Disciplining Dystopia: Power and the Body in Contemporary Young Adult Dystopian Fiction

by

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Abstract

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Despite a lineage stretching back as far as the 1940s, it is only in recent years that Young Adult (YA) fiction has begun to shed its reputation as a niche category largely deemed unworthy of study. The current boom in popularity of YA fiction has instigated this change. One of the most significant strands of this boom is the proliferation of Young Adult dystopian novels, which began to appear in significant numbers in the early 21st century and which provide the focus for this study. Specifically, this thesis examines the issue of the body and its role in the exertion and resistance of disciplinary power in contemporary YA dystopias. The theoretical model, drawn from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), bolsters the study of power and the body in five contemporary YA dystopian trilogies: Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies* series, Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium* trilogy, Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* series and Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy. A focus on texts featuring female protagonists accounts for the secondary focus on feminist theory. Combining these approaches, this thesis features close readings facilitated also by Young Adult literary criticism, Children’s literature theory, science fiction criticism, utopian studies, literary theory, feminist theory and cultural studies. In so doing, it seeks to determine whether the treatment of disciplinary power and the body may account for the current interest in YA dystopian fiction. The conclusions drawn propose, firstly, that the conflation of romance genre conventions with the dystopian mode in part account for both the prominence of the body and the depiction of female heroes in these texts. Additionally, I propose that for teens across the Western world, increasing levels of surveillance and highly regulated yet subtle power structures ensure that dystopian treatments of the body and disciplinary power resonate greatly.
Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the original work of the author and has not been submitted previously to any other academic institution. Where use has been made of the works of others it has been duly acknowledged and referenced.

________________________
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Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.

C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*

When someone dreams they never remain rooted to the spot. They move almost at will away from the place or the state in which they find themselves. Around the thirteenth year a fellow-travelling ego is discovered. That is the reason why dreams of a better life grow so luxuriantly around this time. They stir the fermenting day, fly beyond school and home, take with them what is good for and dear to us…

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

But humanity, in its desire for comfort, had over-reached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine.

E.M. Forster, *The Machine Stops*

To be seen – to be *seen* – is to be – her voice trembled – penetrated. What you must be, girls, is impenetrable.

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale*
In 1697, Charles Perrault published the story “Le Petit Chaperon Rouge” in his collection *Histoires et Contes du Temps Passé, avec des Moralités. Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (generally published in English as *Stories and Tales from Times Past, with Morals* or *Mother Goose’s Tales*). “Little Red Riding Hood”, as the tale is now most famously known, was likely the result of influences from various oral renditions popular in Southeast France and Northern Italy in the 17th Century (Zipes "Trials" 7). However, as the first published example of the narrative, Perrault’s version of the tale is largely responsible for the myriad of adaptations of the story which were to follow. Described by Jack Zipes as having “transformed a hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl into a tragic one in which the girl is blamed for her own violation” (Zipes "Trials" 7), Perrault bestowed upon the protagonist her red cap (its colour symbolising her sensuality and her “nonconformist” disposition) and with it, the responsibility for her demise (Zipes "Trials" 26; Zipes "Male" 122). This first published version of the tale concludes with Little Red Riding Hood being eaten by the wolf, and the contention appears to be that she is wholly deserving of her fate. Certainly, Perrault was unequivocal about the explicit message he intended his tale to convey:

> From this story one learns that children, especially young lasses, pretty, courteous and well-bred, do very wrong to listen to strangers, and it is not an unheard thing if the Wolf is thereby provided with his dinner. I say Wolf, for all wolves are not of the same sort; there is one kind with an amenable disposition – neither noisy, nor hateful, nor angry, but tame, obliging and gentle, following the young maids in the streets, even into their homes. Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves are of all such creatures the most dangerous! (Saintyves 83)

The sexualised imagery of the wolf eating the little girl is commonly understood to be a metaphor for rape — a rape for which, apparently, the little girl is entirely to blame. With this attempt at regulating sexuality through the medium of the fairy tale, Perrault laid the
foundations for a story that in its next significant form apparently softened, but in actual fact extended, its disciplinary messages.

The popularity of “Little Red Riding Hood” led to its appropriation by oral storytellers until it emerged in a new form written by the Brothers Grimm. First published in 1812, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s revision of the story (titled “Little Red Cap”) took its more definitive form in the 1857 edition of their collection Children’s and Household Tales. Like Perrault’s tale, “Little Red Cap” opens with the young girl being asked by her mother to take things to her sick grandmother. Unlike Perrault, however, the mother here gives her daughter very precise instructions:

“Come Little Red Cap; take this piece of cake and bottle of wine and bring them to your grandmother. She’s sick and weak, and this will strengthen her. Get an early start, before it becomes hot, and when you’re out in the woods, be nice and good and don’t stray from the path, otherwise you’ll fall and break the glass, and your grandmother will get nothing. And when you enter her room, don’t forget to say good morning, and don’t go peeping into all the corners” (Grimm 159).

Disregarding her mother’s warnings, the little girl is destined to come to a bad end. However, in the most significant deviation from Perrault’s story to be found in this version, Little Red Cap and her grandmother are rescued. Hearing snoring from the grandmother’s cabin, a passing huntsman decides to investigate. Upon finding the wolf he cuts open its stomach, releasing the unharmed girl and her grandmother. Unlike some oral versions of the tale, where the girl saves herself, the huntsman here rescues her from her deviant ways, and the experience teaches her a valuable lesson. As Zipes observes, “Little Red Riding Hood as Little Red Cap is transformed even more into the naïve, helpless, pretty little girl who must be punished for her transgression, which is spelled out more clearly as disobedience and indulgence in sensual pleasures” ("Trials" 33).
In order to ensure that the reader is left in no doubt that Little Red Cap’s behaviour was the cause of this horror, the Brothers Grimm concluded this version with an anti-climactic coda demonstrating what occurs when little girls do as they are told. On this occasion, the young protagonist is once again approached by a wolf en route to her grandmother’s house. She reflects that, had she been disobedient and failed to travel on the main road, the wolf would have eaten her. Instead, she avoids him and reaches her grandmother’s house unharmed. They are prepared when the wolf approaches, and ignore his attempts at gaining entry. Ultimately, he falls from the roof of the house to his demise. By obeying the expectations imposed upon her, Little Red Cap ensures that all is right with the world.

Little Red Cap reappears in various guises and versions throughout the centuries, including that of Offred, the red-cloaked, basket-carrying concubine of Margaret Atwood’s dystopia *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). Trapped by the wolf-like commander, charmed by flowers like those that distracted Red Cap, and with her own huntsman in Nick the commander’s driver, Offred has already been consumed by her wolf at the story’s opening and is attempting to engage in resistance. Yet despite feminist retellings such as Atwood’s and Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves,” the message implicit in Little Red Cap retains its potency. The morals of such fairy tales seek to regulate our behaviour. By apparently softening the ending of the story, the Grimms introduced clemency, and with it “more phrases and images suggestive of authority and order” (Zipes "Male" 125). While less stark, their ending reinforces the need to be compliant, obedient subjects who do not attempt to determine their own actions. As Zipes has shown, “what had formerly been a frank oral tale about sexuality and actual dangers in the woods became, by the time the Grimms finished civilising and refining “Little Red Cap,” a coded message about rationalising bodies and sex” ("Trials" 34). Lest we fail to understand the message, Little Red Cap clarifies it for us: “Little
Red Cap thought to herself, ‘Never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when your mother has forbidden it’” (Grimm 161).

There are many approaches to convincing people that they should submit to attempts at controlling their behaviour. Evidently, the most overt of these are not always the most formidable.
Introduction

This thesis examines the theme of the body and its role in the exertion and resistance of disciplinary power in contemporary Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction. In doing so, it utilises a Foucauldian framework influenced by feminist theory in its study of the treatment of this theme in five contemporary Young Adult dystopian trilogies: Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies* series, Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium* trilogy, Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* series and Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy. Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) — with its polemical discussion of the body’s centrality in enabling disciplinary practices while simultaneously providing a potentially significant site of resistance — provides the basic theoretical model. Additionally, a focus on texts containing female protagonists, which place the “docile body” at the centre of the discussion, accounts for the supplementary feminist theory. In combining these approaches, I undertake a close-reading of the selected texts, supported in addition to Foucault’s work by wide reading in the fields of Young Adult literary criticism, Children’s Literature theory, science fiction criticism, utopian studies, literary theory, feminist theory and cultural studies.

This introduction will provide context, justification and background information, before the five main chapters each progress to an analysis of a single trilogy and its treatment of the theme in question. These close readings will be followed by a conclusion which conflates the findings in an attempt to identify the significance of the body and its role in maintaining and resisting regulatory power for contemporary Young Adult dystopian fiction. Thus, it aims to provide an understanding of what the appeal of this theme may tell us about the reading choices of contemporary adolescents.

This introduction provides first a brief explanation of what precisely Young Adult (YA) literature is, and why it requires critical attention. I follow this explanation with
historical information about YA fiction before proceeding to a discussion of dystopian literature. A concise history of Young Adult science fiction and its connection to the current wave of YA dystopian texts is then undertaken, before I offer the rationale for the research and a discussion of the text selection process. Subsequently, I provide a brief discussion of the Foucauldian theory that underpins my five chapters, and information on feminist appropriations of this theory. This is followed by a discussion of resistance, agency and freedom and what they mean for Foucault. The introduction concludes with an exposition of my central research questions, and a chapter outline signposting the topics to be discussed.

What is Young Adult Literature and Why Study it?

The term “Young Adult” is, as Michael Cart has observed, “inherently slippery and amorphous” (3). Even in the 21st century, decades after the term first emerged in the aftermath of World War II, there is little consensus regarding the age demographic to which it definitively refers. In the United States, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) defines young adults as those aged twelve to eighteen (YALSA Para. 1), while industry magazine Publishers Weekly applies the label to twelve to seventeen year olds (PW Para. 1). When compiling statistics on young adult fiction, Neilsen BookScan – who measure book sales in the ten largest English-language book markets in the world – set thirteen as the lower end of the young adult age range (Milliot Graph. 6). In disciplines outside the realm of the Arts, Young Adults have been defined variously as those aged between twenty and forty years of age (Erikson 237), those between twenty and twenty-four years (Horon, Strobino and MacDonald 444), those between eighteen and twenty-seven (Bagley, Wood and Young 683), and as encompassing many other age ranges besides. In Ireland, leading book retailers Eason have recently separated their Young Adult literature section into two categories: “Teen” and
“Young Adult”. The intention is apparently to place books deemed more “grown-up” in the latter section, implying that YA books are appropriate for those in their late teens or older (Hennessey Para. 3). Yet in YA literary criticism, the terms young adult, adolescent and teenager are regularly used interchangeably. It appears that while a precise age-range has not been agreed, most critics and those in the publishing industry generally define young adults as those roughly between twelve and eighteen years old.

With the phrase “young adult” difficult to define, it is perhaps unsurprising that “Young Adult literature” also resists easy characterisation. Originally used simply to refer to texts written for a young adult audience, the growing popularity of the category means that the definition of YA fiction has become increasingly fluid. For some the original designation remains satisfactory; increasingly, however, YA literature is described in terms relating to the presence of young adult protagonists and issues deemed relevant to adolescence. Writer, editor and critic Patty Campbell suggests one definition that seeks to separate the YA text from the Adult novel:

Voice is all-important here and is the quality that most clearly distinguishes YA from Adult fiction…Whether it is told in the first, third (or even second) point of view, to be a YA novel a book must have a teen protagonist speaking from an adolescent point of view, with all the limitations of understanding this implies. An adult novel may have a teenage protagonist, but the action is seen from the vantage point of adult memory looking back. (Campbell 75)

This definition is consistent with many current perspectives on what constitutes a Young Adult novel. Yet the need to differentiate YA literature from Adult literature is a relatively recent concern. Traditionally, separating YA texts from Children’s literature has been the more pressing issue, as critics have tended to conflate the two. Indeed, in 1996 Caroline Hunt noted that between 1980 and 1995 “not a single major theorist in the field deals with young adult literature as something separate from literature for younger children” (5 emphasis in original). This observation, however, was made in a special issue of Children’s Literature
**Association Quarterly** that marked a turning point in Young Adult literature being treated separately from its junior counterpart. Gradually, the idea that YA fiction deserved, even *needed* to be discussed in its own right began to take hold. This was aided by observations such as Roberta Seelinger Trites’ that “YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery as children’s literature does” (*Disturbing* 20). Similarly, Peter Hunt defines YA literature as “the literary novel with an adolescent hero or heroine seen coming to terms with the world and self” (147). More recently, Crag Hill suggested the following interpretation:

YA literature is generally perceived as fiction that immerses readers in the experience, lived and imagined, of young adults aged 14-18. Frequently written in the first person, YA narratives across genres enable identification with the narrator/and or encourage empathy for the protagonist and/or other characters. (Hill 8)

Although such progressive descriptions of Young Adult literature did not take hold immediately, they have certainly been popularised in the 21st century. This may be partly due to the significant numbers of adults reading YA, rendering inaccurate previous suggestions that it is simply “literature for young adults”. In 2014, it was determined that 79% of the young adult books purchased the previous year were bought by adults (Milliot Graph. 6). While it is not possible to gauge how many of these books were purchased as gifts for young adult readers, there has undoubtedly been a notable increase in the appetite for YA fiction amongst adult audiences of late. Such is YA fiction’s current reach that the need for strict categories might be unnecessary but for the power of Young Adult fiction as a marketing opportunity. Between 2006 and 2012, Nielsen Bookscan reported a rise in YA fiction sales of 150%, and in 2014 these figures show little sign of waning (Para. 5).

As a category of fiction that is on the rise while sales of many other forms decline, Young Adult literature is evidently worthy of study at this point in time. Much like science
fiction, YA fiction has, historically, lacked respect within the academy (Hill 6). P.L. Thomas goes so far as to suggest that it has been “marginalised, even demonised” in the past (xi). Thus, Young Adult fiction has traditionally suffered from a dearth of critical attention. However, this is changing. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on Young Adult literature at a time when the YA novel is perhaps experiencing its most significant boom in popularity to date. As a literature read by many in their formative years, Young Adult fiction has the potential to both influence readers’ world view and to shape their future reading habits throughout adulthood. Thus, it is important that sufficient critical discussion is fostered in relation to YA literature in all its forms. The focus of this research lies at the intersection between YA dystopias, the body and power. Each of these topics is particularly significant for a young adult audience at present and will be discussed in detail in later sections. Firstly, however, I will provide a closer examination of the history of the Young Adult novel in an attempt to contextualise its current status.

**A Brief History of Young Adult Fiction**

Despite the recent surge in the popularity of YA literature, its history extends back as far as the 1940s. Maureen Daly’s *Seventeenth Summer*, first published in 1942, is widely considered to be the first Young Adult title. Daly was just twenty-one at the time of publication, and what the young Northern Irish-born author and her publishers believed to be an adult novel was eagerly adopted by teenagers who identified with the seventeen year old protagonist and her adolescent concerns. Yet despite the success of *Seventeenth Summer*, which remains in print today, it was to be a further twenty-five years before the second notable YA text appeared. (While other YA fiction was published in the interim, none of it was particularly well-regarded or successful, with Cart purporting that these texts were
“legitimately ignored” (23)). In 1967, S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, a tale of gang warfare, marked the beginning of an era of books for young adults that sought to represent “the reality” of teenagers’ lives (Hinton "Teen-Agers" 26). Hinton’s novel was a watershed text that led to YA novels taking a darker turn throughout the 1970s, as they aimed to portray the challenges of teenage life. Notable examples from this period include the inauthentic diary *Go Ask Alice*, published in 1971 (credited to “Anonymous” but later revealed to have been authored by its supposed editor Beatrice Sparks (Garcia 84)), and Robert Cormier’s ground-breaking 1974 novel *The Chocolate War*. Like Daly’s text, Cormier’s novel was in fact written for an adult audience, demonstrating that authorial intention has little impact on which novels become part of the YA canon (Coats 322). *The Chocolate War* is often cited as one of the most influential texts in the history of YA literature. Its stark depiction of the challenges of teenage life ensured that it was – and continues to be – regularly censored, with some adults apparently fearing that allowing youths to read about the issues that they faced in their daily lives might somehow corrupt their young minds.

In spite of controversy over Cormier’s subject matter, the 1970s saw other writers begin to produce works in a similar vein. Judy Blume’s early YA texts dealt with such pertinent teenage issues as menstruation, bullying, family pressure and masturbation. Most significantly, her 1975 novel *Forever* was almost certainly the first YA text to place sex at the centre of the story, and not in a moralistic manner. While perhaps overly didactic in nature, the lessons which *Forever* teaches are not regarding the ills of sexuality or the perils of pregnancy, as featured in the abundance of so-called “preggers” novels addressing sex at this time (Campbell 13). Rather, Blume’s pioneering text aims to elucidate for young adults all of the things about which they are likely to wonder, and anticipate, when embarking upon their first sexual experiences. Graphic, positive depiction of sexual intercourse, detailed information about contraception and allusions to homosexuality set *Forever* apart from other
novels dealing with young adult relationships in this era, and have resulted in its remaining an important text for young readers to this day.

Authors like Cormier and Blume dealt with teenage issues in a revealing, constructive manner. Unfortunately, however, the popularity of their texts resulted in the increased promotion of a genre for young adults which dealt with realistic themes far less successfully. The “problem novel” had its roots in the late 1960s, influenced by texts such as *The Outsiders*. However, it was not until the 1970s that the genre really began to take shape. Characterised by texts containing “a slick surface realism that too often acts as a cover up” for the stark realities of life, the problem novel tended to offer simplistic solutions to melodramatic tales of woe (Abramson 38). As Campbell describes it, the problem in such texts took centre stage, and “writers drew heavily on the possibilities for preachy moral instruction” (12). This contrasted greatly with the genuinely realistic depictions of life portrayed by Cormier and others. Michael Cart posits that “the novel of realism was gradually evolving into something richer and more rewarding” at this point, just as “the problem novel was evolving into something, well, ridiculous” (34).

The “ridiculous” state of the problem novel ensured that by the early 1980s it had become the object of satire, and its brand of realism appeared jaded to young readers. Young adults began to turn in their droves to the escapism of the romance novel. This romance renaissance took the shape of a return to series fiction, which had previously been popularised for children and teenagers in 1920s and 1930s mystery novels, such as those featuring Nancy Drew. The 1980s series fiction, however, took the form of rapidly produced, highly commercial paperbacks, including the enormously popular Wildfire and Sweet Valley High series’ (the latter sold over 250 million copies by the time the final instalment was published in 2003, and spawned a vast array of spin-offs (Bennett Para. 10)). While these texts were undoubtedly more popular with girls than with boys, their success led to the development of
further series fiction: horror paperbacks aimed at teens. Series such as *Goosebumps* and *Point Horror* found a significant audience with both genders, and remain popular currently.

Both genres of series fiction discussed here continued to garner notable success into the 1990s. However, their disposable nature and lack of literary substance was bemoaned by editors and critics alike. The proliferation of such texts certainly generated negative publicity which prejudiced readers against even those quality hardbacks that dealt with real life concerns. While genre fiction has the potential to be extremely important in its own right, many of these texts presented sanitised worlds, lacked nuance and simply repackaged tired formulas. The increased proliferation of romance and horror series led to the YA market narrowing, and the number and variety of titles published continued to decline throughout the first half of the 1990s (Cart 53).

Just as it appeared clear that YA fiction was an ailing genre, the industry began to improve. Cart suggests that a mid-1990s “renaissance of youth culture” was conducive to the revival of YA literature that began to occur at this time: market forces determined that teens were a somewhat untapped resource and began to lavish greater attention on them (62). Concurrently, academics and those in the industry concerned for the genre began to highlight the potential value of novels for teens in literary publications. New prizes for Young Adult titles such as YALSA’s Michael J. Printz award, in addition to new categories for YA fiction in established book awards, also contributed to increasing YA fiction’s profile. A grittier fiction emerged and contributed to the category’s gradually improving reputation.

In the early years of the 21st century, literature for young adults continued to increase its profile. Its genres were also diversified. J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series (the latter novels of which were published in the 2000s and are by many considered to have progressed from children’s literature to YA, thus mirroring its aging audience) saw fantasy becoming
increasingly popular with young readers. The novels were an international phenomenon and played a sizeable role in rejuvenating both children’s and YA fiction in the 21st century. In 2005, Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* series became the next major publishing success story for teenagers. Perhaps lacking in substance, Meyer’s novels brought the romance/vampire hybrid popularised for adults by authors like Anne Rice to a teenage audience for the first time. This audience eagerly bought into the hype created by the series’ publishers.

Such an appetite for genre fiction – as demonstrated by the popularity of Rowling’s and Meyer’s series – served as an indication that the “next big thing” in the publishing world would have elements of science fiction/fantasy and romance. That next big thing was dystopian fiction. By the late 2000s, a significant number of YA dystopias had begun to appear, and with them, the new publishing phenomenon for teens: Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy. However, having examined the history of YA fiction up to this point, I will refrain from charting further the YA dystopia’s rise here. To do so comprehensively, it is first necessary to turn to a discussion of the genres from which it sprang: Science Fiction and Dystopian literature.

**Dystopian Literature**

Dystopian fiction is a subcategory of the literary utopia. An “inversion” of its eutopian counterpart (Moylan *Scraps* 111), the dystopia is perhaps most helpfully explicated by Lyman Tower Sargent’s definition of it as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in a time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived” (Sargent "Three Faces" 9). Sometimes confused with the “anti-utopia” (Cf. Sargent "Three Faces" 21; Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 5), which refers to texts that are framed in opposition to eutopian
desire and hope, the literary dystopia actually “works between” anti-eutopian and eutopian expression (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 6). By presenting readers with a bleak future vision, dystopian fiction retains in some of its forms the potential to inspire the kind of “social dreaming” that is central to utopianism, and to act as an effective call to action for readers who engage with the warning implicit in the text (Sargent "Three Faces" 3).

Despite suggestions that the dystopian impulse is evident in late nineteenth century works such as Jules Verne’s *The Begum’s Millions* (1879) and Walter Besant’s *The Inner House* (1888) (Murphy 473), it was in the early twentieth century that dystopian literature actually emerged as a coherent mode. As “capital entered a new phase with the onset of monopolised production and as the modern imperialist state extended its internal and external reach,” new dystopian texts began to reflect twentieth century anxieties about the future and where humanity might be going (Moylan *Scraps* xi). Novels such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are amongst the most widely-known early dystopias. However, it is E.M Forster’s depiction of a world where people have been forced underground to live in isolation in a world ruled by “the machine” in his short story “The Machine Stops” (1909) that perhaps lays claim to the mantle of the original dystopian tale. Classical dystopias lean toward the anti-utopian end of the spectrum, depicting worlds with little hope and endings that resist leading the reader to a better possible future. The only positive potential of such texts lies instead within the reader’s interpretation of and reaction to them. If they heed the warning presented, readers will be forced to think critically about their own world and what must be done to prevent it from developing into an approximation of the negative future vision depicted.

While classical dystopias abounded until the 1960s, the 1970s saw a return to eutopian expression with the advent of the critical utopia (Moylan *Demand* 10). By the 1980s, however, the literary utopian landscape once again began to shift, and the dystopian genre
reassumed its primacy. Cyberpunk put a new spin on the negative utopia, while novels such as Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) “directly drew on the classical dystopian narrative” while simultaneously pushing the traditional boundaries (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 3). Over time, these boundaries gradually began to blur, allowing for the development of a new form of dystopian text: the critical dystopia.

The term “critical dystopia” refers to those works of fiction that “are clearly both eutopias and dystopias” (Sargent "Three Faces" 7). While retaining a negative future vision of the world at its core, the critical dystopia injects the classical dystopia’s resolutely negative tone “with a militant or utopian stance that not only breaks through the hegemonic enclosure of the text’s alternative world but also self-reflexively refuses the anti-utopian temptation that lingers in every dystopian account” (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 7). Critical dystopias feature eutopian spaces that model alternative possibilities (Sargent "U.S. Eutopias" 222), and contain open endings that allow utopian hope to reside within, as well as outside the text (Baccolini "Persistence" 520). Additionally, critical dystopias display self-reflexivity. They are imbued with an awareness of both the tradition from which they have emerged, and the new genres with which they interact. Notable examples of the critical dystopian text include the oft-cited *He She and It* by Marge Piercy (1991), Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Telling* (1990), and more recently, Margaret Atwood’s *Maddaddam* trilogy (2003-2013) and Disney Pixar’s CGI film *Wall-E* (2008).

This thesis is concerned primarily with dystopian fiction in what is perhaps its most popular form at present: the Young Adult dystopia. While I will discuss events leading up to – and the current state of – the young adult dystopian craze in further detail in following sections, before doing so I believe it necessary to briefly address the link between dystopian literature and science fiction (sf). The two genres are closely connected; as Raymond Williams observes, “the presentation of otherness appears to link them, as modes of desire or
of warning in which a crucial emphasis is obtained by the element of discontinuity from ordinary ‘realism’” (205). While sf and dystopia evolved separately, they regularly overlap, to the extent that sf author Jo Walton has described dystopias as “an encapsulated subgenre on an uneasy border” with science fiction (Para. 6). Certainly, while a significant number of sf novels are set in dystopias, it is less common for a dystopian text to exist independently of all of the conventions of sf. Nevertheless, the two genres can and regularly do operate with no reference to each other. While Walton’s definition is appealing, the dystopia is in actuality a subgenre of the literary utopia. Despite its inextricable links to sf, to categorise it merely as a form of the latter is at best, misguided, and at worst, wilfully ignorant.

Despite my insistence, however, that sf and dystopian literature are not conflated, I accept wholeheartedly that they can, in fact, should be spoken about as sister-genres of a kind. Often, it is pertinent to discuss the hallmarks of one in terms of the other, or to interrogate their evolution as they intertwine. Indeed, in the following section I will go on to do just that. In order to fully understand the current explosion in YA dystopian fiction, I will first analyse the tradition of Young Adult Science Fiction, and how its development is central to the rise in contemporary dystopias, sf or otherwise.

**Young Adult Science Fiction and the Dystopia**

Peter Graham’s assertion that “the golden age of science fiction is 12” perhaps goes some way to signifying the extent of the impression which sf can make on the young adult reader. (qtd. in Hartwell 81). Opening their eyes to new worlds and thrilling possibilities, science fiction for young readers has the potential to envision the future and in so doing to influence greatly its audience’s perspective on the present. Despite the current popularity of sf and related genres with the young adult audience, however, young readers were largely restricted
until the late 1940s to reading sf novels written for their adult counterparts. One author in particular was extremely influential in changing this situation: Robert A. Heinlein.

Heinlein wrote what was known as “juvenile” sf. Aimed at teenagers, his novels established the field. *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947) is generally accepted to be the first science fiction novel written specifically for this age group. Throughout the remainder of the 1940s and the 1950s, Heinlein published a further twelve juvenile sf texts. (Additionally, his 1963 novel *Podkayne of Mars* is regularly categorised as Heinlein’s fourteenth and final juvenile, despite the author’s insistence that it was written for an adult audience (Heinlein 86).) Often viewed as misogynistic today, many of Heinlein’s juveniles were in their own time partially progressive. Clearly, they were aimed at a male market, and casual sexism was indeed woven into the texts. Female characters were in a small minority, and at times referred to dismissively. However, Heinlein’s juveniles also contained a notable contingent of strong female characters, such as Elizabeth and Hazel Stone in *The Rolling Stones* (1952), Helen Walker in *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955) and Mother Shaum in 1957’s *Citizen of the Galaxy*. Space travel was a prominent theme throughout Heinlein’s juveniles, introducing young readers to the possibilities of science fiction. The text’s often open endings encouraged these readers to consider such possibilities further.

The juvenile market well and truly established, a number of other notable authors of sf for adults began to turn their hand to writing for younger audiences, including Isaac Asimov and Frederik Pohl. Additionally, Andre Norton began publishing sf aimed at this market with her novel *Star Man’s Son: 2250 A.D.* (1952). Norton was to become an extremely prolific writer of sf and fantasy: many of her juveniles contributed to cementing YASF as an important category of fiction at that time. Gradually, juvenile science fiction began to take a somewhat darker turn: by the 1970s space travel and adventure were relegated from centre-stage and post-apocalyptic visions began to appear more prominently. Indeed, Kay Sambell
suggests that since this period, “futuristic science fiction for young readers has been dominated by authorial fears about the violent, inhumane social and political worlds young people seem likely to inherit” (“Carnivalizing” 247). At this point, the term “juveniles” had begun to be replaced by “Young Adult,” and certainly, some of the notable examples of influential early YA science fiction texts are quite a bit darker than their pre-1960s counterparts. Robert C. O’Brien’s *Z for Zachariah* is often cited as a classic from the 1970s, and is set in a post-holocaust vision of the future. Similarly, Robert Westall’s hugely popular *Futuretrack 5* (1983) presents a dystopian 21st century Britain, while Monica Hughes’ *Devil on my Back* (1986) is another YASF text from this era which considers the negative direction in which our world might be heading.

O’Brien, Westall and Hughes’s novels suggest that post-apocalyptic and dystopian visions have indeed been present in YA science fiction for many years. However, the examples cited are amongst the most famous texts of the time. In general, throughout the 1980s and 1990s sf was less popular with teens than it had been with previous generations (Mendlesohn "Campaign" Para. 5). Yet the influence of the darker tone that had begun to appear in the 1970s was present in many of those that did find popularity. One of the most significant examples of this influence can be seen in Lois Lowry’s 1993 novel *The Giver*. Lowry’s dystopia is set in a homogenous society where aberrations are “released” through lethal injection and “the Receiver” of memories carries the burden of knowledge and understanding for the entire community. Having recently gained a new audience with teenagers currently embracing dystopian fiction for the first time (with its film adaptation released in 2014, over twenty years after the book’s initial publication), *The Giver* is a precursor to the current wave of texts that often eschew hard science fiction conventions, but embrace dystopian future visions.
It was not until the 21st century that these dystopian leanings crystallised into a clearly identifiable trend for young adults. From its roots in YASF, the Young Adult dystopian genre gradually gained momentum throughout the first decade of the century. Early examples, such as M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002), Nancy Farmer’s *The House of the Scorpion* (2002), Patrick Cave’s *Sharp North* (2004) and Pete Hautman’s *Rash* (2006), while positively received by both critics and fans, were initially not recognised as contributing to the establishment of a YA dystopian trend. Many novels from that period were only perceived as truly significant in the second decade of the century, in the wake of the influence of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Now, on surveying the literature published for a YA audience this century, it is clear that dystopian fiction has had an enormous impact on the current YA market. Texts from the early 2000s are being rediscovered and their audiences continue to grow rapidly. In this decade, countless more dystopian series and stand-alone novels have been published: Caragh M. O’Brien’s *Birthmarked* trilogy, Suzanne Weyn’s *Empty*, *The Always War* by Margaret Peterson Haddix, Teri Terry’s *Slated* series and *Blackout* by Sam Mills are just a very small sample of the dystopian texts published since 2010. Additionally, texts which are not strictly dystopian but fuse dystopian elements with fantasy or post-apocalyptic settings also abound for the YA audience. Presently, the novels receiving attention may be classified as sf to varying degrees; irrespective of their sf credentials, however, the mode *du jour* is distinctly dystopian.

Sean P. Connors notes that “Despite (or perhaps because of) its popularity with fans, there is a history of prejudice against dystopias in the field of literary criticism” ("Introduction" 4). Indeed, this is true of sf, fantasy, horror, and many other forms of genre fiction. Similarly, as already noted, YA fiction has also suffered from such prejudice, and has historically been dismissed by many critics. Thus, as Connors elsewhere suggests, “One might assume, then, that young adult dystopian fiction represents the low-person on the
literary totem pole” ("Try" 146). Yet all of this appears to be changing. While undoubtedly, both YA and genre fiction are yet to be recognised by critics to the extent that forms of “high” art may be, their popularity is such at present that they can no longer be dismissed. Keith M. Booker has stated that “If the main value of literature in general is its ability to make us see the world in new ways, to make us capable of entertaining new and different perspectives on reality, then dystopian fiction is not a marginal genre” (175). This statement can equally be applied to Young Adult fiction. Dystopian fiction is not a marginal genre at present, and YA fiction in general is flourishing like never before. Perhaps now more than ever, these previously derided forms of fiction warrant considerable critical attention, and I believe that the intersection at which they meet is the best place to start.

**Rationale**

The topic for this thesis arose from my interest in both Young Adult fiction and science fiction. At the time of embarking upon this research in December 2011 it had become clear that YA was in the throes of a regeneration, and further study was certainly warranted. In particular, this regeneration appeared to focus upon science fiction and dystopian texts. Having surveyed the most popular texts at that time, I determined that I would focus my research initially upon YA science fiction. Wide reading within the category quickly revealed a number of things:

- Firstly, the trend was undeniably dystopian, and the proliferation of texts published within this mode was rapidly increasing.
- Secondly, female protagonists were evident in far greater numbers than is traditional within YASF, and indeed than is customary in YA literature in general (a survey of the winners of the only award solely for Young Adult literature, the Michael J. Printz
award, reveals eleven male protagonists out of the fourteen winning novels since its inception in 2000).

- Thirdly, two recurring motifs could be identified across a significant number of the texts: issues relating to power, and to the body.

With these observations becoming further entrenched as my reading continued, it appeared evident that they required closer observation. I decided to revise my focus, shifting from sf to dystopian texts, and solely those featuring female protagonists. Having done so, questions surrounding power and the body began to present themselves even more prominently, and it soon became apparent that their interaction required analysis in the context of the YA dystopia.

Roberta Seelinger Trites has shown that recurring patterns in YA literature are largely linked to issues of power. Indeed, she views power relations as a central tenet of the YA novel, one that differentiates it from children’s literature:

The chief characteristic that distinguishes adolescent literature from children’s literature is the issue of how social power is deployed during the course of the narrative...Children’s literature often affirms the child’s sense of self and her or his personal power.

But in the adolescent novel, protagonists must learn about the social forces that have made them what they are. They learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function...(Disturbing 2-3).

The prominence of relations of power as a theme in YA texts is perhaps unsurprising, as power is inextricably linked to agency and developing subjectivity. Fiction for a young adult audience overwhelmingly focuses upon development (leading Trites to ally them with the entwikkungsroman rather than the bildungsroman form (Disturbing 10)). Central to this development are the struggles encountered when dealing with the social forces that attempt to both construct and suppress. Consequently, realistic novels for young adults often deal with
power dynamics relating to issues such as parenting, school, religion, sexuality, race and many others.

Encounters with all of the above forms of power abound in the current wave of YA dystopias. Many also focus on wider social issues and the awakening that comes from challenging them. Set in negative futures which may be constituted by anything from overt totalitarian regimes to (as in many of the trilogies discussed in this thesis) more subtle, disciplinary deployments of power, the dystopian setting provides its protagonists with challenges that force them to both resist and embrace power in a myriad of ways. They reinvent the coming of age trope for young adults, while addressing anxieties of the contemporary era and the roles that teens may have to play in confronting them.

In many ways, dystopia and the teenage experience are natural bedfellows. Author Scott Westerfeld has acknowledged this, asking “What is the apocalypse but an everlasting snow day? An excuse to tear up all those college applications, which suddenly aren’t going to determine the rest of your life?” ("Breaking" Para. 4). In agreement, Hintz and Ostry have suggested that “dystopia can act as a powerful metaphor for adolescence,” going on to explain that:

In adolescence, authority appears oppressive, and perhaps no one feels more under surveillance than the average teenager. The teenager is on the brink of adulthood: close enough to see its privileges but unable to enjoy them. The comforts of childhood fail to satisfy. The adolescent craves more power and control, and feels the limits on his or her freedom intensely ("Introduction" 9).

Thus, it seems fitting that the dystopian mode is currently so popular with teenagers, who are at present perhaps subject to more time-management and technological forms of scrutiny than previous generations. Having examined a select number of texts, chosen both on the basis of their relevance to the central thesis and their popularity with young adult readers, my
conclusion will consider further possible reasons for the current boom in YA dystopian fiction.

While power is vital to the texts in question, the body also recurs as a central motif in both the deployment of and resistance to dominant power in its various forms. The prominence of female protagonists may play a part in this; feminist theorists generally purport that “women just are their bodies in a way that men are not,” and the materiality of the female protagonist is likely to foreground bodily concerns (Shildrick and Price 3). Indeed, as the close-readings contained here will show, manifestations of power affect both genders, and forms of bodily discipline that are female-specific are particularly prevalent. These forms of bodily discipline include pressure relating to physical appearance, fashion, romantic relationships, limited choices regarding the future, expectations of caring for others, and many more besides.

Power and the body presented themselves as central to many current YA dystopias, and especially to those featuring central female characters. Another interesting dynamic in current YA dystopian writing is the proliferation of trilogies, to which the YA section of any book shop will testify — indeed, YALSA included an article bemoaning the trend entitled “Too Many Trilogies” on their website in July 2013. Thus, as a further means of limiting my focus, I determined to restrict my study to trilogies. Rather than selecting all of my featured texts at the outset, I opted to allow the market to continue to unfold as I wrote, featuring trilogies that generated the most sales and publicity throughout my period of study.

The final element that influenced greatly the course of my research was Foucault’s writings on the disciplinary society. During my initial reading in the field of YA dystopias, I recognised the recurrence of disciplinary techniques throughout many of the novels in question. Indeed, it was through these disciplinary techniques that the issues of power and the
body often intertwined. The following section will address Foucault’s theories in further
detail. Here, I will simply acknowledge that Foucault’s writings surrounding regulatory
societies and docile bodies supplied the initial broad framework for the study, providing a
structure through which to focus my discussion of power and the body in YA dystopian
fiction. However, in doing so I was cognisant of Foucault’s androcentric tendencies: his
writings tend to treat the body as if it were one, disregarding those experiences that are
characteristically female. Thus, I endeavoured to supplement my methodology with feminist
theory throughout to ensure that the female protagonists featured were not examined through
an ill-fitting lens. Additionally, it must be stressed that Foucault’s work is used here to
examine the novels, which are my primary interest. This thesis is not an exercise in
Foucauldian theory with the novels in a supporting role; instead, the texts take prominence,
with the theory providing appropriate hermeneutic frameworks and starting points for close
readings.

I have noted previously that while there exists currently a considerable body of
research relating to children’s literature (e.g., Zipes 1985, 2000; Nodelman 1992, 2008;
Nikolajeva 1996, 2000; P. Hunt 1991; Kohl 1995; and Lesnik-Oberstein 2004), Young Adult
Literature has received somewhat less attention. However, in recent years many scholars
have become cognisant of a need to discuss YA literature as a distinct form. Critics such as
been at the forefront of such developments, with McCallum and Seelinger Trites highlighting
the importance of power in the genre. Others including Sullivan (1999), Hintz and Ostry
(2003) and Mendlesohn (2009), meanwhile, have narrowed their focus to YA Science Fiction;
their studies are not solely based on dystopias, however: they are very broad overviews of the
genre, lacking detailed discussion of the thematic and generic issues treated here.
Combining studies of YA science fiction or dystopias and power are Ostry (2004), Guerra (2009) and Applebaum (2009). Unlike this project, the focal point of these studies has without exception been the posthuman body. Similarly, much of the research relating to adult SF or dystopian literature and power has focused on the posthuman also (e.g., Deery 1994, Haraway 1987, Ostry 2004). While this trope indeed merits consideration, and is examined in detail in relation to a number of the trilogies featured here, I believe that to solely concentrate upon this element of the body’s relationship to power in YA fiction is to dismiss its broader significance for the young adult audience.

Unsurprisingly, Foucault and disciplinarity have been invoked by numerous SF scholars, albeit largely in relation to adult or children’s fiction. Notable examples include Jacobs (2007) on assent and the body in Nineteen Eighty-Four, and Don Latham’s (2004) Foucauldian reading of The Giver. More recently, in a 2014 essay Sara K. Day has examined docility in terms of female sexuality in YA dystopian fiction. In addition to a focus on the body and power, many of these studies also feature feminist modes of analysis.

Day’s text is contained in Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction (2014), one of two recent collections to focus on contemporary YA dystopias. The other, Basu, Broad and Hintz’s Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers (2013) does contain chapters relating to the body, and has been useful in this study. However, the related Foucauldian theory does not feature in this collection. The existence of these new collections demonstrates that research in this area is timely, and interest continues to grow.

Clearly, the various elements with which this thesis is concerned (YA Literature; dystopian literature, science fiction; the body; power; Foucault’s writings on disciplinarity; and feminism) have been addressed previously (and indeed the texts referred to above are just a sample of those on the topic, although I have chosen the most relevant). This study makes
an original contribution by combining the above in examining the body’s role in exerting and maintaining disciplinary power in contemporary YA dystopian fiction. In doing so, it aims to understand the significance of this theme for the YA audience and to determine whether it may account for the current interest in Young Adult dystopias amongst contemporary adolescents.

Foucault, Discipline and the Docile Body

The broad framework underlying this research is informed by Michel Foucault’s theories surrounding the disciplinary society and the docile body. In his 1975 study *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault proposes that during the Enlightenment, Western society largely abandoned public physical punishment in favour of imprisonment. From this proposition emerged a picture of the body as a direct locus of power that enables disciplinary practices to be executed throughout the anatomo-political realm. Issues of power and the body are central to many contemporary YA dystopias, and Foucault’s ideas provide a useful lens through which to interrogate these topics.

*Discipline and Punish* describes the new power structures that largely replaced the spectacle of torture and punishment in the Western world. Foucault suggests that these structures were bolstered when Enlightenment reformers – driven by desires to make power more efficient and to limit that of the King rather than by altruistic tendencies – decentralised punishment. Thus, rather than relying upon public spectacle and torture imposed by identifiable figureheads, punitive measures became less visible and less severe (*Discipline* 8-11). Limiting the burden carried by any one person for inflicting punishment, this new method instead implicated numerous actors in the punishment process, thereby diminishing the involvement of each:
As a result of this new restraint, a whole army of technicians took over from the executioner, the immediate anatomist of pain: warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists; by their very presence near the prisoner, they sing the praises that the law needs: they reassure it that the body and pain are not the ultimate objects of its punitive action. (*Discipline* 11)

Foucault goes on to demonstrate how this distribution of power in the penal system mirrors that later deployed in wider society. Rather than inflicting torture on the physical body, the new system seeks to control the prisoner in more subtle, but all-pervasive ways. This is achieved partly through attaining knowledge about the subject. Knowledge and power intertwine throughout Foucault’s theories on disciplinarity, and are equally significant for ensuring that power operates efficiently. The new prisons operated as an “apparatus of knowledge,” allowing for the “ever-growing knowledge of the individuals” (*Discipline* 126-27). Extending from the prison to a wider mechanism of social control, the public too were soon subjected to “stricter methods of surveillance, a tighter partitioning of the population, more efficient techniques of locating and obtaining information” (*Discipline* 77). The decentralisation of power was, in effect, the broadening of its potential.

Foucault uses military analogies to describe the effects that this shift in power structures had on the greater population. Perhaps the most significant of these effects was the focus upon creating “docile bodies”: bodies that may be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (*Discipline* 136). Foucault claims that there were three new techniques involved in creating docile bodies:

1. Rather than treating the body en masse, as was previously the custom, this new form of control treated it individually, “exercising upon it a subtle coercion” (*Discipline* 137).
2. The object of control was now the efficiency of the body, rather than its signifying elements of behaviour or language. Exercise became the only ceremony involved.
3. There now existed a permanent coercion through the use of supervision and control of time, space and movement to the greatest degree possible (Discipline 137). Together, these methods ensure docility combined with utility, and can be referred to as “disciplines” (Discipline 137). Unlike previous forms of domination, disciplinarity requires little force. It lacks a sole, identifiable sovereign-like figure, and does not seek “ritual marks of allegiance” to a lord (Foucault Discipline 137). Also, rather than requiring the individual to engage in a monastic-style renunciation of the body, disciplinarity encourages the individual to increase his or her utility (Discipline 137).

Disciplinary techniques quickly began to extend beyond the prison, to schools, hospitals, asylums, the military, and various other institutions. Through a “micro-physics of control,” Foucault states that these institutions employed “Small acts of cunning endowed with a greater power of diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious, mechanisms that obeyed economies too shameful to be acknowledged, or pursued petty forms of coercion,” thus heralding the extension of the penal system (Discipline 139). Beginning with apparently insignificant forms of control, to which people easily assented, the limits of this power could subtly increase in line with docility, while being perceived as entirely innocuous.

Discipline operates primarily upon four principal techniques, within which are contained a number of sub-techniques. As these are discussed in chapters one to five in relation to their utilisation in the societies depicted, they are outlined only briefly here:

1. The art of distributions
   - This involves the distribution of individuals in space, and relates to methods of enclosure, partitioning, functionality of space and the rank of serial space.

2. The control of activity
• The control of activity operates through time-tabling, applying a timed expectation to actions, training the body in precise gestures, “fastening” the body to the object that it manipulates, and arranging the continual extraction of optimal results from time.

3. The organisation of geneses

• Duration of training etc., must be divided into defined segments which are ordered according to a hierarchy. This must conclude with an examination allowing citizens to be classified, after which they will be “caught up in a temporal series which specifically defines his level or his rank” (*Discipline* 159).

4. The composition of forces

• “The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others” (*Discipline* 164). The various divisions of time operate efficiently and result in a defined system of command which does not need to be explicitly articulated, but leads to automatic results.

These techniques are then enabled by what Foucault calls the three “simple instruments” of discipline:

1. Hierarchical Observation

• People must be made clearly visible, while those observing them operate both seen and unseen. Buildings are organised into “an apparatus of observation, recording and training” to ensure that “a single gaze” can view all (*Discipline* 173).

2. Normalising Judgement

• A norm is established, and people are observed to ensure that they satisfy it. Those who fail to adopt the norms are judged, leading to a new kind of “infra-
penalty” independent of the law (Foucault Discipline 178). By instilling a culture of uniformity, citizens are discouraged from transgressing, and punished through humiliation and ostracisation if they do. “The power of normalisation imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful” (Discipline 184).

3. The Examination

- The examination extends surveillance and normalisation by transferring a “ceremony” of objectification once desired by rulers onto discipline’s subjects. It creates and records knowledge of individuals, using data to aid “the constitution of the individual as a describable, analysable object” (Discipline 190), and makes each person a “case” requiring correction/normalisation/training (Discipline 191).

Together these elements combine to facilitate the regulation of populations.

Clearly, this pattern is irregular: to suggest that it unfolds in all societies in this precise manner is unrealistic. Rather than replacing all other modalities of power, disciplinarity has infiltrated them, “sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary link between them, linking them together, expanding them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements” (Discipline 216). Although the model outlined here is not always replicated entirely, many facets of it are observable across myriad forms of societies. The novels included in this thesis describe the techniques of disciplinarity to varying degrees, and some of them combine the creation of docile bodies with more traditional forms of control and punishment. In general, however, Foucault’s regulatory mechanisms are readily identifiable in YA dystopia. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the emphasis on homogeneity, subtle coercion, surveillance and control of time and space
are all conducive to societies that, while in some cases are apparently benign, can produce the utmost levels of domination.

It should be noted that if we are to accept Foucault’s theories, power must not be thought of as a privilege for certain individuals (for example law enforcers) which is inaccessible to others. Instead, we must understand power as something which arises out of interaction between subjects or groups; it is only through such engagement that power becomes intelligible (Butin 168). Indeed, Foucault suggests it is more accurate to refer to “relations of power” when discussing power in broad terms, and I believe this to be a helpful suggestion as the word “power” alone tends to connote dominance. Power is not always repressive: it creates and enables also. To say “relations of power” instead has the dual effect of being an inclusive term encompassing both dominance and resistance, while also recognising the latter as a form of power in itself. Resistance can arise both against and within dominant power. For example, docility imbues people with the ability to optimise their capacity, and it is possible that this capacity may in fact empower them. Harnessing this power can lead to the subject partaking in an engaged resistance to the disciplinary structures that envelop them: however, despite Foucault’s claims that where there is power, there is resistance, he fails to provide a greatly detailed discussion of the latter in Discipline and Punish. Yet what he does make clear is that, although resistance is often viewed as a reaction that comes subsequent to power, they are in fact wholly intertwined, each imbued with the other ("Question" 186). It is not possible to operate independently of power, as it is everywhere. Therefore any resistance that occurs does so within the domain of relations of power. The connection between power and resistance does not mean that resistance is futile; rather, it appears to suggest that multiple resistances can be forged through the disciplines, but always with the risk of merely perpetuating the dominant power structure whilst believing oneself to be acting against it.
It is important to understand that relations of power are not always directly oppositional. They do not necessarily operate in a neat binary structure, and there is often no obvious distinction or division between positive and negative forms of power or between those who facilitate them. The suggestion that “power is everywhere” should not be taken to mean that this power is equally distributed, but rather that absolute power is impossible. Relations of power shift and change but they are always just that: relational. Various scenarios may occur, from situations in which almost complete domination has occurred (for example, when someone is imprisoned), to those in which it may not always be possible to identify the dominant party. Without a dialectic between the will to dominate and the will to resist, therefore, there is no relational or systemic tension within which power can be constituted.

The ideas here are discussed further in the following chapters in an attempt to elucidate my discussion of power and the body in contemporary dystopian fiction. However, as previously noted, Foucault fails to address the female experience in his examinations of bodily control. Thus, the next section attempts to somewhat balance Foucault’s work with approaches that appropriate and enhance his ideas from a feminist perspective, and it is followed by an effort to address the question of resistance in more detail.

**Docile Female Bodies**

The concerns raised by feminist theorists regarding the need for a gynocentric discussion of docility are as relevant when considering the female protagonists of YA dystopian texts as when discussing contemporary culture, according to Sara K. Day. She states that the adolescent female body represents a particularly “implicit pairing of docility and danger, both in contemporary Western culture and in dystopian novels, in that the adolescent woman is expected to conform to specific physical requirements that ultimately position her as a threat.
that may be monitored, controlled, or exploited by the social system in which she lives” (Day 77). Certainly, these physical requirements are evident in the texts discussed in this thesis, and will be analysed at length. Before doing so, however, a brief exposition of feminist thought on these issues is necessary.

Foucault’s work on the body and power is often regarded as androcentric; thus, Sandra Lee Bartky asks: “Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the ‘docile bodies’ of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men?” (63-64). For many feminists, the docile body is considered to be at the root of a significant number of the oppressions imposed upon women. Similarly, the body’s role in other notable sites of power-play, such as the arenas of gender, sexuality and symbolic orders has been recognised as an issue of which we must remain cognisant. Foucault’s theories have been utilised successfully by feminism in a variety of ways; his anti-essentialist ideas about the body in particular have proven useful to many. However, Foucault’s lack of consideration of the manner in which women’s bodies are subjected to disciplinary practices that are not especially relevant to men is the cause of frustration. As Angela King observes, “He doesn’t seem concerned to explore how or why power operates to invest, train and produce bodies that are gendered and he also appears to be blind to the extent that gender determines the techniques and degrees of discipline exerted on the body” (30).

Simone de Beauvoir argued that women are “weighed down by everything peculiar to” the body; thus, the critical prioritisation of disciplinary techniques affecting women is certainly warranted (15). Feminists such as Bartky and Susan Bordo have subsequently attempted to rectify Foucault’s neglect of the female body. Bordo contends that while Foucault’s theories are useful, to credit him with being the first to identify the connection between the body and relations of power is unfair. She purports that in fact, “that was discovered by feminism, and long before it entered into its marriage with poststructuralist
thought” (Bordo *Unbearable* 17). Nevertheless, she accepts that his discussion of docility is enlightening, and has joined Bartky and others in discussing it in relation to experiences that are particular to – or especially applicable to – women (for example, pressure surrounding diet, the beauty industry, hair removal, cosmetic surgery and bodily comportment). By normalising such issues, disciplinarity ensures that women bear much of the responsibility for their own subjection, and often renders them blind to the very power structures that constitute them.

In addition to Foucault’s claims about dominant power, his thoughts – or relative lack of – on resistance have also been addressed by feminist critics. Jana Sawicki, Margaret A. McLaren and others have claimed that accounts like Bartky and Bordo’s merely perpetuate the problematic aspects of Foucault’s theories, framing women as wholly subjugated victims largely incapable of resistance (Sawicki 293; McLaren 98). Nancy Fraser has argued that acceptance of the Foucauldian notion that subjectivity is constituted by power precludes the possibility of any meaningful resistance. She also criticises Foucault for failing to account for precisely what forms of power warrant resistance in the first place (Fraser 29). However, others have suggested that it would not have been appropriate for Foucault to attempt to answer this question, as this would “undermine Foucault’s attempt to avoid appealing to external vantage points from which to judge” and that any answer would “surely be savaged for its appeal to a norm” (Butin 170). Nancy Hartsock asks how it is possible for a subject that cannot exist outside of power to resist it in any way, and whether portraying people in such terms is reducing them to victims (172). Linda Alcoff agrees, claiming that Foucault’s political ontology “inhibits the development of an adequate theory of resistance” and thus “undercuts the possibilities for an effective resistance to domination” (70). The next section addresses such questions of resistance further, and in so doing, also considers the concepts of agency and freedom.
Resistance Reconsidered

The previous section has demonstrated that feminist critics are somewhat divided on the usefulness of Foucault’s work on disciplinarity and the extent to which his thoughts on resistance are credible. However, the following chapters will accept Foucault’s contention that, despite power’s purported all-pervasive nature, resistance is not just possible, but an integral part of all relations of power. While *Discipline and Punish* undoubtedly failed to detail the conditions of this resistance, Foucault’s later writings and lectures gradually began to elucidate his thoughts on the matter. Foucault states in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (*Sexuality* 95). Such proclamations situate power’s relational status in what Kevin Thompson terms “both adversarial as well as supportive lines between forces” (117). If we are to understand the relational nature of power systems, we must realise that there is a significant difference between power being everywhere and domination being everywhere. Power and dominance should not be conflated; to do so is to underestimate the true significance of the former. Accordingly, points of resistance are embedded within relations of power as another form of power itself. Rather than viewing domination’s antithesis to be powerlessness, we must recognise that antithesis as being active, engaged struggle.

Engaged struggle, then, can take many forms. In general, rather than a “single locus of great refusal,” Foucault notes that there are instead a multiplicity of resistances which by their very nature “can only exist in the strategic field of power relations” (*Sexuality* 95). Thus, we should not view resistance as a reaction to power ultimately doomed to failure, but as an essential element within all relations of power, and as such distributed in an equally
irregular fashion. Indeed, Foucault has stated that “The existence of power relationships
depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance which are present everywhere in the power
network. Resistances are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as
an irreducible opposite” (Sexuality 95). At times, these resistances take the shape of “radical
ruptures” (Sexuality 96); throughout this thesis, examples of such ruptures will be presented in
the form of revolutionary movements, such as the effort to literally take down Portland’s
walls in Lauren Oliver’s Delirium series, or the Rising movement in Condie’s Matched
trilogy. Additionally significant, however, are the smaller, “mobile and transitory points of
resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting
regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them”
(Foucault Sexuality 95). Each of the five chapters here contain numerous examples of such
resistances, from characters’ shaping of their physical appearance, to the use of self-harm, to
the promotion of prohibited skills such as writing, and decisions about protagonists’ romantic
relationships. Such apparently minor forms of resistance are deeply significant: Foucault
suggests that “it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes
a revolution possible” (Foucault Sexuality 95). Rather than being curtailed by its close
proximity to dominant power, resistance “exists all the more by being in the same place as
power; hence, like power, resistances are multiple” (Foucault "Power" 142). Thus, power
relations are defined by the simultaneous presence of disparate and often dissonant social and
political energies.

Embedded within the idea of resistance are the concepts of agency and freedom. For
the young adult protagonists of the novels analysed in this thesis, agency and freedom lie at
the heart of both the societal struggles in which they are ultimately engaged, and in their self-
creation as strong young women. Resistance often utilises the techniques of the dominant
power structure in its efforts. Thus, young female protagonists who have been moulded
according to the values or norms of a dominant regime will be shown in the following chapters often to use the skills, characteristics or experience conferred through this moulding in their attempts at resistance (for example, Westerfeld’s protagonist Tally uses the “tricks” accepted within her society as a means of identifying engaged citizens against it when she leaves to join the Smokies, and Oliver’s Lena re-dons a now disingenuous timid persona when entering New York from the Wilds as a spy). As Brent L. Pickett observes in his article “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance,” such practical engagement means “it is possible to work upon the self, and to create more ‘space’ for self-creation,” as “the practice of an aesthetics of the self is nothing other than resistance to the ways in which one is constituted as a subject by modern power” (462). The ability and indeed the will to engage in resistance is a significant element in the constitution of female agency in these novels.

In addition to playing a role in the self-creation of the novels’ protagonists, their engagement with, and in, various forms of resistance will also be shown to allow points of freedom to emerge in the texts. For Foucault, freedom denotes the possibility of new discourses and new relations of power borne out of the friction between dominance and resistance (Phillips 335). Freedom’s significance, rather than lying in the production of these new relations, can be found in the “moment of possibility” created in the space between the old and the new. Such concepts are integral to utopian philosophy: the friction created through resistance and the resultant new forms of thought and action drive progress and reinforce the impetus for hope and for change. In order for this to occur, however, the conditions must allow for “an egalitarian distribution of transformative capacity (equal access to a social formation’s mechanisms of power)” which “maintains the fluidity and variability of a power-relation, ensuring that the whims, appetites, and desires of both sides are able to coexist without limitation” (Heller 104). In the dystopian texts discussed here, the conditions allow for points of freedom to develop to varying degrees, and can be witnessed, for example,
at the end of Condie’s *Matched* trilogy where we see the community in a state of flux and about to vote on a new leader and societal structure. It is important to note, then, that while spaces of freedom can breed transformation, they do not eradicate relations of power, but merely reconfigure them.

**Central Research Questions and Chapter Outline**

The topics addressed above converge in the following chapters to aid my examination of the body, disciplinarity and resistance in the contemporary YA dystopia. In doing so, they inform the consideration of four central research questions.

First: to what extent can the key elements of what Foucault termed the “disciplinary society” be identified in the novels discussed? Four basic techniques of discipline combine with three “simple instruments” to form the roots of the disciplinary society, and are enacted through institutions and norms that infiltrate the minutiae of everyday life (Foucault 218-223; 170-192). Using these key elements to guide a close-reading of the novels discussed, I assess the extent to which elements of Foucault’s “disciplinary society” are manifest in the chosen texts.

Second: what role does the body play in the implementation and maintenance of the disciplinary practices employed in the societies in question? As asserted, the production and regulation of docile bodies is central to the success of disciplinarity. The trilogies to be addressed each contain numerous themes relating to the body. It will be necessary to examine the treatment of these themes and how they may relate to the functioning of the disciplinary societies in question. Power and the body are significant tropes of interest across many genres of Young Adult fiction; their combination in YA dystopian fiction is one that warrants attention in order to understand their contemporary reception.
Third: is the body utilised as a vehicle for the resistance to and subversion of disciplinary power in the novels discussed? If so, in what ways? In tandem with Foucault’s claim that the body is a significant and direct locus of power that enables disciplinary practices to be executed throughout the anatomo-political realm, the argument that the body also has the potential to be a special site of resistance to such disciplinary manipulations is developed here. If utilised correctly, the body may be subjects’ most important weapon in attempting to free themselves from the shackles of social control (Harvey 15). Instances in the texts where the body is used for the resistance and subversion of disciplinary mechanisms will be identified and discussed, with the objective of determining whether and to what degree these popular novels suggest to readers that defeat of the status quo is possible. Feminist theories relating to the embodied subject and bodily appropriation will be employed in this discussion.

