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1. Introduction

In recent years the genre of young adult dystopian fiction has experienced a new high in popularity due to the success of book series like *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner Quintet* (2009-2016) by James Dashner or the *Divergent Trilogy* (2011-2013) by Veronica Roth. Correspondingly, there has been an increase in discussions of the genre. However, these discussions are often focused on specific primary works and the genre is seldom approached from a perspective of genre theory, even though this is an interesting aspect, seeing that the name of the genre already implies that it is made up of a combination between two other genres, i.e. young adult and dystopian fiction.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the composition of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction by applying an approach to genre based on prototype theory. This specifically involves finding out how the genres of young adult and dystopian fiction influence each other within young adult dystopian fiction and why they work well together when they are combined in young adult dystopian fiction. Moreover, the objective is to use this framework to analyse primary examples of the genre in order to gain a better understanding of the genre as a whole and the texts within it.

At the beginning of the thesis there is a chapter providing an introduction to prototype theory and how it can be applied to genre. The next chapter deals with the identification of typical attributes of the genres of young adult, dystopian and young adult dystopian fiction and includes an analysis of these attributes with a focus on young adult dystopian fiction. The ensuing chapter is concerned with primary examples of the genre and provides an analysis of *The Testing Trilogy* (2013-2014) by Joelle Charbonneau and *The Giver Quartet* (1993-2012) by Lois Lowry in accordance with the typical attributes found in the previous chapter. It also features a discussion about the positioning of the two series in the radial structure.

2. Applying Prototype Theory to Genre

Genre theory is a broad field of study where many different approaches are applied, developed and discussed. In their introduction to genre Bawarshi and Reiff (13-28),

for example, discuss many different views on the concept – from neoclassical over structuralist and romantic to cultural studies approaches – and in each approach genre means something different. Contrastingly, in another introductory book to genre Frow approaches the topic from a different perspective. He gives a clear definition of genre, stating that it is “a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning” (10).

I am going to explore yet another approach. Since young adult dystopian fiction is seemingly made up of an interaction between young adult and dystopian fiction, an approach that meets certain criteria needs to be applied. Firstly, it has to allow for genre overlap and interaction. Secondly, it has to acknowledge that genres are flexible and can change over time. While many approaches meet these requirements, prototype theory works best to answer my research questions, since it provides a logical way of studying what defines different genres and how they interact with each other, as will become clear in the following sections.

2.1. Introduction to Prototype Theory

Prototype theory is part of the cognitive sciences and was introduced to literary studies through cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics. It was developed by Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s and is concerned with ideas about categorisation (see Stockwell 40, Geeraerts 141, Paltridge 53). Rosch (61) explains that categorisation is “[o]ne of the most basic functions of living creatures.” This is because “[h]umans live in a categorized world; from household items to emotions to gender to democracy, objects and events, although unique, are acted towards as members of classes” (61).

Seeing how important the concept of categorisation is, it is not surprising that the cognitive sciences became interested in how it works. Stockwell (27) even states that it is “[o]ne of the most radical areas of thought affected by cognitive science.” The classical view of categorisation claims that “something is either a category member or it isn't” and that “all [category] members are equivalent” (Rosch 65). However, Rosch (66) conducted a study where she found that for test subjects “all categories show gradients of membership; that is, subjects easily, rapidly, and meaningfully rate how well a particular item fits their idea or image of the category to which the item belongs.” This means that, as De Geest and Van Gorp (40) put it, “[m]embership of a category is [...] in most cases not a question of discrete objective

decisions, but primarily a matter of degree.”

This is the core concept of prototype theory – categorisation is based on a graded or radial structure (see Rosch 66, Stockwell 29, Geeraerts 146). Stockwell (29) provides a good explanation of how this graded structure works: “[O]ur cognitive system for categorisation is [...] an arrangement of elements in a **radial** structure or network with **central** good examples, **secondary** poorer examples, and **peripheral** examples” whereas the “central examples [are] acting as **cognitive reference points** in the middle of a radial structure.” What this means is that “[i]tems in a category are not equivalent with respect to membership but rather possess gradations of membership,” as Rosch (69) explains, or put differently by Geeraerts (146): “[N]ot every member is equally representative for a category.”

In this radial structure, where not all elements are equal, the central best examples that Stockwell (29) refers to as “cognitive reference points,” are called prototypes. Rosch (67) defines prototypes as “[t]he judged best examples of conceptual categories.” Similarly, Paltridge (53) explains a prototype as an “image [...] of what it is that represents [an] object in question” and De Geest and Van Gorp (40-41) describe a prototype as “an instance which functions cognitively as an optimal representation of the entire category.” Simply put, one could therefore say that the prototype of a category can be found in the centre of the radial structure, is the best representation of the category and is the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about the category.

Where in the radial structure something is situated, i.e. whether it is a central or a peripheral example, depends on its attributes, whereas an example that shares fewer attributes with the prototype of the category is positioned farther away from the centre of the structure than an example that shares more attributes with the prototype (see Stockwell 29-30). An important aspect hereby is that “[m]any categories have no, and no category need have any, necessary and sufficient attributes which make an item a member of the category” (Rosch 68-69). This means that in order for an example to be part of a category, it does not have to possess all the attributes that define the category. Moreover, it can have attributes that do not define the category at all, so that two very dissimilar examples can still be part of the same category, if they share some attributes of the category in question (see Stockwell 30).

Another important aspect when it comes to prototype theory is that “[g]raded structure categories do not have clear-cut boundaries” (Rosch 68), which means that

categories “have a common core at the centre and fade off at the edges” (Paltridge 53). The term commonly used to describe the boundaries is fuzzy (see Stockwell 29, Geeraerts 144). This corresponds to what was stated before, namely that more peripheral examples share fewer attributes with the examples in the centre. Furthermore, coinciding with the idea that dissimilar examples can be part of the same category, an example can also be part of more than one category, since the boundaries between categories are not clear-cut.

2.2. How to Apply Prototype Theory to Genre

After this general introduction to prototype theory, it is important to look at how it can be applied to genre specifically. Although Geeraerts calls prototype theory “productive” (144) and “interdisciplinary” (145), there have not yet been many instances where it is used in the context of genre. This is very surprising, since the concept of genre seems to be a typical example of categorisation, as it implies that texts are classified into different categories according to certain characteristics. Even Stockwell, whose aim is to show how ideas from the cognitive sciences can be applied to literature, only mentions genre sporadically in his chapter on prototypes, although he suggests that “prototypicality could [...] give us a means of understanding genre-distinctions” (38).

However, Paltridge dedicates a chapter in his book concerned with ideas about genre to cognitive viewpoints, where he addresses how prototype theory can be used in this context. He explains that “the closer the representation of a genre is to the prototypical image of the genre, the clearer an example it will be as an instance of that particular genre. The further away it is from the central prototypical image, the more fuzziness there will be and the less clear-cut an example of the particular genre the representation will be” (54). Another instance where prototype theory is applied to genre is an article by De Geest and Van Gorp. They discuss “literary genres as prototypically structured categories” (39) and relate these ideas to some example genres (see 45-50). A noteworthy statement of theirs is that “one may argue that the most representative examples of a genre category are usually not judged to be the best ones” (43), meaning that a text that features all of the attributes of the prototype is not likely to be considered a masterpiece.

Interestingly, scholars repeatedly apply ideas from prototype theory to genre,

but do not refer to it as such. Cobley (43), for example, states that “genres comprise generic texts which are made up of generic signs.” In this statement one could argue that the genres are categories, the generic texts examples and the generic signs attributes of the examples. The most important instance in the context of this thesis, however, is Nodelman, who in his effort to define children’s literature uses many ideas related to prototype theory. He refers to genres as schemata, i.e. “abstract conceptions of what literature is and what specific types of literature are” (108), rather than categories, and eventually reaches the conclusion that genre “becomes something like a matter of familial relationships. While all members of a family have similarities with other members of the family, no two members necessarily share the same characteristics as each other” (126). Moreover, he discusses that two texts can each represent the characteristics of two different genres, but still both may “represent the characteristics of a third, notably different, genre at the same time” (128). These two points represent two aspects of prototype theory mentioned earlier, namely that two dissimilar examples can be part of the same category and that categories have fuzzy boundaries.

These applications of prototype theory to genre are rather theoretical and hardly any primary literature is discussed. This is why my approach focuses on a particular genre and on particular examples from within this genre. Consequently, my method is less concerned with theoretical ideas about how prototype theory works in the context of literary genres, but more with how it can be used to analyse a certain genre and sample texts from within it. As has been mentioned in the introduction, I am going to investigate young adult dystopian fiction and the texts that I am going to analyse are *The Testing Trilogy* by Joelle Charbonneau and *The Giver Quartet* by Lois Lowry.

All the aspects of prototype theory explained earlier will be reflected by my study. I approach the genre of young adult dystopian fiction as an instance of categorisation, where the texts that are part of the genre are arranged in a radial structure according to their similarity to the prototype. This similarity is determined by how many prototypical attributes the texts feature. This means that once the prototypical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction are known, the position of the sample texts in the radial structure can be discerned. Therefore, the first step in my research is to find attributes that are considered prototypical of young adult dystopian fiction and the second step is to look for these attributes in examples of the genre.

As I am approaching young adult dystopian fiction as a genre that seems to be a combination of young adult and dystopian fiction, I am not only going to identify typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction, but also of the other two genres. This will enable me to draw conclusions about whether young adult and dystopian influence each other within young adult dystopian fiction and why they work well together when they are combined in young adult dystopian fiction. This investigation will be based on secondary literature, since focusing on the features that scholars deem important is likely to yield a good overview of the typical attributes of these genres.

After this analysis, I am going to apply what I found to the two examples of young adult dystopian fiction. I am going to analyse whether the texts feature the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction and based on this analysis I am going to discern the position of the two examples in the radial structure of the category, which will show whether the texts can be considered central, secondary or peripheral examples of the genre. This analysis will provide an insight into the genre of young adult dystopian fiction and the texts from within the genre.

Looking at the specific method that will be applied in this study illustrates why prototype theory works well in the context of genre. Since it is not necessary for a text to possess all of the typical attributes to be part of a genre, it is hard to contest that the two examples I have chosen are part of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction, only their position in the radial structure can be subject to discussion. Another aspect is that prototype theory allows for genre interaction, since boundaries between categories are fuzzy and dissimilar examples can still be part of the same genre. Therefore, my interest in young adult dystopian fiction as a combination of genres is theoretically founded in prototype theory.

3. Typical Attributes

Having illustrated the theoretical approach on which this study is founded, in this chapter I focus on identifying typical attributes of the three genres of young adult, dystopian and young adult dystopian fiction. As has been explained before, the focus is on drawing conclusions about the composition of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction. A variety of attributes will be discussed – attributes related to the

story level of the texts, attributes related to the discourse level and attributes related to the reader – whereas it is important to realise that this is not a strict classification, since attributes from different levels may influence each other.

3.1. *Typical Attributes of Young Adult Fiction*

To begin with, I am going to analyse the genre of young adult fiction. Before focusing on typical attributes, however, it is necessary to address the problem of defining this genre. Scholars use the term young adult fiction to refer to a number of different concepts, especially when it comes to the age of readers. Daniels (78), for instance, explains that when it comes to young adult and children's literature “contemporary critics often speak of the two as if they were one and the same.” Moreover, scholars sometimes use the terms young readers or adolescents, either to refer to the audience of young adult fiction, or to describe separate audiences.

As can be surmised from these observations, the most common method of categorising texts as young adult fiction is according to the age of its readers. In an often quoted textbook on young adult literature Nilsen (3) defines young adult fiction as “anything that readers between the approximate ages of twelve and eighteen choose to read for leisure reading or to fill school assignments.” A few years later Cart (139) suggests that young adult literature “no longer embraces only twelve- to eighteen-year-olds but must now also include nineteen- to twenty-five-year-olds.” Crumpler and Wedwick (63), on the other hand, state that “the generally accepted age range for adolescence is 10 to 20.”

Other scholars focus on textual features to define young adult literature. Trites (118), for example, suggests that “death is the sine qua non of adolescent literature, the defining factor that distinguishes it both from children's and adult literature,” while Hunt (16) proposes that young adult novels have “the subject-matter of the adult novel and the plot-shape [...] of the children's novel” and Coats (322) argues that “a book that calls [the] moral universe into question” should be considered young adult fiction.

For my purpose, I mainly focus on making sure that statements made by scholars can be compared to one another. I do not want to exclude certain age ranges, especially in light of the key features of prototype theory, which state that boundaries between categories are fuzzy and that examples can easily be included

into categories. However, I am not interested in texts for young children, like picture books, which are sometimes discussed in research about children's literature and young adult fiction. It should also be mentioned that young adult fiction is a much bigger body of writing than dystopian or young adult dystopian fiction, so that it is hard to pin down which attributes typically occur in the genre as a whole.

3.1.1. Young Adult Protagonist

As a start, the age of the protagonists is an attribute that needs to be addressed in the context of young adult fiction, which is to say that young adult fiction usually features protagonists who are young adults. Scholars usually focus on the age of the readers when discussing young adult fiction, while the age of the protagonists is treated as a given criterium or is implied. One of the rare examples where the protagonist's age is pointed out is Hunt (15-16), who describes teenage fiction as “focused through teenage eyes, or centred on teenage characters.”

But the protagonists are not only characterised by their age, it is also important that they are heroes. Nilsen (30) explains that “authors have [...] devised a multitude of ways for young characters to be the ones who solve the problem or who in some other way become the heroes of the story.” This may be due to the fact that “[w]hatever dilemmas these protagonists face, they appear to be largely on their own,” as Whitley (17) states. Trites does not explicitly mention that young adult protagonists act as heroes. Nevertheless, her statement about power seems to fit nicely in this context: “[T]eenagers are repressed as well as liberated by their own power and by the power of the social forces that surround them” (7).

3.1.2. Personal Growth

When it comes to characteristics of young adult fiction that are explicitly discussed by scholars, what I encountered most often were statements related to growing up and finding one's identity. Often scholars use the terms *Bildungsroman* and *Entwicklungsroman* in this context. Cadden (310), for example, states that a young adult novel “is often either a full blown novel of growth (*Bildungsroman*) or of character change (*Entwicklungsroman*).” However, Whitley, as well as Trites argue that young adult novels are usually *Entwicklungsromane*, since they “limit the scope

for development and maturation of their protagonists” (Whitley 18) and “end before the protagonist reaches adulthood” (Trites 19).

Leaving this terminology aside, personal growth is a prominent feature of young adult fiction, whereas two aspects can be subsumed under this attribute. Firstly, young adult fiction usually deals with the process of growing up. Horrell (47) explains that “protagonists move – often painfully – from dependent, highly managed and regulated childhood to a more fluid, uncertain and yet more agential (young) adulthood.” Similarly, Nodelman (167) states that “the declared themes and messages of most texts for children are almost always about becoming less egocentric, more rational, and so on – less childlike. They teach children how to be adults.” Interestingly, Koss and Teale (567) in a content analysis of young adult novels found that “there has been a shift from the big event/coming-of-age stories to a more general focus on teens struggling to find themselves and dealing with typical teenage life,” which leads to the other aspect in relation to personal growth.

Identity formation is the second element that can be subsumed under this attribute. Hilton and Nikolajeva (8), for instance, observe that scholars see “the young protagonists’ [...] pronounced search for identity” as a main feature of young adult fiction. Cadden (308) even suggests that in literature for young adults the “primary subtext is usually about identity construction.” Trites (47) focuses on identity in the context of culture when she states that “[i]dentity politics matter most in adolescent literature [...] in terms of how an adolescent’s self-identifications position her within her culture.” McCallum (3), on the other hand, discusses identity in adolescent fiction in relation to the concept of subjectivity, which is described as “that sense of a personal identity an individual has of her/his self as distinct from other selves, as occupying a position within society and in relation to other selves.”

3.1.3. Romance and Sex

A typical attribute of young adult fiction that is closely related to personal growth is romance and sex. Romance is often described as a subgenre of young adult fiction or discussed in combination with other aspects. Beauvais, for example, discusses it in connection to politics and social order, rather than as a feature of its own. She states that “romance across the bounds of a divided world is a leitmotif of literature, particularly Young Adult fiction, where the adolescent’s universe-disturbing,

transgressive feelings respond to the dialectical socio-political order of the parents” (61). Horrell (49) does something similar by explaining that “[p]olitical awakening, an awareness of the Other, is mapped onto sexual awakening or romantic love – a key modality in Young Adult fiction.” Nilsen (103-142), on the other hand, discusses romance in a separate chapter and treats it like one of many subgenres of young adult literature.

However, I still suggest that it is an important attribute of young adult fiction, especially when looking at romance and sex as a combined characteristic. Crumpler and Wedwick (67), for instance, state that in comparison to middle level literature, “[c]haracters deal explicitly with issues of sex and sexuality” in adolescent literature, while Cadden (307) draws a comparison to adult literature when suggesting that the novel for young adults “blends with the novel for adults in its employment of, for example, themes and scenes of sexuality.” Trites (84) even suggests that “the genre is replete with sex” and gives many examples: “[D]ecisions about whether to have sex, issues of sexual orientation, issues of birth control and responsibility, unwanted pregnancies, masturbation, orgasms, nocturnal emission, sexually transmitted diseases, pornography, and prostitution.”

3.1.4. Conflicts with Parts of Society

Another typical attribute of young adult fiction is concerned with conflicts that arise between the protagonists and certain parts of society. There are two areas of society that are of interest in this context. Firstly, parents are often portrayed as a source of conflict in young adult fiction. This is because “inadequate or absent parents [...] provide opportunities for the protagonists to assert their independence and prove that they can take care of themselves,” as Nilsen (129) explains. Therefore, “in many young adult novels, good relationships between teenagers and their parents are the exception” (129). Similarly, Trites (56) states that “[p]arents of teenagers constitute a [...] problematic presence in the adolescent novel because parent-figures in [young adult] novels usually serve more as sources of conflict than as sources of support. They are more likely to repress than to empower.”

Secondly, institutions act as a source of conflict in young adult fiction. Crumpler and Wedwick see this as one of the main features of adolescent literature, as compared to middle level literature. They state that “[t]he protagonist's struggle is

more on an institutional level, and he/she is more likely to be disempowered by the social institutions in this struggle” (67). Likewise, Trites sees social institutions as important factors in adolescent literature. She explains that protagonists “learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function including family; school; the church; the government; social constructions of sexuality; gender, race, class; and cultural mores surrounding death” (3).

