Clarke, Sophie, 'How to Build a Patriarchy: Conceptualising Themes and Creating Normalised Belief Systems in Young Adult Feminist Dystopias'
Leaf Journal, Issue 1, Volume 1, April 2023
DOI: http://doi.org/10.58091/5t5j-xd11
URL: https://ojs.library.lancs.ac.uk/lj/index

How to Build a Patriarchy: Conceptualising Themes and Creating Normalised Belief Systems in Young Adult Feminist Dystopias

Sophie Clarke

Abstract
In recent years, Young Adult (YA) fiction has – following its speculative adult counterparts – seen an influx of feminist dystopias. With this increase, comes a vast assortment of patriarchal systems created to coerce and control young female protagonists. What are the steps for YA writers wishing to create such high-concept patriarchies? Prior to writing is understanding that real-world patriarchies are social systems with interconnected power discourses. Social ideals are created and upheld by institutions such as education, science and religion, to create common norms – or 'Group Think' – ensuring women are ruled by men, whether it be actively or passively. Thus, when planning, writers must first form the feminist message their novel revolves around, before turning this idea directly on its head: the world in their novel should present the direct opposite of their message. Now, with the foundations of a patriarchy conceptualised, writers must focus on developing and maintaining the social norms which are to keep their protagonist oppressed and unhappy. Finally, to deliver the desired message, writers must plot to send their oppressed and unhappy protagonist on a journey through the patriarchy; it is up to the writer whether they come out the other side.

Keywords: *Young Adult literature*, *feminist dystopia*, *children's writing*, *feminist writing*

*

Introduction

I still remember the day I became a feminist. It was break time, I was in Year 4 and Abigail kicked me. My response was to call her an unsavoury name which no nine-year-old should rightfully know (not my proudest moment). However, when tell-tale Abigail went back inside after break and told our teacher, Mrs. Nolan, about the incident, this older woman's response – still imprinted in my memory to this very day – was, "Well, I'd expect such bad language from a boy, but not from a little *girl*." She also gave me detention. This was when my struggle for gender equality began. It is a struggle that has followed me into my own teaching career and, ultimately, into my writing.

This same struggle has been the fuel for many female novelists. If I were to ask you to name a fictional setting which portrays a governmental system organised to favour the interests of men, where women's reproductive rights are controlled, where coercion and social conditioning have silenced the voices of dissent, the first book which comes to mind might be Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*[1]. If that is the case, you are not wrong. Yet, if you thought of the dystopian realities of Alderman's *The Power*[2], Zumas' *Red Clocks*[3], or Dalcher's *Vox*[4], you are still correct. You could even have thought of authors as different from one another as Jane Austen[5] or Sophie Kinsella[6], and still earned a nod. Rightfully so, because what I described is, of course, not the plot of any one book, but rather a few generalised aspects of a patriarchy.

In fact, with women accounting for only 5% of CEO positions globally[7], with only 15 women presidents operating in the world as of May 2022[8], and with men globally owning 50% more wealth than women[9], if the setting you thought of was our present-day world, you wouldn't be far wrong. The only exception being that our world is not a book. Our world is merely – and perhaps more frighteningly – food for the imagination.

Yet it is not only 'women's fiction' which is eating such imagination-nourishing food to create richly dark patriarchal systems. Feeding from the same trough and, more often than not, branching into the realm of fantasy, is one of the most widely read markets in literature: Young Adult (YA) fiction.

A few such novels, which create their own patriarchal systems showing female power being regularly coerced and controlled, are: Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones* with its impending 'Ritual of Purity'[10], Kim Liggett's *The Grace Year* with its yearly purging of girls' 'magic'[11], and Kirsten Simmons' *The Glass Arrow*, which sees girls primped in 'the Garden' ready for auction[12]. The patriarchy in my own novel, *Bring Me Fire*, respectfully bows to Atwood's[13], nods to Alderman's[14], and sits alongside Forna's[15] and Liggett's[16].

However, before all this, as a nine-year-old stood outside the headteacher's office on my detention, I didn't know the meaning of 'feminism' or 'patriarchy', I only knew the boiling rage of injustice and the feeling of needing to *change something*. In his series of essays, *Why I Write*, George Orwell said one motivation to write is from the 'desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after'[17]. Twenty years later, the idealist in me who sat down to mould young minds by writing a YA feminist fantasy agreed with Orwell; however, after five drafts of the aforementioned feminist fantasy, I can now understand that my desire is also to interrogate my own understanding of feminism, womanhood and gender bias. How do you do this? To build a patriarchy, from first concept to final draft, one word at a time.

