



Universidad
Zaragoza

Undergraduate Dissertation

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Heroines of Captivity Then and Now: A Comparison of Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*

Author

Marta Monzón García

Supervisor

Silvia Martínez Falquina

FACULTY OF ARTS
2017

ABSTRACT

In spite of female invisibilization and silencing throughout history, women have often managed to remain present in one way or another. There are significant examples in literature of strong female characters who are the best models to inspire other women in order to make positive changes in the world. In many relevant American literary works, female characters embody the worthy values of American citizens, usually related to male heroes. These female voices can be considered heroines in their worlds and they show the importance of women's actions to subvert the traditional image of fragility and dependence derived from patriarchy. In this essay the evolution of the American heroine is analyzed in two works that, at first sight, have few things in common: Mary Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008). In spite of the obvious contextual and ideological distance between the two texts, it is my contention that both works can be examined under the scope of the captivity narrative genre, which became a very recognizable image of American literature about the problems of the first American settlers in the colonies, and whose influence continues to this day. This comparative analysis tries to prove the existence of the frontier heroine in American literature related to the archetypal frontier hero and the need for strong female voices for 21st century young readers. The essay also deals with the formal features of the genre which are present in both texts and the similarities that connect them. A key element of this analysis is the characterization of the heroines and the symbolism of the Bible in Rowlandson's and the food in Collins', both of which become essential elements of support for the heroines' survival.

RESUMEN

A pesar de que las mujeres han sido invisibilizadas y silenciadas a lo largo de la historia, han conseguido reivindicar su presencia de un modo u otro. En literatura hay ejemplos representativos de fuertes personajes femeninos que son modelos para inspirar a otras mujeres a hacer cambios positivos en el mundo. En muchas de las obras más importantes de la literatura norteamericana, existen personajes femeninos que representan los valores más nobles de los ciudadanos norteamericanos, normalmente relacionados con los héroes masculinos. Estas voces femeninas se pueden considerar heroínas en sus mundos y muestran la importancia de las acciones de las mujeres para debilitar la imagen tradicional de fragilidad y dependencia derivada del patriarcado. En este trabajo se analiza la evolución de la heroína norteamericana en dos obras que, a primera vista, tienen muy pocas cosas en común: *La verdadera historia del cautiverio y restitución de la señora Mary Rowlandson*, de Mary Rowlandson (1682) y *Los juegos del hambre*, de Suzanne Collins (2008). A pesar de que existe una diferencia contextual e ideológica notable entre los dos textos, este trabajo trata de demostrar que ambos pueden estudiarse desde el punto de vista del género denominado narrativa de cautividad, fácilmente identificable en la literatura norteamericana, que trata sobre los problemas de los primeros colonos norteamericanos, y cuya influencia se extiende hasta la actualidad. Este análisis comparativo trata de probar la existencia de la heroína de frontera en la literatura norteamericana en relación con el héroe de frontera arquetípico y la necesidad de reivindicar voces femeninas fuertes para los lectores más jóvenes del siglo XXI. Este trabajo también trata sobre las características formales del género presentes en ambos textos y sus similitudes. Uno de los aspectos más importantes de este análisis es la caracterización de las heroínas y el simbolismo de la Biblia en el texto puritano y la comida en la novela. Ambos elementos se convierten en algo imprescindible para la supervivencia de las heroínas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE: ORIGINS AND CONTINUITY	8
CHAPTER TWO: HEROINES' CHARACTERIZATION AND SPIRITUAL FOOD.....	16
CONCLUSION	25
WORKS CITED	28

INTRODUCTION

Trying to compare Mary Rowlandson, a devoted Puritan woman who lived in the colonial 17th century and wrote about her captivity at the hands of the Natives, with Katniss Everdeen, a fictional character of a 21st century dystopian trilogy aimed at young readers, might seem an impossible—or at least unexpected—task. After all, society and the female position in it have changed enough in 300 years for us to expect far more differences than similarities between these women. At first sight, Mary Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) have few things in common; clearly, the setting, the times and the historical contexts are very different. Furthermore, we cannot forget the obvious fact that we are dealing with a historical figure who became the main character of her narrative on the one hand, and a character of a fictional text, on the other. Nevertheless, when considering the representation of both characters as heroines in texts which share the features of the captivity narratives, the comparison seems much more plausible. Mary Rowlandson is a very good example of strength who survived captivity under extremely harsh conditions in a society in which the female figure had a very prominent role in the domestic sphere, but not in the public one. On the other hand, Katniss Everdeen portrays, mostly for young 21st century readers, a resourceful woman who is empowered in spite of contextual difficulties, and who is able to withstand the worst situations that life could place in front of her. This essay analyzes Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* and *The Hunger Games*—the first book of a trilogy—in order to show how, in spite

of generic and contextual differences, these female figures offer similar models of women's strength and resilience aimed at survival under adverse circumstances of captivity.

