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Recognition, Subject Formation, and Agency: Marginalization and Agency in Feminist Dystopian Narratives

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RECOGNITION, SUBJECT FORMATION, AND AGENCY: MARGINALIZATION
AND AGENCY IN FEMINIST DYSTOPIAN NARRATIVES

By

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Though more frequently discussed in regard to freedom and intersubjectivity, subject formation and recognition have significant potential in helping us understand the structures of power, domination, and resistance in our lived experiences. Through the portrayal of recognition within literature - particularly within feminist dystopian literature - we can see significant examples of not only recognition experiences between characters, but also the acknowledgement of or resistance against unjust and oppressive power structures through recognition. To explore this phenomena, I begin by assessing the experience of empathy – or moral imagination, according to Martha Nussbaum – in reading and in writing, along with the argument surrounding the responsibility of readers and authors. I then draw attention to the presence of moral imagination within feminist dystopia, due to the genre's inherent magnification of social issues. Following discussions of moral imagination and responsibility, the primary chapters address three varying forms of recognition within feminist dystopian literature: individual, institutional, and self recognition. Though each form expands from the same platform of recognition – from philosophers such as G.W.F Hegel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and others – they not only manifest slightly differently as characters are portrayed as experiencing recognition, but the portrayals also have varying implications in what the characters – and readers – can take away from the portrayals, as well. Specifically, the implications center primarily around the more in-depth understanding of marginalization, oppression, and power that can be gained from experiencing both corrupted and uncorrupted recognition. The implications of understanding and engaging agency through recognition experiences can be seen through feminist dystopian characters engaging and utilizing their agency in a variety of ways to address, challenge, and/or dismantle the oppressive structures around them. Using Nussbaum's conception of moral imagination as a framework, these implications can lead readers to empathize with these characters and gain similar recognitive and agential experiences in their own lives as well.

Introduction

The description of various distinct experiences of subject formation and the establishment of intersubjective agencies and identities remain significant research concerns within phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology has, since the turn of the 20th century, been concerned with identifying the phenomenal structures underlying and making possible the experiences through which one's subject, agency, and sense of self are enacted and realized by themselves and others. Consequently, this research has incredible potential to help us understand and engage with the world around us as we can more effectively identify the forces and systems transforming our agency both for better and for worse. To this end, I consider the implications of marginalization and oppression on subject formation – namely that subject formation is unfulfilled or even impossible in the context of oppression. I will be focusing on subject formation as it relates most distinctly to particular notions of power and recognition. Recognition can be defined as subject formation that reflects an acknowledgement of another subject in the world, which – paradoxically – allows you to acknowledge yourself as a subject. To put it more plainly, by "recognizing" another person in the world as being a subject (i.e. acknowledging them as an acting, agentive being) we come to see our own subjectivity as an acting, agentive being in the world as we perceive others as objects and are perceived as objects simultaneously, as well. As philosopher Judith Butler writes,

> One is compelled and comported outside oneself; one finds that the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself, exterior to oneself, by virtue of a convention or a norm that one did not make, in which one cannot discern oneself as an author or an agent of one's own making.[1]

Butler here not only acknowledges the fundamentally intersubjective nature of subject formation, but also the ways in which we are called upon or encouraged to take part in the experience of recognition, an idea that we'll discuss in more depth in chapter one, "Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency." For example, Butler points to the phenomena of subject formation occurring *outside* of the individual as an outside force that acts upon the subject, rather than the subject enacting subjectivity entirely "from within." This notion of recognition as intersubjective is seen in the work of Jean Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser, Frantz Fanon, and G.W.F. Hegel, to name a few, has significant implications on one's intersubjective connection with others, engagement with structures of power, and acknowledgement of socialized identities, as experienced through three forms of recognition: individual, institutional, and self.

In order to contextualize my argument, I focus chapter one, titled "Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency," on defining and situating theorizations of recognition throughout phenomenology and philosophy, such as those of G.W.F Hegel and Jean Paul Sartre specifically, whose work

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[1] Judith Butler, *Giving An Account of Oneself*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 28.

I use as the foundations for my understanding of recognition and subject formation. Additionally, alongside recognition, I consider structures and dynamics of power via Michel Foucault and Judith Butler as they affect and are affected by the experience of subject formation. Along with walking through various theorizations of recognition, I consider experiencing a "lack" of recognition (though I challenge the use of "lack" and instead opt for "corrupted/uncorrupted" terminology) and its effects on an individual's subjectivity and subject experience, as both are hindered not only within this lack but most specifically when this lack is caused by oppression and marginalization. This serves as a catalyst for understanding recognition as affected by oppression and thus allowing us to engage with oppression and agency in ways more conducive to the possibility of transforming oppressive contexts. With this potential for change, I reference Kelly Oliver's concept of "witnessing" alongside recognition as it can strengthen both our understanding of marginalization and oppression along with our intersubjective connections with others, especially as we experience recognition across individual, institutional, and self recognition. I close out the first half of chapter one with brief descriptions of these three forms of recognition as the structure for the remainder of this project.

I conclude chapter one by considering the potentially fraught experience of engaging with philosophical concepts, opting instead to address examples of various forms of recognition through literature, as I argue that fiction offers us the opportunity to conceptualize and internalize experiences through reading that may be more difficult to engage with in other formats, especially in a traditional philosophical format which remains abstract. Rather than looking at fiction as a broad category for such examples of recognition experiences, I focus on feminist dystopia, arguing that the genre itself is intentionally focused on social commentary and presents many interesting examples of recognition experiences between characters that we as readers can not only relate to, but engage with, in order to understand oppression and the potential of agency to address oppression. More specifically, I focus on examples from Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* series, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Leni Zumas' *Red Clocks*, and Scot Westerfeld's *Uglies* series. Each of these texts above not only represent the feminist dystopian genre through their overt social commentary on intersecting issues of gender, race, and class alongside political surveillance, visibility and hypervisibility, and lack of bodily and social autonomy. Additionally, I utilize these particular texts due to their portrayal of intersubjective connection among characters both in their recognition experiences and in their transgressing oppressions.

Chapter two, "Intersubjectivity through Individual Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature," focuses on the experience of individual recognition, which I define as recognition experienced between two individuals. This form is the most identifiable as it is the format represented throughout the work of Hegel and Sartre, though both cite the experience as occurring differently between individuals. That is, while Sartre's conception does include an other in the experience, Hegel's mutual recognition requires an other to not only be involved, but for both participants to engage in the experience together in order for the experience to be "successful" (though as I discuss in chapter one,

I take issue with the idea of it either being successful or failing). Further, I consider the intersubjective nature of individual recognition as it not only is affected by power and marginalization (thus potentially hindering connection with others), but also as it showcases the potential connection that can be established when recognition is *uncorrupted*. Walking through various textual examples from feminist dystopian literature, I discuss moments of both corrupted and uncorrupted recognition that exemplify the way in which oppression in the narrative contexts impacts characters' recognition experiences with examples of uncorrupted experiences not only allowing characters to engage with oppression but also to strengthen their connections with one another.

Similar to chapter two, we also see a focus on intersubjective connection alongside engaging with institutional and systemic power in chapter three, "Recognition With and Within Institutions and Systemic Power in Feminist Dystopian Contexts." I begin this chapter by defining institutional recognition as it is not a theorized concept within recognition scholarship. Despite concerns of institutions being described as living beings, I argue that given that institutions are both collectivities and, through systemic oppression, have the ability to act for or against individuals and groups, we can identify institutions as collectives with which recognition can occur. I discuss textual examples that not only portray characters engaging with the pervasiveness of institutional power but identifying that power through interactions with fellow characters that had been separated from them either physically through literal separation of cities/states or socially through class divides and presumed surveillance. In these experiences we see recognition occurring through characters' engagement with institutional power in understanding the institution as primarily perpetuating oppression, rather than other characters doing so. Additionally, bridging the gap between characters, such institutional recognition also points to the significance of intersubjective connection through witnessing the other as both crucial to recognition and to addressing or transgressing systemic oppression.

In chapter four, "Formation and Recognition of Self in Normatively Socialized Contexts in Feminist Dystopia," I consider the third and final form of recognition that, bringing together individual and institutional recognition, presents a recognition of self through both intersubjective engagement with others and with socialized norms and expectations. I first define self recognition as the establishment or engagement with one's sense of self and sense of agency as one not only gains self understanding through self recognition, but also is able to address their ability to act in the world, potentially transgressing the oppressions that keep their self recognition experiences corrupted. Looking to feminist dystopian literature, I first consider textual examples that showcase character's self understanding as they engage with socialized norms and oppressions affecting them, identifying their problematic nature and ultimately attempting to resist their various oppressions. This resistance is exemplified through both peaceful attempts to change one's own and others' mindsets or through the active rejection of social expectations. Further, I look at the opposite experience of having one's self recognition entirely rejected through oppression. In this all encompassing refusal of self recognition, we see the significance of this subject formation as it allows space for broader transgressions of marginalization.

Finally, I conclude this project by considering implications of understanding recognition as not only hindered by oppression, but the agency that can be engaged with through the experience of uncorrupted individual, institutional, and self recognition experiences. In this, I argue that through the experience of reading and immersing oneself in the text, readers have the potential to internalize the narratives that they are engaging with to identify such oppressions. This internalization stems from the experience of moral imagination that allows readers to immerse themselves in the narratives in the first place, while also having their moral imagination enriched through the text and experience of reading, as well. Through the moral imagination and portrayals of recognition experiences, I argue that readers can begin to identify not only oppressive structures and norms, but also recognition experiences in their own lives, as well. Readers being able to identify such structures and experiences allows for the possibility that they can not only better understand oppressive power structures and their pervasiveness (potentially to transgress and resist them), but also can more thoughtfully engage with others in their subjectivity and intersubjectivity (hopefully leading to stronger community and intersubjective connections).

1 Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency

1.1 Experiencing Recognition

In order to define and contextualize recognition, we can first consider the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, who theorizes recognition through the "look"[2] that we experience when we encounter another person in the world. In this encounter, when we gaze upon another, we see them as an object for our engagement with the world as their presence defines our understanding of the space we are encountering. As Sartre writes, during this encounter,

> Everything is in place; everything still exists for me; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object. The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting.[3]

This "decentralization" shifts the individual's perspective to their world as wider than their own person, noting the space as similarly "belonging to" or "being used by" an other, as well, thus shifting the self-focused lens and identifying intersubjective existence. With this objectification, however, comes an understanding and realization that they, as an acting subject, are simultaneously experiencing me as an object. Sartre describes this experience, explaining: "It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject. For just as the Other is a probable object for me-as-subject, so I can discover myself in the process of becoming a probable object for only a certain subject."[4] In other words, acknowledging the possibility of the other encountering me as an object necessitates their position as a subject, just as we encounter the other as an object while we exist as a subject simultaneously. Additionally, Sartre's use of both "being-as-object" and "being-as-subject" are crucial here as they do not simply indicate these experiences as singular moments in time that we experience in isolation, but rather that his "look" is a phenomenon that we experience consistently. He continues,

> In a word, my apprehension of the Other in the world as probably being a man refers to my permanent possibility of *being-seen-by-him*; that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. 'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the truth of 'seeing-the-other.[5]

It is important to point to the phrase "permanent possibility" here, as it further denotes that this "look" is a state of being that we can and will experience (hence the use of

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[2] Jean Paul Sartre, "The Look," in *Being and Nothingness: The Principle text of Modern Existentialism*, 252-302.

[3] Sartre, *Being*, 255.

[4] Sartre, *Being*, 256-257.

[5] Sartre, *Being*, 257. Emphasis added.

"permanent") at any given time, both in our consistent encounters with others and our internalization of the other through socialized norms. Thus, through Sartre's "look" we not only encounter and understand another person's consciousness and subjectivity as an acting being in the world, but we also see their position as an object for our own understanding of our consciousness. With that, we then recognize our own place as objects – or at least the possibility of being objects – for them as well, thus identifying our subjectivity to ourselves. In this conception, Sartre draws attention to the intersubjectivity and thus interconnected nature of subjectivity, along with the complexities of our own self-awareness, or as Sartre says "self-reflective" consciousness.

While Sartre's "look" seems to be possible between any two people encountering one another regardless of social power or authority between them – particularly as they are simply encountered and engaged with in order to understand each other's space in the world – some philosophers address subject formation as being inherently connected to and affected by power dynamics and structures. We can see this most prominently in the work of Louis Althusser on ideology and "interpellation," in which a person is "hailed upon" and feels compelled to respond. Althusser first considers "ideological recognition," in which we exist within ideology and have material rituals and actions (that is, socialized norms) based in that ideology that shows us to be "always already subjects" that are "indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects."[6] This example provides a view of subject formation that acknowledges our existence within a set of systems that affect and potentially determine our being in the world – a notion similar to that later taken up by Judith Butler in understanding our existence as being inherently connected to the systems into which we are born. Moving to interpellation within contexts of authority and power, Althusser describes interpellation as an experience of a police officer calling out, "hey, you there!" In regards to this experience, he states, "By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else)."[7] Althusser uses this example to showcase the pervasive nature of ideology as it hails and creates subjects through the presence of ideological maneuvers that are identifiable and relatable to the individual. Further in the context of interpellation, even if we have no reason to think that a police officer would be calling on us, we feel compelled to turn and respond, not only because of the ideological assumptions around being called upon, but also because of the officer's authority. Discussing Althusser and interpellation, Judith Butler[8] addresses this authority through our being compelled to respond to the law in being called upon, stating that "the call itself is also figured as a demand to align oneself with the law, a turning around (to face the law, to find a face for the law?), and an entrance into the language of self-ascription – 'Here I am' – through the appropriation of guilt."[9] In this way, Butler

[6] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 117.
[7] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," 118. Emphasis in original.
[8] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[9] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 107.

addresses the reasoning behind our feeling compelled to respond, as we are not just acknowledging the voice calling out, but also can recognize the authority of the law in that voice, an authority that we feel compelled to obey and which we have internalized as part of our identity. Further, addressing the internalized relation to and experience with power, Butler acknowledges this complicity with the law as inherent to subjectivity, stating

> . . . prior to any possibility of a critical understanding of the law is an openness or vulnerability to the law, exemplified in the turn toward the law, in the anticipation of culling an identity through identifying with the one who has broken the law . . . The possibility of a critical view of the law is thus limited by what might be understood as a prior desire for the law, a passionate complicity with the law, without which no subject can exist.[10]

This means, then, that we are not simply aware of the law as a source of authority, but exist *within* the law's power to the point of opening ourselves to its authority as we cannot exist outside of it. She further acknowledges these power dynamics as being inherent to subjectivity and subject formation, specifically that subjects are formed not by power being forced upon them, but by an internalization of this authority. According to Butler, "This turning toward the voice of the law is a sign of a certain desire to be beheld by and perhaps also to behold the face of authority . . . that permits the misrecognition without which the sociality of the subject cannot be achieved."[11] In other words, Butler points to not just being compelled to turn toward authority, but also the desire to be seen by or reflected in authority, as identification and subjectivation are inherent parts of being compelled by authority - though a failed or corrupted recognition, as it is ultimately an experience of subordination. Addressing this subordination, Butler then continues by stating that

> This account appears to imply that social existence, existence as a subject, can be purchased only through a guilty embrace of the law, where guilt guarantees the intervention of the law and, hence, the continuation of the subject's existence. If the subject can only assure his/her existence in terms of the law, and the law requires subjection for subjectivation, then, perversely, one may (always already) yield to the law in order to continue to assure one's own existence.

Through this section, Butler ultimately argues that there is no subject formation without subjection in the call from authority. Just as we cannot exist outside of power and authority that are internalized within us and our existence, we cannot experience a subject formation that exists outside of the law and the guilt of the law potentially having been broken. This connection to authority is, of course, significant in our understanding of oppression and marginalization, as power and authority, through this theorization,

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[10] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 108.
[11] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 112.

become so foundational to our experience in the world that our acting existence is inherently mitigated and determined by the power structures within which we live.

This connection to power and authority can also be seen, of course, through Michel Foucault's work on power and discipline, as he acknowledges subject formation as occurring through and within the power structures one is born into. Central to Foucault's notion of power, is his conception of "panopticism,"[12] in which individuals are subjected to power's gaze and forced to self regulate in order to avoid punishment or ostracization.[13] Within panopticism, Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" – a prison in which all inmates are in a position to assume that they are being observed through the presence of a tower in the center of the structure while simultaneously being entirely separated from other inmates. Due to the placement of the tower the prisoners are assumed to be under constant surveillance, even though no guard is present. According to Foucault, "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen."[14] In this theorization, Foucault recognizes that this presumed constant subjection to the gaze creates a problematic, unbalanced power dynamic, in which those subject to the gaze are inherently subordinated and stripped of agency. Further, this surveillance is not simply a disciplinary action, but serves to make the subjects discipline themselves through the threat of potential punishment. Foucault states,

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the *principle of his own subjection*.[15]

In this way, not only is the subject stripped of his agency through being surveilled, he is also stripped of agency in disciplining his own actions to avoid an imagined punishment. In terms of subjectivity and subject formation, Foucault's conception of panopticism shows an individual whose subjectivity is never fully realized and is entirely dependent on the power and authority potentially observing it. In terms of power and marginalization, Foucault's notions showcase the hindrance of subject formation both in being surveilled and in the lack of intersubjective connection with others. Foucault uses the panopticon as a metaphor for the structure of power as it exists outside of sovereign power. Within panopticism, power is no longer identified and centralized within a sovereign monarch, but rather is dispersed through ideological socialization of norms. With this, power exists not as something outside of ourselves, but as Butler identifies,

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[12] Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Anthology*, edited by Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek, (John Wiley & Sons), 654-667.
[13] Foucault, "Panopticism," 654.
[14] Foucault, "Panopticism," 657.
[15] Foucault, "Panopticism," 657-658. Emphasis added.

exists in and through our existence both as we internalize it and as it constitutes and is perpetuated by our subjectivity.

From here, we can look to another prominent conceptualization of recognition, that of G.W.F. Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*[16] and, most notably, his "master/slave dialectic" and mutual recognition. Similarly to Sartre's "look," Hegel acknowledges the experience of recognition as such: "self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself.* This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self."[17] In this brief yet dense definition, Hegel is essentially saying that recognition begins with an acknowledgement of one's engagement with another as an object and then acknowledging one's presence as an object for the other. In these acknowledgements, the individual sees (recognizes) their own subjectivity in their seeing (recognizing) the other's subjectivity. However, unlike Sartre's "look" that can be a one-sided experience – one-sided in the sense that both parties involved don't have to recognize the other simultaneously, rather there just needs to be an acknowledgement of a possibility for it to occur – Hegel's recognition is one that cannot occur with just one of the persons involved; both must be able to recognize the other. This simultaneous recognition is seen in J.G. Fichte's discussions of recognition, as well. As Michael Quante states in reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, connecting Hegel and Fichte,

> I want to suggest understanding Hegel's core thesis in such a way that a self-consciousness A is constituted when it is firstly – actually, contemporaneously – recognized by a self-consciousness B. Furthermore, self-consciousness A needs the recognition of self-consciousness as a trigger, to say it with Fichte: an impulse or a request, in order to be able to constitute itself as self-consciousness[18]

In other words, one cannot experience recognition without an other compelling or "triggering" them to do so. While of course connected and similar to Althusser's interpellation discussed previously, Fichte's notion here does not address authority as part of the call, but rather assumes that the call or trigger can come from any other "self-consciousness." Additionally, Fichte's idea initially seems to be in contrast with other forms of recognition, such as Sartre's "look" – particularly in the look's necessary other who acts upon them, as the look implies a one-sided experience of even just realizing that an other *could* objectify you in the way you objectify them. However, we could argue that being compelled as Hegel and Fichte claim is similar to Sartre's look in the way that encountering an other in the world acts as its own trigger. To clarify, though Sartre's

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[16] G.W.F. Hegel, "Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Translated by A.V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111-118.

[17] Hegel, "Independence," 111. Emphasis in original.

[18] Michael Quante, "'The Pure Notion of Recognition': Reflections on the Grammar of the Relation of Recognition in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," in *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 101.

subject formation doesn't necessarily necessitate the mutuality of recognition between two individuals, it does still imply a "call" to recognition in encountering an other, as this encounter leads to the objectification of the other and thus the understanding of one's own potential objectification as well. With consideration of various theorizations of recognition in mind, we can address the recognition experience when power dynamics are unbalanced and how this unbalance impacts subjectivity.

1.2 "Lacking" Recognition or Experiencing "Corrupted" Recognition

Returning to Hegel, his master/slave dialectic describes the experience between "the lord and the bondsman," or the master and the slave, and the lack of recognition between them – lack of recognition, of course, being a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of each other's subjectivity. According to Hegel,

> The lord achieves his recognition through another consciousness; for in them, that other consciousness is expressly something unessential . . . Here, therefore, is present this moment of recognition, viz. that the other consciousness sets aside its own being-for-self, and in so doing itself does what the first does to it. Similarly, the other moment too is present, that this action of the second is the first's own action; for what the bondsman does is really the action of the lord . . . Thus [the lord] is the pure, essential action in this relationship, while the action of the bondsman is impure and unessential. But for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that what the lord does to the other he also does to himself, and what the bondsman does to himself he should also do to the other. The outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal.[19]

Essentially, Hegel is saying that the master objectifies the slave without seeing their own potential place as an object for the slave and places the slave in a subordinate position. Thus both are denied recognition as neither acknowledge their place or position for the other. According to Ludwig Siep, despite the intention of the experience of recognition being to "confirm the significance" of the self to oneself while also "demonstrating this to someone else, who is merely there to confirm the first individual's freedom,"[20] the dynamics between the master and the slave problematizes this process. This subordination creates an unequal power dynamic and paradoxically refuses the possibility of the objectified slave to recognize the master's subjectivity either, as the slave is not in a subjectified position necessary to recognize the master. While the master objectifies the slave and the slave may be able to see the master's subjectivity, the slave is not placed in a position to see the master's *objectivity*. Thus, both remain unrecognized and devoid of a fully realized experience of subjectivity. Now, this lack of recognition due to subordination seems paradoxical considering Butler's notion that subjection is inherent to

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[19] Hegel, "Independence," 116.

[20] Ludwig Siep, "Recognition in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Contemporary Practical Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 110.

the process of subject formation. However, what's important to note is the mutuality of Hegel's recognition. Butler's (and Althusser's) subject formation in subjection does not necessarily require multiple individuals recognizing each other, but rather one individual experiencing a "call" from authority. So, the authority figure in Hegel's context (the master) *does not* offer a call to the subordinate (the slave), as the master only sees the slave as an object, not a subject to be called upon. In Hegel's master/slave dialectic, the slave is not called upon by the master as a potential subject, but rather is viewed as an object for the master. In this way, the slave's subordination doesn't function as a call *to* but a rejection *from* subject formation.

While the lack of recognition, particularly for the master, does not manifest in any physical repercussions, socially a lack of recognition can be incredibly harmful. Frederick Neuhouser explains this in regard to Rousseau's notions of recognition – particularly the idea that recognition allows one to have a "'sentiment of his own *existence*'"[21] – stating that

> The failure to find recognition from others does not, of course, threaten one's existence as a physical entity, and yet, as ordinary language acknowledges, a person who lacks standing in the eyes of others is, in some meaningful sense, a 'nobody' . . . to achieve recognition is to acquire a confirmed existence for others as a substantial, effect-producing subject.[22]

Though Rousseau's discussions of recognition center around recognition and the lack thereof as it affects one's social, legal, and personal standing, this "confirmation" of one's being and existence – along with the harmful effects of a lack of confirmation – is one that can help us see the significance of Hegel's mutual recognition and the implications of a lack of recognition, as well. Social, political, and legal standing are all crucial elements of marginalization, especially through the socialization of norms that dictate which identities "matter" and which don't, as those standings directly impact one's being recognized by other individuals and by institutions broadly.

Addressing concerns about the potential to "lack" recognition, Michael Monahan[23] theorizes the concept of "pure" and "corrupted" recognition, attempting to clarify Hegel's distinction between recognition and a lack thereof. Monahan distinguishes this difference between pure and corrupted recognition directly, stating, "In pure recognition . . . the agents '*recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another.' If one or both parties refuse to recognize the other, then recognition becomes *corrupted*."[24] Within his conception, we do not experience either recognition or a lack of recognition. Rather,

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[21] Frederick Neuhouser, "Rousseau and the Human Drive for Recognition (*Amour Propre*)," in *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).

[22] Neuhouser, "Rousseau and the Human Drive for Recognition," 24-25.

[23] Michael Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle: On a Liberatory Account of Hegelian Recognition," *Social Theory and Practice* 32, no. 3, (July 2006): 389-414.

[24] Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle," 399. Emphasis in original.

Monahan discusses this "lack" as a corrupted form of recognition, one that does not truly represent what recognition can or should be. In a corrupted recognition, according to Monahan, there exists a struggle between the recognizer and the recognizee that creates a fight for domination and subsequently for one party to be subordinated. What is significant about Monahan's notions here is that, while other conceptions of recognition state that agency is founded through recognition and that a lack of recognition implies a lack of agency, Monahan's conceptualization allows all parties to maintain agency and subjectivity alongside a problematic recognition experience, a notion that is important when considering the implications of recognition. Nonetheless, the use of "pure" and "corrupted" certainly invites questions and criticisms, as both imply a perfected or even a prior version of recognition on which one is missing out. This is problematic because it implies that the recognition experience is in some ways finite and experienced linearly, rather than as a fluid and continuous process. Additionally, the concept of "purity" is inherently problematic in general as the implied perfection of purity ignores the complexities of recognition as it adapts from context to context. For these reasons, I will not be using the term "pure" to consider recognition experiences moving forward, though I will use "corrupted" and "uncorrupted." Though these still can imply a perfected recognition experience, I use them with the connection between the fight for domination and corrupted power that can negatively impact the recognition process and the idea that there is an ideal, though not necessarily perfect, recognition experience that we can attempt to achieve.

Moving away from "lacking" or experiencing corrupted recognition, in order to achieve mutual recognition, these problematic power dynamics must shift to allow space for the slave to be recognized. Namely, Hegel addresses the ways in which the slave can gain recognition through his work. In this discussion, the slave's work is taken and claimed by the master, leaving the slave with no representation of what he has accomplished. According to Hegel, when the slave begins to reclaim his work as his own accomplishment, his identification in his work can create space for the master to recognize him and his acting subjectivity. Hegel states,

> Through work . . . the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is . . . Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its *form* and something *permanent*, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence . . . It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence.[25]

In other words, for Hegel, work and the object provides the bondsman (slave) with a sense of his own self as a subject. Butler also addresses Hegel's use of work through the

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[25] Hegel, "Independence," 118. Emphasis in original.

sense of a "signature" that one places on the objects that they produce, rather than the work they do more broadly. Particularly she states that the bondsman cannot read his own signature as the object, and thus the signature "has been written over by the lord."[26] She continues by stating that the "[bondsman] recognizes himself in the very forfeiture of the signature, in the *threat* to autonomy that such an expropriation produces . . . This fear is a fear of a certain loss of control, a certain transience and expropriability produced by the activity of labor."[27] In Butler's conceptualization, the bondsman can still gain a sense of self recognition in their work even when mutual recognition has failed, but more specifically in the negation of their work by the lord, whereas in Hegel's notion, the bondsman gains recognition through identifying themselves in their work.

Now, when discussing the master/slave dialectic, especially in regards to reclaiming one's work and production in order to recognize subjectivity, it is crucial to acknowledge the use of the term "master/slave," as the terms become problematic when put in the context of colonialism and the enslavement of Black and African people. Debbie Evans addresses this problematic notion particularly in relation to the potential of finding freedom. She states,

> Hegel does not relate the life experience of masters and slaves (a relationship based on material oppression) with his discussion of the Master-Slave relation. The latter is analyzed as a privileged textual/literary motif that illustrates a stage in the development of autonomous self-consciousness. A slave is in essence a person who is neither autonomous nor free, nor who has any potential to be free . . . In Hegel's discussion of the Master-Slave relation, for example, he claims that the Slave finds freedom through work; an actual slave does not.[28]

Evans recognizes a potentially significant gap in Hegel's theorization here, one which distinctly overlooks the power dynamics within slavery.[29] Similarly, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon, though a supporter of Hegel's mutual recognition, criticizes the reference to slavery used in Hegel's theorization in more detail. Specifically, Fanon argues that the dynamic between the white "master" and the black slave was incredibly different than what Hegel seemed to be theorizing, as the black slave was not simply subordinated to the white "master," but was seen as a subhuman species.[30] In this way, gaining recognition within the context of slavery is much more complex than identifying oneself in one's work to show your agency in the world, but instead meant proving one's

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[26] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 39.

[27] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 39. Emphasis in original.

[28] Debbie Evans, "Sartre and Beauvoir on Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic and the Question of the 'Look,'" in *Beauvoir and Sartre: The Riddle of Influence*, ed. Jacob Golomb, and Christine Daigle, (Indiana University Press, 2009), 107.

[29] Within this criticism, I want to note that I am aware of the dynamics between "lord" and "bondsman" are, in British and Canadian contexts, very similar to "master" and "slave" in American contexts. Nonetheless, the potential loss of nuance between these terms are addressed frequently in scholarship around Hegel and the master/slave dialectic, and thus seemed significant to include here.

[30] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

actual humanity to the oppressive master. This criticism does not discount Hegel's ideas here, though. Actually, if anything it shows exactly how significant an impact that power has on recognition and subject formation, as recognition becomes notably more complex and more difficult to achieve as the weight of power behind the master gets stronger and more deeply socially ingrained.

While Fanon still agrees with the majority of Hegel's recognition, other scholars complicate his conceptualization as a whole, as can be seen in the work of Kelly Oliver, who presents a feminist critique of Hegel's recognition. In her criticism, Oliver acknowledges Hegel's work as inherently antagonistic and as perpetuating the hierarchies of domination that he purports recognition to address, stating,

> If recognition is conceived as being conferred on others by the dominant group, then it merely repeats the dynamic of hierarchies, privilege, and domination. Even if oppressed people are making demands for recognition, insofar as those who are dominant are empowered to confer it, we are thrown back into the hierarchy of domination. This is to say that if the operations of recognition require a recognizer and a recognizee, then we have done no more than replicate the master-slave, subject-other/object hierarchy in this new form.[31]

Essentially, Oliver acknowledges that the reliance placed on the "master" in Hegel's master/slave dynamic upholds the problematic hierarchies that recognition is said to thwart, as it both maintains a reliance on the master to engage with recognition and thus bestow subjectivity, while also perpetuating the victimization and othering of the subjugated. Also important to note here is that along with this criticism, Oliver also addresses the issue of recognition as being *seen*, stating that being seen is not enough to truly encounter what oppressions a person has faced. Similarly to Evans' thoughts above, Oliver states, "The victims of oppression, slavery, and torture are not merely seeking visibility and recognition, but they are also seeking witnesses to horrors beyond recognition."[32] In this way, Oliver begins to point away from recognition on its own to her own theorization of "witnessing" as a way to address the complexity and depth of violent oppressions.

Oliver describes witnessing as going beyond simply seeing the individual into engaging with (witnessing) their contexts and experiences that make up their oppressions. Witnessing describes a subject formation that rejects the exclusionary notions of traditional conceptions of recognition and instead theorizes a subject formation centered around acknowledging one's contextual experiences with various oppressions. She defines witnessing as both the "ability to respond to, and address, others,"[33] and, paraphrasing the Oxford English Dictionary, as "the action of bearing witness or giving testimony, the fact of being present and observing something; *witnessing* is from *witness*,

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[31] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 9.

[32] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 8.

[33] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 15.

defined as to bear witness, to testify, to give evidence, to be a spectator or auditor of something, to be present as an observer, to see with one's own eyes."[34] Additionally, she states that "Witnessing works to ameliorate the trauma particular to othered subjectivity . . . because witnessing is the essential dynamic of all subjectivity, its constitutive event and process."[35] In this way, Oliver presents witnessing as a space for a more engaged and thoughtful recognition experience. Though an argument could be made that Oliver seems to be misrepresenting recognition as simply "seeing" an other as a person, rather than recognizing their subjectivity/objectivity, her concept of witnessing has incredible potential alongside recognition in engaging with the contexts upholding and perpetuating oppression. Given that some theorizations of recognition, such as Sartre's look, don't necessitate an active engagement with an other's context and experiences, the nuances of objectification can easily be overlooked, just as with the use of master/slave being more complex in colonial contexts. Oliver's witnessing, however, offers a way to consider these contexts alongside recognition to more astutely address the impact that they have on recognition.

1.3 Implications of Corrupted and Uncorrupted Recognition as Subject Formation

1.3.1 Understanding Power and Marginalization through Recognition

Recognition, understood broadly, has significant implications for understanding marginalization and power. Through Hegel's mutual recognition and his master/slave dialectic, we can see the inherent connection between the power dynamics underpinning subjectivity and their effects on recognition. As discussed above, Hegel articulates recognition and agency as negatively impacted in contexts of complex and unbalanced power dynamics between the oppressed and their oppressor. Though less explicit, the effects of power can be seen in non-Hegelian theorizations of recognition, as well. For example, there is much to be said about the power dynamics in play during the encounter and objectification described in Sartre's "look." In Sartre's conception, the person being encountered is, in some ways, at the will of the person encountering and objectifying them, and is subject to their gaze even when they aren't gazing back. Additionally, according to scholars like Oliver, this "look" (along with Sartre's discussion of looking through a keyhole and being afraid of being caught) has been connected to criminality and guilt or "metaphors of criminality"[36] to be specific, thus making this form of recognition seem almost as an invasion of privacy. Essentially what these interpretations show us about power and marginalization is that in this particular theorization of recognition, the seer holds significant power over the seen and uses their subjectivity for their own good, thus inherently subordinating the seen to the seer.

The subordination of the seen is also present in Althusser's interpellation and Foucault's panopticism, as well. Within interpellation, the seen or "hailed" is at the mercy of the

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[34] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 16. Emphasis in original.

[35] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 7.

[36] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 173.

authority by which they were called and are defined by and through that authority. In this conception, subject formation is not only defined by power, but is inherently dependent on it for one to engage with their own subjectivity and agency. Similarly, within Foucault's "panopticism," the subject is also dependent on and at the will of perceived power as their actions are determined by the assumption of the panoptic gaze, in which he mitigates his own actions based on the threat of punishment in being observed. Additionally, the panoptic structure invades the social mechanisms of the seen to become commonplace enough to seem natural or unrecognizable. According to Foucault,

> The Panopticon's solution to this problem [of strengthening power] is that the productive increase of power can be assured only if, on the one hand, it can be exercised continuously in the very foundations of society, in the subtlest possible way, and if, on the other hand, it functions outside these sudden, violent, discontinuous forms that are bound up with the exercise of sovereignty.[37]

In this way, panopticism and panoptic power intentionally function opposite to sovereign power[38] distributing power as an abstract force inherent to the given social structure, with discipline enacted on individuals by the individuals themselves.[39] In terms of subjectivity, panopticism creates distinct divisions of power that not only take power and agency from the individual under its gaze, but also permeate society so subtly that its power is socialized and becomes difficult to identify.

