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**THE YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIA AS BILDUNGSROMAN:
FORMATIONAL REBELLIONS AGAINST SIMPLICITY
IN WESTERFELD'S *UGLIES* AND ROTH'S *DIVERGENT***

by

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PROFESSOR WERNIMONT**

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Introduction

Young adult novels are undeniably popular and yet they are simultaneously dismissed as inconsequential or light – conventionally deemed low literature, these novels are generally not considered worthy to be discussed in the same spaces as the less popular, more traditional high literature. If a genre of young adult novels were given a place within literary history, it would not only legitimize these novels as more than guilty pleasures or the provinces of adolescent readers who will come to grow out of them, but it would also open up the possibility for other forms of literature to be similarly recognized as worth reading or thinking about. The Bildungsroman, also known as the "novel of formation" or the more colloquial "coming-of-age" novel, is a genre grounded in the traditions of multiple literary histories and is commonly understood to be high literature. The German, French, and English models are differentiable, according to Marianne Hirsch, yet proposing that another genre of novels are Bildungsromans requires a means of assessing the characteristics of the Bildunsgroman. Hirsch models the European Bildungsroman, which is useful for both American novels due to the predominance of European and particularly English canon. This paper is interested in determining how contemporary young adult dystopian novels both work within and depart from the conventions of the traditional Bildungsroman.

Broadly speaking, Hirsch defines the Bildungsroman as a novel that deals with the formation of the protagonist's self through "progressive disillusionment…with the social reality" (295, 300). Hirsch unfolds her model of

the novel of formation through a series of structuralist categories, beginning with the requirement that there be a focus on one main character. The primary texts – Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* – fulfill this first requirement, with their single protagonists Tally and Tris, just as most of Hirsch's remaining categories deal with the tension between individual and society and the formation of the self – prominent issues in the chosen texts. The novel of formation, according to Hirsch, "maintains a peculiar balance between the social and the personal and explores their interaction" (299), a relation significant for *Uglies* and *Divergent* in that their protagonists are continually responding to their societal environments. Thus this paper also aims to find what type of relationship between individual and society is proposed by these novels.

The idea of the young adult protagonist rebelling against a powerful authoritative force while seeking to develop an identity suggests that it is plausible for the young adult dystopia (henceforth YAD) to be posited a type of Bildungsroman. The chosen novels focus on their protagonists' losing their identities, creating physical distance between them and the people or places of their pasts, and re-constructing them through encounters with new obstacles and characters; these identity-driven processes evoke the self-formation Hirsch emphasizes in her definition of the Bildungsroman genre.

Before discussing particular instances of how the Bildungsroman is reflected in the YAD, it is important to not overlook the dystopian contexts of these novels, which relate in many ways to the ideas of formation. A discussion of dystopia should begin with its predecessor and relation, the utopia. This

discussion is complicated by the fact that the term 'utopia' "has been defined in a

bewildering variety of ways," as Gregory Claeys puts it, with "little

interdisciplinary consensus on how (indeed even whether) we should link its

literary, communal and ideological components" (147). While I will focus this

thesis on the literary, I believe it can deal with "communal," "ideological," and

other components as part of a literary investigation since literary texts are the

object of study. To this end, working definitions of dystopia and utopia are

required. For the purposes of this thesis, the utopia will be classified according to

Northrop Frye's definition as a "*speculative* myth," a "species of the constructive

literary imagination" that is an envisioning of an ideal world (Frye 323, 330).

Frye's definition of the utopia is particularly useful in that it focuses on creation

as fundamentally important; speculation and construction are creative acts that

imply that something, even if it is intangible, is being made. As Claeys puts it,

utopia is "not an account of the 'perfect'" but rather is "often about *perfectibility*"

(emphasis in original, 148-149) and as such, about the process of creating, or

attempting to create, something perfect – even if that creation is the alteration of

that which already exists – rather than depicting that which is already perfect.

The ideas of construction and its opposite process, destruction, will be important

for thinking about how the self creation and recreation employed by the

protagonists in my chosen texts work within the Bildungsroman.

      Thus the idea that utopias are very much created worlds that also contain

processes of creation is significant for determining what a "dystopia" will mean

for this discussion. For Claeys, "Dystopia represents a loss of control" (Claeys

170-171). Dystopias, however, do not seem to be the opposite of utopias, but are rather the envisioning of a world created according to what some might see as utopian parameters. In other words, dystopias are essentially utopias – peaceful ideals – that acknowledge their flaws. Frye describes dystopias as "utopian satire," which reframes the utopia vision of "a world-state assumed to be ideal, or at least ideal in comparison with what we have…in terms of slavery, tyranny, or anarchy" (Frye 326). In other words, dystopias take a utopian concept and "[demonstrate] their inconsistency, their hypocrisy, or their unreality," (Frye 337), imagining how that created society, in its relentless pursuit of perfectability, would fall apart.

For example, the popular utopian satires or dystopias of *The Matrix*, *Blade Runner,* and *Minority Report* movies examine worlds in which destructive humans lose control of the world and themselves to robots, robot clones are created to perform manual labor instead of humans, and people can stop crimes before they happen, respectively. Though these are somewhat simplified renderings to show how these movies might seem utopian from one angle, each film illustrates the grim repercussions of their respective societies: all three societies seem to lose sight of humanity itself, for autonomy is lost in *The Matrix* and *Minority Report,* while *Blade Runner* questions whether replicants, the robots, can possess human emotion – perhaps even more than humans can. The goals of these worlds might have seemed noble or utopian, a re-envisioning of a world that removed some problem of reality, but what dystopian fiction seems to say is that these utopian worlds can never be more than myths, to again use Frye's

wording. While there might not be a dystopia for every utopia imagined, utopian impulses seem to undergird dystopias. The positive cannot exist without the negative consequences of creating that positive, since the society "predominates over the individual" in order to enforce unity, peace, or some other ideal (Frye 335). In this way, the utopian individual does not have any more control than the dystopian individual, who is distinctly aware of a loss of control. Dystopias and utopias, in this reading, are essentially the same society, though dystopias highlight the darker sides of perfection that utopias gloss over. This connects to how my texts' protagonists both and disassemble their selves over the courses of their story arcs. It then seems fitting that the word utopia, sometimes seen as a wished for hope or improvement, means both good place and no place (Claeys 152) – definitions which suggest the impossibility of perfection.

I selected *Uglies* and *Divergent* as my primary texts for their focus upon issues of identity and self-making or remaking, on individual and societal levels. In addition, these texts were chosen because identity-focused processes such as the breaking down of previous identities or self-definitions and creating new ones, processes significant for this thesis, are integral in the adolescent's transition from childhood to adulthood. In their introduction to their collection of critical essays *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry note:

> Indeed, dystopia can act as a powerful metaphor for adolescence. In adolescence, authority appears oppressive, and perhaps no one feels more under surveillance than the average teenager. The teenager is on the brink of adulthood: close enough to see its privileges but unable to enjoy them. The comforts of childhood fail to satisfy. The adolescent craves more

power and control, and feels the limits on his or her freedom intensely. (10)

Looked at thus, the adolescent is suspended in a space "on the brink of adulthood," aware of the limits of freedom – the adolescent is all potentiality, creation waiting to happen, prepared to simultaneously destroy pieces of her child identity and build pieces of her adult one. While this identity construction can be part of a larger and empowering developmental journey, the importance of the oppression and powerlessness felt by the adolescent should not be overlooked – these forces that Hintz and Ostry draw attention to are, as demonstrated, the same at work in dystopias. The force that limits the adolescent's freedom, in dystopias, is magnified; instead of authority represented by parents or other adults, authority is society itself, surveilling and restricting the adolescent's actions. As Hirsch puts it, "Society is the novel's *antagonist*" in the Bildungsroman (297). With this definition in mind, the restrictions that dystopian societies place on individuals serve as markers of their antagonism toward the protagonists.

Hintz and Ostry write, "The conundrum of many utopian and dystopian books for young readers is…At what point does utopian cooperation become dystopian conformity?" (7). Their question suggests a blurring between the utopian and dystopian, an idea that works in tandem with the blurred identity space of the adolescent. For both Tally and Tris, the respective heroines of the *Uglies* and *Divergent* books, they come up against this conundrum as their own identities start to shift. Both of them have grown up within societies intended to create peaceful, harmonious utopias, but neither of them voices, even in their self-narration, that there might be some better alternative to their societies. When

Tally and Tris, both at age sixteen, leave their homes and childhood identities behind and start to question whom they want to become, their actions reflect the Bildungsroman model of growth as a "*gradual process* consisting of a number of encounters between subjective needs and an unbending social order" (298). In this way, the utopian images they had of their respective societies begin to break down along with their past identities. Pointing out this connection between the ideas of the Bildungsroman and the YAD, Hintz and Ostry write, "Dystopian literature thus mingles well with the coming-of-age novel, which features a loss of innocence" (9). This commingling suggests a model of Bildungsroman that will differ from the traditional in that the societies Tally and Tris encounter are more than unbending, they are all-powerful systems that, in true dystopian fashion, Tally and Tris rebel against instead of adjusting through growth or maturation.