3.1.5. Death

This leads to another attribute that can typically be found in young adult fiction, namely death. As has been stated before, Trites (118) suggests that “death is the sine qua non of adolescent literature, the defining factor that distinguishes it both from children’s and adult literature,” making it clear that death is an issue likely to be dealt with in young adult fiction. She goes on explaining how death is approached in these texts by stating that “[a]cceptance of losing others and awareness of mortality shape much of the discourse surrounding death in [young adult] novels” (119). Also James (3) proposes that death often occurs in young adult fiction, as she states that “its repeated appearance across a multitude of genres in the adolescent category suggests that has an especially powerful appeal to teen audiences in particular.” Moreover, she emphasises the genre’s “willingness to engage with the traumatic and harsh aspects of life” (73) and lists various experiences that can be featured in young adult fiction: “[S]exual abuse, incest, teenage pregnancy, homosexuality, violence, suicide, and terminal illness” (73).

3.1.6. Diversity

Another typical attribute of young adult fiction is diversity, whereas this theme seems to be related to two different aspects. Firstly, texts for young adults often include “Characters from Many Different Ethnic and Cultural Groups,” as Nilsen (35) suggests. In this context Hunt (149) observes that “[i]t is interesting to see that the religious/didactic element in children’s books has been replaced by a movement to be ‘politically correct’ – socially and racially aware.” Trites (150) even states that young adult “novels are, by definition, outside the traditional white male cannon,”

which provides a good segue to the other aspect of diversity.

Secondly, LGBTQ+ themes are often addressed in young adult fiction. Blackburn and Clark devote a whole article in their handbook of young adult literature to LGBT themes, in which they even name and discuss different types of LGBT literature. In relation to this aspect Cart (187) states that “[t]hrough the world of LGBT teens remained an all-white one, an otherwise more realistic – and positive – picture of homosexuality did begin emerging in the eighties.” While this statement shows that LGBTQ+ themes do occur in young adult literature, it also points out that the two aspects of diversity seldom mix. Trites (102), on the other hand, discusses how homosexuality is treated in young adult novels. She states that they “address how teenagers are affected when they develop their sexuality oppressed because of their orientation.” Contrastingly, James (91) suggests that “contemporary adolescent texts which feature same-sex relationships are apt to associate these 'alternative' forms of sexuality with pathology or with a crisis in identity.”

3.1.7. Happy Ending

One of the typical attributes that is related to the discourse level is concerned with the ending of young adult novels, in that they usually feature a happy ending. In this context Nilsen (120) states that “a long-cherished belief that young readers deserve books with happy endings” exists. Coats (326) confirms this by proposing that “most young adult literature closes with a message of possibility and resilience.” Nodelman (216) even explains that “[a] number of theorists see happy endings not only as a key characteristic of the texts but the main import of their existence.” Moreover, Koss and Teale (569) in their analysis of examples of young adult literature found that “hopeful endings predominated.”

3.1.8. First-Person Narration

First-person narration can be defined as another typical attribute of young adult fiction. Hilton and Nikolajeva (4) describe it as “one of the most prominent formal traits” and “a repeating convention in Young Adult novels” and Nilsen (28) points out that “people discuss it as a prerequisite for the genre.” However, sometimes young adult novels feature more than one narrator, as Nilsen (28) suggests that “some

authors let their characters take turns in telling various parts of the story.” McCallum (10) similarly points out that “the use of multiple narrative strands and narrational voices” has become popular.

The reason why first-person narration is often featured in young adult fiction seems to be the engagement it creates in its readers. In this context Nilsen (28) explains that “[f]irst-person narration gives an immediacy to a story and serves as a narrative hook to grab readers' attention.” McCallum and Stephens (362) point out that “readers align closely with the subjective experience of narrator-protagonists,” which seems to be facilitated by the use of this kind of narration. Wylie (186) intently focuses on narration in young adult literature and calls it “immediate-engaging-first-person narration.” She explains that “young narrator-protagonists narrate events in their immediate past” and thus there is not “much conclusive commentary” (187). She makes clear that “the purpose of first-person narration is to stick to the narrator's, and in this case the youth's perspective” (189).

3.1.9. Thought-Provoking

One of the typical attributes of young adult fiction that is related to the level of the reader is that there is usually an aim to be thought-provoking. Scholars mostly agree that literature for young adults should provoke its readers to think about certain issues or even teach them something. Hunt (3) states that “[i]t is arguably impossible for a children's book [...] not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology and, by extension, didacticism.” Trites (73) agrees in her statement that “[m]ost adolescent literature bears some sort of didactic impulse.” Wolf (395) approaches the subject more broadly when she makes the following claim: “Always, always, there is the sense of that end user, that child or teen who will find in the book some nugget that will open her eyes to the world as possibility and wonder.”

A variety of thought-provoking issues may be found in young adult fiction. Nilsen (133), for example, suggests that young adult books “can serve as conversation starters and as ways to focus needed attention on matters of hostility related to racial, ethnic, and class differences.” Similarly, Hilton and Nikolajeva (1) list a number of aspects that can be addressed in young adult fiction when they state that “writers bring young readers face to face with different forms of cultural alienation

itself: the legacy of colonialism, political injustice, environmental desecration, sexual stereotyping, consumerism, madness, and death.” A more general observation is made by Coats (320) who states that “[y]oung adult literature [...] responds to and helps contextualize cultural trends for its readers.”

Furthermore, sexuality is often mentioned in this context. Trites (85) states that “sexuality in [young adult] novels often includes a lesson for the reader to learn,” whereas “adolescent literature is as often an ideological tool used to curb teenagers' libido.” James (104) observes something similar as she lists “a number of messages for young women.” These are: “It is best not to get involved with a boy who doesn't love you; monogamous, romantic sex is preferable to casual encounters; safety and stability afford the teen girl happiness; and nothing should be more important to a mother than her own child” (104).

3.1.10. Social Critique

As can be inferred from this list of messages, when these issues are addressed in young adult fiction, certain values or ideologies are frequently favoured or presented as preferable. McCallum and Stephens (361), for instance, suggest that “[b]ecause children's literature is persistently concerned with social issues and values, books may openly advocate attitudes or positions as desirable for readers to espouse.” They also emphasise that this can be done implicitly, as they state that “[t]exts produced for children seldom thematize ideology, but either implicitly reflect its social function of defining group values or seek to challenge received ideologies and substitute new formations” (370). Trites (27) even goes so far as to claim that “the underlying agenda of many [young adult] novels is to indoctrinate adolescents into a measure of social acceptance.” In addressing real world issues and providing a certain viewpoint on them young adult fiction provides the reader with social critique, which is therefore another typical attribute of young adult fiction.

3.1.11. Rebellious Behaviour

Finally, the aspect of rebellious behaviour should be addressed in the context of young adult fiction. I expected to find scholars mentioning rebellious behaviour frequently, especially since parents and social institutions are considered a source of

conflict, which would lead one to assume that the protagonists rebel against them. However, scholars rarely discuss this issue. As one of few, Trites mentions it when discussing novels set at schools. In this context she states that “[a]dolescents have to fail at one form of institutionally proscribed rebellion before they find an institutionally tolerated form of rebellion” (34). Moreover, McCallum and Stephens (367) allude to it when they state that “characters define the otherness of the world by separating themselves from it through roles or actions involving subversion, deviance, or revolt.” This statement may hint to why rebellious behaviour is discussed this sparsely. It seems to be closely related to how protagonists find their place in society and therefore often falls under the attribute of personal growth.

3.2. Typical Attributes of Dystopian Fiction

As was the case with young adult fiction, the problem of definition needs to be addressed when trying to find typical attributes of dystopian fiction. Booker (5) explains that “the general term *dystopia* can be (and has been) applied in a number of different ways.” Moreover, terms like anti-utopia or negative utopia are often used interchangeably with dystopia (Claeys, *Origins* 107), but they are also used to discriminate between different concepts. In this context Sargent (8) explains that “[a]nti-utopia is in common use as a substitute for dystopia, but as such it is often inaccurate, and it is useful to have a term to describe those works that use the utopian form to attack either utopias in general or a specific utopia.”

Furthermore, there is the issue of distinguishing dystopias from utopias. It is not uncommon that dystopias are discussed alongside utopias without much distinction, which may be due to the fact that “one man's utopia can be another man's nightmare,” as Kumar (72) puts it. This is in fact a regular remark made by scholars. Sargent (12), for example, states that “we may find a work the author intended as a positive utopia to be, from our perspective, a dystopia” and Thiess (19) points out that “[s]ometimes a dystopia looks a great deal like a utopia, only falling short by a bit – especially after a dystopian critic gets done with it.” Mohr (7) even argues that there are texts that “hybridize utopia and dystopia, and present them as interactive hemispheres rather than distinct poles.”

However, when looking for a definition of dystopian fiction, scholars most commonly refer to Sargent (9), who defines a dystopia as “a non-existent society

described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived.” Claeys (*Origins* 109) describes dystopian fiction very similarly, in that it is “portraying feasible negative visions of social and political development, cast principally in fictional form,” whereas he emphasises that the visions need to be feasible. Also Suvin's definition can be seen alongside Sargent's and Claeys'. He describes dystopia as “having sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships among people organized according to a *radically less perfect* principle” than “in the author's community” (189).

In addition to these definitions, scholars often refer to three key texts that define the genre of dystopian fiction or are seen as “classical” dystopian texts (see e.g. Booker 8-9; Baccolini and Moylan 1; Claeys, *Origins* 109). These three texts are Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). These might act as reference points if certain aspects are unclear or not explicitly discussed by scholars.

For my purpose, I focus on research that discusses dystopia and utopia separately, rather than making general statements about both concepts at the same time. For the most part, Sargent's (9) aforementioned definition of dystopia fits with research on dystopian fiction, but my aim, again, is to make sure that statements can be compared to one another and to include rather than exclude texts or aspects, as is suggested by prototype theory.

3.2.1. Repressive Regime

An important typical attribute of dystopian fiction is that it usually features a repressive regime or oppressive society of some sort. Booker (5) explains that “[t]o be dystopian, a work needs to foreground the oppressive society in which it is set.” Scholars recurrently describe the source of repression as a totalitarian state or government. Claeys (*Origins* 109), for example, talks about the “quasi-omnipotence of a monolithic, totalitarian state demanding and normally exacting complete obedience from its citizens [...] relying upon scientific and technological advances to ensure social control” and Kunkel (90) explains that “[i]n the most basic political terms, dystopia is a nightmare of authoritarian or totalitarian rule.”

However, it need not be a state or government per se, scholars also mention

corporations as the source of repression. Booker (11) points this out when stating that there “is a growing tendency to situate the repressive power normally associated with dystopian societies not in governments but in private corporations.” Moylan (*Moment* 135) describes very similarly that “in the dystopian turn of the closing decades of the twentieth century, the power of the authoritarian state gives way to the more pervasive tyranny of the corporation.”

Whether it is a government or corporation, what is important is that the repressive institution usually has absolute control over the people who are part of the society. Claeys (*Variants* 17), for instance, states that dystopias are “societies where human volition has been superseded or eroded by an authoritative imposition of control from outside – from the leader, party, alien race and so on.” Correspondingly, Varsam (212) suggests that in dystopian texts “public as well as privately enforced violence and its threat ensure the obedience of the lesser powerful.” This control often goes along with the loss of individuality or identity. Barton (5) states that “[t]he dystopian landscape is one where the virtues of the individual and the family are trampled upon and destroyed in the name of development and control” and goes on emphasising this the following way: “The ultimate tragedy for the modern, dystopian, protagonist is not the loss of life, but the loss of individual identity” (8). This often goes along with “the loss of memory and history,” as Stock (419) describes. In this context Moylan (*Scraps* 149-150) points out that “the hegemonic order restricts memory to nostalgia for a fictive golden age.”

3.2.2. Protagonist Is an Outsider

As was the case with young adult fiction, when looking for typical attributes of dystopian fiction a closer look needs to be taken at the protagonist, although for a different reason. While it was important to point out the protagonists' age in young adult fiction, in dystopian fiction it is important to notice that the protagonists are usually outsiders in their societies. In this context Parrinder (170) explains that “the protagonist must be granted a varied social experience in order for the society to be described fully” and Baccolini and Moylan (5) state that “the focus is frequently on a character who questions the dystopian society.” Elsewhere Moylan (*Scraps* 147) refers to this as a “presentation of an alienated character's refusal of the dominant society.” Also Barton (11) points out that the protagonist is usually dissident in some

way by stating that “[t]he protagonist of the post-modern dystopia is not just an outside observer evaluating society, but instead questions every aspect of what he previously considered reality.” Similarly, Varsam (205) suggests that “[i]t is usually the protagonist's desires and hopes for a better present or future that distinguish him/her from the rest of the population and additionally bring him/her into conflict with the dystopian establishment.”

3.2.3. Discovering the Truth

The typical attribute of discovering the truth is closely related to the protagonist being an outsider. Questioning their society not only makes the protagonists outsiders, but it also leads to their realising the truth about its repressive nature. This process is rarely discussed by scholars – the focus seems to be more on the aspect of the protagonists being outsiders. As one of few Kunkel (96) addresses the realisation of the truth by stating that dystopian fiction “is a subgenre of the gothic or horror novel, in which the hero or heroine discovers a barbaric truth (the nature of society) lurking beneath a civilized facade.” Furthermore, Baccolini and Moylan's (5) statement that “the dystopian citizen moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance” can be linked to discovering the truth. The discovery must be what happens between the feeling of contentment and the experience of alienation, as there must be a reason for this change.

3.2.4. Rebellion

The discovery of the truth leads to another typical attribute of dystopian fiction – rebellion. In this context Mohr (9) states that “the classical dystopia has often (if not always) contained a utopian, but a defeated, utopian core: the protagonist's rebellion against the totalitarian system.” She elaborates that the revolt leads to “the inevitable defeat of the rebel” (9). Kunkel's (96) statement that “the dystopian story [...] often concludes with the hero yielding up his or her conscience to the evil society after a failed or contemplated rebellion” confirms that rebellion is usually not successful. Baccolini and Moylan (6), on the other hand, focus on the “reappropriation of language” and explain that “the process of taking control over the means of language, representation, memory, and interpellation is a crucial weapon and

strategy in moving dystopian resistance from an initial consciousness to an action.” Elsewhere Moylan (*Scraps* 150) adds that “there is also the material dimension of the opposition: martial, economic, and political action are equally part of the counter-hegemonic force.” Furthermore, Galdón Rodríguez (166-167) very generally points out that there is a desire to escape from repression by stating that “the narrative structure in the dystopian genre is built on the character’s dislike for the Party or State, which gives the citizen two possibilities: the desire to be relieved from that ideological disease or the desire to escape from the system.” Also Varsam (204) observes that there is “a conspicuous preoccupation with obtaining freedom” in dystopian fiction.

3.2.5. Romance

Another typical attribute of dystopian fiction is romance. Especially Parrinder deals with this topic in the context of dystopian fiction, although his focus is more on utopian fiction. He states that “the ‘love interest’ of romance is better suited to dystopian fiction” than to utopian fiction (158) and suggests that “in *We, Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the majority of modern dystopian novels [...] the standard romance conventions of commercial fiction play a much greater part” than in *Brave New World* (170). Moreover, he explains that “the romantic motifs of danger, passion and suffering must all arise within the society, most often [...] emerg[e] as the consequence of an illicit love-affair” (169), which means that usually people from within a dystopian society are romantically involved with each other, rather than an outsider with someone from within the society. Kunkel, on the other hand, sees romance in dystopian fiction as another aspect of repression. He states that in some dystopias “a totally commodified world transforms would-be lovers into commodities themselves and in this way destroys the possibility of love” (95). However, he also states that these dystopias “defend love and individuality against forces threatening to crush them” (95).

3.2.6. Set in the Future

A typical attribute of dystopian fiction that is related to the discourse level is the future setting. Scholars mostly discuss this issue in contrast to utopian fiction or in

connection with the relationship between dystopian fiction and science fiction. Contrasting utopian and dystopian fiction Kumar (72) explains that “[t]here is no movement, as was conventional in the utopia, from the writer's own society to the new or future society. In the anti-utopia, one lands squarely and immediately in the midst of the nightmare society.” Baccolini and Moylan (5) describe something similar: “[T]he dystopian text usually begins directly in the terrible new world.” On top of there being no journey to another world, “more modern or contemporary versions of dystopias are almost entirely set in the future,” as Barton (7) points out. Parrinder (169) explains this the following way: “The abandonment of the 'travelogue' structure in modern dystopian fiction reflects the normal location of dystopias in the near future of our advanced industrial societies rather than in some remote and unexplored region of earth.” Moreover, Vieira (17) points out that this is called “euchronia (i.e., imagining what the same place – the place where the utopist lives – will be like in another time – the future).”

Alongside dystopias being set in the future – or because of them being set in the future – dystopias often include elements related to scientific progress. Vieira (15), for example, links “the dark side” of dystopias “to the idea of scientific and technological progress” and Claeys (*Origins* 110) points out that “[f]or many, the theme of science- (or scientist) gone-wild [...] first heralds dystopia.” Also Stein (48) proposes that “[i]nstead of political dictators, the agents in some recent dystopias are scientists or alien species ostensibly motivated by the praiseworthy aim of saving humanity from extinction.” However, Horan (56) makes an important point in this context by stating that “[a]lthough scientific developments sometimes feature prominently in this literature, such technology always advances the underlying societal philosophy that the author either endorses or critiques; it never figures as an independent concern, as it often does in science fiction.”

3.2.7. Social Critique

Moving on to the typical attributes of dystopian fiction that are related to the reader, social critique is usually an aspect of these texts. Generally, dystopias are connected or refer to the real world in one way or another. This can already be observed in early examples of the genre. Gadowski (152) illustrates this by stating that the “dystopian turn has been the result of growing uneasiness concerning the cold war, anxiety

about the future of societies that seemed to be trapped in the vicious circle of war and terror, rampant economic crises and the tension between traditional and progressive world views.” Similarly, Booker (3) explains that during the twentieth century “individuals came more and more to suspect that they were becoming little more than faceless cogs in a huge and impersonal corporate mechanism. Little wonder, then, that literature would respond with the dark visions that we have come to know as dystopian.” Fascism (see Varsam 210) and communism (see Sargent 26) are also often mentioned in this context. These observations show that dystopian fiction has grown out of the need to respond to historical events and societal changes.

