Women and Identity Search in Speculative Fiction

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Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – prevoditeljski smjer i pedagogije

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Abstract

Search for identity is a common occurrence, especially in the lives of adolescents, so it is no wonder it frequently occurs in works of speculative fiction as well. The theme of soul-searching appeals to both adolescents and adults who are on the journey to actualise themselves as individuals, making it an always relevant subject. The period of adolescence is characterized by the extended need for establishing an identity that will serve as a solid basis for adulthood that awaits them. Development of identity can be hindered due to various reasons, some of which are presented in the analysis of two works of speculative fiction – *Carrie* by Stephen King and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. Both novels portray 16-year-old female protagonists whose identities are repressed through either societal or familial circumstances. Throughout the novels, both heroines exhibit major changes in their identity, which is followed by a change in other's perception of them. By finding their true self, they embark on the path of self-actualization.

Keywords: speculative fiction, search for identity, horror, dystopia, Stephen King, Veronica Roth, *Carrie*, *Divergent*

Introduction

The search for identity search is one of the topics that will always be relevant to adolescents, as well as to those adults who can identify with the journey of searching for oneself. Adolescence is a period of life marked by feelings of being lost, insecure, misunderstood, and with little idea to what one's true identity is. Adolescents have a strong need for belonging and being understood, as well as achieving meaningful relationships with their peers, since through communication with them they can develop their personalities. The novels such as *Carrie* and *Divergent* provide a sense of relief to those who are currently on the journey to explore their identity. They also offer insight into the effects one's social surroundings can have on the development of one's identity. The protagonists struggle with progress personality-wise due to a number of both internal and external factors that halt their development. Society, peers, and family are some of the main obstructions in the process, but they also sometimes prove to be the greatest instigators of change.

The aim of this thesis is to scrutinise the search for identity of female protagonists in literary works of speculative fiction, find out what some of the characteristics of the journey for identity search are, and analyse the changes in personality that the characters in question go through. The opening chapter discusses the scope of speculative fiction, as well as women characters in the mentioned genre. It deals with the fuzziness of genre's boundaries, the vagueness of its definition, as well as the modern views on speculative fiction. The following chapter deals with the challenges of identity development, as well as the factors that contribute to the progress of adolescents' journey towards finding their own selves in *Carrie* and *Divergent*. It also reviews the factors that inhibit or encourage the identity growth in the afore-mentioned novels.

1. Speculative Fiction

The term speculative fiction is one of the fuzziest and most disputed areas amongst literary researchers. Robert A. Heinlein coined the term "speculative fiction" and defined it as a "narrative concerned not so much with science or technology as with human actions in response to a new situation created by science or technology" (qtd. in Oziewicz). He defined it also as "fiction about things that have not happened – and he would limit the name science fiction to a sub-class" (Bereit 896). This definition seems to be only partially fitting to the term of speculative fiction. As Oziewicz (2017) states, the problem with Heinlein's idea of speculative fiction is that it excludes many genres, such as horror, pulp science fiction, fantasy, and other non-mimetic genres, going as far as calling his restriction of speculative fiction "elitist." It is, however, a widespread genre that contains

> science fiction, fantasy, utopian and dystopian fiction, magic realism, fantastic voyages, ghost stories, and the Gothic with supernatural elements. It excludes, somewhat arbitrarily (at least for our purposes), fairy tales with no known author, graphic novels, games, and philosophical works of a speculative nature unless written as a work of fiction. (Gill 72)

Bereit (1969) also states that Heinlein's definition is not complete as he "does not define his use of the terms fantastic and fantasy . . . [he only] implies that science fiction is grounded in reality, it contains imaginary elements, and that writers consciously order this fiction" (896).

Speculative fiction works often present other realities, "but their alternative worlds . . . comment on this world – negatively to satirize its shortcomings, or positively to provide a model for emulation, as in some utopias" (Gill 81). The line between science fiction and speculative fiction is extremely blurry, but what separates the two is that "speculative fiction highlights a human rather than technological problem" (Oziewicz). Speculative fiction offers the much-needed social critique and allows the readers to transfer themselves to a reality that could have been theirs. It is a "mode of thought-experimenting that embraces an open-ended vision of the real" (Oziewicz).

Since it encompasses many different literary genres, "speculative fiction is not limited to any specific literary techniques" (Oziewicz), representing one of the most flexible genres. Speculative fiction is a genre that especially appeals to the public since it includes "works presenting modes of being that contrast with their audiences' understanding of ordinary reality" (Gill 73), providing certain "food for thought."

Speculative fiction arose in the 1970s as a "resistance to the specifically Western, post-Enlightenment, androcentric, and colonialist mindset that had long excluded from 'Literature' stories that failed to imitate reality or embraced a different version of the real" (Oziewicz). From then on, the area of speculative fiction has been seen as a large cultural field. Oziewicz (2017) states that it was the New Wave radical feminist authors who instigated the entire view on speculative fiction as a field rather than a genre. The opposition of hard and soft science fiction led to controversy, which was especially oriented towards feminist authors. Male authors generally used to write hard speculative fiction, in which women were portrayed as highly stereotypical; when female authors began writing their own stories, they struggled with the same issue. This led to projecting "speculative fiction as a new space for articulating feminist theory and praxis" (Oziewicz): "These authors used the textual power of speculative fiction to challenge the predominantly male literary establishment and patriarchal social reality—including the dominant androcentric traditions of science fiction" (Oziewicz).

On the one hand, speculative fiction was created as a "tool to dismantle the traditional Western cultural bias" (Oziewicz), and on the other, it was born out of the desire of humanity to turn to freedom, creativity, and openness of the mind. Society got fed up with the mimetic aspect of reading and writing, so speculative fiction provided a sort of respite to those who did not want to be constricted by non-flexible genres.

Another approach to speculative fiction observes it as completely opposite to science fiction. Oziewicz mentions Margaret Atwood who strongly differentiates science fiction from speculative fiction. According to Atwood, science fiction portrays stories about "events that cannot possibly happen, while speculative fiction refers to "narratives about things that can potentially take place" (Oziewicz). This outlook of the term is faulty as well since it, if viewed as such, it is no different than utopia or dystopia.

A more widespread understanding of speculative fiction is that it is not just a genre that is limited to literature but rather something that "operates across the spectrum of narrative media" (Oziewicz). A drawback of this point of view is that the term is too broad as it covers narratives that "slip beyond fantasy and science fiction" (Oziewicz). When speculative fiction is observed as a field of cultural production rather than a prototypical genre, it includes non-mimetic literature and art. This perspective of science fiction has led to a cease of genre border wars and "opened up the field of literature to fruitful interaction with other fields" (Oziewicz).

2. Women in Speculative Fiction

Mary Shelley is thought to be "the mother" of speculative fiction as her famed novel *Frankenstein* manages to introduce a scientific aspect to the supernatural plotline, thus creating a narrative "transcending the gothic horror stories of the period" (Zanghi 1). Zanghi (2) points out that one of the possible interpretations of *Frankenstein* implies that the monster was "a fragmented being incapable of functioning in the capacity he desired as a part of society," which is something that women of the period could identify with. As vague as the universal characteristics of speculative fiction might be, social critique is an aspect that most certainly permeates its narrative. It is a field that allows us to reflect upon the idea of a could-have-been world through which we can recognize the flaws of our existing world. Female authors of the time were stranded as they struggled to express themselves within the genre that was dominated by the male point of view.