Fourth: to what extent might this recurring theme of the body as a locus of dominant power and resistance account for the current popularity of the dystopian form within the Young Adult category, and what might this suggest about the young adult readers of these texts? Leading children’s literature theorist Jack Zipes has suggested that as western children are becoming increasingly monitored, controlled and time managed, so too does their need for books which reflect their desire for agency increase (Sticks 34). In dystopian literature, young adults are presented with narratives which replicate such feelings of being intensely controlled.

In order to address these questions, each chapter will analyse one series of novels, examining the ways in which power and the body are implicated in maintaining and challenging regulatory controls in the text. The content of every chapter is divided into four sections, with each section discussing one topic relevant to the discussion.
Chapter One focuses upon Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy. The first section of this chapter introduces the concept of panopticism in an effort to detail the significance of surveillance, a notable feature of disciplinarity and of dystopian fiction. It also considers further Foucault’s four “basic techniques” of discipline, examining their presence in Panem and District 13. Section Two progresses to an inspection of expectations surrounding female physical appearance and the ways in which they are used to both impose and subvert disciplinary practices. The third section focuses on gender and normalisation in the text, including a critique of the love-triangle (a recurring theme in the current wave of YA dystopias) and the heteronormative messages surrounding it. Finally, Section Four is centred upon the power of discourse, and in particular Foucault’s concept of the “archive” (“Politics” 59).

Chapter Two examines Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies* series. Beginning with a return to the topics of spatial distribution and surveillance – each central to disciplinarity and often to dystopian texts – it then proceeds to an examination of the norms established around beauty in the trilogy. Section Three concerns forms of embodied resistance, while Section Four discusses posthumanity and how it can both dominate and liberate the body.

The subject of Chapter Three is the *Delirium* trilogy by Lauren Oliver. Section One here delves further into the convergence of romance novel conventions (in particular the love triangle) and the dystopian genre, and examines the effects that this has in this text. Section Two examines the culture of perfection so common to dystopian fiction, and the way in which, in this trilogy, it is facilitated by disciplinary techniques. The third section focuses on the culture of fear regarding love and its associated elements, and how this controls people’s actions. Lastly, Section Four of Chapter Three analyses the forms of resistance present in The Wilds, the text’s alternate space.
Chapter Four analyses Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* novels. Its first two sections relate to identity, a topic significant for YA fiction in general and the dystopian narrative in particular. Section One concerns social identity and female physical appearance, while Section Two addresses the link between sexuality and identity formation. The latter also returns to the question of romance conventions. Section Three considers the role of the family in imposing disciplinary structures, and in providing the impetus to resist them. The final section of this chapter discusses biotechnology and how it is implicated in both controlling and empowering the body.

My fifth and final chapter examines Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy. This chapter begins with a discussion of the way in which medicalisation of the society in the text has facilitated various regulatory processes. Section Two addresses data collection and returns to the issue of surveillance, both of which are in this text aided by Foucault’s “simple instruments” of disciplinarity which encourage people to make themselves highly visible. Section Three discusses censorship in the novels, and the forms of rebellion that develop around it, while Section Four examines in detail the Rising, the novel’s resistance movement. This final section shows the entwining of Foucault’s observations about dominant power and the possibilities for resistance to that dominant power in action.
Chapter 1

“Perhaps I am Watching you Now”: Discipline, Appearance, Heteronormativity and Discourse in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy

Introduction

Since the publication of the first novel in *The Hunger Games* trilogy in 2008, Suzanne Collins’ series has evolved into a multimedia phenomenon. In 2009 the first sequel, *Catching Fire*, was published, followed by *Mockingjay*, which completed the trilogy in 2010. Such was the series’ success that it led to the development of a four-part film adaptation, of which to date three instalments have been released. Certainly the most well-known of the series examined in this thesis, Collins’ trilogy is now a worldwide sensation. The novels are particularly significant as they have proven extremely popular with young adult – and indeed with adult – readers, and are the likely catalyst for the notably increased interest in Young Adult dystopia in recent years. As a pioneer of this current wave of texts, and one which models disciplinary structures in both of the societies depicted (with the body placed at the centre of these structures in each case), *The Hunger Games* trilogy seems a worthy place to begin a discussion of power and the body in contemporary Young Adult dystopian fiction.

Perhaps best classified as a critical dystopia – the term used narrowly here to refer to the fact that the text retains a “utopian impulse” (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 7), and resists the closed ending and ultimate subjugation of the individual that characterise the traditional dystopian form – *The Hunger Games* encompasses numerous themes which point to the importance of the body in both implementing and resisting regulatory power structures. While elements of traditional sovereign power feature throughout the text, they are greatly supplemented with regulatory mechanisms that comprise a far more subtle but equally
menacing form of control. From the explicit surveillance and disciplinary techniques exerted over the citizens of Panem, the novel’s setting, to the more insidious promotion of norms relating to appearance, relationships and discourse, Collins’ trilogy demonstrates the centrality of the body to her dystopian vision. In so doing, however, the author also includes acts of resistance, many of which are undertaken by the novel’s female protagonist Katniss Everdeen, and which serve to maintain the texts’ utopian potential. Through Katniss and others in the novel, the young adult reader is alerted to the negative ways in which the body may be implicated in their oppression. However, readers are also shown that it is possible to reclaim their body in the battle against those injustices which are currently faced, and perhaps prevent those which are at present merely threats from coming into being. This chapter examines the significance of both dominant power and resistance in *The Hunger Games*, with particular focus on Katniss and the manner in which she engages with both sides of the power dynamic.

1.1 Panoptic Power and Discipline’s Dominance: Surveillance and Other Disciplinary Structures in The Capitol and District 13

Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan have noted that, unlike many eutopian narratives, where the action may open in an unremarkable setting and progress to a utopian community, the dystopian novel generally begins with the protagonist already situated in the text’s negative utopia. Nevertheless, “the element of textual estrangement remains in effect since the focus is frequently on a character who questions the dystopian society” (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 5). This is certainly true of *The Hunger Games*, which demonstrates its protagonist’s dissatisfaction with the society in which she lives from the very beginning of the novel:

When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far off city called
the Capitol. Eventually I understood that this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. (*Hunger 7*)

Such pronouncements immediately alert the reader to the fact that this is a world in which dissent of any kind is not tolerated. Panem displays many of the hallmarks of Foucault’s “disciplinary society”: time and space are strictly ordered, with citizens confined to their own districts, and most sent to work in their district’s specialist industry from a young age. Even within the districts movement is restricted, with areas such as the woods in District 12 strictly off-limits. “Peacekeepers” patrol the districts, willing both to carry out punishment and enforce regulatory surveillance on behalf of the Capitol in exchange for the semblance of power that it gives them. In addition to being regulated by others, the people of Panem have internalised the power structures which dominate them, becoming “caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers” (*Discipline* 201). While some citizens – including Katniss and her friend Gale – attempt to resist these controls by asserting their freedom, they do this in a clandestine fashion as the trilogy opens, aware of the repercussions that they will face if caught.

The citizens of Panem are consistently complicit in the bodily controls exerted over them. The operation of this practice is perhaps best understood through a consideration of Foucault’s theory of panopticism. Foucault developed this theory from Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon: a circular prison comprising a central surveillance tower, surrounded by cells along the walls. The surveillance tower is designed to provide complete visibility to the occupant of the tower, while lighting and design ensure that those incarcerated cannot see the other inmates or establish the degree to which they are being observed. The Panopticon leads to prisoners assuming responsibility for their own control; unable to determine whether they are under surveillance, they are forced to behave as if being watched
at all times. Using the Panopticon as a metaphor for the way in which disciplinary power succeeds in controlling populations, Foucault explains that:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (*Discipline* 202-03)

Trapped by a government which has isolated the districts, and which rules from the elusive “Capitol” through surveillance, the people of Panem’s districts feel their every move being scrutinised. As June Pulliam has shown, Collins’ dystopia acts as a hybrid of what Foucault terms the sovereign society, and a disciplinary society where power’s pervasive reach leads to citizens gradually assuming responsibility for self-regulation (172). While Panem does not have a king, President Snow fulfils a similar function, using the highly visible, physical methods of punishment that typify sovereign rule. For example, he ensures that public displays of the Capitol’s power are common, with citizens publicly punished for dissent (such as Gale’s violent whipping by Peacekeepers upon being caught poaching), and executes those who displease him (Pulliam 172). However, such overt forms of power are heavily supplemented with disciplinary mechanisms, and pervasive surveillance is one of the most significant of these. Even Katniss, generally portrayed as brave in the face of oppression, is haunted by feelings of being observed by the country’s rulers. This is illustrated when she finds the rose that President Snow has planted in her house and recognises that “It speaks to me of unfinished business. It whispers, *I can find you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you now*” (*Mockingjay* 18). It appears that the threat of constant surveillance allows the Capitol to successfully exert power from a distance while enjoying more privileged surroundings. Those in the districts are viewed merely as the providers of the “panem et circenses” (bread and circuses) necessary to keep the Capitol citizens mindlessly content (*Mockingjay* 261).
Another element of the novel’s society which supplements sovereign power with panoptic discipline is the Hunger Games themselves. Posited as a punishment for the “dark days” when the citizens revolted seventy-four years previously (Hunger 21), the Hunger Games operate on the “rule of lateral effects” – the idea that punishment should have its greatest effects on those who have not committed the crime (Discipline 95). In addition to taking the lives of numerous innocent civilians each year, the games act as an annual reminder to the people of the consequences of rebellion. Within the games, the players are divided in much the same way as are the cell-mates in a panopticon, with an awareness that their every move may be examined, yet never knowing which of their actions will be broadcast. Both in and outside of the arena, the people of Panem are subjected to an “inspecting gaze” that they internalise until they are their own overseers, “each individual thus exercising surveillance over, and against, himself” (Foucault "Power" 155).

As the trilogy progresses, it becomes clear that this level of surveillance is not being utilised solely by the powers in the Capitol, but is also wielded by the rebels. During the revolution, Plutarch repeatedly warns Katniss that she must carefully maintain her image to ensure that she is transmitting the “correct” message at all times. Katniss sarcastically retorts: “Why don’t I just pretend I’m on camera?” (Mockingjay 165). To an even greater degree, such methods are employed in District 13. 13 is apparently posited as a “eutopian enclave” in the text (Sargent "U.S. Eutopias" 222). Its role in convincing Katniss and others that life without the Capitol is sustainable is one of the grounds for the text being read as a critical dystopia, as it reminds readers that the “utopian impulse” has not been entirely eradicated (Baccolini and Moylan "Introduction" 7). However, District 13 is at best a “flawed utopia” (Sargent "Problem" 225), and its own disciplinary mechanisms are widespread.

In order to demonstrate the extent to which District 13 functions as a disciplinary society, we must turn to the four basic techniques of discipline which Foucault describes in
Discipline and Punish. The first of these is the “art of distributions” (Discipline 141). The art of distributions is evident throughout District 13, where citizens are allocated compartments to live in, granted privileges to access different areas in accordance with their perceived usefulness to the cause, and given strict timetables to organise their day:

You can go outside for exercise and sunlight but only at very specific times in your schedule. You can’t miss your schedule. Every morning, you’re supposed to stick your right arm in this contraption in the wall. It tattoos the smooth inside of your forearm with your schedule for the day in a sticky purple ink. 7:00 – Breakfast. 7:30 – Kitchen Duties. 8:30 – Education Centre, Room 17. And so on. The ink is indelible until 22:00 – Bathing. That’s when whatever keeps it water resistant breaks down and the whole schedule rinses away. The lights-out at 22:30 signals that everyone not on the night shift should be in bed. (Collins Mockingjay 21)

This system also demonstrates the second of Foucault’s principles: the control of activity (Discipline 149). The time-table is a classic example of the way in which this operates, ensuring that citizens are encouraged to spend their time in ways which are perceived as useful or beneficial to the society. As Foucault explains,

Discipline ... poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time: exhaustion rather than use; it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces. This means that one must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment, as if time, in its very fragmentation, were inexhaustible or as if, at least by an ever more detailed internal arrangement, one could tend towards an ideal point at which one maintained maximum speed and maximum efficiency. (Discipline 154)

These principles are adhered to in District 13, with time so strictly organised that Katniss remarks: “The citizens of 13 are truly starved for entertainment” (Mockingjay 179).

The third principle of the disciplinary society has been termed “the organisation of training into discrete segments” (Latham 136). In District 13, all citizens are given entry-level ranks in the military when they turn fourteen and from then on they are addressed as “soldier” (Mockingjay 9). Their traditional schooling finishes and they are trained for combat in the area to which their skills are deemed best suited, their bodies harnessed for the good of the planned uprising.
Finally, the fourth of the principles discussed by Foucault is the “co-ordination of all parts such that the interests of the individual are subordinated to the good of the community” (Latham 137). As is common in depictions of self-sufficient communities, individualism is considered in District 13 to be a dangerous quality. People are forbidden to consume alcohol, ostensibly to ensure that they can carry out their duties at any time (Mockingjay 30). The privileging of the group over the individual in District 13 is perhaps best illustrated by the guard’s imprisoning Katniss’s prep team for taking extra bread when hungry. Finding them “half-naked, bruised, and shackled to a wall” (Mockingjay 55), Katniss and the others from outside District 13 are aghast:

“Why are they being punished?”
“For stealing food. We had to restrain them over an altercation over some bread,” says the guard.
“This seems extreme,” says Plutarch.
“It’s because they took a slice of bread?” asks Gale.
“There were repeated infractions leading up to that. They were warned. Still they took more bread.” The guard pauses a moment, as if puzzled by our density. “You can’t take bread.” (Mockingjay 57-58)

Indeed, food intake is tightly controlled in District 13. While in the other districts, provisions are somewhat scarce due to the Capitol exploiting the various industries according to its needs and wants, each individual or family in District 12 does have control of its own intake – in so far as food can be accessed. In District 13, however, as with all other aspects of life, distribution of food is highly regulated according to what is deemed fair:

I see breakfast is its usual dependable self — a bowl of hot grain, a cup of milk and a small scoop of fruit or vegetables. Today, mashed turnips ... I sit at the table assigned to the Everdeens and the Hawthornes and some other refugees, and shovel my food down, wishing for seconds, but there are never seconds here. They have nutrition down to a science. You leave with enough calories to take you to the next meal, no more, no less. Serving size it based on your age, height, body type, health and amount of physical labour required by your schedule. The people from 12 are already getting slightly larger portions than the natives of 13 in an effort to bring us up to weight. I guess bony soldiers tire too quickly. (Mockingjay 41-42)
It is Katniss’s last comment — “I guess bony soldiers tire too quickly” — that astutely identifies the true motivation for this apparently egalitarian approach to food regulation. While ensuring that no-one in the district goes hungry, this regime does not do so for entirely benign reasons. As Cressida J. Heyes has noted, “the production of docile bodies requires coercive attention to be paid to the smallest details of the body’s functioning,” and food intake is perhaps one of the most significant of these small details (72). The true extent of the “coercive attention” paid in this realm is revealed as Katniss continues to ruminate:

They have very strict rules about food. For instance, if you don’t finish something and want to save it for later, you can’t take it from the dining hall. Apparently, in the early days, there was some incident of food hoarding. For a couple of people like Gale and me, who’ve been in charge of our families’ food supply for years, it doesn’t sit well. We know how to be hungry, but not how to be told to handle what provisions we have. In some ways, District 13 is even more controlling than that Capitol. (Mockingjay 42-43, my emphasis)

Though providing its citizens with what they deem to be adequate provisions, the ruling forces in District 13 have also removed some of the freedoms to which refugees from District 12 were accustomed. At home, Katniss and Gale illegally hunted both in an effort to attain food for their families, and also as an act of defiance against the regime. Here, however, surveillance on the ground is perhaps even tighter than that in the other districts, and apparently Katniss is right to be concerned, as evidenced by the treatment of her prep team.

Clearly, these four principles are adopted in an attempt to foster the body’s usefulness and render it “docile,” a term which Foucault used to describe bodies which are “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Discipline 136). Although District 13 has succeeded in resisting the control of the Capitol, its rulers have once again begun to exert power over the citizens’ bodies in attempting to build a society with the optimum control and resources to defeat the original oppressors. The result is a highly rigid society, reminiscent in many ways of “hierarchical and repressive” Sparta (Cartledge 22). In both Sparta and 13, citizens live communally, share resources, devote themselves to the military from a young age, and
deprived of entertainment and forced to live lives of austerity. Even the laconic style of speech is encouraged, with Katniss noting that “words are another thing not wasted in 13” (Mockingjay 68). The similarities with Sparta do not end there, however; the lack of freedom characteristic of this classical state also pervades the hidden district, as the extent of the disciplinary controls employed there have demonstrated.

Despite the regulatory restrictions – and in particular the surveillance - that both the Capitol and District 13 wield over the citizens of Panem, many of the novel’s characters succeed in utilising this strict observation to their advantage. Katniss in particular, although portrayed throughout her interview training as lacking awareness of how to manipulate an audience, appears to understand precisely how to use this surveillance to regain bodily control. It is Rue’s death that prompts the first attempt by Katniss to use her agency to turn the power that her oppressors wield against them, as she determines “to do something right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can’t own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I” (Hunger 286). Gathering wild flowers, Katniss slowly decorates Rue’s dead body, making wreaths to honour her friend. Clearly, she is aware of the impact that such scenes will make; she perceptively notes that “They’ll have to show it. Or, even if they choose to turn the cameras elsewhere at this moment, they’ll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then and know I did it” (Hunger 287). The Capitol may have taken Rue’s life, but through this act Katniss ensures that she and Rue together defy the panoptic attempt to divide and conquer, and refuse to allow their rulers to exert an all-encompassing power over their bodies.

What is perhaps Katniss’s greatest achievement in using the Capitol’s surveillance to perform an act of resistance unfolds at the end of the first book in the trilogy. Following the announced rule change which states that she and Peeta may not, after all, be joint winners of
the Hunger Games, Katniss quickly understands that the only way to regain power in what appears to be a helpless situation is to stage a joint attempted suicide live on camera:

> They have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol. Might possibly even be executed, slowly and painfully, while the cameras broadcast it to every screen in the country.
>
> If Peeta and I were both to die, or they thought we were ... (Hunger 418)

Don Latham has noted that “destroying the body is the ultimate way for the individual to undermine society’s ability to exert control over the body” (141). Aware of this fact, Katniss is confident that the Capitol will not allow her and Peeta to take their lives, and will instead be forced to accept her resistance to their attempted twist in the games. Her prediction proves correct, another one of many occasions in which Katniss succeeds in utilising the public nature of her actions for resistance. Evidently, her gradual development of media literacy has shown Katniss that as long as her actions continue to be monitored, she possesses at least some power in the construction of her public identity and the influence it might wield. However, as the next section will demonstrate, her actions are not her own; the physical appearance which she is repeatedly forced to display publicly is constructed by others: first the Capitol, and later, the resistance.

### 1.2 Playing with Fire: Regulated Appearances and the Power of Spectacle

Throughout the trilogy, the physical body and its appearance are regularly at the centre of attempts to both exert and resist dominant power. The intense scrutiny that Katniss undergoes at all times leads to great efforts being made — first on the part of Cinna and the prep team, and later by those implicated in District 13’s rebel plot — to ensure that her physical appearance portrays her variously as sweet, innocent, attractive, brave and threatening. Upon her first visit to the Capitol, Katniss quickly learns that her natural physical appearance will
not be considered acceptable to the audience that she is about to face, and her prep team have no qualms about making this clear:

I’ve been in the Remake Centre for more than three hours and I still haven’t met my stylist. Apparently he has no interest in seeing me until Venia and the other members of my prep team have addressed some obvious problems. This has included scrubbing down my body with a gritty foam that has removed not only dirt but at least three layers of skin, turning my nails into uniform shapes, and primarily, ridding my body of hair. My legs, arms, torso, underarms and parts of my eyebrows have been stripped of the stuff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting. I don’t like it.

You almost look like a human being now!” says Flavius, and they all laugh...

"You know, now that we’ve got rid of all the hair and filth, you’re not horrible at all!” (Hunger 75-76)

Such practices of bodily manipulation are a significant tool of the disciplinary gaze which, as Ann Balsamo has noted “disciplines the unruly female body by first fragmenting it into isolated parts - face, hair, legs, breasts - and then redefining those parts as inherently flawed and pathological” (Technologies 208). These methods are used to control the female subject in particular, even in Panem - which despite its failings perhaps exhibits slightly less gender inequality than the world of the contemporaneous Western-world reader. Before the victory tour that follows her and Peeta’s first Hunger Games, Katniss observes that “I get to spend the morning having the hair ripped off my body while Peeta sleeps in. I hadn’t thought about it much, but in the arena at least some of the boys got to keep their body hair whereas none of the girls did” (Catching 59). Additionally, throughout the texts the focus is continually on Katniss’s appearance and clothing, with Peeta’s rarely addressed, despite the fact that the impression that he gives to those observing them is often equally significant.

As the novels progress, Katniss is subjected to countless similar makeovers, and she remains uncomfortable with this manipulation of her appearance. However, although the various guises which she assumes may initially appear to be an attempt to appease the President and the powers in the Capitol, they may also be viewed as an effort by Cinna to help Katniss use her body for resistance. From her first television ensemble, characterising her as
“the girl who was on fire” (Hunger 82), Cinna shows an acute awareness that “a woman's appearance is always judged as important and in some way representative of who she is” (Brush 38). Accordingly, he crafts her image carefully at all times, hoping variously to protect her from and arm her against her oppressors. Following her first experience in the arena, Cinna attempts to create an innocent image for Katniss that may appease President Snow:

My hair’s loose, held back by a simple hairband. The make-up rounds and fills out the sharp angles of my face. A clear polish coats my nails. The sleeveless dress is gathered at my ribs, not my waist, largely eliminating any help the padding would have given my figure. The hem falls just to my knees. Without heels, you can see my true stature. I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at the most. Innocent. Harmless. Yes, it is shocking that Cinna has pulled this off when you remember I’ve just won the Games.

This is a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary. (Hunger 431)

In contrast, however, when it becomes clear that nothing Katniss does will convince the president to take mercy on her, Cinna returns to creating a fierce outfit for her that clearly asserts her decision to use her body to resist, rather than to assent. Gone is the innocent young girl of her previous television appearance:

I do not see a girl, or even a woman, but some unearthly being who looks like she might make her home in the volcano that destroyed so many in Haymitch’s Quell. The black crown, which now appears red-hot, casts strange shadows on my dramatically made-up face. Katniss, the girl on fire, has left behind her flickering flames and bejewelled gowns and soft candlelight frocks. She is as deadly as fire itself. (Catching 248)

Cinna, however, is not the only one concerned with the image that Katniss portrays through her physical appearance. Later, when acting as the “mockingjay” in the rebels’ plot to overthrow the Capitol, Katniss is surprised to find that little has changed in regards to the strict management of her appearance:

“Remake her to Beauty Base Zero”, Fulvia ordered first thing this morning. “We’ll work from there.” Beauty Base Zero turns out to be what a person would look like if they stepped out of bed looking flawless but natural. It means my nails are perfectly shaped but not polished. My hair soft and shiny but not styled. My skin smooth and clear but not painted. Wax the body hair and erase the dark circles, but don’t make
any noticeable enhancements. I suppose Cinna gave the same instructions on the first day I arrived as a tribute in the Capitol. Only that was different, since I was a contestant. As a rebel I thought I’d get to look more like myself. But it seems a televised rebel has her own standards to live up to. (*Mockingjay* 71)

With Cinna dead, the rebel leaders in District 13 concern themselves with ensuring that once again Katniss’s body is used against the Capitol – this time for the good of the rebel population of Panem, rather than merely to save Katniss herself. Yet despite these attempts to resist bodily control, it should not be forgotten that it is the Capitol that has set the rules of this game, and any attempts at resistance are simply operating within their parameters. While in the earlier novels, Katniss’s image is crafted alternately to appease and manipulate the powers that be, it is used in *Mockingjay* to threaten them and to encourage dissenters. However, Katniss is never permitted to take control of her own appearance. Regardless of whether she is attempting to fend off the Capitol’s influence over her body, or use it to assert her power both inside and outside District 13, she is ultimately always playing the role of someone else’s puppet.

In the Capitol, many citizens have gone to far greater lengths at body modification than those imposed upon Katniss. While the majority of these citizens are depicted as mindlessly pursuing fashion statements, Tigris, who allows Katniss and her division to hide in her shop storeroom as they prepare for battle, is one character that has harnessed these practices as an engaged method of resistance. A former head stylist in *The Hunger Games*, Tigris has undergone dramatic cosmetic enhancements:

She’s an extreme example of surgical enhancement gone wrong, for surely not even in the Capitol could they find this face attractive. The skin has been pulled back tightly and tattooed with black and gold stripes. The nose has been flattened until it barely exists. I’ve seen cat whiskers on people in the Capitol before, but none so long. The result is a grotesque, semi-feline mask ... (*Mockingjay* 372)

Katniss’s assumption that Tigris could not have intended to create such an unorthodox appearance suggests that she believes the majority of Capitol citizens lack individual agency
and desire merely to adhere to the aesthetic standards imposed upon them. However, the distinct possibility that Tigris may in fact be attempting an act of resistance through these surgical enhancements must not be ignored. As Brent L. Pickett has noted, “the practice of aesthetics of the self is nothing other than resistance to the ways in which one is constituted as a subject by modern power” (462), and by choosing to create an appearance so vastly removed from her natural body, Tigris may be attempting to also remove herself from the grip of the disciplinary society that controls her life. Reminiscent of performance artist Orlan, whose use of cosmetic surgery in her art has been described as “a path to self determination” and “a way for women to regain control over their bodies” (Davis 459), Tigris chooses to create an appearance that, rather than conforming to Capitol ideals, has gone beyond them to demonstrate her agency and determination to be the orchestrator of her own aesthetic. Indeed, it is not unusual for performance artists of various kinds to use the construction of an “obscene” body to reclaim their own identities (Bell 17), and in the highly regulated society of Panem, Tigris may have few other demonstrable ways of doing so.

If Tigris wishes to reclaim her agency from the Capitol, she must first de-subjectify the body over which they wield control, for as Nikki Sullivan has argued, “voluntary ‘non-normative’ practices of self-transformation” can articulate “a method of de-subjectivisation that is self-motivated, and thus functions to reaffirm the subject through a volitional process of self-shattering” (30). Unsurprisingly, her attempts at this “self-shattering” have not gone unnoticed. When Katniss realises that President Snow has banned the former stylist from being involved in the Games because she “had one operation too many and crossed the line into repellence” (Mockingjay 372), it becomes apparent that Tigris has chosen to take the Capitol’s aesthetic values to a carnivalesque extreme. In doing so, she has positioned herself outside of the docile majority — an act that was immediately recognised and banished from public exposure. Tigris’s appearance signifies to Katniss and the rebels that she has taken
control of her own subjectivity; thus, she wonders “if her parents actually named her Tigris, inspiring her mutilation, or if she chose the style and changed her name to match her stripes” (Mockingjay 373). Either way, Tigris has taken action that differentiates her from many of her Capitol contemporaries and shows her ability to work within the confines of the disciplinary society to exercise personal freedom.

Unlike Tigris, however, many of the Capitol citizens fail to identify the anatomopo- political mechanisms that are controlling their aesthetic practices. The disciplinary regime of cultural standards imposed by those governing the Capitol has largely succeeded in its provision of an “illusory rhetoric of choice” (Bordo Unbearable 94), with people undertaking cosmetic procedures such as skin-tinting to keep up with the latest trends. Such practices have been referred to by Pippa Brush as “the literal inscription of cultural standards on the plastic body” (29). Here, it appears that these cultural standards are designed to distract people with superficial concerns that ensure both their bodies and their consciousness are perpetually preoccupied and controlled. The disciplinary society uses normalising judgements to control people (Discipline 177), and in the Capitol, the normalisation of body modification makes it easy for the powers that be to identify those who have succumbed to the regime’s regulatory practices, and equally to identify those who have not. Dissenters who do not fully embrace these standards, or who take them to a conspicuous extreme – such as Cinna and Tigris respectively – are quickly disposed of. Due to their experiences as stylists in the Hunger Games, these two characters have become aware of the manner in which the Capitol’s aesthetic norms are being used to control the populace. Thus, while they may understand the need to engage with these practices at times (such as in the case of Cinna’s attempts to mould Katniss’s appearance to her advantage), they privately aim to exist largely outside of these aesthetic regulations.
Cinna and Tigris are, however, notable exceptions. The majority of people in the Capitol are unaware of the power being wielded over them through the normalisation of standards around fashion and appearance. In *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, Jana Sawicki has observed that the emphasis on normalisation,

As opposed to violence represents a major advantage of the disciplinary model of power. If patriarchal power operated primarily through violence, objectification and oppression, why would women subject themselves to it willingly? On the other hand, if it also operates by inciting desire, attaching individuals to specific identities, and addressing real needs, then it is easier to understand how it has been so effective at getting a grip on us. (Sawicki 85)

Clearly, these practices have succeeded in the Capitol, and not just in relation to the female subjects. The population largely appear to have been lulled into a false consciousness, thoroughly unaware of their facilitation of the very practices that control them. Members of Katniss’s prep team in particular are proffered as examples of the typical Capitol citizen: entirely superficial beings whose lives revolve around frivolities such as fashion, beauty and fine dining. By keeping them preoccupied with such issues, the Capitol dominates their bodies and their consciousness, ensuring that they and the majority of their fellow citizens are entirely politically and socially disengaged. This can clearly be seen when, despite being aghast at the fact that they “haven’t been able to get any seafood for weeks!” (*Catching 200*), no members of the Katniss’s prep team question the reasoning for this. It does not occur to them to doubt the explanation given — which is that weather conditions in District 4, from where they source their seafood, have been obstructive — and the rare disappointment of missing out on something to which they feel entitled is enough to occupy their thoughts.

Similarly, Collins depicts the average Capitol viewer’s reaction to the Hunger Games through the prep team: “Even though they’re rattling on about the Games, it’s all about where they were or what they were doing or how they felt when a specific event occurred. ‘I was still in
bed!’ ‘I had just had my eyebrows dyed!’ ‘I swear I nearly fainted!’ Everything is about them, not the dying boys and girls in the arena” (*Hunger 430*).

While for the populations of the various districts, the Games are a matter of life and death, to those that live in the Capitol they constitute merely another reality television show provided for their entertainment. Karyn Riddle has argued that “repeat exposure to explicitly violent or sexual media leads to a lessening in emotional, attitudinal, and physiological reactions” (159), and this certainly appears to be the case here. The Hunger Games have taken place annually for seventy-five years; in addition to functioning as a warning to the districts not to risk an uprising, they have had the added effect of ensuring that those who live in the Capitol are entirely desensitised to the horrors perpetuated upon their neighbours on a daily basis. Instead, the Capitol citizens view the tributes as objects, gaining scopophilic pleasure from the gaze which they confer on their bodies, clothes and actions. The especially intense scrutiny of Katniss over Peeta bears out Laura Mulvey’s claims that women connote a particular “to-be-looked-at-ness” which reduces them to image (11). As addressed in the following section, however, this emphasis on physical appearance is inextricably associated with a wider emphasis on gender performativity that affects not just Katniss, but also the series’ central male characters, and the love-triangle depicted between them.

### 1.3 Hunger Breeds Heteronormativity: Gender Performativity and the Love Triangle

The theory of gender performativity was first postulated by Judith Butler, who, in her seminal text *Gender Trouble* argued that gender, if understood to denote the cultural meanings assumed by the sexed body, cannot be said to logically follow from sex. According to Butler, it is not inevitable that “the construction of ‘men’ will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that ‘women’ will interpret only female bodies” (*Gender* 10). Instead, a person’s
actions, gestures, and desire combine to suggest an internal core that is in fact produced on the body. These actions, gestures and enactments are described by Butler as “performative,” as she suggests that “the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (Gender 173). Such repeated behaviours create what Butler sees as the illusion of an organising gender core which is “discursively maintained” to aid the regulation of sexuality within the frame of reproductive heterosexuality (Gender 73).

Upon analysing gender in The Hunger Games trilogy, it becomes evident that in Panem, a gender performance which is perceived to be consistent with the behaviours traditionally attributed to one’s sex is greatly valued by the establishment. In order to understand how attempts to coerce citizens into normative gender presentation operate, this section examines the gender performances of Katniss, Peeta and Gale and the complex relationships that they conduct within the parameters of a disciplinary dominance that attempts to enforce compulsory heterosexuality as a means of regulation.

From the beginning of The Hunger Games, when we are introduced to a protagonist who pulls on androgynous clothing before picking up a deadly weapon to go hunting, while reflecting on a failed attempt to drown her sister’s kitten, it is clear that we are being presented with a female whose choice of gender performance is contrary to that generally expected of her sex (Hunger 4-5). Many of Katniss’s behaviours, gestures and traits are those often associated with hegemonic masculinity in the western world. Indeed, Rozenkrantz et al.’s study of stereotypical traits associated with men and women identified the characteristics most commonly perceived to be masculine, and all of these can be attributed to Katniss: aggressive, unemotional, able to separate feelings from ideas, adventurous, direct, independent, acts as leader and unconcerned about appearance (Brannon 174).
Katniss embodies each of the above traits to varying degrees. She is certainly aggressive. Aside from her time in the arena, when aggression is necessary for survival, she shows signs of being quick-tempered and forceful on numerous other occasions, such as when she reacts to the game-makers’ indifference by shooting an arrow into the mouth of the pig upon which they are feasting (*Hunger* 124). She reacts violently when others attempt to remove her agency without informing her, as evidenced by her physical assault on Peeta following his televised declaration that he is in love with her (*Hunger* 163). She may be perceived as unemotional at times, showing little empathy towards her mother and finding it difficult to relate to her contemporaries or communicate her feelings. Certainly, she is adept at separating feelings from ideas. This is perhaps best exemplified by Gale’s observation that her past behaviour suggests that she will coldly choose between him and Peeta, predicting that “Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can’t survive without” (*Mockingjay* 385). Her adventurousness is evident throughout, from the pleasure that she gets from her illicit hunting trips to her determination to partake in combat as part of the resistance. In her dealings with people she is direct, struggling to be less so during public appearances. Her independence is also clear: she has taken her late father’s place in the family, refusing to rely on her mother to take responsibility. Additionally, Katniss embraces leadership roles, evident in the relationships that she forms in the arena, and in particular in her role as the mockingjay. Finally, as previously addressed, she shows disinterest in her appearance, having been too preoccupied with survival and protecting her family to share the Capital citizens’ favourite distraction.

While Katniss’s natural gender performativity often appears to lean toward the “masculine,” the disciplinary forces in control of Panem – and indeed the sovereign figurehead of President Snow – desire her to behave in a more traditionally “feminine” manner. As Pulliam has pointed out, “which stylized repetition of acts constitute hegemonic
femininity is determined by various disciplinary institutions” (174), and here the institutions in question dictate the need for a female gender presentation consistent with that often valued in the present day. In her essay “‘She has no idea, the effect she can have’: Katniss and the politics of gender,” Jessica Miller suggests that the pressure upon Katniss to adapt to the expected gender norms imposed upon her is clear from the trilogy’s opening, when Gale implores her to “wear something pretty” to the reaping (Miller 136; Hunger 17). This is later followed by Haymitch’s warning that she needs to change her personality for television, because “You’ve got about as much charm as a dead slug” (Hunger 142). As Hardt and Negri have shown, “disciplinary power rules in effect by structuring the parameters and limits of thought and practice, sanctioning and prescribing normal and/or deviant behaviours” (23), and in this case, Katniss’s male advisors are asserting that her natural characteristics should be discarded in favour of a performance more consistent with the norms associated with her sex. Accepting this “correct training” is not easy for Katniss (Foucault Discipline 170), as throughout the trilogy she is depicted as finding it difficult to identify with many of the expectations inscribed on the female body. For example, she repeatedly states that she does not want to have children, and as “the roles of women and feminine identity have been historically and traditionally constructed around motherhood” (Gillespie 122), this positions her somewhat outside the norm. This is not to suggest, however, that Katniss does not naturally exhibit any normative feminine behaviour: indeed, a number of scholars have noted her alignment with feminist care ethics, as exhibited in particular through her interactions with Prim, her mother and Rue (Cf. Averill; Fritz; J. Mitchell; Pulliam). Nevertheless, for the most part she is evidently more comfortable with behaviours traditionally coded as masculine. Accordingly, Katniss adopts her contrived “feminine” gender performance reluctantly, aware that it is her only chance at survival — first within the arena, where Haymitch and the viewing public reward her normative gender behaviour (J. Mitchell 133), and later when
instructed by President Snow to attempt to quell the rebellious sentiment within the districts by staging a romance with Peeta.

Despite her reluctance, Katniss proves to be quite successful at performing femininity. Her first television interview results in her gushing over her outfit, twirling for the audience, and giggling, after which she admits to having “never in my lifetime” behaved in such a manner (Hunger 154-55). Here, the dominant forces are succeeding in their attempts to publicly regulate Katniss’s body, and she later recoils at the realisation of the sacrifice that she has made, thinking “I survived my interview, but what was I really? A silly girl giggling in a sparkling dress. Giggling ... Silly and sparkly and forgettable” (Hunger 165).

Nevertheless, she continues to maintain her attempt at projecting a feminine image as long as there is hope that she can appease President Snow and prevent a rebellion in her name. In addition to her solo “performance,” she does as Snow suggests and uses her relationship with Peeta to lend credence to her more feminine persona. R.W. Connell has stated that, “in gender process, the everyday conduct of life is ordered in relation to a reproductive arena [including] sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity” (Men 58-59). Apparently aware of this, Katniss takes advantage of the perception of others that her relationship with Peeta is romantic. She plays on the sex difference between them, making herself small and dainty and curling into him when they appear on television together. Similarly, their pretence that Katniss is pregnant with Peeta’s baby places her in a more traditionally feminine role. Such behaviours constitute an attempt to simultaneously appease the disciplinary regime while also manipulating it in an effort to save Katniss’s life and that of those around her.

As previously discussed, Katniss’s appearance is under strict disciplinary regulation, and this is partly due to the impact that it has on her gender performance. For her first public appearance following the seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Cinna presents Katniss with a dress
that has breast padding, and to her objections replies that “The Gamemakers wanted to alter you surgically. Haymitch had a huge fight with them over it. This was the compromise” (Hunger 430). Later, further implications about her physical “lack” are made when Flavius bemoans Cinna’s refusal to let the prep team alter Katniss surgically. Here, Naomi Wolf’s predictions about the future of the female body appear to have been realised:

The spectre of the future is not that women will be slaves, but that we will be robots. First, we will be subservient to ever more refined technology for self-surveillance ... Then, to more sophisticated alterations of images of the ‘ideal’ in the media ... Then, to technologies that replace the faulty, mortal female body, piece by piece, with perfect artifice. (Wolf qtd. in Barr 9)

The Capitol powers, with the aid of their self-regulating citizens, have ensured the prevalence of a norm in their capital city which positions Katniss’s natural body as “Other”. Initially, she appears entirely resistant to these expectations, and contemplates what they might like to do to her:

Do what? Blow my lips up like President Snow’s? Tattoo my breasts? Dye my skin magenta and implant gems in it? Cut decorative patterns in my face? Give me curved talons? Or cat’s whiskers? I saw all those things and more on the people in the Capitol. Do they really have no idea how freakish they look to the rest of us? (Catching 60)

However, Katniss does not succeed in staying entirely immune to the negative effects of the messages that she receives about the need to behave in a manner contrary to her natural inclinations. Susan Bordo posits that “through the exacting and normalising disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress ... we are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification” (Unbearable 166). While Katniss may remain socially orientated throughout, she is certainly not immune to the damage that these disciplinary mechanisms can do. By the third novel in the series she appears to have internalised the idea that her natural self is insufficiently feminine, stating that, “frankly, I could use a little sugarcoating” (Mockingjay 281). Bordo avers that it is through such practices that female
bodies become docile (*Unbearable* 166), and despite her attempts at resistance, Katniss’s body has apparently been rendered thus. Lem and Hassell have shown that “a critical part of making Katniss into a compliant participant in the Capitol’s oppressive enterprise is remaking Katniss into a feminine character both physically and behaviourally” (124), and certainly the normative gender performance which she assumes appears to elicit a less empowered character.

Despite this internalisation, once removed from the control of the Capitol and President Snow Katniss largely rejects the “feminine” performance in which she has been schooled, and instead “behaves in a more androgynous manner, which makes her more difficult to control” (Pulliam 181). By now, a “radical rupture” has occurred in the society, something which Foucault posited may happen when “the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilising groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour” (*Sexuality* 96). The rupture in Panem, which has resulted in an organised rebellion, has largely freed Katniss from the need to exhibit stereotypically feminine traits. She now allows herself to exhibit more “masculine” inclinations. These are most evident in her actions as a soldier in combat and her leadership of a team of rebels.

Like Katniss, Peeta also undertakes a gender performance that is in many ways contrary to traditional expectations. Returning to Rozenkrants et al.’s study, it appears that he exhibits many of the most common traits stereotypically associated with females: he is aware of others’ feelings, tactful, gentle, quiet and neat (Brannon 174). He is nurturing, not only in his attempts to protect Katniss, but also in his dealings with others, such as when he takes it upon himself to clean up a drunk and sick Haymitch soon after their first meeting. He is compassionate, as evidenced clearly by Katniss’s tale of “the boy with the bread” (*Hunger* 35-39); his hobbies include baking and decorating cakes. Despite being described as large in
stature and physically strong, he has no experience with violence prior to his entry into The Hunger Games, unlike his female counterpart. Additionally, he is a far better communicator than Katniss, and has no qualms about expressing his feelings publicly, easily declaring his love for her on television. Finally, contrary to traditional expectations, it is Peeta who wishes to marry and have children, and it is only as a result of his persistent requests to do so that Katniss acquiesces (Mockingjay 454). Combined, these traits lead to Peeta’s gender performance presenting as a form of “marginalised masculinity” which is initially portrayed as subordinate to Gale’s hegemonic masculinity (Connell Masculinities 81). Even Katniss appears to compare him unfavourably, stating “It’s not that Peeta’s soft, exactly… But there are things you don’t question too much, I guess, when your home always smells like baking bread, whereas Gale questions everything” (Hunger 360). Having been raised in a relatively privileged family, Peeta is considered to be weaker than Gale and Katniss, and therefore less masculine.

Similar to Katniss, it is when Peeta is under the most explicit of disciplinary controls that he is forced to present a gender performance more traditionally ascribed to his sex. During their television interviews, the pressure of intense surveillance forces Peeta to take the lead. He acts confident in front of the cameras, speaking for Katniss and appearing to be the dominant partner in their relationship. Later, the Peeta that we are first presented with in Mockingjay is particularly far removed from the somewhat “feminine” male of the first two books in the trilogy. Through the use of drugs in the form of tracker-jacker poison, the Capitol powers have infiltrated his mind and body, causing him to adopt an aggressive, violent persona. This persona is closely associated with what R.W. Connell terms “hypermascularity” ("Straight" 738). In addition to temporarily presenting in Peeta, this version of masculinity typifies Gale’s gender performance throughout the final novel of the series.
As Connell has noted, men predominate across the spectrum of violence, and aggression has long been proffered as an element of the “master-pattern of masculinity” (Men 214-15). Certainly, Gale is aggressive and violent. While he does appear to be somewhat tender with Katniss, in general, he is quick-tempered and wont to suggest the use of violence to solve problems. In addition to aggression, all of the other traits identified by Rosenkrantz et al. as being typical of hegemonic masculinity also apply to Gale’s character (it must be noted that these traits, outlined above in relation to Katniss, are not static but are dictated by the norms of the society in question). However, his violent, aggressive side is the one that appears to most prominently characterise his gender performance. He is competitive with other males and entirely ruthless, willing to sacrifice everything and everyone to destroy the current world order. Indeed, what begins as a standard performance of hegemonic masculinity appears to turn gradually to hypermasculinity by the third novel in the series, with Gale “increasingly disconnected from any traits related to caring and nurturing” (Woloshyn, Taber and Lane 152). The signs of such inclinations can be traced back to The Hunger Games and his advice to Katniss that “It’s just hunting ... You know how to kill”. When she protests, “Not people,” Gale coldly responds, “How different can it be, really?” (Hunger 48). This attitude develops over time. Gale relishes the opportunity to help Betee create bombs and other weapons to kill with impunity, and when Katniss suggests that murdering innocent people may be going too far for their cause, he reacts with hostility (Mockingjay 216). By the end of the series, Katniss describes Gale’s character as being “fire, kindled with rage and hatred” (Mockingjay 453). What began as a desirable hegemonic gender performance has transgressed the acceptable boundaries for normative masculinity, resulting in a less positive portrayal of Gale’s character.

Connected to the issue of gender performativity is the love triangle which features in the trilogy. The romance element of The Hunger Games is a significant element of the text,
with Katherine R. Broad demonstrating that many readers perceive it to be primarily a love story (118). As Don Latham has noted, in the disciplinary society, “one of the great challenges of maintaining social discipline is the regulation of sexual desire” (137).

Recognising the need to regulate sexuality, the Capitol rulers — and in particular President Snow — ensure that Katniss is forced into a relationship with Peeta that entirely dismisses her agency. While it is Peeta and Haymitch who initially devise the relationship, they do so precisely because they know that this will improve their chances of gaining approval from the audience and surviving their experience in the arena. Once this “romance” has been established, Katniss is trapped, forced by President Snow into maintaining the charade and internalising the disciplinary impositions of those around her to the extent that she begins to doubt herself, wondering if she does in fact desire Peeta. Regardless of her feelings, however, she believes that she has no choice either way:

I will never have a life with Gale, even if I want to. I will never be allowed to live alone. I will have to be forever in love with Peeta. The Capitol will insist on it. I’ll have a few years maybe, because I’m still only sixteen, to stay with my mother and Prim. And then ... and then ...There’s only one future, if I want to keep those I love alive and stay alive myself. I’ll have to marry Peeta. (Catching 53)

The lamentation that “I will never be allowed to live alone” has echoes of the Katniss that the reader is first introduced to: the independent young woman who has no interest in romance and purports not even to have romantic thoughts about Gale, her closest friend. This Katniss has “never had much time or use” for romance (Hunger 364), and states explicitly on numerous occasions that she does not wish to marry or have children, declaring “I know I’ll never marry, never risk bringing a child into the world” (Hunger 378). Nevertheless, as Broad has noted, this is not unusual in romance narratives, where “a professed disinterest in love is easily remedied over time” (119). Katniss exhibits romantic feelings for both Gale and Peeta at various times in the novel; she kisses Gale on more than one occasion and appears to struggle with the idea that she may never have the opportunity to be with him. However,
Katniss’s true feelings for Peeta are less clear, as they are manipulated at every turn. Being coerced into a relationship with Peeta ensures that her entire future will be regulated by the Capitol at the most minute levels, and she is dismayed to realise that “one of the few freedoms we have in District 12 is the right to marry who we want or not to marry at all. And now even that has been taken away from me” (Catching 54). Acquiescing to the insistence of those around her that she conduct a public relationship with Peeta, she becomes confused about her true feelings, and in so doing allows President Snow to tighten the disciplinary controls that keep her trapped. Katniss recognises that by obeying Snow’s directives she can convince him of her feelings for Peeta. It later transpires, however, that this “gave him the weapon he needed” to break her (Mockingjay 183).

In addition to manipulating public discourse by forcing Katniss and Peeta to conduct a relationship, President Snow and his co-conspirators use the romance between them to regulate their gender performances. As Butler avers, “acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organising gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality” (Gender 172). Under duress both Peeta and Katniss appear to actively do what is necessary to submit to these regulations. During the Hunger Games, their public performance of their relationship involves exaggerating traits which they do not naturally exhibit and which are closely linked to stereotypical expectations for their sex. Katniss forces herself to be affectionate, kissing and touching Peeta and tenderly caring for him in a way that, while perhaps genuine, is certainly exaggerated for the benefit of those observing. Afterwards, she is compelled to partake in a televised fashion show where she excitedly fawns over the wedding dresses she has been sent, despite having no interest in fashion or marriage. In turn, Peeta takes on more traditionally masculine roles in his public relationship with Katniss, physically sheltering her as she acts coy during their interviews and
assertively making decisions and public pronouncements regarding them both without
consulting her. The heterosexualization of desire both institutes and is reliant upon a system
of oppositions between the “feminine” and the “masculine” (Butler Gender 23), and here the
expression of Katniss and Peeta’s relationship is exhibited through their assumption of such
binary oppositions. Indeed, Katniss reflects at the end of the series that she does not need
Gale’s fire, as “I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring”
(Mockingjay 453). The possibility of Katniss and Gale ending up together is discounted
because they are too alike, with the heteronormative assumption that opposites should
complement one another prevailing.

As Basu, Broad and Hintz have noted, “YA dystopias that end in romantic fulfilment
tend to include a retreat into an insular relationship, turning away from the social and political
involvement that motivated the narrative” (8). Undeniably, Katniss’s conclusion is an insular
one: in the trilogy’s epilogue we find her hero status stymied by her ultimate acceptance of a
lifestyle which she had previously rejected. Whether or not Katniss’s story ends in romantic
fulfilment, however, is debateable. She is married to Peeta, the suitor prescribed to her by the
previous regime, having after “five, ten, fifteen years” succumbed to his pleas to have
children (Mockingjay 454). Traumatised by her experiences, Katniss uses their relationship as
an escape, abandoning political action permanently. Despite living in a new world order, she
has failed to entirely free herself from the previous regime, as she continues to maintain the
heteronormative standards previously imposed upon her. Having been forced to “love” Peeta,
Katniss eventually acquiesces to this oppression, and while the reader may be expected to
believe that she has chosen her husband, there is little agency involved. Gale has not returned
to District 12, removing any need to choose between them; indeed, she is “relieved” to hear
that he has gone to live in District 2, and to realise that she does not have to make this final
decision. Instead, she finds herself returned to her home place; in the passive position of not
“choosing” either of the boys, she merely accepts the one who follows her back to District 12. Rather than taking part in the establishment of the new society or asserting her newfound freedom and independence in any way, she retreats into domesticity, occupying her time with marriage and motherhood.

Systems of compulsory heterosexuality have consistently dictated Katniss’s choices throughout the novels, and although ultimately she may appear to have willingly rekindled her relationship with Peeta, as Adrienne Rich has noted, traditionally, women have married for a myriad of reasons other than love:

Women have married because it was necessary, in order to survive economically, in order to have children who would not suffer economic deprivation or social ostracism, in order to remain respectable, in order to do what was expected of women, because coming out of “abnormal” childhoods they wanted to feel normal and because heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty and fulfilment. (Rich 242)

It is not difficult to imagine that Katniss has been influenced by some of these – and similar – factors; certainly, her teenage years were “abnormal,” and she has been consistently informed by those around her that her relationship with Peeta is her duty (and indeed, by Peeta that having children represents the ultimate extension of that duty). Accordingly, she submits to the expectations imposed upon her and executes a more traditional gender performance than that which she exhibited prior to the Hunger Games. Certainly, both she and Peeta remain true to their original gendered selves in many ways, with Katniss noting that in their spare time “Peeta bakes. I hunt” (*Mockingjay* 452). However, her willingness to compromise her desires and adapt her true self in her relationship with Peeta point to her not having entirely escaped the shackles of the Capitol after all.
1.4 Disciplining through Discourse: The Power of the Archive

The control of discourse is another means by which disciplinarity can be enacted. This is certainly evident in Panem, where from an early age children are warned not to speak out against the Capitol or its regime in any way (*Hunger* 7). Not content with relying entirely upon disciplinary tactics, the Capitol also uses physical punishment to ensure that discourse is tightly controlled. People risk being made avoxs (having their tongues cut out), or being subjected to tracker-jacker poison, as Peeta experiences following his attempt to speak out on television to warn District 13. Despite this, discourse is also used as a tool for resistance in the novels. Speech and song prove to be invaluable methods of showing that revolutionary intent is gaining ground.

In “Politics and the Study of Discourse,” Foucault used the term “archive” to refer to the rules which at a given moment in a particular society govern:

1. “The limits and forms of the sayable.”
   [Here, Foucault is referring to the constituted domain of discourse and what it is possible to speak of in this particular domain.]

   [Which utterances are destined to be ignored, and which will enter collective memory through ritual? Which will be deemed reusable, and by whom? Which will be entirely censored?]

3. “The limits and forms of memory as it appears in different discursive formations.”
   [Which utterances will be universally considered valid, invalid or debateable? What are the relationships between the system of past statements and the new ones?]

4. “The limits and forms of reactivation.”

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[Which discourses from previous or foreign eras are retained, which are imported, how are they altered, and what role should they have?]

5. “The limits and forms of appropriation.”

[Which individuals/groups/classes have access to which discourses? How is the struggle for control of discourses conducted?]

("Politics" 59-60)

Clearly, Foucault’s concerns surround what can and cannot be said, and the limits that constrain and enable the discourses in question. Together, these elements of the archive play a significant role in ensuring that the disciplinary society in The Hunger Games trilogy operates smoothly. In Panem, citizens are from an early age introduced to the “limits and forms of the sayable” (Foucault "Politics" 59), with Katniss learning that there are a number of things which must not be referred to within her domain:

When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who run our country, Panem, from the far off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood that this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school. Make only polite small talk in the public market. Discuss little more than trades in the Hob ... Even at home, where I am less pleasant, I avoid discussing tricky topics. Like the reaping, or food shortages, or the Hunger Games. (Hunger 7)

Aware that denouncing their rulers will have devastating effects for her family, Katniss learns to keep her thoughts to herself. This enforced repression of her feelings and beliefs results in her becoming distant from those around her, ensuring that any inclination toward resistance is not shared. By controlling the outlet that she has for such rebellious thoughts, the Capitol ensures that Katniss’s power of speech is tightly regulated and has had its revolutionary potential constrained.

Another element of the archive which is under strict control in the novels is that of collective memory. Panem’s rulers ensure that memory is tightly regulated, and the
transmission of this collective memory again begins at an early age. Each week, children are indoctrinated with accounts of the “dark days” in school, in an attempt to convince them that they should be grateful for the current disciplinary society in which they live:

   Somehow it all comes back to coal in school. Besides basic reading and maths, most of our instruction is coal-related. Except for the weekly lecture on the history of Panem. It’s mostly a lot of blather about what we owe the Capitol. I know there must be more than they’re telling us, an actual account of what happened during the rebellion. But I don’t spend much time thinking about it. Whatever the truth is, I don’t see how it will help me get food on the table. (Hunger 50-51)

Despite her suspicions that the discourse which she and her contemporaries are being presented with is not entirely accurate, Katniss is not motivated to challenge these stories, as life in District 12 does not support the luxury of entertaining such musings. Instead, she and the others in the poor districts are preoccupied with the fundamental issues of feeding themselves and their families and surviving the harsh conditions which have been imposed upon them by the Capitol. The true extent to which teachers – and indeed the other adults who have lived through the times in question - are limited in their retellings of Panem’s history begins to become evident when Katniss thinks back to what she has learned about the previous Quarter Quell:

   In school I remember hearing that for the second Quarter Quell, the Capitol demanded that twice the number of tributes be provided for the arena. The teachers didn’t go into much more detail, which is surprising, because that was the year District 12’s very own Haymitch Abernathy won the crown. (Catching 44)

Vaguely aware of the fact that no-one else appears to want to talk about Haymitch’s success, it is only upon watching the recording of the second Quarter Quell that Katniss realises that Haymitch was the first tribute to outsmart the gamemakers, resulting in humiliation on behalf of the government. As a result, the story of this Hunger Games is censored, falling as it does within the “limits and forms of conversation” (Foucault "Politics" 60).
Collective memory and “the limits and forms of reactivation” are also manipulated to ensure the citizens’ acceptance of the Hunger Games themselves (Foucault "Politics" 60).

Each year at the reaping they are reminded of their “history” by the district’s mayor:

He tells of the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (Hunger 21)

Here again a discourse has been created in an attempt to control the population: firstly, by convincing them that their existence is a relatively good one compared to times past, and secondly, through a yearly reminder of the dominance which the Capitol wields and the severe punishments which it has the power to execute if disobeyed. This two-fold approach ensures that the citizens of Panem are once again insidiously controlled by discourse and the largely false collective memory which it has served to bolster.

Memory is a particularly important tool in overcoming dystopian structures. As Vincent Geoghegan has noted, it is Ernst Bloch’s theories regarding memory that perhaps come closest to unlocking its utopian potential (21). Bloch distinguishes between what he refers to as “anamnesis” (recollection) and “anagnorisis” (recognition). Anamnesis is defined as a Platonic form of recollection which proposes that as an authentic future must involve a return to an authentic past, there can be no new knowledge, making everything a “gigantic déjà vu” (Bloch qtd. in Geoghegan 21). In anagnorisis, however, the relationship between the past and the present is more difficult, due to the novelty that has occurred in the intervening time. Here, memory traces are reactivated as the past is resurrected, its power lying within its “complicated relationship of similarity/dissimilarity to the present” (Geoghegan 22). The resulting tension is the genesis of the new. As Bloch asserts, “in anagnorisis there must
always be a distance between the former and the present reality, otherwise it would not be so
difficult and astonishing” (qtd. in Geoghegan 22). It is within anagnorisis that the potential
for revolution lies, because as Raffaella Baccolini has recognised, “in order for memory and
history not to hinder progress, and Utopia, there has to be room for novelty in memory”
("Useful" 118). In anamnesis, recollection of the past leads to a reiteration of cyclical
discourse, but when anagnorisis occurs, the past combines with the novel to facilitate change.

The process of anagnorisis plays a key role in the resistance led by Katniss and the
residents of District 13. Geoghegan has averred that “the act of remembering is a far from
innocent act” (17), and Panem’s citizens have been provided with a ready-made anamnesis by
the Capitol, which since the “dark days” has served to control their collective memory and
resultant cultural identity. The archive operates precisely in this manner, as articulated by
Foucault:

> The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the
appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which
determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous
mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the
mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures,
composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in
accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw
at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us
shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us are already
growing pale. (Archaeology 129)

Accordingly, the disciplinary society regulates memories, controlling the citizens’ collective
recollection and identity. In The Hunger Games, the gradual affirmation that (as suspected by
Katniss and others) the story of their society’s origins is largely fabricated serves to disrupt
the anamnesis and shatter the recollection which has been imposed upon the citizens. This in
turn makes way for a new understanding of the past and its relation to the present and
potential future. As Bloch has noted, “we always relate what we find to an earlier experience
or to an image we have of it” (qtd. in Geoghegan 22), and by removing the image implanted
by the Capitol and replacing it with the memory — and indeed physical evidence — of the experience of those who live in District 13, the shock of the resulting anagnorisis makes way for an attempt to attain a utopian future.