First, Get to Know Your Patriarchy

One thing is important to know before sitting at a writing desk to devise a patriarchy: that an understanding of the construction of *our own* patriarchy is inherent in the application of creating one. I learnt this the hard way; I was mid-way through writing the first draft of *Bring Me Fire*, when the story stopped making sense. I was stumped. I'd read the 'How To' writing books: my protagonist, 'Clayr', had a surface 'story problem' (there's an illegal sleeping 'Prince' in her house and it's her fault he's there) and an overarching 'internal conflict'[18] (she's on the brink of 'womanhood' which means giving up her power), she had an 'objective' (wake up said Prince/hatch powerful dragon from egg) and 'motivation'[19] (don't get thrown in prison/marry well) – so what was wrong? The problem was eclipsed when my mentor, Elen, asked me, "What will actually happen to her if she doesn't get married?"[20] – and I didn't have an answer. The best I could come up with was it would be 'frowned upon'; which frankly isn't good enough for high-stakes YA. I found that what I needed was for Clayr – and all the other women in the novel – to feel powerless, as though they do not have a choice. To achieve this, I conceded, I would have to delve into our own patriarchal system and understand how it makes women feel the same.

While the dictionary defines a patriarchy as 'a society, system or country that is ruled or controlled by men'[21]. I see this definition to be somewhat lacking. After all, at the time of writing, there are fifteen countries in the world 'ruled' by women prime ministers which still uphold patriarchal ideals. This is due to the fact that patriarchies run much deeper and have existed for much longer than one single leader. It must instead be viewed as a social structure. A social structure where institutions such as religion, politics and, above all, science have used 'knowledge' to create normalised belief systems working to control the female body – whether she is aware of them or not. This knowledge dictates what is expected and unexpected, acceptable and unacceptable, normal and abnormal. As Lois McNay writes, 'The production of knowledge is always bound up with historically specific regimes of power and, therefore, every society produces its own truths which have a normalising and regulatory function'[22]. For example, a religion which dictates two girls marrying one

man[23], a political system which births girls to pit themselves against one another in a desperate beauty pageant to win the honour of being a 'companion'[24], an economy which puts all of the money and power of attorney in the hands of a woman's husband[25].

To put these terminologies into perspective, take Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours* where a girl's education and pedigree revolves purely around pleasing men. Additionally, as referenced earlier, they are in fierce competition with each other – often to the point of brutality. This novel takes the idea of normalised beauty ideals to the extreme, ultimately critiquing, as Naomi Wolf describes it, the 'ever-more-unattainable, ever-thinner, ever-more-surgically-enhanced' ideal of female beauty 'that bombarded women's sensibilities in every direction'[26]. All but one of the characters in O'Neill's dystopia buy into the 'truth' of the society; the rest have been indoctrinated by the fear of punishment (getting a low ranking and then, potentially, not being chosen to be a 'companion') and prospect of reward (becoming a 'companion' to one of the most appealing suitors). The competition between women, too, serves as a form of surveillance; if they are to deviate from the norm or exhibit unpalatable opinions or behaviours, they may be reported or ridiculed by their sisters. Often, there is no need for brutality; fear and hope for the future are enough to keep girls in line[27].

O'Neill's dystopia hyperbolises a huge range of problems perpetuated by our very own patriarchal systems: from body image and eating disorders, to the sexualisation of children and rape. In an interview with *Den of Geek*, O'Neill said everything she included in the book, like Atwood and Liggett, 'was inspired by a real-life event'[28]. These writers draw from their understanding of real world inequalities, hold a torch up to them; they interrogate them in order to critique them in fiction. And it is only with criticism can we create messages of resistance; doing your homework has never been so important.

Then, Know What You Want to Say… Roughly

While popular writing self-help books such as *Writing Your Story's Theme*[29] argue that writers often shy away from the topic of theme, preferring to focus on the more tangible topics of plot and character, I would argue that speculative fiction writers with a point to prove do the opposite. For such writers, theme – whether it be the theme of power, surveillance or, of course, feminism – comes first in our conception and subsequent plotting of a story. It's from a central theme that the idea first starts to take shape, helping characters and conflict emerge organically.

I wrote the first iteration of what has become *Bring Me Fire* to provide my excitable Year 7 students with a short fantasy story for their unit on genre. I began writing knowing two things: it would have dragons (because I like them), and its theme would be feminist (because I am). Teaching in a Middle Eastern country with strong, creative, intelligent female students – and a society which so often subjugates such personality traits in these women – I knew I wanted my story to essentially have a character who *has* power but has been brought up to believe her power's only worth is

in relation to the men in her society. She believes she has no choice and, upon discovering she, in fact, does have a choice, she chooses differently. To me, what I had to say was clear: *there are many ways for a woman to live her life; you have power, the power to choose differently.*

Kirsten Simmons took the same first step when she began to write *The Glass Arrow*, focusing first on what she wanted to say, and letting the story grow from there, saying, 'I wanted to write a story where worth is determined by so much more than the value other people place on your body'[30]. What evolved from this initial message was a world presenting the direct opposite: a world where girls are taken to 'the Garden', trained and rated for their looks and thus sold at an auction into domestic slavery. Endorsing the slavery of women is, of course, not the message behind the novel (or any, I would hope); it's how characters navigate these worlds which decide it. Rather, the dystopian world she created along with the path her character takes through it, as ever, resulted in the message she first envisioned. So decide what your message is, stick it to your desk, put it on your fridge. Keep it in sight; you'll need it.