It could be said that for there to be room for any newness, the old must be cast out or re-shaped; therefore the developments of Tally and Tris are not so noteworthy as far as coming of age narratives go. However, what occurs in my texts as dystopias goes beyond natural change and involves self-destruction as a result of attempts to create and emulate some vision of perfection – physical perfection in Tally's case and behavioral or moral perfection in Tris's. The versions of self in these novels are exaggerated and disturbing, both for the stringent requirements of the novels' societies and also for the fact that these requirements are created *by* the societies or some authoritative power, which helps to account for how these texts diverge from the traditional Bildungsroman model offered by Hirsch.

In this way, my texts' worlds align with Claeys' definition of dystopias as societies in which control is lost, held by some force separate from the individual. This idea that images of perfection, coming from sources outside of the self, influence self-creation and self-realization is not a novel one in today's world, which connects back to Frye's assertion that utopias are projections "in time or space" of the present (Frye 323). Projection, or magnification, is a key element in how these dystopic science fictions are speculations upon – not reflections of – our present. Therefore, as visions of the present imagined and stretched into different shapes or scopes, these texts contain fascinating connections to our present, but an exploration of those connections is not what this work aims to accomplish. My discussion will be more concerned with the present in the texts themselves.

While these definitions of dystopia are important for understanding the chosen texts, the ultimate goal is to examine how *Uglies* and *Divergent,* and by extension the genre of the Young Adult dystopian, compare to Hirsch's model of the Bildungsroman – and what the implications of departure from this model might mean. To do this, I will adopt Hirsch's seven-part model in order to assess the structural similarities and differences between it and my chosen texts. In my first chapter, I will focus on the type of relationship between individual and society that is proposed by my texts. My second chapter will look deeper at the protagonists' formation arcs themselves, as the formation of character is at the heart of the Bildungsroman genre. My third chapter will explore the different types of relationships formed between the protagonists and others in their

respective novels and how these relationships inform or illuminate the

protagonists' formations.

Chapter One: Individual and Society

This chapter will examine the societies of *Uglies* and *Divergent* as well as

the roles of Tally and Tris as individuals within these societies to examine what

type of relationship between individual and society seems characteristic of these

novels. The first condition of Hirsch's model explains:

> The novel of formation is a novel that focuses on one central character, a
> *Figurenroman.* It is the story of a representative individual's *growth and
> development* within the context of a defined social order. Although he
> learns and grows, the protagonist is an essentially *passive* character, a
> plaything of circumstance. Unable to control his destiny actively, he is
> someone who gives shape to events without actually causing them. The
> hero's development is explored from various perspectives in the novel of
> formation which aims at the formation of a *total personality*, physical,
> emotional, intellectual and moral. (296-7)

This concept of one person as "representative" of other characters within a society

is useful in conjunction with dystopias since the conflict between individual and

society is the foundation of dystopias. Dystopian systems and governmental

structures affect all individuals living under their rules, but narrative conventions

typically show the tension between citizens and their government through one

person. Both Tally and Tris represent their respective communities through their

struggles, but the extent to which they are passive characters or are formed with

"total personalit[ies]" are questions to explore.

Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies*, as perhaps is apparent from the title, envisions

a world in which the worth and perhaps the very existence of a person depend

upon physical appearance. In this society, people are "uglies" until they turn

sixteen when they undergo an operation to become "pretties": their appearances

are altered so that they meet a certain standard of beauty, with "The overall

average of human facial characteristics [as] the primary template for the operation" (300). The "uglies" in the novels hate their looks, longing for the day when they can be transformed into "pretties." This operation is not optional, as the protagonist Tally Youngblood learns, though the values of the society are so ingrained in her that she does not question the desirability of the operation for the first half of the book; eventually Tally finds out that those who run away from the operation are hunted down by a government force called Special Circumstances. It is clear that the novel situates itself in the dystopia model since the inhabitants of this world lack control not just over themselves, but over their very bodies, which are manufactured according to a standardized "template" created by the society. Hirsch describes the protagonists of Bildungsromans as passive characters, "plaything[s] of circumstance," and the stringent control the government asserts over Tally certainly takes away her active role in her life – at least at first. In this way, Tally's passive beginnings align with Hirsch's idea; whether her entire trajectory only serves to give "shape to events without actually causing them" is something that will be investigated.

As Tally explores New Pretty Town, the area recent uglies-turned-pretties are relocated to, she describes the structures around her as "pretty toys," not sturdy like the old iron bridge she walks past, "built so long ago that it held up its own weight" (20, 11). If Tally is at least subconsciously aware of this artificiality and weakness in her society from the start, her difficulty in letting go of her society's standards presents a conundrum. As the protagonist, Tally functions as the representative face of the individuals in her world, her own suspicions

suggesting that there were others who likely had their doubts about the system yet continued to subscribe to it. To help answer why Tally and, by extension, others subscribed to a society that they knew was artificial, I propose that Tally's society makes its citizens classic utopian promises that have captivated desires for as long as the idea of an ideal world has existed. These promises, the text suggest, are more appealing to the people in Tally's world than individual choice and thus give them passive roles in their own lives.

Frye writes about how "the real social ideal would be a greatly simplified society, and the quickest way to utopia would be through providing the absolute minimum of social structure and organization" (Frye 337). Thus Frye emphasizes the importance of the "conception of ideal society as simplified," connecting it to the pastoral convention in literature (Frye 338). By dividing its citizens into strictly delineated categories in which the members of each category look approximately the same and creating a system where a person has value based upon her physical appearance, Tally's society has created a means of averaging the worth of a human, rendering no one more or less valuable than someone else. Frye points out that the Golden Age, the ideal world in Classical mythology, was characterized with "simplicity and equality" (Frye 339); like the mythological Golden Age societies, the world of *Uglies* is structured in a way that works to simplify and eliminate potentially hierarchical differences among its citizens. The similarities between the society in *Uglies* and those in classical mythology push against trivializing readings of young adult literature as easy or light, suggesting that young adult novels can be read alongside classical mythology.

Uglies does not simply create a likeness of the Golden Age societies Frye connects to utopias, however, but goes on to critique it by demonstrating how the lauded simplicity of myth is ultimately self-destructive. This type of ideal society breaks down and becomes dystopian, as these novels show, because in order to maintain this "simple and equal" world a means for controlling the society must be created, contradicting the idea of minimizing organization. The pretties, who are promised freedom from work and the ability to party and play all day, are also restricted with respect to whom they speak to and where they live. Despite assurances of peaceful, carefree lives for its citizens, *Uglies'* government shows that these types of promises cannot be carried out without a system to do it. Regarding the goals of such a controlling structure, Claeys speculates that "The quintessentially utopian component…[involves] an expectation of behavioural improvement...[or] enhanced sociability" (Claeys 150). These concepts suggest that some force would decide what determined improvement or sociability, such as the Operations Committee in Tally's world that uses a template for creating their citizens so that no one would be more or less beautiful than anyone else. *Uglies* illustrates the impossibility of utopian promises without control while also demonstrating the consequences of that control on an individual level.

In *Divergent*, another committee creates an aptitude test that places all citizens into a faction founded upon a virtue, with the five factions consisting of Abnegation (selflessness), Candor (honesty), Erudite (wisdom), Amity (compassion), and Dauntless (bravery). The breaking down of society into these components, akin to the stratification of Tally's world by uglies, pretties, older

pretties, and those called 'specials,' simplifies society by creating certain

acceptable identity groups and placing people into them. The structures of these

two dystopic societies suggest, then, that if people were left to create their own

identities instead of accepting that which is prescribed for them, it would result in

a world of inequality – and these societal systems provide an alternative, a

solution to that potential inequality. A world where a few people decide what is

right for everyone else does not represent a society where all are equal, but

perhaps the citizens in these societies find simplicity and freedom from

sometimes burdensome choice appealing in the mode of the mythological Golden

Age societies. Yet like *Uglies, Divergent*'s society ultimately contests the

nostalgic concept of simplicity as good by creating a system that is both simple

and diseased, the enforcement of simplicity destroying the society from within.

Both novels' responses to the longstanding positivity if not wistfulness associated

with Golden Age simplicity are significant moves for the genre, as it becomes

both critic and, more important, creator of societies which complicate the claim

equating simple with goodness.