Though not in support of the recognition described above, Oliver's criticisms still offer us a significant perspective on the ways in which we understand marginalization through subjectivity. The primary area of Oliver's work that aids in this understanding is in her discussion of the subject/other dynamic that inherently separates us, and thus also maintains hierarchies of oppression, even when recognition is supposed to dismantle them. She recognizes that power is not only held over the seen, but the objectification of the seen is also the root of oppression. She claims that the

> Dichotomy between subject and other or subject and object is itself a result of the pathology of oppression. To see oneself as a subject and to see other people as *the other* or *objects* not only alienates one from those around him or her but also enables the dehumanization inherent in oppression and domination.[40]

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[37] Foucault, "Panopticism," 660.

[38] Sovereign power is described as power enacted and solidified through threats and acts of violence, such as displays of public violence and punishment to discourage similar actions by others. Foucault places panopticism, and thus disciplinary power, as opposite to sovereign power and its outward displays of discipline. For discussion and definitions of sovereign power, see Sean P. Connors', "I Was Watching You, MockingJay" from *Politics of Panem: Challenging Genres*.

[39] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

[40] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 3. Emphasis added.

Oliver's conceptualization of objectification here allows us to see the depth of oppression and the ways in which areas of recognition can perpetuate domination. This insight provides a useful interpretation of the intersubjective nature of recognition that can change the way that our understanding of recognition functions, moving away from the reliance of those in power to achieve recognition towards an interconnection with others broadly. Further, we could consider a different perspective on the visuality described in regard to Sartre and Althusser above, acknowledging the potential that the seer has to *witness* the other in their positionality and perspective rather than inherently subordinating them. This allows space for a more intersubjective notion of recognition that, per Oliver's theorizations, rejects the narrative of domination surrounding subject formation. With these connections, we can see the ways in which recognition and power are inherently connected and the way that recognition is negatively impacted in oppressive contexts.

1.3.2 Agency to Create Change

Along with establishing a deeper understanding of marginalization and its effect on subjectivity, recognition also showcases the roots of agency and the possibility of using agency to change or affect power dynamics within oppression. As the discussions above show us, subject formation through recognition allows us to see our relationship to power along with showing us that subversion is possible through the agency that becomes accessible within subject formation. When one is recognized, they gain a sense of themselves as an acting subject, an acting subject who affects the world around them. In acknowledging their acting existence, they can more readily engage with their agency as an element of themselves that had previously been hindered or inaccessible in a subordinated context. Once agency becomes accessible, subjects are able to enact agency to acknowledge and or resist the powers oppressing them. In this way, it is not simply the experience of recognition that enacts one's agency, but instead it is the reclamation of power, whether through work, as Hegel writes, or through another means of subversion, that works to create a space for resistance.

This power, per Butler, is one that ultimately creates the subject, but also can then be wielded *by* the subject, thus solidifying one's agency within their subjectivity. She states, "Part of this difficulty, I suggest, is that the subject is itself a site of this ambivalence in which the subject emerges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition of possibility* for a radically conditioned form of agency."[41] This "ambivalence" of subject formation, in relation to power, is continually complicated by power's relation to agency and subject formation. As Butler further recognizes,

> One might say that the purposes of power are not always the purposes of agency. To the extent that the latter diverge from the former, agency is the assumption of a purpose unintended by power, one that could not have been derived logically or historically, that operates in a relation of contingency and reversal to the power

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[41] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 14-15. Emphasis in original.

that makes it possible, to which it nevertheless belongs. This is, as it were, the ambivalent scene of agency, constrained by no teleological necessity.[42]

Through these quotes, Butler's notion of subject formation, similarly to Foucault, is seen as occurring inherently through power and cannot be separated from the power establishing them. The difference, however, being that, while Foucault's notion of power and panopticism leaves little room for subversion,[43] Butler's notion of power denotes establishing subjectivity that can then be reclaimed by the subject, with the potential for undermining power as well.

This issue of power within lack of recognition is also seen in Monahan's conception of pure and corrupted recognition[44] discussed previously, as he presents an agentive subjectivity in which we still hold agency even with a corrupted recognition experience. With this, he then acknowledges the ideal experience of recognition that we seek is a "pure" form that can only occur in particular contexts. This pure recognition, Monahan acknowledges, allows a subject to exist as a subject *in their own right* while being aware of their objectivity in the world as well. He states,

> What recognition provides is a way to bridge this gap between universality and particularity *within* the consciousness of the agent, by allowing the agent to experience herself both as a situated, particular object enmeshed in a sophisticated system of other objects and forces, as well as being an independent consciousness capable of *acting* on this larger system of objects and forces in a way that generates new and different possibilities of further action and self-expression. In *pure* recognition, the agent is able to exist as a self-conscious agent for another self-conscious agent, which means that the agent exists *for* himself as both a subject and an object simultaneously.[45]

In other words, pure recognition represents a more agentive experience than a simplistic recognition/lack of recognition dichotomy, in which one doesn't need to engage in confrontation with an other to gain recognition. Additionally, Monahan acknowledges the presence of agency, as the subject is not devoid of agency when experiencing a corrupted recognition, but rather has their agency undermined. Further, while Monahan's theorizations of "pure" recognition here show us a more agentive subjectivity, what still needs to be discussed is what this agency can do. In other words, how can this agency, and one's understanding of it, actually support change? Namely, understanding agency, especially as it relates to domination and oppression, allows us to engage with oppressors

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[42] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 15.

[43] This lack of subversion/agency in Foucault's panopticism has been challenged in various places, most notably Sean P. Connors' "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay," in which he discusses the agency of characters in Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy, as they use various "tactics" to undermine the panoptic gaze of their authoritarian government.

[44] Though I already established my own use of "corrupted"/"uncorrupted," I use "pure" here to better convey Monahan's concepts and discussion.

[45] Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle," 398. Emphasis in original.

outside of the dynamic of domination as our agency is retained regardless of the "purity" of the recognition experience. Monahan refers to this as a move into an "active" state,

> [A subordinated or marginalized individual] thereby moves from a passive state in which they are acted upon by forces beyond their control to an active one in which they gradually assume more and more control over the world around them, challenging what was previously understood to be beyond question. Struggle for pure recognition, then, should be understood as a means of building and developing agency on the part of the oppressed and dominated.[46]

As Monahan says, recognition changes the experience of the individual not only to acknowledge their own agency, but to use that agency to resist their oppressions. So, in his conception, not only does agency help in our understanding of oppression, it also allows us space to challenge oppression and the norms that dictate it.

Along with the agency of the oppressed, Monahan also addresses the change that this "pure" (uncorrupted) recognition and its account for agency can have on the oppressor as well. He recognizes that the action taken by the oppressed thwarts the normalization of the oppressors. He states,

> The ultimate function of struggle is to throw in the face of the oppressors the reality of the status of the oppressed as fully human agents. To be sure, many of the oppressors will resist this reality, by attempting to ignore it, or by explaining it away, or by attempting to crush those who resist their understanding of the world they inhabit. The point of the struggle is to make these efforts to evade the realization of the humanity of the oppressed as difficult as possible.[47]

In other words, through recognition, the subordinated not only challenge the normative social structures set up by the oppressor, but they also effectively stifle the process of normalization and assimilation that perpetuates the oppression itself.

Further, though Oliver only addresses agency specifically very briefly in her theorization of witnessing, she does present a notion of subject formation that has significant potential in creating change. Oliver recognizes the potential to establish agency through witnessing by stating, "Through the process of bearing witness to oppression and subordination, those othered can begin to repair damaged subjectivity by taking up a position as speaking subjects." Within her discussion of witnessing, she argues the significance of witnessing through a "loving-eye," as she defines love as "the affirmation of our relationship to the world and other people."[48] This witnessing through a loving eye is then a direct solution to the domination of recognition. Along with affirmation, Oliver acknowledges the space for interconnection as well, stating,

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[46] Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle," 410.
[47] Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle," 410.
[48] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 221.

> If we reconceive of recognition from a notion of vision that emphasizes the fullness of space and the connections – interdependence even – between the visible world and vision, between the seer and the seen, then we begin to move away from the Hegelian struggle for recognition and toward an acknowledgement of otherness. Starting from this alternative notion of vision, otherness or others are not forever cut off from subjects or seers, threatening alienation and annihilation. Rather, the gaps or spaces between us open up the very possibility of communication and communion. Vision itself becomes a process, a becoming, rather than the sovereign of recognition.[49]

In this theorization, Oliver acknowledges the great potential that witnessing has not simply on individual subject formation, but on the ways in which our subject formation is connected to that of those around us and the ways that witnessing can develop or strengthen our intersubjective connections as we bridge the gap between self and other. As she states in her conclusion, "Only by witnessing the process of witnessing itself, the unseen in vision, the unsaid in language, can we begin to reconstruct our relationships by imagining ourselves together."[50] So, witnessing posits a recognition that occurs without a power struggle between the individuals, but instead with agency and mutual understanding established for and between the parties. It is in these ways that we see not only a distinct connection between recognition and agency, but significant implications on the *potential* of agency when recognition remains uncorrupted.

1.4 Conclusion

Engaging with the concepts of recognition and subject formation and their connections to power, othering, and subjection allows us to identify the effect that oppression has on subjectivity and identity, particularly as recognition can become either corrupted or uncorrupted across the three forms – individual, institutional, and self recognition – within a given intersubjective, oppressive context. Through these conceptualizations of recognition and subject formation, we can work to establish a much deeper understanding of marginalization and oppression, one that in some ways goes beyond the experiences of those oppressions, to the underlying structures and frameworks that create and sustain them. In understanding subject formation as it affects and is affected by power, we garner a new perspective through which to engage with activism and social change, one that allows us access to our own sense of agency. This agency in subject formation is, of course, one we can then use to enact change in the world, as well, thus showcasing the significance of understanding and acknowledging the philosophical foundations of subjectivity.

With the explanation of recognition broadly and its general implications having been outlined, in subsequent chapters I will consider specific "types" of recognition that function under the explanations discussed above, but that have important distinctions.

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[49] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 221.

[50] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 223.

These distinctions not only change the experience of recognition, they also affect one's agency within oppressive contexts. The "types" of recognition that will be discussed in subsequent chapters include recognition between individuals (theorized above), recognition with and within institutions or systems, and finally, recognition of self. Each of these, while still falling under the umbrella of recognition broadly, function in different ways and ultimately change the ways that a subject acts in the world, particularly when surviving through marginalization and inequality.

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to outline the ways in which subject formation is affected by marginalization and oppression, but it is necessary to ask: how can we see recognition experiences played out in more concrete ways? Though a useful foundation, the above discussions of power and subjectivity remain somewhat abstract. In order to better engage with these concepts, I believe that we can look to literature to help us identify examples of both corrupted and uncorrupted recognition experiences. Philosophical concepts, though important, remain somewhat inaccessible in their complexity and nuance. Literature (particularly fiction) however, in its narrative structure and immersing readers into the story of the text offers a format for philosophical concepts to be portrayed in relatable and identifiable ways. Along with being a more accessible writing format, according to Susan Anderson, using fiction to work through philosophical topics also "[shows] the relevance of philosophy to life"[51] and places the reader in the position to "actively participate in the reasoning process,"[52] making them "more likely to take [the] thesis to heart"[53] as they react to and interpret the narrative as they read. With Anderson's take, Martha Nussbaum also discusses philosophy in literature, particularly focusing on moral philosophy, identifying literature as being inherently moral. While Nussbaum's discussion focuses on moral imagination and the experience of engaging with moral philosophy in literature as a reader (a concept that I will outline further in the conclusion chapter) she also acknowledges that the "adventure" of engaging with a text that "calls upon and also develops our ability to confront mystery with the cognitive engagement of both thought and feeling."[54] She continues, stating, "to work through these sentences and these chapters is to become involved in an activity of exploration and unraveling that uses abilities, especially abilities of emotion and imagination, rarely tapped by philosophical texts."[55] So, per Anderson and Nussbaum, fiction allows readers to engage with philosophical concepts more astutely, not only because the narratives can be more accessible than traditional philosophical writing, but also because of the way that a reader is positioned to interpret and assess the narrative as they read. Fiction being a wide-reaching genre of literature, I will focus my discussions of recognition and subject formation within a particular genre, feminist dystopia, that I believe most distinctly portrays recognition experiences and the effects that marginalization can have on

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[51] Susan Anderson, "Philosophy and Fiction," *Metaphilosophy* 23, no. 3, (July 1992): 208.

[52] Anderson, "Philosophy and Fiction," 209.

[53] Anderson, "Philosophy and Fiction," 209.

[54] Martha Nussbaum, "James's *The Golden Bowl*: Literature as Moral Philosophy," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 143.

[55] Nussbaum, "James's *The Golden Bowl*," 143.

subjectivity in a variety of ways. The impact that oppression has on recognition can be most distinctly identified within feminist dystopian literature, as the genre itself is not only focused on various oppressive contexts and thus poised to engage with social and political issues in general, but also as the genre proves to most poignantly display experiences of recognition in an identifiable way as we are able to relate to/identify with the experiences portrayed between characters.

1.4.1 Defining Feminist Dystopia

Given the plethora of ways that we can understand dystopia as a literary genre, feminist dystopia can similarly be difficult to pin down. Part of this issue is due to the lack of solidity of the subgenre and the ever changing dynamics of dystopia as a whole. For example, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, Tom Moylan defines science fiction, utopia, and dystopia in relation to their ability to affect change in the world and provides detailed distinctions between a variety of subgenres within each category, each with significantly overlapping definitions. In terms of dystopia, Moylan defines the genre not only as "clearly unlike its generic sibling, the literary eutopia,"[56] but also by its ability to "reflect upon the causes of social and ecological evil as systemic"[57] and "register the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of everyday people."[58] In this way, he distinguishes dystopia from utopia as its opposite, in which utopia presents a better or perfected world, while dystopia presents a worse or the worst imaginable world.[59] As he defines it, "the dystopian text opens in the midst of a social 'elsewhere' that appears to be far worse than any in the 'real' world," with the given protagonist tracing their dystopic context back to the social system and either being "defeated" by or opposing their oppressive system.[60] Referring to these categories as "anti-utopian dystopia" and "utopian dystopia," he clarifies their difference as such,

> In the anti-utopian [or anti-critical] dystopia, the best that can happen is a recognition of the integrity of the individual even when the hegemonic power coercively and ideologically closes in; whereas in the utopian [or critical] dystopia, a collective resistance is at least acknowledged, and sometimes a full-fledged opposition and even victory is achieved against the apparently impervious, tightly sutured system.[61]

Within this understanding of dystopia, Moylan distinguishes critical dystopia, which includes visions of hope, and anti-critical dystopia, which remains pessimistic, while also pointing to the subgenres' focuses on justice and change, as well. Though Moylan's

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[56] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), xiii.

[57] Moylan, *Scraps*, xii.

[58] Moylan, *Scraps*, xiii.

[59] I know that there are other ways to define dystopia, but I have landed on this understanding, as it is what the majority of my source material uses as a definition/understanding of the genre.

[60] Moylan, *Scraps*, xiii.

[61] Moylan, *Scraps*, xiii.

definitions and classifications are potentially redundant and over-specified as he distinguishes between miniscule details between subgenres (a task potentially relevant for academic clarity, but potentially overly complicated for the average layman reader) they offer us a useful perspective for understanding the variance and yet overlap between dystopia and utopia as literary traditions.

Despite their similarities and overlapping nature, these genre and subgenre descriptions still ultimately showcase the inherent social commentary present in dystopia, as its active intention is to present a particular view of the world and thus bring attention to various issues present in that world and our own. Silvia Martínez-Falquina argues that

> The current obsession with dystopia is not just about the future: writers and critics often resort to the dystopian characterization of our present time in order to denounce the injustice, powerlessness, and violence experienced by too many people around the world. As a genre with a particularly strong connection to culture and politics, dystopia mediates between past, present, and future: *grounded in the anxieties of the present, it speculates on the future consequences of current events and actions.*[62]

Not only does the above quote directly identify the intentionality of the dystopian genre to point to "future consequences" of contemporary social ills, this focus on social commentary is precisely where we see a connection to a feminist dystopia, as well. While Moylan doesn't define feminist dystopia as its own subgenre, he acknowledges the undeniable connection between critical dystopia and the goals or focuses of the feminist movement more broadly.

To define a literary genre as "feminist" the genre would need to include distinct connections to feminist concerns and values, particularly as they connect to social change – a theme that, as we will see, is prevalent in feminist dystopian literature. I do acknowledge here that the use of "feminist concerns and values" remains somewhat vague, but this was an intentional choice on my part, as there are a plethora of ways to identify "feminist values," within and outside of issues of gender, womanhood, and femininity. Nonetheless, Anna Gilarek defines feminist dystopia as such,

> A marginal genre in itself, feminist speculative fiction discusses the same issues that concern feminist theorists, yet it presents and dramatizes them in the form of *thought experiments*. The negative aspects of patriarchy, including the marginalization of women, are typically exposed by means of dystopian visions.

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[62] Silvia Martínez-Falquina, "Feminist Dystopia and Reality in Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* and Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks*," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* (2021): 1-17. Emphasis added.

Masculinist dystopias feature worlds of male dominance, where discrimination and sexism are carried to the extreme.[63]

She continues by recognizing the fantastical elements of these thought experiments, stating that

These are usually set in invented worlds, planets, moons and lands, the exact spatial and temporal location of which remains unknown. Despite this or, paradoxically, due to this intentional cognitive estrangement, the problems dramatized in such novels are recognizable for a contemporary reader. Indeed, many critics perceive strong parallels with the contemporary world, which can *hardly be dismissed as unintended*. Even though certain issues are exaggerated, their relevance to current issues is indisputable.[64]

Here Gilarek very explicitly acknowledges the feminist dystopian genre's goal to not only represent our real world through a fantastical lens, but to use that lens in order to magnify the issues that we face in the real world, thus making those issues more visible to readers in their real world contexts. This is especially poignant when the text in question is set in a not-as-distant or a different future, such as a future American context – as is the case with some of the texts that I will explore.

In my conception of feminist dystopia, I focus on social change broadly, thus encompassing issues facing a variety of identities, so as to not focus solely on gender or female identified folks.[65] While critical dystopias don't necessarily have to include feminist issues, Moylan – citing Jenny Wolmark – recognizes a distinct turn in North American dystopia in the 1980s, in which dystopian narratives began to address "a complex mixture of 'utopian and dystopian elements' as they 'critically voice the fears and anxieties of a range of new and fragmented social and sexual constituencies and identities in post-industrial societies.'"[66] Further, Moylan addresses this turn by recognizing critical dystopias as

[giving] voice and space to such dispossessed and denied subjects (and, I would add, to those diminished and deprived by the accompanying economic reconfigurations) they go on to explore ways to change the present system so that such culturally and economically marginalized peoples not only survive but also try to move toward creating a social reality that is shaped by an impulse to human self-determination and ecological health rather than one constricted by the narrow

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[63] Anna Gilarek, "Marginalization of 'the Other': Gender Discrimination in Dystopian Visions by Feminist Science Fiction Authors," *Text Matters* 2, no. 2 (2012): 221-238. Emphasis added.

[64] Gilarek, "Marginalization," 222. Emphasis added.

[65] While this could arguably be deemed as "intersectional" rather than simply feminist, I chose feminist as a categorization to better represent the current scholarship on these issues and texts. I have seen few texts and little scholarship that consider intersectional dystopias, though it is a categorization that I have tried to conceptualize in some of my own scholarship.

[66] Moylan, *Scraps*, 187.

and destructive logic of a system intent only on enhancing competition in order to gain more profit for a select few.[67]

With this, we can see an opening of the dystopian genre to include a wider variety of social issues and concerns, along with a rejection of subjugation and a creation of space for marginalized groups and individuals,[68] thus presenting a clear connection and overlap between critical dystopia and feminist dystopia.[69]

Additionally, along with the 1980s expansion of feminist-focused dystopia, since the early 2000s and 2010s there has been a distinct rise in Young Adult (YA) dystopian fiction, much of which is feminist-focused. This trend includes such popular series as the *Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Maze Runner*, *Matched*, *The Selection*, *Uglies*, and *Red Queen*, among many others. Along with being focused on teenaged and young adult protagonists, such novels also contain very explicit social and political commentary, as the characters in each are not only faced with varying oppressions, but also find themselves in a place to resist or even entirely dismantle oppressions. Though social commentary in YA fiction is often more explicit or overt than we might see in adult fiction, a format relevant to both the intended audience of and the protagonists in YA fiction who would be engaging with such commentary from a less mature and nuanced perspective, I argue that YA holds a significant place within discussions of dystopia, not only because of the influx of YA dystopian literature in recent decades, but also because I believe that dystopia growing in YA specifically is a phenomenon which can tell us a lot about young adults and the issues that they care about. This YA dystopia growth showcases an interesting dynamic in which teens and young adults find themselves potentially more engaged in politics and social change, not only then influencing this growth in dystopian literature, but simultaneously *being* influenced by it as well. Also, though they may initially seem underdeveloped or unsophisticated, from a rhetorical perspective, these novels' style and format is not only written for teenagers who are still developing their subjectivities themselves, but the texts also portray the perspective of teens developing their subjectivities as well. Though we as adults may find ourselves less engaged in such narratives, as we have likely already undergone those experiences, I would argue that young adults are likely going to find more significance in them being able to relate to each text's and character's point of view. For these reasons, I include YA dystopia in this project and consider some of its feminist texts as potential harbingers of change.

Interestingly, alongside the several YA texts I consider, all but two of the adult fiction texts I also consider are centered around young adult protagonists. This raises more questions about the authors' intentions to focus on young adults in dystopian contexts even in adult fiction. Though there are many possible intentions, the one that seems most

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[67] Moylan, *Scraps*, 189.

[68] Moylan, *Scraps*, 189.

[69] To clarify, in my conceptualization alongside Moylan's definition of "critical dystopia," all feminist dystopia is critical dystopia, but not all critical dystopia is feminist.

noteworthy is the notion of placing change at the feet of younger generations as they will be inheriting the world around them while also being tasked with changing it. This thought particularly coincides with Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, in which protagonist Lauren Olamina actively confronts the traditionalist views of her collapsing community as the elders hope to return to the world that they once had while Lauren focuses on the need for change and forward movement. Further, from the context of some literary criticism, namely scholarship that discusses the importance of including social commentary in literature, in "What Is Literature" Jean Paul Sartre explains his belief that authors lay out a social concern with the understanding and intention for that concern to be taken up and addressed by future generations. He points out that change does not come about imminently, but requires active consideration and movement over the course of time, placing the impetus of change into the future.[70]

As we can see, feminist dystopian literature holds significant potential to impact readers, not simply in teaching readers how to identify these social ills, but engaging readers in the institutions and normative structures that uphold and maintain them. Even in this, there are many ways to consider these structures from a critical standpoint. Though they help readers make sense of their broader world, there is much room for this to help readers understand the experience of people in the world, not just others, but their own experience, as well. When considering feminist dystopia, there are a plethora of themes to analyze throughout the genre from panopticism, visibility, autonomy, hope, and more. Housed in each of these themes, we see depictions of interpersonal, intersubjective interactions between characters in which they engage with others as subjects, both individual and collective. Through these experiences, we see characters gain awareness of others, their surrounding institutions and social structures, and even themselves by and through systems of power and oppression. Throughout the following chapters, I consider these systems, specifically in regard to the experience of subject formation and recognition as seen in feminist dystopian literature and the implications of bringing the two together.

Further, I will be considering examples of individual, institutional and self recognition experiences across various feminist dystopian texts including Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Joyce Carol Oates' *Hazards of Time Travel*, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series, Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Leni Zumas' *Red Clocks*, and Scot Westerfeld's the *Uglies* series, each chosen for their distinct and unique dystopian context and recognition experience portrayal. Several of the texts listed above do have quite obvious feminist themes, particularly *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Red Clocks*, and *Future Home of the Living God*, each of which focus on female protagonists who are both trapped within social constructions of gender while also being denied autonomy of their physical body and reproductive systems. Others, however, offer a less overt feminist take focusing either on young female protagonists within a context of either class separation – *The Hunger Games* and

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[70] Jean-Paul Sartre, "What is Literature?" *'What is Literature?' and Other Essays*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

Parable of the Sower – or of normative beauty standards – the *Uglies* series. Also noteworthy are the intersectional dynamics of several of the texts, including *Parable of the Sower* and *Future Home of the Living God*, that portray and address social issues related to a wide range of intersecting gender, race, and class divides. Along with these varied feminist themes, the texts above were also chosen for the presence of such themes as disciplinary and sovereign power and the lack/loss of autonomy.

We see depictions of disciplinary and sovereign power throughout several of the above texts, particularly in the form of surveillance and public threats of violence. Both disciplinary and sovereign power function through the threat of punishment for perceived wrong-doings. While disciplinary power relies on the *threat* of potential punishment to enforce obedience, through sovereign power, those in power utilize acts of violence or execution to threaten punishment for wrongdoing and as a way to maintain institutional structures of power. Sean P. Connors outlines the difference between disciplinary and sovereign power, citing disciplinary power as lording an unseen threat of punishment in which people follow rules of law based on fear of perceived punishment while sovereign power maintains power and instills fear through public acts of cruelty, violence, or execution.[71] Thus, both attempt to regulate action and obedience, but do so in quite different ways. Depictions of disciplinary and sovereign power can be seen in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Hazards of Time Travel*, and *The Hunger Games*. In Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, disciplinary power can be seen through implied surveillance, namely through other characters as potential observers. Atwood's classic dystopian novel portrays a not-so-futuristic society in which Christian religious elites in America have separated themselves into a new society of Gilead, created out of the fear over the lack of population growth and rampant infertility and sterility. Not only does Gilead use Biblical models of female servitude and suppression to oppress women, but they also use fertile women as reproductive slaves (handmaids) forcing them into families in the hopes of them becoming impregnated. With this, they are also under constant threat of violence, from both their Commanders and "aunts" (the women who train them as handmaids) and from the "Eyes" (a government organization rumored to be watching and listening to them at all times). Though this monitoring does apply to every citizen, the commanders have more freedom to move about without as many consequences. The handmaids, however, undergo even more surveillance, as they not only worry about the Eyes watching them in the world, but also know that they are under constant scrutiny from their assigned commanders and commanders' wives. In this way, their actions are always mediated by the threat of punishment as they attempt to move through the world as quietly as possible.

Similarly, in Oates' *Hazards of Time Travel*, Adriane, alias Mary Ellen, experiences a similar perceived surveillance by those around her. *Hazards* portrays NAS-23 (North American States), a future society in which citizens, despite considering themselves

[71] Sean P. Connors, "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay': Surveillance, Tactics, and the Limits of Panopticism," In *The Politics of Panem: Challenging Genres*, (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014), 85-102.

members of a democracy, are led by threat of "Exile," removal from society supposedly for the sake of rehabilitation, or worse "Deletion" or "vaporization," murder or removal from existence (a necessary distinction due to the ambiguous way Deletion is described throughout). The narrative follows high school senior, Adriane Strohl, who, despite receiving Valedictorian of her graduating class and a "Patriot Scholarship," is detained by the "Youth Disciplinary Division of Homeland Security" (Youth Disciplinary)[72] and is charged with "*Treason-Speech* and *Questioning of Authority*"[73] for writing a graduation speech consisting of only questions. As punishment for her "crimes" she is sentenced to four years of Exile to "Zone Nine," Wainscotia State University, a university in rural Wisconsin, in the year 1959. Along with being sent back in time to study at Wainscotia, she is also given the new identity, Mary Ellen Enright, and slowly has her memories removed over time. Along with this, she is also told that she is under near constant supervision by planted security agents. Ultimately this leaves her attempting to navigate a completely new world while also navigating life as a heavily monitored fugitive, unable to act without the threat of Deletion.

Hazards' presentation of a panoptic surveillance state is quite vivid as it showcases two different examples of surveillance in NAS-23 and in Wainscotia. The governmental authority in NAS-23 can be identified primarily as disciplinary in its constant instilled fear of being watched, heard, and informed on. Just as in *Handmaid* with the threat of being watched by Commanders, Wives, Lydias, and even other handmaids, there are a plethora of examples of Adriane and other characters being subject to the panoptic gaze, including the use of ever-present "dirigible clouds rumored to be surveillance devices,"[74] spies from the "DCVSB (Democratic Citizens Volunteer Surveillance Bureau),"[75] and "numerous 'eyes' in any classroom, and all invisible."[76] The theme of disciplinary power continues to follow Adriane into her punishment in Zone Nine as well, particularly in the "instructions" she is given as an "Exiled Individual (EI)." These instructions include the caveat that "The EI will be monitored at any and all times during his/her exile. It is understood that HSEDB [Homeland Security Exile Disciplinary Bureau] can revoke the term of Exile and Sentencing at any time . . . Violations of any of these instructions will [ensure] that the EI will be immediately Deleted."[77] Mirroring common Cold War sentiments of the 1950s, Adriane/Mary Ellen finds herself constantly questioning who she can trust and who could potentially be an informant monitoring her. After initially arriving at Wainscotia, being understandably distraught and lonely, Mary Ellen recognizes "their eyes eating at me, like hungry ants. Memorizing, assessing. Planning the words they would use in their reports to Homeland Security."[78] With these examples,

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[72] Joyce Carol Oates, *The Hazards of Time Travel* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018), 27.

[73] Oates, *Hazards*, 26.

[74] Oates, *Hazards*, 8.

[75] Oates, *Hazards*, 21.

[76] Oates, *Hazards*, 22.

[77] Oates, *Hazards*, 3-4.

[78] Oates, *Hazards*, 61.

we can see the severe mistrust that develops when she fears her constantly being observed.

Along with *Handmaid* and *Hazards*, surveillance in *Hunger Games* can be seen through the maintenance of the social order of Panem, a future society set in what used to be North America, now splintered by failed revolutions and a tyrannical government. The series follows Katniss Everdeen as she is a tribute in the annual spectacle that is the hunger games in which children from each district are forced to fight to the death. Not only is Panem divided into twelve districts, each one with their own exports and industry, it is also led by the Capitol and President Snow, who exercise control over the entirety of Panem through various means of surveillance and threats of violence. Though people do act as a means of surveillance, particularly the armed peacekeepers, their surveillance functions differently than those discussed in regard to *Handmaid* and *Hazards* in that peacekeepers are official agents of the government whereas those in *Handmaid* and *Hazards* are simply citizens that may or may not be listening in and may or may not use what they learn against the person they're observing. Along with the peacekeepers, Panem is also surveilled by surveillance cameras and sometimes even watchtowers. Additionally, the Capitol government also uses "muttations," mutated animals, such as the "jabberjays" to monitor the districts, as well. Jabberjays are birds that are designed to recognize, record, and repeat human voices, and are said to have been used in the early rebellion, prior to the narrative of the books, to record information from rebel forces.[79] The use of cameras, watchtowers, and jabberjays not only serve to literally watch the actions of the district citizens, but also to enforce the self-regulation of the citizens as well, as they worry about having their conversations recorded. Within the *Hunger Games* series, these panoptic threats serve to maintain the subjugation of the district citizens, as they believe that they're being observed and, though they do still rebel and challenge these powers, they ultimately regulate themselves in order to protect themselves, their families, and loved ones.[80]

Sovereign power is often naturally intertwined with disciplinary power with both working in tandem to establish and maintain control. In addition to surveillance to maintain social order, the Capitol government in *Hunger Games* also uses threats and direct acts of violence, as well. First, they use public beatings and executions to enforce their power, not only when they find citizens breaking district rules, such as hunting outside of the security fences, as happens to Katniss' hunting partner, Gale,[81] but also when the rebellion gains more prominence in the later books. One particular example of the use of execution occurs in the second book of the trilogy, *Catching Fire*, in which Katniss and Peeta travel to district 11 on their victory tour and a man in the crowd is executed after starting the three-finger salute and whistling the tune that Katniss had used

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[79] Connors, Sean P., "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay,'" 85-102.

[80] June Pulliam, "Real or Not Real – Katniss Everdeen Loves Peeta Melark: The lingering Effects of Discipline in the 'Hunger Games' Trilogy," in *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*, edited by Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited), 172.

[81] Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire*, (New York: Scholastic Press, 2009), 61-62.

as a signal as a tribute in the games – thus showing their allegiance to Katniss.[82] This action of execution, though shocking and seemingly unnecessary given the peacefulness of the signal and whistle itself, attempts to set a precedent for the district citizens about the consequences of their potential rebellion. Most predominantly, though, the Capitol government uses violence as intimidation through the spectacle of the hunger games themselves, a gladiator-style fight to the death that forces children from each district to compete for their own survival. This competition is meant to remind district citizens of the power that the Capitol holds over them, ultimately in an attempt to eliminate the threat of another rebellion. So, the citizens of Panem are being subjected to disciplinary power through being monitored via various forms of surveillance, along with sovereign power through the threat of violence and punishment.

Handmaid's Gilead also presents threats of punishment through the use of public executions and beatings, in which some of the handmaids participate. This is most distinctly where we see the violence become more overt, especially in comparison to the *Hunger Games* series – a difference likely due to the intended YA versus adult audiences. In *Handmaid*, not only are citizens punished for conspiratory – or assumed conspiratory – actions, post-execution their bodies are displayed in town as reminders of what happens to those that disobey Gilead.[83] Additionally, some people are even publicly brought to trial for their crimes – though seemingly not crimes against the state, but rather for crimes meant to give a false sense of autonomy to the handmaids in particular. For example, Offred describes a "Salvaging" that the handmaids attend, in which three people are hanged for unnamed crimes. Offred describes the experience as reminiscent of dead birds, "The three bodies hang there, even with the white sacks over their heads looking curiously stretched, like chickens strung up by the neck in a meatshop window; like birds with their wings clipped like flightless birds, wrecked angels. It's hard to take your eyes off them."[84] After the hanging, a man is then publicly shamed and punished for having raped a pregnant woman, resulting in the death of the unborn baby. Though his punishment is to ultimately be executed for his crimes, the handmaids are allowed and encouraged to beat him, going so far as to form a mob, nearly killing him themselves. Offred thinks, "Now there are sounds, gasps, a low noise like growling, yells, and the red bodies tumble forward and I can no longer see, he's obscured by arms, fists, feet. A high scream comes from somewhere, like a horse in terror."[85] This man's punishment is, of course, somewhat ironic considering the constant rape and sexual assault committed by the commanders. Additionally, we know that they don't actually have the autonomy that is implied through this group punishment, but it creates an assumption of justice having been served and thus keeps the handmaids complacent.