While attempts are made by the governing authorities to control discourse in Panem, they are clearly not the only ones to see the revolutionary potential that lies within language. The citizens of the districts also find ways of using language to show their unwillingness to accept this form of dominance, with Katniss, Peeta and the revolutionaries in District 13 providing the most significant examples of this. Throughout the novels, Katniss uses language to further the cause of the revolt which she has initially unintentionally encouraged, while Peeta and the others follow her lead in the final text. By staging a coup d’état which entirely overturns the ruling dynamic in the Capitol, they destroy the existing archive and ensure that the rules regarding “what can be said” are rewritten permanently (Foucault *Archaeology* 129).

One linguistic device which Katniss appropriates for resistance on a number of occasions is that of song. This first occurs as a result of Rue’s request that Katniss sing to her while she lies dying in Katniss’s arms. Although not initially viewed by Katniss as an attempt to defy the Capitol, the lyrics of the song contain the utopian promise that “tomorrow will be more hopeful than this awful piece of time we call today” (*Hunger* 248). It later becomes clear that this, in conjunction with Katniss covering Rue’s body in flowers, has been perceived as a direct condemnation of the games and those that oversee them. Undoubtedly, too, it is in anger as well as sadness that Katniss sings this song, as she thinks afterwards that, “It’s the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us. Gale’s voice is in my head. His ravings against the Capitol no longer pointless, no longer to be ignored. Rue’s death has forced me to confront my own fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us” (*Hunger* 286).
It is, however, Katniss’s use of a song from her childhood, “The Hanging Tree,” which contains the more significant challenge to the Capitol. Wrestling with the horrific memories that plague her from following her first hunger games, Katniss feels an uncontrollable urge to sing this song, knowing that it will be echoed by the mockingjays — another symbol of those who the Capitol have tried but ultimately failed to control. First sung to her by her father, who died in an accident in the coal mines which provide the Capitol’s fuel, the song is now “forbidden” in Panem, which makes Katniss’s apparent affinity with it particularly significant. While the lyrics in question appear to tell the tale of a murderer who is singing to his love from beyond the grave, upon closer inspection there appears to be a much more significant meaning to the song. Having been hanged for murdering three people, he calls on her to “flee” and meet him at the hanging tree wearing a “necklace of rope” (Catching 144). These lyrics, however, do not illuminate the reason for the song being banned in Panem, nor the extreme reaction that Katniss remembers her mother having when she found Katniss and her father singing it many years before. The true meaning is alluded to only through Katniss’s musings on the topic:

I used to think that the murderer was the creepiest guy imaginable. Now, with a couple of trips to The Hunger Games under my belt, I decide not to judge him without knowing more details. Maybe his lover was already sentenced to death and he was trying to make it easier. To let her know he’d be waiting. Or maybe he thought the place he was leaving her was really worse than death. Didn’t I want to kill Peeta with that syringe to save him from the Capitol? (Catching 147-48)

Katniss’s theory that there may be more to the song than meets the eye is one that must be considered, as her repeated reference to it throughout the final novel — which is centred upon the uprising against the Capitol in which she is the mascot — is undoubtedly linked to the meaning at the heart of “The Hanging Tree”. If Katniss is correct, it is possible that this song is in fact a rebel song that refers to a revolutionary, rather than a man who has murdered for love or personal gain. As Charlotte Jacklein has noted, the "rebel song" tradition “trades in
themes of bold heroes, martyrdom ... and further expressions of patriotic fervor,” all of which appear to be present here (129). The Capitol’s banning of the song suggests that it may refer to an incident that attempted to threaten their power – perhaps the murder of people from the ruling classes – and the resulting public execution. If so, the murderer’s call to his lover to join him at the hanging tree may in reality be an appeal on his part to others to join the resistance (a common theme in rebel songs which are generally used as “a rallying, reinforcing device”) and to put their society’s freedom above their own lives (Reuss 260). This reading of the song exposes Katniss’s father’s possible revolutionary leanings, explaining her mother’s anger at hearing him singing the song to their children. It also supports the allusion (never explicitly stated but implied at various times) that the mining explosion which killed both Katniss and Gale’s fathers may not have been an accident. Additionally, Katniss’s resurrection and appropriation of this song during her and her co-conspirators attempts to attack the very regime to which the song may refer strengthens the notion that it contains such hidden meanings. By reclaiming control of utterances that previously fell into the category of “what must not be said,” Katniss shows their unwillingness to continue submitting to the Capitol’s power, and calls on others to join their cause.

Another significant occasion in which language is used as a tool for resistance is within the “propos” made by the revolutionaries. Short for “propaganda spots” (Mockingjay 52), these brief films are used to rouse support for the rebels and to send a message to President Snow that the resistance is resolutely strong. Unscripted, the propos provide a forum for Katniss to effectively rally the troops. The language that she uses appears to seek to elicit both overt behaviours from her audience, such as inspiring them to join the rebellion, and affective behaviours, including rousing both anti-Capitol and pro-revolutionary sentiment (Jowett and O'Donnell 48). In so doing, Katniss aims to alter what Schmidt and Kess term the
“world image” of the citizens of Panem, (11), in the hope that their eyes will be opened to the true extent of the manipulation that they have faced. Her language is emotive and passionate as she addresses the camera directly and states that “I want to tell people that if you think for one second the Capitol will treat us fairly, you’re deluding yourself. Because you know who they are and what they do ... This is what they do! And we must fight back!” (Mockingjay 124-25).

Additionally, the use of persuasive devices such as rhetorical questions (“President Snow says he’s sending a message?”; “Do you see that?”), implicit information (“you know who they are and what they do”) and metaphor and imagery are employed to great effect in this propo (Schmidt and Kess 18-19). The latter two devices can be seen most clearly in Katniss’s closing statement, where she shouts, in a direct message to the president, “Fire is catching! And if we burn, you burn with us!” (Mockingjay 125). This statement is printed on screen surrounded by flames, and the image, accompanied by both the literal and metaphorical meaning of the words, is used to great revolutionary effect. The invocation of fire lends an air of menace to Katniss’s speech, providing associations with the Phoenix, to which she is symbolically linked throughout the text. This reference to fire and heat is also reminiscent of Malcolm Mitchell’s description of the propagandists’ manipulation of public sentiment as “a burning glass which collects and focuses the diffused warmth of popular emotions, concentrating them upon a specific issue on which the warmth becomes heat and may reach the firing-point of revivals, risings, revolts, revolutions” (111). Clearly, Katniss is not the first person to use this imagery, but she does so to great effect. The promise of a leader, and indeed a society that has the potential to rise triumphantly from the ashes of that which went before it, is cleverly presented to the public through the use of persuasive language – a tool which is evidently not only useful to the enforcers of disciplinary power, but also to those who aim to resist it.
Nevertheless, the resistance’s attempts at using language to defeat those who have controlled them are not entirely successful throughout the series. When held hostage by the Capitol, Peeta takes advantage of the television interviews that he is subjected to and attempts to subvert his captors’ aims by warning Katniss and her fellow revolutionaries of the threats that lie ahead. While he initially appears to be discouraging their efforts – as he has no doubt been forced to do – it soon becomes clear that he too sees the power that lies within being able to communicate verbally with his friends. He risks his life, warning them that “no one is safe. Not in the Capitol. Not in the districts. And you ... in Thirteen ...” He inhales sharply, as if fighting for air; his eyes look insane. “Dead by morning!” (Hunger 156). However, while Peeta has been successful in fulfilling his aim of warning the rebels, showing once again that “what can be said” may be altered, the consequences are great:

Off camera, Snow orders, “End it!” Betee throws the whole thing into chaos by flashing a still shot of me standing in front of the hospital at three second intervals. But between the images, we are privy to the real life action being played out on the set. Peeta’s attempt to continue speaking. The camera knocked down to record the white tiled floor. The scuffle of boots. The impact of the blow that’s inseparable from Peeta’s cry of pain.

And his blood as it spatters the tiles. (Mockingjay 156)

Peeta’s use of voice to stage an act of resistance results in retaliation that controls his body in another way entirely. Following the initial physical assault, he is subjected to an injection of tracker-jacker poison which dramatically alters his personality. By distorting his memories and instilling fear and doubt into his mind about those to whom he was previously closest, the Capitol are quick to remind him and others that their dominance will not be easily defeated.

In addition to using discourse to stage acts of resistance, the citizens of Panem have also learned to use non-verbal communication to show their dissent. This is shown to be a significant tool for them from the beginning of the series, when the crowd refuses to respond to Effie’s request for a round of applause when Katniss takes Prim’s place at the reaping and in so doing “take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we
do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong” (Hunger 28). Foucault has stated that:

Silence itself —the thing one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers — is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (Sexuality 27)

Clearly, silence can be used to communicate much like language, and in this case it is used to convey disagreement with the regime. However, silence is not the only form of non-verbal communication used by the citizens of Panem. Gesture has long been recognised as a powerful means of expressing dissent (Braddick 9), and it is one that this society knows how to utilise to great effect. Following the crowd’s silence in response to Effie’s request comes perhaps the most significant physical gesture featured in the series:

At first one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means goodbye to someone you love. (Hunger 29)

Used here to show support and respect to Katniss, this gesture also has the effect of once again alerting the Capitol to the crowd’s disapproval of the sinister controls to which they are subjected. The gesture is repeated twice more throughout the trilogy: firstly, it is used by Katniss following her burial of Rue under flowers in the arena. Here again, it is employed as an act of dissent, with Katniss being acutely aware of the fact that she is being filmed and has been presented with an opportunity to pay her respects while simultaneously denouncing the regime. The final appearance of the gesture occurs after Katniss pays her respects to Rue when she and Peeta visit Rue’s district on their victory tour: “What happens next is not an
accident. It is too well executed to be spontaneous, because it happens in complete unison. Every person in the crowd presses the three middle fingers of their left hand against their lips and extends them to me. It’s our sign from District 12, the last goodbye I gave Rue in the arena” (Catching 75). On this occasion, Katniss immediately realises the consequences of the gesture being used as a sign of support for her, and despite being touched, she is also quite clearly dismayed:

If I hadn’t spoken to President Snow, this gesture might move me to tears. But with his recent orders to calm the districts fresh in my ears, it fills me with dread. What will he think of this very public salute to the girl who defied the Capitol?

The full impact of what I’ve done hits me. It was not intentional — I only meant to express my thanks — but I have elicited something dangerous. An act of dissent from the people of District 11. (Catching 75-76)

Her suspicions that this act of rebellion will lead to trouble are almost immediately confirmed, as Katniss later witnesses the punishment of the man who signalled for the crowd to make the gesture: “We see the whole thing. A pair of Peacekeepers dragging the old man who whistled to the top of the steps. Forcing him to his knees before the crowd. And putting a bullet through his head” (Catching 77). In response to a non-verbal gesture of dissent, this man’s execution has been meted out as a punishment, a warning, and a glimpse of what is to come should such rebellious feeling continue to be exhibited. Evidently, attempting to operate outside the sanctioned discourse in Panem is a risk that few can afford to take.

**Conclusion**

Collins’ trilogy presents readers with a world that combines the threat of sovereign power with a complex web of disciplinary techniques that operate both through overt and implicit means to create docile subjects. Susan Bordo has defined docile bodies as those “whose energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, ‘improvement’” (Unbearable 166), and all of these practices are imposed on the people of Panem. As
demonstrated here, the key arenas of influence in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* are surveillance and spatial regulation; physical appearance; gender performativity and heteronormative expectation; and the realm of discourse. While the setting of the novels is in many ways far removed from that of the contemporaneous reader, the young adult audience at which the trilogy is aimed will find much to identify with here. Many of today’s teenagers will at some point find themselves embroiled in power struggles relating to one or more of these issues, as in addition to featuring in Collins’s dystopia, they have a significant role to play in everyday life for most people. Thus, it is likely that the average young adult in the Western world – and in particular females – will recognise many of the challenges depicted here. Certainly, teenagers today find themselves unprecedentedly tightly supervised and time-managed. Indeed, as Hintz and Ostry have noted, “Dystopia can act as a powerful metaphor for adolescence. In adolescence, authority appears oppressive, and perhaps no-one feels more under surveillance than the average teenager” (“Introduction” 9-10). Accordingly, the panoptic society of Panem is likely to provide the young adult reader with a sense of “cognitive estrangement,” whereby being confronted with a world ostensibly much different from their own causes them to contemplate from a fresh perspective the ways in which similar themes operate in their own present (Suvin 7-8).

The exertion of societal pressure relating to physical appearance, fashion and bodily deportment is familiar to many young women especially, as they are bombarded with regulatory messages from an ever-increasing variety of media and encouraged to conform by countless cultural and political institutions. While the manipulation of Katniss’s appearance is depicted as serving higher purposes, young women today are generally well-versed in the messages embedded in their fashion and appearance choices, and also in the expectations imposed by outside forces. Collins’s trilogy asks them to consider the ways in which they may be manipulated through their appearance, and indeed whether it may be possible to invert
these attempts at manipulation in the name of resistance. Similarly, young women in particular are regularly exposed to heteronormative bias and its associated expectations, which can affect not only their relationships but their careers, reproductive rights, and several other aspects of their lives into adulthood. Katniss cannot sustain that initial rejection of relationships and motherhood which had promised to offer a possible alternative destiny for young women. Therefore, the novels ultimately reinforce to readers the formidable nature of heteronormative structures. Finally, for both genders, restrictions surrounding discourse are a common frustration. Teenagers are suspended in a limbo of sorts between childhood and adulthood. They often find themselves in the difficult position of being cut off from “adult” discourse and the knowledge and power within, and doubly frustrated by their awareness of this exclusion. Thus, the young adult reader of Collins’ series will be deeply familiar with the challenges faced by Katniss and her fellow citizens, despite having encountered them in vastly different settings. *The Hunger Games* trilogy reminds readers that they should not always trust what adults tell them, but instead use their own judgement and instincts to uncover the truths that may bring about change.

Having examined in detail the manner in which disciplinary controls are exerted in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, it is evident that in Panem “a calculated constraint runs through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit” (Foucault *Discipline* 135). In this future world vision, dominant power operates largely through the citizens themselves: the people of Panem are intensely engaged in self-regulation. Nevertheless, in each of the discussed spheres of influence there have been ways for the body to resist such stifling controls. From Katniss’s manipulation of the media coverage to which she is subjected, to the subversive actions taken by the protagonist and others when managing their physical appearance, to the defiantly complex gender performances displayed, and the innumerable occasions upon which discourse is
appropriated and used against the Capitol, the reader is consistently reminded that, if sufficient attention is drawn to the “policy of coercions that act on the body,” it may be possible to render some of them ineffective (Foucault Discipline 138). As Judith Butler has observed, the individual “is at once formed and subordinated by power,” as “power not only acts on a subject but, in a transitive sense, enacts the subject into being” ("Bodily" 6). Thus, while dominant power initially controls the body and its disciplinary mechanisms, other forms of power can be found via the agency of the subject in resisting such controls. Certainly, this is the case in Collins’ trilogy, a text which in many ways mirrors the decisions which are so often made during adolescence: “What are the proper limits of freedom? To what extent can one rebel? At what point does conformity rob one of his or her identity?” (Hintz and Ostry "Introduction" 10). Throughout The Hunger Games the body is implicated in constraining freedom, but also in creating new spaces of freedom between the old and the new, allowing for a displacement of the regime and the instatement of an alternate power structure. Such revelations of the complexities of power relations may encourage the young adult reader to continue their quest for answers, and indeed to assert themselves in the battle for resistance against similar dominant power structures in their society. Roberta Seelinger Trites warns that Collins’ text implies that “only adolescents can save the world because once they become adults they will be too corrupt to do so any longer” ("Politics" 26), with Katniss’s agency greatly diminished in her adult years. However, rather than being the burden that Trites posits it to be, this challenge could be viewed by teenagers as an empowering suggestion that they too can have influence, and possibly even change the world.
Chapter Two

“Now Everybody’s Happy, Because Everyone Looks the Same”: Surveilled Space, Normalisation, Embodied Resistance and Posthumanity in Scott Westerfeld’s Uglies Series

Introduction

In his 2011 essay “Teenage Wastelands: How Dystopian YA Became Publishing’s Next Big Thing,” Scott Westerfeld observed that:

Teenagers’ lives are constantly defined by rules, and in response they construct their identities through necessary confrontations with authority, large and small. Imagining a world in which these authorities must be destroyed by any means necessary is one way of expanding that game. ("Teenage" Para. 6)

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that it is precisely this “game” with which Westerfeld is concerned in his Uglies series of dystopian novels. Written for a YA audience and published between 2005 and 2007, the series contains four books: the initial three (Uglies, Pretties and Specials) which formed a trilogy of texts focusing on one coherent storyline, and the final, companion novel Extras. While re-introducing four of the characters from the previous novels in relatively minor roles, Extras features an entirely different protagonist and plot.

Following the release of the four novels, Westerfeld in 2012 co-authored two graphic novels, Shay’s Story and Cutters, both re-telling aspects of the original story from the perspective of the protagonist’s best friend. Most recently, a related 2014 short story was included as an appendage to a reissue of Uglies exclusive to Barnes & Noble outlets in the United States; in this case, the first novel’s central male character provides the focal point for the story.

This chapter addresses the original trilogy of novels, which form the earliest published of all the series examined in this thesis and which are often recognised as pioneering texts.
within this current wave of YA dystopias. Westerfeld’s series is particularly relevant to this thesis as its central premise is that the body (in particular physical appearance) may be used to encourage people to collude in their own regulation. The body lies at the heart of both sides of the relations of power throughout, and the normalisation of standards surrounding beauty is implicated in both implementation of and resistance to regulation. Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate that for the young female protagonists depicted in contemporary YA dystopian fiction, expectations related to beauty, fashion and deportment are often used as mechanisms of dominant power. Westerfeld’s series, with its dystopia set in a world where everyone must be beautiful, provides an ideal narrative framework for discussion and critique to develop. Wielding considerable influence, and including a female protagonist battling a world where the primary dystopian conditions all relate to the body and power, the *Uglies* series is one which undoubtedly warrants attention.

Set approximately three hundred years into the future, Westerfeld’s original trilogy bears many of the hallmarks of Foucault’s disciplinary society, though the text is furnished with relatively little detail about the day-to-day running of the society. Indeed, even the name of the city in North America in which the action is set eludes the reader throughout the entire series. Nevertheless, the world depicted through the eyes of the novels’ teenage protagonist, Tally Youngblood, is undoubtedly a dystopian one where regulatory controls are many. The *Uglies* series falls into the category of dystopias which Naomi Jacobs classifies as those operating in a “Huxleyan” world “of vapid contentment” (“Posthuman” 92). In this society, people are controlled both by traditional disciplinary mechanisms and overt physical manipulations of which, as the novels begin, only a very select few are conscious. In exploring these mechanisms, and the role that the body has in both facilitating and resisting them, this chapter examines four principal sites of the body’s relationship to discipline in the series. Beginning with a discussion of surveillance and its related regulatory processes
(including distribution of individuals in space and time, normalising judgement, and hierarchical observation), I will then move on to an examination of cosmetic surgery, a significant theme in the texts, before addressing in further detail the mental restrictions placed upon people during the operation and their resultant forms of bodily resistance. Finally, I addresses the importance of the “posthuman” body in the texts.

2.1 Discipline through Distribution: Regulated Space and the Gaze Within

From the very beginning of *Uglies* it is apparent that the society to which we are being introduced relies heavily upon the first of Foucault’s four basic techniques of discipline, “the distribution of individuals in space” (*Discipline* 141). Tally is in the process of planning a forbidden trip across the river that divides the area of the city in which she lives. As a fifteen year old she is expected to remain within the bounds of “Uglyville,” which houses those over twelve years old until they undergo the “pretty-making” operation carried out on teenagers on their sixteenth birthday (*Uglies* 8). Across the river, in “New Pretty Town,” the pretty older teenagers live “in a bubble” that consists of partying, drinking, and revelling in their new found beauty (*Uglies* 260). This segregation of teenagers within the society depicted in the trilogy appears to have a number of functions. Firstly, it ensures that the “uglies” are anxious to become pretty and graduate to New Pretty Town where they will experience the exciting, glamorous lifestyle which they believe awaits them. Only exceptionally “tricky” teenagers like Tally, who find ways to resist the restraints imposed upon them (such as the “smart bridges” that report any ugly footfall to the authorities) have witnessed life on the other side of the river, and doing so merely serves to reinforce their desire to undergo the operation (*Uglies* 30). An illicit midnight visit to New Pretty Town, where she encounters her newly-pretty best friend Peris, makes Tally long to join her older friends, whom she suspects are no longer interested in what they have left behind. Indeed, Tally’s suspicions appear to be
confirmed when in response to her plea to reassure her that “We’re best friends, right?,” Peris sighs, replying “Sure, forever. In three months” (Uglies 20). It seems that ugly Tally is now not worthy of Peris’s friendship, and will only become so when she has undergone the operation to become pretty. Rather than objecting to her old friend’s remark, however, Tally believes that his assessment is correct, accepting as uglies and pretties alike do that pretties are superior in every way. Accordingly, Tally’s confinement within the boundaries of Uglyville is successful in ensuring her and other uglies’ willingness to engage with the disciplinary controls which they encounter throughout their transformation and graduation to the other side of the river. As Emma Kate Wortley asserts, “segregation of uglies and pretties is designed to stoke the desire to conform” (199), and the attitude of Tally and many of her contemporaries shows that this process is highly successful.

Secondly, the minimal amount of engagement that uglies have with their elders ensures that they are given little opportunity to observe the change in those who have undergone the operation. Such “partitioning” is an important tool of the disciplinary society, where to succeed the regime must “avoid distributions in groups; break up collective dispositions” and “eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation” (Foucault Discipline 143). By ensuring that uglies are kept separate from their older friends, and limiting their engagement with “middle” and “late” pretties, the potential for them discovering the extent of the controls that are enacted upon citizens over the age of sixteen is limited - as is the likelihood that they will communicate such truths to their elders or embark upon organised revolt.

The restricted distribution of individuals in space is here linked to the second of Foucault’s basic disciplinary techniques, the control of activity (Discipline 149). Combined, these techniques produce the final function of keeping uglies and pretties separate. With the
control of activity entirely bound up with the notion of temporal regulation, in this society, “time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power” (Foucault Discipline 152). Life is divided into different stages according to age, each of which is accompanied by clearly defined expectations. “Littlies” live with their parents, before becoming “Uglies” and being sent to live in dormitories at age twelve (a time when they may be about to begin questioning the more profound differences between themselves and their elders). After graduating to “new pretty” at sixteen, they are expected to live a life of excess before being assigned a career, becoming “middle pretties,” living in “crumblyville” and having children of their own. Finally, they become “late pretties,” living into their hundred-teens. Accordingly, time becomes something which is measured in relation to graduating to the next stage of life, particularly the time before being made pretty, with Tally and her friends excitedly counting the days until they turn sixteen. The mysterious nature of the various life stages, which they have thus far witnessed to a minimal degree, makes the uglies feel that something desirable is eluding them. Thus, they are anxious for time to pass and more than willing to submit to what is required of them in the next stage. This is typical of disciplinary societies, where what is important is “the rank: the place one occupies in a classification,” and an individual’s value is determined by their positioning within “serial space” (Foucault Discipline 147; 78).

In order to ensure that the segregation of uglies and pretties is successful, and to aid the general running of the disciplinary society in question, hierarchical observation is utilised. This takes the form of surveillance carried out both through the use of technology and with the help of the citizens, who police themselves and others. The extent of the technological surveillance in the novels is evident from the opening of Uglies, when Tally says goodnight to her bedroom – which responds – before removing her “interface ring” (a device that uglies must wear which relays their physical location to the authorities) and placing a portable heater
which will act as a substitute for her body heat to the sensors in her bed (Uglies 5). The interface ring in particular proves a difficult mode of surveillance to escape, as it is required to activate many everyday objects, leading Tally to believe that, “without her interface ring, she was nobody” (Uglies 15). When she and her boyfriend Zane – following her transformation to new pretty – do succeed in fooling the authorities by leaving their rings in a park, they are punished by being fitted with interface cuffs which are placed on their wrists and appear impossible to remove. In addition to tracking their locations, the cuffs also monitor all conversations that Tally and Zane have, in an effort to ensure that they cannot plan any further illicit activity:

The doctors slipped Tally’s on during her eyebrow surge, and Zane awoke the next morning to find himself wearing one. They worked just like interface rings, except they could send voice-pings from anywhere ... That meant the cuffs heard you talking even when you went outside and, unlike rings, they didn’t come off. They were manacles with an invisible chain, and no tool Tally and Zane had yet tried could cut them open. (Pretties 105)

In conjunction with the interface devices, numerous other technologies are used to secure detailed surveillance of all citizens. “Smart walls” in buildings report on who dwells within them (Pretties 168). The “hole in the wall” that each person has in their bedroom monitors their desires and chooses to grant or deny requests depending on whether they are considered appropriate - for example, supplying food but refusing to provide cigarettes (Pretties 11). Additionally, when Tally and Zane are under suspicion of planning an escape to “the Smoke,” the rebel community with which Tally has previously been involved, Zane is surreptitiously fitted with an extra tracking device in his tooth during a hospital visit. Finally, following her initiation into Special Circumstances, the sinister organisation that – unbeknownst to most citizens – controls the city, Tally is fitted with another surveillance device, a skintenna. This provides her with a direct connection to the other “Cutters,” her clique within the “Specials,” allowing her to communicate with them and listen to the
conversations they have and the sounds they encounter. Such technological devices have been described by David Lyon as the “electronic superpanopticon”: they ensure that surveillance in societies like that depicted by Westerfeld is all-encompassing yet largely invisible, ever-present and oft-forgotten (108). As Foucault asserted, the primary effect of the Panopticon was to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automate functioning of power” (Discipline 201). In this case, the “superpanopticon” is largely fulfilling this aim, as it ensures that the Cutters are observable and observing at all times.

While such technologies are clearly useful in maintaining disciplinarity, as Foucault posits:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost. ("Power" 155)

In the *Uglies* trilogy, this assertion is certainly applicable: while technological surveillance is used to great effect, non-technological methods are also utilised, with people monitoring others and self-surveilling. While citizens who are post-operation are compliant due to the lesions which have been surreptitiously implanted in their brains, it is unlikely that the uglies, whose brains are unaltered, could be controlled efficiently without such methods. These methods include the patrolling of Uglyville by wardens and the hierarchical structure which encourages the older uglies to monitor and criticise their younger counterparts. Additionally, Special Circumstances has chosen to allow rumours of its existence to penetrate both sides of the river, aware that the threatening tales of their superhuman strength and frightening appearance will be sufficient to ensure effective self-surveillance by the majority. Generally residing in a compound outside the city to appear only on such rare occasions as cannot be
attested to by any of the characters, the Specials have realised that in order to succeed they must, as Foucault holds,

> Arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it. *(Discipline 201)*

Unsurprisingly, they appear to have succeeded in this aim – while the Specials have not been witnessed, their existence is mythologised by uglies and pretties alike, as evidenced by Peris’s assertion that “Specials are like gremlins; you blame them when anything weird happens. Some people think they’re totally bogus, and no-one I know has actually seen a Special” *(Uglies 124)*. While the citizens are – initially, at least – unsure whether the Specials even exist, the belief that they may is sufficient to ensure that the general population is compliant.

While Tally and a minority of other teenagers appear to find ways to resist the surveillance which pervades the city (such as sneaking across to New Pretty Town and stealing bungee jackets), it gradually becomes evident that such minor forms of what they believe to be resistance are in fact sanctioned by the Specials. As Dr. Cable explains to Tally, the Specials allow “tricky” youths to engage in such antics with the belief that they are deceiving the authorities in order to observe whether any of the teenagers possess the qualities necessary to join Special Circumstances in later life. Tally is horrified at Dr. Cable’s revelation that “That’s why we let uglies play their little tricks – to see who’s cleverest. To see which of you fights your way out of the cage. That’s what your rebellion is all about, Tally – graduating to Special Circumstances” *(Pretties 134)*. This affirms Tally’s earlier realisation that her initial acts of resistance lacked significance, when “She saw the tricks for what they were: a way for uglies to blow off steam until they reached sixteen, nothing but a meaningless distraction until their mutinous natures were erased by adulthood, and the operation” *(Uglies 360)*.
Despite learning that her earlier attempts at avoiding detection have been futile, Tally continues to attempt physical acts of resistance to this surveillance throughout the remainder of the series, and on many occasions – at least temporarily – succeeds. She devises a way to remove her and Zane’s interface cuffs by heating them until they expand enough to slip off, while the rest of the “crims,” her gang of friends, tie their interface rings to balloons and release them (Pretties 227). Recognised by a doctor in Andrew Simpson Smith’s reservation, she succeeds in hijacking his hovercar and escapes to the Rusty Ruins, and even after being made Special against her will she chooses to avoid detection by her fellow cutters by turning off her skintenna. While in many instances she is captured again at a later date, her continual efforts to evade surveillance show that Tally is unwilling to submit entirely to the disciplinary controls that permeate her society and attempt to dominate her body. In a world where people are both physically and mentally transformed at the behest of the authorities, it is no wonder that the only possible option is to attempt to “reclaim the self through resistance” (Ostry "Human" 231), a process which, as is becoming evident, is a trope of the contemporary YA dystopian text.

In addition to the distribution of individuals in time and space and the use of hierarchical observation, normalising judgement is employed to ensure that Westerfeld’s dystopia operates successfully. In order to ensure that this process runs smoothly, people have firstly been inundated with information about the Rusty era (that is, the society of the present-day reader) in an attempt to convince them that their own society is far superior. They are presented with an uncivilised image of the Rusties, who destroyed their environment and “almost destroyed the world” (Uglies 267). Tally and others are told that this civilisation ended when:

A bug got loose, but it didn’t infect people. It infected petroleum ... The spores spread through the air, and when they landed in petroleum, processed or crude, they sprouted. Like a mould or something. It changed the chemical composition of the oil ... Oil infected by this bacterium was just as unstable as phosphorus. It exploded on contact
with oxygen. And as it burned, the spores were released in the smoke, and spread on the wind. Until the spores got to the next car, or airplane, or oil well, and started growing again. \textit{(Uglies 345-46)}

Apparently true, this story has undoubtedly been utilised to control people by convincing them that their society is more progressive than that which preceded it. They are reminded that the Rusties engaged in “war and crime and all that” \textit{(Uglies 267)}, and have accepted this to the extent that when playing games in school, the Rusties “were always the bad guys” \textit{(Pretties 11)}. However, perhaps the most significant message that people have internalised in relation to the Rusties is that which legitimises the pretty-making operation:

Tally groaned and flopped back onto her bed, glaring up at the ceiling. Shay could be so weird sometimes. She always had a chip on her shoulder about the operation, like someone was making her turn sixteen. “Right, and things were so great back when everyone was ugly. Or did you miss that day in school?”

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Shay recited. “Everyone judged everyone else based on their appearance. People who were taller got better jobs, and people even voted for some politicians just because they weren’t quite as ugly as everybody else. Blah, blah, blah.”

“Yeah, and people killed one another over stuff like having different skin color.” Tally shook her head. No matter how many times they repeated it at school, she’d never really quite believed that one. “So what if people look more alike now? It’s the only way to make people equal.” \textit{(Uglies 44-45)}

Such tales lay the foundations for the normalising judgement which is one of the most significant disciplinary mechanisms in this society. People are brainwashed into believing that the pretty-making operation will place everyone on equal footing, thus ensuring that all discrimination will be eradicated. The standards of beauty attained by those who have undergone the operation prove awe-inspiring to uglies, who accept that until they too become pretty, they are unworthy in every way. Recognising such trends in the present day, Virginia Blum has claimed that “a woman’s identity is always constructed according to the terms of the Other Woman, the model, the perfect woman who we fail to be. What we make of our identity is the measure of our failure relative to her perfection” (111). Certainly, Tally and the majority of her contemporaries are convinced that they are lacking in relation to their pretty
counterparts, and when Shay ponders why pretties never return to visit their ugly friends, Tally posits that it’s “Because we’re so ugly, Skinny, that’s why” (Uglies 38). She, like almost all uglies, has been successfully programmed to see her body as deficient when compared with those of her older counterparts.

So preoccupied with their apparent lack of beauty are the uglies that they spend much of their time making morphological depictions of what they may look like following the operation. When Tally attempts to make Shay’s “morpho” symmetrical and Shay objects, Tally informs her that facial asymmetry is a sign of “childhood stress,” and therefore undesirable (Uglies 42). Additionally, when Tally sneaks across to New Pretty Town, she observes how a group of pretties knock her down as if she was nothing, before reflecting that she “was nothing here. Worse, she was ugly” (Uglies 7). Although traditionally based upon adherence to a rule, normalising judgement is in this case based upon the uglies’ failure to satisfy the gaze conferred upon them by their pretty counterparts. As Foucault notes, in such cases “Vision becomes the medium through which our actions are constantly judged – not only how we break the rules but also how we fail to reach a certain standard. The order we must follow is one that forces us to adapt to certain norms” (Discipline 178). At the beginning of the series, Tally – and the vast majority of her contemporaries – believe that they genuinely want to have the operation and are freely choosing to do so; as Naomi Jacobs has pointed out, however, such free choice is rarely entirely free in societies like the one depicted here:

Although individuals may believe they are freely choosing and freely acting from a position of integrity, their choices and actions merely duplicate subject positions to which they have been “called”, [and] this sense of unity or self-identity is itself a mark of the extent to which the subjects exists in a state of subjection. ("Posthuman" 93)

Nevertheless, it is not impossible for people to resist this normalising judgement, as evidenced firstly by Shay and later by others in the series. Having been influenced by David, Shay frequently speaks about the operation in negative terms – to the frustration of Tally, who
is initially excited about undergoing the transformation, having accepted the discourse perpetuated by the regulatory conventions of her society. Like the protagonists of Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium* and Veronica Roth’s *Divergent*, Tally is wholly convinced that she is unattractive. In Tally’s society, however, the stigma attached to being so is far greater than that in most YA dystopias. Nevertheless, Shay attempts to change Tally’s perception, discouraging the use of disparaging nicknames and attempting to make her see that activities like the construction of morphos are “just designed to make us hate ourselves” (*Uglies* 44). She repeatedly challenges Tally, saying “You don’t believe all that crap, do you – that there’s only one way to look, and everyone’s programmed to agree on it?” (*Uglies* 82). She reminds her that “we may not be gorgeous, but at least we’re not hyped-up Barbie dolls” (*Uglies* 82). Additionally, Shay recognises that allowing the uglyies to design their ideal face is just a mindless distraction, as “the doctors pretty much do what they want, no matter what you tell them” (*Uglies* 41). She wisely notes that the days before they turn sixteen are “our last chance to do anything cool. To be ourselves. Once we turn, it’s new pretty, middle pretty, late pretty ... Then dead pretty” (*Uglies* 49). Her friends who have escaped to the Smoke clearly recognise this fact too, and even Tally appears to start overcoming the effects of normalising judgement once she spends some time with the Smokies and begins to have feelings for David: “She could see that his forehead was too high, that a small scar cut a white stroke through his eyebrow. And his smile was pretty crooked, really. But it was as if something had changed inside Tally’s head, something that had turned his face pretty to her” (*Uglies* 250). It appears that given the chance, attraction to others may enable uglyies to see past “a million years of evolution” (*Uglies* 16), and to resist the shackles of the beliefs perpetuated by the norm – a norm which relies upon cosmetic surgery and the supposed benefits which accompany it to keep its population under control. However, so ingrained is their society’s ideology regarding beauty that, as the following section will make apparent,
the majority of people do not even attempt to think outside this mould. Instead, they willingly submit to an operation which makes it increasingly difficult for them to do so.

2.2 Pretty Vacant: Homogeneity and the Cosmetic Cure for Individualism

Tally learns midway through *Uglies* that the “pretty-making” operation is merely a cover for the mind-altering surgery carried out on all citizens (*Pretties* 24). As becoming pretty has been instilled as the norm in this society, few citizens question the need for the operation, leading to the easily attained mass control of the population. The surgery reduces the possibility of people expressing their individuality both physically and mentally. The lesions reduce intellectual capacity – thus creating a disengaged populace – while physical appearance is moulded in accordance with strict standards dictated by the “pretty committee” (*Uglies* 262). The pretty committee, as Tally explains, “was a global institution that made sure pretties were all more or less the same. It would ruin the whole point of the operation if the people from one city wound up prettier than everyone else” (*Uglies* 262). This is reminiscent of Jacobs’ observation that “dystopias understand free agency as based in individuality, and they use every means to destroy any kind of identity that is separable from and potentially at odds with the collective” (“Posthuman” 92). Clearly, in this dystopia as in many others, individuality has been identified as linked to subjectivity and agency. Accordingly, the people in Westerfeld’s text are subject to uniform standards that ensure that pretties are all equally beautiful, their bodies equally subjected to manipulation and equally unlikely to resist due to prettiness having been firmly instilled as the society’s norm.

As is common in dystopian fiction, throughout the *Uglies* series homogeneity is consistently presented as desirable for the authorities and initially coveted by the citizens also. We are told that “the overall average of human facial characteristics was the primary template for the operation,” and Tally has no difficulty accepting that “average-looking features are
one of the things people look for in a face” (*Uglies* 256). In an attempt to highlight the difficulties with the trend toward homogeneity, Westerfeld employs a somewhat heavy-handed metaphor. On her journey to the Smoke, Tally encounters the rangers, who spread fires across the mountains. They explain to Tally that the fires are necessary “because of *phragmipedium panther*” which “used to be one of the rarest plants in the world. A white tiger orchid. In rust days, a single bulb was worth more than a house” (*Uglies* 181). Since then, however, the Rusties engineered the species to adapt to more varied conditions, an endeavour which was:

> Too successful. They turned into the ultimate weed. What we call a monoculture. They crowd out every other species, choke trees and grass ... Everything the same. After enough orchids build up in an area, there aren’t enough hummingbirds to pollinate them ... So, the orchids eventually die out, victims of their own success, leaving a wasteland behind. Biological zero.” (*Uglies* 181-82)

This is Tally’s first encounter with the notion that homogeneity is not always desirable. Elsewhere, her observation that costume parties “reminded her of how different everyone used to look back when there were way too many people” ensures that the reader is left in no doubt regarding the lack of diversity in Tally’s world, or in her willingness to accept it (*Pretties* 17).

The homogeneity which prevails in the dystopia presented here is seen as a necessary condition for prettiness. In turn, prettiness is always considered to be desirable, and has become the standard against which uglies consistently judge themselves deficient. At the series’ opening, Tally is painfully aware that she is “taller than pretty standard” (*Uglies* 23), and conscious of her “wide nose and thin lips, too-high forehead and tangled mass of frizzy hair” (*Uglies* 8). She believes that she has “squinty, narrow-set, indifferently brown eyes. Nobody eyes” (*Uglies* 17), and spends much of her time creating morphos, certain that all of the visions of her pretty self that she creates are a vast improvement on her natural
appearance. As Sandra Lee Bartky notes, such policing by women of their own appearance is customary:

> It is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies ... The woman who checks her makeup half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara has run, who worries that the wind or the rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. (Bartky 81)

Having internalised the standards imposed upon them, the uglies no longer need a higher authority to remind them that they fail to satisfy the norm in their society, as they consistently measure themselves against these standards and note their own imperfections. Not only do Tally and her peers judge their own appearances harshly, they also find deficiencies in each other, as evidenced by Tally’s critical comments while making morphos of Shay. Sixteen years of enduring such harsh pronouncements of lacking, inflicted by both the self and others, has ensured that by the time the citizens are given the opportunity to undergo the operation, they are by and large anxiously awaiting the procedure.

Such is the strength of the uglies’ desire to become pretty that the most effective way for Dr. Cable to convince Tally to betray Shay is to threaten to force her to remain ugly permanently:

> Dr. Cable pointed at the wallscreen, and an image appeared. Like a mirror, but in close-up, it showed Tally as she looked right now: puffy-eyed and dishevelled, exhaustion and red scratches marking her face, her hair sticking out in all directions, and her expression turning horrified as she beheld her own appearance. “That’s you, Tally. Forever.” “Turn it off ...” “Decide.” “Okay, I’ll do it. Turn it off.” (Uglies 135)

For Tally the prospect of living outside the norm and staying ugly for life proves too difficult to contemplate, and she convinces herself that following her friend and betraying the Smoke to ensure her prettiness is a necessary act. Like the desperate “eves” of Louise O’Neill’s 2014
YA dystopia *Only Ever Yours*, whose entire existence depends upon them being physically flawless and who are accordingly willing to betray those around them to achieve beauty-dependent status, Tally’s decision is inevitable at this point. As Anne Balsamo has averred, “When a woman internalizes a fragmented body image and accepts its ‘flawed’ identity, each part of the body becomes a site for the ‘fixing’ of her physical abnormality” (*Technologies* 56-57), and Tally cannot contemplate delaying this “fixing” any longer.

Despite her desire to become pretty, Tally’s apprehension at the extensive body-modification which she is required to undergo in order to do so is evident when she is questioned by a new ugly about looking unhappy on the morning of her sixteenth birthday:

> Should she tell this new ugly that sometime this afternoon, her body was going to be opened up, the bones ground down to the right shape, some of them stretched or padded, her nose cartilage and cheekbones stripped out and replaced with programmable plastic, skin sanded off and reseeded like a soccer field in spring? That her eyes would be laser-cut for a lifetime of perfect vision, reflective implants inserted under the iris to add sparkling, gold flecks to their indifferent brown? Her muscles all trimmed up with a night of electrocize and all her baby fat sucked out for good? (*Uglies* 97)

Unsurprisingly, Tally is somewhat uncomfortable at the thought of what the surgery entails, as evidenced also by her revulsion when Shay describes the process as one where “they grind and stretch your bones to the right shape, peel off your face and rub all your skin away, and stick in plastic cheekbones so you look like everybody else” (*Uglies* 50). Apparently, unlike Tally, Shay has identified the desire for homogeneity discussed earlier as a negative process. Balsamo asserts that “surgical techniques literally enact assembly-line beauty: ‘difference’ is made over into sameness” (*Technologies* 58), and undoubtedly, this is a significant aim of the pretty-making operation, which – as will be discussed in greater detail in Section Three – ensures that pretties’ entire subjectivity is greatly weakened. Nevertheless, Tally and her contemporaries enthusiastically assent to the operation. The power of the norm is such that each individual is acutely aware that they will be judged not in isolation, but in relation to
their contemporaries, and the implicit threat of the consequences of being deemed unsatisfactory render them anxious to conform. The extent of the norm’s power here is evidenced by the plight of “uglies-for-life, the few people for whom the operation wouldn’t work” (Uglies 83). Tally states that uglies-for-life “were allowed in public, but most of them preferred to hide. Who wouldn’t? Uglies might look goofy, but at least they were young. Old uglies were really unbelievable” (Uglies 83). Her attitude here confirms that she is complicit in the execution of normalising judgement, and that this execution is effective in inhibiting others.

As the novels progress, the apparent advantages of being pretty become increasingly clear. Uglies have been taught in school and by their elders that:

There was a certain kind of beauty, a prettiness that everyone could see. Big eyes and full lips like a kid’s; smooth, clear skin; symmetrical features; and a thousand other little clues. Somewhere in the backs of their minds, people were always looking for these markers. No one could help seeing them, no matter how they were brought up. A million years of evolution had made it part of the human brain.

The big eyes and lips said: I’m young and vulnerable, I can’t hurt you, and you want to protect me. And the rest said: I’m healthy, I won’t make you sick. And no matter how you felt about a pretty, there was a part of you that thought: If we had kids, they’d be healthy too. I want this pretty person ...” (Uglies 16-17, original emphasis)

This desirability has conferred upon the pretties a privileged status. As Tally avers, when you were pretty, “people put up with your annoying habits” (Uglies 402). In New Pretty Town, the only rules were “Act Stupid. Have fun. Make noise” (Uglies 12). The fact that this granting of their superficial desires has had the – wholly intended – effect of rendering the pretties manipulable and disengaged escapes the notice of the vast majority of people. Like the citizens of the Capitol in Collins’ text – who also live in what Elaine Ostry describes as a “utopia of abundance” (“On the Brink” 102), where people’s every desire is catered to – the new pretties are vapid, with Shay describing them as “pampered and dependent” (Uglies 226). Although Tally and others are aware that the pretties appear to be “stupid,” they choose not to
interrogate this fact too closely, and refuse to let it deter them from their desire to make the transformation (Uglies 7). It appears that by and large, they believe that a life of prettiness is an acceptable exchange for their unaltered personalities. While it is true that, initially, the uglies are unaware of the extent of the operation’s effects, which will be discussed in greater detail in Section Three, they have been provided with numerous clues that all is not as it seems, and yet at each turn have chosen to ignore them.

However, not all uglies are convinced that the pretty-making operation is entirely desirable. Shay is one example of an ugly who has objections to her society’s preoccupation with appearance. She shows resistance to the brainwashing which Tally and the majority of her peers have undergone, and attempts to bring this brainwashing to Tally’s attention, telling her, “It’s a trick, Tally. You’ve only seen pretty faces your whole life. Your parents, your teachers, everyone over sixteen. But you weren’t born expecting that kind of beauty in everyone, all the time. You just got programmed into thinking anything else is ugly” (Uglies 82). Tally, however, is not ready to accept this radical theory, preferring to believe that her prejudices regarding appearance are entirely natural. Nevertheless, Shay continues to try to convince her otherwise, and is consistently disparaging about pretties, making comments such as: “The last thing I want to do is become some empty-headed new pretty, having one big party all day (Uglies 83), and, “I can’t imagine anything worse than being required to have fun” (Uglies 49).

Such is Shay’s objection to the operation that she decides to abscond and flee to the Smoke, a rebel community which dwells in the wilderness. The “Smokies” do not undergo the operation, choosing instead to live in secret, working the land and welcoming any uglies who escape the city before their sixteenth birthday. Despite Shay’s pleas, Tally refuses to go with her; at this point in the series, she has failed to resist the influence of the “programming” which she has experienced her entire life. Nevertheless, after a short time living with the
Smokies, she too proves capable of understanding the need for resistance. Upon arrival she finds it difficult to accept the others’ decision to remain ugly, baulking at the sight of an old ugly and marvelling over the inferior looks of models in Rusty magazines in the Smokie library; over time, however, her perception changes. She gradually finds that she is capable of overcoming the brainwashing to which she has been subjected; her realisation that she has fallen for David despite his ugliness is the first significant breakthrough in this regard:

A strange thought crossed her mind, and Tally said, “I’d hate it if you got the operation.” She couldn’t believe she was saying it ... “I don’t want you to look like everyone else.”
“I thought that was the point of being pretty.”
“I did too.” (Uglies 279).

By now, Tally is aware of the more serious malevolent effects of the surgery. This realisation marks a deeper change in her thoughts regarding the city’s pretty-making practices. She has thought her way out of the restrictive beliefs with which she has been indoctrinated, and come to understand that a life outside of this way of being is both possible and preferable.

Tally proves capable of mental resistance on a number of occasions throughout the text, and this new capability will be discussed in further detail in the next section. In the final novel in the series, however, she does fall prey to the effects of the Special operation which results in her feeling repulsed by Zane’s physical “defects,” as she perceives them. Although pretty, Zane has been left physically weakened by the side effects of his incomplete cure and the operations which followed. Tally initially attributes her disgust to Zane’s infirmity, but it soon becomes clear that it is her own feelings of superiority that are the primary change in how she relates to him, as she observes that “the averageness ... seemed to be leaking out of Zane” (Specials 83). Once again, by the end of the novel Tally has overcome many of the negative effects which accompanied her Special status. However, she does not entirely change her feelings towards Zane, whose awareness of this fact ultimately leads to his death after too many operations to Tally’s standards. Tally has resisted or overcome all
programming up to this point. It seems that her apparent desire to retain her identity as a Special – in itself somewhat problematic due to the recurrent demonstrations throughout the series that the operations overwrite people’s true thoughts and replace them with those more beneficial to the regime – prevents her from entirely overriding her Special characteristics. Here, she simultaneously fails to overcome the restrictions imposed upon her, while paradoxically successfully transgressing the norm by choosing to remain the only surviving Special.

Others show their resistance to the bodily modifications imposed upon them by using those same bodies to subvert the practices employed by the authorities. Zane, for example, makes an effort to push the boundaries of what is sanctioned by the pretty committee, seeking to escape the limitations of homogeneity imposed upon him and his peers: “The operation guidelines wouldn’t let you have jet-black hair, which the Committee thought was too extreme, but Zane died his with calligraphy ink. On top of that, he didn’t eat much, keeping his face gaunt, his stare intense. Of all the pretties Tally had met since her operation, he was the only one whose looks really stood out” (Pretties 51). Throughout the second and third novel in the trilogy Zane succeeds in resisting many of the operation’s negative effects. However, his death while trying to mould his body to be acceptable to Tally shows that he too is ultimately defeated by the imposed norms of the society.

While surgery is often used as an indication of conformity in the text, it is occasionally used for subversive purposes. In Diego, where people have been freed from the shackles of “pretty-mindedness” by the Smokies, who have distributed the cure there, many people choose to subvert the old regime by taking surgery to new extremes in an attempt to highlight their newfound freedom. Tally is perturbed by:

The wild facial structures, skin textures and body mods ... Coats of downy feathers, pinkie fingers replaced with tiny snakes, skin every shade between deep black and alabaster, and hair that writhed like some sinuous creature under the sea.
Whole cliques wore the same skin colour, or shared similar faces, like families used to before the operation. It reminded Tally uncomfortably of how people grouped themselves back in pre-rusty days. (*Specials* 227)

In Tally’s city, pretties regularly “surged,” further modifying their bodies with temporary adornments. For example, Tally decorates a scar “with a flash tattoo: black Celtic swirls just above her eye that spun in time with her heartbeat. For good measure, she’d gotten eye surge exactly like Shay’s, backward running clocks and everything” (*Pretties* 102). In this case, the pretties are merely perpetuating the cultural values with which they have been indoctrinated. However, in Diego, what Tally initially mistakes for “costume surge” is – despite on the surface appearing to be quite similar – fulfilling an entirely contradictory aim (*Specials* 221). Like Tigris in Collins’ series, the citizens of Diego, rather than surging to extend the pretty-making operation, are showing that they have broken free of the restrictions imposed by it. Their extreme body modification, which is far more outrageous than anything Tally has previously seen, is their way of reclaiming their individuality.

Cultural practices exert dominant power over bodies at various levels. Susan Bordo describes two of these in “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault”. The first she refers to as the body “as a text of culture” ("Body" 13). This is consistent with much of what has been discussed in this section. Margaret McLaren explains: “the body as the text of culture refers to the ways that our lived bodily experience is affected by the changes in social practices and cultural categories, subsequently changing our bodies themselves” (95). The “programming” which people experience in Westerfeld’s dystopia has led to the creation of certain norms around appearance and body modification that are policed by the citizens themselves, influencing how people adorn or modify their bodies. Regulatory societies utilise such methods to ensure that people remain passive or preoccupied with inconsequential matters, as are the majority of the people in Tally’s world. However, the authorities here also exert power at the other level of which
Bordo speaks, which is that of “the body as the practical locus of social control” (qtd. in McLaren 95). As McLaren elaborates, “cultural practices can also exert control directly over physical bodies, for example in the case of the anorexic’s confinement to a hospital” (95). McLaren asserts that “although these two levels of bodily control are distinguishable, they are not separate. They are interimbricated” (95). The first of the two levels have been examined in this section; it is necessary now to address the second, which examines the lesions implanted during the operation and attempts by the protagonists and her friends to utilise their bodies in acts of resistance against these controls.

2.3 Moulded Minds and Bubbly Bodies: The Surgery and Physical Fights for Freedom

Tally’s society utilises disciplinary methods to control the citizens, producing “docile bodies” that are subject to an all-encompassing power which penetrates every aspect of their lives (Foucault *Discipline* 135). The production of a docile body requires “a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour,” and each of these practices is successfully executed in Westerfeld’s series through the application of disciplinary techniques (Foucault *Discipline* 136). Foucault states that by entering into a regime of disciplinarity, “the human body was entering into a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (*Discipline* 138), and undoubtedly this has been shown to occur both literally and figuratively throughout the *Uglies* series. However, while such mechanisms are heavily relied upon in Tally’s world, it is important to acknowledge that these techniques are accompanied by a physical domination which is imposed upon the majority of citizens over sixteen through the implantation of brain lesions.

Foucault has posited that control no longer requires physical domination of the body. He does not suggest that disciplinary power has replaced all others, however; rather that “it
has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements” (Discipline 216).

Contrary to working in isolation, disciplinarity often combines with and connects other forms of power. In order to fully comprehend the significance of the control exerted in the society in question, we must now turn to a consideration of “the body as the practical locus of social control” (McLaren 95), in this case the physical domination of bodies through neurological intervention. In so doing, it will be necessary to address both the effect of the brain lesions and perhaps more significantly, the efforts made by the protagonist and others to utilise their physicality in resisting this form of domination.

The surgery that uglies undergo on their sixteenth birthday ostensibly has the sole objective of turning them into pretties. However, as Tally discovers, there is more to the operation than is generally known. This information is imparted by David’s parents, Maddy and Az, who were once cosmetic surgeons and citizens of Tally’s city. They explain that while working on research regarding the safety of the operation, they garnered information which revealed that “there were complications from the anaesthetic used in the operation. Tiny lesions in the brain” (Uglies 263). Upon further investigation, they discovered that almost all pretties had these lesions, with the exceptions being those working in the emergency services and members of Special Circumstances. While Tally has been taught at school that “now everybody is happy, because everyone looks the same: They’re all pretty. No more Rusties, no more war,” David explains that “the reason war and all that other stuff went away is that there are no more controversies, no disagreements, no people demanding change. Just masses of smiling pretties, and a few people left to run things” (Uglies 267).

Upon reflection of her meeting with Peris following his transformation, Tally begins to accept the truth of the operation’s effects:
It was as if he’d become a different person. Was it only because since his operation they had lived in different worlds? Or had it been something more? She tried to imagine Peris coping out here in the Smoke, working with his hands and making his own clothes. The old, ugly Peris would have enjoyed the challenge. But what about Pretty Peris? *Uglies* 266

In the socially-stratified environment in which Tally has grown up, opportunities for encountering pretties have been limited. Her only extended contact was with her parents before the age of twelve. However, her memories of Peris convince Tally that Maddy and Az’s theory about the lesions is correct:

Tally remembered crossing the river to New Pretty Town, watching them have their endless fun. She and Peris used to boast they’d never wind up so idiotic, so shallow. But when she’d seen him ... “Becoming pretty doesn’t just change the way you look,” she said.

“No,” David said. “It changes the way you think.” *Uglies* 268

Having utilised disciplinary mechanisms to make uglies not only assent to, but desire the operation, the lesions then ensure that they are mentally weakened, preoccupied with superficial concerns that remove any remaining tendency to struggle for agency. Pretties are content in their ignorance, in a manner reminiscent of the masses in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. As Leon Kass observes, “unlike the man [or woman] reduced by disease or slavery, the people dehumanized à la *Brave New World* are not miserable, don’t know that they are dehumanized, and, what is worse, would not care if they knew (qtd. in Fukuyama *Posthuman* 6). Similarly, here it is only the minority of people who have yet to undergo the operation and are privy to the knowledge about the operation’s true purpose that are equipped with the willingness or inclination to form a resistance.

Once again, Westerfeld identifies here an opportunity for didacticism, explicitly drawing our attention to the similarities between Tally’s society and that of the reader. When questioned by Tally on the fact that he and Maddy failed to notice anything strange about
other pretties when their own lesions went away upon their qualification as doctors, Az explains that:

History would indicate that the majority of people have always been sheep. Before the operation, there were wars and mass hatred and clear-cutting. Whatever these lesions make us, it isn’t a far cry from the way humanity was in the Rusty era. These days we’re just a bit ... easier to manage. (Uglies 272)

Critics of Children’s Literature have been largely disparaging about texts which attempt didacticism. Farah Mendlesohn, however, has diverged from that consensus:

Opposition to “didactic” literature is essentially ideological and has nothing to do with what some child readers want. First, didactic is too often used when the critic actually means pious ... Second, the comment that a book is didactic is often rather prejudiced: we ignore the didactic we like but hit on the didactic we don’t. ("Campaign" Para.13)

Additionally, Mendlesohn has elsewhere noted that science fiction for adults has traditionally carried a “pedagogic load,” and therefore to dismiss its Young Adult counterparts for this precise trait may be to often overlook important texts (Intergalactic 14). In the case of Westerfeld’s series, the novels, while perhaps unnecessarily explicit in their pedagogy at times, are in many ways faithful to the dystopian form, utilising cognitive estrangement to draw the reader’s attention to elements in their world which may as yet have escaped their notice.

Extending this didacticism through his protagonist, Westerfeld ensures that Tally begins to understand that the fallacies which she has grown up accepting are incorrect relatively early on in the text. Having spoken to Az and Maddy, she begins to reassess her perception of the adults around her:

Her parents had always been so sure of themselves, and yet in a way so clueless. But they’d always seemed that way: wise and confident, and at the same time disconnected from whatever ugly, real-life problems Tally was having. Was that pretty brain damage? Tally had always thought that was just how parents were supposed to be. For that matter, shallow and self-centred was how brand-new pretties were supposed to be. (Uglies 272)
Here, Tally appears to be realising that despite having yet to undergo the operation, she and her peers have been subject to a different form of control that has led to their unquestioning acceptance of the status quo. On further consideration of this fact she wonders: “how could you tell how much was the operation and how much was just people going along with the way things had always been? Only by making a whole new world, which is just what Maddy and Az had begun to do” (*Uglies* 272).

In their effort at leading a resistance, Maddy and Az have begun attempting to create a cure for the lesions, which Maddy later succeeds in developing. However, the only potential subject for experimentation in the wilds is Shay, who was made pretty by Dr. Cable before her rescue. As Shay is under the influence of the lesions, she purports to be happy with her prettiness, and refuses to take the cure. Tally – aiming to make amends for accidentally betraying the Smokies – volunteers to go back to the city with Shay and be turned pretty, so that she can (having given prior written consent) take the cure as a test case. While the cure in itself marks a significant form of resistance on the part of the Smokies, it is perhaps the forms of resistance that Tally and others execute when not under its influence that are more interesting.

Tally momentarily reclaims agency at the end of *Uglies*, when she returns to the city announcing “I’m Tally Youngblood ... Make me pretty” (*Uglies* 425). A very different Tally emerges post-operation at the beginning of *Pretties*. Despite having vague memories of her involvement with the Smokies, she is now firmly ensconced in “the haze of being pretty” (*Pretties* 133), and it appears that despite her resolve to try and resist the effects of the lesions, thus far she has been unsuccessful. Westerfeld makes clear the extent to which the operation has affected Tally and Shay in the beginning of this novel, as we are presented with vain, shallow teenagers who display none of the understanding of their societies’ ills that they gained throughout the previous book. *Pretties’* opening statement informs us that “getting
dressed was always the hardest part of the afternoon” (*Pretties* 3), thus setting the tone for the life that Tally and Shay are now living. They use “pretty-talk,” a dialect full of dramatic and exclamatory terms, and portray a superior attitude when speaking to uglies, ensuring that the reader is left in no doubt that the surgery has transformed them (*Pretties* 120). However, Tally displays signs that she has not entirely left her old self behind, as she at times has to remind herself to not say or do things that are out of character for a pretty. Similarly, following her later transformation to special, Tally again finds herself thinking “non-Special thoughts” (*Specials* 28), suggesting that she, at least, is always capable of retaining her core self.

