sub-cultures exist. This understanding of society as a larger mainstream group culture with its mainstream social norms and constraints that govern gender performativity presents

the idea of a sub-culture that could go against these mainstream social norms (Griffin, 2012). As these sub-cultures are able to achieve their own set of social norms and constraints, through which gender performativity is governed, then these sub-cultures and the individuals within them become able to act or perform against the mainstream while still fitting in with or adhering to a sub-cultural set of social norms (Griffin, 2012). Through this understanding, it must also be mentioned how primary and secondary socialization act as a key contributor to the notion of gender performativity. The different sub-cultures that exist within society become examples of secondary socialization which as mentioned earlier makes the individual able to perform against the mainstream social norms and understanding of gender. As for primary socialization, this functions as the individual's introduction to the mainstream social norms and understandings of how genders are to be perceived and performed. The notion of mainstream culture and sub-culture presents the fact that the social norms and constraints may vary and may produce different ways of gender performativity and gender perception or understanding while cementing the fact that gender performativity is a socially constructed and regulated concept or entity. To further explain the notion of sub-culture and how it goes against the mainstream or dominant culture we must make use of Griffin's interpretation of Stuart Hall's theory of ideology (Griffin, 2012). Here we are introduced to the idea of a dominant ideology that governs the dominant culture and the resistance of this dominant ideology and the dominant culture (Griffin, 2012). At first, it must be mentioned that Griffin in his interpretation explains that dominant ideology is upheld by constraint which contributes to the concept of gender performativity and presents the constraints and the norms that sub-cultures and their ideologies have to resist or cut themselves loose from (Griffin, 2012).

"Hall wants to liberate people from an unknowing acquiescence to the dominant ideology of the culture. Obviously, *critical theory* and *cultural studies* are close relatives. However, Hall places less emphasis on rationality and more emphasis on resistance." (Griffin, 2012, p. 345).

By this interpretation and explanation by Griffin, it must be understood that Stuart Hall emphasizes the resistance of the dominant ideology and culture in an attempt to liberate people from its constraints. An example of such ideological resistance would be Katniss and her resistance to the dominant ideology of the Capitol. It must be understood as an attempt to inform people to not reluctantly accept the dominant ideology and the dominant culture and its power. Through this statement, it can be understood that differing sub-cultures and their ideologies are examples of

resistance towards the dominant culture and ideology. This resistance creates new ways of gender performativity as the sub-cultures and their ideologies present new norms and constraints to regulate and govern the performance of gender. To further support the notion of subcultural resistance towards the dominant culture we may look to the work "Subculture: The meaning of style" by Dick Hebdige (Hebdige, 2003). In this work, Hebdige defines subculture in the following way, "The word 'subculture' is loaded down with mystery. It suggests secrecy, masonic oaths, an underworld. It also invokes the larger and no less difficult concept 'culture'." (Hebdige, 2003, p. 4). This definition of sub-culture presents it as an underworld to the dominant culture that invites secrecy as it is not necessarily known commonly throughout society. Through this definition, Hebdige further explains that subcultures represent a challenge to hegemony as they tend to stand in resistance to the dominant culture (Hebdige, 2003). This challenge to cultural and ideological hegemony that sub-cultures represent is not directly issued by their existence but instead indirectly by their style (Hebdige, 2003). Some sub-cultures may stray more from the dominant culture and adopt a style that presents social norms and constraints that pose a larger challenge to the cultural hegemony than others.

"Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalization'. As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus. (Hebdige, 2003, p.18).

As stated by the quote from Hebdige then the different styles that exist within different sub-cultures are extremely significant as they set the limits of performativity and its transformation. It explains that in relation to gender performativity then the style within a given sub-culture or social group is extremely important as it helps maintain or create the normative constraints and the social norms that govern it. Through this quote, it also becomes apparent how the style of a given sub-culture is able to go against the nature of the dominant culture and against the normalization of the dominant culture. The style of a given sub-culture enables resistance towards the dominant culture and this resistance of the dominant culture creates new ways of understanding, perceiving and ultimately performing gender. The clash between dominant culture and sub-culture must therefore be seen as an important factor of gender performativity.

The concept that is gender performativity as broad and various as it is must be understood as discursive practice. On that note, it is important to clarify that gender performativity is a concept or discursive practice that encompasses both speech acts as well as bodily acts. Butler mentions this in the work "Undoing Gender" from 2004 where she argues that performativity is about both speech acts and bodily acts (Butler, 2004). This presents the notion that gender performativity as a concept and a discursive practice must be understood or perceived as the combination of bodily acts and speech acts as they function together to manifest gender. "There is always a dimension of bodily life that cannot be fully represented, even as it works as the condition and activating condition of language." (Butler, 2004, p.198-199). As stated by Butler in the quote it is through the combination of speech acts and bodily acts that performativity must be understood. This symbiotic relationship between bodily acts and speech acts can be a crucial factor in the construction and perception of gender performativity. This relationship between the two types of acts is what truly defines performativity as these bodily acts and speech acts give rise to one another. As bodily acts give rise to speech acts in the form of language, we are presented with the understanding that language is enabled to carry bodily aims and ultimately perform bodily deeds which are only possible through the combination of the two types of acts. Through this relationship between the different acts, it must be understood that speech acts like language become able to accomplish more than it would normally be able to do on its own (Butler, 2004). This is also the case the other way around as language or speech acts also give rise to bodily acts. This definition of gender performativity presents it as a discursive practice and an intricate concept that encompasses a variety of different performative aspects and as a socially controlled and regulated entity that is governed by the norms and constraints of society.

Gendered Emotions:

When dealing with a concept like gender performativity as presented by Butler it becomes important to understand or investigate some of the underlying aspects of the concept. One important aspect must be argued to be emotions which Sarah Ahmed describes in the work "The Cultural Politics of Emotion" (Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed presents an interesting perception of the concept of emotions in an argument of the British nation being a "soft touch" nation. It must first be stated that the theory of emotion that Ahmed presents encompasses both individual and collective bodies and deals with how emotions work to shape them (Ahmed, 2014). But in this argument of the "soft touch" nation

Ahmed presents the idea of soft and hard emotions as she uses these metaphors to describe the difference between the two kinds of emotions. The soft nation or collective body is described as being too emotional as it is soft, weak, easily shaped or bruised, and vulnerable to abuse as it is easily manipulated by the demands of others (Ahmed, 2014). The counterpart to this is the hard nation or collective body that is less emotional, less open and is not moved or manipulated easily and that is perceived as being hard or tough (Ahmed, 2014). These arguments of the soft and hard nation or collective body and the idea behind the concept of soft and hard emotions can of course be transferred directly to the individual body or rather the individual person. The argument just presents the idea of different emotional behaviors which undoubtedly must be considered gendered and a part or attribute of Butler's gender performativity (Butler, 2011). As Ahmed describes it;

"The use of metaphors of 'softness' and 'hardness' shows us how emotions become attributes of collectives, which get constructed as 'being' through 'feeling'. Such attributes are of course gendered: the soft national body is a feminized body, which is 'penetrated' or 'invaded' by others." (Ahmed, 2014, p. 11).

As Ahmed explains in the quote then the metaphors used for emotions being soft or hard present the idea that emotions without a doubt are gendered. Through the quote, it can be understood that soft emotions are considered feminine emotions while hard emotions are considered masculine emotions. It also seems to prove or at least suggest the point that emotion undoubtedly is a part of gender performativity as emotions are attributes of collectives or individuals that are constructed socially (Ahmed, 2014). This seems to be the case as these gendered emotions become attributes of the individual or the collective social grouping, which ultimately becomes an important factor in the perception and manifestation of gender and the performance of it. The notion of 'being' through 'feeling' also points towards emotions being a great factor for gender performativity (Ahmed, 2014). This seems to be the case as it can be understood that gendered emotions, as attributes of gender performance, help with shaping and manifesting the individual and the individual gender.

The idea of using metaphors such as soft and hard to describe feminine and masculine emotions seems to point towards some emotions being stronger than others. The idea of the softer emotions being considered feminine, and the harder emotions being considered masculine seems to paint the picture of the masculine emotions being the stronger emotions in the hierarchy of gendered

emotions. This must of course be understood not as a given fact in all social circumstances but instead be understood through the social norms of a given culture, sub-culture, or social grouping. As presented by Ahmed, "It is not difficult to see how emotions are bound up with the securing of social hierarchy: emotions become attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is 'lower' or 'higher' into bodily traits." (Ahmed, 2014, p. 13). By this explanation by Ahmed, it can be understood that emotion is an attribute of an individual or a collective that secures social hierarchy which could present the idea of some emotions being valued higher or lower than others and at the same time stronger or weaker than others. This also seems to further prove that gendered emotions are truly interconnected or a direct part of the notion of gender performativity as it is also dependent on society and the social norms and regulations that govern it. The metaphors used for emotions being soft or hard seem to further point towards the emotional social hierarchy where the soft feminine emotions might be considered weaker than the hard masculine emotions. This leads to the idea that the softer or more feminine individual or collective body seems to be more emotional and vulnerable due to its openness, whereas the harder or more masculine individual or collective body is less emotional and less vulnerable due to its tougher nature being less open to others (Ahmed, 2014). As Ahmed explains it, "Hardness is not the absence of emotion, but a different emotional orientation towards others." (Ahmed, 2014, p. 13). Through this explanation, it can be understood that a harder masculine emotional body is not indicative of emotional absence, but it is instead indicative of less emotion and a harder or tougher emotional orientation toward others, which is exemplified through Wonder Woman and her role as a warrior. This also presents the idea of emotions not only shaping the individual or the collective body but also their orientation towards others and the perception of others.

"Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others. Indeed, attending to emotions might show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others." (Ahmed, 2014, p. 13).

Through this explanation of how emotions shape the bodies of individuals and collectives, it is presented that gendered emotions are actions and reactions that support the manifestation of the body and gender. The idea that emotions are set up as the "you" and the "others" presents the notion that gendered emotions, especially in relation to gender performativity, are a socially

constructed and controlled attribute. This also explains how emotions shape bodies and genders due to their reactional nature. This reactional nature can be further explained as an individual's emotional actions are influenced by the social norms and understanding of gender which creates a fitting reactional response. It must therefore be argued that Ahmed's theory of gendered emotions is highly relatable to Butler's notion of gender performativity since gendered emotions become an important part or attribute of gender performativity and the manifestation of gender.

Characterology:

This part of the theory and methodology section will focus on the characterology that is to be used later on in the analysis of Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games* (2012) and Diana aka Wonder Woman from *Wonder Woman* (2017).

Flat and Round Characters:

Characters are found in almost every story written, told, or shown by men and women and these characters vary exponentially in shape, size, and behavior as they all have their own personality and identity. Characters can be seen as tools or devices for the author to use to progress the plot of his or her story or narrative. The variation in characters and the use of different kinds of characters is an important device for the writer as presented by E. M. Forster in his work "Aspects of the Novel" from 1927 (Forster, 1927). In this work, Forster further explains characters as tools or devices that are present to help the author tell or progress his or her story or narrative. In this explanation, Forster presents two kinds of characters as he states, "We may divide characters into flat and round." (Forster, 1927, p. 103). These two types of characters or the descriptions of characters as 'flat' or 'round' seem to differentiate characters from one another as it outs them into two boxes each with their own uses and benefits. Firstly, we will be looking at the 'flat' character type which Forster describes in the following way, "Flat characters were called 'humours' in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round." (Forster, 1927, p. 103-104). This explanation of the 'flat' character presents a character that is extremely simple as it is written or constructed around a single quality or concept and serves to fulfill that purpose or quality only. It can be understood from the explanation that this type of character is so simple in its pure form that it comes off as humorous

and as a caricature. It is also apparent from this explanation of the flat character type that when these characters start gaining more than one quality or factor to them then they start slowly transforming into the 'round' character type. Forster also states that "The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as 'I never will desert Mr. Micawber.' There is Mrs. Micawber – she says she won't desert Mr. Micawber, she doesn't, and there she is." (Forster, 1927, p. 104). By this statement and example, it becomes clear that the single sentence clearly and completely describes the character and that this is the concept of the character and its only quality. The character does not seem to exist outside of the single-sentence description (Forster, 1927). This exemplification of the 'flat' character further promotes the simplicity of the character and presents its lack of traits or qualities that more complex characters have in abundance.

'Flat' characters may be simple in design and lacking in qualities compared to its counterpart the 'round' characters but that does not make them useless. Forster presents two great advantages of the 'flat' character, the first being the character's recognizability. As stated by Forster, "One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in – recognized by the reader's emotional eye, not by the visual eye, which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name." (Forster, 1927, p. 105). The simple 'flat' characters are easy for the audience to recognize as their simple nature makes them easier to keep track of in comparison to more complex 'round' characters that continue to develop and evolve. This recognizability of 'flat' characters must also be argued to be useful for the author of the story as the quality and concept of the characters are simple and mostly only serve a singular purpose. Another advantage of the recognizability of the 'flat' characters is that they never need to be reintroduced and you never need to be wary of any sort of development. This simple nature and concept behind a 'flat' character even provides it with its own character atmosphere (Forster, 1927). The second advantage is that the 'flat' characters are easily remembered.

"A second advantage is that they are easily remembered by the reader afterward. They remain in his mind as unalterable for the reason that they were not changed by circumstances; they moved through circumstances, which gives them in retrospect a comforting quality, and preserves them when the book that produced them may decay." (Forster, 1927, p. 105-106).

As explained by Forster then the 'flat' characters are easily remembered by the reader/viewer as they remain unaltered and unchanged by the circumstances of the story. The simple nature of the 'flat' characters seems to attain a comforting quality for the reader/viewer as it never changes and therefore never betrays itself or its own purpose within the narrative. It can even be understood by Forster's explanation, that the 'flat' characters are so easy to remember that they might even outlive the story they appear in as they remain unaltered and unchanged in the mind of the reader/viewer due to their simplistic nature. To put it simply then these 'flat' characters are most likely easier to remember than the story or narrative they appear in. It seems to be the case as their simplicity makes them easier to remember than the complexity of the 'round' characters and the complexity of the narrative. Compared to the 'flat' character the 'round' character might not be as easily remembered, as the 'round' character develops and evolves as it has multiple facets just like a real human being (Forster, 1927). The 'round' character is modified by the scenes or scenarios it goes through throughout the narrative and it is this development of character that makes it more difficult to remember as there is way more to remember and keep track of compared to the simplicity of the 'flat' character. Compared to the 'flat' character then the 'round' character is just way more complex, and one could even exchange the ideas of 'flat' and 'round' with simple and complex characters instead. To further add to this comparison between the two character types then the 'round' character cannot be summed up in a single phrase or sentence as the simple 'flat' character can (Forster, 1927).

