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The use and function of ballads in *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* and its movie adaptation

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Nicole Falkenhayner

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Abstract

This thesis explores the use and function of ballads in a modern young adult fiction novel, and a comparison of the novel's use of ballads in its movie adaptation. *The Hunger Games'* last installment, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, and its movie adaptation are the source materials for this thesis. It has relevance to the field of literary studies, involving two narrative genres; novels and ballads, and to the field of adaptation studies, as the movie adaptation is the subject of comparison.

This thesis explores how ballads are used in three selected sequences from the novel, and their respective sequences in the movie. This thesis will also explore how ballads have an important function in the narrative, drawing from a theoretical framework regarding the ballad genre, aspects of intertextuality, adaptation theory, as well as young adult fiction.

Through the three selected sequences, all including musical elements, it is evident that ballads are explicitly present and mentioned in the novel, and work as an important factor in the characterization of Lucy Gray, as her story is mostly realized through ballads. In the movie adaptation, on the other hand, the term *ballad* is not mentioned at all. In total, the number of musical elements is almost halved in the movie compared to the novel, revealing that ballads are given more attention in the novel. All the ballads, or songs as they are called, in the movie are also found in the novel, but they are sometimes shortened or presented in a less significant way.

The findings show that ballads in the novel are used to give Lucy Gray a voice and platform to tell her story. Ballads are related to the Middle Ages and the Romantic period, and their presence in the poor and rural District 12 in the *Hunger Games'* storyworld can symbolize a society connected to the past, as the ballad form is not present in the capital city which represents a futuristic society. This polarization between the more nostalgic world of District 12 and the futuristic Capitol has an important function in the developments of a dystopian storyworld. The movie can rely more on visual effects to portray the same symbolic contrast, therefore making the explicit mention of ballads less important.

This thesis focuses mainly on three sequences, analyzing them independently as they are presented in the novel and in the movie, before comparing them and their use of musical elements. This thesis does not explore the function of ballads in the original *Hunger Games* series, or how they were received by the audience, but a certain overlap is mentioned. Further

research on this could bring a new perspective on the intertwining between the original series and the prequel regarding their use of musical elements. Overall, this thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge on young adult fiction and movie adaptation by exploring how an old genre is intertwined and important in a modern fictional novel aimed at young adults.

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Introduction

The fourth novel of the *Hunger Games* series was published in 2020, ten years after its predecessors (Collins). The *Hunger Games* series depicts a dystopian future in which the country of Panem arranges the titular Hunger Games, where two children from each of the twelve districts of Panem must fight each other to death until only one remains alive and is declared the winner. The Hunger Games are broadcast live and have connotations of, and in a way criticizes, modern reality TV shows. In the first three novels, the reader is immersed in the 74th and 75th annual Hunger Games, which are strictly enforced by the ruthless President Coriolanus Snow. In the fourth installment, being the prequel to the original series, the reader is brought 64 years back in time, to the life of then 18-year-old Coriolanus Snow, years before his presidency. Like the first three *Hunger Games* novels, the prequel, *the Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*¹ was adapted into a movie. Titled *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*, it was released in late 2023 and was instantly successful as “it held the number one gross box office for three weekends” (Debellis).

In *BOSAS*, music plays a particular role, and this will be the focus of the thesis. The title of the novel itself shows the inclusion of ballads, signaling their importance. Music is essential and given a much larger role in *BOSAS* when compared to the original *Hunger Games* series. Music is also an important element in the original novels, but not to the same degree. Katniss Everdeen, the main protagonist of the first three novels, is represented as the most powerful rebel against President Snow, despite her young age. She will be the main factor leading to his death, putting an end to the Hunger Games. She is from District 12 and, every now and then, sings songs she learned in her district. There is one song in particular, titled “The Hanging Tree”, that turns into a symbolic anthem of the rebellion against the presidency. The same song is also found in *BOSAS* where the audience learns of its origin, decades before Katniss sings it. The songs in the first three novels are not an extensive part of the story, but they still hold a symbolic value. Music in general, and particularly songs adhering to the ballad form, plays a more significant role in *BOSAS* than in its predecessors. The adapted movie is not considered a musical, but it is still filled with several songs written by Suzanne Collins and performed by the actors. Collins uses the song’s lyrics as a medium to tell the story and bring in a different perspective from the main storyline.

¹ Hereby abbreviated and referred to as *BOSAS*.

In *BOSAS*, the readers and viewers follow a young Coriolanus Snow in a post-war Capitol, the name given to the capital of Panem, and by which the government is referred to. A great civil war between the Capitol on one side and rebels from all districts on the other, where the latter lost, results in the Capitol creating a new treaty to ensure peace in the country. The most prominent part of which being the establishment of the Hunger Games. The Hunger Games is a yearly arrangement where children from the 12 districts must fight for their lives until one remains alive. The war and the creation of the Hunger Games has ensured a strong hatred between people from Capitol and people from the districts creating a social stratification. For the 10th annual Hunger Games, top students of the Capitol must each mentor a tribute. One of these students is Coriolanus Snow, and he is assigned to mentor Lucy Gray Baird from the impoverished District 12, whose tributes have usually died within the first minutes of the previous Games. In this installment though, Lucy Gray's charm and musical talent end up captivating the audience and Snow. Despite his inherent hate towards District people, he eventually falls in love with her. Snow exerts every effort to turn the odds in her favor, successfully leading to her victory in the Games. However, a discovery revealing that Snow had cheated to ensure Lucy Gray's victory leads to his punishment by enrolling him in military service in District 12, where he reunites with Lucy Gray after the Games.

Lucy Gray lives in a small, nomad community of orphans, calling themselves 'the Covey', resembling communities such as the Irish Travelers. The group originally travelled between districts, not belonging to a particular one, but the war hindered their mobility and they have been stuck in District 12 ever since. Lucy Gray and the rest of the Covey are musicians, and they often perform at a local pub. One day, a conflict between Lucy Gray, Snow, and other people from Lucy's life, results in Snow shooting and killing the daughter of District 12's mayor. With very few witnesses and the murder weapon being hidden, Snow is not suspected of the murder. At the same time, he is doing very well in the military and is therefore given the chance to return to the Capitol to attend officers' school and return to his old, wealthy lifestyle. The only thing keeping him from pursuing this future is the possibility of someone discovering the murder weapon with his DNA proving him to be guilty. Snow therefore decides to run away with Lucy Gray, who he has fallen in love with despite their different upbringings. When Snow and Lucy Gray happen to come across the murder weapon while running away, Snow realizes that he can get rid of it, and nothing can connect him to the murder again – except for Lucy Gray, being the last witness alive. Lucy Gray understands that the love between them is not strong enough for Snow to risk his future in the Capitol, so she tries to run away from him. As

a diversion maneuver, Lucy Gray manages to hide a poisonous snake in Snow's trail, and he is attacked by it. This infuriates Snow and he now uses the newly found murder weapon to shoot after Lucy Gray. Snow is not certain if he shot and killed her or if she managed to run off. He gives up his hunt for Lucy, still uncertain of her state, and returns to the Capitol where he ultimately becomes President of Panem and thinks of his falling for Lucy Gray as a mistake that must never be repeated.

The next segment of this thesis will focus on the function of ballads in *BOSAS* as a contemporary narrative device, as followed by a comparison of the use and function of ballads and songs in the novel and its movie adaptation. The first chapter will present theoretical background on relevant subjects: Ballads as a genre, movie adaptation, and young adult fiction. The main part of the thesis will be about *BOSAS*, firstly on a general level focusing on the story and the main characters. The analysis of Coriolanus Snow and Lucy Gray will be centered on their connection to music and their relationship to each other. Further on, three specific sequences will be presented, analyzed, and discussed. These sequences all include musical elements and the sequences in the novel will be compared to their respective sequences in the movie. The three sequences will mainly be addressed by the song/ballad that is present in the sequence: "The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird", "Lucy Gray's Song", and "The Hanging Tree"². These three sequences include a ballad or a song, sung by Lucy Gray, and they act as a synecdoche for the plot or character developments. A conclusive thought on the function and use of ballads in young adult literature and movies is presented at the end. After the conclusion, there will be a part called "relevance for teacher profession" where the thesis is put into perspective of how it can be useful for English teachers in Norway.

² See appendices for full transcriptions of how the lyrics are written in the novel. Some changes have been done to how the lyrics are represented in the movie, and these are discussed in the comparative sections of the thesis.

Chapter 1: Theory

Ballads

The primary object of this thesis is exploring the use and function of ballads in *BOSAS*, making it relevant to elaborate on the genre of ballads. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: the Romantic Period* states that “ballads are tricky to locate historically”, because of the nature of ballads being a part of the oral culture long before they were collected and written down (Greenblatt 31). In McGill’s article “What Is a Ballad? Reading for Genre, Format, and Medium” the author explains how “[b]allads have proved famously difficult to define”, partly because their popularity stretches over different literary periods, making it difficult to systematize the genre (156). Even though there can be variations to ballads, there are still some core characteristics to the genre. The quatrains, and “regular meter and use of refrain and repetition”, and often an abcb rhyme scheme, are characteristic properties of ballads (Greenblatt 32).