It is necessary to mention that prior to the appearance of greater female presence in the genre, women were often represented stereotypically, which Zanghi sees as an "obvious extension of the patriarchal society's attempts to subjugate and oppress women" (3). Zanghi (4) devised four categories of stereotypical roles of women in speculative fiction: "The Woman in the Bullet Bra", "The Woman in the Diaphonous Gown", "The Frigid Female Mad Scientist", and "The Cute and Perky but not-so bright Girl Next Door." Such roles were not a realistic representation of women and they depicted them as de-feminized, but at the same time regarded them as "little more than a sex object" (Zanghi 4). "The Woman in the Bullet Bra" is a stereotype that depicts women as de-feminized, and it is a representation of characteristics that are not stereotypically female. It is a portrayal of women as strong, capable, and independent, which is a "culmination of what patriarchy fears" the most in a woman (Zanghi 3). "The Woman in the Diaphonous Gown" stereotype depicts women as a sort of a damsel in distress type of a character, clad in skimpy clothes, appealing to the "male desire for power and conquest" (Zanghi 4) as she symbolises the "quintessential victim found throughout traditional speculative fiction" (Zanghi 4). "The Frigid Female Mad Scientist" stereotype is the polar opposite of "The Woman in the Diaphonous Gown" as it represents a woman that is completely de-feminized and unappealing to men, because her "beauty has been sucked away in direct correlation to her degree of intelligence and ambition" (Zanghi 4). The last stereotype is "The Cute and Perky but not-so-bright Girl Next Door" that Zanghi (4) labels as the "patriarchy's example of the perfect woman," since it is a type of a character that is young and beautiful, with non-exceptional intelligence, hence being completely harmless to men. These stereotypes are still present to a certain extent in works of speculative

fiction, as well as in works of fiction in general. Speculative fiction serves as a perfect medium through which we can observe such stereotypes because it "is not constrained by physical reality . . . [and] it allows us to consider topics such as gender in new ways" (Thiess 5). Thiess (2015) even goes as far as to claim that speculative fiction is an even better tool for observing social constructions of gender "than science itself" (6) due to its fictional nature. Speculative fiction allows us to comprehend the current existing social environment through the lens of an imaginary world that serves as an implicit analogy to the issues happening around us. By reading such a work of literature, through the process of defamiliarization, the reader can rise above his subjectivity and observe the situation from an "outside vantage point" (Zanghi 7).

Although the focus of the feminist viewpoint is on women authors creating female characters, it is necessary to mention that with raising awareness of stereotypical outlook on women in speculative fiction, there are also male authors who have tried and succeeded in creating non-stereotypical female characters. Young adults, who are the primary readers of the genre, can also identify with women characters in speculative fiction because they are depicted as fully developed and authentic characters. Ultimately, such characterization of female characters provides a genuine reflection of the real society onto the works of fiction, thus contributing to the possibilities of accurate literary analysis.

3. Identity in Speculative Fiction

3.1. Stephen King's *Carrie*

Stephen King's compelling and impactful debut novel was published in 1974. The novel almost immediately became a fan and critics' favourite, and its success in the first year upon publication enabled King to leave his post as an English teacher and focus on his writing full-time (King and DeFilippo). King was praised for the novel's unusual plot and style of writing, characterization, objectivity secured through the use of three different narrators, but also for tackling controversial topics. However, despite *Carrie's* success, it was banned until the mid-1990s in numerous school libraries across the USA for being age-inappropriate, blasphemous, and for explicitly exhibiting sexual content and violence (Felix).

What is interesting about *Carrie* is that King did not like it at all. In fact, not being convinced by the plot and unsure of its subsequent success, he threw the first draft of the novel in the bin (Flood): "I couldn't see wasting two weeks, maybe even a month, creating a novella I didn't like and wouldn't be able to sell. So I threw it away" (King qtd. in Flood). Had it not been for Tabitha, King's wife, to whom he eventually dedicated the novel and who persuaded him to continue writing, *Carrie* would not have seen the light of day. Since then, the novel has become one of King's best-selling and most popular novels with multiple adaptations and accolades.

The protagonist of this horror novel is Carrietta "Carrie" White, a troubled 16-year-old who possesses a dormant power of telekinesis and whose life is being dictated by her fanatic mother. The relationship between Carrie and her mother Margaret is beyond unhealthy, with Margaret's behaviour barely resembling that of a mother. Carrie is a victim of Margaret's religious fundamentalist beliefs, which directly causes her to be alienated and ostracized by her peers.

3.1.1. Margaret and Carrie's Toxic Relationship

Margaret White is a woman whose "near-fanatical fundamentalist religious beliefs" (King 14) and psychotic behaviour have led to complete alienation of herself and her daughter. She is fairly disliked by the community, to the point that when she was giving birth and screaming her lungs out, the neighbours called the police only a few hours later, just to witness that she had already given birth to Carrie. The circumstances surrounding her pregnancy and childbirth are

inconceivable to ordinary people; Margaret was seemingly unaware of her pregnancy, believing that she had "a cancer of the womanly parts" (King 15). This thought process can be attributed to her delusional worldview, as she perceives nearly every mundane activity as sinful, to the point that she is in complete denial that her participation in something sinful has led to pregnancy. She is a firm believer that sexuality is a sin, so she is determined to keep Carrie perfectly "innocent," causing her to be completely oblivious to the way the world around her functions. Her devotion to religion has blinded her completely and although she managed to become a functional part of the society (work- and family-wise), she sticks out socially. This behaviour of hers is extended to the way people perceive Carrie and it affects her social life as well.

Margaret has made her life's mission to keep Carrie protected from any possible trace of "sin," which includes sleeping on a pillow, listening to rock and roll music, wearing the colour red, and even acknowledging the normalcy of natural bodily processes, such as menstruation. She managed to brainwash Carrie into thinking that everything and everyone besides herself were sinful and universally evil. She forbade her to behave like a child and explore the world around her and did not provide her with basic knowledge needed for a child to become a fully-fledged member of society. Carrie was abused both emotionally and physically, receiving beatings from Margaret and being locked in a closet for hours each time she would disobey her ill will. One instance of her disrespecting Margaret occurs when she wandered off into the neighbour's backyard, only to see Stella, a teenage girl, sunbathing in her swimming suit. Carrie was mesmerized by the sight of a female body as she inquired "what are those?" (King 26), pointing at her breasts (the motif of Carrie's fascination by the female body is present throughout the novel and is discussed later in the paper). Margaret suddenly appeared and started "screaming things about sluts and strumpets and the sins of the fathers being visited even unto the seventh generation" (King 27). She then proceeded to scream and inflict physical injuries upon herself, with the intent of inducing the feeling of guilt in Carrie, which displays her atrocious manipulative tactics. This leads to the first major outbreak of Carrie's telekinetic abilities. Considering that Margaret has isolated Carrie from the rest of the world, she is the sole remaining figure to whom Carrie can look up to and communicate with. She has made her dependable and afraid of losing the only kinship that she knows of. It is no wonder that at the thought of losing her, Carrie experiences a state of major shock, which onsets her supernatural abilities on a scale that they have never occurred before. Stones were falling only on the property of the Whites and "punched holes right through the roof and the attic" (King 30), showing the formidable power of Carrietta White. Following this incident, it is as though her powers have undergone a process of hibernation and she lost the

memory of the incident, as well as the minor telekinesis powers that she displayed prior to it. Margaret continued to carry out her religion-based upbringing, imbued with manipulation, indoctrination, and physical violence, and by doing so, she deprived Carrie of a healthy and normal childhood, thus preventing the development of her identity.