The comparison between the 'flat' and the 'round' character presents a significant difference between the two character types. It also seems to present some shortcomings of the 'flat' character as Forster writes, "For we must admit that flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones, and also that they are best when they are comic. A serious or tragic flat character is apt to be a bore." (Forster, 1927, p. 111). Here Forster explains how 'flat' characters even though they can be good and are rememberable do not stand as big achievements as they are but simple characters in nature. Furthermore, the statement implies that 'round' characters are big achievements as they are more complex in nature and more difficult to maintain, a complexity that will be shown later on with Katniss Everdeen. On top of that Forster adds that 'flat' characters work best when they are comic and that a tragic or serious 'flat' character simply does not work as great as they quickly become a bore (Forster, 1927). To this last statement, Forster later adds, "It is only

round people who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feelings except humour and appropriateness." (Forster, 1927, p. 111-112). By this statement, it becomes clear that, by Forster's definition, 'round' characters are the only characters that are fit to perform the tragic or more serious roles. This statement also presents the idea that 'round' characters are able to move the reader or the audience emotionally by performing these more complex roles. This seems to exemplify the complexity of the 'round' character as it is able to move or affect the reader/audience on an emotional level which can be said to be a more difficult task compared to the two-dimensional 'flat' character (Forster, 1927). The 'round' character can be explained as being more complex due to its developing and continuously evolving nature. The 'round' character must also be seen as a multifaceted character and not just two-dimensional as the 'flat' character. As Forster explains it, "The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is a flat pretending to be round." (Forster, 1927, p. 118). This explanation of the 'round' character states that to be a 'round' character it needs to be able to convincingly impact or surprise the reader/audience or else it should be considered a 'flat' character. It also states that 'flat' characters rarely if ever surprise but that if the character does surprise but not convincingly then it is also 'flat' (Forster, 1927). In conclusion, then the 'round' character is able to convincingly surprise or impact the reader/audience on a more emotional level while the 'flat' character may be easier to remember due to its simplicity (Forster, 1927). Finally, some might argue that the 'round' characters are easier to remember due to their complex and more life-like nature which is a valid argument, but it must be understood that it should be easier to remember the 'flat' characters as their whole character can be remembered through that singular aspect of their character. The dynamic between these character types is what makes and breaks them as they depend on each other since the 'flat' character makes the 'round' character seem rounder, more life-like, and complex. On that note, the 'round' character is there to make the 'flat' character seem simpler and in some cases emphasize their comedic value. The two character types ultimately depend on each other.

It Could Be People – or Textual Constructions:

From the topic of characters being 'flat' or 'round,' we now move on to describing whether characters could be considered people or at least thought of as fictitious people or just textual

constructions. To do this we must make use of the article "Det kunne være mennesker…" by Per Krogh Hansen. In this article, Hansen seeks to present an answer to this question as he presents a model of character analysis based on the notion of the possible world semantics (Hansen, 2002). Hansen refers to Uri Margolin in his explanation of the intentions of the possible world semantics as Margolin states that the intention behind the possible world semantics is to create a point of entry for literary theory and analysis to analyze the literary character. A point of entry that lets us discuss the literary character as a living individual without succumbing to naive mimicry which means that it remains anchored in the literary aspects such as the textual and linguistic aspects (Hansen, 2002). The notion of the possible world semantics that Hansen makes use of in his article is explained by Saul Kripke, one of the founding figures of the concept. Kripke presents the possible world semantics as a structural model that is set up as a fixed triple as Hansen describes it (Hansen, 2002). The model is presented as "(G, K, R)" where G is described as a privileged member or the real world, K is considered a set of possible worlds, and R is a reflective relation to both G and K (Hansen, 2002). Kripke explains the point of the model is to present K as the set of possible worlds where G is the real world, and we then have R that represents the relation or the connection between the different worlds G and K (Hansen, 2002). The notion of possible world semantics and the structured model by Kripke creates the foundation of a nuanced analysis and discussion of the relationship between fiction and reality which will be shown and exemplified later on in the analysis of Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman. It is a model that lets us analyze and discuss fictitious worlds and universes as possible worlds that each have their own conditions and entitlements even though they make use of real-life elements such as people and events from our actual world while still being anchored in the literary aspects and within the notion that these possible worlds and its inhabitants are discursively manifested (Hansen, 2002).

The structured model of character analysis presented by Hansen is not necessarily completely based on the possible world semantics but works on a similar level to it as it maintains its focus on the textual aspects of the subject. This structured model of character analysis will be used to analyze both Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman as it will provide us with a detailed model of analysis on the textual level. The analysis model by Hansen seeks to visualize the character as the entity that both connects and conveys the different textual aspects and levels while still leaving room for the semantic level to operate (Hansen, 2002). The character analysis model by Hansen takes its point of

departure with the notion of telling and showing and the distinction between them, a distinction that is crucial to how the character is presented and portrayed which could be either through a narrator (telling) or through the characters own actions (showing) (Hansen, 2002). Hansen's character analysis model is structured so that it operates on three organized levels the surface structure or surface level, the middle structure or the mid-level, and the depth structure or the depth level (appendix 1). The surface structure/level deals with the sequential presentation of the character and the actions that it is a part of. The surface structure/level is made up of five parts or five groups that each look at different distinctive areas of the character that are seen as being characterizing aspects. These five groups are "Handlinger (Actions)", "Sprog (Language)", "Meddelser (Messages)", "Fremtræden (Appearance)", and lastly "Interpersonelle karakteriseringer (Interpersonal characterizations)" (Hansen, 2002). The first group "Handlinger (Actions)" deals with the actions and interactions the character is a part of both actively and passively. "Sprog (Language)" deals with the language of the character through its lines and deals with both direct speech and the inner monologue of the character. This group also looks at the stylistic traits of the language that the character is using (Hansen,2002). "Meddelser (Messages)" is the group or part of the surface structure/level that deals with the messages and statements that can be attributed to the character. It mainly focuses on the content that is within the character's lines, statements, and actions that is crucial to the portrayal of the character as a special or unique identity within the story's universe. These messages and the content within them are expressed both implicitly and explicitly (Hansen, 2002). The penultimate group "Fremtræden (Appearance)" looks at the appearance of the character and characteristics such as social position and the naming of the character and even environmentally indicated characteristics (Hansen, 2002). The last group of the surface structure/level "Interpersonelle karakteriseringer (Interpersonal characterizations)" deals with the characteristics of the character that are presented by other characters both explicitly through direct speech or comments about the character and implicitly through their reactions (Hansen, 2002).

The five groups or parts of the surface structure/level are then put together by the viewer/reader to form the personality of the character. This puts the character in a discursive formation as they become a semantically charged subject (Hansen, 2002). This leads us to the middle structure/level that deals with the connotations of the material presented by the surface structure/level. It collects the traits of the character and deals with how the character is formed within the conscience of the

viewer/reader. The middle structure/level must be stated to be the place where the character attains its identity and can be seen as an existence. It is within the middle structure/level that the character can be distinguished as a given type of character such as the hero or the villain and it becomes clear what role the character is there to play or fulfill (Hansen, 2002). The dive from the surface level to the middle level also seems to present the idea of the character being in possession of inner values that let it have a stronger or weaker personality. This presents the fact that this model by Hansen is made primarily for 'round' characters presented by Forster as the 'flat' characters only make it to the surface level and never transcend to the middle or depth level due to their simple nature (Forster, 1927). It also presents the idea that the character is part of a story world in which the character is part of a social and cultural context that helps define it and adds to the character's mimetic value (Hansen, 2002). The last level of the model, the depth structure/level, deals with the rules, conventions, and structures that the text or media presents. These rules, conventions, and structures determine the character's possibilities of growth and evolution and the possibilities for the character's creation and presentation as well as its values (Hansen, 2002). It can be stated that the depth structure/level contains the set of rules that the text and its characters adhere to and is ultimately created by. The depth structure/level can be said to be the guarantee for the structuring of the character through thematic taxonomy or paradigms. These aspects of structural guarantee will only be visible implicitly as they will manifest through the two prior structures/levels the middle structure and the surface structure (Hansen, 2002). The depth level could or rather should be considered the ideological level of the character and the text or visual media as it contains the subject's thematic structure and the character's own perception of the world or society in which it lives (Griffin, 2012). This should also be considered the ideological level as it contains the dominating norms and paradigms of the character and the world it lives in (Griffin, 2012).

After the explanation of the possible world semantics and his own character analysis model, Hansen explains the notion of the mimetic trap. The mimetic trap can be said to be a character analysis gone wrong as the real world seems to affect the story world of possible worlds too heavily. The mimetic trap is in other words the confusion between the fictitious world and the actual real world (Hansen, 2002). A result of the mimetic trap could be if you add certain traits to a character that are not represented or explained in the text and through this allow the character to grow out of the text. The mimetic trap can be said to be a misreading of the character as you misinterpret the character

on the surface level which then leads to a misinterpretation of the character on the other levels of analysis. This misinterpretation caused by the confusion between the fictitious story world and the actual real world then leads to the addition of character traits that have not manifested within the text to make sense of the surface and middle structure of the character not aligning properly (Hansen, 2002). Hansen mentions and explains the mimetic trap as it is a major risk that the possible world semantics seems to present as it invites the idea of confusion between the sometimes realistically portrayed fictitious world and the actual world. Hansen seeks to clarify the importance of looking at the text as text and a story not just a possible parallel world to our own (Hansen, 2002). To avoid making the mistake of the mimetic trap that makes us see characters in fictitious stories as real human beings because they exist in a world that resembles our own Hansen emphasizes that we need to look at them differently. Hansen states that we need to look at these fictitious characters as what they truly are, fictitious textual characters or entities. We need to look at the characters within the stories as entities of significance that may in fact resemble human beings which present and build upon human aspects but do not truly present or represent the human as it actually is (Hansen, 2002). So, when we have to analyze Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman through the scope of the strong female character trope, we must keep in mind that they are not human beings but just fictitious beings that represent and build upon human aspects.

The Strong Female Character:

What is the strong female character? Or who is the strong female character? It is a character trope that has been around for some time and has evolved over time. The strong female character is a concept or character trope often associated with TV series or movies. Sadie Castro writes about this character trope in her article "THE 'STRONG FEMALE CHARACTER'" where she comments, "It's a phrase that I often roll my eyes at because these strong women are often not that. No, your strong female character kicking butt in high heels and having armor with obvious boob cups, still only defined by her relationship with a man, is not something to be celebrated." (Castro, 2020). It becomes clear from the comment by Castro that there appears to be a problem with the perception of the strong female character trope as she describes this oversexualized stereotype of the character trope. Castro later adds;

"There seems to be a presumption within Hollywood movies that a female character is strong because she is kicking butt and still looking beautiful and perfect while doing it: sexualized, romanticized, obvious bait for the male consumer. No, her skimpy outfit does not count as empowering. No matter how tragic her backstory is that makes her wear nothing but underwear and a bra, it's still bait for men." (Castro, 2020).

By this statement, it can be understood that Castro seeks to present the issue with the misconception and misrepresentation of the strong female character. The quote explains that the overly sexualized and romanticized female character that is kicking butt in Hollywood simply is not a strong female character but instead a misrepresentation of one. One could argue that Castro might be falling into the mimetic trap here as she explains the character as it was an actual human being instead of a fictitious character (Hansen, 2002). On that note, it must be argued that it might be easier to fall into the mimetic trap when dealing with visual culture and media as it is a real human actor portraying the fictitious character. It should be understood by Castro that the strong female character is not just simply a sexualized female icon but an actually strong female character that should be able to be equally as engaging in movies as the many strong male characters (Castro, 2020). The strong female character should not be romanticized or sexualized but should be able to appear appropriately and not always be beautiful and perfect. The strong female character should be able to get dirty when appearing in the middle of a warzone instead of being portrayed as an overly sexualized and beautiful icon or object for the male gaze (Castro, 2020). That is a short explanation of the character stereotype by Castro as she wants people to expect better-written female characters instead of accepting this misconception of the strong female character. But even then, Castro raises the question "What is the perfect strong female character? It's a question that is hard to answer, because there are so few examples (which is really sad)." (Castro, 2020).

To better understand the character stereotype that is the strong female character and to try to build upon the explanation by Castro of what it is not we may look towards the definition of the term by Valari Westeren. In the paper "'Strong Female Characters'? An Analysis of Six Female Fantasy Characters from Novel to Film" Westeren seeks to further explain the character type that is the strong female character (Westeren, 2020). As Westeren writes;

"The term 'strong female character' is frequently used in criticism of and commentary on fantasy stories, both in literature and film, but it means different things to different people, making it hard to pin down a precise definition. For some, especially those in the academy, this term is positive and describes a character that challenges gender stereotypes and provides audiences with empowered female role models to emulate." (Westeren, 2020, p. 1).

By this statement, it can be understood that the strong female character is a character stereotype that is difficult to describe in an accurate manner as it carries different meanings for different people. It can be understood that in its purest most professional form it can be a positive character stereotype that invites character writing that creates role models for people to emulate. On the other hand, it can be seen as a rather negative term to some people. Westeren writes that it is especially within pop culture that people might seem less enticed by the term and may often perceive it negatively. This negative view of the term stems from it being too simplistic for some people (Westeren, 2020). But as Westeren states, then the term will vary quite a bit both the positive and negative perceptions and interpretations of it. Even though the perception of the term may vary then there seem to be two main interpretations of the strong female character which Westeren explains as the strong female character and the hyper-strong female character (Westeren, 2020). The strong female character being the first interpretation is described as an "active, complex, and admirable heroine" and is considered a more developed character stereotype both in literature and movies (Westeren, 2020). The second interpretation being the hyper-strong female character is mostly a stereotype found in movies that is considered underdeveloped. The hyper-strong female character is described as being "defined not by her inner qualities, but by her physical and/or mental abilities, and to make the character appear 'strong', those abilities are ridiculously exaggerated" to the point where "she appears more like an action figure than a real person." (Westeren, 2020, p.2). Westeren then further explains the hyper-strong female character in the following way.

"She has no character flaws, weaknesses, or struggles. She's often restricted to exhibiting traditionally masculine traits, while ignoring or even disparaging traditionally feminine traits. She may fire machine guns, fix motorcycles, or instantly solve computer equations that have left men baffled, yet instead of deepening her character, these external qualities are treated as if they're to replace the need for complex character development." (Westeren, 2020, p. 2).

This definition of the hyper-strong female character seems to portray a near-perfect character capable of almost anything imaginable. At the same time, it explains that this interpretation of the term invites and embraces masculinity and masculine traits within the strong female character while straight-up ignoring the character's femininity and feminine traits as they could be perceived as being inferior. This interpretation of the character stereotype seems to bear a striking resemblance to the 'Mary Sue' character stereotype which is known for being the perfect and strongest female character stereotype. As explained by Keidra Chaney and Razel Liebler in their article "Me, Myself, and I: Fan fiction and the art of self-insertion" then the 'Mary Sue' is the strongest female character, perfect and beautiful and capable of anything the narrative needs her to be capable of. More accurately;

"What commonly defines a Mary Sue is not simply the appearance of positive characteristics, but rather the exaggeration of those traits to an unattainable ideal: She's not just smart, kind, quirky, or pretty, she's smarter, nicer, quirkier, and prettier than any other female around – and her creator will allow no one to forget it. Mary Sues always display some unique ability – a latent magical power, exceptional intelligence, or technical acumen – that is required at a pivotal point in the narrative." (Chaney & Liebler, 2006, p. 54).

