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WORKINGS OF POWER IN *THE 100*:  
PARADOXES IN POST-APOCALYPTIC SOCIETIES

## **Abstract**

This study is an attempt to determine what role power plays in post-apocalyptic audio-visual culture and what influence it has on the nature of the dystopian post-apocalyptic film genre. The emergence of post-apocalypticism in American popular culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has led to a projection of our collective hopes and fears onto film worlds. The empty canvas of a world without ideologies, law, governments, or religion allows for a complete re-imagining of social life. The American dystopian post-apocalyptic science fiction drama series *The 100* (2014 –) is used as a case study. This thesis examines the way in which power operates in relation to politics and gender in three societies within its fictional world, using the theories and ideas of Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984). Said collective hopes and fears are represented simultaneously in the paradoxical roots of these communities. The society of the Mountain Men seems to be based on ‘contaminated purity’ when looking at their culture, heritage and physicality, the society of the Grounder Clans appears to have its roots in ‘female masculinity’ with an emphasis on violence, and the society of the Sky People gives the impression of ‘civilized primitiveness’, highlighting continuous surveillance. Since the Sky People are implicitly divided in the Arkadians and the Hundred, they are the more complex community and are therefore explored in further detail. They are also the ones that transcend the other two societies in their social progressivity. It becomes clear that all instances of power dynamics have become internalized and normalized, creating individual self-regulation. The three paradoxical roots of these societies lead up to the grand paradox of the genre itself, constructing a ‘utopian dystopia’ in which the post-apocalyptic world is glorified.

## Keywords

*Dystopian fiction, gender, femininity, leadership, masculinity, post-apocalypticism, power, purification, societies, surveillance, The 100, violence, utopianism.*



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## Introduction

When I started watching the television series *The 100* a few years ago, I was struck by the non-traditional elements that it contained. First, the protagonists often acted in morally ambiguous ways and made mistakes, whereas the antagonists were able to redeem themselves more than once, creating a large grey area without boundaries between the good and the bad guys. Second, in its post-apocalyptic world, not one, but three new societies had emerged and one is still in the process of development, thereby the series distinguishes itself from other dystopian films in the same genre. Third, the most successful leaders in all layers of society seem to be young women, which is a radicalization of the rise of the female hero in recent years. And fourth, being queer is just as normal as being heterosexual. These four instant observations I made as a fan, made me want to analyze some of these elements in more detail. I realized that the key concept to all of those aspects is *power*. Not possessed power, but the power dynamics that circulate among and between the three societies that are introduced. Moreover, what consequences those power dynamics have not only for the respective societies, but for the post-apocalyptic genre as a whole. Politics and gender were used as the two main realms of power, because the TV series highlights these aspects the most. Especially the combination between politics and gender, in this case resulting in female leadership, is relevant for our world today. On International Women's Day this year, a statue of a little girl was placed across the iconic bronze bull statue on Wall Street. According to the artist, Kristen Visbal, the girl is about seven years old, has her hands on her hips and looks defiantly at the larger creature mere feet from her. The plaque that accompanies 'The Fearless Girl' holds engraved the following words: "Know the Power of Women in Leadership, SHE makes a difference". Pictures of the statue went viral on social media in the following hours and many women came to see it in person. All of this happened about a year after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made public that half of his cabinet was going to exist of female politicians. In Western contemporary society there seems to be a growing discussion on gender equality in powerful positions. Political scholar Michael Genovese argues that very little research has been done on this topic because of two reasons: scholars who do research political leadership are very often men, and nearly all national political leaders that we know in our world have been men (Genovese, 1993: ix). Furthermore, research on post-apocalyptic film worlds is all relatively recent, for the genre has crept into the realm of popular culture only about a decade ago, and most post-apocalyptic film worlds present one new – often dystopian – society in which a rebellion takes place to throw over the government, think of

blockbuster movies such as *The Hunger Games* series (2012–2015), the *Divergent* series (2014–2017), and the *Maze Runner* series (2014–2018) or examples on television like *Falling Skies* (2011–2015) or *Revolution* (2012–2014). We will see that the unfolding of the narrative in *The 100*, as well as its emphases, is quite different. Let us first look at a synopsis of the series.