Mary Rowlandson (1637-1711) was a Puritan woman, the wife and daughter of Puritan Ministers, established in Lancaster, Massachusetts. Although not exactly a professional writer, she wrote *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, which reported her captivity by Indians during King Philip's War. Mary Rowlandson's text is considered a major American work, key to the development of American autobiography, and the first in the typically American—and extremely successful and influential—literary genre known as the captivity narrative or “Indian narrative.” After her captivity she recorded her experiences—“for the benefit of the afflicted” (3)—and it was edited by a Puritan Minister, a common practice at the time. Puritan Ministers wanted the authorial control of the returned captives' narratives (Fitzpatrick 3), and they used these texts in their sermons to frighten possible settlers about the Indian frontier (13)¹. Rowlandson's autobiographical text narrates the Indian assault of Lancaster, Massachusetts, on February 10, 1675, in which a great number of British settlers died or were wounded. The survivors of the attack—like Mary Rowlandson and her three children—were captured by the Indians and taken into the wilderness. The text describes people—mainly Natives—and uses the first person narrative to account for the traumatic events that Rowlandson

¹To learn more about the influence of the Puritan Ministers in captivity narrative texts, see Fitzpatrick's *The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative*.

experienced during eleven weeks of imprisonment, like the death of her youngest child. The *Narrative* expresses her inner thoughts, her faith and her interpretation of the captivity as God's punishment. During these weeks of extreme conditions she survived 20 removes with not much more than a Bible to comfort her.

The Hunger Games (2008), written by Suzanne Collins (1962-), is the first part of a fictional trilogy for young adults, followed by *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). The first book narrates the story of Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen year-old girl, who lives in a fictional and futuristic dystopian North America. The country where it is set, Panem, is divided into twelve districts ruled by the Capitol, the city where people are supplied with the districts' raw materials. Katniss lives in District 12 with her mother and sister after her father's death, and she hunts illegally in order to survive the hard conditions imposed by Panem's president. Every year the Capitol forces 24 teenager tributes, one male and one female from each district, to compete in an arena. There they have to fight for their lives by trying to kill the other tributes in a televised show known as the Hunger Games. When her younger sister Prim is chosen as tribute in the annual reaping, Katniss volunteers to take her place and from then on she starts a journey with her co-tribute, Peeta Mellark, to try to return home alive.

Although Rowlandson's narrative and Collins' fiction have been widely analyzed from different perspectives, I am dealing with both texts differently by resorting to a genre that arose in the 17th century, and came to be known as the captivity narrative. This classification is obvious for Mary Rowlandson's

document, due to the fact that it is the first and most representative work of this autobiographical genre, it is one of the seminal texts in American literature that became a “best-seller” and 30 editions of the work were published. This Puritan kind of narrative emerged as a very recognizable image of American literature, and it is related to the frontier hero who reflected the frontier problems of colonial settlers. Texts about experiences of captivity are very useful to study American history and they have achieved “a kind of literary status” (Pearce 1). This literary genre is full of contrasts between irreconcilable realities, as pointed out by Derounian-Stodola when she discusses it in terms of “freedom and captivity, self and other, civilization and savagery” (253).

The genre became very relevant because there were thousands of publications that reflected the frontier experience of people who became captives of the Natives. These texts were best-sellers in the 17th and 18th century and the genre became extremely popular. The texts embodied the most representative problems of the first American settlers, as well as the best ideal values of the frontier inhabitants. One of the first accounts of a captivity—though not a captivity narrative as such—was John Smith’s *A True Relation of Virginia* (1608), the first work written in English in America. Smith was made captive by the Powhatan and he portrayed himself as a hero, especially in the famous incident with Pocahontas. The protagonists of this and other autobiographical texts were portrayed like people of “exceptional gifts” (Macneil 649), values that were later transferred into the fictional captivity narratives, with James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) as the most popular example. From that point onwards, literary works were still

influenced by this genre but they cannot be considered captivity narratives as such. Even today, the genre is relevant in a completely different social context, as we see in *The Hunger Games*, a fictional text which presents influences of several genres, including the captivity narrative. As I argue, *The Hunger Games* can be best understood as being influenced by this genre because the main character, Katniss Everdeen, becomes a hostage at the hands of the Capitol after the reaping. She suffers distressing situations in the story's development that bring about the evolution of the character which concludes in *Mockingjay*.

The presence of heroes in literature is very common because they represent the highest and most valuable principles of human beings. In the history of American literature, they have embodied the most desirable values of US citizens. Macneil believes that "the American frontier hero is ubiquitous" in American culture, and she provides several examples in literary works and in Western films (625). The American hero became a very relevant figure in American cultural representations, since it was closely related to the origin of the country. Many texts have been written about the frontier hero, who connects the best things of two different lifestyles, and who "is usually defined as emerging from literary and cultural traditions of male characters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (MacNeil 625).

In this essay I will analyze how the aforementioned heroines embody many features of the frontier heroine with a special focus on the persisting importance of the captivity narrative as a genre. For centuries in American Literature, a great number of narratives about heroines have emerged:

outstanding women who are admired for their courage, achievements, or noble qualities, according to the Oxford definition of the term, to which we might add, and whose merit increases when we observe how their achievements find the obstacles associated to a patriarchal society. The woman's role has changed on both sides of the domestic-public dichotomy: whereas in Rowlandson's time we found two clearly—and irrevocably—separated spheres, there is generally much more—although not total—flexibility and freedom in the 21st century. Nevertheless, there is not enough female presence in the public sphere and societies still have to struggle for equality.

