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**Feminist Interpretations of Selected YA Novels**

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# ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná diplomová práce se bude věnovat literatuře pro dospívající, tzv. young adult literature (YA) a bude ji nahlížet prizmatem feministické literární kritiky. V úvodní části diplomantka stručně uvede do literárního kontextu YA literatury a zvolená díla do něj zasadí; zmíní rovněž přístupy kritického studia YA literatury. Vysvětlí dále teoreticko-kritický rámec, v němž bude díla analyzovat (tj. přístupy feministické literární teorie a kritiky) a případně definuje další pojmy, s nimiž bude pracovat (gender, genderový stereotyp, ap.). Jádrem práce pak bude analýza zvolených děl z hlediska jejich zobrazení genderové problematiky, rozdílů v pojetí a rolích mužských a ženských postav a jejich společenského postavení. V závěru práce diplomantka své analýzy shrne a zhodnotí, zda vybraná díla posilují či naopak zpochybňují, podřívají patriarchální pojetí společnosti a hodnotový systém.

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## **ANNOTATION**

This diploma thesis is focused on the feminist analysis of three chosen Young Adult novels, *Dry* by Jarrod and Neal Shusterman, *Four Dead Queens* by Astrid Scholte, and *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett. The initial part of the thesis provides a theoretical background to the genre of Young Adult literature and an introduction to feminist literary criticism and a definition of some key terms connected to it. The next part offers the analysis of the chosen YA novels with the main aim to decide whether the chosen YA texts accept, question, or even reject the stereotypical gender roles and determine whether the texts reinforce or undermine the patriarchal social system.

## **KEYWORDS**

Feminist literary criticism, Young Adult literature, gender roles, patriarchy

## **NÁZEV**

Feministické interpretace vybraných děl z literatury pro mládež

## **ANOTACE**

Tato diplomová práce je zaměřena na analýzu třech vybraných děl z literatury pro mládež, mezi které patří *Sucho* od Jarroda a Neala Shustermana, *Čtyři mrtvé královny* od Astrid Scholte, a *Prokletý rok* od Kim Liggett. V úvodní části práce je poskytnuto teoretické pozadí k literatuře pro mládež a úvod do feministické literární kritiky spolu s definicí některých klíčových termínů. Další část nabízí zmíněnou analýzu vybraných děl s cílem určit, zda jsou v těchto dílech přijímány, zpochybňovány, nebo odmítány stereotypní genderové role a zároveň rozhodnout, zda tyto texty posilují nebo podřívají patriarchální systém.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Feministická literární kritika, literatura pro mládež, genderové role, patriarchát

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## Introduction

There are many functions of literature, ranging from educating its readers to simply providing an enjoyable time to relax, which have been projected into the readings for adults and children for centuries. Yet there is one group of readers that is in between these age categories, which was rather neglected until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that is the teenage category. However, over the last few decades, the number of Young Adult (further abbreviated as YA) novels and short stories overloaded the book market as the young adult readers were given literature correlating with their age and life experiences, but also literature about wonderful fantasy worlds and remarkable heroes.

However, with the enormous number of books targeted at teenage readers nowadays, these young readers in the process of their development might face contradictory ideas about what is wrong and right. As previously stated, literature has many important functions, one of which is also its function to educate and edify the reader. As Dorothy Hall in her article *The Function of Literature* claims, “Literature [...] is an exploration for a set of values to live by.”<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, the readers may be influenced by the moral values of literary characters, which can be reflected in the readers’ lives. Because of the impact of literature on the readers, it is desirable to examine literary works with the help of literary criticism. Therefore, literary criticism comes into play in order to explore the possible interpretations of the same text and broaden the range of points of view to look at it.

The Marxist literary theory is among the critical theories that lay a foundation for literary criticism helpful for the evaluation and analysis of YA fiction. According to M. H. Abrams and G. G. Harpham, Marxist critics see literature as “‘products’ of the economic and ideological determinants specific to [any historical] era.”<sup>2</sup> Based on this principle, as stated in the article *Literary Theory and Young Adult Literature*, “the genre of YA literature can be examined as a way to analyze the underlying class ideology of a work, without the text being specifically ‘about’ class conflict. The genre itself, the form itself, could contain ideological messages within the structures of its conventions.”<sup>3</sup> While Marxist criticism advises reading a literary text with attention to the class struggle and promoted ideology, there are other literary theories that

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Hall, “The Function of Literature,” *The Antioch Review* 1, no. 3 (Autumn, 1941): 394.

<sup>2</sup> M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 182.

<sup>3</sup> Cindy Lou Daniels, “Literary Theory and Young Adult Literature: The Open Frontier in Critical Studies,” *The Alan Review* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 80.



offer different viewpoints, such as post-colonial criticism. According to Lois Tyson, who provides an introduction to several literary theories in her book *Critical Theory Today*, post-colonial criticism is based on the examination of a literary text with a focus on “the ways in which the text reinforces or resists colonialism’s oppressive ideology.”<sup>4</sup> This theory then invites readers to explore the clash of cultures with respect to its challenges and difficulties.

It is apparent that YA literature can be analysed through the lenses of many literary theories, which can sometimes even overlap. Yet for the purpose of this diploma thesis, feminist literary criticism is applied to examine various aspects related to stereotypical gender roles and a patriarchal social system in three chosen YA novels. The analysed novels are *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett which portrays a strongly patriarchal society, *Four Dead Queens* by Astrid Scholte which, on the contrary, depicts a matriarchal society which, however, in many aspects mirrors the patriarchal one, but also *Dry* by Jarrod and Neal Shusterman which displays a society in a crisis. Even though these novels fall within the genres of fantasy, sci-fi, and dystopia, they are very relatable for teenage readers thanks to the issues they address, which parallel the problems of many young people, such as objectification or the struggle to conform to the norms of the society.

This diploma thesis is divided into three main chapters, first of which is dedicated to the definition of YA fiction and some common characteristics of YA characters and common themes in connection to specific genres of YA literature, but also to the characterisation of feminist literary criticism and definition of some key concepts significant for the later analysis. Furthermore, the analysis that is covered in the next two chapters is aimed at the examination of the approach to the stereotypical gender roles promoted by patriarchy in connection to the main characters and chosen secondary characters. Moreover, the next part of the analysis is focused on whether the texts reinforce or undermine the patriarchy, but also on specific difficulties that many people, including teenagers, have to face because of the social system. Last but not least, to utilize the potential of *Four Dead Queens* and its portrayal of a matriarchal society, the similarities between matriarchy and patriarchy are examined to decide whether matriarchy could help with the issue of inequality observable in the patriarchal social system.

Overall, the aim of this diploma thesis is to uncover whether the stereotypical gender roles are accepted, questioned, or even rejected in the chosen YA texts, answer the question of

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<sup>4</sup> Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 427.

whether the texts reinforce or undermine the patriarchal social system, and discover whether matriarchy might be an acceptable choice to defeat patriarchy.

# 1 Young Adult Literature and Feminist Literary Criticism

One of the genres of literature that deserves more attention is the Young Adult genre targeted at teenagers. According to Hall, literature can offer “a sharpening of the vision and an extension of awareness”<sup>5</sup> and these young readers, as Jeffrey S. Kaplan argues, are in search of their identity,<sup>6</sup> therefore literature can be their guide and facilitator throughout the journey. To analyse YA novels and, among other things, uncover possible viewpoints and stances that may affect the reader is a difficult, yet significant, task. However, feminist literary criticism can be used to fulfil it.

Based on the chosen literary genre and literary criticism, the aim of this chapter is to introduce the YA genre and point out essential thoughts and principles of feminist literary criticism.

## 1.1 Young Adult Literature

First of all, considering the fact that Young Adult fiction is a relatively new genre, it is crucial to introduce it, because for some it might be uncharted territory. According to Alice Trupe, the origins of contemporary YA literature are usually dated to the late 1960s, concretely to the publication of *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hilton in 1967.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the YA novels have been evolving and a wide range of intriguing topics close to the target readers, teenagers, has been covered in the stories. It is the flexibility that makes the genre so appealing to young readers because everyone can find a topic that might interest them. Based on that reason, YA literature became an important part of many readers’ lives, and it is worth exploring.

### 1.1.1 The Definition and Importance of Young Adult Literature

Usually, YA fiction is classified as one of the subsections of children’s literature. As Fiona McCulloch, a writer of many texts about children’s and Young Adult literature, claims, “Young-Adult fiction [...] bridges the gap between fiction for children and fiction for adults.”<sup>8</sup> The term ‘Young Adult literature’, sometimes labelled as ‘teenage literature’ or ‘coming-of-

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<sup>5</sup> Hall, “The Function of Literature,” 396.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey S. Kaplan, “Young Adult Literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Moving Beyond Traditional Constraints and Conventions,” *The ALAN Review* 32, no. 2 (December 2005): 12.

<sup>7</sup> Alice Trupe, *Thematic Guide to Young Adult Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), VII.

<sup>8</sup> Fiona McCulloch, *Children’s Literature in Context* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 126.

age literature', is therefore fitting, because it implies to whom the genre is intended, and it nicely expresses the transition between the children's and adults' literature YA fiction provides.

Concerning the definition of YA literature, Chris Crowe, the author of the article *What Is Young Adult Literature?*, very briefly, yet accurately, defines this subsection of children's literature as "all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults."<sup>9</sup> As was mentioned, the year 1967 is connected to the publication of S. E. Hilton's *The Outsiders* to which is usually contemporary YA literature dated, however, some sources state J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951, to be the first YA novel. Nevertheless, the target reader is in both cases a young adult and as Wei-Keong Too, a university professor in Malaysia, claims, the age of these target readers is between the approximate ages of twelve and twenty.<sup>10</sup> In other words, YA literature is targeted at teenagers and readers in their early twenties. According to *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the readers who became too old for juvenile books were supposed to start reading popular classics, such as the works of Scott and Dickens.<sup>11</sup> Thus until then, teenagers were rather overlooked, however nowadays YA fiction is very popular and there is a plethora of novels for these young readers.

Because of the increasing number of YA novels, readers have a wide selection of books to choose from. What is more, its significance also lies in the fact that, as Crowe suggests, YA literature has the potential to turn non-readers into readers.<sup>12</sup> His ideas are mainly aimed at compulsory reading at schools and he proposes that it might be beneficial to start with reading YA novels since it is more likely to lead the students to read more in the future.<sup>13</sup> Also Too agrees that teenage students should be encouraged to read YA literature in order to motivate them to read.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Crowe proposes:

YA books can be used to accomplish the same English and language arts objectives as traditional literature; however, YAL has the added advantage of being more relevant to the lives of teenagers and is therefore more likely to overcome the resistance to 'school books' and reading that afflicts too many teenagers these days.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Chris Crowe, "What is Young Adult Literature?," *The English Journal* 88, no. 1 (September 1998), 121.

<sup>10</sup> Wei-Keong Too, "Young Adult Literature: An Alternative Genre in the Classroom Reading List," *The English Teacher* 35 (December 2006), 42.

<sup>11</sup> Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 518.

<sup>12</sup> Crowe, "What is Young Adult Literature?," 120.

<sup>13</sup> Crowe, "What is Young Adult Literature?," 122.

<sup>14</sup> Too, "Young Adult Literature," 52.

<sup>15</sup> Crowe, "What is Young Adult Literature?," 122.

Many other authors supporting the idea of incorporating YA novels into reading classes to promote reading can be found. Therefore, its potential for the children to grow fond of reading is one of the aspects YA literature is praised for and that is why it is valuable to examine it.

Hand in hand goes another significant aspect of YA novels and that is the relatability of the themes for the teenage reader. According to Peter Hunt, YA novels are “focused through teenage eyes, or centered on teenage characters,”<sup>16</sup> therefore, it is easier for the young-adult reader to relate to the characters’ problems and thoughts since it is written for them and about them. As Too suggests, these young readers are attracted to YA novels because it reflects their lives and does not portray false optimism.<sup>17</sup> In fact, many of these novels are concerned with very serious issues. For example, Belinda Y. Louie and Douglas H. Louie mention themes such as addiction, death among family members, or child abuse,<sup>18</sup> which are often incorporated into YA fiction to help the teenage readers to deal with these issues in their own lives if necessary.

In summary, the YA literature is, as the term suggests, written for readers aged from approximately twelve to twenty, containing the protagonists of the same age as the target reader. Since this protagonist usually deals with problems that are relatable for the young readers, many scholars suggest using YA novels in reading classes as a motivational tool to promote reading. Therefore, the relatability of themes and the potential to grow a reader are two indisputable benefits YA fiction provides.

### 1.1.2 Common Themes and Types of Characters in Young Adult Literature

Characters and themes are the most significant aspects of every single story. Yet both literary characters and themes tend to have similar features based on the literary genre or age category they appear in and even characters and themes in YA fiction can be introduced by their common characteristics. The aim of this subchapter is to introduce some of the common characteristics of YA characters and point out several themes repeated in YA fiction in connection to specific genres of literature.

First of all, for the majority of young-adult readers, the most important character is the protagonist of the story. As Too reports, adolescent readers usually choose YA novels with a young and realistic protagonist in order to identify with the character.<sup>19</sup> In McCulloch’s view,

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children’s Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> Too, “Young Adult Literature,” 42.

<sup>18</sup> Belinda Y. Louie and Douglas H. Louie, “Empowerment through Young-Adult Literature,” *The English Journal* 81, no. 4 (April 1992): 53.

<sup>19</sup> Too, “Young Adult Literature,” 42.

these young protagonists usually attempt to find ways to deal with the changes they face, their sexuality, and the modern society as such.<sup>20</sup> Too adds that, unlike the other characters, the protagonist is a round character,<sup>21</sup> which is defined in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, as a character who alters and develops throughout the story.<sup>22</sup> The development of the protagonist is crucial since it, in a way, refers to the development and maturation of the reader. Based on McCulloch's perception, the development of the protagonist is portrayed in the YA fiction by "taking responsibility in a heroic role and stepping out of one's comfort zone of familiarity to face the fear of the unknown."<sup>23</sup> In connection to the development of the reader, for example, McCulloch points out that some writers picture a credible strong female character that the reader can identify with, in the hope that the young readers will internalize this image in the world beyond the text.<sup>24</sup> In other words, literature has the power to influence the reader and even the mindset and portrayal of a character can have an impact on the reader.

Little is mentioned by the scholars about the parents of the literary protagonist despite the fact that parents usually play an essential role in the reader's world. The difference between the reader's world and the literary world sometimes lies in the parents' involvement in the young adults' lives, since, according to McCulloch, parents become less reliable in the YA novels,<sup>25</sup> and Too describes them as flat characters or those who are out of the picture.<sup>26</sup> Flat characters, according to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, can be explained as characters that do not change and develop in the course of a story.<sup>27</sup> As an example can serve a well-known YA trilogy *Divergent* by V. Roth or *The Illuminae Files Series* by A. Kaufman and J. Kristoff in which the parents are only marginal characters. Concerning other secondary characters, more specifically the protagonist's peers, Too labels them as either the source of conflict or the protagonist's best friends.<sup>28</sup> As was implied, as well as the parents of the protagonist, these secondary characters are usually flat since the reader mostly follows the life of the protagonist and his or her development.

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<sup>20</sup> McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> Too, "Young Adult Literature," 42–43.

<sup>22</sup> J. A. Cuddon and C. E. Preston, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 321.

<sup>23</sup> McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context*, 126.

<sup>24</sup> McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context*, 131.

<sup>25</sup> McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Too, "Young Adult Literature," 42.

<sup>27</sup> Cuddon and Preston, *The Penguin Dictionary*, 321.

<sup>28</sup> Too, "Young Adult Literature," 42.

In addition to the common portrayals of characters, also some of the themes and topics seem to be repeated, but as many scholars suggest, they are transformed in the course of time. This transformation can be explained by Karen Coats's claim, who in *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature* states: "YA texts tend to appear in thematic clusters, revealing an intertextuality that responds to the market, which in turn responds to prevailing cultural and personal fantasies."<sup>29</sup> In other words, the repetition and intertextuality among YA novels is based on the readers' current preferences in terms of their interests which play a role in the decision whether or not to read a specific book. Additionally, as Too claims, teenagers are in search of information, values, or even identity so they tend to select books with themes and topics related to their own lives in order to learn from them or satisfy their curiosity.<sup>30</sup> This claim is also supported by B. Y. Louie and D. H. Louie who argue that "preoccupation with self makes young adults uniquely receptive to literature."<sup>31</sup> However, it is necessary to mention the escapism that literature provides. For instance, two professors of English who support the academic study of YA literature, A. P. Nilsen and K. L. Donelson claim that at some point in life every reader's motive for choosing a book is purely to escape into the literary world from the reader's reality, and that, of course, involves young adult readers.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the YA fiction and the themes and topics chosen by YA writers ensure that the reader can be satisfied in case of trying to escape their own lives as well as when searching for information or understanding.