3.1.2. Carrie's Non-Existent Identity

Carrie White is portrayed as a "chunky girl with pimples on her neck and back and buttocks" (King 8), forever stuck playing the role of a "sacrificial goat" (King 8). She is mocked by her peers, looked down on by her teachers, molested by her mother, and even teased by random children with whom she does not even have any contact. All these factors contributed to her identity being stunted – if existent at all. Carrie is depicted as a pushover, who seemingly does not have a grain of self-respect and dignity. She foolishly continues to take part in social activities even though her peers downright bully her and pull an array of mischievous pranks on her without exception. Some of the instances in which she was emotionally and/or physically harmed, yet did nothing about it, include "the pinches, the legs outstretched in school aisles to trip her up, the books knocked from her desk, the obscene postcard tucked into her purse" (King 11) and many other atrocities. Having always been isolated and side-lined, she is unable to stand up for herself because a part of her desperately yearns to belong, and a part is terrified of people surrounding her. This is especially true when it comes to her mother, as Carrie is stuck with this "hate-love-dread feeling" (King 23) towards her. Margaret is her "greatest tormentor" (Domjanović 19), and they have formed "a sort of an abuser-victim relationship" (Domjanović 19), which provides Carrie with a twisted feeling of safety. Considering that Carrie was perceived as a normal child before "her mother's sickness touched her very deeply" (King 26), Margaret is largely to blame for the creation of the person she has become. With the constant emotional and physical abuse, she has shaped Carrie into a being whose real identity is beaten down both literally and metaphorically into the depths of her being. In a sense, Carrie is an obedient puppet who eventually does everything the way her "Momma" would want her to, even if it differs from her own wishes. Margaret's influence is so potent that her mantras are instilled in Carrie's mind, and each time she even thinks of something that goes against her moral code, the intrusive thoughts come flooding into her brain, as she begins a thought process of remarks that her mother would usually recite: "…*easy* was one of Momma's pet words (she knew what Momma would say 0 no question) to describe *them.* And

it would make her dreadfully self-conscious, she knew that. Naked, evil, blackened with the sin of exhibitionism, the breeze blowing lewdly up the backs of her legs, inciting lust" (King 33).

Although Carrie obeys Margaret, she is aware of her crookedness and has "defied Momma in a hundred little ways" (King 21) to try to fit in with the rest, with the outcome always being the same. Margaret "had kept her in the closet for as long as a day at a stretch" (King 46) after she would misbehave, leaving Carrie to her own devices and forcing her to seek consolation from religious objects placed into the closet for the sole purpose of religious indoctrination. This "time-out" in the closet where "a figurine of Jesus judges her for her supposedly wrong actions" (Pennington 22) is Carrie's worst nightmare and it affects her deeply, to the point where she "manifests her own type of religious fixation" (Pennington 22). Carrie evidently abhors the suppressed form of her identity as it is but remains resigned with an occasional snarky remark and a slight defiance towards Margaret, for instance when she snuck a lipstick into her purse and leafed through a magazine that displayed models who looked "easy and smooth in their short, kicky skirts" (King 33). She was also forbidden to shower with other girls at school, but she "had hidden her shower things in her school locker and had showered anyway" (King 22) so she could participate in an activity that is like a "naked ritual" (King 22) for teenage girls. Carrie yearns for the opportunity, or better yet, permission to start growing as a self-determining individual.

Although hidden signs of Carrie wanting to break free from her mother's hold are evident throughout her life, the event that brings about the major change in her attitude is the advent of her menarche and the traumatizing circumstances surrounding it. Carrie is dumbfounded when she experiences her first period in the shower room and is completely oblivious to the idea of menstruation. It was Margaret's obligation as her sole caregiver to prepare her for the world of womanhood, and, once again, she failed to do so, or even worse, she chose not to. The advent of her menarche occurs in the most unfortunate moment, leaving Carrie completely vulnerable to the horrific attack that happens afterwards. As Carrie is screaming, convinced that she is "bleeding to death" (King 13), her schoolmates start mocking her and throwing tampons at her, exhibiting "a hive mindset of conformity" (Pennington 11). Considering that Carrie is sixteen years old, it comes as a shock to everyone that she only got her first period, which ultimately places Carrie even further away from her peers, causing them to feel disgust for her. Pennington notes that

> [t]he extremity of such a ritualistic ceremony to partition Carrie from the "normal" girls and to mark her difference connects to the exclusion often experienced during adolescent rites of passage ceremonies in which members of a society enter a period of liminality

> during which they are stripped away of identity markers that signal their place within a social hierarchy. (11)

The girls bully her and strip her of her identity, so they can build theirs and "justify their senses of self" (Pennington 21). The traumatic event of her first period coincides with this final (or so it appeared to be) act of ostracism, both of which have affected Carrie deeply and caused a shift in her mindset. At first, she is in complete denial and "clap[s] her hands over her ears" (King 15), refusing to face the reality. Shortly after the incident, the vice-principal calls her "Cassie," which prompts her to react and yell out that this is not her name. A given name is a large part of one's identity, it is a "focal point around which we organize our personality" (Windt-Val 275) and the first identifier of personality we receive. By calling Carrie a different name, he demonstrates that he does not respect her identity and does not acknowledge her as a rightful individual. Considering that the primary descriptor of her identity is disregarded, Carrie is furious to not have received the minimum respect or even acknowledgment of her identity. It is the first time Carrie has stood up for herself and exhibited self-respect. The long-awaited search for identity has been set in motion and from that point onwards Carrie's true colours start to peek through the tight grip her mother and society have over her life.

3.1.3. Carrie's Breakthrough

If one is to pinpoint the exact day when Carrie's identity starts to form in a more serious manner, many would agree that it is the day of her first period. "Carrie's period is – even according to another female – symbolic of entry into an adult life which will see her defined by her body and its reproductive ability" (Ackers 42). The advent of her first menstruation, in addition to the bullying that occurs simultaneously, has galvanized every aspect of Carrie's being, representing a turning point for her in both a biological and psychological sense:

> Gómez Moreno (198) asserts that Carrie's period is not only a rite of passage in a biological, but also in a psychological way. From that moment on, she rebels against her mother and starts rethinking what she was being indoctrinated her whole life, and also starts letting her negative feelings towards her mother hit the surface of her mind. (Domjanović 19)

Adolescence is a period in which the young search for themselves and "face the central issue of constructing an identity that will provide a firm basis for adulthood" (Kasinath 1). Adolescents have a strong need for belonging and being understood, none of which Carrie can associate with: "Jesus watches from the wall, but his face is cold as stone, and if he loves me as she tells me, why do I feel so all alone?" (King 56). The society rejects Carrie because her mother is the pariah of Chamberlain, which also indirectly besmirches her reputation. Furthermore, her appearance is different to that of other children her age, as Margaret forces her to wear dowdy clothes in order to look the part of a chaste girl. She also behaves differently, which is something that even Carrie herself notices, as she remembers "the stares, and the sudden, awful silence when she had gotten down on her knees" (King 21) to pray before lunch in school. She also exhibits a "socioeconomic, religious, and sexual difference from her classmates" (Pennington 11). Ultimately, she cannot find her place amongst others because her identity is underdeveloped. She has never been allowed to have an identity, let alone develop or question it. Her life is a constant dilemma between doing what she wants to do and indulging her mother's toxic behaviour. Upon (re)discovering her telekinetic powers and reaching the final stage in her physiological development (the onset of her menstruation), Carrie finally realises that she does not need anyone's permission and that she herself wants to "try and be a whole person before it's too late" (King 72).