*The 100* (2014 –) is “an American dystopian post-apocalyptic science fiction drama series” (CW) loosely based on the first book of *The 100 Series* written by Kass Morgan. The unfolding of the narrative and the character developments in the books differ from the ones in the television series, and in this thesis we will look at the film adaptation only and disregard the original narrative. The series was developed by Jason Rothenberg, produced by Alloy Entertainment, CBS Television Studios and Warner Bros. Television, and is broadcast on The CW Network. The series has a group protagonist, following multiple leading characters on different but intertwined narratives, with Clarke Griffin played by Eliza Taylor as the main heroine in the story. As of March 2014, 58 episodes have aired with an estimated 2.7 million American viewers, which makes it “the most-watched show in its time slot on The CW since 2010” (Kondoljy, par. 1).

*The 100* is set 97 years after Earth was hit by a nuclear apocalypse, presumably in the year 2052. Twelve countries had space stations in orbit at the times of the bombs and in order to survive in the long run, those stations were forged together into the Ark.



Image 1: Logo of the TV show 'The 100'

The ark has about 2.200 survivors of the human race, and in fear of overpopulation, no couple is allowed to have more than one child and every crime is considered to be a capital crime. Even though every offense is punishable by death, children and adolescents under 18 are put in lock-up and get reviewed when they become of age. The council knows that there is a system failure in the Ark, and although they were supposed to survive in space for 300 years, the station is dying. Therefore, the Chancellor decides to send one hundred prisoners to the ground to find out if Earth is survivable despite the still present radiation. These juveniles do

not know what is happening precisely, just that they are being monitored by the Ark through wristbands. That is why they decide to take them off and start their own community near Washington D.C. The narrative then unfolds when it turns out that there are multiple societies that have emerged since the apocalypse and many of them are actually at war with each other in order to survive. The three societies that are zoomed in on are the Mountain Men, the Grounder Clans, and the Sky People (with a further distinction into the Arkadians and the Hundred). *The 100* consistently deals with issues of power or impotence, law and crime, survival and redemption, leadership and decision-making throughout the entire run of the show so far.

In order to place this TV series in its genre, the term ‘post-apocalypticism’ needs to be introduced. Apocalypticism is the idea within certain Christian belief systems that the world will come to an end, usually with the accompanying faith that people who have devoted their lives to God will remain to start a new society without atheism or technology or science, but “in modern parlance the apocalypse refers to an *event, act or occurrence (accidental or otherwise) that brings about the end of the world*” (Yar, 2015: 2). In the second half of the twentieth century, books, films and series in the genre of science fiction were frequently focused on this idea, often without the religious context. We all know the stories about nuclear wars, alien invasions, major natural disasters or zombies taking over the world. The fascination with apocalypticism in popular culture does not come as a complete shock. The twentieth century knew many catastrophic instances, from major natural disasters to two world wars and the development of the nuclear bomb (Horton, 2014: 73). These instances could be seen as leading up to a major apocalypse. Representations of such matters in cultural discourses “may deal with events leading-up to ‘the end’, and depict heroic attempts (successful or doomed) to prevent catastrophe (Yar, 2015: 2). Yet, where the second half of the twentieth century was dominated by apocalypticism in popular culture, the twenty-first seems to have popularized the post-apocalyptic setting in young adult literature and film adaptations: ““Teresa Heffernan argues that contemporary fiction has shifted modes [...], moving away from an apocalyptic attention to the end as a “story of renewal and redemption” (11) and instead embracing a postapocalyptic [sic] preoccupation with life *after catastrophe*”” (Horton, 2014: 73). Therefore the apocalypse – the major disaster which leads to the end of the world – is not actually the end of the world in popular culture: “instead, it’s the beginning of a new world, a world that is devoid of strong central government and traditional social institutions (Yuen, 2012: xiii). The apocalypse is thus more a catalyst from which new