Contemporary YA fiction offers many themes to the readers, and it might be tricky to claim what themes prevail, for that reason, there are two perceptions on the current YA fiction and the themes it covers. On the one hand, Coats argues that nowadays, YA literature highlights the positives of being a young adult, which is being young, beautiful, and, to a certain point, carefree.<sup>33</sup> What is meant by that is that many YA novels are romances about first loves, proms, or friendships, such as *P.S. I Like You* by Kasie West or *The Bookworm Crush* by Lisa B. Roberts. On the other hand, Hayn, Kaplan and Nolen allege: "YA literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century became centred more around the bitter reality of adolescent lives, such as neglectful parents or

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<sup>29</sup> Karen Coats, "Young Adult Literature: Growing Up, In Theory," in *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, ed. Shelby A. Wolf, Karen Coats, Patricia Enciso and Christine A. Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 2011), 318.

<sup>30</sup> Too, "Young Adult Literature," 42-43.

<sup>31</sup> Louie and Louie, "Empowerment," 53.

<sup>32</sup> Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson, *Literature for Today's Young Adults* (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 217.

<sup>33</sup> Coats, "Young Adult Literature," 325.

abusive relationships.”<sup>34</sup> On their side are also B. Y. Louie and D. H. Louie, who refer to a survey of YA fiction that showed a prevalence of realistic YA fiction with serious problems related to those of YA readers, such as death among family members or confusion about one’s sexuality.<sup>35</sup> YA fiction centred around these themes is frequently used in bibliotherapy, which purpose, according to Terry Shepherd and Lynn B. Iles, lies in helping children to “explore and realize various means of solving personal problems.”<sup>36</sup> To provide some examples of realistic YA fiction centred around serious problems, some of the most popular ones nowadays are *The Hate You Give* by A. Thomas focusing on racial issues, or *Letters to the Lost* by B. Kemmerer which deals with the loss of a parent.

Apart from realistic YA fiction, YA literature also includes sci-fi and fantasy novels that attract different sorts of readers, especially those who want to explore fantastical and magical worlds, possible futures, or the potential of technology. According to Too, among some common themes that YA readers choose to read are also heroism and survival,<sup>37</sup> which are typical of sci-fi and fantasy novels, and these are themes the chosen novels for analysis in this diploma thesis are concerned with.

As it was indicated, one of the reasons readers choose to read books is escapism and according to Nilsen and Donelson, fantasy is the genre that has been, in fact, labelled as escapist literature since it invites the readers to explore other worlds and enjoy remarkable adventures and by that escape the everyday life.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the reader can, with a little imagination, become a hero in a magical world fighting against the evil or the unknown for a while, which according to Nilsen and Donelson, responds to human’s need for heroes, the good, and success.<sup>39</sup> For that reason, heroism is one of the themes YA readers go for when choosing a book. What is also important in fantasy novels is the quest that, as Nilsen and Donelson argue, expresses the desire to accomplish something by undergoing a difficult, dangerous, and usually magical journey throughout which the hero faces obstacles and has to make choices that affect others as well.<sup>40</sup> One of the YA fantasy novels, combined with sci-fi elements, centred around the quest of a protagonist is *Four Dead Queens* by an author of fantasy and science fiction for

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<sup>34</sup> Judith A. Hayn, Jeffrey S. Kaplan and Amanda Nolen, “Young Adult Literature Research in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Theory Into Practice* 50, no. 3 (Summer 2011), 177.

<sup>35</sup> Louie and Louie, “Empowerment,” 53.

<sup>36</sup> Terry Shepherd and Lynn B. Iles, “What Is Bibliotherapy?,” *Language Arts* 53, no. 5 (May 1976): 569.

<sup>37</sup> Too, “Young Adult Literature,” 43.

<sup>38</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today’s Young Adults*, 217.

<sup>39</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today’s Young Adults*, 216.

<sup>40</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today’s Young Adults*, 216–217.



young adults, Astrid Scholte, which is the subject of analysis in the later chapters of this diploma thesis. The novel follows a journey of two teenage characters in search of the assassin of the four queens as well as escaping a dangerous manipulator. Nilsen and Donelson add to the idea of a quest that it is an analogy to the reader's life: "Our quests may not be as earthshaking as those of fantasy heroes, but our emotional and intellectual wrestling can shake our own personal worlds."<sup>41</sup> It is evident that even such an imaginative genre still draws from human experiences, fears, and interests and masks it behind the magical worlds and fantastic creatures.

The theme of survival is rather connected to science fiction since the sci-fi stories usually take place in the future and as Trupe states, they warn the readers of the negative outcomes of the recent actions that the characters need to deal with.<sup>42</sup> Nilsen and Donelson mention some of the problems projected into the future and suggest that these novels provide new perspectives on, for instance, overpopulation, pollution, or political intrigues to the YA readers.<sup>43</sup> Reading about these issues and realizing the possible catastrophic outcomes that are perhaps waiting right around the corner might be very unsettling, however, as Trupe further argues, some of the YA sci-fi novels "offer optimism in their shared theme of humans' capacity to learn."<sup>44</sup> Since the protagonists are the same age as the readers, reading YA sci-fi might be a wake-up call for many of these young readers to consider how their choices could influence future generations. What Nilsen mentions as essential in science fiction to have some effect on the readers is the idea that technology, being a crucial element of sci-fi, must be believable, or in other words, the readers must be persuaded that the events occurring in the story are possible.<sup>45</sup> The advanced technology utilized by the imaginary kingdom is one of the features of sci-fi in *Four Dead Queens*.

Another genre that has become prevalent in YA fiction in recent years is dystopia. This genre has some common features with the previously mentioned sci-fi and fantasy genres since according to Nilsen and Donelson, what dystopian stories share with sci-fi is that they are usually set in the future and many of them usually point out the enormous power of technology over society; on the other hand, dystopian fiction shares the focus on sociological and emotional aspects of the story with the fantasy genre.<sup>46</sup> It is possible that this combination of characteristics is what attracts the young readers' attention. Furthermore, as P. Bedore claims,

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<sup>41</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, 217.

<sup>42</sup> Trupe, *Thematic Guide*, 125.

<sup>43</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, 231.

<sup>44</sup> Trupe, *Thematic Guide*, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, 231.

<sup>46</sup> Nilsen and Donelson, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, 238.

YA dystopias reflect contemporary cultural anxieties that the YA readers are full of,<sup>47</sup> and additionally, according to *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults*, YA dystopian novels simultaneously seek to teach lessons about the issues drawn from the cultural anxieties and to provide an escape from the everyday life by reading about the dangerous, yet engaging, adventures of the young protagonists.<sup>48</sup> That is to say, YA dystopias offer to the readers escapism, projected anxieties with lessons to learn, and a combination of some characteristics of sci-fi and fantasy genres. These reasons probably caused the current interest of adolescent readers in the genre of dystopia. The popularity of YA dystopian novels many sources also ascribe to the publication and success of the well-known series *The Hunger Games* by S. Collins followed by another profitable series *Divergent* by V. Roth. However, among some more recent examples of popular YA dystopian novels is a standalone *Dry* written by an American writer Neal Shusterman in collaboration with his son Jarrod Shusterman that deals with environmental destruction, a very common theme of YA dystopias. Another popular dystopian story is *The Grace Year* by an American bestselling author Kim Liggett, which projected some of the feminist issues into the story and deals with the theme of the oppressional social system, and it is, together with *Dry* and *Four Dead Queens*, analysed in the next chapters of this diploma thesis.

It is evident that the themes of YA dystopias are very serious, and they might not be appealing enough to young adult readers as such, but what probably makes it more attractive to these target readers are the protagonist's actions that give the story a more adventurous tone. According to *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults*, "rebellion against the status quo is a common feature of YA dystopian fiction, especially if such rebellion promises to redeem the world from postapocalyptic collapse."<sup>49</sup> Since the rebels are usually the adolescent protagonists, the YA readers might feel empowered to make a change on their own and see some of the issues from a new perspective. The rebellion of the protagonist is observable in all three novels that are to be analysed in this diploma thesis, which proves that despite the variety of themes and topics, revolt of the main characters is one of the essential elements. Nevertheless, to stay on the more positive side, love is part and parcel of every teenager's life, therefore, according to *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults*, these YA dystopian

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<sup>47</sup> "Young Adult Literature and Dystopia," last modified September 13, 2021, <https://www.wondriumdaily.com/young-adult-literature-and-dystopia/>.

<sup>48</sup> Balaka Basu, Katherine R. Broad, and Carrie Hintz, *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Basu, Broad and Hintz, *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction*, 11.

texts usually include a romance plot that sometimes affects the characters' choices and by that shapes the dystopian narrative.<sup>50</sup> The idea of including a romance plot in the dystopian story seems to be that love can occur in any situation, even during an apocalyptic scenario and, once again, the dystopian representatives in this thesis do not contradict this statement.

In summary, it is apparent that there are quite a few shared characteristics of the YA characters, such as the age and development of the main character throughout the story, as well as many common themes that occur in the various genres of YA fiction, such as survival, heroism, love, or death of a loved one. It is also evident that YA fiction can satisfy readers of light and romantic novels along with those who prefer heavier, more serious reading or those who like to explore other worlds or the possible future.

## 1.2 Feminist Literary Criticism

The analysis of YA fiction can be done from multiple points of view, which can offer numerous interpretations of the same work. Feminism, which according to G. Plain and S. Sellers had a profound impact on literary criticism in the last few decades,<sup>51</sup> can provide some of the viewpoints for the study and evaluation of literary texts. Influenced by the feminist ideology, there are several noticeable methods, tools, and ideas in feminist literary criticism that tend to be repeatedly utilized by various examiners and scholars, therefore, this subchapter deals with what the feminist literary criticism focuses on as well as briefly introduces feminism as such.

To begin with, even today, the word 'feminism' is by some people perceived in a pejorative sense, perhaps because of the long-standing association of feminism with man-hating, which is in fact incorrect. According to Martha Easton, the meaning of the word can vary since it usually means something different for every individual, therefore it depends on the outlook of the person.<sup>52</sup> However, as various sources claim, what the majority of feminists, if not all, promote are equal opportunities for all men and women as well as the right to make one's own choices. Therefore, these two aspirations can be considered some of the central aspects of feminism. To provide some general definitions of feminism, Sarah Gamble defines it as a set of theories and simultaneously a movement since it can be examined and discussed on an academic level, but it also aims at making changes in society. She also adds that traditional gender roles determined by the patriarchal society limit women from having equal opportunities

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<sup>50</sup> Basu, Broad and Hintz, *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, *History of Feminist Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>52</sup> Martha Easton, "Feminism," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 99.

as men, which is what feminism fights against.<sup>53</sup> Similarities can be found in Easton's definition who claims that feminism is a political and social movement fighting for equal rights and refers to three waves of feminism. The first wave is mainly connected to women's effort to gain the right to vote, the second wave was during the 1960s and 70s when women fought for greater equality in education, workplace, and home, and last but not least, the third wave was focused on the lack of attention to race, class, or religion.<sup>54</sup> There can be found some mentions of four waves of feminism in some sources, Emmaline Soken-Huberty is one of the examples, however, according to her, the fourth wave is not that different from the third wave. The main difference is that more attention is paid to the concept of intersectionality, especially in connection to the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the feminist movement shifted from the struggle for women's suffrage to feminism that would include more than white straight women's rights, needs, and wishes. Because of that, Gamble labels feminism as a "dynamic and multifaceted movement"<sup>56</sup> as well as Easton mentions the idea of multiple 'feminisms' rather than one 'feminism.'<sup>57</sup> These struggles then became reflected in the feminist literary criticism, and it is important to point out that even the perceptions of feminism influenced the present-day feminist literary criticism.

Feminist ideology had an impact on critical theories mainly during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more specifically, according to *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, feminist literary criticism resulted from second-wave feminism in the 1960s.<sup>58</sup> Concerning the aim of feminist literary criticism in the 1960s and 1970s, Peter Barry claims that it targeted at uncovering the mechanisms of patriarchy in literature,<sup>59</sup> which is a relevant issue even in nowadays practices of feminist criticism. During that time, the patriarchal mindset was revealed, among other things, by the disproportion between the male-produced and female-produced literature in the literary canon. As Tyson further claims, "the literary works of (white) male authors describing experience from a (white) male point of view was considered the standard of universality, [...] universality was considered a major criterion of greatness."<sup>60</sup> For these reasons, literary canon

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<sup>53</sup> Sarah Gamble, *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), The Controversies of Feminism.

<sup>54</sup> Easton, "Feminism," 99.

<sup>55</sup> "Types of Feminism: The Four Waves," Human Rights Careers, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/types-of-feminism-the-four-waves/>.

<sup>56</sup> Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, The Controversies of Feminism.

<sup>57</sup> Easton, "Feminism," 101.

<sup>58</sup> Plain and Sellers, *History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>60</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 84.

contained mainly of literature written by men and almost no works produced by women, and it became one of the subjects of feminist literary criticism.

However, before discussing the practices of feminist literary criticism in more depth, it is in place to look at the definition of feminist criticism. For instance, according to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, “it is an attempt to describe and interpret (and reinterpret) women experience as depicted in various kinds of literature.”<sup>61</sup> It is evident that women experience is in the focus of the analysis, as Annette Kolodny states, there are differences between the men and women’s experience of the world, as well as there are differences between individual women’s experiences and that is what feminist literary critics examine and interpret.<sup>62</sup> Tyson provides a definition as well and claims: “feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature [...] reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women.”<sup>63</sup> In this case, Tyson indicates the effort to point out the negative experience of inequality between men and women in literature as a central aspect of feminist criticism, which perhaps suggests that feminist literary criticism is rather pessimistic. Yet G. Plain and S. Sellers label it as a source of pleasure and, among other things, stimulation, since it has the capacity to change people’s outlook of the world and themselves.<sup>64</sup> In addition, Tyson also emphasizes the postmodern concept of many feminisms which results in multiple points of view even within the same critical tool based on the feminist viewpoint of the person examining the text.<sup>65</sup> Mary Eagleton also mentions this premise and claims that there is no uniform feminist practice but rather more feminist theories.<sup>66</sup> This perception portrays feminist literary criticism(s) as a rather flexible tool open to new concepts and viewpoints.

As the evidence of the flexibility of feminist literary criticism can serve the variety of methods used by feminist critics and the issues it covers. A summary of what is usually the subject of feminist literary criticism provides, for instance, Linda Napikoski, who considers a deconstruction of the women characters’ description in literature as one of the major methods, by which she means the examination and questioning of the portrayal of female characters in literature, mostly when written by a male author.<sup>67</sup> This method is connected to the traditional

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<sup>61</sup> Cuddon and Preston, *The Penguin Dictionary*, 315.

<sup>62</sup> Annette Kolodny, “Some Notes on Defining a ‘Feminist Literary Criticism’,” *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 78–79.

<sup>63</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 83.

<sup>64</sup> Plain and Sellers, *History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Eagleton, *Feminist Literary Criticism* (New York: Longman, 1991), 2.

<sup>67</sup> “Feminist Literary Criticism,” ThoughtCo, last modified February 16, 2021, [thoughtco.com/feminist-literary-criticism-3528960](https://www.thoughtco.com/feminist-literary-criticism-3528960).

roles of women in patriarchal society and according to *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, “[feminist criticism] challenges traditional and accepted male ideas [...] about how women feel, act and think, or are supposed to feel, act and think, and how in general they respond to life and living.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, feminist literary criticism questions the stereotypical portrayal of female characters based on frequent prejudices about women. However, it is not only women who are assigned to some stereotypical roles, therefore, as Napikoski further claims, among other methods is also the examination of both the male and female roles.<sup>69</sup> Since feminism is mainly about the equality between genders, which is disturbed by the assigned roles in society, as well as Napikoski, Tyson considers the question of gender and traditional gender roles in her summary of common issues discussed by feminist critics, more specifically, she suggests the question of how femininity and masculinity appear to be defined in a literary text and whether traditional gender roles are accepted, questioned, or rejected.<sup>70</sup> What is closely related to the traditional gender roles is the patriarchal mindset of society, which both Tyson and Napikoski reflect in pointing out the issue of the frequent use of patriarchal language in literature, such as the use of the pronoun ‘he’ as universal to represent both men and women, as well as in the method of the examination of how and whether the text embodies or undercuts the patriarchal manners. Another question related to the patriarchal manners proposed by Tyson is linked to sisterhood in order to resist patriarchy and whether and how the text manages this idea.<sup>71</sup> Napikoski also reveals one of the most recent methods related to intersectionality, more specifically the question of how the text incorporates factors like race, class, sexuality, and so on.<sup>72</sup> To conclude, many of the methods and questions connected to feminist literary criticism are related to the attitude towards traditional gender roles as well as the patriarchal mindset expressed in the examined text, but also to the issues of race or sexuality.

