

CLASSICAL ELEMENTS and MYTHOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES in *THE HUNGER GAMES*

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One of the most popular young adult novels of the last decade has been Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. Multiple websites are now devoted to it and the two succeeding novels in the trilogy, along with the films of the books,<sup>1</sup> and popular appetite for various Hunger Games-derived books and artefacts seems unending.<sup>2</sup> The appeal of the books lies in their attractive heroine Katniss Everdeen, their remarkably violent but exciting plots and, as will be argued in this paper, their engagement with some powerful mythological and classical motifs.

*The Hunger Games* is set in a dystopian future in which the civilisation of Panem has risen from the ashes of a North America battered by natural disasters. Panem is centred on a shining Capitol, located somewhere in the western part of the Rocky Mountains (Collins 2008: 41). It was originally ringed by thirteen districts, but seventy five years before the story begins, the districts rebelled against Panem's mysterious and totalitarian rulers: twelve were eventually defeated and the thirteenth was obliterated (17). And so that no citizen of Panem will ever forget or dare to rebel again, the Hunger Games are held annually, beginning with the reaping, an event with clear literary and historical debts, to Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Lottery," and to the draft lotteries of the Vietnam War.<sup>3</sup> At the reaping, a boy and a girl from each of the twelve districts are chosen by lot as so-called tributes. The 24 participants, microchipped like animals so that their whereabouts can be known at all times (142), must fight one another to the death over several weeks in a huge outdoor arena that is technologically manipulated by unseen, powerful "Gamemakers", so that it can comprise anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. The last one left standing will be declared the winner and brought back to his or her district in triumph. The whole contest is broadcast for the entertainment of the rulers and the entire nation (123).

Many influences shape this imaginary world. Most obvious are the violent world of the children of *Lord of the Flies*, movies such as *Battle Royale*, *Rollerball* or *Logan's Run*, and, above all, reality TV shows. The most obvious parallel is *Survivor*, but the concept lies even behind productions such as *American Idol*, which pit individuals against one another in a zero-sum game offered up to millions of spectators who are out for blood, if only metaphorically.<sup>4</sup> Television provides an eternally intrusive eye into people's most painful moments: early on, Katniss is aware of this and refuses to cry on camera, knowing that if she breaks down, she will be remembered forever through its immortalizing power as the girl who cried (Collins 2008: 22, 34). Throughout the book runs an intense emphasis on what it means to live life eternally on show, in a blend of reality TV and politically-motivated surveillance by the state, and how it can warp and pervert sincerity of feeling, expression and action.<sup>5</sup>

However, two classical influences on the *Hunger Games* have also been explicitly acknowledged by its author in interviews.<sup>6</sup> First is the myth of Theseus and the 14 Athenians sacrificed to the Minotaur as a punishment, or tribute, imposed by Minos for the death of his son Androgeos in Athens when he came to compete in the games there.<sup>7</sup> The arena in which the contestants are trapped is a kind of vast labyrinth, full of dangers, since it pits the Tributes against its inhospitable climate, against attacks from man-made fireballs (Collins 2008: 174), creatures such as poisonous mutant wasps (185), and most of all, against one another in a liminal and unstable world, which is both highly technological and a primitive wilderness, a world in which the status of predator and prey is continually shifting.<sup>8</sup> At the book's remarkably gory climax, the three remaining tributes are attacked by human/animal hybrids<sup>9</sup> evoking the Minotaur (331-4), although

these are biped wolves with human eyes, the resurrected incarnations of the previously dead tributes. In some versions of the Theseus myth, such as Plutarch, *Life of Theseus* 17.2, Theseus shows particular heroism by volunteering as one of the Athenian victims. Katniss Everdeen takes the moral lead in the same way: when her younger sister is chosen as one of her district's tributes at the reaping, she insists on taking her place (21).