According to J. A. Burrow, in *An Outline of English Literature*, the fifteenth century is “the century in which the traditional ballad emerges as an established popular form” (51). In the Middle Ages, the ballads were a popular medium and they were transmitted orally as most people were illiterate. The characteristics of ballads, both the use of repetitions and refrains, and the fascinating and sometimes horrifying narratives, made them easy to remember and pass on through generations. Ballads were often sung or chanted accompanied by music, therefore making them even more popular and memorable. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: the Romantic Period* argues that even though many see ballads belonging to the Middle Ages, the genre had a revival in the Romantic period (Greenblatt 31). Romanticism celebrated nature, national identity, and the new interest in folklore, while being influenced by nostalgic appreciation of the medieval era. During the Middle Ages all ballads circulated orally, due to the widespread illiteracy and absence of printing technology. However, during the Romantic period the ballads regained popularity thanks to a well-developed printing technology. People began traveling all over England to collect and write down the ballads and then put them to print (31). Ballads did not emerge in the Romantic period, but that was the time were “literary culture began to engage [...] with an oral culture associated with sensational stories” and, therefore, ballads have become representative for this period (31).

William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are two of the most prominent poets of the Romantic period, and their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems* in

1798 is seen as “one of the most important publications of the Romantic period” (Lamont 260). Common themes of Wordsworth’s ballads are social tragedies, suffering, and intense descriptions of parent and child relationships (261). These themes are common not only for Wordsworth’s ballads, but for ballads in general. They tend to be written in a straightforward language, but with rather gruesome themes, making them both fascinating while also easy to remember and pass on; “The stark simplicity of the ballads helps them take hold of their audience’s imagination” (Greenblatt 32).

Intertextuality

In *BOSAS*, Lucy Gray performs a ballad that is a direct intertext of a ballad by William Wordsworth called “Lucy Gray” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 132–33). In this section of the novel, the intertextuality is openly referred to, as Lucy introduces the ballad by saying; “it’s a really old one by a man named Wordsworth. We mixed it up a little, so it makes better sense, but you still need to listen close” (Collins 424). She makes it clear that there are some changes between the original ballad and the one found in *BOSAS*, but when they are seen side by side, these are rather small. As an example, the text by Wordsworth reads, “she dwelt on a wild moor, [...] Beside a human door” (Kerler 132), whereas Collins’ reads, “She dwelt were none abide, [...] Upon the mountainside” (424). When Collins alters the content, she usually makes the language more fitting to the story in *BOSAS*, while still retaining the abcb rhyme scheme. The inclusion of Wordsworth’s ballad in the novel is an example of intertextuality, and also a sort of multimodality, and therefore makes it appropriate to delve further into.

Wordsworth’s ballad narrates a mysterious story about a girl named Lucy Gray who disappears in a snowstorm (Kerler 132). The girl is on her way to town as a favor to her parents, when the snowstorm suddenly hits. As the girl never returns, her parents go out looking for her, finally finding her footsteps in the snow. They follow the footsteps until they suddenly stop in the middle of a path, leaving the reader to assume she has disappeared or died. The final stanzas, however, suggest that Lucy Gray might not be dead after all, that she lives on, perhaps as a ghost (132). There is reason to believe that Suzanne Collins had taken heavy inspiration from Wordsworth’s character “Lucy Gray” when creating the main protagonist of *BOSAS*. The obvious reason being their shared name, but also because of their similar fates in both works.

Multimodality is another element present in the novel. Multimodal novels can be seen as those that include a range of “non-verbal symbolic representations and non-narrative semiotic modes” (Hallet 129). In the case of *BOSAS*, however, it can be argued that it is multimodal

even though it does not portray meaning beyond words, but through different forms of written modes. When Collins includes the song lyrics, she is mixing the mode of prose with the mode of meter. A term for this specific mix of modes is called *prosimetrum*, where the word itself is a mix of the words *prose* and *meter*. It is a genre that “mixes not only prose and verse but also narrative and lyric” (Matthews 297). The general idea of a lyrical piece is detached from its author and seen in the context of the reader; however, the incorporation of the narrative brings the author’s story and background to the focal point of the piece (298).

The term ‘intertextuality’ dates back to the 1960’s, but the phenomenon itself is “at least as old as recorded human society” (Worton and Still 2). Michael Riffaterre defines the term ‘intertext’ as “one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance” (56). He proceeds by saying that ‘knowing’ an intertext does not necessarily mean to have knowledge of the form and content of the intertext, but awareness that it exists and can be found somewhere. In *BOSAS*, Collins makes the intertext very clear by stating that the coming section is from a pre-existing ballad, but with some modifications. It is easy for the reader to know that there is an intertext present and they are provided information to look up the original text if they want to. In the movie, however, the intertext is not recognized. Furthermore, only a small portion of the ballad in the novel is found in the movie, but there is no mention of Wordsworth. In this sense, the viewer must themselves be able to recognize the song lyrics and connect them to the ballad by Wordsworth to know about the intertextuality.

Movie adaptation

Another important aspect of this thesis is the comparison of the novel to the movie adaptation, making it relevant to present some aspects of adaptation theory. It is common nowadays that a popular young adult fiction is followed by a movie adaptation (Beckton 13). Linda Hutcheon introduces her book *A Theory of Adaptation* by stating that “[w]riting a screenplay based on a great novel is foremost a labor of simplification” (1). A film has the advantages of having images and sound to transport meaning and atmosphere but, compared to a written work, there is comparatively less spoken discourse in a film. There are different advantages to different modes. Novels give the narrator the advantage of revealing the inside of the minds of characters, whereas a movie involves a “visual performance experienced in real time” (13). Moving pictures can say a lot, especially in combination with speech, music, and sound. However, many movies, including *BOSAS*, do not give the audience insight into the character’s mind in the same way as Collins does in the novel.

There is an overwhelmingly large percentage of movies and series that are adaptations of written works, therefore Hutcheon argues that “there must be something particularly appealing about adaptations *as adaptations*” (4, italics in original). Hutcheon continues this argument by explaining how repetitions are appealing to people, and when a story is repeated with variation there is something comforting in that (4). As all installments of *the Hunger Games* trilogy have been New York Times best sellers, the publication of *BOSAS* was likely requested by many fans. Within its first week after publishing, it had sold over half a million copies in the United States (“‘Hunger Games’ Prequel Sells 500K Copies in Debut”). One can assume that many readers of *BOSAS* had also read and enjoyed the original trilogy, however this is likely not the case for everyone. Similarly, many viewers of the movie adaptation might not have read any of the installments of the *Hunger Games* series, including *BOSAS*. For this part of the audience, it can be presumed that the new movie, being a continuation of the already existing fictional universe is what drew them to watch this movie as well. Hutcheon describes the appeal for adaptations arguing that they are “bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise, and novelty” (173). It can be argued that the popularity of series in recent years is connected to a similar impulse, and as this format increases the likelihood of monetary success for publishers and film producers, this might further enforce the dominance of novel and film series in the last decades.

An important part of the story in *BOSAS* is the use and function of music. Lucy Gray Baird is a singer, songwriter, and performer, and musical elements shape her character. “Certainly, sound has many dimensions and uses in film”, states Timothy Corrigan in his book *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (89). Relevant terms, used in the analysis part regarding music, are also explained in Corrigan’s book. Sounds in movies are either *diegetic* or *non-diegetic*. Diegetic sound “has its source in the narrative world of the film (such as when a character breaks into a song)”, which will be seen several times in *BOSAS* (89). All diegetic sounds can be either *internal*, sound within the mind of a character and not audible to others, or *external*, sound from a physical source so all characters at the space can hear it (Bordwell and Thompson 478-479). Non-diegetic sound, on the other hand, “has its source outside that world”, and an example of this is the typical orchestral score used to affect the mood and feel of a scene (Corrigan 89). A *sound bridge* is when the sound of a scene begins at the end of the previous scene, or continues in the beginning of the following scene, and it is often used for transitional purposes (Bordwell and Thompson 481).

Young adult fiction

BOSAS, and the *Hunger Games* series in general, can be categorized as young adult fiction (commonly abbreviated as YAF), an umbrella term for popular novels catering to a younger audience, regardless of genre. Written about and for young adults, it is often depicted with recurring themes such as first love, sexuality, race, and self-identity (Kaplan and Olan 10). The main characters of *BOSAS* are teenagers trying to find their way in a society with immense socioeconomic differences while also falling in love, this proving that the novel checks off several boxes to be described as a young adult fiction. It is not uncommon for authors to include musical elements in YAF, since music is a big part of many teenagers' lives. Bickmore and Bickmore discuss why music is often a part of YAF, and they explain that "students in our classrooms participate in musical events more frequently than they engage with literature" (150). It might be a tactical choice by authors to include musical elements to further engage younger readers. This demographic will possibly be able to relate more to characters who are interested in music, as it can mirror their own interests.