Loss of autonomy as a theme manifests more overtly in feminist dystopian narratives as characters are reduced to component parts of their identities. For example, in *Handmaid*,

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[82] Collins, *Catching Fire.*
[83] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 43.
[84] Atwood, *Handmaid*, 277.
[85] Atwood, *Handmaid*, 280.

women are reduced to various domestic roles, either as Wives, Marthas (maids), and handmaids (wombs for birthing). Such reduction is also present in Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, which showcases the loss of autonomy that comes from one's identity being broken down to motherhood and ability to bear a child, along with a loss of autonomy due to her race. *Future Home* follows Cedar Hawk Songmaker as she navigates not only an ecological disaster in which nature seems to be evolving to eradicate humans while nature overtakes humanity, but she does so as a pregnant, Native American woman – two identities that are being directly targeted in the narrative. As a pregnant woman, she is targeted for the potential to study her unborn fetus and attempt to identify its viability, and as a Native American woman, she is more susceptible to being tracked and experimented on than a white woman would be. Just as in *Handmaid*, Cedar's identity is ultimately reduced to the fetus growing inside of her, rather than being recognized as her own person – with the government going so far as to detain and experiment on her. Also, even once the baby is born in the end, we see the implication that she will continue to be held and impregnated again, thus reduced to a breeding slave, in similar ways to Offred. However, moving away from lack of race and racial identification in *Handmaid*, Cedar's race plays a significant role in her loss of autonomy, as she and other pregnant women of color are tracked and detained more predominantly than white women.

Alongside *Handmaid* and *Future Home*, though less physically violent and more political in nature, another textual example of the loss of bodily autonomy is Leni Zumas' *Red Clocks*. *Red Clocks* showcases a not-so-distant future America, in which abortion is severely criminalized. The narrative follows five different, interconnected women, some struggling with secretly conducting abortions, attempting to seek an abortion, attempting to seek a divorce, and even trying desperately to get IVF or artificial insemination as a single woman amid laws restricting pregnancy and parenthood to two-parent, heterosexual homes. Similarly to Offred and Cedar, the several protagonists of *Red Clocks* have their senses of self stripped down entirely to their reproduction and reproductive choices – not that they have much choice, however. The loss of bodily autonomy brought about by the anti-abortion legislation described in *Red Clocks* is an especially interesting example because of its subtlety banality in comparison to the scenarios presented in *Handmaid* and *Future Home*. Though not subtle in a lack of impact, such legislation is banal specifically because of how it can be passed into law not only while those affected are forced to watch, but also by those that are indoctrinated by the narratives supporting such legislation, even though their rights are also being infringed upon.

Though it moves away from the loss of reproductive autonomy specifically, Westerfeld's *Uglies* series presents a forced loss of autonomy through lesions placed on the brain to maintain a presumed peacefulness and docility. Following Tally Youngblood ahead of her sixteenth birthday and "pretty surgery," in which she will be physically modified to mirror the accepted body standards of her society, we see her ultimately confront the significance of the surgery as she encounters rebels who have escaped her society and begins to change her perspective. Through this encounter she learns that the surgery changes far more than cosmetic, external features. Rather, it alters the structure of

people's brains to keep them docile under the guise of preventing disagreement and war. We follow Tally as she not only fights for a cure to the lesions for herself and others, but learns to "think her way out" of the lesions in order to be her own autonomous self.[86]

Hunger Games also offers examples of a loss of autonomy through hypervisibility as they exist as pawns for entertainment. Hypervisibility pertains to the concept of being not only visible, but visible to a heightened degree, in which your actions and existence are under constant scrutiny. While this concept is similar to surveillance, it differs primarily in its certainty. Whereas surveillance, especially panoptic surveillance that only needs to threaten the action of viewing and visibility, hypervisibility confirms the act of surveillance and makes those being viewed fully aware of their own spectacle. Within the *Hunger Games* series, hypervisibility is present with the tributes competing in the games. Not only are they constantly surveilled as citizens in the districts, once they are chosen as tributes, they are then broadcast to the entirety of Panem before and during the hunger games. During this time as tributes, they are constantly watched on television both forcibly in the districts and voluntarily and by copious crowds within the Capitol, while also being tracked and monitored by the Gamemakers during the games, as well. While this seems to be the same surveillance that they were already under – it's similar, to be sure – it differs in that they know that they are being watched constantly and they know that the Gamemakers can and will manipulate the arena, other tributes, and themselves in order to mediate their actions. For example, in the *Hunger Games*, Katniss trees herself to stay hidden and the Gamemakers ignite rapidly spreading fires to force more action out of her and other tributes, which she immediately recognizes as an intentional action to keep the audience from "getting bored."[87] As tributes both in and out of the arena, they are placed under near constant scrutiny, as their actions and words are literally being watched, judged, and even mediated by both citizens and the Gamemakers at all times. Even after the games, this hypervisibility never ends for the victors, as they are treated as celebrities throughout their lives and are forced to maintain a public facade frequently. In terms of autonomy, each of these examples of hypervisibility remove tributes' and victors' abilities to make decisions and exist for themselves, as they are transformed into entities existing for the state and the Capitol citizens, primarily as entertainment, but also as political pawns. As we can see with each of the chosen texts and their focuses on power and autonomy, within their feminist criticism and perspectives offer significant images of recognition experiences allowing characters to engage with their own subjectivities alongside others in the world, within institutional and systemic power, and within themselves.

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[86] Scott Westerfeld, *Uglies*, (New York: Simon Pulse, 2011).
[87] Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games,* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2008)*,* 173.

2 Intersubjectivity through Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature

2.1 Recognition Between Individuals

2.1.1 Recognition Between Individuals

Recognition between individuals – referred to as "individual recognition" from this point forward – is the first, and most identifiable, form of recognition affected by power and oppression. Individual recognition, i.e. recognition between two individuals, most closely resembles the experiences laid out in the previous chapter's various conceptualizations of recognition across phenomenology. In individual recognition, subjects encounter one another and – through the paradox of objectification and subjectification that philosophers such as Sartre and Hegel theorized – acknowledge each other not only as existing objects in their world, but as acting subjects who have an effect on their world, while also being able to see the initial "viewer" in the same way, as well. This experience is an embodied one in which we encounter an other and are able to acknowledge being objectified by that other, while simultaneously solidifying our own subjectivity. Acknowledging individuals as "centers," John Russon writes,

> to be a self-consciousness is to be a center who recognizes other centers and is thereby vulnerable to their communication that there is an ideal of objectivity . . . to be a self-conscious agent is to be a center of desire involved with other self-conscious centers of desire, we cannot ever succeed in being ourselves by ourselves, since our identity is in the hands of these other centers.[88]

This intersubjectivity is a crucial piece of the recognition experience, especially for Hegel and his mutual recognition, which posits that recognition is not possible without the involvement of an other. Russon also identifies this mutuality, stating, "It is only through shared commitments to a project of mutual recognition that this tension of being a de-centered center can be successfully navigated."[89] The seeming contradiction of "de-centered center" represents the acknowledgement of simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity that one experiences through mutual recognition, as they are no longer engaged in a self-focused experience of the world.

Along with mutual recognition, Hegel also approaches recognition with his master/slave dialectic, considering the experience of encountering an other as an acting subject, but specifically through dynamics of power, as power imbalances hinder the possibility of recognition. This approach, as John Russon explains, is essentially a "fight to the death" in which the participants involved are unconsciously struggling against one another in order to gain recognition from the other. As Russon states, "No matter how much the first self wishes to accept the second self's surrender, if the second is not willing to give up

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[88] John Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure: Intersubjectivity and Objectivity," in *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 89.
[89] Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure," 89.

resistance the fight will not stop until one of them dies. Likewise, no matter how much the first self wants to surrender, if the second does not accept the offer they fight until death."[90] This struggle only concludes if they either die or accept the situation of domination: "The only way, then, for the relationship of master and slave to emerge is for both to bend their wills from the original course of destroying the other and for both to choose to accept a situation of unequal recognition."[91] Further, Sonia Kruks describes this fight as a "threat to my own experience of self" in which "the other's 'look' also induces me to flee into self-objectification . . . in an experience such as shame the look of the other is internalized as my own."[92] In the same vein, Kruks also writes, "For suddenly, I *am* as I am seen to be: 'shame . . . is shame of *self*; it is the *recognition* of the fact that I *am* indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging."[93] So, not only do we see recognition theorized as a struggle or fight to the death with another, Kruks presents a recognition experience that directly impedes our self constitution, as well. Some scholars, however, would take issue with the slave's acceptance of such domination and even the violent nature of recognition – namely Kelly Oliver[94] who, as discussed in the previous chapter, rejects the violent interpretation that Hegel describes and proposes the experience of witnessing others' contexts and perspectives, along with Kruks who also describes recognition as "a means of expressing friendship or love, of sharing, of validating another."[95] However, Russon's earlier statements point to the paradoxical nature of recognition and of domination, as the slave remains as crucial a piece to the problematized experience as the master. As Russon argues,

> The deal [of recognition], by its very nature as 'deal,' has already implied that the slave has a choosing, desiring – interpretive – authority: in order to become the slave, the slave had to recognize the master as master; that is, the slave must be in a position to determine significance if the two of them are to agree to their mutual definitions . . . The master, *not the slave*, is supposed to be the one who interprets things; yet it is precisely the slave's interpretings that realize the relationship.[96]

So, per Russon, the slave, though subordinated and in many ways rejected from the possibility of recognition with the master, remains an agent, able to affect their dynamic with the master – a notion that can be easily lost or misunderstood. Further considering the "acceptance" of enslavement, John Christman addresses the problematic idea that an oppressed person would be considered to lack autonomy in their seeming "acceptance" of

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[90] John Russon, "Reading and the Body," in *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 73.

[91] Russon, "Reading and the Body," 73.

[92] Sonia Kruks, "The Politics of Recognition: Sartre, Fanon, and Identity Politics," in *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*, (Cornell University Press, 2001), 91.

[93] Sonia Kruks, "Panopticism and Shame: Foucault, Beauvoir, and Feminism," in *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*, (Cornell University Press, 2001), 62. Emphasis in original.

[94] Oliver, *Witnessing.*

[95] Kruks, "Panopticism and Shame," 61-62.

[96] Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure," 88. Emphasis in original.

their social role(s). Christman challenges this idea, stating, "Insofar as a person has authentically embraced even (what we might call) oppressive social status or subservient roles, that person deserves respect insofar as her judgment about those roles has the same formal features as our own judgment about our own lives."[97] In other words, he calls for an acknowledgment that an oppressed person remains an autonomous agent even in oppression, as their ability to make choices and to reflect on those choices, along with their lived experiences, work to constitute their autonomy.

Additionally, Russon's discussion above of the contradiction between the master and the slave, along with his focus on the struggle involved in the recognition experience, displays the negative impact that power dynamics and domination have on the recognition experience, altering it and rejecting "equal" recognition. Of course, rather than describing these experiences as "equal" or "unequal," Michael Monahan states that they can become "corrupted" when this recognition is not reciprocated, most often due to one of the participants holding more power than the other, placing the other in a subordinated position.[98] Within this dynamic, the subordinated individual lacks the standing to be recognized, having been forced to a relegated position by the other while simultaneously being unable to recognize them from their lower positionality.

Despite the focus on subordination and corrupted recognition experiences, individual recognition also showcases the significance of intersubjectivity and connection with others. Though we potentially see this through Hegel's mutual recognition and its requiring both participants to recognize each other for recognition to avoid corruption thus pointing to the reliance that we have on others, this is a fraught intersubjectivity. As discussed previously, as Oliver argues, this reliance perpetuates the hierarchies of domination keeping the oppressed subordinated in the first place. Using Oliver's witnessing to acknowledge others' unique experiences as part of their subject position, however, offers a positive intersubjective connection in recognition. Through engaging with others' perspectives through witnessing, we have the opportunity to identify or empathize with them, thus drawing us together as subjects.

Though present in many literary genres, individual recognition is seen vividly throughout feminist dystopian literature. These representations of recognition experiences in feminist dystopia ultimately allow us to see not only the impact that marginalization has on subject formation and subsequently the engagement of agency available to enact – or that can be produced through – an uncorrupted recognition experience, they also showcase the intersubjective nature of recognition and the significance of intersubjective connection experienced through both recognition and witnessing.

2.2 Examples of Corrupted and Uncorrupted Recognition

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[97] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves," *Philosophical Studies* 117 (2004): 153.
[98] Monahan, "Recognition Beyond Struggle."

Experiences in Feminist Dystopian Literature

2.2.1 Corrupted Recognition

The first examples of individual recognition that I will consider are corrupted, not only because they function as a foundation of comparison for understanding the possibility of uncorrupted recognition experiences, but also because they exemplify the significance of intersubjective connection in recognition. With this, visibility is a crucial piece of the recognition experiences as per Foucault, Sartre, and Oliver, all of whom cite some form of "vision" as being inherent to the experience of establishing and being a subject. The concept of visibility and visuality goes much further than simply "being seen." It addresses issues of what is seen, how it is seen, who can see or be seen, and who cannot see or be seen.[99] According to Nicholas Mirzeoff, not only is visuality the opposite of the right to look,[100] it is also "not composed simply of visual perceptions in the physical sense, but is formed by a set of relations combining information, imagination, and insight into a rendition of physical and psychic space" and a "discursive practice that has material effects, like Foucault's panopticism, the gaze or perspective."[101] This visuality is further exemplified through Sartre's look in which our subjectivity is established by and through the gaze of the other and through Oliver's witnessing that uses dynamics of vision and visibility to outline the experience of engaging with others and their unique perspectives.

We can first see examples of corrupted individual recognition experiences with Offred in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, in which America has been taken over by Christian religious control, forcing women into domestic and reproductive roles. *Handmaid* presents a view of the handmaids as being simultaneously observed and unseen. As a handmaid – a reproductive slave – the protagonist, Offred, is forced to remain silent and unseen, and is only permitted to interact with others in brief, moderated ways, such as when grocery shopping with other handmaids. In these encounters, the handmaids are afraid of being constantly monitored and most often speak only of innocuous topics in order to avoid punishment, as they also live in a surveillance state reminiscent of Foucault's panopticism, afraid of both the fabled "Eyes" that are said to always be watching, along with the Lydias who serve Gilead disciplining and indoctrinating handmaids. With this, handmaids are also forced to avoid eye contact at all times, further perpetuated through the "wings" that they are made to wear to block their head and eyes from view.[102] Not only is Offred symbolically placed beneath nearly every other class of citizen in Gilead as a handmaid, she is also subordinated in literally being denied sight of others, thus restricting the recognizing gaze as we understand it. Not only does this restriction of sight subordinate her, it also isolates her, rejecting the possibility of intersubjective connection with others. Given the restriction of the literal gaze and her

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[99] Nicholas Mizroeff, "Introduction: For Critical Visuality Studies," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-34.

[100] Mizroeff, "Introduction," 1.

[101] Mizroeff, "Introduction," 3.

[102] Atwood, *Handmaid*, 8.

subordinated position in which she is forced into submission via the threat of punishment, we can see how Offred remains stuck in corrupted individual recognition experiences as her interactions with others are heavily mediated if not outright rejected.

Suzanne Collins', the *Hunger Games* series also offers significant examples of corrupted individual recognition and the agency that develops and strengthens through it. Due to the dynamics of visibility, specifically in Foucault's panopticism, the characters throughout the *Hunger Games* don't experience uncorrupted recognition in almost any context. First, recognition becomes corrupted when character-subjects are invisible to one another, as they are between districts and from the Capitol to the districts. Each district is intentionally separated from the others in both physical and socioeconomic ways and thus don't have opportunities to truly interact in a way that would enable recognition. Considering the intersubjective nature of recognition, the physical separation of districts eliminates the possibility of citizens engaging with each other at all, let alone through the act of witnessing or recognition. Further complicating the possibility for recognition or witnessing, the negative rhetoric surrounding districts, such as Katniss' disdain towards the "career" districts, the "career" districts seeing poorer districts as insignificant, and the Capitol's assumptions about the districts as "less-than" and deserving of discipline, ensures that the citizens from various districts and the Capitol citizens never meaningfully encounter each other's lives, but instead see what media presents them with. In each of these contexts, each party considers themselves better than the other, eliminating the possibility for uncorrupted recognition, as their interactions are mediated by the power dynamics between them while also ignoring the shared oppressive context between them, a shared context that could elicit connection or relatability. We can see this recognition as corrupted in there being no awareness or acknowledgement of the experiences of either group. That is, due to physical separation and socialized dynamics between characters, they neither see, recognize, or witness each others' contexts in order to gain intersubjective connection and thus cannot experience uncorrupted recognition either.

Similarly, citizens within the same districts aren't always able to recognize each other either, particularly due to socioeconomic separations. In District 12, though considered a poor district overall, there are distinct lines of separation between the "merchant class" and the "impoverished residents of the Seam who struggle to earn a living laboring in the Capitol's coalmines,"[103] where Katniss and her family live. Those in the main areas of town are considered to be of a slightly higher social status and subsequently look down on the Seam, as they are considered the lowest within the district. For example, this disdain is illustrated in a scene where Peeta's mom (Peeta, of course, being Katniss' fellow tribute in the games), a merchant-class character, throws leftover food to the pigs, as she tells him to make sure that the kids from the Seam don't steal it instead.[104] Despite their shared struggle in District 12 and in Panem's oppressive state overall, there remains a hierarchical divide, using power (though still minimal) to maintain a class separation.

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[103] Connors, "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay,'" 95.
[104] Collins, *The Hunger Games,* 29-31.

Using Hegel's master/slave dialectic, we can see how these social hierarchies eliminate the space for potential uncorrupted recognition, as those from the Seam are seen as, in some ways, subhuman – better to feed the pigs than children from the Seam. So, similar to the way that the master sees only what he can gain from the slave, District 12's "merchant class" only sees what those from the Seam *don't* or *can't* provide in return, viewing them as unworthy of even the merchant class's scraps. This identifies both a refusal to witness the Seam's struggle, along with a desperate clinging to power, even if that power is minimal and contingent to begin with. This internal class divide is also interesting in regards to power and recognition as it functions to distract from the larger oppressions facing all citizens of District 12, thus perpetuating the significant class issues present throughout Panem. Within this context, it becomes easier to challenge and fight for the recognition of your fellow district citizens as opposed to fighting for the recognition of the larger institutions around you, showcasing the evasiveness of disciplinary power as we are socialized to ignore tis systems while still maintaining the ambiguous forces behind power and socialization. In this way, in our first encounter with the series, we don't initially see any instances where characters across the districts encounter each other meaningfully in the ways that Sartre and Hegel suggest as being necessary for uncorrupted recognition to occur, nor in ways conducive to Oliver's witnessing. Through this, the physical and social structure portrayed in the series addresses the ways in which individual recognition is corrupted when intersubjective connection with others is hindered or eliminated.

Along with invisibility in physical and social separation,, recognition in the *Hunger Games* series is also corrupted by visibility and hypervisibility, as well. Visibility may initially seem to be a positive experience in which, per Oliver's witnessing, one is seen and acknowledged, visibility holds negative implications, as well. As per Mizroeff's definition, visibility functions as another method of oppression through being watched, surveilled either frequently or constantly. In a literal sense, surveillance is, of course, a form of visibility, but it also induces in its subjects a sense of hypervisibility – or at least a perceived hypervisibility as the one subjected to the panoptic gaze does not know if they are actually being perceived or not, though the gaze appears to be constant.[105] In the *Hunger Games* series, the tributes of the games experience hypervisibility when they are placed under constant surveillance in being broadcast across Panem during the games. Before entering the arena, tributes are positioned as celebrities in the Capitol with an array of interviews and television appearances. Once in the arena, the tributes' every move are watched by Gamemakers and are forcibly broadcast across Panem. In this way, tributes are not only under constant surveillance from the Gamemakers, they are also hypervisible to the Capitol and districts as pawns in the games. In other words, the Gamemakers enforcing the gaze and surveillance can't recognize the tributes, not only because they are literally not visible to the tributes, but also because they've placed themselves in a position of power over the tributes, subjugating the tributes to the point that they also cannot recognize those in power. Again referencing Hegel's master/slave dialectic, this positionality of hypervisibility creates a corrupted individual recognition

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[105] Foucault, "Panopticism," 654-667.

experience as only one member is being actively viewed – though not technically *recognized* – while the other cannot be seen by the viewed at all. Also, part of this corrupted recognition comes from the exploitation of the tributes in the games, as they are observed for entertainment and thus what they can offer as objects to be viewed. When they are viewed for what they can provide or produce – either within their districts or as entertainment, the districts and tributes are essentially reduced to slaves or bondsmen (in Hegel's conception) and thus cannot experience uncorrupted recognition with the Capitol citizens or Gamemakers. Much like the separation between district citizens, the games function to keep district and Capitol citizens separated as tributes are objects for entertainment, not subjects to relate to, witness, or recognize in their oppressive contexts. In this way, we can identify dynamics of visibility as they negatively impact the individual recognition experience.

In similar terms of visibility and hypervisibility, Oates' *The Hazards of Time Travel* presents several interesting examples of corrupted recognition particularly focused around panoptic surveillance. This panoptic surveillance can be seen through a plethora of examples of disciplinary power, as citizens of NAS-23 – a future America, "North American States" – are constantly policing their own thoughts and actions to avoid accusation or punishment. *Hazards* follows seventeen-year-old Adriane through her being accused of questioning authority and subsequent punishment being sent back in time to "Zone Nine," Wainscotia University in 1959 Wisconsin.

Adriane experiences a corrupted individual recognition in nearly every relationship she has throughout the text, whether with students, peers, or family in both NAS-23 and in Wainscotia. Through the use of disciplinary power, Adriane engages with others with great suspicion, having been raised to believe that informants are everywhere and are always listening. We see this primarily through the guarded way her father, Eric Strohl, discusses her "Deleted" Uncle Toby and the reasons for his Deletion, having attended a rally for free speech, making clear that she is not to discuss this openly for fear of the same happening to her. Deletion, of course, being the vaporization of the accused individual, in which they are arrested and never seen or heard from again, presumed dead. Adriane/Mary Ellen recalls a conversation with her father in which he tells her of his brother, her Uncle Toby, and his involvement in a "May Day free-speech demonstration" and subsequent arrest, which he describes as having been "arrested in this very house, taken away, allegedly tried – and Deleted,"[106] which Eric describes as simply being gone, "like a flame when it's been blown out." He continues by recognizing that they are not supposed to have any memories of Uncle Toby, stating "We aren't supposed to 'recall' Tobias. Certainly not provide information to a child. Or look at pictures! I could be arrested if – anyone heard." Adriane continues,

> By *anyone* Dad meant the government. Though you would not say that word – 'Government.' You would not say the words 'State' – 'Federal Leaders.' It was forbidden to say such words and so, as Dad did, you spoke in a vague way, with a

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[106] Oates, *Hazards*, 8.

furtive look – *if anyone heard . . .* Downstairs in the vicinity of our electronic devices, Dad would never speak so openly. Of course you would never trust your computer no matter how friendly and throaty-seductive its voice, or your cell phone or dicta-stylus, but also thermostats, dishwashers, microwaves, car keys and (self-driving) cars.[107]

This is a perfect example of disciplinary power, in both the secrecy of the exchange, having to hide in their attic away from all electronic devices that may be transmitting audio back to the government, but also in what happens to Uncle Toby as he is supposedly executed for advocating for free speech. Further, Adriane also describes her father's experience as a "Marked Individual (MI)" simply for having been a doctor. According to Adriane this meant that "he'd been under observation as a scientifically-minded individual, for such individuals were assumed to be 'thinking for themselves' – not a reputation anyone would have wished to have," and for having associated with a "Subversive Individual (SI)" – though his association only extended to having stopped to "sympathetically listen to this man address a small gathering in a public park."[108] As punishment Eric was essentially blacklisted, being demoted from his residency appointment and only being able to find work as a "lowly-paid medical attendant in the [medical] center, where there had to be maintained a bias against him, that he might never be allowed to 'practice' medicine again." Despite having his life essentially upturned, true to the fear of further punishment, he instead accepts his fate. As Adriane states, "Yet, Dad never (publicly) complained – he was lucky, he often (publicly) said, not to be imprisoned, and to be alive."[109] They were forced to interact in heavily moderated ways to avoid being found as rebellious or as dissenters, thus making them hypervisible to the government's authority while simultaneously hindering their connections to one another – a connection that Adriane's father risks to confide in her. The effect of hypervisibility on intersubjective connection is crucial in its corruption of recognition, as characters are kept from engaging with one another in meaningful ways, thus complicating both recognition and the possibility of witnessing – though Eric and Adriane's interaction begins to point toward Adriane witnessing Eric's context and experiences as she starts to see the lengths to which he will go to connect with her.

Further, Adriane also experiences this hindrance of intersubjective connection with her friends at school, both in NAS-23 and in Wainscotia, and even with her own brother, a government employee, who she believes to be the one who turned her in for questioning authority in the first place. With her friends, she finds herself constantly questioning whether or not they might be government informants. In NAS-23, it is assumed and understood that friendships are superficial and that no one is to be trusted. In Wainscotia, this notion becomes quite complicated, as most people Adriane encounters seem innocent and friendly, but the "Instructions" given to her at the start of her punishment clearly state that there would be hidden informers observing and reporting on her throughout her

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[107] Oates, *Hazards*, 8-9. Emphasis in original.
[108] Oates, *Hazards*, 6.
[109] Oates, *Hazards*, 6.

punishment, thus making it impossible to trust anyone – especially anyone who isn't also an Exiled Individual (EI), a status which they are instructed to keep hidden. Adriane describes her roommates and housemates as being potential informants. She questions

> Had to wonder who my roommates really were. Why I'd been assigned to room 3C of Acrady Cottage, with these individuals. In NAS-23 it was said – 'No accidents, only algorithms.' I could not think that there were coincidences in the stratagems of Homeland Security. I could not think that at least one and perhaps all of my roommates were informants assigned to *Enright, Mary Ellen*. Possibly, one of them was a robot. But which one?[110]

Despite coming from a surveillance state, we can see the severe mistrust that enhances when she is forced to confront her constantly being observed. Interestingly, this actually does make her the paranoid, untrusting person the Youth Disciplinary agents accused her of being during their interrogation. In terms of a corrupted individual recognition experience, this secrecy and lack of trust ultimately keeps Adraine/Mary Ellen from experiencing uncorrupted recognition in her isolation and separation from those around her. Like with *Handmaid* and *Hunger Games*, *Hazards* further exemplifies the ways that dynamics of visibility hinder intersubjective connection and thus recognition, keeping Mary Ellen in a state of fear and compliance.

I've acknowledged the separation between characters in feminist dystopian literature that keeps them from engaging with one another's subjectivities or from engaging with one another altogether in discussing other texts, as well. In the *Hunger Games* series, this separation is physical and creates problematic power dynamics between districts as they are fed falsified and villainized ideas about one another. In *Hazards*, we see a separation that is less physical and more psychological,[111] leaving Adriane defensive and guarded in nearly all of her interactions. Much in the same way that characters in the *Hunger Games* villainize each other, Adriane's guardedness and lack of trust perpetuate a corrupted recognition with other characters as she engages with them as objects around her, but not necessarily as subjects, keeping them at a distance to avoid potentially being informed on. When existing in a panoptic state as Adriane, Offred, and Katniss do, recognition becomes incredibly complicated as people don't experience intersubjective connection. This leaves people with a corrupted recognition experience, in which they don't fully engage with or understand others' subjectivities, ultimately solidifying the negative impact that oppressive forces – in this case, surveillance – has on one's recognition experiences and subject formation. Additionally, this context then hinders the intersubjective connection experienced within and through individual recognition, as both

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[110] Oates, *Hazards*, 59. Emphasis in original.

[111] This is not to say that the separation in the Hunger Games series is not psychological – because it most definitely is – but rather to acknowledge the role that the separation of districts played in the psychological separation, a role that is not present in *Hazards*.

empathy and the possibility of witnessing are thwarted when individuals are so distinctly separated from one another.

2.2.2 Uncorrupted Recognition

Despite the examples of corrupted recognition discussed above that make uncorrupted recognition appear unachievable, uncorrupted recognition is accessible within oppressive contexts and can both identify oppressive structures and one's agency to engage with such structures. In the *Hunger Games* series, for example, there are in fact distinct moments in which power dynamics shift and uncorrupted recognition becomes possible. First, despite the fact that citizens between districts seemingly can't engage in the experience of uncorrupted individual recognition, we can see Katniss experience uncorrupted recognition with citizens of other districts once she herself becomes a tribute. Though she previously holds much disdain for the "career" districts, once she meets some of them in the arena – especially in the Quarter Quell in *Catching Fire*,[112] the second book in the trilogy, in which she competes against other past victors – she realizes that through the experience of witnessing they are also being mistreated and oppressed by the Capitol in a variety of ways, not only in being forced to compete in the same way that she was and is, but even in their treatment after winning. This witnessing can be seen in the storyline surrounding Finnick Odair of District 4. Though Katniss assumes that he was a Capitol favorite of his own volition and charisma, she later finds out that the government of Panem has prostituted him to Capitol citizens, a prime example of Oliver's witnessing others' contexts and experiences. Once she learns this and understands that other districts, citizens, tributes, and even victors are being mistreated in various ways as well, she is able to not only relate to them, but also identify their positions as subjects in entirely different ways. Katniss's understanding then allows their shared experiences to become clearer, thus connecting them in a way that they hadn't been previously – a connection that is crucial not only in the recognition experience that can more readily occur between them, but also in their coming together in the rebellion later. Through Katniss's experience, the novel showcases not only the intersubjectivity of the recognition experience in the ways that it can bond those engaging in it, but also the power of the recognition experience coupled with witnessing, as it has the potential to change perspectives and ultimately influence an event as significant as a revolution.

Further, the *Hunger Games* series also portrays uncorrupted individual recognition between Katniss and President Snow, namely in Katniss being identified as a threat to Snow's power. Before addressing the textual examples, the uncorrupted recognition between Katniss and Snow is akin to Hegel's master/slave dynamics in which power shifts to allow for recognition. As Oliver's witnessing has been an important piece in understanding recognition, it is useful to note that she would likely criticize the recognition between Katniss and Snow in its continued focus on the loss and/or gain of power rather than intersubjective connection and understanding of the other. Though witnessing is prevalent throughout recognition experiences, Katniss and Snow are more

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[112] Collins, *Catching Fire*.

separated from one another in their positions of power, which I argue calls for a different, more forceful engagement with the other – especially when considering a tyrannical leader intent on maintaining their power. Given Snow's status as president and his maniacal and oppressive governance over Panem, he holds distinct power over Katniss and other citizens, a fact of which he consistently reminds the nation. This power can be seen not simply in the surveillance that he enforces across Panem, but also in the fear that he cultivates and perpetuates. Many rumors are discussed throughout the series that identify Snow as a corrupt, power-hungry man who not only has citizens beaten and/or executed at his whim, but also poisons various people that he believes to have wronged him. In addition to the rumors about his use of poison, it is also said that Snow drinks the poisons himself in order to avoid suspicion and in turn wears strong colognes to mask the smell of blood in his mouth from associated sores that never heal. Though presented as a rumor in the books, this narrative instills terror within Panem's citizens, making them less likely to oppose or stand up against him, in the same way that the panoptic gaze incites the prisoner or worker to maintain self-regulation to avoid a potential punishment.

Given the various forms of power that Collins attributes to Snow, we can see how the recognition experience between him and any citizen would seem to be inherently corrupted. However, this changes for Katniss specifically once Snow truly sees her as a threat to his power and thus in some ways as an equal. As the narration doesn't delve into Snow's point of view, the reader can't identify exactly when Snow's perspective on Katniss shifts. However, we can see the change developing over the course of the books and Katniss' acts of rebellion, which suggests that her agency helps cultivate an uncorrupted recognition experience. This shift begins with Katniss's reaction to Rue's death in the first book. The novel represents her rebellion not only in her preparation of Rue's body with flowers and song,[113] but also with her interiority in these moments. Watching over Rue's dead body, Katniss thinks,

> Gale's voice in my head. His ravings against the Capitol no longer pointless, no longer to be ignored. Rue's death has forced me to confront my own fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us. But here, even more strongly than at home, I feel my impotence. There's no way to take revenge on the Capitol. Is there? . . . I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I.[114]

Now, obviously Snow doesn't have access to this inner dialogue to see her newfound rebellion. Nonetheless, this indicates a clear shift in Katniss's perspective and actions, pushing her toward the open rebellion seen later. Though witnessing doesn't occur between Katniss and Snow, it is her witnessing Rue that provides a catalyst for her changed perspective which also helps set a foundation for Katniss's uncorrupted

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[113] Collins, *The Hunger Games,* 234-238.
[114] Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 236-237.

recognition experiences with Snow. This change is necessary to witness the oppression of others as perpetuated by Snow or Panem and to engage with her own agency to rebel against structures.

Along with paying tribute to Rue, Katniss' potential attempted suicide through the use of nightlock berries serves both as a moment of rebellion and a threat to Snow's and the Capitol's power, as well. This action, committed after a last minute rule change that indicated that she and Peeta could not win together at the end of their first games, was meant to show not only that the Capitol didn't need to have a winner in the games and that the tributes could create a different outcome, but also that the Capitol's systems could be changed, despite their claim that the games were the only solution and must be played out in very specific ways. This example is certainly her primary act of rebellion within the first book and arguably places her under more direct scrutiny from Snow. Though I wouldn't necessarily indicate this as *the* moment of a shift in power dynamics between Katniss and Snow – as it is her first major act of rebellion, which Snow believes he can thwart relatively easily – it is somewhat of a turning point for Katniss in her awareness of her own ability to resist the Capitol's oppressive forces. Nonetheless, it isn't until later books that her rebellion really begins to take shape as a real force against the Capitol and Snow. Katniss doesn't simply understand and identify the need for rebellion outright. Rather, she gains that understanding over time and experience with the oppressive power structures of Panem, partially through interacting with and witnessing a wider range of people and partially through meeting and engaging with those in power. Through this character growth, Collins seems to be pointing to the importance of witnessing, that is experiencing others' contexts in order to develop connections that can lead to change.

With the previous example, I would identify the shift between Katniss and Snow as occurring from the uprisings in District 11, both in *The Hunger Games* after Rue's death and in *Catching Fire*[115] after Katniss' tribute to Rue during her and Peeta's victory tour, as those scenes solidify the sway and influence that Katniss holds over other districts. To clarify, the two uprisings in District 11 are as follows. First, after Katniss cares for and protects Rue's body, District 11 begins rioting against the peacekeepers and destroying the facilities and machines used for their exports to the Capitol.[116] Second, during Katniss and Peeta's victory tour, having successfully won the hunger games in the first book by threatening to poison themselves, at the beginning of *Catching Fire* in District 11 Katniss offers a tribute for Rue to Rue's family, which encourages an elderly man in the crowd to offer her the three-finger salute, then matched by the entire crowd,

> I stand there, feeling broken and small, thousands of eyes trained on me. There's a long pause. Then, from somewhere in the crowd, someone whistles Rue's four-note mockingjay tune . . . The one that meant safety in the arena. By the end of

[115] Collins, *Catching Fire*.