Next, Conceptualise Your Theme

So, having devised a feminist message, where do you go from there? Just as Simmons and countless before and after her have done, you must take your message and create a world which depicts the direct opposite. Want to show how inhumanely women have been treated for centuries? Create a world of reversed gender roles where the rights of men are lesser to those of women[31]. Want to show that traditional gender roles have no place in human survival? Create a post-apocalyptic world which still clings to them[32].

As I said, with *Bring Me Fire*, one message I wanted to send was that *there is more than one way for a woman to live her life.* Turning this on its head seemed simple: I sought to create a world where there *is* only one way for a woman to live her life. Not dissimilar from gender expectations of 'not so long ago' or 'not so far away', girls in *Aneth* are expected to give everything they have – time, money, power – in the pursuit and attainment of a 'Match'/husband. This concept is purely based on social expectation and, as I mentioned earlier, sprouted a whole series of questions which needed answering to create a fully functioning patriarchy – more on that later.

It is this idea of 'power' which houses the second and more nuanced message that effectively drives the entirety of the story: *you have power, the power to choose differently.* Therefore, in *Bring Me Fire*, 'power' would not be Michel Foucault's pervasive and often immeasurable theoretical concept[33], but rather a literal, magical power (it is a fantasy, after all). Every girl would have this power, and every girl would have to give it up.

But what will they give it up to? It needed to be, I decided, something which the patriarchy appropriates to make its own. Something which science and religion and politics have imbued with 'knowledge', something which is taught to everybody in every

corner of the land and, above all, something which the patriarchy would be hard-pressed to give up. This is where the dragons came in.

Now, Decide on How Norms are Developed and Maintained

If you are a budding feminist novelist, if you have your message on your mind and your concept at hand, I say *well done; the easy part is over.* Now the hard part begins – creating reasons why your characters would go along with such oppressive regimes in the first place.

In that long-ago first draft, I presumptuously thought that the pressure of social expectation would be enough to drive Clayr to make rash decisions. To me, it made sense: are not thousands of girls pressured by their family into forced marriages every year?[34] Are not billions of women spending $20 billion each year on cosmetics in an effort to appear attractive to the male gaze?[35] If women abide by norms without really understanding the reasons in our own world, why could Clayr not do the same in hers? Originally, Clayr was prepared to pour all of her essence into a dragon's egg and use it to secure a marriage of high social standing – to become a man's property – purely because she didn't know any better. Pressure was enough to propel her, and this reasoning was enough to propel me.

This thinking, I realised, would be doing a disservice to my message. While in various ways across the globe power is held by men, it is not always easy to define how and why this power is held. We are so close to the picture, it seems, that it is sometimes difficult to see the canvas as a whole. Readers, however, should be able to see, to some degree, these power discourses within a fictionalised patriarchy; even if the protagonist and the other assembling cast of characters cannot. To do this, I found – after much hair-tearing – the two questions I had to ask myself: first, *why* is the system like this in the first place? Then, *how* is this rationale maintained?

To further understand the *why,* I returned to feminist interpretations of Foucault's power/knowledge complexes and how they 'operate at a micro-social level in order to produce regimes of truth'[36]. Finding that the two key producers of 'knowledge' or 'cultural truths' are religious and scientific institutions, I toyed with which institution to focus on in my world building. On the one hand, one theme I had focused on early in the writing process was the idea of stories and how they perpetuate social norms. Inspired by the brutal twists to patriarchal fairy tales in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*[37], and pointed in the direction of the frame narratives of Sophie Anderson's *The Girl Who Speaks Bear*[38] and Patrick Ness' *A Monster Calls*[39], I wanted to imbue my story with tales 'entrench[ing] bigotry' and upholding the patriarchy[40]. Therefore, it seemed natural to branch from fairy tales to the stories of myth and legend, stories which inexorably lean heavily on religious discourse. While scientific 'truths' have their place in my novel, too – the giving up of innate 'essence' is taught by religion and 'legitimised by reference to biology'[41] – I came to see it as a means of justifying religious doctrine, rather than standing on its own. Furthermore, organised religion is a writer's tool to create the laws and the

'Group Think'[42] of the land. As Pamela Jaye Smith puts it, 'Order is kept by religious prescriptions: it is much more efficient to implant a little policeman (morals) inside everyone than to patrol the streets 24/7'[43]. Religion produces disciplined bodies who police themselves and each other and thus, as Foucault would put it, 'assures the automatic functioning of power'[44]. Never mind 'Big Brother is Watching You'[45], God is watching you, too.

Writing religion into the novel, however, was (and still is) a continuous bone of contention. To start, I debated between whether the religion of the continent in my novel would be polytheistic or monotheistic. Having multiple gods suited that first concept of myth and fairy tale, but as the story shifted, so too did the need for a religion which spans a continent, which decides the behaviour and the laws of multiple countries, one which has one god calling the shots. Influenced by my time in the Middle East and being taught in a Church of England school, I saw that a monotheistic belief system creates a sense of unity amongst people despite differing nationalities; everyone visits the same place to worship, learns from the same religious text, and has the same single omniscient god.