The other paradigm shaping the book is, of course, gladiatorial combat.<sup>10</sup> The very name of Panem evokes Juvenal 10.81's "panem et circenses", "bread and circuses", a phrase referring to the means by which the elite pacify and distract the masses from serious challenges to the social order through offering them trivial entertainment, such as the gladiatorial games, or reality TV.<sup>11</sup> Through vicarious participation in the games, whether gladiatorial or Hunger, the people are given the illusion of sharing in the power, wealth and privileges of the elite. It is exciting and reassuring to be watching others suffer down below in the ring while you are safe in the stands.<sup>12</sup>

Many structural similarities exist between tributes and gladiators: the tributes are carefully nourished beforehand to fatten them up for the contest, like the gladiators who were also given a special meal the day before the combat.<sup>13</sup> Indeed the special pampering of the tributes with luxurious accommodation and food before the horrors to come resembles the treatment often given to sacrificial animals before they are killed.<sup>14</sup> Like the gladiators, the tributes are displayed to the people in a showy parade.<sup>15</sup> Just as the gladiatorial games matched gladiators with different sets of arms against one another, so the tributes from the districts of Panem have different skills useful for survival in the arena, which derive from the various industrial and agricultural specialities of the districts. As valuable entertainers, the gladiators were offered good medical care to keep them available for public enjoyment and those in charge of the Hunger Games use sophisticated technology to restore the bodies the Games have damaged.<sup>16</sup> Spectators bet on the outcome of fights between gladiators and on the outcome of the Hunger Games.<sup>17</sup> More specifically, Finnick Odair in Collins (2009: 208-9) is portrayed as an expert with the trident and the net, the weapons wielded by the gladiators known as *retiarii*.

The Hunger Games, though superficially public entertainment, represent the leaders' power over their nation, just as the gladiatorial games represented the Emperor's exclusive power over life and death themselves. Although the crowd could shout for mercy or the dispatch of a fallen gladiator, the Emperor alone had the right to decide whether to stay his hand and spare the gladiator or exert his full power and command that he be killed.<sup>18</sup> Those in charge of the Hunger Games, marked by their imperial purple clothing (Collins 2008: 96), have a similar degree of power: though all previous Hunger Games have involved a fight to the death until the final tribute is left standing, in this year's Games, the Gamemakers announce halfway through that the rules will be changed to allow two tributes from the same district to be joint winners (244). Katniss and her fellow male tribute, of course, are the last survivors, but suddenly, the announcer, one Claudius Templesmith, exercises "imperial" powers to rescind the change (342), so that they must, after all, kill each other.

Above all, central to both the gladiatorial games and the Hunger Games is sadism on display. The Gamemakers "like to see the tributes draw blood personally."<sup>19</sup> After a day when no tributes die, the Gamemakers create a forest fire to drive the scattered contestants together for more bloodshed, since "the audience in the Capitol will be getting bored...the one thing the Games must not do." (173). At the climax of the Games when the audience "expects a show" (337), the horrifically long-drawn out and bloody death of Cato at the claws and teeth of mutant wolves is dubbed "the final word in entertainment" (339). Deliberate cruelty runs through the games right from the start, at which contestants must fight to acquire food and supplies from the Cornucopia, "a giant golden horn shaped like a cone with a curved tail, the mouth of which is at least twenty feet high" to assist their struggles to stay alive (148). At Rome, the Cornucopia was a symbol of peace and abundance, but the tempting abundance of Panem's Cornucopia is deadly. The longer

one stays to acquire useful materials, the more vulnerable one is to attack from rivals: on the first day alone, eleven out of twenty-four are dead at the Cornucopia (151). Unlike the Roman games, modern technological miracles mean that the whole nation can watch the horrors, not just once, but repeatedly, as the highlights of all the bloodiest deaths are recorded (362). The games are central to their societies and a central source of potential corruption for participants and spectators alike. The humanity of the participants in the Hunger Games is tested to the limit by what they must do.<sup>20</sup> A few writers<sup>21</sup> are also aware of the effect watching the Roman games might have on the humanity of their spectators, and Katniss (84) makes a direct connection between watching cruelty and passively approving it: at a time when she did not intervene as forces from the Capitol mutilated a rebel, it was “just like I was watching the Games.”