[116] In the book, we learn about this uprising later, after Katniss and Peeta win their first games, while in the film adaptation we see this rebellion occur in real time.

the tune, I have found the whistler, a wizened old man in a faded red shirt and overalls. His eyes meet mine. What happens next is not an accident. It is too well executed to be spontaneous, because it happens in complete unison. Every person in the crowd presses the three middle fingers of their left hand against their lips and extends them to me. It's our sign from District 12, the last good-bye I gave Rue in the arena.[117]

Not only does this act lead to the elderly man's execution, the execution sparks a violent uprising as District 11's citizens push forward to attack the peacekeepers. Though Katniss had committed acts of rebellion prior, these particular moments were inspired by her in a much louder way and in less abstract terms than her and Peeta's threat to poison themselves in her first games, which implied a weakness of the Capitol[118] but didn't necessarily showcase the overall rebellion that would follow. Both uprisings in District 11 ultimately showcase what Katniss' influence can accomplish and potentially allow Snow to see her in a more serious light as a direct threat to his power; this shift becomes apparent to Katniss, as well. Though only viewed as entertainment by the Capitol, Katniss quickly becomes a fan-favorite. After her rebellion in the arena and the uprisings in District 11, Katniss is again threatened by Snow to follow through on her and Peeta's engagement and marriage plans. After this, she realizes that his threat, though not empty, is thwarted in some ways, as even the Capitol would be outraged if she was killed at that point. Snow's shift in perspective and Katniss's acknowledgement of this shift means that Katniss is no longer simply his subordinate, but potentially his equal able to act against him. This leads the way to their uncorrupted recognition experience with one another as subjective, acting beings in the world, showcasing the impact that shifts in understanding and in power can allow space for uncorrupted recognition. Further, in terms of agency, the novel's portrayal of uncorrupted recognition showcases that transgression against oppressive forces, even in intersubjective connection with others can affect power dynamics, but also can help realize agency through uncorrupted recognition experiences.

In *Handmaid*, Offred's experience witnessing and developing intersubjective connection with other characters, namely Nick, Serena Joy, and Commander Waterford, lead to uncorrupted recognition, despite the strict rules constraining contact with those around her. First, Offred develops a relationship with Nick under the instruction of Commander Waterford's wife, Serena Joy, who forces them to attempt to illegally conceive a child for the Waterfords. Even though they were initially pushed together, they develop a romantic connection that eventually aids in Offred's escape. Offred not only gains a sense of recognition with Nick, but potentially also with Serena Joy, as the one who pushed them together. Though not literally her superior, as a man within Gilead's patriarchal structure, Nick would be considered in a slightly higher position than Offred, and thus be more likely to experience a corrupted recognition, seeing her as a subordinated "other." It is important to acknowledge that this dynamic is in some ways new to these characters, as Gilead has only recently been established and the characters remember their time before

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[117] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 61.
[118] Connors, "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay.'"

Gilead and their time as free individuals. Their relationship, however, allows them space to build a dynamic that could allow uncorrupted recognition to occur as it might have years earlier, prior to Gilead's establishment. This becomes especially clear in Offred's narration, in which she begins to find a positive experience and intersubjective connection in their relationship. Offred cherishes at least those few moments they have, stating, "I went back to Nick. Time after time, on my own, without Serena knowing. It wasn't called for, there was no excuse. I did not do it for him, but for myself entirely."[119] She further states, "We make love each time as if we know beyond the shadow of a doubt that there will never be any more, for either of us, with anyone, ever . . . Being here with him is safety; it's a cave, where we huddle together while the storm goes on outside. This is a delusion, of course."[120] Though she acknowledges their lack of security, their encounters become spaces for the two of them to connect with each other as, in a sense, equals as they might have before Gilead's take-over. Though Nick is not a narrating character, his uncorrupted recognition with Offred is suggested later by his affiliation with the Eyes and by his rescuing her at the end of the novel. Not only does this experience between Offred and Nick showcase the intersubjective nature of recognition, it also solidifies the call to recognition presented by Althusser and Butler, discussed in chapter one, "Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency." In this context, recognition is shown as desired, sought despite the forces potentially hindering it. This ultimately also presents recognition as an experience that transgresses oppressions through the intersubjective connection existing between the individual participants. Finding comfort and community together in their uncorrupted recognition experience, there is the potential for a camaraderie to develop around the possibility of rebellion and change, as also seen with Katniss and tributes from other districts when they come together in recognition and to fight together as rebels.

Atwood also depicts a possibility of uncorrupted recognition between Serena Joy and Offred, through Offred's witnessing Serena Joy's desperation in pushing Offred and Nick together. Despite Serena Joy's continuing hostility, Offred realizes how desperate Serena Joy is for the potential child that could come from Offred's and Nick's sexual relationship. As Offred notes, while bringing her to Nick, "[Serena's] left hand clamps the banister, in pain maybe holding on, steadying her. I think: she's biting her lip, she's suffering. She wants it all right, that baby."[121] Further, Offred is aware of Serena Joy's change in tone, stating, "'I won't go outside with you,' she whispers. Odd, to hear her whispering, as if she is one of us. Usually Wives do not lower their voices."[122] Offred's thoughts here indicate Serena Joy's reckless desire, as she is willing to not only admit that they may need another outlet to conceive, but also the lengths to which she will go (even breaking the law) to impregnate Offred. This understanding ultimately makes Serena Joy more vulnerable, thus allowing space for Offred to witness the complicated position Serena Joy is in as oppressed in certain ways herself. Though I wouldn't identify

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119 Atwood, *Handmaid*, 268.

120 Atwood, *Handmaid*, 268.

121 Atwood, *Handmaid*, 259.

122 Atwood, *Handmaid*, 260.

Offred as empathizing with or relating to Serena Joy, these moments of vulnerability do begin to shift Offred's perspective, thus allowing space for potential uncorrupted recognition.

Discussing Hegel, Axel Honneth addresses vulnerability in recognition directly, acknowledging a potential interpretation of Hegel's mutual recognition – particularly in the desire for recognition that leads one to attack the other that they seek recognition from in order to be seen. Honneth states, "Hegel's statements can also be understood that it is only with the anticipation of the finitude of the other that subjects become conscious of the existential common ground on the basis of which they learn to view each other reciprocally as vulnerable and threatened beings."[123] Thus, vulnerability is a crucial piece in the recognition experience, as it is the only way in which an individual can ultimately be recognized, as they must, in some ways, allow themselves to be perceived in such a way while also seeing the other in a similar, open way. So, in terms of potential uncorrupted individual recognition, though Atwood doesn't give us access to Serena Joy's perspective, the examples above provide a potential catalyst for both witnessing and uncorrupted recognition experiences.

Even more apparent, we can see the potential for uncorrupted individual recognition between Offred and Serena Joy after their first ceremony with the commander. During the ceremonies, not only are the handmaids raped by their commanders, they are made to lay on the bed, between the wife's legs while holding the wife's hands. In Offred's description of their ceremony, she notes not only the way that she is trying to focus elsewhere until it is over, but also on the way that Serena Joy is gripping her hands tightly in an unusual way. After the ceremony has ended, Offred also recognizes that Serena Joy lets out a breath that she had been holding and immediately demands that Offred leave the room, despite the protocol requiring her to stay on her back and increase the chance of conception. Offred questions Serena Joy's feelings here, noting her sharp tone and tense posture, stating, "Before I turn away I see her straighten her blue skirt, clench her legs together; she continues lying on the bed, gazing up at the canopy above her, stiff and straight as an effigy. Which of us is it worse for, her or me?"[124] In this acknowledgement, Offred not only sees Serena Joy's vulnerability – and her exertion of power as a cover, but also gains an understanding of the oppressive powers also affecting the commander's wives, as they are clearly uncomfortable with this dynamic, as well. Offred, then, potentially experiences a sense of witnessing and recognition with Serena Joy, as seeing her experience allows Offred to identify the potential oppressions that the wives face as well.[125] Offred's ability to witness Serena Joy's, and other Wives', vulnerability leads to

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[123] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 48.

[124] Atwood, *Handmaid*, 95.

[125] Though the in-text discussion of the Wives' experiences is somewhat limited, I wanted to note the greater discussion that could be had surrounding the TV adaptation of the narrative, in which the Wives are given much more narrative space. Though diving into this adaptation isn't necessarily feasible within this particular discussion, I wanted to point to the potential expansion that could be addressed in reference to the TV adaptation and its representation of the Wives and the view it provides on their oppressions.

an empathetic view of and thus to an uncorrupted recognition experience. As Oliver theorizes, this connection between recognition and witnessing doesn't simply allow us to better understand others' oppressions but also provides space for us to engage with them to potentially transgress oppressions.[126]

Additionally, Offred's interactions with Commander Waterford provide more useful examples of potentially uncorrupted recognition experiences. Despite communication between a handmaid and a commander being strictly forbidden, Waterford is the one who invites Offred not only into his office but also to a brothel in order for them to spend private time together. Though she doesn't know what his intentions are initially, she quickly sees his potential weaknesses, as he is breaking the law through these interactions. She actually acknowledges this weakness explicitly,

> So why does he want to see me, at night, alone? . . . To refuse to see him could be worse. There's no doubt about who holds the real power. But there must be something he wants, from me. To want is to have a weakness. It's this weakness, whatever it is, that entices me. It's like a small crack in a wall, before now impenetrable. If I press my eye to it, this weakness of his, I may be able to see my way clear. I want to know what he wants.[127]

In much the same way she does with Serena Joy, these interactions with Waterford level the two of them – potentially even allowing space for uncorrupted recognition, as Offred can see ways that his actions may be exploited. Unlike Offred's recognition experiences with Serena Joy, Offred's experiences with Commander Waterford don't seem to showcase witnessing on Offred's part to see a potential plight that he might be experiencing. Instead, she sees his actions and words for the ways that they might be used against him. This shift in dynamics and newfound understanding of Commander Waterford, then allows space for an uncorrupted individual recognition experience as their power dynamics shift. This distinction also shows a different form of transgression, moving away from empathy and understanding of the other person and instead acknowledging their place of power that potentially requires more force to balance power between them – also seen between Katniss and Snow. This is significant in regard to recognition as it presents a vulnerability in the oppressor, one that – rather than relates the oppressor and oppressed in a shared or similar vulnerability – requires force to weaken the oppressor's power, while bolstering the power of the oppressed. Again, Oliver would likely take issue with this context of domination, though Hegel would identify this struggle as necessary.

Hazards also presents examples of uncorrupted recognition experiences that stem from vulnerability, moments in which characters thoughtfully encounter each other's subjectivities. The first is between Adriane and her father, Eric. Her father plays a vital role in her life, not only in being supportive in a fatherly way, but also in trusting her with

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[126] Oliver, *Witnessing*.
[127] Atwood, *Handmaid*, 136.

family secrets – i.e. Uncle Toby and his Deletion. So, while Eric's explanation about her Uncle Toby contributes to the corrupt recognition experience overall in her understanding of the world, it also serves as an example of uncorrupted recognition between her and her father. In particular, this act shows how Eric sees his daughter and how he potentially sees the government constrictions, as well. In terms of Adriane, through this conversation we can see not only how much he trusts her to keep their family secret, but also how he sees the importance of her understanding the problematic dynamics of the world they live in. Rather than simply teaching her to be docile and afraid, he teaches her how to carefully maneuver their surveillance state instead, telling her not to talk about Toby while also hiding in the attic away from listening technology. These moments showcase his acknowledgement of his daughter as a subject, someone with her own mind and sense of self that can be maintained and preserved as she comes into her own, which creates space for uncorrupted recognition to occur between them. Again, not only does Eric see Adriane as a subject with agency, he also shows how significantly he can trust her, a rare occurrence in NAS-23. These recognition experiences also showcase the intersubjective connection crucial to recognition, along with the significance of witnessing others' context, in this case allowing trust as a form of a connection.

Further, *Hazards* portrays a potential uncorrupted individual recognition through intersubjective connection between Adriane – referred to by the alias Mary Ellen while in Wainscotia – and Ira Wolfman. Adriane and Wolfman meet at Wainscotia when she is a student in the psychology class for which he is the teaching assistant. She is immediately drawn to him as she believes him to be an Exiled Individual (EI) like her. This belief – and him subsequently admitting to also being an EI – are crucial moments in which we can potentially see an uncorrupted recognition happening between the characters. When she initially sees him, she thinks, "[Wolfman] was the first person who *knew*. Staring at me, in an instant he knew who I was. What I was. And I thought – *There are two of us now*."[128] In this moment, we can see them experiencing one another in a way that clearly goes beyond a simple encounter, instead acknowledging a connection in their shared identity. Further, when Wolfman eventually does confirm her suspicions, they share their reasons for having been exiled, sentence lengths, and other details about NAS-23. In this sharing of experiences, going a step beyond the initial recognition – reminiscent of Oliver's witnessing – Mary Ellen and Wolfman engage in a recognition experience through understanding and engaging with one another's punishment and persecution. Though more subtle than examples from some other texts, these moments between Wolfman and Mary Ellen are crucial in understanding the complexity of recognition within a surveillance context in which not only can one not trust those around them, but then also certainly can't be vocal about connecting with others in meaningful ways. While these experiences don't encourage rebellion (like with Katniss) or showcase oppressors' weaknesses (like with Offred) they do give Mary Ellen a newfound strength to make it through the remainder of her four-year sentence. Though this is certainly a more passive effect produced by an uncorrupted recognition experience, it nonetheless changes Mary Ellen's demeanor as she finds an outlet for her loneliness. Now, we can't

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[128] Oates, *Hazards*, 85. Emphasis in original.

possibly discuss Mary Ellen's "outlet" in Wolfman without also addressing the problematic obsession that she fosters for him. Along with hoping to gain a friend in him, she also immediately believes herself to be in love with him, despite his consistently trying to keep her at arm's length. Though he eventually gives in to her attention, confiding in her about his experiences as an EI, he initially tells her to leave him alone so that they can both avoid punishment. Eventually he persuades her to attempt to leave Wainscotia, an act that leads to his Deletion and her hospitalization and erased memory. Although she uses Ira as an outlet in an arguably unhealthy way, we can potentially acknowledge her gained strength as a positive outcome – at least until her memories are wiped out entirely later in the novel, a complexity that I will further address in a later chapter. Much like with Offred and Nick, the recognition experience between Mary Ellen and Wolfman illustrates not only the intersubjective power of recognition, but also the significance of such intersubjectivity within oppressive contexts, bringing characters together to survive their contexts in community with one another – transgressing the isolation into which they are forced.

2.3 Conclusion - Individual Recognition and How it Affects Agency

In each of the texts above, we see examples of recognition experiences that not only showcase the intersubjective nature of recognition, demonstrating that we rely on witnessing others to understand and experience our world fully, but also in some circumstances allow space for characters to utilize their own subjectivity and agency in significant ways to either find their oppressors weaknesses or even to rebel against oppressors. Through these texts, we can learn a significant amount about the ways that recognition functions within marginalization, namely its corruption, and the ways that individuals can engage with their own and others' subjectivities – whether to transgress and make change or to witness one another and understand each other more meaningfully. Not only are individual recognition experiences corrupted through unbalanced power dynamics as we through *Hunger Games*, *Handmaid*, and *Hazards*, both the experience of witnessing others' contexts and oppressions as they change individual perspectives and perceptions, along with shifting power dynamics can lead to uncorrupted recognition experiences through intersubjective connection and empathy with others.

3 Recognition With and Within Institutions and Systemic Power in Feminist Dystopian Contexts

3.1 Recognition within Institutions, Governments, or Systems

Understanding power structures and the influence that power has on subject formation is crucial to identifying recognition with institutions, as structures of power don't simply exist around us, but constitute our being as we exist by and through systems of power. This idea is derived from the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. According to Foucault, the power of the state apparatus is not one that bears down on its subjects from outside, but both constitutes them and uses them to further its power simultaneously. In *Power/Knowledge*, he states,

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of . . . multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals.[129]

From here, Foucault states that this "individual is an effect of power and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation" or its "vehicle."[130] The individual does not experience power as something outside of themselves, but as something that creates their being as a subject and furthers that power as well. Given Foucault's later theorizations on panopticism and disciplinary power – particularly as it is used to enforce conformity and normativity[131] – the notion of the individual as a "vehicle" of power points to a socialization of power and its effects that leads to self discipline and the desire to conform to social norms. The pervasiveness of power leads Foucault to also call for the analysis and dismantling not of the state apparatus in its entirety, but in its minute mechanisms "outside, below and alongside" it, as those, he posits, are what maintain the power of the state.[132]

In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler builds on Foucault's notion of the subject being created by and through power, adding that this constitution is also a *submission* to power through the experience of subjection, as power not only "imposes itself on us, and, weakened by its force, we come to internalize or accept its terms," but also we experience a "fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically,

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[129] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 98.

[130] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.

[131] Michel Foucault, "The body of the condemned," in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

[132] Michel Foucault, "Body/Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 60.

initiates and sustains our agency."[133] Butler challenges the lack of discussion in Foucault's work around this submission and adherence to power's effects, noting that "power that first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity."[134] So, while Foucault's focuses on power that affects the individual's actions and self-discipline, Butler addresses the experiences of self and subjectivity that are impacted by power. Louis Althusser similarly addresses the effect of power on subject formation through his notion of interpellation, in which one is hailed by authority and submits to that authority by acknowledging the call.[135] In Althusser's interpellation, not only does power directly impact one's subjectivity, it is through a direct submission to power – that is, turning when the police officer calls "hey, you!" regardless of guilt or wrongdoing – that one's subject is established as authority acknowledges it. Though quite similar to her theorizations of submission and subjection, Butler challenges Althusser's focus on a "centralized state apparatus," which, she argues, implies the guilt of the individual compelled to turn toward the voice calling out to them.[136] Nonetheless, interpellation is a useful notion of subject formation as it further supports the idea that power exists around and within us to the point that, even if we have no reason to imagine being called on by authority, we turn toward the voice, seeking confirmation and approval of our subjectivity by authority.[137] Foucault's, Butler's, and Althusser's notions of power help us better understand not only the importance of acknowledging the compelling presence of power, but also the connection between recognition and forces of power constituting subject formation.

Moving more directly into recognition, we can look to Hegel's master/slave dialectic[138] for its theorizations of recognition as impacted by power dynamics between individuals. While on the surface Hegel presents the corrupted recognition experience that occurs between those in power and those that they oppress, we can see how the use of "lord" and "bondsman," or "slave" and "master," specifically represents the social and political structure maintaining various forms of oppression. In Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*,[139] though Fanon agrees with Hegel's overarching thoughts on recognition, he analyzes the significance of context in the terminology Hegel uses. Particularly, Fanon addresses the use of "master" and "slave" as it holds different connotations within the context of a Western colonial situation in which people of color were not simply subordinated, but seen as subhuman, animal species. In this context, a corrupted recognition experience is much more significant than the enslaved person simply being subconsciously objectified, as we see in Sartre's "look," for example. Rather, enslaved

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[133] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 2.

[134] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 3.

[135] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).

[136] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 5-6.

[137] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 112.

[138] Hegel, "Independence."

[139] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

people were actively and consciously objectified in their enslavement. With this, we can see that there is a clear correlation between the terminology and the social structure maintaining oppressive schemes and thus perpetuating corrupted recognition experiences. This is a correlation that we must consider not only as we engage with oppressive structures, but also with recognition experiences across various contexts, as such terminology can change the dynamics of power that affect the recognition experience and thus can also change our understanding of those contexts.

Additionally, though not a concept articulated within phenomenological recognition and subject formation, I argue that there is potential for a concept of "institutional recognition" that refers to individuals experiencing recognition with an institution or system itself. Now, while this sounds potentially questionable given the focus on individual subjectivity and agency in recognition, we can't ignore two important elements: first, the possibility of identifying institutions as entities, particularly as they are acting forces that act upon or against individuals and groups and second, the collectivity of institutions as they are comprised of individuals acting within a collective intention.

First, though the use of "entity" above is potentially problematic, namely in the definition of an "entity" as a being or subject, institutions or groups are able to take action as "actors." According to Maxim Voronov and Klaus Weber, specifically in reference to addressing the individual and "personhood" within institutional analysis,

> An 'actor' is an entity that is located in a network of other actors within an institutional order. It is constituted by the institution and is afforded actorhood (standing as a recognized entity) by its position within the institution and in relation to the domain governed by the institution. Hence, actors can be people in specific roles (e.g., manager), but also organized collectives, legal fictions, and material objects and technological artefacts [*sic*].[140]

In other words, an actor or subject can be identified as far more than simply an individual, allowing space to consider institutions as organized collectives and thus as acting entities themselves. Voronov and Weber further address the complexity of institutions on one's personhood, particularly as institutions engage personhood differently in different contexts and are complex networks of power.[141] With this, institutions are ultimately composed of people and, as we saw with Foucault, such power constitutes individuals while also acting through them, thus placing the perpetuation of institutional power in the realm of socialization and social norms. Even acting through people, however, institutions still function as a unit, utilizing their constructed power to affect individuals. Institutions can engage in a corrupted recognition experience with individuals through systemic oppression (racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia,

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[140] Maxim Voronov and Klaus Weber, "People, Actors, and the Humanizing of Institutional Theory," Journal of Management Studies 57, no. 4 (2020): 874

[141] Voronov and Weber, "People, Actors, and the Humanizing of Institutional Theory," 874

classism, etc.). These systemic oppressions – enacted and perpetuated by social and political institutions – place people in subordinated positions, not receiving the institutional support or social standing that those of normative identities receive.

Second, though recognition primarily considers individuals encountering other individuals, the notion of collectivity and collective intention are crucial within institutional contexts. Dan Zahavi and Dominik Zelinsky address collective identity or "we-ness," acknowledging "experiential subjectivity" as imperative to understand the socialization of identity and thus intersubjectivity.[142] In terms of identifying "we-ness," Zahavi states,

> In order to adopt a we-perspective, it is, in short, not sufficient simply to recognize the presence of others. In addition, at some level one has to feel connected to and identify with these others. Absent such an identification, the others will precisely remain others, and this will not allow for the emergence of any we-ness. To identify with others, to see oneself as similar to them, to experience oneself as a group member, as one of *us*, is, however, precisely something that involves and transforms one's self-experience.[143]

In other words, one's sense of self is ultimately tied up with engagement with others, not simply in acknowledging their presence in our world, but in our connections and identifications with them. Zahavi also identifies this as "being-with-one-another" through "collective intentionality," which he states "must address the question of what it takes to act together with others, to experiences oneself as part of a we, to feel joy or anger or a victory not simply as mine, but as *ours*."[144] In this way, through collective intentionality – also defined as "the intentionality of collectives and intentional phenomena involving groups of agents in contexts in which they are acting or oriented toward action as a group"[145] – we exist not as individuals comprising groups, but as identified by and through those groups via shared experiences, values, and action.

In terms of institutional recognition, Zahavi's "we-ness" and collective intentionality offer us a view of group identification that allows space for experiences of recognition as and with groups. Elisabeth Pacherie discusses collective phenomenology as both "social identification and adherence to the goals, values, norms, standards, beliefs, and practices of the group one identifies with,"[146] along with being "composite experiences, combining, or perhaps coalescing, a primary phenomenal experience (the experience that

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[142] Dan Zahavi and Dominik Zelinsky, "Experience, Subjectivity, Selfhood: Beyond a Meadian Sociology of the Self," *J Theory Social Behavior* 54, (2024): 48.

[143] Dan Zahavi, "Group-Identification, Collectivism, and Perspectival Autonomy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 61 (2023): 68. Emphasis in original.

[144] Zahavi, "Group-Identification, Collectivism, and Perspectival Autonomy," 73. Emphasis in original.

[145] Marija Jankovic and Kirk Ludwig, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality*, ed. Marija Jankovic and Kirk Ludwig (London: Routledge, 2018), 2.

[146] Elisabeth Pacherie, "Collective Phenomenology," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality*, ed. Marija Jankovic and Kirk Ludwig (London: Routledge, 2018), 167.

is shared) and a phenomenal experience of sharing."[147] In each of these, a group is identified by its shared experiences and beliefs, making those in such groups "perceptually sensitive to affordances for joint action."[148] Pacherie's definitions, along with Zahavi's thoughts, showcase not only collectivity, but also collective intentionality as crucial pieces to identity and action within a group, thus supporting the identification of collectivity and institutions as entities to be engaged with as wholes. We can look to Axel Honneth's social recognition theory and to feminist theory, namely focused on intersectionality and social justice, to identify support for both seeing institutions and systems as acting forces and to identify institutions and groups as capable of experiencing corrupted recognition with individuals.

Within the context of feminist theory, in Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality, identity is defined as a varying experience of both oppressions and privileges as one's identities overlap and intersect. Systems of power are, as we know, at the root of these oppressions and privileges as identity norms are socially constructed and enforced. As Carole Shadbolt defines it,

> Interpersonal systemic oppression is an unconscious bias that is built in, inherited transgenerationally, and embodied, one that continually recreates and reinvents itself as it goes about its ordinary, unquestioned, entitled, traditional, everyday business. Paradoxically, although it does not speak with one voice, its meanings are clearly articulated, communicated in a muteness that can be deafening. Hiding in plain sight, it is simultaneously observable, invisible, feelable, ghost like, full volume audible and indistinct, explicit and implicit.[149]

Oppression and systemic power maintain their pervasiveness through this sense of invisibility identified by Shadbolt, often so deeply ingrained in our world – and our understanding of our world – that they act against and around us seemingly without acknowledgement or challenge. Additionally, when identities are considered non-normative they are subjected to active mistreatment through institutional policies and procedures[150,151] – i.e. being denied various rights under government, laws, politics, and even being threatened by and/or subjected to systemic violence, while also treated as "illegitimate." According Shadbolt, oppressive systems establish

> the dominant discourse of theory and practice in which policies, practices, and curricula go unscrutinized because of historical allegiances, loyalties, and nostalgia . . . They masquerade as rituals, rules, and protocols and are the

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[147] Pacherie, "Collective Phenomenology," 170.

[148] Pacherie, "Collective Phenomenology," 170.

[149] Carole Shadbolt, "The Many Faces of Systemic Oppression, Power, and Privilege: The Necessity of Self-Examination," *Transactional Analysis Journal* 52, no. 3, (2022): 264.

[150] Shadbolt, "The Many Faces of Systemic Oppression," 264.

[151] Foucault, "The body of the condemned," 26-27.

bureaucratic glue with which potentially an institutional systemic oppressive organization is unawarely built and maintained.[152]

Though I would challenge the use of "unawarely" here – particularly in its potential innocence or ignorance that it implies in regards to privilege – Shadbolt's notion of systemic normalization is inherent to not only social norms, but the institutional policies and norms affecting individuals and groups within those institutions. Here we can see a direct connection to Honneth's social recognition theory, which essentially states that recognition experiences are inherently impacted by socialization and social norms, as they dictate the systems of power upholding those norms and the identification of the normative-identified people as privileged. Referencing Hegel's focus on the struggle of social conflict, Honneth states that "[social] conflict represents the most demanding form of intersubjective diremption . . . This conflict is based not on a violation of an individual assertion of rights, but rather on a violation of the integrity of the person as a whole."[153] These violations equate to corrupted recognition experiences as institutions attempt to maintain their power through socialization of norms and the normativity of certain identities that continually perpetuate those denials as they are internalized.[154]

Additionally, from a phenomenological perspective, these denials of rights and identities are also directly connected to shame; that is, shame in being separated from others in a social world through a sense of difference. Luna Dolezal argues that social normativity perpetuates the desire to remain simultaneously seen and invisible. She states,

> The idea is to remain visible, to remain in play in social interaction, but at the same time to look and act just like everyone else, and hence not draw undue attention to oneself . . . (In)visibility indicates that the subject is 'visible' in social relations, he or she is 'in play,' but at the same time, remains unremarkable: acknowledged as a social agent but not judged or objectified.[155]

Here Dolezal points to the paradoxical nature of social interaction, in which we seek acknowledgement as agents while simultaneously attempting to "blend in" with the larger social expectation, even if it leads to an "inauthenticity" via Sartre's "bad faith."[156]

These denials are then connected to issues of subjectivity and subject formation in that the refusal to acknowledge certain identities as legitimate – as we see with Hegel's master/slave dialectic – leads to and perpetuates the hierarchical power dynamic that maintains systems of subordination and domination. This continually places marginalized identities in a corrupted recognition experience with the institutional powers oppressing

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[152] Shadbolt, "The Many Faces of Systemic Oppression," 267.

[153] Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition,* 22.

[154] Sonia Kruks, "The Politics of Recognition: Sartre, Fanon, and Identity Politics," 99.

[155] Luna Dolezal, "The Politics of Shame: The phenomenology of self presentation and social (in)visibility," in *The body and shame: phenomenology, feminism, and the socially shaped body*, (Lexington Books, 2015), 80.

[156] Kruks, "The Politics of Recognition," 93.

them, thus hindering their subject formation experience while also refusing the possibility of the marginalized individuals to recognize the institution. As Honneth writes, "Within society, the individual is not yet, as Hegel says, posited as a 'totality' and thus not yet as a 'whole that reconstructs itself out of difference.'"[157] With this, just like with the master and the slave, the possibility of overcoming the master's oppression is directly connected to the slave's potential recognition experience with the master – though, as we know from Frantz Fanon and Kelly Oliver, the dynamic of master/slave is especially fraught in both the context of the enslavement of African people in Europe and the Americas[158] and in the perpetuation of dominant hierarchies, requiring the master's recognition in order to establish the slave's subjectivity[159] – along with the slave's potential construction of self, as well.

Having identified the corrupted recognition experience from the institution to the individual, I will now consider the recognition experience from individual to the institution. Again, this is complicated, particularly as institutions and systems are not human entities – despite being upheld by human identities and social norms. Nonetheless, I argue that this recognition comes in the form of acknowledging the systemic power – much in the same way that one would identify the acting subjectivity of another person that they encounter – and an individual identifying the ways in which they and others are being used as objects by the institutions, most predominantly though examples of Oliver's witnessing, as we will see in the upcoming textual examples. Using standpoint theory, Eden Kinkaid discusses marginalized individuals being uniquely situated for this recognition, stating,

> One's standpoint cannot be separated [from] the power dynamics that produce differential locations in the production of knowledge. Because of these power dynamics, not all standpoints are equal: in particular, marginalized viewpoints tend to illuminate the functions of power and privilege that remain invisible to dominant accounts.[160]

While not discussing recognition explicitly, Kinkaid's remarks relate to the recognition experience, particularly in systems of power being not only acknowledged but addressed explicitly. This is ultimately the basis of social justice: not only the acknowledgement of oppression and oppressive powers, but also the realization that such powers can be acted against. Tamar Malloy acknowledges this potential distinctly, stating, "when groups enter legal and political arenas and gain even partial or contingent recognition, they are empowered to use their new status as a tool in continuing fights for inclusion and equality." Further, Malloy distinguishes the importance of "viewing the pursuit of

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[157] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 19.

[158] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

[159] Oliver, *Witnessing*.

[160] Eden Kinkaid, "Positionality, post-phenomenology, and the politics of theory," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 29, no. 7 (2022): 927.

recognition as a resource to be utilized, rather than as an end unto itself"[161] as a way to enact change through acknowledgement of one's identity. This is a sentiment similarly acknowledged by Kruks in regards to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* in which Fanon "[affirms that] identity can be liberating only in the context of a struggle also to transform wider material and institutional forms of oppression."[162] While Malloy potentially uses the term "recognition" from the view of acknowledgment as opposed to subject formation, there is still merit in considering subject formation's recognition as being a catalyst for change.

Recognition in the context of institutional settings and power can manifest in varying ways in literature. This recognition often occurs through a metaphorical representation with the narrative's antagonist(s), in which the antagonist's actions and goals represent the larger actions of the institution which they support and uphold. As we will see through various feminist dystopian examples, characters are often depicted as experiencing recognition with another individual, but one who represents the institution that they uphold. To be sure, this does not necessarily mean that recognition experiences between an individual and an authority or political figure inherently represent the institution's recognition as a whole. Rather, such synecdoches serve to connect and compare individual and institutional recognition experiences, ultimately, I argue, making portrayals of institutional recognition experiences in literature more identifiable and relatable. Similarly, this can also be seen through recognition and witnessing between individual characters that ultimately leads to a deeper understanding of the oppressive forces of the institutions themselves. One of the differences between individual recognition and the institutional recognition discussed here is in the implications that the experiences have on the larger systems affecting the characters and their recognition. Namely, there are particular moments in which characters' recognition experiences with one another lead to a distinct witnessing or understanding of the systems of power around them, thus highlighting the institution as the arbiter of oppression and challenging the false social narratives that may have kept characters isolated from one another. These forms of institutional recognition are distinctly portrayed in feminist dystopian literature, as oppressed characters through recognition both acknowledge the oppressive powers that various institutions hold and use for subordination while also attempting to act against the oppressive institutions. So, despite not being a concretely conceptualized idea throughout recognition scholarship, the concept of "institutional recognition" has potential as a form of recognition experience and, as we will see through portrayals in feminist dystopian narratives, affects the experience of subject formation.

3.2 Examples of Corrupted and Uncorrupted Recognition within

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[161] Tamar Malloy, "Reconceiving Recognition: Towards a Cumulative Politics of Recognition," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 22, no. 4 (2014): 417.
[162] Kruks, "The Politics of Recognition," 104.

Institutions in Feminist Dystopian Literature

3.2.1 Corrupted Recognition

While corrupted and uncorrupted recognition experiences engage subjectivity differently, as we've seen in previous chapters, both experiences do allow participants to acknowledge and engage with institutional power and ultimately institutional recognition. Though the experiences differ in terms of subject formation, whether one's subjectivity is being denied or established, they can use that experience to better identify the institutions around them and the power affecting their subjectivities. First looking at examples of corrupted recognition, Westerfeld's young adult *Uglies* series showcases an institutional recognition corrupted by and through a forced disconnection from themselves through the pretty surgery quite distinctly. Though similar to the *Hunger Games* series in both following a young adult protagonist and in the overarching threat of rebellion throughout, *Uglies* offers an interesting view of recognition. Unlike others discussed in this and previous chapters, the recognition experiences portrayed in the *Uglies* series illustrate the continuous nature of recognition, as the protagonist and other characters take part in recognition experiences multiple times throughout the narrative, leading to a comprehension of the larger institutions at play.

In the *Uglies* series, the government perpetuates its control through various forms of memory augmentation, leaving the characters to experience recognition with other characters multiple times – while also, through these recognition experiences, gaining the understanding of the government's oppression multiple times as well. *Uglies* follows Tally Youngblood leading up to her sixteenth birthday, in which "uglies" receive body augmentation surgeries to fit the society's beauty standard of tall bodies, unblemished, fair skin, large wide eyes, and other qualities; they continue to undergo augmentations throughout their lives to maintain these beauty standards. For context, in the initial book in the series, *Uglies*, despite Tally looking forward to her upcoming pretty surgery, her best friend Shay leaves to find the fabled "Smoke" – a community of uglies that has separated themselves from society to avoid the pretty surgery. Coerced into leading "special" enforcement officers to the Smoke with the hope of saving Shay, Tally ultimately finds that the Smokies just want to live unhindered by their society, both for personal freedom and due to the discovery of the surgery's brain "lesions" placed to keep people docile and nonviolent.