This is why dystopian texts can usually be linked to the real world. Booker (4) sees “dystopian fiction [...] as part of a widespread anxiety in reaction to the tribulations of modernity,” Sargisson (40) states that “[d]ystopias identify key themes, trends or issues in the present and extrapolate these” and Horan (55-56) suggests that dystopian texts “project exaggerated models of current political or socioeconomical trends into the future, frequently in order to inform, warn or advise readers.” Barton (6) also uses the term projection when stating that dystopias “are shadow projections of current society, hyper-exemplifying problems and potential fears that already exist.” Looking at these statements it becomes clear that dystopian fiction is a genre inherently concerned with society.

However, dystopian fiction is not only connected to the real world, usually dystopian texts are also meant to be a form of social critique. Booker (7), for instance, proposes that “one might see the *classic* dystopia as one that focuses on critique of whatever social or political practices are examined in the text” and Claeys (*Origins* 107) likewise states that dystopias “may in fact be sharply critical of the societies they reflect.” Stock (417) names some societal aspects that can be the target of this critique, namely “issues across science, politics, economics, and philosophy.” Beyond being a form of critique, dystopian texts may also explore possibilities to improve society. Moylan (*Scraps* 133) explains that “*dystopias* [...] are not texts that temperamentally refuse the possibility of radical social transformation; rather, they look quizzically, skeptically, critically not only at the present society but also at the means needed to transform it.”

3.2.8. Warning

The typical attribute of providing a warning is closely related to the attribute of social critique, since dystopian fiction is not only meant to be a form of critique, but also to act as a warning to its readers. This feature is commonly explicitly mentioned in discussions of the genre. Sargent (8), for example, explains that “[t]he traditional dystopia was an extrapolation from the present that involved a warning” and Baccolini and Moylan (1-2) state that “the dystopian imagination has served as a prophetic vehicle [...] for writers with an ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued, turn our contemporary world into the iron cages portrayed in the realm of utopia's underside.” When it comes to what dystopias warn their readers of, Stein (48) states that “[d]ystopias are meant to warn readers of the dangerous course we are following. They argue that most of the ills that threaten our extinction as a species stem from human action, inaction, or just plain stubbornness or laziness.” Barton (7), on the other hand, more generally suggests that dystopias “act as warnings not of the repetition of past punishments but of a new possibility altogether.”

Interrelated with this aspect of warning is a sense of hope dystopian texts try to convey, meaning that they try to suggest to the audience that if the warning is understood, there is still hope for change. Sargent (26) explains this the following way: “[M]any dystopias are self-consciously warnings. A warning implies that choice, and therefore hope, are still possible.” Baccolini and Moylan (7) emphasise the fact that hope is created outside the story by stating that “it is only if we consider dystopia as a warning that we as readers can hope to escape its pessimistic future.” Discussing this issue Vieira (17) even goes so far as to claim that “[d]ystopias that leave no room for hope do in fact fail in their missions.” However, Moylan (*Scraps* 147) points out that “some [dystopias] affiliate with a utopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope [...], while others [...] retain an anti-utopian disposition that forecloses all transformative possibility.” In other words, hope can be an aspect of dystopian fiction, but it is not a feature of every dystopia that can be encountered. Moreover, it is closely interconnected with the warnings these texts try to convey.

3.2.9. Thought-Provoking

Like young adult fiction, dystopian fiction is meant to be thought-provoking for its readers or to teach them something. This typical attribute of dystopian fiction is closely interrelated with the attribute of warning – if the warning is successful, people might learn to adjust their behaviour. Vieira (17) explains this very well when she states that “the main aim of [dystopias] is didactic and moralistic; images of the future are put forward as real possibilities because the utopist wants to frighten the reader and to make him realize that things may go either right or wrong, depending on the moral, social and civic responsibility of the citizens.” Also Baccolini and Moylan (6) emphasise the didactic nature of dystopian fiction by focusing on a specific point in a dystopian narrative: “[T]he dystopia [...] generates its own didactic account in the critical encounter that ensues when the citizen confronts, or is confronted by, the contradictions of the society that is present on the very first page.”

Others highlight that dystopias try to make the reader think. Booker (5), for instance, suggests that “the bleak dystopian world should encourage the reader or viewer to think critically about it, then transfer this critical thinking to his or her own world.” Correspondingly, Sargisson (40) suggests that dystopias “make us think. They help us to imagine and envisage how the present can change into something very nasty. They tell us what's wrong with the now, and they imagine how things could (easily) become much worse.” Furthermore, Gadowski (152) states that dystopian fiction “asks us to think what should be done to correct our mistakes.”

3.2.10. Narration

Finally, the aspect of narration should be mentioned. Varsam (211) argues that first-person narration in the context of dystopian fiction is a means to “focus on the subjective point of view of the narrator with whom the reader must identify and sympathize.” Despite this statement making sense, it seems that first-person narration does not commonly occur in dystopian fiction. Looking at the three central examples of the genre, which were mentioned earlier, only *We* features first-person narration. Both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* employ third-person narration. One might therefore argue that the first-person pronoun is not what is important, but the ability to see the protagonist's point of view and a way to empathise with the protagonist.

3.3. Typical Attributes of Young Adult Dystopian Fiction

Having discussed the attributes of young adult and dystopian fiction, I can focus on the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction with these findings in mind. However, as a start, the issue of definition needs to be addressed again. In general, scholars focus less on defining the genre than was the case with the other two genres. This may be due to the fact that young adult dystopian fiction is a younger field of research and has been written about less. Moreover, scholars seem to put more focus on particular examples of young adult dystopian fiction, rather than on the genre as a whole.

However, the issues of definition addressed in relation to young adult and dystopian fiction are also relevant for young adult dystopian fiction. Again, the question arises which age-range of readers should be considered young adult and which texts should therefore be considered part of young adult dystopian fiction, especially in comparison to mainstream dystopian fiction. Furthermore, distinguishing dystopias from utopias is an issue that arises again, although Hintz and Ostry (9) find that “utopias predominate in children's literature, whereas dystopias are far more common in young adult literature,” leading one to believe that utopian young adult literature is rather rare.

As has been made clear before, my aim is to make sure that the statements made by scholars can be compared to one another, as well as to include, rather than to exclude, discussions related to the genre of young adult dystopian fiction. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that finding typical attributes of this genre is a more challenging task, since, as has been stated before, scholars seem to put more focus on specific issues or texts, which makes it hard to filter out aspects generally true for the genre.

3.3.1. Young Adult (Female) Hero

To begin with, there is a typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction that is concerned with the protagonist. As was the case with young adult fiction, the fact that young adult dystopian fiction features a young adult protagonist is presupposed. Moreover, the young adult protagonists are seen as heroes – performing heroic acts. This seems to be more emphasised in young adult dystopian fiction than it is in

young adult fiction, likely because the heroic aspect in young adult dystopian fiction is often on the scale of saving society. In this context Hintz (256) describes the “political actions” of the protagonists as “uniquely heroic” and points out that “[t]hese individuals must possess courage and resolve.” Elsewhere Hintz and Ostry state that “they often save the world from destruction” (10), “wield power against their societies” (13) and are seen “taking control and doing their best to alter society’s course” (15). Seymour (631) similarly points out that young adult dystopian fiction features “characters who are capable of transcending their limitations and toppling the regimes which require their subordination to function.”

In addition, the protagonists are very often female, as Barton (13) points out by stating that “the contemporary protagonist [of dystopias] is predominantly adolescent and female.” Also Seymour (628) emphasises this fact: “In contemporary [young adult] dystopia, female protagonists are generally the lead character in their respective narratives, and they tend to blur gender distinctions by performing many of the gender attributes commonly portrayed by male characters.” As can be gained from this statement, the focus is on the heroic facet of the female protagonists. Barton (13), for example, goes on describing the young adult dystopian heroine as “fierce and heroic, a natural leader and a symbol of salvation for her fictional world.” Day, Green-Barteet and Montz even edited an anthology focused on female rebellion in young adult dystopian fiction. There they state that young adult dystopian texts present “young women as agents of change” (7).

3.3.2. Repressive Regime

The typical attribute that I encountered most frequently in discussions about young adult dystopian fiction is a repressive regime or oppressive government of some sort, just like in dystopian fiction. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (3), for instance, state that young adult dystopias feature “rigid and repressive regimes [that] are often enforced through the enslavement and silencing of citizens.” Hintz (254) elsewhere lists some elements that can be found in such texts, namely “a rigorously planned society, charismatic leaders or masterminds, control of reproductive freedom, and the prioritization of collective well-being over the fate of the individual.” Sambell (*Approach* 247) in this context talks about “societies that are shockingly indifferent to injustice, oppression, persecution and the suffering of the masses.”

Again, like with dystopian fiction, the aspect of control is often mentioned in this context, as can be somewhat gained by the statements so far. In addition, Basu, Broad, and Hintz (3) state that “dystopias [are] marked by secrecy, fear, and control” and Green-Barteet (36) argues that “the dystopian governments of these novels need their citizens to remain in an extended state of childhood if the governments are to maintain absolute control.” Montz (109), on the other hand, focuses on the limited choices dystopian societies provide, explaining that “[b]y making the choices limited, the government controls the populace even more so than it would have controlled it without any choice at all; the populace thus thinks it is in control of itself.”

The loss of personal freedom is also frequently observed in relation to young adult dystopian societies. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (4), for example, point out that “these novels attempt to tease out the appropriate balance between personal freedom and social harmony” and Barton (14) states that “[e]xtreme equality, limited personal freedoms, and the maldistribution of food and wealth are all prevalent in these dystopian atmospheres.” Connors and Shepard (119-120) correspondingly argue that the institutions in these text “function to suppress human happiness and freedom.”

3.3.3. Discovering the Truth

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the discovery of the truth. This process of protagonists realising in what kind of society they live is often also called (social) awakening, as, for example, by Basu, Broad, and Hintz (4) who explain that “[m]any novels feature an awakening, sudden or gradual, to the truth of what has really been going on.” Hintz and Ostry (9) elaborate that “[a] common trope in such literature is the emphasis on the lie, the secret and unsavory workings of the society that the teen hero uncovers.” Hintz (255) also suggests that “political and social awakening is almost always combined with a depiction of the personal problems of adolescence.”

This discovery of the truth is usually what leads protagonists to rebel against the repressive regime. Hintz and Ostry (9), for instance, explain that “[t]he adolescent comes to recognize the faults and weaknesses of his or her society, and rebels against it.” Day, Green-Barteet and Montz (3-4), focusing on female protagonists, suggest that “adolescent women protagonists in such dystopian novels both

recognize their liminal situations and, over time, use their in-between positions as a means for resistance and rebellion against the social orders that seek to control them.” Basu, Broad, and Hintz (7) see another effect of the realisation of the truth, besides rebellion, when they state that “[w]hile the political awakening [...] might inspire rebellion against a stultifying status quo, it also might teach their protagonists to strike a compromise between change and acceptance: to come to terms with an imperfect world.”

3.3.4. Rebellion

As has just been explained, the discovery of the truth is usually followed by rebellion, which is another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction. Scholars generally agree that these texts feature a rebellion of some sort. Hintz and Ostry (10), for example, state that “[i]n many of these books, children and adolescents form groups that resist the dystopian system under which they suffer” and Hintz (255) elsewhere suggests that “young adult novels honor dissent and agitation, and action based on a prolonged and combative questioning of the society in which the protagonists find themselves.” Day (88) considers the aftereffects of rebellion by proposing that “rebellion typically evolves into a society-wide questioning of the regulations that limit access to characters’ choices and emotional engagement with others.” Montz (108) relates rebellion to choices being limited, as she does with society, and explains that “[f]or these reasons, these limited choices, our female protagonists recognize the problems within the system and rebel against them.”

As has already been hinted in the section focusing on protagonists, rebellion is very often linked to the fact that it is female protagonists who rebel. In their anthology Day, Green-Barteet and Montz (7) argue that “contemporary dystopian literature with adolescent women protagonists place young women in unfamiliar, often liminal spaces [...] in order to explore the possibilities of resistance and rebellion in such unreal settings.” In a different article Day describes how young adult female protagonists come to rebel. She states that “the young women depicted in such dystopian novels first encounter and learn about the possibilities of social rebellion through their relationships with young men who have already established their own rebellious paths” (90). In the context of rebellion Childs (187) explains that “[t]eenaged girls oppose oppressive societies in the latest wave of young adult

dystopian fiction, rescuing themselves and ascending to leadership roles in overt, ostensibly feminist displays of girl power.”

Childs (187) also points out that “teenage protagonists have a much better chance at succeeding against the odds and defeating their governments,” as is generally assumed in discussions about young adult dystopian fiction. Seymour (631), for instance, states that “contemporary [young adult] dystopia creates characters who are capable of transcending their limitations and toppling the regimes which require their subordination to function.” Gadowski (158) in this context argues that “[t]he dominant narrative scheme [...] is a trajectory from freedom crushed under the impact of totalitarian assault to freedom either revitalized and reshaped through the actions of the protagonists or forfeited as a futile dream.” As can be seen, rebellion is much more likely to succeed in young adult dystopian fiction than in mainstream dystopian fiction.

3.3.5. Protagonist Is an Outsider

Closely related to rebellion is the fact that the protagonists of young adult dystopian fiction are typically outsiders in their societies, just like the protagonists of dystopian fiction. This is seldom addressed in secondary literature, although Hintz and Ostry (15) describe the protagonists of young adult dystopian fiction as “understanding more than their elders,” which suggests that being young adults is exactly what makes them outsiders. One could also argue that many of these protagonists are outsiders, because they are female. Moreover, Moylan's (5) statement about dystopian fiction that “the focus is frequently on a character who questions the dystopian society,” holds true for young adult dystopian fiction as well, since discovering the truth and rebellion were previously identified as typical attributes. This means that questioning society makes the young adults outsiders, just like it does their counterparts of mainstream dystopian fiction.

3.3.6. Personal Growth

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is personal growth. In the context of this feature similar explanations to those related to young adult fiction are given. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (7), for example, state that young adult “dystopias

recapitulate the conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*, using political strife, environmental disaster, or other forms of turmoil as the catalyst for achieving adulthood.” Moreover, the act of finding one's identity is referenced. Day, Green-Barteet and Montz (3), for instance, suggest that “the female protagonists of contemporary young adult dystopias [...] seek to understand their places in the world, to claim their identities, and to live their lives on their own terms.” Basu (19), on the other hand, claims that the protagonists “tend to find not an individual identity but a collective one, defined mainly by membership in a particular group.”

3.3.7. Romance

Closely interrelated with the aspect of personal growth is romance, which can be seen as another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (8), for example, address romance when stating that “as adolescent protagonists confront the dangers of the dystopian future, they often also find love, making the romance plot an important element of the [young adult] dystopian genre.” Correspondingly, Beauvais (64) explains that “[a]dolescent romance in dystopia – or romance in a divided, plural world – is at the crossroads of adult authoritarianism and teenage emotional growth,” whereas Day, Green-Barteet and Montz focus again on young adult dystopian texts with female protagonists. They argue that “[d]ystopian novels with adolescent women protagonists in particular often include (and even privilege) romantic elements” (10).

3.3.8. Violence

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is violence. Sambell (*Approach* 247) illustrates this by stating that “[t]he authors pull no punches in depicting brutally enforced inequality, horrifying violence and the systematic dismantling of individual rights in their future worlds.” Stewart (162), from a different perspective, suggests that “the sacrifice of the young, whether explicit or implicit, is frequently woven into novels of dystopia; in fact, it is often part of what makes them dystopian narratives.” Contrastingly, Seymour (636) argues that violence can also be directed towards the repressive force. She suggests that “[k]illing is in itself not generally considered bad or immoral [...] – particularly when the totalitarian regime

necessitates a violent uprising.”

3.3.9. Post-Apocalyptic World

Moving on to the typical attributes related to the discourse level, one attribute is concerned with the setting of young adult dystopian fiction. Typically, these texts feature a post-apocalyptic world of some kind. Hintz and Ostry (12), for instance, point out that “[a] startling number of works in the dystopian mode for young adults deal with post-disaster and environmentally challenged scenarios.” Similarly, Barton (14) describes the setting as “a post-apocalyptic landscape.” A number of possible disasters or apocalyptic events are listed by scholars in this context: “[H]uge world-changing events, such as plague, World War III; cataclysmic asteroid crashes, or even zombies” (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3) or “the possible effects of genetic engineering, global-scale pollution, and the finiteness of resources, [...] bio-plagues, climate shifts, massive earthquakes, and changes in sea level” (James 155).

3.3.10. Set in the Future

Closely related to the setting in a post-apocalyptic world is the fact that young adult dystopias are usually set in the future, just like mainstream dystopias. This attribute is rarely discussed explicitly by scholars, because it can be inferred from the fact that young adult dystopias are set in post-apocalyptic worlds – at some point in the future an apocalyptic event occurs and the young adult dystopian texts are set after that. As one of few, Nilsen (180) addresses this aspect by stating that “utopian and dystopian books are usually set in the future, with technology having played a role in establishing the conditions out of which the story grows.”

3.3.11. Hopeful Outlook

It has been stated before that in young adult dystopian fiction rebellion has a good chance to succeed. This leads to another typical attribute of the genre, namely that these texts usually leave the protagonist with hope for the future. This attribute is closely related to the attribute of a happy ending observable in young adult fiction, but in young adult dystopian fiction the focus seems to be more on a general theme

of hope and on open endings. Concerning the general theme of hope James (155) states that “[a]s with children's literature in general, [young adult] post-disaster novels also tend to offer their readers hope for the future.” Sambell (*Approach* 252) also emphasises that hope is important when stating that “most children's authors appear to feel the need to adapt the classic 'adult' dystopia, usually by compromising the dire warning and supplying hope within the text itself.” Similarly, Childs (187), when comparing young adult with adult dystopias, explains that “the message in children's dystopia involves the in-text hope that the oppressive regime can be successfully undermined.”

Sambell (*Dilemma* 172) discusses the open endings of young adult dystopias and states that “[d]espite employing worst-case future dystopian scenarios [...] remarkably few [authors] unequivocally depict the utter defeat of their child protagonists.” For this reason they “tend to replace the unequivocal unhappy ending of the adult antecedents with more ambiguous, open structures” (172). Childs (187) similarly suggests that “without the inescapable failure adult dystopian fiction requires, young adult dystopias have the burden of finding other ways to restore both the tension and hopelessness that the genre demands.”