Since stereotypical gender roles and patriarchal ideology are important aspects of feminist criticism, it is essential to characterize them. As it is stated in *Historical Dictionary of Feminist Philosophy*, ‘patriarchy’ literally means “the rule of the father,”<sup>73</sup> which already implies who will be prioritized. Therefore, what feminists criticize about patriarchal society is the position of women and the way women are treated since, as it is stated in *A Reader’s Guide*

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<sup>68</sup> Cuddon and Preston, *The Penguin Dictionary*, 315.

<sup>69</sup> ThoughtCo, "Feminist Literary Criticism."

<sup>70</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 119.

<sup>71</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 119.

<sup>72</sup> ThoughtCo, "Feminist Literary Criticism."

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Villanueva Gardner, *Historical Dictionary of Feminist Philosophy* (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2006), 164.

to *Contemporary Literary Theory*, patriarchy perceives women as inferior to men, who consequently have the power to constrain women.<sup>74</sup> Napikoski lists some of the positions of men that enable them to control and limit women in both social and domestic life, such as “head of the family unit, leaders of social groups, the boss in the workplace, and heads of government.”<sup>75</sup> Even though these positions are nowadays more reachable for women than they used to be, the dominance of men over women is still a relevant issue. As Gamble points out, the patriarchal society is programmed to prioritise male beliefs, concerns, and ideas, therefore, women do not have equal access to these positions.<sup>76</sup> The oppression of women is one of the aspects most criticized by feminists, in literature and society as such, however, what Tyson adds as another problem is the objectification of women, in other words, treating women as objects rather than human beings.<sup>77</sup> Catherine V. Gardner, who also included this issue in her work, clarifies that objectification is a result of the premise about women’s sexuality, which describes women as submissive in contrast to men, who are perceived as dominant. For this reason, Gardner refers to objectification of women as a sexual objectification since they often become sexual objects satisfying the needs of men.<sup>78</sup> This patriarchal mindset that subordinates and objectifies women is very often projected in literature as well, therefore, as it was pointed out, feminist literary criticism examines whether the analysed work undermines or supports this patriarchal attitude.

The impact of patriarchy is evident when discussing traditional gender roles, which affect children, adults, and of course, teenagers as well. However, firstly, it is necessary to define the difference between sex and gender because even though they might seem identical, there are some distinctions. As N. L. Cole argues, sex is biologically determined categorizing humans as male, female or intersex. On the other hand, as Cole further claims, “gender is a socially-situated performance and accomplishment that is framed and directed by social institutions, ideologies, discourse, communities, peer groups, and other individuals in society.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, gender is a social construct that pressures individuals to behave or think a certain way. Based on that, there are some traditional gender roles promoted by a

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<sup>74</sup> Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 123.

<sup>75</sup> "Patriarchal Society According to Feminism," ThoughtCo, last modified February 11, 2021, [thoughtco.com/patriarchal-society-feminism-definition-3528978](https://www.thoughtco.com/patriarchal-society-feminism-definition-3528978).

<sup>76</sup> Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, Introduction.

<sup>77</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 92.

<sup>78</sup> Gardner, *Historical Dictionary*, 158.

<sup>79</sup> "How Gender Differs From Sex," ThoughtCo, last modified February 16, 2021, [thoughtco.com/gender-definition-3026335](https://www.thoughtco.com/gender-definition-3026335).

patriarchal society that individuals are expected to fulfil. According to S. Gamble, within these gender roles, women are seen as weak, emotional, and passive in contrast to men who are perceived as strong, rational, and active.<sup>80</sup> It is necessary to add that, as many sources imply, feminists do not question the biological differences between men and women, however, they reject these differences to be a reason to perceive women as inferior. As Tyson claims, since many people operate on the premise that these gender roles are accurate, inequality is effectively justified.<sup>81</sup> It might seem that these gender roles are destructive only for women, however, as Tyson further points out, it is not ideal for men either. For instance, when men cry it is perceived as a sign of weakness because they are supposed to be strong, rational and they should avoid expressing emotions such as sadness, fear, or pain. These emotions are typically assigned to women, therefore, when a man shows these emotions, he is considered too 'feminine'.<sup>82</sup> Since this adjective is typically connected to women, or in the patriarchal language, to the weaker sex, when speaking about a man in this sense, it is perceived as an insult. In other words, both genders are assigned some roles in society that they are expected to perform, therefore, any violation of the performance is usually not accepted and rather deprecated. Concerning feminist literary criticism, these gender roles and their depiction in literature become very frequently the subject of analysis and criticism.

Within the family, both men and women are expected to perform certain roles as well, and it also functions as an influencing element at work. Catherine Villanueva Gardner discusses the functions of men and women at home, which essentially limits women to bear and raise children, since as Gardner further claims, women are considered too weak for physical or intellectual activity, while the function of men is to support and provide for the family.<sup>83</sup> In other words, both genders have their place in the patriarchal society which is not to be mixed.

Given that patriarchal society operates with the previously discussed gender roles that are desirable and expected to be performed, the possible refusal of submission to those roles results in disfavour by society. In consequence, women are usually perceived in two opposite identities, which is in *The Routledge Companion To Critical Theory* labelled as 'patriarchal binarism', which identifies women either as "subservient angel or resisting monster."<sup>84</sup> As it is further stated, these two notions are usually analysed in literary works by feminist literary critics

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<sup>80</sup> Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, The Controversies of Feminism.

<sup>81</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 85.

<sup>82</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 87–88.

<sup>83</sup> Gardner, *Historical Dictionary*, 38.

<sup>84</sup> Simon Malpas and Paul Wake, *Routledge Companion to Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 194.



and it is examined how the writers challenged this binarism.<sup>85</sup> Tyson also discusses these two identities of women and refers to them as “the good girl” and “the bad girl.”<sup>86</sup> These two identities are defined with respect to the traditional gender roles, therefore, the meaning is not difficult to infer from the labels. Concerning the ‘bad girl’ or the ‘resisting monster’, Tyson defines this identity as the woman who violates the patriarchal norms, such as the sexual norms by having multiple sexual partners.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, the ‘good girl’ or the ‘subservient angel’ is described as “modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing. She has no needs of her own, for she is completely satisfied by serving her family.”<sup>88</sup> In addition, in *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism*, the idea of a good girl is related to the acceptance of the modest and proper female behaviour, such as being silent and obedient as much as possible as well as properly dressed.<sup>89</sup> Overall, it is obvious that the bad girl is the opposite of the good girl, since the satisfaction of one’s own needs and the subordination to the patriarchal norms play a major part in the distinction. However, a significant aspect to consider in this distinction is also who has the power to define a woman as the good or the bad girl, and as it is mentioned in *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism*, “this power rests ultimately in those who will arbitrarily interpret her appearance and actions: the collective and anonymous judge, public opinion.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, the society as such is the judge of women’s behaviour and one of the techniques of feminist literary criticism is to look at the ways women are perceived in society in a literary work.

Considering the traits of patriarchal attitude and the predetermined gender roles in YA literature, Abbey J. Fox claims,

Identity is discovered and created through experiences with social systems and exploring one’s own belief systems and communities. Young people are exposed to conflicting messages about ‘appropriate’ behavior and ‘correct’ performances of gendered identities in the mass media, by their families, and in the books they read. It is in adolescence that one begins to sort through these messages of socialization to cultivate an understanding of one’s identity.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Malpas and Wake, *Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*, 194.

<sup>86</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 89.

<sup>87</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 90.

<sup>88</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 90.

<sup>89</sup> Bridget Aldaraca, “El Angel Del Hogar: The Cult of Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century Spain,” in *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Gabriela Mora and Karen S. Van Hooft (Michigan: Bilingual Press, 1982), 73.

<sup>90</sup> Aldaraca, “The Cult of Domesticity,” 75.

<sup>91</sup> Abbey J. Fox, “Girls Coming of Age: Possibilities and Potentials Within Young Adult Literature” (Thesis, DePaul University, 2010), 32.

Based on this statement, it is significant to repeat that YA literature and the portrayal of characters can shape the readers' own identities, values, and beliefs, in other words, as Fox further argues, YA literature can influence readers' identity development and formation.<sup>92</sup> For this reason, the questioning or rejection of patriarchal manners in literature for young adults might be crucial since it can contribute to building the equality between men and women, as well as between people of different race, class or sexuality in the readers' reality.

In conclusion, feminist literary criticism reflects the four waves of feminism in its methods and issues that are examined, such as the focus on intersectionality in literature or the re-evaluation of canon, as well as the postmodern premise of no uniform feminist practice that results in the flexibility of this literary criticism. Among the most examined aspects in various literary works are both their approach to the patriarchal society as well as to the stereotypical gender roles that are promoted by the patriarchy, which in connection to YA literature may influence its readers since young adults are very receptive readers.

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<sup>92</sup> Fox, "Girls coming of age", 32.

## 2 YA Characters and Stereotypical Gender Roles

The stereotypical gender roles promoted by patriarchal societies are observable not only in society as such but also in literature. The aim of this chapter is to look at both main and secondary characters of chosen YA novels, *Dry* by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman, *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett, and *Four Dead Queens* by Astrid Scholte, and examine whether they conform to stereotypical gender roles or rather differ from this patriarchal doctrine.

### 2.1 Main Characters and Gender Roles

One of the common features of the main characters in YA fiction is their age since it corresponds with the age of the teenage reader. Therefore, the chosen novels are no exceptions, and they share the feature that at least one of the main characters is a teenage girl. In the case of *Four Dead Queens*, the protagonist is a seventeen-year-old Keralie, in *The Grace Year* the story is presented from a point of view of sixteen-year-old Tierney, and last but not least, two adolescent girls, Alyssa and Jacqui, are the protagonists of *Dry*. In addition, except for *The Grace Year*, as well as girls, teenage boys occur in the position of the main character. The second protagonist of *Four Dead Queens* is Varin, while in *Dry* it is Alyssa's neighbour Kelton. The aim of this subchapter is to find out whether these characters share more than their age, especially when considering their approach to patriarchal gender roles and the way these characters are portrayed.

Firstly, as it was mentioned, the protagonist of *The Grace Year* by K. Liggett is a sixteen-year-old Tierney whose age is crucial for the story. In this dystopian novel, girls are sent at the age of sixteen to an isolated island to get rid of their alleged seductive and poisonous magic. The impact of the magic is presented in the introduction of the story:

We're told we have the power to lure grown men from their beds, make boys lose their minds, and drive wives mad with jealousy. They believe our very skin emits a powerful aphrodisiac, the potent essence of youth, of a girl on the edge of womanhood. That's why we're banished for our sixteenth year, to release our magic into the wild before we're allowed to return to civilization.<sup>93</sup>

From this extract, it is already evident the way men perceive women in this novel, and that is as an object that can be placed anywhere and anytime men want. As Tyson claims, in a patriarchal society, the objectification of women leads to the ignorance of their feelings, opinions, and perspectives.<sup>94</sup> In Tierney's world, men think that young girls have power over

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<sup>93</sup> Kim Liggett, *The Grace Year* (London: Del Rey, 2020), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 91.

them that controls their thinking and behaviour, so they decided to send them away to deal with it without considering their complaints and fears. Another apparent aspect of a patriarchal mindset of the society is that it is clearly stated who, in fact, has the power, i.e. men, and who is obligated to respect it, i.e. women, otherwise, there will be consequences. In connection to gender roles, men appear to be the powerful and wise gender because they are seemingly taking care of a problem, while women, including Tierney, are supposed to be the submissive gender since they need to submit to the rules of men. The paradox is that men want to eliminate the power women supposedly have over men by reversing the role and enforcing power over women.

Tierney is aware of the treatment women receive and she despises being considered the weaker sex and the fact that men can decide everything while women have no say. She reveals her thoughts on the inequality at the beginning of the story: “As far as I can tell, we all have hearts. We all have brains. There are only a few differences I can see, and most men seem to think with that part anyway.”<sup>95</sup> She is one of the few women in *The Grace Year* who seem to realize that biological differences should not be taken into account since they are not relevant in decision-making, therefore, she is frustrated with the position of women in society and the fact that men have control over her life, her choices and her future. Considering the distinction of women into two identities, Tierney seems to be a cogent epitome of the bad girl, the resisting monster, because of her opinions and behaviour that could be considered rebellious. Also, her nickname Tierney the Terrible proposes that she is not the good girl a patriarchal society values, but rather a problematic creature who disrupts the social system. For example, later in the story the reader discovers that her father taught her to start a fire or build something out of wood in order to survive the grace year, however, her skills were seen as boyish and inappropriate for a woman by the other girls, and it started the mockery and hatred towards Tierney: ““her father treated her as a son,’ [Kiersten] says as she gets to her feet prowling toward me. ‘Do you have a willy under there? Maybe you’re not a girl at all.’”<sup>96</sup> The fact that Tierney was skilled at activities that did not fit her gender role makes the other girls question both the intentions of her father and Tierney’s sex. This reflects the mentality of the society that Tierney grew up in as well as it deepens Tierney’s rage and resentment towards the stereotypical gender roles and the rules that come with them. Based on these observations, it is safe to say that Tierney does

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<sup>95</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 108.

not conform to the roles that society has prepared for her and it is scandalous for many of her peers.

Keralie from Astrid Scholte's *Four Dead Queens* seems to share Tierney's resentment towards the roles set by society, yet she uses it to her advantage. As Cole claims, gender is a performance done by adopting certain attitudes, mannerisms, or styles of clothing,<sup>97</sup> which come with certain roles. Keralie chooses a role to perform based on what would be most profitable for her: "[Mackiel] moved to drape his arm heavily around my shoulder. 'Who do you feel like being today? A sweet young girl? A damsel in distress? A reluctant seductress?' [...] I laughed and pushed him away. 'I'll be whatever makes us the most money.'"<sup>98</sup> It is evident that Keralie is aware that everyone performs a role of their choosing, and she does not hesitate to switch between a good girl and a bad girl, depending on the situation. In addition, Scholte nicely depicts that the role performed to be judged by others does not necessarily mirror the intention or personality of the performer by adding Keralie's comment, "hidden beneath my modest layers and pinching corsets, no one knew of my wickedness."<sup>99</sup> This shows that despite acting as the modest and sweet girl, she did not internalize the typical norms and behaviour of this social role. Despite this conflict between her internal beliefs and her behaviour, it is the society who is the judge of her, therefore, when she chooses to perform the role of the good patriarchal girl, she automatically becomes one in their eyes. From this perspective, she adapts to her stereotypical gender role.

Yet *Four Dead Queens* follows not only Keralie's journey but a journey she shares with a teenage boy, Varin. Scholte seemed to utilize the idea of various quadrants of a kingdom with a different focus to project the destructive power of stereotypical gender roles. Varin comes from Eonia, which is described as "the frozen quadrant that values technology, evolution and a harmonious society,"<sup>100</sup> which is a very utopian description, yet it means that emotions are not welcome and that those who are not useful are no longer needed. Keralie, on the other hand, comes from Toria, "the coastal quadrant that values commerce, curiosity and exploration,"<sup>101</sup> which pushes its citizens mainly into working on a boat and as traders. That means that Varin's and Keralie's, as the Eonist and Torian, experiences of life are very distinct, as well as men's and women's experiences differ. Keralie is presented rather as the emotional one, the one who

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<sup>97</sup> ThoughtCo, "How Gender Differs From Sex."

<sup>98</sup> Astrid Scholte, *Four Dead Queens* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2019), 13.

<sup>99</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 15.