The first depiction of corrupted recognition that we see in the series occurs in the second book, *Pretties*. Tally loses memories of previous recognition experiences after she allows herself to be captured and given the pretty surgery, which she does to save her best friend Shay and get her to take the cure for the brain lesions, Shay having been captured and forced to undergo the pretty surgery in the conclusion to *Uglies*. Having done this intentionally, and with full knowledge that she will lose her memories, Tally leaves the Smokies with instructions to give her clues that will help her remember the lesions and ultimately want to take the cure; in other words, hopefully remember the recognition experiences she had already had with the Smoke that changed her worldview. Before Tally turns herself in, the narrator states hopefully, "Unlike most people, [Tally] knew

about the lesions. Maybe she could beat them."[163] Once in New Pretty Town, she and Shay attempt to join the infamous "Crims," the rebellious pretties who not only take part in dangerous stunts and pranks, but also remember and discuss their time as uglies – something that other pretties don't care, and are typically unable, to do. The leader of the Crims, Zane, tries to help Tally remember her time as an ugly, particularly in the Smoke. As Tally realizes her memories are fuzzy and difficult to focus on, Zane asks,

> 'Tell me, Tally, why did you come back here and give yourself up?'
> Zane still held her hand, was squeezing it hard as he waited for an answer. His face was close again . . . drinking in everything she said. But somehow, the memories wouldn't come. Thinking about those times was like banging her head against a wall.
> She chewed her lip. 'How come I can't remember? What's wrong with me, Zane?'
> 'That's a good question. But whatever it is, it's wrong with all of us . . . At least, everyone here in New Pretty Town. Most people won't even talk about when they were uglies. They say they don't want to discuss boring kid stuff . . . But when you push them,' Zane continued, 'it turns out most of them *can't* remember.'[164]

In this exchange, we can see first Zane's attempted recognition with Tally. He seems to be trying to get her to recognize herself and question her world as it exists – that is, to see her agential existence in the world as resistance, as he (like other Crims) has thought his way out of the lesions and their control. Though we don't see her recognizing him, through this corrupted recognition experience between Tally and Zane we can see the beginning of Tally's engagement with the problematic social and political system in which she lives, which we hope could lead to uncorrupted recognition both with Zane and her oppressive society as a whole eventually. Having Zane push Tally to question the obscure spots in her memory allows her to begin to question the overall structure of control being enforced; thus this corrupted recognition experience serves as a foundation for understanding the institutional power upholding their world.

Further, once she and Zane find and take the cure hidden for her by the Smokies, she finds herself realizing the odd nature of New Pretty Town and the pretties inhabiting it. Not only does she notice their superficiality, focused only on having fun and partying, she also witnesses their oppressed context, not having a choice in their thoughts and actions due to the lesions. With this, Tally experiences a corrupted recognition once again, this time with her fellow pretties in New Pretty Town (corrupted in that they don't, or can't, recognize her back) as she sees not only the forced complacency and docility of the pretties, but also how she could have been in the same state herself if she hadn't taken the cure. This recognition experience then encourages her to find the Smoke once again to escape her government's oppressive rule and attempt to live autonomously using Zane's encouragement to explore her autonomy in an oppressive world. These examples

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[163] Westerfeld, *Uglies*, 405. Emphasis in original.
[164] Scott Westerfeld, *Pretties*, (New York: Simon Pulse, 2011), 60. Emphasis in original.

of corrupted recognition showcase both the ways that oppressive power hinders recognition and the ways that even corrupted recognition experiences aid institutional recognition, making institutional power recognizable.

Another example of corrupted institutional recognition in the *Uglies* series is seen in the final book surrounding Tally,[165] *Specials*, in which Tally is forced to become a "special" – essentially an augmented super-human, law enforcement officer. Specials are described as having harsh, sharp features, making them look "hawkish,"[166] or like "predators"[167] with muscular physiques and teeth filed into sharp points.[168] After becoming a special herself, Tally begins to question her and Shay's augmentation, realizing that she feels superior to others – specifically after she visits Zane and is repulsed by his physical and mental state, Zane having been severely disabled by the partial cure taken in *Pretties*. After seeing Zane,

> [Tally] tried to stay icy, to remember how Zane had made her feel back in pretty days. 'What did Dr. Cable do to us, Shay? Do we have some kind of special lesions in our brains? Something that makes everyone else look pathetic? Like we're better than them?'
> 'We *are* better than them, Tally-wa!' Shay's eyes shone like coins, reflecting the lights of New Pretty Town. 'The operation gives us the clarity to see that. That's why everyone else looks confused and pitiful, because that's how most people *are*.'
> . . .
> 'I don't want to *see* this way! I don't want to be disgusted by everyone who's not part of our clique, Shay!'[169]

This questioning is the first way in which we see a corrupted recognition between Tally and Shay, as she wonders why her perspective has changed so dramatically while Shay doesn't seem bothered, finding herself thinking that it must have been part of the change from the special surgery – even though specials are supposed to be one of the job groups that *doesn't* have the lesions.

This interaction is especially interesting as it portrays potentially two examples of recognition that lead to institutional understanding – first between Tally and Shay, and second a self-recognition for Tally. First, we see a corrupted recognition happening here between Tally and Shay in Shay's clear indoctrination and lack of curiosity about their new roles and abilities. Despite Tally actively questioning and rejecting these changes,

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[165] Though there is a fourth book in the series, *Extras*, it does not follow Tally Youngblood. She does appear in later chapters, however. Nonetheless, given my focus on Tally's recognition experiences, I will not be addressing *Extras* here – though it also offers interesting insight into institutional recognition and recognition more broadly.

[166] Westerfeld, *Uglies*, 100.

[167] Westerfeld, *Pretties*, 344.

[168] Westerfeld, *Pretties*, 344.

[169] Scott Westerfeld, *Specials*, (New York: Simon Pulse, 2011), 85-86. Emphasis in original.

Shay remains fully accepting of them, leading Tally to further question not only their changes, but how a government could support these augmentations in the first place. This questioning is an important moment of Tally's autonomy and agency – two features that Shay seems to be lacking or repressing. From there, Tally does seem to recognize herself in some ways, as she not only realizes her thought processes to be so distinctly different from Shay, but also in her rejection of the "special" perspective – again pointing to her own autonomy. Not only does this experience portray a corrupted recognition between Tally and Shay, but also Tally and the governmental system in which she lives, which we can see distinctly in her acknowledgement of the changes forced upon her and, subsequently, the lack of autonomy allowed by her government, as well. In both of these examples, through recognition experiences Tally gains a deeper understanding of the institutions upholding the "special" system, allowing them to continue to exert power over their communities despite their problematic augmentations and perspectives. Not only does this solidify the connection between recognition and institutional power, as recognition within oppressive institutions is corrupted, it also magnifies the significance of agency within recognition experiences to question and potentially address the institutions themselves. Further, Tally's questioning of being a special also identifies a position of privilege as she holds power over others and is still able to acknowledge the oppressive experiences even of those relatively privileged like her, which even further complicates the recognition experience as she herself is both subjected to the oppressive forces and is used to perpetuate those forces, as well.

Though still following a young adult protagonist, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* showcases a different perspective on recognition as corrupted by oppression and power than young adult narratives, such as *Hunger Games* and *Uglies*. Surviving in a future America, ravaged by ecological disaster, food and water scarcity, and rampant homelessness, first-person narrator Lauren Olamina, though certainly rebellious against her father and community, doesn't go through the discovery experience to realize the oppressive forces of her world like other young adult characters do in other dystopian texts I've discussed. Additionally, she doesn't lean into the rebellion to overthrow those forces. Rather, she takes a more peaceful stance, creating a safe community for those who need one. Lauren's experience with recognition is more complex to address, as her oppressors are not as clearly representative of government forces as other protagonists' are (i.e. President Snow to Katniss). Nonetheless, Lauren experiences a corrupted recognition experience in at least two ways: with her father and with society more broadly. A Baptist preacher and the leader of their community – and thus the one perpetuating their social structure and norms – Lauren's father functions as a representative of their society (just as President Snow does within the *Hunger Games* context). Though Lauren has a good relationship with her father, she is locked in a power struggle with him, as she sees the problematic traditionalism present in their community that he perpetuates. More specifically, she states, "They never miss a chance to relive the good old days or to tell kids how great it's going to be when the country gets back on its feet and good times come back."[170] While many members of her neighborhood hope for

[170] Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2019), 8.

things to return to normal, Lauren argues that life won't go back to the way things were, but instead will continue to change. With this change, she acknowledges the need to be prepared for an emergency, not only in terms of supplies for travel, self-defense, and safety, but also in addressing the importance of embracing change and adaptability. Despite Lauren's protests and growing fear, her father tells her to stop scaring the rest of the community and to prepare quietly on her own.[171] In this particular instance, we can see a corrupted recognition experience as he doesn't seem to acknowledge what she is trying to accomplish and thus doesn't acknowledge her agency within their community.

Additionally, the power dynamics between Lauren and her father are made apparent in their specific interaction, in which Lauren's father attempts to reprimand her and exert his power over her. This can be seen through such statements as, "'That's not up to you, Lauren. You don't make decisions for this community,'"[172] "'Don't talk about this any more,' he said in a voice that didn't invite argument,"[173] and "I thought he would yell at me or punish me. His voice had had that warning edge to it that my brothers and I had come to call the rattle – as in a rattlesnake's warning sound. If you pushed him past the rattle, you were in trouble."[174] What each of these quotes shows is the relegated position in which Lauren is placed, as both his daughter and a community member under his charge, thus corrupting their recognition experience, as he doesn't address her as an equal who is trying to aid her community, but as a child to be maintained. This corrupted recognition is especially interesting when compared to the interactions between Eric and Adriane Strohl in *Hazards* discussed in chapter two. As discussed, Eric trusts Adriane and acknowledges her position as a subject in confiding in her about Toby and his Deletion. In direct contrast, Lauren's father sees and treats her as a child who needs to obey his wishes without argument, thus not allowing her space to exist as an acting subject. This also shows how pervasive such power dynamics are, not only existing between government and citizens, but familially (and patriarchically) between parents and children.

Within the novel's future American society broadly, there is a similarly corrupted recognition experience in the overt representation of class constraint and divide. Lauren's class status separates her so distinctly from those with power and/or wealth that she is, in this social structure, inherently barred from gaining recognition with those in authority and with those in lower classes as well. In similar ways to the districts and characters in the *Hunger Games* series, we see this corrupted recognition for Lauren in her community's isolation. The fact that they have separated themselves on the basis of safety from the lower classes – the homeless, the substance abusers, etc. – represents a class warfare designed to keep them from looking at the classes above them while simultaneously refusing space for witnessing to occur with the lower classes. Lauren addresses this class divide explicitly after her community falls victim to multiple

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[171] Butler, *Parable*, 62-67.

[172] Butler, *Parable*, 64.

[173] Butler, *Parable*, 65.

[174] Butler, *Parable*, 65.

robberies. She states, "Some kind of insane burn-the-rich movement . . . We've never been rich, but to the desperate, we looked rich. We were surviving and we had our wall. Did our community die so that addicts could make a help-the-poor political statement?"[175] While Lauren's internalized bias and blame for "addicts" is reductive and problematic, her words show how significant a divide there is between the rich and the poor for her community to be targeted for their supposed wealth, as the actual elite are hidden and well-protected. Lauren also questions what the ultra-rich must experience, stating, "If this is what's happening to us, what must it be like for people who are really rich – although perhaps with their big guns, private armies of security guards, and up to date security equipment, they're better able to fight back. Maybe that's why we're getting so much attention."[176] Even having so little and fighting to survive, Lauren's community is seen as one of wealth simply for having walls to protect themselves. This maintains, as mentioned previously, a class warfare between the lower classes – between the "have-littles and the have-nots,"[177] thus allowing upper classes to continue their lives relatively unscathed.

In terms of recognition, this division between social classes only allows space for a corrupted recognition experience because, while the lower classes can acknowledge the privilege of those above them, none of the groups are truly able to witness one another. Not only can the lowest classes not see Lauren's community as also victimized by the resource-hoarding of the upper classes and the upper classes cannot see any of the lower classes from their protected position, Lauren also can neither recognize the upper class nor the lowest class due to her own relative privilege and oppression, and preconceived notions of the lowest class. Lauren's intersectionality is especially interesting here, as her oppression is undeniable – being so separated from both the upper classes and those in authority over her society at large along with having her agency rejected and belittled because of her age and gender. However, she also experiences a certain amount of privilege, as well – having a community, a family, a home, walls to protect her family and neighborhood, etc. While the separation from upper classes keeps her from experiencing recognition with them, she also is herself separated from the lowest classes, as her own position keeps her from witnessing them in their complex experience of oppression, just as the lowest class is also unable to do for her community. Just as we saw with *Hunger Games* in regards to individual recognition in chapter two, the physical and social separation maintains a corrupted recognition in the lack of intersubjective connection; all groups see the others as enemies without space for witnessing. In terms of institutional recognition, this also maintains a corrupted recognition with the government and/or social system, as individuals are too focused on their animosity towards other groups (along with just trying to survive, of course) that the larger institutions upholding the system remain hidden from view.

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[175] Butler, *Parable*, 163.

[176] Butler, *Parable*, 117.

[177] Jim Miller, "Post-Apocalyptic Hoping: Octavia Butler's Dystopian/Utopian Vision," *Science Fiction Studies* 25, no. 2 (1998): 349.

Another way that we can see institutional recognition corrupted is through governmental control and denial of bodily and reproductive autonomy, as seen through portrayals in Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*. Set in a future America in which evolutionary processes are disrupted – nature overtaking humanity and humans birthing neanderthals rather than homo sapiens – the novel follows Cedar Hawk Songmaker as she attempts to protect her unborn child from the government. Not only does the government want to experiment on her unborn child and – as we find out in the end – continue to impregnate her to help control the population, they also hunt her throughout as a runaway fugitive. Similar to *Handmaid's* Gilead, the government attempting to control Cedar clearly does not see her agentive subject, but rather they see her as an object for the continuation of humanity, with or without her consent.

Though Erdrich depicts the government as an overarching, somewhat unidentifiable entity, we see corrupted recognition with the government representative that Cedar briefly encounters: Mother, a virtual representative, portrayed as a middle-aged woman, who attempts to communicate with and track Cedar after Cedar's pregnancy is discovered. Mother first appears on Cedar's computer screen, whether the device is on or off, and attempts to take a soothing tone, asking how Cedar is feeling and telling her that she cares and is worried about her.[178] Also interesting is the connection between *Future Home's* Mother and the Aunt Lydias in *Handmaid*. Both represent maternal figures meant to perpetuate indoctrination of the young women in the narrative, acting as if in the protagonists' best interest. However, though both Mother and the Lydias act as extensions of the government overall, Lydias are indoctrinated into Gilead's beliefs and are shown as passionate (if not obsessed) about their cause, while Mother sees Cedar as nothing more than an object to which she is assigned. Though Mother, as a virtual entity, doesn't really see her at all, but is just programmed to interact with her as an extension of governmental powers – which further complicates the recognition experience, as Mother herself isn't an entity with which recognition can occur, but is representative of the government. However, along with appearing on Cedar's computer at random, a physical, human version of Mother is part of the party searching for Cedar when she is hiding with her own biological mother. Hidden in a closet beneath a pile of clothes, Cedar thinks,

> She looks straight at me. It is Mother. Her thick hair is fiercely sprayed, the bangs immobilized. Her dark eyes are sunken in her dough face. Her lipless mouth puckers in sympathetic consternation. 'Are you in there, dear?' . . . Her eyes dart around the room and she whispers, 'Can you believe this shit?'[179]

Mother manifesting as a real person and not a virtual entity here is incredibly significant within the context of recognition from Cedar's perspective, as Mother is humanized. This does not mean that an uncorrupted recognition experience occurs between them, but it does change the dynamic of recognition from an inhuman government institution to a representative of the political authority. This even further problematizes Cedar's view

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[178] Louise Erdrich, *Future Home of the Living God*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018), 68, 71, 73, 119.
[179] Erdrich, *Future Home*, 240.

and understanding of the government as Mother's human iteration is not the caring, concerned being that her virtual presence is shown to be. This changed portrayal solidifies Cedar's place as an object for government control. Mother's human demeanor shows that the government doesn't actually want to care for Cedar and other pregnant women, but wants them to comply with their demands without question or struggle.

Despite the corrupted recognition Cedar experiences with Mother and the government, she does attempt to resist their control, namely in her attempts to hide from the government and protect her unborn child, thus acknowledging that the government does not see her as a subject but as a reproductive object. Again, while this doesn't make the recognition experience with the government uncorrupted, it does exemplify the ways in which corrupted recognition allows us to see institutional power and its pervasiveness. Along with attempting to round up and detain pregnant women, Erdrich's government perpetuates a narrative that they are trying to help these women by protecting their pregnancies and offering them amenities to keep them comfortable – though we later find out that many end up being held in a converted prison – and they use Mother as an "unassuming" entity to draw these women in. Even without this later knowledge of their intentions, Cedar is skeptical of their promises, going so far as to first hide in her own home and then to escape the hospital in which she is originally detained to hide with her newly-found biological family on an indigenous reservation in northern Minnesota. These actions, though seemingly obvious choices in the oppressive system presented, showcase a way in which Cedar experiences corrupted recognition, while still acknowledging and understanding the depth of the oppressive systems trying to persuade her with false narratives and promises, thus fueling her attempted resistance.

It is also important to note the complexity of Cedar's recognition here, as the oppressive system within which she exists is quite complicated in terms of the ecological disaster her world is experiencing. In similar ways to Lauren in *Parable* – Cedar has very little control over the roots of the oppressions facing her. To be more specific, the ecological changes and upheaval that lead to her being tracked and detained are out of her – and humanity's – control. Thus she remains, in some ways, at the mercy of the government's actions in response to upheaval. With this, we could potentially identify a sense of conformity to the corrupted recognition experience in Cedar's general lack of action, as she primarily hides and eventually agrees to go to the hospital willingly, the first time; the second time she is forcibly taken from the reservation on which her biological family lives. This "willingness," however, is interesting to consider, as she really feels more out of options than she does "willing" to be taken in. Additionally, we could potentially see this conformity in the way that she focuses on herself and her own child's safety. Though we might expect the protagonist of a dystopia to take an active stance in helping others, Cedar really only works to protect herself and her unborn child. Again, however, this can be easily complicated by the lack of power and options that she has to fight against the government as a whole and those tracking her. This complexity and the feeling of helplessness that can come from a lack of options showcases the influence of institutional power to not only corrupt and hinder people's recognition experiences, but also their agency and autonomy, as well. Through Cedar's portrayal, we can identify the complex effect of oppression on recognition, as the corrupted experiences she has with the

government simultaneously objectifies her while also allowing her space to engage with her own agency to resist and attempt to survive.

3.2.2 Uncorrupted Recognition

Moving to uncorrupted institutional recognition experiences that lead individuals to understand and engage with the institutions and institutional power maintaining their marginalization, we can see the impact that uncorrupted institutional recognition can have on agency and intersubjectivity through witnessing. The first example of uncorrupted institutional recognition can be seen in Parable as Lauren experiences recognition with both her father and society at large. Though her father doesn't survive to see her preparedness pay off, it could be argued that through her actions to prepare for their community's potential collapse, Lauren develops her own sense of agency and thus an awareness of her ability to make change in the world. Additionally, considering her father represents society's, or at least her community's, perspective to wait for things to "go back to the way they were" and to do so quietly – despite the corrupted recognition experience – Lauren develops a much deeper understanding of how harmful this perspective is, particularly in respect to resisting change. This directly leads to her resistance against the oppression she faces from society broadly: that is, her development of the religion and philosophy Earthseed. This is a transgression against corrupted recognition that leads to the possibility of an uncorrupted recognition in her new community – though, as we will see, it's still complicated in its being a "religion." Throughout the narrative, Lauren includes descriptions of her new religion, Earthseed, in which the "god" being followed is "change." Lauren writes, "All that you touch / You Change. / All that you Change / Changes you. / The only lasting truth / Is Change. / God / Is Change."[180] With this, Earthseed focuses on moving forward while trying to do better than those who came before you, both in your actions toward each other and toward the earth itself. This religion not only acts as a transgression against oppression in its open rejection of the social norms of individualism and traditionalism seen in her community, but also as leading to uncorrupted recognition in the way Lauren realizes her own ability and capability as an agentive being through it. In these ways, Earthseed actively allows space for both an acknowledgement of society and the perspectives that can potentially overcome the oppressions being faced, along with a community of mutual respect and intersubjective connection which has the potential for uncorrupted recognition experiences to occur among community members.

Interestingly and paradoxically, Earthseed can also be seen as a way in which Lauren seemingly conforms to the social and subjective norms around her. Though Lauren actively pushes against some of the structures put in place by her father, Earthseed retains a significant religiosity that could arguably be seen as alienating and constricting. For example, as Lauren travels north and encounters many others also trying to find a better life, she allows people to travel and eventually settle with her community. Though she

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[180] Butler, *Parable*, 3.

doesn't force people to adopt the exact beliefs of Earthseed,[181] she does entirely center their community around its philosophy, much in the same way her father centered Baptist Christianity. While not inherently problematic, Lauren's leadership still seems to perpetuate the guarded, structured world of the neighborhood she left, in which conventions of religion – studying a central text (the Book of Earthseed, which she quotes throughout), addressing a deity (in this case, Change) and naming it "God," expecting members to uphold the beliefs of the system, etc. – determines the group's social structure. Some travelers don't adhere to Earthseed's philosophy/theology, but they still seek protection and connection within Earthseed's community; at times, they find themselves alienated for their lack of adherence. For example, after saving two women's lives, Lauren introduces their group as Earthseed, inviting questions from the strangers, Jill and Allie. The exchange illustrates Lauren's establishing potentially problematic religious conventions and expectations around her community,

> [Allie] turned to stare at me with what looked like hostility. 'I think religion is dog shit,' she announced. 'It's either phony or crazy.'
> I shrugged. 'You can travel with us or you can walk away' . . .
> She turned away in disgust, then turned back. 'Do we have to join your cult if we travel with you?'
> 'No.'
> 'All right then!' She turned her back and walked ahead of me as though she'd won something.[182]

Lauren continues by challenging and potentially even attempting to intimidate them,

> I raised my voice just enough to startle and projected it at the back of her head. I said, 'We risked ourselves for you today.' She jumped, but refused to look back. I continued. 'You don't owe us anything for that. It isn't something you could buy from us. But if you travel with us, and there's trouble, you stand by us, stand with us. Now will you do that or not?'[183]

Again, while Lauren's discussion and demand for loyalty is not an inherently problematic exchange, as Lauren's fears of loyalty surely are an attempt to protect herself and her community, the hostility from the strangers is not necessarily a shocking overreaction, as they are merely doing the same – trying to protect themselves. In some ways, then, this conformity complicates the growth that Lauren may have experienced, as she ends up adhering to social norms and potentially alienating those that don't want to follow Earthseed's teachings anyway. In terms of institutional recognition, while Earthseed does help Lauren transgress problematic social structures of individualism and traditionalism, it also adheres to religious structures and institutions, thus complicating the potential recognition that her community members can experience with one another and with

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[181] Butler, *Parable*, 238.
[182] Butler, *Parable*, 238.
[183] Butler, *Parable*, 238.

outsiders. This complication is incredibly significant, as it shows the complexity of the recognition experience, both in the pervasiveness of socialized norms and in showcasing that recognition is not static. Not only do we see Lauren simultaneously reject and adhere to social norms, we can also see varying experiences of recognition throughout Lauren's narrative that change and develop. She isn't unrecognized one moment and recognized the next, but rather experiences varied recognition experiences with her society and those around her throughout the novel. Butler's portrayal of recognition and its complexity is incredibly important to demonstrate the nuances and varied experience of recognition and subsequently the complexity of institutional power and its effects. Even when aspects of institutional power are identified and rejected, its socialization continues to uphold its influence and presence. So, while identifying Earthseed as a catalyst for uncorrupted recognition does help showcase an engagement with agency, it also portrays an agency still mitigated by power.

A more apparent example of uncorrupted institutional recognition can be seen within the *Hunger Games* series between Katniss and Snow. In chapter two, "Intersubjectivity through Individual Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature," I discussed the individual recognition experiences between Katniss and President Snow, which translate directly to institutional recognition. In the individual recognition examples between Katniss and Snow, Snow can be seen as a representation of the government as a whole, particularly the oppressive systems his presidency upholds: the games themselves, the fear-mongering panoptic surveillance state, and even the sovereign power he exerts through the destruction of District 13 and eventually District 12. Though Snow's perpetuation of Panem's surveillance state has already been thoroughly discussed in previous chapters, his use of sovereign power is important to consider here, as well. Understanding sovereign power as authority maintained through public displays of violence intended to keep citizens obedient in fear of punishment,[184] we can see how the destruction of Districts 13 (destroyed after a previous rebellion) and 12 (destroyed following Katniss's time as the Mockingjay)[185] and the games themselves serve to keep citizens afraid and obedient. In each of these examples, Snow uses his presidential power not only to directly attack Katniss and those she loves, but also to maintain his tyrannical power over the entirety of Panem. While Snow is a figurehead, we know that the political system is fundamentally corrupt and that the games started well before Snow ever became president; he merely upheld and took advantage of a corrupt political situation.

We can see this corruption in the prequel to the series, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, released in 2020. In this novel, Collins depicts Snow as a teenager through his initial ascent into the planning and implementation of the games and shows the significant role he played in them growing more cruel and heinous. In this prequel, the games are shown as being far less of a spectacle than we see in the original series. Rather than being broadcast to the country and treating the tributes as if they're winning a prize in getting to compete, the games that Snow originally develops places the tributes in zoo

[184] Sean P. Connors, "'I Was Watching You, Mockingjay,'" 85-102.

[185] Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay*, (New York: Scholastic Press, 2010).

cages, nearly starving them, and ultimately throws them into an arena in shambles.[186] What this shows us is that Snow, both in the prequel and in the original series, not only perpetuates the oppressive systems in Panem, but is also *representative* of these systems more broadly, in both his role developing them and their existence prior to his participation. Therefore, while Katniss potentially experiences uncorrupted recognition with Snow directly when he sees her as a threat and when she realizes that he can't hurt her without Capitol retaliation, her interactions with Snow also lead to a deeper understanding of the systems oppressing Panem's citizens, as these systems are represented by and through him.

We can potentially see this institutional recognition within Katniss' assassination of President Coin, District 13's rebel leader, at the end of the series. Despite having just defeated a tyrannical leader, Katniss sees the potential that Coin has to become a tyrant as well, particularly in her idea to hold one last hunger games with the children of Capitol citizens and leaders. According to Coin, "'It was [my idea]' . . . 'It seemed to balance the need for vengeance with the least loss of life.'"[187] Despite the objections of many previous victors, Katniss initially agrees to this last hunger games as well. However, once she is in front of the crowd gathered to watch Snow's execution, she turns her bow and arrow toward Coin instead. Though we don't get much inner monologue from Katniss during these moments (aside from her decision and then her being rushed by guards) her final thought before shooting the arrow is of the last words Snow spoke to her. Before Coin asked for a vote on the final Capitol games, Snow attempted to create doubt in Katniss' mind, particularly in regard to the bombing of Capitol children – which also killed Katniss' sister, Prim. Coin blamed this on Snow and said that it led to the Capitol's surrender as they lost their final shred of hope in Snow, though there was no way to know whose bomb it actually was – implying that it was actually one from the rebellion. Snow states, "'However, I must concede it was a masterful move on Coin's part. The idea that I was bombing our own helpless children instantly snapped whatever frail allegiance my people still felt to me.'"[188] He continues, stating,

> 'My failure,' says Snow, 'was being so slow to grasp Coin's plan. To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with [District] Thirteen barely scratched. Make no mistake, she was intending to take my place right from the beginning. I shouldn't be surprised. After all, it was Thirteen that started the rebellion that led to the Dark Days, and then abandoned the rest of the districts when the tide turned against it. But I wasn't watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I'm afraid we have both been played for fools.'
> I refuse for this to be true. Some things even I can't survive. I utter my first words since my sister's death. 'I don't believe you.'

[186] Suzanne Collins, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, (New York: Scholastic Press, 2020).

[187] Collins, *Mockingjay*, 369.

[188] Collins, *Mockingjay*, 357.

Snow shakes his head in mock disappointment. 'Oh, my dear Miss Everdeen. I thought we had agreed not to lie to each other.'[189]

Though she doesn't want to believe him, he succeeds in planting doubt in her mind, as she sees Coin's potential for tyranny. Once in front of Snow for his execution, his words "I thought we had agreed not to lie to each other" ring in her mind, ultimately leading her to turn her bow and arrow. In these moments, Katniss sees Coin and Snow in much the same way, acknowledging their unwavering drive for power. Additionally, I argue that Snow's final line above is another moment of uncorrupted recognition between he and Katniss, in which he simultaneously belittles her and makes her a confidant. As an example of recognition within an institution, this interaction and the doubt planted by Snow ultimately allows Katniss to see the same systems that she just fought against being perpetuated through Coin's actions. Rather than risk another tyranny and another hard-fought rebellion, Katniss kills Coin instead. In this, Katniss is not only able to acknowledge the problematic and oppressive system – which she had of course already seen throughout the series – but also its pervasiveness to corrupt, as well.

Another example of institutional recognition in the *Hunger Games* series can be seen through the recognition that Katniss experiences with other tributes, particularly in *Mockingjay*. As discussed in regards to individual recognition, the districts are isolated from one another, primarily to prevent rebellions and uprisings, but this isolation does more than simply separate Panem's citizens from one another. This separation also breeds animosity between districts, as the poorer districts like 11 and 12 see the wealthier, Capitol-esque districts as feeding into the propaganda of the games. These "career districts" train their children to compete in the games and frequently have volunteers to compete – a situation which is not common in other districts, as citizens actively try to avoid being selected, and which shows the ways volunteer tributes see the games as an actual competition of their choice, as opposed to a violent social punishment. Katniss experiences corrupted recognition with these other tributes when she actually meets and interacts with previous champions in the Quarter Quell in *Catching Fire*, in which the tributes are chosen from previous winners. More specifically, Katniss sees the other tributes' anger and fear about being brought back into the games – such as District 11's Seeder and Chaff, who both challenge the Quarter Quell, stating that Snow could change the rules if he wanted to, especially if he's as "all-powerful" as he conveys,[190] and District 7's Johanna Mason, who takes advantage of the tributes' celebrity value and questions how anyone could be "so cruel as to sever such a deep bond [between the tributes and the Capitol citizens who love them]"[191] – and realizes that this anger expands beyond the poorer districts. In these examples, Katniss witnesses these other characters, changing her perspective on them and their districts as she identifies their similarities in fear and anger over the games, thus allowing space for uncorrupted recognition. This recognition experience is further solidified when, in the same scene, Johanna tells Katniss

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[189] Collins, *Mockingjay*, 357-358.
[190] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 251.
[191] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 251.

to "make Snow suffer," when she goes on stage – thus both acknowledging Katniss' position with Snow and their shared anger as tributes and district citizens. Another prominent example of Katniss' witnessing and uncorrupted recognition with tributes from the career districts is with Finnick Odair from District 4. Throughout the series, he's seen as a Capitol favorite who seemingly plays into the fandom and attention he receives. However, after the rebellion intensifies and tributes are rescued from the arena in *Catching Fire* and brought to District 13 in *Mockingjay*, Katniss learns that Finnick was actually prostituted by the Capitol because he was so adored by Capitol citizens. While filming propaganda videos against Snow, Finnick states,

> 'President Snow used to . . . sell me . . . my body, that is,' Finnick begins in a flat, removed tone. 'I wasn't the only one. If a victor is considered desirable, the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it.'[192]

Upon hearing this, we see Katniss witnessing Finnick as she thinks,

> That explains it then. Finnick's parade of lovers in the Capitol. They were never real lovers. Just people like our old Head Peacekeeper, Cray, who bought desperate girls to devour and discard because he could. I want to interrupt the taping and beg Finnick's forgiveness for every false thought I've ever had about him.[193]

Witnessing Finnick and engaging with his traumatic experiences solidifies for Katniss that *all* district citizens are being taken advantage of, and in many more ways than just the games themselves, despite their perceived intersections of privilege and oppression. This recognition with other tributes in *Catching Fire* and with Finnick in *Mockingjay* ultimately leads to a recognition experience with the government of Panem broadly with an acknowledgement of the social structure of isolation and surveillance that they're forced into. Seeing the other tributes as people also suffering at the hands of the Capitol thus causes Katniss to see the other districts in a way she hadn't previously been able to and subsequently can also then see the Capitol's oppression in a way she hadn't before – as she had really only been able to see within the borders of her own district. In this way, her witnessing the contexts and experiences of other citizens and tributes, such as Johanna Mason and Finnick Odair discussed above, leads directly into her understanding of the oppressive institution of Panem broadly, thus allowing a recognition experience to occur with the institution itself.

The final example of institutional recognition that can be seen within the *Hunger Games* series is the uprising in District 11. I've discussed this piece of the series several times now, as it is a significant point for Katniss and her desire to rebel and create change. Recall that Katniss gives a speech to the families of Rue and Thresh, District 11 tributes.

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[192] Collins, *Mockingjay*, 170.
[193] Collins, *Mockingjay*, 170.

After this speech, an elderly man in the crowd whistles the tune she and Rue had used in the arena and offered her the three-finger salute, which was then repeated by every member of the crowd.[194] After this moment, Katniss' thoughts showcase the pervasive nature of Snow's control, as she thinks,

> If I hadn't spoken to President Snow, this gesture might move me to tears. But with his recent orders to calm the districts fresh in my ears, it fills me with dread. What will he think of this very public salute to the girl who defied the Capitol? The full weight of what I've done hits me. It was not intentional – I only meant to express my thanks – but I have elicited something dangerous. An act of dissent from the people of District 11.[195]

Similarly to the examples with Joanna and Finnick above, this moment in District 11 becomes a prime example of both witnessing and recognition, as it allows Katniss to witness the District 11 citizens in both their fear and anger against Panem's control, along with their desire to rebel and resist its control. This witnessing then leads to a recognition experience with the citizens of District 11, as she is able to see the harm that Panem has caused across the districts, showcasing the scope of Panem's oppressive structure and power. The above quote also shows Katniss' subconscious fear of retaliation (an example of sovereign power) that Snow will take against District 11 for their actions of solidarity with Katniss. What happens next in the scene is the most striking example, as the elderly man is pulled from the crowd and executed,[196] resulting in a violent uprising from the rest of District 11. While the uprising shows Katniss the other districts' suffering and their readiness to fight against the Capitol's oppression, the execution offers a broader picture of the Capitol's sovereign power in their willingness to commit acts of violence in order to maintain, or attempt to maintain, control. Though the Capitol's readiness toward violence was never a secret, considering the panoptic state and the games themselves, this particular execution is the initial moment when Katniss sees the true scope of that violence in the face of any and all opposition. Not only does this then fuel her desire to join the rebellion, it also functions as a witnessing and an uncorrupted recognition experience with other Panem citizens – initially hidden from her – that leads her to become more aware of the Capitol, Panem, and their structures of control than she had previously in the series.

3.3 Conclusion

As we can see within the examples above, institutional recognition is represented quite frequently and meaningfully throughout feminist dystopian literature, which offers us important insight into the implications that these narratives showcase, particularly in the impact that agency can have to affect change and that witnessing can have to change perspectives and establish intersubjective connections. Seeing this recognition within

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[194] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 61.