The faulty construction of the simplifying, controlling structure in

Divergent and, therefore, *Divergent*'s critique of simplified societies, quickly

becomes apparent. As the faction formed around selflessness, Abnegation is in

primary control of the government, a fact that clearly demonstrates the failure of

their society's efforts to achieve equality. Though in theory it is logical that the

selfless faction be the one placed in charge and that people be placed into factions

that reflect their talents and aptitudes, nevertheless the idea of one group or type

of people controlling all other types of people seems fundamentally unequal. The impetus for the creation of the societal structure in *Divergent* is articulated by a leading member of Abnegation named Marcus at Tris's Choosing Ceremony, the event at which she will choose the faction she will belong to for the rest of her life, unless she fails that faction's Initiation and becomes a factionless:

> "Decades ago our ancestors realized that it is not political ideology, religious belief, race, or nationalism that is to blame for a warring world. Rather, they determined that it was the fault of human personality – of humankind's inclination toward evil, in whatever form that is. They divided into factions that sought to eradicate those qualities they believed responsible for the world's disarray." (Roth 32)

Marcus's word choice illustrates the losing battle the society is waging in striving for perfection, pointing to the "inclination" of the "human personality" – the natural condition of the human, in other words – as tending toward evil. If that is true then the aim to "eradicate" these pieces of the human personality at fault for "a warring world" –suggesting a type of reprogramming of the individual – is an ultimately futile attempt to create an artificial version of the human identity that contains all its natural virtues but none of its faults. Though the goals of the "ancestors" Marcus mentions might have been constructive in that they sought to cultivate positive qualities in an effort to get rid of the negative, they seem to result in emotionally repressed individuals who fear their own minds, if Tris is understood as her society's representative. Similar to the template created by the government in *Uglies* that decided what a person ought to look like, the society in *Divergent* seems to have made a personality template for its citizens, placing them into passive roles in which their very minds are subject to the demands of others.

Divergent has drawn criticism for the obvious weaknesses of its governmental structure, which creates a seemingly under-developed and illogical premise; one blogger notes in her review that the idea of the faction "From the start…feels a bit half-baked" and concludes, "Overall, the universe of *Divergent* feels like it needed a little more work" (DiGuiseppi). Another reviewer writes of the society and world:

> The first thing that bears mentioning is the inherent simplicity and implausibility with regards to the structure of *Divergent'*s world. The entire system, predicated on five character traits, seems like a flimsy, silly contrivance – how could any one person, with their myriad emotions and experiences, be reduced to a single quality to abide by for the rest of their lives? (Baltazar)

Rather than reading the simplicity of *Divergent's* world as a weakness, we should read it as a warning for both societies and individuals – a warning against a quest for an artificial perfection that overlooks or tries to change the natural human tendency to experience such "myriad emotions." Just as Hirsch's first condition for the Bildungsroman references the idea of a *"total personality,"* the novel exposes the instability of a society in which people are formed with partial personalities that are dictated by others. The dissolution of Tris's society as it exists at the beginning of the novel coincides with Tris's own shifting identity, since both begin with rigid values; ultimately that rigidity is shown to make both societal and individual identities brittle and destructible. Frye points out this inflexibility as characteristic of utopias, which most dystopian societies arguably aspire to be, when he writes, "Considered as a final or definitive social ideal, the utopia is a static society; and most utopias have built-in safeguards against radical alteration of the structure" (Frye 329). Therefore it seems that the societal

unwillingness to allow individuals to change or progress after the new, government-approved identities have been assumed is the society's very undoing. By testing as a Divergent, unable to be categorized into just one of the factions, Tris represents a threat to this stagnant society and as such, functions as an agent of change and progress as her identity develops. Additionally, the static quality of these societies seems to be the antithesis to the Bildungsroman with its formation of a total person, by definition becoming someone different than she once was. Unlike Hirsch's suggestion that the protagonist is essentially passive, however, both Tris and Tally actively work to undermine the societies that constrict them.

Through this introduction to the protagonists and societies of *Uglies* and *Divergent*, the opposition between the two forces in each novel connects to the duality suggested in Hirsch's second condition of the Bildungsroman:

> The novel of formation's concern is both *biographical* and *social*. Society is the novel's *antagonist* and is viewed as a school of life, a locus for experience. The spirit and values of the social order emerge through the fate of one representative individual. Consequently, the novel of formation does not represent a panorama of society and might thus be distinguished from the panoramic or social novel (297)

The controlling forces exerted upon the people in the two texts not only establish an antagonistic relationship between government and individual, but demand an examination of both sides of the conflict. Though there is indisputably one protagonist in each novel, it would be a disservice to these novels as dystopias and potential Bildunsgromans to neglect the societies themselves. Consequently, the societies are illuminated by the ways in which they have influenced the representative protagonists, just as Hirsch argues. In many ways the antagonism between protagonist and society is also an antagonism towards the self, since the

society is instrumental in forming the foundations of its citizens. Thus Hirsch's

two-fold focus upon the biographical and social seems to apply to these YADs in

that the social – with the values and expectations it drills into the protagonists – is

the biographical.

When Tally leaves the city, sent as a spy by Special Circumstances to find

the compound for the rebels, she remarks of the world, "Everything's so big;" her

friend Shay, a character who has always seen their world as a dystopia, replies,

"That's what you can never tell from inside…How small the city is. How small

they have to make everyone to keep them trapped there" (Westerfeld 246).

Though Shay's words reference the forced diminishing of people's selves through

societal control, they also suggest a connection between the city and the people,

as if the city is a reflection of its inhabitants. These ideas can be linked because, in

this text's world, they are both carefully constructed creations, made to appear a

certain way and fulfill a certain purpose. Additionally, this comparison allows

Tally's identity to manifest itself in the ways she sees the world. On the first page

of the novel, Tally watches the sunset and thinks, "Any other summer, a sunset

like this would have been beautiful. But nothing had been beautiful since Peris

turned pretty" (Westerfeld 9), her sentiment showing how she projects herself

onto her surroundings; this idea may not be revelatory here, but it becomes useful

for tracking Tally's identity progression, particularly since she spends the first

half of the book adamant that she wants to be pretty, not showing any doubt of the

system. If Tally's observations about the world around her are read in this way,

her identity, beyond what has been instilled in her by her society's rigid standards,

is able to be expressed, such as when she notes that "If all the pretty toys somehow stopped working, just about everything in New Pretty Town would come crumbling down" (Westerfeld 20). Tally's view of the technologies in New Pretty Town as 'toys' that could crumble reveals a sentiment that the structures and by extension the people are temporary, artificial creations without any true substance; this unconscious insight suggests Tally's subtle resistance, with the potential to become active rebellion.

In making societies the enemies of their people, these texts raise the question of how people deal with this societal relationship. The concept of sociability that Claeys associates with utopias seems important to explain why people would put up with the antagonizing and dystopic conditions in these texts, despite the destructive, warping effects of the societies upon their individual identities. Claeys suggests a communal human "desire, sometimes intense, to *belong*, to be alike, to wear uniforms, to *be* uniform…" (Claeys 151), emphasizing the importance of similar physical appearance for similarity among people. In a world where people are uniform, the formation of individuality is then a challenge. Desire for something implies a wish to pursue a certain direction, which takes someone towards that goal and away from what is not desired – or that which might be feared. Seen this way, Tally's difficulties in accepting her own identity or that she even has an identity become easier to understand, for if she had her own identity it would mean being alone and as Gough notes, "Tally's pain and fear of being alone" and her "basic human need for companionship" are important for understanding the progression of her

identity (Gough 22). Shay describes the acquisition of their society's uniform, the 'pretty' face and body, in destructive terms that get at the truly identity-damaging nature of their society:

> …they grind and stretch your bones to the right shape, peel off your face and rub all your skin away and stick in plastic cheekbones so you look like everybody else. (Westerfeld 65)

However, Tally desires this uniform of non-identity, her differing view apparent when she describes, "They rubbed you raw, and you grew all new skin, perfect and clear. The old marks…all washed away. A clean start" (Westerfeld 35). She craves the absence of her original identity, even to the extent of physically scrubbing it away, so that she will never be alone, acting as the representative of her society and fulfilling Claeys' assertion.