Deciding to link 'the Arising' – the three-month long ritual which starts with a coming-of-age girl being gifted a dragon's egg to pouring her essence into it on her sixteenth birthday – to the religion, only came about when I introduced the Pedestal into the story. Somewhat of a reverse-panopticon, the Pedestal would rise straight from the centre of the place of worship, would tower over the city as a visual reminder of where all girls in the city were bound to go and where all the women have come from, and, most of all, gave me a physical symbol of what I needed Clayr to feel: obligated, coerced and ultimately choiceless. If she is to question the Arising, she is to question God, and there is no greater wickedness than that.

Having established the organised religion of your patriarchy, ask yourself what I next asked myself: *how* is this rationale maintained? What is the punishment for non-believers or non-conformists? Are they hung as in *The Handmaid's Tale*, stoned as in *The Grace Year*, put to death hundreds of times as in *The Gilded Ones*, or pitted in a televised fight to the death as in *The Hunger Games*[46]? Or might punishment be more subtle than these: a lower ranking[47], perhaps. An ominous exile, maybe[48].

While all of these disciplinary systems are effective in controlling their subjects, I was always wary of having a *1984*-style fascist regime. I tried at it, layering in a violent authoritarian regime who would put non-believers on 'the Pyre' if they were to so much as forget to say 'Haiathin blesses you' after sneezing, but it didn't stick – although it took me a while to work out why. Looking at Offred and Katniss, Tierney and Deka, these protagonists are all bitterly aware of the injustice in their circumstances and it's no wonder; with violence inflicted on women at every turn, it's plain to see. They're 'in the know', as it were, and are already looking for an avenue in which to escape the tyranny which governs them. With Clayr, however, I wanted to paint a more naïve figure, one with a quiet discontent which sometimes bubbles into unexamined rage. Therefore, I eventually decided the consequences of non-conformity would be

ingrained in the system: if girls don't focus on the Arising, they will Match poorly; if girls don't succeed in the Arising at all, they are Outcast. That's if they survive. In my experience, it's worth choosing your disciplinary system based off your character first. They won't lead you wrong.

If, by now, you have created a religious or scientific system teaching cultural 'truths' and enforced a disciplinary system to ensure they are obeyed, you should have, as Sandra Bartky says, turned 'women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers'[49]. You might even call it a patriarchy. Congratulations; now go knock it down.

Extra Advice: Pair Your Patriarchy with your 'Path'

In 2020 after showing my Year 7 students my little feminist fantasy story (which received mixed reviews), I gave them a project: to write the first chapter of a fantasy novel. While in hindsight this was slightly ambitious, regardless, the students got to it with varying degrees of tenacity. Part and parcel of this project, naturally, was to invent a fantasy world. After three weeks of arduous project-ing and a lot of anxious emails, my dear students handed in chapters ranging from anywhere between three-quarters of a page to thirteen pages. Despite the fact that I was marking them on style of language, punctuation and grammar, some students apologised and advised me not to read a word of their stories. Others asked if they could get them published[50]. Many, however, had fallen into a trap that I, too, had fallen into before: they had gone wandering into 'the wood'.

'The wood', of course, is not Mirkwood[51] or The Forbidden Forest[52] – and nor is the allegory of 'the wood' my own – rather, 'the wood', as Philip Pullman puts it, 'is the world in which the characters live and have their being; it's the realm of all the things that could possibly happen to them; it's the notional space where their histories exist, and where their future lives are going to continue after the story reaches the last page'[53]. Having spent so much time growing my patriarchal layering of trees which stand there and deciding which leaves fall and which roots stick out, it seemed counterintuitive to not take my reader on a tour of them. A word of warning: don't.

After devising the intricacies of my own patriarchy, my 'wood', my initial intention was to take the brilliant Anne Lamott's advice: 'Plot grows out of character'[54]. Whilst it may be true that characters can show up midway through and steal the show (like 'Helise', Clayr's antihero, teacher and, ultimately, love interest, for example), I found that leaving Clayr to her own devices did nothing for my story. She stumbled around the wood, heard a story or two from a comatose patient, tripped over a pesky tree root and never got up again. To rescue Clayr, I had to put aside Lamott's wise words, and focus on her path.

Focusing on the path, however, seemed illogical to writing intentionally towards what I was trying to say. By this point, my world was roughly sketched out and I knew that I would have a protagonist who naïvely lived in a patriarchal society until a stranger showed up to tell her stories and, story by story, her eyes would gradually

open, thus giving her a new – and unsettling – perspective on her world. Somewhat inspired by the structure of Andrew Davidson's *The Gargoyle*[55], aside from Clayr listening to the patient's stories and going off on errands around town to show off my sparkly patriarchy, nothing much happened. It was defying, I can now admit, the primary definition of a story: 'Stories are about stuff happening. Without that, you have at best a vignette.'[56] Even though literary fiction might be able to get away with a plotless series of vignettes, YA cannot.