[195] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 61-62.

[196] Collins, *Catching Fire*, 62.

feminist dystopian literature better shows us the ways in which characters engage with the oppressions facing them and see their social or governmental structures more acutely, whether through corrupt *or* uncorrupt experiences. Within the context of some of the narratives above – *Parable*, *Uglies*, and *Future Home* most specifically, we can see this recognition experience leading to increased distrust and questioning of the overarching institutions giving way to transgression, while for others – the *Hunger Games* – this recognition then leads to revolution and societal upheaval entirely. In either case, recognition within institutional power offers significant possibility for building community as we witness others and in an engagement with one's agency to enact change.

4 Formation and Recognition of Self in Normatively Socialized Contexts in Feminist Dystopia

4.1 Recognition of Self

Similarly affected by power and socialization, self recognition is the third and final form of recognition that showcases the impact that marginalization and oppression have on recognition experiences. Self recognition is quite an interesting theorization of recognition, not only when considering issues of mutual recognition and similar conceptions that require multiple participants for the experience to occur, but also in the establishment and engagement of agency that individuals experience in and through self recognition. Self recognition goes beyond Sartre's "look" – in which one doesn't necessarily require the active recognition of the person they're encountering, but just needs to be able to see the potential objectification that that person can also experience and offer in order to see their own subjectivity. Recall that in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre identifies the look as an experience of an individual encountering another individual as an object to understand their own world while realizing that the other individual encounters them in the same way. In this we don't get confirmation that the other has the experience of the look, just that the possibility exists. Further, according to Robert Brandom, self recognition or "self-conception" can be conceived as what "something is *for* oneself"[197] or what

> one *identifies* with. Talking this way, essentially self-conscious beings are ones whose *identity*, their status as being what they are *in* themselves, depends in part upon their attitudes of *identification*, their attitudes of identifying with some privileged elements of what they are *for* themselves.[198]

Self recognition is the acknowledgement of one's identity as it defines one's "self" and through "self-interpretations."[199] Similarly, Jenny Slatman defines self recognition as "a perceptual experience of oneself already [involving] identification with oneself."[200] She goes a step further to acknowledge the bodily experience of self recognition, noting the body as a site of "observational content" both as an "intentional object as well as the non-intentional experience of one's body as 'lived through.'"[201] Slatman points to the importance of intentionally seeking to understand one's "here-ness" and "there-ness" – that is, your being as you can identify it and as others can identify it – arguing that self recognition experiences are unique in their simultaneous acknowledgement of both here-

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[197] Robert Brandom, "The structure of desire and recognition: Self-consciousness and self-constitution," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 33, no. 1 (2007): 127-150. Emphasis in original.

[198] Brandom, "The structure of desire and recognition," 129. Emphasis in original.

[199] Kenneth Baynes, "Self, Narrative and Self-Constitution: Revisiting Taylor's 'Self-Interpreting Animals,'" *The Philosophical Forum* 41, no. 4, (2010): 442.

[200] Jenny Slatman, "A strange hand: On self-recognition and recognition of another," *Phenomenology Cognitive Science* 8 (2009): 322.

[201] Slatman, "A strange hand," 322.

ness and there-ness.[202] This embodiment is a crucial piece of perceptual self-understanding and recognition as it rejects Cartesian separation of mind and body and brings together one's physicality and physical experience in the world with their perceptual experience in the world.

Additionally, addressing the importance of intersubjectivity in recognition, David Espinet and Matthias Flatscher acknowledge the social aspects of self-recognition. They state,

> A positive understanding of recognition takes its departure from the assumption that the subject can only achieve a practical self-relation if she experiences affirmation and acceptance from Others. Those from whom, however, recognition is withheld – for example, in racist, sexist, or colonial contexts – have difficulty affirming their own overall life projects. The intrinsic relation of recognition to freedom is obvious: the autonomous subject recognizes both the limits of her own freedom and that of other autonomous persons.[203]

In other words, not only does corrupted recognition impact one's standing with others, it can also negatively affect one's self-understanding and self-constitution, especially in oppressive social contexts in which one faces problematic socialization. The significance of intersubjectivity and socialization in self recognition is also addressed by Kelly Oliver in her challenge of the subject/other dichotomy, which she argues perpetuates dynamics of domination. Rather, she points to the need for engaging with the socialized norms upholding the subject/other format to interrogate our understanding of clothes in order to subsequently understand ourselves. In terms of socialization, she references Frantz Fanon and his challenge of the slave's dependence on the master for recognition, making the master the "active agent" and the slave as the "passive recipient." Referencing Fanon, Oliver states:

> The logic of recognition that is part and parcel of colonialism and oppression makes those in power the active agents of recognition and those without power the passive recipients. This is why rather than embrace a recognition model of identity and self-worth, or unproblematically endorse the struggle for recognition of oppressed people, Fanon suggests that *active meaning making and self-creation* are necessary to fight oppression and overcome the psychic damage of colonization.[204]

While this doesn't reject the significance of intersubjectivity in recognition, it does identify space for self recognition outside of reliance on the problematic social structure of master/slave, agent/recipient. With this, Oliver describes the intersubjective connection crucial to the establishment of one's subjectivity through "inner witnessing." She

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[202] Slatman, "A Strange hand," 332.

[203] David Espinet and Matthias Flatscher, "Recognition and Freedom," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 144.

[204] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 28-29. Emphasis added.

describes this experience as one's acknowledgement of their ability or position to engage with and witness others.[205] Further, using the context of Althusser's "negative" conception of recognition, Espinet and Flatscher argue that such socialization "starts with the observation that existing orders of recognition force the subject to adopt given identity attributions in conformity with the system and with an effective apparatus of power. Recognition then no longer is what enables freedom, but is in fact what makes freedom impossible."[206] Within the context of Althusser's interpellation and being hailed to recognition by authority, along with Butler's internalization of authority, Espinet and Flatscher imply that obeying the authority that is offering recognition through power potentially eliminates the freedom that can theoretically come from recognition experiences – a notion explicitly echoed by Oliver in her rejection of dynamics of domination inherent to traditional theorizations of recognition.

Althusser's and Butler's notion of obedience to authority's call remains problematic, however, when considering issues of consent in conformity to socialization. As John Christman addresses, a person's seeming obedience to oppressive forces is often seen as precluding autonomy or agency, since the person is not fighting against those forces. Christman rejects this idea. He instead notes the potential for "authentic choice" even in an oppressive context,

> Insofar as the self is socially constituted, it is counterintuitive to claim that such a self is only autonomous if she can break away from those [oppressive] social conditions, authoritarian though they are, that constitute her being. As long as she maintains the ability to adequately reflect on those conditions and embrace them, I argue that we should continue to label her autonomous.[207]

While I do agree with Christman's statements here – i.e. that one's reflective ability should label them as autonomous – his overall thoughts still strike me as missing the importance of consent in these contexts. Within a dangerous or violent situation, consent becomes a corrupted experience as simple yes/no responses are more nuanced; "yeses" may be given out of fear for one's life or safety. That is, when a person is in a context in which they don't feel they have options or a context they have only experienced as violent and oppressive, their "active" choices may still be heavily constituted by the surrounding social structures and experiences. As Sonia Kruks writes,

> If we are to understand women's complicity in sustaining those normalizing practices through which their subordinating 'femininity' is perpetuated, we will need also to look at juridical, economic, and other institutional arrangements in which women find themselves located. For these often still produce de facto

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[205] Oliver, *Witnessing*, 87.

[206] Espinet and Flatscher, "Recognition and Freedom," 144.

[207] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy," 155.

relationships of personal privilege and dependency that make compliance a rational *survival strategy* for many women.[208]

This "survival strategy," connecting back to Christman, then means that someone who doesn't appear to be adequately reflective would, per Christman, not be autonomous and would be justified to see them as such. Given notions of consent and possibility of threats to one's autonomy in oppression, agency and autonomy are far too complex to simply identify reflection as a marker of being an agent while a lack of reflection means being a non-agent. Additionally, this also lends to issues of active versus passive agency, as agency is often identified in action, without considering the ways that passivity still requires choice and decision. Namely, one can choose not to act, not to reject their oppressive context for a variety of reasons, but still be making a choice. Connecting back to consent, giving consent to the oppressive regime (in Christman's context, being "subservient" to it) can be something done out of socialization and normativity, but it can also be done out of a feeling of necessity. In either of these cases, however, the person is arguably still making a decision and retains autonomy, even if only minimally.

With these conceptions in mind, self recognition focuses on agency and the potential that one finds in themselves and their identity when experiencing either uncorrupted *or* corrupted recognition. Self recognition is the acknowledgement of agency, whether active or passive, that individuals experience within and through recognition more broadly. If we understand self recognition as being derived from individual recognition experiences or with recognition experiences with society within the context of social norms, there is a significant complexity between recognition of self in the context of corrupted and uncorrupted experiences. More specifically, I argue that, while corrupted and uncorrupted experiences of both individual and institutional recognition can affect one's self recognition, self recognition experiences often remain *uncorrupted* as one engages with their self-consciousness without the hindrance seen between individuals and with institutions seen in other recognition forms. This is an important distinction, as self recognition can manifest in many ways, sometimes through direct action and external change, and sometimes through a new understanding of one's self or internal growth. Manifestations of self recognition not only engage agency, but also allow space for the possibility of transgression of oppressions, oppressions in this case often portrayed in literature as problematic normative identities. With these experiences of self recognition, one can gain the understanding that they can affect others and the world, thus engaging their agency in new ways – an understanding seen explicitly through the oppressed characters and heroines of feminist dystopian literature. I will consider textual examples that showcase newfound self-understanding that leads to potential transgression within experiences of self recognition. Though previous chapters have had textual examples separated into corrupted and uncorrupted experiences, I will consider the majority of examples together, as I focus on uncorrupted experiences, with a final section exemplifying a complete loss or corruption of self recognition.

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[208] Kruks, "Panopticism and Shame," 60.

4.2 Examples of Self Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature

4.3 *Self Understanding and Transgression*

A primary example of self recognition establishing one's agency and ability to affect their world can be seen through Lauren Olamina in *Parable of the Sower*.[209] Though Lauren is faced with corrupted recognition experiences with her father, community, and society broadly throughout her journey to establish Earthseed, we can see a distinct self recognition through both her acknowledgement of her own ability to make change from the beginning and then as represented through her Earthseed theology. Lauren has a sense of self recognition from the beginning of the narrative, rejecting her community's expectations despite the oppressive forces acting against her. Not only does she reject the social expectation to get married and raise children in her community, thinking "if all I had to look forward to was marriage to [Curtis Talcott] and babies and poverty that just keeps getting worse, I think I'd kill myself,"[210] she also rejects the perspective that many of her community members hold, i.e. the expectation that "things will go back to the way they were." Lauren reflects, "politicians have been promising to return us to the glory, wealth, and order of the twentieth century ever since I can remember."[211] Instead, Lauren actively acknowledges the ways in which the community needs to prepare itself for change, by creating literal survival packs and through Earthseed's teaching that "God is Change." In both of these examples, we see Lauren as understanding her place in her world; she's not trapped within her context (that is, within the corrupted recognition experience with her community) but is seeking to do better for herself and for those in the future. Rather than falling into the expectations surrounding her (getting married, having children, surviving and hoping for the past to return, etc.) she actively attempts to find solutions and create a better world, thus rejecting the corrupted recognition with her community and focusing on her own agency within self recognition. Lauren's experiences showcase self recognition in not only her acknowledgement of holding different values from those around her, but the resistance against the norms upholding those values, which we see through her continued effort to create new systems and ideals within Earthseed.

As transgression of socialized norms within and through self recognition, the establishment of Earthseed furthers Lauren's changing perspective on the world and her place in affecting it. Lauren theorizes a religion centered around Change, which she acknowledges as inevitable and something to be embraced, identifying human beings as catalysts of change. She writes,

> God is Power –
> Infinite.
> Irresistible,

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[209] Butler, *Parable*.

[210] Butler, *Parable*, 88.

[211] Butler, *Parable*, 20.

Inexorable,
Indifferent.
And yet, God is Pliable –
Trickster,
Teacher,
Chaos,
Clay.
God exists to be shaped.
God is Change.[212]

Further, she also writes about the simultaneously active and passive nature of Change, stating,

A victim of God may,
Through learning adaptation,
Become a partner of God,
A victim of God may,
Through forethought and planning,
Become a shaper of God.
Or a victim of God may,
Through shortsightedness and fear,
Remain God's victim,
God's plaything,
God's prey.[213]

In each of the above quotes, Lauren makes clear that not only do people need to accept Change, but also that people should actively take part in it. She assigns humans responsibility for the Earth and for creating a better world, thus acknowledging human beings' wide-reaching capacity for change. Lauren's idea of change is very different from change in other narratives. For example, change in the *Hunger Games* series comes in the form of rebellion and revolution. *Parable's* change is quite different, looking instead to caring for others in the world, though both visions of change are valid and engaging in their own ways. We see this focus in Lauren's writings on unity, in which she writes,

Embrace diversity.
Unite –
Or be divided,
robbed,
ruled,
killed
By those who see you as prey.
Embrace diversity

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212 Butler, *Parable*, 25.
213 Butler, *Parable*, 31.

Or be destroyed.[214]

Despite the fear projected through the lines above, specifically as they mirror the violence with socialization and with corrupted recognition, they also work to convey Lauren's goal of bringing people together in a space of unity and safety, acknowledging that people as a group can look out for and protect one another, even in a society bent on domination.

Lauren is characterized as a self recognized individual who understands her own capacity in the world; she also attempts to bring this knowledge to others through Earthseed, hopefully allowing space for both uncorrupted recognition with others *and* self recognition to occur. Butler depicts Earthseed as a potential transgression, not only against Lauren's community, but against her society as a whole. Throughout *Parable*, Lauren's world is divided, particularly through class separation and warfare. As discussed in previous chapters, this class warfare between the lowest classes both maintains upper class power – as they remain separated from the bulk of the conflict – along with tension and violence among the rest of society. Earthseed is an attempt at a peaceful community, rejecting the conflict and division that Lauren's world centers around. Directly connected to agency, Earthseed functions to identify the inherent capacity for action within humanity both creating a space for people to live outside of oppressive social norms while realizing their potential for agency. So, not only does Lauren experience self recognition through her establishment of Earthseed, she creates a space/community to help others experience self recognition as well. This speaks to the intersubjective nature of self recognition as it exemplifies a witnessing of sorts. Through Earthseed, Lauren witnesses the potential of others to create change, thus supporting and participating in their self recognition experiences. Lauren's transgression through Earthseed would not have been as achievable without her self recognition experiences. Separating herself from the expectations of her community allowed her the space to gain self understanding and a newfound set of values – which Christman notes as being inherent to self understanding and constitution[215] – to transgress the oppressive forces controlling her world.

Another significant example of self recognition as a rejection of oppressive power and socialization in feminist dystopian literature is present in Westerfeld's *Uglies* series. As discussed in regard to corrupted institutional recognition, Tally and other characters come to question the oppressive nature of their government and social structure, along with their position within those structures. Part of this institutional recognition is inherently a self recognition for several characters and groups, as they come to terms not only with what the government has or has tried to force upon them, but also with how they can exist as individuals outside of those structures and expectations.

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[214] Butler, *Parable*, 196.

[215] John Christman, "Relational Autonomy."

The first example of this recognition can be seen through the Smoke, the rebel community living in the wilderness to avoid the pretty surgery. The Smoke – led by former pretty surgeons, Maddy and Az, who discovered the lesions in pretties' brains – fled Tally's city because they not only realized the problematic nature of the surgery that made everyone look alike and fit certain standards of beauty, but were also further horrified by the lesions keeping people docile.[216] The Smokies are prime examples of self recognition, as they were able to cognitively separate themselves from the social expectations around them and see how they could exist on their own terms and with their own standards of beauty. Tally begins to understand this after her initial days in the Smoke, realizing, "The physical beauty of the Smoke also cleared her mind of worries. Every day seemed to change the mountain, the sky, and the surrounding valleys, making them spectacular in a completely new way. Nature, at least, didn't need an operation to be beautiful. It just was."[217] Though obviously referring to non-human nature, this clearly suggests the natural beauty of the "uglies" that Tally has been indoctrinated against her entire life. Further, much like we will see with the characters in *Red Clocks* that resist the social expectations forced upon them, Tally and others also experience self recognition in being able to see not only how damaging the beauty standards are, but also the superficiality and docility of new pretties in particular, knowing that they want to be more thoughtful and engaged with the world around them than the "clueless" and "disconnected" pretties.[218] Further, this self recognition is established by the realization that they can separate themselves both physically and mentally from the norms they reject.

Another example of self recognition in the *Uglies* series is in Tally's recognition experience. Tally experiences recognition multiple times throughout the series as she undergoes several different brain-altering surgeries. What is unique here is the *way* in which she experiences this recognition. More specifically, in *Uglies*, after she finds the Smoke and learns about the brain lesions, Maddy and Az tell her about a cure that they have developed that can be given to pretties and will repair their lesions, allowing them to see through their docile stupor. At this point in *Uglies*, Tally has already experienced self recognition in seeing the beauty of the Smoke and the Smokies' physical and cognitive uniqueness. However, as we know, she allows herself to undergo the pretty surgery in order to save Shay and convince her to take the cure herself. In *Pretties* then, we see Tally take the cure left for her by the Smoke. What she doesn't realize is that her choice to split the cure with Zane (the leader of the Crims), meant that she doesn't actually take the full cure, instead experiences a placebo effect. This placebo effect, then, is the first place where we can once again see Tally's self recognition, as we (and Tally) realize that she cured herself on her own,[219] which then allowed her to see the problematic nature of pretties and to seek out a space for freedom outside of such control and docility. This example is interesting when considered alongside other texts – namely *Red Clocks*, as we

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[216] Westerfeld, *Uglies*.

[217] Westerfeld, *Uglies*, 219.

[218] Westerfeld, *Uglies*, 258.

[219] Westerfeld, *Pretties*, 317.

will see – as Tally's self recognition is complicated in the context of being physically altered. Though we can assume she always would have thought her way out of the lesions, the surgery and need for a cure that allows for self recognition showcases the importance of context in someone's reaction to oppression and corrupted recognition. More specifically, it is not necessarily reasonable to expect someone in Tally's position – having had invasive surgery that changes her brain structure and function – to unlearn her problematic narrative in the way that Lauren in *Parable* or characters in *Red Clocks* do by changing their perspectives or engaging their autonomy individually.

This context is especially true when considering that *Uglies* is a YA text written about and for young adults. Rather than portraying a more nuanced experience of learning/unlearning social norms, Westerfeld crafted an overt experience of Tally's self recognition meant to make such understanding obvious to both Tally and the readers. Not only does this showcase the significance of context in self recognition, it also identifies the effect of agency in engaging with the self recognition experience. It is interesting to note, however, the lack of intersubjectivity in the second self recognition example above. While the first included a connection to and relationality with the Smokies as self recognized, Tally's placebo effect points to a somewhat independent self recognition experience. Though not engaging in individual recognition as a catalyst for self recognition, both examples in *Uglies* exemplify Tally witnessing others, Smokies and pretties respectively, that leads her to engage with her own position and experiences, thus leading to her self recognition.

We see a more intersubjective self recognition with Tally in *Specials*,[220] when she finally confronts Dr. Cable (leader of the specials) for trying to take control of the city.[221] After being rescued from a hospital in a neighboring city, Diego, by her fellow specials – and before she can undergo the Special correction surgery to undo the "morphological violations" – Tally again is able to essentially think her way out of the special mindset she had been experiencing. Similarly to the way that she thought herself to a cure in the previous books, Tally begins to experience self recognition in *Specials* when the doctors in Diego tell her that she has lesions alongside her bodily augmentations, stating, "'There are also certain structures in your higher cortex, apparently artificial, which seemed designed to change your behavior. Tally, do you ever suffer from sudden flashes of anger or euphoria, countersocial impulses, or feelings of superiority?'"[222] This final question helps to solidify the questions about her mental state that she began asking after seeing the extent of Zane's brain damage earlier in the novel. Her self recognition is furthered then not only by Shay's having been cured and trying to reassure Tally, but also by seeing that Dr. Cable had waged war on Diego, something that she thought to be impossible[223] – considering that the pretty surgery had supposedly eliminated war altogether. Thinking her way to the cure this final time, ultimately leads to her

[220] Scott Westerfeld, *Specials*, (New York: Simon Pulse, 2011).
[221] As discussed in chapter three on institutional recognition.
[222] Westerfeld, *Specials*, 235.
[223] Westerfeld, *Specials*, 256.

confronting Dr. Cable and tricking her into the cure as well – taking direct action against her and her oppressive forces. In these ways, Tally experiences self recognition throughout the series and, through these experiences, takes an active stance in an attempt to thwart her tyrannical government and oppressive social system. What is interesting in Tally's final example of self recognition is the experience of *being* witnessed by others that helps her self recognition experience. Rather than witnessing and internalizing others' experiences, Tally is actively witnessed by citizens of Diego as they point out the problematic nature of her special augmentations. Though it is reasonable to assume that she could recognize herself as she did in *Pretties*, others acknowledging what she has been subjected to identifies a significant reliance on others – not to establish one's subjectivity, but to aid in identifying oppressions when they are deeply internalized to one's sense of self. Thus *Uglies* showcases varying experiences of self recognition as they are impacted by oppression and witnessing.

Using a near-future, relatable setting, Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks* includes poignant examples of self recognition that acknowledge oppression affecting and the reestablishment of both bodily and personal autonomy. Despite their struggles throughout, several of *Red Clocks'* interconnected main characters come to find their own strength and senses of self through their varied recognition experiences in ways they didn't or couldn't in the beginning of their narratives. Unlike other texts set in distant or significantly changed futures, Zumas takes our contemporary world and showcases it as a dystopia in itself, particularly for women as they lose more and more autonomy – physically, reproductively, mentally, and socially. *Red Clocks* follows five women (referred to by Zumas as "The Biographer," "The Wife," "The Daughter," "The Mender," and "The Explorer") interconnected, but living in quite different contexts in which they each experience a variety of oppressive forces. All (except the 19th century explorer, Eivør Mínervudottír) are navigating a nation-wide, no-exception abortion ban that punishes both abortion-seekers and those helping abortion-seekers. The ban is described as such:

> The United States Congress ratified the Personhood Amendment, which gives the constitutional right to life, liberty, and property to a fertilized egg at the moment of conception. Abortion is now illegal in all fifty states. Abortion providers can be charged with second-degree murder, abortion seekers with conspiracy to commit murder. In vitro fertilization, too, is federally banned, because the amendment outlaws the transfer of embryos from laboratory to uterus. (The embryos can't give their consent to be moved).[224]

Additionally, there is a "Pink Wall" between the U.S. and Canada to prevent abortion-seekers from crossing the border to receive the procedure,[225]

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[224] Leni Zumas, *Red Clocks*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 2018), 32-33.
[225] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 75.

The border control can detain any woman or girl they 'reasonably' suspect of crossing into Canada for the purpose of ending a pregnancy. Seekers are returned (by police escort) to their state of residence, where the district attorney can prosecute them for attempting a termination.[226]

As we can see through the restrictive policies discussed above, the characters experience a corrupted recognition with their government and society, as they are denied access to the healthcare that they need and want. In this narrative context, all women – or rather, all people with uteruses – are not recognized as agentive subjects, but instead as objects to be maintained and controlled, an experience that bleeds into their recognition experiences with society as their agency and thus their subjectivities are not being acknowledged.

Each of the five women goes through varying recognition experiences, all connected to their overarching loss of autonomy in their forced identities. Though all interconnected, I will focus on Roberta "The Biographer," Susan "The Wife," and Gin "The Mender," each identified by Zumas throughout according to a different socialized identity. These descriptors are crucial as Zumas seems to be magnifying their socialized identities, even if the characters themselves might reject the title. First, we have the Biographer, Roberta or "Ro," a high school history teacher writing a biography about Eivør Mínervudottír, a female nineteenth century Icelandic explorer. Roberta wants nothing more than to be able to have a child and is attempting in vitro fertilization (IVF) as a single woman. However, along with the wide-reaching abortion ban, the "Every Child Needs 2" – "ECN2" – act will soon be enforced, which won't allow single people to conceive artificially or even adopt. Roberta states,

On January fifteenth – less than three months – this law, also known as Every Child Needs Two, takes effect. Its mission: *to restore dignity, strength, and prosperity to American families*. Unmarried persons will be legally prohibited from adopting children. In addition to valid marriage licenses, all adoptions will require approval through a federally regulated agency, rendering private transactions criminal.[227]

We follow Roberta through her unsuccessful IVF experiences and then getting denied the chance to adopt ahead of ECN2.

Initially, Roberta is stuck in a loop of inadequacy, feeling as though she is failing as a woman in being unable to conceive. First, we see this in the opening lines of the novel, in which she describes the fertility clinic as "a room for women whose bodies are *broken . . . whose cells and tubes and bloods are *failing at their animal destiny*."[228] The second

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[226] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 89.

[227] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 33-34. Emphasis in original.

[228] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 4. Emphasis added.

example of her insecurities can be seen when she makes a list titled, "Accusations from the world," which states:

1. You're too old.
2. If you can't have a child the natural way, you shouldn't have one at all.
3. Every child needs two parents.
4. Children raised by single mothers are more liable to rape/murder/drug-take/score low on standardized tests.
5. You're too old.
6. You should've thought of this earlier.
7. You're selfish.
8. You're doing something unnatural.
9. How is that child going to feel when she finds out her father is an anonymous masturbator?
10. Your body is a grizzled husk.
11. You're too old, sad spinster!
12. Are you only doing this because you're lonely?[229]

This list and its title "accusations from the world" directly acknowledge the socialized identity and expectations to which Roberta is subjected. Her internalized anxieties then come not from something inherent to herself, but from society's established norms and gender normativity. More specifically, not only do these quotes showcase Roberta's assumptions and shame about her desire to have children, they also point to the issue of her age, a notion that isn't applicable to men the same way it is for women. This issue of age, particularly that women have a shorter timeline for having kids (the infamous "biological clock" ticking towards geriatric pregnancies and higher risks of birth defects) along with a supposed decline of aesthetic beauty, which, as Simone de Beauvoir discusses in "From Maturity to Old Age" in *The Second Sex*, can become tangled up in a woman's sense of identity.[230] This differs for men, not only in their ability to sire children being essentially uninterrupted throughout their lives – meaning that their insemination value doesn't necessarily go down as a woman's childbearing value would – but also men's aesthetics have historically been less tied to their identity, thus when their external beauty declines they don't feel the same depersonalization or loss of self.[231] Both examples from Roberta showcase a set of social norms that dictate what she, as a woman, should and shouldn't be able to do, with the underlying message being that she is somehow failing if she and her body function differently than these expectations. She rests her entire identity on her ability to have a child and, when her attempts fail, belittles

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[229] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 10-11.

[230] Simone de Beauvoir, "From Maturity to Old Age," in *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley, ed. H.M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), 547-566.

[231] I do not want to imply that men *can't* have their identity tied to their physical attributes. We know that this happens frequently, especially with the growth of social media and beauty standards. However, this of course historically has been more prominent for women and is thus relevant to my discussion of *Red Clocks* specifically.

herself to the point of desperation, thus not being recognized by society broadly or by herself in her seeming inability to fit within the social norms to which she is subjected.

Roberta experiences self recognition when teenage student Mattie, "The Daughter," confides in Roberta over Mattie's unwanted pregnancy. When Roberta finds out that Mattie is pregnant, she first wants to ask if she can have the baby instead. After Mattie gets back from Canada and Roberta realizes that Mattie wasn't able to get the abortion, the two talk about what other options Mattie has. In this conversation, Roberta sees how difficult it would be for Mattie to have to maintain the pregnancy, even if she didn't keep the baby.[232] Because of this, Roberta offers to take Mattie to Portland for an underground abortion. Seeing Mattie come through the procedure safely, Roberta finds a sense of hope – for Mattie, for the world, for herself. After this experience, concluding the novel, Roberta writes a list of all of the things that she can accomplish and all of the possibilities left for her future that don't involve a child. Beginning to question her socialized identity, Roberta asks herself,

> Why does she even want one?
> How can she tell her students to reject the myth that their happiness depends on having a mate if she believes the same myth about having a child?
> Why isn't she glad, as Eivør Mínervudottír [The Explorer] was glad, to be free?
> . . .
> Maybe she has flat-out been programmed by marketing. Awash in images of mother and child, mama bear and baby bear, she learned, without knowing she was learning it, to desire them.
> Maybe there are better things she could be doing with the life she already has.[233]

Similarly, she later thinks, "How much of her ferocious longing is cellular instinct, and how much is socially installed? Whose urges is she listening to? Her life, like anyone's, could go a way she never wanted, never planned, and turn out marvelous . . . By walking, she tells her students, is how you make the road."[234] These lines point directly to the social expectations and pressure – "urges" – placed on women to take on a maternal role and identity, but this is a crucial moment in which Roberta seriously considers how she might be present in her current life – not the future life she hopes to live. In the final lines of the novel, Roberta writes a new list of things she wants,

> To write the last sentence of Mínervudottír.
> To write the first sentence of something else.
> To be courteous but fierce with her father's doctors.
> To be a foster mom.
> To be the next principal.
> *To be neither.*

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[232] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 303.

[233] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 242.

[234] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 332.

She wants to stretch her mind wider than 'to have one.'
Wider than 'not to have one.'
To quit shrinking life to a checked box, a calendar square.
To quit shaking her head.
To go to the protest in May.
To do more than go to a protest.
To be okay with not knowing.
Keep your legs, Stephens.
To see what is. And to see what is possible.[235]

This list, and the others that Roberta writes throughout the novel, work to showcase her self recognition process as she questions her own thoughts and identity. The use of questions here is significant in that we can see the process as continuous and as an experience that one has to engage in, not just that happens to them. Roberta doesn't sit back and passively wait for self recognition to act upon her; she questions her assumptions and beliefs to better understand herself and to grow as a subject, thus gaining self recognition through her rejection of socialized gender norms. Additionally, Zumas's use of lists with Roberta's character seems to identify Roberta's desire for control over her own life. The lists function to help her academically organize her thoughts in a way that makes them digestible and achievable. These final moments, both with Mattie and in her own mind, showcase Roberta's experience of self recognition, as she is finally able to take her focus off of the possibility of motherhood and the consuming nature of motherhood as an identity to see what her life can be outside of that expectation – though her list celebrates all possibilities, not just having/not having children. In this way, her self recognition experience allows her to both gain a deeper self awareness of her socialized identity, along with an acknowledgement of her ability to transgress the social expectations forced upon her.

Similarly to Roberta's gained self awareness, we also see self recognition through self awareness and transgression in Susan, "The Wife." Through we watch her struggle with anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and a stifling domestic life, in which she is the sole caretaker and homemaker, having given up her law degree to marry and start a family. In this, she not only begs her husband for help, she also begs him to go to counseling with her – a request he staunchly refuses. Her domesticity and motherhood ultimately become oppressive forces that keep her trapped in a life she hates, constantly envying other families, while resenting her own. Much like the Biographer, Susan's entire identity is tied up in her position as a wife, mother, and caretaker. As a stay at home mother, Susan has no outlet for self expression, but instead is forced to focus on cleaning, cooking, and chauffeuring her children, while also being the only disciplinarian for their children. In each of these relegated positions, Susan's resentment continues to grow – in turn causing violent intrusive thoughts, for which she judges herself harshly. These thoughts – namely imagining trash to be a tortured, burned animal crawling across the road, which she convinces herself is trash despite her conviction that it's a dying animal – ultimately

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[235] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 350-351. Emphasis added.

represent herself, as she struggles to cope and survive in the life in which she is trapped. We see this representation through her thought process, in which she thinks,

> A little animal is struggling across the road. Dark, about a foot long.
> Possum? Porcupine? Trying to cross.
> . . .
> Closer: burnt black, scorched to rubber.
> Shivering.
> Already dead, still trying.
> What burned it? Or who?
> . . .
> Who burned this animal?
> Convulsing, trembling, already so dead. Fur singed off. Skin black rubber.
> Who burned you?
> Closer: it's a black plastic bag.
> But she can't unsee the shivering thing, burnt and dead and trying.[236]

This imagery seems to represent her own marriage, not only in her relating to the injured and broken animal broadly, but also specifically in its movements. For example, the lines "Trying to cross" and "Already dead, still trying," highlight the ways in which Susan herself subconsciously sees her marriage as already failed, yet continues her attempts to fix it. With that, looking to the final line, "But she can't unsee the shivering thing, burnt and dead and trying," we can see that once the brokenness is revealed, it cannot go back to being hidden or invisible, but instead must be confronted.

In terms of self recognition, this moment not only allows Susan to acknowledge the flaws within her marriage, but also herself as represented by the animal struggling to survive despite its injuries. We further see this solidified when she experiences similar intrusive thoughts,

> The wife steps on a hand, soft and rubbery.
> A dead hand on the floor of the woods.
> A hand torn from its owner, left loose.
> A dead hand is also a mushroom.
> A black plastic bag is also an animal.
> You can't believe your eyes.
> She convinced herself at the time it was a bag because she didn't want it to be a writhing animal.
> *I wanted to help it, but it was already dead.*
> How do you help a cinder, half-alive?
> Run over it fast to stop the burning.[237]

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[236] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 24-25.

[237] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 169. Emphasis in original.

Similar to the previous quote, the imagined animal further represents her marriage through such lines as "I wanted to help it, but it was already dead." Where it becomes more solidified, however, is through the line "She convinced herself at the time it was a bag because she didn't want it to be a writhing animal," representing her being in denial about her marriage failing and ending, acknowledging that maybe she saw only what she wanted to see to avoid seeing the truth – "You can't believe your eyes." Through these representations, though Susan doesn't actively acknowledge the symbolism of the dying animal, we can still identify a sort of internalization of the intrusive thoughts that allow her to empathize with it, thus leading to self recognition through this connection and identification with it, as well.

Beginning to accept the ending – "Run over it fast to stop the burning" – Susan eventually finds the nerve to separate from her husband, acknowledging that she can no longer live a life in which she is confined to the role forced upon her, thus finding freedom to be herself and pursue the passions she had been denied in her role as mother and wife. When she finally takes the step to tell him that she wants to separate, he responds by defensively insulting her and their life together, but she stands her ground. In the aftermath of their conversation, she finally experiences her own autonomy and freedom,

> The wife kneels on the path.
> Rent a car. Open a bank account. Bring yourself to care.
> She reaches for the black earth.
> Her body yearns, inexplicably, to taste it.
> Brings a handful to her lips. The minerals sizzle on her tongue, rich with the gists of flower and bone.
> 'Hell are you doing?' says Didier
> Bright minerals. Powdered feathers. Ancient shells.
> 'Jesus, *stop* that!'
> She keeps tasting. The soil is bark and needle and flecks of brain, little animal burnt and dead.
> Goodbye, shipwrecks.
> Goodbye, house.
> Goodbye, wife.[238]

In these moments, though her actions seem bizarre, they showcase the long-awaited freedom and finally realized agency to experience the world around her freely and truthfully, despite the outside forces attempting to stifle her while leaving behind her old identity as "The Wife," to which she actively says goodbye. In this, she both acknowledges her position and role while also actively rejecting it, thus engaging with self recognition as a transgression against her normative gender roles.