One of the most prominent theories of identity development is Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which was to a greater extent influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Syed and McLean 2017). Freud's theory encompasses the well-known concept of the id, ego, and superego. The id is the instinctive part of the mind, where all the animalistic, irrational, and unconscious aspects of personality are kept. It is a part of personality that one is born with, and it is responsible for our primal and instinctual desires. The ego serves as a mechanism that regulates the balance between the intrinsic desires of ego and the conscience and the self-restraint of the superego. The aim of the superego is perfection, and it is a source of self-criticism. It contains one's ideals, moral values, and consciousness. Freud's theory is limited to the period of childhood, and in it differs from Erikson's theory that is expanded over the entire lifespan. Freud focuses on the psychosexual aspect of identity development, while Erikson puts emphasis on the psychosocial factors. Eriksen's theory consists of eight stages, or tensions, that one goes through in life. It is important to note that even though each tension is characteristic of a certain age range, it is not limited to it; all tensions are present throughout the life of an individual and "no aspect of development is ever actually 'complete'" (Syed and McLean 3). These tensions can also be viewed as the "developmental tasks" that one "must confront and resolve in order to

realize healthy development" (Syed and McLean 3). The first tension that Syed and McLean describe is *Trust vs. Mistrust* and it is characteristic for infancy. During this stage, it is important that the infant develops a sense that their caregivers and environment are responsive, reliable, and consistent (McLeod). The child learns to trust their parent(s) as it is completely dependent on them to fulfil its needs. If the parent fails to provide such conditions, mistrust will grow, and the infant might "not have confidence in the world around them or in their abilities to influence events" (McLeod). Carrie White's childhood was evidently turbulent, and even though there is no evidence that her mother failed to provide her with necessities, the trust is broken the moment Carrie is brought into this world and Margaret attempts to commit infanticide. This stage is followed by the *Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt* stage, which is characteristic for toddlerhood. The autonomy in question is primarily the autonomy in the process of toilet training, through which the child exercises control and learns what it means to hold on or let something go. During this stage, the child takes an "initial step towards developing as an individual person" (Syed and McLean 3) and starts establishing autonomy. It starts discovering independence and making its own choices, but if the parent overly controls, criticizes, or does not allow the child to be assertive, the children "begin to feel inadequate in their ability to survive, and may then become overly dependent upon others" (McLeod). Margaret White exhibits all the don'ts described previously, denying Carrie the opportunity to reach independence. The connection between toilet training and learning to exercise control later on in life can also be observed in Carrie's case. She exhibits signs of independency, and she is perfectly capable of controlling her urges (i.e., urinating and defecating), but Margaret is the one who halts her progress with each act of violence. On one occasion when Margaret locked her in the infamous closet, Carrie had "fainted from the lack of food and the smell of her own waste" (King 46). She was locked in for a long period and was presumably no longer physically able to contain her urge to defecate. With doing so, Margaret has taken away from her the chance even for the most basic act of control a human being can exhibit. The third tension is *Initiative vs. Guilt* stage, which is mostly salient in early childhood. During this stage, children learn how to take initiative and their focus is primarily on play "as it provides children with the opportunity to explore their interpersonal skills" (McLeod). If the child is allowed to explore and develop its own sense of initiative, it will later feel safe to make decisions autonomously. Parental control or criticism can affect the child and provoke a feeling of guilt in them. Carrie had displayed her telekinetic powers as a young child, and in one instance she dangled a bottle "in thin air over her head" (King 110). She probably considered her telekinetic powers as a form of play, and entertainment, but that play was met with disapproval from Margaret. Instead of allowing her child to explore, she nearly murdered her. The fourth stage *Industry vs. Inferiority* continues onto the

previous stage and is characteristic for middle childhood. Children demand encouragement and need reinforcement when they achieve their goals. When their parents fail to recognize their growth, children may feel inferior and doubt their abilities. Throughout her life, Carrie has only known punishment, did not receive any positive reaction from Margaret, as she probably considered it vain. The next stage is *Identity vs. Role Confusion* that occurs in adolescence and emerges through the adulthood. It is a period in which a child transitions to the world of adulthood and focuses on its own identity. It is a "major stage of development where the child has to learn the roles he will occupy as an adult" (McLeod) and upon completing this stage one should have gotten a better sense of self. Carrie enters this stage belatedly and fails to establish a sense of identity within the society. This leads to role confusion, which ultimately leads to "rebellion in the form of establishing a negative identity" (McLeod). The following stage *Intimacy vs. Isolation* is characterised by individuals seeking to achieve intimate relationships and once they "develop a reasonable sense of identity, they are then prepared to share that identity with others in order to develop successful intimate relations" (Syed and McLean 4). Carrie has never been able to share herself and explore meaningful relationships with others because she has not developed a sense of self. The last two stages are *Generativity vs. Stagnation* and *Integrity vs. Despair*, which occur in adulthood and old age, respectively, and are not relevant to the case of Carrie White since she does not reach them. It is indicated by Erikson's theory that the "balance is central" (Syed and McLean 5) and healthy development comprises of both negative and positive ends of the aforementioned stages. Carrie predominantly experiences the negative pole of the stages, which results in discontent and the stunted identity she demonstrates.

Through communication with peers, adolescents build their personalities and make social connections. Carrie has never managed to acquire friends and have a meaningful relationship with anybody. The only communication she has ever known were abuse and oppression. Her previous attempts of fitting in always failed, and she was forbidden to take part in activities that perhaps would have enabled her to get to know her peers and make meaningful connections.

Gender identity is a major part of identity that Carrie evidently yearns to realize. As a child, her mother inserted thoughts in her mind that breasts are sinful and even refused to address them appropriately, calling them "dirty pillows" (King 90). She presented the female body as something that is sinful or will categorically lead to sin. Ackers states that "Margaret clearly associates sexual desire as a form of identity which is at odds with her militant religious views" (13). Margaret's extremely narrow-minded behaviour and worldview, in which she equates sexuality with sin, have been efficiently translated to Carrie. She explicitly subdues Carrie's gender identity, disallowing

her to embrace the woman inside of her and "asking Carrie to be unnatural in order to be completely sinless" (Pennington 25). Margaret punishes her for the natural process of menstruation and locks her up in the closet. Ackers draws a connection between the symbolic closet "as a place of guilt and shame for homosexuals" and her closet that is "synonymous with the shame she experiences when she sins" (13). Carrie slowly but surely starts developing a sense of self and begins to realize that her "self" is something she should protect and nurture, without allowing others to control, belittle or humiliate her. She yearns to explore the possibilities of life beyond the constraints of her mother's rules, which is evident in the moment she acknowledges her sexuality:

> She unsnapped her heavy cotton bra and let it fall. Her breasts were milk-white, upright and smooth. The nipples were a light coffee color. She ran her hands over them and a little shiver went through her. Evil, bad, oh it was. Momma had told her there was Something . . . Carrie thought that the Something had come to her. She ran her hands over her breasts (dirtypillows) again, and the skin was cool but the nipples were hot and hard, and when she tweaked one it made her feel weak and dissolving. Yes, this was the Something. (King 34)

The incident with the stones marked her childhood, having been so traumatic that it caused her powers and memory to become suppressed. Considering that it was indecent exposure that triggered Margaret to throw such a violent fit, Carrie inevitably started associating sexuality with the emotional trauma that occurred due to her mother's rage. It is the repression of womanhood that causes her to explode.