Throughout *Pretties*, Tally and others utilise a number of techniques to do just that. Discovering that being “bubbly” (that is, in a state of high adrenaline) helps them to overcome the blinkers which accompany their prettiness, Tally, Zane and Shay attempt numerous forms of bodily resistance to achieve that state, encouraging others to do so also. It is Zane that first introduces Tally to this concept. As leader of Tally’s gang, the Crims, Zane is consistently looking for “bubbly-making” opportunities, with Tally observing that “sometimes he seemed to think he was still an ugly, trying to stay bubbly, pushing back against the easy fun of being pretty. That was why he was great at leading the Crims, of course. But one-on-one, he could be dizzy-making” (*Pretties* 54). Zane helps Tally to stay bubbly through adrenaline-boosting activities, such as playing tricks and taking risks with their safety. However, perhaps the most significant manner in which they manage to resist the effects of the lesions is through refraining from eating.

The literature on eating disorders has long acknowledged the links between power and thinness, as has that addressing eating disorders as a feature of Young Adult and other fiction (Cf. Boskind-Lodahl; Bruch; Gremillion; Lawrence; Surgenor et al.; Younger "Pleasure"; Tsai; Castiglionia et al.). While neither Zane nor Tally are depicted as having an eating
disorder, it is worth noting that their decision to restrict their food intake as much as possible is motivated by something that has also been shown to motivate many people who exhibit disordered eating patterns: the desire to feel in control (Bruch xvii). Tally and Zane’s ultimate aim when practicing food restriction is to keep themselves in a “bubbly” state; in turn, however, this aim is entirely bound up in their desire to resist the power which has been exerted over them both through the lesions and the disciplinary practices that structure their society. As Zane has discovered, it is not only the authorities who can physically manipulate bodies to create altered mental states:

Tally felt faint, the world growing unsteady for the hundredth time that day. She reached out toward the breakfast tray, but Zane took her hand. “No, don’t eat.”
“What?”
“Don’t eat anything else, Tally. In fact, take a couple of these.” He pulled a packet of calorie-purgers from his pocket – four had already been punched out.
“It helps if your heart’s beating faster.” He punched out two more, and bolted them down with a drink of coffee.
“Helps what?” she asked.
Zane pointed at his head. “Thinking. Hunger focuses your mind. Any kind of excitement works, actually.” He grinned, and pressed the packet into her hand. (Pretties 61)

Unsurprisingly, Zane and Tally’s “crim” behaviour draws attention from the authorities, and their attempts at resistance initially merely lead to stricter controls being imposed upon them. Not eating, it seems, provides a potential solution to another of these – their being fitted with interface cuffs. In an attempt to remove the cuffs, both Tally and Zane starve themselves further, hoping that they may become thin enough to remove the cuffs and once again overcome both the physical and mental restrictions imposed upon them. While this plan does not prove successful, Westerfeld’s repeated portrayal of starvation as a means of resistance is notable. Such depictions are perhaps unsurprising; as Liz Eckermann has noted, often, “self-starvation may represent a personal solution to a broader social problem of lack of order and control” (155), and while Tally and Zane’s motives are apparently practical, it cannot be denied that it is precisely such a lack of control with which they are concerned.
Effectively, Tally, Zane (and as will be discussed presently, Shay and others) are depicted as achieving a degree of dissociation between mind and body, which may, as Foucault posited, “Permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power” (Sexuality 367). Their bodies colonised by the authorities in an effort to dominate them both physically and mentally, Tally and her friends come to understand that if they are to resist the effects of this colonisation, they must reclaim their physical beings by any means possible. In order to do so successfully, they must firstly learn to retrain their minds. Elizabeth Grosz has suggested in her discussion of corporeal feminism that “the body can be seen as the crucial term, the site of contestation in a series of economic, political, sexual and intellectual struggles” (19). In a manner that reflects this, Zane has formed the Crims in an apparent effort to surround himself with people who have been risk-takers before turning and will still be likely to engage in such contestation. Understanding that they are “all brain damaged” (Pretties 92), he and Tally realise that it may be possible to “think their way out of being pretty-minded” (Pretties 120). Westerfeld again uses this opportunity to appeal to his readers, telling them through Tally that “everyone in the world was programmed by the place they were born, hemmed in by their beliefs, but you had to at least try to grow your own brain” (Pretties 309). Believing that they have shared the cure delivered for Tally (an assumption that turns out to be incorrect, with only Zane’s pill actually containing the cure), they impart their knowledge regarding the importance of staying bubbly to the other Crims. While each of the Crims begins to take risks, keeping their adrenaline levels high to encourage mental clarity, it is Shay who, in anger at Tally’s sharing the cure with Zane instead of her, takes this practice another step further.
In a similar vein to Tally and Zane’s decision to not eat in an effort to stay adrenaline-fuelled, Shay turns to self-injury as a means of keeping bubbly, and begins a new clique of her own based around this practice. As Jennifer Miskec and Chris McGee note in their discussion of self-harm in Young Adult fiction, “cutting,” while having appeared in YA literature since the early 1990s, has in more recent years begun to be portrayed in more complex ways, shifting away from its roots in the “problem novel” format (163). In these novels, rather than being portrayed as a suicidal cry for help, self-injury is “connected to the cutter’s need for control over interpersonal situations” (Miskec and McGee 167), much like the portrayals of anorexia previously discussed. By cutting, these characters are attempting “to own the body, to perceive it as self (not other), known (not uncharted and unpredictable) and impenetrable (not invaded or controlled from the outside)” (Cross qtd. in Favazza 51); they are trying to reclaim some of the agency of which they have been stripped.

Undoubtedly, Westerfeld’s portrayal of Shay’s actions in this case may be viewed in this light. Initially, however, she is perceived by the others as being “crazed” and “insane” (Pretties 176):

Shay took the knife with her left hand and placed its edge against her right forearm, the wet metal gleaming. She raised both arms, turning slowly, fixing each of the others with her burning gaze. Then she looked up into the sky.

The movement was so slight that Tally hardly saw it from their hiding place, but she knew what had happened from the reactions of the others. Their bodies shuddered, eyes widening with horrified fascination – like Tally, they couldn’t look away.

Then she saw the blood begin to trickle from the wound. It ran thinly in the rain, spreading down Shay’s upraised arm and onto her shoulder, reaching her shirt, spreading a colour that was more pink than red.

She turned around once to give them all a good look, her slow, deliberate movements as disturbing as the blood running down her arm. (Pretties 174-75)

Although self-harm is here presented in the negative terms that dominated early YA literature featuring this topic, Westerfeld does not deal with the subject in such a simplistic manner.

Following Tally’s initial discomfort at watching Shay cut, Tally concedes that “there was more to this ritual than madness” (Pretties 176), recognising that she has experienced clarity
of mind when hurt previously and that cutting is a way of producing the same effect. As the series develops, cutting continues to be utilised as a means of exercising agency, “a way to be freed from the vapidity of being a pretty – that is, to stay bubbly, to remain focused, and to resist” (Miskec and McGee 175). As Don Latham has explained, “If the body is a site acted upon by the power structures of the community, it can also be used by the individual as a means of undermining those power structures. Destroying the body is the ultimate way for the individual to undermine society’s ability to exert control over the body” (143).

In both *Pretties* and *Specials*, cutting is depicted as a way of resisting this control, and even Tally, following her transformation to special, relies upon it to provide her with heightened awareness:

> Tally squeezed down hard, driving the razor edge into her flesh. The delicate and fine-tuned nerves woven into her palm, a hundred times more sensitive than any random’s, split apart, screaming. She heard herself cry out.

> The special moment came with its wild clarity, and Tally could finally see through her own tangled thoughts: Deep inside herself were threads of permanence, the things that had remained unchanged whether she was ugly or pretty or special ... *(Specials 95)*

Cutting is intended at this point to be a method of accessing the subject’s pre-operative consciousness; however, as Mary Jeanette Moran notes, soon “the society co-opts even this method of resistance, integrating Shay’s group of Cutters into the Specials and turning them into tools of repression” (133). The Cutters have now been legitimised, given a privileged status as “*special Specials*” (*Pretties* 367); nevertheless, their minds and bodies have still been optimised by outside forces, and cutting is now depicted as a way of ensuring that they are elevated above the other specials, their minds “icy” and hyper-aware (*Specials* 97).

> At times, Tally is portrayed as wanting to self-harm for apparently self-destructive reasons, such as when horrified by her reaction to Zane in his weakened state, she wanted “to cut herself, to tear at her own flesh until she had become something different inside. Something less special, more human” (*Specials* 197). Here, however, Miskec and McGee’s
observation that “In Westerfeld’s trilogy ... teenagers become literal products, perfected by surgery and carefully monitored to ensure against wear and tear. To hurt the body is to hurt this product, to use what little power one has” appears appropriate (176). Tally wants to hurt herself to escape what she has been moulded into, to reclaim her former self and be released from the power that is being exercised over her.

Despite Westerfeld’s relatively progressive approach to the topic of self-harm, and his recurring depiction of the ways in which it may be utilised as a form of bodily resistance, he does not go so far as to project the message that such forms of resistance are desirable. By the end of Specials, Shay, now cured both of being special and being pretty, and retaining her understanding of the disciplinary forces which structure her society, realises that she no longer needs self-injury as a means to reclaim her agency. She tells Tally, “Everything’s less intense now, less extreme. I don’t have to cut myself just to make sense of it all; none of us do” (Specials 292). Nevertheless, the practice is not entirely delegitimized, and Westerfeld refrains from lecturing his audience, acknowledging instead through Tally the productive form of power which non-suicidal self-injury may provide in some circumstances. Facing the prospect of having her special status removed, Tally thinks that “Even the cutting scars on her arm would disappear,” and rather than viewing this as a positive thing, she “realised she didn’t want to lose them. They were a reminder of everything she’d been through, of what she’d managed to overcome” (Specials 345). As Cheryl Cowdy has suggested, “self-mutilation can be interpreted as an attempt at self-healing that seeks to change the relationship between the individual human body and the communal social body” (50), and although it is not something which Westerfeld’s characters do on a prolonged basis, it does indeed temporarily change the relationship, and in turn the power structure, between these two elements. With the effect that manipulating the physical body can have upon engaging in acts
of resistance clear, then, an examination of the impact of further bodily adaptations in the form of posthuman attributes is now warranted.

2.4 Special Circumstances: Posthumanity as Oppression and Progression

Posthumanity is a concept which frequently recurs in dystopian literature; the current wave of Young Adult dystopian texts is no exception. Today’s young adults find themselves presented with a world where the technological innovations presented in science fiction may not be entirely intangible; indeed, such is the pace at which developments in technology – and perhaps most significantly, biotechnology – are progressing, that many young people may live to see such fictions become reality. As Elaine Ostry has posited, “being introduced to and understanding the posthuman age is essential for young adults, as it is their future” ("Human" 223), and with this apparently in mind, numerous authors (including Peter Dickinson, Nancy Farmer, M.T. Anderson, Carol Matas, Louise O’Neill, Ann Halam and others) have chosen to place biotechnological themes at the centre of their YA dystopias. Such texts, as Ostry has noted, often “use biotechnology as a metaphor for adolescence” ("Human" 223), and unsurprisingly, at the centre of this metaphor is the issue of power. Adolescent concerns such as physical restrictions, “resistance to adult control,” identity struggles, “the discovery of the lie” ("Human" 223), and hierarchical control are all bound up in the exercise of and resistance to power and may be represented through the concept of posthumanity. Like many of his counterparts, Westerfeld has chosen to employ such a metaphor throughout the Uglies series, from the relatively minor biotechnological innovations with which the pretties are equipped, to the more significant posthuman qualities of Special Circumstances.

As Westerfeld himself has acknowledged, “One of the themes of the [Uglies] series is transhumanity. How we change when we use technology to alter our minds and bodies in radical ways” ("Visit" Para. 1). This theme permeates the novels, with a significant number
of the protagonist’s and her contemporaries’ struggles relating to the power that is exerted over them as their minds and bodies are altered by the combination of disciplinary mechanisms and physical manipulations to which they are subjected. It is the Specials that are the most overtly posthuman figures, yet it is apparent from the series’ opening that as pretties, and to a lesser extent as uglies, the citizens of Tally’s world have already begun to blur the boundaries between humanity and technology. Ugly Tally’s requirement to wear an interface ring and the later fitting of her and Zane with interface cuffs are merely the most superficial beginnings of their transition from organic to inorganic beings. Following the pretty-making operation, citizens have firmly entered the realm of transhumanity. Aside from making them beautiful and being used as an opportunity to implant the lesions in a subject’s brain, the operation has numerous other “benefits”. For example, pretties do not get sick, and any injuries can be instantly fixed by doctors:

[Tally] looked up into the wardens’ middle-pretty faces, calm and wise and knowing what to do. The look of concern on their faces made the blood all over her face feel less shaming.

They gently led her to the car and sprayed new skin onto the wound, giving her a pill to stop the swelling. When she asked about bruises, they laughed and said the operation took care of that. No more bruises ever. (Pretties 42)

The operation “cures” bad habits such as nail biting, and implants an eyemouse which shows precisely where the subject is looking at any time. While such modifications may appear relatively minor, these are added to the potential provision of “life-extension treatments” and the possibilities presented by surging (Uglies 99), which allows citizens to further modify their bodies with technological interventions – such as Shay’s backward-spinning clock iris implants or the surge that people of Diego undergo to show their liberation from the old system. Such practices call to mind N. Katherine Hayles’s contention that “the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis”; surging and the operation itself, like all other forms of “extending or replacing the body,” may be considered the mere “continuation
of a process that began before we were born” (3). However, whether this process is used to
control or liberate people is what may determine the legitimacy of these and similar
posthuman developments. As Maree Kimberley notes, *Uglies* “uses neuroscientific concepts
to both reinforce the power of the ruling regime and give limited agency to the protagonists”
(Para. 5) and it is perhaps in relation to the Specials that this struggle between domination and
agency is most evident.

Tally is initially unaware that Specials are in fact cyborgs who have been mentally and
physically augmented far beyond what is done to pretties. Nevertheless, from her first
meeting with a member of Special Circumstances, she can tell that they are different to
anyone that she has previously encountered:

He looked strange, unlike any pretty Tally had ever seen. He was definitely of middle
age, but whoever had done his operation had botched it. He was beautiful, without a
doubt, but it was a terrible beauty.

Instead of wise and confident, the man looked cold, commanding, intimidating,
like some regal animal of prey. When he walked up, Tally started to ask what was
going on, but a glance from him silenced her.

She had never met an adult who affected her this way. She always felt respect
when face-to-face with a middle or late pretty. But in the presence of this cruelly
beautiful man, respect was saturated with fear. (*Uglies* 101)

Scott and Dragoo suggest in their essay on body modification that the body is “a malleable
vehicle we can use to distinguish ourselves from or align ourselves with other members of the
species” (2). While the bodies of the majority of citizens in this world have achieved the
latter, the Specials have chosen instead to do the former. Repeatedly, we are told of their
“terrible” or “cruel” beauty, their looks setting them apart from uglies and pretties in a sinister
manner. Perhaps surprisingly, this initial male Special to whom Tally is introduced (a
character who is not developed or included again in the series) is the only male Special
described in detail in any of the novels. Although there are male cutters such as Fausto and
Ho who later become Specials, such characters are notably underdeveloped. This is unusual,
for as Anne Balsamo has shown, the cyborg most often describes “a *man*-machine hybrid” ("Reading" 145). Susan Honeyman has posited that this suggests an unwillingness on the part of writers and filmmakers “to empower human (and thus believable) female characters with bionic empowerment,” and in the rare cases that this does occur, the “fembots” tend to be overtly objectified (181). In contrast, Tally “is the central, unobjectified actor in her conflicts and resolutions” (Honeyman 181), and contrary to the more common female androids, she combines power with humanity. Unlike Tally, however, Dr. Cable, the head and creator of Special Circumstances and Westerfeld’s first significant example of a cyborg in the series, appears to be lacking some of this humanity.

Dr. Cable is described as a “cruel pretty,” with an edge in her voice “like a piece of metal slowly marking glass” (*Uglies* 104), eyes that “angled upward like a wolf’s” and “a face like a predator’s” (*Uglies* 106). While she is initially civil – if somewhat menacing – while speaking to Tally, upon Tally’s refusal to help her, her demeanour changes: “Dr. Cable bared her teeth. This time, it wasn’t even a mockery of a smile. The woman became nothing but a monster, vengeful and inhuman” (*Uglies* 109-10). However, Dr. Cable’s physical modifications are the least of her cyborgian qualities. She and the other specials have superhuman strength and agility, as Tally discovers when they arrive to break up the Smoke:

> Through everything else, the forms of cruel pretties moved. Their gray uniforms passed like fleeting shadows through the confusion. Graceful and unhurried, as if unaware of the chaos around them, they set about subduing the panicking Smokies. They moved in a blur, without any weapons that Tally could see, leaving everyone in their wake lying on the ground, bound and dazed.
> They were superhumanly fast and strong. The Special operation had given them more than just terrible faces. (*Uglies* 288)

Equipped with physical and mental modifications that make them faster, stronger, and more cruel and ruthless than ordinary citizens, the Specials are ideally positioned to control the population of Tally’s city and those surrounding it, ensuring that any efforts at domination
which cannot be solely perpetuated through disciplinary means are completed by physical
intimidation and if needs be, restraint or violence.

As Tally discovers at the end of *Pretties*, to the authorities in her city, “naturally
imposed boundaries of flesh mean nothing and genes, the brain and even DNA are landscapes
open for colonisation” (Guerra 277). Recruited against her will by Shay, whose Cutter gang
is now a faction of Special Circumstances, Tally is transformed into a Special and rather than
fighting to resist the power structures of her city she finds herself, temporarily at least, joining
the enforcers. No longer repulsed by the physical modifications that accompany Special
status, instead she revels in them – although it must not be forgotten that her mind, too, has
been transformed, making Tally’s feelings regarding the change unreliable. In *Terminal
Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*, Scott Bukatman observes that
“the body is often a site of deformation or disappearance – the subject is dissolved, simulated,
re-tooled, genetically engineered, evolved and devolved,” and in such cases, the fluidity of
this cyborg identity leads to the subject being defined “at different times, as its body, its mind,
or sometimes as its memory” (20). In the case of Tally and the other specials, all three of
these areas of their beings are implicated, with their mental and physical changes
accompanied by distorted memories that for Tally, make her previous ideologies – and indeed
her previous revulsion toward the specials – a thing of the past.

Through Tally’s eyes, in the final book of the original trilogy we learn more about the
range of physical adaptations that she and the other specials are endowed with. The new
Tally appreciates her physical changes, such as the “gloriously spinning web of flash tattoos”
that mark her face, her “razor sharp teeth,” her tattooed hands, and her “icy new muscles and
reflexes tweaked to snakelike speed” (*Specials* 5). She and the other specials have
“superhuman senses” (*Specials* 185), and Shay reminds Tally that “you and I can smell an
unwashed human from a kilometre away, a burnt-out campfire from ten. We can see in the
dark and hear better than bats ... We can make ourselves invisible and move without a sound” (Specials 98). Their physical superiority is alluded to regularly throughout the series: at another point Tally muses that a fall which would break a normal human in “a hundred random ways” might hurt her a little (Specials 25), and she is confident that “her hands were the only weapons she needed” to fight armed Smokies (Specials 45). However, it is perhaps only the reaction of the doctors in Diego upon their examination of Tally that makes the true extent of her biotechnological modifications clear:

Tally, your body has been constructed around a reinforced ceramic skeleton. Your fingernails and teeth have been weaponized, your muscles and reflex centres significantly augmented ... There are also certain structures in your higher cortex, apparently artificial, which seemed designed to change your behaviour. Tally, do you ever suffer from sudden flashes of anger or euphoria, countersocial impulses, or feelings of superiority? (Specials 254)

To Tally’s furious objections to being restrained, the Diegan doctors stand firm, informing her that “because of your body modifications, you meet our criteria for a dangerous weapon” (Specials 255). While such physical prowess is in itself formidable, the Specials’ “extended survival attributes” are perhaps equally threatening, as they can go for extremely long periods with little sleep or food, tending instead to be instantly refuelled after miniscule amounts of each (Honeyman 180). Such cyborgian features make them “non-random, above average ... almost beyond human” (Specials 48).

In addition to the morphological violations contained in Tally’s special body, her altered mental state is apparent throughout Specials, as we see a very different protagonist to that of the two preceding novels. Despite ugly Tally supporting the Smokies and doing everything possible to resist the power of Special Circumstances, Special Tally has reversed allegiances, as demonstrated by her enjoyment during a Cutter operation to capture Smokies at an ugly party. Frustrated at having to wear a mask to stay undercover, she decides to teach a disrespectful ugly a lesson:
She stabbed a button on her crash bracelet. Its signal spread through the smart plastic on her face and hands at the speed of sound, the clever molecules unhooking from each other, her ugly mask exploding in a puff of dust to reveal the cruel beauty underneath. She blinked her eyes hard, popping out the contacts and exposing her wolfen, coal black irises to the winter cold. She felt her tooth-caps loosen, and spat them at the boy’s feet, returning his smile with unveiled fangs.

The whole transformation had taken less than a second, barely time for his expression to crumble.

She smiled. “Buzz off, ugly.” (Specials 18)

The new Tally believes in the Specials’ superiority, and revels in being part of it, having no difficulty in adopting the Special Circumstances motto of “I don’t want to hurt you, but I will if I have to” (Specials 18). She is deferential to Shay, who as founder of the Cutters is the leader of this faction of the Specials, and believes wholeheartedly in Shay’s teachings that “The bubbleheads had it all wrong: It didn’t matter what you looked like. It was how you carried yourself, how you saw yourself. Strength and reflexes were only part of it – Shay simply knew that she was special, and so she was. Everyone else was just wallpaper, a blurred background of listless chatter” (Specials 12). These feelings of superiority extend to a dismissive attitude regarding all non-Specials, even those of whom she had previously been in awe. She is pleased at the idea that “David’s reflexes were nothing compared with hers, and all his practice couldn’t make up for the fact that he was a random: a creature put together by nature. But Tally had been made for this – or remade, anyway ...” (Specials 24-25).

Rejecting David, and finding herself repulsed even by Zane, the new Tally has respect only for fellow Specials, and Cutters in particular. The Cutters’ Special status has led to a blending of their identities, a fluid transfer of knowledge and intuition which reflects their new functions as beings similar to those which Rosi Braidotti refers to as “connection-making” entities (200). During Tally’s first Cutter mission, she marvels at the fact that “it was like being five people at once,” as if her “consciousness were smeared across the party” when combined with those of the other Specials present (Specials 14). Her confidence, and indeed arrogance, is boosted by the knowledge that “The Cutters were connected, an
unbreakable clique. She would never be alone again, even when it felt like something was missing inside her” (Specials 8). The Cutters communicate via “skintennas,” internal communication systems which transmit their thoughts and any electronic media that they wish to share with one another, while ensuring that others are excluded. Believing that those outside the skintenna network are no longer worthwhile, Tally is disappointed to realise that as a result of this, Zane’s “words didn’t come through like the other Cutters’. He wasn’t part of her clique anymore. He wasn’t special” (Specials 81).

Although Tally is confident in her newfound convictions, the reader, who has witnessed her transformation, understands that despite her assuredness she is not in complete control of her thoughts and emotions. Her mind has been changed by the special operation, during which the doctors made sure to “strip away all the built-up guilt and shame,” as “random leftover emotions could leave your brain muddled, which wasn’t very special” (Specials 10). As Elaine Ostry points out, “If to be human means feeling emotion, then losing total control over one’s emotions, or having them controlled for you, puts one’s humanity into question,” and certainly, the humanity of the Specials appears to be in doubt at times (“Human” 236-37). However, it seems that Tally is capable of once again overcoming – or at least augmenting – the changes that have been carried out on her brain, just as she overcame the effects of the pretty lesions. Still in possession of her what Halberstam and Livingston elsewhere term a “techno-body” (3), she is, upon Shay’s revelation that Dr. Cable has used their breaking into the city armoury as an excuse to declare war on Diego, shocked at lengths to which the head Special is prepared to go, and clearly overcomes her mental restraints when choosing to re-join the resistance. This is yet another example of what Moran describes as “the ultimate act of rebellion” (135): other characters rely upon drugs to return their consciousness to its unaltered state. However, Tally overcomes for the second time the mental effects of an operation imposed upon her against her will, while retaining those modifications that are to
her advantage. Here, we find the first positive depiction of transhumanity in the series: previously the Specials have been depicted in largely negative terms, but Westerfeld shows that productive potential lies in posthumanity, providing that such possibilities are carefully negotiated.

Employed as a symbol of fluidity by feminists since the publication of Donna Haraway’s seminal essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*, the cyborg has been used to support a rejection of “fixity, definition, [and] boundaries” (Jacobs "Posthuman" 94), and to advocate “pleasure in the confusion of boundaries” (Haraway 150), including those between human and machine. The cyborg lacks human physical imperfection, and evades traditional binary oppositions, instead embracing the juxtaposition of traditionally opposed features; it contradicts humanist notions regarding women’s role as childbearer, the nuclear family, individuality and “natural affiliation and unity” (Haraway 177), and in so doing presents us with a myriad of new potential ways of being. Tally, having battled with similar expectations imposed by the various identities that have been forced upon her, has now come to reconcile her new way of being with her original one. Aware that she is fundamentally a “collection of what other people have done” to her, she determines to reclaim her agency and refuses to be stripped of her special features, instead choosing to retain her biotechnologically advanced physical adaptations while rewiring her brain (*Specials* 190). Having “thought her way out” of being pretty, Tally has come to understand that it is possible to retrain her thoughts and emotions, and that she has the power to decide to what extent she wishes to do so (*Pretties* 73).

Tally’s actions in the concluding chapters of *Specials* ensure that the reader is reassured regarding her success at reclaiming her agency and overcoming the restrictions that the Special operation has placed on her brain. Returning to her city from Diego, she succeeds in attacking Dr. Cable with the cure for being Special, aware that this will result in the destruction of the regime and end all possibilities of war with Diego. She uses her Special
physical attributes to carry out this mission, proving that such morphological violations can
indeed be put to positive use when combined with a human core. For Elaine Ostry, Young
Adult books concerning biotechnological advances tend to provide the overarching message
that “human values and human nature will prevail no matter what changes the human body
endures” ("Human" 243), and this certainly appears to be the message that Westerfeld is
providing his readers with here. By the end of the novel, in response to David’s query about
whether or not she is still Special Tally feels confident enough to reply that “My body is. But
the rest of me, I think that’s all ... Rewired” (Specials 367). Nevertheless, having finally
regained her original mind, she chooses to retain her Special body, being the only Cutter to do
so. Throughout the series, her mind and body have been colonised repeatedly against her
will, and by the time Tally has finally reclaimed her agency and overcome her special brain,
we are told that “the thought of being changed once more was crushing her” (Specials 345).
She is horrified at the realisation that she may be forced to become pretty again:

She was trapped now, immobilized, and the city could take its final revenge on her:
grinding down her bones to reduce her to average pretty height; cutting the harsh
angles from her cheeks; stripping out the beautiful muscles and bones, the chips in her
jaw and hands, her lethal fingernails; replacing her black and perfect eyes. Making her
a bubblehead again. (Specials 351)

When she breaks free following Dr. Cable’s unexpected decision to help her escape, Tally
decides to retain her preternatural features, putting them to good use by helping David in his
mission to protect nature. She understands that encoded upon her body are markers of
society’s moulding of her as an ugly, pretty and a Special, each one a reminder of what she
and others have fought to resist. Despite having reprogrammed her Special brain, she has
been hardened somewhat by her experiences, and she reminds the others of this in her
farewell letter in the hope that it will prevent them from repeating the mistakes made by the
Rusties:
Whenever you push too far into the wild, we’ll be here waiting, ready to push back. Remember us every time you decide to dig a new foundation, dam a river, or cut down a tree. Worry about us. However hungry the human race becomes now that the pretties are waking up, the wild still has teeth. Special teeth, ugly teeth. Us. We’ll be out here somewhere – watching. Ready to remind you of the price the Rusties paid for going too far. (Specials 371-72)

Vowing that “from now on, nobody rewires my mind but me” (Specials 371), Tally chooses nevertheless to retain the elements of her remade body that can be used to protect the future of the natural world. The future for Tally and her contemporaries is a largely positive one, with her subjectivity intact and her society freed from implications of the bodily constraints previously imposed upon it. Nevertheless, implicit in her closing warning is a reminder that utopian endeavours are a process which much be consistently monitored if their transformative potential is to be fulfilled rather than subverted.

**Conclusion**

In *Uglies*, Westerfeld has created a series that places issues of bodily control and resistance at its very core, ensuring that its readers cannot fail to understand the potential significance of the trends in their society which have here been extrapolated from. From the physical restrictions and monitoring to which the contemporaneous reader is likely subjected, to the standards imposed upon them by the power of the norm, the messages about physical appearance which they encounter, to the pressures to engage with the process of “becoming-machine” (Cf. Ansell-Pearson; Bogue; Genoko; Patton; Žižek), each of the series’ key themes relates to the body and its engagement with both overt and covert forms of power. In addressing these issues, the author portrays a strong female protagonist who, despite proving fallible, consistently succeeds in overcoming the constraints imposed upon her. From the series’ opening, Sara K. Day notes that while Tally purports to believe her society to be a utopian one, “her desire for adventure is linked to her acceptance of society’s rules about
beauty. She already demonstrates rebellious tendencies, in other words, but within the system rather than against it” (80). Both a product and later a survivor of the system which has attempted to shape her, Tally embodies strength and persistence in the face of repeated efforts to mould her into various subject positions. To a significant degree, she succeeds in utilising her agency to exercise power and evade the mental constraints imposed upon her.

Choosing to retain some of Tally’s physical adaptations at the end of Specials, Westerfeld has proven more progressive than many of his YA author peers. As Noga Applebaum has proposed, most writers for this audience exhibit a largely technophobic view, which extends in particular to biotechnology. Through Tally, however, Westerfeld displays a more nuanced image of technology’s potential, recognising that while it may be used to control us, it may also be employed as the tool for evading boundaries once envisioned by Haraway and others. For Thomas J. Morrissey,

The question of how and whether humans will survive and prosper in centuries to come is inextricably tied to the question of who or even what we will become. If posthumanity does not describe our extinction, then it must describe new ways of managing or even becoming one with our technology. (Morrissey 190)

Accordingly, Westerfeld has ensured that Uglies reminds its readers that even in the face of increased technological dominance, resistance is possible, and in some cases may actually be achieved by accepting and then subverting its potential. Tally and others do not fully remove from their bodies the markers of the dystopian regime; however, as long as they strive “to maintain a relational sense of self along with the ethical responsibilities that sense of self entails,” these preternatural elements may be used to create a new world and a new way of being (Moran 135). Such messages are likely to resonate with the series’ young adult audience. Indeed, part of the attraction of the novels may be due to the fact that they “touch upon complex and frightening issues in a manageable format” (Morrissey 199).
For young women in particular, Westerfeld’s series is especially relevant as its central concern is physical beauty and the pressure to conform to a particular standard of attractiveness. Confronted daily by airbrushed advertisements that encourage them to alter themselves in a myriad of ways in the hope of hitting a consistently moving target, challenged to attain the unattainable by a fashion industry that promotes often unhealthy standards, and encouraged to adopt as role models celebrities whose increasingly intensive grooming routines are quickly adopted by their fans, today’s teenage girl is well acquainted with the reasons that she is expected to feel bodily dissatisfaction. Thus, many young women find themselves internalising the professed need to achieve an ideal that is largely impossible to satisfy. The cult of beauty operates in part through mechanisms which are also implicated in bolstering disciplinarity in the trilogies discussed here: normalising judgement and hierarchical observation render teenage girls quick to take on the mantle of regulating their own appearance – and indeed, they are often more than willing to play a role in regulating the appearance of their peers also. Inherent in this drive for physical perfection is an increasing trend toward homogeneity, an attempt to eradicate the differences that make us who we are. The *Uglies* series asks readers to consider the implications of such homogeneity taking hold, and to consider how and why they may want to prevent this from happening. Throughout the series Westerfeld has also captured many related problems, extrapolating them in an effort to show the young adult reader what terrifying consequences blindly accepting such attempts to discipline their bodies may lead to. With the beauty industry, surveillance, normalising judgement, ever increasing technological engagement and the prospect of posthuman selfhood all pressures that teens across the world are currently engaging with, the idea of a future where these matters must be resisted is for the readership perhaps less science fiction than parable, and possibly all the more welcome for being so.
Chapter 3

“Safety, Health and Happiness Spells Shh”: Romance, Perfection and Resistance in Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium* trilogy

**Introduction**

By now, it may be apparent that a recurring feature of many of the current crop of Young Adult dystopian fiction novels is the inclusion of a secondary romance storyline. Such is the present popularity of romance in the dystopian mode that in 2012, sf author Paolo Bacigalupi jokingly claimed that “the term ‘dystopia’ actually means a story where ‘The Man’ screws with someone’s love life” (Para. 1). While romance often features in dystopian fiction for adults, there is a significant emphasis currently placed upon it in YA dystopias. In the creation of her *Delirium* trilogy, Lauren Oliver has taken the romance trope and chosen to elevate it even further, making matters of love the very premise upon which the dystopia is based. Comprised of *Delirium* (2011), *Pandemonium* (2012) and *Requiem* (2013), the *Delirium* series has proven very popular with the young adult audience. Perhaps one of the reasons for this popularity is the series’ significant focus on the love triangle within. The proliferation of the love triangle is the most notable distinction between the treatment of romance in these Young Adult texts and their adult counterparts; indeed, it features in four of the five series discussed in this thesis. In the case of Oliver’s trilogy, the love triangle is central to the text’s development, as it is her relationships with the two male love interests that initially motivate and later reinforce the protagonist’s desire to instigate a revolution. As a particularly vivid example of the role that the love triangle plays in the constitution of many dystopian novels at present, the *Delirium* trilogy provides much to consider. In particular, this chapter will use Oliver’s novels to demonstrate the role that romantic relationships can
play in relations of power, and the manner in which matters of love can be used in both the creation of and resistance to disciplinarity.

The Delirium series features many of the conventions which have thus far emerged as common hallmarks of the Young Adult dystopian text: set in a near-future United States, they centre around seventeen year old female protagonist Lena as she battles against the constraints of her society, finds her place in an alternate space of resistance, and negotiates romantic relationships in the process. Unlike The Hunger Games trilogy or Westerfeld’s series, romance impinges on all elements of the Delirium trilogy, largely as a result of the conditions of the dystopia. The text is set in a world where love has been classified as the disease amor deliria nervosa and subsequently outlawed. The population is controlled by both physical and mental means: bodies and brains are subjected to physical alteration, while indoctrination ensures that they are largely convinced that the procedure, and the accompanying power structures that pervade society in the name of protection, exist for their benefit.

This chapter is comprised of four sections which will analyse the manner in which Delirium’s dystopia operates, its relation to the exertion and resistance of dominant power, and the role that the body plays in negotiating the text’s power relations. In so doing, Section Two will examine in detail the culture of perfection that has been developed by the regime, a culture which leads people to feel that they have no alternative but to unquestioningly accept the restrictions placed on their everyday lives. Following this, Section Three will address in greater detail the question of amor deliria nervosa and how the medicalisation of love has developed into an insidious web of power which affects peoples’ everyday lives and behaviours. Finally, Section Four will address the Wilds, the novel’s alternate space, and the forms of resistance utilised by the Invalids that live there. Before turning to these matters, however, Section One analyses the manner in which the Delirium trilogy combines elements of the romance genre with the young adult dystopian mode to create a series at the core of
which again lie questions of power, resistance, and the body. In each case, the novel’s female protagonist Lena provides the primary focus for the examples discussed.

3.1 Love in a Dystopian Climate: Romance, the Love Triangle and the Female Hero

In *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, Janice Radway examines romance novel readers and observes that texts of this genre, which are generally relatively formulaic, tend to rely upon a conclusion which fulfils for its readers the “utopian promise that male-female relationships can be managed successfully” (74). While Lena’s struggle against the restraints of her dystopian society provides the central premise of the *Delirium* trilogy, this is a series explicitly about love. The male-female relationship which Radway recognises as being central to the traditional romance novel is undeniably vital to its development, and perhaps to its success. In *Delirium, Pandemonium* and *Requiem*, Oliver combines traditional romance conventions with dystopian tropes that enable her to subvert these same conventions. The result is an apparent attempt to provide the young adult reader with a female hero who claims agency through her negotiation of the challenges presented both by her surroundings and her inter-personal relationships.

The justification for the *Delirium* trilogy’s links to the romance novel genre is perhaps clear upon introduction to the texts’ novum. Set in Portland, Maine, in what is apparently the near future, a compulsory brain operation has been developed to render people incapable of love. Similar to *Uglies*, the surgery here is compulsory, and in this case is administered to citizens around the time of their eighteenth birthday. Much like Tally, the protagonist Lena Halloway is initially entirely respectful of her society’s methods. Despite a troubled family history, including her mother’s apparent suicide as a result of being forced to
undergo a series of failed operations, Lena looks forward to her life as a “cured” citizen in her highly restrictive society. However, this aspiration changes shortly before her eighteenth birthday, when she falls in love.

Basu, Broad and Hintz have noted that, in many Young Adult dystopias, “the fight for a better world is itself a fight for love, as dystopian forces keep teenagers from choosing their own mates” (8). The dystopian mode provides a conducive setting within which to realise the potential of the female hero, though some authors have perhaps been more successful than others at ensuring that the romantic entanglements depicted operate as an empowering motivation for resistance, rather than as an ultimately limiting force which diminishes the protagonists’ agency. Many writers of Young Adult dystopian fiction have turned to the formula of the love triangle in their negotiation of such complexities, and Oliver is one of these. Similar to Uglies and The Hunger Games, Delirium’s protagonist finds herself entangled in two complex relationships: firstly with Alex, her first love and a lifelong member of the resistance, and later with Julian Fineman, son of the founder of the anti-deliria lobby group “Deliria-Free America” (DFA). Although claims made by Denis de Rougement in his influential 1940 text Love in the Western World (later supported by feminist critic Lynne Pearce in her 2007 book Romance Writing) that all romance plots are essentially reworkings of Tristan and Iseult are perhaps hyperbolic (Pearce x), love-triangles are certainly numerous in romance literature. Critics are divided as to the pervasiveness of the love-triangle in romance writing for young adults. Lydia Kokkola claimed as recently as 2010 that, despite a long tradition in adult romances, the love-triangle is “remarkably rare in the more conservative, adolescent romance genre” (170). Conversely, Joyce A. Litton has argued that there are two “major variations” of the outcome to the teen romance plot: either the heroine must “make changes to her image’ to secure a relationship, or must “decide between two boys who are interested in her” (20), the latter being the dilemma which brings Lena’s story to a
close. If trends within the current wave of YA dystopian literature are to be accepted, it appears that there may currently be some truth to Litton’s observations, as the love triangle is especially prevalent in these contemporary texts.

In Oliver’s novels, the love triangle occurs as a result of Lena’s belief that Alex has been captured and killed during their attempted escape from Portland into the Wilds. Lena’s relationship with Alex is the fulcrum around which the action in the first novel in the series revolves. As a result of their relationship, she transitions from a passive, obedient girl to a young woman who is gradually coming to understand the ills of her society and is willing to risk her life to experience everything it has tried to keep from her. Lena’s feelings for Alex develop steadily throughout *Delirium*, and by the end of this first novel in the series she is ready to admit to herself that she is in love:

He swivels his head toward my voice, a grin splitting his face, spreading his arms as though to say, *You knew I would come, didn’t you?* It reminds me of how he looked the first time I ever saw him on the balcony in the labs, all twinkle and flash, like a star winking through the darkness just for me.

And in that second I’m so filled with love it’s as though my body transforms into a single blazing beam of light, shooting up, up, up, beyond the room and walls and city: as though everything has dropped away behind us, and Alex and I are alone in the air, and totally free. (*Delirium* 339)

This contentment, however, is extremely short-lived. Alex’s “death” at the hands of the regulators occurs shortly after he rescues Lena from confinement in her bedroom in the above scene. This allows for the introduction of Julian in *Pandemonium*, the second novel in the trilogy. Posited as a foil for Alex, much as Kokkola sees the introduction of Jacob in Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series as serving a similar purpose, Julian is the inverse of Lena’s first love in many ways (168). While Alex is an “invalid,” raised in the wilds and now living illegally in Portland as a spy for the resistance, Julian’s father runs the country’s largest anti-deliria movement, Deliria-Free America (DFA). Julian is spokesperson for the youth faction.
of the DFA, yet has thus far been prevented from having the operation to date, due to risks associated with previous brain tumour treatment. While Alex is embroiled in the underground fight to destroy the status quo and put an end to the operation, Julian appears initially to be willing to risk his life to have the operation. As her relationship with Julian begins to unfold, Lena is plagued with thoughts of Alex. Both before and after the latter escapes his cell in the Crypts and re-enters her life, she is consistently comparing the two boys and her feelings for them:

I want to curl up against him as I would have done with Alex, and let myself breathe in his warm skin.

He is not Alex. You don’t want Julian. You want Alex. And Alex is dead.

But that’s not quite true. I want Julian, too. My body is filled with aching. I want Julian’s lips on mine, full and soft; and his warm hands on my back and in my hair. I want to lose myself in him, dissipate into his body, feel our skin melting together.

I squeeze my eyes shut, willing away the thought. But with my eyes closed, Julian and Alex melt together. (Pandemonium 263-64)

The opposition between the young men may be better understood by turning to de Rougemont’s discussion of the division between eros and agape in romantic fiction, and indeed Pearce’s elaboration of this division in Romance Writing. Traditionally, both erosic and agapic love will be present in the romance novel, especially in cases where the love-triangle is used as a literary device. Erosic love is defined as love motivated by reason (Kokkola 170), a “passionate, pagan love” that is logical and earthly (Rougemont 311), while agapic love is generally represented as being of a higher order, the kind of infinite and involuntary spiritual love that one might have for God (Pearce 5). Lena’s relationship with Julian is erosic: in a time of need and loneliness they turn to one another. However, Alex represents Agape; his love for Lena transcends their separation and difficulties, and despite his anger at seeing her with Julian, his decision to eventually leave the group to prevent Lena from feeling torn shows the extent to which he is willing to sacrifice himself for her. Indeed,
Alex’s only explanation for leaving is a note referencing the biblical story of King Solomon, which Lena – having grown up learning a version of the story misappropriated by the authorities – later learns explains his true love for her.

Despite Alex’s apparently superior form of love for Lena, however, her experiences with both boys are significant in helping her to empower herself against her oppressive surroundings. Her time with Alex helps her to separate herself from her family and see her world for what it really is. This is another traditional convention of romance literature, in which, according to Beth Younger, “romance acts as a social impetus that enables the protagonist to see herself as separate from her family. By enabling the beginning of a detachment from the traditional family structure, romance helps young women gain their independence” (*Learning* 74). Later, meeting Julian enables Lena to move on from her heartbreak, and his treatment by those in authority serves to fuel her resolve to dedicate herself to life in the resistance. Additionally, the physical nature of Lena’s relationships with both young men is significant in marking her passage from child to woman. Trites has averred that “sexual potency is a common metaphor for empowerment in adolescent literature, so ... for many characters in YA novels, experiencing sexuality marks a rite of passage that helps them define themselves as having left childhood behind” (*Disturbing* 84). Lena is never explicitly said to have had sexual intercourse with Julian, and appears to have ventured merely as far as exploring Alex’s body while allowing him to touch her breasts. This level of sexual contact marks the end of Lena’s childhood – one in which she had rarely spoken to boys and had no physical contact with them.

Rather than marking her as the traditional helpless female of many romance novels, Lena’s romantic relationships instead indicate the development of her consciousness and potential as a powerful feminist character. Although Alex initially influences her choice to turn her back on the disciplinary society in which she has been raised, she learns to adapt to
life in the Wilds quite quickly, and within six months has progressed to being an undercover spy for the resistance. Elements of the bildungsroman abound here, with the novels charting Lena’s development from an obedient, nervous child to a strong, confident woman who uses any means necessary, including physical force, to fight the regime. She acknowledges this change herself, repeatedly stating that “the old Lena is dead” (Pandemonium 3). As Jean Luc Nancy has suggested in Shattered Love, his essay deconstructing love’s dialectical reputation, falling in love results in a liberating shattering of the self, with the subject incapable of remaining who they were previously:

I do not return from [love], and consequently something of I is definitely lost or dissociated in its act of loving… I return broken: I come back to myself, or I come out of it, broken. The “return” does not annul the break; it neither repairs it nor sublates it, for the return in fact takes place across the break itself, keeping it open. Love represents I to itself broken. (Nancy 111)

Undoubtedly, Lena’s romantic relationships play a significant part in her development. However, when alone (following Alex’s “death”) or in control (taking the dominant role with Julian) she really asserts herself as a strong woman capable of fighting the regime.

It appears, then, that Lena qualifies as a feminist protagonist, according to Trites’ definition:

No longer the passive “good girl” who grows into a prescribed and circumscribed social role, the feminist protagonist learns to recognise and appreciate the power of her own voice. Her awakening is not bestowed on her by a male awakener; instead, she wakes herself and discovers herself to be a strong, independent and articulate person. Thus, while in prefeminist novels the protagonist tends to become Sleeping Beauty in a movement from active to passive, from vocal to silent, the feminist protagonist remains active and celebrates her agency and her voice. (Waking 7-8)

Having been timid throughout her childhood, afraid to argue or be noticed, Lena develops into an active character who has found and is comfortable with her voice. This chance to claim her agency is afforded to her by the dystopian nature of the text: while traditional romance
novels tend to portray women in passive positions, the challenges posed by the very conditions of the dystopia here provide a setting for the female protagonist to overcome the traditional submissive subject position and assert herself. According to Trites:

The feminist character’s recognition of her agency and her voice invariably leads to some sort of transcendence, usually taking the form of a triumph over whatever system or structure was oppressing her – the character defeats some force of evil (sometimes magical, sometimes not), or she succeeds at a typically male task, or she comes to believe in herself despite the doubts of those around her. (Waking 7)

In this case, the transcendence occurs when Lena plays her part in the revolt against the dystopia which has destroyed the lives of so many of her friends and family, literally breaking down the walls that separate Portland from the Wilds. Such actions serve to show the extent to which Lena has developed throughout the novels, typical of the bildungsroman and characteristic of the political action often depicted in dystopian texts. Indeed, referring to the young adult dystopias of Monica Hughes and Lois Lowry, Carrie Hintz has noted that “the major quality” of YA utopias, both positive and negative, is “their advancement of a particular type of utopian pedagogy: one in which political action is addressed within the developmental narrative of adolescence” (254). Like Collins and Westerfeld before her, this impetus to act is precisely what Oliver is attempting to evoke with the Delirium trilogy.

As we have seen, the protagonists of The Hunger Games and Uglies are prevented from having to actively disband their love-triangles: Katniss is left with Peeta by default, while Zane dies, closing Tally’s love triangle. However, in Oliver’s series, she and the two boys are left standing at the end of the final novel. Although Lena appears initially to be reuniting with Alex, who tells her: “I won’t let you go again” (Requiem 389), she later explains that although she loves him, “it’s more complicated than that” (Requiem 388). When she sees Julian, it becomes clear that she has not chosen either of them definitively:
I see Julian, too. He is shirtless, sweating, balancing on a heap of rubble, working the butt of a rifle against the wall, so that it splinters and sends a fine spray of white dust onto the people beneath him. The sun makes his hair blaze like a ring of pale fire, touches his shoulders with white wings.

For a second, I feel a sense of overwhelming grief: for how things change, for the fact that we can never go back. I’m not certain of anything anymore. I don’t know what will happen – to me, to Alex and to Julian, to any of us. (Requiem 390)

Despite loving both Alex and Julian, Lena appears ultimately to understand that she does not need either of them. Following this contemplation, her thoughts return to the revolutionary scene in front of her, and the future that lies ahead. The priority now is rebuilding Portland and extending the revolution. By reinstating political action as the protagonists’ central focus, Oliver ensures that Lena’s potential is retained. While the strength of characters such as Katniss (and as will later be examined, the protagonist of Veronica Roth’s Divergent) is stymied by their stultifying conclusions, Lena’s outcome supplies a more empowering message. The Delirium trilogy’s conclusion is an outward looking one, and we are reminded that although the temptation may be to focus on our microcosm, if we are to have the freedom to do so, we must first attend to the ills in the macroworld.

It must be acknowledged that this open ending (open both in relation to Lena’s personal life and the wider world of the text) is somewhat characteristic of the children’s and young adult dystopia, which regularly concludes with ambiguity. In “Presenting the Case for Social Change: The Creative Dilemma of Dystopian Writing for Children,” Kay Sambell describes many children’s and YA dystopias as ending with “an almost dancelike structure of progression and regression, oscillating extravagantly between signs of hope and fear for the protagonists’ future” ("Presenting" 170). While the classical adult dystopia generally communicates its call to action through bleak, closed endings, the YA dystopia in many cases leads its reader directly to the idea of resistance and revolution. Doing so provides reassurance that safety is achievable, “that benign forces can and do exist” (Sambell
"Presenting" 169), and that things will work out in the end. In the case of the Delirium series, which conflates elements of the romance genre with those of the YA dystopia, the combination of the two ensures that adolescents are reminded that freedom may be, as Hintz has noted, simultaneously “a political issue (should we allow ourselves to be brainwashed ... into a perfectly efficient society?) and a negotiation between adolescents and their families or friends” (263). She suggests that YA authors address such themes presumably “to help adolescent readers cope with difficult political and social ideas within a context they can understand: their own narrative of development” (Hintz 263). Certainly, Oliver has used this fusion of genres to do just that. As we have seen, issues surrounding power and the body often play a significant role in creating such narratives, and in an attempt to examine how they are explored in Oliver’s trilogy, the following section will focus on the culture of perfection as a controlling force in Lena’s society.

3.2 Cultivating Compliance: Discipline and the Pursuit of Perfection

Carrie Hintz has identified elements such as “a rigorously planned society, charismatic leaders or masterminds, control of reproductive freedom, and the prioritization of collective well-being over the fate of the individual” as common features of the Young Adult dystopia (254). All of these elements are present in the Delirium trilogy. Here, they combine to bolster a disciplinary society which has created a culture of perfection to keep its citizens under control. In a manner reminiscent of The Hunger Games, children are taught in school of the “dark days” (the precise term used by Collins in her text also) before the current regime (Delirium 3). They are indoctrinated to believe that love is “deadly” (Delirium 2), and that the operation which will prevent them from falling in love with someone – or indeed, for having feelings of love of any kind – is necessary for the protection of society. Accordingly,
the majority of people succumb willingly to the power that is exercised over them at a multitude of levels and in various ways, accepting that if they are to be kept safe, love must be eschewed and a perfect society striven for. Tools such as propaganda and censorship, the restriction of discourse, the operation to “cure” the disease, eugenic practices, gender inequality, and intense security ensure that the people are moulded into “perfect” citizens. Those who fail to comply face dire consequences.

Throughout the trilogy, Oliver uses epigraphs and direct reflections from characters to introduce the reader to The Book of Shhh. The book’s official title is The Safety, Health, and Happiness Handbook (Delirium 3), and it is one of many forms of propaganda used to manipulate citizens. The Book of Shhh functions as a bible, containing proverbs and other recognisable elements, including revised versions of Genesis and the Story of Solomon. Chapters are given ominously normative titles, such as “Fundamentals of Society” (Delirium 10), and “The Role and Purpose of Society” (Delirium 353). Designed to brainwash people into submission, the book contains pronouncements including: ‘Human beings, in their natural state, are unpredictable, erratic, and unhappy. It is only once their animal instincts are controlled that they can be responsible, dependable, and content” (Delirium 192), and “Humans, unregulated, are cruel and capricious; violent and selfish; miserable and quarrelsome. It is only after their instincts and basic emotions have been controlled that they can be happy, generous and good” (Delirium 317). The repeated use of the word “controlled” leaves the reader in no doubt that this is a society intent upon regulating its populace and making them slaves to the current social structures. Proverbs include “Happy are they who have a place; wise are they who follow the path; blessed are they who obey the word” (Pandemonium 297), while the message regarding disobedience is that those who engage in it will go to hell “to live in squalor and chaos” (Pandemonium 223).
The pursuit of perfection has long been associated with religion. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold suggests that perfection must be pursued in order to “make reason and the will of God” flourish (45). Arnold correlates the aims of religion with that of culture, both of which he states ultimately seek to ascertain “what perfection is and to make it prevail” (47). Reminiscent of the disciplinary society’s aim of producing high-functioning bodies, Arnold claims that culture aims to foster the improvement of all elements of human nature, with religion playing an important role in the process (48). However, he notes the complex relationship between individualism and perfection:

> The idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family is at variance with our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual’s personality, our maxim of ‘every man for himself’. Above all the idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature is at variance with our want of flexibility… (Arnold 49)

The pursuit of perfection and its associated religious implications are therefore served best by discouraging individualism and fostering community. In Lena’s society, citizens are treated as a collective, subjected to the same rigorous divisions of time and space and provided with minimal choice. *The Book of Shhh* is consistently invoked to remind them that their lack of freedom and subjectivity is for their protection; thus, the majority are easily indoctrinated. The degree of reverence conferred upon the book is clear from Lena’s shock when Alex admits to having burned his copy. However, upon escaping Portland and visiting the Wilds, Lena comes to recognise the fallacies to which she has been subjected:

> We are such small, stupid things. For most of my life I thought of nature as the stupid thing: blind, animal, destructive. We, the humans, were clean and smart and in control; we had wrestled the rest of the world into submission, battered it down, pinned it to a glass slide and the pages of *The Book of Shhh*. (*Pandemonium* 60)

Yet few are lucky enough to come to such realisations; the majority accept that “The tools of a healthy society are obedience, commitment and agreement” (*Pandemonium* 161). Long
utilised as a tool in literary dystopias, including Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, such propaganda ensures that knowledge is tightly controlled – a necessary condition for the exertion of disciplinary power and the maintenance of “perfection”.

In addition to *The Book of Shhh*, Lena and her contemporaries are subject to other forms of brainwashing. Religious indoctrination is instituted by the “New Religion of the Holy Trinity of God, Science and Order,” whose priests and scientists preach that “at our heart, at our base, we are no better than animals” and must be regulated for the good of society (*Pandemonium* 100). Nursery rhymes warn of the dangers of consorting with “invalids,” the uncured who live undercover or in the Wilds (*Requiem* 83). Even stories such as Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Tell-Tale Heart* are appropriated in schools to frighten children about the dangers of civil disobedience (*Delirium* 105). Additionally, Lena imparts matter-of-factly that “the intranet, like everything else in the United States, is controlled and monitored for our protection…All the content is written by government agencies” (*Delirium* 92).

Unsurprisingly, this propaganda is accompanied by strict censorship. Media content is limited to the “List of Authorized Entertainment” (*Delirium* 92), which contains a limited selection of approved items. Music must be “prim and harmonious and structured” (*Delirium* 111), recalling Plato’s concern in *The Republic* that “The introduction of novel fashions in music is a thing to beware of as endangering the whole fabric of society, whose most important conventions are unsettled by any revolutions in that quarter” (qtd. in Cornford 115). Attempting to contravene these rules is perceived to be a dangerous pursuit, and Lena warns her friend Hana that “people have been arrested for less” (*Delirium* 96). Don Latham posits that, “in such societies, everyone is a potential transgressor, for it is nearly impossible not to transgress against some rule” (178). Certainly restrictions here are so tight that it appears difficult to remain consistently obedient. In addition to censorship of media, there are rules regarding those “limits and forms of the sayable” (Foucault "Politics" 59), which I have
discussed in relation to *The Hunger Games* trilogy. As the *Delirium* series begins, the existence of the Wilds has never been acknowledged by the government, and people pretend to be unaware of its existence. Although the Invalids break into Portland each year and stage protests, such actions are explained in implausible, yet accepted, ways. Lena notes that, “as long as no one mentions the Invalids, everyone’s happy” (*Delirium* 39). Acknowledging the existence of dissenters would rupture the illusion of perfection.

Supplementary to censorship and propaganda, Lena’s society uses more overt methods to maintain standards of perfection. Prior to turning eighteen, teenagers must take an “evaluation,” the ostensible purpose of which is to aid in the “pairing” of couples. Teenagers are assessed and ranked based on their performance. They are then provided with a list of potential matches, generated according to ranking, compatibility, looks, and social status. While they are afforded the opportunity to rate their matches in order of preference, the element of choice here is merely an illusion: the final decision is made for them. The evaluation is characterised simply as a useful tool for matching couples. However, it also secures the successful combination of “the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgement,” establishing over individuals “a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault *Discipline* 184). The process fulfils Foucault’s description of the disciplinary examination, being a “highly ritualized” mechanism of discipline which collects information about a subject, establishes “truths” about them, and identifies way in which these “truths” can be used to make them more useful (*Discipline* 184). In general, disciplinary power strives to remain largely invisible, and operates by making citizens highly visible instead, reminding them that they are being objectified and judged. Having developed a ritual whereby teenage girls and boys are tested in front of a panel of evaluators and expected to answer questions while dressed in a semi-translucent gown, Lena’s society has come to pretend that this is a practice employed for the citizen’s own happiness,
rather than an explicit exercise of dominant power. In so doing, it ensures that each citizen who comes of age is subject to this reminder that they are being monitored. Lena notes prior to her evaluation that, “sometimes it seems the whole process is designed to be as intimidating and confusing as possible” (Delirium 24). Despite her tendency to be docile, we witness the initial signs of the protagonist’s desire to resist these regulatory controls during her first evaluation, where she finds herself deviating from the “correct” answers and beginning to tell the truth. On this occasion, her evaluation is interrupted by an Invalid protest, and Lena succeeds in providing the approved answers during her second attempt. Nevertheless, it is clear that, underneath the façade, she objects to the constraints that surround her.

Following evaluation, each citizen is matched with their “perfect” partner and deemed ready to be operated upon. The history of the operation is chequered, as an extract from “A Brief History of The United States of America” illustrates:

Before the cure was perfected, it was offered on a trial basis only. The risks attached to it were great. At the time one out of every hundred patients suffered a fatal loss of brain function after the procedure.

Nonetheless, people swarmed the hospitals in record number, demanding to be cured; they camped outside the laboratories for days at a time, hoping to secure a procedural slot.

These years are also known as the Miracle Years because of the quantity of lives that were healed and made whole, and the number of souls brought out of sickness.

And if there were people who died on the operating table, they died for a good cause, and no one can lament them ... (Delirium 177)

Nevertheless, people are anxious to undergo the procedure, accepting that amor deliria nervosa is “the deadliest of all deadly things” to be avoided at all costs (Delirium 48). The creation of a culture of fear surrounding love ensures that most people submit willingly to this method of control, and if they do not, they are forced to do so. The cure promises “a road and a path for everybody” (Requiem 86), but fails to acknowledge that at best, this path will be
determined without the input of the subject, and at worst, will be imprisonment or execution for failing to comply. Those who resist or are immune to the operation must be made invisible, as their presence disrupts the veneer of perfection and may encourage others to recognise the lies upon which the state is founded.