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[238] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 328. Emphasis in original.

The lines above also arguably point to a potential sense of responsibility on Susan's part, as well. Going back to the discussion of Christman's subservience and compliance of the oppressed from the introduction to this chapter, as Christman would note, before reflecting on her position as wife and mother, her acceptance of this role affects her loss of autonomy, potentially having some responsibility in her own subordination. Though I partially agree with the idea that Susan could have taken certain steps to gain the autonomy she craved – specifically in opening a bank account, renting a car, etc. as she lists in the above quote – I again have to point out the lack of consent available in her context. As discussed previously, subordination hinders the possibility for consent, thus complicating the notion that she *chose* not to take steps to gain freedom. It is not a simple enough context to say that Susan could have made the choice to leave at any point. While this is technically true, the context of her subjection as a wife and mother – and subsequently the responsibility she felt to keep her children safe and comfortable – negated the possibility of simply consenting to her role, as up until the end of the narrative when she'd reached the end of her own rope, she felt that she had no other options. Additionally, as Kruks acknowledges, self judgment and shame are significant in maintaining subordination, specifically in the normalization of gendered expectations and roles[239] – a notion directly applicable to Susan. It wasn't until she gained a sense of self recognition – that is, an understanding not only of her desires and goals separate from domestic life, but also of her subjectivity and agency – that she was able to transgress the social roles forced upon her. This self recognition, then, allows her not only to see her domestic life as oppressive, but she is also able to see the possibilities for her outside of this domesticity as a newly formed person and identity. Thus, through Susan, "The Wife," we can identify not only autonomy as hindered through socialized norms, but also the role that self recognition can have in rejecting socialization and engaging one's agency.

Finally, arguably the most unique example of self recognition that Zumas crafts in *Red Clocks*, is with the Mender, Gin. Gin is an older woman living alone in a cabin in the woods. She is known in their small community by some as a healer, but by most as a witch who is ridiculed and avoided. Because of this, Gin mostly keeps to herself and is brought clients by word of mouth of those that she has treated previously. Along with Mattie going to her in an attempt to get a home-remedy for an abortion, Roberta also sees Gin for fertility help, as well. Eventually, Gin is jailed and accused of causing the mayor's wife, Lola – who has also been Gin's lover – to have a miscarriage.[240] Though innocent, Lola – in an attempt to avoid the mayor's physical abuse – claims that the salve that Gin made for her bruises was actually to induce an abortion. Gin is the only character that starts and remains self recognized throughout the narrative. Despite being subjected to ridicule, judgment, and rejection from society, Gin remains the most confident and self aware character in the novel. We see this when, in regards to her goats, she thinks, "Hans nuzzles the mender's crotch, and Pinka lifts a front hoof to be shaken. *Hello, beautifuls*. Their tongues are hard and clean. First time she saw a goat's pupil – rectangular, not

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[239] Kruks, "The Politics of Recognition," 65.
[240] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 186.

round – she felt a stab of recognition. *I know you, strangeness.*[241] In these brief sentences, we see Gin's awareness of her place as "strange" or "abnormal," but accepts that as part of herself, seeing how her "strangeness" is found elsewhere in the world, in nature, as well. This is further shown during her trial, when she reassures herself, thinking, "Kook. *People like to throw around labels.* Kooky. *Don't let them define you.* Kookaburra. *You are exactly yourself, that's who*." Unlike the other characters (particularly Susan and Roberta) Gin actively rejects the self shame and judgment constantly overtaking them. Rather than give in to the pressures of socialized gender norms, Gin actively transgresses them in her self awareness. Additionally, with the above quotes, though she acknowledges what her community thinks of her – and acknowledges how much she misses her aunt with whom she used to live before her passing, she constantly thinks about how content she is to live in the woods with her pets and with nature – and thus how secure she feels in that life away from society. Though "contentment" does not always imply the same experience as "freedom," I argue that Gin's contentment in self recognition allows her a kind of freedom, a freedom from the constraints and unnaturalness of social roles and expectations. Even in the face of prosecution for the alleged attempted miscarriage of Lola's baby, Gin remains steadfast in her privacy and love for Lola, refusing to provide any information about their personal and romantic relationship or about Lola's abusive relationship – which Gin keeps hidden to avoid Lola's embarrassment.

The only real situation in which Gin has to grapple with her identity and life can be seen when she meets Mattie and is asked to help with an abortion. Mattie being Gin's biological daughter complicates Gin's desire to help and makes Gin wish that she could tell Mattie the truth – which she can't as it was a closed adoption. Gin decides to let Mattie live without that knowledge to protect her from the stress that it might cause and the potential ridicule that Mattie might face if the truth is spread, which then further maintains Gin's commitment to her own sense of morality. Gin's self recognition, then, allows her to exist more freely as herself, unlike the other characters who feel forced into particular lives and expectations. In this way, Gin is the more significant example of self recognition – arguably the level of self recognition for which the other characters strive – within the novel, thus showcasing the significant impact of self recognition on transgressing socialization. Gine serves as the pinnacle of self awareness to which other characters can strive, even if their own roles keep them constrained and unable to engage with Gin's position outside of her social ridicule.

As we saw, each of the women portrayed in *Red Clocks* experience a different kind of oppression as women, not only from government control, but also in the social expectations forced upon them. Even the way the Zumas refers to each of the characters – "the Wife," "the Daughter," etc. – lends to these structures that identify women for their role as opposed to their individual selves. Zumas seems to be making a statement about the pervasiveness of these structures that strip away identity in order to fit into particular societal expectations. This is not to say that the characters' titles are inherently

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[241] Zumas, *Red Clocks*, 44. Emphasis in original.

problematic. None are derogatory – some, like "the Explorer" might actually be what the character herself would have preferred, knowing that Eivør wanted that life and profession, despite living in a time that attempted to deny her of it – yet could be referring to any number of women in the narrative. As seen in the oppressions portrayed, each of these women experiences a corrupted recognition with society, as they are inherently seen and treated as subordinated, yet experience uncorrupted self recognition in identifying and transgressing that subordination through rejection of social expectations. Different from many other texts discussed here, *Red Clocks* focuses less on rebellion against their government and more on challenging social structures that keep women subjugated and living for others rather than themselves. This is an important distinction as it presents a more realistic and relatable transgression than other feminist dystopias might, making transgression and self recognition more attainable, as well.

4.3.1 Lack of Self Recognition

Having discussed many examples of self recognition in feminist dystopian literature, there is one novel that stands out as having a noteworthy portrayal of the experience: Oates' *Hazards of Time Travel*. While other texts have had prime examples of characters experiencing self recognition and gaining self understanding or agency to resist oppressions, *Hazards* attempts to capture the experience of a *loss* of self recognition that comes from complacency in socialization. This loss begins early on for Adriane/Mary Ellen, as she is Exiled 80 years into the past to Wainscotia University in 1950's Wisconsin as punishment for questioning authority and quickly begins to lose memories from her life in the surveillance state, North American States 23 (NAS-23). As an Exiled Individual (EI), she is not only given a new identity, meant to keep details of her previous life secret, but she is also made to believe that there are NAS-23 informants throughout the Wainscotia campus watching and reporting on her actions. She is threatened upon her arrival, told that if she fights against the punishment or even tells others about her life in NAS-23 she will be "Deleted" – that is, essentially ceasing to exist. Adriane/Mary Ellen then spends the first half of the novel fighting against her loss of memories, trying to remember any scrap of her former life that she can. When she first notices this lack, she describes it as such: "My head ached somewhere behind my eyes, where the microchip had been inserted. If I tried to think of – (was the word *home? parents?*) – there emerged a barrier like Plexiglas. Against this barrier I would strain and strain – like a trapped creature trying to press through a wall"[242] and "Like trying to peer through something clotted. A thick gauze. Strength was required to remember. My eyes ached in their sockets with the effort of trying to see my friends' faces that were beginning to fade."[243] This initial loss, though it happens on a slightly smaller scale than the loss she experiences later in the novel, which I will discuss shortly, signifies a loss of her sense of self as she is forced to adapt and assimilate to this new world within which she is trapped.

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[242] Oates, *Hazards*, 80. Emphasis in original.
[243] Oates, *Hazards*, 81.

Not only is this a loss of self, it can also be seen as dehumanizing, particularly as she identifies with the metaphor of being a "trapped creature."

Her loss of self is significantly amplified after Ira Wolfman – her fellow EI and only real companion – is Deleted for trying to escape Wainscotia. After he is Deleted, Mary Ellen is hospitalized with complete amnesia, having no knowledge of who or where she is – though she can feel the inklings of memories coming through as emotions, but emotions that she can't explain. These emotions, she describes as: "Like a convulsion of the body, such grief. Like a great snake rippling inside me, that cannot be contained or controlled and whose outlet was tears. Why did I cry so helplessly, and bitterly – I did not know."[244] She accepts "memories" of her past, though these memories are relative considering the history that was fed to those around her as her cover (from hospital staff and visitors). Having no other experiences to grasp, she internalizes these false memories, using them to define herself.[245] In this way, she doesn't simply live with a corrupted self recognition experience, rather she lives in a context in which she cannot possibly recognize herself, only having falsified memories given to her by others. This notion presents an interesting connection to the intersubjectivity of recognition in that it acknowledges issues with having one's subjectivity established by and through others. Within contexts of domination and oppressive socialization, relying on others to establish one's subjectivity is problematized, as others may not be able to truthfully and effectively witness you and your true context, as they are only privy to certain info and contexts Additionally, as is the case for Mary Ellen, the lack of witnessing from others coupled with the complete separation from one's self display the complexity of self recognition. Given such an oppressive context, not only can Mary Ellen not rely on others to aid in her recognition experiences, she also cannot rely on herself as the oppressive forces affecting her have cut her off even from herself.

In addition to the corrupted self recognition through her loss of memories, the internalization of her forced memories also leads to a loss of self recognition through her acceptance of socialized and gendered domestic roles in the end. After bonding with Jamie Stiles – a Wainscotia student who she met during a campus anti-war demonstration – while recovering, she and Jamie move back to his farm and begin a life together. In her inner narrative, distinctly opposite in comparison to Susan in *Red Clocks*, we see Adriane seemingly happily accepting her role as caretaker and wife, as she constantly says how happy she is. However, as time goes on, her declarations of happiness become more and more concerning, with her thoughts seeming to convey the opposite. For example, amidst a houseful of guests, she thinks, "There is no time here for sorrow. I am too busy!"[246] Though not an alarming statement on its own, its context as an aside to the narrative that does not relate to Mary Ellen's surrounding events and thoughts creates an unsettled feeling for the reader, as we're forced to ask: why is she considering sorrow when she outwardly portrays complete contentment if not overt happiness? This is confirmed when,

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[244] Oates, *Hazards*, 286.

[245] Oates, *Hazards*, 285.

[246] Oates, *Hazards*, 311.

in regards to one of Jamie's houseguests, "Here is a man who sees through you. Your happiness, your relentless smile, even your 'love.'"[247] Through the notion that her happiness can be "seen through" along with the quotes around "love," Mary Ellen portrays a loving and devoted wife, who actually appears to be hiding her true feelings, hiding them even from herself. With this, I would argue that Oates' goal here is to showcase the overarching oppressive nature of domesticity and social expectations that make passive acceptance of narrow social roles seem so easy. It is in this passive acceptance that we can see Adriane's loss of self recognition. Despite the minute moments in which we see her facade breaking, as above, she doesn't allow them to lead her to question or challenge her life and roles. Instead we see her dig her heels in and refuse to consider them in any more detail. The only potential moment in which self recognition may be possible is when she finds the word-less, empty books, reminding her of the signs of living in a dream state[248] – a seeming confirmation for the reader of Wolfman's claims to have been the tech that created and developed the simulation in which he claimed they were living out their punishment.[249] Her panic in this moment offers the potential for her to further question her world and life, hopefully leading to self recognition eventually, though she doesn't experience one within the narrative. Instead, as we saw with her resistance against negative emotions, she simply puts the books back and quickly leaves the room. The novel concludes with her continuing to think on her domestic "bliss." While the other texts discussed in this chapter show us ways in which self recognition presents us with the self understanding and potential transgression of oppressions, *Hazards* instead shows us the dangers of a *lack* of self-recognition, in which we become complacent to the world and social expectations, without the desire and/or self awareness to resist or change our roles.

Additionally, it is important to note the complexity of Mary Ellen's context, not only in her loss of self recognition, but also in the context that allows for such loss. More specifically, Mary Ellen's loss doesn't come from a mere socialization – though arguably the fear of retaliation from her life in a surveillance state could be identified as a socialization by and through power. Rather, oppressive technology – much like for Tally in the *Uglies* series – plays a critical role in complicating and corrupting her self recognition experience. Mary Ellen doesn't simply accept a subordinated, non-autonomous role, but instead is forced to do so through the use of microchips, Deletion, and potentially a computer simulation in which she may have been forced. Now, this is even further complicated when we consider her moments in the hospital, namely when she is visited by a man pretending to be her doctor who asks her if she has an Uncle Toby – which we as the reader know she does, as he had been Deleted in NAS-23 when she was a child. Though this remains lost on her, having no recollection of any family, it does initiate a severe headache leading her to wonder why she feels like there is a memory just outside of her reach. Though she doesn't do anything with these feelings within the narrative, much like the wordless books, it offers a potential opportunity for curiosity and

[247] Oates, *Hazards*, 322.
[248] Oates, *Hazards*, 323.
[249] Oates, *Hazards*, 260-264.

self recognition eventually, as she is confronted with a variety of confusing situations that could lead to questioning. These complications are important as they further showcase the effect that oppression has in corrupting self recognition, not just making it difficult, but seemingly impossible, as our subjectivities are established and mitigated through such socialized norms.

4.4 Conclusion

While some recognition philosophers may challenge these conceptions of self recognition as not sufficiently intersubjective, especially when considering the mutuality of recognition as Hegel conceptualizes, each of the novels discussed in this chapter offers a significant way to understand one's self and agency. While recognition experiences overall help us understand ourselves and our place in the world, the representations of self recognition in feminist dystopian literature go far beyond seeing ourselves as objectified by others, to seeing our own autonomy and agency in the world – particularly as we can transgress the objectification and subordination to which we are subjected through engaging our own sense of self and agency. As we saw above, sometimes that autonomy manifests actively as rebellion and the fight for change, as Westerfeld illustrates Tally in *Uglies*, or creating new systems for positive and peaceful change, like Butler's Lauren does in *Parable*. For others this autonomy comes in the acknowledgement of freedom and the possibilities that life can offer when you step outside of the social expectations and pressure trapping you in an unfulfilled life, as for Zumas's characters Roberta and Susan in *Red Clocks*, or in grasping the dangers that can come from accepting the role you have been relegated to, as with Mary Ellen in Oates's *Hazards*. In these ways, feminist dystopian literature offers us a significant perspective on the possibilities of self recognition as a catalyst for self understanding and engaging with one's own agency. As we will see in the following, final chapter, such visions of recognition hold incredible potential for readers to not only empathize with characters to understand their own subjectivities, but also to see portrayals of transgression against oppression that can be internalized and replicated in their lives, as well.

5 Implications of Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature

As we can see from the texts and themes discussed in previous chapters, not only is there a clear correlation between power, oppression and the experience of subject formation, but feminist dystopian literature goes far beyond the realm of entertainment to both portray corrupted and uncorrupted recognition experiences, along with social issues and injustices as they affect and are affected by experiences of objectivity and subjectivity. These portrayals of oppression and recognition offer readers an intriguing insight into these oppressions, as we are able to see them demonstrated in ways that, though exaggerated, we can potentially relate to or empathize with. Given the intentionality of the feminist dystopian genre to point to these injustices, this experience of empathy present within literature and the experience of reading itself, I argue, allows us to strengthen our "moral imagination" to better understand and engage with such injustices in the real world. Additionally, this strengthening of the moral imagination also helps us understand our own agency in the world, as we see the dystopian characters engaging with their agency in a variety of ways through depictions of recognition.

5.1 Responsibility In and Through Literature

Recognized as a crucial way in which to understand both the creative and literary landscape and human experience, fiction as a whole remains a fruitful and complex area of study. Having the potential to simultaneously entertain and educate, fiction offers unique ways for readers to engage, particularly in the ways that this engagement teaches readers about their world, others in the world, and ultimately themselves. While fiction broadly does hold this potential, there are specific genres of fiction that utilize this combination of education and entertainment in more distinct, intentional, and recognizable ways. Namely, I have argued that dystopian fiction – specifically feminist dystopia – is situated in such a way to astutely offer readers an understanding of marginalization and social engagement through the themes magnifying current social structures and issues that readers may or may not be aware of and engaged with in their own worlds.

5.2 The Responsibility of Literature and of the Author

Historically, there has been much debate about what literature can accomplish for and through its writers and readers, with some taking literature merely as art, while others place a significant responsibility on literature and on authors – with some even considering the "novel as a building-block of social justice."[250] Jean-Paul Sartre writes of this divide in "What is Literature," where he not only defines literature, but also argues for the role that it can and should play in social and political change. Sartre begins by discussing how to define writing, acknowledging authorial intention and the author's ability to affect change in their world, stating,

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[250] Heather McRobie, "Martha Nussbaum, empathy, and the moral imagination," *Open Democracy* (2014).

By speaking, I reveal the situation by my very intention of changing it; I reveal it to myself and to others *in order* to change it. I strike at its very heart, I transfix it, and I display it in full view; at present I dispose of it; with every word I utter, I involve myself a little more in the world, and by the same token I emerge from it a little more, since I go beyond it towards the future.[251]

Here Sartre addresses the effect that our speaking or putting thoughts into words has on the world, noting that the act of speaking both situates us in the world as we interpret and engage with it while also allowing us to engage with new possibilities as our speaking has the potential to change the world, as well. Though he writes of "speaking" specifically, putting our thoughts and ideas into words in any capacity would, per Sartre's notion above, allow space for engaging in or changing one's world. In this way, Sartre shows the possibility of the writer, as they engage with the world around them through their engagement with and creation of literature. He continues by considering the history of literature and the ways in which the dominant ideology of the time impacted the text being written – not only in who may or may not interact with the text, but also how the author would be portraying the world through their writing which, according to Sartre, historically has reflected the bourgeois or elite perspective and ideology. He recognizes this changing partially through the expansion of literacy among the masses,[252] but also with the changes to literature in the eighteenth century, particularly with "an objective and subjective unclassing"[253] by writers of the time. He discusses this "unclassing" as occurring around religion and spirituality, more specifically around notions of "truth." Sartre writes,

Placed by an extreme chance between confused aspirations and an ideology in ruins – like the writer between the bourgeoisie, the Court, and the Church – literature suddenly asserted its independence. It was no longer to reflect the commonplaces of the collectivity; it identified itself with Mind, that is, with the permanent power of forming and criticizing ideas.[254]

In this passage, Sartre points to a critical autonomy, in which people of the time began to more distinctly reject the given "truths" of the ruling class and religious leaders – or, as Sartre states in the following paragraph, this rejection "manifested itself as the power of continually surpassing the *given*, whatever it might be."[255] In this way, Sartre points to not only a growing movement of also creating new ideas – rather than only expanding on existing ones belonging to the ruling class – which then also leads to the growth of criticism and challenging existing ideas. With this, Sartre then defines the contemporary

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[251] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 37.
[252] Sartre, "What is Literature?".
[253] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 96.
[254] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 97.
[255] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 98. Emphasis added.

writer as one who not only challenges the ruling ideology, but encourages readers to do so, as well. He writes,

> The writer presents [society] with its image; he calls upon it to assume it or to change itself. At any rate, it changes; it loses the equilibrium which its ignorance had given it; it wavers between shame and cynicism; it [practices] dishonesty; thus, the writer gives society *a guilty conscience*; he is thereby in a state of perpetual antagonism towards the conservative forces which are maintaining the balance he tends to upset.[256]

As Sartre recognizes here, the writer has the potential to impact readers' views of their world by showing them an image of their own society and the governing ideologies that maintain a certain status quo. This intention – that of showing society an image of itself intended to highlight dominant ideologies and their oppressive natures – is inherent to the dystopian genre itself, as seen through Moylan's "critical dystopias"[257] and Gilarek's "thought experiments."[258] In this way, we can further see the significance of feminist dystopian literature as a space for changing mindsets and perspectives, just as Sartre points out with respect to literature in general.

This then is also where we see a connection back to Sartre's notion of the responsibility of authors, as literature has grown into an art that can and does actively challenge problematic social structures. According to Damon Boria, Sartre saw literature as having significant "functions," stating,

> Among those [functions of literature that Sartre] named are giving society a guilty conscience by demanding it assume or change itself, facilitating class consciousness, challenging the alienation of work and showing the human person as creative action, awakening oppressors to the fact that they are oppressors, shaping a revolutionary ideology for the oppressed, militating in favor of the individual and the socialist revolution, reestablishing the dignity of language, speaking aloud the opinions of the citizenry, and, in response to the circumstances of one's age, arouse anger, discomfort, shame, hatred and love.[259]

Boria continues, recognizing that these effects imply an authorial responsibility to address social issues within their work, whether it be changing "hearts and minds, policy reform or revolution."[260] Despite Sartre's argument for the responsibility of the author, he does acknowledge the realistic scope that literature has, stating, "instead of trying to change an intolerable situation, one attempts to evade it and seeks refuge in a future

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[256] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 81. Emphasis in original.

[257] Moylan, *Scraps*.

[258] Gilarek, "Marginalization of 'the Other,'" 222.

[259] Damon Boria, "Pricking Us into Revolt?: Vonnegut, DeLillo and Sartre's Hope for Literature," *Sartre Studies International* 19, no. 2, (2013): 45-46.

[260] Boria, "Pricking Us into Revolt?," 46.

which is utterly foreign to us, since it is not the future that we are making, but the *concrete present of our grandchildren*."[261] In this passage, Sartre first points to the escapism that comes from literature, in which we use literature to remove ourselves from the problems of our contemporary world in order to see new future potentialities. With this, he also acknowledges that literature in this way can only portray a new or different world than our own, as the changes portrayed cannot happen in the present and that the writer does not actually have any "means of action upon this present," but rather is in the hands of those future generations (readers) for them to take action in their own time. In other words, portraying visions of a future world – whether better or worse than the writer's contemporary world – does not necessitate change in the present, but instead places opportunity for action in the hands of the generations that could or will live in this potential future.

In terms of feminist dystopian literature, this notion of placing the text and its commentary with readers is incredibly significant, as the dystopian genre is arguably the most obvious realization of this vision of literature, looking towards a potential future, while hopefully encouraging change for and with readers. Though Sartre's take seems to imply a utopian vision, particularly through his use of the phrase "evade it and seeks refuge in a future," I argue that there is still space for dystopia in his conception, as the escapism of literature is not and does not have to be a comfortable escape, but instead transports the reader to a different or new world in just the same way that Sartre discusses – just with a different engagement experience for the reader and author alike. Similarly, Martha Nussbaum acknowledges the potential that literature can have on its readers, particularly situating the novel as an inherently moral space, whether through the realistic, expository literature for Sartre or Nussbaum's notion of the novel as an inherently creative "moral achievement."[262] In her theorizations of reader-response theory, Louise Rosenblatt echoes Nussbaum's argument, citing literature as being an experience to engage in rather than an object to engage with.[263] In this, literature has much greater implications than simply being entertainment or art. Instead, Sartre's take showcases the ways in which literature not only portrays our real world, but also what it can do to *change* our world as we engage with it, as well.

Now, we cannot discuss Sartre's notions of authorial intention and responsibility without considering the discourse in literary theory surrounding "the author" and the authorial role in literature. Most notably, Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author," addresses this discourse, discussing the place given to the author throughout the history of literary criticism, making the author the pinnacle of interpretation and engagement with a given

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[261] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 244. Emphasis added.

[262] Martha Nussbaum, "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Literature and the Moral Imagination," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 148.

[263] Carolyn Allen, "Louise Rosenblatt and Theories of Reader Response," in *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader Response Theory*, ed. John Clifford, (New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1991), 16.

text. Barthes argues that this focus has been misguided, as readers' contributions to literature have been consistently overlooked. Barthes writes,

> The reader is the very space in which are inscribed without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted.[264]

Here Barthes acknowledges the role of the reader as the "unity" (or significance as I interpret it) of the text particularly as an indistinct person that seemingly cannot be identified. While this portrayal of the reader as indistinguishable is potentially problematic, especially from the perspective of rhetorical and feminist standpoint theories, we can still take from Barthes' thoughts above that the landing-place of literature is with the reader, as the text comes from the author and is sent out into the world to be engaged with by any reader that may choose to, leaving the reader as the space for interpretation and engagement. Once the author releases the text, its movement is no longer in their hands, but in those of the readers. Summarizing such arguments, Chris Jury writes,

> This focus on the author's intent has given unwarranted status to authors (particularly compared to the status of readers) and that the author has thus acquired a tyranny over the reader and that the reader has to be released from the oppressive task of seeking or paying heed to the author's intentions.[265]

As Jury argues, authorial intent as an analytical focus in literary criticism has potentially created a problematic view of literature and readers as relegated in comparison to authors, with authors placed as the pinnacles of literary production.

With this discourse in mind, we can see ways in which Barthes' notion seems to almost over-correct in the opposite direction, in some ways potentially under-valuing – or at worst eliminating – the author's contribution to the text. Coming back to Sartre's discussion of authorial responsibility, these criticisms seem to directly oppose his argument, and even the possibility of responsibility in general, as the author has the potential to be significantly separated from the text which they produce. With this separation, responsibility becomes null and void, as the author's intentions are pushed aside in favor of the reader's interpretations. This is not to say that these interpretations are to be overlooked, but instead would place the responsibility on the *reader* to maintain a lens of change, justice, equity, etc. when engaging with a given text. Placing the responsibility on the reader creates a new concern, as readers would then have to take the

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[264] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, ltd, 2017), 518-521.
[265] Chris Jury, "The Death Of The Critic: Authorial Intent & The Birth Of The Writer," n.p. (n.d.), 1-9.

text without any pretense from the author's perspective and context. While this can and does happen – rhetorical critic Edwin Black[266] discusses this criticism and the differences between literary criticism methods, that of either allowing the text to speak to you in whatever way you interpret it or engaging with the text with a very specific critical lens in mind – not considering at the very least the author's context does not allow the reader to truly understand the space and time that would have influenced the writing of the text, from style, to content, to symbolism, and beyond.

With concerns about authorial intention in mind, other critics do cite the importance of bridging this gap, bringing author and reader together as inherently connected and working together in engaging with the text. Jury, for example, discusses the intersubjectivity of literature, arguing that a text and its meaning cannot exist without both reader and author. He writes,

> The meaning that a text conveys is not infinitely subjective; writing is a collective communicative inter-subjective process that involves author, reader and social context. When writing the author presupposes the reader; when reading the reader presupposes the author; neither activity makes sense without the other.[267]

As he acknowledges, literature cannot be separated from the one creating it, the one engaging with it, or the broader social context in which it was created and in which it is portrayed – which, of course, is crucial to both the form in which the author writes and the method which the reader uses to interpret the text. This discourse around authorial intent is interesting alongside Sartre's discussions of intent and responsibility because it showcases the complexity of the literary experience, a notion that he readily addresses. While we can take Sartre's notions as true to form and useful when considering literature that actively attempts to challenge social and political norms (like feminist dystopia does) the discourse around the "death of the author" might lead us to question what responsibility readers may potentially have. As we will soon see in the upcoming section on the moral imagination, while we cannot guarantee that readers will take on their responsibility, we can *hope* that they recognize the author's responsibility and intention to then take up those goals presented by the author.

Along with his notions of authorial responsibility, what is also interesting about Sartre's take on literature, is his own use of a literary style, particularly that of scene and world building in his philosophical writings. For example, in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre explains some of his denser concepts such as the "look," recognition, and the guilt/shame in the look through detailed scenes made to immerse the reader in the scenario, and thus the embodied phenomena being portrayed. More specifically, in his discussion of the "look," Sartre writes of a man walking through a park encountering the objects in the park (a bench, trees, etc.) as sources of meaning and understanding of the space in which

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[266] Edwin Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (Fall 1980): 331-336.
[267] Jury, "The Death Of The Critic," 8.

he exists. He first acknowledges that he can see the person in the park in the same way he does the other objects, stating, "If I were to think of him as being only a puppet, I should apply to him the categories which I ordinarily use to group temporal-spatial 'things.' That is I should apprehend him as being 'beside' the benches, two yards and twenty inches from the lawn, as exercising a certain pressure on the ground, etc."[268] He continues,

> Perceiving him as a man, on the other hand, is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and him; it is to register an organization without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object. To be sure, the lawn remains two yards and twenty inches away from him, but it is also as a lawn bound to him in a relation which at once both transcends distance and contains it . . . We are dealing with a relation which is without parts, given at one stroke, inside of which there unfolds a spatiality which is not my spatiality; for instead of a grouping *toward me* of the objects, there is now an orientation *which flees from me*.[269]

In this scene, Sartre uses not only clear imagery of this encounter, but imagery of an encounter that nearly any reader would be able to imagine and relate to. This imagery is significant in driving home his point about recognition and being-with-others, as it creates a vivid image in the reader's mind, allowing them to engage with Sartre's "look" in a more visceral way than if he explained the phenomenon in more clinical or academic terms, as the reader is able to insert themself into the scene itself – a notion that we will discuss in more detail in the "moral imagination" section below.

5.3 The Role of the Reader and the Moral Imagination

As discussed above, just as important as the writer and their potential responsibility is the role of the *reader* in engaging with literature, as can be seen through reader response theory. Championed by Louise Rosenblatt, reader response theory generally argues that readers are "co-creator[s] of the work" as they "allow [their] consciousness to be invaded by the consciousness of another,"[270] making a text meaningful through their engagement with it.[271] Through reader response theory, we see readers experiencing the text not only as an art form with which to engage, but as a sense of meaning making in their own very real worlds. According to Rosenblatt, "The sense of personal identity . . . comes largely from self-definition as against the 'other,' the external world of people and things. Literary texts provide us with a widely broadened 'other' through which to define

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[268] Jean Paul Sartre, "The Look," in *Being and Nothingness: The Principle text of Modern Existentialism*, 252-302.

[269] Sartre, "The Look," 254. Emphasis in original.

[270] Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader Response Theory*, ed. John Clifford, (New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1991), xv.

[271] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1978), ix.

ourselves and our world."[272] Thus not only does reader response theory highlight readers as the source of literary interpretation, it also showcases the impact that reading and literature have on one's sense of self as we identify ourselves with and against these "external worlds" to find a sense of self-definition.

Despite his focus on the author, and though he isn't explicitly referencing reader response theory, in "What is Literature," Sartre does point to the reader as a crucial piece of the literary experience, stating that

> The operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative and these two connected acts necessitate two distinct agents. It is the joint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. There is no art except for and by others.[273]

Clearly, it is not simply what the author intends to create and portray that is significant, but how the reader engages with the text as well. Further, Sartre also recognizes that "reading is induction, interpolation, extrapolation, and the basis of these activities rests on the reader's will . . . A gentle force accompanies us and supports us from the first page to the last. That does not mean that we fathom the artist's intentions easily."[274] Recognizing this engagement, Sartre acknowledges the reader's interpretation as well, stating,

> If [the reader] is at his best, he will project beyond the words a synthetic form, each phrase of which will be no more than a partial function: the 'theme', the 'subject', or the 'meaning'. Thus, from the very beginning, the meaning is no longer contained in the words, since it is he, on the contrary, who allows the significance of each of them to be understood.[275]

In the above quotes, Sartre acknowledges not only the significance of the meaning that the reader gleans from the text, both outside of the author's intentions and outside of the literal words themselves, but also the reader's role as being inherent to the meaning of the text being found and understood. The reader and their experience, then, cannot be overlooked when considering a work of literature, as they, in some ways, play just as important – if not potentially more important – a role as the writer. But *how* does the reader engage with literature?

Not only can we acknowledge the reader as crucial to literature, we can also look at the experience of reading itself and the ways that this experience impacts readers. In "The Phenomenology of Reading," Georges Poulet (similarly to Louise Rosenblatt) discusses the experience of reading, noting the ways in which the book not only transforms from an

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[272] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, 145.
[273] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 51-52.
[274] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 60.
[275] Sartre, "What is Literature?" 52.

object as we are enticed to explore the interior of the text,[276] but also changes the way that we think as we're reading and thinking the "thoughts of another."[277] In reference to these thoughts, Poulet writes,

> Ordinarily there is the *I* which thinks, which recognizes itself (when it takes its bearings) in thoughts which may have come from elsewhere but which it takes upon itself as its own in the moment it thinks them . . . Because of the strange invasion of my person by the thoughts of another, I am a self who is granted the experience of thinking thoughts foreign to him. I am the subject of thoughts other than my own. My consciousness behaves as though it were the consciousness of another.[278]

In this way, reading is not as simple as engaging with a given narrative; rather, through the act of reading, we are entirely immersed in the narrative to the point that we think thoughts given to us by another, thoughts entirely foreign to us.[279] Throughout the remainder of Poulet's article, he attempts to answer the question of whose consciousness one experiences while reading. While he initially points to the author, he acknowledges that the author can often be somewhat removed from what they write and that it may not be representative of their consciousness. Rather, Poulet seems to recognize the text, the work itself as a subject. He states, "And it is the work, finally, which, not satisfied thus with defining the content of my consciousness, takes hold of it, presides over the unfolding of the work, of the single work which I am reading."[280] Here, not only does Poulet directly acknowledge the text itself as impacting his sense of self and consciousness, but also his personification of the text further showcases his conception of it as a subject.

Now, I argue that we can go a step further here, specifically with fiction, to even acknowledge the characters within the text as the "consciousnesses" that we are engaging with and whose thoughts we are thinking as our own. If we use this empathetic interpretation, we can then begin to look toward the concept and experience of the "moral imagination." Though connected to philosopher Edmund Burke and expanded by Toni

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[276] Georges Poulet, "The Phenomenology of Reading," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, ltd, 2017), 306.

[277] Poulet, "The Phenomenology of Reading," 307.

[278] Poulet, "The Phenomenology of Reading," 307-308. Emphasis in original.

[279] Though I use Poulet's thoughts here as a significant lead-in to Nussbaum's moral imagination, it is important to note that Poulet's notions of the reading experience are somewhat subjective and may not be experienced in this exact way by others. At one point in "The Phenomenology of Reading," he discusses the imagery that one sees in their head while reading as a significant point in his argument. This notion, though historically common-place, has very recently been challenged, as "aphantasia" – the inability to see images in one's mind – has been more thoroughly researched and diagnosed. So, while Poulet's overall argument about the experience of reading and its effects on the mind remain predominant in society and useful within my argument, I felt it important to acknowledge its potentially subjective nature.