Sadism has an aesthetic and technological dimension as well. The emperor’s power is exhibited through the physical magnificence of his games and players. The gladiators’ armour was sometimes gilded, decorated with gold thread or precious stones.<sup>22</sup> Before the tributes are first paraded before their audience, stylists deck them out in showy, festive costumes and Katniss’ first costume includes an orange, yellow and red cloak which will be set alight with harmless fire just before she enters the arena, giving her the epithet, repeated throughout the book, of “the girl on fire,” (Collins 2008: 108, 176, 354). In colour, her cloak recalls the *flammeum*, or Roman bridal veil, while fire features in the gladiatorial arena in the form of the *tunica molesta*, an inflammable garment worn by certain criminals and even paid volunteers who would run a certain distance in it.<sup>23</sup>

*Venationes*, the public hunts of rare animals, signify the economic power of powerful men to destroy what is expensive and rare,<sup>24</sup> and the Hunger Games blend elements of *venationes* with gladiatorial combat to create a remarkable and costly spectacle. Particularly remarkable as a display of power is the manipulation of the natural landscape itself. In Rome, immense effort and expense could be expended on turning the arena into an artificial landscape: whole forests would sometime be reconstituted there from trees, dug up roots and all and replanted, while another arena displayed a wooden replica of Mount Ida planted with authentic plants. In a strikingly similar manner, the tributes fight in a place which is both the wild - a huge arena big enough to jog and walk in for several hours in it - and domestic.<sup>25</sup> Everything in it can be seen through television, and, thanks to a mastery of virtual reality that Rome’s rulers can only have dreamed of, its physical conditions can be altered; thus towards the end of this contest, the Gamemakers dry all the streams up so as to force all the contestants to return to meet their enemies at the lake for the final conflict.

In ancient Rome, though the gladiatorial profession tended to belong to slaves, some free men, the *auctorati* also took it up, in spite of its manifold stigmas, whether out of poverty or a desire for bloodshed.<sup>26</sup> The Hunger Games are, crucially, not voluntary, since everyone from 12 to 18 must undergo the reaping, but even in this society there are what are called Career Tributes, volunteers from the wealthier districts who are at some advantage in prior training and care. In this respect, they resemble Rome’s *auctorati* as a slightly better grade of gladiator freely submitting to gladiatorial work for material reward, especially food. Poverty is omnipresent in Katniss’ district and food is an eternal obsession of this society, due to its ironic scarcity in Panem, the supposed land of bread, whose poor citizens are issued with tickets or *tesserae* for yearly supplies of staples, which superficially resemble the *tesserae frumentariae* (grain tickets) of ancient Rome.<sup>27</sup> But more cruelly than anything Rome devised, the poor can apply for more *tesserae*, but the more they receive, the more times the names of the children of the poor families must go into the hat for the reaping and the greater their chances are of appearing in the arena for the deadly contest (Collins 2008: 13).

By contrast, Panem’s Capitol is an entirely different world. It is a land not merely of plenty, but of material excess, a Petronian, decadent and stereotypically Roman imperial-style society which

stands in stark contrast to Katniss' familiar world of scarcity in which she has to support her family through hunting and bartering. In Collins (2009: 78) at a party for the victorious tributes, Katniss is horrified when she is offered a drug by her stylists that will make her vomit so that she can eat more, invoking one of the most common (mis)conceptions about the decadence of ancient Roman life. The film of the *Hunger Games* portrayed the Capitol especially effectively, with its visual evocation of forbidding Fascist architecture, and the portrayal of its inhabitants, leisured people with brightly-coloured clothes and artificially enhanced physical appearances.<sup>28</sup>

