

Virginity, Wilderness, and Bows: Diana's Return in Contemporary Cinema

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Abstract

This paper identifies and analyses the echoes of Artemis/Diana's mythical character in the construction of *The Hunger Games'* heroine Katniss Everdeen. Three main characteristics are approached—her virginity, her love for the woods, and her use of bows—with an emphasis on the symbolic potential of the heroic image reimagined and reused in the films. Then, the saga's explicit inclusion of the process through which a character becomes a myth in a society is analyzed, paying special attention to the role of repetition and to the dissemination of the heroic *ethos* expressed through spectacular actions.

Keywords: *The Hunger Games*, liminality, performativity, myth, Artemis, Diana.

1. Introduction

The traces of a number of myths, everlasting and reimagined, have been identified in many heroic figures of mainstream contemporary cinema, offering a clear example of the presence of myth in today's culture. In this paper, this recurrence is taken as an invitation to reflect on the permanence of myths and their functions in our culture, combined with a study of the mythemes that allow us to establish dialogic relations with other stories.

Heroic tales mirror the values and aspiration of the society that imagines them. They do so in an excessive and symbolic way, favored by an extreme temporal remoteness entailing a cultural distancing. This cultural distancing, however, continues to display and is still attached to the characteristics of the society with which it dialogues. This is one of the reasons why, in the modern and premodern eras, legends and mythical tales involving heroes or heroines were set in a remote or medievalized past, while in recent years there has been a proliferation of futuristic and dystopic fictions, which seem more apt to articulate a radical expression of the moral and social problems of the culture of origin. This is the case of *The Hunger Games*, a saga of novels later adapted into a film saga.¹ The plot takes place in Panem, a dystopic setting in which an absolute and centralized power reigns over an alienated society, and where a population of impoverished citizens is distributed in separate districts according to the rules set by the president through the violent control of the individual and collective aspirations. However, underlying this futuristic shell, some authors have identified a number of references to the Roman/Greek culture (Hernández Henríquez 2018), which become apparent when we take a look at the names of the characters living in the first district,

known as the Capitol. This generates a complex temporal remoteness, one that encompasses both a past *and* a present of today's society, and within whose framework the two of them are stylized in accordance with our political and historical reference tales.

At the beginning of the movie saga, the events take place in this dystopic environment, which is presented as the best possible social organization after a civil war among the districts. Every year, as a reminder of that time, the Capitol organizes a series of televised *games*—a euphemism for battle—confronting participants (*tributes*) of every district. The winner is the participant that manages to finish the game alive. The games are a big TV event whose target and main supporters are the people living in the Capitol. They are the ones responsible for turning the tributes into popular characters in the days that precede the players' arrival to the set where the battle will be hosted in the format of a reality show.

During those days, the tributes' goal is to find sponsors. The number of sponsors achieved by each tribute depends on their popularity, which results from a combination of their personal skills and the marketing strategies set up by their team (composed by a manager, a coach, a fashion designer, etc.). This is the context of Katniss' world. Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) is the heroine of the saga, the one that the politically engaged and disappointed citizens choose to be a symbol for the rebellion, and whom the rest see as a celebrity they can follow and admire. The films show the gradual consolidation of a revolt that was dormant in District 13, even though it had a number of supporters in different circles of Panem. Katniss' popularity is seen by the rebels as an opportunity to spread the revolution and attack the Capitol. In this light, *The Hunger Games'* plot prompts a reflection on heroism based on its thematization of two main factors: 1) the construction of the mythical figure, and 2) the role that exemplarity and entertainment play in that construction. In Antiquity, *prodesse* and *delectare* (teaching and entertaining) were considered as two well differentiated functions of rhetoric communication. However, these notions evolved throughout history. In the Middle Ages, following Horace's teachings, they were brought together as two inherent aspects of a good literary work. According to this, a literary work was considered good only when it integrated these two components, that is, when it managed to teach something while entertaining the reader. Therefore, the myths and legends included in medieval treaties were used not only as a way to emphasize or illustrate a moral lesson, but also, they provided variety and entertainment. Also, in this kind of books, the heroes of the stories performed their virtue, that is, they showed their moral quality through good actions that became the center of the tale. These actions, especially those performed at the climax of the story, summarize for recipients not only the myth but also the virtues of the heroes. In manuscripts, these images were usually portrayed in illustrations or miniatures, sculptures or paintings. Therefore, an image can invoke a myth and its lesson, and it becomes a symbol easy to place in different cultural and artistic contexts.