By this definition of the Mary Sue, it becomes clear that this character stereotype is the perfect female character that is not just better than the other female characters around her but also the male characters as she is, to put it simply, the perfect character capable of doing anything. The resemblance between the Mary Sue and the hyper-strong female character becomes apparent in both of the characters stereotypes being exaggerated to an almost ridiculous level to the point where they may seem like perfect action figures capable of anything. To put it simply, then the resemblance between the two stems from both of them being ridiculously unrealistic. Both of these terms the hyper-strong female character and the Mary Sue seems to completely miss the point of the true strong female character and may both be seen as misinterpretations of the term strong female character. If we return to Forster for a moment here, then the Mary Sue and the hyper-strong female character with their resemblance to action figures sort of makes the examples of 'flat' characters by definition whereas the true strong female character and its mistaken resemblance to real humans would make it a 'round' character (Forster, 1927). Through this, the distinction between

the 'flat' and 'round' characters is redescribed as action figures or toys and fiction versus realism (Forster, 1927).

Westeren seeks to describe the change of the strong female character through time and ends up with the following explanation or definition for the term as it is today.

"In short, connotations of the term 'strong female character' have changed considerably over the last two hundred years, yet today, however we might technically define the trope, we associate the phrase with notable physical and/or mental strength, especially in female warriors. Regarding inner traits, we commonly recognize modern 'strong female characters' for their independence, tenacity, and thirst for adventure – all traditionally masculine traits." (Westeren, 2020, p. 6).

This explanation of the modern strong female character as it stands today presents a character that is dominated by masculine traits with the lack of feminine traits. Even the inner traits of the strong female character are considered dominated by masculinity. This means that on the depth level or the ideological level of the analysis model by Hansen then the strong female character is dominated by masculine ideologies (Hansen, 2002). This presents the idea that the character trope is dominated ideologically by a masculine mental framework which ultimately creates a female character that is to be perceived as being more masculine (Griffin, 2012). This definition seems to paint the picture that the strong female character has become a character trope or stereotype that is heavily influenced or rather dominated by masculinity, whereas the hyper-strong female character stands apart as it heightens these masculine traits to an extreme level to the point where it could be considered toxic masculinity (Westeren, 2020). Westeren later adds that the term strong female character even though it carries these masculine connotations then it does also include female characters that are well-written and traditionally feminine (Westeren, 2020). Westeren even goes as far as stating a major positive trait and negative in the existence of the hyper-strong female character as she writes;

"The very existence of the 'hyper-strong' female character and its values influences both novelists and screenwriters to favor female characters with more traditionally masculine traits, and while this trend does produce some wonderfully complex female characters, it sometimes echoes the 'hyper-strong' female character's assertions that to be feminine is to be inferior. (Westeren, 2020, p. 7).

The positive thing to note from this quote is that the masculine traits that the strong female character incorporates now are able to function in harmony with the character's feminine traits, thus creating a well-balanced and nuanced character consisting of both masculine and feminine traits which do make it "wonderfully complex". We will see an example of such a wonderfully complex female character later on in the analysis of Katniss Everdeen from "The hunger Games" (Ross, 2012). The negative thing to note from the quote is the risk of echoing the hyper-strong female character which invites the absence of feminine traits and portrays femininity and feminine traits as being inferior to masculinity and masculine traits. The strong female character proves to be a character trope or stereotype that is difficult to completely define but Westeren seems to come up with a great interpretation of the true strong female character. This truly strong female character is a character that "exhibits her strength primarily through inner character complexity, rather than a checklist of external physical or mental abilities: she balances ideal personality strengths with realistic moral flaws and/or circumstantial limitations, so that she neither champions a cheap interpretation of female empowerment, nor falls prey to repressive gender stereotypes" (Westeren, 2020, p. 3). Going by this explanation then the true strong female character is a character that focuses mainly on inner strengths instead of focusing on physical abilities. This character may be seen as a realistically balanced character with flaws and limitations and as a character that embodies the balance of both feminine and masculine traits. Finally, then the true strong female character is not there to only develop the male characters of the story as she herself is part of said story with her own impact that is just as important.

Finally, to sum up the different theories in this section and the methodology I will shortly explain how the different pieces will be used in the following analysis of Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman and why. The characterology dealing with the strong female character as most recently presented by Westeren will represent a more cultural insight into the character analysis of the two female protagonists. Westeren's explanation of the strong female character will be the major focus point of the analysis where the theory of 'flat' and 'round' characters presented by Forster will have a more supportive role in the analysis and function as a more textual aspect of the analysis compared to the more cultural approach that Westeren and Castro presents. The theory presented by Hansen further supports the more textual aspect of the analysis as he provides us with the model of character analysis that will be used to analyze the two strong female protagonists. The theory of

gender performativity presented by Butler and the notion of gendered emotions presented by Ahmed will be the cultural approach and focus point of the analysis of the two female protagonists in relation to the strong female character trope. Finally, to connect all of the different textual and cultural pieces the critical method presented by Felski, the hermeneutics of suspicion, will be used to function as the connector between the textual and cultural aspects of the analysis.

Analysis – Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman:

This section will include an in-depth analysis of the main characters and protagonists of the movies *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Wonder Woman* (2017). Both of these analyses of the two characters will be carried out in regard to the term "strong female character", presented and explained earlier by Valari Westeren, and look at their cultural impacts and effects.

Katniss Everdeen – *The Hunger Games* (2012):

The first subject of analysis will be the girl on fire herself, Katniss Everdeen, as we will be analyzing the character based on the first movie in the series *The Hunger Games* (2012). Before we get started with the in-depth analysis of the movie and its tough female protagonist then let us take a look at the movie poster to see how it portrays Katniss Everdeen and if it presents a strong first impression of the character. This start-up approach will also be done in the following analysis of Diana the female protagonist in *Wonder Woman* (2017). Both of the movie posters will be taken from both movies' respective pages on the popular website IMDb.com but for the sake of simplicity, I have made a second appendix that includes both posters. I will therefore be referring to Appendix 2 when talking about the two movie posters. First off, we have the poster for *The Hunger Games* (2012) that shows the movie's protagonist Katniss Everdeen with the title of the movie in the foreground written in golden letters with the burning logo behind it (Appendix 2, 2.1). The burning logo depicts the fictitious bird made for the story and the franchise, the Mockingjay, on fire within a burning ring holding a burning arrow. One could argue that this burning symbol represents Katniss as the bird with the arrow stuck in the Hunger Games that she will eventually take part in. The theme of fire seems to be the main focus of this poster as it shows a wave of flames approaching the face of Katniss Everdeen who seems to be unaffected by the fire with a stoic and serious look on her face. Alongside this, it shows that Katniss has what looks like a drawn bowstring touching her face and,

more importantly, her lips. The drawn bowstring on her lips could present her combat abilities to present the idea that she is a strong warrior and that it represents the kiss of death perhaps. If so to display Katniss as this strong warrior or hunter then the presence of fire and flames seems to perfectly emphasize this as a first impression of the character. Her serious demeanor combined with the drawn bow and her being completely unscathed in this fiery inferno paints the picture of a strong protagonist of an action movie pretty well.

If we make use of the character analysis model by Hansen, then we of course would only be able to work on the surface level here as we are getting a first impression based mostly on the appearance of the character alone (Hansen, 2002). Based on the model by Hansen then we can say that the appearance alone of Katniss Everdeen on the movie poster gives the audience the first impression of a strong female character that might not resemble the traditional male action movie protagonist (Hansen, 2002). She does not portray the picture of the traditional bulked-up, battle-scarred, and battle-worn male action character, but she does seem to portray the idea of a mentally strong character with her serious and stoic demeanor. This of course plays into the explanation of the strong female character presented by Westeren as the first impression we get of Katniss Everdeen is that she is a mentally strong female warrior and an example of a strong female character (Westeren, 2020). One could argue that the poster also presents physical strength or at least hints towards it with the theme of the fire and the flames which could insinuate that this character is a force to be reckoned with. Furthermore, as Westeren explains, then Katniss seems to be presented as being rather masculine on the poster which of course plays into the explanation of the strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This rather masculine portrayal must be said to be originating with the messages that the poster sends which is still on the surface level of the model by Hansen (Hansen, 2002). It is not that Katniss does not look serious and fierce on the poster, but it can be argued that it is the messages sent by her action of holding the drawn bow and her stoic and serious demeanor that present her as being more masculine. Katniss herself is unscathed and beautifully presented on the poster which plays into Castro's idea of what the strong female character is not (Castro, 2020). Of course, it must be said that Katniss is in no way sexualized on this poster, but she is portrayed as a female warrior or hunter who does look rather clean and pretty considering that being a warrior or a hunter is not such a clean or pretty business (Castro, 2020). Katniss seems to resemble the strong female character presented by Westeren while still raising some of the questions presented

by Castro, but this is of course only the first impression based on the movie poster. To further explain the idea that Katniss comes off as being a masculine character from this first impression we may look to Ahmed. As explained, Katniss seems to be very serious and stoic on the poster as she almost displays no emotions at all. This display of hard emotions and the overall lack of emotion on the poster seems to present Katniss as a more masculine character (Ahmed, 2014).

Finally, the sentence "The world will be watching" is written at the very top of the poster to emphasize the magnitude of the events to come and to present the seriousness and the severity of the situation that Katniss Everdeen will soon be in the middle of (Appendix 2, 2.1). But this poster only presents us with an idea of what this character may be like: masculine or feminine? Strong or weak? Or perhaps all of them are neatly compressed within a beautifully complex strong female character? To figure this out we must dive into the movie itself where we start with the introductory scene that gives us the first look into the character that is Katniss Everdeen. The scene in question or rather the sequence in question is at the very beginning of the movie and it is our very first encounter with our protagonist Katniss Everdeen (The Hunger 0:01:30-0:05:58). This sequence takes place right after the intro sequence of the entire movie where the history behind the death game called The Hunger Games is explained in an interview with the current game maker which ends abruptly as we transition into the sequence in question with a hard cut (Ross, 2012). The sequence starts out with a shot of a row of old and dilapidated houses in a wooded area along with the text saying "DISTRICT 12" in the bottom right corner of the screen. In the background, we can see what looks like some sort of mining factory in the distance. We then hear the voice of a girl screaming in fear as the scene cuts to Katniss Everdeen comforting her younger sister Primrose Everdeen after she had a nightmare of being chosen as the female tribute for the Hunger Games (Ross, 2012). We are shown that Katniss embraces her younger sister as she comforts her and later accepts the request of her sister to sing for her. As Katniss proceeds to sing to her younger sister Primrose smiles as she starts singing along and they both smile to one another before Katniss tells Primrose to sing the rest herself as she needs to go but that she will come back. We are then shown Katniss putting her jacket on as she gets ready to leave her house while getting hissed at by what might be their family cat. She threatens the cat saying that she will still cook it as she leaves. Katniss then runs towards the place that is still unknown to the viewer and as she runs through District 12, we are shown the poor and rough conditions of the society they live in (Ross, 2012). We are shown poor

living conditions as we see different shots of people somewhat covered in dirt as they go about their day doing manual labor and see the row of men headed for work at the mining facility. We are even shown elderly people scraping the last meat off the bones of some unknown animal to get enough to eat. To put it simply, on her way through District 12 we are shown the harsh and sad reality of life in this poor and rough society.

We ultimately reach the destination which is shown to be a restricted area via the signs on an old broken electric fence, which Katniss goes through to enter the forest on the other side. In this forest, Katniss proceeds to find a bow and a quiver of arrows that she has hidden in two separate places. Katniss then traverses the forest as she is now hunting for wild prey to take home. She comes across a wild deer but as she readies her bow the deer becomes aware of her presence and takes off. Katniss then displays her skills as a hunter as we see her pick up some leaves which she crumbles in her hand to check the direction of the wind, as she thinks that might be the reason for it becoming aware of her presence (Ross, 2012). She continues the hunt for the deer and even scares it out of hiding by firing off a small rock with her bow which ultimately leads to her having a clear shot to take it down. This opportunity is short-lived as the character Gale Hawthorne yells at her jokingly asking what she is going to do with it which startles the deer resulting in it running away and Katniss missing the shot. This leads to a conversation between the two characters who undoubtedly know each other as Gale calls Katniss "Catnip". Katniss is rather upset with him for scaring the deer away, but Gale seems to be there to warn her as it is reaping day. The conversation leads to Gale throwing a rock into the bushes which scares a flock of birds and as they fly away Katniss quickly readies her bow and shoots down one of them. They both laugh but the joy is cut short as a giant aircraft floats by menacingly above them which forces them to hide with the joy quickly turning to fear and worry (Ross, 2012).

To start we will look at the textual side of the character Katniss Everdeen. So, we will be utilizing the character analysis model by Hansen before moving on to the more cultural side of the character analysis (Hansen, 2002). Before we dive into the model by Hansen, we must first visit Forster and take a look at whether Katniss shows signs of being a 'round' or 'flat' character through this first introductory sequence (Forster, 1927). First of all then, this introductory sequence shows a completely different character from the first impression that we get from the movie poster as the character gets to show its personality through its actions instead of a still picture and through the presence of emotions. So, to check if Katniss shows signs of being a 'flat' character then we can do

the test of summing up the character in a single sentence as presented by Forster (Forster, 1927). To put it simply, it might actually be difficult to sum up Katniss Everdeen in a single sentence based on the different qualities that she reveals in this introductory sequence. Katniss as a character is both a loving and caring elder sister as she shows compassion as she comforts her younger sister while also being a skilled hunter to provide for herself and her family. This sequence alone does not completely set in stone whether Katniss is a 'flat' or 'round' character, but it does strongly point towards her being an example of a 'round' character due to her multiple qualities (Forster, 1927). On that note, we can dive into the character analysis model by Hansen, which could help prove these claims of Katniss being a 'round' character.

First, we will look at Katniss Everdeen as a character on the first level of Hansen's model being the surface level (Hansen, 2002). Throughout the analysis, there will of course be further additions to each of the respective levels of Hansen's model of character analysis. In this first instance, we will create a baseline for the character and therefore go through each of the three major structures or levels of the model starting with the surface structure. If we start with the actions of Katniss Everdeen as the first part of the surface structure, then we find that Katniss is a hardworking and caring character (Hansen, 2002). This can be said as we see her calm down her younger sister Primrose as she comforts her after having a nightmare which also shows a loving and caring side of the character. The hardworking aspect of her character shines through as she goes hunting in the forest in the restricted area to provide her family with food or wild game to sell. The hunting skills that Katniss is shown to be capable of also paint the picture of a character who is a skilled hunter. The different actions that we see Katniss actively take part in show that she is quite an interesting character as we are shown her being both feminine and masculine. The actions of Katniss Everdeen in this sequence seem to plant the seeds of what could be a rather complex female character.