Due to its readership and how 'voraciously'[57] they read, YA requires a high-stakes plot which keeps the pages turning. YA writers, therefore, have no business fannying about in the wood. We, as Pullman puts it, have other priorities: 'The business of the storyteller is with the storyline, with the path. You can make your story-wood, your invented world, as rich and full as you like, but be very, very careful not to be tempted off the path. […] The reason for this is very simple: if you leave the path, the readers put down the book'[58]. And no message ever got sent to someone who quits halfway through a book – not the right one, at least.

Pairing your patriarchy with your path might seem simple, but what it requires is a detective's pinboard and the discipline of an athlete to make every scene and every object significant. Where Anton Chekhov famously said, 'If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired.[59], adapting this to a dystopian, patriarchal fantasy might sound something like this: *if in the first chapter you have a dragon melding her own chains closed, by the last chapter she should have broken them.* Perhaps that's a little too on the nose. In short, every element introduced in your patriarchy must influence the main character's path and, therefore, the final climax. Even if, as Will Wiles explains in relation to reading Michael Crichton's *Congo*[60], the purpose for what you have included might seem obvious to start, everything must tie together at the end: 'A good twist is like a hot-air balloon: all the components are right there in plain sight, but the reader doesn't know what they are looking at until the crucial moment'[61].

Take Louis Sachar's *Holes*, for instance – a masterclass in plotting if ever there was one[62]. The reader does not understand the significance of Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather carrying a pig up a mountain, other than it got him cursed by a one-legged gypsy. The reader also does not understand the significance of the doomed romance between Katherine Barlow and Sam, nor the onions, nor the peaches, nor Stanley Yelnats I's robbery. Even as revelations are drip-fed in – Zero's real name, the reason the boys are digging, the location of their camp – the plot twist at the climax still creates an inevitable and resounding *ahhh* of catharsis as all the elements are drawn together every single time. And believe me, I've read it about fifteen times with around three hundred students; the *ahhh* is always there.

I say all of this, of course, because in my complete 'shitty first draft'[63] of *Bring Me Fire*, there were parts of my world which I had laid down at the beginning (because I'd taken so long thinking about them), which had no place in the ending. In fact, in the

surging race towards writing the last chapters, many plot points completely fizzled out. The dragons were completely forgotten about, the antagonist didn't show up for the show down, the secondary characters ceased to exist. Talk about guns not being fired, there was a whole armoury left fully loaded.

Most importantly, was the overall message sent? Not quite. The story was all setup, with little payoff. I couldn't see the path for the trees. By my most recent draft, this has changed. The setup and subplots all tie into the ending in a dramatic – and epic, if I do say so myself – reflection of the beginning: the dragon who's melding her own chains closed breaks them, the friend concerned only with Matching almost dies because of it, the Prince is not a prince but a cruel businessman Promised to Helise, Helise is the runaway manservant who's been sending men to sleep across the city. Clayr finds a purpose for her essence; to save her Relapsing friend. No trees are passed without reason, no roots are tripped on without consequence.

So, to echo Pullman's advice: you've created your patriarchy, your wood, now only include the trees beside your character's path. Preferably, put a few in her way, too. You didn't make those trees for no reason, after all.

A Few Last Words...

Now, having researched and written a novel with a patriarchal system, how do you build a patriarchy? Before anything, know what makes a patriarchy, then you can write your message (stick it to your fridge, desk, forehead). Next look in the mirror; create a concept which shows the direct opposite. After this, get into the nitty gritty: devise a norm-making, 'truth' teaching religion or scientific institution, as well as a disciplinary system which upholds these norms. Finally, think up a path through your patriarchy, a path where your protagonist picks up little trinkets – a match here, a scrap of paper there – until by the end they can put all the pieces together and use them to escape the wood. That, or burn it to the ground.

In his essay "Between Mum and the Wild Garden", Adam Thorpe says, 'To write a novel is to don a different pair of spectacles, to test a different way of looking at things'[64]. In terms of writing dystopian novels, I would rather liken the process to looking in a mirror; everything is the same, but also the complete opposite, the inverse.

The magic of looking in this mirror is that the longer you look, the more you notice. As you delve deeper into plotting, characterization and worldbuilding, messages begin to emerge almost organically. Around a year into writing this novel, I was given some golden advice by my mentor: if you ever get stuck in your world building, use your theme to inform it[65]. What this did was give me the opportunity to truly interrogate my own understanding of feminism and gender inequality. Did I know when I first started writing that my novel would explore self-worth and its connection to the 'power' of beauty and sexuality? No. Did I realise that the story would say that genders are innately different due to their biology (innate female essence), but in the same breath explore the idea of gender as performance (Helise's disguise as a man)[66]? Of course not. In fact, it came as a shock to myself to *not know* which branch of feminist

theory I believe in, and an even bigger shock to be able to say to myself, "It's okay to not know." To find out, maybe I'll just have to keep on writing.