She is perceived as unattractive and odd, which is then reflected in her own perception of herself. There is a discrepancy in *Carrie* between who Carrie is, who Carrie wants to be, and how everyone else perceives Carrie. The society perceives her as disgusting mostly due to her unusual behaviour and outdated appearance, failing to see her natural beauty. Pennington states that she is "othered . . . by being described as a frog, making her less than human in the eyes of the girls and the narrator" (13). Before Margaret managed to shape her into the way she is now, Carrie was perceived as a "regular" child. Despite the horrific treatment she received her entire life, Carrie has managed to stay relatively common-sensical, and it is implied that she would have been a normal teenager had it not been for her mother's fanatical influence: "she was so pretty, with pink cheeks and bright brown eyes, and her hair the shade of blonde you know will darken and get mousy. Sweet is the only word that fits. Sweet and bright and innocent. Her mother's sickness hadn't touched her very deeply, not then" (King 26).

Unlike Margaret, Carrie is aware that their way of living is not right and that there is more to life than living in perpetual fear of sin, that is, in perpetual fear of her mother. She has been passive her entire life because she felt a twisted sense of safety within the predictability of their dull life. The resurgence of her telekinetic powers and her first period have massively impacted her and derailed her from the predictable path she was on. Suddenly she faces the weight of making decisions herself that would finally have an impact on her life, which is something she has never experienced before. Feeling lost and isolated, Carrie longs for kindness and normalcy, so it is not surprising that this is something she chooses to pursue. Once she finally decides to go to the prom and dress the way she wants to, she cannot enjoy it for she is constantly anticipating that she will once again be the laughingstock. She has perceived herself as unattractive and "hated her face, her dull, stupid, bovine face, the vapid eyes, the red, shiny pimples, the nest of blackheads," which has ultimately led to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once she puts on the dress that she had made for herself and gotten ready for the prom night, she can see "only a maddening ghost image of herself, but everything seemed to be right" (King 89). The mere act of changing her appearance the way she always wanted has given her a confidence boost. Her appearance is finally in accordance with the one she envisioned for herself, so her true self ultimately comes to the surface. The change in her is visible to everyone around her, as she is radiant in the night of the prom, and even allows herself to be a bit cocky with her peers. Her winning the prom queen title is a dream come true, but soon turns into her worst nightmare. The final betrayal has ignited an urge for revenge in Carrie, the urge greater than the need to exist in this world as she is:

> (!! NO !!) The steel in her—and there was a great deal of it—suddenly rose up and cried the word out strongly. The closet? The endless, wandering prayers? The tracts and the cross and only the mechanical bird in the Black Forest cuckoo clock to mark off the rest of the hours and days and years and decades of her life? (King 138)

She chooses chaos and death over going back to the way things were, turning the night into "an accumulative payback" (Domjanović 20). Her search for identity has unfortunately come a full circle. She begins her journey having virtually a hollow personality, manages to come out of her shell and starts developing her identity, only to be beaten down once again. On her deathbed, she reverts to her original state and yells out for her "Momma," seemingly regretting everything that has been done. The growth she has experienced by letting go of fear was crushed by her merciless peers. In the end, the self-fulfilling prophecy comes true and "she finally becomes the monster she has been told she was her entire life" (Pennington 24).

3.2. Veronica Roth's *Divergent*

The protagonist of Roth's dystopian novel is Beatrice "Tris" Prior, a 16-year-old who finds herself faced with challenges of life that are completely opposite to those that she knew before. The plot of the novel is set in postapocalyptic Chicago where people are divided into five factions according to their aptitudes and wishes: Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Dauntless, and Erudite. Each 16-year-old is given a choice on the day of the Choosing Ceremony to pick out their new faction, or remain in the one they were born and raised. Taking into consideration that it is not unprecedented that one has different affinities than their native faction, a special aptitude test was devised to supposedly help them in the process of decision making. The test comprises of a set of simulations that forces them to make a decision that will later point to the personality traits that are consistent with a certain faction. One may or may not choose the faction that was suggested by the aptitude test, but the risk of not fitting in is higher if they choose a faction that they do not possess the attributes of. Their entire life depends on that one decision, since if one makes a wrong choice and fails to assimilate, they are sentenced to a life of "poverty and discomfort . . . divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community" (Roth ch. 3).

3.2.1. Factions – Identity Suppressors

The society is divided into five factions, each having their flaws and virtues. Yet, all five have one thing in common – "faction before blood" (Roth ch. 5). Once a 16-year-old chooses their faction, there is no turning back, even if it means abandoning their own family. A new faction becomes a new family, and it is vital that 16-year-olds fit in. It is expected from the members of society to shape themselves into the mould of a certain faction and behave according to the code of conduct of a corresponding faction. Those who continue exhibiting traits that are not in line with their factions, and who are not willing to submit to certain values and rules, are bound to be shunned, and eventually end up as Factionless.

The characteristics of the five factions are as follows:

	Faction				
	Abnegation	**Amity**	**Candor**	**Dauntless**	**Erudite**
Description	The Selfless	The Peaceful	The Honest	The Brave	The Intelligent
Main virtue	temperance	humanity	justice	courage	wisdom
Main flaw	stiffness	passivity	tactlessness	cruelty	vanity
Clothing	plain grey baggy simplistic conservative	bright comfortable earthy tones (mostly red and yellow, sometimes green or brown)	black and white formal	black durable practical often have piercings and tattoos	must wear at least one blue item practical business casual often wear glasses
Desired personality traits	modest selfless self-restrained ascetic generous quiet unobtrusive	peaceful kind, uncombative neutral friendly serene forgiving trustful	honest rational trustable direct impartial	courageous fearless unwavering indomitable heroic stoic	smart intelligent curious hard-working serious focused perseverant
Social functions	political leadership public service social assistance	farming caretaking counselling	judges lawyers	keeping order and protection (guards, security, soldiers)	scientists teachers researchers doctors

Table 1. The characteristics of the five factions in *Divergent*

The Abnegation faction is focused on selflessness, and it is the faction the heroine of the novel natively belongs to. The members of Abnegation always strive to put others before themselves and live modestly without being in the centre of attention. They try to live their lives unnoticed, wearing grey clothes and hiding away their beauty since it is a sign of vanity. Considering that the Abnegation are selfless and unobtrusive, they are put in charge of the faction system, since they always put the greater good and the benefit of others before themselves. Due to their rigid nature, they are often a target for bullies, who appropriately nickname them the "stiffs." Amity is a peaceful faction that manages farms and seeks harmony in the world. They appear calm

and respect peace above everything else. Given that they have a mediating nature, they have "given understanding counselors and caretakers" (Roth ch. 5). The truth is the ultimate life goal for Candor, and dishonesty is the greatest sin that leads to all the evil in the world. They are rational and due to their impartialness, they make up the judges and lawyers of the society. Dauntless is a faction that is home to the bold and the brave. Their main goal is protection of people, as well as securing the compliance of law. Their biggest flaw is cruelty, which is displayed even within the members of the faction. The Dauntless are courageous and unwavering, so weakness is met with disapproval. The Erudite dedicate their lives to studies and their behaviour is very matter-of-factly. They are responsible for the technological progress of the community and are in eternal pursuit of knowledge. If one fails to fit in these factions, they are cast out and become Factionless, which is the greatest fear of postapocalyptic Chicagoans. The factionless occupy the outskirts of the city, living a miserable life and doing jobs that are considered undesirable. It is only later in the novel series inferred that they are actually the ones who have the greatest amount of freedom.

