

The Euphemism of Rebellion: Ally Condie's *Matched* Trilogy and the Reinforcement of Patriarchal, Heteronormative Structures

Keith M. Booker notes that dystopian fiction traditionally portrays societies where “sexuality functions as a central focus for repressive energies” (12) and characters draw on sex and sexual relationships as a potential rebellious force. In Ally Condie's *Matched* trilogy, Society Matches people to everything in life, from their jobs to their heterosexual spouse (with the exception that citizens may choose to be Single as opposed to being Matched). However, as the protagonist, Cassia, falls in love with Ky, who is not her Match, she begins to rebel against Society in order to have control over whom she gets to be with. As such, Cassia's romantic relationships become an avenue for rebellion against the multiple controls enforced by Society. However, I argue, the trilogy's depiction of sex and its reliance on the romance plot reinforce patriarchal heteronormative structures, thereby undermining the trilogy's critique of the oppressive methods of limiting agency enforced by Society. The trilogy's lack of inclusion of any sexuality other than heterosexuality limits the trilogy's critique, as the trilogy can thus only critique limiting the rights of heterosexual persons to the exclusion of anyone else. Additionally, the trilogy enforces a euphemistic treatment of sex, in which the absence of aspects of sex, such as birth control, pregnancies, and the actual act of sex, work to reinforce patriarchal structures, by focusing on romantic, yet sexless relationships. Finally, although Cassia rebels against Society, she only rebels within the values of the system. As Cassia's goal is to end up with Ky, her ultimate goal is in line with the goals of Society, even though she ends up with a different person than Society intended. My analysis of Cassia's rebellion from within the system, in conjunction with how the aspects of the trilogy reinforce patriarchal heteronormative structures, should provide a critical explanation for the way in which the trilogy seems to blur the causation of Cassia's rebellion and the puzzling emphasis in the final volume, *Reached*, on how Society and the Rising (the rebellion against Society) have become indistinguishable, thus providing an ambiguous, if seemingly hopeful, ending.