Both Mary Rowlandson and Katniss Everdeen represent strong and courageous female survivors who undergo difficult and unexpected struggles in their lives. In these two texts, women are placed in the leading roles of the stories and both narratives are also written by women. Collins describes Katniss following the attributes of traditional male heroes, fighting for her life with courage and resourcefulness while she also tries to transform the world into a better place to live in. Significantly, it is becoming less difficult to imagine that a woman can be the hero saving not only her male partner, but also the whole country. These two women embody the ideal of heroines and they can both be considered frontier heroines. The main characteristics shared by Rowlandson and Katniss are their strong vitality, their desire to survive—not merely for themselves but also for their loved ones—and the importance of their own principles, which allow them to return home. Their experiences have changed their visions of the world and they have to establish a new relationship with the old background that surrounds them.

Needless to say, the *Narrative* and *The Hunger Games* reflect two very different understandings of who the oppressed and the oppressor are. In Rowlandson's text, the center of representation is white, Puritan and colonial, and the Indians are the cruel savage enemy. This view is questioned at present, with more attention to the Native side of the binary being paid. On the other hand, in *The Hunger Games* race is not an issue, but there are radical differences of power which are marked between the great mass of oppressed people, including Katniss, and the few privileged ones, who become the oppressors and captors in this tyrannical system. In spite of the contextual, textual, and ideological distance of the two texts, both Rowlandson's narrative and Collins' novel are stories about strong, heroic women who go through individual traumatic experiences of captivity. In the first part of my essay, I offer an overview of the captivity narrative genre, its origins and the context in which it was developed. Then I talk about the main conventions of the genre, the formal issues which are present in Rowlandson's story and how some features can be applied in a multi-genre novel like *The Hunger Games*. The second part will be dedicated to the heroine concept, and here I argue that both characters could be understood as heroines and I prove how the narrative motifs show their need for nourishment. Part of the focus of this essay is to analyze the evolution of heroine's figure in American literature, the importance of inner strength and people's principles, and the significance of strong female voices. At the end I demonstrate that, although heroines have been silenced, total silence was never achieved and they remain the best examples to inspire women with models who change their worlds.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE: ORIGINS AND CONTINUITY

This chapter deals with the main conventions of the captivity narrative as established in Rowlandson's text—with a special attention to its Puritan context—and it examines how those conventions are transformed in *The Hunger Games*. My main point is to argue that we can establish a relevant formal connection—including the characterization of the protagonists—between two texts as different as an autobiographical captivity and a dystopian science fiction novel. In this part I provide the socio-cultural context of Puritan colonies, the main conventions of the captivity narratives and the absence of a direct addressee. I examine the main features of Rowlandson's style, the multiple genres that are present in *The Hunger Games* and I connect the novel's features with the captivity narrative conventions. Finally, I explain the structure of each work and the most significant formal issues in common.

Mary Rowlandson's narrative is "representative as a woman's text, a Puritan text, a spiritual autobiography, and an editorialized text" (Derounian-Stodola 248), and all these characteristics make this narrative a seminal text within the American literary tradition. In Bauer's words, this text is an example of "gendered specificities of the frontier experience and the colonial encounter" (667). It is the most classic example of captivity narratives and the main features of the genre can be found in it. In order to be able to understand the relevance of this narrative, it is important to observe the setting, the main habits of Puritan society and how its customs are represented in Puritan literature. The popularity of this genre was very much related with the social

context in which it was developed. The first settlers arrived in America with the image of a prosperous land, full of opportunities where they could be free to profess their religion. This propagandistic image was far from the violent reality and the initial difficulties of the colonies. Puritan societies made emphasis on damnation and on eternal life as a consequence of their religious origin, so they imposed a very rigorous lifestyle based on hard work and on the rejection of pleasure in their daily lives. The colonies were theocratic societies in which God had a predominant place reflected in the main themes of this literature. The interpretation of life as a test was one of the main subjects in Puritan texts, who saw events as signs of God's plans. Another relevant topic was the world's representation as an arena of constant battle between the forces of God and Satan as a reflection of the physical confrontations with the Natives. For Puritans writing should depict the importance of worshipping God and the spiritual dangers of life on Earth. However, the most distinctive feature of Puritan texts was the constant references to the Bible—there are about 65 in Rowlandson's typically Puritan narrative.

Captivity narratives were tales of the settlers' experiences in the frontier in which Indians' economic and political reasons were ignored. The structure of these narratives followed the steps in which the captivities were divided—capture, captivity and return. In Rowlandson's text she talked about "several removes" she "had up and down in the wilderness" (6), which indicated the passing of time. In captivity narratives there was usually not a direct addressee, but the texts were still a kind of journal with an implicit one. The Puritan text was "first of all a testament of personal salvation" (Downing