There is a similar focus in the world of *Divergent* upon a community in which being alone, or "factionless," would be worse than death, for factionlessness means homelessness, poverty, and ostracism – to avoid this fate, people must choose and subscribe to the identities of the five factions. In Tally's world, physical bodies function as uniforms; in Beatrice Prior's world in *Divergent,* uniforms work more conventionally, with each faction wearing clothing fitting for their virtue, yet these uniforms perpetuate the theme of physical appearance coding for identity. As a member of the Abnegation faction, Tris is supposed to be selfless and focus on others, and she reflects upon how the uniform of her faction affects views of her identity when a member from another faction shoves her:

> The gray clothes, the plain hairstyle, and the unassuming demeanor of my faction are supposed to make it easier for me to forget myself, and easier

for everyone else to forget me too. But now they make me a target. (Roth 10)

The Abnegation faction fits particularly well into the utopian model of disregarding individual identity in favor of creating an equal whole since, like Tally, Tris speaks of forgetting herself, in essence being invisible. The text's representation of Abnegation's equality as forgetting oneself suggests that there is no place for the self in equality, in turn suggesting that equality can only exist when individuals do not. Tris markedly differs from Tally, however, in that she has difficulty forgetting herself and is fascinated by the idea of personal expression through physical markers – choices that "pierced, tattooed, and black-clothed" members of the Dauntless faction are free to make for themselves (Roth 10). Tris's desire to don this different kind of uniform could be driven by a desire similar to Tally's fear of being alone – since Abnegation does not give her identity a sense of belonging or protection, making her feel more visible as a "target" rather than less visible, Tris does not belong in the faction. Rather than desiring freedom from the factions and their rigid clothing and behavioral requirements, Tris still desires to remain in the system – but in a faction that she would truly feel a part of and in a uniform that she feels fits who she is.

To cast off the factions entirely, Tris would have to face her society's nightmare of being factionless; she narrates this fear when she speculates upon the results of the test that will tell her which faction she should choose to join:

> What if they tell me I'm not cut out for any faction? I would have to live on the streets, with the factionless. I can't do that. To live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community. My mother told me once that we can't survive alone, but even if we could, we

wouldn't want to. Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live. (Roth 19)

Just as Tally's desire to assume the identity of a Pretty face, literally scrubbing away her former self, reflects a dread of being alone, Tris fears the lack of community more than anything else. In these worlds where community constitutes identities for the individuals within it, the constructed codependence of community and individual becomes apparent – the communities could not exist if individuals did not believe that without them, they would be no one at all; Tris articulates this when she thinks, "I would rather be dead than empty, like the factionless" (Roth 39).

Claeys asserts that these kinds of societies are driven by a utopian "desire to create an enforced sociability to compensate for what has been lost with the passing of traditional societies," (161) such as the Golden Age societies; Frye too points to this reaching for "something which existing society has lost, forfeited, rejected, or violated, and which utopia itself is to restore" (336). Claeys goes further to express that both utopias and dystopias function as "discourses about community…and about our relative failure to balance natural and artificial sociability" (161). The problem, then, arises in the extreme artificiality or "constructedness" of the societies in these novels – they enforce behavioral standards, requiring confined social interactions, morals, and dress. The narrative arcs of Tally and Tris illustrate the destruction resulting from societal attempts to create an ideal world. In this way, these novels suggest a different take on dystopian societies than Claeys or Frye in that the societies are not just examples of a failure to balance or a wish to recover an imagined past community – they are

examples of how forced communities will be destroyed by individuals seeking alternative identities.

The traditional Bildungsroman, according to Hirsch, follows an individual as she moves through the world and forms an identity, eventually finding a place in society; in the world of young adult dystopias that presents death as preferable to not belonging to the community, both the formation of identity and the idea of belonging are put under pressure such that belonging overrides identity – eventually, they become synonymous. For Tris, not belonging means being "empty," implying that that which gives her identity – community – is also that which requires her to belong, robbing her of the possibility of forming her own identity. Both Tally's and Tris's initial desires to belong to communities suggest that being visible would mean not belonging, creating a relationship between protagonist and society that departs from the traditional Bildungsroman. While Hirsch writes of societies as the antagonists of protagonists, creating obstacles that help form the protagonist's identity, they are ultimately unbending and unchanging, systems that protagonists must grow accustomed to. These young adult novels create communities that the protagonists, in order to form their identities, cannot grow used to but instead must reject – they cannot take the easy way of belonging to society's set categories, but must become uncomfortably visible and different in order to make their identities and, perhaps, new communities.

Chapter Two: Identity Formation

The antagonistic pressures of the societies in both *Uglies* and *Divergent*

shape character formation; according to Hirsch, society is not only the

environment a character must move within, but it is also an enemy, presenting

obstacles or hardships to that character. Hirsch's third condition states:

> The novel of formation's plot is a version of the quest story; it portrays a
> search for a meaningful existence within society, for the authentic values
> which will facilitate the unfolding of inner capacities. The *linear
> chronological plot*, according to Scholes and Kellogg, represents "a
> general movement to emphasize character in narrative," since it "allows
> for free and full character development without interference from the
> requirements of a tightly-knit plot." Growth is a *gradual process*
> consisting of a number of encounters between subjective needs and an
> unbending social order. Since it entails the consideration of various
> alternatives, the growth process necessitates errors and the pursuit of false
> leads (297-8)

In drawing out this idea of the protagonist's "inner capacities," Hirsch gives

importance to the formation of an individual, the abstract journey that often

accompanies a physical or chronological one. Since in *Uglies* worth and sense of

self are so tied to physical appearance, an examination of the protagonist's

external and internal identities and their transformations in the text is essential in

order to understand the text as a Bildungsroman.

In a discussion of *Uglies*, Philip Gough contextualizes the identity-making

of young adult protagonists when he writes:

> The raw materials of identity formation for most adolescent protagonists
> and their real world models are found in family, friendships made and lost,
> romance, clothing, body modifications, and even exchanging a known
> environment for the unknown. (Gough 7)

Tally's society, in addition to its aesthetic control, separates parents from children

and "uglies" from "pretties," placing them in different cities and thus controlling

identity-creating shifts in environment. This focus on location and the significance of proximity to others gives the controlling structure in the novel power over the family, friendship, and romance components of Gough's materials, since uglies can hardly maintain any type of relationship with pretties when it is considered a crime for an ugly to enter New Pretty Town. The remaining elements left free to the adolescents in Tally's world from Gough's analysis are clothing and body modifications, both aspects of physical appearance, showing the calculating manner in which looks are made all-important to identity formation. The effects of this identity control become clear when Tally sneaks into New Pretty Town to see a friend who was turned pretty, having left behind an interface ring that tracked her movements:

> Without her interface ring, she was invisible to vehicles. They'd just run her down like she was nothing. Of course, Tally *was* nothing here. Worse she was ugly (Westerfeld 13)

Like Tris's fear of being empty without belonging to a faction, Tally's early feeling of invisibility is representative of these YAD Bildungsromans – this negative view of not belonging as invisibility is something Tally will go on to overcome as she shifts her view on community, not adjusting to her society but rejecting it to find herself. At this point in her narrative Tally's thought that she lacks any identity or worth in New Pretty Town is disturbing enough, but her sentiment that being ugly is worse than being nothing demonstrates the damage done to her identity by the twisted value system of her society, which defines an entire person by one category. This glimpse into Tally's mind reveals a tension with the idea of a "meaningful existence," as described in Hirsch's condition –

within the bounds of her "unbending social order," Tally seems to believe that not only is her existence meaningless, it is worthless.

It takes a process, as Hirsch describes, for Tally to find her meaningful existence, and for much of the novel she responds to the gaps between what she desires and what her social order demands with self-loathing. The narrowing of personhood to a single characteristic constricts both present and potential identities, resulting in Tally often expressing that she has no identity or is nothing, as she does above, illustrating the devastating effects of the identities and categories endorsed by her society. While becoming pretty might free Tally from this nothingness, she would again be classified as a pretty, her identity once more constituted by one thing. Interestingly, Tally's assertions that she is nothing based on her 'ugly' appearance reflect a constant awareness of her looks, suggesting that that which negates her existence also gives her one, in an interaction of opposites. She does not lack an identity, but rather possesses the 'ugly' one that is not valued in her society. When Tally meets up with her friend Peris who is now a pretty, she is painfully conscious of her appearance, obsessing over how he looks at her: "He wasn't looking at her hand, or into her eyes. Not into her squinty, narrow-set, indifferent eyes. Nobody eyes" (Westerfeld 26). This self-description shows how Tally's painful awareness of what she *is* reminds her of what she is not – a pretty, someone with value, according to her society. However, rather than suggesting that Tally change in order to join the valued community of 'pretties,' the text shifts away from that traditional Bildungsroman

adjustment to the system by showing Tally's movement away from her society as positive growth.