Dissenters are not the only ones who must be concealed in the name of perfection. Lena and Julian are rescued by two strangers, the rat-man and Coin, following their escape from the Scavengers. Coin, like many of the others whom they encounter during their recovery underground, has a birth defect – a distorted skull. Lena is shocked at her appearance, and realises that:

I’ve only seen a few defectives in my life, and all of them were in textbooks. In school we were always taught that kids born from the uncured would end up like this, crippled and mangled in some way. The priests told us this was the deliria manifesting in their bodies ... All these people, born crippled or bent or misshapen, have been driven underground. I wonder what would have happened to them as babies, as children, if they had stayed aboveground. I remember, then, what Raven told me about finding Blue. You know what they say about deliria babies ... She would probably be taken and killed. She wouldn’t even be buried ... She’d be burned, and packed up with the waste. (Pandemonium 236, original emphasis)

Effectively, Lena’s society is practising a form of eugenics in their attempt to create a façade of perfection. Nicholas Rose has explained that, with the evolution of disciplinarity, “medical jurisdiction extended beyond accidents, illness and disease, to the management of chronic illness and death, the administration of reproduction, the assessment of government of ‘risk’, and the maintenance and optimization of the healthy body” (10). In this future United States, medical jurisdiction has indeed begun to infiltrate in more expansive and sinister ways. “Defective” and disabled infants, if caught aboveground, are murdered. Conversely, healthy young men and women are assigned a quota of babies to produce. As Lena begins to realise, the prevailing attitude is that “for a society to be healthy, not a single one of its members can be sick ... The dangerous are not just the uncured: they are also the different, the deformed,
the abnormal” (Pandemonium 241). Reproduction of the privileged is considered so important that, although divorce is “practically illegal,” one criterion whereby a man can divorce his wife is if she is “biologically defective” (Requiem 109-10). It is not clear, however, whether it is possible for a wife to initiate divorce proceedings if it is her husband who is infertile.

Although the above allusion to gender may not appear particularly significant for everyday life in Portland, the contrary is gradually revealed to be true. From infancy, boys and girls are segregated (what Oliver fails to explain, however, is how this rule operates in families where there are children of opposite sexes). Uncured citizens are only permitted to have contact with cured members of the opposite sex, with the exception of their designated pair, whom they may meet with if chaperoned. Most teenagers have internalised and now contribute to the policing of this policy. Indeed, Lena feels deeply uncomfortable when she first goes to live in the Wilds and sees young men and women mixing freely.

When the sexes reunite in adulthood it becomes clear that they have not been raised to be entirely equal. For example, Lena notes that it is unusual to see female doctors, as “many intelligent women are expected to spend their time fulfilling their procreative and child-rearing duties instead” (Pandemonium 309). Additionally, misogynistic attitudes are attributed to many men in power. Hana’s partner Fred, the mayor of Portland, even suggests that she shouldn’t complain about feeling sick as it might make him think he had “gotten a defective” match (Requiem 39). As Corones and Hardy point out in their discussion of the gendered contexts in which surveillance is conducted, “this livestock view of women’s worth is not only debasing, but also places men in charge of women, their compliance and manageability assured by their material nature” (393). While both men and women are subjected to disciplinarity, Hana is expected to feel especially grateful to have been granted a life with Fred. However, she describes their wedding – somewhat cynically perhaps – as
“Perfect dress. Perfect match. A perfect lifetime of happiness” (Requiem 13). As mayor, Fred is more concerned with maintaining perfect standards and appearances than most, and as Hana’s relationship with him unfolds, we learn that this attitude has been to his previous wife’s Cassie’s detriment. With Fred unwilling to explain why he is no longer married to Cassie, Hana sneaks into his study to look for answers. There, she finds a letter apparently from Cassie’s physician, which states that “Mrs. Hargrove suffers acute delusions provoked by an entrenched mental instability; she is fixated on the Bluebeard myth and relates the story to her fears of persecution; she is profoundly neurotic and unlikely, in my opinion, to improve” (Requiem 230).

The Bluebeard tale is one that has begun to reappear in YA fiction in recent years. Lauren de Stefano’s Chemical Garden Trilogy (2011-2013) invokes strong references to Charles Perrault’s tale, with her heroine Rhine being forced to marry a kidnapper who captures a number of women, murdering the others before settling on three. Rhine’s new father-in-law has orchestrated her capture and is the true Bluebeard figure in this series. Sarah Cross’s 2012 contemporary fairy tale Kill Me Softly features a Sleeping Beauty character who finds herself at the hands of a modern day Bluebeard. Additionally, Jane Nickerson’s 2013 book Strands of Bronze and Gold is a retelling of the myth in the guise of a historical novel. Having been appropriated for a feminist revision by Angela Carter in her 1979 story “The Bloody Chamber,” the reappearance of the Bluebeard tale in these YA texts is perhaps due to its potential to explore through allegory issues of power and misogyny. In general, YA novels are greatly concerned with power, for as Roberta Seelinger Trites has noted, “without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow. Thus, power is even more fundamental to adolescent literature than growth” (Disturbing x). Many dystopian texts – which are especially concerned with power, perhaps even more explicitly than YA novels of other genres – also include world visions where
gender inequality is present. *Bluebeard* provides a blueprint for tales addressing such themes. As Maggie Kilgour puts it, it “enables us to see that the home is a prison, in which the helpless female is at the mercy of ominous patriarchal authorities” (9).

While Hana initially accepts the version of events outlined in the letter, Fred’s behaviour becomes increasingly abusive, both physically and mentally. Despite her awareness that their marriage has been “tabulated and coordinated – made to work beautifully, engineered for efficiency and perfection” (*Requiem* 245), all is far from perfect in their relationship. Hana’s fears are intensified on her next visit to Fred’s study:

> My eyes land on the single painting in the room: the man, the hunter, and the butchered carcasses ...
>
> There’s something wrong with the hunter – he’s dressed too well, in an old fashioned suit and polished boots. Unconsciously, I take two steps closer, horrified and unable to look away. The animals strung from meat hooks aren’t animals at all.
> They’re women.
> Corpses, human corpses, strung from the ceiling and piled on the marble floor.
> Next to the artist’s signature is a small, painted note: *The Myth of Bluebeard, or, The Dangers of Disobedience.* (*Requiem* 312)

Oliver’s inclusion of the *Bluebeard* allegory reinforces the emphasis placed on obedience and eschewing curiosity in this society (with the painting’s alternate title, “The Dangers of Disobedience” providing an unambiguous reference to this fact). Additionally, it exhibits Fred’s misogynistic tendencies, and indeed those of the society at large. Fred’s misogyny, however, has extended to the extreme of poisoning his wife and having her banished for life to the Crypts for discovering his illegal activities. It is the discovery of this information that makes Hana understand the *Bluebeard* reference, as she thinks “Bluebeard kept a locked room, a secret space where he stashed his wives ... Locked doors, heavy bolts, women rotting in stone prisons ... ” (*Requiem* 256). Fred is not just a misogynist, but a megalomaniac determined that there should be consequences for disrupting the image of perfection that he
strives to convey. Nevertheless, Hana succeeds in staging the ultimate act of resistance by convincing Fred to stay in their house knowing that the invalids have planted a bomb in it, leaving him to be obliterated by the Invalids.

Unlike Lena and the uncured Hana, most people are led to believe that they have a sufficient degree of freedom in this society. However, they lack agency in all key areas of bodily control. In addition to being assigned a number of children to produce, couples must apply for permission to move house, and as we have seen, people are not free to choose their life partner – a fact which Lena initially seems to forget when she tells Hana that “they do give us a choice,” only to be reminded that it’s “a limited choice ... we get to choose from the people who have been chosen for us” (*Delirium* 19). As Amy L. Montz has observed, in Lena’s society, “By making the choices limited, the government controls the populace even more so than it would have controlled it without any choice at all; the populace thus thinks it is in control of itself” (109). Distracted by such “choices,” people fail to object to the level of surveillance they are subjected to. “Regulators” – a force made up of both government employees and citizen volunteers – patrol the streets, monitoring people’s behaviour. They watch for “uncureds breaking curfew, checking the streets and (if curtains are open) houses for unapproved activity, like two uncureds touching each other, or walking together ...” (*Delirium* 171). Additionally, they perform raids where they “come inside your house, tear the walls down and look for signs of suspicious activity” (*Delirium* 181). Montz suggests that this surveillance may actually be somewhat welcome, with the society standing *in loco parentis* for the adults that cannot love their children and are largely disinterested as result (110). Regardless of the state’s parental function, the regulators’ most significant function is ensuring that people are frightened into engaging in self-surveillance. As Majid Yar explains, in such societies:
The functioning of panoptic power rests in its essence not upon visibility (the fact that the subject is visible to the eye that observes), but upon the visibility of visibility i.e. that conscious registration of being observed on the part of the subject (seeing and recognizing that he is being seen) is what induces in the subject the disciplining of his own conduct. (Yar 261)

In addition to being physically monitored by the regulators, citizens’ phones are bugged, and they must carry I.D. which may be randomly checked against the city’s secure validation system. Used to constant monitoring, people become complicit in this web of governmentality. Lena describes the surveillance practices as leading to “the normal feeling of being observed in school and on the street and even at home, having to be cautious about what you do and say, the close, blocked-in feeling that everyone gets used to eventually” (Delirium 53). She and others have internalised the culture of surveillance that surrounds them, and the results appear to lead to a “perfect” society, with very little crime or disorder. As the citizens are taught, “irregularity must be regulated; dirt must be cleansed; the laws of physics teach us that systems tend increasingly toward chaos, and so chaos must be constantly pushed back” (Pandemonium 242).

Evidently, this is a society where overt and covert forms of power are utilised to control the population and create the false image of perfection. Propaganda and censorship combine to subtly convince citizens that the philosophy and the ensuing policies which have evolved from the medicalisation of love are for their own protection. Meanwhile, the restriction of discourse around apparently imperfect topics of conversation is strictly limited. The operation physically alters people’s brains: they are first evaluated for what they are, and then transformed into what they should be according to the prevailing mores. Imperfect people, who do not or cannot meet these standards, are excluded from society at best and executed at worst. Those that are permitted to take part in society are subjected to segregation, gender inequality, and a lifetime of surveillance, both external and self-imposed.
All of this is done in the name of perfection, for as a post-op Hana explains, “perfection is a promise, and a reassurance that we are not wrong” (Requiem 13). In order to more clearly understand what being wrong entails, where these philosophies developed, and what their effects are on people physically, mentally and emotionally, it will be necessary to next turn to amor deliria nervosa itself.

3.3 The Deadliest of All Deadly Things: Amor Deliria Nervosa and Relations of Power

Evidently, the citizens in Oliver’s trilogy find themselves succumbing to the will of varied agents of power, and they do so largely because of the culture of fear surrounding love in their society. Through indoctrination, the stigmatisation of emotion, expectations around pairing and reproduction, the outlawing of homosexuality, the procedure itself and the accompanying regulation of sexual desire, citizens are restricted at every turn, and each of these restrictions relates to amor deliria nervosa.

To successfully convince people that love is a destructive force, Lena and her contemporaries have been indoctrinated by several agents, including their parents, religious institutions (which purport that only the deliria-free will go to heaven), the authorities, and even their schoolteachers (Requiem 144). At Delirium’s opening, Lena earnestly explains how in the old days – the days in which the implied contemporaneous reader is living – people weren’t so enlightened:

Things weren’t always as good as they are now. In school we learned that in the old days, the dark days, people didn’t realize how deadly a disease love was. For a long time they even viewed it as a good thing, something to be celebrated and pursued ... Instead people back then named other diseases – stress, heart disease, anxiety, depression, hypertension, insomnia, bipolar disorder – never realizing that these were, in fact, only symptoms that in the majority of cases could be traced back to the effects of amor deliria nervosa. (Delirium 3)
Clearly, Lena is entirely convinced of this story, as are the majority of her peers. In addition to information which is imparted to them at school and by family, messages regarding the dangers of love and the necessity of the procedure pervade every aspect of their lives from infancy. The extent of this indoctrination is apparent when Hana finds Grace, Lena’s six year old cousin, playing alone in a neighbourhood populated with families shamed by connections with dissenters. Hana narrates alternate chapters in the final novel in the series, having featured in the first as Lena’s best friend. As Koss and Teale have shown, split narration is a recurring narrative device in many contemporary YA texts (568). It also features in instalments of Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* series and Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy. In this case, it provides the reader with an insight regarding what is happening in Portland while Lena is in the Wilds, and also illustrates life inside the mind of a “cured” through Hana. Here, Hana’s encounter with Grace illustrates what has become of Lena’s family in her absence, and the true extent of the pervasive anti-deliria culture in the town:

She is holding a filthy doll in one hand and a stick in the other. Its end is whittled to a point. The doll has hair made of matted yellow yarn, and eyes of black buttons, although only one of them is still attached to its face. Its mouth is no more than a stitch of red yarn, also unravelling.

“I met a vampire, a rotten old wreck ... ”

I close my eyes as the rest of the lines from the rhyme come back to me.

*Mama, Mama, put me to bed*

*I won’t make it home, I’m already half dead*

*I met an Invalid, and fell for his art*

*He showed me his smile, and went straight for my heart (Requiem 83)*

Not only is Grace schooled in the dangers of consorting with Invalids, it appears that the importance of the operation itself is deeply ingrained:

Now she takes the stick and begins working it against the doll’s neck, as though making a procedural scar. “Safety, Health and Happiness spells *Shh,*” she singsongs.
Her voice is pitched higher now, a lullaby coo. “Shh. Be a good girl. This won’t hurt at all, I promise.”

I can’t watch anymore. She’s jabbing at the doll’s flexible neck, making its head shudder in response as though it is nodding yes. (Requiem 84)

Grace has suffered great losses: her parents and Lena have abandoned her for romantic relationships. Accordingly, despite having helped Lena to escape with Alex, she is likely to have little difficulty believing in the dangers of *amor deliria nervosa*.

While Grace is only a small child, Lena, at almost eighteen years of age, still finds it difficult to escape her own indoctrination. Even upon running away to the Wilds, her old beliefs are difficult to discard. Although she has been conducting a covert relationship with Alex at home, she finds it difficult adjusting to a world where boys and girls are not segregated:

I don’t like to think of all those male strangers, just on the other side of the stone wall, with their baritone voices and their snorts of laughter. Before I met Alex, I lived almost eighteen years believing fully in the system, believing 100 percent that love was a disease, that we must protect ourselves, that girls and boys must stay rigorously separate to avoid contagion. Looks, glances, touches, hugs – all of it carried the risk of contamination. And even though being with Alex changed me, you don’t shake loose the fear all at once. You can’t. (Pandemonium 15)

This passage shows that Lena’s relationship with Alex has been the turning point in her transformed perception of her society. She previously accepted without question the need for outlawing love, but meeting Alex has entirely altered Lena’s thoughts on the matter. This is a regular pattern in contemporary YA dystopias. For example, Ann M. M. Childs notes of *Uglies* that “Tally doesn’t rebel in earnest until a love interest is dangled before her” (192). Additionally, as will become evident in Chapter Five, the protagonist of Condie’s *Matched* is alerted to the possibility of resistance through an encounter with romance. As Sara K. Day confirms, “frequently, the young women depicted in such dystopian novels first encounter and learn about the possibilities of social rebellion through their relationships with young men.”
who have already established their rebellious paths” (190). In these texts, love is used as a device to shake the young women from their indoctrination. Clearly conducive to a conventional dystopian plot progression, the protagonist imparts information which alerts the reader to the true horror of the world vision depicted. Thus, the invocation of male characters in this manner is not an entirely positive one; framing the protagonists’ enlightenment in such terms reduces them from active, self-determinate women to passive followers who rely upon men to provide a traditional fairy-tale style awakening. Tally, Lena and Cassia share the common unflattering trait of having little understanding or interest in the true state of their society until their prince charming requires them to do so. Additionally, in both Tally and Lena’s cases, their best female friend is the first person to alert them to the problems in their society and the need for resistance, but neither of the girls is convinced until their male love interest reiterates these concerns.

Nevertheless, Lena’s initial difficulty in reframing her thinking is perhaps understandable, as she has been taught her entire life that she must fear love and all associated behaviours. The penalties for transgressing in any way are stringent. Being a member of the resistance or flaunting their deliria can lead to someone being locked in the town Crypts or executed. Even the penalties for teenagers transgressing the rules by consorting with the opposite sex are extreme, as Lena illustrates:

I think of the raids last summer: when the regulators in their stiff uniforms stormed an illegal party, swinging baseball bats and police batons, letting loose the foaming, snapping bull mastiffs on the crowd. I think of the swinging arc of blood on a wall; the sounds of skulls cracking underneath heavy wood.  (*Pandemonium* 83-84)

Yet these penalties are not enough to deter everyone, and so the culture of fear must focus primarily upon making people believe that the outlawing of love is for their benefit. *The Book of Shhh* details the symptoms of *amor deliria nervosa*. These include “reduced mental awareness,” “paranoia” and “insecurity,” “difficulty breathing,” “emotional or physical
paralysis” and ultimately, “death” (*Pandemonium* 132-33). Such scaremongering ensures that the majority of people become the bearers of the power structure which surrounds them, with Lena checking regularly to make sure that she does not display any of the signs. Similarly, when forced to share a cell with Lena, Julian focuses on maintaining the “Protective Three: Distance, Detachment, Dispassion” as he is afraid of the consequences of being alone with an uncured female (*Pandemonium* 117).

The extent to which people in this society must hide their feelings for fear of being deemed irregular is evident from Lena’s development throughout the series. We are told that she “hasn’t cried in years,” and is especially guarded around her Aunt Carol, because “after the few tantrums I threw as a child, I hated the way she looked at me sideways for days, as though analysing me, measuring me. I knew she was thinking, *Just like her mother*” (*Delirium* 124). Similarly, Julian appears intent upon constructing an acceptable identity performance, despite what he is truly feeling:

“I don’t like that smell’, Julian says quietly. If he were less well trained, and less careful, he would say *hate*. But he can’t say it; it is too close to passion, and passion is too close to love, and love is *amor deliria nervosa*, the deadliest of all deadly things: it is the reason for the games of pretend, for the secret selves, for the spasms in the throat. (*Pandemonium* 237)

Displaying passion of any kind is deemed problematic here. Singing and dancing are disapproved of: Lena remembers that her uncured mother, Annabel, used to sing to her and her sister. Equally. Hana is concerned that her operation has failed when she finds herself humming. Annabel often danced with her children, and teenagers in Portland regularly attempt to engage in resistance by holding secret parties with unapproved music. The idea that engaging in such activities may not be conducive to maintaining disciplinary control is perhaps based in some truth. In their study “The Moderating Effect of Passion on the Relation Between Activity Engagement and Positive Effect,” Mageau and Vallerand have
shown that people with a passion “have more difficulties putting their passion aside to invest themselves in other activities” (312). Possibly this is one of the reasons why activities such as singing and dancing are frowned upon or even outlawed here: a body and mind preoccupied by passion is unlikely to exhibit the qualities of docility and utility needed to ensure that the disciplinary society can flourish. By medicalising love, Lena’s world has succeeded in controlling citizens’ display of their emotions and driving innocuous hobbies underground, as people fear more than anything being accused of having the disease.

In another attempt to discourage the development of *amor deliria nervosa*, young men and women are entered into arranged marriages. Matter of factly, Lena explains: “It’s the way things are. ‘Marriage is Order and Stability, the mark of a Healthy society’” (*Delirium* 10). People’s lives are mapped out prior to their operation, and regardless of whether they desire another, they will be married to their “ideal match” with no expectation of true affection. Following her evaluation, Lena learns that:

I’ll be spending the rest of my life with Brian Scharff, whose hobbies are ‘watching the news’ and ‘fantasy baseball,’ and who plans to work ‘in the electricians’ guild,’ and who can ‘someday expect to make $45,000,’ a salary that ‘should support two to three kids’. I’ll be pledged to him before I begin Regional College of Portland in the fall. When I graduate we’ll be married. (*Delirium* 163)

Evidently, youths are generally pragmatic about the pairing process, accepting that it is preferable to allowing citizens to choose their own mates. Steven, with whom Hana was developing a relationship before the cure, dispassionately tells her after his procedure that his wife-to-be Celia is “not the prettiest girl, but she’s decent. And her dad’s chief of the Regulatory Office, so we’ll be all set up” (*Delirium* 105). Yet as evidenced by Hana and Fred’s pairing, matching people according to the rehearsed answers they give in their evaluations does not always lead to harmonious relationships. Nevertheless, people are expected to remain married and not speak about any dissatisfaction. As Hana describes, at
her wedding, “When Fred takes my hands in his and lays them on top of The Book of Shhh, a small sigh travels the room, an exhalation of relief. This is what we are made for: promises, pledges, and sworn oaths of obedience” (Requiem 338). She understands that obedience is the goal; replacing love with these artificial structures is one means through which that goal will be reached. Such is the weight of expectation on marriage, and in particular the marriages of “important” people like Fred and his bride, that the National News Service requests to film their wedding. Paparazzi sit outside their house, waiting for pictures of the “happy” couple to perpetuate the myth that arranged marriage is the key to happiness.

Once married, people must stay together for life unless one of the pair is suspected of being a sympathizer, or unless the female is found to be “defective” (Delirium 109). Infertility is unacceptable, as all women must bear children. This reproductive pressure is illustrated by Lena’s thoughts that “The truth is, I don’t like very many children except for Gracie. They’re so bumpy and loud all the time, and they’re always grabbing things and dribbling and wetting themselves. But I know I’ll have to have children of my own someday” (Delirium 15). Like all women in Lena’s society, she is “victimized by the institutionalized power to deny her the control of her own body” (Barr 175), and aware from childhood that she will not have the freedom to make her own reproductive choices.

Such structures of compulsory heterosexuality are supported in this society by an innate homophobia. There is no room for homosexuals here: perhaps because they cannot produce offspring, or because they are considered to be another example of irregularity (Pandemonium 242). Gay men and lesbians are referred to as “unnaturals,” and if unwilling to hide their sexuality they must flee to the Wilds or face persecution (Pandemonium 59). Indeed, Amy Pattee has proposed that in general the YA romance text invalidates “the experiences of gays and lesbians as it reifies and glorifies heterosexual romance” (156). Certainly, representations of non-normative forms of sexuality have in the past been rare in
YA literature, and the majority of contemporary texts continue to privilege heterosexuality. Gay and lesbian characters have begun to appear more regularly in fiction written for this audience in recent years, with pioneering authors such as David Levithan paving the way for progress in this area. However, heteronormativity still prevails, and while YA dystopian authors such as Marie Lu and Veronica Roth do include homosexual characters, they do so in relatively minor roles. Similarly, Oliver appears cognisant of the need to counter the prejudice portrayed in Portland by ensuring that, in the Wilds, Lena’s friend Hunter is in a gay relationship that is positively portrayed. Yet once again these gay characters are very much secondary and do little to challenge normative structures of sexuality. In general, diversity is lacking in many of these texts: in addition to the dearth of LGTBQ characters, homogeneity largely prevails in relation to race. While Roth and Westerfeld include pedagogic interludes on race (with Tally wondering how people could ever have fought over skin colour, and Roth using an extended metaphor relating to race discussed in Chapter Four), the default standard for beauty in the former appears to be Caucasian, and in both texts the majority of characters are white. Characters of colour do feature in all of the series here, and often in far more significant roles than the gay characters referred to above. Overall, however, they are perhaps most notable for their absence.

When Hana begins to narrate alternate chapters in Requiem, we get the opportunity to see in detail how people are affected by the procedure. Despite having appeared to be the more rebellious of the two friends, Hana chooses to stay in Portland rather than attempting to evade the operation. She no longer dreams about freedom, and even feels triumphant following the execution of Invalids, believing that “it sent a powerful message: We are not the evil ones. We are reasonable and compassionate. We stand for fairness, structure and organization” (Requiem 18-19). She has lost interest in her old hobbies and is appalled when
she meets the young man she had developed feelings for prior to her operation, thinking “I can’t believe that I risked everything – contagion, infection – on this boy” (Requiem 104).

Yet in the final novel of the trilogy, we find a Hana who, beneath the façade, is somewhat concerned that her procedure has not been completely successful. She is troubled by her regular dreams and nightmares, knowing that the majority of people do not dream after they have been cured. Similarly, she is horrified when her mother points out that she has been singing absentmindedly. Additionally, she finds herself still concerned about Lena and Grace, despite the fact that Lena is now an Invalid. Perhaps even more tellingly, Hana is unable to blindly accept what she is told by her husband and by the authorities, questioning her husband’s policies for controlling the masses, and sneaking into the Crypts to hear Cassie’s story of her marriage to Fred. As Hana is the only character who we meet both as a cured and uncured, and whose thoughts we are privy to in both states, the possibility that she is not the only one with latent rebellious inclinations must be considered. While certainly, the operation has had some effect on Hana, it is not as transformative as she had expected. Perhaps, then, it is possible that the same may be true of the rest of this docile population. They may in fact be complicit in a charade which has led to their obedience partly as a result of the operation, but also partly because of the culture of fear relating to love. Hana is clearly frightened at the prospect that her cure has not been entirely successful, and she intends to closely guard this secret. If others are experiencing the same doubts and keeping them private for fear of being “invalidated,” then it is possible that the myth surrounding the operation is just as successful at keeping the population under control as the operation itself.

In addition to affecting people’s attitudes and public behaviours, the operation controls another aspect of society which is difficult to police in the uncured: desire. Don Latham has argued that “one of the greatest challenges of maintaining social discipline is the regulation of sexual desire, for such desire is difficult to subordinate to the larger concerns of the
community” (137). In this society, as in that of Huxley’s *Brave New World*, it is love that “represents a threat to the stability of the community” (Latham 137). Contrary to the future vision depicted by Huxley, however, sexual desire is here considered to be an inextricable component of that love. Thus, “Tongue-kissing is even worse than illegal nowadays. It’s considered dirty, disgusting, a symptom of disease taken root” (*Pandemonium* 134). Lena’s sexual explorations with Alex, in addition to those in which she engages with Julian, are therefore significant acts of resistance. In each case, the desire that she feels results in a further transgression beyond what is considered acceptable by the disciplinary regime. The equation of desire and rebellion that the operation’s existence alludes to may indeed have some grounding. As Day has argued, in this and other YA dystopian texts, there is a correlation between overcoming discomfort with desire and gaining the confidence to engage in resistance (86). Through her relationship with Alex, Lena becomes increasingly cognisant of the ills which she had previously failed to recognise in her society, and is provided with greater motivation to rebel. Day notes that:

> Her belief that love and desire will be worth the pain and sacrifice they may cause inspires Lena’s decision to leave the community and live with Alex in the wilderness. She thus takes inspiration from her sexual awakening not only to escape the procedure that will leave her “immune” to love – meaning that she can continue to act upon her desires for Alex – but also to abandon her previous willingness to blindly accept the laws and lore of the community in which she was raised. (Day 86)

Like the protagonists of Westerfeld’s, Roth’s and Condie’s series, Lena’s sexual awakening corresponds to her general empowerment. Her confidence is increased and her physical perception of herself transformed by the realisation that Alex is sexually attracted to her. Day posits that “The adolescent woman’s sense of her own physical attractiveness is also necessarily linked to the experience of sexual awakening” (79), and this is certainly true of Lena. Like Tally, and like Tris in *Divergent*, Lena initially believes herself insufficiently attractive to appeal to the object of her desire. The realisation that Alex is enthralled by her is
the validation that she needs to appreciate herself. Following the first occasion on which Lena allows Alex to see her breasts, she views herself differently. She recounts how, “That night, for the first time in my life, I stand in front of the bathroom mirror and don’t see an in-between girl. For the first time, with my hair swept back and my nightgown slipping off one shoulder and my eyes glowing, I believe what Alex said. I am beautiful” (Pandemonium 233-34). Lena’s increasing confidence as a result of her relationship with Alex, is the motivation that she needs to rebel. It appears that the notion that love may be a threat to the current social is correct. By experiencing desire, Lena comes to understand the actions of “Invalids” like Annabel and Alex, and begins to adopt similar principles and actions herself. Accordingly, she concludes of the establishment that ultimately, “I’d rather die on my own terms than live on theirs” (Delirium 379).

Certainly, then, it appears that the medicalisation of love in this society is the central development which has facilitated disciplinary control and ensured that people are complicit in their own submissiveness. Having been indoctrinated by all institutions from infancy, children grow up aware that they must conceal their emotions and avoid showing passion of any kind through their actions. The compulsory pairing of teenagers, the ensuing operation and the later assignation of a specific quota of expected offspring aims to stifle people’s potential for falling in love as early as possible. In order to keep this regulated, love-free society stable, homosexuals are outlawed, and parents are either moved to treat their children dispassionately, or shamed into doing so. It is only by escaping to the Wilds – the alternative space to be discussed in the next section – that it is truly possible to be freed from these constraints.
3.4 Resisting Regulation: The Wilds and Organised Revolt

While this chapter has thus far been primarily concerned with power relations in the primary setting of the novel, in order to examine in greater detail the forms that resistance to dominant power takes, and to a lesser extent the ways in which power operates outside this setting, we must turn to the novel’s alternative space. While perhaps not an immediately obvious “eutopian enclave” of the kind that Sargent has described as characteristic of the critical dystopia ("U.S. Eutopias" 222), the Wilds is undoubtedly the primary site of resistance in this trilogy and the source of much hope. To better understand how it successfully remains so, it is necessary to examine those who aid the movement on both sides of the border. This section will also discuss the various challenges posed by the ruling regime. Subsequently, it will turn to Lena’s development in the face of such challenges. Specifically, the question of how involvement in the resistance develops her into a feminist character who understands need for free choice at all costs will be addressed.

The Wilds (or the “free zones,” as they are referred to by those who live there) are a mystery to the majority of people in Portland, and indeed the United States in general, as they lie beyond the borders that have been closed since the dark days (Pandemonium 8). Such borders are a common trope in dystopian narratives, appearing in notable texts including Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, in addition to Young Adult novels such as Marie Lu’s Legend series, Veronica Roth’s Divergent trilogy and indeed The Hunger Games. Ostensibly designed to keep the deliria out, in practice, these borders in Delirium are perhaps most effective at keeping the citizens in. From childhood people are taught to accept them as being for their own benefit:

Think of it this way: when it’s cold outside and your teeth are chattering, you bundle up in a winter coat, and scarves, and mittens, to keep from catching the flu. Well, the borders are like hats and scarves and winter coats for the whole country! They keep
Such propaganda is extremely successful. When Alex first points out to Lena that they are living in “a bordered cage,” she is stunned: “A little shock pulses through me. In all the seventeen years and eleven months of my life I have never, not once, thought of it that way” (Delirium 204). Not only have people blindly accepted such practices, they have become complicit in the pretence that there is no life beyond these borders. Officially, the Invalids (so called because their identity is “invalidated” from the secure validation system once they go beyond the borders – setting up a valid/invalid dichotomy previously utilised to slightly different effect in Andrew Niccol’s 1997 film Gattaca) do not exist, despite regular evidence to the contrary. Regardless of the government’s apparent willingness to write off those who escape, every attempt is made to prevent them from doing so, with an electric fence marking the border and the penalty if caught being certain death (Delirium 240). Thus, Lena has no knowledge of what lies beyond. It is only through her relationship with Alex (who, like Tally’s first love David in Uglies, has not had the operation and is therefore “uncured”) that she begins to find out. However, it appears that despite her conformity growing up, Lena has always had an interest in the Wilds:

‘I used to think about it a lot. The Wilds, I mean, and what they were like ... and the Invalids, whether they really existed.’ Out of the corner of my eye I think I see him flinch slightly, so I press on, ‘I used to sometimes think ... I used to pretend that maybe my mom didn’t die, you know? That maybe she’d only run away to the Wilds. Not that that would be any better. I guess I just didn’t want her to be gone for good. It was better to imagine her out there somewhere, singing ...’

‘Did you used to think about going to the Wilds when you were little? Just for fun, I mean, like a game.’

Alex squints, looks away from me, and grimaces. ‘Yeah, sure. A lot.’ He reaches out and slaps the buoys. ‘None of these. No walls to run into. No eyes. Freedom and space, places to stretch out. I still think about the Wilds.

I stare at him. Nobody uses words like that anymore: freedom, space. Old words. (Delirium 147)
Such is Lena’s belief in the system that it has not even occurred to her to think in detail about what an existence in the Wilds might mean. However, after her shock at discovering that Alex is an Invalid, she gradually comes to accept that there may be more to life than is granted by the dominant power structures in her insular world, and becomes keen to experience a trip beyond the border. In order to successfully execute this, Alex explains that it will be necessary to invoke the help of “sympathisers” – people who live within the United States but are dissatisfied with the regime and happy to help Invalids with other acts of resistance. In addition to genuine sympathisers, people whose relatives have been infected with the deliria are often accused of being sympathisers themselves. Those who are somehow proven to be so “are almost always executed” or at the very least “locked away in the Crypts to serve three life sentences, back to back” (Delirium 8). Additionally, those with more tenuous links to the dissenters are often sent to live in disgrace in Deering Highlands, a derelict estate that houses disgraced families. The threat of being accused of sympathising acts as an effective tool of discipline, as the associated shame “serves as a highly effective form of self-punishment and as such prods individuals to exercise control over themselves” (Latham 142).

This reference to “sympathisers” invokes connections to World War II and those who assisted the Jews throughout the Holocaust. This is just one of a number of associations with World War II that Oliver has included throughout the Delirium trilogy. Many of these references relate to the Wilds and the resistance – perhaps unsurprisingly, for as Raven points out to Lena about the struggle to destroy the current status quo and reintroduce love to the masses, “This is a war” (Requiem 68). Propaganda and censorship relating to alternate lifestyles are rife. For example, Lena first encounters poetry and the alternate viewpoints espoused in banned books when Alex brings her across the border to his trailer. This book
banning is reminiscent of Nazi attempts to censor information and memory in a similar fashion. As Jonathan Rose explains, “in literate societies, script and print are the primary means of preserving memory, disseminating information, inculcating ideologies, distributing wealth, and exercising power” (1), all things which the Nazis, and the prevailing regime in this society, are likely to have been attempting to eradicate. Books such as Dickens’ *Great Expectations* are banned purely because they depict a functioning society in which love is legal. Later, when Lena is living as an Invalid, she tries to read some of them in more detail. However, she finds it a distressing task, confessing that “It made my chest ache to imagine it. All that freedom, all that feeling and life ...”(*Pandemonium* 74).

Additionally, as previously acknowledged, the term “the blitz” (used most commonly to refer to Germany’s campaign of bombing on the United Kingdom during the Second World War) is employed throughout the trilogy. Here, it refers to the bombing of the Wilds fifty years previous, an attempt to eradicate all invalids living illegally outside the borders. Deliria-Free America, meanwhile, utilises similar tactics to those employed by the Nazi party to engender support and denigrate the Jews. They hold sizeable rallies where the leaders give motivational speeches regarding the need to eradicate the deliria and those who suffer from it. Indeed, the extent of excitement that the DFA creates is described by Lena, now an underground member of the resistance in New York, in a manner that is once again reminiscent of Nazism:

The DFA’s chants soon drown out all other sound. I join in, let my body find the rhythm, feel the hum of all those thousands of people buzz up through my feet and into my chest. And even though I don’t believe in any of it – the words, the cause, the people around me – it amazes me, still, the surge I get from being in a crowd, the electricity, the sense of power.

Dangerous. (*Requiem* 96)
The DFA has a significant youth division, comparable to the Nazi Youth. Additionally, the erection and eventual destruction of the Berlin Wall, which may be viewed as part of the legacy of World War II, is replicated here through the creation of the new wall around Portland, described by Hana:

The new border wall will replace all the electrified fences that have always encircled Portland.

The first phase of construction, completed just two days after Fred officially became mayor, extends from the Old Port past Tukey’s Bridge and all the way to the Crypts. The second phase will not be completed for another year, and will place a wall all the way down to the Fore River; two years after that, the final wall will go up, connecting the two, and the modernization and strengthening of the border will be complete, just in time for Fred’s reelection. (Requiem 165-66)

The series ends with this wall being destroyed: having decided to increase the resistance effort by bombing Fred’s house and three government buildings, hundreds of Invalids scale the wall to create a diversion, and for the first time enter into direct combat with the regulators on the other side. A pipe bomb is used to create a hole to let more people through, and later, Lena returns to the wall to find people beginning to tear it down piece by piece, in a manner again reminiscent of the fall of the Berlin Wall:

People are surging toward the wall.
More than that: They are tearing it down.
Yelling, wild and triumphant, brandishing hammers and bits of the ruined scaffolding, or picking with their bare hands, they are dismantling the wall piece by piece, breaking the boundaries of the wall as we know it. (Requiem 389)

The exercise of breaking down the wall acts as a metaphor for overcoming the boundaries between the two sides of the border, much as it did in 1980s Germany. This, and the other apparent references to World War II remind the reader of the power divide here, and of the need for resistance against the disciplinary state.
McDonough and Wagner aver that in many YA dystopias the protagonists begin their journey believing in only one place, the society in which they are raised (159). All areas outside of this place are viewed by these protagonists merely as blank space, with no value or definition. In Delirium, in Uglies and in Ally Condie’s Matched trilogy, the space outside the dystopia is a resistance enclave deeply intertwined with nature. Perhaps this is unsurprising, if Kathryn V. Graham’s claims are to be accepted:

Urban life and juvenile well-being are somehow essentially incompatible. When we examine novels set in the century yet to come, cities are hostile to all human life. They loom as frightening repositories of our intractable problems: crowding, crime, pollution, alienation, out of control technology and human arrogance. (Graham 79)

Having left the city that has limited the element of choice in their lives, characters such as Lena, Tally and Cassia find themselves confronted with disordered rural worlds that have no boundaries and no guidelines. If “place, as distinct from space, provides a profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and is part of the complex processes through which individuals and groups define themselves” (Convery, Corsane and Davis 1), then it is perhaps understandable that Lena and her counterparts are forced to reassess who they are upon leaving the dystopia in which they have lived their entire lives. It is only upon coming to view their new surroundings in nature as place, rather than space, that a new identity formation is possible. As McDonough and Wagner point out, in Lena’s case this process begins prior to her decision to leave her society behind, when Alex Sneaks her over the border to visit his home in the Wilds for the first time (166). Having been lied to by the society about what exists beyond the border, Lena finds a functioning, free alternative way of being that contradicts the blank space that she had been encouraged to envision. Indeed, “As the Wilds become a place for Lena rather than the space society claims it to be, she starts to wonder what other beliefs and practices enforced by her society may also be false” (McDonough and Wagner 166). Beginning the alteration of her identity while still
within the stifling city that disciplines her, Lena finds herself increasingly determined to experience life in a new place once Alex has shown her that this is a tangible possibility. Having been granted the chance to pause away from her reality “long enough to reevaluate everything” (McDonough and Wagner 168), Lena can for the first time see her world with an outside perspective, and recognise within it the myriad of things that must be challenged. Realising that the only way to begin this challenge is to seek refuge from its confines, she chooses to flee the place that has moulded her passive identity, and find a space within nature where she can engage with a new place conducive to recreating herself as a confident, active young woman.

That place is the home of a resistance which, as we have seen, is comprised of those in the Wilds, of sympathisers who live within the system, and of Invalids masquerading as “cureds” in Portland for intelligence purposes. While Lena becomes one of the latter for a time, she first has to prove herself in the Wilds. Having ended up there alone due to Alex’s capture as they attempted to cross over for the final time, she initially finds herself weak and bewildered. Lena has given up her ordered life for love, but that love is now gone; she is stuck with no way back and no motivation to adjust to the harsh conditions of the Wilds. Here, everything is vastly different from the world that she grew up in; there is no sex segregation, and the leader of the group which finds her and nurses her back to health upon her arrival in the Wilds is female. Nudity is commonplace, “unnaturals” live happily amongst heterosexuals, physical contact is regular and people love freely. Additionally, their living conditions are simple: like the “Smokies” of Westerfeld’s series, everything is recycled or built from raw materials. Yet over time, Lena begins to adjust to her new surroundings, and as she finds herself getting stronger, so too does her resolve to become part of the organised resistance. She resolves to do what she can to put an end to the regime that still controls the
United States and to free the “zombies” that are subjected to these controls (*Pandemonium* 31).

Lena has been damaged due to her experiences and as a result of Alex’s death in particular. Here she declares that her old self is dead, and begins to experience hatred, a feeling which she had never previously indulged due to its links with passion. Now, she allows herself to embrace that hatred, believing that “It will feed you and at the same time turn you to rot. It is hard and deep and angular, a system of blockades. It is everything and total. Hatred is a high tower. In the Wilds, I start to build, and to climb” (*Pandemonium* 147). New, foreign settings are often used in novels for young adults as a device to draw out the previously untapped strength of the characters. Arigo L. Morgan describes this dynamic: “The peril and danger of an alien environment present the protagonist with a unique challenge to relinquish childlike dependencies, to master obstacles, and to emerge victorious by finding unrealised inner potentialities” (132). In *Delirium*, Lena’s time in the Wilds charts her development from an innocent, nervous girl to a strong woman who is tougher than many of those around her. She appears to believe entirely in the motto “live free or die” (*Pandemonium* 76), and understands that living free may require her to act in ways that would have appalled the old Lena. It is she who guides Julian, organising an escape plan for them when they are held hostage and taking charge of the weapons throughout. Indeed, it is due to her eagerness to shadow him for the resistance, despite knowing the dangers involved, that she is tasked with leading Julian in the first place. Lena, it transpires, is more like her mother than she realised, as she learns that Annabel has been working at a high level within the resistance since her escape from the Crypts. When she and Lena are unexpectedly reunited, Lena is angry at her mother’s apparent disinterest in her; gradually, however, she comes to understand that Annabel does love her, but believes she must put the cause first. Like Annabel, Lena too is developing into a strong woman who makes sacrifices in the hope of
contributing to a better world. In the process, she overcomes the traditional passive female character subject position that has generally prevailed in the children’s and YA novels of the past. Trites has observed that “any time a [female] character in children’s literature triumphs over the social institutions that have tried to hold her down, she helps to destroy the traditions that have so long forced females to occupy the position of Other” (Waking 7). In Delirium, and as we have seen in other texts discussed thus far, the dystopian mode with its depiction of societal challenges and the associated call to action provides many opportunities to do just that.

All, however, is not entirely harmonious on the rebels’ side of the border, making Oliver’s depiction of the conflict more complex and nuanced than that of many YA texts. As Lena discovers, those in the Wilds are not fully united: for example, she and her fellow Invalids are keen to disassociate themselves from what they call “Scavengers”. Lena describes the Scavengers as “Invalids, like us, but they don’t stand for anything. We want to take down the walls and get rid of the cure. The Scavengers want to take down everything, burn everything to dust, steal and slaughter and set the world to flame” (Pandemonium 75). It is suggested that some of the Scavengers have been the victims of botched operations, and are now incapable of feeling anything. Additionally, there are the people that live underground due to birth defects or babies born from deliria, and those like the Rat-man, all of whom have experienced love and would rather live in the sewers than have that memory taken from them. These people are not part of the official resistance, as they do not go above ground, but are willing to help Lena and her contemporaries nonetheless. Finally, Lena comes to learn that even within her own fold, the Invalids are not above betraying one another. In Waterbury, where crowds of Invalids gather after the government begins bombing their side of the border, tension rises steadily, with one invalid confessing that “Last week someone was killed over a goddamn cigarette” (Requiem 160). Resources are scarce, and many people appear to have
lost sight of their revolutionary goals, instead concentrating their efforts on trying to get the best possible standard of living for themselves. Even Raven and Tack, who took Lena in and have taken care of her, cannot be trusted entirely, as it emerges that it was they who paid the Scavengers to take her and Julian hostage. Evidently, things are not perfect on either side of the border.

Despite the lack of unity amongst the Invalids, the dedicated resistance is still strong. Nevertheless, there are sacrifices to be made to keep it that way, and not just practical ones. Lena admits that “The Wilds turn us mean ... Mean and hard, all edges,” and people’s behaviour in Waterbury bears witness to that (Requiem 109). The relatively frequent usage of swear words in the Wilds also appears to have the aim of showing that these young men and women are tougher than those that live on the other side of the border. As Karyn Stapleton has shown, swearing is often seen as a “forceful, aggressive activity”; additionally, “its inherent links with ‘slang’ mean that the use of expletives can be a powerful means of establishing and reinforcing group identity for certain categories of speakers; most markedly for adolescents” (291). Precisely that effect is achieved here: as Lena begins to fit in and become accepted as one of the group, she begins to mirror them by swearing more often, and also begins to grow a thicker skin. Over time, however, she begins to wonder whether these changes have been worth it:

I look away, toward the hundreds and hundreds of people who have been driven out of their homes, out of their lives, to this place of dust and dirtiness, all because they wanted the power to feel, to think, to choose for themselves. They couldn’t have known that even this was a lie – that we never really choose, not entirely. We are always being pushed and squeezed down one road or another. We have no choice but to step forward, and then step forward again, and then step forward again; suddenly we find ourselves on a road we haven’t chosen at all.

But maybe happiness isn’t in the choosing. Maybe it’s in the fiction, in the pretending: that wherever we have ended up is where we intended to be all along. (Requiem 182-83)
As the revolutionary actions of the resistance gather pace, however, Lena is reminded of Hana’s theory that “You can’t be happy unless you’re unhappy sometimes” (Requiem 210), and comes to understand that in order for a new world to function, it will be necessary for people to reclaim their true selves through resistance (Ostry "Human" 231). She realises that freedom necessitates that people “can even choose the wrong thing” (Requiem 163). For her, and many of the others in the Wilds, the kind of power that they are claiming equates to Marilyn French’s description of feminist power: having “power to” do what one wants or needs, as opposed to having “power over” (504). Their actions are carried out with the aim of granting this power to those inside the border. Having done this to some extent in the “incidents,” where bombs at government buildings across the states included one which allowed three hundred people to escape the city’s Crypts, it is clear to the Invalids that further revolutionary action must be taken if the power wielded by the disciplinary society is to be reclaimed. While we do not learn precisely what the outcome of these actions are, it appears that the bomb in Hana’s house has killed Fred, who as mayor is responsible for overseeing the running of the dystopian regime in Portland, while the Invalids, quite literally, are successfully “taking down the walls”. As Trites summarises, “Foucault points out that power can be simultaneously repressive and enabling because those who are complacent are often less empowered than those who gain power by struggling” (Disturbing 16), and certainly, in this case it is the Invalids who are empowered, while their Valid counterparts unknowingly wait for rescue.

It appears, then, that although the world after the series’ conclusion can only be imagined, resistance has been in this case at least somewhat successful and is gathering momentum rapidly. The Wilds and the Invalids that populate it have taken back their right to cross the boundary and exist alongside their cured counterparts, heralding the arrival of a new dawn. This has occurred with the help of sympathisers, and despite a sustained campaign
against freedom that bears many of the hallmarks — propaganda, rallies, bombing and physical divisions — of Europe before, during and after World War II. Nevertheless, by learning to exist in the Wilds, and negotiate what it means to live a life of true freedom, Lena has developed into a strong feminist character who understands that people are not all the same, and that even opposing sides of a dichotomy, diversity is, and must be, rife. Freedom here means the freedom to do both right and wrong, and sometimes, it seems that the only way to gain such freedom, is through direct action.

**Conclusion**

As noted in my introduction, Roberta Seelinger Trites has stated that “the chief characteristic that distinguishes adolescent literature from children’s literature is the issue of how social power is deployed during the course of the narrative” (*Disturbing* 2). She goes on to explain that in children’s literature, the plot is usually concerned with one child and their personal power, which is affirmed in the context of their native environment. Conversely, the young adult text must focus on the protagonist learning about the relations of power that constitute them and the world around them, as they learn to negotiate the “levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function” (Trites *Disturbing* 3). Certainly, then, by this benchmark it appears that in the *Delirium* trilogy, Oliver has successfully produced a young adult text that addresses each of these concerns and provides the reader with an example of how manifestations of dominant power may not only be negotiated, but also resisted.

The *Delirium* trilogy is one of the two series discussed in this thesis that places the romance plot at the very centre of the action (the other being Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy). Romance literature has long been popular with young adult audiences – in particular with
young women – and its amalgamation with the dystopian mode provides the contemporary reader with a new direction for this well-worn form. Oliver’s text depicts a world where citizens are not free to love whom they choose. For young adults who may have encountered restrictions on their own relationships, such portrayals are likely to make an impression. To teenagers experiencing or contemplating romantic relationships for the first time, the idea that these relationships can operate as form of resistance to the dominant power structures surrounding them is perhaps an appealing one. The dystopian setting here provides an atmosphere with which today’s young adults may well identify, while the hope inherent in the romance plot injects those populating this dystopian setting with a motivation for resistance. In addition to the text’s broad premise, the culture of perfection depicted may resonate with readers who feel that their behaviour is consistently being monitored and corrected by the adults in their lives. Pressure to excel academically, at sports and hobbies, to be attractive, and to generally be “the best” in competitive Western culture is nothing new to young adults today. Oliver magnifies such issues in her trilogy; thus, her readers may find themselves reaching a new understanding of such pressures and how they may be negotiated. Certainly, there is much for the young adult reader to identify with in these novels, and this is highlighted, rather than diminished, by the science fictional setting.

While the employment of elements of the romance genre may be expected to reduce the female protagonist’s agency and show her deferring to her love interests, as is so common in romance novels, here the dystopian form overrides such clichés. Instead, it allows for the development of a central female character that is a strong young woman who comes to realise that personal relationships are not the only thing worth fighting for. Rather than simply utilising the operation as the device that constitutes Lena’s society, Oliver explores the countless and complex microcosms of dominant power that emerge and merge to create a culture of perfection that stifles an entire country and dulls people’s senses until they believe
that the world in which they are living is the one that they have chosen. Taking love, something which is prized in the implied reader’s society, and showing what might happen if it were stigmatised, Oliver leads her reader into cognitive estrangement which highlights troubling elements emerging in our own world, including state interference in reproductive rights and the attempted regulation of sexual desire. Having asked young adults to consider the implications of such developments, she then goes on to demonstrate that an alternative is possible, if not easily obtained, through her depiction of the Wilds. As is common in the YA dystopia, we are led directly to a solution, with the novel’s final paragraph imploring us three times “take down the walls” (Requiem 391). While the bleak ending regularly found in the adult dystopia is once again eschewed, the message here is the same: something must be done, and the time for doing it is now.
Chapter Four
“Let the Guilt Teach You How to Behave”: Issues of Identity, Sexuality, Family and Biotechnology in Veronica Roth’s Divergent Trilogy

Introduction

Despite being in its infancy in terms of reception – with each of the three novels in the series released between April 2011 and October 2013 – Veronica Roth’s Divergent trilogy has made quite an impression amongst its young adult audience. Two film adaptations of the novels have also been released to date, cementing the hype amongst young adult fans who have clearly found something appealing within Roth’s tale. Set in a dystopian Chicago seven generations into the future, the series depicts a society divided into five factions, each predicated on the value that the members believe to be most conducive to maintaining peace. At age sixteen, citizens are required to choose whether to remain in their birth faction, or join another of the five (Dauntless, Abnegation, Amity, Candour or Erudite) for the remainder of their lives. In an attempt to address the questions surrounding power and the body that arise from this setting, this chapter will focus primarily upon the theme of identity in the novels. The search for one’s identity is a recurring theme in Children’s and Young Adult fiction, and dystopian fiction for this audience is no different (Cf. Basu; Crew; McCallum; Mendlesohn Intergalactic; Moran; Ostry "Human"; Trites Disturbing). As Balaka Basu points out, “Whatever else they may do, all heroes of young adult fiction – and by extension, their readers – are eventually asked to consider the two great questions of adolescence: ‘Who am I now? And who do I want to be when I grow up?’” (19). This is particularly true of Roth’s text, which provides an excellent forum for addressing the manner in which identity-related
matters are implicated in all aspects of power relations. Identity will also be shown here to be closely linked to the body; the connection is clearly exhibited in the disciplinary aspects of Roth’s dystopia. For the young adult reader, the issue of identity is of significant interest, as adolescence is a time when we begin to understand and question our place in the world. Dystopian settings offer particularly fertile ground for exploring such issues: the nature of the text requires the reader to take a stand, thus engaging her or him in a form of self-articulation in conjunction with the protagonist. Of all the series analysed in this thesis, the Divergent novels illustrate most usefully the intersection between issues of identity, power and the body. As a result, all four sections of this chapter relate to identity; the first three sections are linked to the protagonist’s identity in particular.

To begin with, Section One addresses Tris’s social-identity and the related issues of physical appearance, identity construction and fitting in. Section Two and Three then proceed to discuss the relationships that have the greatest influence on Tris’s developing identity: her romantic relationship with Tobias, and her family relationships respectively. Finally, Section Four progresses to a discussion of genetic engineering in the text, a theme which profoundly affects the identity of many of the novel’s key characters. In the Divergent trilogy, humanity’s desire to grasp a definitive sense of self plays a significant role in facilitating disciplinary regulation both from outside the self, and indeed within it.

4.1 From Factions to Fashions: Social Identity and Physical Appearance

Concepts of identity have long been keenly debated amongst scholars. Coming from fields such as gender studies, queer theory, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and many more besides, critics have devoted significant research efforts to the consideration of identity. In actuality, much of this research seeks to delegitimise the concept, focusing on its
various limitations and inherent fallacies. Generally, theorists largely agree that identity is in fact socially constructed, and thus constantly in a state of flux. As Stuart Hall has suggested, rather than thinking of identity as a *fait accompli*, “we should think instead of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process. Identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past” ("Cultural" 222-25). Despite the elusive nature of identity, however, Young Adult fiction authors continue to depict quests to secure it in an essentialist state as a feature of their novels. Rightly or wrongly, teenagers are often portrayed as anxious to define themselves and others, seeking categories in which to place themselves and labels to identify with or bestow. Recognising this, YA fiction generally addresses various life stages which may be linked to self-actualisation, often leading to the protagonist coming of age and “finding oneself” in the process.

Much of the *Divergent* trilogy is concerned with the concept of identity, and how an eagerness to adopt a stable identity results in people colluding in their own regulation. The young adults in the novels are confronted with identity issues when forced to choose a faction; none more so than the series’ protagonist, Tris. Coming from a culture where identity is largely believed to be fixed, Tris discovers that she is Divergent. This means that she has an aptitude for more than one faction, and is therefore not so easily categorised. While the majority of her peers are guided in their choice of faction by an aptitude test, the flexibility of Tris’s identity is inescapable and provides a central theme of the trilogy. As noted, such themes are not uncommon in YA fiction; Koss and Teale observe that in recent years, “Overall trends in subject matter included a shift away from coming of age stories to a focus on books with themes of fitting in, finding oneself, and dealing with major life changes” (569). In Roth’s text, the discussion around fitting in and finding oneself takes many forms. This section will provide an examination of two of these forms: social identity, and the connection between physical appearance and identity construction.
Social identity is perhaps especially significant for young adults, as they grapple to find their place in the world. In 1972, Henri Tajfel proposed a social identity theory to explain the manner in which people “conceptualise themselves in intergroup contexts” (Hogg 186). Additionally, he aimed to examine how the process of instituting such categories “creates and defines an individual’s own place in society” (Tajfel 293). Tajfel’s initial thoughts were developed further into a fully-formulated theory with John Turner in 1979, and later elaborated within the wider framework of self-categorisation theory in the 1980s (Ellemers et al. 5). Social identity theory posited that individuals’ sense of belonging to a group was an extremely pertinent element of their self-identity, and that these groups in turn developed their meaning in relation to their difference from other communities. This scenario is played out throughout the Divergent trilogy. From birth, children are raised in accordance with the value deemed most important to their faction. They spend their childhoods being moulded – and indeed often attempting to mould themselves – into the perfect epitome of that value. Tris, born into Abnegation, battles with the burden of having the Abnegation identity bestowed upon her throughout her early years. She struggles to embody the selflessness that her faction values, yet is cognisant of what leaving it behind will entail:

When I look at the Abnegation lifestyle as an outsider, I think it’s beautiful. When I watch my family move in harmony; when we go to dinner parties and everyone cleans together after without having to be asked; when I see Caleb help strangers carry their groceries, I fall in love with this life all over again. It’s only when I try to live it myself that I have trouble. It never feels genuine.

But choosing a different faction means I forsake my family. Permanently. (Divergent 24)

Tris has spent her early life trying, and often failing, to fit in with the Abnegation. Despite her alienation, however, she has never questioned the benevolence of the system, and is largely unaware of the insidious dominant power-structure that lies at its heart. Regardless of their apparent good intentions, each of the factions is predicated on forcing its members
into a pre-determined identity profile that restricts their actions, behaviours, and movements. The citizens of the city are indeed docile bodies, and perhaps none more than in Abnegation, where lives are controlled to the extent that, following her transfer to Dauntless, Tris is “almost giddy” at the thought of having an evening free to do whatever she chooses (Divergent 86). However, she finds herself at a loss to fill the time, as “at home, I could never do what I wanted, not even for an evening ... I don’t even know what I like to do” (Divergent 70). Despite such extensive controls, most people seem content to submit to the demands of their group identity, eager to embrace the security and sense of self that so doing confers upon them.

At age sixteen, before deciding which faction to spend their adult lives in, teenagers must undergo a test to determine which of the five faction values they most embody. Tris’s initial impression of the aptitude test is reminiscent of that experienced by Lena when attending her evaluation in Delirium:

Mirrors cover the inner walls of the room. I can see my reflection from all angles: the gray fabric obscuring the shape of my back, my long neck, my knobbly-knuckled hands, red with a blood brush. The ceiling glows white with light. In the centre of the room is a reclined chair, like a dentist’s, with a machine next to it. It looks like a place where terrible things happen ... Clumsily I sit in the chair and recline, putting my head on the headrest. The lights hurt my eyes. (Divergent 12)

I go into the antechamber, which is small and just as bright as the hallway. It looks like a regular doctor’s examination room. There’s an enormous piece of medical equipment squatting in the corner, emitting a series of periodic beeps, a tissue-paper-covered examination table, a stinging, antiseptic smell ... I take a deep breath and step through the blue door. It’s even brighter in the lab – dazzlingly bright ... (Oliver Delirium 12)

Such practices are tools of Foucault’s “examination,” designed ostensibly for the good of the people, but in actuality functioning primarily as a knowledge-gathering exercise which facilitates disciplinarity (Discipline 184). It is possible for people to choose a faction other than that which their test result recommends; for the majority, however, this choice amounts
at most to a decision between their birth faction and one other. The very suggestion of choice appears to satisfy the masses, making them believe that they are free to do as they wish. Rather than being allowed to truly choose their own way in the world, however, Tris recognises that they are compelled to choose “one of five predetermined ways” (Divergent 42). Again, this has echoes of Lena’s discussion with Hanna about whether the evaluation results encourage them to make a choice or rather, “a limited choice” (Oliver Delirium 19). Like Lena, Tris begins the series convinced that her society’s structure is both desirable and necessary. This is evidenced by her thoughts on the factionless people that she passes on her way to and from school:

To live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community.