In 1997, Disney revisited the entertainment-related devices of heroic tales, this time in terms of capitalism: in a hilarious sequence of the film that takes his name, Hercules becomes a celebrity that even has his own merchandising line. Here the market makes profit out of the image, and we can question the capability of this commodified image in terms of myth transmission. In the same way, the abandon of heroism as an ethical value in favor of the symbol's fame—understood as a product that can be economically exploited—contrasts with classical heroism in the characterization of Katniss. The

heroine is set in the context of show business—she is depicted as a participant in a reality show. Not only is she forced to take part in morbid interviews produced by the Capitol, but also, she is the face of the promotional videos of the rebellious section, created in District 13. This is a good example of how the saga (as pointed out earlier) questions the construction of heroic and mythical tales. It brings this process to our reality, where symbolic images potentially recall myths or just the values that these stories once developed. But, more importantly, in this way, *The Hunger Games* challenges the malleability of the very meaning of the myth and symbol, as it uses Katniss' manipulation by different sections (and for different purposes) as a *leitmotiv*. Profit and entertainment go hand in hand.

1. Artemis/Diana and The Hunger Games

The Hunger Games replicates a process that takes place in every culture. Since their foundation, myths have been and still are reimagined and placed in different contexts to suit the needs of the creator of the particular discourses that address the myths (such as novels or movies), reformulating them—hence their anthropological and sociological interest (not surprisingly, Gilbert Durand's *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, one of the founding works of myth criticism, approaches its subjects of study from the frameworks of anthropology and sociology). Despite living in a dystopian world, a diachronic reading reveals that Katniss is not that different from the mythical heroines that have populated the Western culture since the classical era.

Different critics have identified the echoes of several myths in Katniss and in *The Hunger Games*, such as Theseus's courage and sacrifice or Persephone's lack of agency when she must meet her annual obligation.² The potent symbolic loading of every component of the tale has been approached, too³—one of the most revealing being the connection between the image of Katniss and that of Diana/Artemis, constructed after a set of common characteristics. One of the *Homeric Hymns*, attributed to Hesiod, is devoted to Artemis and refers to the goddess as follows:

I sing of Artemis, whose shafts are of gold, who cheers on the hounds, the pure maiden, shooter of stags, who delights in archery, own sister to Apollo with the golden sword. Over the shadowy hills and windy peaks she draws her golden bow, rejoicing in the chase, and sends out grievous shafts. (Evelyn-White 1920, 453)

In this text, we can already identify the constant attributes of Artemis' mythical image: her bow and arrows, her virginity, and the wilderness of her surroundings.⁴ This is the same image that Katniss projects, allowing us to connect both heroines. However, this does not imply a semantic identity, since, as Durand pointed out, it is necessary to consider “the non-linearity of images and their semanticity” (1999, 34). In any case, the construction of the image of the heroine around these three elements should be examined.

3. Virginity: Pollution and Liminality

Katniss' virginity is represented through her rejection of romantic love, a cliché to which the plot repeatedly returns throughout the three films of the saga. In the *Homeric Hymn* dedicated to Aphrodite, the text emphasizes Artemis' virginity: “Nor does laughter-loving Aphrodite ever tame in love Artemis, the huntress with shafts of gold;

for she loves archery and the slaying of wild beasts in the mountains" (Evelyn-White 1920, 407). For Katniss, the invitation for love materializes in two characters, Peeta and Gale. While they keep showing their romantic love for her, Katniss—as she recurrently states—only experiences fraternal (and never carnal) love towards them. Her rejection of love puts her in a place far from that traditionally assigned to women. This is a position that perfectly matches her role as a leader—we must not forget that mythical characters presented as intellectual leaders (such as sibyls) or warrior leaders (Amazons) are always characterized by their detachment from love and sexuality.