Tally is so preoccupied with the idea of being nothing that it seems, as shown earlier, that she would rather not exist than be ugly. When she almost falls down a cliff at one point she morbidly ponders that "*She* could have been down there, battered again and again until there was nothing left," a speculation that reflects the extent to which she does not value her own well-being as an ugly (emphasis in original, Westerfeld 177). Later Tally thinks of herself as less than human when she calls herself "walking poison" and "a weed," comparing herself at one point to a field of orchids that were "so beautiful, so delicate and unthreatening, but they choked everything around them" because they were "victims of their own success" (Westerfeld 287, 216). Though at this point she does not seem to consciously connect her society to the orchids in this way, this metaphor clearly suggests a comparison to those in Tally's society who are seemingly enslaved to their technological advances. Tally's comparison also shows a glimmer of another view of her self beyond ugly or worthless, since flowers as a metaphor to illuminate or describe a person are commonly used to communicate the beauty of that person. To explore the other definitions of flowers, since an orchid belongs to that group, "flower" can be defined as "the finest [individual] out of a number of people or things," a meaning that works against Tally's view of herself as something poisonous and destructive, unworthy in comparison to others around her (Oxford Dictionaries). However, Tally does say that, "unlike the orchids, she wasn't even a pretty [weed]," once again

drawing attention to her ugliness, even though she is living in the Smoke where she is surrounded by others who would be deemed "uglies" – Tally seems to see herself as ugly even among other uglies, being ugly at her core (Westerfeld 287). While these repeated, painful encounters with societal values tear at Tally's self-esteem, this comparison of herself to the orchid, though riddled with self-loathing, provides evidence of potential growth.

Tris's identity arc throughout the novel shows her progressing from someone who feels guilt and shame for who she is, even within her own mind and thoughts, to someone who finds a way to reconcile who she is with who she wants to be by changing and growing, directing her progress herself. On the first page of *Divergent* Tris looks at her mother and thinks, "She is well-practiced in the art of losing herself. I can't say the same of myself" (8), showing Tris's inability to forget her own identity; like Tally's fixation on herself as an ugly Tris cannot lose herself, but unlike Tally who continually describes herself as a nobody, Tris is unable to be invisible. This issue of Tris's is significant to her self-identification, since she has grown up in Abnegation, where people are supposed to be the epitome of selflessness. Therefore, she continually feels as if her personality is wrong since it cannot measure up to the one identity she is meant to have.

While Tris's faction as well as the others are all founded upon virtues and thus seem to represent positive goals, the constricting nature of this categorization of identity is seen throughout Tris's narration. Tris constantly reflects upon her wish to be like the other Abnegation, saying of her faction, "If we have little, and want for little, and we are all equal, we envy no one. I try to love it" (24).

Clearly if Tris must try to embody the selfless identity of her faction, then her true self, or whoever she is beneath the standards of Abnegation, is being limited and controlled by it; this is shown when she thinks, "My natural tendency toward sarcasm is still not appreciated. Sarcasm is always at someone's expense. Maybe it's better that Abnegation wants me to suppress it…Maybe if I fight to make Abnegation work, my act will turn into reality" (24). In this instance, value judgments created by the strictly categorized factions are shown to be internalized by Tris, who instinctively sees everything about herself that is not an Abnegation quality as bad – something to be suppressed. Speculating upon which faction she will choose to join, Tris judges herself, "I am not sure I can live this life of obligation any longer. I am not good enough" (28). Gough points out that individuals creating their identities according to "the state's agenda" are "practicing self-surveillance" (Gough 16), a monitoring of the self that suggests the controlling governmental practices of dystopias working on an individual level as individuals condemn and shut down those natural parts of their selves that do not fit into the socially prescribed identity. Just as Tally necessarily represents the untold stories of the others in her world, Tris's struggle with her childhood and future factions speaks for the countless others in her world who it seems, should not be bound by the singularly bounded virtues of their respective factions. Consequently the ways in which Tris monitors her own thoughts and feelings according to what she feels she *should* be thinking and feeling indicate that the societal standards have, in true dystopian fashion, infiltrated at a disturbingly

fundamental level her mind and the minds of her fellow citizens, again suggesting

the intertwined nature of Hirsch's "biographical and social." (297)

The Choosing Ceremony is where Tris first encounters a crossroads that

will allow her to determine her own identity, though it is impossible to determine

how much her choices are her own and or results of her self-surveillance. Told

from her aptitude test that she is Divergent, equally qualified for Erudite,

Abnegation, and Dauntless, Tris must make the decision about which faction to

join. This choice has immense consequences, for leaving behind Abnegation

would mean leaving her family and that part of herself behind while also breaking

the hearts of her parents, since transferring factions is viewed as a betrayal – yet

another societally-instilled view that reflects the values of conformity and

resistance to change. Tris speculates upon the implications of this choice on her

identity when she thinks:

> It will require a great act of selflessness to choose Abnegation, or a great
> act of courage to choose Dauntless, and maybe just choosing one over the
> other will prove I belong…those two qualities will struggle within me, and
> only one can win (Roth 29)

Though Tris recognizes that she possesses affinity for more than one faction,

hence her speaking of her internal struggle, she still views identity as made up of

fixed, rigid categories. For Tris, her status as a Divergent is a heavy burden

because it means that she does not wholly belong to one faction over the others; in

a society that conditions its citizens to feel worthless without a faction to create

their identities for them, Tris's fear of the nebulous, category-breaching role of

Divergent is understandable. The prospect of having to choose a faction allows

Tris an opportunity to confine herself to one faction identity, simplifying herself

and giving her a new set of behavioral expectations, but as a Divergent, she eventually finds she can never fully assume an artificial identity and has to create one for herself on different terms.

In a seeming effort to ignore her Divergence, Tris continually makes declarative statements about who and what she is as if she can boil down her personality into a few traits, as her society would want. When she decides to choose the Dauntless faction she thinks to herself, "I am selfish. I am brave," (Roth 35) the first of many such statements as her old identity breaks down and her new one develops. The frequency of these statements suggest Tris's efforts to define herself in the face of losing her former, selfless identity; thus for a long time, she sees everything in relation to her old identity, judging people, situations, and herself by how they would be viewed by Abnegation. When Tris entered the Choosing Ceremony as an Abnegation, she and the others in her faction had taken the stairs to the hall instead of the elevators to allow others to use the elevators. As Tris leaves, now a Dauntless initiate, she takes the stairs again, but the Dauntless run down them; noting the change she thinks, "It is not a selfless act for the Dauntless to take the stairs; it is a wild act," (Roth 36) showing how she is already reclassifying the world and her self in terms of her new faction. However, Tris is unable to completely rid herself of Abnegation, even early on in the novel, her identities mixing confusingly:

> I close my eyes and picture my mother and father sitting at the dinner table in silence. Is it a lingering hint of selflessness that makes my throat tighten at the thought of them, or is it selfishness, because I know I will never be their daughter again? (Roth 38)

The faction-divided society renders identity in absolutes, making Tris feel as if she cannot belong to more than one faction or one family at the same time. Later, as the initiates are told they must jump an unknown distance off a roof, Tris is at first teased by the other initiates since she is the only transfer from Abnegation. She asserts her new identity when she tells herself, "I am proud. It will get me into trouble someday, but today it makes me brave" (Roth 41). No longer does Tris define herself by what she is not, such as not selfless or not good, but now she begins to build up her new identity with positive declarations such as this one. These statements mark the construction of Tris's shifting identity, marking her as a figure who has started to gain power and choice – two things, Hintz and Ostry write, that the young adult audience would also crave. Tris's transition from fearing her own mind to joining the faction of the fearless furthers her brave journey into adulthood.

Tris wants to both exist and belong, two desires she conflates for much of the novel. As discussed earlier, Gough listed relationships, appearance, and location as "raw materials of identity formation" which, in addition to Tris's remaking of her name, prove significant to the development of Tris's new identity. She actively begins to construct her new Dauntless identity the moment she jumps off the roof, her newfound pride leading her to jump first, and is asked her name. Her full name, Beatrice, she thinks "doesn't sound right anymore," so she tells herself, "A new place, a new name. I can be remade here" (Roth 43). Tris feels that her old relationships to her family have been stripped away from her, leaving her no longer their daughter, and encounters a shift in uniform when

she transfers from Abnegation to Dauntless. The Dauntless members wear black

and are pierced and tattooed, unlike the members of Abnegation who wear

modest, unassuming gray clothing; helping Tris alter her appearance to assume

this new type of uniform, Tris's friend Christina, a transfer from Candor, picks

out black clothing and puts eyeliner on Tris, who claims that it will not make her

pretty. To this Christina replies, "Who cares about pretty? I'm going for

noticeable," (Roth 57) a statement which draws attention to the importance of

visibly existing – Tris has never been able to be invisible successfully, so instead

of failing at not existing, as a Dauntless Tris asserts the part of herself that wants

to be noticed and known.