On that note, we have to bring in Westeren and her description of the strong female character which states that the strong female character often is dominated by masculine traits (Westeren,2020). To that, it must be added that the actions of Katniss in this sequence can be argued to be mostly masculine as she is shown as a capable independent hunter which makes her resemble Westeren's idea of the traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). But this sequence does more than that, as it shows her being capable of being caring and compassionate as she shows emotions as she comforts her sister. This seems to point in the direction of Katniss Everdeen being a possible example

of a true strong female character also mentioned by Westeren as she shows signs of embodying the balance between both masculine and feminine traits (Westeren, 2020). To further add to this argument of Katniss as a possible example of a true strong female character we may look to Ahmed and the idea of gendered emotions as we are shown two different sides of her character (Ahmed, 2014). We are shown that she is capable of being rather feminine and caring enabling the softer emotions while later switching to being more emotionless as she goes into hunting mode basically (Ahmed, 2014). Katniss basically shows the audience that she is capable of switching between soft and hard emotions based on the given situation which adds to the complexity of the character (Ahmed, 2014). This also seems to further point towards the direction of Katniss being a 'round' character rather than a 'flat' one as she is shown to be rather complex (Forster, 1927). This switch between emotions and her being capable of doing this further points in the direction of the balanced true strong female character (Westeren, 2020).

This leads us to the next part of the surface structure, being the one that deals with the messages sent by the character. But before this, it might be better if we skip to the group that deals with the appearance of the character first, since this group most certainly does contribute to the messages sent by the character. Therefore we must first take a look at the "Fremtræden" or appearance of the character which deals with not only the looks and general appearance of the character but also the character's social position and environmental characteristics (Hansen, 2002). Katniss as a character does not appear all that special when it comes to appearance, at least, as she fits in with her surroundings. She might appear to be a bit cleaner than some of the other characters shown in the sequence, but her clothing fits in with the surrounding characters as it looks old and worn. Her appearance seems to echo her surrounding society as it is bland and poor-looking. Her appearance seems to be an environmentally indicated characteristic as the environment and the society that she lives in is rather rough and poor. Here we can take a guess and say that her appearance does not seem to indicate that she belongs amongst the rich upper class but quite the contrary that she and the society that is District 12 belong to the working class. This could explain the need for a more masculine personality or the need for masculine aspects within her character as a measure of self-defense and to survive in a poor and rough environment. To that, it must be noted that having this masculine act towards others and then being able to be a more feminine caring elder sister should be considered a massive strength for the character. This should be seen as an example of Butler's

gender performativity, as the social norms call for a more masculine approach to be able to get by (Butler, 2011). Katniss also seems to exemplify the very concept of gender performativity as she switches between acting out the more feminine role of elder sister to later acting out the role of the masculine hunter (Butler, 2011). Here we must also conclude that gender performativity is a major part of the true strong female character presented by Westeren as it should be the embodiment of balance between masculinity and femininity (Westeren, 2020). The true strong female character must therefore be able to fluently switch between gender performances and find strength in both masculinity and femininity.

Now we move on to the group within the surface structure that deals with messages (Hansen, 2002). After going through the other groupings within the surface structure alongside the notion of the strong female character presented by Westeren and the theory of gendered emotions and gender performativity presented by Ahmed and Butler, then it becomes more interesting to look at the different messages sent by Katniss Everdeen. The character Katniss Everdeen sends the message that she is a rather independent character who cares for her family as she works hard to support them and herself. Her actions seem to send the message that she is a complex character that is both feminine and masculine. Furthermore, her character and the society that she lives in along with her position within it seems to send the message that an individual in these poor and rough conditions must have a tough and masculine side to get by as to speak up for and defend themselves and their family. The messages sent by Katniss seem to lean towards the traditional strong female character explained by Westeren as the sequence presents her as being predominantly masculine but seems to also echo the true strong female character as it plants the seeds by showing us her having a feminine side or aspect to her character other than her biological gender, of course (Westeren, 2020).

As we have now established a temporal baseline for the surface structure of the character, we can dig a little deeper as we move on to the middle structure/level (Hansen, 2002). The middle structure is, as stated by Hansen, where the traits presented in the surface structure are combined by the viewer/reader to fully form the character, as it is here that the character gains its identity (Hansen 2002. In this case, it is where Katniss Everdeen gains her identity and existence within the story world of the movie. We have slightly been working within the middle structure already as we have established a temporal idea of Katniss Everdeen as the skilled hunter and the caring elder sister as it is within the middle structure that the character type is established. Through this first sequence and

the traits shown within the surface structure, then the middle structure establishes Katniss Everdeen as the respectable and good-natured protagonist who is able to carry out multiple roles that are both masculine and feminine in nature making her a rather complex character (Forster, 1927). The inner values of the character point toward Katniss being a delightfully complex character, the 'round' character, who is shown to be strong through both her masculine and feminine traits (Forster, 1927). The middle structure so far seems to be setting up Katniss as a strong female type character through her portrayal as a more complex and capable type of character. The middle structure also adds to her mimetic value as we perceive her as part of the story world created by the movie (Hansen, 2002). The mimetic value is enhanced as we are shown Katniss as part of a social and cultural context being that of District 12, which is presented as a poor working-class society, that helps define Katniss Everdeen as a character and helps explain the character's behavioral patterns (Hansen,2002). The social and cultural context that Katniss is part of helps explain why her character may be able to fulfill multiple roles and possess a variety of inner values, being both masculine and feminine and helps define her as a more complex character. That being said then it must be stated that the social and cultural context most definitely explains the need for and why Katniss is presented as a predominantly masculine character in possession of female values. The character being more complex and more of a 'round' character makes the character have a stronger mimetic value as the character bears closer resemblance to real human aspects.

That is of course only what the surface and middle structures provide us with through this first sequence and will be further built upon as we go through the scenes to come. But before that, we may briefly tap into the depth structure/level and see what it has to tell us so far before moving on (Hansen, 2002). The depth structure might not tell us a whole lot through this first sequence alone but it does present us with the story world and an idea of how it works socially and culturally, which establishes the framework in which Katniss Everdeen is able to grow and evolve as a character (Hansen, 2002). First and foremost, the depth level does present us with the rules that help create the character we know as Katniss Everdeen. Through the combination of the character's actions and additional aspects within the surface level, we reach an idea of a character identity within the middle structure. The creation of the character identity that is Katniss Everdeen is enabled by the structures and rules within the story world that are implicitly driving and guiding the character's creation and development. These structures and rules are in this instance those of a dystopic society separated

into multiple districts that are all ruled by a singular capital. The rules of this dystopic story world are implicitly there but are also briefly described explicitly in the very first scene of the movie. Going by this understanding then, the depth level presents a framework for character creation and character growth that is dystopic in its thematic structure which ultimately calls for characters to be strong or at least to become strong to survive the rough social and cultural conditions (Appendix 1). This can be argued to be true as it is manifested through Katniss Everdeen as she plays the character role of the caring elder sister but must be able to also play the role of the skilled hunter to survive in this story world. The story world and the implicit structures of the depth structure do seem to limit the possibilities of character growth and evolution if we go by this first sequence alone, as we are shown a poor and rough working-class society. But implicitly the story world does a great job presenting the audience with an ideal way for complex character growth and development with the idea of the dystopic death game, the Hunger Games, looming in the background. The fear presented by this dystopic game and its effect upon the society of District 12 is tremendously present from the start of the sequence and proves to be an example of the depth structure that shapes and creates the characters that we see within this story world. Katniss is no exception to this as she is a product created by this socially and culturally dystopic structure.

Katniss Everdeen is of course a product of the structure set up by the story world and the underlying norms that exist within it. Through this understanding, it becomes important to note that the depth structure/level should also be considered the ideological level as it explains why a character such as Katniss acts and performs as she does and why (Griffin, 2012). The thematic structure and the social and cultural structure and norms that the story world sets up establishes Katniss as a character that is living and existing within a working-class society and therefore adapts to these social and cultural norms as she adopts the working-class ideology as she perceives the world she lives in (Griffin, 2012). Through the use of Griffin in combination with the model presented by Hansen, then it becomes clear that life in District 12 is structured and ruled by working-class ideological norms (Griffin, 2012). This is especially prevalent within Katniss as a character as the more dominant and masculine side of her shines through in this sequence as she has become a skilled hunter who hunts in secret to provide for herself and her family. The working-class ideology really shines through here as she hunts to sell the spoils of her labor to the upper classes which falls in line perfectly with the established story world of the separated districts serving the upper-class capitalists. This even presents us with

a story world and a thematic and ideological structure that is Marxist in theory as Katniss and the other characters within District 12 must sell their labor and the spoils of their labor to the ruling upper-class capitalists to get by and survive in the poor conditions (Griffin, 2012). The depth structure that is shown through Katniss and her surrounding environment in this sequence portrays the dominant culture and the dominant norms through the working-class society and ideology as it ultimately presents a dystopic society that is ideologically Marxist in theory (Griffin, 2012).

This walkthrough of the character analysis model by Hansen has provided us with a first glance at who Katniss Everdeen is as a character and has shown us what type of character she is while also planting the seeds and thoughts of what she might become (Hansen, 2002). This is of course only a temporary understanding of the character that we will continue to build upon as we go through the other sequences of the movie. But before moving on to the next sequence we must shortly discuss Katniss as a strong female character in relation to Butler's notion of gender performativity to combine the textual and cultural aspects of the character (Butler, 2011). We are of course able to make this combination due to Felski and the hermeneutics of suspicion functioning as the connector between text and culture (Felski, 2015). The traditional strong female character presented by Westeren is predominantly masculine in nature as it is a mentally or physically strong and independent character and we are introduced to an example of such a character with Katniss Everdeen (Westeren, 2020). As mentioned earlier there does seem to be the possibility of Katniss being an example of the true strong female character, but that is yet to be fully concluded as she from first glance arguably should be considered a traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This means that Katniss is mostly masculine as we are shown, and the social and cultural norms presented could of course explain this need for being more masculine. This leads us to the notion of gender performativity which is governed and regulated by social norms and constraints (Butler, 2011). Katniss does seem to perfectly exemplify the notion of gender performativity as she shows both a feminine side of herself and the more dominant masculine side. This shows that even though she is biologically a female character, she is able to perform more like the opposite gender and appear more masculine while still being able to switch performance to act more feminine given the social context (Butler, 2011). This then raises the question of what gender performativity says about the strong female character. One answer could be that gender performativity affects fictional characters in the same way that it affects an actual human being also governed and regulated by

social norms and constraints (Butler, 2011). This of course leads to the idea of gender performativity only being something 'round' characters are capable of since Hansen's analysis model also mostly works for 'round' characters (Forster, 1927). Here it must be argued that both 'flat' and 'round' characters are capable of gender performativity, but it is only the 'round' character, due to its more complex nature, that is able to switch between gender performances (Forster, 1927). So, to return to the question at hand then it can be argued that the strong female character is highly affected by gender performativity as it must put on a masculine performance to appear strong since the trope is traditionally masculine (Westeren, 2020). To put it simply then, gender performativity helps highlight some of the issues within the strong female character trope as it presents the idea that to be a strong female character you must be and act like a man. This idea presents the rather toxic and wrong statement that to be feminine is the same as being inferior which is far from the truth (Westeren, 2020). That is of course when gender performativity is discussed in relation to the traditional strong female character and not the true strong female character (Westeren, 2020).

The seeds have been planted for Katniss to be an example of the true strong female character so we must move on to the next sequence to further investigate and back up this claim (Westeren, 2020). This sequence is when the enforcers from the capital come to randomly pick the annual two participants or rather "tributes" from District 12 for the Hunger Games (The Hunger 0:09:50-0:17:30). The sequence starts with Katniss and Primrose walking together to the assembly along with the other possible tributes from District 12. On her way there Katniss reassures her sister that everything will be alright as Primrose is afraid and starts panicking. Katniss ultimately ends up succeeding in calming Primrose down, but Katniss remains explicitly worried as she protects her sister and fears both for herself and Primrose. The selection starts shortly after the people from District 12 have been registered by the enforcers and lined up in front of the stage where the representative from the capital holds a short speech and shows a short video before proceeding to the actual selection for the 74. annual Hunger Games (Ross, 2012). The representative picks the female tribute first with great suspense building as the assembly is dead quiet. Primrose Everdeen ends up being chosen as the female tribute for District 12 which greatly shocks the two Everdeen sisters. Katniss is struck with a rush of emotions that is shown explicitly as she is clearly seen being shocked, afraid, and of course, extremely saddened by the outcome. She ends up calling out to Primrose as she is on her way towards the stage, stepping out of line in her panicked state needing to be held back by a couple of

enforcers. Through her panic and the struggle with the enforcers, Katniss ends up committing the heroic deed of volunteering as the female tribute to save the life of her beloved younger sister. Katniss is then led to the stage as the first-ever volunteer of District 12, with the shock and the reality of the situation starting to really sink in. Afterward, Peeta Mellark is chosen as the male tribute of District 12, and the two tributes are taken away as the selection ceremony ends (Ross, 2012).

This sequence must be argued to be the sequence in which Katniss fully enters the path and the role of the strong female character. That must be argued due to this being the sequence in which she is thrown headfirst into the conflict and chaos that lies ahead and due to the fact that she selflessly and heroically sacrificed herself to save her younger sister (Ross, 2012). One could argue that this sacrifice should be considered yet another example of her role as the protective and caring elder sister, which it is, but it also adds much more to Katniss as a character. The sequence of course further provides examples of the caring and emotional side of Katniss but must be said to add a new and important heroic trait to her character. Katniss sort of evolves through her already established roles as her actions provide the evidence needed for her to attain the role of the hero-type character (Hansen, 2002). This of course emphasizes her as an example of the strong female character as she enters the role of the heroic protagonist. We have now opened up for the idea and the argument that Katniss has entered the realm of the heroic character of some sort, but we must rewind a bit and look at the build-up to this heroic deed. From the beginning of the sequence Katniss of course appears to be both worried and afraid as she fears for Primrose and herself, which must be argued to be a pretty normal reaction considering the idea of being forcibly entered in the lottery of being chosen for a death game. Through the tough odds, Katniss still finds the strength to comfort and calm down Primrose, which shows strength within Katniss that she is selfless and emotionally strong. This also plays into the idea of her gaining more heroic traits through her inner strength and selflessness.