Gladiators, for all their degraded status, and the fear and paranoia they could evoke,<sup>29</sup> had a certain sexual charisma.<sup>30</sup> Even this feature is not entirely missing from the tributes of the *Hunger Games*. Katniss is imbued with a subtle sexual power of her own, although it is carefully mediated through the images recalling the virgin goddess Artemis, notably in her last costume, a sleeveless dress gathered at the ribs and falling to her knees (Collins 2008: 354). Katniss is 16, explicitly uninterested in, and even hostile to marriage: several times, she affirms a kind of perpetual virginity.<sup>31</sup> She is in transition between childhood and adulthood: sometimes she is subject to childish tantrums (118); she can dress like a boy, a beautiful young woman (120) or a 14-year old girl (354). Her particular strength in the Games is her superb archery (38, 101, 220), which has been honed by hunting in the woods with her best friend, a boy called Gale. Katniss' skills will save her more than once in the Games and also bring her to the attention of the Gamemakers early on as a potential star or danger. When they have had had too much wine and are more interested in a roast pig than in her talents, which she is supposed to be exhibiting to them, in a rage, she shoots arrows into the lights and then straight into the apple in the roast pig's mouth, mingling William Tell and Odysseus among the suitors (101).

With Gale, there is no overt romance, since they are primarily comrades as hunters and friends.<sup>32</sup> Her relationship with her fellow male tribute is more immediately complicated and is marked by a quintessentially 21<sup>st</sup> century reading of an ancient paradigm. Among ancient pairs like Gilgamesh and Enkidu, or Achilles and Patroclus, one is dominant and the other, to some degree, is feminised. Since this book was written in 2008, Katniss dominates her fellow tribute Peeta, who is a subordinate and to some degree feminised figure,<sup>33</sup> just as Katniss herself has an ambivalent attitude to traditional feminine roles,<sup>34</sup> in keeping with her affinities with the ambivalent Artemis, a goddess who is a virgin yet also presides over its negation in childbirth. Peeta, a name which even looks feminine, is the baker's son: in *Iliad* 9.216-7, it is the subordinate Patroclus who handles the bread, while Achilles handles the meat, just as Katniss, not Peeta (Collins 2008: 294), is a hunter and killer of animals for their meat. Peeta's name perhaps evokes pita bread and a certain softness, since he is a boy who will cry when she will not (40-41),<sup>35</sup> a gentler, more emotionally expressive character than tough Katniss: even his own mother thinks so.<sup>36</sup> Later in the book, he is badly physically damaged, requiring protection that Katniss finds burdensome in her struggle to survive, and she contrasts his timidity with Gale's fearlessness (262, 295, 313-15, 337). Peeta is even given the classic female role of life-giver: the book repeatedly refers to an earlier time when Katniss and her family were on the point of starvation. He gave her bread then, enabling her not only to survive physically, but to have hope and to begin to plan her future resourcefully (26-32, 49-50). Peeta has been genuinely in love with Katniss more or less since then, but their mentor advises them to use this love as a tool for victory, turning them into a romantic golden couple (135, 205, 260) so as to become favourites with the audience watching the games: significantly, the first time Peeta reveals his love is on camera (130-3). For Peeta, every romantic gesture is genuine, but for Katniss, romance is an act (260-1, 264, 280, 321, 354, 367-9) ostensibly at least. She is careful to play her part of the girl in love only when the cameras are upon her, and sometimes rewarded when she does (301). Since for most of the book we are led to think that one will eventually have to kill the other to win the games, any possibility of romance between Katniss and Peeta is pleasingly ambiguous. The book teases its readers – could this be a real romance after all?<sup>37</sup> – only repeatedly to shut the possibility down. Katniss experiences her first kiss with Peeta in a cave, but the heat of his lips is a result of fever, not

passion. Though they sleep in the same sleeping bag, and she is aware of the heat of his body, its heat is merely a symptom of blood poisoning and there is no *Aeneid*-like lovers' consummation in their cave (Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.165-8). Another kiss is ostensibly just for the cameras, but it is the first that makes Katniss want another; however, they are distracted immediately as a wound she has sustained starts to bleed again.<sup>38</sup>