The text's focus on Tris's transition from Abnegation to Dauntless and the

repercussions of her transfer grant importance to adolescent decisions as

formational, not only for the adolescent's immediacy but for their future.

Hirsch's fourth condition describes the focus of Bildungsromans on certain

formative events thus:

> It is the development of selfhood that is the primary concern of the novel
> of formation, the events that determine the life of the individual, rather
> than all the events of that life: this type of novel is a *story of
> apprenticeship* and not a full biography. *Its projected resolution is an
> accommodation to the existing society.* While each protagonist has the
> choice of accepting or rejecting this projected resolution, each novel ends
> with a precise stand on his part, with *his assessment of himself and his
> place in society.* (298)

In this way, the major events that determine Tris's identity are at the fore, given

the most attention and consequences by the novel. While it might seem natural

that the most important events also be most important for the protagonist,

Hirsch's precise attention to the "development of selfhood" describes what these

major events, in the Bildungsroman, are not. Some of these events, for Tris, are her Choosing Ceremony, the moment she jumps into the Dauntless compound, and her decision to stand up for a friend in training. At each of these points, Tris has to confront and question something within herself and ultimately make a decision about who she will be, moving forward – this makes these events life-determining.

Chapter Three: Formational Relationships

While other occurrences in Tris's life, such as a glimpse into her childhood in Abnegation, might have helped characterize her past, the novel seems to demarcate a more significant phase of her life simply by what it includes. However, many traditional Bildungsromans such as *David Copperfield* or *Jane Eyre* do begin in the protagonist's childhood, leading to the question of how the stories of Tally and Tris are told in much shorter time spans. Rather than beginning in childhood, *Uglies* and *Divergent* introduce the reader to 16-year old protagonists, each on the precipice of the most significant transition in her life – in Tally's case, the operation, and in Tris's, the Choosing Ceremony. Both of these events are intended to transition adolescents in their respective societies into adulthood. Given this idea, it seems important to think about the specifically young adult struggles and developments of the protagonists, particularly with respect to the relationships they form with their peers and with authority. Hirsch describes the types of relationships formed in her model of the Bildungsroman in her sixth condition:

> The novel's other characters fulfill several fixed functions: *educators* serve as mediators and interpreters between the two confronting forces of self and society; *companions* serves as reflectors on the protagonist, standing for alternative goals and achievements (for example, Wilhelm Mesiter and Lothario, Emma Woodhouse and Jane Fairfax, Lucien de Rubempre and David Sechard); *lovers* provide the opportunity for the education of sentiment. (In the novel of formation these figures are subordinated to the protagonist in contrast to the social novel where a number of characters provide equal centers of interest.) (298)

Though Hirsch allows other characters "fixed functions," the other characters in the novels seem to fulfill more than the roles Hirsch describes; both

Tally's and Tris's interactions with others contribute to their realizations that they do not have to belong to one type of identity to exist and be worthy of existing, allowing them to reframe their ideas of acceptable selves. There are certainly characters that do fit into Hirsch's prescribed functions, such as Dr. Cable, the primary antagonist of *Uglies*, or Jeanine Matthews, the antagonist of *Divergent.* Dr. Cable, the head of Special Circumstances, is the face of the oppressive society and thus the bridge between it and Tally, a relationship shown when she says, "The city is a paradise, Tally. It feeds you, educates you, keeps you safe. It makes you pretty" (131). Dr. Cable interprets the rigid, character-restricting demands of the society, communicating the benefits in an effort to persuade Tally to spy on the Smokies for her. Hirsch's definition of "educator" seems to imply a more positive role of mediation, perhaps one who helps the protagonist reconcile her values with the society; Dr. Cable as "educator," on the other hand, instead does not mediate between society and citizen, as if they are two relatively equal forces, but constructs a vision of society to which there is no alternative – for who would choose something other than paradise? Jeanine Matthews functions similarly as the face of Tris's society, though unlike Tally, perhaps since the meeting takes place later in Tris's character arc than Tally's meeting with her educator, Tris seems aware of the veiled threats of this "educator." Tris immediately sees Jeanine as a threat, thinking, "*She* is the danger Tori and my mother warned me about, the danger of being Divergent," later noting, "…the look she gives me reminds me of the look in the attack dog's eyes in the aptitude test – a vicious, predatory stare. She wants to rip me to pieces" (210, 211). Though there are

others who align with Hirsch's less antagonistic form of "educator," such as Tally's parents or Marcus, Tori, Tris's parents, and even Tobias, the fact that both Dr. Cable and Jeanine Matthews, as the head of Erudite, are educators significantly pushes against Hirsch's model. There seems, then, to be a difference between educators in Hirsch's Bildungsroman and educators in young adult dystopias in that the educators are more manipulators than mediators, more antagonist than aid to the protagonist's journey.

The next role Hirsch delineates, the "companion," represents a reflection of or alternate path for the protagonist. Since the companion's path seems to be so related to that of the protagonist, it stands to reason that the companion and protagonist are peers. Though the relationship between educator and protagonist is important as the educator represents the force of authority, the companion is similarly crucial to understanding the character journey of the young adult protagonist. Gough writes that, "What is most influential on Tally's identity formation is her encounter with otherness as experiences through displacement. Through encounters with otherness, an identifiable self is discovered" (Gough 23). In other words, Tally's experiences through displacement of location or of companionship becomes formative. Tally has several important interactions with peers throughout *Uglies*: with her former best friend Peris, who has been turned Pretty before her, her new best friend Shay, and her eventual romantic interest, David. Gough outlines the types of identity-forming interactions that characterize the experiences of adolescents as:

> …the fear of being alone, the desire to be part of a group, to be an individual without being outcast, the need for purpose to make life meaningful, and companionship and love (Gough 60)

These ideas, tied to the young adult perspective, lend even greater significance to the role of the companion than Hirsch seems to describe. A companion who is on a different path from the protagonist is not merely representative of "alternative goals," as Hirsch puts it, is but also fear for the protagonist – fear that they are not on the same paths, fear that the protagonist is on the wrong path, alone.

Tally feels that the world lacks beauty when she is not with Peris and once she is with him, she is painfully anxious about her "ugly" appearance, her friend now an 'other' that displaces her feelings about both him and herself. The shifting of Tally's friendship with Peris reflects the adolescent social groups and the changing dynamics of friendships and groups. Tally thinks, after her encounter with Peris, that "their friendship had always been the main thing in both their lives. Not anymore, apparently" (Westerfeld 41), showing the loss of a piece of Tally's identity once she encounters her friend-turned-other. Tally's reaction to pretty Peris can be illuminated by the work of psychologist Erik Erikson, who coined the term "identity crisis" and writes that young adults become

> …much concerned with faddish attempts at establishing an adolescent subculture…sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are (Erikson 128)

In the way that Erikson describes, Tally is obsessively preoccupied with how Peris views her now that he is pretty and she is not. For Tally, being in Peris's presence exaggerates her awareness of her ugliness, influencing her self-identity and sense of worth – but as Erikson says, the preoccupation seems to take place

entirely in the minds of adolescents, who compare what they think someone else sees with what they themselves see. Just as Peris never tells Tally that she is ugly or that their friendship is over, yet she determines that he believes both of those things, Erikson suggests with his word choice of "concerned" and "morbidly…preoccupied" that there is a heightened level of emotion and perhaps even obsession in adolescent interactions. Peris' example as Tally's former companion shows how his separate path instills her with fear and self-loathing. This altered friendship illustrates a type of companion relationship in these YAD Bildungsromans, complicating Hirsch's relatively neutral description of companions as representatives of alternative paths.