Compared to the notion of the strong female character by Westeren, this showing of heroism and inner strength presents an interesting angle on Katniss and the type of strong female character that she is slowly turning into (Westeren, 2020). Katniss must be mentioned to appear dressed rather feminine in this sequence which adds to the presentation of her as a strong character. The appearance and the actions of Katniss in this particular sequence seem to present a strong female character that is not necessarily a one-to-one copy of Westeren's traditional strong female character

(Westeren, 2020). It can be argued that the strong emotions and the rush of these strong emotions, in relation to her protective nature, could be considered the reason and the trigger for the awakening of heroic traits within Katniss. This proves to be a rather interesting observation as Katniss further proves herself as a strong female character by putting her mental strength on display, but it is her showing of inner traits and values that truly stand out here in particular. This should be said as Katniss plays into the idea of the traditional strong female character by showing her independence, which Westeren deems a masculine trait, which ends up clashing with her feminine appearance and her rather feminine emotional display (Ahmed, 2014). This is the interesting part as Westeren presents the strong female character as being predominantly masculine, while the emotional behavior of Katniss in this sequence can be argued to play into the notion of gendered emotions by Ahmed, which makes her more feminine. The idea of Katniss being feminine through her emotional state stems from Ahmed's idea of the more emotional body, which Katniss is not necessarily a direct example of, but we do encounter a Katniss who is heavily acting upon her emotions in this sequence. This does not mean that Katniss is an example of the softer and too emotional body/individual that is vulnerable to the influence of others, but it does not set her up as the less emotional and tougher hard body/individual either (Ahmed, 2014). The sequence must be argued to find the perfect middle ground between the soft and the hard body/individual, as Katniss seems to acquire or awaken her heroic inner traits through the soft and vulnerable emotions of fear and sadness spawned by her affection for Primrose (Ahmed, 2014). These vulnerable emotions that are on display in connection with the strong female character act seem rather contradictory as one points towards masculinity and the other towards femininity. Katniss in her emotional and vulnerable state develops heroic traits and takes heroic action as she selflessly saves her sister from certain death, which seems to point towards the idea that the vulnerable and highly emotional individual that Ahmed considers soft or feminine may not be so weak after all, as it leads to the manifestation of heroic traits within the character (Ahmed, 2014). In combination with the explanations by Westeren, we are presented with a character that finds strengths in both femininity and masculinity as it is ultimately the combination of the two that leads to the development of heroic traits. This seems to further point in the direction of the true female character (Westeren, 2020).

With that said we now move on to the next sequence to further investigate Katniss as a strong female character. For this next sequence we jump a bit forward to when Katniss has already arrived in The

Capitol, the richest city in the Hunger Games universe that stands as the capital and the governing body within the story (Ross, 2012). This particular sequence is when each of the tributes must undergo an individual test of their skills, showing off said skills for the gamemaster and the possible sponsors and ultimately getting their skills rated in the process (The Hunger 0:41:20-0:47:40). Just before this sequence we are shown the start of their training, both in survival and in combat, where we see many of the other tributes skills with Katniss not standing out in the slightest. This prior sequence also seems to show off the tough competition as some of the other competitors have trained most of their lives for the Hunger Games (The Hunger 0:35:20-0-41:09). This prior sequence does not say much about Katniss as a character, but it must be argued that it functions as great set-up for the skill evaluating sequence that follows. There is but one thing to add to Katniss' character in this prior sequence and that is her ability to recognize the skills of others. This must be argued to be accredited to her perceptive skills as a trained hunter since she is also seen scouting the abilities of the other tributes while training. This is shown as we see Peeta Mellark struggling in training as Katniss spots some of the other more trained tributes laughing at him as they may perceive him as easy prey. Katniss then stands up for Peeta making him show his strength, which is one of Peeta's strongest assets. It must be argued that Katniss does this to look out for her fellow tribute from District 12 and to assert dominance of some sort, as it angers her slightly that the others may perceive them and their District as being weak. We even get the understanding that they are not to show off their skills to the other tributes, which they have been told by their mentor Haymitch. But Katniss is rebellious and does not care as she finds it important that they must not look weak. This speaks to the inner values of her character, as it shows her mental strength to stay strong when faced with adversity (Hansen, 2002). Going by the model by Hansen, then this shows us that Katniss' inner values further point towards her having a strong personality (Hansen, 2002).

Through that prior sequence, it becomes clear that Katniss seems to be in possession of strong inner values that make her have a strong personality that wants to stay strong and not seem weak to others (Hansen, 2002). But with that said we now move on to the main course, the evaluation sequence (The Hunger 0:41:20-0:47:40). We are not thrown into the evaluation immediately as the mentor Haymitch starts out by explaining the importance of this evaluation to Katniss and Peeta, as it could secure sponsors and better chances of survival. Haymitch also mentions that they get this one and final chance to show their skills and that they have to show the utmost best of their abilities.

Katniss and Peeta are the two last tributes to be evaluated and as they sit waiting in silence, we can see clear signs of them being nervous. The silence is a clear sign at first, but we are especially shown the nervousness of Katniss as she is slightly shaking which is probably due to the fact that she does not seem to be able to sit still as her legs are jittery. Finally, Katniss is called in for evaluation and we have a brief exchange of words between the two tributes of District 12 before the evaluation of Katniss begins. As Katniss enters the evaluation hall she grabs her signature weapon, the bow and arrow, while getting a glance at the onlooking gamemaster and the possible sponsors, who pay her little to no attention as they are too busy enjoying themselves. Though Katniss does get their attention as she introduces herself but loses their interest rather quickly as she completely misses her first shot, and they just laugh it off. A clear example of the nerves getting to Katniss, but as she steels herself and focuses up, she picks up another arrow and hits a perfect shot dead center, a perfect second shot which nobody witnessed because they had already lost interest (Ross, 2012). This disinterest clearly provokes and angers Katniss who then decides to pull off a daring move, as she sees a pig roast with an apple in its mouth up among the sponsors and decides to fire a third arrow aimed directly at said apple. To the surprise and shock of the gamemaster and the sponsors, Katniss hits the apple perfectly pinning it to the wall behind it and thanking them for their consideration before leaving the evaluation hall. The performance by Katniss and the daring move leads to her getting the highest score out of all the tributes with an astounding rating of 11 out of 12 (Ross, 2012).

This evaluation sequence is rather interesting, especially in relation to the idea of the strong female character and the notion of gendered emotions (The Hunger 0:41:20-0:47:40). The sequence is especially interesting as it must be seen as a rather strong sequence as it shows both strengths and weaknesses within the character. If we briefly visit the character analysis model by Hansen, then we can conclude that fear in the form of nervousness and anger are the two dominating emotions that guide Katniss' actions throughout the sequence (Hansen, 2002). To that, it must be added that this sequence in relation to the sequences used prior concludes that Katniss is a character that is heavily affected and guided by her emotions as she tends to act upon them without hesitation (Hansen, 2002). Even though it is shown that Katniss acts heavily upon her emotions, we are also shown her being able to calm herself and regain her composure in a stressed situation as she calms herself down from her nerves after missing the first arrow and regains total focus. This is a perfect display

of her mental strength which seems to be one of Katniss' greatest weapons, a strength befitting a strong female character (Westeren, 2020). To continue on that note, then this sequence truly emphasizes Katniss Everdeen as a great example of a strong female character, as we witness her skill in action and her confidence and bravery as she daringly shoots the apple right out of the pig's mouth risking hitting the gamemaster and the sponsors (Westeren, 2020). In this sequence, Katniss must of course enter the role of a skilled hunter, as mentioned earlier, to show off her skills but it must be argued that this role of skilled hunter may have evolved into the role of the skilled warrior that is confident in her own skills and that is not afraid to act or take risks (Hansen, 2002). This must be argued to fit right into the idea of the strong female character as Katniss now ticks off all the requirements of being one, as she is not necessarily physically strong, not that we know of at least, but she is mentally strong (Westeren, 2020). Continuing on that track then it must be argued that she also possesses strong inner values, which have been proven to range from the inner values of the caring elder sister to the skilled hunter and now evolved into the confident risk-taking warrior. It must be argued that she possesses inner values that are predominantly masculine in nature as she is independent, daring, confident, and tenacious (Westeren, 2020). Katniss must therefore be argued to be the perfect example of a strong female character.

Katniss Everdeen may be an example of a strong female character, but the important question is whether or not she fully embraces the role of the traditional female character or takes the extra step toward the true strong female character (Westeren, 2020). It must be mentioned that from what has been stated by the two recent sequences, the evaluation sequence and the short training sequence prior to it, then Katniss may fit perfectly within the role of the traditional strong female character that is dominated by masculine traits (Westeren, 2020). To that, it must be added that Katniss shows quite a bit of her feminine side as well and not in the form of weakness as it is ultimately her love and care for her family that awakened the heroic traits within her or at least led to her developing the traits and inner values of a heroic warrior. It must be added that Katniss is rather emotional, as mentioned before, which is ultimately seen as a more feminine trait according to Ahmed's notion of gendered emotions (Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed describes the 'soft' body as the feminine body that is too emotional and may be perceived as being weak and easily manipulated and the masculine body is 'hard' and less emotional and therefore perceived as being strong (Ahmed, 2014). This may be the case in some instances, but not this one, as Katniss is a character that does

not portray being emotional as a weakness but the opposite rather, as it must be considered a source for her strength. Then one might argue that this strength and power that she gains from her emotions stem from the harder more masculine emotions such as anger, rage, and hate, which she without a doubt does gain strength from, but Katniss is also shown to gain an equal amount of strength from more soft or feminine emotions such as love, kindness, and affection (Ahmed, 2014). One might even argue that the emotion of fear should be considered a soft emotion as it is an emotion that signifies vulnerability but at the same time, it is an emotion that Katniss seems to gain lots of strength from as she is able to overcome it. The nervousness shown explicitly through her body language with the jittery legs before the evaluation and the fact that it got to her so bad that she completely missed the first shot clearly shows that fear and nerves affect her a lot. But as Katniss is able to calm herself down it becomes clear that even the emotion of fear can be turned into strength. To put it simply the emotionality of Katniss does seem to present a balanced source of strength from both masculine and feminine emotions (Ahmed, 2014). This is of course a step in the direction of the true female character (Westeren, 2020).

The strength Katniss gains to pull off the daring move of shooting the apple must be accredited to the emotion of anger though as it angers her that the gamemaster and the sponsors do not pay her the attention that she deserves (Ahmed, 2014). As anger seems to take control of Katniss and her actions something special happens especially within the middle structure/level of the character as her character gains an almost mythical status (Hansen, 2002). This mythical or perhaps legendary status stems from her daring apple shot which almost portrays Katniss' character as a female Robin Hood or William Tell due to her remarkable skills with the bow and arrow. So as Katniss develops as a character her skills and actions lead her to resemble the legendary heroic archer reborn in female form almost. This is of course a rather abstract observation that must be stated to be present implicitly, but it must be argued that this is a significant sign of Katniss evolving from a caring sister and skilled hunter into a strong female hero type of character. If we play with this idea just a bit more then we might shine some light on just how much Katniss seems to resemble the legendary outlaw hero, Robin Hood, as they are both highly skilled archers and both rebel against the rich upper class for the sake of the poor lower classes. Ideologically this also seems to be the case in her resembling William Tell, as both Katniss and Tell are perceived as threats to the upper class. To her resemblance to Robin Hood, it must even be added how both characters are forest dwellers of some sort as we

are shown that District 12 is situated in and near a forested area. This implicit resemblance must therefore be argued to bring some sort of mythical status to the character that is Katniss Everdeen if we go by the analysis model by Hansen, which would now be able to perceive Katniss as bearing resemblance to a mythical figure (Hansen, 2002).

The portrayal of Katniss in the evaluation sequence in relation to the resemblance of the Robin Hood character must be argued to highlight the clash between cultures in the movie (The Hunger 0:41:20-0:47:40). This clash is of course the clash between the dominant culture of Capitol and the sub-culture of District 12. The class difference between the rich upper class and the working class which Katniss is a part of is put on display and it angers her that the upper-class sponsors and game master treats her and the other contestants like mere playthings. This anger is of course unleashed as she shoots the apple and through that action sort of resists the rules or the system that they made for the evaluations. The act of shooting the apple must of course be seen as a direct resemblance to William Tell and his famous and confident feat of shooting the apple on the head of his son. Symbolically it can be perceived almost as a one-to-one reenactment of the confident and fearless feat of William Tell, as the apple is not on top of the pig's head but instead held within the jaws of the pig which ultimately symbolizes the rich upper-class rulers of Capitol. This clash of cultures and clash of classes creates the structure of us vs them as Katniss actively defies her upper-class rulers. This plays even further into the mythical aspect of her character as it arguably resembles the outlaw hero Robin Hood's clash and conflict with the rich upper classes of society (Hansen, 2002). If we return to Hebdige for a moment, then we see that this resistance of the dominant culture of Capitol is to be expected as this clash of dominant culture and sub-culture invites resistance (Hebdige, 2003). The poor and rough style of the culture of District 12 is heavily colliding with the rich and overflowing style of the dominant culture of Capitol which Katniss actively goes against, especially through her performance of gender (Hebdige, 2003). As Katniss defies and resists the ways of Capitol, she must put on a tough exterior to not seem weak and therefore appears to act more masculine, since this is the way of showing strength and how to survive in District 12. That leads us to the understanding that Katniss not only switches between the different character roles but also gender roles (Butler, 2011). It must be argued that Katniss constantly puts on this masculine gender act to be perceived as being strong and to resist the dominant culture (Butler, 2011). The gender performance in this particular evaluation sequence must be argued to be mostly masculine but with some instances of

a slightly female gender performance through her being more emotionally affected (Butler, 2011). The mythical aspect of her character, the resemblance with Robin Hood, seems to further emphasize that she has to put on a masculine gender performance to seem strong (Butler, 2011).

Through these selected sequences we get a clear picture of what sort of character Katniss Everdeen is and what kind of character she evolves into being. Katniss as a character is a rather complex character as have been mentioned earlier, a character who is able to perform both masculine and feminine character roles. Ultimately, we must return to Westeren yet again for a sort of final evaluation of Katniss as a strong female character before moving on to Wonder Woman (Westeren, 2020). It must be said that Katniss Everdeen is without any doubt a strong female character. She may not be physically strong, but her wit, technique, and mental strength make up for it alongside her strong inner values (Westeren, 2020). Katniss is the type of strong female character who completely contradicts the explanation of the strong female character presented by Castro as it proves it completely wrong. Katniss is not defined by her relationship with a man, she is not strong because she is kicking ass in a sexy outfit while looking beautiful and perfect, so simply put Katniss completely disproves Castro's romanticized explanation of the strong female character (Castro, 2020). Katniss might disprove the explanation by Castro by being an example of Westeren's strong female character, but Castro might be on to something when stating that the strong women in movies might not be exactly that. This also seems to play into the idea of the strong female character presented by Westeren, as the traditionally strong female character is predominantly masculine in nature (Westeren, 2020). This presents the idea that a strong female character might just be a male character in disguise. Katniss must be said to be rather masculine but not entirely as she seems to embody both masculinity and femininity. That leads us to the important question of what type of strong female character Katniss is an example of.