As is the case with Artemis/Diana, virginity puts Katniss in a liminal position, accentuated by her fondness for wild territories. Katniss avoids the company of men, but she displays masculine behaviors and attributes, which has been read as "a symbol of ambiguity" (Oliver 2014, 677). This ambiguity also shows in Katniss' looks, in the two attires that we see her wearing in the film saga:

The films alternate between showing us Katniss as Tomboy and Katniss as beauty queen, but they do not show us Katniss as sex symbol. (One movie poster for the second film shows Katniss as half princess and half hunter, her face split in half).

Indeed Katniss's sexuality is a mystery, even to herself. (Oliver 2014, 677)

Her actions and physical attributes also lie at the intersection of the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. On the one hand, she displays excellent hunting skills and is an expert warrior when forced to fight. On the other hand, she is in charge of taking care of young girls, represented by her younger sister Primrose (while she is living in the District), and her friend Rue (when they meet in the hunger games' arena). The combination of her looks and her actions express and conform her liminal *ethos*,⁵ which also becomes narratively meaningful—both faces transcend the mere portrait of the character and end up being two of the reasons why the districts decide to follow her. The physical exposure of Katniss' ambiguous *ethos*—expressed by her actions and her attire—allow her to move her fellow citizens, now explicitly turned into spectators, as all these details are being televised. Note that this transcendence of the heroine's actions that manage to move Panem's population is actually favored by Katniss' liminal position. As pointed out by Douglas (1966), the space of ambiguity, of non-definition lies in between what societies recognize as admissible and inadmissible in nature. The border separating both spaces is determined by concern, by fear of an external threat, be it a divine punishment or the awareness of any other kind of danger (e.g. threats to one's health or physical integrity). Things that are difficult to classify or involve some degree of vacillation between categories negate purity—they negate what, from this point of view, opposes peril. Katniss is a taboo, the materialization of pollution and non-definition. She cannot be controlled: she stands up to President Snow, she refuses to adhere to the games' rules, she even rejects the principles of the rebellious section. Again, Katniss' position contributes to reinforce her transformative ability: she is represented as the one and only true leader—a leader that is beyond the power of the media and the political rulers. Following Katniss, the rest of the characters come to recognize the way they need to follow in order to transform their reality. She is their guide to fairer world. Similarly, Artemis/Diana's model stands for an independent and solitary character.

The liminal representation of the character points out to the transition from one state to another. In this context, Katniss' nurturing role with Primrose and Rue involves and connects the motherly care and the task of being a supportive figure during the ritual of

initiation the games are. The connections with maternity become apparent in two key scenes: when Katniss replaces her own mother in the raising of Primrose, and when she asks Rue's mother to forgive her for not having been able to protect the girl and to avoid her murder in the course of the games (*The Hunger Games*, 2012). Along with this interpretation, another reading is possible: Katniss as a character that accompanies the young girls during the initiation rites symbolized in the *reaping* (that is, the selection process of tributes that is carried out in the districts) and the games. In his study of Artemis/Diana, Bonavides Mateos (1996, 212) highlights the goddess' roles as a protector of animals (it should be noted that Katniss never shows any affection for animals, but she does protect her sister's cat when it is helpless) and as a supporting, accompanying figure for girls in their rites of passage. Katniss thus proves her mythical and heroic potential, as a figure with the ability to transition between liminal spaces and to guide her people through them. In contrast with the potential danger inherent to abandoning the familiar territories (a control measure), the heroine is an incarnation of audacity, a quality that matches the ambiguous, polluted identity of the character. According to Douglas "some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order" (1966, 3). From this perspective, Katniss is the representation of a polluted nature, a figure that is able to break with the social conventions in her sexual and family life, but also as a citizen. This definition of Katniss as an undefined, ambiguous, and therefore enigmatic being emphasizes her portrayal as a mythical figure, which is also reinforced by its connections with Artemis/Diana's classical model, such as her virginity or her inclination to hunting.