Even though the inclusion of music in YAF is common, it is not necessarily common to include ballads from before 1800, as Suzanne Collins has done in *BOSAS*. Similarly to how YAF is a popular form of storytelling today, and has become canonized, ballads were the popular form centuries ago. Thus, the choice of intertwining an old and new popular form may have been a deliberate one by Collins.

In any case, it is evident that Collins' decision to include ballads in *BOSAS* was well thought through. Involving music in literature can be done in several ways, and often it is done in a way where the characters "live their lives listening to music" where already existing songs are used in the story (152). Another way is to write about young aspiring artists or musicians creating their own music, and this is how music is included in *BOSAS* (152). Lucy Gray, with the rest of the Covey, writes, creates, and performs their own music. The music is generally of a narrative nature, tying in with the story.

Chapter 2: Analysis

BOSAS can be seen as a representation of Snow's character development, influenced by Lucy Gray. It is written in third person from Snow's perspective, while Lucy Gray is mostly seen through Snow's eyes. She only shares her narrative when she sings her ballads. *BOSAS* is the prequel to the *Hunger Games* series, in which Snow is the main antagonist with clearly articulated characteristics as the villain. His role as the villain is static throughout the series, and he does not undergo significant character developments. In the prequel, however, the reader gets insight to Coriolanus Snow as a young man, and it delves into more complex aspects of his character. Snow exhibits similar characteristics as seen in the original *Hunger Games* series, such as egocentrism and coldness. However, in *BOSAS*, warmer and more vulnerable personality traits are revealed as he experiences falling in love.

Snow's perspective of Lucy Gray is an intriguing part of the story, illustrating conflicting sides of his character. Egocentric and possessive thoughts are shown even towards someone he cares for. The consensus that people from districts and people from the Capitol do not get along sets the relationship between Snow and Lucy Gray to be a complicated one. Snow's descriptions of Lucy Gray reveal his conflicting thoughts of caring for, and falling in love with, someone he is raised to hate. Snow describes Lucy Gray with admiration, while also unveiling his inherent views.

The first time Snow encounters Lucy, without knowing what their relation would turn into, he thinks that "[t]here was something exciting, even attractive, about her" (Collins 28). He shows her affection and love several times, for example he declares his fondness towards her, the night before the Games, "... you're the most incredible girl I've ever met. Really. Extraordinary in every way", before he promises that they will win the Hunger Games *together* (190). Also, when they first meet again after Lucy has won the Games, Snow "[locks] her in an embrace, remembering how scared he had been for her, for himself, and how he hadn't dared fantasize about this moment as it had seemed so unattainable" (383). It is clear, continuously throughout the story, that Snow admires her, and eventually falls in love with her.

However, Snow is also thinking of Lucy as less than him, proving his inherent thoughts that people from the Capitol are superior to those from the districts. Evidence of this is found throughout the same period where he is affectionate and loving towards her. This proves that there is not a shift in his personality towards her, but rather a conflict of emotions within him where he must navigate falling in love with someone he was raised to despise. The night before

Lucy must fight for her life in the Games, Snow talks to her one final time, and they share their first kiss, leaving Snow giddy. When the euphoric feeling dies down, however, Snow reflects on the kiss and his feelings towards her; “[a]nd even if the circumstances were different, she’d still be a girl from the districts [...]. A second-class citizen. Human, but bestial. Smart, perhaps, but not evolved” (194). This shows how Snow’s view on people from outside the Capitol are internalized – not even Lucy Gray can make Snow’s prejudice fall away fully.

Snow also shows possessive traits towards Lucy Gray and thinks of her as an object. After the mentors are assigned their tributes and a friend of Coriolanus asks him to exchange tributes, he thinks “Lucy Gray was one thing belonging to [him] that [the friend] would never, ever get” and he responds with, “[s]orry, my friend, [...] I think I’ll keep her” (75). The same possessive and egoistic mindset is seen after the fact that Lucy won the Hunger Games, and Snow thinks: “Was that it? Had **he** really won? The Hunger Games? [...] The girl? [...]” (319, my emphasis). Lucy was the one participating in the horrendous and murderous Hunger Games, but Snow still sees it as his victory more than hers. In his mind *he* had won, and Lucy Gray was his prize.

As the novel is written from Snow’s point of view, the reader never gets insight into Lucy Gray’s thoughts. What she says, and even more importantly, what she sings, is the reader’s way of getting to know her character. She is generally described as a stubborn and somewhat mysterious girl, and her singing is very much related to her personality. “Singing transformed her, and Coriolanus no longer found her so disconcerting” (28). When Snow sees Lucy for the first time after she won the Games and he was sent to District 12, she is up on stage performing in front of an audience. “*That’s her when she’s happy*, he thought. *She’s beautiful!* Beautiful in a way anyone could see, not just him. That could be a problem. Jealousy pricked his heart” (363, italics in original). Through his thought process, Snow reveals how Lucy Gray is inevitably attractive, but it also confirms his jealous characteristics.

It is mostly Lucy Gray who writes, sings, and performs the songs found in *BOSAS*. Lucy Gray has lost her parents, and she describes the other teenagers she lives with like they are her family; “[m]y people are Covey. Musicians by trade” (52-3). Lucy and the rest of the Covey make their living by performing at people’s weddings or at the local pub. Throughout the novel there are 20 different incidents of singing and 17 of them are by Lucy Gray or the Covey. The remaining three incidents are people from the Capitol, Coriolanus included, singing the national anthem called “Gem of Panem”. The first time the reader is introduced to the national anthem, or any musical element, is within the first few pages: “From deep in the apartment [Coriolanus] heard

the recording of the Capitol anthem, ‘Gem of Panem’, kick on” (4). At a school event, Coriolanus sings the anthem with full confidence as he had memorized the lyrics through hearing his grandmother sing it daily. While his fellow peers are unsure of the lyrics, Snow “sang all three verses in a forceful voice, garnering a few nods of approval” (23). Snow is not a particularly good singer and when he is asked to sing something he chooses “Gem of Panem” as he “only had one song in his repertoire” (416). The anthem works as a symbol for Coriolanus’s identification and pride with being from the Capitol.

The movie adaptation of *BOSAS* follows the storyline in its chronological order, and all main events from the novel is included in the movie (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). It uses a restricted narration, only showing what is known to Snow. There are hardly any scenes that Snow does not personally partake in, and even in these scenes Snow’s reaction is still shown. An example of this is when Lucy Gray and the other tributes are fighting in the arena during the Hunger Games, Snow watches the broadcasting of the Games from the Capitol. When showing what happens to the tributes in the arena, the audience also sees Snow’s reaction to the events. Similar to the novel, where the story is told from Snow’s perspective, the movie shows his viewpoint throughout. A difference between the two media is the movie’s omission of hearing Snow’s thoughts, or any of the characters’ thoughts for that matter. Their inner motivations can only be understood and interpreted through their facial expressions, speech, and actions. The novel has an advantage of describing Snow’s thoughts, giving the reader a greater understanding of his character. The movie relies on depicting the character through what is seen and said, leaving more of the characters complexity up to interpretation.

The viewer is introduced to Snow’s home, personal life, and academic life, in addition to all his interactions with Lucy. She, on the other hand, is never seen without Snow also being physically present, or having his reactions shown. The audience therefore does not gain insight into Lucy’s personal life or how she acts when Snow is not present. Whereas Snow is seen in different spheres of his life, Lucy is only shown in connection to Snow. This can signal how he is the main character of the movie, while she takes on more of a supporting role.

Lucy Gray is responsible for most of the musical elements of the movie, sometimes accompanied by her band, the Covey. As previously mentioned, there are seventeen incidents of Lucy or the Covey performing these songs. All songs are written by the author, apart from “Lucy Gray’s Song”, which is an adapted version of an already existing Wordsworth ballad. The intertextuality is clearly mentioned in the novel, but it is omitted from the movie, where

the song appears as only existing in the storyworld. Furthermore, three sequences including musical elements will be analyzed and discussed, one of which including the intertext of Wordsworth's ballad. All songs and ballads being analyzed are sung or performed by Lucy, symbolizing the storyline, as well as her character's development.

Sequence 1: “The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird”

The first sequence that will be analyzed is set in the night before Lucy Gray must participate in the Hunger Games. The people from the Capitol watch the Games as if it were a reality show, and through a televised interview with each tribute they have a chance to find their favorite contestants. During the live interview, the audience can give donations to the tributes, which will benefit them once the Games begin. Lucy Gray takes this opportunity to perform a self-written ballad to win over the public.

In the novel Lucy Gray introduces herself and the ballad she is about to perform:

“Good evening [...] I’m Lucy Gray Baird, of the Covey Bairds. I started writing this song back in District Twelve, before I knew what the ending would be. It’s my words set to an old tune. Where I’m from, we call it a ballad. That’s a song that tells a story. And I guess this is mine. ‘The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird’. I hope you like it”

(Collins 170).