The faction system undoubtedly suppresses the identity of their members, but some factions are much more flexible and allow a greater level of self-expression and growth. The Abnegation virtually allows no self-expression, since they should be focused exclusively on the well-being of others. They are supposed to be completely selfless, rejecting even the smallest joys (such as celebrating birthdays) that would make them appear vain. Consequently, the Abnegation do not have an individual identity, but they are rather a faceless mass that assumes a group identity. The Dauntless, on the other hand, have a much greater level of freedom. They are free to do with their physical appearance as they wish, with many expressing themselves by wearing piercings and being covered in tattoos. The Dauntless are even allowed to have fun and socialising with other members of the faction is considered normal. Their compound is made in such a way that they are constantly surrounded by others; they even share their rooms. Such debauchery is unthinkable to the Abnegation, so it is no wonder Tris is shocked and feels guilty when she is suddenly allowed to do all these things. The control the factions have over the people goes as far as to prescribe the food they eat; Abnegation only eat plain food since "extravagance is considered self-indulgent and unnecessary" (Roth ch. 5), while the Dauntless are allowed to eat whatever they want and drink alcohol as well. Yet, despite everything, not even the Dauntless are free to behave as they wish. They are not allowed to show weakness, as it is considered the greatest sin of their faction. The Dauntless initiation is ruthless, only allowing a certain number of initiates to succeed and join them. Those who are not apt and strong enough cannot be let in, so they become the Factionless. This level of stress is unbearable to some, so the only way out for them is suicide. As

it can be seen in *Table 1. The characteristics of the five factions in Divergent*, even the clothes are prescribed by the faction. The Abnegation must hide away their beauty and bodies in plain and baggy clothes. They reject vanity so their clothes reflect their inner blandness. The Amity are dressed in bright and comfortable clothes, which goes hand in hand with their cheerful nature. The Candor represent the upper-class of the society, as well as Erudite, who usually dress formally and business casually respectively. As it was mentioned, the Dauntless have the most freedom when it comes to expressing themselves through physical appearance, as they often appear quite eccentric.

3.2.2. The Abnegation Tris

The Priors seem like a regular Abnegation family and Tris has everything one could possibly wish for; her "brother makes breakfast, and [her] father's hand skims [her] hair as he reads the newspaper, and [her] mother hums as she clears the table" (Roth ch. 1). It is a seemingly perfect life, but "it is on these mornings that [she] feel[s] guiltiest for wanting to leave them" (Roth ch. 1). She is constantly doubting her affinity to Abnegation as she does not think of herself as selfless enough, or good enough. She compares herself to her mother who is "well-practiced in the art of losing herself" and seems like she completely belongs to Abnegation (Roth ch. 1). She even displays envy towards her brother Caleb: "What irritates me most about him is his natural goodness, his inborn selflessness" (Roth ch. 4). By comparing herself to him, she feels inadequate to stay in Abnegation, i.e., she even feels inadequate to continue posing as Abnegation. The problem lies in that she perceives the Abnegation lifestyle as beautiful and peaceful, but it does not feel genuine. It is as though she understands, on a subconscious level, that the life they all lead is a charade:

> When I look at the Abnegation lifestyle as an outsider, I think it's beautiful. When I watch my family move in harmony; when we go to dinner parties and everyone cleans together afterward without having to be asked; when I see Caleb help strangers carry their groceries, I fall in love with this life all over again. It's only when I try to live it myself that I have trouble. It never feels genuine. (Roth ch. 3)

Abnegation is a faction that prescribes "gray clothes, the plain hairstyle, and the unassuming demeanor" (Roth ch. 1), which is supposed to make them appear on the outside as they should be on the inside – completely selfless. They are expected to exhibit selflessness in every possible aspect of the word, always striving to be altruistic, self-sacrificing, and devoted.

The Abnegation are not well-received by the society and are looked down upon by other fractions, meaning that Tris inevitably becomes a target for bullying. In one instance, she is pushed by an Erudite boy, and she just gets up and brushes herself off. She does not even stand up for herself even though it is a situation in which one should respond to protect their integrity or just their self. With this level of self-denying, they are virtually not allowed to have an identity of their own, but rather "their journey of maturation ends when they form a 'collective' and not 'individual' identity" (Basu qtd. in Stafylidou 58). There is a prescribed set of values and personality traits that are deemed perfect for each faction, which ultimately represses their freedom to grow and develop as individuals. The factions regime has control over the society as a whole, as well as over the individuals that constitute that very society since "faction customs dictate even idle behavior and supersede individual preference" (Roth ch. 2).

Tris is an individual who manages to rise above the constraints of the existing society due to her divergent way of thinking and behaving. It is no wonder she feels discontent as she is aware of the pretence everyone is so devotedly trying to keep up with. She is often brazen and full of sarcastic remarks, which she usually keeps to herself; it is clear that the life of eschewal somewhat annoys her: "Susan's father travels throughout the city for his job, so he has a car and drives her to and from school every day. He offered to drive us, too, but as Caleb says, we prefer to leave later and would not want to inconvenience him. Of course not" (Roth ch. 2). She is clearly discontent that she has to abide the rules prescribed by her faction, while other factions can enjoy little luxuries such as riding to school or celebrating birthdays. Not only does Tris respect the restrains of her faction, but she also bows down to her brother's wishes. She perceives Caleb as an exemplary member of Abnegation and wishes to be more like him. This is highly ironic because he is also suffering within the faction they were born in, and later sets out to seek his own identity within the Erudite faction.

Tris is eager to find out what her Aptitude test results are because she is completely uncertain of her identity. She is waiting for someone or something to take over agency and steer her towards the path she should take, so when her Aptitude test results are inconclusive (i.e., Divergent) she is forced to snap out of it and make a decision herself. It can be concluded that she is reluctant to make decisions due to a lifetime of forced abnegation and the clash of opinions inside of her mind. On the one hand, it is expected of her to choose selflessness and "be the child that stays" (Roth ch. 5) but, on the other, she knows that she will continue to feel miserable if she stays, and that the decision to leave Abnegation will inevitably be perceived as selfish. It is a situation in which she is bound to lose something – either her family or herself. If she stays in her

original faction she will never progress, but if she chooses to go on the identity search, she must forsake her family. By choosing the latter, she takes the first step towards being her true self for the first time in her life.

The Abnegation way of living prohibits everything that would promote "vanity, greed or envy which are just forms of selfishness" (Roth ch. 4), and Tris forces herself to "try to love it" (Roth ch. 4). At some point, she is even positive that her "act will turn into reality" if she tries hard enough. Prior to the Aptitude test, she is constantly pondering whether she should stay in Abnegation or transfer to another faction, but she is insecure and lacks agency to make a decision on her own. With the moment of decision approaching, she starts thinking more clearly and finally realises that "sixteen years of trying . . . [were] not enough" (Roth ch. 5). The act that gives her that final push is her brother's "betrayal." When Caleb, seemingly "born for Abnegation" (Roth ch. 5) chooses Erudite, her bubble bursts and she is in a state of confusion. Feeling shocked, she keeps repeating "What do I believe? I do not know; I do not know; I do not know" (Roth ch. 5), but she sees clearly for the first time. She realises that even Caleb, whom she was so envious of, was pretending and comes to terms with the fact that she will never thrive if she continues the pretence. Even at this moment, she wants to be selfless and stay in Abnegation because she thinks she has "to do [that] for [her] parents" (Roth ch. 5). Throughout the novel, "she experiences both a selfless need to protect others and a selfish desire to be 'in charge' of her future" (Cothran and Prickett 26). A major factor that plays a role in Tris finally gathering up the courage to make a decision for her own good is the support of her parents. Right before the Aptitude test, Tris nearly loses "what little resolve" (Roth ch. 5) she had, but her mother seemingly recognizes what is going on in her head and reassures her. Thanks to the support she receives from her mother, she can go ahead and start growing as the person she wants to become.

