

The Making of a Revolutionary: Ethics of Care and Community Formation in *The Lunar Chronicles*

Young Adult dystopias with female protagonists are notorious for fraught female friendships. More often than not, the protagonist's female best friend suffers dire consequences, usually to "demonstrate the destructive and evil powers of an oppressive society" (Childs 188). Adrienne Rich has argued that focusing on heterosexual relations at the expense of female relationships is an expression of patriarchal oppression. Indeed, although the allegedly strong female characters rebel against their dystopian societies, they invariably "tend to accept that they cannot change every aspect of their societies' controlling frameworks, particularly as these relate to violence and sexuality" (Day, *et al.* 4). Marissa Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles*, however, seems to be an exception to this rule. Cinder, the primary protagonist, is perhaps one of the *first* revolutionary heroines to take control of her people and her country and govern them in a way that *she* feels is right. In this paper, I contend that Cinder can rule over Luna not just because of her physical prowess and the materiality of her body (much like Katniss Everdeen and other female rebels in dystopian fiction), but also because she has the unwavering support of her (female) companions, Iko, Scarlet, Cress, and Winter. I further argue that one character caring for another creates a chain of caring that transcends gender, nationality, race, class, generations, and in some cases, even technology.

This paper draws on children's literature scholarship and feminist ethics of care, with a special focus on Nel Noddings' understanding of the relationship between the "one-caring" and the "cared-for," to examine how the act of caring gives Cinder and her friends much needed agency to defeat the evil Queen Levana. Finally, the paper concludes with an examination of how no act of caring is mutually exclusive. Cinder and her crew – male and female, Earthen and Lunar – all care for one another on multiple levels, and each and every act of caring – however negligible it might seem on the surface – plays a significant role in cementing personal relationships and consequently, in overthrowing Levana.