“The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird” is written in full without additional information throughout the lyrics (see Appendix 1). Snow describes it as a song with a “haunting melody” and that her voice is husky (170), as Lucy Gray begins singing the story of her experience being selected to take part in the Hunger Games. A part of the lyrics goes; “*It’s sooner than later that I’m six feet under. / It’s sooner than later that you’ll be alone. / So who will you turn to tomorrow, I wonder? / For when the bells ring, lover, you’re on your own*” (171). Lucy is seemingly referring to the bell being the starting signal of the Hunger Games. The audience is emotionally moved by the song as their reaction after the performance is complete silence, with the expectation of a few sniffles, before breaking out in great applause. Coriolanus knew that the “dark, moving, far too personal account of her life” had given Lucy Gray a massive advantage in the coming Games as she had made the audience sympathize with her (171).

The sequence also proves Snow’s character yet again as he witnesses Lucy successfully receiving approval from the audience. “He knew the gifts would pour into the arena for her. That her success, even now, reflected back on him, making it his success. [...] But what he really felt was jealous” (171). Snow often shows signs of wanting other people’s success to benefit him, and even when it did, he would still feel jealousy, craving attention for himself. This continues to reveal greedy and selfish aspects of his character.

The movie scene for the equivalent sequence is depicting an old television where Snow and some other people watch the broadcasting of the interview at a different location to where the interview is held (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*)³. All shots from the interview are seen through the same television on which Snow watches it. As the first shot of the interview is shown, the interviewer introduces the last tribute; “from District 12, Lucy Gray Baird. Come out here with that guitar, you songbird”⁴. Lucy Gray steps out on the stage with a guitar in her hand introducing her song and herself; “Good evening, Capitol. Districts. I wrote this song about a boy back in 12, and I hope he hears it”, before she starts singing “The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird”. In the movie, however, the song is not introduced with its name, nor is it referred to as a ballad. The song is clearly written after Lucy was selected as a tribute, as the theme is how she is about to meet her death in the Games. Shots from the audience show people being visibly affected by the song as some wipe their tears.

Snow is not in the audience of where the interview is held, but he watches the live televised version of it. Among him are his cousin, a friend, and a few other unfamiliar people. Snow’s reaction to the song throughout this scene is complex. He seems to be moved by the song and on the brink of tears, probably fearful he might lose Lucy forever the following day. However, he also shows a different side of his character as he turns to look at the people around him during Lucy’s performance. Every person around him also watches the interview and they are all fully concentrated on the screen, not able to look away even when they could tell someone beside them looking at them. This can be interpreted as how Snow, while still being moved by the song, wants to see how others perceive his tribute, signaling an egotistical characteristic. Unlike the others, Snow is not completely captivated by Lucy’s song and storytelling, instead he looks at others’ perception of her, possibly hoping it can reflect positively back on him.

The television screen broadcasting the interview shows a donation count during the performance, and donations to Lucy rise quickly while she is singing. The interviewer comments, after the performance, that she received a record high amount of donations, before stating; “how wonderful is this night, that we all get to be here for someone’s final

³ While including timestamps when citing audiovisual media was previously practiced, they have been omitted from this thesis as recent examples of academic work do not include them, as in the streaming age, they have become largely irrelevant. See, for example, Korte and Falkenhayner 2021.

⁴ All transcriptions from the movie are my own.

performance”. The sequence ends shortly after Lucy finishes her song, and she and Snow do not discuss the song with each other.

The sequence shows different facets of the main characters. Lucy, on the one hand, is telling her story through a self-written song. There are few scenes where Lucy verbally tells her story, as it is rather portrayed through her songs, as in this sequence. She seems herself to be emotionally affected by her song as her face gets more expressive, more teary-eyed, and her voice stronger as the song progresses. She uses the personal pronoun *I* as she sings about how she will most likely be killed in the Games the next day. Lucy is met with an astounding applause and an incredible amount of donations after her performance. Her facial expression, being serious and dramatically expressive throughout the song, quickly changes to her smiling when hearing the audience’s feedback. Snow, on the other hand, shows signs of compassion throughout the sequence. After it has become clear that Lucy has received a large amount of donations, Snow still has a worried look on his face, seemingly not reassured that her performance will guarantee a positive outcome in the Games.

The sequence including “The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird” is selected because of its explicit mention of being a ballad, in the novel. This is the first incident in the novel where the term *ballad* is used. Until this the reader has learned about Lucy’s interest in music and songwriting, and she has sung in front of people a couple of times previously, but the mention of her song being a ballad is explicitly mentioned for the first time. Out of the songs sung by Lucy Gray, this is presented quite early on, being her third song in the novel, and the second one in the movie. The receiver is still getting to know her, and the performance of this song is part of building her character. The lyrics themselves are the same in the novel as in the movie, and the performance happens in a similar setting.

One of the differences between the two media regarding this sequence is Snow’s physical position. In the novel, Snow is backstage with Lucy Gray making sure she is ready for the interview, before she goes on stage. After the interview Snow finds himself feeling jealous over Lucy’s success, and the setting of the scene can symbolize this. They are both in the same space, but Snow stays behind the stage as Lucy enters it, performs, and receives great recognition. Snow is physically behind Lucy, and he reflects on how he feels emotionally left behind Lucy’s success as well. In the movie, on the other hand, the entire sequence is only showing Snow’s point of view. He is not present at the interview, but in a different location

where the live streaming of the interview is shown. The only way the viewer sees Lucy is through the same screen Snow watches. It can signal a split between the two characters, where Snow's character is prioritized as his viewpoint is shown, even though the main action of the sequence is Lucy's interview. The viewer is, in a way, watching the interview alongside Snow, indicating that he is a more important character than her.

Another somewhat small, but still significant, detail is changed from the novel to the movie adaptation. In the novel, Lucy Gray introduces the song as *her* ballad, telling *her* story. "Where I'm from we call it ballad. That's a song that tells a story. And I guess this is mine" (Collins 170). She makes it clear to the audience, and also to the reader, that what is about to be played is a ballad about her. In the movie, "The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird" is not referred to as a ballad at all, or by the title it is given in the novel. When Lucy is welcomed on stage where the interview is held, she introduces the ballad as a "song about a boy back in 12", shifting the focus from her to the unknown boy from her district. Not only is the term ballad taken out of the movie sequence, but also the fact that it tells *Lucy's* story. The lyrics and the content of the ballad are the same in both media, but the novel leads the attention towards Lucy Gray, while the movie arguably leads the attention towards 'the boy', and away from Lucy. Because of this, the song in the novel can be summarized as "Lucy's ballad", while in the movie it would be "a song about a boy". These distinct descriptions are about the same musical element, and it will possibly influence how it is perceived in the different media.

Snow is the main character in the movie, whereas it is easier to argue that Lucy has a supporting role. "The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird" is said to be 'about a boy', more so than about herself (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). This builds upon the idea that Lucy's character is not of the same importance as Snow's in the movie. It is reiterated through Snow being physically absent from the location of the interview, but still the entire sequence is set in his space, not Lucy's. This is different from the novel, where the sequence is set where the interview is held, and Snow is also present but stays in the background. In the novel, Snow is argued to be the main character, but he is not the only one. The novel shows Snow's perspective, and his point of view is more prominent, but without diminishing Lucy's role. The songs and ballads Lucy perform are *her* stories, and it is explicitly iterated several in this sequence. The focus, and attention, is on Lucy, and even though Snow's commentary and response is always a part of it, these are the moments where Lucy's character is built, and her story is told.

The audience's reaction to the performance is quite similar in both media. The novel describes how, after Lucy's performance, the audience stay completely silent with only sounds of sniffles and coughs, before a "thunderous applause" breaks out (Collins 171). In the movie, the audience's reaction is shown simultaneously as Lucy sings, and they all seem captivated as some dries their tears or holds their hands to their hearts in sign of compassion or empathy. When she finishes the song, the audience is not visible in the shots, but the sound of their applause is evident. Snow's reaction is shown, and he watches the screen completely still with tears in his eyes.

Both the novel and the movie show Snow's reaction as somewhat egocentric. In the novel it is described explicitly that "... what he really felt was jealous" after hearing the overwhelming response from the audience (171). The movie shows Snow, while also being moved by her song, looking to others almost seeking validation on Lucy's behalf (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). Through this sequence, in both the novel and the movie, it can be interpreted that Snow wants other people to like him and people connected to him, unless they overshadow him. Lucy Gray being liked by others can be seen as Snow's success, but it still sparks jealous feelings in him, making it seem like he does not want her to diminish his achievements. In a way it feels like a conflict within Snow. He sees Lucy Gray as his possession and his achievement, but when she gets too much recognition it also builds a certain independence from Snow. Lucy receives recognition that is not associated with Snow. The sequence shows Lucy as she is singing her story, revealing parts of her character as she reflects on her possible future in the Games, but it also reveals Snow's character as proud of being Lucy's mentor while also struggling with her being too validated and admired.

Sequence 2: “Lucy Gray’s Song”

The following sequence is included because of it being directly related to a Wordsworth ballad and being the longest musical work in the novel. Out of the three selected sequences, this is the one with the largest differences between the written and on-screen work. The novel and the movie portray the song of interest in different manners with different settings and backgrounds. The ballad’s placement in the storyline is similar in both media, being after Lucy’s victory in the Games after she has met up again with Snow in District 12. Where the novel presents the song as a performance by Lucy and the Covey in front of a large audience, the movie presents it as a seemingly non-diegetic sound with only a few people within hearing distance. The sequence is a rather crucial part of novel, and arguably less crucial in the movie, which will be discussed further along. The ballad foreshadows Lucy Gray’s future, which is revealed towards the very end of the story, discussed and analyzed in Sequence 3.