253) which Rowlandson wrote in order to share her “personal experience” with the whole community (Derounian 85). This text offered hope to those settlers in problematic situations near the Indian frontier in America and it was a powerful defense of the Puritan beliefs and lifestyle. Nevertheless, as Rowlandson’s narrative pointed out, her remembered experience was addressed directly to a certain public, “the afflicted” readers (3). Rowlandson’s narration combined adventure, heroism and piety, and it was reflected on her will to survive. Indian narratives were pieces that contributed to spread the anti-Indian sentiment among Puritan colonies and Rowlandson’s text acted as a proof of Indian brutality (De Luise 21), naming her captors “barbarous creatures,” and other similar derogatory terms. Pearce declares that the most important thing in those narratives was what they meant for the readers for whom they were written because the significances “vary from that of the religious confessional to that of the noisomely visceral thriller” (1). Rowlandson’s narrative was a “fusion of vivid immediacy and religious intensity” (Pearce 3) written in plain style conforming to the lack of adornment and disapproval of amusement in Puritan productions. Her text was a compilation of real events and a spiritual autobiography in which God answered her through Scriptures in a didactic way that allowed readers to understand God’s will. Puritan narratives were very detailed about the captivity itself because it had a symbolic value and it was interpreted as a religious experience (2). The captivity was portrayed as a rite of passage and self-transformation in which moral conclusions could be found. Rowlandson’s narrative was “an example of personal salvation” and an “allegory for the

desperate yet hopeful plight of the Puritans and their role in New England” (De Luise 44). According to the Puritans, everything in the captivities was determined by God in order to teach a lesson, and the dichotomy between Puritans and Indians reinforced this idea. The first group represented the “good” protagonists of the story—as did Mary Rowlandson, who was the clear central character—and the second one was depicted as “the others”: the “barbarous creatures” (Rowlandson 14). Pearce explains that the “religious concerns came to be incidental at most” and later captivity texts were more focused on “register as much hatred of the French and Indians as possible” (6). He describes the evolution of the genre² and he highlights the fact that narratives were changed by the interest of the audience to whom they were directed (6).

This genre suffered the loss of directness, the introduction of the propagandistic value and the stylization of the texts as a kind of journalistic narration. Captivity narratives were used to “inspire those who would venture forth to new settlements” (Fitzpatrick 5), although the beginnings were difficult due to constant Indian attacks. This genre went through shapes and reshapes “according to varying immediate cultural needs” (Pearce 1), and it took into account the readers’ desires and the socio-cultural reality of the colonies. At the end of the 19th century, when the political situation had changed in the colonies, the captivity narrative was not taken very seriously by American readers and the genre became less and less important in the following literary periods (Pearce 12). Nevertheless, as I argue in this essay, this genre is still

²To learn more about the evolution of the captivity narratives as genre, see Pearce’s *The Significances of the Captivity Narrative*.

important in American literary tradition and its influence can be traced to recent works like *The Hunger Games*. This novel follows the spirit of the captivity narratives to “record the cultural significance of what the captives had to say about their experiences and of the way in which they said it” (Pearce 7). *The Hunger Games* is a mixture of genres and it can be interpreted “as romance, as dystopian, as action adventure, as political” (Jordan). Obviously, it is also a science fiction story because the events are set in a dystopian future, and as a captivity narrative because of the similarities between captivity narrative conventions and some formal issues of that novel. Collins’ fictional story can therefore be studied as a captivity narrative because it can be classified at the same time as “a survivor story in which the survivor never fully recovered; a *Bildungsroman* in which the protagonist regresses as much as she progresses” (Henthorne 30). As aforementioned, the main aim of the early captivity narratives was to comfort Puritan settlers and encourage them to face the difficulties of the frontier experience. *The Hunger Games* is a fictional text written for young readers which tries to call their attention to the fact that “we can only prevent future atrocities by confronting them directly” (Henthorne 34). This warning appears in Katniss’ story by presenting fictional events “on record for the benefit of others” (Henthorne 34) in order to face life problems and get over them.

If we focus on the formal elements of the texts, we find relevant similarities. In both narratives, events are presented in a linear way, which facilitates the understanding of the story, and it allows readers to understand the world from women’s inner perspectives. Rowlandson’s text is narrated in

retrospective and it presents the heroine's progress, which is noticeable at the end of the traumatic experience of her captivity. Readers know that she survived the captivity, but there are other elements—like the fact that she was not raped, or the details about how she survived—which are unveiled gradually. *The Hunger Games* is characterized by its immediacy; the narrative is telling the events at the same moment in which the protagonist is experiencing them. Suspense is one of the main elements in Collins' work because the narration is made in the present tense. Readers are waiting the whole novel in order to know whether Katniss is able to achieve her main purpose, to return home alive. As Derounian-Stodola determines, Rowlandson's captivity is a "multilayered and multivocal" text (249), which is written in the first person by a homodiegetic narrator. The same definition could also be applied to *The Hunger Games* but with one relevant difference: the autobiography was written after the events had happened and the fictional novel narrates the experience as if readers were part of the Panem's spectators. Henthorne makes reference only to *The Hunger Games*' readers when he says that they "must figure out what is happening from a narrator who herself is overwhelmed and confused" (5), but Rowlandson was also an overwhelmed and confused narrator. Even though the events were told when she had already suffered them, Rowlandson talked about things she could barely understand and the narrative was her own interpretation of the real events. Whereas "Katniss becomes an increasingly unreliable narrator" (Henthorne 10), Mary Rowlandson presented a reliable picture of her experiences in wilderness

although she described the world that surrounded her from her personal point of view.