3.3.12. Thought-Provoking

Related to the level of the reader, a typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the fact that these texts are usually intended to be thought-provoking or supposed to teach the reader something. However, while in young adult fiction the issues related to this attribute can range over a number of aspects, the focus of young adult dystopian fiction seems to be more on political and social issues, which is more in line with what is described in relation to mainstream dystopian fiction. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (4-5) explain that the “wildly fantastic premises [of young adult dystopias] may provide young people with an entry point into real-world problems, encouraging them to think about social and political issues in new ways, or even for the first time.” Gadowski (145) similarly claims that “young adult dystopian science fiction narratives have become a powerful tool for young readers to tackle cogent cultural ideas” and Hintz and Ostry (8) state that “[e]xposure to these types of texts can lead young readers to see inequality in their own communities and countries.” Moreover, Rodríguez (157) points out that “[y]oung adult dystopias [...] offer readers an

opportunity to question the social conditions that adults have created for them.”

3.3.13. Warning

In addition to encouraging readers to think about certain issues, the aspect of taking action in response to a warning comes into play, as it does in dystopian fiction. Therefore, providing a warning is another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction. In this context Ames (16) suggests that “[m]any feel that young adult dystopias are written by authors in the hope that their message will spark action amongst their teenage readers” and Hintz and Ostry (12) state that “[d]ystopias function as cautionary tales for a young audience, warning them to take care of the Earth and each other.” Sambell (*Dilemma* 163) more radically proposes that young adult dystopian literature “seeks to shock its readership into a realization of the urgent need for a radical revisioning of current human political organization, and even of human nature itself.”

3.3.14. Social Critique

Finally, social critique is typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction. Like dystopian fiction, these texts are often related to the real world in some form. Basu, Broad, and Hintz (3) propose that they “can trace thematic threads in the genre [of young adult dystopian fiction] that reflect how the central fears and concerns of the contemporary world are grafted onto a dystopian landscape.” Barton (14) similarly states that “[t]he cultural atmospheres of these fictional worlds represent a perversion of our own cultural ideas” and Ames (4) suggests that “[a]nalyzing the socio-political commentary present within this popular body of literature provides insights into the concerns this generation may have for the future.” Hintz and Ostry (16) even mention some specific events that can be related to young adult dystopian fiction: “The horrors of World War II and the threat of nuclear destruction have inspired dystopias in children's and young adult literature.”

One of the issues that is often addressed in this context is technology or technological progress. Gadowski (153), for example, states that “[young adult] dystopias tend to heighten young people's awareness of technological perils by exploring the controversies that have already surfaced in social and political debates,

such as prospects of genetic manipulation or the development of surveillance techniques” and Ames (9) claims that “the majority of [young adult dystopias] explore the effects of technologically driven, surveillance-ridden societies.” She then goes on mentioning some specific issues in this context: “These novels often allude subtly (or not-so-subtly) to the culture of narcissism inspired by social networking, the consumerist nature of the media-saturated world, or the infringements of personal liberties” (9).

Other issues are brought up in this context as well. Montz (112), for example, focuses on beauty as something that is critiqued by young adult dystopian fiction, as she states that “[w]e are a culture obsessed with beauty and youth; it is no accident, then, that our young adult novels would see this obsession become an extreme portrayed and even required in the presented dystopian societies.” Basu, Broad, and Hintz, on the other hand, mention the environment as an issue that is addressed in young adult dystopias. They state that “[o]ne major preoccupation of the dystopian imagination is the threat of environmental destruction. [...] Rising sea levels, storms, drought, and the end of fossil fuels create social, political, and economic nightmares that sensitize readers to the dangers of environmental ruin” (3).

3.4. Analysis of Attributes

All these attributes of the genres of young adult, dystopian and young adult dystopian fiction are summarised in Figure 1, whereas the table also represents whether the attributes are related to the story level, the discourse level or the level of the reader. When studying Figure 1 closely, several insights can be gained. The aspect that catches the eye most easily is that I was able to identify a greater number of typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction than of the other two genres. This seems to be due to the fact that young adult dystopian fiction features all of the attributes of dystopian fiction and many of the attributes of young adult fiction.

All of the typical attributes of mainstream dystopian fiction can be observed in young adult dystopian fiction. Of these attributes there are some that are described very similarly within both genres. There is usually a repressive regime, within which control plays an important part; the protagonist is an outsider, who questions society; there is romance within a dystopian setting; the dystopias are set in the (post-apocalyptic) future; and the reader is warned and hopefully inspired to change. With

these attributes it seems straightforward why young adult dystopian fiction features them – because they are typical attributes of mainstream dystopian fiction.

	Young Adult	Dystopian	Young Adult Dystopian
Story	Young Adult Protagonist		Young Adult (Female) Hero
	Conflicts with Parts of Society	Repressive Regime	Repressive Regime
		Discovering the Truth	Discovering the Truth
	Rebellious Behaviour	Rebellion	Rebellion
		Protagonist Is an Outsider	Protagonist Is an Outsider
	Personal Growth		Personal Growth
	Romance and Sex	Romance	Romance
	Death		Violence
Discourse	Diversity		
			Post-Apocalyptic World
		Set in the Future	Set in the Future
	Happy Ending		Hopeful Outlook
Reader	First-Person Narration		
	Thought-Provoking	Thought-Provoking	Thought-Provoking
		Warning	Warning
	Social Critique	Social Critique	Social Critique

Fig. 1 Overview of Attributes

However, with other attributes young adult and dystopian fiction seem to influence each other within young adult dystopian fiction. This seems to be mainly related the ending of young adult fiction. Although the happy ending that is typical of young adult fiction and the hopeful outlook that typically occurs in young adult dystopian fiction are very similar concepts, young adult fiction usually features happy endings that provide closure, while open endings that provide only general hope for the future frequently occur in young adult dystopian fiction. Observing this difference, one might conclude that the happy ending of young adult fiction has been toned down in young adult dystopian fiction, because of the influence of mainstream dystopian fiction, where the ending is usually pessimistic due to rebellion failing. One might also say that the happy ending of young adult fiction has influenced the outcome of mainstream dystopian fiction, so that in young adult dystopian fiction rebellion is typically successful and the protagonist is left with hope for the future. Put differently, one might also say that the influence of young adult fiction has increased the chance of rebellion to succeed. The aspect of rebellion seems to then influence how the attribute of discovering the truth is treated in young adult dystopian fiction. While in mainstream dystopian fiction it has a tendency to be linked to the protagonist's role in society, in young adult dystopian fiction it is what sparks

rebellion.

On the level of the reader young adult and dystopian fiction seem to influence each other within young adult dystopian fiction as well. Young adult fiction aims to encourage the reader to think about a variety of issues, from society to sexuality. Dystopian fiction, on the other hand, is more focused on dystopian aspects when it comes to being thought-provoking for the reader. Young adult dystopian fiction, however, wants the reader to think especially about political and social issues, which seems to be more in line with dystopian fiction and more specific than the variety of issues addressed in young adult fiction. Thus, an influence of dystopian fiction seems occur in this case. A slightly different relation is observable for the attribute of social critique. While young adult fiction has a tendency to promote desired ideologies, dystopian fiction is focused on political and societal aspects in particular. Young adult dystopian fiction seems to be a sort of middle ground. While it does deal with the general aspects related to young adult fiction and the political and societal aspects typical of dystopian fiction, there also seems to be a focus on particular issues when it comes to social critique, issues like technology, beauty or the environment. In this case there seems to be a balance between the influences of young adult and dystopian fiction.

On top of the attributes of dystopian fiction, young adult dystopian fiction features attributes of young adult fiction. Most importantly, there is the young adult protagonist. With this attribute it is obvious that young adult dystopian fiction features a young adult protagonist, because of its classification as literature for young adults. However, due to the influence of dystopian fiction, the young adult protagonists appear to be more heroic in young adult dystopian fiction, likely due to the fact that they rebel on a societal scale. Moreover, there is a tendency for female heroes to appear in young adult dystopian fiction. This might be because of the influence of young adult fiction, since diversity is a more important aspect in young adult than in dystopian fiction, which would suggest that including female heroes is important.

Furthermore, personal growth is a typical feature of young adult fiction that can also be observed in young adult dystopian fiction. This attribute is described very similarly within both genres, i.e. as being concerned with the process of growing up and finding one's identity. Finally, young adult fiction often addresses death as an issue that the protagonists have to accept and be aware of, while in young adult dystopian fiction violence and death are often part of the dystopian world itself and

therefore get less focus. Thus, it seems that in this case the influence of dystopian fiction lessens the impact of this attribute in young adult dystopian fiction.

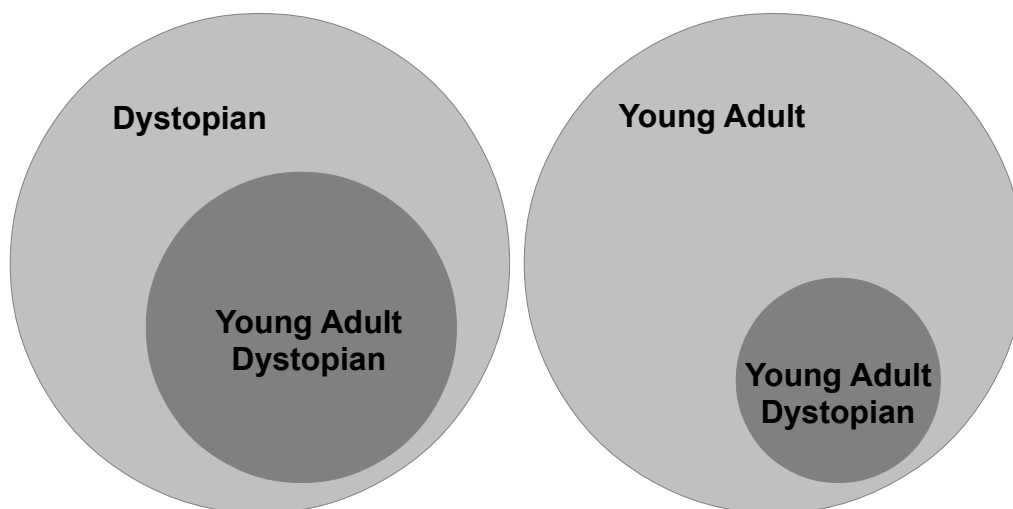


Fig. 2 Young Adult Dystopian Fiction in Relation to Dystopian and Young Adult Fiction

Considering all these observations, it seems that the genre of young adult dystopian fiction can be seen from two perspectives, as is represented by Figure 2. It can be seen as a subgenre of dystopian fiction or as a part of young adult fiction. The first perspective is supported by the fact that young adult dystopian fiction features all of the attributes of dystopian fiction, while young adult fiction influences several attributes. The second perspective results from the observation that most of the typical attributes of young adult fiction can be observed in young adult dystopian fiction, although there is more variation than with the attributes of dystopian fiction. This is not surprising, since young adult fiction is a much bigger body of writing than dystopian fiction, so that it is much more difficult to pin down characteristics that are generally true. Thus, young adult dystopian fiction is a part of young adult fiction, but a much smaller part than it is of dystopian fiction.

Finally, I want to address the question of why young adult and dystopian fiction seem to work well together when they are combined in young adult dystopian fiction. Figure 1 shows that the attributes that unite all three of the genres are mostly situated on the level of the reader. More precisely, the two typical attributes of social critique and being thought-provoking are what young adult and dystopian fiction have in common. Although there are differences between how these attributes are described in respect to each of the two genres, the basic idea of how the reader

should be influenced when reading young adult or dystopian fiction is the same, in that both genres address issues related to the real world, teach the reader about certain issues and want the reader to think critically. What is more, the basic idea of these two attributes is also observable in young adult dystopian fiction. Therefore, it might be concluded that the attributes on the level of the reader are the reason why young adult and dystopian fiction work well together when they are combined in young adult dystopian fiction. While story-related features are dependent on a specific context, attributes on the level of the reader might be easier to transfer from one context to another, so that it is these features that bring young adult and dystopian fiction together in young adult dystopian fiction.

4. Typical Attributes of Examples of Young Adult Dystopian Fiction

Having analysed the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction based on secondary literature, in this section I focus on applying the findings to primary literature from within the genre. For this purpose I chose two book series that are usually considered part of the genre, but differ in several aspects. While the four instalments of *The Giver Quartet* were published over a time span of nineteen years, the whole of *The Testing Trilogy* was published within two consecutive years. *The Giver*, the first book of *The Giver Quartet*, was published in 1993 and is generally considered the “progenitor” of young adult dystopian fiction (Cart 123). The first instalment of *The Testing*, on the other hand, was published in 2013 and could be deemed one of the “imitators” of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, which were published after its success (Connors 85). However, these are only the differences related to publishing. On the levels of the story, discourse and reader many differences can be observed as well, which will become clear in the following analysis.

4.1. The Testing Trilogy

As the first of the two book series, I am going to analyse *The Testing Trilogy* by Joelle Charbonneau, since at first glance it seems to be a more typical example of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction. However, before analysing the attributes of the series and its position in the radial structure, a brief introduction shall be given.

4.1.1. About *The Testing Trilogy*

The Testing Trilogy is a series of three novels written by American author Joelle Charbonneau, whereas the individual instalments were published within two consecutive years. The first book of the series, *The Testing*, was published in 2013 and is concerned with Cia, a 16 year old girl living in Five Lakes Colony. Cia is chosen for The Testing, a process where the smartest students of the United Commonwealth are competing for a place at University. Before she leaves for Tosu City, her father warns her that she should not trust anyone. When Cia realises that every step of the candidates is monitored, she still shares her knowledge with Tomas, who is also one of the selected Five Lakes students. The Testing is very competitive and consists of several phases. At first it is only written exams, but soon candidates start dying during the tests. For the last test the students have to travel across the unrevitalised, dangerous country and are only given survival supplies and weapons. Cia soon realises that many candidates intent to win by killing other students. Cia and Tomas team up during most of *The Testing* and fall in love. Cia is offered help from a person who claims to be part of a resistance group. When Cia and Tomas make it over the finish line, they are both severely injured, and had to kill during their journey. They are both selected to go on to University. Since Cia knows her memories of *The Testing* will be wiped, she records everything. At the end of the novel she finds the recording.

The second book of the series, *Independent Study*, was published in 2014 and picks up immediately after the events of *The Testing*. Cia is at University and has lost her memories of *The Testing*, but she is suspicious, because of her recording. Therefore, she follows a Redirected student and sees that he is killed. She decides to run away, but Michal, the official who brought her to Tosu City, convinces her to join the rebellion instead. After that there is an Induction, where Cia is paired with other Government students and they have to complete several tasks, during which a number of students dies. Cia is given more courses than anybody else and receives an internship with the President. After overhearing a conversation between Dr. Barnes, the head of *The Testing*, and the leader of the rebellion, Cia decides to go to the old air-force base to find out more. She is joined by Raffe, a fellow Government student. They find out that the rebels are hiding there and that her brother Zeen is with them. Cia convinces Raffe to obtain proof for what happens at *The Testing* from

his father, who is an important official, so that they can give it to the rebels. When listening to it, she her memories come back. However, the rebel leader shoots Michal and destroys the evidence. It becomes clear that the rebellion is really controlled by Dr. Barnes, so that it will not go anywhere. At the end of the novel Cia decides that she needs to start her own rebellion and manages to reach her brother.

The last novel of the series, *Graduation Day*, was also published in 2014 and seamlessly continues after Michal's death. Cia learns that soon there will be a Debate Chamber vote: If the President loses, The Testing will continue and she will be removed from office. Cia decides to tell the President about the rebellion and their attack plans. The President tells her that she can stop everything, if she kills a number of Testing officials. Tomas does not like this plan, but finally they decide to do it. To succeed Cia needs allies. Stacia, a girl she knows since The Testing, is an obvious choice, but she needs to test Raffe's loyalty. She disguises a bomb and tells Raffe not to open it. He passes the test. However, another student finds the bomb in Cia's room and is injured, which means Cia needs to flee. She and Tomas hide in an abandoned house and make a plan. They will set off two bombs as a distraction and Cia and Raffe will kill Raffe's father and Dr. Barnes, while Tomas and Stacia will detain two more officials. Raffe kills his father after learning that Redirected students are used as lab rats for experiments. At Dr. Barnes' house they learn that he had been trying to prevent students from being Redirected and that Cia would have failed The Testing, had he not let her pass. When Cia finds Dr. Barnes, he tells her that the President is actually the one who wants to continue The Testing and that Cia is their test subject: If she shoots Dr. Barnes, The Testing will stop, if not, it will continue. Several people interrupt and Dr. Barnes and Cia's brother are killed. Tomas kills the rebel leader. When the President arrives, she promises that The Testing will end. At the end of the novel Cia and Tomas are in Five Lakes, but Cia decides to go back to make sure the President keeps her word.

4.1.2. Attributes Observable in *The Testing Trilogy*

After this brief overview of the series, it can be discussed according to the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction. Figure 3 illustrates which of the attributes occur in the series, whereas it can be seen that all the attributes are a checked off. This means that all of the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction are

observable in *The Testing Trilogy*, as will become clear throughout the discussion in this section.

Content	Young Adult (Female) Hero	✓
	Repressive Regime	✓
	Discovering the Truth	✓
	Rebellion	✓
	Protagonist Is an Outsider	✓
	Personal Growth	✓
	Romance	✓
	Violence	✓
	Discourse	Post-Apocalyptic World
Set in the Future		✓
Hopeful Outlook		✓
Reader	Thought-Provoking	✓
	Warning	✓
	Social Critique	✓

Fig. 3 Attributes of The Testing Trilogy

4.1.2.1. Young Adult (Female) Hero

To begin with, a typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the young adult (female) hero. This attribute is observable in *The Testing Trilogy*, because the protagonist, Cia, is a sixteen-year-old girl (Charbonneau, *Testing* 1) and she can be considered a heroine. There are several aspects that make her a heroine. Firstly, and most importantly, she is determined to save her society from The Testing. The societal scale is even explicitly addressed by Cia: “I find it hard to believe that my actions could change the course of my country's history” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 4). Tomas urges her to run away several times, but she feels that “there is too much at stake. I might not be able to stop what is to come, but I cannot leave without trying” (54). Secondly, it is repeatedly mentioned that Cia has a good moral compass, due to her upbringing. For example, she never considers surviving The Testing by killing other candidates (Charbonneau, *Testing* 153), as she explains that she “will not put aside the beliefs [she] grew up with in order to pass” (188). She also does not want to leave one of her team members behind during the Induction (Charbonneau, *Study* 95-102). Thirdly, she deeply regrets when she has to hurt people, even if it is in self-defence. When she kills a mutated human who is attacking

her, for instance, she struggles with her conscience (Charbonneau, *Testing* 235) and wakes up in tears the night afterwards (236). Moreover, when a candidate ends up dead after attacking her, her feelings are described the following way: “I can't breathe. Bending over, I put my hands on my legs and force air in and out of my lungs” (Charbonneau, *Study* 273) and “I want to collapse to the ground and howl with frustration, guilt, and sorrow” (275). Generally, the people, who have died, are continuously on her mind (see Charbonneau, *Testing* 310, *Study* 308, *Graduation* 13).