In the novel, the sequence is set at the local bar with its “dim interior [and] air heavy with sweat and liquor” (Collins 423). The Covey often play live music here, and it is Snow’s second time at one of their shows. He is there with his friends from the military, and they all drink as it is their time off duty. The ballad is introduced by a member of the Covey saying: “Every one of us Covey owes our name to a ballad, and this one belongs to this pretty lady right here!” and pointing towards Lucy Gray (423). Lucy continues to explain how the ballad is originally by “some man named Wordsworth” but the lyrics are slightly changed to fit her narrative, so even though the main part of the ballad is written by someone else it is still “Lucy Gray’s Song”⁵ (423-4). Before she begins singing, Lucy Gray says that the audience “need to listen close” as she waits for them to settle down (424). This signals the importance of the ballad and gives the reader a sign that they too should pay attention to it.

“Lucy Gray’s Song” (see Appendix 2) is based on an old, pre-existing ballad that can be described as a mystery ballad. The Wordsworth ballad, and the ballad in *BOSAS*, tells the story of a girl named Lucy Gray and how she disappears without anyone knowing what happened. Her parents find and follow her footsteps until the footprints suddenly stop in the middle of the path. Some would say she died in the cold, snowy weather, others believe her to be a ghost,

⁵ The ballad is given the made-up title of “Lucy Gray’s Song” in this thesis, as it is not given a title in the novel or the movie. The reason for the name being how, after Lucy introduces the song, Snow thinks to himself “[i]f this was Lucy Gray’s song I should pay close attention ...” (Collins 424). It is also important to note that the title includes the term *song*, but it is still referred to as a *ballad*, in the novel.

while some think Lucy is still alive somewhere. Snow, after hearing the ballad, “couldn’t make sense of it”, likely similarly to many others in the audience (Collins 427).

“Lucy Gray’s Song” turning into a mystery and a ghost story, is pointed out dismissively by Snow after he hears it; “[o]h, a ghost story. Ugh. Boo. So ridiculous. Well, he’d try hard to love it when he saw the Covey tomorrow” (427). After the performance, Lucy brings up the ballad and asks Snow what he made of it. He compliments her saying; “[y]ou were fantastic”, to which Lucy replies; “[t]hanks, but I meant the song” (432). Lucy does not wait for his answer before she gives her own opinion right away; “[d]o you think people really see Lucy Gray, or they’re just dreaming her?’ she said. ‘Because I think they really see her. Only now, she flies like a bird’” (432). Snow explains how he didn’t understand the ending, to which she responds “[i]t’s a mystery, sweetheart. Just like me. That’s why it’s my song” (432). It is not articulated in the novel that Lucy Gray understands that this will also be her destiny, but it shows how she resonates with the mysteriousness of it.

The sequence in the movie, containing “Lucy Gray’s Song”, is quite different than in the novel. It still takes place after the Games, where she and Snow have met up in District 12 (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). Lucy Gray, and the rest of the Covey, bring Snow to a lake found on the outskirts of District 12, where they occasionally spend their time away from the rest of the district. The overarching theme of the sequence is the differences between Snow and Lucy Gray’s worlds. He is brought to Lucy’s turf where she feels at ease, and he shows signs of discomfort. They also discuss how Snow wants to return to the Capitol one day since that is where he belongs, while Lucy expresses how she could never join him since she so clearly does not belong there, especially after being forced to participate in the Hunger Games.

The sequence begins with a montage of several clips showing the group of characters walking through the woods, reaching the lake. The montage lasts for slightly more than a minute where different clips of the journey to the lake are shown. They walk through the woods, with Snow at the back of the group. Branches hit him in his face, and he smacks his neck because of flies or mosquitos, signifying how Snow is out of his element in nature. The next clip shows Lucy Gray looking back at Snow while laughing. This gives the impression that Lucy finds it amusing how Snow seems uncomfortable in nature, while the others are well acquainted with their surroundings. There are overview shots of the lake, as well as close-up shots of the different characters. The Covey rush to get their clothes off and jump into the lake. Snow stays

behind more hesitantly, but eventually he also undresses and jumps into the lake with the rest. The colors are vibrant and warm, the characters are enjoying themselves, and the general atmosphere of the sequence is happy and tranquil.

The musical landscape of the sequence is developed from a sound bridge from the previous scene, not giving the song any kind of introduction. Lucy's voice is singing an acapella version of a so far unknown song, and then the montage begins. The song continues as acapella, but diegetic sounds from the scenes are audible in the background. These background noises consist of birds whistling, the characters laughing and shouting, and water splashing, to name a few. The song itself is presumably non-diegetic throughout the whole montage. It seems independent from the visuals, as the song lyrics are not related to what is shown in the scenes, but instead functions to set a calming mood and specify how this is Lucy Gray's turf since her voice is the main part of the soundscape. One can argue that it gives the lyrics a feeling of non-importance resulting in viewers possibly not paying attention to them. The general feel of the music, being light and somewhat eerie, and the fact that it is Lucy's voice singing, seems to be more important than the content of the lyrics.

The song lyrics foreshadows Lucy's future, which is being realized at the end of the story. However, since the audience is potentially not attentive to the lyrics this might not be noticed. All the lyrics heard in the movie are also part of the full lyrics from the novel. The movie-version of the ballad is very shortened, only including four out of the sixteen verses from the version in the novel. Here are the full lyrics of "Lucy Gray's Song" as they appear in the movie adaptation:

*"oft, I have heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see the break of day
The solitary child.*

*And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same;
They tracked them on, not ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.*

They followed from the snowy bank

*Those footmarks one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!*

*Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.*

(The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes).

The ballad follows the abcb rhyme scheme, and it has a consistent meter of alternating tetrameters and trimeters, all being characteristics of ballads. As seen in the theory section, typical themes of ballads include tragedies, children, and mysteries, which are all present in “Lucy Gray’s Song”. As the lyrics in the movie are only excerpts of the original ballad from the novel, the full meaning is not as evident. The first stanza introduces Lucy Gray as a solitary child. Then, in the second stanza ‘they’ are looking for her, without the receiver knowing who ‘they’ refers to. In the novel, however, it is made clear that the parents were the ones looking for her. The large omissions from the original ballad found in the novel, can also affect its feeling of being less important as much of the content is removed.

Only by the last two lines does the viewer see Lucy Gray singing the song that has been heard for the entirety of the sequence. The sound is revealed to be an external diegetic sound, instead of the seemingly non-diegetic sound it appeared to be for most of the sequence. In the few seconds where the viewer sees Lucy singing the ballad, she lies on Snow’s thigh on the grass by the lake. As the song began with no introduction it is not revealed to the audience, or possibly to Snow, what Lucy’s intentions were when singing this particular song. Lucy is faced away from Snow, and she appears to be singing mostly to herself rather than performing the song to Snow.

When Lucy Gray finishes singing, the birds above them keep whistling the same melody of the song. Snow comments on them, saying, “I’ve never seen those birds before”, to which she replies, “mockingjays we call ‘em”. Snow then comments on the ballad Lucy just sung: “Does she survive? Lucy Gray in the song? The footprints?”. He now reveals that he was, in fact, paying attention to the lyrics. Lucy replies, “maybe she flew away. I’m sure she’s out there somewhere. She’s a survivor. But it’s a mystery, sweetheart, just like me”. Snow’s face is out

of frame, so his reaction to this comment is not visible, and the narrative of the song is not discussed further. Instead, Snow changes the subject by giving Lucy Gray a scarf of his late mother, and the sequence continues to show Snow and the Covey by the lake.

To compare the sequences including “Lucy Gray’s Song” in both media is interesting as they are tremendously different. The setting, the way the song is played, and the conversations surrounding it are a few of the differences between the media. The musical element is displayed in different forms, where in the novel it is performed by Lucy Gray and the Covey at the local pub. Lucy gives the ballad importance by asking the audience to “listen close”, and Snow also tells himself to pay attention so he can say something nice about it (Collins 424). The introduction of the ballad gives it value as a part of Lucy’s narrative, as it is said to be ‘her story’. In the movie, on the other side, the song is seemingly non-diegetic for the most part, functioning as a background sound to the images. The content of the ballad is not given much relevance to the story, and it is not introduced in a similar manner as the novel does. The movie sequence is showing how Snow is out of his element and brought into Lucy’s world, and that is arguably the most significant motive of the movie sequence. In the novel, the fact that this is Lucy’s chance to tell her story, in the form of a ballad, is the main point of the sequence. When looking at the use of ballads in *BOSAS*, this sequence stands out in the novel, but not in the movie.