Shay, the other prominent companion in Tally's life, serves as both reflection and alternative in the novel. While Tally and Shay initially become friends because they are both rebellious Uglies, Shay's resistance to the operation and yearning to escape the system sets her apart from Tally. Even on her journey to the Smoke, Tally doubts the soundness of Shay's convictions, but as she settles into life at the Smoke, her outlook stars to change; her self-surveillance, a marker of her adolescent struggle to define herself, is clear when she reaches the Smoke and is greeted with the warmth and praise of the "Smokies" – the people she is meant to betray – for completing the journey by herself. Conflicted over what to do, Tally "was glad she hadn't activated the pendant yet. She could hardly sit there enjoying the Smokies' admiration if she'd just betrayed them all" (Westerfeld 244). Earlier, when Tally's operation was shockingly postponed, she thinks about how others saw her: "Everywhere she went, eyes looked away, but it

was the most *visible* she'd ever felt," but this visibility made her stand out and feel alone, an outlier in a carefully rule-bound "utopia" of conformity (Emphasis in original, Westerfeld 139). As the texts have shown, dystopian societies work to associate non-comformity with fear and standing out with being alone. Finally having found a place where she is both visible and visible in a positive manner, unlike the isolating experience of averted eyes, Tally craves the praise and acceptance of the Smokies. Though she can only become "pretty" if she betrays the Smokies, here Tally exchanges that former dream of conformity for a new one, trading in her wish to be pretty for the chance to belong with the Smokies. Tally is no longer on a different path from Shay, her companion, but Shay now reflects Tally's perhaps even stronger commitment to the Smoke, seen when Tally thinks,

> The Smoke wasn't just a hideout for assorted runaways, she realized now. It was a real town, a city in its own right. If Tally activated the tracker, it wouldn't just mean the end of Shay's big adventure…She wished she had activated the pendant the moment she'd gotten there. In only one day she'd begun to realize that it wasn't just Shay's dream she'd be betraying. Hundreds of people had made a life in the Smoke (258-9, 266)

More than just an alternate path juxtaposed to Tally's, Shay's views are at first dangerous deviances from the comfortable expectations of society; later, Shay's beliefs prove a stepping stone for Tally, more an inspiration to who Tally will become than a reflection of who she is. Perhaps this is due to the fear of isolation that Gough connects to the young adult experience, but this development of Tally's relationship to Shay as a companion again seems to complicate Hirsch's model in that Shay moves from representing what not to do to eventual inspiration.

While Tris has relatively few significant companions in *Uglies*, Tris finds herself thrown into a new environment with a group of initiates her age, an environment that leads to a large variety of peer responses to the Dauntless challenges. Tris not only has her close group of companions – Christina, Al, and Will – but Peter and Tobias also function as companions in their own ways. Tris' friends, in particular, range from ally to rival, inspiration to burden. When Eric punishes Christina for perceived cowardice by making her hang over the waterfall in the Pit, Tris is faced with a choice:

> If I help her, Eric would make my fate the same as hers. Will I let her fall to her death, or will I resign myself to being factionless? What's worse: to be idle while someone dies, or to be exiled and empty-handed? (66)

Unlike Hirsch's view of the other companions' roles as "fixed," Christina here rapidly shifts from friend and ally to potential threat to Tris' future; this change shows that, like Shay and Tally, their relationship is dynamic, suggesting that shifting peer relationships might be characteristic of YADs along with shifting identities. Thinking of her friends, Tris observes that they sometimes look at her "like I am too small and too weak to be of any use, and they pity me for it" (89), a sentiment revealing that these ties are anything but simple. Like Tally, Tris finds that her relationships change as she changes – as Tris becomes more successful, more Dauntless than her friends, jealousy creeps in. When Tris tells Christina how she climbed to the top of the ferris wheel for the capture-the-flag drill she notices, "Christina looks at me like she no longer recognizes me" (94); this tension soon becomes rivalry:

> As I run, I realized that only one of us will get to touch the flag, and it won't matter that it was my plan and my information that got us to it if

> I'm not the one who grabs it. Though I can hardly breathe as it is, I run faster, and I'm on Christina's heels…I sprint to catch up to Christina…She gives me a patronizing look, the way people sometimes look at children when they act too adult, and snatches the flag from the branch (95-6)

Not only does the friendly competition seem to become true rivalry with Christina's patronizing look, but this interaction also suggests Christina's inability to accept that Tris has grown or developed – that she is someone different than who she was when she met Christina. As competitors in the Dauntless trials to become full members, fearing the fate of the factionless, Tris and her peers necessarily have shifting allegiances as they juggle self-preservation and loyalty.

Al, another of Tris' companions, provides an even starker example of a drastically shifting relationship – after he makes romantic advances toward Tris when she only views him as a friend and she lies about her aptitude test, she reflects, "I should not lie to my friends. It creates barriers between us and we already have more than I want. Christina taking the flag. Me rejecting Al" (120). Al has been friend, defender, defended, and suitor, not only a representation of a different path – and he moves between these statuses rapidly. When Tris achieves the first ranking for the second phase of initiation, the simulations, and Al is last, he joins her enemy Peter in an attempt to kill her. Tobias points out what made Al and Tris' relationship shift into aggression when he says, "He wanted you to be the small, quiet girl from Abnegation…He hurt you because your strength made him feel weak" (171), an observation that reveals not only that Tris has changed, but that she also has become stronger. This turning point in their relationship is also a major event for Tris, as shown in her reaction to Al's later, tearful apoogy:

> Somewhere inside me is a merciful, forgiving person. Somewhere there is a girl who tries to understand what people are going through, who accepts that people do evil things and that desperation leads them to darker places than they ever imagined. I swear she exists, and she hurts for the repentant boy I see in front of me. But if I saw her, I wouldn't recognize her (177)

In her changing view of her connection to her peer, her companion, Tris realizes that she too has become someone else, altered to become someone who does not forgive breaches in loyalty. Al's story ends tragically, as he is found dead at the bottom of the chasm the next day, understood to have jumped. Al does not stand for "alternate goals or achievements" in as positive a sense as Hirsch seems to express, but rather as an example of what not to be – a friend who turned on a friend, someone who was broken by the challenges posed by the Dauntless. If what Hirsch means by calling companions reflectors on the protagonist is that they lead the protagonist to reflect on himself or herself, Al's fate makes Tris contemplate, "The simulations drove a crack through Al so wide he could not mend it. Why not me? Why am I not like him – and why does that thought make me feel so uneasy, like I'm teetering on a ledge myself?" (186)

Though there are others who function as companions in several different ways, arguably the most significant companions in both novels are Tally's and Tris' romantic interests, David and Tobias. Hirsch does not explicitly comment on whether characters' roles can overlap, with some functioning in more than one role, but it seems as though she sorts non-protagonist characters each into one role: educator, companion, or lover. While this paper, in conversation with Hirsch's model, does assign primary roles to these characters, it is also interested in questioning how these characters could fill multiple roles. David and Tobias,

as the peers of Tally and Tris, could be read as companions in many ways, since

their lives provide clear alternate goals for the protagonist: David's path shows

Tally the value of the way of life in the Smoke; Tobias, Tris' trainer and mentor,

shows her a type of bravery and strength that does not abandon selflessness. At

the same time, David and Tobias are undeniably the lovers of the two

protagonists. Hirsch writes that lovers "provide the opportunity for the education

of sentiment," suggesting that the protagonists' relationships with their lovers

help them learn about their own emotional capabilities (298). Even here, Hirsch's

word choice of "education" connects the lover to the role of the educator, and in

Uglies and *Divergent*, David and Tobias could be said to fulfill all three of

Hirsch's roles.

> The first time Tally sees David, at her arrival to the Smoke, she thinks,
>
> He was an ugly, but he had a nice smile. And his face held a kind of
> confidence that Tally had never seen in an ugly before. Maybe he was a
> few years older than she was. Tally had never watched anyone mature
> naturally past age sixteen. She wondered how much of being an ugly was
> just an awkward age (225)

It is clear that Tally is immediately captivated by David, but it is not so simple as

her finding him physically attractive – what she sees in David already presents a

path different from one she's always known since he never had the operation.

David seems to represent, in this moment, an alternative to the path prescribed by

Tally's society, which would be significant enough by itself, but he also appears

confident and happy. Just in this first glimpse of David's face, Tally is already

learning that it is possible to be content with oneself while being an ugly; thus

David performs the functions of Hirsch's educator and companion doubly in this

instance. Later in their relationship David and Tally share a moment as David reveals how he admired her the day she arrived, "You were so scratched up, your hair and clothes all singed from that fire, but you had the biggest smile on your face," he tells her (291). David could be said to be an educator in sentiment here in that he demonstrates the possibility of admiring a person for something more than physical beauty. This idea grows within Tally's mind as she looks at him and thinks, "…the moonlight and the setting, or maybe just the words he was saying, had somehow turned David into a pretty. Just for a moment," and later again, "…it was as if something had changed inside Tally's head, something that had turned his face pretty to her" (293, 295). Though Tally's thoughts are still rooted in the ugly/pretty dichotomy of her society, it seems she is starting to develop a new understanding of emotion and love as something that turns the loved one pretty, even if physically he or she is not the most beautiful person in the world. At the beginning of the novel Tally observes that one of the effects of looking at a pretty makes one think, "*I want this pretty person…*" (25), a want that suggests the pull of desire. In this context, Tally thinking that David, though an ugly, seems pretty is another way of her wanting him, despite his ugliness. Despite spending much of the novel up to this point thinking that to be ugly is to be nothing, unlovable and worthless, Tally learns that it is possible to admire and even love another ugly – which, in turn, helps her to eventually love and accept herself.