It should also be pointed out there are a few situations where it stands out that Cia is a female hero specifically, as is typical of young adult dystopian fiction. For instance, when Tomas gets hurt, she takes care of him (Charbonneau, *Testing* 173-174), but when she gets hurt herself, she takes care of her own wounds, even though she almost faints from the pain (268). During *The Testing* the male and female roles of Tomas and Cia are often reversed. At one point, for example, the following situation occurs: “Tomas volunteers to take care of dinner and scout around for a water source while I assess the bicycles and their usability” (183). Furthermore, during the Induction the President explicitly points out the fact that Cia is female: “Of all the students who come into the Debate Chamber, you were the only one who recited the request without error and the only female who made the attempt for her team. Taking that kind of risk in public is often more difficult for women than men” (Charbonneau, *Study* 218).

4.1.2.2. *Repressive Regime*

The typical attribute of a repressive regime can be observed in *The Testing Trilogy* as well. The repressive aspect of the society in the novels is mostly related to the process of *The Testing* and to the interrelated process of how leaders are selected, which means it mainly affects the young people in the society. There are several reasons why these processes can be seen as repressive. To begin with, the government controls what happens to young people once they graduate. The general principal is explained early in *The Testing*: “Every year the United Commonwealth reviews the achievements of the graduates in all eighteen colonies. The top students from that pool of graduates are brought to Tosu City for *Testing* to attend the University” (Charbonneau 21). However, pretty soon it becomes clear that this is not

a choice, rather, the government has full control of what happens to young people. When one student does not want to participate in The Testing, she is told that “not presenting oneself for The Testing is a form of treason” and Cia explains that “the most common punishment for treason is death” (23). The Testing and University are how the future leaders of the country are selected (75) and as a result of this process the government controls society as a whole.

Moreover, the process of The Testing shows its dystopian character when it comes to what happens to candidates who fail. The first hint is given when Cia's roommate commits suicide and the leader of The Testing sees this as having failed a test (Charbonneau, *Testing* 94). During the second phase of The Testing a student in Cia's group dies (111) and it really becomes clear that failure means death, when the candidates are told that during the journey across the country they are allowed to “choose to impair the progress of [their] fellow candidates in order to ensure that [they] obtain a passing grade before them” (134-135). Something similar happens once the candidates make it to University. Apart from the dangerous tasks during the Induction (see e.g. Charbonneau, *Study* 109, 119), there is always the fear of Redirection. When students fail, they are “Redirected to a field outside the University's scope” (18), which Cia soon learns means death as well (25-29). In *Graduation Day* she then learns that Redirected students are also used as test subjects for experiments (Charbonneau 222).

Lastly, surveillance is an important aspect of The Testing. The candidates are constantly monitored. Already when Cia and the other candidates are travelling to Tosu City for the first time, they are given identification bracelets (Charbonneau, *Testing* 44) which Cia later finds out are listening devices (198). During the ride to Tosu City they are also monitored by cameras (52 -54) and there are cameras in their rooms (96). Once the candidates make it to University, they are given identification bracelets that act as tracking devices (Charbonneau, *Study* 196) and in *Graduation Day* Cia finds a listening device in her room (Charbonneau 90).

Apart from The Testing and University there are also other elements that play into the repressiveness of the regime. There seems to be, for example, a kind of class system distinguishing the citizens of Tosu City from those of the colonies. Students from Tosu City do not have to participate in The Testing (Charbonneau, *Study* 45) and government officials generally seem to be treated favourably – “[s]treets that government officials call home are repaired more frequently than those

of people who do not hold influential jobs” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 47). Moreover, the government does not allow opposing opinions, as Cia explains that “[a]nyone who voices negative opinions about The Testing either is relocated to an outpost or disappears” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 144). She also mentions that in the beginning of the United Commonwealth dissenters, people opposing a centralised government, suddenly disappeared (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 43-44) Similarly, treason is most commonly punished by death (Charbonneau, *Testing* 23), as has been mentioned earlier. Finally, citizens do not seem to know what is happening outside the United Commonwealth, since at one point Cia is very excited at the prospect of “discovering what is happening outside [the] country” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 103).

4.1.2.3. *Discovering the Truth*

As this description of society already hints, there are several instances in *The Testing Trilogy* where Cia discovers the truth about her society, so that this typical attribute is also fully observable in the series. Already at the beginning of *The Testing* Cia's father tells her: “[Q]uestion everything you see and everyone you meet” (Charbonneau 35), which makes it clear that there are some secrets surrounding the process of The Testing. Although her father also warns her that “Testing memories are wiped clean after the process” (31) and that candidates died during his Testing (33, 42), Cia's main discovery is that all of the candidates who fail The Testing die (see 94, 111, 117, 134-135), as has been explained in the context of the repressive regime already. Because her father warns her right at the beginning, there is no specific point of revelation, rather Cia gradually learns more terrible details about the process of The Testing. She becomes “horrified at the methods employed with The Testing” (127) and finally vows to make the Testing officials pay for what they are doing (286). These methods and her rage about them are what ultimately lead her to rebel, as is typical of young adult dystopian fiction.

Apart from this main issue, there are also other aspects of society where Cia discovers the truth. There are small things like realising that the identification bracelets are listening devices (Charbonneau, *Testing* 198) or that the candidates are monitored by cameras (52 -54, 96). Cia also realises that the Testing officials have set traps for the candidates in the survival part of The Testing (see 168, 177, 215). Furthermore, there is a big moment in *Independent Study*, where Cia sees a

Redirected candidate being killed (Charbonneau 28), which briefly makes her consider running away (31). In *Graduation Day* she then also learns that some of the Redirected students are used as test subjects for experiments (Charbonneau 222). Moreover, there is one big twist towards the end of the series, when Cia discovers that Dr. Barnes is actually the one who wants to end The Testing, while the President wants to expand it (263-265).

4.1.2.4. Rebellion

One might argue that the typical attribute of rebellion is one of the most important ones in *The Testing Trilogy*, since it is one of the major themes of the last two instalments of the series. *The Testing*, on the other hand, is mostly concerned with survival and discovering the truth about the process of The Testing. While Cia does make plans to avoid the memory wipe after The Testing (Charbonneau, *Testing* 201) and vow to make the Testing officials pay for all the dead candidates (286), actual rebellion only starts in *Independent Study*. When Cia sees a Redirected candidate being killed (Charbonneau, *Study* 28) and decides to run away, she is stopped by Michal who recruits her for the rebellious faction lead by Symon (40-44). She promises to keep an eye out for other students who are rebel members and for ones who might have joined the other, more violent rebel faction (44). After the Induction and having learned that Tomas killed a girl from Five Lakes (187-189), she is even more determined to end The Testing: “I will do what it takes to get the information Michal and those working in secret need to bring down Dr. Barnes and The Testing – no matter what the cost might be” (191). When Cia then learns about the Debate Chamber vote about The Testing (230), she convinces Raffe to steal recordings from his father's office that prove what methods are used during The Testing (293-294). At the end of the novel, when Michal is killed by Symon and it becomes clear that Dr. Barnes is associated with the rebels, she finally decides that “the only way to stop it is to create a new rebellion” (306).

Graduation Day is similarly focused on rebellion. At the beginning of the novel Cia decides to tell the President about the rebels' plans, in hope to pass the responsibility for what might happen, if the rebels attack, to the President (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 11). However, contrary to her expectations, the President puts even more pressure on Cia, asking her to “murder Dr. Barnes and his top

administrators” (31) in order to stop The Testing. When she decides to actually go through with this plan (83), it seems that she has again joined someone else's rebellion, but this changes, when Raffe tells her that not all the people the President wants killed are actually responsible for The Testing (147-148). Everything that happens after this is based on her own decisions, which can be seen from her reflection that “for the first time since I was selected for The Testing, my actions are my own” (169). Cia's plan to end The Testing consists of her brother killing Symon, as well as herself and her allies killing two officials and detaining two more (187). When they discuss this plan it is made clear that all of this is happening because of Cia, as Raffe states that “the only reason we're having this discussion is because of Cia” (207). As can be seen, the way Cia acts is exactly how rebellion is described in the context of young adult dystopian fiction – she learns about the flaws in her society, finds a group of people to help her and sets out to change the system. It should also be pointed out that she is a female protagonist who rebels, as is also common for the genre.

Moreover, Cia's rebellion is successful, which is in line with the typical description of rebellion as well. It does not necessarily go according to Cia's plan, since she learns that Dr. Barnes actually does not want The Testing to continue (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 263-265). Even though killing him would still end The Testing due to an agreement between Dr. Barnes and the President (267-268), Cia is not able to pull the trigger (270). However, he is killed in the commotion created by her plan. The President assumes Cia killed him and therefore promises to end The Testing (278-279). Thus, the change of the system has been brought about by Cia's actions, even though it did not happen exactly the way she had planned.

4.1.2.5. *Protagonist Is an Outsider*

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the fact that the protagonists are usually outsiders in their societies. This attribute is fulfilled by *The Testing Trilogy* as well. There are several aspects that make Cia an outsider. Firstly, it is mentioned several times that she is one of the youngest students, but also one of the smartest (see e.g. Charbonneau, *Testing* 1, 48; *Graduation* 210). What is more, she is a female student (Charbonneau, *Testing* 1), which one might argue sets her apart. Moreover, she is from Five Lakes Colony. Colony students are considered to

be inferior to Tosu City students (Charbonneau, *Study 48*), and from within the colonies Five Lakes is seen as one of the inferior ones (see Charbonneau, *Testing* 50, 68).

Secondly, Cia has access to a lot more information than other people in her society. This advantage starts with her father warning her about The Testing (Charbonneau, *Testing* 31-35). She also receives information from Michal once he asks her to join the rebellion. This way she learns about the rebel factions and that there are rebels among the students (Charbonneau, *Study* 40-43). Moreover, he tells her about the limited number of internships, the danger of the Tosu City students (44-46) and the Induction she will have to go through (48). Through her internship with the President she then learns about the vote about The Testing (230) and that it will be happening very soon (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 16). She also receives information from her brother about what is happening with the rebels (66-67, 188-189). None of Cia's peers have access to all this information and this is what sets her apart. It is also closely related to the fact that she rebels against the system, which is another aspect that makes her an outsider.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Cia is singled out by Dr. Barnes and the President. Towards the end of the series Cia finds out that she actually failed The Testing, but Dr. Barnes made sure that she made it to University (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 240-241) She then learns that Dr. Barnes and the President came to the agreement to base the future of The Testing on the actions of Cia, a colony student who during The Testing was considered to be “too emotional” and not having the right qualities to be a leader (266). If someone like her could make the decision to kill Dr. Barnes, The Testing would not be necessary, otherwise it would be needed (267-268). Thus, Cia is not only an outsider, because she chooses to rebel, but also, because she was chosen from within the system for a special purpose.

4.1.2.6. *Personal Growth*

Personal growth is another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction that can be observed in *The Testing Trilogy*. This attribute is frequently explicitly referenced throughout the series. At the end of *The Testing*, for example, Cia struggles with her identity: “I'm no longer the girl who left Five Lakes Colony [...] After everything I have seen and done, I'm forced to admit I don't know exactly who I am”

(Charbonneau 298). In *Independent Study* she observes again that The Testing changes people (Charbonneau 162) and that she is no longer the same girl she was before she went through it: “The one who believed that the government wanted the best for us all and that her fellow students could be trusted. This girl would never have believed that friends could betray or that a fellow student would happily abandon her to die in a metal box” (239). Reflections like these also occur in *Graduation Day*. At one point Cia contemplates how she has changed: “These five raised scars remind me how far I have come and how much I have changed. Because it is not just the outside that has been marked. Where my beliefs were once black and white, I now see shades of gray” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 65). She also struggles with her identity once she has decided to rebel and several people have died because of this decision: “Somehow, remarkably, my image in the reflector looks unchanged. How wrong that seems and yet how lucky it's true. Because there is still so much to do before this ends. Maybe once it is over people will understand what I have become. Maybe I'll understand as well” (133).

As can be seen, Cia's personal growth is very much connected to the things she discovers about her society. Her main struggle is related to coming to terms with the society she lives in and finding a place in a society like that. At the end of the series she observes that she is “not just the naïve girl from Five Lakes” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 283) any more. Rather, she is someone who was able to make a change in her society and who wants to make sure that this change sticks (291). Therefore, she decides to go back to Tosu City and not to fall back into a happy life in Five Lakes Colony (290). She explains why: “I wish I could go back to who I was, but I'm different” (290).

4.1.2.7. Romance

The typical attribute of romance can be observed in *The Testing Trilogy* as well. Cia's love interest throughout the series is Tomas, a boy from her colony. Cia seems to have liked Tomas already before they were chosen for The Testing. She describes that “[she]’d have to be blind not to notice the way laughter and the single dimple in his left cheek transform his angular face. More than once my fingers have itched to brush back the lock of hair that always falls across his forehead” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 49). She also mentions that she does not have any experience with “boys

and dating” (49), which means Tomas is likely her first love interest. Also Tomas seems to have been interested in Cia before the story starts, as Cia remembers that they had “danced in each other's arms for one memorable hour at last year's graduation party” (57) and that he asked her “to take a walk or work with him on some assignment” more than once (57).

Once they are both chosen for The Testing their romance starts to take off, whereas this is mostly initiated by Tomas. He is worried about her (Charbonneau, *Testing* 57), takes her hand to comfort her on several occasions (see 60, 73-74, 135-136) and suggests they team up during The Testing (see 60, 136). Cia enjoys these gestures. She describes that she feels “bubbles of anxiety that have nothing to do with the tests and everything to do with the way [her] hand feels in his” (74) and thinks about “the strength Tomas's presence has lent” her (137). During the survival part of The Testing Cia and Tomas grow really close. Cia is very happy that they found each other in the big Testing area (159) and very upset when Tomas gets hurt (170). As the journey continues there are several scenes where they kiss (see 174, 184-185) and Cia feels that “nothing has ever felt this perfect” (185). Finally, Cia admits to herself that she is falling in love with Tomas (196) and soon they say “I love you” to each other (201-203).

The dystopian setting of this romance plays an important part as well, which is especially apparent in the last two instalments of the series. When Cia and Tomas are chosen for different fields of study, it is frowned upon that they still see each other. This is why they have to find hidden spots to meet (see Charbonneau, *Study* 170-171, *Graduation* 80-81) and form a study group as an excuse to meet at the library (Charbonneau, *Study* 212-213). Moreover, many of the decisions Cia and Tomas have to make can mean the difference between live and death. When Cia decides to go through with the President's assignment to kill several officials, Tomas would rather flee, but agrees to help her anyway. He tells her that he “won't leave [her] to do this alone” (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 84) and that they are “in this together” (85). When they then set out to complete the plan, they are well aware that they might not see each other again (214-215). As can be seen, the aspect that romance in young adult dystopian fiction is influenced by the dystopian setting is fulfilled by *The Testing Trilogy*.

4.1.2.8. Violence

It has become clear from the descriptions of the typical attributes so far that violence is also an attribute that is observable in *The Testing Trilogy*. There seem to be two types of violence in the series. Firstly, the process of The Testing is characterised by a lot of violence and death. To only mention a few instances: During a practical test a student is killed by a nail that shoots into his eye (Charbonneau, *Testing* 111), at the beginning of the survival test Cia is immediately hunted by someone with a crossbow (152-153), there are dangerous traps placed all over the Testing area and Tomas is injured by an explosion (169-171), a student kills dozens of mutated humans until “the rainwater streaming down the road” is “swirling with red blood” (261) and Cia and Tomas are hunted by gunfire (277). This pattern of violence continues during the Induction where someone is hurt by an explosion (Charbonneau, *Study* 109-111) and Cia is locked in a metal box where it is very possible that she will suffocate (119-121).

Secondly, violence is employed by the rebels, as has been mentioned in the description of this attribute in the context of young adult dystopian fiction. There is a second rebel faction that wants to end The Testing with violence (Charbonneau, *Study* 42), but Cia does not see this as the right way. However, ultimately Cia decides that she does have to use violence herself, if she wants to end The Testing. For instance, she lets a friend convince her to build a bomb in order to test Raffe's loyalty, which will kill him, if he fails the test (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 107-113). Later another student is hurt when he sneaks into Cia's room and the bomb goes off (156-158). Moreover, Cia forms the plan of killing two Testing officials and the leader of the rebels, as well as detaining two more officials (187). In the end several people are killed during the rebellion – among others: Raffe's father (223), Dr. Barnes (277), Symon (274-275), Cia's brother (276) and Stacia (289) – and this one of the main reasons why Cia's rebellion is successful and The Testing is abolished.

4.1.2.9. Post-Apocalyptic World

One of the typical attributes related to the discourse level is concerned with young adult dystopias being set in a post-apocalyptic world. This attribute is fully observable in *The Testing Trilogy*, since the series provides a pretty good insight into history. It is made clear that an apocalypse has occurred and also what kind of apocalypse destroyed the earth. According to *The Testing* there were “Seven Stages of War – the

Four Stages of destruction that humans wrought on one another and then the following Three Stages in which the earth fought back” (Charbonneau 62-63). At the time there seem to have been several alliances who fought one another – “the Asian Alliance,” “the Mideastern Coalition,” “the North American Alliance” and “the South American Coalition” are explicitly mentioned – and nuclear disasters seem to have been part of this fight (81). “After the Seven Stages of War came to an end, the surviving population of the former United States had the courage to begin the overwhelming process of rebuilding,” as Cia explains (Charbonneau, *Study* 24). It is also described that many major cities were destroyed, but Wichita remained standing and became the new capital, Tosu City (24).