The ballad seems to be more impactful on Snow in the novel compared to the movie, as he has a stronger reaction to it. He is not very fond of the ballad in the novel, since the ending confuses him, and the mysterious genre is boring to him. His inner monologue is very clear on him not liking the ballad, as he thinks; “[w]hat a dreadful song. Maybe no one would mention it.... No, they would”, and then figuring out how he can avoid having to talk too much about it, with Lucy or the rest of the Covey, in fear of revealing how he didn’t like it (427, ellipsis in original). Lucy Gray does in fact ask him about it, and he expresses his confusion. In the movie, on the other hand, Snow’s reaction to the song is far less substantial. When Lucy’s song quiets down Snow mentions the birds above them, then he is the one to ask about the ending of the song, and Lucy’s similar response to the novel is the end of the discussion regarding that song.

Since the narrative aspect of the ballad is stronger in the novel, it will likely be easier for the reader to remember it by the time the foreshadowing comes to show later in the story. The footprints disappearing is described in the novel, like how the story went in “Lucy Gray’s Song”. By the time Snow hunts after Lucy in the movie, it is less likely that the viewer will

connect her fate to the comparable fate of the girl from the song, as it was not signaling to the viewer to pay much attention to the song lyrics. In general, this sequence is arguably quite important in the novel, as Lucy Gray's narrative and foreshadowing of her mysterious destiny. Whereas the same importance is not found in the movie, seeing how the sequence is not particularly about Lucy's narrative, but rather about Snow and Lucy's differences. Where the novel makes Lucy the main character of the sequence, the movie makes it more about Snow which can again signal him being the main character and Lucy being the supporting role. The novel can be argued to portray both characters as equally important, only showing their characteristics through different manners, where Snow's characteristics are seen through his thoughts and Lucy's are shown through her music. In comparison, the movie gives the content of Lucy's song less attention, and the sequence itself is more about how Snow is different from Lucy than it is about the essence of the song itself.

Sequence 3: “The Hanging Tree”

The final sequence being analyzed and compared includes the last song Lucy Gray sings, “The Hanging Tree”, also being the very last utterance from Lucy Gray in general. The sequence is set towards the very end of the story, and it marks one of the climactic points as Snow and Lucy Gray run away together. None of them feel safe in District 12 as Snow is guilty of murder and Lucy has enemies wanting her dead, revealing both of their motives to flee. The sequence demonstrates how the song affects Snow’s character and it symbolizes Lucy Gray’s fate. During their escape, they encounter something that alters Snow’s view on his future. He thought he could never go back to his old life in the Capitol because he killed the mayor of District 12’s daughter and does not know the location of the murder weapon with his DNA on it. Believing his future doomed, he joined Lucy. Snow and Lucy Gray stop at an old cabin to get some rest, where Snow surprisingly finds the murder weapon. He realizes that he can get rid of the evidence and get his old life back, but to do so he must leave Lucy by herself trusting that she will not jeopardize it for him. Lucy is the last witness that can connect Snow to the murder, and only she could attest to Snow’s guilt if he were to destroy the weapon holding the evidence.

Previously in the story, Snow and Lucy Gray discuss how important trust is to them, even more so than love, and they both proclaim each other’s trustworthiness. This changes quickly as the finding of the murder weapon complicates their relationship and possible future together. Lucy Gray leaves the cabin to pick some food for their journey, but when Snow eventually goes after her, she is nowhere to be found.

After Snow finds the murder weapon “in the middle of the wilderness, where it posed no threat at all”, he thinks to himself; “[a]ll he had to do was destroy it, and he would be free from the hangman’s noose” (Collins 498). When Snow is given the chance to leave Lucy behind to ensure his own future, he persuades himself that she will be understanding of him leaving. This reveals to the reader that Snow joined her mostly out of fear of being caught and not only out of love for Lucy. Snow even reflects on this himself as he weighs out his options; “[a]nd he did love her! He did! It was just that only a few hours into his new life in the wilderness, he knew he hated it” (498-9). As most of the sequence describes Snow’s thoughts, it is difficult to know how much Lucy understands of his thought process and whether or not she is suspicious about him leaving her.

Lucy leaves to pick some food, but when Snow discovers she is gone he loses his trust in her. “No question, she was hiding from him. But why? There could only be one answer. Because she’d figured it out. [...] That he no longer wanted to run away. That she was the last witness to tie him to the crime” (500). Snow ends up looking for Lucy in the woods, but with no luck. This shows the reader that Lucy Gray did in fact connect the dots and figure out the possible consequences to Snow’s decision. Throughout this sequence, the narrative of “Lucy Gray’s Song” ends up becoming the real future of Lucy Gray. Comparable to how the parents searched for their daughter in Wordsworth’s ballad, Snow “scanned the ground until he found slight imprints of her shoes” (501). After following these footprints for a little while, suddenly “[t]here was no trace of her”, equivalent to the ending of “Lucy Gray’s Song” (503). The content of “Lucy Gray’s Song” is not specifically referenced in this sequence, therefore something the reader must remember themselves.

The musical element in the sequence is unexpected to Snow. As he is searching for Lucy “[h]er voice surprised him, lifting suddenly and sweetly into the air” as she sings “The Hanging Tree” (503) (see Appendix 3). Throughout the scene he has gotten progressively more frustrated that Lucy has disappeared, until she suddenly starts singing. As the song continues, the birds are picking up the melody of the song and it spreads across the woods. Snow is clearly aggravated as he starts shouting after her; “‘Lucy Gray!’ he bellowed in frustration” (504). He “opened fire on the spot the voice had come from. Had he hit her? He couldn’t tell, because the birdsong filled his ears, disorienting him” (504). Snow is now furious, dizzy, and nauseous. During his search for Lucy Gray, he is attacked and bit by a snake. The possible venom of the snake might be the reason for his dizziness and nausea. He sees his arm swelling up from the snake bite and he realizes he must return to the base as quickly as possible, after getting rid of the weapon. Lucy is still nowhere to be seen or heard, but worrying about the snake bite he concludes his search for her. Snow returns to base, not knowing of Lucy’s state or whereabouts, and follows his plan to get back to the Capitol. This sequence brings “Lucy Gray’s Song” to life, as Lucy Gray’s destiny becomes a mystery, just like the character from the ballad.

In the movie, this sequence stays relatively true to the original descriptions in the novel. Snow goes looking for Lucy through the woods, calling her name and saying out loud; “if something’s happened we can talk about it”, trying to convince her to emerge from her hiding (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). Then he sees her scarf lying on the ground, he reaches down to grab it and right as he does a snake suddenly attacks him biting his arm. Snow falls to his knees grunting with a clenched jaw and shouts out loud; “is that

poisonous? Are you trying to kill me? Lucy Gray?”, while his eyes are desperately searching his surroundings for signs of Lucy. The soundscape that begins with the snake attack is intensifying throughout the scene. The instrumental music has unsettling, piercing, and dramatic sounds, reflecting Snow’s growing frustration.

Suddenly, the sound of branches crackling is heard, and Snow reacts to the sound, possibly thinking it is Lucy Gray. He picks up his rifle and shoots in the direction of the sound. It is now revealed that Snow is not interested in talking, but he sees Lucy as a potential threat. The camera cuts towards the direction of his shot, and Lucy Gray is seen running between trees in the background, screaming while falling to the ground. There are no more shots of Lucy in the rest of this sequence, or the rest of the movie, for that matter. When Snow goes to where her body would be if she was shot dead, he only finds an empty space, before picking up one of Lucy Gray’s earrings proving she had been there. Snow sees footprints in the dirt, and he follows them until they suddenly stop in the middle of the path. This is referring to the previously mentioned sequence where she sang “Lucy Gray’s Song” in front of Snow, containing the lyrics; “they followed (...) those footmarks one by one, (...) and further there were none”. The foreshadowing from “Lucy Gray’s Song” is realized in this sequence, with Lucy suddenly disappearing.

Snow is still searching the woods when he hears Lucy’s voice, in what is a mix between singing and saying, “are you?” before he flings up his rifle and turns to the direction of the utterance. The voice of Lucy continues, and it sounds more and more like the song she had sung earlier in the movie. “Are you.., coming to the tree?”. The sound is clearly diegetic since Snow is reacting to it and turning towards the direction of it. However, it is difficult to know for a fact whether Lucy’s voice is an internal or external sound. She is not seen in any of the coming clips, the sound has an echo-like effect coming from afar, and Snow is desperately and repeatedly turning around to figure out where her voice comes from. The omnipresence, echo, and reverb combined with Snow’s increasing frustration can give the impression that he is having auditory hallucinations. The birds around him are picking up the melody and start chirping to it. The bird noises get louder and louder, and Lucy’s voice is eventually overshadowed by the bird song. The sequence ends in a climactic point with Snow being frustrated of not knowing where Lucy is, and clearly annoyed at the chirping as he desperately points his rifle up to the sky and fires repeatedly, emptying his rifle, trying to kill the birds. Then an instrumental, dramatic soundscape blends in, and functions as a sound bridge while the next sequence begins.