Tally's interactions with David are not without conflict, however, as she struggles to escape the standards of her society. As David and Tally grow closer

he tells her that she "can see the world clearly," and that is why she is beautiful

(323). In response to this declaration, Tally projects what her society has told its

citizens all their lives: "Me?[...]What, with my thin lips and my eyes too close

together?[...]And my frizzy hair and squashed-down nose?" (323). David's role

as educator, in a number of ways, becomes clear when he says, "Don't say

that…That's the worst thing they do to you, to any of you…the worst damage is

done before they even pick up the knife: You're all brainwashed into believing

you're ugly" (323); unlike Tally, perhaps because he grew up without those

values instilled into him, David is aware of the effects of growing up in Tally's

society and is thus separated from being controlled by those standards of physical

perfection. The education David brings to Tally, therefore, is not only about

loving others, but also about understanding her society and herself.

Tobias functions similarly in *Divergent*, showing Tris that it is possible to

be more than what society demands or allows. He contends that the faction

divisions are artificial, exhibiting, like David, a separation from societal views

when he tells Tris, "I have a theory that selflessness and bravery aren't all that

different. All your life you've been training to forget yourself, so when you're in

danger, it becomes your first instinct" (198). This seems an idea that has crossed

Tris' mind, such as when she thought about the Dauntless manifesto of "We

believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand

up for another," (125) but Tobias' words get through to her more than the

manifesto alone; reflecting on what he said, Tris thinks, "He's figured out more

about me than I have," a sentiment that firmly places Tobias, though Tris' lover, also in the role of educator.

These texts seem to suggest more fluid roles for companions than Hirsch's model does, showing a move away from somewhat fixed relationships to a dynamic interpersonal landscape that the protagonists must navigate. The fluctuating relationships can be seen in the varied positions of educators in these texts such as villain, parent, and lover, the flux between rival and ally of the companions, and the multiple roles played the lovers, who are also educators and companions. The implications of the constantly shifting, loosely defined roles of the characters around the protagonist ask the question, does anyone in these worlds know who they are? And if they do, is that who they will remain or will they continue to change? These texts move depart from the idea that people can be primarily defined by one role, instead showing that characters are constantly changing. This is a significant idea in novels driven by their protagonist's identity formation, proposing that although it might be unsettling and even frightening to be uncertain one another's identity, change is also natural and unavoidable. Indeed, the omnipresence of fluctuating characters in these novels and the characterization of fixed characters like Jeanine, Dr. Cable, and Eric as villains suggests that more disturbing than change itself would be the inability to change.

Conclusion

Having examined the ways in which young adult dystopias fit or push

against Hirsch's traditional model of the Bildungsroman, this thesis is interested

in what kind of relationship between individual and society is ultimately proposed

in these novels. The Bildungsroman has been shown to be an effective medium

for thinking about this type of relationship because it follows a protagonist, an

individual representative of her society, through formative encounters with that

society. *Uglies* and *Divergent* consistently side with their protagonists, never

suggesting that what Tally and Tris want from their worlds might be impossible

and bringing the discussion to Hirsch's fifth condition:

> The narrative point of view and voice, whether it be the first or the third
> person, is characterized by *irony* toward the inexperienced protagonist,
> rather than nostalgia for youth. There is always a distance between the
> perspective of the narrator and that of the protagonist (298)

The novels do not have this distance, notably failing to fulfill this condition unlike

the six others, which are fulfilled at least in part, but they also lack any nostalgia

for youth – youth in these novels is a terrifying, oppressive time in which the best

defense seems to be growing up. Any triumphs or setbacks Tally or Tris

experience are embraced by the prose of the novels, with the protagonists

essentially functioning as the narrators. In both Tally's and Tris's worlds, those

affiliated with the government – like Dr. Cable and Jeanine Matthews – are

villainous, suggesting that the government itself is evil. Though both novels do

some work to complicate the oppressive government with positive characters –

David's parents' work on the operation that creates the brain lesions, Tris' faction

controlling the government – ultimately these 'good' characters have their power

taken from them, re-affirming the oppressive control of society. While this view fits into the novels' dystopian frameworks, it also makes for very little distance between the perspectives of protagonist and narrator, even in the third person narration of *Uglies*. Therefore the novels un-ironically demonize government as the oppressor of individuals' freedoms, the enemy of non-conformity.

This lack of distance between narrator and protagonist creates a similar lack between reader and protagonist, allowing the reader to experience the protagonist's narrative without a layer of irony or judgment separating the two. *Uglies* (2005) and *Divergent* (2011) come from relatively close yet nonetheless different literary moments, if classified with respect to the YAD behemoth *The Hunger Games* (2008). If both of these novels, coming from their differing dystopian roots, do not possess this narrative distance, then I propose that this lack of distance could be characteristic of young adult dystopian Bildungsromans. When readers do not encounter a separation between the narrator and protagonist, it stands to reason that they are more easily able to identify with the protagonist. With this in mind, it is important to think about the implications of what readers are able to take away from these novels of formation – if readers mirror the protagonist's experience as she learns or does not learn from her respective journey.

Hirsch's seventh and final condition of her model of the Bildungsroman is a short one, yet it is significant when examining this model in conjunction with young adult novels: "The novel of formation is conceived as a *didactic* novel, one which educates the reader by portraying the education of the protagonist" (298).

Westerfeld's world of pretties and uglies, where a young woman learns to reject

the physical standards of beauty that have driven her to hate herself, contains clear

messages for the young women of our world: beauty is not just physical and being

exactly like everybody else is not something to be desired. In a similar way,

Divergent tells its readers that they do not have to force themselves into the boxes

society might place them into – it is acceptable, even preferable, for them to

belong to more than one type of identity. These lessons seem tailored for the

young adult experience, confirming Hintz and Ostry's assertion that dystopia

works as a metaphor for adolescence. The anxieties and feelings of

powerlessness attributed to adolescents by both Hintz and Ostry and also Erikson

further support the idea that these novels, in their ways, contain hopeful, even

didactic messages for their readers.

However, it seems important to question to what extent Tally and Tris are

truly educated by their societies. These young women begin their novels knowing

what their worlds expect of them and, though they might be uncomfortable or

unhappy with some of these expectations, do not actively resist their societies

until they are displaced from them. Rather than growing to understand the

reasons for the rules of their societies, Tally and Tris present an alternative that

may not be available to their readers: they transcend society's rules by becoming

leaders of their rebellions, refusing to accept the control of their governments.

Neither *Uglies* nor *Divergent* proposes societal rules that Tally and Tris would

view as acceptable – both protagonists grow to resist the idea of society itself,

which comes to mean manipulation and control. It seems that Tally and Tris do

not learn from their societies in ways that help them to accept things as they are, but resist rules and control without an alternative form of government in mind, as if they would rather have no government at all. Tally and Tris could then be read as more adolescent wish fulfillment than education.

At the same time Tally's and Tris' ultimate moves to question and change society, as naïve as they might seem, could be a type of education. Tally and Tris might learn from their societies who they do not want to be and how they do not want to treat others; in turn, readers could learn these things about themselves. Readers could also discover, through the journeys of characters like Tally and Tris, that accepting the world the way it is without a fight is not acceptable, that they must work to make the world a better place. Though these stories could be seen as representative of an adolescent pushback against authority and resistance to any and all rules, it seems shortsighted to deem them as nothing more than teen power fantasies, a move that would also be dismissive of adolescents themselves.

Both Tally and Tris exist in dystopian worlds where society exerts control over individual identities by creating confining categories. Tally's society is structured around physical appearance, teaching its citizens that they are no one until they join the system and become "Pretty" at age sixteen; Tris's society does similar work in that at the same age, adolescents join a faction that will shape and create their adult, socially accepted identities, not unlike Uglies becoming Pretties. In societies that survive by perpetuating stagnant systems, both Tally and Tris bring change to their identities and to the traditional model of the Bildungsroman in proposing that individuals ought to be free from societal

standards. These novels engage with the simplifying, utopian societies from the classical Golden Age and then move further to critique them, suggesting that the concept of simplicity as ideal is damaging and self-destructive – creating oppressive dystopias instead of utopias. What, then, could this say about the readers of these novels? These stories about the ability to come from a powerless place to eventually create and shape oneself likely speaks to adolescent readers who feel similar forces at work in their lives, but also to anyone who has ever feared she is unable to change, trapped by the world around her or even by herself. They could also reflect a suspicion of societal promises or demands as controlling, in an age of widespread disillusionment regarding overbearing governmental structures. Thus the Young Adult dystopia Bildungsroman affirms the liberating potential for self-change despite confining, seemingly insurmountable obstacles, carving out new spaces to be critical of past utopian models and moving forward to a world where change, rather than being feared, is embraced.

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