4. Nature: The Real and the False

The woods are Artemis/Diana's emblematic space—a wild space opposed to the city, which is the known social space, organized according to a set of rules and conventions. Likewise, in *The Hunger Games* the woods play a major role in the configuration of Katniss' character. In the first scene in which Katniss is introduced in the film saga (the second scene of the first film), we see the character in her environment. Following a wide shot of District 12 (Katniss' district), the camera enters the heroine's house, where we see her taking care of her little sister. They have a conversation, and Katniss leaves the house. She crosses her district, with the camera showing us the streets and the citizens living there. After a little while following Katniss through her neighborhood, the screen displays a message on an electric fence: "No access beyond this point." The limit is clear, but a hole in the fence allows Katniss to trespass. She then enters the woods, where she hides her bow and arrows. The film focuses on showing her agility and her expertise in using the different natural resources at her reach while she is hunting a deer (which is Artemis's sacred animal). The woods are not depicted as a dangerous space, but as a familiar environment where Katniss feels at ease and in control.

The woods are presented as the origin, a balanced natural environment where Katniss finds the food she needs for sustenance and that she also trades for obtaining other goods. The usual dichotomy involves an opposition between the city (the social safe space) and the woods (the dangerous, wild space). The film not only dialogues with this tradition, but also it re-signifies by opposing the peace of the woods to the lack of security in the District, a precarious place ruled by violence and abuse. A scene of the first film of the saga proves quite revealing in this regard. It shows Katniss in her room at the Capitolium, which is equipped with a window that acts like a screen. The image

on the window can be "personalized" using a remote control. Katniss goes through a catalogue of default images: two of cities, one of a desert... and eventually stops when the screen displays a picture of tall trees in a forest. This image moves Katniss, putting her in a dreamy state that ends up with the heroine feeling distressed after she realizes that the woods she saw were just an illusion. The symbolism of nature as Katniss' origin and true environment is reinforced by the meaning of her name, whose etymology traces back to "cattail," as it is pointed out in the books by Suzanne Collins that served for the film adaptation and highlighted by Frankel (2012, 13).

The first image of Katniss offered by the film is very similar to that of Artemis/Diana: she is an archer and hunts for deer in the woods. The woods become part of her image, along with her bow, arrows, and quiver. As the plot develops, Katniss evolves into a symbol for the population living in the districts. Her image consolidates, too, with her weapons playing a relevant role in the symbolic identification of the character. This process unfolds simultaneously inside and outside the fictional world, and the promotional posters of the films are proof of it, for they always portray an armed Katniss. In *Catching Fire*, the second film of the saga (2013), Katniss has already become a perfectly recognizable heroine thanks to her weapons. The film opens with a slow-paced sequence built in three parts. First, the screen shows an aerial wide shot of snow-covered forest. The images are accompanied by a simple melody performed by wind instruments. This shot is followed by one of Katniss wearing her bow and arrows, contemplating the snowy forest from within. The composition of this scene, with Katniss crouching in the middle of the screen, radiates feelings of calmness and balance. The third part of the sequence consists in a close-up of Katniss' face that reveals she is actually in distress: she is in the woods, which to her are a space of intimacy, a shelter to which she can always return for solace and comfort.

The film saga shows us another forest, constructed in a similar way. It is a space quite relevant to the plot: the arena where the Hunger Games take place, which is actually a simulation of a real forest. As is the case with almost every single element in the Capitolium, technology reigns. Using a general control panel, the director of the show (within the film) is able to make the sun rise, initiate a fire or activate technological animals that attack the contestants, called tributes. However, this other forest, created and ruled by the inhabitants of the Capitolium, is perceived as a hostile environment despite Katniss' ability to elude all the traps. What's more, this fake nature becomes the *décor* in which human wilderness emerges: the contestants, alienated, are forced to kill each other by the Capitolium, only to entertain the population of the first district.