3.2.3. The Dauntless Tris

It is hardly a surprise that Tris chooses Dauntless as her new faction. She used to observe the Dauntless jump from a moving train every morning, well aware that they pique her interest, but unsuccessfully repressing it. She believed that "watching them [was] a foolish practice" (Roth ch. 1) since she planned on staying in Abnegation. Once she finally arrives at the Dauntless compound, she is determined to change: "It will be difficult to break the habits of thinking Abnegation instilled in me, like tugging a single thread from a complex work of embroidery. But

I will find new habits, new thoughts, new rules. I will become something else" (Roth ch. 8). Considering that she was forced to live her entire childhood in a faction she did not belong to, Tris can move forward because she finally has a clear goal – to succeed in her new faction and find her place in the sun. The first thing she does when she arrives at the Dauntless compound is change her name from Beatrice to Tris – it "symbolizes her choice to sever part of her identity by shortening her name" (Cothran and Prickett 27). The society recognizes us under a certain name, meaning that it has a certain power over us, and by taking a new name Tris has taken over the agency over her identity.

There is no specific turning point for Tris in which she realises that she is a changed woman, rather, the change within her is constant and it keeps progressing throughout the novel. She does have an idea of how she wants to behave and what she wants to achieve, but she is still hung up on the idea of Tris she would have become had she stayed in Abnegation. She tries to keep up with the good girl act, which makes her feel dissatisfied and frustrated, for she cannot bring herself to respond to situations in a way she wants to. The two sides of her constantly collide as she cannot fully let go of the act. Tris is no Goody Two-shoes and has opinions about everyone and everything. She is aware of that side of herself, and she tries to supress it since it is the exact opposite of what Abnegation should behave and think like. Upon transferring to Dauntless, Tris begins to question herself and the reasons behind her complex emotions. She dislikes the part of herself that is envious, selfish, sarcastic – the part that clearly does not characterise her as a good Abnegation girl. This can be attributed to the heavily imposed manner of conduct that was prescribed by the Abnegation faction. Stafylidou notes that "the system transforms adolescents into docile subjects through the faction system while promoting subjugation instead of agency" (43). The entire structure of their society is highly controlling and manipulative as it "restricts and regulates the everyday lives of its citizens in the hope of promoting peace and prosperity" (Stafylidou 40). Their appearance is prescribed by the corresponding faction, as well as personality traits, jobs, everyday activities, etc. The Abnegation faction goes as far as to dictate the amount of time they spend looking at their own reflection in the mirror. By doing so, they are robbed of the opportunity to relate to their physical identity.

No matter how vain looking in a mirror might be, one deserves to see their physical appearance so that they can be at terms with the physical aspect of their being. The first sentence of the novel – "There is one mirror in my house." (Roth ch. 1) – points out the importance of physical appearance as a part of Tris' identity. She sneaks a peek while her mother is cutting her hair and studies the changes in her face. The Abnegation are allowed to look at their own reflection

only for practical reasons – when cutting their hair. For growing adolescents whose appearance changes rapidly, seeing their reflection four times a year is not enough to develop a consistent self-image. Upon arriving to the Dauntless, who embrace their bodies and express their individuality by wearing piercings and having tattoos, Tris feels out of place. She is unaccustomed to showing skin and wearing makeup, but gradually learns to accept herself:

> Looking at myself now isn't like seeing myself for the first time; it's like seeing someone else for the first time. Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine and don't release me; this is Tris. (Roth ch. 8)

The physical appearance aspect of identity goes hand in hand with the sexual aspect of adolescence and growing up. Public displays of affection were uncustomary in Abnegation, so Tris did not have a chance to observe romantic relationships as other factions did. Their factions limited virtually every aspect of their lives, so romantic relationships are not an exception. The Abnegation values are so ingrained in Tris that she is conflicted over what she was taught to think and what she really wants. Upon seeing Myra and Edward kiss, she reacts with disapproval, but also with excitement:

> Myra pauses to kiss Edward. I watch them carefully. I've only seen a few kisses in my life… Air hisses between my teeth and I look away. Part of me waits for them to be scolded. Another part wonders, with a touch of desperation, what it would feel like to have someone's lips against mine. (Roth ch. 8)

The Dauntless faction has opened up many opportunities for Tris to develop various aspects of her identity, which she would not have experienced had she remained in Abnegation. During the fear simulation, which was part of the initiation, one of Tris' fears is being intimate with Four, her instructor and the boy she likes. She is reluctant to be intimate with him, even if it is a matter of minor physical touch, such as leaning into him. She feels uneasy due to her Abnegation upbringing since she was taught to "pull away from all gestures of affection, because [her parents] raised [her] to take them seriously" (Roth ch. 16). The Dauntless faction is basically the polar opposite to the Abnegation faction when it comes to sexuality and physical touch in general. During their initiation, both girls and boys share their living spaces, with little to no privacy. That is something Tris was unaccustomed to, and in the beginning had trouble adjusting to that level of invasion of privacy. She was also not exposed to physical affection: "[her] parents rarely held hands even in [their] own home" (Roth ch. 16), which may have contributed to her

being vary of intimacy. However, as she starts accepting herself and developing personality traits free from constraints of Abnegation, she also overcomes her fear of intimate physical touch. She connects to Four on a deeper level and they eventually journey into a romantic relationship. However, the "romance seems to be secondary to Tris's need to follow her destiny" (Cothran and Prickett 28) and she is primarily concerned with survival within the Dauntless ranks. Despite her "growing self-esteem caused by her identity formation and her being protected by her friends and future boyfriend Four" (Anić 6), she remains the target of other initiates who are threatened by her high ranking. Just as her mother served as a support before the Choosing Ceremony, her friends and boyfriend make up a support system that helps her through the "discouraging circumstances [she] encounters in Dauntless and the accompanying abuse" (Anić 10). Tris was unable to stand up to her abusers in the past, but upon establishing her identity and gaining confidence, she gains a new view of life. Anić states that "the abusers can be overpowered by the provision of effective support to the victim and the victim's disposition regardless of their environment" (21), which is proven true for Tris.

Switching factions has certainly given her the much-needed initiative and a boost in her confidence: "I look over my shoulder at the ground. If I fall now, I will die. But I don't think I will fall" (Roth ch. 12). She has gone from being a girl who does not stand up for herself when she is pushed onto the ground, to a confident young woman who is able to protect herself and even beat up a girl who is nearly twice her size. She defeats Molly fairly in a fight, but then proceeds to kick her when she is down. She thinks to herself that this is something her "mother and father would not approve" (Roth ch. 14) but at that moment she simply no longer cares about the values she used to hold. Tris' progress is evident in her everchanging character; one moment she chooses to ignore the values she obeyed in her previous faction, and in the other moment she ponders whether she has "lost the ability to see what people need" (Roth 142), which is something an Abnegation would ask themselves. Her thoughts are dual, which is also evident in the way she perceives herself. When her friend Christina puts makeup on her and gives her a dress, Tris is elated to see the reflection of herself in the mirror. She looks and feels like a different person, "the idea of leaving [her] Abnegation identity behind doesn't make [her] nervous; it gives [her] hope" (Roth ch. 8). Soon afterwards, following a bad fight that has left her heavily bruised, she "look[s] at [her] reflection in the small mirror on the back wall and see[s] a stranger" (Roth ch. 11). Her search for identity eventually starts looking more like a Sisyphean task, and less like a journey. The complex process of identity search is characteristic for adolescents, and most of them go through it in some degree. In addition to the regular feeling of being lost in the world due to the turbulent period of

adolescence, Tris' "development is . . . hindered because she cannot express herself freely and is deprived of certain freedoms due to the rules of the faction she belongs to" (Stafylidou 43).