<sup>100</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 10.

does not understand how someone can live without emotions in contrast to Varin, who is trained to not feel anything in order to focus on technical progress, in other words, he is presented as the rational one. Their struggle to understand each other as citizens of different quadrants parallels also the consequences of gender roles because how can men understand women and vice versa if they are raised to be the complete opposites their whole lives. Varin's response to the lack of understanding is one of the comments that could shape the young-adult reader's perception of the other sex: "‘Perhaps we shouldn't judge one another,' he said after a while. 'I'll help you, and in return, you'll help me. Why don't we agree that neither of us knows what it's like to live in the other's quadrant?' I could agree to that."<sup>102</sup> As well as Varin does not know what it is like to be a Torian, men do not know what it is like to be a woman and vice versa. For the reader, it might be a message to try to be more understanding of the other sex and perhaps explain the differences in experience to each other to contribute to better conditions for both.

From the excerpts above it might appear that both Keralie and Varin accepted their position and roles in the society as it was predetermined for them. Yet, their approaches seem to differ. In Varin's description of his quadrant, he implies that society dictates individuals to behave a certain way to ensure that the quadrant works effectively: "‘Everyone has their place here,' Varin said under his breath [...] ‘Everyone plays their part.' ‘And if they don't?' He glanced away. ‘Come on, we're almost there.' But I knew the answer."<sup>103</sup> From this excerpt, it is evident that as well as in a patriarchal culture, Eonists are led to conform to the expectations of the society and the roles that are prescribed for them and if they fail this task, they can be deprecated by the society and considered the outcasts. This social system might be perceived as efficient, yet it is also very harmful to the individuals because of the constant social pressure to follow the social standards to ensure an acknowledgment by the others. Keralie and Varin's approaches to the system that determines their place and roles in society differ, which is obvious from Keralie's statement: "[Varin] accepted his position in the world, while I had rebelled against mine."<sup>104</sup> Based on this argument, it might be said that Varin surrendered to the pressure of society, while Keralie is not ready to give up the possibility of changing her status. Abbey J. Fox expresses an opinion that by accepting the position, the person conforms "to the existing norms and standards,"<sup>105</sup> while resisting the social models means "using our subjectivities to

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<sup>102</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 77.

<sup>103</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 92.

<sup>104</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 115.

<sup>105</sup> Fox, "Girls coming of age", 22.

make a statement against these existing standards and norms.”<sup>106</sup> In other words, Keralie is the typical character of YA fiction who rebels against the system and her predetermined position in society, which she takes advantage of only when she could profit from it.

Based on the above-presented excerpts, when considering the stereotypical gender roles, Keralie could be described as an active, brave, intelligent, and ambitious character, which according to John Macionis and Ken Plummer are traits typically ascribed to men.<sup>107</sup> Despite her emotional side, she seems to break the stereotypical portrayal of a female character and by that Scholte provides to the young readers with a strong female figure to look up to. While Keralie is almost the complete opposite of the good patriarchal girl, Varin tries to be the epitome of what his quadrant values, which is rationality, intelligence, and strength, which is also what a patriarchal society values in men. Despite Varin’s effort to be an ideal Enoist, he seems to fail to be emotionless. It is evident from the scene when Keralie discovers that Varin keeps some comm chips with other people’s memories:

‘Why keep them?’ I asked. [...] He hesitated for a moment. ‘We only have a short time to experience the world, and there’s so much out there to see.’ He closed his eyes. ‘I’ll never get to see it all.’ This boy was sitting in this stark room, watching other people’s memories to get a taste of a life he’d never live. It was pathetic, but also incredibly sad.<sup>108</sup>

This shows that Varin is not emotionless, he is a sensitive boy who accepted his unfortunate position in society. Therefore, both Keralie and Varin are not portrayed in a stereotypical way, they both show some feminine and masculine traits of the gender roles promoted by patriarchy.

Unlike *Four Dead Queens* and *The Grace Year*, which are both narrated from the point of view of the main female character, *Dry* by N. Shusterman and J. Shusterman offers multiple points of view, both from male and female characters, which makes the storytelling gender-balanced because it is not limited to only male or female perspectives. In the eyes of a young-adult reader, it is easier to relate to at least one character, because of the wider range of main characters, and it can subconsciously demonstrate that men and women should have equal say in everyday life as well as in the time of a crisis. In other words, despite probable differences in male and female experiences, both male and female points of view matter. Two of the most prominent characters of the novel that provide their perspectives are Alyssa and Kelton, two neighbours and classmates, who stick together during the crisis in spite of their differences and

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<sup>106</sup> Fox, “Girls coming of age”, 22.

<sup>107</sup> John Macionis and Ken Plummer, *Sociology: A Global Introduction* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 369.

<sup>108</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 96–97.

disagreements. One of the differences is for instance their approach to stereotypical gender roles because Kelton at the beginning of the story seems to be fixated on the perception of women as weaker, more vulnerable, and more dependent than men, because of which he tries to protect Alyssa in every possibly dangerous moment, while Alyssa tries to prove by her behaviour and opinions that this premise is very narrow-minded. For instance, when Alyssa is looking for her brother in one scene, Kelton decides, despite her protests, to ride with her to offer protection: “Kelton initially follows behind me, but then he pushes his way in front—as if just remembering that Eagle Scouts probably shouldn’t hide behind girls.”<sup>109</sup> Kelton’s move is very inconspicuous, yet it could be understood as that he does not like to be led by a girl, therefore, he enforces control over the situation. To contrast it with Alyssa’s opinions, she believes that girls are capable of having a situation under control as well, perhaps even more than boys:

Before the water turned off, my plan for Sunday was to work on my paper on *Lord of the Flies*. My hypothesis is that had it been a group of girls abandoned on the island instead of boys, it would have gone a lot differently. When I suggested it to the teacher, the boys in class agreed—and were convinced that everyone would have died a lot sooner. My hypothesis was, of course, the opposite.<sup>110</sup>

It is evident that Alyssa does not consider girls to be weak or unintelligent, therefore, it could be said that she does not conform to the patriarchal mindset and the stereotypical gender roles. Yet she still does not appear to believe men and women are equal either, therefore, as well as Kelton, she has some destructive prejudices about the other gender.

Considering only the female main characters, Alyssa and Jacqui do not differ from each other that much. Both are pictured as very strong, intelligent, brave teenagers, sometimes even dominant and because these adjectives are stereotypically connected to men, they both also could be, by some, perceived as rather boyish. Alyssa, for example, plays football, which is not typically considered a girls’ sport. This claim could be supported by research done by Sonia Bianchi and Jos Dirx, which shows that the female interviewees associate football more closely with male players and believe that men are better at playing football.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, the fact that the Shustermans chose this sport for Alyssa breaks the stereotype. Furthermore, Jacqui is in her opening scene described as a psychotic biker, who charms everyone with her dangerous appearance, especially Kelton: “She’s not just tough, she’s stunning in a wild kind of way. Dark

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<sup>109</sup> Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman, *Dry* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 50.

<sup>110</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 28. Italics original

<sup>111</sup> Sonia Bianchi and Jos Dirx, “Women's Health and Empowerment - Girls & Football Make the Link,” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 26, no. 2 (2012): 141.



and mysterious.”<sup>112</sup> Both Alyssa and Jacqui violate the prescribed gender roles that pressure girls to be submissive and modest, therefore, they would not be considered the good girls. Additionally, they are complete strangers at the beginning and since it is a time of crisis in which everyone focuses only on oneself or their family, a conflict arises between them. Jacqui describes Alyssa as follows: “her eyes aren’t as dull and vapid as I had first thought. She’s shrewd. Which means she could be a problem.”<sup>113</sup> Alyssa seems to have a very similar opinion about Jacqui as she claims her to be a new threat. Since there are certain similarities between their character traits, they both consider each other a problem. In other words, there is an evident dominance of the female characters, who compete with each other to prove that they are not defenceless, weak, or foolish.

As mentioned above, Kelton is portrayed as a character that likes to have things under control, he is determined to protect the girls and as a scout, he has the skills to survive in a time of crisis as long as possible. Yet the authors disturbed this image of the proper patriarchal man, who is dominant, rational, and strong, by scenes in which Kelton fails to prove these qualities. One of these situations arises when Alyssa is harassed by another boy and Kelton decides to save her by pulling out a gun and threatening him. Yet, his hands start shaking and the boy knows that Kelton will not pull the trigger:

‘He’ll do it!’ Alyssa screams. [...]. ‘You better run like your friends.’ ‘No,’ he says. Just ‘no.’ And then he takes a step toward me. [...] ‘Do it, Kelton! Do it!’ Garrett yells. But I can’t. With all the training, with everything I’ve been taught about self defense and the wielding of weapons, something inside me blows a critical fuse. I can’t bring myself to pull that trigger. And the kid knows it. He lurches forward, knocking me back, and the gun flies out of my hands.<sup>114</sup>

Despite Kelton’s skills and knowledge, he is not able to perform his role of a fearless and strong man, which is revealed by his trembling hands and hesitation. Then Jacqui comes into the picture and picks up Kelton’s gun from the ground and her confidence and style finally chase away the bully. This contributes to the image of strong and dominant female characters and breaks the stereotype of a male character with the same qualities.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that these main characters share more than their age. Especially when considering the female characters who do not conform to the stereotypical female roles because of their portrayal as the rebels who are strong, intelligent, and definitely not submissive. On the other hand, while the female characters show an effort to distinguish

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<sup>112</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 88.

<sup>113</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 98.

<sup>114</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 87–88.

themselves from the prescribed roles, both Kelton and Varin try to perform their male roles, even though they are not always successful. Their struggles to do so make them more credible and relatable for a young-adult reader since they also often encounter obstacles they need to overcome. Overall, all three novels seem to question, or perhaps even reject, the stereotypical roles determined by the patriarchal society, which is mainly visible in the portrayal of female characters.

## 2.2 Secondary Characters and Gender Roles

Even though secondary characters are not provided with that much space in a novel in contrast to the main characters, their portrayal and involvement in the story are significant. They help to create the whole picture of a story as well as contribute to the plot, therefore, it is desirable to look at their attitude towards the gender roles dictated by society and the way the authors of the chosen novels depicted them.

To start with, in *The Grace Year*, there are many secondary characters that are presented to the reader through Tierney's eyes and probably the most noticeable female character is Kiersten, another sixteen-year-old girl. Regarding Too's characterization of the peers of the main YA characters, Kiersten is definitely the source of a conflict. Even though men are in this novel portrayed as powerful and controlling, Kiersten is paradoxically one of the most dangerous and manipulative characters. At the beginning of the story, she seemingly submits to the patriarchal norms and mindset, pretending to be the perfect patriarchal girl, yet later she takes advantage of any situation that can profit her, such as using the doubts of the other girls about their alleged powers to manipulate them and subsequently harm them in order to be their leader. The following excerpt shows both her determination to be the head of the camp and the manners learned from men in the county:

‘But hear me,’ she says as she walks through the group. ‘If someone took Tierney’s supplies, stealing will not be tolerated. There will be punishment.’ ‘But who’s going to do the punishing?’ Hannah asks. ‘At home, the punishers are men, chosen by God.’ ‘Look around,’ Kiersten says as she stares me dead in the eyes. ‘We are the only Gods here.’<sup>115</sup>

As it was implied, in the patriarchal society, men are usually in the leading positions, which Kiersten is trying to claim as her own, even indirectly stating that she is the Goddess of the camp and everyone else is going to play by her rules. This attitude is very similar to the attitude of men towards women in the patriarchal society. In addition, considering Gamble's definition

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<sup>115</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 101.

of gender roles, Kiersten performs rather male roles since she can be perceived as strong and active, which is assigned in the patriarchal society to men. In other words, in the camp, she transforms into a male figure reminding the other girls of their place by which she violates her supposed gender role.

Regarding the male characters in the novel, most of the men from the county seem to be pleased with their roles and position in society which they use to their advantage to control women, such as Mr. Welk, who believes it is his responsibility and pride to punish those who do not follow the rules of the patriarchal society. In one of the scenes, Mr. Welk punishes a woman for dreaming and talking from her sleep, which is both forbidden for women, because it allegedly helps the women hide their magic: ““On behalf of God and the chosen men, I hereby sentence you to the gallows.””<sup>116</sup> In this excerpt, he emphasises his dominance and power by speaking on behalf of God and other men, to punish a woman for something she cannot really control. As stated in *Effects of Enforcing Gender Roles on Men and Women*, dominance and power are some of the norms of masculinity,<sup>117</sup> therefore, Mr. Welk conforms to his gender role.

Nonetheless, there are 3 male characters that are very close to Tierney that differ from many other men from the county. There is one feature that connects them and that violates the stereotypical gender roles of men and that is their very nurturing and self-sacrificing side, which is typically assigned to women, more specifically to the good girls. First of all, there is Tierney’s father, who teaches Tierney many skills that can save her life during the grace year as well as uses his medical skills to save those who were banished to the outskirts and need medical care, both of which is very dangerous for him and his whole family. Secondly, Ryker is a poacher, a person who is supposed to be hunting the grace-year girls to trade their body parts for money, who made a deal with Tierney’s father that he would save Tierney, if necessary, in exchange for Tierney’s father’s help to save Ryker’s best friend’s life. Complicated as it sounds, he really ends up saving Tierney’s life, taking care of her, and falling in love with her, all of which could cost him his own life. In other words, Ryker is ready to sacrifice himself for his friend, Tierney, and additionally his family, which makes him very selfless. The fact that Tierney and Ryker fall in love during the grace year is nothing unexpected in YA fiction because a romance plot is a quite common feature of YA novels, especially a love story between two enemies, however,

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<sup>116</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 39.

<sup>117</sup> Josie Reyes, Gabriela Chub, Eden Perez, Dora Hob, Hesmair Cawich and Xunan Quetzal, “Effects of Enforcing Gender Roles on Men and Women” (University of Belize, 2019), 3–4.

because of the social system that the book portrays, there is no happy end for them. Unfortunately, Ryker is killed by other poachers for his betrayal, for letting his emotions take over him instead of making the rational decision of killing Tierney as his role dictates him to do. As a result of their love, Tierney is in danger as well because she is pregnant with Ryker's baby. Yet the third man that is willing to sacrifice himself for Tierney is Michael, Tierney's best friend, who claims this baby as his own and by that saves Tierney's and the baby's life. These three male characters stand side by side with women, they do not look down on them but rather help them when they are given the chance. For the reasons stated above, it seems that their approach to gender roles is very doubtful and they do not behave according to the norms of a patriarchal society.

Another aspect of the male characters depicted in *The Grace Year* is their role as a provider, which Tyson claims to be crucial for being evaluated as the 'real man' in the patriarchal society because, in its view, a man is supposed to be able to provide financial support to his family.<sup>118</sup> This is mainly observable in the characters of poachers who are willing to do such horrendous acts as killing the grace year girls and getting paid for their body parts to secure their own families enough money to live a relatively respectful life. Yet, as the reader slowly finds out from Ryker, poachers are forced to do it because there is no other way for them to secure the money: "If I leave, if I don't take my place as a poacher, my family won't get my pay... they'll starve."<sup>119</sup> In other words, there is no choice for men from the outskirts than being a poacher if they want their families to get some food. What is also evident from the quotation is that women do not have a way of providing for themselves. They are considered wives, mothers, and housekeepers, but not a working force. Once Tierney adopts these roles, she finds a way to rebel against this limitation with the help of Michael: "Michael and I ease into our expected roles, until it doesn't feel like a role anymore. [...] On occasion, I'm allowed to help him in the apothecary, which has given me purpose, something to do."<sup>120</sup> Despite the fact that some women might be content with the given roles they are supposed to perform, it might be suffocating the others, such as Tierney. It expresses that pushing men into the role of a provider is actually limiting for both men and women in the county.

Perhaps the opposite of *The Grace Year* is the novel *Four Dead Queens*, which tells a story about a kingdom with four queens as the leaders, also known as matriarchy, indicating

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<sup>118</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 87.

<sup>119</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 235.

<sup>120</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 397.

that it might deviate from the stereotypical gender roles prescribed by a patriarchal society, or at least question them. The queens themselves are depicted mainly as strong, powerful, reasonable, passionate, and active, which are adjectives that from a patriarchal point of view describe men, not women. Power is something that plays one of the most important roles in both patriarchy and matriarchy, it is also the motive for murder in this novel because as queen Iris argues, it is the queens who hold it: “The queens were the power. No one else. Power was a game, and over the years, Iris had perfected it.”<sup>121</sup> The shift of position of women in society is obvious when compared to *The Grace Year*, which depicts women as the weaker sex, *Four Dead Queens* does not portray submissive female characters, but rather powerful women, such as the queens, who are aware of their opportunities and abilities.