The order of events in the sequence in the novel and the movie are quite similar. The results are the same, and the general feel of the sequences are similar. In this sequence, however, the use of music is well utilized in the movie, possibly more so than in the novel. The auditory on-screen medium can take advantage of using music and effects to amplify the feel and the story. In the movie, Lucy Gray's singing sounds distant while omnipresent and Snow's reaction signals how he is confused by the source of the song. The novel, on the other hand, describes how the song comes from a specific direction, but the songbirds picking up the melody is what disorients Snow and gives Lucy a chance to keep hiding. It is hard to imagine why Lucy Gray would sing out loud if she knew Snow was hunting her with a rifle and with the intention to kill. If it were not for the songbirds spreading her song throughout the forest, Snow would likely locate her whereabouts. The novel continues to describe how Snow "collapsed on the ground, dizzy and nauseous", which can be a way for the reader to open for the possibility that the song was only in Snow's head (Collins 504). The song Lucy sings also has a function, as "The Hanging Tree" has been sung previously in both the novel and the movie. In the novel, Snow finds the song strange, which contributes to build an unsettling feeling in the sequence (491).

Chapter 3: Discussion

The title of the novel, *the Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, points to the use and relevance of ballads. Songbirds and snakes are also elements found in the story, contributing to the storyline while also being symbols for the main characters. Lucy Gray is referred to in relation to songbirds a few times throughout the novel, and even more so in the movie. An example being the interviewer saying, “come out here with that guitar, you songbird” before her performance of “The Ballad of Lucy Gray Baird”. Snow, being the antagonist of the story, can be tied to the symbolic representation of snakes symbolizing evil.

As seen earlier, ballads have specific features making them easy to be remembered which facilitates their spread through mostly illiterate populations. Lucy’s transmissions of ballads are a central part of the story, and it establishes the origin story of “The Hanging Tree” that is later becoming a central song in the original *Hunger Games* storyworld. As prequels typically demonstrate origin stories, *BOSAS* does the same, not only with “The Hanging Tree”, but the function of ballads in general. There are two ballads, sung and created by Lucy Gray as the novel shows, that is also sung by Katniss Everdeen 60 years later, mimicking the oral tradition of ballads as previously mentioned. In addition to “The Hanging Tree” Lucy sings another ballad in the novel, which scene is omitted from the movie adaptation, that Katniss repeats in *The Hunger Games*. This proves how specific ballads have been orally transmitted through several decades and generations. The inclusion of ballads in *BOSAS*, and especially in relation to District 12, signals the rurality and poverty of that part of the society. The story is set in a dystopian future where the Capitol is wealthy and technologically advanced. However, most districts, and especially District 12, are seemingly connected to the past rather than the future. The ballads, in addition to other descriptions and visuals, are part of contrasting District 12 from the futuristic Capitol.

It is not necessarily typical for modern YAF authors to include an old literary genre, such as ballads, in their novels. Many can assume that the language of a 200-year-old ballad would not fit in a modern dystopian novel, however, Collins successfully intertwines the Wordsworth ballad “Lucy Gray” into the novel *BOSAS*. Throughout the performance of “Lucy Gray’s Song”, the reader gets insight into Snow’s reaction to it. Despite the somewhat outdated language in the original ballad, Collins makes it more applicable in the novel by guiding the reader through it, using Snow’s thoughts. After around half of the ballad is presented with a few interruptive thoughts from Snow, he thinks to himself: “Ah. Lots of nonsense words, but

she gets lost in the snow” (425). Collins is apparently aware of the fact that the ballad is not the easiest for young readers to understand, which is likely why she added Snow’s realizations in a simpler language. HE summarizes the meaning of the ballad to himself, and therefore also to the reader. Towards the end of the ballad Snow first thinks; “[o]h, good. They found her footprints. Happy ending”, but then after two more stanzas he is confused again; “[w]ait? What? She vanished into thin air?” (426). By getting an insight into Snow’s thoughts it is easier for the reader to fully understand the content of Lucy Gray’s ballad. It can also be seen as a humoristic twist to the otherwise dark and mysterious ballad. Snow is not particularly pleased with the ballad, and his reactions to it can be fun to read. His thoughts on the ballad also function as a mirror that enhances the reader’s reaction to the ballad. Since the ballad is such an important part of Lucy Gray’s story it is probably a conscious choice that Collins added this guidance to ensure the reader’s understanding.

The importance and explicit mention of ballads in the novel was lost in the adaptation. Most of the musical elements are a part of the adaptation, but them being ballads must be implicitly understood by the viewers. As discussed earlier, the ballads in the novel signal a poor non-modern society. In the movie, the visuals can give the same signals, and the need for intentionally mentioning ballads is not necessary. When images of District 12 are shown it illustrates a society in poverty (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). The first clips shown of District 12, as Snow arrives by train, is of a town filled with smoke, destroyed brick buildings, and people walking with their faces and clothes covered in soot. District 12 is known for its mines, and most people have underground mining jobs. As the train pulls into the station, the shot shows several people walking around, and they are all doing physical labor, like carrying barrels and buckets, or pushing wagons, and they are all wearing gray, seemingly filthy clothes. A large poster is hung on a building wall, right by the train station, showing a drawing of two men with soot in their faces, with the text “TRUE WORK IS: DISTRICT 12”, reminding of a propaganda poster. The clip is quite short, but it insinuates a poorer, working-class society compared to how the Capitol is portrayed.

In the movie adaptation, ballads are given less significance. The songs are important, but the term *ballad* is never used in the movie, apart from within the title. In the novel, the two terms *ballad* and *song* are used mostly interchangeably, but Lucy and the Covey are referring to their songs as ballads several times, while also specifically referring to William Wordsworth’s ballad. In the movie however, songs are important as Lucy Gray and the Covey use musical elements to tell their stories, as well as being used as background music for certain sequences.

One could argue that the songs Lucy and the Covey sing are ballads because of their form and will therefore be recognized as such by the audience. On the other side, it is not to be assumed that all audience members will know what ballads are or what characterizes them enough to connect the songs from the movie to the ballad genre.

When adapting written work to an audiovisual form, there are many changes and decisions to be made. “Being shown a story is not the same as being told a story” (Hutcheon 12). Similarly, reading a song is not the same as hearing a song. When Collins writes out the song lyrics in the novel, she rarely describes the rhythm, pace, or melody of the songs. Mostly, the lyrics stand somewhat by themselves, and it is up to the reader to interpret and imagine the song. Therefore, it might be a deliberate choice from Collins to clarify that they are ballads, as it can trigger the reader to imagine a specific rhythm or feel to the song. As mentioned, some receivers of the story might not have knowledge of the ballad genre, but the people that do can utilize this knowledge when reading the ballad lyrics. The movie has the advantage of playing out the auditory version of the songs. The mention of ballad might not be equally necessary in the movie, as the viewer will hear the ballad rather than having to imagine it. What Collins wants the reader to imagine, by making the ballad genre apparent in the novel, might be easier to portray through auditory elements making the mention of ballads in the movie unessential.

The aspect of intertextuality is discussed in relation to the ballad “Lucy Gray’s Song” included in the novel. Parts of the same ballad is found in the movie adaptation, but the intertextuality is not apparent. As seen earlier, one of the key concepts of Rifaterre’s definition of *intertext* is that the reader has knowledge of the intertext that is included in the main written work. Not knowledge of its form or content, per se, but knowledge of its existence. Even though Rifaterre’s definition is related to written work, it can be extrapolated to an audio-visual medium. In the novel, Lucy Gray makes it clear that what she is about to sing is “a really old [ballad] by some man named Wordsworth” and the reader thus can understand that it exists outside the storyworld of *BOSAS* (Collins 423). On the other hand, in the movie, the ballad is presented without giving information about its origin, though it could still be recognized by some of the audience, and they would thus be aware of the intertextuality (*The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*). However, it does not fulfill Rifaterre’s definition of an intertext since the source material is not explicitly mentioned. Thus, including the origin of the ballad in the novel, and not the movie, underlines its importance in this written context.

The use and function of ballads in the story has an effect on the main characters, Lucy Gray and Coriolanus Snow. Lucy is not only influenced by her songs, but personally connected to them as they are her stories. Her character often comes to show through her ballads, like when she performs the emotional ballad at the interview before the Games. In this song she reveals a certain fear that she will likely die in the coming days, and she expresses concern over the people she will leave behind; “[i]t’s sooner than later that you’ll be alone / So, who will you turn to tomorrow I wonder” (Collins 171). It is also shown in “Lucy Gray’s Song” that her fate is foreshadowed, and later realized, as she mysteriously disappears or potentially dies.

As Lucy Gray attempts to run away from Snow she starts singing “The Hanging Tree”. This song clearly affects Snow as he loses track of Lucy, gets annoyed and frustrated at the song and the birds mimicking it. This leads to a climactic point, in both the novel and the movie, where he dramatically shoots towards the sky aiming at the songbirds trying to silence them. The movie is filled with loud gunshot sounds making it one of the most auditory dramatic scenes. He falls to the ground seemingly defeated, and eventually realizes the hunt after Lucy is a lost cause. “The Hanging Tree” can be seen as one of the determining factors that stop Snow from continuing his hunt for Lucy. The song has also been repeated a couple of times in both the novel and the movie, before Snow hears it in the woods. It is not an unfamiliar song to him, and its familiarity can be a reason for his growing frustration. “The Hanging Tree” can be seen as a theme song for *BOSAS* since it is the only song that gets repeated three times in each of the media. The song’s trait as a theme song gets further strengthened with each repetition, and when it is also present in the original *Hunger Games* series it can be argued to function as the theme song of the entire storyworld (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1*).

Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis has been to look at the use and function of ballads as a narrative genre included in a modern young adult fiction and its movie adaptation. The prequel to the famous *Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, was selected as source material for the analysis, in addition to its movie adaptation, *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. Through a theoretical exploration of key concepts such as the ballad genre, movie adaptation, and young adult fiction, a foundation has been laid for an in-depth analysis of textual and visual narratives. Three key sequences from the story, all including musical elements and ballads, were selected to exemplify the use and function of ballads. The source material, a written novel, was compared to its movie adaptation to highlight similarities and differences in the two media. Through the analysis and comparisons, ballads have shown to be present in the novel through direct mentioning from the characters when performing and discussing said ballads. The equivalent musical elements are also a part of the movie adaptation, only they are not presented with the term *ballad*. The only exception where *ballad* is apparent in the movie adaptation is in its title.

Ballads' features of a being a narrative tool is manifested in *BOSAS*, and especially through the character of Lucy Gray. She is the creator of most of the ballads in the story and uses them as the main medium to tell her story, revealing less of her through dialogue. Meanwhile, both the novel and the movie give more attention to Coriolanus Snow, the main antagonist. He is affected by the ballads sung by Lucy, his love interest, as she never sings them without his presence, either by being next to her or witnessing the song through a screen. Snow, always being a receiver of Lucy's ballads, will reflect on, and sometimes discuss, the contents of the lyrics.

The author's decision to include an old narrative genre into a dystopian young adult fiction can be varied. For instance, ballads' exclusive presence in District 12, as opposed to in the Capitol, and them being a symbol of the Middle Ages and the Romantic period, can be a way to contrast the district's more rural and vernacular aspect to the Capitol's more futuristic atmosphere. Collins has used songs and musical elements in all installments of the *Hunger Games* series, but its inclusion is more apparent in *BOSAS*. The explicit use and mention of ballads are evident in *BOSAS*, and one of the main characters is a musician, singer, and songwriter. The increased incorporation of music in *BOSAS* is therefore understandable.

In the original *Hunger Games* series, with Katniss Everdeen as the main protagonist, ballads are also used, but to a smaller degree than in *BOSAS*. “The Hanging Tree” was first heard from Katniss, which confirms the characteristics of a ballad being orally passed on through generations. *BOSAS*, published ten years after the first mention of the ballad, reveals that it was made by Lucy Gray Baird, and further passed on within District 12. The use and function of “The Hanging Tree” in the original *Hunger Games* series compared and connected to *BOSAS* is an interesting aspect that has not been researched in this thesis. Collins’ inclusion of the same ballads in two separate stories set half a century apart can lead to an interesting exploration. The public’s reception of “The Hanging Tree” and other musical elements from the original series might have influenced Collins’ inclusion and enhancement of ballads in *BOSAS*, and it is an aspect that could be researched further.

It has been an interesting process exploring the intertwining of an old narrative genre into a modern fictional novel. It brings the universe, although being set to the future, to a representation of an old period of time. The ballad is characterized as being popular stories that are spread through generations. Similar to how pop-songs and true-crime podcasts are popular forms of storytelling in today’s society, ballads held the same value in the Middle Ages. The polarized society in *BOSAS*, containing a wealthy and futuristic Panem on one side, and a poor and ‘old-fashioned’ District 12 on the other, is a possible representation of the future. Collins paints a picture of a divided futuristic world that is both going forward and backwards in time simultaneously.

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Relevance to teacher profession

This thesis is not pedagogically or didactically focused; however, it can still be relevant and useful for Norwegian teachers of English. The term Young Adult Fiction (YAF) clearly implies the target audience, and this group is found in upper secondary and high schools. The Norwegian Directorate for Training and Education includes, as a core element in the English subject, that different types of texts shall be critically assessed, and furthermore used to acquire language and knowledge of society and culture. Teachers should present fictional written work, amongst other genres, to their students. A suitable way to introduce fictional texts can be by using YAF, such as *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. One could assume that Norwegian teenagers generally spend more time watching series or movies, listening to music, or engaging in social media rather than reading books. A teacher should not overlook this, but instead use these interests and topics to their advantage to motivate students. Utilizing interests that students likely have in common can be a way to engage them in the classroom. With *The Hunger Games* series being a popular franchise directed at young adults including themes of finding their place in society, it can hopefully spark the pupils' interest as they are experiencing similar aspects of becoming adults.

The curriculum in English includes a competence aim that reads;

The pupil is expected to be able to discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different cultural forms of expression from different media in the English-language world, including music, film and gaming.

The inclusion of music and film in this competence aim makes *BOSAS* a good example of a text to introduce to students in the English classrooms. Discussions and reflections on what is read, seen, and heard are also important factors of the competence aim. A fictional novel can be the source material for language acquisition and the elements of a polarized dystopian future can be the foundation for interesting discussions about the students' perception of the world they live in. Comparing a novel to its movie adaptation will likely further enrich these discussions and learning outcomes.

The themes in *BOSAS* are central for students, as it includes themes such as self-exploration, society, and media. The Norwegian educational system acknowledges the importance of helping students become critical and curious citizens. By discussing the dystopian, but not necessarily unforeseeable, future society in *BOSAS* the students can practice critical and curious thinking and reflections. An interdisciplinary topic found in the English curriculum

reads that the English subject should “provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns, as well as on the pupils’ own way of life and that of others”. The themes of *BOSAS* would likely spark conversations that can lead to new perspectives. As the main characters of *BOSAS* are seemingly polar opposites, but despite their differences they fall in love. The way society functions in the story, being very polarized and possibly depicting an extreme variant of today’s society, will likely spark conversations where students will be presented with different perspectives.

In addition to drawing in newer popular media, *BOSAS* especially can also be used to teach and introduce a historical medium: namely, the ballad, showing interconnections between modern and older forms of literary expressions. All these factors make for this particular novel and movie adaptation to be relevant and suitable for English classrooms in Norway. The general themes of contrasting societies and teenagers’ lives found in the story are relevant to be discussed within the younger generation. These themes are apparent in written form, through music and shown in the movie adaptation, and the different modes of expression are all to be utilized in the classroom.

Appendices

Appendix 1

*When I was a babe I fell down in the holler.
When I was your girl I fell into your arms.
We fell on hard times and we lost our bright color.
You went to the dogs and I lived by my charms.*

*I danced for my dinner, spread kisses like honey.
You stole and you gambled, and I said you should.
We sang for our suppers, we drank up our money.
Then one day you left, saying I was no good.*

*Well, alright, I'm bad, but then, you're no prize either.
Alright, I'm bad, but then, that's nothing new.
You say you won't love me, I won't love you either.
Just let me remind you who I am to you.*

*'Cause I am the one who looks out when you're leaping.
I am the one who knows how you were brave.
And I am the one who heard what you said sleeping.
I'll take that and more when I go to my grave*

*It's sooner than later that I'm six feet under.
It's sooner than later that you'll be alone.
So, who will you turn to tomorrow, I wonder?
For when the bell rings, lover, you're on your own.*

*And I am the one you let see you weeping.
I know the soul that you struggle to save.
Too bad I'm the bet that you lost in the reaping.
Now what will you do when I go to my grave?*

(Collins 170-171)

Appendix 2

*Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see the break of day
The solitary child*

*No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt where none abide
- The sweetest thing that ever grew
Upon the mountainside!*

*You yet may spy the fawn at play
The hare among the green;
But the sweet of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.*

*“To-night will be a stormy night-
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, Child, to light
Your mother through the snow.”*

*“That, Father! Will I gladly do:
‘Tis scarcely afternoon –
The village clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!”*

*At this the father turned his hook,
To kindling for the day;
He plied his work; - and Lucy took
The lantern on her way.*

*As carefree as a mountain doe:
A fresh, new patch she broke
Her feet dispersed the powdery snow,
That rose up just like smoke*

*The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb:
But never reached the town.*

*The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide:
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them as a guide*

*At daybreak on a hill they stood
That overlooked the scene;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
That spanned a deep ravine.*

*They wept – and, turning homeward
cried,
“In heaven we shall meet”
- When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy’s feet.*

*Then downwards from the steep hill’s
edge
They tracked the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn edge,
And by the long stone-wall;*

*And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same;
They tracked them on, not ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.*

*They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!*

*- Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.*

*O’er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.*

(Collins 424-427)

Appendix 3

Are you, are you

Coming to the tree

Where they strung up a man they say murdered three?

Strange things did happen here

No stranger would it be

If we met up at midnight in the hanging tree.

Are you, are you

Coming to the tree

Where the dead man called out for his love to flee?

Strange things did happen here

No stranger would it be

If we met up at midnight in hanging tree.

Are you, are you

Coming to the tree

Wear a necklace of rope, side by side with me.

Strange things did happen here

No stranger would it be

If we met up at midnight in the hanging tree.

(Collins 382, 503)



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