In both cases, the woods are beyond the social conventions that regulate the interactions between the citizens (for good in the first case, for bad in the second). In the same way that she rebels against the social order, in *Catching Fire* (2013), Katniss attempts to destroy the arena, the fake woods. In this film, the alliances among the tributes, and, simultaneously, among the inhabitants of the districts, begin to replace the previous atomization of the individuals. In this new context, the true enemy is outside the tributes' environment (outside the arena), but also outside the twelve districts. "Remember who the real enemy is," Finnick says to Katniss (*Catching Fire*, 2013). After hearing these words, Katniss shoots her arrow into the sky. This action reveals the limits of the arena, as well as the falsehood of that which seemed natural. It exposes the fact that the sky is but a vulnerable dome that collapses after the attack and, with it, the Capitolium's power over the tributes.

5. Bows: Performativity of the Heroic Actions

Katniss' shooting the arrow in the air puts an end to the games and to the main plot of the second film. It is followed by an epilogue in which are shown the effects of this action, anticipating the story developed in *Mockingjay*, the last part of the saga (one volume in the book saga, two films in its adaptation to the big screen). These two consecutive scenes reveal that Katniss' spectacular action is the trigger that *enables* the rebellion. We can thus read it as a performative action from the perspectives of both drama and pragmatics.⁶

Performative actions change reality. Very often, mythical characters perform actions that go beyond the physical or moral limits of the humans. Through them, they establish a new order or open a path for society to follow them, as is the case with Katniss. In the two last films, the process through which Katniss is turned into a symbol, the heroine of the rebellion, becomes apparent—even though this is a process that has been covertly developing since the beginning of the saga.

As tributes of District 12, Katniss and Peeta benefit from the services of their own personal designer, Cenna, played by Lenny Kravitz. Every team has their own designer, who is in charge of manufacturing garments that stand for the symbolism of their district. However, the relationship between Katniss, Cenna, and the symbolic potential of her attire—which is always bold and striking—is a constant in the films. The attires are a fundamental part of the symbolic representation of the mythical characters, which usually include some of the tools and weapons they use in their actions. In addition to the bow and arrows used at the games and that we can see in the pictures of the movie posters, the dresses worn by Katniss at the parades are always covered in fire in one way or another. These attires combining feminine dresses and fire portray her courage, femininity and exceptional nature, three of the qualities that are contained in the name “girl on fire” (her most common nickname). Interestingly enough, this applies to the last two films, too: Cenna has passed away, but Katniss finds the sketches for her battle costume, on which he had been working before his death. This turns out to be quite significant, since Katniss' outfits strongly contribute to differentiate her: they make her visually distinguishable from both her neighbors and the rest of the tributes, as Reynolds pointed out in his study of superheroes (26).

KATNISS: So, you are here to make me look pretty?

CENNA: I'm here to help you make an impression. (*The Hunger Games*, 2012)

In the first film, Cenna says these words to Katniss. The ambiguity produced by the word *impression* (acting/impact) characterizes the double path that Katniss will be forced to follow. On the one hand, she is prompted to play a role before the rest of the characters. On the other hand, the actions that arise from her own inclinations—the ones that she doesn't *act out*—actually make an impression on the people of the districts. Both of them are aspects to the perception of Katniss as a heroine and symbol of the rebellion, and little girls start dressing like her, and her neighbors are moved by the way she acts. This is an innovative combination in the construction of mythical characters, which are supposed to be of a different moral condition—an exceptional one that is revealed through their heroic actions and that cannot be retouched, neither for exaggerating nor for concealing it. The innovation here lies on the deliberate open display of the resources involved in the transformation of Katniss into a symbol, just in the same way that some characters become a myth in our culture by the actions of the media that elaborate a tale through which the exceptionality of said characters is projected.

There is a scene in the first part of *Mockingjay* that is quite revealing in this respect.

Katniss has been rescued by some rebels' section and accepts to act as a symbol for the cause. To do so, the communication chief of the rebels arranges a set for shooting short promotional videos for recruiting new soldiers for the revolt, with Katniss as the star. With a green backdrop behind her, Katniss wields her iconic weapons and encourages the people to revolt against the Capitolium. However, things do not turn out as the rebels expected: Katniss' speech doesn't feel real. Then, Katniss' trainer, Haymitch, shows up and says, "And that, my friends, is how a revolution dies" (*The Hunger Games. Mockingjay part 1*, 2014). In the scene that follows, we see a number of characters sitting at a round table. The characters of Katniss' circle discuss what caused the failure with the ideologues of the revolution:

Haymitch: Let's everybody think of one incident where Katniss Everdeen genuinely moved you. Not where you were jealous of her hairstyle or her dress went up in flames or she made a halfway decent shot with an arrow. And not where Peeta made you like her. No, I'd like you all to think of one moment where she made you feel something real.