Endnotes

[1] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, (London: Vintage, 1996).
[2] Naomi Alderman, *The Power*, (Penguin: London, 2016).
[3] Leni Zumas, *Red Clocks*, (London: Harper Collins, 2019).
[4] Christina Dalcher, *Vox*, (London: Harper Collins, 2019).
[5] Jane Austen, *Jane Austen: The Complete Novels*, (Kent: Crown Publishers, 1995).
[6] Sophie Kinsella, *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*, (London: Black Swan, 2000).
[7] Milica Milenkovic, "The Leadership Gap: 20 Revealing Male vs Female CEO Statistics", (March 2022), Accessed on 5th June 2022 at >https://www.smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/male-vs-female-ceo-statistics/#gref<
[8] Aaron O'Neill, "Number of countries where the de facto highest position of executive power was held by a woman from 1960 to 2022", (May, 2022), Accessed on 5th June 2022 at >https://www.statista.com/statistics/1058345/countries-with-women-highest-position-executive-power-since-1960/<
[9] Catherine Clifford, "Global Wealth Inequality is 'founded on sexism', says Oxfam International, (Jan, 2020), Accessed on 29th August 2022 at > https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/17/global-wealth-inequality-is-founded-on-sexism-oxfam-international.html<
[10] Namina Forna, *The Gilded Ones*, (London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2021).
[11] Kim Liggett, *The Grace Year*, (London: Del Ray, 2019).
[12] Kristen Simmons, *The Glass Arrow*, (New York: Macmillan, 2015).
[13] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale.*
[14] Naomi Alderman, *The Power.*
[15] Namina Forna, *The Gilded Ones.*
[16] Kim Liggett, *The Grace Year.*
[17] George Orwell, *Why I Write*, (London: Penguin, 1946), p.5.
[18] Lisa Cron, *Story Genius*, (New York: Ten Speed, 2016), p.17.
[19] Mary Kole, *Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2012), p.89.
[20] Elen Caldecott, 3rd Tutorial of Lancaster University MA in Creative Writing, 2020-2022.
[21] *Oxford Leaner's Dictionary*, Accessed on 3rd June 2022 at > https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/<
[22] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p.25.
[23] Tehlor Kay Mejia, *We Set the Dark on Fire*, (Katherine Tegen Books: New York, 2019).
[24] Louise O'Neill, *Only Ever Yours*, (London: Quercus Editions Ltd., 2014).
[25] Sue Lloyd Roberts, "Saudi Arabia: The World's Largest Women's Prison", *The War on Women*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 2016).
[26] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, (London: Vintage Books, 1991), Kindle loc. 35 of 1431.
[27] O'Neill, *Only Ever Yours.*
[28] Louise O'Neill, "Louise O'Neill Interview: Only Ever Yours", (May 2015), Accessed on 22nd August 2022 at <https://www.denofgeek.com/books/louise-o-neill-interview-only-ever-yours/>
[29] K.M. Weiland, *Writing Your Story's Theme*, (Nebraska: Pen for a Sword Publishing, 2021), pp.4-6.
[30] Kristen Simmons, "Interview with Kristen Simmons, author of *The Glass Arrow*", Cindy Hudson, *Mother Daughter Book Club*, (July, 2017). Accessed on 3rd June 2022 at > https://motherdaughterbookclub.com/2017/07/interview-with-kristen-simmons-author-of-the-glass-arrow/<