Especially the environmental ramifications of the Seven Stages of War are described elaborately. Already at the beginning of *The Testing*, the reader is given some details: “[T]he earth is cracked and brittle” and “clean water is not always easy to come by” (Charbonneau 3). In Five Lakes Colony food is scarce and people are careful not to waste it (6). Outside the colony it is dangerous, because there are “poisonous plants and meat-seeking animals,” as well as “earthquake-made fissures” (38). Cia also describes that “earthquakes, tornados, and floods” (63), as well as “windstorms filled with radioactive air” (81) destroyed the earth. Later, when Cia is dropped in Chicago during the survival part of *The Testing*, she describes “the decaying devastation around” her: “Steel and rock. Glass and wood. Buildings broken and collapsed. Cars completely rusted and overturned. A layer of sooty grime covers it all” (148). In *Independent Study* Cia also mentions that it had not always been safe to be outside, because there were “chemical- and radiation-laced elements” in the air that affected people (Charbonneau 128).

4.1.2.10. *Set in the Future*

As can be gathered from this description of the post-apocalyptic world, *The Testing Trilogy* is set in the future, which means that this typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is fulfilled as well. There are two aspects that suggest the future setting. Firstly, the series is set in our world, since the United States, Wichita (Charbonneau, *Study* 24) and Chicago are mentioned (Charbonneau, *Testing* 136). This means that it is unlikely that it is set in a different universe. Secondly, for the aforementioned alliances to form and for the Seven Stages of War to occur some

time has to have passed. However, how far in the future the series is set can only be guessed. Cia only mentions that Tosu City was created ninety-nine years ago, which marks the end of the Seven Stages of War (62). Therefore, one might argue that the series is set at least a hundred and fifty years in the future.

4.1.2.11. Hopeful Outlook

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the hopeful outlook. This attribute can be observed in *The Testing Trilogy*, whereas this is mainly true for the last instalment of the series, as it should be. *The Testing* ends mostly hopeful, since Cia has survived the tasks and the horror seems to be over. On the down side, however, her memories have been erased (Charbonneau, *Testing* 317-325). *Independent Study*, on the other hand, does not leave the reader with a lot of hope. Michal has been killed and the proof that could potentially have ended *The Testing* is gone (Charbonneau, *Study* 304-310). However, at the end of *Graduation Day* most of the issues are resolved and there is hope for the future. The President has promised to abolish the process of *The Testing* (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 279) and made an announcement in the Debate Chamber (288). She has also announced that “a new selection system for the University, one that will be the same for both Tosu City and colony students” will be created (288). There is also someone new in charge of the research that has been performed on Redirected students and Testing candidates (286) and he has promised that research will be limited “to subjects who have already suffered mutations” (287). Moreover, Cia's injured friends will make recoveries (285), she was able to retrieve two of her friends' siblings from the research facility (287) and Cia and Tomas are still together (290-291).

However, while there is hope for the future, the series also ends on some sad notes. On top of all the students who died during *The Testing* and at the University, Cia's brother died during the rebellion (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 276) and so did her friend Stacia (289). Moreover, there are some points left open, which is in line with the observation that young adult dystopian fiction often employs open endings. Cia is not sure whether the President will keep her word to end *The Testing*, as she observes that the President's “smile is reassuring but her words are not” (279). This is why she decides to go back to Tosu City: “Because the only way to be sure *The Testing* we had to survive never happens again is not to trust our leaders. It is to be

one of them” (291). She would like Tomas to come with her, but it is left open, whether he will (290-291).

4.1.2.12. *Thought-Provoking*

The attribute of young adult dystopian fiction related to the level of the reader, the intention of being thought-provoking, is fully observable in *The Testing Trilogy* as well. The series touches on several aspects about which the reader is encouraged to think. To begin with, there is the issue of leadership. The series continuously asks what qualities a good leader needs to have and how a good leader should act and make decisions. Cia frequently reminds herself that she has to act like a leader. While doing so, she internally discusses what a leader should be like: “Leaders are not weak” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 95), “[e]ven leaders have to trust sometime” (251) or “real leaders [...] must think of others before themselves” (Charbonneau, *Study* 123). Even the conclusion of the series is concerned with this issue. Dr. Barnes and the President have chosen Cia as their deciding factor to determine whether good leaders need to go through The Testing (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 266). The fact that Cia does not actually kill Dr. Barnes, but the President believes that she did (270, 282), only confirms that *The Testing Trilogy* wants its readers to think about the issue of leadership, because this means that Cia is not the leader the President thinks her to be, but she still announces to end The Testing (279).

Another thought-provoking aspect of *The Testing Trilogy* is related to the process of The Testing itself. While Cia does believe that killing Testing candidates is wrong, it is interesting that she keeps explaining and justifying the methods employed by the government, giving the reader almost the impression that the end might justify the means. During the survival portion of The Testing, for example, Cia reasons that “[t]his test is designed to help us learn about the land we need to restore to health, but it also gives us and the Testing officials a strong look into our character” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 230). During the very dangerous Induction Cia explains what skills are tested and why – “in addition to classroom-learned knowledge, the tests have measured something more. They have judged our ability to work under pressure. To trust one another. [...] Successful government officials do all these things, but the best of them do more” (Charbonneau, *Study* 134-135). In *Graduation Day* Cia even states that she “understand[s] why The Testing was created,” namely

because “[i]n a time when each decision could mean the difference between a country rebuilt and one that becomes too broken to repair, the founders of The Testing were not willing to trust anyone's best intentions” (Charbonneau 249). The same as Cia is forming her opinion about The Testing, the reader is encouraged to do so as well.

Moreover, trust is an important theme of *The Testing Trilogy*. From the very beginning of the series, when Cia's father advises her to “trust no one” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 46), the question of whether it is smart to trust people is a recurring subject. During one of the tasks of The Testing, for instance, a main issue is whether Cia should trust the other candidates. After some deliberation she decides to not trust one of her teammates and convinces another teammate to do the same, which saves them both from failing the test (128-133). Cia also mentions that “people who elicit trust only to betray should not be leaders” (304), which connects the issue of trust with the issue of leadership discussed before. During the Induction, trust comes up as well. Cia has to decide whether to trust her teammates to not abandon her and leave her for dead in a metal box (Charbonneau, *Study* 119). In *Graduation Day* she is again told to “[t]rust no one” (Charbonneau 38), only this time it is the President giving this advice. In this instalment of the series, trust is an especially important issue, because Cia has to decide whom to recruit for her rebellion. She discusses with Tomas that they need “[p]eople who believe as [they] do and can handle the decisions [they] are going to have to make. People [they] can trust” (85). Through all these decisions about whether to trust people, the reader is encouraged to think about this issue as well.

4.1.2.13. *Warning*

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is that it usually provides the reader with a warning. This is true for *The Testing Trilogy* as well, whereas the warnings seem to be closely related to the issues already described in the context of the post-apocalyptic world. To begin with, there is the aspect that humans let the war between nations go so far that ultimately “the world's population [was cut] to a fraction of what it was” (Charbonneau, *Testing* 81). While the politics behind the Seven Stages of War are described only vaguely, it seems clear that politics were at fault. There was an “assassination,” “a civil war” and “bombs were dropped on the

Korean States [...] causing the meltdown of two nuclear reactors” (81). Moreover, it is described that it is unclear who dropped bombs on Chicago, but “the president and his advisers believed they knew. They struck back, and the world collapsed” (149). The warning the series seems to provide in this case is that power struggles on a global scale are very dangerous, but also that one event, like an assassination, can lead to the destruction of the world.

Another aspect where *The Testing Trilogy* tries to warn the reader is related to environmental concerns. As has been described before, the series features a post-apocalyptic environment where water is not always safe to drink (Charbonneau, *Testing 3*), food is scarce and there are “poisonous plants and meat-seeking animals” (38). How this aspect of the series provides a warning becomes apparent when taking a closer look at how the environmental disasters are described in the series. Phrases like “the earth fought back” (63) or “[t]he earth's reaction to man-made warfare” (Charbonneau, *Study 24*) are used. It is made clear that the world's population is responsible for what happened to the environment and the readers are warned not to make these mistakes and let it come so far that the earth becomes hostile towards its inhabitants.

4.1.2.14. Social Critique

Social critique is another typical attribute related to the level of the reader usually observable in young adult dystopian fiction. This attribute can also be found in *The Testing Trilogy*, whereas there seem to be two major issues in the series that are related to the real world. Firstly, the political system of the United Commonwealth gives the impression that it is a very close description of the one of today's United States. “[T]he president is the head of the government” and there is a Debate Chamber that votes on important changes (Charbonneau, *Study 230*). Furthermore, every citizen is allowed to address the Debate Chamber, if they use the right wording (136-137) and the president can be removed from power through a vote of confidence in the Debate Chamber (231). However, a closer look at the system reveals its flaws. Although the Debate Chamber is a public institution, all the decisions are made behind closed doors. The President is trying to convince the department heads to vote for her proposal, but this is difficult, because of their friendship to Dr. Barnes (230). She also risks a civil war, because she might be voted

out office (231). Finally, she instructs Cia to kill “Dr. Barnes and his top administrators,” so that The Testing ends (Charbonneau, *Graduation* 31). Of course, Cia later finds out that the President is actually a supporter of The Testing and wants to expand it (263). The description of these political proceedings is reminiscent of political processes in the United States and shows how easily the system can go wrong.

Secondly, the series seems to criticise the university system of the United States and the pressure it puts on students. Especially the scenes when Cia first arrives at the Testing Centre reflect the competitive environment that is often found in universities. Immediately someone trips one of the Five Lake candidates (Charbonneau, *Testing* 67) and an announcement is made that only twenty out of one hundred and eight candidates will pass The Testing (68). Even though at this point the students do not know that failing The Testing means death, this puts a lot of pressure on the candidates. After the written exams people pretend that the tests were almost too easy and that they had no problem completing everything (92). Cia's roommate even commits suicide, because of the pressure (92), which seems to be a common occurrence during The Testing (94). Finally, the competitiveness is portrayed in a highly exaggerated manner when the candidates literally kill each other to pass The Testing (see 134ff). Although failure to graduate from a real-world university might not mean the difference between life and death, the series certainly comments on how hard the system is on students and to what lengths people might go to make it through.

4.1.2.15. *First-Person Narration*

Finally, *The Testing Trilogy* features an attribute that I did not classify as a typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction, namely first-person narration. The series tells the story from Cia's point of view, using first-person pronouns, and the focus is always on her. As has been discussed in the section about dystopian fiction, some scholars argue that first-person narration fits well with dystopias, because the reader needs to understand the protagonist's point of view in order to understand the dystopian society. This seems to apply to *The Testing Trilogy*. The reader empathises with Cia and in this way understands how terrible The Testing is and that it needs to be abolished. This narrative technique also makes the reader understand the moral

struggles Cia has to deal with and provides an insight into Cia's personal growth.

4.1.3. Position of *The Testing Trilogy* in the Radial Structure

Having described all the attributes that are observable in *The Testing Trilogy*, it is possible to analyse the series' position in the radial structure of young adult dystopian fiction. As can easily be seen in Figure 3, all the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction are observable in *The Testing Trilogy*. Furthermore, the series does not feature any attributes that are not typical of young adult dystopian fiction. There is only first-person narration, which is an attribute that can sometimes be observed in the genre, but I did not classify as a typical attribute. Based on these findings I suggest that the series is a prototypical example of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction. This means that when looking for an example to describe the genre, *The Testing Trilogy* is likely to come to mind.

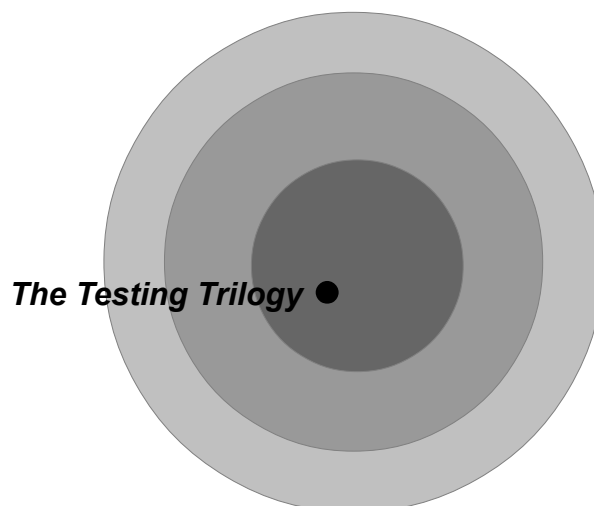


Fig. 4 Position of *The Testing Trilogy*

The positioning of *The Testing Trilogy* in the radial structure as a prototypical example of young adult dystopian fiction is illustrated in Figure 4. The circles represent the radial structure of young adult dystopian fiction, whereas the inner circle represents prototypical young adult dystopian fiction. In this area prototypical examples of the genre are located, i.e. examples that feature all the typical attributes of the genre. The second circle represents the area where secondary examples are located. These examples do not share all the attributes with the prototypical examples. The outer circle is where peripheral examples of the genre are found.

These examples are likely to feature attributes that are not related to young adult dystopian fiction. It can be seen that *The Testing Trilogy* is located in the inner circle, which is the area where prototypical examples of the genre are situated.

This conclusion about the positioning of the series in the radial structure is not surprising seeing that *The Testing Trilogy* can be considered one of the “imitators” of *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (Connors 85). One would likely come to the conclusion that *The Hunger Games Trilogy* is a prototypical example of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction and therefore its followers are likely to be situated in the same area in the radial structure. It might even be interesting to study whether *The Hunger Games Trilogy* and its imitators are the canon that makes up the prototypical area of young adult dystopian fiction. Furthermore, the positioning of *The Testing Trilogy* illustrates how prototype theory works in the context of genre when it comes to prototypical examples. Since it shares the attributes of the prototype and does not have any attributes that deviate significantly from the prototype, it is situated in the centre of the radial structure and can itself be used as a reference point for other examples of the genre.

4.2. *The Giver Quartet*

As the second of the two book series, I am going to apply the same method of analysis to *The Giver Quartet* by Lois Lowry. However, while *The Testing Trilogy* deals with an ongoing story focused on one protagonist, the four instalments of *The Giver Quartet* are quite different from one another, as will quickly become clear in the following analysis. Each novel focuses on a different protagonist and deals with different societies, whereas the different stories are only loosely connected. This is why a slightly different approach needs to be taken when analysing the series according to the attributes of young adult dystopian fiction. Thus, after a brief introduction to the series, each instalment is classified individually.

4.2.1. About *The Giver Quartet*

The Giver Quartet is a series of four novels written by American author Lois Lowry, whereas the individual instalments were published several years apart from each other. The first book of the series, *The Giver*, was published in 1993 and deals with

the story of Jonas, a twelve year old boy living in a strictly governed community. The community is founded on the principle of sameness and people are taking pills that suppress their feelings. Moreover, old and unwanted people are killed. Jonas is chosen to be the new Receiver of Memory and through this assignment learns the truth about history and his society. This is why he makes a plan to flee. However, his escape is rushed when he finds out that the little boy Gabe, who has been living with Jonas' family, is about to be killed. He takes Gabe with him and flees the community on a bike. At the end of a long journey that almost leaves Gabe and him dead, he arrives at a house in the snow.

The second novel of the series, *Gathering Blue*, was published seven years later in 2000 and is concerned with Kira's story. Kira, who is about Jonas' age, lives in a rather crude rural community. After her mother's death the Council assigns her to be the new Stitcher for the ceremonial robe. She lives in the Council Edifice together with a boy named Thomas, who is the Carver of the ceremonial staff and a girl named Jo, who is the new ceremonial Singer. When Kira addresses with her Guardian, Jamison, that an old woman told her that there are no beasts in the woods, the old woman suddenly dies. Kira starts to get suspicious and her friend Matty suddenly vanishes. He returns on the day of the annual ceremony and as gifts brings her the colour blue and her father, whom she had believed dead. Her father tells her that Jamison tried to kill him, but he was saved by inhabitants of a nice village. At the ceremony Kira realises that her mother, as well as Thomas' and Jo's parents were killed, because the three of them are artists and can therefore decide the future. This is why the Council wanted them under their control. In the end Kira decides to stay and improve her community, rather than to leave with her father.

The third instalment of the series, *Messenger*, was published in 2004 and is concerned with Kira's friend Matty, who now lives together with Kira's father in Village. Jonas, now grown up, is the leader of this almost utopian community. Matty learns that he can heal things. He also realises that people in Village are starting to act strangely – less kind and less welcoming to new people. It becomes clear that this is due to Trade Mart, where Trademaster offers people to trade part of themselves for things they desire. Because of this the citizens decide that Village will be closed for new people. Therefore, Matty makes his way through Forest to get Kira, so that she can live with her father. When Matty and Kira try to make their way back to Village, Forest has turned hostile. It is really dark, smells rotten, everything has

turned poisonous and vines are attacking them. When Jonas sees that Matty and Kira are close to dying, he communicates with Kira and tells her that Matty should use his gift. When he does, Forest, Kira and all the people in Village are healed, but Matty dies due to the effort.

The fourth and last book of the series, *Son*, was published nineteen years after *The Giver* in 2012 and acts as a conclusion to all of the characters' stories. However, the main focaliser is Claire, who lives in Jonas' community and was chosen to be a Birthmother. When she gives birth to Gabe at fourteen, there are complications and she is reassigned. Due to an oversight Claire is never given the pills and thus her feelings are not suppressed. This is why she tries to have as much contact with her son as possible. On the day Jonas vanishes, she realises that Gabe was supposed to be killed and that Jonas took him. In her distraught she ends up on a delivery boat, but she goes overboard and strands in a small village. She has lost her memories, but recovers them after some time. She decides that she needs to find Gabe. This involves climbing a huge cliff, for which she trains many years, together with Einar, who has climbed the cliff before, but returned after encountering Trademaster. They fall in love, but Claire needs to leave to find Gabe. She makes the climb and encounters Trademaster as well. He offers her to bring her to Gabe in exchange for her youth. Gabe lives in Matty's Village and is trying to build a boat in order to go find his mother. Claire watches him from afar as an old woman. Jonas and Kira are now married and have two children. Matty is remembered as a hero. When Claire is about to die from old age, she tells her story to Jonas and finally they decide to tell Gabe. She rapidly falls ill and Jonas sends Gabe to fight off Trademaster, who is watching Claire die. Gabe uses his gift against Trademaster – he can see into people and understand them. He realises that Trademaster is pure evil and therefore tells him that all of the people he traded with are happy after all. This kills him and Claire is young again.