Additionally, one of the people behind the murders of the queens to gain power is Mackiel, a male character who is determined to prove his father wrong. Despite the matriarchal system which allows only women to rule the kingdom, men seem to be still assigned the stereotypical patriarchal roles, which pressure men to behave, look, or think a certain way, otherwise, they are considered a failure. This principle is depicted in the complicated relationship between Mackiel and his father, mainly because of Mackiel’s father’s expectations and outlook. Based on the patriarchal mindset, Macionis and Plummer designed a table of masculine traits, some of which are reflected in Mackiel’s father’s attitude, such as dominance, bravery, ambition, or competitiveness.<sup>122</sup> Since Mackiel did not show these traits as a child properly, his father lost faith in him to be as successful businessman as himself: “Mackiel Sr. had wanted a formidable protégé. Instead, he’d gotten a waif of a boy. He worried Mackiel’s presence would not instill the same kind of fear and admiration in everyone who’d dealt with him and his business of Delore Imports and Exports.”<sup>123</sup> As it is evident, Mackiel’s father’s expectations were based on the assumption that having a son would mean that he would follow his father’s footsteps including the same ambitious and dominant behaviour. Mackiel’s father’s disappointment after the realization that his son differs from him then results in a relationship full of frustration and need for approval. Mackiel’s response to his father’s disappointment represents that the values and stance of others affect oneself, which is why the patriarchal norms are still a relevant issue in contemporary society and why Mackiel’s frustration might be, in a way, relatable for the young-adult readers. Mackiel’s acts in response are very aggressive, as it was mentioned, he got the queens killed to become the powerful man his father wanted him to

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<sup>121</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 20.

<sup>122</sup> Macionis and Plummer, *Sociology*, 304.

<sup>123</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 25.

be. Therefore, it is obvious that his goal became to conform to the social role that was prescribed for him: “‘I’ll have more power here as Arebella’s confidant than I ever could’ve achieved back at the Jetée. And I’ll ensure no one will threaten my business again. Not even a queen.’ His expression grew intense. ‘No one will *ever* forget my name.’”<sup>124</sup> This excerpt nicely illustrates the masculine traits that define Mackiel as the patriarchal man, such as his need for being acknowledged as a powerful, ambitious, active, and rational person, not threatened by a female leader.

Another male secondary character is Lyker, one of the queens’ secret lover and advisor. When contrasted to Mackiel, Lyker is presented as a very sensitive man with a fiery temper, furthermore, he is described as “‘too open to the world and consequently [feeling] too much.’”<sup>125</sup> This depiction fits with his role in the book as the artist, yet it also contributes to the fact that not all of the characters follow the stereotypical gender roles, but rather deviate from this outdated model. Additionally, Lyker is also depicted as very protective, since he applied as an advisor just to be with queen Stessa and look after her, even though this position is not suitable for his artistic soul. In this case, Scholte blended the traits of a patriarchal woman, such as being emotional and sensitive, and a patriarchal man, such as being protective, by which she disturbed the stereotypical gender roles, yet nobody in the story felt shocked by the fact that a man can be emotional. It perhaps portrays that the stereotypical gender roles are an unnecessary standard by which people are assessed.

Similarly, *Dry* presents a male character who shares some qualities with Lyker. Alyssa’s ten-year-old brother Garrett seems to be presented as sensitive, dependent, and perhaps even rash, however, considering his age, it might reflect his youth rather than feminine traits as in the case of Lyker. On the other hand, the fact that these qualities are not accepted or welcomed by others is indicated by the way other characters try to shape Garrett’s personality and push him into being the patriarchal version of a man. Even though this shaping is managed by occasional comments on what he as a boy is supposed to be good at, it might still contribute to falling into the stereotypical roles of men and women later on. One of these comments is presented in the following excerpt,

‘Dad said the cleaning supplies are under the sink. I’m sure you can figure it out.’ [...] ‘Why do *I* have to do it?’ he nags. ‘Because we’re taking turns,’ I remind him, then appeal to his male ego. ‘Plus you’re a guy; you’re naturally

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<sup>124</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 263.

<sup>125</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 68.

going to be better than me at plumbing.’ He nods in accordance, clearly satisfied to hear me say he’s better than me at something.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the fact that Alyssa seems to despise the perception of women as weak, dependent, and submissive, it is comments like this that contribute to preserving this exact perception, even though she clearly uses this note to avoid doing the unpleasant job herself. Furthermore, stereotypically, works such as plumbing are expected to be performed by men since women are not considered smart and handy enough to handle this type of job. That is to say that by Alyssa’s claim that Garrett will be naturally better at it because he is a boy, she supports this stereotype despite plumbing being a skill that can be learned by both men and women. Overall, Alyssa’s comment might shape Garrett’s perception of women as less competent and weaker than men. According to Frank Taylor, children tend to organize their behaviour around the learned sense of femininity and masculinity,<sup>127</sup> for that reason, similar remarks might be very influential and might come to light later through the behaviour of a child.

In contrast to Garrett, Henry, a character introduced part way through the story, displays many traits of a patriarchal man, such as being ambitious, competitive, and rational. However, what is mainly visible is his desire and determination to become a leader, even of a group of people that are unknown to him. As Taylor claims, literature for children usually portrays male characters in the role of a leader, while female characters become the followers.<sup>128</sup> Until the introduction of Henry in the story, *Dry* heavily contradicts this claim, since Alyssa and Jacqui are the most dominant characters, and they could be considered the leaders of the group. However, once Henry comes into the picture, both girls are forced to become the followers of Henry because he has the advantage of having the car of Alyssa’s uncle which he traded in exchange for water with Henry, and the car becomes something the group needs. Because of that, Henry starts to blackmail the others and enforces the role of the leader:

Jacqui hops out of the truck bed and storms to Henry’s window. ‘Get the hell out, I’m driving!’ ‘In the back seat or not at all,’ Henry tells her. ‘Not gonna happen,’ says Jacqui. ‘Fine, then not at all,’ and he throws the car in gear and pulls out, leaving her behind in a cloud of dust. ‘God DAMN it!’ yells Jacqui, running after us. ‘You can’t just leave her here!’ I yell. ‘I’m not!’ he tells me, now calm as can be. ‘This is a negotiation and I’m playing hardball.’ He stops the car to let Jacqui catch up with us. ‘If you want to tie down a loose cannon, you can’t give it much rope, follow?’ Jacqui catches up with us, spewing wholly

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<sup>126</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 43. Italics original

<sup>127</sup> Frank Taylor, “Content Analysis and Gender Stereotypes in Children’s Books,” *Teaching Sociology* 31, no. 3 (July 2003): 301.

<sup>128</sup> Taylor, “Gender Stereotypes in Children’s Books,” 301–302.

original combinations of foulness. Henry is not fazed. 'In the back seat,' he says. 'Or I drive off, and we part company for good.'<sup>129</sup>

This excerpt illustrates all the masculine traits mentioned above, portraying Henry as the epitome of a patriarchal boy, who is trying to make Jacqui, and later even Alyssa, do what he wants and adjust their position in the group to his position of a leader. Since he manipulates Alyssa and blackmails Jacqui to do so and runs off once the situation is not profitable for him anymore, he can be seen as the antagonist of the story.

Among the secondary characters of *Dry* are also Alyssa and Garrett's parents, who disappear one day, and Allyssa and Garrett try to find them throughout the novel, therefore, the parents are out of the picture almost the entire story. Yet at the beginning, the reader gets to discover their place and roles at home. The novel opens with the mother in the kitchen and the father in the garage, which already creates the image of a nurturing woman and a hardworking man, a stereotypical portrayal of male and female characters. However, despite the stereotypical division of household chores, as the novel continues, this image becomes weakened. For example, a 'good girl' would probably never silence a man, because it would not correspond with her submissive role, yet Allyssa's mother is not afraid to do that: "'What's so important that you gotta drag me out of—' 'Shush!' Mom says. She rarely shushes Dad. She'll shush me and Garrett all day, but my parents never shush each other. It's an unspoken rule.'"<sup>130</sup> The fact that the parents have an unspoken rule about not silencing each other signals that, despite ignoring the rule every now and then, they respect each other and that they are equals in the relationship. The male dominance is also subverted by Allyssa's ironic comment: "as supreme ruler of the household, Dad has elected Garrett and me to take care of the toilets."<sup>131</sup> By this exaggerated label together with the context, the writers seem to ridicule the stereotypical position of a man as the head of the family. Overall, despite the initial picture of a woman in the kitchen and a man in the garage, Allyssa's parents do not seem to perform the stereotypical gender roles and function rather as two equal human beings in a relationship.

Overall, when contrasted to the main characters of the chosen novels, the secondary characters provide more diversity, depicting characters that conform to the patriarchal norms and roles, such as Mr. Welk in *The Grace Year*, Henry in *Dry*, and Mackiel in *Four Dead Queens*, but also characters that differ from the stereotypical principle. The characters who

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<sup>129</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 176–177.

<sup>130</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 6.

<sup>131</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 43.



violate their performances of their prescribed roles usually show traits of the other gender roles, such as Ryker from *The Grace Year*, Garrett from *Dry*, or the queens from *Four Dead Queens*. However, the difference between these two approaches is that those who conform to the stereotypical gender roles are usually seen as the antagonists, the evil characters, on the other hand, those who rebel against their prescribed roles are usually presented as the good characters with decent manners, except for Kiersten. Based on these variations in approach to the stereotypical gender roles, it might be concluded that the authors question the patriarchal norms, leading the readers to the message that it is perfectly fine for a man to be emotional as well as it is acceptable for a woman to be powerful and not submissive.

### 3 The Thrive of Patriarchy or its Downfall?

#### 3.1 *The Grace Year* and Patriarchal Society

Even from the excerpts above it is evident that *The Grace Year* depicts a strongly patriarchal society, which is introduced through the eyes of a sixteen-year-old girl who struggles to understand and conform to its norms, roles, and beliefs. Yet the way others perceive this social system might differ and therefore, the aim of this subchapter is to explore the approach to the social organization that portrays women as weaker and submissive in contrast to the dominant roles of men, but also the way patriarchy limits both men and women.

Since the novel is narrated from the first-person point of view, which causes the reader to discover many aspects of the story together with the main character, Tierney's realizations and revelations throughout the novel become the source of learning about others and their approach to the patriarchal system. Therefore, Tierney's development, being one of the common features of the main characters in YA fiction, becomes a significant aspect of the story. Because of Tierney's temper and determination to show her disagreement with the restrictions and rules that girls need to obey, she is very frustrated with the others who seemingly accept the patriarchal attitude and do nothing. Her mother, on the other hand, always tries to indicate that things are not always as they seem: "Your eyes are wide open, but you see nothing."<sup>132</sup> This statement suggests that Tierney is at the beginning very short-sighted and perhaps even judgemental and narrow-minded. Slowly she figures out that even people that she taught were supporting the patriarchal attitude, such as her parents or Michael, are secretly against it and they are trying to help those who are suffering the most because of this social system. In other words, she realizes that many others are against patriarchy and that despite being in it for the long haul, their goal is to change the social situation. Tierney's development is marked at the end by her declaration: "My eyes are wide open, and I see everything now."<sup>133</sup> Apart from Tierney's mother who tried to help Tierney to realize that she is not the only person recognizing the patriarchal oppression, Michael played in her development a crucial part as well: "All those years we spent together as kids, running around the county, trying to figure out clues about the grace year, it meant something to me. [...] I always believed, in you, [...] in change, you just didn't believe in *me*."<sup>134</sup> This quotation implies that perhaps Tierney was too self-absorbed to

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<sup>132</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 56.

<sup>133</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 403.

<sup>134</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 396. Italics original

notice that her close ones were supporting her, believing in her, and sharing her point of view all along.

Despite many characters realizing the danger that the patriarchal system represents, there are still many characters that seem to conform to its outlook. For example, the other grace-year girls got so used to their position in society that their major goal is to get married and have children. This is a perfectly acceptable desire, however, the fact that they see other paths as failures demonstrates their submission to the patriarchal norms. For that reason, from the point of view of patriarchal society, they could be considered 'the good girls'. As Bridget Aldaraca claims, "[Women's] reproductive potential defines and limits them to a unique social role, that of motherhood."<sup>135</sup> As a consequence of this premise, the majority of men and women take this role as a matter of course, which results in disbelief and contempt when somebody rejects this role. Many young people nowadays reject this role as well, therefore, this novel might prepare those who consider it for the possibility of negative reactions. The following excerpt shows the unpleasant shock it might be for the others:

'We knew I wouldn't get a veil,' Becca says, [...]. 'I didn't have my first blood until May, and no one wants a late bloomer.' 'Better than not having one at all,' Molly says. 'I never even had a chance at a veil, [...].' 'I didn't mind not getting a veil,' Martha says. They all look at her in shock. 'What?' she says with a casual shrug. 'At least I don't have to worry about dying in childbirth.' They look appalled, but no one argues with her. What can they possibly say? It's the truth.<sup>136</sup>

Getting a veil means everything for most grace-year girls. It means that they will become wives and mothers and that they will have a respectful life. Despite giving an indisputable reason, the fact that Martha goes against the tide is unacceptable for those who honour the stereotypical way of living. Another unsettling point evident from this excerpt is that women are, in a way, punished for something they cannot control, such as getting their period. Because of the system they grew up in, they feel like they disappointed men when they did not get their period in a time that would be perceived as ideal by men. This only strengthens the picture of oppression of women by men that Liggett tried to portray.

However, at the end, there is an apparent shift from these patriarchal women to women who stick together to resist patriarchy. Going back to Tyson's question about sisterhood and its effect on patriarchy, Liggett uses this idea in one of the final scenes to express the power of women when they unite forces. There is a situation when the men and women in the county

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<sup>135</sup> Aldaraca, "The Cult of Domesticity," 77.

<sup>136</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 125.

find out that Tierney got pregnant during the grace year, and for that, they want to punish her. However, Michael and the grace year girls save Tierney and her baby's lives by using the alleged magic as a defence:

'The child is mine,' Michael says [...] 'Tierney came to me in a dream.' He speaks directly to the crowd. 'Night after night we lay together in the meadow. That's how strong our bond is. *That* was Tierney's magic.' 'That's not possible,' someone calls out. 'She's a whore, anyone can see that.' [...] 'I know of Tierney's dreams.' Gerdie steps beside me. 'They're as real as she's standing before you.' 'It's a witchery,' a voice booms from the crowd 'Those two are in on it together. Depraved.' I'm telling Gerdie to stand down, don't get in trouble for me, when Kiersten follows. One by one, the girls fall in around me.<sup>137</sup>

As a result of using the men's own medicine by taking advantage of their belief in the girls' magic, Tierney is saved. In addition, the fact that the girls stuck together to defend one of them, brought a new sign of hope for the other girls and women from the county and showed them that their position could change and that their voices matter. In other words, the girls together with Michael conquered the patriarchal system in this scene by using the men's beliefs against them, but also by the girls' unified standpoint. Additionally, it should be noted that some of the secondary characters slightly develop as well, such as Kiersten, which is not that common in YA fiction. Kiersten is at the beginning very selfish and self-absorbed, however, after the grace year, she stands together with other grace year girls by Tierney, which shows some personal growth. All these changes and actions express the possibility of change in the social system as well as the fact that a change always starts with individuals and grows from there.

Nonetheless, as it was suggested, the patriarchal social system is limiting for men as well, because as it is stated in *The Routledge Companion To Critical Theory*, "by identifying woman's place [patriarchy] also defines a man's."<sup>138</sup> Therefore, both men and women have a specific position and role in society which affects their choices and possibilities. Aspects of women's oppression are very visible in the novel and some of the restrictions that control men are similar to those of women. The main limitation for men is that their path is usually given, such as in the case of Michael who takes his father's place at the end of the story as an owner of an apothecary and as a head of a council. For some it might be a thrilling position, however, as was previously mentioned, Michael is not a supporter of the patriarchal system. Yet he will be in its leading position. Therefore, because of the social system, men usually follow someone else's path instead of creating their own. Secondly, they do not have the freedom to be with the

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<sup>137</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 376. Italics original

<sup>138</sup> Malpas and Wake, *Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*, 238.

person they love if they come from different corners of the society, such as Ryker, who dies because of this limitation and judgment that comes with it. In other words, patriarchal advocates do not allow this mixing of two alleged enemies, probably because it could lead to the subversion of the system.