While not remotely sexual, the relationship between Katniss and another tribute, Rue, another creature of the wilds who resembles her little sister, lacks the ambiguities of Katniss' relationships with men.<sup>39</sup> Though they are technically enemies, the two of them bond, helping each other survive in the woods with what each can offer (200-1), embodying a familiar bond between women in myth, divine and human – again, Katniss' affinities with Artemis are clear here. When Rue is killed, Katniss honours her by covering her dead body with flowers, and killing<sup>40</sup> her killer in her angry determination to avenge Rue's death: "something happened when I was holding Rue's hand, watching the life drain out of her. Now I am determined to avenge her, to make her loss unforgettable, and I can only do that by winning and thereby making myself unforgettable." Here, Katniss takes on a kind of Homeric persona, in her determination to conquer loss and mortality and find eternal memory and glory through a spectacular heroic display on the battle field.<sup>41</sup>

Even beyond these classical motifs, some of the names that Suzanne Collins has used have strong classical resonances. She is not entirely consistent, but many characters from the Capitol or who are Katniss' adversaries have Roman or classical names.<sup>42</sup> The stylists of Peeta and Katniss respectively are Portia and Cinna with Octavia as their assistant: whether the name is intended to recall Cinna the poet, torn to pieces by the mob or Cinna the conspirator against Julius Caesar, this Cinna views the decadent lifestyle of the Capitol with some awareness and he is very sympathetic to Katniss (63-4, 145-6). Also in this group are Venia (forgiveness? Venatio?) while the name of the stylist Flavius invokes the Flavian emperors who built the Colosseum, and, appropriately for his name, he has orange hair. The head trainer is Atala, a tall athletic woman whose name and persona evoke Atalanta, the great runner in Greek mythology. One of the most obviously classical of Collins' minor inventions is the status of Avox, a servant punished for treachery to the Capitol by amputation of the tongue, evoking the Procne and Philomela myth. A legendary tribute called Titus once went mad in the woods and resorted to cannibalism, invoking his Shakespearian ancestor Titus Andronicus, while one of Katniss' deadliest enemies is the thuggish and rage-prone Cato. In imperial mode, alongside the announcer Claudius Templesmith is the game-show host who interviews the candidates before and after the Games - one Caesar Flickerman.<sup>43</sup> One notable difference between the novel of the *Hunger Games* and the film is the role of Seneca Crane, the chief gamemaker, who is forced – like his Neronian forebear - to commit suicide (in this instance by eating poisonous berries) at the end of the film by President Coriolanus Snow for being outwitted by Katniss and Peeta when they threaten to subvert the games by a double suicide through those berries.

So what are we to make of all this? Classical elements are certainly not as consistently present in the *Hunger Games* as they are in the Harry Potter books, which are steeped in slightly twisted Latin, or in the more straightforwardly mythologically-inspired Percy Jackson series and as a whole, the novel is a hybrid of genres and influence, as is fitting for its emphasis on technologically-created hybrid forms. Many other cultural elements compete in the *Hunger Games*, but its classical or mythological elements are also an important part of the book which deserve attention. Given the book's constant evocation of contemporary motifs of reality TV and the life lived on the screen, where only what is broadcast to millions is what is real, and increasing cultural anxiety about the effects of social media on its users, and fears about privacy in a surveillance society, the book may also be seen as the most recent manifestation of the modern world's continuing fascination with the so-called Fall of Rome as we ask ourselves with some degree of gloom, "Are we Rome?" or "Will we be Panem? Could it happen here?"<sup>44</sup> But for those



of us trying to make the Greco-Roman civilisation come alive for new generations, the multiple resonances between past, present and an imagined future, however dystopian, perhaps offer a reason for optimism as a fresh way to open up the ancient world to them.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The film of *The Hunger Games* was released in 2012, with *Catching Fire* following the next year. Both were huge critical and financial successes. *Mockingjay* is to be divided into two, scheduled for release in 2014 and 2015.

<sup>2</sup> The first (and probably last) Hunger Games-themed summer camp had to be abolished after its inhabitants began to exhibit excessively authentic levels of violence: Locker (2013). The critical bibliography on the trilogy is growing, with several recent anthologies of essays, the best of which is Pharr and Clark (2012). Surprisingly, however, no essay that I know focuses in depth on the classical and mythological archetypes in the books, though many essays address these in passing. This essay only discusses in detail Collins (2008), the first book in the trilogy, though it will make one or two allusions to Collins (2009) and (2010).