4.2.2. Attributes Observable in *The Giver Quartet*

After this brief overview of the series, the typical attributes observable in *The Giver Quartet* can be discussed. Figure 5 illustrates which attributes of young adult dystopian fiction occur in each of the four instalments of the series, whereas a check mark indicates that an attribute can be observed, the wave symbol that it can be

observed to some extent and an x that the attribute cannot be observed.

		<i>The Giver</i>	<i>Gathering Blue</i>	<i>Messenger</i>	<i>Son</i>
Story	Young Adult (Female) Hero	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Repressive Regime	✓	~	x	~
	Discovering the Truth	✓	✓	✓	~
	Rebellion	x	x	x	x
	Protagonist Is an Outsider	✓	✓	x	~
	Personal Growth	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Romance	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Violence	✓	✓	x	x
Discourse	Post-Apocalyptic World	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Set in the Future	~	~	~	~
	Hopeful Outlook	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reader	Thought-Provoking	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Warning	x	x	x	x
	Social Critique	x	✓	✓	x

Fig. 5 Attributes of The Giver Quartet

4.2.2.1. Young Adult (Female) Hero

All of the aspects of the typical attribute of the young adult (female) hero are observable in each of the instalments of *The Giver Quartet*. To begin with, all of the protagonists can be considered young adults. They are all in their early teenage years when the story focuses on them. Jonas is eleven (Lowry, *Giver* 4) at the beginning of his story and about thirteen when he flees the community (130). Kira is fourteen when she is introduced in *Gathering Blue* (Lowry, *Son* 219) and it is mentioned that she is “just about the same age” as Jonas (Lowry, *Blue* 182). Matty is a “boy of eight or nine years” (7) when he first appears in Kira's story, which makes him about fourteen in *Messenger* (see Lowry, *Messenger* 26). Claire is also fourteen at the beginning of *Son* (see Lowry, *Son* 4-5). Gabe is only one year old in *The Giver* (see Lowry, *The Giver* 10-11), but fifteen when the story returns to him in *Son* (Lowry, *Son* 219). Therefore, they are all in an age-range usually classified as young adult when they are the focus of the story.

However, the aspect of whether they can be considered heroes is not as clear cut. The character most likely to be described as a hero is Matty. He shows courage when he is determined to make the dangerous journey to go and get Kira (Lowry, *Messenger* 83), demonstrates bravery when he leads her through the hostile wood

(see 95, 121, 133) and most importantly he gives his life in order to save Kira and Village (139-142). In the context of young adult dystopian fiction heroes are usually described as saving their society and this is what Matty does. Jonas, on the other hand, does not save his community per se, although he certainly has a part in improving it, as is hinted in *Messenger* (25). He is also the leader of Matty's Village for several years and seems to have an impact there, seeing that Village is described as having "thrived" in *Son* (Lowry 217). Moreover, he decides to save Gabe in *The Giver*, when he learns that the boy is to be "released" (Lowry 158-159). The last of the male protagonists, Gabe, also performs an heroic act when defeats Trademaster at the end of *Son* (Lowry 300-304). It can therefore be argued that all the male protagonists are heroes.

The female characters, although acting more passively, can be considered heroes as well. Kira is showing bravery after her mother's death. She is set on rebuilding her cott (Lowry, *Blue* 2-3) and she stands up against the women who want to take her plot of land (14-15). Furthermore, she decides to stay in her community at the end of *Gathering Blue* in order to try and make a difference (181-183). The success of this mission is described in *Messenger* (Lowry 29): "The community where [Matty] had lived was greatly changed and seemed foreign, though less harsh than he remembered." Thus, Kira, like Jonas, has a part in changing her community. Contrastingly, Claire seems to have the least impact on her communities, since her story is more concerned with the search for her son. She is, however, rather strong and courageous. When she learns that Jonas has fled with Gabe, she instantly feels that she needs to find him and goes aboard the supply boat (Lowry, *Son* 99). Moreover, she trains for years in order to be able to climb the cliff out of the village (181) and she even goes through with her plan after learning about Trademaster, who will be waiting for her on top (181). Therefore, in line with young adult dystopian fiction, *The Giver Quartet* features heroic acts performed by female characters as well, so that the attribute is marked as observable for all the four instalments of the series.

4.2.2.2. Repressive Regime

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is a repressive regime. As indicated in Figure 5, this attribute is only fully observable in *The Giver*, which

features a society that fits the description usually associated with young adult dystopian fiction, in that all the aspects previously discussed in this context are observable. To begin with, the government rigidly controls its citizens. This is done through strict rules, on the one hand, and the suppression of feelings on the other. The children's lives are regulated by age, whereas every year they are granted specific rights and duties, when finally at twelve they are assigned their future jobs (see Lowry, *Giver* 16, 38-44). Spouses are matched to each other (46) and form a family unit and every family unit receives two children (8). Rule-breakers, as well as old people are "released" (7-8), which means that they are killed (143). These rules work, because the citizens are given pills that suppress their feelings. On top of strict control, society is based on the principle of sameness (80-81), so that collectivity is overshadowing individuality, as is typical of young adult dystopian fiction. Moreover, citizens' choices are limited. Jonas even discusses this with the Giver, who tells him that it would be dangerous to let people make their own choices (94). Finally, there is an aspect that is foregrounded in the society of *The Giver*, which has only briefly been mentioned in the context of dystopian fiction, namely that dystopian societies are often founded on the oblivion of history or memory. This is one of the main themes of the novel, as Jonas is chosen to be the Receiver of Memory, i.e. the only person in the community who has access to the past (57). This means, of course, that all the other people only know what they are told, which makes them less likely to question the system.

In contrast to Jonas' community, the other societies appearing in the series should likely not be considered repressive. The community of *Gathering Blue*, however, might be the closest of the remaining three. There is definitely a governing elite with the Guardians (Lowry, *Blue* 20), who try to control citizens by manipulating the future, as Kira finds out at the end of the novel (180-181). Nevertheless, collectivity is not foregrounded and choices are not limited by the Guardians, at least not on the small scale. Moreover, the past is not treated as a secret, but is told to the citizens annually (18). Therefore, I classified this attribute as only occurring partially in *Gathering Blue*.

The village in which Claire strands, on the other hand, cannot be considered repressive at all. Its main function is to provide a contrast to Jonas' society, in which Claire lived before the village. Claire learns many things she has not known before, like what weddings are, that there are seasons or what music is (Lowry, *Son* 132-

133). Through this contrast the reader is reminded of what kind of society Claire escaped. Since both societies are a part of *Son*, the attribute is marked as occurring to some extent in Figure 5. However, an interesting aspect of the village is that Claire's life there fits well with the category of conflicts with parts of society, as described in the context of young adult fiction. She never quite fits into village life, as she does not want to get married (140), for example. Especially after it is revealed that she had a child and the villagers reject her (152-153), she struggles to find her place, finally being most comfortable with the other outsider in the village, Einar (see 168, 176). Therefore, conflict arises for Claire when it comes to the institutions of marriage and family.

In *Messenger* society is different altogether, since Village represents a sort of utopia. Matty describes that in Village “marks and failings [are] not considered flaws at all. They [are] valued” (Lowry, *Messenger* 5). Moreover, lying is considered wrong (7), there are no secrets (21) and everyone is welcome (42). This description is the complete opposite to one of a repressive regime, so that in *Messenger* this attribute cannot be observed at all.

4.2.2.3. *Discovering the Truth*

The typical attribute of discovering the truth is observable in the first three instalments of *The Giver Quartet* and in the last instalment it occurs to some extent. However, it should be kept in mind that in young adult dystopian fiction discovering the truth typically leads the protagonists to rebel, but this is not the case in the series, as will be addressed with the next attribute. In *The Giver* there are a few instances where Jonas realises how lacking his society is – he questions whether people lie (Lowry, *Giver* 68), he thinks it was not a good choice to implement sameness (91) and he realises that no one has ever felt real pain (106). His main realisation is that releasing people really means that they are killed (143). This is the turning point for him where he feels unable to go on like before. He screams at the Giver: “I won't! I won't go home!” (145) and finally they decide to make a plan (147). Therefore, *The Giver* comes closest to the typical description of this attribute.

In *Gathering Blue* this attribute can be observed in a very similar way. Kira starts to discover little things and finally there is a big revelation. The first instance where she questions what she has been lead to believe is when an old woman tells

her that there are no beasts in the woods (Lowry, *Blue* 92). After that she learns that Thomas has been held captive by the Guardians when he was younger (121). The big revelation occurs at the end of the novel, when she learns that Jamison had tried to kill her father (177) and figures out that the Guardians are really only concerned with their own power (180-181). Her reaction is to stay, rather than to leave with her father, so that she can improve her society (181).

In *Messenger* uncovering the truth is mostly related to Trade Mart. When Matty first attends it, he already thinks that “[i]t doesn't feel right” (Lowry, *Messenger* 48). Later he learns that the teacher's personality has greatly changed after trading away “his deepest self” (59). The difference here, however, is that there is no immediate reaction to learning this. Matty is concerned and he tells Jonas (59), but he makes no decision to do anything about it. Rather, the story continues on with Matty's journey to get Kira.

Son does not feature this reaction either. Nor is there much of a revelation. Only in the first part of the novel, when Claire is still living in Jonas' society, does she uncover some truths about her community. When she is giving birth, for example, she realises they lied to her about experiencing some discomfort, rather she is experiencing real pain (Lowry, *Son* 7). Later she becomes aware that she has not been given the pills that suppress feelings and therefore she is the only one experiencing them (90). Thus, this attribute is only partially observable in *Son*.

4.2.2.4. *Rebellion*

As can be seen, there is some truth to discover in all of the instalments of *The Giver Quartet*, but the typical reaction of this discovery leading the protagonists to rebel which is associated with young adult dystopian fiction does not occur. This is due to the fact that these books do not feature rebellion as has been discussed in relation to the genre. The protagonists do break certain rules after discovering facts about their societies. Jonas, for example, stops taking the pills (Lowry, *Giver* 123) and Claire schemes to get to know her son (Lowry, *Son* 20), but overall there is no resistance or dissidence and no impulse to attempt to change society at its core. Therefore, rebellion has been marked as not observable in all of the four novels.

4.2.2.5. *Protagonist Is an Outsider*

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is the protagonist being an outsider. This attribute is different for each of the instalments of *The Giver Quartet*, because the protagonists are not all complete outsiders. The description is certainly true for Jonas, who is chosen to be the Receiver of Memory. This is a very special position in the society, since the Receiver is the only one who has access to the past (see Lowry, *Giver* 57, 74), can see colour (90) and is exempt from some rules (65). Moreover, he is not allowed to talk to anyone about the things he learns during his training with the Giver (65). This not only puts Jonas into an outside position, but also makes him question his society.

With Kira it is already more difficult to ascertain whether she should be considered an outsider in her society. She does have a twisted leg (Lowry, *Blue* 3), which is unusual in her community, since people with flaws are customarily killed (4). She also lives in the Council Edifice (50), which is uncommon. Moreover, she has a special gift for stitching (17), but she is not the only one with a gift. Seeing all these things in combination, Kira should likely be considered an outsider, since her experience is varied due to her leg and her special position at the Council Edifice.

Also Claire may be considered an outsider. Her experience varies while she still lives in Jonas' society, since she is not given the pills (Lowry, *Son* 90). She is also considered an outsider in the village, since, as has been mentioned before, she does not quite fit in with the other villagers. Furthermore, she is turned into an old woman by Trademaster (206-207), which is clearly a varied experience. However, these experiences are not necessarily related to the aspect of questioning society typical of young adult dystopian fiction and therefore this attribute is marked as only partially occurring in *Son*.

In contrast to the other protagonists, Matty should not be classified as an outsider at all. He does have the gift of healing (see *Messenger* 35, 140), but he is well integrated into his society and not especially distinguished from the rest of the citizens.

4.2.2.6. *Personal Growth*

The typical attribute of personal growth can be fully observed in all four books. This is mainly due to the fact that the reader is able to watch the four main protagonists grow

up. Jonas is only eleven when he first appears in *The Giver* (Lowry 4) and is about thirty years old at the end of *Son* (see Lowry 219). Approximately the same is true for Kira (see Lowry, *Blue* 182). Claire is fourteen at the beginning of *Son* (see Lowry 4-5) and she is about three years older than Jonas (see 62), which makes her about thirty-three when the story concludes. Therefore, most of the development of these three characters is apparent to the reader. Contrastingly, Gabe is only fifteen at the end of *Son* (Lowry 219) and Matty dies when he is still a teenager (see Lowry, *Messenger* 140-142).

During the time the story follows each protagonist they undergo developments that can be described as personal growth. Jonas is a pretty carefree eleven-year-old when his story begins, but soon he realises what feelings are (Lowry, *Giver* 125-126) and even makes the decisions to flee his community (148) and rescue Gabe (158-159). However, the plan to escape is initiated by the Giver, rather than by Jonas (147). Jonas does become a decision-maker later in *Messenger*, when he has become the successful leader of Village (Lowry 22), only being in his early twenties (see 26). Kira is pretty strong from the very beginning of her story, as can be seen by how she deals with her mother's death, when she is still very young (see Lowry, *Blue* 1-2). Her development during *Gathering Blue* is mostly concerned with learning how to dye threads and realising the truth about how the Guardians manipulate people (180-181). Later in *Son* the reader sees her as a wife and mother (Lowry 216). Claire, at the beginning of her story, is described as a young girl who does not really know what is happening to her (see 1-6). However, similarly to Jonas, she soon experiences feelings (see e.g. 42) and makes plans to have contact with her son (20). Later in the small village she undergoes a similar development – from a girl who does not have memories (111) to a strong determined woman who wants to find her son (163). Even with Matty, although he dies early, a step of development can be observed. In *Gathering Blue* he is described as a wild “dirty-faced boy” (Lowry 7), but in *Messenger* he is a very reliable, upstanding citizen of Village, as he helps Kira's father (Lowry 1), is concerned about lying (7) and is trusted by the people to run errands (8). Therefore, all the four main characters undergo personal growth throughout the novels.

4.2.2.7. Romance

The typical attribute of romance can be observed in each of the instalments of *The Giver Quartet* as well. Although it takes up a rather small part of the characters' stories, every protagonist does have a love interest. Jonas, in *The Giver*, is briefly interested in a girl named Fiona (see Lowry 33-34), but later marries Kira (Lowry, *Son* 217), whereas this is only mentioned in passing. Matty is in love with the teacher's daughter Jean (Lowry, *Messenger* 58) and there is even a scene where they kiss (87). Claire falls in love with Einar while training in the village and there is also a kiss scene before she leaves (Lowry, *Son* 187). Gabe has a love interest as well. He likes his friend's sister Deirdre (215) and Trademaster even tries to use her to convince Gabe to trade with him (298). As can be seen, romance is a part of all the protagonists' paths, so that this attribute is marked as being observable in all of the four novels. However, it should be mentioned that in young adult dystopian fiction it is important that romance occurs in a dystopian setting specifically, but this aspect is not necessarily true for *The Giver Quartet*.

4.2.2.8. Violence

The typical attribute of violence is marked as observable in *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue*, since the few instances of violence that occur in the series can be found in these two novels. One of the most important is probably the concept of "release" in *The Giver*. As has been mentioned before, rule-breakers and old people are "released" (Lowry, *Giver* 7-8) in Jonas' society, which means that they are killed (143). Although the citizens are not aware what "release" really means (41), it is the ultimate act of violence – regularly performed by the government so that its vision of society can be realised. This is a typical form of violence for young adult dystopian fiction.

Also in Kira's society, which is generally pretty harsh, acts of violence occur. At one point, for instance, Kira is physically threatened by a woman named Vandara who wants to steal Kira's plot of land (Lowry, *Blue* 14). There is also a scene where the men are distributing weapons for the hunt and Kira observes that several men "would be injured before the disorganized distribution was complete" (82). However, what is likely more important to notice in this context is that Kira has to deal with her mother's death. Her mother dies at the very beginning of *Gathering Blue* and Kira has

to figure out where to live on top of dealing with her grief (1-10). This aspect is more reminiscent of the typical attribute of death associated with young adult fiction, than the attribute of violence observable in young adult dystopian fiction.

4.2.2.9. *Post-Apocalyptic World*

The typical attribute of a post-apocalyptic world is fulfilled by *The Giver Quartet* as a whole. With this attribute the series should be seen as a whole, because even though it depicts different communities, everything takes place in the same world. Several hints that the world is post-apocalyptic are given in *Gathering Blue*, where history and the telling of it are very important. The Ruin Song, which is performed annually and all the citizens of Kira's society have to attend, tells the "story of the people over countless centuries" (Lowry, *Blue* 18). "The story of the past filled with warfare and disasters," and "the Ruin, the end of the civilization of the ancestors" are described in the song (18). Even some details are given: "Verses told of smoky, poisonous fumes, of great fractures in the earth itself, of the way huge buildings toppled and were swept away by the seas" (18). This suggests that the series is set in a distant future, after an apocalypse has destroyed the world.

4.2.2.10. *Set in the Future*

This leads to another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction – the future setting, which is again an attribute that is the same for all of the novels in the series. This attribute is denoted as only occurring to some extent, because the series might be set in a different universe. The post-apocalyptic world just described and some hints in *The Giver* suggest a future setting. Jonas' society has some quite advanced technology, seeing as it is able to regulate the weather (Lowry, *Son* 132) and genetically manipulate people (Lowry, *Giver* 90). However, *The Giver Quartet* might be set in a different universe or dimension. There are two reasons for this argument. Firstly, there are several magical elements in the series, which will be addressed in more detail below. Secondly, no specific names or places are mentioned which would indicate that the world of *The Giver Quartet* is actually our world.

4.2.2.11. Hopeful Outlook

The typical attribute of a hopeful outlook is marked as observable in the first three instalments of *The Giver Quartet*, since each of the three novels leaves the reader with a sense of hope for the future, as is typical of young adult dystopian fiction. At the end of *The Giver*, when Jonas and Gabe are close to dying after their long and hard journey, Jonas suddenly sees Christmas lights and hears people singing (Lowry 171). His feelings are described the following way: “Suddenly he was aware with certainty and joy that below, ahead, they were waiting for him; and that they were waiting, too, for the baby” (171). This scene leaves the reader with hope that Jonas and Gabe have found a new, better home.