My mother told me once that we can’t survive alone, but even if we could, we wouldn’t want to. Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live. (Divergent 20)

Clearly, Tris feels that subjectivity is wholly bound up in group identity, and it is only upon receiving the results of her aptitude test that she is forced to consider what this really means. The test fails to identify one faction most suitable for Tris. Instead, it suggests that she belongs equally in Abnegation, Dauntless and Erudite. In other words, she is Divergent.

The discovery that she is Divergent is troubling for Tris. Such is the level of importance placed on faction life that the groups are united only in their agreement that “faction before blood” is a sentiment which should be shared by all (Divergent 43). Therefore, upon joining Dauntless she is determined to appear entirely allied to her new way of life. Her shedding of the name Beatrice in favour of Tris marks her first attempt at separating herself from her Abnegation past, a statement made also by Tobias, her instructor and eventual boyfriend. Going by the name of “Four” in the Dauntless compound, Tobias too seeks to separate himself from his past identity. Roth’s intention here has been articulated in
her statement that “I believe the names we choose on our own can be powerful, and they can
embody a new identity for us” (“Names,” 20 Mar 2012). Four asks Tris to call him by his real
name, as he is willing to show her his past self; he remains Four to others who met him
following his transfer to Dauntless. Tris, however, is insistent upon being referred to by her
new moniker at all times.

Nevertheless, it is apparent throughout the text that Tris is mistaken in the hope that a
new faction and name will be sufficient to secure a stable identity. Certainly, she does her
utmost to emulate the values espoused by the Dauntless, and excels at the initiation required
to be admitted. In so doing, she at times exaggerates her Dauntless qualities in order to fit in,
in a manner identified in social identity and self-categorisation theory as common to those
who need in-group approval (Halsam, Reicher and Platow 118). Yet as Miranda A. Green-
Barteet posits, Tris’s decision to leave Abnegation in favour of Dauntless initially does little
to develop her subjectivity, as she is now “more concerned with fitting in than with knowing
herself” (44). She volunteers for tasks which terrify her, such as jumping off moving trains,
into dark chasms, zip-lining down the tallest building in the city, and changing her
appearance, all to convince herself that she has a new, Dauntless identity. Despite this, it
seems that her Abnegation habits have not left her, as old instincts resurface when she lets her
guard down:

I stare at my plate of food. I just grabbed what looked good to me at the time, and
now that I take a closer look, I realise that I chose a plain chicken breast, a scoop of
peas, and a slice of brown bread. Abnegation food.

I sigh. Abnegation is what I am. It’s what I am when I’m not thinking about
what I’m doing. It is what I am when I am put to the test. It is what I am even when I
appear to be brave. Am I in the wrong faction? (Divergent 379)

Gradually, however, Tris begins to recognise that there are advantages to having attributes
from different factions. While her divergence has ensured that she cannot hope for the
security of the fixed identity she believes others to possess, it does make her less manipulable. It also allows her to perceive things that those conditioned to think in a singular way often fail to see. Accordingly, she is ideally placed to resist the abuses of power inherent in the faction system, and to show that it is possible to be complete without being entirely bound up in the group. As Balaka Basu has noted,

Belonging to a single faction is clearly connected ... with qualities that Roth seems to find contemptible: susceptibility to conditioning, brainwashing, and passivity. As the reverse, Divergence is the literal embodiment of resistance to the dystopia of totalitarian classification she has built. (Basu 25)

Basu goes on to suggest that Divergence, when examined in closer detail, amounts merely to another category as confining as those that Roth appears to be denouncing. However, her analysis is based solely upon the first novel in the series, and as the trilogy develops it becomes more difficult to wholly support this claim. Certainly, Tris’s Divergence defines her throughout the first, and indeed the second novel, where she is marked as special. While she is only one of a number of Divergent people whom we meet throughout the series, Tris is proffered as being more Divergent than the rest, having an aptitude for three factions where others have two. She exhibits special abilities to resist conditioning, and appears strongly suited to each of the factions to which she is allied. Ultimately, however, Tris and her friends learn that being Divergent does not make her special; rather, it is those around her that are unusual. While the group gradually realise that the faction system is corrupt, it is only upon leaving their city that they begin to understand just how pervasive this regulation is. In *Uglies*, Tally stumbles across a reservation of primitive people, which is revealed to be a social experiment run by Specials. Similarly, here we learn that Tris’s society is just one of a number of “experiments” controlled by the United States government. Although the members of the factions have become the bearers of the dominant power structure within which they live, their entire existence has been orchestrated by external forces. Genetic manipulation
seven generations previous has led to Tris’s contemporaries being genetically predisposed to one of the faction values. Her genes have gradually corrected themselves before being passed on to her, however, which means that Tris is like the majority of the world’s population outside the experiments: a unique individual with no fixed identity. In a world where people are not defined by factions, the title “Divergent” no longer possesses the markers of a faction identity; in fact, it no longer possesses a fixed identity of its own at all.

Prior to the discovery that their society was artificially constructed by forces from outside the city, Tris and others make concerted efforts to comply with the group identity of their chosen faction. Tris in particular engages in numerous performative activities to prove her Dauntless conviction, many of which relate to her appearance. As Julia Twigg has noted, this is not unusual, as “fashion and identity are often theorised in terms of sub-group analysis, in which clothing and body styling is seen as markers of the boundaries of the group, a means of stabilising identity and registering belonging” (96). Undoubtedly, it has this function for Tris, who engages in these practices in an attempt to separate her Abnegation past from her Dauntless future.

Tris’s past lack of conviction regarding the Abnegation lifestyle ensures that when given the opportunity to embrace Dauntless fashion, she does so willingly – although not without trepidation. Accustomed to wearing a simple grey uniform, she initially finds herself clinging to Abnegation-style clothing. However, when Christina insists upon giving her a makeover (the first of many, in a reappearance of the trope so common in YA fiction and discussed in Chapter One in detail), it ignites a desire for change:

She holds up a black pencil.

“You aren’t going to be able to make me pretty, you know.” I close my eyes and hold still. She runs the tip of the pencil along the line of my eyelashes. I imagine standing before my family in these clothes, and my stomach twists like I might be sick.
“Who cares about pretty? I’m going for noticeable.”

I open my eyes and for the first time stare openly at my own reflection. My heart rate picks up as I do, like I am breaking the rules and will be scolded for it. It will be difficult to break the habits of thinking Abnegation instilled in me, like tugging a single thread from a complex work of embroidery. But I will find new habits, new thoughts, new rules. I will become something else. *(Divergent 86-87)*

Here, physical transformation functions as a representation of the changes occurring within the protagonist. Previously discouraged from looking in the mirror, Tris is free as a member of Dauntless to observe the changes occurring within her as they manifest through her body and its adornments. Symbolically, Tris lets down her hair in preparation for the makeover, shaking off the restraints of her Abnegation sensibilities. Although “Beatrice” has not yet been extinguished, as evidenced by worries about what her family might think, “Tris” is indeed developing into someone noticeable, with distinct agency and a resolve not to be discounted. The physical transformation is rapid, and it is accompanied by an equally swift mental one, despite the initial cognitive dissonance associated with viewing the changes for the first time: “Looking at myself now isn’t like seeing myself for the first time; it’s like seeing someone else for the first time. Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine and don’t release me; this is Tris” *(Divergent 87)*.

Roth’s trilogy replicates the makeover scene on two further occasions. Tris’s increasing willingness to engage in such activities provides the reader with a signifier that her transition to Dauntless is progressing. When Christina persuades her to buy clothing that exposes her shoulders and to wear more makeup, Tris realises that she no longer objects to such efforts, “since I find myself enjoying them” *(Divergent 246)*. However, echoing Collins before her, Roth ensures that her protagonist is not directly responsible for what are depicted as the more frivolous changes to her appearance. Like Katniss, Tris merely relents while others impose upon her the superficial markers of her shifting identity. It seems that such
endeavours are, despite their significance, generally depicted as being at odds with the persona of the strong female protagonist. Tris’s lack of knowledge relating to these matters is emphasised during her final makeover, when she observes Christina and muses on her own lack of interest in her appearance. She notes that Christina “rummages in her bag for a few seconds and pulls out a small box. In it are different-sized tubes and containers that I recognise as makeup, but wouldn’t know what to do with” (Insurgent 426). Perhaps we are expected to infer that Tris, as the strong, brave hero of the novels is too serious, too busy or too selfless to think of such matters; however, the fact that she admittedly enjoys them somewhat disrupts that façade. It seems that Roth, while determined that her strong female character be depicted as being at a remove from these conventions of hegemonic femininity, is nevertheless disinclined to reject them entirely.

As the novels progress, Tris begins to more actively utilise her own agency in creating physical manifestations of her Dauntless persona. On visiting day, where initiates’ parents have the opportunity to see their children for the first time in their new factions, the chasm between Tris’s previous identity performance and the new one that she is cultivating is clear. “I check my clothes again – am I covered up? My pants are tight and my collarbone is showing. They won’t approve. Who cares if they approve? I set my jaw. This is my faction now. These are the clothes my faction wears” (Divergent 177). Despite her Abnegation instincts, Tris forces herself to rebel, and in doing so asserts herself as a young adult independent of her parents and her natal faction. Diana Crane has noted that “clothes as artefacts ‘create’ behaviour through their capacity to impose social identities and empower people to assert latent social identities” (2), and in this case, Tris appears to be using these artefacts to reinforce her resolve. She is no longer Abnegation. Now, she is a Dauntless initiate, and she understands that through fashion, she can exhibit this identity to her parents.
In addition to clothing, Tris embarks upon other physical alterations in pursuit of a stable Dauntless identity. Following her first makeover, she finds herself attracted to the transformative power that bodily adjustments can have in helping her to transition. Taking this practice a step further, she decides to get her first tattoo, a custom popular amongst the Dauntless. The significance of this decision is evident, as Tris contemplates the fact that this action “will place another wedge between me and my family that I can never remove” (*Divergent* 90). Her choice of tattoo is three flying birds, “one for each member of the family I left behind” (*Divergent* 90). Later, as her new identity develops further, Tris reinforces this “wedge” by getting further tattoos: the Dauntless seal, and shortly afterwards, the Abnegation symbol. It seems that although she is attempting to be Tris the Dauntless young adult, she is not quite willing to leave Beatrice, the Abnegation child, behind.

While the above changes are ones that Tris has intentionally sought or endorsed, there is one change to her appearance which is entirely unintentional, yet which signifies her increasing strength and power as the series develops. This change is that of her rapidly altering body shape, which occurs due to her new physical pursuits. So accustomed is she to avoiding mirrors, that it is only when experiencing difficulty dressing that Tris becomes aware of this change:

I try to pull a pant leg over my thigh and it sticks just above my knee. Frowning, I stare at my leg. A bulge of muscle is stopping the fabric. I let the pant leg fall and look over my shoulder at the back of my thigh. Another muscle stands out there.

I step to the side so I stand in front of the mirror. I see muscles that I couldn’t see before in my arms, legs, and stomach. I pinch my side, where a layer of fat used to hint at curves to come. Nothing. Dauntless initiation has stolen whatever softness my body had. Is that good, or bad? (*Divergent* 167-68)

The confusion displayed in this latter question is characteristic of Tris throughout the novels. Unlike many of the non-Divergent, who are strongly allied to a particular ethos which they do not question, Tris battles with her Abnegation, Dauntless and occasionally her Erudite traits.
In her society, this multifaceted subjectivity makes her unusual. In the outside world, however, she is just another human being comprised of numerous conflicting and ever-changing traits that make for an entirely unstable and elusive identity. In a further discussion of this theme, Section Two progresses to a discussion of Tris’s developing sexual identity, and the influence that it has on her identity construction and performance as she matures.

### 4.2 Becoming Woman: Sexuality, Romance and Identity Formation

As we have seen in the previous chapter, sexuality is a recurrent theme in YA literature. The *Divergent* series is no different. This section addresses the question of Tris’s emerging sexuality, with a particular emphasis on how it shapes her developing identity and the impact that it has on disciplining and/or empowering her. Roth’s trilogy is unique among the five series discussed in this thesis in that it does *not* feature a love triangle. Nevertheless, Tris’s involvement in what emerges as a largely conventional romantic relationship, in spite of the dystopian setting, plays a significant role in both her identity struggle and her emerging understanding of how her body can be used by and against the regime.

Like *Delirium*’s Lena, Tris has in growing up had little exposure to physical expressions of love and desire. That she remarks with surprise at seeing her parents holding hands during a difficult time alerts us early on to the fact that such displays of affection are unusual in the Abnegation sector of the city. It is unsurprising, then, that Tris is sexually naive upon entering Dauntless. Her reaction to seeing two of her fellow initiates kissing illustrates this:

> Myra pauses to kiss Edward. I watch them carefully. I’ve only seen a few kisses in my life.

> Edward turns his head and presses his lips to Myra’s. Air hisses between my teeth, and I look away. Part of me waits for them to be scolded. Another part
wonders, with a touch of desperation, what it would feel like to have someone’s lips against mine.

“Do they have to be so public?” I say.

“She just kissed him.” Al frowns at me. When he frowns his thick eyebrows touch his eyelashes. “It’s not like they’re stripping naked.”

“A kiss is not something you do in public.”

Al, Will and Christina all give me the same knowing smile.

“What?” I say.

“Your Abnegation is showing,” says Christina. (Divergent 81-82)

This instance occurs shortly after Tris has left Abnegation, at a time when her identity is still strongly allied to the teachings of her former faction. However, as she begins to grow more comfortable with her Dauntless traits, Tris starts to explore her own sexual impulses. In her examination of female body image and sexuality, Beth Younger found that “when a young woman becomes involved in a romantic relationship, the romance can provide an impetus for her self-discovery, as long as the romance is depicted as not being the most important experience of her life” (Learning 75). While Tris certainly has other significant concerns in her life, her developing relationship with Tobias becomes a tool for developing and understanding her identity and the power within it.

Despite her inexperience, Tris is curious about romantic relationships. Previously restrained by her efforts to live in accordance with Abnegation ideals, Tris’s emerging sexual identity is exciting to her. As her relationship with Tobias develops, she is exhilarated by their physical interaction. Engaging in such behaviour is a sign that Tris’s Dauntless side is beginning to emerge. By exhibiting her desires, she is rebelling against the values instilled in her as a child and asserting herself as a woman with values that are allied to her new faction. Despite her earlier discomfort with displays of affection, it is she that initiates her physical relationship with Tobias by holding his hand: “I stare at him. I feel my heartbeat everywhere, even in my toes. I feel like doing something bold, but I could just as easily walk away. I am not sure which option is smarter, or better. I am not sure that I care. I reach out and take his
hand. His fingers slide between mine. I can’t breathe” (*Divergent* 274). From here, the physical aspect of their relationship develops relatively quickly. However, Tris is still depicted as experiencing some discomfort with sexual expressions of desire. She becomes nervous when Tobias attempts to remove their clothing, and the extent of her apprehension is evident when he appears as one of the obstacles in her fear landscape:

> My fear is being with him. I have been wary of affection all my life, but I didn’t know how deep that wariness went.

> But this obstacle doesn’t feel the same as the others. It is a different kind of fear – nervous panic rather than blind terror.

> He slides his hands down my arms and then squeezes my hips, his fingers sliding over the skin just above my breast, and I shiver.

> I gently push him back and press my hands to my forehead. I have been attacked by crows and men with grotesque faces; I have been set on fire by the boy who almost threw me off a ledge; I have almost drowned – twice – and this is what I can’t cope with? *This* is the fear I have no solutions for – a boy I like, who wants to ... have sex with me? (*Divergent* 395)

At this point, Tris is not ready to take her relationship with Tobias further. She succeeds in ending the simulation by firmly telling Tobias’s image that she will not have sex with him. Despite her fear, Tris is sufficiently confident to accept herself as she is at present and will not be pressurised into acting contrarily. On this occasion, her refusal depicts her as strong and self-assured in the face of her fears.

> However, as she becomes increasingly intimate with Tobias it is clear that Tris does wish to consummate the relationship. Yet initially, she refuses to allow herself to do so. When Tris goes to Tobias seeking comfort following her parents’ death, she appears anxious to have sex with him, but thinks that she should stop him as he attempts to begin undressing her (*Insurgent* 48). Notably, there is no explanation given as to why she “should” refrain from doing as she desires in this instance. As their kissing becomes more heated, Tris is undoubtedly excited by the turn of events. However, Roth ensures that this time, there is a
justification for her decision to pull back: “Then his fingers brush the bandage on my shoulder, and a dart of pain goes through me. It didn’t hurt much, but it brings me back to reality. I can’t be with him in that way if one of my reasons for wanting it is to distract myself from grief” (Insurgent 49).

Tris’s decision to refrain from sleeping with Tobias, despite her desire to, appears to be an attempt to communicate with the young adult reader. Roth suggests through the above passage that they must have sex only for the right reasons (although what those reasons might be is unclear), and reminds the reader that having sex may not always be “wise” through Tobias’s ruminations on sexual activity: “I think I’d like to find a middle ground for myself,” he says. “To find that place between what I want and what I think is wise” (Allegiant 31). Adopting the role of pedagogue, Roth ensures that her readers are left in no doubt that having sex should be considered carefully. The didactic tone here may alienate some of the audience for whom the novels were intended. As Trites has observed, authors “who communicate that sex is to be avoided to protect vulnerable females ultimately end up affirming the patriarchal status quo” (Disturbing 95), and Roth appears to be doing precisely that in this instance.

Tris’s inclination to regularly discourage Tobias in his advances, despite the fact that she desires him and wants to have sex, serves to weaken her depiction as a strong female protagonist. Disregarding her own wishes, here she is portrayed as controlled by her impression of what young women “should” allow themselves to enjoy. Her refusal to fully accept her developing sexual identity disrupts the image of her as a resistant figure. With her emerging sexuality developing in tandem with her Dauntless persona, Tris’s inhibitions here indicate that she is still influenced by her Abnegation side, and as yet unable to commit herself entirely to rebellion.

Evidently, the relationship between Tris and Tobias plays a significant role in the text and is played out in largely conventional terms, despite Tris’s active persona. In her seminal
1984 text *Reading the Romance*, Janice developed a model which highlighted the uniformity of romance texts. Based upon a similar framework featured in Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, Radway termed her model “The Narrative Model of Romance” (134). By employing it here, the formulaic nature of Tris and Tobias’s romance becomes apparent:

1. The heroine’s social identity is destroyed [Tris learns that she is Divergent during her aptitude test (*Divergent* 23)]

2. The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male [Tris challenges her instructor Tobias – in this case, not aristocratic but in a position of authority – in public (*Divergent* 69)]

3. The aristocratic male responds ambiguously [Tobias is hard on Tris in public, but takes an interest in her privately (*Divergent* 199; 248)]

4. The heroine interprets the hero’s behaviour as evidence of a purely sexual interest [Tris: “It’s a little weird that, of all the girls you could have chosen, you chose me. So if you’re just looking for … um, you know …that…” (*Divergent* 401)]

5. The heroine responds to the hero’s behaviour with anger or coldness [Tris overhears Tobias plotting to ally with the factionless, and later confronts him (*Insurgent* 111; 60)]

6. The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine [Tobias responds to her refusal to stay out of harm’s way by getting himself captured, saying “You die, I die. You made your decision” (*Insurgent* 338).]

7. The hero and heroine are physically and/or emotionally separated [They are held captive separately, and then emotionally separated by differing convictions regarding the outside world (*Insurgent* 381; *Allegiant* 143)]

8. The hero treats the heroine tenderly [Tobias shows his vulnerability when faced with the possibility of Tris leaving him (*Allegiant* 372)]
9. The heroine responds warmly to the hero’s act of tenderness [Tris kisses Tobias and chooses to stay with him (Allegiant 372)]

10. The heroine re-interprets the hero’s ambiguous behaviour as the result of a previous hurt [“How have I never seen the schism inside his heart? How have I never realised that for all the strong, kind parts of him, there are also hurting, broken parts?” (Allegiant 370)]

11. The hero declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine [Tobias listens to her fears about her brother risking his life, and reiterates his love for her (Roth Allegiant 413)]

12. The heroine responds sexually and emotionally [they have sex and Tris feels herself at becoming “better, sharper, every time I touch him” (Allegiant 416).]

13. The heroine’s identity is restored [Having transitioned from a sheltered girl to a strong woman, Tris is finally secure in her identity, as evidenced by Roth’s quote below that at this point we see a Tris “who knew who she was” ("End" Para. 19)]

(Radway 134-50)

Thus, Tris and Tobias’s story follows a trajectory typical of those in romance fiction. In their case, the physical element is perhaps the most significant feature of their relationship. Tris’s development from a cosseted girl uncomfortable with her own desire, to a courageous young woman who eventually embraces the “half joy, half nerves” that accompany her first sexual experience, coincides with her growing resolve to challenge the regime (Allegiant 415). Like Lena, the progression in Tris’s love life mirrors her increased revolutionary endeavours at numerous points. As Sara K. Day states, Tris “gains the confidence to pursue personal and social resistance by overcoming her discomfort with desire” (86). With women often framed in discourse as being allied to embodiment to a greater extent than men, they are perhaps even more susceptible than their male counterparts when it comes to being rendered docile. The
converse effect of this is that claiming ownership of their sexuality may have particularly significant effects, with this increased agency likely to extend to empowerment in other areas of their lives. In the case of Tris, her acceptance that Tobias desires her, and the increased confidence that she gradually amasses through their sexual exploration, heralds her transition from girl to woman. While Roth is initially conservative in the depiction of their physical relationship, gradually Tris and Tobias begin to enact their desires. With these developments in their sexual relationship comes Tris’s enhanced revolutionary subjectivity.

Tris’s ultimate graduation to maturity is indicated through her and Tobias having sex on the night before she dies. Roth is careful to ensure that this passage is sufficiently vague to be interpreted otherwise by readers who choose to do so, asserting that “I didn’t want to have smut on the page” (Kidd 8). While she has refused to state categorically that Tris and Tobias have sex in the passage in question, she has, however, hinted that this is in fact the case (Kidd 8). Certainly, a close-reading of the text shows that this instance is different to the previous occasions when the two central characters had come close to consummating their relationship. The prose is conventionally romantic, with Tobias depicted as throwing Tris over his shoulder before placing her on the couch. Then, “he lies down next to me, and I run my fingers over the flames wrapping around his rib cage. He is strong, and lithe, and certain. And he is mine. I fit my mouth to his” (Allegiant 416). Unlike previous scenes, where Roth has ensured that Tris explicitly calls a halt to their passion, the possibly sexual encounter is interrupted in this case by an unprecedented chapter break, suggesting we have cut away from the action rather than that it has ended. Despite the apparent attempt at ambiguity, this passage seems to have been interpreted as a sex scene by the majority of Roth’s teen readers, who on online forums have heatedly debated the likely meaning of Tris and Tobias’s final night together.

As the Abnegation and Dauntless elements of her personality are finally reconciled, Tris makes her transition from child to adult, with her sexual being reaching maturity in
tandem with her emotional being. Depicted as being whole and free from the internal struggles with which she has been battling, Tris now has a strong sense of self, and controversially, Roth determined that this was the time to end her life. In a blog post defending the ending of the trilogy, Roth explained:

That was a Tris who knew what she believed about selflessness. Who knew who she was. Who knew what she wanted to do. In each book she tried to emulate her parents’ sacrifice, and in each book she didn’t seem to understand what that sacrifice really was, until Allegiant. And it’s only in Allegiant, when she had a strong sense of identity, when she had a keen understanding of what she (and her parents) believed about selflessness, that her journey was over. (“End” Para. 19)

In his aforementioned treatise on love, Nancy has posited that “love is the extreme movement, beyond the self, of a being reaching completion” (351). Apparently concurring, Roth conveys the message that now that Tris finally knows who she is, she in a position to make the ultimate sacrifice. In this case, that means sacrificing her life for her brother, Caleb. Refusing to allow Caleb to make amends for his past wrongs by risking his life to destroy the current regime, Tris takes his place. In so doing, she knowingly commits herself to her likely demise. It seems that the author is claiming that having a fixed identity is possible – somewhat paradoxically, as the entire premise of Divergent suggests otherwise - and that once you have determined yours, there is nothing left to do.

4.3 Regulation and Relations: Family Power, Legacy and Sacrifice

Stuart Hall has noted that disciplinarity operates by ensuring that relations of power “permeate all levels of social existence and are therefore to be found operating at every site of social life – in the private spheres of the family and sexuality as much as in the public spheres of politics, the economy and the law” ("Foucault" 77). The question of sexuality and power in the formation of identity was addressed in Section Two. In Section Three, a discussion of
power as it operates within and through the family, and in particular through the mother/child relationship, is addressed in order to explore its importance in the *Divergent* trilogy (and to a lesser extent in YA dystopias generally). In Roth’s text, many of the power relations permeating the family stem from wider faction values. Instilled by parents from birth, the technologies of power that accompany these faction values ensure that children are taught to submit to, and later perpetuate, the very mechanisms that render them controllable. Additionally, the individual dynamics of each family create power structures that operate solely from within the home and family relationships, supplementing those imposed from outside. While Tris attempts to rebel and extract herself from such systems, the marks that being raised within her Abnegation family have left upon her remain visible and play an important role in shaping her liminal identity throughout the text.

The influence of Tris’s family is responsible for much of her behaviour throughout the series, including ultimately, her decision to risk her life rather than allow her brother to do so. Such actions are the product of Abnegation values, promoted by all of the institutions that surround Tris, but perhaps most significantly within her family. As the first novel opens, Tris is depicted as struggling to submit to the Abnegation ethos. She continually fails at “losing herself” in the prioritisation of others (*Divergent* 1). While Caleb appears to naturally embark upon selfless acts, Tris ruefully observes her own lack of innate charity. Caleb, however, is actively engaged in the kind of hierarchical observation that Foucault identified as being central to disciplinarity (*Discipline* 170). Outside the home, Tris’s brother monitors her misdemeanours, while within it he joins her parents in ensuring that her behaviour is heavily regulated. Tris struggles to accept such controls, for example, talking during dinner, despite knowing that “we aren’t supposed to speak at the dinner table unless our parents ask us a direct question, and they usually don’t. Our listening ears are a gift to them, my father says” (*Divergent* 34). Being reprimanded by both her mother and Caleb for so doing prompts her to
doubt her worthiness and attempt to increase her self-regulation, while realising that “I am not sure I can live this life of obligation any longer. I am not worthy” (Divergent 35). This realisation ultimately leads to her defection to Dauntless. As the novels progress, it becomes clear that Tris has been profoundly affected by the power that has been exerted over her in the home. The impact of this remains with her beyond the Abnegation compound.

The recurring self-regulation that Tris embarks upon on behalf of her parents and Caleb is one of the most notable examples of the impression that their efforts at controlling her have made. With their physical voices removed, she regularly refers to the beliefs that they have imposed upon her to guide her behaviour. She does not always behave in ways approved of by her family. On occasions where she deviates, Tris is affected by feelings of guilt which impede the development of her own values or restrict her actions. Numerous areas of her life remain influenced by Tris’s family following her decision to leave them. When learning to shoot she reflects that “my family would never approve of me firing a gun. They would say that guns are used for self-defence, if not violence, and therefore they are self-serving” (Divergent 78). Before preparing to possibly be reunited with her parents she is concerned that her appearance might not be sufficiently modest for their tastes. Having yearned for approval while living with her Abnegation parents, Tris becomes in their absence a perpetrator of the dominant power structure that she has attempted to leave behind. She battles to resist her family’s influence, telling herself that she must put her new faction “before blood” (Divergent 43). This proves difficult, and throughout the first novel an internal battle is depicted, as Tris tries to escape the influence of her parents in a manner not uncommon in Young Adult fiction. Trites has observed of writing for young adults that:

Even if parent figures are absent ... their physical absence often creates a psychological presence that is remarked upon as a sort of repression felt strongly by the adolescent character. This absence then becomes, in turn, a presence against which the character rebels. When adolescent characters transform an absent parent
into a presence against which they can rebel, they are creating a parent who is present as *logos*, as Word, through which and against to develop. (*Disturbing* 56)

While she does fight against her upbringing, Tris comes to realise that ultimately, “I want to make them proud of me. It’s all I want” (*Allegiant* 67). She refutes Tobias’s reminder that her decisions should not be based upon what her deceased parents would want, telling him: “it’s always about what they want” (*Allegiant* 67).

Tris’s relationship with her mother in particular plays a sizeable role in regulating her behaviour. Conversely, as Tris finds out who Natalie really is, her mother’s influence also gives her the strength to defy others’ attempts to regulate her. While living at home, Tris believes her mother to be the epitome of a successful Abnegation woman: she appears naturally selfless, shows no vanity, is gentle, supportive of her family, and cares for the factionless. Tris longs to be like her and attempts to emulate her behaviour. Even after her transfer to Dauntless she defers to Natalie in conversation during her visit. While this visit marks the beginning of Tris’s understanding that Natalie’s past is more complex than she had realised, it is only after her death that Natalie’s influence really begins to haunt her.

Absent parents are a recurring motif in contemporary Young Adult science fiction. Indeed, we need only survey the texts discussed in the previous chapters to support this observation: Katniss’s father is dead, and her mother, while present, is depicted as being undependable; depressed, she left her children to fend for themselves. Although she and Katniss do have a relationship, Collins’s protagonist feels let down by her mother, and refuses to rely upon her for anything. In *Uglies*, Tally’s parents live apart from her in Crumblyville, and are depicted as vapid socialites upon whom she cannot rely and rarely sees. Additionally, Oliver’s protagonist is left to fend for herself, as her father has died and her mother is absent until midway through the final novel, where she appears as an inspirational but unavailable revolutionary figure, rather than a maternal presence.
Frances A. Nadeau has observed that absent mothers in particular are common throughout YA fiction. She notes that in these texts “the mother is often removed physically through travel, illness or death, or emotionally” (Nadeau, Para. 5). Roth’s trilogy initially appears to be different: Tris’s parents are present both physically and emotionally at various intervals throughout the first novel in the series. However, they both die at the end of this instalment. Nadeau goes on to claim that “by removing the mother, these authors may allow the daughter more freedom to face and solve problems on her own” (Para. 5). Natalie’s death, however, does not free Tris. Instead, Natalie’s influence is largely responsible for controlling her actions at some of the most crucial moments in her life. Prior to her mother’s death, Tris is concerned with emulating her mother’s Abnegation behaviours. After it, she is tasked with continuing these attempts, while juxtaposing them with efforts to perform the role of strong, fearless ambassador that she gradually discovers her mother to have been. Feeling somewhat responsible for Natalie’s demise, Tris is controlled partly by who she feels her mother was, and by who she must be in her image. That Natalie’s death may have been prompted by efforts to save Tris makes this task difficult, as she is promoted to hero status in her daughter’s eyes. Such results are apparently quite common, for as Andri Simic suggests in his exploration of cryptomatriarchy, the power of the maternal image:

Is rooted in a moral superiority derived from self-abnegation and suffering phrased in a mother’s devotion to the well-being of her children at the expense of other forms of self-realisation. In this way, “maternal sacrifice” provides the keystone for the support of a structure of guilt on the part of the children ... assuring the perpetuation of a mother’s influence and power ... (Simic 26)

Tris’s guilt ensures that her mother’s memory acts as a constant regulator for her behaviour. While Natalie’s claims prior to her death that she too is Divergent inspire Tris to observe that “I feel like someone breathed new air into my lungs. I am not Abnegation. I am not Dauntless. I am Divergent. And I can’t be controlled,” her legacy in actuality plays a part in
controlling Tris’s future actions (*Divergent* 442). As she learns more and more about her mother’s past, Tris is increasingly influenced by the person whom she discovers her to be. Nancy Chodorow has postulated that daughters often internalise and imitate, consciously or unconsciously, a significant number of their mother’s attitudes, behaviours and beliefs (92). Tris, it seems, is embroiled in such a pattern. Such is her desire to be like Natalie, and such is her guilt at the thought that Natalie may have died for her that she essentially repeats her mother’s actions in sacrificing herself for Caleb. While she does not die directly due to volunteering herself for the deadly task previously assigned to him – in a gesture akin to Katniss volunteering at the reaping to save her sister – her death undoubtedly comes as an indirect result of this. As she lies dying, Tris has a vision of Natalie that reaffirms the influence that she has had on her daughter’s agency:

I know she can’t be alive, but I don’t know if I’m seeing her now because I’m delirious from blood loss or if the death serum has addled my thoughts or if she is here in some other way.

She kneels next to me and touches a cool hand to my cheek.

“Hello, Beatrice,” she says, and she smiles.

“Am I done yet?” I say, and I’m not sure if I actually say it or if I just think it and she hears it.

“Yes,” she says, her eyes bright with tears. “My dear child, you’ve done so well.” (*Allegiant* 475)

Tris’s enquiry as to whether she is “done yet,” in addition to Natalie’s endorsement as she agrees that Tris has “done so well” suggests that she had a mission to fulfil which was wholly bound up in their mother/daughter relationship. Only upon sacrificing herself for a family member, like her mother before her, does Tris consider herself to have met the expectations that she has internalised as a result of Natalie’s actions. Roth has attempted to explain her decision to kill off her protagonist in such terms, stating that by dying in this way, “Tris entered the same role her parents played when they died for her. She loved and gave her
life for Caleb even after he betrayed her, the same way her parents loved and gave their lives for her after she left them for Dauntless” (“End,” Para. 17). Her decision to leave Abnegation for Dauntless appeared initially to mark Tris’s foray into independence; however, this attempt to free herself from the control of her family and their faction was counteracted by the death of her parents, ensuring that she could never fully be independent of them. As Hilary M. Lips has stated in her study of family power relations, in many cases, “the maternal image is one of devotion and sacrifice, creating in children the sense of a debt that can never be paid” (350). Tris has been embroiled in an effort to repay her mother since her death, and it is only by repeating the ultimate sacrifice that she can be freed from the power struggle that Natalie’s death has stirred within her. Notably, it is her mother’s apparition that gives Tris what is essentially permission to die, showing that the power that she exerts over Tris is perhaps the strongest form of discipline in her daughter’s short life.

Natalie is not the only member of Tris’s family to exert control over her. Her father Andrew, despite featuring relatively little throughout the trilogy, is depicted as having a somewhat difficult relationship with his daughter. Although this is not explicitly stated, Tris’s description of him conveys some contention, as she states that “Other people see him as an opinionated man – too opinionated, maybe – but he’s also loving. I try to see only the good in him; I try” (Divergent 31). We are alerted to the fact that Andrew and Tris have different values from the very beginning of the series through his referring to the Dauntless as “hellions” (Divergent 7), and his anger at Beatrice’s refusal to bow to his knowledge on this matter is evident when she chooses to leave Abnegation. She observes that, “my father’s eyes burn into mine with a look of accusation. At first, when I feel the heat behind my eyes, I think he’s found a way to set me on fire, to punish me for what I’ve done, but no – I’m about to cry” (Divergent 41). Such feelings of guilt characterise Tris’s relationship with her father: she feels guilty at the thought of wanting to leave Abnegation, knowing that he will
disapprove, and guilty afterwards for doing so. Even after his death, his effort at controlling
her through guilt appears to have left its mark. She finds herself thinking when upset that
Andrew would advise her to “Let the guilt teach you how to behave next time” (*Insurgent*
158).

Despite this, however, Tris resists her father’s efforts at controlling her behaviour,
continuing in her attempt to be initiated into Dauntless. Although she finds herself wondering
whether her actions would meet his and the rest of her family’s approval, she is relatively
successful at freeing herself from his influence in a manner that she fails to replicate in her
relationship with her mother. Indeed, upon their reunification as the Erudite-controlled
Dauntless begin to attack Abnegation, Tris is no longer willing to submit to her father.
Having escaped his influence and experienced the death of Natalie, she has become a different
person, no longer afraid to make herself heard:

“What makes you think you have the right to shoot someone?” my father says as he
follows me up the path ...  
“Now isn’t the time for debates about ethics,” I say.
“Now is the perfect time,” he says, “because you will get the opportunity to
shoot someone again, and if you don’t realise –”
“Realise what?” I say without turning around. “That every second I waste
means another Abnegation dead and another Dauntless made into a murderer? I’ve
realised that. Now it’s your turn.
“There’s a right way to do things.”
“What makes you so sure that you know what it is?” I say ...

I keep climbing, my cheeks hot. A few months ago I would not have dared to
snap at my father. A few hours ago, I might not have done it either. But something
changed when they shot my mother. (*Divergent* 466-67)

Evidently, Andrew does not approve of the way that his daughter has turned out in his
absence. Nevertheless, her efforts to be independent and resist his attempts to exert power
over her have been successful, as Tris realises that now she is no longer an Abnegation
member, “He looks at me like I’m a peer. He speaks to me like I’m a peer. Either he has accepted that I am an adult now, or he has accepted that I am no longer his daughter. The latter is more likely, and more painful” (Divergent 454). Difficult relationships such as these are common in YA fiction, where Trites notes, parents “usually serve more as sources of conflict than as sources of support. They are more likely to repress than to empower” (Trites Disturbing 56). Certainly, Andrew has tried to repress Tris, and he has undoubtedly made a significant impression upon her in many ways. She retains many of his values throughout the rest of her life, embracing her Abnegation side more and more as she develops. His influence, however, is minimal in comparison to Natalie’s, perhaps because of his overt attempts to control his daughter in ways which she is unwilling to accept. Yet despite their somewhat fractious relationship, Tris is still devastated at her father’s death. She struggles to talk about it, observing that referring to him as dead “strikes a blow like a hammer to my chest, and the monster of grief awakens, clawing at my eyes and throat” (Insurgent 44). While he is undoubtedly a symbol of family control, Tris colludes in this control and appears reluctant to leave it behind entirely.

Finally, Tris’s relationship with her brother is a complex one. Caleb’s influence is significant throughout her life, and indeed, her relationship with him ultimately results in her death. Having apparently been the model Abnegation citizen throughout their childhood and early teenage years, Caleb’s defection to Erudite during the choosing ceremony is a shock for Tris and their parents. Despite being a keen participant in the hierarchical observation that stifles Tris growing up, it emerges that in dedicating himself to Abnegation behaviour Caleb has in fact been performing a role that is entirely contrary to his true inclinations. While Tris too has opted to leave her birth faction, she believes his decision to leave to be a worse betrayal than her own, as his identity performance was previously entirely consistent with Abnegation rules. Caleb’s apparent lack of difficulty with his choice is the first hint that Tris
does not know her brother as well as she believed herself to. Ultimately, this turns out to be correct, as it is Caleb who later betrays his sister to Jeanine, the malevolent leader of the Erudite. Aware that he is sending Tris to her death, Caleb’s conviction that the Erudite are a superior faction takes precedence over his sister’s life.

Despite Caleb betraying Tris in this manner, she proves unable to sever ties with him. While their relationship is fraught following Tris’s escape from Erudite, her parents’ influence once again ensures that she is incapable of allowing him to face death following his trial for being a traitor. She battles with her feelings, but the knowledge that “My parents would want me to save him” leads to her decision to take Caleb with her when leaving the compound for the outside world (Allegiant 66). Nevertheless, at this point she has not forgiven him for his betrayal, reflecting that “I want to scream into the darkest parts of him so he can finally hear me, finally understand what he did to me” (Allegiant 89).

Ultimately, Caleb does show remorse regarding his behaviour toward Tris. In the hope that Tris will forgive him for betraying her, he agrees to risk his life to break into the Bureau’s weapons lab. However, when Tris accompanies Caleb on his mission, they are immediately confronted with guards. Seeing his terror in the face of death, Tris is unable to allow Caleb to go through with the plan, and instead opts to take his place. As Tris contemplates their fate, she considers the part of her that remains from her childhood, and will forever be tied to Caleb:

He is a part of me, always will be, and I am a part of him, too. I don’t belong to Abnegation, or Dauntless, or even the Divergent. I don’t belong to the Bureau or the experiment or the fringe. I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me – they, and the love and the loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could. (Allegiant 455)

Having accepted her identity as whole, despite its conflicting elements, Tris can finally acknowledge the significant role that her family had in shaping who she is. Her decision to
sacrifice herself, choosing to save Caleb’s life in the process, shows the ultimate juxtaposition of her Abnegation and Dauntless characteristics and is the final step in understanding and accepting herself just as she is.

The dominant power deployed by Tris’s family over her influences her at every stage throughout her life, and her existence culminates with her eventual acceptance of this fact. Michael Hardt has asserted that institutions such as the family “Constitute the paradigmatic terrain for the disciplinary deployments of power in modern society, producing normalised subjects and thus exerting hegemony through consent in a way that is perhaps more subtle but no less authoritarian than the exertion of a dictatorship through coercion” (163). Here, both authoritarian practices and the more subtle disciplinary deployment of power are employed by Tris’s family in their attempts at controlling her. Providing sites for coercion which masquerade as support, the adults attempt to influence their children’s decisions, beliefs, values and actions. While undoubtedly, the motivation behind such practices may not always be malevolent, they ultimately produce young adults who, as Trites observed, are tasked with battling against “a sort of repression” – an apparently futile task as they are never fully able to distance themselves from the technologies of power that their parents have used to mould them (Allegiant 56). Although the faction system has been controlled by scientists outside their city in a society the existence of which most people are ignorant, within the city dominant power infiltrates every layer of society through faction values. In this case, the exertion of such powers appears to begin at home.

4.4 Editing Humanity: Biotechnology, Eugenics and Problematic Premises

Questions surrounding biotechnology and genetic engineering are not uncommon in adult SF. Notable utopian texts with biotechnological themes can be traced back at least as far as the
1800s. Indeed, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is considered by many to be the first science fiction novel. In its wake, the late 19th century saw authors of early feminist utopias experimenting with the possibilities of biotechnology: Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (serialised in 1880-1881 and later published in book form in 1890) is based on parthenogenesis, a form of asexual reproduction whereby embryos can develop without fertilisation, while “nerve rejuvenation” and eugenics feature in Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s 1890 novel *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future*. Furthermore, 1896 saw the publication of H.G. Wells’s scientific romance *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, which featured man-made animal/human hybrids.

In the early 20th century, the popularity of texts relating to the body and technology continued to grow. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) replicated and added to those themes utilised by her feminist precursors Lane and Corbett, while in 1932, Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World*. Despite not being the first of its kind, Huxley’s text is often cited as the seminal work featuring nuanced speculation about the future forms which the body may take, and was certainly extremely influential. Subsequently, the 1960s and 1970s saw a return to feminist utopias with authors such as Ursula LeGuin, Joanna Russ and Marge Piercy heralding a new wave of SF that considered the positive effects that biotechnology and genetic engineering might someday have for women. By the 1980s, William Gibson’s cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* and the ensuing wave of biopunk novels were taking biotechnology and genetic engineering to further extremes. Four-time Hugo award-winner Lois McMaster Bujold is perhaps the most notable SF author to tackle the subject in the late 20th century, with her novels regularly featuring elements such as extra-uterine gestation, cryonics, and cloning.

In the present day, topics including “genetic engineering (eugenics) as a means of controlling and selecting the population” and “issues of differentiation and identity” remain
extremely popular themes in science fiction (Crew 204). As Elaine Ostry has shown, since
the late 1990s such themes have also begun to emerge as recurring tropes in SF for young
adults ("Clones" 184). Many of these texts conflate the theme of biotechnology with the
search for identity, posing such questions as: “If the body’s DNA is programmed, does the
self follow suit? Can the individual self exist in a conformist society that uses genetic
technology to control its inhabitants?” (Ostry "Clones" 185). Ostry points out that novels of
this ilk generally tend to be framed as “cautionary tales, warning us about the dangers of
biotechnology” ("Clones" 184), and they rarely explore in detail such technology’s
revolutionary potential. This is precisely the tone employed in Roth’s trilogy. Although
relatively limited in scope in Divergent and Insurgent, biotechnological themes abound
throughout Allegiant, where they are revealed to lie at the heart of the dystopia’s very
existence. While the physical potential of – and concerns surrounding – the posthuman body
were addressed in some detail in relation to the Uglies trilogy in Chapter Two, here we must
turn to themes relating to genetic engineering, DNA screening, eugenics practices, and
neuropharmacological control. In so doing, messages relating to power and the body will be
explored, and the inherent weaknesses addressed.

Roth’s trilogy is awash with references to biotechnology, genetic engineering, and
within that, genetic determinism. The faction system is dependent on the belief that people
are naturally predisposed to one way of life or another. Rather than recognising this ethos as
a device used to “nurture” citizens into conforming, it is instead viewed by the majority as a
system designed to satisfy demand for a way of life consistent with people’s predetermined
aptitudes. The history of the faction system, as accepted by those within the city, is explained
to Tris by her father:

“Decades ago our ancestors realised that it is not political ideology, religious belief,
race, or nationalism that is to blame for a warring world. Rather, they determined that
it was the fault of human personality – of humankind’s inclination toward evil ...
They divided into factions that sought to eradicate those qualities they believed responsible for the world’s disarray ... Those who blamed aggression formed Amity ... Those who blamed ignorance became the Erudite ... Those who blamed duplicity created Candor ... Those who blamed selfishness made Abnegation ... And those who blamed cowardice were the Dauntless.” (Divergent 42-43)

While Andrew claims that people initially made conscious decisions regarding their beliefs, the aptitude test now used suggests that they must be naturally suited to one faction. By screening people’s personalities through a chemically-induced simulation, the test claims to identify the faction to which each citizen should ally themselves. Ignorant of their history, the citizens of Tris’s city have structured their society around this premise. Their lack of knowledge of the truth means that despite the faction system being a false construct, its consequences are entirely real for those living in the city. As Natalie reflects in her journal, “Even if the Bureau thinks the factions don’t mean anything, that they’re just a kind of behavioural modification that will help with the damage, those people believe they do” (Allegiant 205-06). The instillation of this belief is sufficient to ensure that seven generations of people’s lives are controlled by the underlying premise.

The truth about the factions, however, is ultimately revealed to be very different. David, head of the United States Bureau of Genetic Welfare, explains:

A few centuries ago, the government in this country became interested in enforcing certain desirable behaviour in its citizens. There had been studies that indicated that violent tendencies could be partially traced to a person’s genes – a gene called ‘the murder gene’ was the first of these, but there were quite a few more, genetic predispositions toward cowardice, dishonesty, low intelligence – all the qualities, in other words, that ultimately contribute to a broken society. (Allegiant 121)

Despite acknowledging that other factors relating to nurture might contribute to a person’s personality, David goes on to explain that “editing humanity” – through tactics similar to those that Francis Fukuyama has termed “a kind of germline engineering for enhancement purposes” when discussing future biotechnological possibilities – was the chosen approach
By removing these apparently negative genes, it was believed that such undesirable behaviours would be eradicated in future generations (Allegiant 122). As Baudrillard has stated, “all genetic manipulation is haunted by an ideal model from which all negative traits are eliminated” (34), and such a model appears to have been in mind when embarking upon this project. Unsurprisingly, however, this “genetic manipulation experiment” had disastrous consequences. As Tris and her friends are informed:

Take away someone’s fear, or low intelligence, or dishonesty and you take away their compassion. Take away someone’s aggression and you take away their motivation, or their ability to assert themselves. Take away their selfishness and you take away their sense of self-preservation. (Allegiant 122-23)

The solution to this problem is to inter the citizens with damaged genes in a number of closed cities, where they are left to reproduce until the damaged genes are eradicated from the gene pool (the inherent illogicality here apparently eludes Roth; evidently such methods are more likely to elicit a “founder effect” than the correction of gene abnormalities, and online reviews show that many of her young adult readers found this explanation deficient as a result). Seven generations on, those whose genes are considered to have reverted to a pure state are classed as Divergent.

These revelations remove the status conferred upon divergence in the first two novels. Tris and those like her are framed as “special” people, whose existence must be hidden from the leaders of the Erudite wishing to eradicate them. This is not a new concept in YASF. As Jeffrey S. Kaplan has noted, “the creation of a super class of human beings” is a common feature of the genre (11). Stephanie Guerra goes even further in detailing such trends. She posits that in texts of this kind

Population genomics is applied to clones and genetically improved or altered humans, who upon testing or by tagging are revealed to be “different” and thus open to persecution ranging from social discrimination to torture and murder. Here
technology plays a role of double betrayal, allowing both the creation and detection of these groups. (Guerra 286)

Roth’s trilogy adheres to these conventions. Biotechnological advances are responsible for Tris’s appearance as an anomaly, while evidence gathered from her aptitude test and her behaviour in simulations is responsible for revealing her as such. In a world where people are defined by one aptitude, appearing well-rounded makes Tris and the other Divergents exceptional. However, the ultimate explanation of what being Divergent truly means subverts this. In a move responsible for many of the fan complaints regarding the series’ concluding instalment, the revelation that to be Divergent is to be just like all unaltered citizens in the outside world removes the exceptional status conferred upon Tris and other Divergents. It also has another significant effect: it ensures that the entire non-Divergent population of the cities are suddenly marked as inferior:

“So what you’re saying is that if we’re not Divergent, we’re damaged,” Caleb says. His voice is shaking. I never thought I would see Caleb on the verge of tears because of something like this, but he is.

Steady, I tell myself again, and take another deep, slow breath.

“Genetically damaged, yes,” says David. However, we were surprised to discover that the behavioural modification component of our city’s experiment was quite positive – up until recently, it actually helped quite a bit with the behavioural problems that made the genetic manipulation so problematic to begin with. So generally, you would not be able to tell whether a person’s genes were damaged or healed from their behaviour.”

“I’m smart,” Caleb says. “So you’re saying that because my ancestors were altered to be smart, I, their descendant, can’t be fully compassionate. I, and every other genetically damaged person, am limited by my damaged genes. And the Divergent are not.” (Roth Allegiant 126-27)

Inside the city, the Divergent were exceptional and the non-Divergent average. Now, in the outside world, the Divergent are average and the non-Divergent defective. Tris and her fellow Divergents are no longer special, but the consequences for the others, who are now second-class citizens, are likely to be much more serious if they remain in the outside world.
Here the Divergent, or Genetically Pure (GP) citizens live side-by-side with numerous Genetically Damaged (GD) citizens, who have been released to live in the outside world following the failure of other experiments. The latter are discriminated against. Once again, such concepts are not alien to this form, for as Guerra has observed in YA texts dealing with biotechnology, often “the tropes of discrimination are projected onto a group who is distinguished not by external markers like skin colour but by internal markers like DNA, thus reconfiguring racism on a cellular level” (286). Roth appears to be doing just that, combining warnings against biochemical interference with numerous allegorical references to racism throughout *Allegiant*. Efforts to create an improved race of people have led to disastrous consequences, going back as far as the “purity war” fought between those whose genes had been damaged and the genetically unharmed prior to the establishment of the city experiments. The damaged were segregated, with the memories of the first generation consensually wiped so that they could not pass the truth on to their descendants. When those who are not genetically pure are released, they are treated as inferior to those from the outside. As Nita explains to Tobias, the GDs have a specific place in this society:

“Support staff is more than just a job. Almost all of us are GDs – genetically damaged, leftovers from the failed city experiments or the descendants of other leftovers or people pulled in from the outside, like Tris’s mother, except without her genetic advantage. And all of the scientists and leaders are GPs – genetically pure, descendants of people who resisted the genetic engineering movement in the first place. There are some exceptions, of course, but so few I could list them all for you if I wanted to.”

I am about to ask why the division is so strict, but I can figure it out for myself. The so-called “GPs” grew up in this community, their worlds saturated by experiments and observation and learning. The “GDs” grew up in the experiments, where they only had to learn enough to survive until the next generation. The division is based on knowledge, based on qualifications – but as I learned from the factionless, a system that relies on a group of uneducated people to do its dirty work without giving them a way to rise is hardly fair. (*Allegiant* 195-96)

The above is another example of Roth’s tendency to include a “pedagogic load” (as discussed in Chapter Two) in her trilogy (Mendlesohn *Intergalactic* 14). Such overtly
didactic passages are difficult to negotiate when packaged within the Young Adult dystopia, as the tradition of didacticism in both Young Adult Literature and that of dystopian and science fiction texts is quite different. Critics of Young Adult fiction generally agree that despite books for this age group generally being “rife with didactic explicit ideologies” (Trites Disturbing 73), there is much wariness surrounding the value of didactic content in the texts in question – with good reason, perhaps. Undoubtedly, in the early days of the genre, and to this day in some cases, Young Adult literature has been treated by some as merely “a didactic means to an end” (Ewers 79). Accordingly, the YASF novel has in some instances been reduced to a moralistic, weakly plotted lecture that alienates the very readers whom it intended to influence. Conversely, science fiction, as Mendlesohn points out, has valued a didactic approach to fiction for adults “since Hugo Gernsback set out his mission statement for the field in the 1920s” (Intergalactic 14). Indeed, Gernsback noted that this new genre had the power to supply “knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain” in a “very palatable form,” and that the best writers of “scientifiction” as he termed it, do so “without once making us aware that we are being taught” (Gernsback 3). To this day, concepts such as the novum (the non-supernatural “point of difference” which Darko Suvin suggests lies at the heart of science fiction) and the use of cognitive estrangement are generally viewed as opportunities to draw the reader’s attention to issues in their own world (Roberts 7). The latter concept (another of Suvin’s) relates to the presentation of an alternate reality which estranges the reader from their present setting and helps them to recognise elements in this reality applicable to their own surroundings. This results in a “feedback loop” that “moves now from the author’s and implied reader’s norm of reality back to the narratively actualised novum in order to understand the plot-events, and now back from those novelties to the author’s reality, in order to see it afresh from the new perspective gained” (Suvin 71). Utopian literature in particular takes eutopian and dystopian forms to show us what might be possible, or indeed
what might be inevitable, depending on the action we choose to take. Nevertheless, the conflation of these differing perspectives from YA fiction and SF regarding didacticism is certainly possible. It is my view, however, that the success of this approach is largely dependent upon the way in which the didactic message is presented.

Adult SF, then, usually maintains a strong pedagogical character. Despite this, it is a literature that generally demands much of its audience, requiring them to engage with it and work at interpreting its implied messages. Young adult authors may feel the need to help their readers along with decoding the allegories included in their novels; however, many do so to such an extent that they patronise their audience and lose the critical potential inherent in the SF mode. By refusing to trust the YA reader to understand the messages which they wish to convey, these authors fail to differentiate between what is appropriate in Children’s Literature and in Young Adult fiction. A lack of appreciation of this latter distinction, however, is one that is unlikely to escape the notice of the YA reader. Heavy-handed attempts at teaching lessons to these readers, such as Tobias’s reflection on the difference between GDs and GPs, are precisely the kind of passages that may be perceived by readers as patronising. Indeed, the Allegiant review voted most helpful on Amazon lamented the fact that the biotechnological facets of the story read like “an after-school special about prejudice so preachy and obnoxious that half the time I felt like the book was yelling at me” (Penny Para. 25).

In addition to Tobias’s ruminations on discrimination, Roth includes numerous other allusions to race throughout the text, all of which are displayed as criticisms of the negative potential of biotechnology. The majority of the city’s GD population have been ostracised, and live in a ghetto referred to as The Fringe. Speaking to one of the residents, Tobias is told that “In the cities, if you get killed, definitely no one will give a damn, not if you’re a GD. The worst crime I’ve ever seen a GP get charged with for killing a GD was ‘manslaughter’”
The experiments show that in general the “genetically damaged” are considered expendable, and are viewed as entertainment by many within the bureau who watch them on television screens. Tris notes that David “would gladly trade thousands of GD memories – lives – for control of the experiments. That he would trade them without even thinking of alternatives – without feeling like he needed to bother to save them. They’re damaged, after all” (Allegiant 378). Great importance is placed on determining whether people are “pure” or “damaged”. Tobias’s reaction upon finding out that he had been mistakenly identified as Divergent during his aptitude test is particularly indicative of the divide between the two social groups. Despite the fact that Divergence in the outside world has been stripped of its elevated status, with the Divergent merely average people here, the thought of not being Divergent is clearly extremely difficult for Tobias to accept:

The word “damaged” sinks inside me like it’s made of lead. I guess I always knew there was something wrong with me, but I thought it was because of my father, or my mother, and the pain they bequeathed to me like a family heirloom, handed down from generation to generation. And this means that the one good thing my father had – his Divergence – didn’t reach me. (Allegiant 176)

However, as Tris notes, “Divergence doesn’t mean as much as I thought it did. It’s just a word for a particular sequence in my DNA, like a word for all people with brown eyes or blond hair” (Allegiant 179). Yet the knowledge that this is true does not appear to be a comfort to Tobias, who understands that while to be Divergent is to be average, to be perceived as less than average in a world intent on using biotechnological means to confirm it is a far worse fate indeed.

It is not just the non-Divergent who are discriminated against for reasons relating to biology. When Amar asks Tris not to tell anyone that he and George are in a relationship, her confusion leads him to explain that “The Bureau is obsessed with procreation – with passing on genes. And George and I are both GPs, so any entanglement that can’t produce a stronger
genetic code ... It’s not encouraged” (*Allegiant* 356). Failing to use pure genes to propagate further generations is frowned upon in this society. By extension, the mixing of GP and GD genes is also outlawed, as Matthew makes clear to Tris: “There was this girl,” he says. “She was genetically damaged, and that meant I wasn’t supposed to go out with her, right? We’re supposed to make sure that we match ourselves with ‘optimal’ partners, so we produce genetically superior offspring or something” (*Allegiant* 427). Such eugenic practices show clearly that the Bureau wishes to prevent GP genes from being altered, with the aim of producing fewer numbers of genetically damaged people in the coming generations. While the discrimination is not always explicit, the population is in no doubt that to be a GD here is to be considered a lesser being.

Within the experiments, biotechnological control takes the form of serums used to control people. Developed by the Bureau and supplied to the factions, who may then further explore ways to enhance them, the serums enable many of the regulatory tactics employed within the experiments. Each faction has their own serum. For example, Amity use a peace serum administered in the bread distributed to citizens to keep them amiable, and Candor employ truth serum to ensure its members can be trusted. Other serums include one for “resetting” peoples’ memories, a terror serum, the simulation serum used by Dauntless, and even a death serum. However, the Divergent prove to be very largely resistant to these, with Tris in particular immune to almost all. Tris’s resistance here aids her struggle to be free from the controls that abound in her society. The plan devised by her and the GD revolutionaries to use the memory serum against the Bureau is an attempt to use the very tools for exertion of power employed by those controlling the status quo against them. This plan, however, is somewhat illogical, as those whom it is intended to affect in this case are Genetically Pure, and very likely immune. Additionally, Tris’s previous protestations regarding use of serums suggest that it would be against her moral code to utilise these biotechnological tools.
Nevertheless, Roth here suggests that rather than succumbing entirely to the exertion of dominant power, sometimes it may be possible to appropriate the tools of the oppressor in attempts to free ourselves.