[31] K.L. Kettle, *The Boy I Am*, (London: Stripes Publishing, 2021).
[32] Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*, (New York: Hatchett Book Group, 1993).
[33] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (London: Penguin, 2020).
[34] Rao Farman Ali, "Forced Marriages: In Kashmir, old habits die hard", *The Express Tribune*, (November 2013), Accessed on 25th August 2020 at https://tribune.com.pk/story/636425/forced-marriages-in-kashmir-old-habits-die-hard
[35] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, (London: Vintage Books, 1991), Kindle loc. 203 of 1431.
[36] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), pp. 25-27.
[37] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, (London: Vintage, 2006).
[38] Sophie Anderson, *The Girl Who Speaks Bear*, (Usborne Publishing: London, 2019).
[39] Patrick Ness, *A Monster Calls*, (Walker Books Ltd., London: 2011).
[40] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), Kindle location 7863.
[41] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism*, p.17.
[42] Pamela Jaye Smith, *The Power of the Dark Side*, (Studio City, California: Michael Wiese Productions, 2008), p.98.
[43] Pamela Jaye Smith, *The Power of the Dark Side*, (Studio City, CA: Michael Weise Productions, 2008), p.109.
[44] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2020),
[45] George Orwell, *1984*, (London: Penguin, 2008).
[46] Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, (New York: Scholastic, 2011).
[47] Louise O'Neill, *Only Ever Yours*.
[48] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, (London: Vintage, 2007).
[49] Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, femininity and the modernisation of patriarchal power", ed. Irene Diamond & Lee Quinby, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p.75.
[50] And some, one day, just might.
[51] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954).
[52] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1997).
[53] Philip Pullman, "The Path Through the Wood" in *Deamon Voices*, (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2017), p.87.
[54] Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 1994), p.52.
[55] Andrew Davidson, *The Gargoyle*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009).
[56] Graeme Shimmin, "On Being Boring", *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Nicholas Royle, (Norfolk: SALT Publishing, 2015), p.156.
[57] Mary Kole, *Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2012), p.2.
[58] Philip Pullman, "The Path Through the Wood" in *Daemon Voices*, (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2017), pp.89-90
[59] Anton Chekhov, "Writing 101: What is Chekhov's Gun?", *Masterclass.com*, Accessed at > https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-101-what-is-chekhovs-gun-learn-how-to-use-chekhovs-gun-in-your-writing< on Monday 22nd August 2022.
[60] Michael Crichton, *Congo*, (New York: Avon Books, 1980).
[61] Will Wiles, "Plot Twists", *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Nicholas Royle, (Norfolk: SALT Publishing, 2015), p.151.
[62] Louis Sachar, *Holes*, (New York: Farrar, 1998).
[63] Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 1994), p.20.
[64] Adam Thorpe, "Between Mum and the Wild Garden", *How Novelists Work*, ed. Maura Dooley, (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press Ltd, 2000), p.13.
[65] Elen Caldecott, 5th Tutorial of Lancaster University MA in Creative Writing, 2020-2022.
[66] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 1990).

Works Cited

Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi, *We Should All Be Feminists*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2014).
Ali, Rao Farman, "Forced Marriages: In Kashmir, old habits die hard", *The Express Tribune*, (November 2013), Accessed on 25th August 2020 at https://tribune.com.pk/story/636425/forced-marriages-in-kashmir-old-habits-die-hard.
Alderman, Naomi, *The Power*, (Penguin: London, 2016).
Anderson, Sophie, *The Girl Who Speaks Bear*, (Usborne Publishing: London, 2019).
Atwood, Margaret, *The Handmaid's Tale*, (London: Vintage, 1996).
Atwood, Margaret, *On Writers and Writing*, (London: Virago, 2002).
Bardugo, Leigh, *Six of Crows*, (Orion: London, 2016).
Bardugo, Leigh, *Crooked Kingdom*, (Orion: London, 2016).
Barrett, Michelle, *Women's Oppression Today*, (London: Verso, 2014).
Ashfeldt, Lane, "Building a World", *Short Circuit: A Guide to the Art of the Short Story*, (Norfolk: SALT Publishing, 2013).
Bartky, Sandra, "Foucault, femininity and the modernisation of patriarchal power", ed. Irene Diamond & Lee Quinby, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988).
Betsy Lerner, *The Forest for the Trees*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010).
Brody, Jessica, *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel*, (New York: Ten Speed, 2018).
Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 1990).
Butler, Octavia, *The Parable of the Sower*, (New York: Hatchett Book Group, 1993).
Caldecott, Elen, Tutorials for Lancaster University MA in Creative Writing, 2020-2022.
Carter, Angela, *The Bloody Chamber*, (London: Vintage, 2006).
Chekhov, Anton, "Writing 101: What is Chekhov's Gun?", *Masterclass.com*, Accessed at >https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-101-what-is-chekhovs-gun-learn-how-to-use-chekhovs-gun-in-your-writing< on Monday 22nd August 2022.
Chemaly, Soraya, *Rage Becomes Her*, (New York: Atria Paperback, 2018).
Clifford, Catherine, "Global Wealth Inequality is 'founded on sexism', says Oxfam International, (Jan, 2020), Accessed on 29th August 2022 at >https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/17/global-wealth-inequality-is-founded-on-sexism-oxfam-international.html<.
Crichton, Michael, *Congo*, (New York: Avon Books, 1980).
Cron, Lisa, *Wired for Story*, (New York: Ten Speed, 2012).
Cron, Lisa, *Story Genius*, (New York: Ten Speed, 2016).
Collins, Suzanne, *The Hunger Games*, (New York: Scholastic, 2011).
Dalcher, Christina, *Vox*, (London: Harper Collins, 2019).
Davidson, Andrew, *The Gargoyle*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009).
Diamond, Irene, & Quinby, Lee, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988).
Fine, Cordelia, *Delusions of Gender*, (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 2010).
Flanagan, Liz, *Dragon Daughter*, (Oxford: David Fickling Book, 2018).
Ford, Clementine, *Fight Like a Girl*, (London: Oneworld Publications, 2019).
Forna, Namina, *The Gilded Ones*, (London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 2021).
Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish*, (London: Penguin, 2020).
Harry, Anneka, *Gender Rebels*, (New York: Little A, 2020).
Hartman, Rachel, *Seraphina*, (London: Corgi Childrens, 2013).
Huxley, Aldous, *Brave New World*, (London: Vintage, 2007).