In summary, it is clear that in spite of many supporters of the patriarchal social system, there are also characters whose approach to patriarchy is negative and whose goal is to slowly subvert the system, such as Tierney's mother or Michael. What is also important to note is that the development of the grace-year girls, together with Tierney, results in a moment of the girls' shared standpoint which sends a sign of hope to other girls that in unity is power and that their position could change. Yet it is not only women who are limited since some men experience the social pressure as well by being pushed into following the path of their fathers despite differences in outlook or not being able to spend their lives with the ones they love. Therefore, a change seems to be needed for both men and women.

### 3.2 Facing Patriarchy

The patriarchal system comes with many issues related both to the stereotypical gender roles and the position of men and women in a patriarchal society. The patriarchal mannerism is reflected in many aspects of everyday life, such as facing judgment based on various stereotypes, experiencing sexual objectification, but also in the tendency of setting a beauty standard, or reactions to homosexuality. The purpose of this subchapter is to explore the chosen novels with respect to these attributes of patriarchal society and examine how the authors incorporated these issues into the texts and whether they try to undermine the patriarchal tendencies or rather justify them. In addition, since this diploma thesis is based on the analysis of chosen literary texts, the aim is also to look for occurrences of the patriarchal language in the chosen YA texts.

To start with, a stereotype resulting from the patriarchal gender roles, describing men as active in contrast to women defined as passive, is the notion that men are the saviours of women in trouble. As presented in the article *Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children*, rescues are acts that require "independence and self-confidence,"<sup>139</sup> which are unthinkable qualities for women to have, for that reason, the authors label rescues as

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<sup>139</sup> Lenore J. Weitzman, Deborah Eifler, Elizabeth Hokada and Catherine Ross, "Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 6 (May 1972): 1134.

“exclusively a male activity.”<sup>140</sup> While reading *Dry*, *Four Dead Queens*, and *The Grace Year*, the reader can encounter situations that support this stereotypical perception, but also some that contradict it. For instance, *The Grace Year* portrays a society that heavily relies on the actions and decisions of men, who in many cases rescue women from certain death. It also concerns Tierney, who is saved by Michael and Ryker, as was presented above, and her life is dependent on their solidarity. On the other hand, Tierney becomes the rescuer in some situations as well, which expresses that she is not as defenceless and vulnerable as it might seem. One of these situations is related to the alleged magic many of the girls believe in, which consequently cost the lives of many grace-year girls. One of the girls who almost becomes the victim of her belief is Helen, who is persuaded by Kiersten that she is invincible, therefore, Helen decides to leave the camp confident that no poacher will see her. Once Helen leaves the camp, Tierney is prepared to rescue her:

Pushing past the girls, I dart out after [Helen]. [...] I’m running toward her, motioning for her to come back, but her eyes are fixed to the north, on an advancing poacher. [...] Picking up my pace, I call out her name. She looks at me, sheer panic washing over her face. ‘You can see me?’ ‘Run.’ I shove her back toward the encampment.<sup>141</sup>

Helen is convinced that her magic is real, for that reason, she is not afraid to put it to a test, which, not surprisingly, fails. The moment Tierney addresses Helen outside the camp is a breaking point because it makes Helen doubt her powers for the first time, which contributes to her rescue. Additionally, despite being terrified, Tierney risks her life to save another’s which shows her strength, selflessness as well as confidence, which undermines the stereotype of the passive woman.

Perhaps it is no surprise that the female characters in *Dry* exemplify the role of a rescuer as well. Both Jacqui and Alyssa are competent and smart girls who, despite needing help sometimes, are everything but passive. What is also crucial to note is that physical strength, which puts men into the role of a saviour most of the time, is not always the key to rescuing those in need. For example, Alyssa uses her intelligence and wit to save her friends and herself from going to prison for Marijuana possession:

‘So you’re going to arrest a bunch of kids for having pot? It’s legal now, you know!’ ‘Not in a moving vehicle,’ the soldier says as he begins to frisk us. ‘And you’re all underage!’ But Alyssa will not be deterred. ‘Really? Is this your top priority in the middle of this crisis?’ ‘Be quiet!’ the soldier orders. He pats Kelton down, and is about to move on to Alyssa. ‘*This is the physical and psychological*

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<sup>140</sup> Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross, “Sex-Role Socialization,” 1134.

<sup>141</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 156–157.

*intimidation of minors—not even martial law allows that!*’ she yells. *‘I’m sure my cousin at the LA Times is going to love this story!’* And, miraculously, he backs off. But not before grabbing the bag of weed. *‘I’m confiscating this!’* he says. *‘Now move it! Get in line with everyone else!’*<sup>142</sup>

Due to Alyssa’s prompt thinking and acting, she is able to get them out of trouble, which not only breaks the stereotypical view of a male rescuer but also proves that girls and women are not dependent on men because they are able to take care of themselves. Having the young-adult reader in mind, it is a great example for young girls that their strength does not necessarily have to be physical, but they can use their voice and intelligence to save themselves.

Yet *Dry* also points to the fact that sometimes the intention of others is not to rescue those who need help, but rather to harm even more. This warning is presented when Alyssa is looking for her brother and shouts his name: “Kelton shushes me, and I know why—the distressed voice of a girl is a bleeding wound in a sea of sharks.”<sup>143</sup> This statement illustrates situations in which others might take advantage of the vulnerability of those in trouble instead of giving a helping hand. To a young-adult reader, it is a lesson to be aware of this possibility and avoid being overly trusting to strangers. In connection to the perception of men being the rescuers, this excerpt perhaps slightly disproves this belief by indirectly suggesting that men are rather those from whom girls need rescuing.

Last but not least, *Four Dead Queens* provides a very distinct perception of a social system, therefore, it is no surprise that a female character functions in the role of a saviour as well. Keralie’s way of dealing with problematic situations is very similar to Alyssa’s since she mainly uses her knowledge, wit, and intellect to protect herself and Varin from harm. Her approach is observable in the way she rescues Varin and herself from Mackiel and his helper in one of the scenes in which Keralie feels extremely threatened by Mackiel. Therefore, she is determined to act. Her first step is to scan the room and assess her options: “I quickly reassessed the situation. Varin was tall and muscular. I was swift, nimble and unpredictable. The woman was heavier than I was; a little softer, a little slower. And Mackiel had the strength of a coat hanger.”<sup>144</sup> This technique of scanning the room allowed Keralie to come up with a solution that would be less probable to fail her. Based on her observations she thought it would be the most effective to aggravate Mackiel by deflating his ego in order to trick him into a trap: “He was angry. And when he was angry, he didn’t think clearly. *Perfect*. [...] In his rage he hadn’t

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<sup>142</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 168–169. Italics original

<sup>143</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 196.

<sup>144</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 151.

seen me flick the switch on the incinerator. When he reached me, I shoved his side, propelling him toward the wall and the incinerator drawer.”<sup>145</sup> It is clear that Keralie firstly utilized her knowledge of the enemy and combined it with her physical abilities to rescue Varin and herself from a certain harm. By this, Scholte undermined the stereotypical gender roles which ascribe intelligence, rationality, and bravery only to men and portrayed a female character with these qualities, while picturing male characters as either passive and dependent, as in the case of Varin, or as weak and irrational, as in the case of Mackiel.

Another stereotype observable in *Four Dead Queens* is the assumption that successful women are not successful because of their abilities, but as Joanna L. Grossman suggests, because of their sexuality and femininity<sup>146</sup>. Despite the fact that this novel portrays a matriarchal society, it still reveals some aspects of the patriarchal one and this assumption is one of them. Keralie is a very talented thief, because of which Mackiel gives her the best tasks. However, others question her abilities and her success:

‘I don’t need your kind of inspiration.’ Kyrin pushed my arm out of the way. ‘Not all of us are willing to wet Mackiel’s whistle as you do.’ ‘I do nothing but my job!’ [...] ‘Right. You think we’re blind?’ [...] ‘You get all the best jobs.’ ‘Because I am the best.’ ‘The best at sucking his—’ I lurched forward, my fist about to slam into his face, but I was jerked back at the last second.<sup>147</sup>

It is possible that jealousy stands behind these kinds of accusations, it still disparages her achievements and endeavours, even though theft is not considered a job in the contemporary world, in this novel, it is their means of livelihood. Unfortunately, it is very probable that another man would not be accused of trading his body and services for a better job simply because he is a man, and men are considered naturally more capable. This double standard seems to accompany Keralie throughout her journey, however, Keralie’s fierce reaction proves that she is a very competent and courageous girl, not afraid to stand up for herself, determined to prove Kyrin and others wrong.

As was implied before, patriarchy is destructive for men as well. Despite not questioning men’s abilities, it deprecates expressing emotions such as fear or sadness because as Tyson claims, it is considered unmanly.<sup>148</sup> In *Dry*, there are some instances of this patriarchal behaviour that pressures men and boys to prove their masculinity by avoiding these feelings or

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<sup>145</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 152. Italics original

<sup>146</sup> “‘She Slept Her Way to the Top’: The Fourth Circuit Pushes Back on a Harmful Gender Stereotype,” Verdict, last modified November 8, 2019, <https://verdict.justia.com/2019/11/08/she-slept-her-way-to-the-top-the-fourth-circuit-pushes-back-on-a-harmful-gender-stereotype>.

<sup>147</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 32.

<sup>148</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 87.



at least hiding them. One of these situations is when Jacqui is driving a car too fast and Alyssa's brother Garrett is both scared and sick: "'I'm gonna throw up,' says Garrett. 'I think I'm going to throw up.' 'Swallow it down and man up!' I tell him. 'Don't you talk to my brother like that!'"<sup>149</sup> First of all, Jacqui used the phrase 'man up' to imply that Garrett is not acting as the 'real man', which, as Tyson explains, means that it is required for a man or a boy to hold feminine qualities, such as being emotional, in contempt, since it is forbidden for men to act too feminine in the patriarchal culture.<sup>150</sup> Yet Alyssa's reaction defending Garrett shows that this phrase is acknowledged to be harmful because it forces him to essentially avoid vulnerability, in other words, dictating him how to behave in accordance with the social patriarchal standard.

As implied above, facing stereotypes is not the only matter of concern in the patriarchal society. Sexual objectification of women by men is one of them as well. However, in a world without water, it becomes less of a problem and more of an advantage since it becomes something from which both sexes can profit. Yet the experience is different from a female and male point of view. Neal and Jarrod Shusterman portray in *Dry* that a desperate situation requests desperate actions. In this case, it causes adolescent girls to offer their bodies to a strange-looking man in exchange for water. Some of them are more reluctant than others, yet the seriousness of the situation together with the social pressure breaks those in doubt, which is also Hali's case. Hali is a teenage girl in a desperate need of water, therefore, when she runs into her friend Sydney who reveals that she has a bottle of water, Hali wants her to share her secret on how to get one as well. Yet when Sydney points to an odd driver of a red Volkswagen bus, Hali's excitement soon becomes reluctance and hopelessness:

'He's giving out free water,' Sydney says. 'But he's kind of picky about who he gives it to. [...]' Then Sydney lets off a nervous little chuckle that gives away the cold, hard reality that there's no such thing as free water—and Hali realizes why she hasn't seen Sydney until now. She was one of the three girls who just got out of the little red bus. [...] Hali watches as a pretty girl she doesn't know gets into the van. The ponytail guy holds the door open for her, pretending to be a gentleman instead of slime. Hali turns to Sydney. 'Thanks, but no thanks,' she says, and tries to stride away with sufficient indignation—but Sydney grabs her arm. 'Don't be stupid, Hali. [...] No one's coming to help the people here! They're probably all going to die of thirst. You don't want to be one of them!' [...] 'Why do you even care what I do?' Hali blurts out. 'You got your water, why don't you just leave me alone?' And Sydney finally spills her true motive. 'He said he'll give me another bottle if I bring him someone. Someone like you...' [...] Hali looks at her [mother]. [...] 'I'll be back,' she tells her mother.

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<sup>149</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 126.

<sup>150</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 88.

‘I promise.’ Then she heads toward the little red Volkswagen bus, where the man with the ponytail opens the door for her. Like a gentleman.<sup>151</sup>

This longer excerpt reveals many unsettling aspects of patriarchal attitude, both from male and female characters. Firstly, it is apparent that the driver takes advantage of the crisis to decoy these young girls to fulfil his sexual desires in exchange for a bottle of water, which becomes something that can save their lives. These are typical features of an objectifier as stated by Kathleen Stock, who points out that objectification involves an objectlike treatment towards another person together with power to enforce. Additionally, objectification becomes sexual once it includes submission to one’s sexual desires.<sup>152</sup> In other words, in *Dry*, the driver uses the girls as objects to satisfy his own sexual needs and the bottles of water as a source of power, therefore, he becomes an epitome of the sexual objectifier. Secondly, regarding Tyson’s idea of sisterhood in order to resist patriarchy, Sydney does not really fit into this image because instead of protecting Hali from this disgusting business, she pushes Hali into it to profit from it herself. However, as it was mentioned, their desperation caused by the water shortage and fear of death is what leads them to these actions. The same applies to Hali, who takes examples from her mother, who flirts with men to get some water from them, and despite being hesitant, or even disapproving at the beginning, Hali succumbs to the pressure and offers herself as a toy to save both herself and her mother. Since *Dry* is a YA novel, the erotic scenes are not explicitly written, it is only foreshadowed by comments such as ‘the cold, hard reality that there’s no such thing as free water’ or ‘she heads toward the little red Volkswagen bus’, which refer to what happened in the bus and what is Hali about to do.

Similar situation happens when Henry betrays others by exchanging their car for water with two intimidating men. Alyssa tries to save the situation and suggests a modification in the deal, yet one of the men takes it as an opportunity to find himself a new sexual object to please him:

‘We’re going to the San Gabriel Reservoir,’ I tell him. [...] ‘Let us get there, and then you can have the truck.’ The inked one shakes his head. ‘Already a done deal. Nothing more to talk about.’ ‘Now hold on,’ says the skinhead. ‘Let’s not be hasty.’ And he drags his eyes across me, looking me up and down like I’m something up for auction.<sup>153</sup>

From the way the man looks at Alyssa his intentions become clear. In other words, he becomes more interested in Alyssa and her physical appearance and what she can offer than the car itself.

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<sup>151</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 162–164.

<sup>152</sup> Kathleen Stock, “Sexual Objectification,” *Analysis* 75, no. 2 (April 2015): 192.

<sup>153</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 240.

As in the example above, it points to the issue of sexual objectification of women, especially when they become vulnerable and almost defenseless. By the portrayal of situations like these, the authors depicted the depravity of some individuals who take advantage of the crisis to project their desires resulting from the patriarchal perception of women as submissive sex toys intended to please men.

As well as *Dry*, *The Grace Year* incorporates objectification of women into the story, which is observable already from some of the excerpts above. Nonetheless, Tierney becomes aware of this objectification once her mother dresses her up for the grace year ceremony: “When I enter the covered market, an uncomfortable din permeates the air. Normally, I pass through the stall unnoticed, [...] but today, the wives glare as I walk by, and the men smile in a way that makes me want to hide.”<sup>154</sup> The change of clothes that reveal her feminine figure results in endless stares followed by inappropriate comments by men causing Tierney to become ashamed and wanting to flee from the market as fast as possible. What is also noticeable is that typically fearless Tierney, who is not afraid to speak her mind and stand up for herself, becomes speechless and runs away from the problem. According to Nathan A. Heflick and Jamie L. Goldenberg, when the public focus is on the physical aspects of a person, the person starts to behave in more objectlike manners, which includes being passive and speaking less.<sup>155</sup> In this case, Tierney experiences this exact effect of objectification, i.e., objectlike manners that are reflected in her reaction to the situation.

As presented above, usually, it is women who are objectified and sexualized, yet it does not exclude men from being the subject to objectification. As *Dry* depicts the sexual objectification of women, by some references, it also pictures the objectification of men, mainly because some women tend to prioritize the physical side of a person. For instance, one of the secondary characters explains the reason behind his parents’ divorce, “a few years back, Dalton’s mom had left [his dad] for a loser with nice pecs and a soul patch, who she subsequently kicked to the curb a year later. Live and learn. Anyway, when the marriage went south, his dad went north.”<sup>156</sup> From this excerpt, it seems like Dalton’s mother chose a man with a nicely built body instead of his father just to satisfy her needs, then broke up with him when the body suddenly was not enough. To rephrase it, since the man’s body seems to be the

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<sup>154</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 21.