Clearly, biology and genetics are heavily bound up in the exertion of dominant power in the societies featured in the *Divergent* trilogy, and particularly in the world outside of Tris’s city. Unfortunately, the execution of this message is perhaps not as successful as it might have been due to an apparent lack of understanding or consideration of biotechnological possibilities by the author. For example, the science behind the original genetic experiment fails in its plausibility. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, dystopian fiction – and indeed sf– must satisfy this basic tenet to be successful. While undoubtedly, the technology described by the author is not required to make sense in the world of the contemporaneous reader, it is essential that it is plausible in the context of the world built in the text. As C.W. Sullivan III points out, if an SF novel does not provide “a believable extrapolation” from known theories surrounding technology, the reader’s task of suspending disbelief and succumbing entirely to the atmosphere of the text is made far more difficult ("Extrapolation" 3). Here, perhaps the most obvious fault lies in the fact that, while the reader may accept the possibility of scientists having identified specific genes as beings responsible for characteristics such as dishonesty, it is more difficult to believe that if removing them is possible, reinserting them is not. Instead, the subjects are isolated in the city experiments, where waiting as long as necessary for the offending genes to somehow obliterate themselves is presented as a more logical option.

Other incredible utilisations of these technologies include the Bureau’s decision to provide Jeanine with simulation serum to wage war on the Abnegation, despite the fact that they make up the greatest proportion of Divergent in the city and could have been controlled through the use of memory serum. Conversely, the suggestion that Tris and her friends could
use the memory serum against David and other GPs when it had already been shown to be useless against the Divergent is illogical. Additionally, it is never explained why these serums work on the genetically damaged but not on the pure; the correlation between a missing gene (not even the same missing gene in every case) and the success of such technologies is unclear. Finally, the claim that the manipulation of subjects’ genes would not manifest until several generations later is incorrect, disrupting the entire premise from the very beginning.

In all, it appears that Roth’s utilisation of biotechnology is somewhat flawed. Refusing the more nuanced method of pedagogical persuasion traditionally favoured in SF, Roth instead chooses to provide readers of the Divergent trilogy with an explicit explanation of her thoughts on issues such as genetic engineering and race. These explanations are at times far from convincing, exhibiting a tone perceived by some of her audience to be patronising, and imbued with a frustrating element of bad science that is difficult to ignore. Certainly, she does go some way to addressing the implications that biotechnological advances may have on the exertion of dominant power, and reminding her readers that these should be resisted where possible. Overall, however, the teenage characters in this text are largely powerless against the majority of the advances that have taken place, and their agency is notably limited. This is not an uncommon trend in texts of this nature, for as Maree Kimberley has observed, “Without the ability to use neuroscientific advantages for their own gain, however, the characters’ power to change their worlds remains in the hands of adult authorities and the teenaged characters lose the fight to change their world (4).

Initially, the above quote may appear to be untrue of Tobias and the other surviving teens from his and Tris’s gang; upon closer inspection it is actually quite accurate. With Tris murdered by David, the others eventually return to their city. Although things have improved somewhat, Chicago is still ruled by the Bureau (which is still run by David, albeit a “reset” David) and must “submit to the government’s authority” (Allegiant 504). Outside of their
city, however, the world remains the same. The GD/GP divide is unresolved in the rest of the United States and poised to continue causing devastation. Other experiments presumably remain in operation, and it is perhaps only a matter of time before Chicago too finds itself once again operating in a system of disciplinarity which on the surface may appear to afford greater freedom than the previous regime, but which in practice is not much better. The presentation of a somewhat positive ending despite these conditions may be explained by the tendency of YA fiction to be inward-looking. As Farah Mendlesohn has demonstrated, in particular contemporary science fiction for the young adult audience has strayed from the original outward-facing values which imbued the original juveniles by Robert Heinlein, Andre Norton and others of their era. Now, SF for children and young adults has “an increasing emphasis on the inward – inward towards family and the establishment of family, and inward also towards feelings” (Mendlesohn Intergalactic 111). Uglies and Delirium cannot be accused of concluding in this manner, as they ultimately prioritise the future for the collective, rather than the individual. However, Mendlesohn’s observation is certainly true of some of the dystopian series discussed here: notably, The Hunger Games, Divergent and Matched. These series conclude with varying degrees of focus on the home life of the principal characters rather than the consequences for the wider world of the text, as is more common in adult SF texts. In this case, by abandoning the story of the outside world in the end, Roth leaves the reader with the inference that biotechnology can only lead to negative consequences. Its possible revolutionary potential is, regrettfully, largely unexplored. Divergent, it seems, is a clear example of a text that exhibits the “anti-technological and even anti-evolutionary bias” that characterises much children’s and YA sf and dystopian writing today (Nodelman "Out" 288).
Conclusion

Michael Hardt has observed that “disciplinary diagrammatics in general functioned primarily in terms of positions, fixed points, and identities,” going on to note that “Foucault saw the production of identities ... as fundamental to the functions of rule in disciplinary societies” (36). Having examined Roth’s trilogy, the question of identity has indeed been revealed as fundamental to the dominant power structures that attempt to control, and are challenged by, Tris and her contemporaries. Familial power relations and biotechnology are inextricably linked to the constitution of the subject (in this case, Tris) and their identity struggle. The emphasis on identity here is unsurprising; as noted, it is a common trope of the YA novel, and if successfully executed, often well received. However, it appears that despite her creation of a protagonist who resists simple categorisation, Roth is herself somewhat confused regarding the question of identity. In an interview with Amazon.com, she stated that the idea for the novel stemmed from the fact that “I think we all secretly love and hate categories – love to get a firm hold on our identities, but hate to be confined – and I never loved and hated them more than when I was a teenager” ("A Q&a with Veronica Roth" Para. 5). As Basu points out, however, the suggestion that it is possible to “get a firm hold on our identities” contradicts the very basis of contemporary identity theory (31). Not only that, but it also appears to contradict the suggestion in the final novel that identity is, after all, fluid, with the factions exposed as being an artificially constructed experiment and Divergence losing its mythical status. Indeed, the marketing of the trilogy, even during publicity for the final novel, has focused largely on the idea of the various factions. This was especially evident at book signings for Allegiant, where the young adults in the audience were encouraged to take turns shouting the name of the faction which they felt best represented their own identities. Here, each of the five factions was presented as an option, with the possibility of being Divergent, of not feeling allied to any one value, apparently discounted. Such contradictory messages
regarding identity imply that perhaps some of her more frustrated fans are right in their suggestions that Roth “realised too late that she wrote herself into a corner and then half-assed her way out” (Penny Para. 23).

Nevertheless, the *Divergent* trilogy has proven popular with teenagers across the world, and it is likely that the focus on finding one’s place in a world in turmoil has a significant role to play in its success. Identity-formation is an issue of great importance for young adults, who in their transition from childhood to adulthood are attempting to reframe their understanding of themselves. This understanding is largely relational; that is, the young adult’s sense of herself or himself evolves in relation to those around them and the conditions in which they live. One of the main things that sets the YA novel apart from the Children’s novel is that, rather than focusing largely on self-discovery (as the latter does), YA fiction is concerned with the interaction between the self and society. For Roth’s young adult readers, the trilogy’s emphasis on identity, and the connection between identity and the body is apparently compelling. Tris’s battle for self-discovery in the face of pressures from her family and wider society to mould her into the person they want her to be is an experience with which most young adults will identify, albeit not in such explicit circumstances. Engagement in acts of resistance such as those depicted here ensures two things: it bestows upon the subject a sense of identity as someone opposed to the dominant power structure, and a sense of “self-as-agent” through the process of enacting this resistance. For the young adult reader of this text, depictions of young characters asserting identity through resistance are particularly attractive. Thus, it is unsurprising that Roth’s series is so popular with this age group. Yet the mixed reactions to Roth’s concluding novel suggest that her audience was not always entirely convinced by the messages which they decoded in her often opaque prose, both in relation to identity-related matters and more generally. Plot holes such as those related to genetic engineering perhaps weakened the impact of the questions posed. Indeed, at
times coherence appeared to give way to elements which promoted the trilogy’s “inner conservatism” (Basu, Broad and Hintz 2). Lessons about sex, prejudice and sacrifice dominate Allegiant, which struggles to achieve the most basic necessity of a science fiction novel: the ability to make its reader suspend disbelief. The death of the protagonist, while perhaps a brave departure from the usual positive ending of the YA dystopia, fails to be convincing as a natural consequence of the action surrounding it. In 2012, Roth mused that her favourite books, J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, “wouldn’t have been the same without Rowling’s willingness to make sacrifices. That, more than anything, made me decide that if I was going to be an author, I had to be willing to make sacrifices too” ("Character Death" Para. 8). Perhaps, then, Roth had decided that Tris must die in order to be an effective protagonist, without fully accounting for her death’s necessity. Unfortunately, by eradicating Tris in so weakly executed a manner, she instead risks leaving the reader confused as to what the point of the protagonist’s struggle was, and whether there is anything to be learned from it that can truly be applied to their own world.
Chapter Five

“It’s Like a Snake Eating its Own Damn Tail”: Medicalisation, Data Collection, Censorship and Regressive Revolution in Ally Condie’s *Matched* Trilogy

**Introduction**

First published by Penguin imprint Dutton Children’s Books between November 2010 and November 2012, Ally Condie’s *Matched* trilogy consists of the novels *Matched*, *Crossed* and *Reached*. Like *The Hunger Games*, *Uglies*, *Delirium* and *Divergent*, Condie’s text is yet another YA dystopian series that emphasises the significance of the body in negotiating relations of power and regulation. Like *Delirium* and *Divergent*, the series features split narration. *Matched* is narrated by Cassia, Condie’s female protagonist. The second novel in the trilogy, *Crossed*, is comprised of alternating chapters narrated by Cassia and by Ky, her love interest. Finally, the narration of *Reached* alternates between Cassia, Ky and Xander, Cassia’s male best friend and arranged husband-to-be. The inclusion of the two young men sets up a love triangle that is familiar from *The Hunger Games*, *Uglies*, and *Delirium*. Nevertheless, Cassia takes centre stage in the series. Even Xander and Ky’s chapters are based primarily around the female protagonist and her relationship with each of them.

Condie’s trilogy takes place in a future North America where, at the age of seventeen, people must choose to be “matched” with a member of the opposite sex (notably, heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation referred to throughout), or to remain a “single” for life. If opting for the former, citizens are matched through computer algorithms, which use the extensive data collected on people to pair them with their ideal partner – ensuring that they are matched not only for compatibility, but also for the healthy propagation of humanity. The series details the fight of Cassia to be with Ky, the boy she truly loves, while negotiating
her relationship with best friend and assigned match Xander. However, it is the obstacles that
their dystopian world lays down which are perhaps of most significant interest. Through
these obstacles, the reader is confronted with an array of ways in which the body is again used
to both exert and resist disciplinary structures. This series provides an excellent example of
resistance being an equally formidable form of power to its ostensibly dominant counterpart,
and in particular of the manner in which the two forms co-exist and/or merge to create
relations of power. A detailed discussion of this is located in Section Four of this chapter,
which examines the trilogy’s revolutionary movement and the manner in which it proves to
emulate the hegemonic regime that preceded it. The first three sections, then, focus on the
body’s role in the development of this hegemonic regime. Section One examines the way in
which the medicalisation of the depicted society has turned the body into a docile entity
which is simultaneously enabled and restrained, while Section Two addresses the importance
of data collection in maintaining levels of control over the citizens. The third section will
examine the use of censorship by the society, and the ways in which Cassia and others
succeed in circumventing the obstacles it creates.

5.1 Regulation via Medicalisation: The Culture of Health and its
Disciplinary Effects

By now it has been established that disciplinary power relies upon subtle coercions that act
upon the body, convincing people that it is in their interest to collude in their own regulation.
One notable form that this can take is the medicalisation of numerous domains of everyday
Deery note that, increasingly, “[the] power to regulate bodies is linked to the legitimisation of
biomedical knowledge and the socioeconomic and political issues that influence it,” and that
“clinical knowledge and practice may act as regulatory mechanisms used to discipline bodies”
The authors are referring here to practices which appear to be unfolding in the present day; in the *Matched* trilogy, Condie extrapolates from such developments and places medicalisation at the very centre of her future dystopia. Described by Irving Zola as a process “whereby more and more of everyday life has come under medical dominion, influence and supervision,” medicalisation facilitates the control of populations by regulating their behaviour on purported medical grounds (295). In Cassia’s society, this regulation extends from the control of marriages, births and deaths to food, exercise and government-administered medication. When combined, these factors ensure that Cassia and her fellow citizens find themselves at the centre of a regime which appears to be taking care of them, while simultaneously limiting their agency with great success.

As noted, Cassia lives in a world where the Society is responsible for matching citizens with their life partners. In addition to the apparent aim of pairing people with their ideal matches, the process is rigidly structured to ensure that it produces children of optimal health. The official Matching material explains to citizens a prescribed timeframe and its justification:

> If you choose to be Matched, your Marriage Contract will take place when you are twenty-one. Studies have shown that the fertility of both men and women peaks at the age of twenty-four. The Matching System has been constructed to allow those who match to have their children near this age – providing for the biggest likelihood of healthy offspring. (*Matched* 17-18)

By enforcing this practice, the Society establishes a norm – compliance with which the majority of citizens believe to be for their own wellbeing. As the series begins, Cassia is convinced of the validity of this system, observing that “We live longer and better than any other citizens in the history of the world. And it’s thanks in large part to the Matching System, which produces physically and emotionally healthy offspring” (*Matched* 19). In addition to “matching for healthy genes” (*Matched* 69), the Society dictates that women may
not bear children after the age of thirty-one, and recommends two years as “perfect” spacing between siblings (Reached 10). With the process of reproduction so tightly regulated, citizens readily accept that following birth, the children in question should have their health – and the numerous domains which are apparently linked to it – monitored and optimised throughout their lives.

The system of medicalisation which prevails in Condie’s dystopia is largely successful in its ostensible aim of creating a healthy population. Injuries and illness are rare in the Society (Crossed 159), and most debilitating diseases have been “almost entirely eradicated” (Crossed 114). Children are indoctrinated in school with tales of how fragile their bodies are, and how easily they could succumb to illness. By rendering citizens grateful for the care that they perceive the Society to be administering, they are also made willing participants in their docility. As Erik Parens argues in his exploration of good and bad forms of medicalisation, “insofar as the institution of medicine focuses on human beings as objects (i.e. as bodies), the medicalisation process potentially undermines seeing ourselves as subjects; it potentially undermines our ‘subjectivity’” (29). This is precisely what is occurring in Cassia’s world. People are convinced that they must for their own benefit allow their bodies to be treated as medical concerns; they come to accept such treatment as care, and lose the inclination to take responsibility for themselves. Complying with the subtle powers exerted over them, they become docile, simultaneously “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault Discipline 136).

As health is increasingly touted as the most significant concern in the Society, the citizens accept its all-encompassing importance, and allow it to dictate other areas of their lives. Cassia learns when reading the history of the rebellion’s origins that:

In the year before the Hundred Selections began, the Cancer Eradication Rate remained stagnant at 85.1 percent. It was the first occurrence of a failure to improve
since the Cancer Eradication Initiative took effect. The Society did not take this lightly. Though they knew total perfection in all areas was impossible, they decided that closing the gap on 100 percent in certain areas was of utmost importance. They knew this would require complete focus and determination. They decided to centre all their efforts on increasing productivity and physical health. Those at the highest level of Official voted to eliminate distractions such as excess poetry and music while retaining an optimal amount to enhance culture and satiate the desire for experiencing art. The Hundred Committees, one for each area of the arts, were formed to oversee the choices. This was the beginning of the Society’s abuse of power. (Crossed 153)

Clearly, the health of the population has been prioritised above all other domains of life, and in the process all apparent distractions from the centrality of health have been strictly regulated. In the Society, as for Foucault, health is “at once a duty for each and the objective of all” ("Power" 94).

Perhaps the most overt means of intervention into the health of Cassia and her contemporaries is the administering of medication to citizens from birth. Initially, this takes the form of preventative medicine: infants are inoculated with “disease-proofing” tablets at their Welcoming Day ceremony (Reached 10). As citizens grow older, they are provided with three tablets, blue, green and red, at ages ten, thirteen and sixteen respectively. The green, designed to calm people in an anxious or nervous state, may be used “up to once a week without the Officials taking special note of it” (Matched 117). The blue, the population is assured, contains enough nutrients to allow them to survive for several days when combined with water. The red tablet, however, remains mysterious to many, and rumours abound that it is a euthanasia drug.

Pharmacological control is a recurring motif in contemporary Young Adult dystopias. John Hickman refers to novels “where pharmacological science either produces or reinforces a dystopian social order,” as “drug dystopias” (141). Despite notable examples including Huxley’s Brave New World, Karin Boye’s Kallocain and Philip K. Dick’s A Scanner Darkly,
Hickman claims that the “drug dystopia” is an uncommon sub-genre. However, Hickman notably neglects works of Young Adult science fiction in his study. Though pharmaceuticals are not always their central focus, novels including Lois Lowry’s aforementioned *The Giver*, Margaret Peterson Haddix’s *Turnabout*, Lydia Miller’s *Pills and Starships*, Gemma Malley’s *The Declaration* series, and as noted, Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* trilogy all feature the use of drugs to reinforce the dystopian status quo. Hickman’s hypothesis is that, in the case of adult dystopias, “neither writers nor their readers now perceive drugs as sufficiently scientifically intriguing or sufficiently technologically threatening as material for gripping drama” (162). Yet Hickman’s findings cannot be readily applied to the YA genre, where the inclusion of pharmaceuticals for sinister means appears to be increasingly popular rather than viewed as passé. It seems possible that this may be due to the didactic impulse which many adult writers of Young Adult fiction exhibit: is the temptation to portray drugs as harmful to the young reader too great to resist?

In Condie’s case, the answer to this appears to be affirmative. While purportedly designed to help people, the tablets supplied prove to do quite the opposite. Urged from childhood by her Grandfather to resist taking the green tablet, Cassia has striven to be strong enough to cope without it throughout her life. Nevertheless, she witnesses those around her, including her friend Em, relying upon it to quell negative feelings. For the Society this ensures that the majority of people are never exercised enough to find the motivation to question or to rebel against the status quo. Instead, they choose to allow their feelings to be medicalised, willingly accepting the pharmaceutical solution with which they are provided.

Compared to the blue and red tablets, the green pill is relatively benign. The blue, it transpires, is not really designed to sustain people in the absence of food; rather, it triggers the “Cerulean virus,” which makes people “still,” or unconscious (* Reached 366*). If found promptly by the Society they may be revived; if not, certain death follows. Even the
apparently beneficial inoculation tablets given to babies prove to have a sinister underlying purpose: they are also used to implant the Cerulean virus into people’s system, so that it can be triggered by administering the blue tablet later in life. Unaccountably, however, Cassia succeeds in resisting the effects of the blue tablet, having taken one prior to realising its true function. This is explained by Ky as Cassia simply being “strong in ways even the Society can’t predict” (Crossed 200). Like Tris in Divergent and Tally in Uglies, Cassia defies the odds by inexplicably evading or overcoming the effects of drugs guaranteed to impact upon all other citizens. While perhaps adding to their characterisation as strong female protagonists, such unexplained strength would be more transformative if accompanied by a clear justification. By failing to explain how Cassia, Tris and Tally succeed at resisting drugs that effect their contemporaries, the authors frame their protagonists as “special” in a way that is entirely unattainable for their readers. If an aim of the dystopian text is to provide a call to action through warning, the effectiveness of this aim is likely to be diminished by an accompanying suggestion that successful resistance requires superhuman attributes.

Resistance to the tablets takes on a more significant function in relation to the mysterious red pill. As cracks begin to appear in the Society, citizens are ordered to take the red tablet on a number of occasions. Cassia is first faced with such an order following Ky’s removal from his home by the Officials. In this instance, Cassia drops her tablet and crushes it beneath her shoe. However, her family and neighbours obey the order, and the resulting effect is that their memories of the previous twelve hours are eradicated. Reminiscent of the memory serum of Roth’s dystopia, the red pill is used whenever an incident occurs which disrupts the Society’s control and the reigning culture of obedience. It soon becomes clear that some people, including Xander and Ky, are immune to the red tablets. This is due to the Rising’s secret inoculation of those whom they have identified as potential participants in a future rebellion. Hopeful that she too is “special” in this way, Cassia is dismayed to discover,
upon being forced to take the red pill at a later stage, that she is not in fact immune to it.

Having laboured under the hope that she may be pivotal to the Rising, Cassia experiences disillusionment reminiscent of that of Roth’s Tobias when he learns that he is not Divergent. Despite her resistance to the blue tablet, the fact that she succumbs to the red forces Cassia to reassess her identity:

I’ve taken the red tablet. And it worked.

I’m not immune.

Some part of me, some hope and belief in what I am, dissolves and disappears.

“No,” I whisper.

This can’t be true. I am immune. I have to be.

Deep down, I believed in my immunity. I thought I would be like Ky, like Xander and Indie. After all, I have conquered the two other tablets. I walked through the blue tablet in the carving, even though it was supposed to stop me cold. And I’ve never once taken the green.

The sorting part of my mind tells me: *You were wrong. You are not immune.* *Now you know.*

If I’m not immune then what have I forgotten? *(Reached 56)*

While Xander, Ky and their friend Indie all escape the effects of the red tablet, the protagonist’s negative experiences remind the reader of the dangers of using medication for non-medical problems. In Cassia’s case, engagement with pharmaceuticals leads to a rupture within her identity, and an inability to trust the memories that make her who she is. Having believed that she was being cared for all her life, the realisation that her memories may have been erased on numerous occasions forces her to question what she knows about the Society and her own past. Not one of the chosen ones identified by the Rising as trustworthy, Cassia finds herself in the liminal space of no longer believing in the Society, but at this point, having nowhere else to turn.

In addition to the overt administering of medication to citizens, the Society ensures that their diets are intensely medicalised. Lawrence and Germov define the medicalisation of
food as “treating food like a drug with therapeutic properties that are able to prevent disease,” and this is precisely how food is framed in Condie’s trilogy (163). From the very beginning of Matched it is apparent that food has an important role to play here. Despite her excitement at attending the Matching Ceremony and discovering whom her husband is to be, Cassia also finds herself thrilled at the prospect of the banquet to be served. She is not alone, as she observes that “It’s almost comical how quickly we all take our seats. Because we might admire the china and the flowers, and we might be here for our Matches, but we also can’t wait to taste the food” (Matched 10). The extent of the attendees’ excitement at the banquet becomes understandable when the reader is later presented with Cassia’s observations on their usual diet:

> As I walk into the kitchen, carrying my dress from the night before, I see that my mother has already set out the breakfast food delivery. Oatmeal, gray-brown and expected. We eat for health and performance, not for taste. Holidays and celebrations are exceptions. Since our calories had been moderated all week long, last night at the Banquet we could eat everything in front of us without significant impact. (Matched 23)

The emphasis on “functional foods” (that is, those which “have been ‘nutritionally engineered and/or are promoted with nutrient-content claims or health claims” (Scrinis 541)) ensures that people are grateful when allowed to eat for pleasure, rather than purely for sustenance. So convinced are people of the Society’s dogma regarding food and health that they discipline themselves in this regard. The extent of their belief in the importance of nutrition is evident when Cassia’s generally obedient mother shows her displeasure at Officials interrupting them at dinnertime, when “the food is here and getting cold, possibly losing nutrients” (Matched 112). Additionally, despite Cassia’s desire to taste the pie that her Grandfather is enjoying when she visits him, it doesn’t occur to her to break the rules in relation to food: “He is eating a piece of something called pie, which I have never actually tasted, but it looks delicious. I wish that it weren’t against the rules for him to share his food with me” (Matched 59). The
Society has made food a medical issue, thus ensuring that people are convinced of the need to police their own intake. This is typical of the power relations that operate through Western medicine, which, as Jeanne M. Lorentzen has noted in her article "I Know My Own Body": Power and Resistance in Women's Experiences of Medical Interactions,” “function like the panopticon through the unceasing ‘gaze’ of power/knowledge regimes positioned as arbiters of truth” (52). Lorentzen goes on to state that this gaze ultimately produces “medicalised, self-regulating subjectivities” (53); people believe that they must achieve the physical standards of the perceived norm. In Cassia’s community, having accepted that diet is central to their well-being, the citizens assume much of the responsibility for policing this aspect of their lives.

The purported reason that Cassia and her fellow citizens have been warned not to eat each other’s food is that their diets are tailored to their own nutritional needs. “Nutrition personnel” are responsible for ensuring that everyone is supplied with the correct meals each day, which are delivered in a “foilware container through the food delivery slot” in the kitchen (Matched 33). These meals are processed to contain a high quantity of the necessary nutrients, and are so far removed from their natural state that they can “last for years” (Reached 365). So emphatic is the Society regarding the importance of people eating only the food directly assigned to them that even when Cassia and Xander are permitted to go on a date, their usual food is sent to the dining hall for them:

The waiter arrives with our food almost as soon as we sit down. The simulated candlelight flickers across the round black metal table in front of me. No tablecloths, and the food is regulation food – we’ll eat the same thing here that we’d eat at home. That’s why it’s necessary to book in advance; so the nutrition personnel can get your meal to the right spot. (Matched 192)

To ensure that people do not get too frustrated with this system occasional treats are incorporated, such as the provision of ice-cream as a reward for physical work. Even then,
Cassia is mindful that “our meals have specialised vitamins and enrichments and have to be
given to the right person. The ice cream is a nothing food” (*Matched* 195). By
simultaneously convincing people that adhering to the rules regarding food is vital for their
health, while also accounting for any desire to rebel by in-building exceptions, the Society
ensures that its citizens accept what is expected of them. Such tactics are typical of
disciplinarity, which as medical sociologist Deborah Lupton has observed, is facilitated by
“the mass screening procedure, the health risk appraisal, the fitness test, the health education
campaign invoking guilt and anxiety if the advocated behaviour is not taken up” (35). To
ensure that they are not victims of this guilt and anxiety, people adhere to the Society’s
dogma regarding health, engaging only in sanctioned deviance.

In addition to the quality of the food provided, the quantity is strictly regulated.
People are allocated personalised portions, and are under strict instruction to finish all food
that they receive. Such disciplinary tactics surrounding food are not entirely far removed
from the current culture surrounding scientific nutrition in our present. Kerry Chamberlain
has shown in her study “Food and Health: Expanding the Agenda for Health Psychology” that
development of scientific nutrition in general, “Opened the way for the state to intervene in
the regulation and surveillance of food and diet. The need for control, protection and
regulation was developed to ensure the delivery of ‘good’ and ‘safe’ food by suppliers and
rapidly extended to the improvement of the health of the population” (467). In the Society,
this regulation of food has been taken to extremes, and for reasons other than the benevolent
ones given to the population. By carefully regulating portion size, it is possible to aid the
production of docile bodies in different ways:

“Look at my portion. They want me to bulk up so they keep giving me more and
more."

I glance over at Xander’s portion of noodles with sauce. It *is* enormous. “Can
you eat all of that?”
“Are you joking? Of course I can.” Xander acts offended.

I peel back the foilware and look at my portion. Next to Xander’s, it seems miniscule. Maybe I’m making this up, but my portions seem to be smaller lately. I’m not sure why. The hiking and running on the tracker keep me fit. If anything, I should be getting more food, not less.

It must be my imagination. (Matched 193)

Xander is in training to be a medic; if he is to play a role in medicalising citizens and therefore advance the Society’s hold on them, he must be strong, and his portions reflect that. Cassia, unsurprisingly, is correct in her assessment of her portion size being reduced. It is only upon her final meeting with the Official monitoring her that she learns that this is an attempt to make her too weak to rebel. The Official informs Cassia that “It was so intriguing; we could control so many variables. We even reduced your meal portions to see if that would make you more stressed, more likely to give up. But you didn’t. Of course, we were never cruel. You always had sufficient calories” (Matched 342). Despite dissatisfaction with her portions, Cassia is nonetheless forced to accept the food allocated to her, as citizens are strictly forbidden to grow food of their own. Indeed, even if they could find a way of doing so, they would not know what to do with it. Thus, Cassia begins to understand that the Society has ensured their dependence:

It’s forbidden to grow food unless the Government has specifically requested it. They control the food; they control us. Some people know how to grow food, some know how to harvest it, some know how to process it; others know how to cook it. But none of us know how to do all of it. We could never survive on our own. (Matched 297)

In tandem with the regulation surrounding diet come strict rules regarding exercise. A keen runner, Cassia is forbidden from exercising outside. Instead, she must run on the “tracker” in her house, which logs data as she runs. In so doing, it aims to determine whether the runner might be “a masochist, an anorexic, or another type” (Matched 113). If found to exhibit symptoms of these kinds of behaviour the runner must “see an Official of Psychology
for diagnosis” (*Matched* 113). The tracker determines how long Cassia must run for, and at what pace:

> Five minutes left before the workout ends, before I’ve run the distance and time I should in order to keep up my optimal heart rate and maintain my optimal body mass index. I have to be healthy. It’s part of what makes us great, what keeps our life span long. (*Matched* 114)

The long life span that Cassia refers to is another aspect of life which has been entirely medicalised in the Society. It has been determined that eighty years of age is the optimal time to die, ensuring that people avoid the inevitable medical decline which would occur beyond this point:

> All the studies show that the best age to die is eighty. It’s long enough that we can have a complete life experience, but not so long that we feel useless. That’s one of the worst feelings the elderly can have. In societies before ours, they could get terrible diseases, like depression, because they didn’t feel needed anymore. And there is a limit to what the Society can do, too. We can’t hold off all the indignities of aging much past eighty. Matching for healthy genes can only take us so far. (*Matched* 69)

The citizens do not question the need for people to die at eighty. As Ivan Illich has noted, “the medicalisation of society has brought the epoch of natural death to an end” (207), and this is entirely true here. Despite the uniformity of the death process, however, neither Cassia nor her contemporaries appear to wonder how inevitable death at eighty years of age occurs. Even when attending her own grandfather’s final banquet and death, Cassia fails to consider this question. Rather than something to be queried, the citizens have come to believe that they must view the Final Banquet as “a luxury. A triumph of planning, of Society, of human life and the quality of it” (*Matched* 69).

Indeed, when viewed in comparison to the fate of most of those who are not valued by the society, living to eighty and having a Final Banquet *is* a luxury. Aberrations sent to the Outer Provinces to fight often die in their teens, while many Anomalies do not even last that...
long. At his banquet, Officials present Cassia’s grandfather with a microcard containing photographs and a history of his life, before taking a sample of his tissue. When they leave, friends arrive to join the family for Grandfather’s final meal. The meal of his choice is a selection of desserts, including the pie that Cassia had previously longed to taste.

Nevertheless, they still must not eat any of Grandfather’s food, as Cassia observes: “The selections for Grandfather and his guests are the same, but it is an actual law that we must eat the food from the trays and he must eat the food on his plate. We’re not allowed to share” (Matched 77). Again, Cassia does not question the reason for this at the time, and when her Grandfather passes away she believes that it is purely because “everything inside him has worked perfectly. He has lived a good life. It ends as it is supposed to end, at exactly the right time” (Matched 183). Gradually, however, the truth behind the medicalisation of both food and death in the Society become clear. When contemplating the fact that the Aberrations involved in food preparation generally die early, the reason for the strict ban on tasting her grandfather’s food suddenly occurs to Cassia:

> Why couldn’t Grandfather share food from his plate at the Final Banquet?
> Why do so many Aberrations work in food cleanup?
> They poison the food for the elderly.

It’s all clear now. Our Society prides itself on never killing anyone, having done away with the death penalty, but what I see here and what I’ve heard about the Outer Provinces tells me that they have found another way to take care of things. The strong survive. Natural selection. With help from our Gods, of course – the Officials. (Matched 288)

With all choice removed regarding diet, people eat what they are presented with, without realising that they are contributing to their own unnatural demise in the process.

Despite this policy of terminating life at eighty, the Society claims to have the long-term goal of preserving life in the long term. At their Final Banquet each eligible citizen has a sample of tissue taken by the Committee. While the Society does not claim to have a way to
use this tissue to recreate the person after their death, they purport to be developing the technology to do so. The citizens appear convinced that this day will come, with Cassia remarking that “I think we all know that it will happen eventually. When has the Society ever failed at reaching a goal?” (*Matched* 75). Such attempts at life preservation further progress the medicalisation of the dying process, as people are led to believe that doctors may soon be able to regenerate them and give them life once more.

Only those who are perceived to be “compliant until the very end” can hope to have this second chance at life in the Society (*Crossed* 248). Thus, as the Pilot tells Cassia, “The tubes have never been about bringing people back ... They’ve always been used to control the people who are here” (*Reached* 428). With health the focus of a variety of aspects of people’s daily lives, the Society reminds citizens that potential illness and the loss of life may be experienced at every turn. Unless, that is, they surrender their agency, and leave the responsibility for their well-being entirely in the hands of the Society. As the following sections will elucidate, this culture of medicalization encourages people to accept the levels of surveillance, data surrender and censorship that encroach on every facet of their existence.

### 5.2 Observance and Obedience: Surveillance-led Data Collection and Docility

The successful operation of disciplinarity is dependent upon an intricate web of surveillance which envelops individuals and influences their behaviour, actions, and even their thoughts. This surveillance controls people not just in public settings, but also ostensibly “private” circumstances. In the present day, traditional methods of surveillance have been enhanced with technologies which can digitally record data related – but not limited – to people’s movements, purchases, communications and general online activity. Condie is yet another
YA author who appears concerned with the degree of control that the possession of such information confers upon those who hold it. In these texts, teenagers are warned that by accepting the intense scrutiny that is increasingly pervading peoples’ on and off-line lives, they are ultimately surrendering their freedom. Further to that, as Amy L. Montz has observed, “In these novels, teenagers – who are already made to feel that every move they make is under constant scrutiny by their peers, their family and their society – are put inside a dystopian future that limits bodies and is even disciplined by the expectation that the governed will willingly accept its fate and even assist with its own control” (111). Such a scenario plays out in the *Matched* novels. Condie places Cassia and her contemporaries in a setting which uses both traditional and digital means of collecting information about citizens. So convinced are people that this surveillance is for their protection that they are again willingly complicit in disciplining the movements and actions of themselves and others.

In the Society, citizens are monitored from birth, when, in a manner reminiscent of Suzanne Weyn’s *Bar Code Tattoo* series, all citizens are assigned a bar code. While not physically imprinted on them, as in Weyn’s novels, this bar code is attached to the vast swathe of data collected on people throughout their lives. Ultimately, it is used at death to determine whether or not they have lived an “ideal life” and are worthy of future resurrection (*Reached* 10). Each individual’s bar code contains electronic data gathered from various domains. Officials are on hand to update the scan cards of citizens every time they engage in activities that must be logged, such as Cassia’s work assignments and Xander’s participation at games time (*Matched* 30; 40). When further information is sought, people are fitted with data tags which monitor their physical reactions to situations. Even in sleep, Cassia and her contemporaries are not free from scrutiny, as they must very regularly wear “sleep tags”:

I’ve always wondered what my dreams looks like on paper, in numbers. Someone out there knows, but it isn’t me. I pull the sleep tags from my skin, taking care not to tug too hard on the one behind my ear. The skin is fragile there and it always hurts to peel the disk away, especially if a strand or two of hair gets caught under the adhesive on
the tag. Glad that my turn is over, I put the equipment back in its box. It’s Bram’s turn to be tagged tonight. (Matched 23)

On the same occasion, Cassia’s delight at realising that “for the first time in my life, I’m allowed to dream of Xander” demonstrates the tight control which the Society attempts to have even on people’s subconscious minds (Matched 24).

While such methods of data collection may appear somewhat far-fetched, they are, in fact, currently in development. Since 2011, scientists at UC Berkeley have been working on the utilisation of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging to reconstruct people’s visual experiences, an endeavour which has led to the successful photographing of people’s dreams (Anwar Para. 2). As theoretical physicist Michio Kaku has explained:

You put the patient in an MRI scanner and he falls asleep. The brain is then scanned creating 30,000 dots. A computer analyzes the 30,000 dots of a sleeping brain and reconstructs the image of what he’s dreaming about. Now I’ve seen these pictures. They’re pretty crude. You see a picture of a human and obviously he’s thinking about and dreaming about a human. But one day we may be able to refine this technique so that when you wake up in the morning and you hit the play button of a computer, you see the dream that you had last night. (Fowler and Fitton 5:09)

This was pure science fiction when envisioned in texts such as Wim Wenders’ 1992 film Until the End of the World; now, however, Condie’s concept of dream recording is becoming science fact. Cassia is under no illusion that this information may be used against her, as is elucidated by her relief following a nightmare: “it isn’t a recurring one, so I can’t be accused of obsessing over something” (Matched 158). Such is her dread of negatively evaluated dreams that Cassia’s self-surveillance has extended to include even her sleep time. Her admission on another occasion that “since it is not my turn for the sleep tags that night, I let my dreams take me where they will” shows that she is well-practised at disciplining herself (Crossed 260). However, the decision to refrain from doing so when she is sure she is not being watched suggests that Cassia, unlike many others in her society it appears, still retains some agency.
Previous chapters have recognised the importance of Foucault’s concept of the “examination” in the disciplinary society. Foucault states that the examination engages individuals “in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them” (*Discipline* 189), and the data collected on citizen’s dreams is just one example of the information gathering process which attempts to do this here. The tracker Cassia uses to exercise records data on the amount and intensity of the activity she engages in, while also monitoring her heart rate and other health indicators. “Named for what it does – tracking information about the person running on it,” the tracker is not just an exercise machine, but an arbiter of Cassia’s fitness and capability (*Matched* 113). When she falls off it, Cassia is concerned and tries to get back on before it registers her absence and “they will know I couldn’t keep up” (*Matched* 290). The identity of the “they” referred to here, presumably the Officials, is rarely addressed in detail by Cassia when she considers matters of discipline. Instead, it appears that the system has taken on a life of its own, with its success dependent only upon the suggestion that the visible Officials represent higher authority. As is typical of the disciplinary society, and often of the contemporary YA dystopia, people appear unsure of precisely who may be watching at any given time or why. Nevertheless, citizens are convinced that they must endeavour to please the elusive “they” at all times, or suffer unpleasant consequences.

However, as McDonough and Wagner suggest, the very fact that Cassia has pushed herself beyond the limits set for her by the Society by running too fast is indicative of her rebellious intent (163). Although she is not quite courageous enough to risk being caught on this occasion, she is clearly dabbling in resistance, challenging herself to push against the regime in the small opportunities that present themselves daily. Indeed, “Though she is physically hurt, she discovers what she is capable of and realises that even potentially beneficial limits are still restrictions. She starts to question whether bigger risks might have greater rewards” (McDonough and Wagner 163). While Cassia’s efforts at developing her
agency start small, such minor attempts at resistance open her eyes to a world of possibilities to which she had previously been blind.

In addition to their activities, peoples’ physical locations are tracked. Even those banished to a life on the fringes of society are monitored. The coats supplied to Aberrations and Anomalies are fitted with tracking devices. Ky suspects that in addition to transmitting their locations, these mechanisms collect other forms of data, and tells Vick, “I bet this records things like our pulse rates, our hydration levels, our moment of death. And anything else they’ve thought up that they want to know about while we’re out in the villages.” (Crossed 104-05). When Eli wonders why the Society would care about the data of outcasts, Ky replies “Death ... It’s the one thing they haven’t fully conquered. They want to know more about it” (Crossed 105).

Ky is correct in this assessment. The primary purpose of the tissue samples is to discipline people through the promise of eventual resurrection if they live an “ideal life” and qualify to have their DNA preserved (Reached 10). However, the Society is clearly interested in discovering the key to resurrection. Not content with harvesting samples after death, it emerges that the Society has been taking DNA from people at various points in their lives without their knowledge. Not only are their movements, dreams, behaviour and health recorded; the very make up of their existence has been taken for analysis. Believing it to be for their benefit, most people feel privileged to be “cared for” in this way. Even Cassia, following her escape from the Society, feels gratitude upon finding her own tissue sample. Her reaction denotes years of disciplining by the Society and indeed by her friends, family and herself: “REYES, CASSIA. I draw my breath in sharply. My Name. Seeing it here reminds me of the way it felt when they said my name at the Match Banquet. It reminds me that I belong. That my future has been secured by the Society with great care” (Crossed 249). Not even a taste of freedom, it seems, is enough to entirely eradicate a lifetime of discipline.
Supplementary to the collection of data through technological means, the Society uses traditional methods of information gathering. Officials monitor the citizens and report on their behaviour, although again, no-one appears to know to whom these reports are sent. Even such apparently innocuous activities as playing games during recreation usually warrants “twelve or more lower-level Officials in the centre, keeping the peace, keeping score” (Matched 223). When spending time alone after being matched, Xander and Cassia are chaperoned by an Official. On one instance, the Official fails to hide his efforts at evaluating their behaviour. Cassia recounts: “He steps away a little, discreet, giving us space, and enters something into his datapod. Probably something like: *Both subjects expressed appropriate reaction upon seeing each other*” (Crossed 24-25). This level of scrutiny is conferred upon even the most obedient citizens. Thus, when Cassia appears to be engaged in irregular activity, she is assigned her very own Official. Rarely visible, Cassia’s Official on occasion – initially in a friendly manner – makes herself known. However, as Cassia fails to extricate herself from her developing relationship with Ky, her Official turns more sinister, reminding her that even when she feels free she is likely being closely observed.

So successful are the Officials’ methods that they do not need to be armed. This is apparent from Ky’s reference to a time “Back when the Officials carried weapons,” adding “They don’t use them anymore”. The reason for this change is acknowledged by Cassia: “What he doesn’t say, but what we both know, is *They don’t have to*” (Matched 235). The Officials no longer need to use the threat of violence to control a population trained to require little convincing. This shift from highly visible armed guards to Officials that have no need for force and are – paradoxically – rendered increasingly invisible through their ubiquity is typical of regulatory societies. Such insidious mechanisms are less obvious, but evidently no less effective here than overt exertions of dominant power.
Evidently, people are sufficiently accepting of the web of surveillance that surrounds them that they shoulder much of the responsibility for its operation themselves. Paula Vaz and Fernando Bruno have proffered that “any practice of surveillance entails self-surveillance as its historical counterpart and it is this simultaneity that accounts for the acceptance and legitimisation of power relations” (273). When free from the gaze of others, Cassia, Ky and others all self-monitor to varying degrees. On the eve of her grandfather’s death, Cassia demonstrates her awareness of the gaze that envelops her. Additionally, she demonstrates how experienced she is at self-disciplining in public as a result of this gaze:

My tears threaten to spill over onto his cheek as I bend down to kiss him. I hold them back; I don’t cry. I wonder when I can. It won’t be tomorrow night at the Final Banquet. People will be watching then. To see how Grandfather handles leaving, and to see how we manage being left. (Matched 68)

Similarly, Ky “always acts as though someone watches him,” even when he and Cassia appear to be alone in the woods (Matched 102). For Ky, Cassia and others, “the external look becomes an internalised and self-regulating mechanism,” and this internal surveillance is perhaps even more successful at disciplining bodies than that from outside (Jay 410). Such panoptic power proves extremely successful throughout the Society, creating a community which has forgotten what freedom means.

The combination of surveillance with pervasive data collection has ensured that the citizens here have little experience or expectation of privacy. Thus, the very act of doing something in private is empowering. When a forbidden print of Cassia’s favourite painting falls to pieces from being handled too much, the other girls reject her suggestion that they view an electronic copy. It is then that Cassia admits that looking at something while being watched is an entirely different experience to viewing it surreptitiously: “Indie makes a dismissive gesture, turns her face away. She’s right. I don’t know why it’s not the same, but it isn’t. At first I thought it was having the picture that made it special, but it’s not even that.
It’s looking at something without being watched, without being told how to see. That’s what the picture has given us” (*Crossed* 12). Such acts prove that resistance is indeed possible, no matter how difficult it may appear to be. As Cassia comes to realise, the Society does not know everything; it merely gives the impression that it does.

Within the Society, people’s time is also strictly monitored. Returning late to her apartment one evening, Cassia is concerned that “The Society will note my lateness, and someone will speak to me about it. An hour unaccounted for here or there is one thing; this is half a night, the kind of time that could be spent in a myriad of nonapproved ways” (*Reached* 90). For disciplinarity to succeed, Foucault holds, “one must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrollable disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation” (*Discipline* 143). By keeping track of individuals’ movements, how their time is spent, and using both traditional and electronic forms of surveillance, the Society has armed itself with sufficient knowledge to know largely what citizens are doing and where, and how to use this information to their advantage.

Throughout the novels, Cassia and her contemporaries are consistently reminded that “there is no luck in the Society,” only probability (*Matched* 18). The data collected is used to predict citizens’ future actions, and to determine what course their lives should take. It also dictates to whom youths will be matched, in a process similar to that in Oliver’s *Delirium* series. “Sorters” like Cassia are tasked with making a variety of decisions for the Society based on data that they are given to sort through, including determining what jobs will be assigned to people. As Cassia’s Official warns her, “people who let the data slide, who let emotions get involved, create a mess for themselves” (*Matched* 340). Using the data gathered, the Society also predicts many of its citizens’ future actions and thoughts: from which dress Cassia will choose for her Matching Ceremony, to which teenagers will engage
in illicit relationships before marriage, and even in which position Cassia will finish when hiking.

The predictions made, and the data on which they are based, are not just used to pre-empt people’s actions and movements. They also provide the significant function of forming the basis for the classification of citizens. Reminiscent of the Philip K. Dick’s 1956 short story *The Minority Report*, where people are jailed for crimes they would have committed in the future if not restrained, information here is used to classify “delinquents” and those who are considered to be a potential threat. As Foucault explains, the examination makes every individual a “case,” which “may be described, judged, measured, compared with others” (*Discipline* 191). The results of these comparisons determine the kinds of lives people will live within, or without, the Society. Those who have committed lesser offences are classified as “Aberrations”. Those who commit crimes and are determined by the Society to be dangerous earn the classification of “Anomaly”. As Cassia explains:

> Aberrations live among us; they’re not dangerous like Anomalies, who have to be separated from society. Though Aberrations usually acquire their status due to an infraction, they are protected; their identities aren’t usually common knowledge. Only the Officials in the Societal Classification Department and other related fields have access to such information. (*Matched* 46)

Despite the fact that Aberrations are allowed to live amongst Society, they are severely penalised for their misdemeanours. Banned from entry into the matching pool, forced to work in dangerous, menial jobs, and eventually sent to the Outer Provinces to die fighting,

Aberrations are consistently reminded that they are considered inferior to the majority of their peers. Additionally, people like Ky are assigned Aberration status simply because of infractions on the part of their parents. Those born to Aberrations are considered a potential threat, and penalised in advance of any wrongdoing that they might undertake. Anomalies have an even lower classification, and are banned from Society entirely. The myths relating to them serve both to ensure that people are scared of them, and scared of becoming them.
In Condie’s dystopia, this creation of the Other is the last stage in using the data gathered to extend the Society’s control. The combination of data collection and traditional surveillance serves to control people’s movements and actions. The information obtained determines the course that their lives will take, whether they will be permitted to live within the Society, and with whom they are allowed – and indeed choose to – fraternise. Rather than merely being at the mercy of surveillance from outside, the citizens themselves are responsible for a significant element of their monitoring, and for enabling the state to uncover and dictate to various elements of their lives. However, Section Three will show that the proliferation of censorship and propaganda that pervade this world ensure that people largely lack the information necessary to see the alternatives available to them, or to understand precisely the damage that living under this regulatory regime may be doing.

5.3 Secrets and Lies: Censorship and related resistance

Censorship is a common trope in dystopian fiction, appearing in classic dystopias such as George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Generally utilised by the rulers of the state in an effort to control peoples’ minds and bodies, it is undoubtedly one of the most significant hallmarks of many oppressive regimes. The dystopia depicted in *Matched* is no different. While there is no overt “ruler” of the Society — its disciplinary structure favours a more subtle, yet pervasive, distribution of power — many of the core foundations of this dystopia rely upon restricting citizens’ thoughts and actions. Simultaneously, citizens are surrounded with material which enforces regulatory messages. Such tactics ensure that Cassia and her contemporaries are rendered docile through ignorance of history, of cultural and personal memory. Moreover they are given limited opportunities to engage in creating the artefacts of the present.
Citizens within the Society are subjected to censorship in various forms. Physical restrictions such as curfews ensure that the bodily freedoms of citizens are tightly regulated. Meanwhile, directives not to “disparage other members of our street and our community” show that Foucault’s previously addressed concept of the Archive has a role to play in restricting their speech (Matched 21). Cassia is acutely aware that there are forbidden topics of conversation, such as other citizens’ classification status. In general, people assent to these rules, accepting the espoused philosophy that limited, specialised expertise is preferable to broad general knowledge. Cassia accepts the Society’s claims that technological failures in previous regimes account for the relative lack of access to such tools in the present, and that each individual must only know how to work those relevant to them in order to “keep people from becoming overwhelmed” (Matched 31). Handwriting is obsolete, as in Uglies, and even knowledge of geography is rare (another common trope, for as we have seen, not one of the protagonists discussed here has a detailed knowledge of what lies outside their own region). It is only upon escaping from her work assignment and seeing what lies beyond the cities for herself that Cassia comes to understand that “the world is so much bigger than I thought it was” (Crossed 100).

Cassia, Xander and the other full citizens (unlike some Aberrations and Anomalies) also have limited knowledge about history, science, art and various other forms of cultural memory. What they do know has been manipulated to convince them that the Society was the best possible result of a troubled past. As the slogan of Nineteen Eighty-Four’s Ingsoc party has it: “who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (Orwell 308). The Society evidently aims to control all three by censoring historical information and outlawing artefacts. In order to do so, the “Hundred Committee” was established at the Society’s inception (Matched 30). Tasked with compiling a list of the one hundred best pieces of art, music, poetry, stories, fashion, science and history lessons, this
committee (including Cassia’s great-grandmother) limited the knowledge accessible to future generations. While the purported justification for this censorship was to remove distractions so that people could devote their energy to improving health, there are undoubtedly other motivations for this drastic action. Firstly, as all creative endeavours are vessels of cultural memory, efforts at rewriting history require the eradication of all artworks or forms of expression and knowledge that may hinder the success of this revision. Secondly, as Maria Varsam (drawing upon Ernst Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope*) has pointed out, “Utopia can be detected in every art form, from literature and music to architecture and painting” (208).

Accordingly, it is understandable that a society which attempts to strictly regulate its population sees benefit in restricting such art, for perhaps in doing so, it aims to stifle the hope central to utopian ideology. With little to inspire them or remind them that they can achieve more than they can see, the population of the society are rendered largely docile, content to accept that while they do not have much, what they do have is “the best” (*Matched* 30).

Limiting the artworks available also serves to restrict the possibility for individuality in the society. When attending their Match Banquet, Cassia and the other girls must choose one of the hundred dresses which the committee selected as permissible. Similarly, the paintings, stories, and music that they favour are all shared by numerous others. Many of these things have lost their appeal entirely as a result of their repetitious nature or outdated appearance. Music has fallen out of favour with many of the younger generations; the old-fashioned songs (never performed live, as no-one can play instruments) are of little interest. The songs that are permitted have been selected partly because they are too difficult for the average person to sing, and even the voice that is heard performing them in music halls is computer-generated. New artwork is disallowed, perhaps because, as will later be outlined, such creative endeavours can express messages that subvert discipline. Thus, the artistically
gifted go unidentified, instead partaking in one of the Society’s sanctioned hobbies. So successful has this limitation of art forms been that even the concept of dancing is alien to Cassia. Despite being strictly limited in their creativity, teenagers in particular are assigned tasks which convince them that they are engaging in creative pursuits, thereby circumventing the need to do so authentically.

A significant example of the latter is when Cassia, Xander and their friends are given the “opportunity” to replant flower beds and have ice cream afterwards. The task is framed as an exciting experience, with limited places and a sign-up sheet fuelling the notion that those partaking will be fortunate to do so. While Cassia recognises that this is “nothing but a glorified work project. They want some free labour and they’re bribing us with ice cream” (*Matched* 129), she nevertheless finds herself somewhat taken in by the excitement surrounding the event. Having planted her flowers, Cassia observes that “it feels like we have created something beautiful” (*Matched* 144). However, upon reflection she sees that this is incorrect, and finds herself confused:

Standing there looking at my work, however, I realise that all my family has ever done is sort. Never create. My father sorts old artifacts like my grandfather did; my grandmother sorted poems. My Farmlander grandparents plant seeds and tend crops, but everything they grow has been assigned by the Officials. Just like the things my mother grows at the Arboretum.

Just like we did here.

So I didn’t create anything after all. I did what I was told and followed the rules and something beautiful happened. Exactly as the Officials have promised. (*Matched* 145)

While Cassia can see that she and others are being manipulated, she cannot deny that this manipulation has resulted in a positive outcome. Such conflicted emotions are not uncommon in Young Adult dystopias: Tally in *Uglies*, and Lena in *Delirium* experience similar feelings. Despite realising that all is not well with the world, forfeiting a highly-regulated but relatively
privileged life of uniformity for freedom, uncertainty and chaos is for these characters not always an easy choice to make.

In addition to art being largely prohibited, people are taught little about their history. That which they do know has been carefully managed. Information is strictly limited, and in a reference to Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, one of Cassia’s father’s work assignments is to lead a book-burning project, destroying material that escaped the hundred committee’s cull (*Matched* 125). Indeed, Bradbury’s text is later explicitly referred to as a banned novel that is available to access through illegal trade (*Crossed* 290). Certainly, Cassia’s world resembles that of Montag, Bradbury’s protagonist, in that this lack of access to current information extends to a confusion regarding the past. Montag is lied to by a fireman who claims, in answer to Montag’s query about whether it is true that in the past fireman used to put out fires rather than start them, that “Houses have always been fireproof. Take my word for it” (*Bradbury* 6). Cassia and her contemporaries are faced with similar misinformation. Their knowledge of science is limited to the “hundred science lessons” (*Reached* 246), while their knowledge of the past is also restricted to the “hundred history lessons” which the Society deems it advantageous to teach (*Matched* 146).

This policy of protecting information about the past succeeds through the elimination and distortion of both personal and wider cultural and historical memory. The aforementioned red tablets are used to destroy memories of particular events, in much the same way as the memory serum in *Divergent* operated. When Ky is forcibly removed from the community, those living in Cassia’s neighbourhood are ordered to take their tablets, and are assured that “all it does is clear your mind” (*Matched* 326). However, Cassia understands the true need for the medication:

*All it does is clear your mind.* Of course. I know now why we’re going to take them. So we forget what happened to Ky, so we forget that the Enemy is winning the war in the Outer Provinces, that the villages there are all dead. And I realise why they didn’t have us take the tablets when something happened to the first Markham boy: because
we needed to remember how dangerous Anomalies can be. How vulnerable we would be without the Society to take them away. (Matched 326)

By means of the red tablets, the Society selects what citizens will or will not be permitted to remember, thus sculpting a narrative about the past that people do not have the tools to question. Here, history and memory are used to create an understanding of a Society which has been based on false premises, but which uses censorship of memory to obfuscate this fact and encourage people to have faith in it regardless.

The manipulation of history and memory are significant tools for control and the maintenance of the disciplinary dystopia. In dystopian texts, an uncensored knowledge of the past facilitates the improvement of the present and the forging of a better future. As Tom Moylan notes in conversation with Raffaella Baccolini, one of the lessons of dystopian literature is that “whatever bad times are upon us have been produced by systemic conditions and human choices that preceded the present moment” ("Conclusion" 241). However, Moylan goes on to note that these conditions can be altered, but “only by remembering that process and then organising against it” ("Conclusion" 241). Without access to memory, the citizens of the dystopia are denied the knowledge that there are other possibilities and potentially better ways of being. Thus, they are easily manipulated, convinced that theirs is the only viable regime. As Baccolini has postulated, a theory of remembrance is a necessary component for a “political, utopian praxis of change, action and empowerment,” because “our reconstructions of the past shape our present and future” ("Useful" 119). In the absence of an understanding of the events that lead to the present, the creation of a better future is a difficult, if not insurmountable, task.

The pursuit of this knowledge about the past is an important part of the development of the dystopian protagonist, and those situated within YA fiction are no different. As we have seen, Katniss, Tally, Lena and Tris have all faced a battle to uncover the truth of their
society’s history, and Cassia too struggles with this obstacle in her efforts to free herself from regulation and engage with the utopian condition of hope. Gradually, she begins to uncover both her own personal history and that of the Society; doing so creates a feedback loop whereby the more she learns, the more she resists, which in turn leads to further revelations about the past. As Baccolini holds: “Memory, then, to be of use for Utopia, needs to disassociate itself from its traditional link to the metaphor of the storage, and identify itself as a process. As Utopia is a process, so memory needs to be perceived as a process, not fixed or reachable, but in progress” ("Useful" 119-20).

Cassia stages attempts at resistance relating to each of these attempted areas of censorship, and an effort to recover memory and history is among the most significant of these attempts. Not immune to the red tablet like Ky and Xander, she is determined to resist it. To prepare for instances of memory loss, she begins to carry a piece of paper that has the word “remember” written on it, and this prompts her to grasp the faint threads of memory that linger in the immediate aftermath of taking the tablet. Having learned that it is possible to resist the drug in this manner, Cassia then concentrates her efforts on reclaiming the events of what her grandfather referred to as “the red garden day,” a time of significance to him which she has forgotten. Gradually, she begins to recall things related to this event, until she finally pieces together the entire memory. It is one which serves to strengthen her resolve against not just the Society, but also the Rising that has come after it. The red garden day involved an encounter with revolutionaries which showed her that they too are guilty of employing devious tactics to render people docile. Thus, Cassia comes to understand that utopia is indeed a process, and not something static which will be attained simply by eradicating the current regime. Both the memory itself and also the act of uncovering it remind her that while it will not be easy to operate outside the constraints imposed through regulation, she does have the power to resist.
Many of the other significant forms of resistance performed by Cassia and others in the novel relate to literacy. Baccolini has shown that, in many dystopian novels, “resistance is maintained through the recovery of history and literacy, with individual and collective memory” ("Finding" 167). Literacy is key to preserving history and memory, and to communicating messages of hope and resistance. While Cassia and her contemporaries can read, all reading is done on screens. Consequently, there are no writing tools, and they do not learn to write in school. This is not an uncommon theme in this genre. As Kristi McDuffie has noted, often in YA dystopias, “due to significant technological advances, many people have lost traditional forms of literacy like writing by hand” (145). This observation is supported by examples such as Westerfeld’s protagonist Tally, who is also unable to write initially, and the teenagers in M.T. Anderson’s Feed, who are entirely dependent upon technological means of communicating. McDuffie has also posited that texts such as Condie’s “present traditional literacies as a means of personal agency and freedom amidst controlling societies facilitated by technology” (145). Certainly, Ky’s writing is the first significantly subversive act that Cassia witnesses. As Moylan observes, in such texts, “Despite the initial silence, the counter-narrative is often accomplished precisely by way of language” (Scraps 149), and that is certainly the case here. When Cassia discovers that Ky, an Aberration who grew up in the Outer Provinces and whose father consorted with Anomalies, is able to write letters in dirt with a stick, she is shocked and thrilled. It has never occurred to her to try to write, and she has clearly never seen it done:

“What are you doing?” I ask him ... His hand moves, making shapes and curves and lines in the grass that seem familiar.

His blue eyes flash up to me. “I’m writing.”