<sup>3</sup> Jackson (1948); Koenig (2012: 39-44). The chronic alcoholic Haymitch Abernathy has been horribly damaged by his experiences in the games and Collins (2009: 191; 196; 213-4, 219, 233, 311) is especially full of references to the post-combat trauma experienced by victorious veteran tributes, a significant number of whom have turned to drink or drugs to cope with their memories.

<sup>4</sup> Many critics discuss the trilogy's relationship to reality TV: Frankel (2012); Wright (2012); Henthorne (2012, chapter 5).

<sup>5</sup> Collins (2008: 56, 92, 99, 114, 123, 136, 203, 300, 321, 361-3). Even in the midst of the dangers of the games themselves, Katniss is always aware of what is being broadcast and plays to the cameras where necessary: 163-4, 222, 232, 261, 267, 277, 311.

<sup>6</sup> [www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/media/qanda.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/media/qanda.pdf); Dominus (2011); Pharr and Clark (2012: 11-13).

<sup>7</sup> Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3. 15. 7; Pausanias 1. 27. 10

<sup>8</sup> Cf. King (2012: 110). Fear of the wilderness, where human dominance over nature is fragile, is understandably deeply rooted in human consciousness, underlying the plots of many horror films, but we see it as early as Sophocles *Philoctetes* 954-60.

<sup>9</sup> King (2012: 113-4) discusses themes of hybridity and monstrosity in the novel.

<sup>10</sup> Collins has also specifically cited the story of Spartacus as inspiration for the story: Dominus (2011).

<sup>11</sup> “nam qui dabat olim/imperium, fasces, legiones, omnia, nunc se/continet atque duas tantum res anxius optat/panem et circenses...”: “for the people which once bestowed power, the fasces, legions, now limits itself and anxiously awaits just two things – bread and circuses” (10.78-81). Clemente (2012: 21-3) discusses the “bread and circuses” theme in the novel and some of its connections with ancient Roman life. In Collins (2010: 223), the Head Gamemaker Plutarch Heavensbee explains to Katniss the meaning of the complete phrase, “written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome.”

<sup>12</sup> Futrell (1997: 45-50); Kyle (1998: 3, 155); Mortimore-Smith (2012: 159-61). “After the reaping, everyone is supposed to celebrate. And a lot of people do, out of relief that their children have been spared for another year.” Collins (2008: 10). The rulers of Panem take care to weave the games inextricably into the lives of the people throughout the year, so that former arenas even become “popular destinations for...vacation. Go for a month, rewatch the Games, tour the catacombs...You can even take part in reenactments”: 144.

<sup>13</sup> Gladiators’ special meal: Plutarch *Moralia* 1099B; Tacitus *Histories* 2.88: Wiedemann (1995: 116-7); Curry (2008). This early part of the novel is notable for its loving descriptions of luxurious food: Collins (2008: 43, 55, 64, 76, 87, 112, 127).

<sup>14</sup> The chamber in the catacombs under the arena where contestants prepare for the Hunger Games is known by the people as the Stockyard: “The place animals go before slaughter” ,144.

<sup>15</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 93); Collins (2008: 68).

<sup>16</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 117); Collins (2008: 188, 346-8).

<sup>17</sup> Hopkins (1985: 25-6): Collins (2008: 56).

<sup>18</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 10).

<sup>19</sup> Collins (2008: 218, cf. 176) and for some inventive examples of Roman cruelty, see Kyle (1998: 53-5). Collins states, “The Hunger Games is a reality television program. An extreme one, but that’s what it is. And while I think some of those shows can succeed on different levels, there’s also the voyeuristic thrill, watching, people being humiliated or brought to tears or suffering physically”: Hudson (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Early in the book (38-9), Katniss, a veteran hunter, speculates on the difference between killing them and humans: “The awful thing is that if I can forget they’re people, it will be no different at all.”

<sup>21</sup> For example, Seneca *Letters* 7.2-5; Augustine *Confessions* 6.8.

<sup>22</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 13-14).