<sup>155</sup> Nathan A. Heflick and Jamie L. Goldenberg, “Seeing Eye to Body: The Literal Objectification of Women,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 23, no. 3 (June 2014): 225–227.

<sup>156</sup> Shusterman and Shusterman, *Dry*, 20.

building block of the relationship, Dalton's mother probably saw this man as an object, or a toy, to play with, then throw it away when it was not needed.

What goes hand in hand with the emphasis on the physical side of women is the beauty standard set by the patriarchal society to please the male audience. This beauty standard is usually different in every culture, and it changes over the course of time, yet it is still present. As Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz argue, the feminine beauty ideal contributes to the objectification and devaluation of women and explains it as a "socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets, and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain."<sup>157</sup> Based on this claim it might be deduced that women's beauty should be the number one priority since those who meet the beauty standard set of the culture are usually rewarded by social recognition and especially male acknowledgment. This principle is also accurately depicted in *Four Dead Queens* through Queen Marguerite, who did not conform to the standard: "When Marguerite was a young girl, she was taller than she should've been, and all her features were hard angles. *Scarecrow*, the kids called her. *Clothes hanger*."<sup>158</sup> This excerpt expresses that once a person fails to conform to the beauty ideal, instead of being accepted, it might result in punishment by society in a form of verbal abuse. Unfortunately, it strengthens the argument that women are mainly appreciated for their beauty. Nevertheless, the power of puberty is also illustrated and suddenly the features of Marguerite that were the subject of mocking became the subject of praise:

When she was brought to the palace as a young woman, everything shifted. The staff spoke of nothing but her stunning beauty. Her long legs, small but elongated frame, sharp cheekbones and prominent profile. What a beautiful queen she would be. Yet the years of being torn down and made to feel smaller than the rats that haunted the *Jetée* could not be undone. Marguerite's past had made her who she was. When the staff called her striking, she heard *severe*, knowing her features were hard and sharp and not the typical Torian beauty.<sup>159</sup>

It is unmistakable that Marguerite became very insecure about her body image because of the way she was treated as a child. Therefore, once she got finally appreciated by others, she was unable to accept the praise and twisted the words of admiration in her head into words of critique. This illustrates the harmful effects of setting beauty standards, especially on young girls, for it may cause anxieties and self-doubts, or even eating disorders. Since many young people nowadays experience the comparison of their bodies to the beauty standards, especially

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<sup>157</sup> Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz, "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales," *Gender and Society* 17, no. 5 (October 2003): 711.

<sup>158</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 119. Italics original

<sup>159</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 119. Italics original

when using social media, Queen Marguerite might become a very relatable character to many of the readers.

It is probably not surprising that beauty plays a major role in *The Grace Year* since it is one of the most important factors that ensure a girl will become a wife instead of an outcast. Tierney is aware of the shallowness of society, for that reason she expects herself to be sent to the outskirts if she survives the grace year because she is mostly seen as the ‘tomboy’. The next excerpt illustrates which girls are recognized, or even rewarded by the society: “I already know the prettiest girls with superior breeding and gentle graces will get a veil, but there’s always at least one wild card.”<sup>160</sup> Based on Tierney’s observation, it is evident that those girls who meet the beauty standard of the county, come from a respected family, and perform the role of a good girl are the most probable to be rewarded by getting a husband. Unfortunately, this approach to marriage contributes to the jealousy, gossiping, and competitiveness between the grace-year girls and to undermining the self-confidence of those who do not meet the criteria.

One of the criteria for a respectful life is also often heterosexuality, therefore, any homosexual tendencies are frequently dispraised. Since both women and homosexuals are often seen as the ‘others’ in a patriarchal society, feminist literary critics concentrate on both representatives in a text simultaneously. This reflects the grading attention paid to intersectionality, which N. L. Cole explains as “the simultaneous experience of categorical and hierarchical classifications including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality,”<sup>161</sup> together with interconnection and mutual dependence between various forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism or xenophobia caused by the social classifiers.<sup>162</sup> In other words, the intersectional approach is applied in feminist studies because the different forms of inequality can overlap. It is something that many young people can experience, and it is also often depicted in YA literature. *The Grace Year* is one of the YA novels that illustrate this premise by portraying a female character, Gertrude, who is oppressed not only for being a girl but also for being a lesbian. She is called Dirty Gertie for trying to kiss another girl a few years prior to the grace year and having an erotic picture of a girl, for these reasons, she is considered depraved and treated as the outcast of the county. This oppressive treatment pushes her into

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<sup>160</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 42.

<sup>161</sup> “Definition of Intersectionality,” ThoughtCo, last modified October 12, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/intersectionality-definition-3026353>.

<sup>162</sup> ThoughtCo, “Definition of Intersectionality.”

being quiet and modest, basically acting as the good patriarchal girl she is supposed to be. Yet even when she tries her hardest to be accepted, she is rejected and ridiculed:

I try to teach them how to build a proper fire, the same way my father taught me, but there's little interest. A few pay attention—mostly girls who will be assigned this type of work upon their return [...]—but Kiersten and the rest of her followers seem annoyed that I'm even bothering them with something so mundane. It's only when Gertrude offers to take the first meal shift that they suddenly take an interest. 'She can't make our food ... it'll be dirty,' Tamara says.<sup>163</sup>

Gertrude's efforts to help in the camp are not welcomed, simply because of her different sexuality, which others understand as an infectious disease. Gerdie's later frustration and desperation that nothing helps to stop the mocking and insults indicate Liggett's attempt to point out the negative impact of the patriarchal approach toward the violation of a social norm.

On the other hand, in *Four Dead Queens*, differences in sexuality are not reasons for oppression, in fact, a homosexual relationship does not seem to be a shocking revelation, but rather an ordinary matter. In this novel, two of the queens, Corra and Iris, fall in love with each other and they are secretly together, despite it being forbidden for queens to be in a relationship in order to avoid any distractions. When their secret gets slowly uncovered, nobody is offended or outraged by the fact that two women form a couple. It can be seen in Queen Stessa's reaction when realizing their secret:

At the next nightly dinner, [Stessa] had watched Iris interact with Corra. While it was almost imperceptible, there had been a difference, a lightness that had colored Iris's features and brightened her green eyes. [...] It could've been mistaken for merely affection for her sister queen, but Stessa had suspected something else. For it was a look she had often seen in Lyker's eyes. A look of love and desire.<sup>164</sup>

Stessa seemed to understand that Iris and Corra's love is comparable to her and Lyker's affection. The romance plots in this novel, therefore, are presented through several relationships of the same value regardless of the variety of sexuality, which sends to the reader a message that every love should be respected and accepted. In other words, this novel undermines the patriarchal attitude towards sexuality other than heterosexuality.

Part of a patriarchal culture is also the patriarchal language, such as the use of the universal pronoun 'he' for both men and women. This can be observed in *Four Dead Queens*, when the palace is investigating the murder of the first queen and refers to the unknown

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<sup>163</sup> Liggett, *The Grace Year*, 103.

<sup>164</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 146.

murderer with this pronoun: “[Marguerite] wanted the assassin hanged. She wanted to watch the life drain from his body until he was merely a shell, as Iris was now.”<sup>165</sup> In spite of not knowing the sex of the assassin, queen Marguerite uses this inclusive pronoun, perhaps not considering that a woman could be the actual killer. Shockingly, the reader in the end discovers that the killer in fact is a girl, a girl whose story the reader follows throughout the whole book, and that she has been drugged by Mackiel and does not remember anything about the murders which she was forced, with the help of the advanced technology, to commit. Concerning the use of the inclusive pronoun, it could also be perceived as a tactical move from the writer that is supposed to lead the reader astray from the thought that a female character could be the assassin. On the other hand, it can also be perceived as the use of a patriarchal language that marginalizes women’s experience and their impact on society.

To conclude, all three novels reflect many issues resulting from the patriarchal gender roles and hierarchies. Yet all three of them seem to undermine the patriarchal norms by breaking the stereotypes, such as picturing a female character in a position of a rescuer, pointing out the problem of sexual objectification, or underlining the negative effects of setting beauty standards. In connection to homosexuality, *The Grace Year* and *Four Dead Queens* portray two different attitudes towards a homosexual character, one of which expresses the harmful effects of mockery while the other expresses the stance that homosexuality and heterosexuality should be equally respected. The only trait that slightly undercuts the impression of a negative stance in *Four Dead Queens* toward patriarchal mannerism is the use of the universal pronoun ‘he’, which could be either perceived as a stylistic choice or the use of patriarchal language. However, overall, these three YA novels seem to share the idea that many aspects of the patriarchal social system are harmful, especially to young people who are forming their identities while facing the difficulties of a patriarchal society.

### 3.3 Matriarchy Is the New Patriarchy

Matriarchy and patriarchy are two seemingly opposite social systems with distinct hierarchies and approaches. One of these differences was previously mentioned in connection with the attitude towards homosexuality, which is highly rejected in a patriarchal society, as in *The Grace Year*, however, it is accepted in a matriarchal culture, as in *Four Dead Queens*. Yet M. M. Toscano labels matriarchy as “equally destructive and sexist”<sup>166</sup> as patriarchy, mainly

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<sup>165</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 83.

<sup>166</sup> Margaret Merrill Toscano, “Beyond Matriarchy, Beyond Patriarchy,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 36.

because they share many oppressive features resulting from the reversed roles of men and women.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, the objective of this subchapter is to discover in what ways is the matriarchal society in *Four Dead Queens* comparable to the patriarchal social system to prove or refute that a matriarchal society is not the right choice to achieve equality.

According to C. G. Thomas, matriarchy is defined as “the rule of women, emphasizing the political role of women in society.”<sup>168</sup> Therefore, while patriarchy does not allow women to have equal access to the leading positions, matriarchy, based on what is observable in *Four Dead Queens*, denied this access to men. For example, the queens have rules to follow and one of them commits them to pass their power only to their daughters or the next closest female relative. In other words, men can be only the queens’ advisors but never the kings. Additionally, another rule forbids them to marry because it is seen as a distraction. In other words, rationality is prioritized over emotions and passion in both patriarchy and matriarchy. What is more, this way of thinking might lead to objectification, seeing men as a means to produce an heir, which is one of the issues discussed above as one of the major problems of a patriarchal attitude. The idea of objectification is strengthened by the way the queens choose the men, that is by selecting them during annual matching balls. Therefore, they select them based on their physical appearance as things to buy in a shop. Yet to be selected is seen as a reward: “To be matched with a Quadarian queen meant a wealth of riches, with one condition—he could never lay claim to the Quadarian throne or his offspring.”<sup>169</sup> Even though it had some benefits to be chosen by the queen to ensure an heir, it still means for the men that they would not be allowed to spend much time with their child, which is a very cruel solution. Therefore, by limiting men in this way, the role of a father is denied to them once they pair up with a queen. When compared to the patriarchal system, the rigid roles that come with the position in society are present in both social systems.

Additionally, the queens’ pride and power cause them to look down on men, particularly when they try to disagree or question their judgment. The following excerpt portrays this play for power: “‘We should gather the queens.’ [...] ‘We need to stay together. I must protect them.’ [...] ‘No, Queen Marguerite.’ The inspector shook his head once. Sharply. ‘That is not a good idea.’ ‘No?’ If Iris had been here, she would have had a fit. No one told her no. Especially not

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<sup>167</sup> Toscano, “Beyond Matriarchy, Beyond Patriarchy,” 36.

<sup>168</sup> C. G. Thomas, “MATRIARCHY IN EARLY GREECE: THE BRONZE AND DARK AGES,” *Arethusa* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1973): 173.

<sup>169</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 67.



a man.”<sup>170</sup> It is evident that the patriarchal model of stereotypical gender roles that considers men to be dominant and women to be submissive is inverted in this novel. Men are expected to behave in accordance with the women’s expectations, at least in the case of the queens, therefore, disagreement can be perceived as a violation.

What also supports Toscano’s argument about matriarchy being destructive is that as well as in patriarchy, women, or at least the queens, are expected to submit to some roles that are defined for them. For some, such as queen Corra, the pressure to fulfil the expectations is very stressful and binding: “*Be patient, child. Be calm. Be selfless. Wait for the right moment. Wait for your time. Rule with a steady hand. A steady heart.* It became a mantra over the years, informing how Corra should and shouldn’t behave.”<sup>171</sup> Corra sees this advice from her mother as a guideline to follow, yet it is very difficult for her to do so on some occasions, such as when her love-interest, queen Iris, dies. The difficulty is obvious from her internal fight with these rules, which she repeats in a time of need: “*Be calm, child. Steady.* But she couldn’t. Not this time.”<sup>172</sup> This depiction of the internal struggle with the roles predetermined by society parallels the effort to change the stereotypical gender roles that support the inequality between men and women in a patriarchal society. Therefore, as long as there are roles determined for men and women that contribute to the oppression of one of the sexes, equality is rather in the distance.

Yet the history of the Kingdom of Quadara in *Four Dead Queens* might play a role in the similarities between the matriarchal and patriarchal systems because it might explain the traits of a patriarchal mindset:

the tenth king of Quadara had taken a wife from each region of his nation. *To taste all that Quadara has to offer*, he’d famously said. When he had died unexpectedly and his four young wives had yet to produce any heirs, the queens decided they would rule in his place—one for each land of their origin.<sup>173</sup>

The fact that the kingdom was once a patriarchal society with a sexist king who saw women as samples of each quarter of the kingdom to taste who used his position to have four women at once explains the similarities in the matriarchal and patriarchal approach to the power. In other words, the queens build the system from the one they already knew by reversing the roles assigned to men and women.

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<sup>170</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 87. Italics original

<sup>171</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 99. Italics original

<sup>172</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 99. Italics original

<sup>173</sup> Scholte, *Four Dead Queens*, 41. Italics original

It is evident that Scholte does not offer a utopian version of society, but rather a society through which young girls can imagine a world where women are those who hold the power. Despite its own injustices and difficulties, Scholte's choice to explore the idea of a matriarchal society is not a common feature of YA fiction, therefore, it stands out. Yet it also offers an answer to the question of whether matriarchy is a way to achieve equality. The answer seems to be that replacing the patriarchal social system with the matriarchal one is a flawed approach, mainly because it does not solve inequality but rather maintains the oppression of the other sex. This is evident from the rules that queens are to obey which limit men in their roles and position but also excludes the queens from having a love life since it is seen as a distraction. Another similarity between patriarchy and matriarchy is the disinterest in the opinions of the oppressed sex or the struggle to conform to the predefined roles. In *Four Dead Queens*, the occurrence of patriarchal traits in the matriarchal social system might be explained by the history of the kingdom, which shifted from a patriarchal to a matriarchal society, yet it does not justify the oppression and inequality.

## 4 Conclusion

This diploma thesis is based on the analysis of three chosen Young Adult novels examined through the lenses of feminist literary criticism. Both YA fiction and feminist literary criticism were introduced in the first chapter which deals with the theoretical background of the thesis. Firstly, Young Adult literature was introduced as literature that already has the target readers in its name, it is the readers approximately from the age of twelve to their early twenties to whom it is marketed. Therefore, the age of the main character of YA fiction corresponds with the age of the readers as well as the development of the protagonist becomes an important feature that parallels the development of the teenage reader. These aspects together with some common themes make the literature more relatable for the reader, which can have the effect of turning non-readers into readers since it is written for young adults and about young adults which makes it attractive for teenage readers. Among the common themes are both light-hearted themes, such as first loves, but also some heavier ones, such as the death of a parent or racial issues. However, the chosen novels cover themes connected to sci-fi, fantasy, and dystopian stories, such as survivalism, heroism, and the rebellion against the social system.

As mentioned, feminist literary criticism was used to analyse the YA novels, therefore, its characterisation was crucial in the theoretical chapter. Feminist literary criticism was, and still is, heavily influenced by feminist ideology, which over time broadened from the struggle for women's suffrage to the effort to reflect more than white straight women's rights in the four waves of feminism. Feminist literary criticism is then defined as literary criticism exploring the portrayal of mainly female characters in comparison to the stereotypical perception of women as seen from the patriarchal point of view. However, feminist criticism is a very flexible tool with many methods and questions to answer, which are often focused not only on the stereotypical gender roles of women, but also men. Since feminist criticism is mostly concerned with the oppression of women in patriarchal society, patriarchy is a key term to explain. Patriarchy is defined as a social system that prioritizes male points of view, seeing women as inferior, which also promotes gender roles that strengthen this system. The stereotypical gender roles describe women as submissive, weak, and emotional, while men as dominant, strong, and rational. Feminist criticism then is used to explore the literary text in connection to patriarchy and gender roles to determine whether the text promotes or undermines the patriarchal outlook. The chosen YA novels for this diploma thesis that were analysed this way are *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett, *Four Dead Queens* by Astrid Scholte, and *Dry* by Jarrod and Neal Shusterman.