[280] Poulet, "The Phenomenology of Reading," 310.

Morrison,[281] the moral imagination has been theorized primarily by Martha Nussbaum and is directly connected to the experience of empathy, as the process that happens behind empathy. More specifically, if empathy is the experience of imagining yourself in one's context and situation in order to better understand and to have compassion for their circumstances, the moral imagination would be the mental process of, and ability to, imagine that context in the first place. In "Cultivating Humanity: The Narrative Imagination," Nussbaum writes that

> Narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual tourist's interest – with involvement and sympathetic understanding, with anger at our society's refusals of visibility. We come to see how circumstances shape the lives of those who share with us some general goals and projects; and we see that circumstances shape not only people's possibilities for action, but also their aspirations and desires, hopes and fears.[282]

Here, Nussbaum points to the empathic potential that literature offers readers, as they become immersed in the lives and experiences of the characters. Further, Nussbaum recognizes that literature, as works of art, has distinct and significant potential in not only conveying moral philosophy, but should also be acknowledged as, in a certain way, moral philosophy texts. This potential, she claims, stems from the reader's experience with the text, arguing that

> the adventure of the reader of this novel, like the adventure of the intelligent characters inside it, involves valuable aspects of human moral experience that are not tapped by traditional books of moral philosophy . . . to work through these sentences and these chapters is to become involved in an activity of exploration and unraveling that uses abilities, especially abilities of emotion and imagination.[283]

In other words, fiction offers readers a more engaging insight into the moral tenets present within a narrative – more so than philosophical texts often do – thus allowing them more space to understand and potentially internalize critical moral ideas and insights, just as Sartre's use of literary imagery and language discussed above. Additionally, Nussbaum recognizes that ethical theory in particular can deepen our engagement with a literary text in the ways that it presents a variety of contexts and issues. Nussbaum argues,

> Ethical theory, just because of its systematic and inclusive disciplinary character, can contribute to our understanding of a literary work by raising questions that

[281] J. Roger Kurtz, "Literature, trauma and the African moral imagination," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32, no. 4 (2014): 431.

[282] Martha Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity: The Narrative Imagination," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, ltd, 2017), 384.

[283] Nussbaum, "James's *The Golden Bowl*," 143.

this work may or may not explicitly ask itself concerning the relationship of its ethical views to other issues on which we have to make up our mind – issues about social structure, about economic distribution, about the self and personal identity.[284]

While referencing ethical and literary theory specifically, Nussbaum offers quite an important insight into the potential that ethical and moral theory can have on readers' interaction with a given work of literature – not just in the way we interpret the text itself, but also in the ways that our understanding of real world contexts and situations are ultimately made more complex. With this strengthening, Nussbaum argues that bringing literature and ethical and moral theories together creates the goal of "self-understanding and communal attunement," which leads to her acknowledgement that, "Each of us is not only a professional, but a human being who is trying to live well; and not simply a human being, but also a citizen of some town, some country, above all a world of human beings, in which attunement and understanding are extremely urgent matters."[285] With this, not only does she address the importance of ethical theory in literature and literary theory, she also establishes the significance of empathy and the development of a more nuanced moral imagination, as well.

Nussbaum cites the significance of this process as a crucial part of a reader's engagement with a given text. She acknowledges that this process is made easier and more accessible the more a person reads and immerses themselves in literature, as they are more frequently losing themself in someone else's world and point of view, thus allowing them to more effectively use the same process to imagine someone else's point of view in the real world, as well. Though moral imagination can be used in any context in which empathy would be useful or necessary, Nussbaum and others discuss its potential to avoid dehumanization and "Othering." As Heather McRobie states in reference to Nussbaum,

> Literature, [Nussbaum] argues, is nourishing because it expands our empathy, developing our moral imagination. Empathy is something we practice, and literature helps us to flex this muscle. By encouraging us to exercise our moral imagination, we develop our capacity to more fully put ourselves in another person's situation and thus those 'different' to ourselves in circumstance, identity or practice can no longer be dehumanised or Other-ised as 'disgusting' or 'subhuman.'[286]

In this way, empathy and moral imagination don't simply allow us more space to understand one another, it also provides us a deeper understanding of one another's marginalization, as well. The hope, then, would be the acknowledgement and respect of others as subjects, much in the same way we do with recognition and subject formation.

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[284] Martha Nussbaum, "Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 191.
[285] Nussbaum, "Perceptive Equilibrium," 192.
[286] McRobie, "Martha Nussbaum, empathy, and moral imagination."

Additionally, moral imagination, along with allowing us to place ourselves in the contexts of others, according to Giles Gunn, also provides us with an understanding of that context's potential meaning or significance. Discussing Clifford Geertz, Gunn states,

> The key to [art's] peculiar nature lies in the effects of the imagination which produces them, for it is the imagination, Geertz believes, which permits artists to render the ordinary experiences of everyday life in terms of acts and objects dissociated from their practical consequences so that we can perceive their potential as opposed to their actual meaning . . . Art not only imitates life but equally influences it, and it does so by providing, often for the first time, a significant form for those very aspects of subjective human experience it purports only to reflect.[287]

In this way, we can see a clear connection between representations in literature (as art) to the meaning that we make in our own lives.

Additionally, along with this connection, Gunn also acknowledges the interpretive experience that we have as readers, as well, in that we don't simply see the representations of the real world, but understand what the representations can mean even if not seen directly in our real lives. This is especially poignant when considering feminist dystopian literature, and dystopian literature more broadly, as dystopia does not necessarily portray situations and events that have actually occurred, but rather ones that *have the potential* to occur. As J Roger Kurtz writes, "The moral imagination is, by [John Paul Lederach]'s definition, a creative and artistic act with 'the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist.'"[288] Kurtz's thoughts here subtly point to the potential that literature and its portrayal of the real world and real social/political issues can have on readers to address those issues in their real world, as well. Put more explicitly, Nussbaum recognizes this potential, stating,

> All of [the moral imagination and empathy in reading] seems highly pertinent to decisions we must make as citizens. Understanding, for example, how a history of racial stereotyping can affect self-esteem, achievement, and love enables us to make more informed judgments on issues relating to affirmative action and education.[289]

In other words, through the moral imagination, readers have significant potential to actually make change in their real lives from the narratives they engage with in literature, taking the narrative experiences that they internalize, as Poulet conceptualizes, and bringing them into the world outside of the text.

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[287] Giles Gunn, "The Semiotics of Culture and the Interpretation of Literature: Clifford Geertz and the Moral Imagination," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 12, no. 1 (1979): 119-120.

[288] Kurtz, "Literature, trauma, and the African moral imagination," 431-432.

[289] Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity," 384-385.

5.4 Implications of Feminist Dystopia and Recognition - Understanding Oppression and Agency

In chapter two, "Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency," I briefly addressed the implications of the concept of recognition itself, pointing to ways in which it helps us understand oppression, marginalization, and agency more effectively, especially as intersubjective experiences. We can see similar implications of recognition in feminist dystopian literature specifically. As addressed previously with the definitions presented by such scholars as Gilarek,[290] Martínez-Falquina,[291] and Moylan,[292] feminist dystopian literature offers a unique picture of the world in which we live – and the world in which we *could* live – amplifying social issues and oppressions to showcase the potential that they have to incite or perpetuate further oppression, while also often offering an image of resistance or transgression. As a genre focused on representations of amplified and worsened social and political discord, there is a direct and significant connection to the implications of the genre and of recognition. In "Understanding Subject Formation and Recognition with and within Power, Oppression, and Agency," I discuss the ways in which phenomenological recognition allows us to not only better understand our own subjectivity and subject formation, but it does so alongside developing an understanding of marginalization and oppression as they hinder the experience of subject formation, as well. In this, I acknowledge the ways in which power and power dynamics are inherently connected to the subject formation process, as they affect the way that we encounter the others that take part in the process with us. As an intersubjective process, subject formation through recognition cannot occur without the presence and awareness of another being in the world – though, as I acknowledge, scholars differ on how involved each individual has to be in the process – and thus it can be affected by a power imbalance between those individuals. Essentially, as we saw through Hegel, Althusser, Oliver, and others, when one of the individuals has power over the other, they see the other as an object for their own use, thus rejecting the possibility or depth of the recognition experience. With this, as in Hegel's mutual recognition,[293] the person with less power is also unable to recognize the other, as they are objectified and not allowed the space or agency with which to recognize or be recognized. This negative impact on recognition and subject formation then tells us something crucial about the pervasiveness of oppression and the effect that it has on others and our own abilities to acknowledge ourselves as agential beings, while also showing us the capacity that an understanding of subjectivity and agency can have on our ability to resist oppression. In this way, the implications of phenomenological recognition extend into both understanding the social structure and ills that keep us oppressed and establishing or engaging the agency that can help us thwart that oppression, as well.

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[290] Gilarek, "Marginalization of 'the Other,'" 221-238.

[291] Martínez-Falquina, "Feminist Dystopia and Reality," 1-17.

[292] Moylan, *Scraps,* xiii.

[293] Hegel, "Independence."

With that synopsis of the implications of recognition itself, we can look to the significance of recognition experiences portrayed in feminist dystopian literature specifically. As mentioned previously, feminist dystopia is intentionally situated to showcase problematic social issues, particularly in their potential, amplified iteration if they go unresolved. Because of this, feminist dystopia, like recognition, helps us see oppressive structures in the world and often present a character resisting those structures or attempting to build a new system, thus showcasing the ways in which recognition can positively impact change. Though examples of recognition and change or resistance are present in the three forms of recognition that I discuss throughout (individual, institutional, and self), they function differently in regard to intersubjectivity, institutional power, and socialization.

5.4.1 Individual

Individual recognition seen in feminist dystopia has implications primarily on our understanding of our ability to affect others in the world, as it shows us the intersubjective nature of our existence with others, along with the understanding of the potential of our own agency. As we know, subject formation and recognition are inherently intersubjective, as they rely on others and their potential recognition and witnessing for our subjectivities to be fully formed and acknowledged. This experience goes beyond individual subjectivities being formed to a collectivity being established through recognition experiences. Dan Zahavi and Dominik Zelinsky discuss this socially dependent experience, stating, "Understanding subjectivity as an irreducible dimension of experience allows for a more satisfactory account of intersubjectivity and social interaction and even provides a better grasp of collective intentionality and 'we-ness'."[294] As Zahavi and Zelinsky point out, the experience of subjectivity and subject formation allow space for individuals coming together to acknowledge their interconnection. In this way, our connections to others are crucial in our understanding of and development of self, as we can see through such texts as the *Hunger Games* series, in which Katniss slowly realizes her own intersubjectivity and connection with others in other districts and throughout Panem. As discussed in chapter three, "Intersubjectivity through Individual Recognition in Feminist Dystopian Literature," Panem is intentionally divided to keep the districts from interacting with one another and potentially inciting another rebellion. Throughout the series, as Katniss interacts and builds connections with tributes from other districts, she starts to understand the oppressions facing *all* districts, even the ones seen as Capitol favorites. We saw this with Finnick Odair, as discussed in chapter four, "Recognition With and Within Institutions and Systemic Power in Feminist Dystopian Contexts," but this also becomes clear with Capitol citizens – both with Cinna, her stylist throughout the series who is eventually murdered for supporting her[295] and then in *Mockingjay* when Katniss and other rebels are helped by Tigris, a Capitol woman who had been forced to undergo cosmetic surgery that gave her orange and black tiger stripes,

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[294] Dan Zahavi and Dominik Zelinsky, "Experience, Subjectivity, Selfhood," 48.
[295] Collins, *Catching Fire*.

making her an outcast in Capitol society.[296] In both of these examples, Katniss truly begins to face the wide-reach that Panem's oppressive state occupies. Her newfound understanding of and respect for others, then, presents readers with an image of recognition as connection, an experience that can ultimately bring us together in our understanding of the oppressions facing us collectively.

Similarly, we can see this intersubjective connection appearing in *Handmaid*, as well, as the individual recognition presented allows Offred to better see the pervasiveness of Gilead's oppression, as it extends even to her direct oppressors, the Waterfords. Particularly, we see this with Offred's acknowledgement of Serena Joy's identity being tied to motherhood and desperation to have a baby at any cost, being complicit in her husband's violent acts of rape, and even breaking the law herself to increase Offred's chances of conception. This vulnerability is a crucial example of individual recognition, as it (like with Katniss) offers the possibility for Offred to not only empathize with Serena Joy, but also to find a sense of awareness in understanding that she and the handmaids are not the only ones struggling in Gilead's system. Though a weaker connection than Katniss develops with other tributes (as the tributes continue to work together to incite revolution throughout the series, while Offred and Serena Joy remain antagonistic towards one another) Offred's recognition experience with Serena Joy still showcases an example of intersubjectivity as she finds potential commonality between them, even if that commonality doesn't create community or positive connection per se. Not only does this intersubjectivity allow individuals to see similarities with others, it also allows for and engages with difference in crucial ways. According to Zahavi and Zelinsky, "Within 'we' formations . . . there is not only unity and similarity, but also difference – and this preserved difference, we would argue, is central for any genuine sense of being-with-one-another."[297] Difference within intersubjectivity here ensures that individuals are not "reduced to the culturally determined roles [they] play" while also not having their "experiential perspectives on matters simply be constituted by [others]." In these ways, difference allows space for clearer autonomy, as individuals are not compiled into particular groups as an amalgamation, but instead as a collective of individuals. Additionally, Zahavi and Zelinsky's use of "being-with-one-another" indicates a significant aspect of intersubjectivity that doesn't simply identify our existence with others – as Heidegger's "being-with-others" can, for example. While "being-with-others" can run the risk of implying simply existing with and being affected by others in the world, the specificity of "being-with-*one-another*" points to a connectedness in existing around and *with* individual, specific (yet varied), others, as opposed to an indistinct and easily reducible "others." Within the textual examples from the *Hunger Games* and *Handmaid* above, this difference is crucial in the difference in both Katniss' and Offred's experience with others, as they engage with their own assumptions about others' oppressions and marginalized experiences, only to face a variety they had not considered. The intersubjectivity in recognition showcased through these texts is significant in what it can potentially teach the readers engaging with them. While we cannot guarantee the

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[296] Collins, *Mockingjay*.
[297] Zahavi and Zelinsky, "Experience, Subjectivity, Selfhood," 48.

reader taking with them an understanding of intersubjectivity in collectivity and in difference from reading such texts, we can at least see the potential, the opportunity, for it to be internalized and expanded upon in the readers' lives through their engagement with the moral imagination.

In addition to intersubjectivity and connection, individual recognition in feminist dystopian literature also has significant implications in the development and acknowledgement of agency, as characters are able to showcase their agency and its potential within certain recognition experiences. Before going into textual examples, it is first important to consider "agency" as a concept, as it can be easily misrepresented. Often, agency is referenced actively, as action or the ability to act, but that implies that agency *requires* action and that inaction or passivity would be classified outside of agency. However, while agency certainly can and does often refer to something active, passivity is also a significant outcome of agency, as well. Passive agency refers to either the choice not to act or to a more internal agential experience, in which one learns about the world or themselves and uses that to further their own sense of self, rather than to take action in the world. Jelle Bruineberg and Odysseus Stone identify this misconceived difference, particularly as agency is often separated into "bodily" and "mental" action.[298] They counter that agency can instead be identified through "perception" or "perceptual attention." Bruineberg and Stone conceptualize "perceptual attention" as "not an inner mental action, but an embodied mental action . . . that is, in part, constituted by bodily activity."[299] As they acknowledge, attention and agency are constantly at play for us as subjects, having the potential to be "passively guided by the salience . . . of personal-level phenomena that are not part of the executive controls system (e.g., perceptions, emotions etc.)."[300] What is significant about Bruineberg and Stone's notion here is that their use of both embodied perception and attention mean that one can never be fully devoid of agency, as they are inherently embodied beings with the ability to maintain awareness of their surroundings and experiences. As we know from previous discussions of recognition, one's agency is impeded or belittled in oppressive contexts, as subjectivity and autonomy of individuals and groups are negatively impacted. This notion of continued agency in marginalization is also seen in John Russon's discussions of the master/slave dynamic portrayed by Hegel. In this, Russon acknowledges the subordination of the slave alongside the paradoxical position of the slave's ability to interpret the difference between the "master" role and the "slave" role. As he states, "The master, *not the slave* is supposed to be the one who interprets things; yet it is precisely the slave's interpretings that realize the relationship."[301] In other words, the slave's necessary acknowledgement and subordination to the master implies an agency (not to be conflated with complicity or consent to subordination) to interpret and engage with their dynamic. These conceptions in mind, an understanding of agency and its complexity is significant

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[298] Jelle Bruineberg and Odysseus Stone, "Structuring Embodied Minds: Attention and Perceptual Agency," *Philosophical Studies* 181, (2024): 462.
[299] Bruineberg and Stone, "Structuring Embodied Minds," 463.
[300] Bruineberg and Stone, "Structuring Embodied Minds," 465.
[301] Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure," 88. Emphasis in original.

throughout feminist dystopian literature and its various portrayals of agency in marginalization and oppression, allowing space for an internalization of these agential experiences.

With this in mind, we can see examples of active and passive agency portrayed in feminist dystopia alongside experiences of recognition. First, we see active agency at play in the *Hunger Games* series most significantly, as Katniss uses her recognition experiences (with other tributes and with President Snow) to engage more deeply in the rebellion and to take an active role in the overthrow of Panem and subsequent revolution – not only in her movement through the war-torn Capitol with other rebels but also in her assassination of President Coin. Passive agency, on the other hand, can be seen in both *Handmaid* and in *Hazards*. For Offred, this passivity comes in her understanding of the Waterfords' vulnerabilities. As discussed previously, though Offred acknowledges the Waterfords' weaknesses, within the main narrative, she doesn't actually use that knowledge against them as we might expect her to – though it is implied in the epilogue that she does. Instead, she takes that understanding found in her recognition experiences with them – particularly with Serena Joy – and, despite their obvious complicity in Gilead's oppressive regime, sees the pressure that they also experience therein. Another example of passive agency, though somewhat different from *Handmaid*, can be seen in *Hazards*, as Mary Ellen's recognition with Ira Wolfman motivates her to, essentially, make the best of a bad situation. Though her punishment begins with her extreme loneliness and loss of self, finding companionship with Wolfman – not just any companion, but another Exiled Individual – gives her more reason to engage with her world in an optimistic way, at least for a short time. Why we can see this as passive agency rather than active is that this motivation remains internal for her. Unlike Katniss, whose recognition experiences encourage her to join the rebellion and bring down the oppressive system of Panem, Mary Ellen's newfound optimism doesn't make her want to run away or try to find a way home; she actually explicitly expresses her concerns about running away when Wolfman suggests it. Rather, it provides her with a brief respite from the isolation of her punishment. In this way, not only do we see an example of passive agency at play, we can also see an example of the intersubjectivity and connection that can come from recognition experiences working to foster a passive agency, as well. Just as with the examples of *Hunger Games* in the previous paragraph, these representations of recognition and intersubjectivity offer readers important insight into interpersonal and intersubjective connection as crucial aspects of understanding and engaging with one's agency. Again, though not guaranteed, the hope then would be for the reader to internalize not only the importance of such connection, but the understanding of what that connection can help us accomplish in the world, whether passively or actively.

5.4.2 Institutional

Similarly to individual recognition, institutional recognition also helps to foster our understanding of marginalization and oppression, but as opposed to focusing on the pervasiveness of oppression among individuals, institutional recognition specifically addresses systemic oppression and the structures perpetuating it. Part of what this also does is point to institutions as perpetuating oppression rather than just the individuals that

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may be on the forefront. This impact of institutional power manifests most significantly through socialization and systemic oppression. As we saw from Foucault, Althusser, and Butler, subjectivity and subject formation are inherently affected by and through power as we cannot exist outside of social power structures while also acting as the "vehicles" for power to maintain its hold and influence.[302] This then affects our experience of identity, as our intersectional identities ("an ensemble of subject positions"[303]) give us varying relations of and to power, changing our relation to marginalization and privilege. This in turn means that one's identities in and through power impact one's subject formation, as well. According to Rachel Joffe Falmagne, "a ['person's'] subjectivity and 'mind' are constituted over time through her/his social location in a gendered, 'raced' and class-stratified world, the attendant formative societal discourses, the local discursive processes in which s/he has participated." Further, not only does she acknowledge the subject being formed by and through identity, she also addresses the impact that subjects can have on "local and macro-level social processes by their actions and positionings,"[304] thus acknowledging both the privilege of positionality and the agency of being a subject. For the recognition experience, this is acknowledging both the systemic oppressions perpetuated by various social and political institutions and one's subjective ability to "act autonomously in order to transform [society]."[305]

Within feminist dystopian literature, we see systemic power and institutional recognition quite significantly as antagonists are often presented as very distinct authority figures, until the protagonists expand their perspective, engaging the antagonist and identifying the pervasiveness of the overarching system(s) behind that antagonist. We see this especially within *Parable* and the *Hunger Games* series. In the social context presented within *Parable*, we see the members of Lauren's society place blame for the societal downfall (especially the violence and theft) on the extremely impoverished and drug-addicted. As discussed in chapter four, "Recognition With and Within Institutions and Systemic Power in Feminist Dystopian Contexts," Lauren herself even questions why her community would be targeted when they are barely surviving, as well. What she ultimately acknowledges, however, is the problematic class divide that keeps them at war with one another, pointing out that the wealthy, higher classes remain so far out of reach that they seem never to be targeted, while the lower classes compete for their survival near constantly.[306] Lauren's acknowledgement here is a distinct example of institutional recognition, as she moves beyond blaming an individual or group around her, but instead points to the overarching system that keeps problematic or oppressive dynamics in play. What this does, then, is help to further the understanding of oppressive systems and the ways in which they keep groups – particularly in the case of *Parable*, the lower classes – pitted against one another. For readers, I argue that as they engage with Lauren's

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[302] Foucault, "Two Lectures," 98.

[303] Rachel Joffe Falmagne, "On the Constitution of 'Self' and 'Mind': The Dialectic of the System and the Person," *Theory and Psychology* 14, no. 6 (2004): 825.

[304] Falmagne, "On the Constitution of 'Self' and 'Mind,'" 823.

[305] Zahavi and Zelinsky, "Experience, Subjectivity, Selfhood," 47.

[306] Butler, *Parable.*

awareness and perspective, this focus and Lauren's realizations about the divisive infighting between the lower classes allows them to potentially see these divides perpetuated by the larger social structure within their world as well.

In a slightly different way, though Snow is initially presented as the sole antagonist in the *Hunger Games* series with various districts and the Capitol citizens benefiting from his authoritarian control, as Katniss dives deeper into the rebellion (and once she interacts with him directly in *Mockingjay* specifically) she begins to see that Snow is not alone in his actions. In chapter four, "Recognition With and Within Institutions and Systemic Power in Feminist Dystopian Contexts," I discuss Katniss' execution of Coin rather than Snow, after Snow points out that Coin, despite her role leading the rebellion, had always been planning to take his place. Even as an obvious manipulation on Snow's part, this acknowledgement of Coin's character coupled with her recommendation to the surviving rebellion and past tributes that they hold one final hunger games with Capitol children as punishment solidify an understanding for Katniss of the problematic and power-hungry leadership that will perpetuate the oppression that they've been fighting to end. This is a crucial moment of institutional recognition as Katniss is able to identify not only the key oppressors perpetuated the authoritarian state, she is also able to see the structure as a whole as much more pervasive than she'd realized; even after a hard-fought revolution, the same tyrannical nature is present in new leadership, as well. Additionally, though I've focused here on Katniss as a character, readers can further understand institutional recognition in the *Hunger Games* series within the recently released prequel, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*,[307] in which a young Snow attempts to work his way into government and into the production of the games, while also being impoverished due to the previous rebellion. In this narrative, readers are drawn in and meant to feel a sense of sympathy for Snow, at least at first, especially when we see the actual creators of the games who are working to make them more cruel. In this, readers can then see how Snow – while he did perpetuate the games and played a significant role in them becoming more of a spectacle – is not the sole individual to blame for them. Rather, what *Ballad* shows us is the post-rebellion system that allowed and gave space for such oppression to occur and flourish.

Similarly, along with portraying specific characters as the sole or primary antagonist, many feminist dystopian texts also broaden out this focus by acknowledging the system that had not been acknowledged (as with *Parable*) and either simply trying to survive in a system that is actively trying to harm you, as it is for Cedar in *Future Home*, or to save the others that you know are being negatively impacted by the system, as for Tally in *Uglies*. For Cedar, it is clear that, as an adopted, Indigenous woman, she is already aware of the problematic systems in place around her, especially as she sees with her white, adoptive parents who chose to name her Cedar Hawk Songmaker to keep her in touch with her heritage (a prime example of good intentions with a potentially problematic result). What she learns throughout the narrative is the lengths that the American government will go to to control the population, as we know, going so far as to detain,

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[307] Collins, *Ballad*.

study, and forcibly re-impregnate women. Cedar, in seeing this pervasiveness, spends the narrative simply attempting to survive, a worthwhile cause considering the significant changes in the natural world that she is experiencing at the same time – changes that she and her world are really unable to control. For Tally, on the other hand, after interacting with the Smoke, she quickly understands their desire to live a life free of the surgery that will not only take away their uniqueness, but force them to live a very mediated and controlled life. Much like Cedar, she then is willing to survive and build her own life in the Smoke as well – that is, until she learns about the brain lesions affecting pretties' thoughts and actions. After learning this, she realizes the distinct need to save other pretties that are being modified for the sake of control, opting to become pretty herself in order to save Shay and others with the cure that the Smoke developed. In this way, Tally doesn't simply acknowledge the problematic system and decide to separate herself from it. Rather, she recognizes the system and knows that others need to be shown the same. Along with the experience of institutional recognition, these examples showcase the ways in which institutional recognition and the acknowledgement of oppressive structures further help to solidify what these systems can and do look like, which hopefully allow readers to better identify them in their lives, as well.

In addition to deepening understanding and visibility of systemic oppression, institutional recognition in feminist dystopian literature also showcases the possibility for change that may seem too daunting to attempt. When facing an oppressive system, it's easy to see the overarching systems around which our society is structured and become overwhelmed with the prospect of dismantling them. Here I've argued that feminist dystopian characters who do take part in dismantling oppressive structures have the potential to show readers how they can take part in the same processes in their own lives. We can see this particularly through characters such as Katniss and Tally, who both encounter the oppressive system and actively seek to fight back against it and even tear it down. Another way in which we see this potential is through Lauren's Earthseed, as she showcases a solution to the oppressive systems that could create a better, more mindful community to change mindsets rather than overthrowing the oppressive system itself. Additionally, with Cedar, we see just how difficult change can be when you're just trying to survive an oppressive system. This is especially poignant, as the push to make change can come across as if change needs to be nearly identical to the active rebellion of the *Hunger Games*. However, as we see throughout these narratives (*Future Home* most significantly) even surviving can be subversive in its own way. This is a crucial notion for readers to engage with, as it showcases the varied enactments of agency that can be used to address systemic oppression and power. All of these texts, then, potentially show readers that the subversion of oppressive systems is possible and that there are a variety of ways in which to do so, thus encouraging space for readers to engage in change that fits their individual contexts.

5.4.3 Self

The implications of self recognition are especially interesting alongside individual and institutional recognition and their fostering understanding of oppression and oppressive systems, as this form of recognition looks toward the self, allowing us to see our own

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agency and sense of self outside of the objectification by others – that is "not as a 'pure' consciousness but as an embodied subject."[308] This is not to say that self recognition experiences occur without others in the world (that would be impossible within the theorizations of intersubjective recognition that we've considered[309, 310]) but rather that our acknowledgement of our own objectification allows us to better see outside of that state of being, to the space in which we affect others and the world around us. John Russon identifies this experience of self as being "immediately in charge of our own value systems . . . able both to control them and, more fundamentally, to recognize them."[311] Directly connected to agency and autonomy, Russon's thoughts here point to not only identifying oneself as an individual, but also within larger value systems with and in which they interact. Acknowledging these systems is crucial in their problematic impact on self recognition. Situating theorizations of recognition, David Espinet and Matthias Flatscher state,

> Recognition takes its departure from the assumption that the subject can only achieve a practical self-relation if she experiences affirmation and acceptance from Others. Those from whom, however, recognition is withheld – for example, in racist, sexist, or colonial contexts – have difficulty affirming their own overall life projects. The intrinsic relation of recognition to freedom is obvious: the autonomous subject recognizes both the limits of her own freedom and that of other autonomous persons.[312]

In other words, along with marginalization impeding recognition experiences, an autonomous individual can identify this marginalization for themselves and in others as well. Similarly, Russon also addresses the place of the oppressed individual (using Hegel's master/slave) as affecting others even within their oppression, as any action from the slave's subjugated position necessitates an act against the master. Russon states, "Any act by the slave is thus necessarily a transgression of the limits of the slave's proper position, a transgression into the proper domain of the master, for in any action the slave takes it upon herself to determine the disposition of something in the world. In any action the slave takes initiative and therefore violates the definition of slave."[313] This paradox showcases the deeply complex position of the slave, maintaining agency within oppression, along with the potential for further action in acknowledging the slave's inherent agency and autonomy.

This is a critical notion when considering feminist dystopian portrayals of self recognition, as the growth of self and establishment of agency, along with the complexity of self and agency in oppression, are portrayed throughout a variety of texts. First, we can

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[308] Kruks, "Panopticism and Shame," 64.

[309] Russon, "Reading and the Body," 71.

[310] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

[311] Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure," 93.

[312] Espinet and Flatscher, "Recognition and Freedom," 144.

[313] Russon, "Hermeneutical Pressure," 83.

look to *Parable* as a prime example, as Lauren seems to consistently understand her own ability, both to reject the problematic systems around her and to positively impact the world. As discussed previously, Lauren experiences recognition with her community and social system, as she sees how pervasive their structures are that keep people divided and looking for the past to return as opposed to seeing the potential change the future can bring. In this, Lauren also experiences self recognition, as she sees her own ability to address those issues herself, even with others around her refusing to take her seriously. In this rejection, she doesn't simply acknowledge that something needs to change. Rather, she develops Earthseed in an attempt to create a community more willing to accept and take part in change in any capacity possible, while also actively growing the community. Despite being challenged by her community and by the society surrounding her, Lauren recognizes herself as an agential being who can actively affect the world and others, using that recognition to attempt to positively affect the world. What is interesting about Lauren's self recognition experience is that, unlike many feminist dystopian characters, she experiences this recognition quite early on and much more subtly. Rather than being portrayed as experiencing corrupted recognition which then becomes uncorrupted through a particular event, in Lauren's narrative, we see her acknowledgement of the issues around her and the need for change immediately, which is quickly followed by her realization that she can and should be the one to implement that change. Additionally, Lauren's recognition experience proves to be significant in that it also showcases the overlap between forms of recognition. As mentioned above, Lauren's self recognition doesn't happen on its own, but rather from and alongside her institutional recognition. Without her experience of institutional recognition (seeing the oppressive systems and acknowledging the need for change) she may not have acknowledged her own agency and ability to change those systems. This is not to say that she couldn't have acknowledged her ability, but that it would have potentially happened on a much smaller scale, if at all. This is incredibly important when considering its impact on readers, as it showcases the complexities of various forms of recognition, as they are not necessarily distinct and separated experiences, but – just as with systems of power – instead affect and are affected by one another, even simultaneously.

Similarly to *Parable*, we can look to *Red Clocks* as an example of self recognition, but one that depicts characters engaging their own autonomy and ability to affect *their own* lives. As addressed in chapter five, "Formation and Recognition of Self in Normatively Socialized Contexts in Feminist Dystopia," the three characters in *Red Clocks* that showcase the self recognition experience are "the Biographer," Ro, "the Wife," Susan, and "the Mender," Gin. In each of these women's narratives, they are in some way trapped within a certain set of societal expectations, leaving them feeling helpless, especially for Ro and Susan. Though, unlike Lauren, they begin the narrative unrecognized, they eventually are able to experience self recognition as they begin to truly understand the systems that are keeping them tied to the things they've, as Kruks writes referencing Simone de Beauvoir, "previously interiorized significations" that are "re-exteriorized as projects and as expressive of the self"[314] (for Ro, a baby, and for

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[314] Kruks, "Panopticism and Shame," 73.

Susan, a fulfilling life as a mother and wife or outside of those roles). Once they acknowledge how oppressed they are by these systems and the people around them perpetuating these systems (and thus experience self recognition) they are able to acknowledge their own ability to make either new goals and expectations or even make an entirely new life for themselves. Gin, just like Lauren, remains self recognized from the beginning as we can see she has already acknowledged these systems and seen her sense of self and ability for the power they hold.

Along with positive examples shown within feminist dystopian literature, we also see the opposite perspective in *Hazards*, which showcases the dangers of a lack of self recognition, as we see Mary Ellen entirely lose her sense of self at the hands of her oppressive government and then seemingly accept and internalize this loss. What each of these examples show us is not only the ways that the self recognition experience can allow us to better access and utilize our agency and autonomy, but also help us understand how significantly a *lack* of self recognition can impact our sense of self and thus ability to affect the world and in our own lives. Despite Russon's previously discussed thoughts on the slave's agency within oppression, *Hazards* showcases the opposite perspective – that is, an internalization of "disrespect," to use Honneth's social recognition terminology.[315] In these ways, self recognition in feminist dystopian literature has incredible potential to showcase to readers how they can acknowledge their existing agency (as Russon does with the slave) and how they might utilize that agency to affect change in their lives, as well.

5.5 Conclusion

Going back to discussions around the moral imagination and readers' responsibility, the feminist dystopian genre is uniquely situated to engage readers in narrative contexts in many ways similar to their real world. Now, I admit that attempting to assume what the reader will take away from a text is potentially fraught. The audience of "readers" is, of course, quite vague and contains a plethora of contexts and situated persons that cannot all be accounted for effectively. What I have attempted to argue here, however, is the potential that feminist dystopian literature (specifically its address and depictions of subject formation and recognition within oppressive contexts) holds incredible potential to engage, and potentially call to action, the reader engaging with such texts. With these implications of recognition within feminist dystopian literature in mind and thus the potential experiences of engagement that readers can have, we can more explicitly see the implications of recognition within literature and bring them together. That is, if feminist dystopian literature offers readers a view of their potential futures with the intention of magnifying various social ills and the moral imagination offers them the ability to engage with characters' experiences in such amplified narratives, we can see the possibility that the reader will identify with those experiences and feel incited to act in their own worlds, as well. Such internalizations offer opportunities for readers to, through characters'

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[315] Bart Van Leeuwen, "A Formal Recognition of Social Attachments," *Inquiry: an interdisciplinary journal of philosophy and the social sciences* 50, no. 2 (2007): 182.

portrayals of marginalization and its effects on subject formation, acknowledge such experiences for themselves, as well. Though, as we've seen, we cannot *guarantee* that a reader will pick up a feminist dystopian text and feel a call to action to fight for change in their own lives, through the understanding of moral imagination – coupled with the presence of phenomenological recognition in these narratives – there is significant potential for feminist dystopian literature to both change readers' perspectives *and* play a role in social change.

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