The main captivity narrative feature in *The Hunger Games* is the combination of adventure and heroism embodied in a powerful leading role. Collins' style is "realistic," since it is showing a possible social reality of a dystopian future, and deliberately simple due to her experience as a TV scriptwriter. Collins is very aware of the importance of "moving the story forward and developing characters at the same time" and also of what the audience needs to continue the story after each chapter's cliffhanger (Henthorne 16). The novel tries to be an authentic narration about the "real" events of the protagonist's life, Katniss Everdeen, who is a fictional character in a dystopian trilogy. She goes through a self-transformation in the same way that Mary Rowlandson did in her captivity because of her imprisonment. It is a kind of rite of passage from "a girl who should never have existed," according to Capitol's parameters, to a girl who exists only "through the will of survival" (Henthorne 44-45), and who, by the end of the trilogy, "challenges the ideological foundation of Panem's itself" (44-45). The last captivity convention in Collins' novel is related with the representation of "the other." In Katniss' world it is not possible to find the figure of the cruel savage as the enemy because Katniss is part of the wild world opposed to Capitols' luxurious kind of life. The perspective is that the wild and natural—which is privileged in contrast to Capitol's life—represents the pure and truthful lifestyle, focused on people's feelings rather than on physical appearances. Katniss' speech is based on an anti-Capitol discourse depicting the suffocating measures that Panem

applies on the district's citizens. At the end of the Hunger Games in the first book, Katniss assures readers that she wants "to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own" (Collins 286).

The structure of each narrative reinforces the similarities between these two stories by the division of the chapters. The Puritan text's division is based on the removes Rowlandson suffered during her captivity journey. These "chapters" can also express "spatial and spiritual movements" (Davis 53) from her civilized background into the unsettled Indian lifestyle. As Logan remarks, after several removes the narrative progresses and it "becomes clear that she relates physical space closely to her sense of identity and values" (256). The sections in Katniss' story are very precise: the novel is composed of three parts, each divided into nine chapters. Part I, entitled "The Tributes," introduces the characters and the situation; Part II, or "The Games," presents the conflict and from which the tensions build up; and Part III, "The Victor," is devoted to the climax and denouement of the book (Henthorne 27-28). The division of each work is a physical representation of a heroine's adventures and of the different stages they are going through in their self-transformation from the beginning to the end, when they arise as new human beings after their experiences of captivity.

CHAPTER TWO: HEROINES' CHARACTERIZATION AND SPIRITUAL FOOD.

Mary Rowlandson and Katniss Everdeen are two powerful and active female figures, and they make great examples of American literary heroines. They are feminine voices who express their anxieties and inner thoughts about the most challenging moments of their lives. Rowlandson's *Narrative* was the first chance of frontier women to express their experiences in opposition to the prevailing image of men "conquering a 'virgin' wilderness" (Fitzpatrick 3). The depiction of the frontier hero in opposition to the Natives—always portrayed as the others from the colonial point of view—is one of the most important representations in American culture. This figure is the best example of American identity: a self-made white man who defends his values and ideals. Mary Rowlandson manifested the abilities of the classical male heroes together with the Puritan woman and she created the image of the frontier heroine, "the heroic stereotype" which was so important in the "shaping of American literature" (MacNeil 626). She was not physically strong but she showed her mental strength through her faith in God. MacNeil contends that Rowlandson's text offered the main roots in American literary tradition to develop the typical frontier hero (627). By means of those abilities Rowlandson was able to "survive among Native Americans" (639), whereas Katniss uses her knowledge of the Games to play a role in front of the cameras and manipulate the audience (Henthorne 83-84). Katniss Everdeen can be

interpreted as the latest heroine in a long list of American frontier heroes,³ although in *The Hunger Games* she starts a “transformative journey” from the Capitol demands to her as tribute in order to become the “heroic symbol of a rebellion against tyranny” (Pharr and Clark 220). Katniss turns into the modern representation of the frontier heroine who is able to fight against the others—embodied by the extravagant citizens of the Capitol. When she emerges as victor of the 74th Hunger Games, not only does Katniss achieve her release and freedom, but she also saves her cherished tribute-partner, Peeta Mellark. Both heroines, Mary and Katniss, are symbols of resistance against their captors—the Indians and the Capitol—and both become powerful and potentially inspiring.

Every hero needs an enemy to embody everything that he or she is not, and to represent an opposing force. Literary works are full of this kind of dichotomy in which the other represents the most undesirable characteristics for the hero. Rowlandson’s and Collins’ heroines are not exceptions and their enemies are also the captors of their captivity experiences. In Rowlandson’s *Narrative*, the Natives were described as “inhumane creatures” (Rowlandson 9), “merciless enemies” (24) or “ravenous beasts” (6), among other derogatory terms based on the colonial civilized/savage dichotomy. In the Puritan work, the Natives’ rituals were something devilish like “the roaring and singing and dancing and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell” (7). The representation of the Natives as hellish

³ Katniss as heroic character is further developed in *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*—the second and third book of the trilogy—, the analysis of which falls out of the scope of this essay.

creatures was a very important concept for the settlers in colonies and this hate against them was at the root of Rowlandson's text. The captivity narrative depicted the Indians as the cruel and pagan savages—this was of course very relevant for Puritan colonies in which religion was the main element—at the beginning of the story. These texts undermined Natives—who were simply defending their lands—and reinforced the settlers' positions in the frontier.