The hope at the end of *Gathering Blue* mostly stems from what Kira learns from her father, namely that there are people who are accepting of people with flaws and who are willing to help one another (Lowry 172). This is Kira's reaction: “Kira was astonished. [...] She knew no one who would be willing to soothe or comfort or aid a grievously wounded being” (172). This is most likely why she feels that she has to stay and try to improve her society (181-183).

Contrastingly, the end of *Messenger*, although hopeful as well, has a very sad undertone. Matty saves Kira, Forest and Village with his gift (Lowry, *Messenger* 140-141). Therefore, the reader is left with hope that Village will be restored to its almost utopian state. However, saving everybody kills Matty, so that the last sentence of the book deals with the villagers mourning him (142). Nonetheless, the fact that people do mourn him can be seen positively, because it means they have recovered their personalities and are able to empathise again.

The ending of *Son*, however, is a special case, since it features a happy ending typical of young adult fiction. I marked the attribute of a hopeful outlook as being observable, because a happy ending certainly includes a hopeful outlook on the future. Nevertheless, it should not go unnoticed that the book actually falls into the category of a happy ending typically observable in young adult fiction. This is because everybody is actually happy at the end of *Son*, rather than there being hope that they will be happy in the future. Matty is remembered as a hero, who saved Village from evil (Lowry, *Son* 211). Jonas and Kira are happily married and have two children (224-225). Claire is young once again and is finally able to live with her son, which makes Gabe happy as well (304). Moreover, the ultimate evil of Trademaster

has been defeated (303) and all the communities the reader encountered are doing well. Village is utopian again after Matty's sacrifice (227) and in *Messenger* we learn that Kira's old village has changed for the better (Lowry, 76-77) as well. Also Jonas' old community has improved (25). Thus, all the protagonists' stories are resolved and nothing is left open, which is the way endings are described in the context of young adult fiction.

4.2.2.12. Thought-Provoking

The attribute of having the intention to be thought-provoking is fulfilled by *The Giver Quartet* as a whole. However, it seems that this attribute is more in line with young adult, than with young adult dystopian fiction. This is because the political and societal aspect typical of young adult dystopian fiction is somewhat missing in *The Giver Quartet*. Generally, an overtone of teaching readers to be kind, to be brave and to think critically can be observed throughout the four novels. All protagonists behave this way and they are considered good people, which is why they act as role models. Therefore, the aim of the series seems to be related to showing readers how to act appropriately, which is closer to how the teaching effects of young adult fiction are described, than to how they are described in the context of young adult dystopian fiction.

Apart from these general tenets, more specific messages can be found in the novels. In *The Giver*, for example, it becomes clear that idea of sameness is not a desirable ideology. Jonas is sad that there are no differences in weather any more (Lowry, *Giver* 80-81), is angry that nobody experiences feelings (125-126) and comes to the conclusion that sameness should never have been instated (91). Another aspect emphasised in *The Giver* is the importance of choice. When Jonas talks to the Giver about the belief that giving people choice is dangerous, he is left with “a feeling of frustration that he [doesn't] understand” (95). In *Messenger* materialism is addressed as an issue that readers should think about. This is done with the concept of Trade Mart, where people trade part of themselves for materialistic things like gaming machines (Lowry, *Messenger* 19-20). Moreover, *Messenger* deals with the concept of community, as Village is depicted almost utopian. Matty describes that in Village “marks and failings [are] not considered flaws at all. They [are] valued” (5). Moreover, lying is considered wrong (7), there are no secrets (21) and everyone is

welcome (42). *Son* also features a very specific lesson, namely that conflicts should be solved without violence. When Gabe goes to confront Trademaster, he repeats the phrase “I cannot kill” (Lowry, *Son* 288, 292) to himself, which weakens Trademaster. Even when he is offered a knife to fight, he does not use it (293-294).

4.2.2.13. *Warning*

Another typical attribute of young adult dystopian fiction is that it usually includes a warning directed at the reader. This attribute has been marked as not occurring in any of the four instalments of *The Giver Quartet*, since the series' focus seems to be more on showing readers how to act, rather than on warning them about their current path, as has been just described. However, a warning might be found in *The Giver*. Jonas' society has gone so far with implementing sameness that people who do not fit in are being killed, but this is not the overreaching tone of the series, nor its focus. Therefore, I suggest that this attribute is not observable in the series.

4.2.2.14. *Social Critique*

Social critique does not seem to be the main goal of *The Giver Quartet* either. However, links to the real world can be found in *Messenger* and *Gathering Blue*. In *Messenger* one of the main conflicts is how Village should deal with newcomers. At the beginning of the novel, it is always emphasised that everybody is welcome. (see Lowry, *Messenger* 16, 42). However, there is “a petition – signed by a substantial number of people – to close Village to outsiders” (29), which leads to a vote, where it is decided that Village will indeed be closed (74). In the novel it is made clear that this is a very wrong and sad decision that only came about, because people were poisoned by Trade Mart. Matty observes the changes in the citizens: “Some of those who had been among the most industrious, the kindest, and the most stalwart citizens of Village now went to the platform and shouted out their wish that the border be closed” (72). This conflict certainly reflects the political climate surrounding immigration that is relevant now more than ever, whereas the stance is, of course, that immigrants should be welcomed rather than banished.

Another point of critique that can be found is related to materialism, which is represented by Trade Mart, as has been mentioned before. The parents of Matty's

friend Ramon trade for a gaming machine (Lowry, *Messenger* 6), a material possession with little value in their society. By the end of the novel it becomes clear that Ramon and his sister are very sick, because of that trade (85). The point of criticism here seems to be that a consumerist society, such as the one we live in today, which values materialistic things more than people, will be left with the materialistic things only.

In *Gathering Blue* social critique can be found in the context of people with flaws or disabilities. It is made clear that Kira would have been killed, because of her bad leg, had it not been for her mother fighting to keep her alive (Lowry 3). Matty's Village, in contrast, provides the right way to deal with situations like these. There "marks and failings [are] not considered flaws at all" (Lowry, *Messenger* 5), rather they are seen as strengths (5-6). The point being made is, of course, that people with disabilities should not be discriminated against, which is a message relevant in today's society as well.

4.2.2.15. Magic

Finally, there is an attribute that is specific to *The Giver Quartet* as a whole, which has not been mentioned in relation to the three genres of young adult, dystopian and young adult dystopian fiction and only occurs in the series specifically. It is important to include this attribute in the discussion, since it shows that examples of a genre can have attributes that are not related to this genre.

As has been hinted before, the novels of *The Giver Quartet* feature various magical elements. All of the protagonists, except for Claire, have special magical gifts. Kira is able to stitch designs without ever being told how to do it (Lowry, *Blue* 17) and later it becomes clear that her stitching has magical effects. It can tell the future (180-181) and the tapestry she has made for her father changes the same way the Forest that it depicts changes (Lowry, *Messenger* 86). Matty has the gift of healing – he heals two dogs (35) and later also Forest and the villagers (140). Jonas can see beyond, which means that he can see places and energies with his mind (82). Gabe can veer – he can enter people's minds and experience their feelings and learn their thoughts (Lowry, *Son* 231). Furthermore, there are Thomas and Jo in *Gathering Blue*. Their gifts are similar to Kira's, except that Thomas can carve in a special way (Lowry, *Blue* 59) instead of stitching and Jo's gift is related to

singing (111).

In addition to these gifts, there are other magical aspects depicted in *The Giver Quartet*. In the first instalment of the series the way memories work is related to magic. The Giver can transfer memories to Jonas by placing his hand on Jonas' back (Lowry, *Giver* 76). Moreover, memories can be released (99-100) and exist “[s]omewhere out there” (100). When this happens, people have access to these memories, which usually results in chaos, since the citizens are not used to dealing with memories (99-100). In *Messenger* Trademaster is introduced, who can grant wishes in exchange for parts of people's souls (Lowry, *Messenger* 19-20). Trademaster performs various magical feats, some people receive materialistic things (54), others become more beautiful (59) and he turns Claire into an old woman in exchange for taking her to Gabe (Lowry, *Son* 206-207). Another magical element in *Messenger* is Forest, which seems to be sentient. Towards the beginning of the novel Matty describes it the following way: “Sometimes Forest closed in and entangled people who had tried to travel beyond. There had been terrible deaths, with bodies brought out strangled by vines or branches that had reached out malevolently around throats and limbs of those who decided to leave Village. Somehow Forest knew” (Lowry, *Messenger* 8). Furthermore, Forest gives warnings before it kills people (13) and it seems to recognise Matty, since it always lets him pass through (14). At the end of the novel it tries to kill Matty and Kira. During their journey it pokes them (117), becomes thicker and thicker (118), attacks them with acid sap dripping from vines (119), makes a swamp appear (124) and finally the air becomes so bad that Matty and Kira can hardly breathe (127).

4.2.3. Position of *The Giver Quartet* in the Radial Structure

Having analysed *The Giver Quartet* according to its attributes, it is possible to discuss the position of each of the novels within the radial structure of young adult dystopian fiction. As becomes clear in Figure 5, *The Giver Quartet* is generally less prototypical than *The Testing Trilogy*. Including the attributes that only occur to some extent – which seems suitable in the context of the fuzziness proposed by prototype theory – *The Giver* features eleven out of the fourteen attributes of young adult dystopian fiction, *Gathering Blue* twelve, *Messenger* nine and *Son* ten. However, there are several occasions where the attributes do not fit perfectly with the descriptions

provided for young adult dystopian fiction. When it comes to romance in young adult dystopian fiction, for example, it is important that it happens in a dystopian setting, but is not the case when it comes to *The Giver Quartet*. Similarly, the discovery of the truth is usually what sparks rebellion, but *The Giver Quartet* does not feature rebellion in the way that it is described in the context of young adult dystopian fiction. Furthermore, the conclusion of the series features a happy ending typical of young adult fiction, rather than a hopeful outlook typically observable in young adult dystopian fiction.

Based on these observations, I suggest that *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue* are secondary examples of young adult dystopian fiction, due to the fact that they feature many of the typical attributes of the genre, but not all of them. Furthermore, magic is a typical attribute of the whole series, which is neither related to young adult dystopian fiction, nor to young adult or dystopian fiction. *Messenger* and *Son*, on the other hand, might be considered peripheral examples of the genre, since they feature even fewer attributes typical of young adult dystopian fiction and again because of the attribute of magic. What is more, *Son* features many of the attributes only to some extent and the ending is more typical of young adult, than of young adult dystopian fiction.

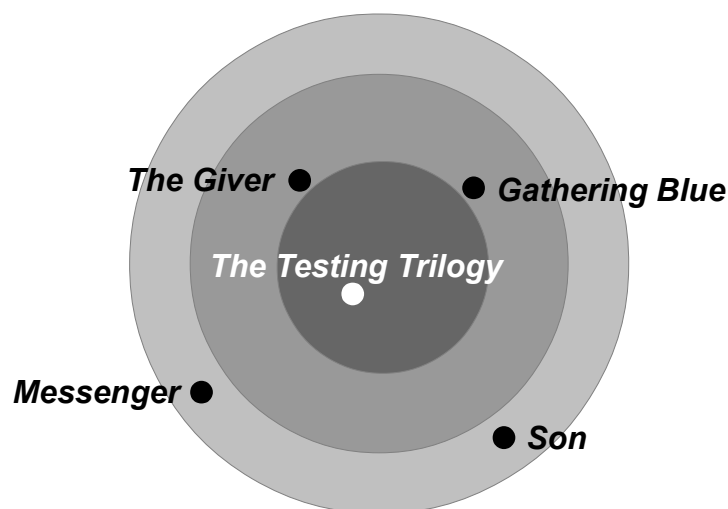


Fig. 6 Position of The Giver Quartet

These positions are illustrated in Figure 6, whereas the same explanations that have been provided for Figure 4 hold true. As a reference point, Figure 6 also includes the position of *The Testing Trilogy*. As can be seen, *The Giver* and

Gathering Blue are situated in the second circle of the radial structure, which means that they share many attributes with prototypical young adult dystopian fiction, but are not as likely to come to mind as a good example of the genre as *The Testing Trilogy*. *Messenger* and *Son*, on the other hand, are located in the outer circle of the radial structure, which means that they share even fewer attributes with prototypical young adult dystopian fiction. Moreover, these positions outside the centre of the radial structure show that the novels feature an attribute that is not related to young adult dystopian fiction, i.e. magic. *The Giver Quartet* demonstrates nicely how prototype theory works in the context of genre. All of the instalments of the series are part of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction, just not prototypical ones, so that they are positioned farther on the outside in the radial structure.

It is interesting that I came to this conclusion about the positioning of the series, since *The Giver* is considered to be the “progenitor” of young adult dystopian fiction (Cart 123). One would therefore infer that especially this first book is a prototypical example of the genre. However, young adult dystopian fiction seems to have changed quite a bit since the publication of *The Giver*, especially considering the success of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Moreover, a statement by De Geest and Van Gorp, which I quoted in the introduction to prototype theory, comes to mind. Just like “the most representative examples of a genre category are usually not judged to be the best ones” (43), one of the first examples of the genre might not be the most representative one.

5. Conclusion

Approaching the genre of young adult dystopian fiction from a perspective of prototype theory, I was able to identify a number of attributes that typically occur in the genre. Young adult dystopian fiction usually features a young adult (female) hero, a repressive regime, the protagonist discovering the truth, rebellion, the protagonist being an outsider, personal growth, romance, violence, a post-apocalyptic world, a future setting, a hopeful outlook, an aim to be thought-provoking, an intent to act as a warning and social critique. Some of these attributes are observable in the genre, because they are typical attributes of dystopian fiction and some of them occur, because they are typical attributes of young adult fiction. Moreover, there are some

instances where young adult and dystopian fiction influence each other within young adult dystopian fiction. Therefore, young adult dystopian fiction can either be seen as a subgenre of dystopian fiction or as a part of young adult fiction. Applying these findings to two examples of young adult dystopian fiction, I classified *The Testing Trilogy* by Joelle Charbonneau as a prototypical example of the genre, because all of the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction are observable in the series. For *The Giver Quartet* by Lois Lowry, on the other hand, I classified the first two instalments of the series as secondary examples of the genre and the last two as peripheral ones. This is because the novels do not feature all of the typical attributes of young adult dystopian fiction and also include an attribute that is not related to the genre.

Since this thesis' approach of applying prototype theory to a specific genre and specific examples from within this genre is not based on any previous study, there are several points where the methodology could be improved. One crucial issue is to decide which attributes are typical of a genre and therefore describe a prototype and which attributes only occur in some examples of the genre, since this highly affects results. Furthermore, including an analysis of the two genres of young adult and dystopian fiction to gain more insight into young adult dystopian fiction proved less fruitful than expected, which suggests that a focus on one genre and its attributes might work better. When it comes to identifying typical attributes in primary examples of a genre, the decision to which extent an attribute needs to be featured or how close it has to fit the description of the typical attribute of the genre can be problematic and highly influence the classification of the example. Moreover, the way I approached narration could be improved, since it is not only important from which perspective a story is told, but also how much insight into the protagonist's mind the reader gains and how much the reader can empathise with the characters. All these issues should be taken into consideration in future studies.

While the genre of young adult dystopian fiction has been studied a lot, prototype theory has rarely been applied in this context. My analysis uncovered several aspects that could be interesting for further study. A meta-analysis of the genre of young adult dystopian fiction on a bigger scale could yield a better insight into what makes up the prototype and provide a better understanding of the genre. Moreover, it would certainly be interesting to study more of the works published after the success of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, since these might make up the centre of

the radial structure of young adult dystopian fiction. Altogether, concepts from the cognitive sciences will certainly find further application in the literary studies and prototype theory will likely be applied to the concept of genre more often. It will surely also be applied to the genre of young adult dystopian fiction again and provide an even better understanding of the genre.

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Appendix

Abstract

As its name suggests, the genre of young adult dystopian fiction is seemingly made up of a combination of the two genres of young adult and dystopian fiction. Approaching the genre from a perspective of prototype theory and accordingly identifying attributes that typically occur in the genre show that some of the attributes are observable in the genre, because they are typical attributes of dystopian fiction, and some of them occur, because they are typical attributes of young adult fiction. Moreover, young adult and dystopian fiction seem to influence each other within some of the attributes of young adult dystopian fiction. Applying this approach to two examples of young adult dystopian fiction leads to the conclusion that *The Testing Trilogy* (2013-2014) by Joelle Charbonneau is a prototypical example of the genre and that *The Giver Quartet* (1993-2012) by Lois Lowry consists of novels that are secondary and peripheral examples of the genre. This thesis shows that applying prototype theory to young adult dystopian fiction can lead to many interesting insights into the genre.

Zusammenfassung

Wie der Name des Genres bereits andeutet, besteht dystopische Literatur für junge Erwachsene scheinbar aus einer Kombination zwischen den Genres der Literatur für junge Erwachsene und der dystopischen Literatur. Die Verwendung eines Ansatzes, der auf der Prototyp Theorie basiert, und die dementsprechende Identifizierung typischer Attribute des Genres zeigen, dass in der dystopischen Literatur für junge Erwachsene Attribute vorkommen, die typisch für dystopische Literatur sind, und Attribute, die typischerweise in der Literatur für junge Erwachsene vorkommen. Weiters beeinflussen sich die Genres der Literatur für junge Erwachsene und der dystopischen Literatur innerhalb einiger Attribute der dystopischen Literatur für junge Erwachsene gegenseitig. Die Analyse zweier Werke aus dem Genre der dystopischen Literatur für junge Erwachsene basierend auf diesem Ansatz zeigt, dass die Trilogie *Die Auslese* (2013-2014) von Joelle Charbonneau ein prototypisches Beispiel aus dem Genre ist und dass die Tetralogie *Hüter der Erinnerung* (1993-2012) von Lois Lowry aus Novellen besteht, die sekundäre und periphere Beispiele sind. Anhand dieser Masterarbeit lässt sich erkennen, dass man durch die Anwendung der Prototyp Theorie auf das Genre der dystopischen Literatur für junge Erwachsene interessante Erkenntnisse über das Genre erlangen kann.