Effie: When she volunteered for her sister at the Reaping.

Haymitch: Excellent example. [...] What else?

Effie: When she sang that song for little Rue.

Haymitch: Oh, yeah. Who didn't get choked up at that? You know, I like you better, Effie, without all that makeup.

Effie: Well, I like you better sober.

Beetee: When she chose Rue as an ally, as well. Effie: Mmm, yes.

Haymitch: Now, what do all these have in common?

Gale: No one told her what to do.

Beetee: Unscripted, yes. So maybe we should just leave her alone.

Boggs: And wash her face. She's still a girl. You made her look 35.

Katniss' emotions and her ability to move through her actions are at the core of the conversation. But for Katniss' skills to really work, her actions must be real. This dialogue exposes the dichotomy that, since Aristotle, has pervaded every theory on how the human beings should behave. It contrasts spontaneity of action with fabricating behaviors ranging from lying to the mere wish of adapting to social conventions or established manners. Both ways of acting tell us something about people, information that, according to Goffman (2008), consists of signals that can be *given off* or simply *given*. In the case of a mythical heroine, it is valued that her behavior gives true information about her extraordinary personality because, just like the film lays out, that is the only way her heroic function can be fulfilled. Only if she is true to herself, only if she is honest, will Katniss become a heroine with the ability to move her society. Thus, Katniss is able to do things with her acts in the way Austin describes it (2009). Her actions produce real changes: they transform reality because, beyond their mere practical purpose, they are able to move people. In other words: Katniss' actions are relevant because of their performative potential.

Her team's decisiveness to move others is approached in emotional terms. The second variable of performativity is therefore implied, that is, the *pathos* of the act. Classical rhetoric already considered the ability to move the audience to be an essential component, since, in this context, the viewers shouldn't by any means remain passive. On the contrary, an ideal speaker is one that is able to effectively communicate a number

of arguments and proof to their audience, but this is only the first part: they must also move the audience into action, that is, into taking the best decision. In classical rhetoric, speakers used different strategies for achieving this, among which were the *pathos*-based strategies. In the words of Farrell, “pity becomes—through rhetoric—a form of proof” (1993, 71).

In the same way, from the classical perspective, the *pathos* must respect the speaker’s *ethos*, an ethical notion that comprises the behavioral virtues (which differ from intellectual virtues), congregating body and personality, as the body reveals the mind, and the mind influences the body. In our context, Katniss’ actions lie on a tense place halfway between these two dimensions: she must convey her true self (the one that has the ability to persuade her followers) and, at the same time, she needs to carry out spectacular actions that move them, triggering a reaction.

In the end, the promotional video for the revolution is shot during a battle. After the video has been recorded, Katniss’ true reaction to the slaughter in the District spreads far and wide across the communities. Full of anger and sorrow, she gives a poignant speech that immediately becomes a revolutionary spot with the potential to move people to revolt. The repetition of the action then becomes another crucial factor for the crystallization of the myth: only when repeated the myth becomes myth. The viewers—both intradiegetically and extradiegetically speaking—are no longer confronted with a decontextualized speech, recorded at a studio and replicated with the purpose to make it become a symbol. Instead, we are now given access to a story, a narrative that explains the character’s motives. From that moment on, every independent image of Katniss functions as a minor secondary symbol, as they can now be understood as part of the story, of Katniss’ story that is presented as a foundational myth for the new society that she helps to build. Consequently, this kind of performative acts, which not only reveal the character’s *ethos* but also have a strong impact on the people living in the districts, can be considered repetitions. At an intradiegetic level and as signifiers of the myth, by being broadcast Katniss’ repeated actions reinforce a content already present, both when she is participating in the games and during her time as a rebel they act as stories that contribute to build the myth. At an extradiegetic level, this repetition of actions reinforces the content of Katniss’ story as it is presented in the saga.