Jasinka, Alicia, *The Dark Tide*, (Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2020).
Lamott, Anne, *Bird by Bird*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 1994).
Le Guin, Ursula K., *Steering the Craft*, (New York: First Mariner Books, 2015).
Le Guin, Ursula K., *Earthsea: The First Four Books*, (London: Penguin, 2016).
Levy, Ariel, *Female Chauvinist Pig: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 2005).
Liggett, Kim, *The Grace Year*, (London: Del Ray, 2019).
Lodge, David, *The Art of Fiction*, (London: Vintage, 2011).
Lowry, Lois, *The Giver*, (London: Harper Collins, 1993).
Kettle, K.L., *The Boy I Am*, (London: Stripes Publishing, 2021).
King, Stephen, *On Writing: A Memoir on the Craft*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000).
Kole, Mary, *Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2012).
Mann, Kate, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, (London: Penguin, 2019).
McNay, Lois, *Foucault and Feminism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994).
Mejia, Tehlor Kay, *We Set the Dark on Fire*, (Katherine Tegen Books: New York, 2019).
Mejia, Tehlor Kay, *We Unleash the Merciless Storm*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2020).
Milenkovic, Milica, "The Leadership Gap: 20 Revealing Male vs Female CEO Statistics", (March 2022), Accessed on 5th June 2022 at >https://www.smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/male-vs-female-ceo-statistics/#gref<.
Ness, Patrick, *A Monster Calls*, (London: Walker Books Ltd., 2011).
Ness, Patrick, *Burn*, (London: Walker Books Ltd., 2020).
Olufemi, Lola, *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power*, (London: Pluto Press, 2020).
O'Neill, Aaron, "Number of countries where the de facto highest position of executive power was held by a woman from 1960 to 2022", (May, 2022), Accessed on 5th June 2022 at >https://www.statista.com/statistics/1058345/countries-with-women-highest-position-executive-power-since-1960/<.
O'Neill, Louise, *Only Ever Yours*, (London: Quercus Editions Ltd., 2014).
O'Neill, Louise, "Louise O'Neill Interview: Only Ever Yours", (May 2015), Accessed on 22nd August 2022 at https://www.denofgeek.com/books/louise-o-neill-interview-only-ever-yours/.
Orwell, George, *Why I Write*, (London: Penguin, 1946).
Orwell, George, *1984*, (London: Penguin, 2008).
Oxford Leaner's Dictionary, Accessed on 3rd June 2022 at > https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/<.
Paolini, Christopher, *Eragon*, (Paradise Valley: Paolini International, 2002).
Pinker, Steven, *The Sense of Style*, (London: Penguin, 2015).
Pullman, Philip, *Deamon Voices*, (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2017).
Roberts, Sue Lloyd, *The War on Women*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 2016).
Sachar, Lois, *Holes*, (New York: Farrar, 1998).
Sawiki, Jana, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, (New York: Routledge, 1991).
Simmons, Kristen, *The Glass Arrow*, (New York: Macmillan, 2015).
Simmons, Kristen, "Interview with Kristen Simmons, author of *The Glass Arrow*", Cindy Hudson, *Mother Daughter Book Club*, (July, 2017). Accessed on 3rd June 2022 at >

https://motherdaughterbookclub.com/2017/07/interview-with-kristen-simmons-author-of-the-glass-arrow/<
Shimmin, Graeme, "On Being Boring", *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Nicholas Royle, (Norfolk: SALT Publishing, 2015).
Smith, Pamela Jaye, *The Power of the Dark Side*, (Studio City, California: Michael Wiese Productions, 2008).
Taylor, Dianna & Vintges, Karen, ed., *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, (Illinois: The University of Illinois, 2004).
Thorpe, Adam, "Between Mum and the Wild Garden", *How Novelists Work*, ed. Maura Dooley, (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press Ltd, 2000).
Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954).
Walter, Heather, *Malice*, (London: Penguin Random House, 2021).
Warner, Marina, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), Kindle location 7863.
Weiland, K.M., *Writing Your Story's Theme*, (Nebraska: Pen for a Sword Publishing, 2021).
Wiles, Will, "Plot Twists", *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Nicholas Royle, (Norfolk: SALT Publishing, 2015).
Wolf, Naomi, *The Beauty Myth*, (London: Vintage Books, 1991).
Wolf, Naomi, *Vagina: A New Biography*, (London: Virago Press, 2013).
Yorke, John, *Into the Woods*, (London: Penguin, 2013).
Zumas, Leni, *Red Clocks*, (London: Harper Collins, 2019).

Author Biography

Sophie Clarke is a writer, copyeditor and ex-teacher living in the northwest of England. After eight years of working in South Korea, Vietnam, and Qatar, she returned to the UK to complete her MA in Creative Writing and pursue a career as a children's and YA novelist. When writing, she believes books should speak to children as friends, echoing their voices and experience and, ultimately, covering big themes enjoyably.