Firstly, it must be argued that Katniss Everdeen is not under any circumstances portrayed as a hyper-strong female character. This can be concluded just by her being a character with both strengths and weaknesses and by being a character that struggles and not simply succeed at anything and everything she does. Lastly, she is not a character that only possesses masculine traits. She may tone down her feminine traits in some situations to be perceived as more masculine and stronger but does not portray the feminine traits as a weakness in any way (Westeren, 2020). The overall question is whether or not Katniss is a true strong female character or just a complex example of the

traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). Katniss does undoubtedly pass all of the criteria of being the traditional strong female character, but along the way, the seeds of the true strong female character have been growing and therefore it must be argued that Katniss is a representation of the true strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This conclusion stems from her being a character embracing both her feminine and masculine traits as she finds strength and weakness in both. Her idea of not wanting to come off as being weak must be argued to be on an individual basis that has no relation to her gender at all. Katniss ultimately ends up blending all of the masculine and feminine traits together as she evolves as a character, letting them strengthen each other as they bring out the best of the character and ultimately end up creating our strong female hero. It must be argued that Katniss is a complex 'round' character that may enter the realm of the true strong female character, as she is a character that exhibits her strength through her inner values and complexity since it must be argued that it is these inner values that drive the character completely (Westeren, 2020). Katniss must be argued to be an example of a true strong female character who embodies a balance between masculine and feminine traits with flaws and limitations. As Katniss seamlessly blends together masculine and feminine traits it must also be noted that she is not a female character there to just develop the male characters but as a strong protagonist with her own impact on the story (Westeren, 2020).

To further enforce this statement that Katniss is an example of the true strong female presented by Westeren, we may turn to Abigail Tichler's description and analysis of the character from her thesis "A Craved hero: How Katniss Everdeen is a new gender of heroic character that fills the gap in young adult literary protagonists" (Tichler, 2015). In this thesis, Tichler analyzes the character Katniss Everdeen by using the literary trilogy that the movie is based upon which should not cause any major issues when comparing our findings. From the get-go, it becomes clear that Katniss is a character written for a young adult audience, a detail that will be relevant later on in the analysis of Wonder Woman. Tichler explains Katniss as a character that "quenches the thirst of readers by surpassing gender to become a heroic figure focused on her true self and the greater good" (Tichler, 2015). This notion of surpassing gender to become a heroic figure could easily be compared to the idea of Katniss combining masculine and feminine traits to become this mythical heroine, which of course invites the idea of perceiving her as more than just a traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). Tichler presents a disregard for gender conformity through Katniss' character that brings forth

"a new breed of heroine for readers to idolize" (Tichler, 2015). This new breed of heroine can be understood as being the true strong female character as Tichler backs her statement up with the following explanation.

"She is able to embrace her true self rather than attempting to fit social norms. Katniss is able to behave in whatever way she feels is most necessary in any given situation instead of following the behavioral suggestions that society deems acceptable. Because of this flexibility, Katniss is able to embrace characteristics of both genders in order to become a well-rounded individual who is capable of leading a nation through a rebellion and lead her followers to freedom." (Tichler, 2015).

The last bit in the quote that states she is capable of leading her followers to freedom or leading a nation of course refers to the literary trilogy as a whole, which is not highly relevant for our case as we only deal with the first of the movies. The rest of the quote on the other hand presents an understanding of the character Katniss Everdeen that we might be rather familiar with, as it presents her as a strong female character who is able to embody both masculine and feminine characteristics while embracing her true self. Through Tichler's explanation of Katniss as a character, we ultimately end up with a rather similar conclusion of her being an example of a true female character that embodies the balance between masculine and feminine traits and values (Westeren, 2020). At the same time, we come to the same result that Katniss is a 'round' character by the theory of Forster and that she is a character that shows resistance and defiance to the social norms of the story world to perform as her true self and truly become the true hero of the story (Hebdige, 2003).

Lastly, to round up the analysis of Katniss Everdeen we may take a look at the character's possible cultural impact. We are of course able to look at the cultural impact of a textual work or a piece of visual media/culture due to the critical method that is the hermeneutics of suspicion presented by Felski (Felski, 2015). Here it becomes important to mention that even though Katniss Everdeen is just a fictitious character like the strong female character trope then they are still able to explain, portray, and affect real human aspects (Hansen, 2002). Characters such as the strong female character and the unhealthy extension, the Mary Sue, may ultimately end up as idols or role models for their audience to look up to, and these characters may even set the standard of what women must strive for or work towards due to their idolized ideals and aspects. As explained by Chaney and Liebler in their article about the Mary Sue, "Rather than offering an opportunity for self-

identification, Mary Sue often reinforces the impossible idea that women must strive for effortless perfection." (Chaney & Liebler, 2006). This does not mean much in the case of Katniss as we have somewhat solidified her as a true strong female character, but the quote by Chaney and Liebler does enforce the idea that such strong female character types may carry a heavier cultural impact than we imagine as they ultimately may end up as role models or idols. To that, it must be added that Katniss as an individual and a character may be seen as a fictitious role model or an idol due to the real human aspects that she embodies as stated by the notion of possible world semantics (Hansen, 2002). The overall idea of the possible world semantics also lets us dive into the relationship between the literary world and the real world and makes it possible for a fictitious literary character, such as Katniss Everdeen, to become a role model or an idol (Hansen, 2002). To sum up the sort of cultural impact a true strong female character such as Katniss might have then the following quote by Tichler explains it perfectly, "Katniss demonstrates how any child, regardless of gender, can create change and be themselves without social pressure and expectation." (Tichler, 2015). This ultimately explains that Katniss may stand as a true strong female character and as a role model and a strong protagonist who spreads the message that strength may be found in both masculinity and femininity. Finally, to close out this part of the analysis then we must see where the true strong female character stands in regard to Butler's gender performativity (Butler, 2011). Going by the example of Katniss Everdeen, then we must argue that the true strong female character is able to perform both genders as it contains traits and aspects of both genders. It is the given situation and environment that ultimately decides which type of gender performance is to be enacted (Butler, 2011). With that said we move on to a female protagonist on a slightly different scale as Katniss Everdeen, as we move on to the analysis of the superhero Wonder Woman.

Diana – *Wonder Woman* (2017):

Just like in the analysis of Katniss Everdeen, we will start off by looking at the paratext of the movie which again will be in the form of its movie poster (Appendix 2, 2.2). Here we will look at the poster to gain a first impression of the heroic female lead of the movie before moving on to her introductory sequence. Like previously with the poster from *The Hunger Games (2012),* we will be using Hansen's character analysis model and like with the previous poster we will only be able to work with the surface structure of the shown character on the poster (Hansen, 2002). So, what sort of first impression of Wonder Woman or Diana are we presented with? First, it must be mentioned how the

poster places Wonder Woman front and center as it shows a nearly full-body action frame of her wearing the recognizable iconic superhero armor. Just like with the last poster with Katniss Everdeen this poster also really sells the movie's female protagonist as the strong battle-ready female lead as it shows her on the battlefield in her iconic armor with dirt and sparks flying around probably from an explosion of some sort. If we look at Hansen's character analysis model then there are three parts of the surface structure/level that seem to stand out in this poster, which are the appearance and the actions of the character which enables the part of the surface structure that deals with the messages sent by the character (Hansen, 2002). As we have already touched upon the appearance of Wonder Woman 'aka' Diana, we will start there (Appendix 1). As mentioned before then Diana wears the well-known and iconic Wonder Woman armor with her gauntlets and everything. It must be mentioned that she looks like the traditional badass superhero we all know and love from comics and other media. She is even presented with a serious and stern look on her face with her gaze locked on her target, which in this case may be us as the audience since she looks out from the poster. To put it simply then she appears as a strong badass superhero who is prepared for battle. One might even add that she is presented almost like a goddess as she appears clean and unscathed on the battlefield with her hair beautifully blowing in the wind caused by an unknown explosion (Hansen, 2002).

This clean and unscathed goddess looks pretty damn cool, but it does seem to raise some questions about how she is able to appear like this on what looks like a dirty and muddied battlefield with explosions sending mud and dirt flying around her. That combined with her fairly revealing armor makes her stand out, but it also may resemble the rather mimetic explanation of the strong female character presented by Castro (Castro, 2020). The appearance and the actions of Diana in this poster come terrifyingly close to the description presented by Castro, as Wonder Woman is seen walking toward us or the enemy in the poster wearing her iconic and rather revealing armor while using her gauntlets to stop or deflect what might be bullets, still looking like a goddess in the process. To revisit the statements of the strong female character by Castro then she states;

"It's a phrase that I often roll my eyes at because these strong women are often not that. No, your strong female character kicking butt in high heels and having armor with obvious boob cups, still only defined by her relationship with a man, is not something to be celebrated…There seems to be a presumption within Hollywood movies that a female character is strong because she is kicking butt

and still looking beautiful and perfect while doing it: sexualized, romanticized, obvious bait for the male consumer. No, her skimpy outfit does not count as empowering." (Castro, 2020).

This rather exaggerated and aggressive description of the strong female character may be an example of having fallen into the mimetic trap, as it explains aspects of certain strong female characters that ultimately should not be considered strong (Hansen, 2002). Even though this may be an example of the mimetic trap then there might be some relevance to it as it presents the idea of the strong female character being sexualized and romanticized which at first glance very well could be the case going by the poster alone (Castro, 2020). There might be some relevance as we are shown an example of the armor with "boob cups" and a heroic female protagonist looking perfect and almost godlike while in action (Castro, 2020). Judging primarily by the poster and the first impression that it might give some people, then there is some validity in the claim of the strong female character being sexualized and romanticized in some instances like with Wonder Woman in this particular case. This might be to bait the male consumer into watching the movie and may very be to make a first impression that stands out. To that, it must still be added that Wonder Woman is a fictitious literary character, a superhero, and superheroes are known for their rather flashy outfits and must therefore not be compared one hundred percent to real people.

This appearance and the actions shown on the poster seem to send the message that this is a confident and independent strong female hero or warrior (Hansen, 2002). The idea that Wonder Woman 'aka' Diana is a capable warrior comes across clearly through the contrast between her looking godlike and divine in her superhero costume or armor in combination with the god-forsaken battlefield in the background, as it seems to enhance this strong heroic aspect of the character and makes her stand out perfectly as the iconic battle ready superhero (Hansen, 2002). This strong independent and confident aspect must also be argued to be shown through the serious and stern look on her face as mentioned earlier. Here we might look to Ahmed as the notion of gendered emotions presents us with the portrayal of the character as being an example of the hard or tough body that is less emotional and not easily moved (Ahmed, 2014). This of course means that she appears more masculine through her serious and stern exterior as it shows her embracing harder or more masculine emotions which present the idea of her being a character that is naturally tough (Ahmed, 2014). One could even argue for the absence of emotion or at least the presence of a harder emotional orientation which makes her seem tough, serious, immovable, and ultimately rather

masculine as it must be argued to be a more masculine emotional orientation (Ahmed, 2014). A reason for portraying Wonder Woman with such a masculine emotional orientation on the poster may be due to social norms and restraints deeming it strong to act and appear more masculine (Butler, 2011).

This leads us to the topic of gender performativity which could help explain the poster's portrayal of Wonder Woman and our first impression of her (Butler, 2011). The poster arguably presents a first impression of Diana being a rather masculine female character as it presents her as this confident and independent warrior who dons a tough and masculine emotional orientation. This presents a gender performance or a glimpse into a gender performance that is socially and culturally perceived as masculine due to the rather masculine nature of the traits and aspects on display (Butler, 2011). This then presents the idea of Wonder Woman being deliberately presented as more masculine on the poster to create a strong first impression as masculine as strength may be easier to recognize culturally and socially through more masculine traits. That does not remove the undoubtedly emphasized feminine look through the slightly sexualized armor/superhero costume. The looks of the character may be the only feminine aspect presented on the poster when everything else mostly points towards a more masculine gender performance and a more masculine first impression (Butler, 2011). This culturally masculine gender performance and character portrayal may in fact be there to present Wonder Woman or Diana as a strong female character and going by Westeren's description of the traditionally strong female character, it is not that far off (Westeren, 2020).

All of the aforementioned aspects and traits presented through the poster and through this first impression of Wonder Woman or Diana ultimately end up displaying her as an example of the traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This first impression presented here must also be argued to be a rather theoretical first impression but even that does not change the fact that the common first impression one might get from this poster most definitely would be that Wonder Woman is a strong female character of some sort. To revisit the description of the strong female character, the one we labeled the traditionally strong female character, then it mentions a character trope that is associated with notable physical or mental strength. It is also explained as being a character trope especially associated with female warriors and is a character trope that consists of mostly masculine inner traits (Westeren, 2020). Through that, we get that the traditionally strong female character is mostly masculine in nature and the impression of Wonder Woman that we get

from the poster seems to fit this description rather well. This can be argued since the first impression we get is that Wonder Woman is or is at least portrayed as a strong female warrior with notable physical strength as she is able to withstand explosions and deflect bullets. If we continue down that line it can even be added that the poster shows independence as she is the lone warrior on the battlefield. The emotional orientation mentioned earlier through the use of the theory by Ahmed further emphasizes these highly masculine inner traits of the character. If we put all this together then we ultimately get the idea and the first impression of Diana or Wonder Woman as a badass superhero and warrior, mostly masculine in nature, that may be a perfect example of Westeren's traditionally strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This is only a first impression though and still not a clear answer but as we dive into the sequences of the movie, we are sure to uncover the true character of Wonder Woman.