<sup>23</sup> Fire-coloured cloaks: Collins (2008: 67, 70); Juvenal 10.334: *tunica molesta*: Juvenal 8. 235; Martial 10.25.5; Seneca *Letters* 14.5.

<sup>24</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 59).

<sup>25</sup> Coleman (1990: 51-4) and Auguet (1992: 99-106) discuss the technology of creating wilderness in the Roman area. Panem arena: (Collins 2008: 139, 150-1, 172, 326).

<sup>26</sup> Motives of the *auctorati*: Wiedemann (1995: 108-9): Career Tributes: Collins (2008: 94, 161).

<sup>27</sup> See Rickman (1980: 244-9). On the role of food in the novel, see Despaign (2012).



<sup>28</sup> Collins (2008: 58). On fascist styling in the book, see Pavlik (2012).

<sup>29</sup> Wiedemann (1995: 27). Such emotions are also paralleled in the attitudes of the controllers of the Games towards the contestants and the entire population, fearful that at any time they might rise up against their control: Collins (2008: 8, 24).

<sup>30</sup> Sexual desirability of gladiators: Juvenal 6.103-12; Tertullian *De Spectaculis* 22; Skinner (2005: 208-9). In Collins (2010: 169-70), the spectacularly handsome Finnick Odair reveals that the rulers in the Capitol would force the more desirable victors of the Games to prostitute themselves on pain of the death of someone dear to them: "Tales of strange sexual appetites, betrayals of the heart, bottomless greed, and bloody power plays" (170). The very next page recalls President Snow's prolific career as a poisoner – another classic motif of imperial Rome.

<sup>31</sup> "I know I'll never marry, never risk bringing a child into the world (310); cf. 9, 300-302.

<sup>32</sup> There are, of course, hints at something more: 37, 112, 135, 196, 280.

<sup>33</sup> See especially Collins (2008: 134-6), where she pushes him in anger and he falls into an urn and cuts his hands. Some defeated gladiators on mosaics are portrayed in a feminine pose with emphasised hips, associating failure with femininity: Wiedemann (1995: 38).

<sup>34</sup> For example, her hostility to being dressed up in feminine costumes at 114-18, 135-6, while at 128, she seems more at ease with the process. Many modern critics discuss the complexities of gender in Collins' work: Lem and Hassel (2012); Mitchell (2012).

<sup>35</sup> Katniss wonders whether this, like so much else in their reality TV existence, is just a ploy so that he can lull the other players into thinking that he is no threat: 60, 71.

<sup>36</sup> Peeta's softness: 259, 295, 297, 314; his mother, 89-90. King (2012: 110) suggests that his name also recalls the animal rights organisation PETA, reflecting incompetence as a hunter and gentle demeanour.

<sup>37</sup> Thus in other passages, she allows herself to picture Peeta more romantically: 262, 296, 311, 323. At 300, when she hears about Peeta's long-held crush on her, she feels incredibly happy but then confused, "because we're supposed to be hamming up this stuff, playing at being in love, not actually being in love." After the games are over, Gale starts to loom larger, and Katniss considers her romance with Peeta once again to be purely for the cameras (270-4), a "showmance" in the language of reality TV.

<sup>38</sup> Collins (2008: 260, 262, 298).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Mitchell (2012: 131-2).

<sup>40</sup> This is her first direct kill. Though Katniss is the winner of the games, Collins retains her as a humane and likeable protagonist by having her kill very sparingly.

<sup>41</sup> Rue: Collins (2008: 98-9, 184, 200-1, 213, 232-42). Achilles is compared to Katniss in Pharr and Clark (2012: 12).

<sup>42</sup> Compare the portrayal of Rome as the imperial, decadent, totalitarian enemy, in *Spartacus*: Malamud (2009: 186-228).

<sup>43</sup> Names: Portia: 65; Cinna: 64; Venia and Flavius: 61; Atala: 93; Avox: 77; Titus: 142; Cato: 181, 216, 223, 323; Caesar Flickerman: 123.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy (2007). Pharr and Clark (2012), Clemente (2012) and Frankel (2012) all offer interesting discussions of the relationship between the world of the novel and the contemporary United States.