In Collins' book, the enemy is embodied in the figure of President Snow, the dictatorial ruler of Panem and defendant of the Hunger Games. For the Capitol's society, the Hunger Games are a “yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated” and a way to guarantee peace in the country (Collins 21). Nevertheless, for Katniss the Games are the punishment for the uprising of the districts against Panem's President and a reminder of “how little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion” (20). At the beginning of the novel, Katniss starts a transformative journey in which she opens her mind and gets to know the world beyond District 12. Her first thought about the Capitol's citizens is that “they're so unlike people” (76), making a difference between her and the others. The same impression is stated by her prep team, who consider that Katniss “almost look like a human being” (76) after their first contact with her. In the first chapter Katniss points out that “to make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity” (22), emphasizing the cruelty of her captors. However, Katniss recognizes afterwards that Capitol's citizens can be “tiresome and clueless” but not destructive (149). Mary Rowlandson went through the same process when she recognized generosity in Indians in spite of

the fact that she was in confinement. As time went by Mary Rowlandson changed her relationship with some Indians, although only slightly, and she started to look at them like differentiated beings.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that both women are the heroines of their stories mostly because of the traumatic experiences they live. Derounian-Stodola states that Mary Rowlandson “reveals herself as a tough, victorious survivor [...], who adapts to her situation using strategies including barter, manipulation and even theft” (249). This can also be applied to Katniss Everdeen, as Miller proves when he says that she is “intensely loyal and will lie, steal, fight and even kill to keep those she loves alive” (147). These features emphasize both characters as heroines because they do not survive only for themselves, but also for those they love and are dependent on them. Mary Rowlandson had to go through so much suffering due to the death of her little kid in her arms and the separation from the rest of her children and husband. On the other hand, Katniss is in constant pain because of her beloved ones—especially her little sister Prim. Thus, these two women can be considered frontier heroines that have to face some tests while they are psychological and physical prisoners.

In these literary works, there are some motifs which are different in each story but relevant in both, and which are used to “guide readers through the text” (Henthorne 27). In Mary Rowlandson’s text, the Bible was the main motif—more specifically the Psalms—that encouraged her to survive and it established a link between her life in the wilderness and her Puritan beliefs. As Pharr and Clark conclude, “religion can also provide [...] hope and

motivation,” and within some religious traditions there is “a phase of spiritual development marked by loneliness and despair” (95-96). In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, imagery becomes very important in the development of the characters and of the plot—especially songs and the mockingjay. However, in the first book food—mostly bread and berries—is very significant and it turns into what we could call “spiritual food” that saves the heroine more than once in her life. The dystopian future portrayed in Collins’ trilogy represents a mechanized society in which nature has lost its relevance. Katniss becomes the heroine of the story because of her skills to find food in the woods and her link with nature. She is comfortable in the wilderness, and in some way she is “Indianized” due to her ability with the bow. Thus, this spiritual food helps both heroines to survive and become stronger women at the end of their adventures.

Faith was a very important part of a Puritan woman’s life and the Bible helped the whole community to endure the difficult situation of the colonies under the Natives’ attacks. At several points of the narration, it becomes obvious that Rowlandson “interpreted her capture and the eleven weeks spent as captive, through a religious lens” (Andrews 9). For someone as well-educated in Puritanism as Rowlandson, the events were understood from a religious perspective. She emphasized the importance of her faith in this experience because “captivity, in the Old Testament, is viewed as a means of both instruction (and spiritual testing) and correction (or punishment)” (Downing 256). The Bible was the main motif in this narrative not only because of the constant repetition of biblical passages, but also because

Rowlandson was allowed to carry a Bible with herself in every removal. Mary Rowlandson included biblical cites to be closer to her readers, to prove her knowledge of the Scriptures and to demonstrate that, although she was captured by the Indians, she was still living according to the Puritan norms (Andrews 9). The first captivity narratives showed the captivities like God's moral lesson and they were understood as tests designed in a life full of sins and temptations (Fitzpatrick 1). God was represented as the "punisher"; he placed suffering in people's lives to remind them of the sinful part of their lives. Because of the duality of Rowlandson's God, there were passages in the narration about her doubts of God's presence by her side. Nevertheless, these uncertainties disappeared when soon afterwards she opened her Bible and became lost in its texts (Fitzpatrick 10). The familiar language of the Psalms provided sustenance for her soul and the texts "reassure herself that her suffering has meaning" (Henwood 170). Moreover, the Scriptures helped Rowlandson to understand what was happening in her life and put "her experience in the wilderness into a typological and therefore, meaningful context" (Logan 255). The Bible protected her in the wild nature and helped her to become less vulnerable and stronger to face what she interpreted as God's will to teach her some lessons (Henwood 182). Fitzpatrick points out that Rowlandson's narrative was "consumed by the imminent prospect of starvation and her search for both literal and spiritual sustenance" (10-11). Rowlandson was thus in need of spiritual food, a kind of nourishment provided by her faith and the benevolent God who never abandoned her. She used the Bible to stay closer to her origins and this transformed her into a very powerful

heroine who was able to fight against her despair (Henwood 171). With the Bible she stayed firm in her beliefs, and she could express her fear, her anxiety and her anger.