Of course. That’s why the marks look familiar. He is writing in an old-fashioned, curved kind of writing, like the script on my compact. I’ve seen samples of it before but I don’t know how to do it. No one does. All we can do is type. We could try to imitate the figures, but with what? We don’t have any of the old tools.
But I realise as I watch Ky that you can make your own tools. *Matched* 170

This realisation is the beginning of Cassia’s understanding that she has the power to achieve things beyond those that have been prescribed by the Society. Ky, however, having been raised by a rebellious father on the fringes of the inner cities has long been aware that there is a world outside of the one Cassia knows, and there is a reason to resist. As a result, he has been creative in his efforts:

I gathered pieces of wood a few at a time on the hill or when a maple tree in the Borough lost a branch. I’d tie them together and lower them into the incinerator to char the ends for writing and drawing. Once, when I needed red, I stole a few petals from one of the blood-coloured petunias in a flower bed and used them to color the Official’s and my hands and the sun. (Condie *Crossed* 132)

The pictures and words that Ky creates in secret are the medium through which he conveys his personal history to Cassia, helping her to understand the realities of the Society’s past and present. Despite attempts to stifle citizens’ creativity, Ky finds methods of breaking the rules, and in so doing shows Cassia that such acts are possible. He begins to teach her to write, supplying her with a tool for resistance which she uses repeatedly throughout the series. As Moylan observes, “control over the means of language, over representation and interpellation, is a crucial weapon and strategy in dystopian resistance” (*Scraps* 149). Through learning to write, Cassia is armed with this weapon, and later arms many of her contemporaries also. Having been provided with words supplied by the Society all her life, she rejects those available for printing from the port, and begins to create her own narrative.

Cassia’s discovery of two poems secreted inside the compact mirror she received from her grandfather prior to his death is the catalyst for her change of views about the Society. Initially horrified to be in possession of something illegal, she is nevertheless enthralled by the words of Dylan Thomas’s 1951 villanelle “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good night” and Lord Alfred Tennyson’s 1889 poem “Crossing the Bar” (D. Thomas 239; Tennyson 255).
While the latter turns out to be a manifesto for the Rising, it is the former to which Cassia is especially drawn and which encourages her and Ky to challenge the disciplinarity that they encounter. Later, Ky trades with an archivist to acquire a stanza of another Thomas poem for Cassia’s birthday. “Cassia’s rebellion through consumption turns to production” when she begins to try to compose her own poetry (McDuffie 148). Following her experiences in the Outer Provinces, she develops her first poem into a song that she gives to another citizen, who passes it amongst the oppressed. Having discovered the power that writing and poetry can have in uniting people, Cassia’s next step is to share “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” with the community. Having procured writing tools in an illegal trade, she goes about spreading the message that inspired her to rebel, hanging the poem on a tree in the city:

I know Ky will understand why I have to write this, why there was nothing else that would suffice.

_Do not go gentle into that good night._  
_Rage, rage against the dying of the light._

Even if it’s a Society sympathizer who takes them down, he will see the words as he pulls the papers from the tree. Even if he burns them, they will have slipped through his fingers on the way to fire. The words will be shared, no matter what.

_Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright_  
_Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,_  
_Rage, rage against the dying of the light._

There are many of them in the world, I think, good men and women with their frail deeds. Wondering what might have been, how things might have danced, if we had only dared to be bright.

I have been one of them.

I unwind more paper and see the line

_Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight_  

I weave the paper through the branches. A long loop. Up and down, my knees bending. My arms above my head, like the girls I saw once in a painting in a cave. There is a rhythm to this, a keeping of time.

I wonder if I am dancing. (Reached 127-28)
Increasingly brave, Cassia then goes on to found the Gallery, a secret place where people come to share their creative endeavours. Rebelling in the Gallery against the Society’s ban on making art, people hang paintings, share songs and, after Cassia teaches them to write, compose stories and poems. The result of this is consistent with Jen Weiss’s finding in her study of poetry as a form of resistance for teenagers that “writing can become the glue that binds youth and their struggles together” (70). Those involved in the Gallery bond over their desire for revolution, and the writing they create reflects this. They use the Gallery space to remind themselves that even under the watchful eye of the Society, they can have secrets of their own.

Clearly, despite the Society’s efforts at censorship, Cassia and her contemporaries are successful in forging numerous modes of resistance to circumvent it. The Hundred Committee’s restrictions on information and cultural memory, while significant obstacles, are at least partly overcome through a refusal to accept their limits. Efforts at reclaiming personal and wider societal memory result in citizens understanding the need for change, realising the alternatives that can be achieved, and igniting hope for a better future. Additionally, the pursuit of literacy supplies them with important tools for rebellion, for as McDuffie asserts, in the *Matched* trilogy, “traditional literacy is presented as desirable and even necessary for personal agency” (149). Framed in opposition to technological literacies, the ability to write constitutes a form of resistance that can be utilised in several ways. As Baccolini recognises, “history, memory and the telling of tales are subversive elements in that they promote hope and the potential for change” ("Useful" 126). Through the acts of passing on skills which allow people to engage with such subversive elements, Cassia, Ky and others demonstrate that, in the face of censorship, an effort to unearth the past and create your own present can free the mind and perhaps, eventually, the body.
5.4 Regulation and the Rising: The Inseparability of Dominant Power and Resistance

In addition to the forms of resistance discussed thus far, the series’ most significant example of revolutionary intent comes in the form of the Rising. An underground movement to which Cassia is initially oblivious, the Rising becomes increasingly prominent in her and others’ lives as they engage in attempts to subvert the regulatory mechanisms that surround them. Framed initially as the Society’s eutopian saviour, the Rising’s vision for the future is somewhat vague, and the methods through which it proposes to attain control of this future are not always as liberating as they appear. While less restrictive than the technologies of power that preceded them, the Rising’s methods, practices and ideologies at times exhibit numerous similarities to those of the Society. Ultimately, this fact is demystified when Cassia and her friends discover that the boundaries between the two once opposing entities have blurred, and it is no longer entirely possible to tell where one ends and the other begins.

Before turning to the Rising in more detail, however, it may be helpful to briefly address other utopian endeavours in the Matched trilogy. Although the Pilot’s disciples are dependent upon the Rising to reconstitute their society, others have chosen to evade the reach of the current regime by removing themselves from it entirely. The presence of alternate communities outside of the hegemonic order is a common pattern in this wave of YA dystopian fiction, with Collins’s, Oliver’s and Westerfeld’s series also all housing a “utopian enclave” of sorts. While the extent to which these communities are eutopian is debateable, in each case they are certainly intended to be “considerably better” than the primary world of the protagonist. Thus, according to Sargent’s oft-cited definition they may be referred to as eutopian in nature ("Three Faces" 9). The proliferation of alternate communities as another form of resistance is to be expected; as Foucault has stated, “In power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there was no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would
be no power relations at all” (*Ethics* 292). Previous chapters have shown that it is often the relatively minor but abundant resistances which offer the most persistent challenges to dominant power. Yet at times these smaller resistances can lead to “radical ruptures,” including the development of counter-hegemonic communities (*Sexuality* 96). Extending Foucault’s ideas, Kevin Jon Heller posits that such counter-hegemonic endeavours are inevitable, “because no individual or group, no matter how hegemonic, can control all of a social formation’s mechanisms of power; and because all mechanisms of power are potentially capable of counter-hegemonic reappropriation” (Heller 102). For dystopian fiction in particular, the depiction of such clashes between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power are a central part of the texts’ revolutionary potential.

In Condie’s novel, there are a number of eutopian enclaves to be found: in the Carving, which lies outside of the Society, Anomalies referred to as “the Farmers” have lived a communal existence for generations, keeping alive traditions such as writing which have long been outlawed in the Society. Further afield, the “Stone Villages” are a number of communities seen as stepping stones to the “Otherlands” (the latter mythologised as the trilogy’s true utopia, despite no-one being entirely sure that it exists). The Stone Villages themselves, and in particular “Endstone,” the furthest from the Society, are depicted as the most viable escape from the hegemonic order for most people. Endstone operates on a communal basis and, despite its egalitarian principles, has its own problematic relations of power. The inhabitants are Anomalies and Aberrations, many of whom are bitter towards the citizens of the Society. While democracy is prized among them, and all decisions are put to a vote, the outcomes of these votes can lead to exile or capital punishment for citizens. The imperfections inherent in Endstone are perhaps highlighted by the fact that the majority of its inhabitants are eager to leave as soon as they can find passage to the Otherlands.
While the utopian community in Westerfeld’s text is generally depicted in positive terms, those in Oliver’s and Collins’s trilogies once again appear to have difficulties of their own. Westerfeld’s counter-hegemonic community, the Smoke, is an ecological utopia which appears to run smoothly; nevertheless, personal relationships are still a source of disillusionment. The enclave of Oliver’s series is similar to Westerfeld’s: members rely heavily upon recycled materials, live off the land and are dedicated to working for the good of the community. However, as the series develops it becomes clear that things are not entirely harmonious in the Wilds: traitors live among them and violent incidents develop from trivial matters. Finally, as detailed in Chapter One, District 13 in *The Hunger Games* is initially posited as a eutopian enclave; yet when examined further, that enclave is revealed to have many features reminiscent of the Capitol. The reappearance of such problems in counter-hegemonic societies is to be expected. As Dan W. Butin has explained, if we are to accept Foucault’s notion that all liberatory practices bring about their own “regime of truth,” “one could never hope that the next solution, the next reform, the next revolt, would finally bring about the desired liberation, freedom or happiness” (165). Instead, new alternatives are bound to bring about “new problems and new disciplinary practices against which to struggle” (Butin 165). Nevertheless, the counter-hegemonic communities succeed in a number of fundamental ways: they provide hope that a better future is possible and that people can physically survive outside of the hegemonic order, and they model alternate ways of living. That they do not always live up to their eutopian promise is unsurprising. However, returning to Condie’s text, such limitations explain why many of those aware of the existence of alternatives choose to stay in the Society and hope that one day the Rising will bring about true change.

Despite the fact that others in the Society turn out to have long been privy to the Rising’s presence, Cassia remains ignorant of its existence until attempting to trade with an
Archivist for a map to find Ky. Instead, what she receives is a story with which she is not familiar from the Hundred Committee’s selection. She is, however, aware of a similar tale, which has been told to her by Ky: the myth of Sisyphus. The tale of Sisyphus pushing a rock up a hill is one which recurs throughout the series, but in this case it has been rewritten as propaganda for the Rising:

This is how the Pilot came to be.

The Pilot is a man who pushed a stone and washed away in the water. It is a woman who crossed the river and looked to the sky. The Pilot is old and young and has eyes of every colour and hair of every shade; lives in deserts, islands, forests, mountains, and plains.

The Pilot leads the Rising – the rebellion against the Society – and the Pilot never dies. When one Pilot’s time has finished, another comes to lead.

And so it goes on, over and over like a stone rolling ...

In a place past the edge of the Society’s map, the Pilot will always live and move. (Crossed 55)

Used at other stages by Ky and Cassia to remind them to keep struggling on in the face of adversity, here the myth of Sisyphus has been adapted as propaganda for the Rising. As the revolution’s presence becomes increasingly felt and is eventually overtly declared, propaganda becomes a tool often used by the resistance. Prior to the beginning of the revolution, the Rising uses stories like that uncovered by Cassia to convince people to join, and once it has begun to overthrow the Society, the level of propaganda employed intensifies.

The Pilot in particular appears to be at the centre of such attempts at manipulation. He begins by informing those involved in the first wave of the revolution, in a disembodied announcement, that they are his chosen ones. Unable to make all citizens immune to the Plague, the Pilot purports that those who are not susceptible are special. Indie’s reaction suggests that the Pilot’s words are effective:
Some of our scientists found a way to make people immune to the red tablet, and also to the Plague. In the “the nightmare beginning, we didn’t have the resources to give these immunities to everyone. So we had to choose. And we chose you.”

“He chose us,” Indie whispers.

“You haven’t forgotten the things the Society wanted you to lose. And you can’t get the Plague. We protected you from both.” (Reached 73)

The Plague in question, citizens are informed, has been developed by the Society to defeat the Enemy. Now, it has finally gotten out of control. Having anticipated this moment, the Rising, armed with a cure, has taken advantage of the situation to announce its existence to the greater public.

Genetic engineering and body modification have been the most common biotechnological themes and tropes in the YA dystopias discussed thus far; however, the spread of plagues or viruses has long been another common trope in science fiction novels. As Heather Urbanski points out, some of the classic SF texts feature these illnesses, which often stem from beginnings similar to those depicted in Matched:

The nightmare of biological experimentation getting out of control is also the frequent premise of stories about viruses and plagues. Mary Shelley’s 1829 novel “The Last Man” describes the destruction of mankind by a plague while “I Am Legend”, the 1951 novel by Richard Matheson, combines nuclear weapons with biology when a bacterial plague that turns humans into vampires is unleashed by nuclear war. (Urbanski 66)

The trope of plague is found in adult SF works such as Jack London’s The Scarlet Plague, Margaret Atwood’s Oryx and Crake, The Year of the Flood and MaddAdam and Frank Herbert’s The White Plague. Additionally, a number of YA dystopias broach the theme, including Plague 99 by Jean Ure, Plague by Michael Grant, The Eleventh Plague by Jeff Hirsch and Marie Lu’s Legend series. Creating atmospheres of fear, despair, oppression and panic familiar in the dystopian mode, the inclusion of the plague in Matched is also central to the power relations that play out in the text. While the Society has engineered the plague, the
Rising takes advantage of its existence to seize control, having produced enough of the cure to convince people it is their saviour. Those who have been convinced are happy to engage in spreading the Rising’s propaganda. For example, Xander takes pride in his role inducting new medical staff, and explaining to them why the pandemic was necessary. When asked why the Rising didn’t immunize the entire population before the outbreak, as they did through the babies’ immunization tablets, Xander is confident that “the Rising has given me all the information I need to field a question like this” (*Reached* 109). As directed, he informs the group of new medics that the Rising, unlike the Society, was not comfortable immunizing older citizens without permission. The crowd is apparently satisfied with this explanation; Xander, however, knows it to be lacking:

> There’s another reason, of course, but I don’t say it out loud: If the Rising had secretly immunized people, the people wouldn’t know whom to thank for saving them. They wouldn’t even know they *had* been saved. The Rising didn’t start this Plague. They solved it. And the people need to know that. They can’t appreciate the solution unless they know there had been a problem. (*Reached* 110)

Convinced that allowing people to get sick was necessary for the greater good, Xander encourages people to be grateful to the Rising. It ultimately transpires, however, that the Plague was introduced to the cities not by the Society, but by members of the Rising itself, who felt that the revolution needed to be forced into an early unveiling. As in the Society, Xander and others have been manipulated.

Further proof of manipulation occurs when the Pilot begins to spread his propaganda amongst the greater population. In a recorded announcement, he attempts to convince citizens that they should be grateful to the Rising, and put themselves in its hands. Cassia, it seems, recognises that the speech is structured for such purposes:

> And now the Pilot’s voice takes on more emotion, more persuasion, more. It becomes bigger; it plays on our emptiness, fills our hearts. “We will keep all the good things from the Society, all the best parts of our way of life. We won’t lose all the things you’ve worked so hard to build. But we’ll get rid of the sickness in the Society.
“This rebellion,” the Pilot says, “is different than others throughout history. It will begin and end with saving your blood, not spilling it.” (Reached 95)

The Pilot goes on to assure people that help is available for the sick, but that “if you try to run, we cannot guarantee a cure” (Reached 96). It seems that the citizens have found themselves displaced from one regime which monitored and restricted its movements to another engaging in similar tactics. The Pilot has supposedly liberated the population, but it is a population still very much at the mercy of a controlling regime. Citizens are forced to stay under the Rising’s watch if they hope to get well. Such tactics are central to disciplinarity, with the “distribution of individuals in space” being a key tenet of regulatory control (Discipline 141). Indeed, even those who are well are asked to keep to the structure established by the Society, to retain their work assignments and living arrangements.

The level of surveillance in which the Rising engages, while perhaps less than that of the Society which preceded it, is certainly significant. Cassia and others feel sure that they are being observed constantly, though they are not always able to identify where the surveillance originates. Regardless of the Society’s fall, she is not comfortable speaking to her family freely over the port. Instead, “we still speak guardedly; we smile and don’t say much more than we did when the Society was in power. We aren’t quite sure who can hear us now. I want to talk without anyone listening” (Reached 116). Rising officers patrol the streets, telling people to hurry along when out and about; people are both watched and time managed. These conditions intensify as time passes: when the mutation occurs all citizens are put under lockdown, told to stay in their guarded apartments and banned from communicating with those in other provinces. Even when the cure for the mutation has been found, people are not granted freedom. When Ky suggests that he will search for his missing parents during his own time, he is informed by the Pilot that “you don’t have any of your own time right now” (Reached 477). It appears that the Rising has embraced the Society’s disciplinary
method of ensuring that “an attempt is also made to assure the quality of the time used:
constant supervision, the pressure of supervisors, the elimination of anything that might
disturb or distract; it is a question of constituting a totally useful time” (Discipline 150).

The use of these disciplinary techniques is perhaps inevitable, for as Cassia and others
appear to realise quickly, the Rising shares many practices with its predecessor. The Pilot
states that the Rising intends to retain the “good” things from the Society; as “good” is
entirely subjective, however, this policy invites abuse. From the very beginning, Ky
identifies the Pilot’s opening speech as having dictatorial and manipulative undertones,
remarking: “This sounds like the Society” (Reached 74). Immediately, in what may or may
not be a response, the Pilot goes on to state that “We are not the Society ... but we recognise
that we have to save people before we can free them” (Reached 74). Either the surveillance
runs even deeper than suspected, and the Pilot was able to hear Ky’s expression of
dissatisfaction, or he had anticipated such claims, suggesting that there is a credible
foundation to them.

Much like the Society, the Rising operates in a furtive manner, with those it purports
to fight for provided with little information. As previously noted, Foucault’s theories suggest
that resistance can only operate from a place within relations of power. Thus, as Brent L.
Pickett observes, resistance relies upon “the techniques of power” (167). While these
techniques may be employed in some cases for productive means, the Rising often chooses to
use them for restrictive purposes. In so doing, those at the head of the hierarchy are protected
from view, while ordinary citizens are made highly visible. Cassia reflects that even when
working within the Rising, she knows extraordinarily little about who is in charge or what is
occurring around her. She wonders: “How deeply and well had the Rising infiltrated central?
Why do I know so little about what is taking place? Is that the Society’s fault, for making me
forget, or the Rising’s, for not telling me enough in the first place?” (Reached 94-95). Like
the Society, which the head archivist tells Cassia is run by “committees of Officials from
different departments,” the rulers of the Rising are also unclear to many (Reached 99). The
Pilot is at the helm, but who exactly the Pilot is remains a mystery to the majority of people.
Even the most committed members of the resistance are ignorant regarding his identity.
Later, he communicates with the general public only verbally, through messages piped into
people’s homes and workplaces. Although Cassia, Ky and Xander are eventually brought to
meet their leader, for others he remains much like the Wizard of Oz – a disembodied voice
that purports to be that of a confident ruler with the answers to everything. An entirely human
and insecure entity, however, lies behind the façade.

In its attempts at ensuring citizens remain visible and docile, the Rising employs
practices carried out by the Society both in everyday and emergency circumstances. Society
food continues to be sent out to people, and when the Plague breaks out, it is the Society’s
methods that are used by the Rising to carry out the treatment. Those who exhibit plague
symptoms are kept in transparent cubicles that the Society has in the past used for more
sinister reasons. As Xander explains:

The rumour is that the Society perfected this system back in the days when Officials
were on the move looking for Anomalies. Sometimes the Society had to set up centres
to contain all the Anomalies they found in order to evaluate them, and so that’s when
they developed the cells. When the Officials from the Safety Department finished
tracking down the majority of those they determined to be dangerous, they turned the
cells over to the Medical Department for use. (Reached 50)

Having used the cells to “evaluate” through surveillance and examination those classified as
Anomalies, the Society then suggests that these cubicles might be used for medical reasons.
The Rising is content to avail of this suggested use, and Xander’s description of the cells
explains the degree to which they may facilitate observation and thus be desirable:

The cells can be taken apart and put together in different configurations, like the
pieces of a puzzle. They have their own sewage and plumbing systems inside their
floors, and the systems can be piggybacked onto those of a larger building. Each cell
has a tiny cot, a slot for food delivery, and a small partition at the back, large enough
for a latrine. The most distinguishing feature of the cells, besides their size, is the walls. They are, for the most part, transparent.

Transparency of care, the Society calls it. Everyone can see what is happening to everyone else, and medical Officials can watch their subjects at all times. (Reached 50)

Transparency is a condition present in all disciplinary regimes, and one that expedites the diffusion of regulatory techniques amongst those most vulnerable to them. Indeed, the Panopticon described by Foucault to elucidate the very concept of discipline is a structure entirely based around transparency. As David S. Allen has explained, “the goal of Panopticism was to expose the inmate to so much visibility that the functioning of power became automatic” (333). Like the Society, the Rising seems to understand that power may be most efficiently exercised through transparency. In this aspect, the latter has departed very little from the ways of the former.

In another move reminiscent of the Society, the tissue samples are also used for manipulation by the Rising. When Ky discovers that Caleb has been bringing samples to some people under the Pilot’s orders, he protests at the selective nature of the endeavour, and questions whether the Rising believe that they can bring people back from the dead. Caleb, however, tells Ky that “They know they can’t. They know the Society couldn’t either. They just want the samples. Like insurance.” When Ky presses him, Caleb admits that “The Pilot knows you can’t bring people back with the samples ... Not everyone else does. He uses that to his advantage” (Reached 218). Later, the Pilot justifies this by telling Ky: “I’ll use whatever I need to secure loyalty and resources for finding the cure. The samples are a currency that works when almost nothing else will” (Reached 269). Despite his purported benevolent motives, this statement indicates that the Rising is intent upon determining what is best for people and controlling them accordingly, just like the Society claimed to do.

Conveniently, the fact that the Plague has been spread by members of the Rising themselves
(thus “necessitating” such circumstances where people apparently must be controlled for their safety) is apparently disregarded.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that experienced characters such as Ky and the head Archivist declare themselves disinclined to trust either the Society or the Rising (Reached 98; Crossed 296). As their hold develops, it becomes increasingly clear that the revolutionaries are using many well-worn methods in the name of change. Cassia’s realisation that the Society had forced her to add Abberations, including Ky, to the matching pool before wiping her memory helps her to see that both “The Society and the Rising used me when they needed me, dropped me when they didn’t” (Reached 472). Others also express dissatisfaction: Oker, a ninety year old evacuee from the Society, tells Xander that “when the Rising asked [the Pilot] to lead, I told him not to believe them. They’re no rebellion. They’re Society, with a different name, and they just want you and your followers” (Reached 317). Later, when Xander tries to convince Oker that “It’s not the Society anymore,” Oker replies, “Only fools think that anything has changed. The Rising and the Society have infiltrated each other so thoroughly that they don’t even know who’s who anymore. It’s like a snake eating its own damn tail” (Reached 341). Those who have dealt with both the Society and the Rising are largely suspicious of each of these regimes, and with good reason, as the Pilot eventually confirms to Cassia, Ky and Xander:

“You should know that the Rising was real,” the Pilot says. “The scientists who came up with the immunity to the red tablet were true rebels. So was your great-grandmother. And so were many of the others, especially those of us in the Army. But then, the Society realised that their power was slipping and discovered that they had a rebellion in the midst. At first, they tried to take back control by getting rid of the Aberrations and Anomalies. Then the Society began to infiltrate us the way we had infiltrated them. Now I don’t know who is who anymore.” (Reached 436)

Understanding that the tide was turning, and that more and more people were sentient due to immunity to the red tablet, the Society understood that the best way to tackle a rebellion was to infiltrate it. Thus, it allowed people to believe that they were experiencing change, while
the same disciplinary techniques were largely being repackaged and reinstated. Despite the Society’s attempts at control, however, they could not wholly predict the outcome: unexpected events such as the development of the mutation disrupted their plans, leading Cassia to conclude that “The Society is dead, even if they don’t know it yet” (Reached 438). As the novel ends, however, it is difficult to entirely accept this assessment. In an attempt at democracy, a vote is planned to decide whether the Society, the Rising or an alternative led by Anna, the leader of the Anomaly group known as the Farmers, will be the next regime instated. We are told that the Society has pulled back from the Rising, and its presence is no longer felt; how one can be certain this is true, however, is unclear. The hope which generally typifies the conclusion of the YA dystopia is certainly present here, but what the future will bring is uncertain, and not guaranteed to be better than what has gone before. Nevertheless, what the Rising has brought about is the possibility of choice. While Cassia comes to understand (as Lena did in Delirium) that freedom necessitates that people can make poor choices, it also grants them the opportunity to work towards a better world.

The Rising, then, despite seeming initially to be the most significant site of resistance in the text, emerges as little other than a replica of the disciplinary practices which it was established to overturn. The true resistance in the Matched series is to be found elsewhere: in the everyday subversive acts which Cassia, Ky and others undertake to escape the physical and mental constraints under which they live, the efforts that they make to retain the past and the plans with which they engage to change the future. The Archivists work outside the boundaries that have been imposed, and the traders show that even under surveillance, it is possible to have secrets. Beyond the Society, organised forms of resistance such as the Farmers and those that live in the Stone Villages and the Otherlands show that while it is not possible to eradicate relations of power, efforts to displace them may nevertheless produce more desirable societal formations. As the Rising shows, the connection between resistance
and dominant power means that the two co-exist in the most unexpected of places, and the friction between them has the potential to create new spaces of hope.

**Conclusion**

A thorough examination of the *Matched* trilogy unearths problems relating to the exercise of dominant power, the body’s role in facilitating and attempting to resist this dominant power, and the difficulties of living under – and trying to escape – disciplinary structures. Corones and Hardy have shown that often, in such societies, “the benevolent mask of health promotion disguises the requisite controlling strategy” (394). The Society utilises this method, and in so doing has succeeded for many years in keeping people amenable to – and even complicit in – their own repression. In the name of healthcare, citizens have submitted to arranged marriages, agreed to medicate upon direction, restrict their diets and undertake prescribed amounts and types of exercise. For those who may struggle with any of these purported health-based initiatives, the incentive of possibly having their tissue preserved for regeneration acts as a significant motivating factor.

The accepted belief that the Society is primarily concerned with looking after citizens’ health has led to life in Cassia’s world developing into an extended Foucauldian examination. The population’s every movement, action, communication and even its dreams are monitored and recorded. With no concept of privacy, and little hope of acting outside the forecasts drawn from the Society’s vast data pool, the few that do rebel are generally reclassified, forced to live in the Society as an Aberration or outside it as an Anomaly. Restrictions on speech, hobbies, creativity and even the memories that people are allowed to retain ensure that the past is difficult to hold on to, and the present often even more so. Yet, as Cassia and her friends demonstrate, resistance is always possible within the field of power relations, and
even the most minor forms of rebellion can lead to greater subjectivity if practiced consistently.

Although the Rising has ultimately proved itself to be far removed from the revolution that it purported to be, like the majority of YA dystopias, the trilogy does end in a hopeful manner. The communities beyond the provinces show that it is possible to live outside the system, and although life in these situations is not always easy, it is less constrained by disciplinarity. For those who choose to remain in the cities, however, including Cassia and Ky, a life free from disciplinary structures is not guaranteed. Condie refrains from providing her young adult readers with a detailed view of the future for her protagonist and the new world order which is dawning. Rather than conclusively supplying a happy ending, she suggests through Cassia that it is the struggle to change things that is the most important part of resistance, not the result. Perhaps there is some merit in this message; certainly, Foucault’s work suggests that it is in the spaces of possibility which are created by such struggles and which precede reform that true freedom is found (Phillips 336). This is consistent with utopian thinking in general, which recognises utopia’s importance as a process rather than an ultimate achievement. Cassia is philosophical as the series concludes: “I can already feel some things slipping through my fingers like sand and water, like artifacts and poems, like everything you want to hold on to and can’t. But we did it. Whatever happens next, we managed to find a cure and begin a vote” (Reached 513). The notion that, “whatever happens next,” things are better than what went before is central to the conclusion of the Matched series. Traditionally the classical adult dystopia leaves the reader with the feeling that any ending beyond the text will be a bleak one; as we have seen, however, its YA counterpart generally operates differently. Here, and in many other similar texts, the young adult reader is left with the impression that even if it has not been explicitly depicted, a better future is coming. Yet successful texts retain elements of the critical potential inherent in the dystopian
form by emphasising that this better future is dependent upon resistance. For Cassia, while the ultimate result of this resistance is not yet clear, the very conditions that it supplies make for a better world.

Thus, it is perhaps understandable that the *Matched* trilogy has proven so popular with its young adult audience. Each of the four sections developed here is concerned with a topic which not only distils the body’s implication in the relations of power depicted, but is also likely to be of interest to young adults more generally. Firstly, the series’ references to medicalisation are a stark depiction of where current trends may lead. Today’s young adults are surely familiar with the increased tendency in our society to medicalise issues previously deemed acceptable; indeed, a number of Condie’s readers will have found themselves involved in relations of power in which the dominant party has pathologised their behaviour or feelings. To see such trends magnified here may prove validating for them. Secondly, the kind of technological surveillance depicted in the *Matched* trilogy is another element with which contemporary Western society is currently grappling. The series asks young readers to consider the potential negative aspects of technological “progress” (in particular those innovations which make it easier for authorities to collect our data), and to consider how and why we might wish to protect ourselves from these. Thirdly, censorship in general is a topic by which adolescents are likely to be exercised. Condie has identified and depicted types of censorship which may resonate with her readers. The novels challenge young adults to destroy such restrictions, or if this is not possible, to find ways to circumnavigate them. Condie’s depictions of resistance have much to offer the YA audience, as they are more intellectually sophisticated than many of the novels discussed here. Firstly, they demonstrate that, from small attempts at shifting the power balance, great changes can develop (such as Cassia’s efforts to teach people how to write leading to a sizeable resistance movement in the gallery). Secondly, through the Rising, Condie illustrates that all relations of power include
dominance and resistance. Teenage readers, who are beginning to nuance their understanding of the manner in which such systems operate in their own world, are sure to appreciate their representation in a manner that does not patronise them. Certainly, the *Matched* trilogy has its faults, as do all of the series discussed here. Nevertheless, for the audience who have made it such a success, these faults appear to be outweighed by its success at capturing YA issues in such a way that satisfies the young adult desire for hope.
Concluding Remarks

On Sunday, 3rd November 2013, two hundred young adults crowded into Eason’s book shop on O’Connell street in Dublin. Comprised mostly of teenage girls, the crowd had gathered to see one of their favourite authors of a YA dystopian trilogy: Veronica Roth. Many of the young adults present dressed in the colours of the faction from the Divergent series with which they most closely identified, and held posters depicting phrases from the trilogy and their drawings of favourite characters. Introducing Roth, the MC asked the audience to shout in support of their chosen faction. The reaction was deafening. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the loudest shouts were in support of Dauntless, the faction of Roth’s protagonist and her love interest.

Following Roth’s reading from her latest book in the series, fans queued eagerly to have their books signed by the author. Young women hugged each other in excitement having spoken to the woman responsible for a series about which they felt so passionate. Fans spoke on camera about their love of the series, and how the character of Tris resonated with them. One young woman, who appeared to be in her early teens, summed up the group’s comments: “I find the characters…like, you’re able to identify with them and their problems, like y’know, having to make the choice between pleasing yourself and pleasing your family, and it’s something that all teenagers do face but it’s just been thrown at us a different way, and I think it’s portrayed really well” (Eason 2:05). Despite the trilogy’s dystopian setting, evidently young adult readers found much to identify with in the Divergent series.

The young adults’ identification with Roth’s series, and the general YA appreciation for this and the other series discussed here, is understandable having examined the texts in detail. Each of the series featured in this thesis has been shown to incorporate disciplinary power structures that for young adult readers may invoke considerations of the complex web
of power relations with which they engage daily. Additionally, the close-readings undertaken have shown that these texts also incorporate the kinds of issues more traditionally featured in realistic fiction for young adults. Romantic relationships and awakening sexuality, identity struggles, problems with parents, heteronormative bias, self-harm, sibling relationships and many more concerns common in realistic YA novels abound here, no less prominent for their dystopian setting. Hintz and Ostry have posited that “adolescence frequently entails traumatic suffering and personal awakening,” and that it is often in this period of their life that “the adolescent comes to recognise the faults and weaknesses of his or her society and rebels against it” ("Introduction" 9). Thus, “Dystopian literature […] mingles well with the coming-of-age novel” (Hintz and Ostry "Introduction" 9). There appears to be some truth to this, as elements of the bildungsroman form can be identified in each of the dystopian series discussed. In all of the texts featured, young female protagonists are faced with conventional teenage concerns in dystopian conditions. In working through the former while facing and to varying degrees overcoming the latter, they reach maturity. Collins’ protagonist is aware of the ills of her society from the text’s opening; in the remaining four series the female hero begins in a place of innocence, before this innocence is shattered by the realisation that her society and way of life is fundamentally flawed. She engages in resistance, and in doing so leaves childhood behind.

The female protagonists featured in the five series discussed are undoubtedly a welcome progression from the days when male protagonists dominated dystopian and sf novels for young adults. They are depicted as strong, brave young women determined to play a role in defeating the status quo, and who are capable of using their bodies to engage in resistance against the dominant power structures which engulf them. Such depictions of strong young females perhaps in part account for the popularity of the novels among teenage girls in particular. As is customary in societies utilising disciplinarity, however, these female
characters are also implicated in ensuring that regulatory institutions operate successfully in the first place: they have accepted the mantle of responsibility for their own regulation. The awakenings that occur in each of the novels, and associated efforts at defeating such structures, go some way toward restoring the subjectivity of the protagonists in question. Unfortunately, in many of the series discussed the protagonist does not reach this position of her own volition. Instead, she is encouraged to do so by a young man. Neither Lena nor Cassia have any desire to disrupt the status quo until enlightened by their love interest, while Tally, despite venturing to the Smoke alone, does so under duress and chooses to stay only due to David’s influence. Tris and Katniss are somewhat less dependent upon male characters to incite them to resistance; nevertheless, they are greatly influenced by Tobias, Peeta and Gale respectively. In Uglies, Delirium and Matched, the young men are depicted as having a superior understanding and knowledge of the world, and it is only when they confer this upon the female protagonist that she is awakened and begins to claim power through resistance.

The five chapters have shown that romance is prominent throughout this current wave of YA dystopian texts. In particular, the overwhelming presence of the love triangle is a notable feature which sets these texts apart from their adult counterparts. However, it seems that the extent to which romance facilitates or limits the text’s revolutionary message can vary significantly. Love is central to the very composition of Oliver’s dystopia; the relationships depicted provide Lena with the impetus for action. They help shape her into a strong woman who, as Nancy suggested in his treatise on love, “returns” not as her old self, but as someone with greater resolve to enact change (111). Conversely, Katniss’s love triangle ultimately gives way to a life determined by structures of compulsory heterosexuality; while much has changed in the world outside, her conclusion plays out as an insular vision of all that she professed to reject. Cassia finds herself motivated to fight for a better world purely because
of her love for Ky and the impossibility of their relationship in the regimented society in which they live. Unlike Lena, however, who is also motivated by romance, Cassia’s conclusion is a more inward looking one: there is little vision for the future, and she seems relatively unconcerned about the wider society now that her relationship has been legitimised. Westerfeld’s protagonist, Tally, appears to be slightly less preoccupied with romance than her counterparts, yet her willingness to neglect friendships and ultimately withdraw from society with David shows that she has chosen to detach herself from the responsibility of rebuilding their world. Instead, she chooses to stay on the fringes, “protecting” nature. Finally, Tris is largely emboldened by her relationship, with her growing sexual confidence mirroring her increased efforts to improve her society. Unfortunately, this depiction is undercut throughout with an explicit didacticism regarding sexual mores, culminating in the message that having sex is bound up in completing oneself. If romance is to successfully reside within the dystopian text, it is vital that female protagonists are divorced from the passive state that typifies such attitudes and revealed instead to be independent subjects who utilise their agency in search of wider change. Supplying prime conditions for the female hero to emerge as an active figure, dystopian literature has the potential to transform romance into a revolutionary force, but only if sufficient care is taken to ensure that it remains a motivation, rather than a distraction, for the protagonist.

In some cases, the protagonists’ romantic relationship is linked to the relatively positive, open endings that proliferate in these texts. While Katniss’s outcome leaves much to be desired, and there is little information about the new world order that is in place at the trilogies close, we are clearly expected to accept that the protagonists’ life with Peeta and their children is a progressive outcome. In Uglies, having disrupted the old status quo, Tally leaves to begin a new life with David, and is depicted as having finally found her identity in doing so. Although Tris dies at the end of Divergent, she does so for what Roth clearly
envisioned to be noble reasons, and only after she has been “completed” through consummating her relationship with Tobias. Cassia is portrayed as looking forward to the creation of a new world in which she can live happily with Ky, her chosen partner, rather than Xander, who was assigned to her by the old regime. Only Oliver’s series places the revolution at the centre of its conclusion, and relegates romance to a secondary concern. The future is uncertain at the end of this text, but it is certainly more hopeful than what preceded it.

A trend toward such hopeful, open endings was clearly identified across the five chapters of this thesis. Unlike the classical dystopian form, which features bleak, closed endings and the ultimate subjugation of the protagonist, each of these series allows for hope both inside and outside of the text. Many YA dystopian authors appear to believe that it is their responsibility to include a glimmer of hope in their novels. Lois Lowry has summed this sentiment up: “Young people handle dystopia every day: in their lives, their dysfunctional families, their violence-ridden schools. They watch dystopian television and movies about the real world where firearms bring about explosive conclusions to conflict. Yes, I think they need to see some hope for such a world” (qtd. in Hintz and Ostry "Introduction" xi). Clearly, Lowry is not alone in feeling this way, as the inclusion of hope is widespread in such texts.

Yet some critics appear to view this inclusion of hope in YA dystopias as a kind of dumbing down of the dystopian form. Kay Sambell in particular views the trend towards the inclusion of hope as problematic, suggesting that it provides “particular challenges for the resolution of the admonitory dystopian novel, whose didactic impact relies instead on an unequivocally pessimistic denouement” ("Presenting" 165). However, here Sambell is clearly neglecting to acknowledge the potential of the critical dystopian form. Baccolini and Moylan define critical dystopias as “texts that maintain a utopian impulse” and “allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure” ("Introduction" 7). The didactic impact of
critical dystopian texts is no less significant for including the possibility of hope; rather it is transformative because it is, as Utopian scholar Ruth Levitas has termed it in conversation with Lucy Sargisson, “the dark side of hope, and hopes for a way out” (26). I have therefore aligned the texts discussed here with the critical dystopia. While perhaps not conscious of writing critical dystopian texts, in general the authors here have maintained a utopian impulse through their endings. Although some aspects of the protagonists’ personal lives are resolved, in general the societies at large are in a state of flux at the novel’s conclusion, but perceived to be changing for the better. Additionally, many of the texts contain at least one “utopian enclave”: District 13 in The Hunger Games, the Smoke in Uglies, the Wilds in Delirium and the stone villages and the Otherlands in Matched. While I believe that the term “critical dystopia” may be somewhat overused currently, according to this definition these texts may be deemed to fit the criteria. Thus, to disregard their admonitory potential as a result of their rejection of the closed ending common in the classical adult dystopian novel would be unfairly dismissive.

Having aligned the trilogies here with the critical dystopian form, further discussion of the question of genre is perhaps warranted. “Genre blurring” has been identified by Baccolini and Moylan as a hallmark of the critical dystopia (“Introduction” 7). In all of the trilogies examined here, the lines between the dystopian and the romance form are blurred. So prevalent is the emphasis on romance – and in particular the love triangle – in many contemporary YA dystopias that these texts have arguably evolved into a new category of their own. The term “dystopian romance” is one that is used frequently in relation to these texts by book reviewers and publishers, and it perhaps more accurately describes their content than the term “dystopian fiction” alone. This juxtaposition of two apparently opposed modes of writing places the texts in a sort of “in-between” place, where liberal messages are mixed with an inner conservatism. While bearing all of the traditional hallmarks of the critical
dystopia (open endings, resistance to the hegemonic order, utopian enclaves, self-reflexivity, genre blurring), these texts reach largely conservative conclusions which emphasise personal relationships rather than the future of the society – with Oliver’s series the one exception. Traditionalist messages on topics such as sex and appearance can be found within the trilogies; such conservatism is typical both of the romance genre, and of much fiction written for children and young adults historically.

Conversely, as dystopian texts these novels also display revolutionary messages which are enhanced further by their links to the feminist dystopia. Although feminism is perhaps more commonly associated with the literary utopia, feminist depictions of the future began to display from the 1980s onward a distinctly dystopian pallor. Peter Fitting observes that this new cohort of feminist dystopias tended to offer “depressing images of a brutal reestablishment of capitalist patriarchy,” perhaps as a result of frustrations surrounding the backlash to second-wave feminism (Fitting 142). Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) bridged the gap between the classical dystopia and works of feminist critical dystopia such as Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It* (1991), Octavia E. Butler’s *Xenogenesis* (1989) and *Parable* novels (1993/1998), and Ursula Le Guin’s *The Telling* (2000). These feminist critical dystopias offered critiques of patriarchy through their treatment of issues such as gender and power, sexuality, female desire, reproduction, memory, language and identity. Many of these topics have also been shown to feature heavily in the YA trilogies discussed here, though they do not always receive such explicitly feminist treatment. As Ildney Cavalcanti has observed: “Although their speculations about gender and power vary in intensity and approach, all feminist dystopias deal with this issue, a factor that marks the connections with contemporary androcentric culture” (Cavalcanti 48). Certainly, the YA texts discussed here have demonstrated a focus on gender and power, with the body connecting the two. In these YA texts, the political message is often to be found in
depictions of personal difficulties, and while gender does not always take centre stage, the conditions of the dystopia are often linked to feminist concerns. Furthermore, Baccolini notes that in most feminist dystopias, “the recovery of history and literacy, together with the recovery of individual and collective memory, becomes an instrumental tool of resistance for their protagonists” ("Persistence" 520). Again, this feature is consistent across all of the series discussed here. The presence of strong female protagonists also enhances the series’ feminist leanings, although such leanings are at times hampered somewhat by a dependence upon and/or preoccupation with male love interests.

Finally, their link to the critical dystopian form sees four of the five trilogies featuring utopian enclaves as part of their counter- hegemonic narrative. While the degree to which these alternative societies can truly be considered utopian varies, as noted in Chapter Five, they all fulfil a utopian function in their provision of oppositional spaces of hope. Those described in Oliver’s and Condie’s series in particular depict communities where women clearly are equal to their male counterparts. The utopian enclave is thus where the objectives of the critical dystopia, feminism and young adult literature are all crystallised: it provides a place for the novels to “maintain the utopian impulse within the work” (unlike the classical dystopia), supplies a forum whereby gender equal societies can be modelled and strong women foregrounded, and allows the author to include those residual messages of hope which can be essential elements of the YA text.

In the introduction to this thesis, I outlined four central research questions. The analysis of my corpus of contemporary YA dystopias in Chapters 1-5 has clearly outlined the answers to the first three of these, which I will briefly return to before addressing the fourth here.
My first question was: to what extent can the key elements of what Foucault termed the “disciplinary society” be identified in the novels discussed? Disciplinary structures are present in all of the dystopian societies depicted here. Certainly, traditional forms of dominant power and punishment can also be witnessed in some of the texts (such as Gale’s public whipping in The Hunger Games or Jeanine’s use of force to eliminate Abnegation members in Divergent), and overt attempts at control do feature. These include the operations that Tally is subjected to and the medication used to render citizens docile in Matched. However, in such cases, characters have been convinced by disciplinary tactics that it is wholly desirable to submit themselves to these physical manipulations. In general, it is disciplinary structures that are most widespread and which facilitate the functioning of the dystopian worlds portrayed. All four of Foucault’s basic techniques of discipline are present in each text: the societies function through the art of distributions, the control of activity, the organisation of geneses and the composition of forces. Additionally, each of the dystopian worlds depicted relies upon Foucault’s simple instruments: normalising judgement, hierarchical observation and the examination.

The second research question was: what role does the body play in the implementation and maintenance of the disciplinary practices employed in the societies in question? The body has been shown to play a central role in both the implementation and maintenance of the disciplinary practices evident in each text. The ways in which it is implicated vary, but many of the more significant examples recur across a number of the series. In The Hunger Games, Katniss is subject to strict control of activity and time management; partitioning; normalisation regarding appearance, gender and heteronormative behaviour expectations; and intense scrutiny through both overt and covert means. In Uglies, Tally is subject to the art of distributions, with her life before becoming pretty tightly scheduled. Additionally, the normalisation of physical perfection in her world leads to people
gladly submitting to surgery which alters not only their bodies but their minds also. Delirium’s Lena quite literally finds herself subject to an examination of both brain and body: wears a translucent gown while being tested by a panel who determine her future, and regulators patrol the streets of her town collecting information on the movements of inhabitants. Those around her are operated upon to prevent them from feeling love, and once again normalising judgement has convinced the majority that this is to be welcomed. In Divergent, Tris is subjected to scrutiny by her family from childhood. Their disapproving gaze leads to her attempting to mould herself according to Abnegation values, before undertaking a similar identity performance in another section of their highly partitioned society. Finally, Cassia lives in a world where the bodies of citizens are intensely medicalised, with people blindly accepting guidelines regarding food, pharmaceuticals and exercise, amongst other things. Their movements are controlled and monitored, their romantic partners prescribed, and they willingly provide statistics for those monitoring them.

Thirdly, we asked: Is the body utilised as a vehicle for the resistance and subversion of disciplinary power in the novels discussed? If so, in what ways? The protagonists of the novels discussed find various ways to utilise their bodies in the production of power and the resistance of disciplinarity. Katniss, for example, works with Cinna to create a physical appearance which makes the audience of the games sympathetic to her, and uses her relationship with Peeta in much the same way. Her transformation into the mockingjay is another manner in which she manipulates the gaze conferred upon her, and she frees herself and others in the process. Similarly, Tally and her friends find methods of bodily resistance to escape the restrictions imposed upon them: as noted, they experiment with self-harm and starvation, but only temporarily and as a productive force for overcoming the effects of the surgery and regaining memory. Indeed, the reclamation of memory is significant in all of the texts. In each case, the protagonist’s or the society’s memory has been manipulated, and the
female heroes recover this memory in an effort to rupture the status quo. This is typical of the
dystopian protagonist, who as Moylan contends, “often reclaims a supressed and subterranean
memory that is forward looking in its enabling force, liberating in its deconstruction of the
official story and its reaffirmation of alternative ways of knowing and living in the world”
(Scraps 149-50). Lena’s love for Alex inspires her to engage in resistance, and she eventually
overcomes the control of activity and distributions to which she is subjected by escaping to
the Wilds. She then inverts the surveillance to which she has been subjected, becoming a spy
for the resistance within Portland. Tris uses her physical strength to shake off the disciplinary
structures that surround her, and takes control of her appearance to separate herself from the
standards of normalisation that moulded her growing up. She also demonstrates that
awakening sexuality can be a transformative force. Finally, Cassia, in addition to joining the
Rising, engages in resistance via creativity. She teaches others to reclaim their voices,
tutoring them in writing and creating songs through which to spread revolutionary messages.
Additionally, she encourages others to engage in unauthorised activities such as dancing, and
in doing so awakens them to alternative possibilities. The above examples are just a small
sample of the ways in which the protagonists featured in the five series harness their bodies to
create power and resist disciplinary structures.

The final research question was: to what extent might this recurring theme of the body
as a locus of dominant power and resistance account for the current popularity of the
dystopian form within the Young Adult category, and what might this suggest about the
young adult readers of these texts? Power’s centrality to contemporary YA dystopias was
demonstrated. This was a finding that I predicted, as power is significant in YA fiction in
general. Roberta Seelinger Trites has averred that

During adolescence, adolescents must learn their place in the power structure. They
must learn to negotiate the many institutions that shape them: school, government,
religion, identity politics, family and so on. They must learn to balance their power
with their parents’ power and with the power of the other authority figures in their lives. And they must learn what portion of power they wield because of and despite such biological imperatives as sex and death. (*Disturbing x*)

Following Trites, it is perhaps understandable that novels encapsulating such negotiations with power are popular with young adults, who are likely to identify with the challenges depicted. The close-readings of the texts discussed here have shown that in fact, in these dystopias, a significant proportion of the power that – as Judith Butler notes when writing on subjection – “not only acts on a subject but, in a transitive sense enacts the subject into being” is constituted through the body (*Psychic 13*). An important tool of dystopian regimes, the body is also particularly relevant for the teenage subject in general, for whom it lies at the centre of many “coming of age” experiences. While the body has long been prominent in realistic fiction for young adults, it takes on a new significance when addressed in the dystopian mode. Transporting issues relating to power and the body to a dystopian setting ensures that Suvin’s previously discussed concept of “cognitive estrangement” comes into play (12). Young adult readers confronted with familiar adolescent concerns in an entirely new setting are provided with framework with which to view these concerns afresh. Thus, by encountering societies where the body and disciplinary power structures are central yet estranged from the reader’s direct experience, the young adult may uncover a new perspective on well-worn considerations. Perhaps paradoxically, placing realistic themes into dystopian settings may be the most effective way to communicate with teenagers on topics that appear jaded and old-fashioned when approached in a traditional manner.

The texts discussed in this thesis, consistent with the dystopian mode, do not shy away from dark and difficult material. Again, much of this material relates to the body and how it may be used to control the teenage subject. While some adults may be critical of the inclusion of such dark topics in YA fiction, and indeed bemoan the inclusion of graphic
discussions surrounding the body, sales figures indicate that a significant number of young adults feel differently. To fail to acknowledge the stark realities of our present in YA literature is to present teenagers with fiction that is largely irrelevant to them, and does not respect their understanding of the complexities of life. As children’s and YA author Patrick Ness responded when accused of writing amoral fiction that is too dark for youths, “I believe that if you don’t engage with darkness, you’re leaving a teen alone to face it by themselves. I think THAT’S the amoral position” (Ness). Young adults surely benefit from having their experiences and feelings regarding the difficult side of life acknowledged and validated, and what better place to do this than in dystopian fiction?

By aligning themselves with the critical dystopia, the texts discussed encompass not only darkness, but also a horizon of hope. They feature calls to action, which result in (comparatively) hopeful conclusions. Tasking the reader with challenging existing dominant power structures, the YA authors here also apparently believe it necessary to encourage them to do so by explicitly modelling this resistance. Thus, the novels discussed are in places unnecessarily prescriptive regarding the ills of the world and what readers should seek to change. Dystopian and sf novels for adults generally trust the reader to interpret implications and draw their own conclusions. They are certainly didactic in nature, yet rather than explicitly telling the reader what to think, they encourage them to think, and to see their world anew. Unfortunately, the YA novels discussed here are not always so subtle. Such overt didacticism can be problematic. Young adults who feel that they are being preached to are unlikely to be appreciative, and such prescriptive means of communication may have an effect contrary to that desired. The sample of texts discussed leads me to believe that YA dystopia authors often lack faith in their readers, deeming it necessary to teach them explicit lessons. Nevertheless, this overt pedagogical slant does not appear to be sufficiently problematic to deter young adults from enjoying novels in this category.
Many of the themes and tropes contained in these chapters are particularly relevant for young adults: identity politics, sexuality, family struggles, pressure surrounding physical appearance and more. Additionally, the topic of surveillance is one which recurs in all five series, and which I believe may be linked to the popularity of these texts currently. As Jack Zipes has observed, North American society has in recent years seen increased emphasis placed on discipline and structure in children’s lives, with school and a return to “traditional” family values resulting in the restriction of freedoms (*Sticks* 79). This is not just true of children, and certainly not just true of the United States. In the Western world generally, young adults also find themselves increasingly monitored, controlled and time-managed. Many engage in regimented after-school schedules, undertake supervised activities during “free” time, and are closely observed in both their online as well as their offline lives. Indeed, today’s young adults are amongst the first to grow up grappling with the unprecedented challenges posed by the internet – perhaps the most notable of these being the intense scrutiny that we are both subjected to, and in true disciplinary form, subject ourselves to. The contemporary young adult’s digital existence has become the potential purview of unprecedentedly large audiences, which ensure that the culture of normalising judgement is taken to a new extreme. Meanwhile, the information provided by teens online is facilitating the creation of a database of information on subjects that “the examination” in its traditional form could only dream of. For the young adults engaging with such media, it presents a new level of surveillance to accompany the traditional forms of observation to which their predecessors were subject. Like the panopticon, these digital forms of surveillance ensure that people self-monitor in supplement to the gaze conferred upon them. When such conditions are considered, it seems appropriate that dystopian visions of surveillance may resonate with a YA audience.
For the readers of contemporary YA dystopian fiction, then, these texts fulfill a number of functions. In simple terms, they firstly provide the readers with escapism, a function often derided but for the young adult in particular, useful in allowing them to safely play out real world issues in a non-threatening environment. They encapsulate familiar teenage concerns, but transport them to a fresh setting which allows new perspectives to be identified. They encourage young people to challenge the status quo, to turn the bodies which have been rendered docile into empowered entities which can challenge ruling regimes and be producers as well as subjects of power. They provide teenagers with visions of alternative worlds, dystopian futures and eutopian enclaves, and present these as possible outcomes over which the reader has some control. They tell youths (in particular young women, who historically have rarely received such messages through fiction) that they can utilise their agency to change the world, and that they should not rely upon adults to do it for them. Despite the liminal position of the young adult, they also suggest to teenagers that they currently hold more power and indeed more options than they may realise, and should act before this is no longer the case.

In addition to the vast young adult readership of YA fiction, it appears that a significant proportion of the audience for YA novels is made up of adults (with one 2012 survey suggesting that figure to be as high as 55% [PW]). This trend first became identifiable with the popularity of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels, when editions with adult-oriented covers were printed, encouraging readers to purchase books they might otherwise be embarrassed to be seen reading. Such embarrassment appears to be a thing of the past, with many adults now openly reading and discussing YA literature. There are a number of possible reasons why YA fiction, and ergo, YA dystopian fiction, is currently so popular with adult readers. Many of these novels are fast-paced, and are easy to read in an era when people are increasingly busy and may find less time for reading in general. They provide
opportunities for escapism; and while escapist literature for adults certainly exists, it tends often to be treated as niche and is accessed largely by readers who seek out genre fiction. In the YA category, genre books are currently mainstream and require little sourcing or prior knowledge. YA fiction can evoke nostalgia in the adult reader, reminding us of our teenage years and helping us to re-experience it with the benefit of hindsight and increased appreciation of that period’s trials and tribulations. There is some suggestion that contemporary Western culture presently encourages a protracted period of young adolescence: sociologist Frank Furedi has argued that contemporary twenty-somethings are exhibiting the effects of having been over-protected in their teenage years (qtd. in Wallis). Furedi notes that there are increasing numbers of adults in their twenties and beyond living with their parents, watching television and films aimed at children, and engaging in other activities previously considered infantile, and claims that this is due to them being insulated from real-life experience as teenagers. While Furedi’s comments are perhaps unfairly disparaging, the idea of an extended adolescence has been officially recognised in the UK: in 2013, child psychologists were given new directives which see them now treating patients up to the age of twenty-five, rather than eighteen. If it is true that adolescence now extends beyond the age range previously believed, it seems understandable that those at its upper limit may find much of interest in Young Adult fiction.

YA dystopian fiction in particular is likely to resonate with adults for many of the same reasons that it appeals to young adult readers: we are perceived by many to be living in particularly precarious, troubled times. This perception, combined with the impact of increased surveillance measures, alongside concerns with big data and the “nanny state” mean that, like their young adult counterparts, adults will identify with some of the ideas found in these texts. Also, YA dystopian fiction does tend to include an element of hope, often to a greater degree than its adult counterpart. Perhaps it is human nature to gravitate towards
positive stories in troubled times: for adults confronted daily with the harsh realities of life, stories which remind us to retain hope are perhaps welcome. Such factors, in addition to those outlined in relation to YA fiction in general, are likely to play a part in the category’s current popularity among adult readers.

The novels discussed here indicate that today’s YA dystopian fiction is quite different from the Juvenile sf fiction which may be its nearest predecessor. While the latter featured almost exclusively male protagonists engaged in an outward looking journey that often included space travel and/or a prioritisation of technology, it appears that today’s YA readers of sf and dystopian fiction are embracing quite different values. These texts feature female protagonists, are set in a future vision of our own world, and ensure that the protagonists’ inward journey is as significant, if not more so, than the outcome for the wider world. In general, representations of technology in these texts are somewhat negative; new technologies are rarely assigned the transformative potential ascribed to them in sf juveniles. Instead, these contemporary dystopias are largely negative regarding the potential outcomes of new technologies, particularly in the bodily realm. For example, the rise of the posthuman subject is portrayed as an undesirable outcome of technology, with the positive possibilities inherent in Haraway’s Cyborg Manifesto entirely forgotten or disregarded. Yet it is important that we do not dismiss these texts as being somehow less worthy for eschewing some of the values of traditional sf and dystopian novels. Michael Levy has argued that, while for adults “the story that actively engages with the society or science and its problems is more interesting…the novel in which a child or YA simply finds his place in society is a standard form of YA fiction” (qtd. in Mendlesohn Intergalactic 3). Thus, “the writer who does this kind of book is not so much failing to write a better book as s/he is simply working within standard YA genre conventions” (Levy qtd. in Mendlesohn Intergalactic 3). This point is significant: we must not hold YA dystopian fiction rigidly to the standards expected of adult dystopian or sf texts,
as the YA part of the form and all associated conventions are equally significant. These texts are neither solely young adult, nor dystopian, but both.

My primary method of analysis was based upon close-readings of the texts selected. From these close-readings, I have employed inductive reasoning leading to interpretation of observations and suggested answers to my central research questions. They are not definitive interpretations, but have been reached with careful consideration of each individual novel’s content and the messages within. Thus, my conclusions are drawn from these close readings and the associated research which I have carried out into the genre and its readers, including many hours spent observing online teen forums discussions and book reviews. Further research may benefit from extending the remit of this study to include empirical data gathered by surveying and interviewing young adult readers of dystopian fiction to determine more accurately their opinions on the genre. Other considerations to address in future study include a comparative analysis of the portrayal of female protagonists in contemporary YA dystopian literature with their male counterparts, and further work on the hybridisation of the romance and dystopian genres.

Foucauldian theory has provided a useful lens through which to examine the body’s role in exerting and resisting disciplinary forms of power in contemporary YA dystopian fiction. Nevertheless, throughout my research it became evident to me that Foucault’s work on disciplinarity is indeed androcentric. Novels featuring female protagonists cannot be thoroughly analysed if the nature of the female bodily experience is entirely disregarded. Accordingly, supplementation from feminist critics, in addition to a wide range of theorists from other disciplines was necessary to ensure that this model proved helpful. Certainly, however, the proliferation of disciplinary structures in the novels addressed, and the body’s centrality to these, must be seriously considered as a possible explanation for the popularity of these texts. Consistently high sales figures throughout the Western-world suggest that
teenagers find much to identify with in YA dystopian fiction which foregrounds power and the body, and are perhaps encouraged by the suggestion that resistance, rather than being futile, is in fact entirely worthwhile.
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