Repetition plays a major role in the construction of the myth. This can be achieved through a rewriting of the narrative, but also by using the symbols that stem from the mythical story. One way of appealing to the myth by the means of a static image with great symbolic power is to represent the heroes and heroines displaying attires and objects that evoke their characteristic actions. This procedure, which was already common in the classical era through paintings and sculptures, is perfectly compatible with the idolatry promoted by the contemporary mass media—the events portrayed in *The Hunger Games* or the previously mentioned *Hercules* scene are good examples of it. Amidst this amalgam of repetitions, Katniss, as an echo of mythical Diana, is but a faded form that will be brought to life thanks to the meaning of the myth.

Thus, the symbolic potential of Katniss’ image, constructed through her attire, her weapons, and her repeated actions broadcast by the media connects with a moral lesson and with a set of values that fill it with meaning, such as courage, justice and the protection of the weaker party. In the same way, that form adheres to previous mythical forms such as Artemis/Diana, and, through them, to a permanent meaning that has been travelling across our history for centuries.

6. Conclusions

Among the many connections that can be identified when approaching Katniss' character, this paper has focused on highlighting the echoes of the mythical figure of Artemis/Diana and her role in the construction of *The Hunger Games'* heroine. Katniss' virginity and sexual ambiguity, which have sometimes been read as a new gender/sexual option with significance nowadays, was already at the core of many female mythical figures. The mythical characters' deviation from the general conventions emphasizes their extraordinary condition and their ability to accomplish exceptional feats. Katniss' liminality is reinforced by the ubiquitous presences of the real forest (a place beyond the social space) and of the fake one (a context ruled by extreme violence). Katniss and Artemis/Diana dwell in wild solitary spaces, making them their home.

Liminality enables the extraordinary acts through which characters can express their heroic *ethos*. Very interestingly, in *The Hunger Games* the process through which these spectacular actions construct the mythical ideal is not implied but explicit, from the heroine's crystallization as a symbolic image—a repeated form that channels a meaning—to the repetition and dissemination of said image.

The last film ends with an epilogue outside the mythical imagery. Once she has fulfilled her heroic function, Katniss lets go of the mythical attributes. She moves to a cottage near a meadow—domesticated natural spaces—and becomes a wife and a mother. At the end of the saga, Katniss is an average person, whose past feats now are distant stories that she passes on to her children.

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Notes

¹ The first volume (*The Hunger Games*) was adapted to the big screen in 2012 and directed by Gary Ross. It was followed by *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013); *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* (2014); and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2* (2015).

² Both the past and the future are used for questioning and modelling the social structures of the present. Moreover, in *The Hunger Games*, we can find several references to the Roman society, such as the gladiators' arena (similar to the Hunger Games' arena) or the use of quadrigas (or the chariots during the tributes' parade).

³ Frankel (2012) offers a broad study of the meanings hidden in different elements present in the novels, from the characters' names to the objects they use. Her analysis is based on a number of sources, such as etymology, history, and the zodiac.

⁴ These three attributes of Artemis are shared by her Roman counterpart, Diana, in most iconographic traditions (Poulsen 2009). To know more on Ephesus' Artemis imagery, see Nielsen (2009).

⁵ I use *ethos* here in Aristotelian terms, that is, as a constitutive element of ethics, but also of literature (theory of literature). In his theory of tragedy, later applied to literature in general, Aristotle states that the object of imitation are the character's actions, which are determined

by two natural causes: *ethos* (personality, temperament) and *dianoia* (discursive thinking). Therefore, from the Aristotelian perspective, being a natural quality that is revealed through the character's actions is what distinguishes the *ethos* or temperament.

- ⁶ This subscribes to Austin's speech act theory, according to which there exist a type of utterances that are not merely referential, but actually bring about real changes in the world when said in a specific context, by specific individuals—these are what Austin calls performative speech acts.

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