The spiritual food is an important element in Katniss' experiences inside the arena, but also outside: when she was a child, Peeta Mellark—the boy with the bread—fed and saved her from starvation. The “food serves as a very important sign” (Peksoy 80) and that moment is very relevant because Peeta gives her hope to survive in the first challenging moment of her life. Whereas Rowlandson's text is full of her religious spirit, in *The Hunger Games* trilogy the focus is, expectedly, very different. There are no direct references to religion, but the bread—an image of redemption in the Christian tradition—is an important element for Katniss. Besides, people in Panem believe in something which is essential to survive: the contact with nature which allows them to live under the severe discipline imposed by the Capitol. As aforementioned, Katniss and nature are connected, and it is due to her experience in the woods that she becomes a heroine. The connection between material and spiritual food arises with Peeta as the “savior God,” the benevolent one. He is kind, he loves her and he has taken care of her since childhood, feeding and nourishing her. In Peksoy's words, “the boy with the bread symbolically acts as the source of nourishment and hope when all hope is gone” because he lighted up once the spark of hope and he does again (82). Peeta is the pillar on which Katniss can rest and she needs to save her contribute because killing him would be the same as killing a part of herself (Green-Barteet 40). The image of Peeta as the savior is also reinforced by the

idea that without that burned loaf of bread Katniss could not even be challenging the Hunger Games. Thus, she becomes a heroine for Peeta, for her family, for her district and for the whole country because she is a woman with a very strong sense of justice. In contrast with Rowlandson, Katniss uses her knowledge of the natural world—which makes her a powerful heroine—to survive the Games. Her connection with the woods and her hunter’s skills are developed due to her transgression of the law. But every heroine needs the assistance of others in order to use her strong principles and beliefs to survive.

Just as in Rowlandson’s narration, there are two opposed understandings of God—the good and the punisher—in *The Hunger Games*, and it is possible to find the same duality embodied by different identities. Peeta is Katniss’ savior and the Gamemakers arise as the “punisher God” during the Games. They give hope to the tributes from the same district but at the end the Gamemakers punish Katniss and Peeta by telling them that they have to kill their co-tribute after all. In this difficult moment, Katniss remembers Peeta’s desire “to show the Capitol they don’t own” the tributes and his advice about being something “more than a piece in their Games” (Collins 172). She becomes a heroine by accident when she tries to find a way to survive saving her loved tribute. All throughout the book, “Collins utilizes the food metaphor as a tool of power” (Peksoy 84)—from the moment in which Katniss hunts illegally in District 12 to the final berries. Food symbolizes rebellion all along the novel, and it continues to be so when Katniss uses fruit to challenge the Capitol and to achieve her objective: find a way to return home with Peeta. Her principles and faith in herself allow her to survive in this

struggle. The motifs show her the way to live the rest of her life with no regrets because as Katniss says “if he (Peeta) dies, I’ll never go home, not really. I’ll spend the rest of my life in this arena” (Collins 417). Food is also the reflection of her beliefs because “Katniss is challenging the rules set forth by the Gamemakers by giving them an ultimatum” with the nightlock berries (Peksoy 82). All her heroic moments in the arena lead Katniss back home with her loved ones, but she needs the boy with the bread—an interesting image of redemption with Christian resonances—because he represents home. Just as the Bible was essential to Mary Rowlandson, food becomes hope for Katniss in the worst moments of her life. Both elements are physical things that stay with the heroines during their captivity, but both go further as a kind of spiritual food, providing them with essential nourishment for their souls.

CONCLUSION

In the 326 years which separate these two texts, the representation of women has changed a great deal, but heroines' necessities remain the same. Rowlandson and Collins each depict the image of a powerful woman who is able to undermine the traditional image of fragility and dependence. Both protagonists break down female stereotypes as they blur the boundaries of the domestic-public dichotomy. The historical context in Rowlandson's *Narrative* appears in opposition to the fictional dystopian future that Collins imagines in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. In spite of the contextual differences, though, there are some constant elements which make a good heroine. Both women are empowered figures who challenge stereotypical constructions created for women throughout history. Rowlandson's text was an "eye-witness/outcast" testimony that placed its truthfulness in the fact that it was an autobiographical story: it was an account of real events suffered by a Puritan woman (Bauer 667). Although those incidents were real, she was transferring her vision of the Puritan world—which was very limited—onto the narrative. The Natives were simply the enemy that the colonists had to defeat because they wanted to establish their settlements on their lands. Rowlandson intended to revive her relationship with God in order to encourage other Puritans to understand the frontier experience as a moral lesson (De Luise 59).

This was the first work of a new literary genre whose influence can still be found in recent novels like Collins' fictional trilogy. This author was very explicit about how the idea of this trilogy emerged in her mind. According to Collins, the idea of these books came out while she was channel surfing and

she saw, in a very small lapse of time, images of a TV show and images of the Iraq war in different channels. Very conscious about war's reality—her father was member of the army—, she was shocked by the people's coldness in front of those real and devastating images. On the other hand, she was also disturbed with the pleasure of current society about people's suffering in TV reality shows (Hudson). Henthorne suggests that “*the Hunger Games* trilogy would tell us little about the world we live in or how we might go about changing it” (7). *The Hunger Games* is Collins' analysis of 21st-century societies, and she criticizes the fact that citizens give up “the political responsibilities” when they have plenty of food and entertainment (Hauge Hamre 14). Katniss' story portrays a country which is ruled by the winners of a civil war who established teenagers' deaths as a tribute to be paid by the defeated ones. *The Hunger Games* tries to open the vision of the readership and to call their attention to the reality around them (Henthorne 11-12).