The first analytic chapter deals with the stereotypical gender roles and the approach of the main and chosen secondary characters to them. All three novels portray the main female characters as intelligent, strong, and dominant young girls which indicates that they do not conform to their patriarchal gender roles. They are presented rather as the rebels and the bad girls from the patriarchal point of view. On the other hand, the male teenage protagonists try their hardest to fit into the roles prescribed for them, trying to be strong, rational, and fearless. However, they tend to fail to conform to their roles in many cases. The chosen secondary characters offer more diversity, such as strongly patriarchal characters who believe in the dominance of men and subordination of women, such as Mr. Welk from *The Grace Year* or Henry from *Dry*, but also characters that in many aspects violate the performance of stereotypical gender roles, such as the queens or Lyker from *Four Dead Queens*. Overall, based on the analysis of the portrayal of the main and chosen secondary characters, all three novels seem to question or even reject the stereotypical gender roles.

In the last analytic chapter, many issues connected to patriarchal culture are addressed to determine whether the chosen novels undermine or support the patriarchal outlook. The first subchapter is dedicated to *The Grace Year*, which portrays a patriarchal society that oppresses women in a massive way, mostly by pressuring teenage girls into marriage and motherhood and considering other ways of living as failures. The author indicated the negative approach, or the shift in approach, of many characters toward the oppressive behaviour of patriarchal society in several instances, such as when the grace year girls joined forces to defeat patriarchal manners to save Tierney's life and by that proved to the others that a change is possible if they unite. Based on the negative portrayal of the patriarchal system that in some ways limits men and oppresses women, *The Grace Year* seems to warn the young readers against the toxic nature of patriarchy.

The second subchapter deals with several patriarchal tendencies which contribute to the unequal positions of men and women in society as well as to the promotion of gender roles. Firstly, there are some stereotypes that are connected to the roles of men and women, such as the assumption that only men are the saviours, while women are the helpless creatures. However, all three novels demonstrated that this assumption is rather false and that even teenage girls are able to take care of themselves and their friends. Another stereotype presented in *Four Dead Queens*, is the belief that women are successful only thanks to their femininity and sexuality rather than their abilities. This stereotype was broken in the text by actually presenting a girl who is successful for her abilities, not the opposite. The last stereotype

mentioned in the analysis is connected to the male gender role, and that is the comment to ‘man up’ if the man or a boy is not acting enough as the ‘real man’, which is presented in the text rather as an insult, implying the harmful nature of such comments.

Apart from the stereotypes, in both *Dry* and *The Grace Year* are pointed out the destructive effects of sexual objectification which contributes to the perception of women as objects rather than human beings, resulting often in changes in behaviour. However, *Dry* also portrays that even men can be sexually objectified by women. Since sexual objectification is based on the attention to the physical side of a person, the social pressure to meet the beauty standard is closely related to this issue, often even contributing to the objectification. For instance, *Four Dead Queens* focuses on the problem of setting beauty standards and punishing those who do not fit into them, alerting that it often causes anxieties and low self-esteem.

What also causes trouble in patriarchal culture is homosexuality since it is often seen as a violation of a social norm. This approach was presented in *The Grace Year* and evaluated as destructive for it shows a character, Gertrude, who suffers because of the mockery resulting from her different sexuality. On the other hand, a different approach was presented in *Four Dead Queens*, in which heterosexual and homosexual relationships are considered equally acceptable, however, this difference might be caused by the portrayal of a matriarchal society. Yet despite depicting matriarchal society instead of a patriarchal one, *Four Dead Queens* seems to be the only YA novel analysed in this diploma thesis that uses the patriarchal language, more specifically, the universal pronoun ‘he’ when talking about an unknown person of unknown sex. However, in spite of the occasional use of patriarchal language, based on the above-presented findings, *Four Dead Queens* together with *Dry* and *The Grace Year* do not reinforce the patriarchal social system, but rather subvert its norms and outlook.

Since many young readers might see an answer to the patriarchal oppression in matriarchal social system, a system presented in *Four Dead Queens*, the last subchapter of this diploma thesis points out some similarities between these two systems to show its demerits. Firstly, while patriarchy oppresses women, matriarchy tends to oppress men, mainly by denying them access to the leading positions and degrading their opinions. This shows that as well as patriarchy, matriarchy operates with the idea of hierarchy which defines the position of men and women in the society. Secondly, while patriarchy sexually objectifies mainly women, matriarchal system tends to objectify men, such as when the queens see men mostly as a means to get an heir. This points out that the position of men and women is reversed, which does not solve the problem of discrimination. Even though there are some differences, such as when

taking into account the approach to homosexuality, matriarchy does not seem to be the way to achieve equality.

In conclusion, the chosen YA novels show through the portrayal of characters a very sceptical, even rejecting, approach towards the stereotypical gender roles promoted by patriarchy, mainly by depicting dominant, intelligent, and competent female characters as well as emotional and nurturing male characters. Additionally, these YA novels in many instances pointed out the problematic elements of patriarchy, provided a negative evaluation of those elements, as well as broke the stereotypes. Based on these facts, it can be summarized that these novels undermine the patriarchal system. To answer the last question of the diploma thesis, the matriarchal system as presented in *Four Dead Queens* does not offer an acceptable way out of the patriarchal oppression since it in many aspects promotes inequality as well. Overall, *Dry*, *Four Dead Queens*, and *The Grace Year* show that even sci-fi, fantasy, and dystopian YA texts can offer an insight into the issue of stereotypical gender roles as well as patriarchal principles and by that provide content appropriate for feminist literary criticism.

## Resumé

Obsahem této diplomové práce je analýza třech vybraných děl z literatury pro mládež, jejímž cílem je za pomoci metod feministické literární kritiky odhalit, zda díla posilují či podřívají patriarchální systém a s tím spojené genderové role. Vzhledem k tomu, že jedno z vybraných děl, konkrétně *Čtyři mrtvé královny* od Astrid Scholte, zobrazuje matriarchální společnost, jedním z cílů je i poukázat na podobnosti mezi matriarchátem a patriarchátem a zhodnotit, zda matriarchát, tak jak je v knize zobrazen, může vyřešit problém s nerovností mezi oběma pohlavími.

Úvodní část práce je věnována teoretickému rámci, konkrétně definici literatury pro mládež, také označováno jako young adult literatura nebo literatura pro dospívající, a také vzhledu do metod feministické literární kritiky spolu s definicemi klíčových termínů používaných v analytické části. Literatura pro mládež je zde definována jako literatura určena a nabízena čtenářům ve věku od dvanácti do dvaceti let, která je vyprávěna z pohledu stejně starého hrdiny či hrdinky. Zároveň témata, která jsou v rámci této věkové kategorie pokryta, často odpovídají problémům, které tito mladí lidé řeší, čímž je pro ně tato literatura atraktivní. V teoretické části jsou také některá z těchto témat zmíněna spolu s častými tématy žánrů sci-fi, fantasy a dystopie, do kterých spadají knihy zvolené pro analýzu. Co se týče teoretického pozadí feministické literární kritiky, která je použita k analýze vybraných knih, je zde shrnut vliv několika vln feministické ideologie na feministickou literární teorii. Na základě proměnlivosti feministické ideologie je zde feministická literární kritika definována jako flexibilní nástroj pro analýzu týkající se například problematiky stereotypních genderových rolí, které definují ženy jako submisivní, přecitlivělé a slabé v kontrastu s muži, kteří jsou vnímáni jako dominantní, racionální a silní. Ve vztahu k literatuře je zkoumán především přístup k uvedeným genderovým rolím, konkrétně zda jsou akceptovány, zpochybňovány anebo odmítány. Zároveň je častým cílem feministické literární kritiky prozkoumat dílo ve vztahu k patriarchální společnosti a zjistit, zda je tento sociální systém v textu podříván či podporován. Díla určená pro tuto analýzu jsou v této práci *Sucho* od Jarroda a Neala Shustermana, *Prokletý rok* od Kim Liggett a *Čtyři mrtvé královny* od Astrid Scholte.

První analytická kapitola je zaměřena na hlavní postavy a několik vybraných vedlejších postav ze zvolených knih a jejich vyobrazení v knihách pro mládež. Postavy jsou analyzovány ve vztahu k výše uvedeným stereotypním genderovým rolím s cílem určit, zda jsou tyto ženské i mužské postavy zobrazeny v souladu s patriarchálními genderovými rolemi, či se od nich odchylují a tím jsou tyto role zpochybňovány nebo odmítány. Na základě provedené analýzy

lze shrnout, že hlavní hrdinky všech třech knih, Tierney, Keralie, Jacqui a Alyssa, jsou v rozporu se stereotypními rolemi, jelikož jsou čtenáři představeny jako silné, racionální, poměrně dominantní a schopné slečny, což jsou znaky odpovídající mužským genderovým rolím. Na druhou stranu, mužské hlavní postavy, Varin a Kelton, se snaží své role racionálních a nebojácných mužů hrát, jak nejlépe dokážou, ačkoliv v jejich snaze několikrát selžou. Jsou tedy v některých případech viděni, jak podléhávají svým emocím jako jsou strach nebo smutek, a zároveň jak se v mnoha případech podřizují právě ženským hrdinkám, což je pro patriarchálního muže nepřijatelné. Stejně tak některé vedlejší mužské postavy jsou vyobrazeny tak, že nekorrespondují se svými patriarchálními rolemi, jako například Lyker, který je popsán jako velmi emotivní umělec. Zároveň některé ženské vedlejší postavy nepodléhají stereotypním rolím, naopak jsou s nimi v rozporu, jako například postavy královen z *Čtyři mrtvé královny*. Pro větší dynamičnost se ale najdou v knihách tací, kteří naopak svou patriarchální roli splňují, jako pan Welk nebo Henry, ti jsou ale většinou zobrazeni jako záporné postavy. Na základě těchto tvrzení lze říci, že ve všech třech knihách nejsou stereotypní genderové role akceptovány, naopak jsou odmítány, čímž ukazují svým mladým čtenářům, že i ženy mohou být dominantní a rozumné, stejně jako muži mohou být citliví.

Druhá část analýzy poskytuje vhled do problematiky patriarchátu a jeho vlivu na společnosti zobrazené ve zvolených knihách pro náctileté čtenáře. Jako první je v tomto ohledu analyzována kniha *Prokletý rok*, která je dystopickým románem o silně patriarchální společnosti. Závěrem analýzy je, že autorka v knize poukazuje na nátlak na ženy a dívky, že manželství a mateřství by mělo být jejich hlavním cílem, jinak budou vnímány jako selhání. Kromě několika momentů, kdy si čtenář uvědomí, jak jsou ženy utiskovány a muži také limitovány, autorka také vyobrazila sílu žen, když spojí své síly a tím oslabí vliv patriarchátu. Celkově je v knize zaujímán negativní postoj k patriarchálním způsobům, což je zobrazené nejen skrze názory hlavní hrdinky Tierney, ale také skrze ostatní postavy, kterým se například postupně přistup k nastavení jejich společnosti mění, nebo začínají dávat svůj postoj více najevo.

Další část analýzy je pak věnována obecně problémům, které přispívají k nerovnému jednání mezi muži a ženami, jako jsou některé stereotypní předpoklady nebo objektivizace. Tyto problémy byly zkoumány ve všech třech knihách se záměrem zjistit, jak je k nim přistupováno, zda jsou považovány za znepokojivé či přehlédnutelné. Vzhledem k tomu, že tyto problémy vystihují mentalitu patriarchální společnosti a posilují nerovnost mezi muži a ženami



i stereotypní genderové role, přístup k těmto problémům zároveň poukazuje na postoj k patriarchální společnosti jako takové, který je v knize zaujímán.

Jako první byly zkoumány stereotypní předsudky vůči ženám, jako například předpoklad, že žena nemůže být úspěšná, protože je schopná, ale pro zneužití svého těla ve svůj prospěch. Dalším stereotypem je pak názor, že pouze muži mohou být zachránci, zatímco ženy jsou jen bezbranná stvoření, která záchranu potřebují, a posledním je pak stereotypní tendence komentovat emotivní chvíli muže nebo chlapce komentáři typu ‚vzmuž se‘. Všechny tyto stereotypy byly v knihách prolomeny, ať už negativními reakcemi na tyto stereotypní předsudky, anebo prokázáním opaku, jako v případech, kdy v knihách dívky byly zachránkyněmi. Dalším zkoumaným problémem pak byla sexuální objektivizace žen, která přispívá k vnímání žen jako submisivních hraček určených pro mužské uspokojení. Ve vybraných knihách bylo několik momentů poukazujících na tuto problematiku, která na základě analýzy byla vyobrazena negativně, poukazující na destruktivní vliv tohoto přístupu k ženám, a to především skrze popsání pocitů postavy zažívající objektivizaci. S tím spojený je i nátlak na ženy korespondovat s ideálem krásy. Tato problematika je například adresována v knize *Čtyři mrtvé královny*, kde jsou dívky zesměšňovány, když ideálu krásy neodpovídají a je zde poukázáno na negativní dopady tohoto porovnávání s ideálem krásy. Problematický je ovšem i postoj patriarchátu k homosexualitě, který byl také v rámci analýzy knih zkoumán. V knize *Prokletý rok* je dívka jménem Getrude utiskována nejen za to, že je dívka, ale také za to, že je homosexuálka a je zde poukázáno na uzavřenost a osamělost, kterou tento přístup u Getrude způsobuje. Naopak v knize *Čtyři mrtvé královny* je zobrazen přístup tolerantní a akceptující, homosexualita je vnímána stejně jako heterosexualita, což může být způsobeno tím, že je kniha o matriarchální společnosti namísto patriarchální. Nicméně, ačkoliv je kniha o matriarchální společnosti, jako jediná obsahuje patriarchální jazyk, konkrétně anglické univerzální zájmeno ‚he‘ pro obě pohlaví. Přesto lze ale tvrdit, na základě výše uvedených výsledků, že knihy *Sucho*, *Prokletý rok* i *Čtyři mrtvé královny* neposilují patriarchální systém, naopak poukazují na jeho destruktivní charakter.

Poslední část analýzy byla věnována porovnání patriarchálních a matriarchálních systémů, jejímž podkladem bylo dílo *Čtyři mrtvé královny* a jeho pojetí matriarchátu, s cílem zjistit, zda je zde vyřešena problematika nerovnosti mezi oběma pohlavími. Analýza ale ukázala, že oba systémy utiskují jedno nebo druhé pohlaví, jde pouze o otočení rolí a pozic mužů a žen ve společnosti. Přestože tyto dva systémy zastávají jiný postoj například

k homosexualitě, matriarchát, tak jak je v knize zobrazen, není ideální cestou k dosažení rovnosti.

Ve shrnutí, ani jedna z vybraných knih nepracuje se stereotypními genderovými rolemi jako s dogmatickým vzorcem, naopak jsou tyto role zpochybňovány a odmítány. Lze tak usuzovat na základě analýzy, která odhalila ženské postavy jako dominantní, inteligentní a schopné slečny a zároveň některé mužské postavy jako citlivé a starostlivé osoby. Zároveň tato díla poukazují na negativní dopady některých problematických elementů patriarchátu, jako je například objektivizace, které ovlivňují především ženy, a také na stereotypy, které posilují nepříznivou pozici žen v patriarchální společnosti. Na základě tohoto negativního postoje k uvedeným problematikám, lze shrnout, že zvolené knihy подрývají patriarchální systém. Pro zodpovězení poslední podotázky této diplomové práce, matriarchální systém, tak jak byl zobrazen v knize *Čtyři mrtvé královny*, neposkytuje akceptovatelnou cestu k rovnosti mezi oběma pohlavími, vzhledem k obrácené opresi. Celkově knihy *Sucho*, *Čtyři mrtvé královny* a *Prokletý rok* ukazují, že i knihy pro mládež z žánru sci-fi, fantasy a dystopie nabízí vhled do problematiky stereotypních genderových rolí a patriarchálních principů, čímž se nabízí pro feministickou literární kritiku.

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