Like with Katniss Everdeen in the previous part of the analysis then we will start out with the introductory sequence of Diana or Wonder Woman as it yet again might present us with a baseline idea of the character. The introduction of Diana is a fairly long sequence and for that reason, we will be focusing on the most important aspects of this character introduction. The first part of the sequence shows Diana as a child running through the streets of her home Themyscira, as she runs away from her tutor to go admire the grown-up Amazons as they combat train (Wonder 0:02:53-0:14:54). Little Diana reaches the training grounds where she starts imitating the training done by the older Amazons or at least tries to, as she idolizes them and shows a desire to one day become a strong warrior herself. Diana ends up being caught by her mother and the queen of the Amazons Hippolyta, who she begs to let her start training soon but is ultimately not allowed to due to her mother Hippolyta being overprotective. Later we find out why she may be overprotective as Hippolyta reads Diana a bedtime story which is the origin story of their gods and how mankind and the Amazons came to be. This story establishes the purpose of the Amazon race which is to bring peace and love to mankind since the villain of the movie and the god of war Ares has corrupted mankind. This sequence also sets up the questionable existence of a child in a society with only women, which Hippolyta explains through her having sculpted Diana out of clay and then asked Zeus to give her life. This can of course be understood as Zeus being the probable father to Diana which would explain the emergence of her godly powers later on in the movie. The last bits we are shown of little Diana is her sneaking out and training in secret with the best general of the Amazon army

and the sister of Hippolyta Antiope. The two are later spotted by Hippolyta during one of these training sessions, in broad daylight this time and with an older Diana, where Hippolyta ultimately agrees to let Diana go through the Amazon warrior training. We then jump further in time seeing a now grown-up Diana training with the other Amazon warriors. In this training sequence, we are shown how strong and capable Diana has become as she puts her skills on display in front of her mother and as she overcomes the Amazon warriors, she is finally faced against Antiope herself. This final test as one might call it leads to Diana disarming Antiope losing awareness as she looks towards her mother as if to say 'Look I won' before being knocked to the ground by Antiope scolding her for letting her guard down. Even though Antiope unleashes a barrage of attacks on Diana the fight ultimately ends with Diana winning, as she unleashes her hidden godly power by accident, creating a shockwave that sends Antiope flying. This shocks Diana who sees that she has hurt Antiope by accident.

This rather long introductory sequence not only presents us with Diana as a character and the origin of her people the Amazons, among whom she is special as a possible descendant of the gods themselves (Jenkins, 2017). If we look at the character of Diana by using the analysis model by Hansen then we will see a character that on the surface level, through her appearance and actions, presents a character dreaming of becoming an Amazon warrior to the extent of being almost obsessed. We are shown a character that actively seeks strength through her admiration and idolization of her mother and the other Amazon warriors (Hansen, 2002). This appearance of a character excited to gain strength and become a warrior continues throughout the entire sequence and it must be argued that her actions enforce this aspect of the character (Hansen, 2002). From a young age, Diana begs her mother to let her start training, and when she is denied this possibility, she even goes as far as to defy her mother's orders which shows her obsession with her dream of becoming a strong Amazon warrior like the ones she idolizes (Hansen, 2002). So far it must be argued that the surface structure of Diana as a character presents a character with immense inner strength as she seeks to follow her dream no matter what, even if she must defy the one, she loves the most. It must be argued though that the sexualized strong female character aspect presented by Castro does seem to make itself present, as the sort of armor Diana and the other Amazons wear while training does seem to fall into the more revealing idea of armor for warriors (Castro, 2020). Not to defend this rather revealing and sexualized sort of armor, but for the sake of the narrative then this

armor does make them seem more exotic and makes the Amazons stand out as being special in some way. Furthermore, this sort of armor seems to be specialized for their style of fighting, but it ultimately does not change that it is a sexualized form of armor that logically speaking does not defend or protect much of their bodies (Castro, 2020). Again, that is of course if we apply logic to a fictitious Amazon race in a fictitious narrative universe where superpowers are real. When Diana is ultimately allowed to train and follow her dream, we are shown that she becomes a rather capable Amazon warrior through her training, gaining immense physical strength, but at the same time, a couple of character flaws seem to emerge as well. The biggest of said flaws is her awakening of her godly power but being unable to fully control it, which of course presents the narrative idea of her gaining control over said godly power later on in the movie. The second flaw we are presented with is her lack of awareness or loss of concentration in the fight against Antiope, as this presents her as an Amazon warrior who is not perfect and still has something to learn (Hansen, 2002).

Staying with Hansen and his character analysis model and with the topic of Diana's character flaws, then we are shown a glimpse of her inner values and parts of the middle structure of the character (Hansen, 2002). The flaw of being unable to control her newly awakened godly power and being positively surprised by this power at first until the shock of possibly hurting a loved one with it presents us with an idea of her morals, as she wants power and wants to be strong, but not if it comes with the cost of hurting other people. This shows us that Diana is a character who seeks strength as she wants to improve her skills as a warrior, but that she is a character who possesses a good heart with slightly heroic abilities since she wants to avoid hurting other people. If we combine the aspects shown through the surface structure then the middle structure provides us with an image of a character that belongs within the warrior type of character which slightly knocks on the door of being the heroic type of character (Hansen, 2002). Her status in society as a princess and her dream of becoming a true and strong Amazon warrior also seem to paint her as the character type known as the warrior princess, which presents the idea of a strong female warrior who may also have considerable diplomatic abilities. Her way of seeking strength and wanting to become an Amazon warrior shows us a character that is adventurous and independent as her curiosity and idolization of the Amazon warriors that she hears about in the legends drives her dream of becoming one herself (Hansen, 2002). Finally, Diana gains mythical status as a character through the explanation of her existence, as having been sculpted of clay by Hippolyta and then been given life

by the god Zeus himself. This presents the idea of her possibly being a demigod of some sort as she could be seen as a descendant of Zeus, which again explains her hidden and dormant abilities as a goddess (Hansen, 2002). This idea of Diana being a mythical figure through her possible relation to a god and her being a demigoddess herself is even further enforced by her being in the utopian society of the mythical Amazon race (Hansen, 2002). Then again Wonder Woman is considered a rather mythical superhero due to this particular background or origin story, so it makes complete sense that this movie presents her as such.

Suppose we stay on the topic of Diana aka Wonder Woman being a demigoddess or an example of a mythical figure as portrayed by the middle structure of her character, due to her parents being Hippolyta and Zeus. In that case, it becomes interesting to look at similar mythical figures from actual Greek mythology. As mentioned, Diana is portrayed as a capable Amazon warrior princess who is also a demigoddess, which makes her resemble other mythical warriors or heroes (Hansen, 2002). One particular Greek hero comes to mind: the son of Zeus Heracles aka Hercules himself. Diana has not done anything super heroic just yet, but she ultimately will, this comparison with Heracles seems rather interesting as he is the son of Zeus, and she is the possible daughter of Zeus, and they are both bound to be recognized as mythical or divine heroes (Hansen, 2002). Another resemblance here, so far at least, is the fact that Diana is the daughter of the god Zeus and the queen of the Amazons Hippolyta, a god, and a mortal, just like in the case of Heracles being the son of Zeus and a mortal woman named Alcmene. This resemblance will grow stronger as we move on to some of the more heroic scenes of Diana. Before moving on to the next sequence, it may be interesting to look at Diana and her introduction through the scope of Westeren's notion of the strong female character and the scope of gender performativity presented by Butler.

If we start with Westeren and the notion of the strong female character, then we can quickly conclude that Diana is not an example of the hyper-strong female character, as she requires tutoring and training before she is capable of performing her role as a skilled Amazon warrior (Westeren, 2020). Through the aspects shown by Diana and her obsession with becoming a strong Amazon warrior, it must be argued that her adventurous and tenacious nature in relation to her dream of becoming a warrior ultimately presents the idea of her being an example of the traditional strong female character (Westeren, 2020). This is further proven by her abilities as an Amazon warrior, where she displays notable physical strength and abilities as a skilled and capable female warrior.

The labeling of Diana as an example of the traditional strong female character stems from her lack of feminine traits since she predominantly only portrays masculine aspects, traits, and inner values throughout this introductory sequence (Westeren, 2020). She displays masculine traits such as her tenacity which she shows throughout the entire sequence due to her dream and obsession with becoming an Amazon warrior. The dream alone of becoming said warrior must be argued to be seen as rather masculine, as she does not seem to care about her position as princess of the Amazons but would much rather fight and stand as one of her idolized female warriors (Westeren, 2020).

That being said if we look through the scope of gender performativity, then we will find similar results. Gender performativity might not explain why Diana is a traditionally strong female character, but it will further enforce the idea of her being primarily and predominantly masculine in this introductory sequence. Going by the temporary classification of Diana being an example of the traditional strong female character due to her dominant masculine aspects, it must be argued that her gender performance is rather masculine contrary to her biological gender (Butler, 2011). Diana enacting a more masculine gender performance is of course seen through our understanding of gender performance through our actual social norms. One must take into consideration that Diana is a fictitious character from a fictitious society of only women. This fictitious Amazon culture most definitely has its own culture and social norms through which gender performativity is governed and constrained (Butler, 2011). It must be argued through this introductory sequence, that the Amazon society of Themyscira does seem to be heavily influenced by its army and the Amazon warriors. Therefore, it may be safe to say that this masculine warrior performance that Diana is enacting might be seen as the norm for this Amazon society. Amazons may ultimately just be fa female race that acts more masculine and has a more masculine nature (Butler, 2011). With that said, then it might be the case that they have gender norms that favor masculine traits due to their focus on being warriors in the case that they have to defend themselves against the legendary god of war Ares himself. Their gender norms and performances may be heavily influenced by masculinity (Butler, 2011).

With that, it may be time to move on to the next sequence where we will seek to unravel even more of the character that is Diana and maybe figure out whether she is a 'flat' or 'round' character (Forster, 1927). Going by the idea of Hansen's model only being able to work with 'round' characters then we can already slightly conclude that Diana may be a 'round' character, but to answer this fully

without any doubts, we must look into the character a bit further (Forster, 1927). The next sequence in question is when Diana decides to free the male lead, Steve Trevor, from his Amazon captivity and wants him to lead her to the war and to lead her to Ares the sworn enemy of the Amazons (Wonder 0:33:20-0:44:00). In this sequence Diana decides to take matters into her own hands, as none of the other Amazons seems to want to go after Ares, so she ultimately decides to team up with Steve to make him take her to the war (Jenkins, 2017). The sequence shows Diana revealing some of her super strength as she jumps over a cliff to get into the building where the equipment, she needs to battle Ares is stored. Diana ends up being confronted by her mother Hippolyta who has become aware of her plan. Diana finds her courage and heroic intent in a display of independence as she confronts her mother, who lets them go telling Diana to be careful in the world of men. We are then shown a slightly emotional parting of mother and daughter before getting some time with Diana and Steve on the small boat headed for London. On the boat Diana shows some confidence as she wants to be taken to where the war is the fiercest as that will be the location of Ares. Steve tries to talk some sense into Diana, as this overconfidence of hers is unbelievable to him since she states that she can end the great war by defeating Ares. Diana is told by Steve that singular individuals like him and her are not able to end the war, but that they have to get to London, to the men who can stop this war, and Diana confidently answers "I'm the man who can!" (Jenkins, 2017).

This sequence shows more of her physical strengths and abilities as a warrior and as a superhuman or goddess, which of course plays into the already established portrayal of her as a strong and now determined Amazon warrior (Hansen, 2002). We are shown a slight development in her physical abilities though, since the introductory sequence shows her strength and skill as a warrior through her combat skills, this sequence on the other hand shows us more of her superhuman strength. That is not the important part of this sequence though as it only emphasizes already established characteristics of the character, but it still shows a slight development and may for that reason be useful just to show her being a character that is evolving. The more important part of this sequence is that it presents us with an extended range of character traits and inner values. For that reason, it must be stated that this sequence is not really that interesting in terms of the surface structure of the character, but instead shows more of the middle structure (Hansen, 2002). This of course further proves Diana as being an example of a 'round' character due to the fact that she becomes more complex as a character as more traits and inner values are added to her character (Forster, 1927). As

mentioned, this sequence shows Diana's strong determination to take matters into her own hands when the other Amazons will not act upon the threat of Ares and even forbid her to do anything about it. Yet again Diana goes against the orders of her mother and the queen as she is determined to defeat Ares, the god of war and the mythical sworn enemy of the Amazons. Through this strong determination that Diana portrays in this particular sequence, it must be argued that she shows independence as she takes action and decides to act on her own against the orders of Hippolyta (Hansen, 2002). This independence portrayed through her actions also seems to present Diana as a character who has great confidence in her skills as a warrior, as she confidently and independently decides to find and defeat the god of war himself (Hansen, 2002). Through the independence and confidence shown throughout this sequence, it must also be argued that Diana begins developing more heroic traits and values, as she is determined to be the one who slays Ares and ends the great war bringing peace back to the world. To put it more simply, Diana is determined to be the good that defeats the world's great evil and their mythical enemy (Hansen, 2002).

In terms of her gender performativity, this sequence seems to further fuel the masculine more masculine gender performance of Diana as it shows her possessing and displaying multiple traits and values most often perceived as being masculine (Butler, 2011). As mentioned, Diana portrays strong confidence and independence in this particular sequence as she courageously and heroically decides that she is going to save the world from Ares. Going by the definition of the traditionally strong female character by Westeren, these traits such as independence and the portrayal of immense physical ability in female warriors are traditionally masculine traits and values (Westeren, 2020). By that reasoning, it must be argued that Diana puts on a highly masculine gender performance even going as far as confidently saying "I'm the man who can!" (Butler, 2011). There is nothing wrong with this sort of gender performance of course, but it does seem to prove the idea that the strong female character is mostly masculine in nature (Westeren, 2020). The quote "I'm the man who can!" may come as an act of overconfidence, which shows a slight flaw in the character, which is great as it contributes to the portrayal of an interesting character with strengths and weaknesses, which leads her even further from the path of the hyper-strong female character (Westeren, 2020). It must also be mentioned how the quote may show an indifference to gender and may suggest that both genders are capable of being equally strong since she as an Amazon woman just as well could enter the role of the man through gender performativity and be just as

successful or capable (Butler, 2011). The idea of genders being equally strong is great, but the quote could give birth to the unfortunate idea of femininity being inferior to masculinity, as it could suggest that only a man could do the job of ending the war and defeating Ares.

Staying on the topic of gender performativity, we must take a look at the emotional orientation of Diana, as the idea of gendered emotions undoubtedly contributes to gender performativity (Ahmed, 2014). Throughout this second sequence, it must be argued that Diana adopts a more tough and masculine emotional orientation guided by her goal of ending the war and defeating Ares. It is a heroic goal to end war and restore peace to the world and doing so makes her lean heavily on her warrior aspects which makes her stand out as being more masculine and less emotional due to her having to appear tougher than she already was before (Ahmed, 2014). It must be argued that Diana's emotional orientation leans heavily towards the harder and more tough and masculine gendered emotions, as she is fully determined to defeat Ares (Ahmed, 2014). This emotional orientation is specially made clear when she is confronted by her mother Hippolyta who lets her go seeing her daughter's determination and independence but warns her that there may be a possibility that she could never return to her home and her family ever again and to be careful in the world of men (Jenkins, 2017).