Both narratives are based on a story of captivity and they divide the world between captors and captives. When Rowlandson's *Narrative* was published, the Puritan readership sympathized with her and all the captives who suffered the cruelty of the Indians as she did, although now the generalized sympathies have changed and more readers try to read between the lines and understand the Natives' behavior and motivations too. On the other hand, Katniss belongs to the captives, and also to the oppressed by the dictatorial Panem's president. Shaffer uses the word “dehumanization” as a process in which the status of personhood is denied to someone, and he declares that it is “a technique used by the oppressors to lure a populace into

enjoying the suffering of others” (80). Dehumanizing someone from the captives’ point of view is a way to be separated from the captors and their insensibility with the prisoners’ problems. Both narratives construct the other based on stereotypes through the lenses of Rowlandson and Everdeen, and emphasize the differences between us and the other.

This dissertation sets the emphasis on the importance of people’s principles and inner strengths. For Mary Rowlandson, the Puritan God was her source of love and comfort to undergo all the struggles of her journey within the wild America. For Katniss Everdeen, the boy with the bread is her savior once and again in her life. Peeta’s love is what saved Katniss from starvation when they were kids and again when their lives are in danger in the Games. These texts offer two examples of how, in spite of having been silenced for most of human history, women can and do embody the worthy values usually related to male heroes. Mary and Katniss save their lives because they find something that gives them hope, and they are faithful to their beliefs in spite of their experiences of captivity. Both female voices give relevance to the importance of women’s actions in order to change the world in which they live. By comparing both works we can conclude that although women heroines have been systematically silenced from human history, they always manage to remain present, vindicating a voice and a space. Strong female characters are the best models to show the importance of fighting for yourself and for your loved ones, and in order to inspire women to change the world and reach for a better future.

WORKS CITED

- Andrews, Sarah Jane. "A Puritan Woman's Perspective: The Captivity Narrative of Mary Rowlandson." *Études Historiques* 2.1. (2010). 18 March, 2017. Web.
- Bauer, Ralph. "Creole Identities in Colonial Space: The Narratives of Mary White Rowlandson and Francisco Nunez de Pineda y Bascunan." *American Literature* 69.4 (1997): 665-95. Web.
- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. London: Scholastic Ltd, 2009. Print.
- Davis, Margaret H. "Mary White Rowlandson's Self-Fashioning as Puritan Goodwife." *Early American Literature* 27.1 (1992): 49-60. Web.
- De Luise, Rachel Bailey. "Creating a New Genre: Mary Rowlandson and Her Narrative of Indian Captivity." Diss. East Tennessee State University, 2002. Web.
- Derounian, Kathryn Zabelle. "Puritan Orthodoxy and the 'Survivors Syndrome' in Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative." *Early American Literature* 22.1 (1987): 82-93. Web.
- Derounian-Stodola, Kathryn Zabelle. "Captivity Narratives." *Teaching the Literatures of Early America*. Ed. Carla Mulford. New York: Modern Language Association of America Options for Teaching, 1999. 243-55. Web.
- Downing, David. "'Streams of Scripture Comfort': Mary Rowlandson's Typological Use of the Bible." *Early American Literature* 15.3 (1980): 252-59. Web.
- Fitzpatrick, Tara. "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative." *American Literature History* 3.1 (1991): 1-26. Web.
- Green-Barteet, Miranda A. "'I'm Beginning to Know Who I Am': The Rebellious Subjectivities of Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior." *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*. Ed. Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet and Amy L. Montz. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014. 33-55. Web.

- Hauge Hamre, Kjellang Therese. "Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* Trilogy and Social Criticism." Diss. University of Oslo, 2013. Web.
- Henthorne, Tom. *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012. Print.
- Henwood, Dawn. "Mary Rowlandson and the Psalms: The Textuality of Survival." *Early American Literature* 32.2 (1997): 169-86. Web.
- Hudson, Hannah Trierweiler. "Q & A with Hunger Games Author Suzanne Collins." Scholastic. 20 March 2017. Web.
- Jordan, Tina. "Suzanne Collins on writing a '*Hunger Games*' movie: 'You have to let things go.'" *Entertainment Weekly*. 2010. 16 March 2017. Web.
- Logan, Lisa. "Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity and the 'Place' of the Woman Subject." *Early American Literature* 28.3 (1993): 255-77. Web.
- MacNeil, Denise. "Mary Rowlandson and the Foundation Mythology of the American Frontier Hero." *Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary Journal* 34 (2005): 625-53. Web.
- Miller, Jessica. "'She has no idea. The effect she can have': Katniss and the Politics of Gender." *The Hunger Games and the Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason*. Ed. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 145-61. Print.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative." *American Literature* 19.1 (1947): 1-20. Web.
- Peksoy, Emrah. "Food as Control in the *Hunger Games* Trilogy." *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 158 (2014): 79-84. Web.
- Pharr, Mary F. and Leisa A. Clark. *Of Bread, Blood and The Hunger Games*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012. Print.
- Rowlandson, Mary White. *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. Project Gutenberg, 2009. March 2014. Web.

Shaffer, Andrew. "The Joy of Watching Others Suffer: Schadenfreude and the Hunger Games." *The Hunger Games and the Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason*. Ed. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 75-89. Print.