Tris is highly perceptive of her real self and the self that she exhibits to others. She recognizes the desires she has in her mind, but she does not act out on them, whether to appear a better person or to live up to the Abnegation values she truly adopted. She "struggles between selflessness, a behavior that she has been taught, and self-interest, a behavior that is innate" (Cothran and Prickett 27). Even though she has chosen self-interest and faction over blood, she cannot help but ruminate about her family. She is constantly battling herself, thinking about what she wants to do and what would others (especially her family) think about her decisions. For each step she takes forward, she takes another step back, constantly going in circles. When she finally adopts some of the Dauntless mindset, her mother visits and Tris' train of thoughts reverts to Abnegation. At that moment, she is perfectly aware that "the old habits are back" (Roth ch. 15) and starts exhibiting the Abnegation code of conduct: she "smile[s] with closed lips, just like [her mother] does" (Roth ch. 15).

She tells herself that by coming to Dauntless she could get "a new place, a new name . . . [she could] be remade" (Roth ch. 6). Her journey is full of highs and lows; at one point, she considers returning home, but realises that she does not "belong there, among people who give without thinking and care without trying." (Roth ch. 7). She gets overwhelmed by the feeling of freedom, she can "look at [her] reflection whenever [she wants] . . . befriend Christina, and cut [her] hair short, and let other people clean up their own messes" (Roth ch. 7), but also the feeling of longing for the safety of her past life in Abnegation. Abnegation has moulded her into Beatrice, but she chose to be a self-made woman – Tris. Throughout the novel, Tris keeps reprimanding herself for doing things that are not seen fitting for Abnegation, as if she forgets that she no longer belongs to that faction and is free to do with her new life as she pleases. The fact that she is Divergent plays a significant role in the development of her identity. As much as the Abnegation values have been inserted into her through external factors, a part of her indeed does correspond with the inherent Abnegation characteristics. Moreover, the Abnegation way of living is the only thing she has known ever since she was a child, so it is not possible to get rid of it like it never even existed. The problem arises in her inconsistency with her feelings about Abnegation. She sees it as a system that has oppressed her and disallowed her to develop into a person she wants to be, but she cannot help to see the positive characteristics of the faction, "abnegation is what [she] is. It is what [she] is when [she is not] thinking about what [she is] doing" (Roth ch. 29).

The realisation that she is Divergent is almost too much to Tris. For the bigger part of the novel, it is as though she cannot comprehend that a number of different characteristics can reside in her, and that due to her divergence she cannot be restricted to a prescribed type of behaviour. She "has been trying to become part of the Dauntless faction in an attempt to renounce her divergent identity" (Stafylidou 59), which has resulted in the complete opposite. She comes to terms with all these opposing feelings that clash inside of her, and as they finally converge, she is able to accept who she is. Despite the fact that she has been questioning her morals since she came to Dauntless, she is still aware of her personality traits:

> Somewhere inside me is a merciful, forgiving person. Somewhere there is a girl who tries to understand what people are going through, who accepts that people do evil things and that desperation leads them to darker places than they ever imagined. I swear she exists, and she hurts for the repentant boy I see in front of me. But if I saw her, I wouldn't recognize her. (Roth ch. 23)

Although she says she would not recognise the Abnegation girl she describes, exactly by being able to describe her, it is evident that she still possesses those characteristics.

Tahir (2021) explores Tris' identity development through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which helps explain her inconsistent desires and behaviours. Five categories of human needs comprise Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At the bottom, there are physiological needs that must be fulfilled in order for an individual to move on to the next level. Tris is evidently blessed enough to have food and a roof over her head, meaning that the first level of Maslow's hierarchy is fulfilled. The next level consists of safety needs that one can "achieve . . . when they are not pressured by any physical or mental threat" (Tahir 7). While living with her parents in the Abnegation faction, Tris is provided with a safe environment and proper care. Thanks to her parents and the selfless nature of Abnegation, Tris' needs for safety are realized. The third level of needs are those for love and belonging, with the latter being "one of the main concerns on the novel that Tris struggles with" (Tahir 9). Tris is a complex character whose need for love and belonging is only partially fulfilled. She receives love from her family, and she does feel like she belongs with them, but when it comes to society, Tris could not feel more isolated. At this level, Tris starts to get motivated to change. Although these first two levels are fulfilled, Tris knows that she must aim higher in order to become a self-actualized individual. She must leave Abnegation to try and fulfil the last two stages of the hierarchy. The last two levels of needs are those of esteem and self-actualization that can only be accomplished if a person has enough self-confidence. Tris

gains self-esteem “by gaining respect and recognition from self and others” (Tahir 13), during the instances when she is praised either by Four or her peers. Tris has managed have all the levels fulfilled, so the only logical step for her was the process of self-actualization. Tahir (2021) notes that she possesses numerous characteristics of people who are self-actualizing, such as spontaneity, autonomy, creativeness, and increase in acceptance. A major characteristic of self-actualizing people is “accept[ing] their flaws and qualities with confidence and without any sort of guilt” (Tahir 15), which is something Tris accomplishes at the end of the novel. When she admits to herself that she is an amalgamation of both Abnegation and Dauntless, she is finally at peace with herself and reaches the answer to what her identity is. With this final act of acceptance, which is in a way an act of selflessness in that she has let go of chasing something that is impossible, Tris can go on and develop her personality.

Conclusion

Search for identity is necessary for the development of one's personality, since it allows individuals to fit in the society and, above all, live their life to their fullest as self-actualised individuals. Both *Carrie* and *Divergent* are proof how important the sense of belonging and fitting in with their peers is to adolescents. No matter what kind of misfortune they are met with, teenagers seek understanding from the people around them. Their primary goal is to find themselves so they can be found by others.

The path towards self-recognition and self-actualisation is paved with many obstacles, which both Carrie and Tris are destined do face. Carrie is halted on her journey towards finding herself by both her mother and the society. What has proven to be of great importance is the role of support. Tris is able to fend off her bullies thanks to the support of her friends, something that probably would not have been possible had she been on her own. She also has the support of her family and has all the stages according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs fulfilled.

Carrie has virtually no support system, as her peers not only isolate her, but they also reject her as a being. Tris, on the other hand, is lucky to have support from her mother and, unlike Carrie, has never physical or psychological violence from her parents. Tris' main hindrance is the controlling structure of the society she lives in, which pressures her to act in a certain way. She feels restricted by the constraints of the society, which is even more emphasised in her native faction Abnegation.

Both Carrie and Tris are unaware of their strength at the beginning, as they allow others to bully and manipulate them. They are brainwashed into thinking what others want them to think, with intrusive thoughts flooding their minds as soon as they act out in a way that would contradict their family, or faction in Tris' case. Carrie's mother has most certainly inflicted the most damage. She has failed to provide nurture and care that are indispensable for a healthy development of a child's identity. Only after she realised that her mother no longer has such influence over her and it is in fact herself who is in charge, Carrie is able to start realising herself as an individual. After experiencing life-changing events, both Carrie and Tris embark on a journey to let go of all restraints that are imposed on them and do with their lives as they will. The breaking point for Carrie is the event of her first menstruation that prompted her to make a first step in embracing her telekinetic powers. The event that incited a change in Tris is the day of the Choosing Ceremony, where she decided to accept her true self, no matter how non-Abnegation it was.

Search for identity is always a relevant topic since it is given that adolescents will go through the process of self-questioning and self-contemplation. Although the protagonists in speculative fiction may face problems and obstacles that are quite unworldly and exceptional, their soul-searching journey is highly relatable to growing adolescents, as well as adults who find themselves facing an identity crisis.

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