This scene where mother and daughter must say goodbye to each other would normally be rather emotional and we do see some emotion, especially from Hippolyta, who shows sadness and worry about her daughter leaving. In the case of Diana though the scene shows little emotion in this farewell and almost sets it up as a heroic sacrifice of hers, a sacrifice she is willing to make to defeat Ares. As Diana sails away from the island with Steve, it must be said that she moves on from this emotional goodbye rather quickly, as she has steeled her emotions through her confidence and determination to be the Amazon warrior who defeats the god of war. Through this final part of the sequence, it is made clear that Diana through her masculine gender performance also has adopted a rather masculine emotional orientation, which makes her less emotional so she can maintain her heroic focus as a warrior (Ahmed, 2014). To sum it up more precisely, then Diana is driven by her strong warrior aspects and values. Compared to the true strong female character that is Katniss, it clearly shows the difference as Katniss is highly emotional when she sacrifices herself for her sister and must say goodbye to her family, whereas the traditionally strong female character Diana is not driven by her emotions but rather her determination and her morals as a warrior. This truly puts into

perspective how different the two types of strong female characters are, as one is driven by emotions and the balance between masculinity and femininity, while the other is driven by strong traits and values like a warrior's determination, all traditionally masculine aspects (Westeren, 2020).

So far it has become clear that Diana is a true example of the traditional strong female character, that is predominantly masculine in nature. As we move on to the next sequence her biological gender may cause some issues within the setting of the narrative, some issues that place Diana in her symbolic role as a female hero who stands as a symbol of female empowerment. This next sequence shows exactly that as we see how she clashes with the historical setting of the First World War (Wonder 0:57:21-0:59:50). This rather short sequence shows Diana, the strong female character, clash with the patriarchal society of 1918, the patriarchal society of World War 1. The sequence shows Diana being present in the meeting room for England's military headquarters during their planning and discussing of war materiel and intel. Here she translates hidden intel written in two languages unknown to the English military high command, to the great shock and dismay of the field marshal, who tells Steve to see her out. One of the colonels does question this decision and wants her to decipher the intel since she is the only individual capable of reading it, which the field marshal reluctantly agrees to. Diana and the field marshal end up arguing over the military decision of ignoring the info from the deciphered intel and knowingly sending soldiers to their deaths, which infuriates Diana and makes her actively defy the field marshal calling him a coward for not fighting alongside his soldiers, and in the process and telling him that he should be ashamed (Jenkins, 2017).

We are shown how Diana makes the heroic and morally correct choice of defying and resisting the military decision of ignoring the intel and just letting innocent soldiers die. Through this Diana shows a strong resistance to the patriarchal society of WW1. This can be seen as an example of her defying and resisting the dominant ideology and culture, which in turn creates a cultural clash between her and the historical setting (Griffin, 2012). To explain the idea behind using the setting of WW1 we must look at the article "Women at War: WWI, Patriarchy, and Conflict in Wonder Woman (2017)" by Zachary Michael Powell who explains it as the following;

"To put it bluntly, WWII saw women with more power than in WWI, and therefore the film uses the latter to create a starker conflict between a superpowered woman and the dominant men in power. By putting Diana into conflict with the societal and political power relations that see women's power

diminished and male power seemingly absolute, the movie challenges contemporary spectators to contemplate their own moment through this window on historical gender relations." (Powell, 2019).

Through this explanation by Powell, it can be understood that the setting of WW1 has been selected to visualize a gender conflict more vividly as the conflict is enhanced by the historical setting. Furthermore, it has been selected to make its audience reflect on their own gender situation both culturally and politically. This also makes Diana stand out even more as a strong female character, as she shows female empowerment in her resistance to the toxic and unfair power relations within this gender conflict (Powell, 2019). This strength shown by it is even further enhanced as she stands alone against this patriarchal society and the patriarchal norms. This sequence truly shows the clash between the superpowered woman and the patriarchy, which in turn creates a setting that helps present a strong and powerful image of Diana as a female character strong and able to stand against a society that looks down on her. To put it simply, the setting functions perfectly to emphasize the power of Diana as a character and as a woman, as her power perfectly conflicts with the male power of the patriarchy to truly emphasize the notion of female empowerment that Wonder Woman is known for (Powell, 2019). Before moving on to the final sequence of the analysis, we must look at a last remark from Powell, as he writes, "Hanley makes clear that to challenge patriarchy is to challenge war, and vice versa." (Powell, 2019). This short remark by Powell holds a lot of meaning in relation to Diana, as we are shown how she wants to stop Ares the god of war and through that seeks to end war itself and restore peace to the world, while also actively going against the patriarchy as shown in this sequence. As the quote clearly explains, then challenging war and the patriarchy must ultimately be seen as the same thing, which ultimately makes the main enemy of Diana both Ares and the patriarchy since you cannot challenge war without challenging the patriarchy (Powell, 2019). This idea of Diana challenging the dominant culture and ideology seems to create a similarity between her and Katniss Everdeen since Katniss also resists and defies the dominant culture and ideology of the Capitol and ultimately sees them as the enemy. This may be a recurring trait of the different types of strong female characters, that they often tend to resist the toxic or corrupt dominant ideology present within their given narrative or story world.

With that said we move on to the final sequence of the movie, which is the sequence in which Diana ultimately enters her role as the superhero Wonder Woman. This sequence in particular is when Diana decides to climb onto "no man's land" which is the area between the British and German

trenches (Wonder 1:11:50-1:21:55). The sequence starts by showing the muddy and bloody terrors of WW1 as Diana and Steve are on their way to the front with the rest of their group. Diana is shocked by what she sees and wants to help people whenever she sees someone wounded or suffering, as Steve and the group tell her to keep moving since there is nothing, they can do for them and that they have their own goal/mission. They ultimately arrive at the trenches on the frontlines where the horrors of the trenches and the sight of suffering civilians push Diana over the edge and her heroic character does not seem to be able to hold back anymore. Diana ends up defying the orders by Steve of staying on mission as her heroism is put on display, as she cannot stand idly by while watching innocent people suffer, which ultimately leads to her suiting up and walking onto "no man's land" appearing in her iconic Wonder Woman armor just as on the movie poster. Diana then proceeds to put her superhuman abilities on display as she runs towards the German trenches right in the line of fire while deflecting their bullets and bombs. She essentially ends up leading the charge as the rest of the group and the British soldier join her as she draws out the German machine gun fire. Diana truly enters the role as Wonder Woman as she is almost untouchable in her charge, but even when it seems like the machine gun fire gets too intense, she is backed up by Steve and the other soldiers who ultimately end up retaking the captured town from the Germans, as they are inspired and led by Wonder Woman herself. The sequence ultimately shows Wonder Woman leading the soldiers to victory and shows her fighting side by side with the British soldier in a heroic fashion to reclaim the town for the sake of the innocent.

First, it must be noticed that her resemblance to the divine Greek hero Heracles is fully realized in this moment, as she displays superhuman strength by deflecting bullets and bombs and even flipping a tank. Most importantly though the resemblance to the Greek demigod is completely established as it must be argued that Diana truly enters her role as Wonder Woman and as a divine hero in this very moment. Furthermore, she displays extraordinary physical strength and courage in this sequence, which are traits she shares with the Greek demigod Heracles as well. The contrast between the muddy setting of WW1 and her looking almost divine truly makes her stand out as she enters battle, and this divinity is further enforced as she seems almost untouchable by the enemy's weapons. Furthermore, the slightly sexualized armor helps make her stand out even more, as everyone around her wears soldier uniforms, which ultimately helps enforce the idea of her fighting the patriarchy and emphasizes that she biologically is a woman fighting alongside male soldiers

(Powell, 2019). It must, of course, be noted, that this attire is the iconic Wonder Woman superhero armor, but that it is not very practical logically speaking as it does not really defend anything, but then again, this lack of armor is made up for in her superhuman skill and abilities (Castro, 2020).

It must be argued that Wonder Woman shows her tremendous strength and skill as a warrior and as a hero in this particular sequence, which makes it clear as day that she ultimately is the perfect example of a traditional female character (Westeren, 2020). To sum up, the different traits Wonder Woman gains or displays in this sequence, then we must, of course, start with her heroism as she selflessly engages the enemy for the sake of the innocent which displays her courage and bravery (Hansen, 2002). This ultimately leads to her leading the charge as an inspiring leader, which one could convincingly describe as a one-woman army. These actions ultimately evolve her character from the female warrior type of character into the female hero character (Hansen, 2002). These actions also further emphasize the fact that the traditionally strong female character is mostly male in nature, where the only female feature of Wonder Woman stands in the contrast between the horrible setting of the muddied battlefield of WW1 and her sexualized attire that emphasizes her physical feminine features (Westeren, 2020). The overconfidence displayed by Diana earlier on seems to be completely replaced with pure confidence as she enters the role of Wonder Woman, which could be argued to her growing out of her desire of wanting to defeat Ares, actively putting that on hold to selflessly fight for the innocent, which ultimately brings out the true hero in her alongside her true confidence and power. In terms of performativity, then Wonder Woman performs the role of an inspiring heroic leader perfectly, but this performance must still be argued to be a masculine performance as a warrior (Butler, 2011). The masculine performance is further enforced by her actions throughout the sequence, as most of the sequence shows off her strength as a superhero and her skills as an Amazon warrior with no real display of any feminine features at all besides her physical appearance (Butler, 2011). No real feminine traits or values are displayed throughout the sequence except for the caring nature toward the innocent and the suffering, which just as well could be accredited to her heroic selflessness. This selflessness could of course be seen as both a feminine and masculine trait, but even if so, then this would still be the only feminine trait that Wonder Woman displays in this sequence.

Sounding almost like a broken record at this point but through the different sequences used within the analysis of Wonder Woman it becomes clear that she is a 'round' character that fits the criteria

of being a traditionally strong female character due to her embodying predominantly masculine character traits and aspects (Westeren, 2020). This last sequence shows it in particular but elevates it to a more heroic level than we have seen before. When compared to Katniss who is also an example of a type of strong female character, the true strong female character, certain similarities, and differences become noticeable (Westeren, 2020). Within these differences and similarities, there are both pros and cons. The first major difference between the two strong character types is of course what separates the traditional strong female from the true strong female character, which is Wonder Woman embodying mostly masculine traits while Katniss seems to embody more of a balance between both masculine and feminine traits. Here we also see the difference between their driving forces where Katniss is heavily driven by her feelings and emotions, while Wonder Woman is heavily driven by her tougher warrior nature and aspects which in turn makes her more masculine and less emotional, at least when compared to Katniss. One could then ask the question, of whether or not one of the two types of strong female characters is better than the other. To answer this, then yes the true strong female character must arguably be seen as the best of the strong female character types, but is also the most difficult one to achieve. This must be argued since a true strong female character like Katniss is a beautifully complex character that displays strength and weakness through both feminine and masculine character traits, which ultimately sets up masculine and feminine traits and values as being equally strong, as they should be (Westeren, 2020). With that said, it does not mean that Wonder Woman and the display of the traditionally strong female character is bad since this character type can be just as interesting and arguably fits better within the superhero genre. Characters such as Wonder Woman and the traditional strong female character type, even though they can be cool and interesting characters may ultimately run the risk of making female traits seem inferior to masculine ones through their lack of feminine traits and their predominantly consisting of masculine traits and values (Westeren, 2020). So as this character becomes mostly masculine and maybe in some cases grows to be too masculine, they ultimately risk portraying masculinity as being superior and femininity as being inferior.

By that, it must not be understood that being masculine as a strong female character is a bad thing, just the idea of forgetting feminine traits and portraying them as inferior to masculinity is bad and unhealthy. The reason for this being unhealthy and bad is of course that it invites less complex and interesting character writing, but mostly because of the cultural impacts it could have upon the

audiences that may perceive these strong female characters as icons or role models. Like Chaney and Liebler explain when discussing the Mary Sue character, then these strong female character archetypes ultimately may end up as role models for their audiences in some cases and this display of portraying femininity as inferior could lead to a negative cultural impact, as people may get the wrong idea that they must act and appear more masculine to be strong or to not seem weak (Chaney & Liebler, 2006). This is where a true strong female character like Katniss comes through as a culturally positive role model with a positive cultural impact, as she is a complex character who finds strength in both gender traits and values. So, to put it simply both types of strong female characters are healthy and rather good, it is just one of them that risks the possibility of sending the wrong and rather negative message. This cultural impact of seeing the characters as role models is all fine as the written characters may show human aspects, values, or morals that are worth idolizing, but it must be argued that the problem posed by the masculine nature of the traditionally strong female character ultimately stems from people falling into the mimetic trap (Hansen, 2002). The idea that it is easier to fall into the mimetic trap due to the movies being part of the visual culture that shows real human beings portraying the written characters must be argued to be one of the biggest reasons behind the possible negative cultural impact related to the traditional strong female character. This must be argued, as people are more likely to forget that it is a written fictitious character when they see a real human actor portray it (Hansen, 2002). Ultimately both examples of the strong female character presented in this analysis must be seen as good and healthy examples of the strong character type, as none of them seems to come close to the toxic nature of the hyper-strong female character or the Mary Sue.

Conclusion:

Through the analysis of both Katniss Everdeen and Diana Prince 'aka' Wonder Woman, it can be concluded that there exist multiple types of strong female characters, some more complex than others. *The Hunger Games (2012)* portrays a true strong female character through its female protagonist Katniss Everdeen, while *Wonder Woman (2017)* displays the traditional strong female character through the protagonist and superhero Diana Prince. The true strong female character, Katniss Everdeen, must be argued to be depicted as the more complex character of the two examples, as this character and the true strong female character archetype show its immense complexity

through the combination and balance of masculinity and femininity (Westeren, 2020). This portrayal of the true strong female character through Katniss Everdeen presents a good and healthy complex character that finds strengths and weaknesses in both masculinity and femininity. The portrayal of Diana Prince or Wonder Woman presents the traditional strong female character, which is predominantly masculine in nature, which is not necessarily a bad or unhealthy character type, but it does present the risk of portraying masculinity as being superior to femininity, as its lack of feminine aspects and traits ultimately may lead to the wrong understanding of femininity being weak and inferior (Westeren, 2020). This does not mean that the traditional strong female character is bad or unhealthy, but that it may present a greater risk of sending a toxic or unhealthy message, which is often caused by individuals more easily falling into the mimetic trap due to the fictitious characters presentation through visual culture such as Hollywood movies (Hansen, 2002).

Furthermore, it can be concluded that the gender performance of the two types of strong female characters is vastly different. This can be concluded through the portrayal of the two female protagonists Katniss and Diana, as Katniss seems to be able to perform both gender roles through her more complex and balanced true strong female character archetype (Butler, 2011). Diana, on the other hand, seems to present the conclusion that the traditional strong female character is mostly masculine and therefore only enables a rather masculine gender performance. This presents us with the conclusion that the traditionally strong female character ultimately adapts a gender performance that leans heavily towards a male gender performance due to its dominant masculine traits and lack of feminine ones (Butler, 2011). One could cheekily present the argument that the traditionally strong female character ultimately puts on a male gender performance. The cultural impact of strong female heroines such as Katniss and Diana may be greater than we think, as they run the risk of being seen as role models or female icons, which ultimately ends up displaying masculinity and femininity as equals in the best scenarios but may present one being superior to the other in worst case scenarios.

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