communities can emerge and different ideologies can arise. Heffernan argues that this statement leads to one of two options: 1) “an “anxiety” regarding the sense of living “after the end,”, or 2) “the hope that the very openness of narrative that cannot be claimed by a unifying telos, that resists the pull of imagined or real absolute ends, keeps alive infinite directions and possibilities” (Heffernan in Horton, 2014: 73). The idea that after an apocalypse governments have fallen, laws have been broken, and ideologies have disappeared, allows for almost complete freedom of narrative. There are no (invisible) rules that guide the unfolding of the story, because there are no rules. This may enable the rise of new kinds of characters, seemingly illogical decisions or ‘weird’ visual depictions. Elana Gomel similarly argues that even though apocalypticism should entail closure because it is the end of the world, it actually opens up “the space of sequentiality” (Gomel in Murphy, 2013: 234). She goes on to say that the catastrophe is intertwined with “the logic of continuity ... the end is never final ... [it is a] brave new world, arising from the destruction of the old” (Gomel in Murphy, 2013: 234). The apocalypse has not only caused the eradication of many animal species as well as almost the entire human race, it has also erased most of the existing worldviews and patriarchal social order that is often at the core of those. When new societies emerge in this ‘clean’ world, there are no assumptions when it comes to pre-existing hierarchies within groups of people.

To analyze the dynamics of power in the realm of politics and gender, the main theoretical framework consists of the theories and ideas of Michel Foucault. By applying a Foucauldian theory of power to the case study of *The 100*, I hope to come to a more detailed understanding of the workings of post-apocalypticism in contemporary American popular culture. The methodology that is used in this thesis is cognitive film analysis, of which I will combine several approaches to help us realize what the series is trying to do. A topic-based, narrative approach, as I mainly look at the internal, formalist aspects of the film world, including characterization and close readings of mise-en-scène, camera movement, photographic composition and sound. A feminist approach, as I will also look at the portrayal of women in the series. And ultimately, a contextualist and generic approach, since I will view *The 100* to be representative of the dystopian post-apocalyptic genre of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as a way of mirroring and re-imagining our own contemporary Western society at large.

In this thesis, film is interpreted as an umbrella term for all contemporary audio-visual culture, thus television series are part of this definition. *The 100* shows not one but three different societies that have emerged since the apocalypse, all with their own norms and social

hierarchies, thereby effectively being able to portray hopes and fears and let them play out in different scenarios. Power appears to be the key concept when it comes to reimagining social life and the two most important concepts *The 100* uses to demonstrate its progressiveness are politics and gender. The main research question is therefore: How does power operate in the post-apocalyptic TV show *The 100*? This question will be answered by analyzing the workings of power within the three separate societies that are introduced by linking one Foucauldian concept to each of them. The Mountain Men will be looked at through the ritual of purification, the Grounders will be analyzed through the norm of violence, and the Sky People will be studied through the lens of surveillance. We will see that all of these societies, even the so-called pre-modern ones, have become self-regulated over time. Laws have turned into individualized norms everywhere. By looking at three societies in the film world of *The 100*, I hope to suggest a change in the nature of the genre of dystopian post-apocalypticism.

## 1. Theories & Concepts

In this chapter, I will introduce some of the main theories and concepts that are used in this thesis. First, I will introduce the idea of world-making in film, since I will be looking at the film world of *The 100* as a self-contained representation of our contemporary Western world. Secondly, I will discuss the ways in which Thomas Hobbes and John Locke use the social contract theory in their ideas on society-forming. This is again especially relevant for the post-apocalyptic world of *The 100*, since the apocalypse has wiped away all existing ideologies, societies, laws and governments from the face of the Earth. People are starting to regroup or have already done so in different ways in this television series. The significance of society-forming will therefore be discussed. Thirdly, I will introduce the main theorist of the theoretical framework, Michel Foucault, and his ideas on the relations between power and knowledge. Some of the concepts he uses in relation to power are violence, surveillance, discipline, normalization and self-regulation. Although not explained or defined in detail by Foucault himself, I will use these concepts to see how power operates within three societies in *The 100*. Finally, I will link Foucault's ideas of power to gender studies and see how gender not only functions within societies in divisions of labor, but also between societies to demarcate one from the other.

### 1.1 World-Making

Victor F. Perkins established that a cinematic fictional universe is indeed a world ontologically speaking (2005: 16). Since the 1970s the ontology of film worlds has been described as “the fictional world of a story” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010: 16), and thus a representation of our contemporary world in which we live. In “Towards a Theory of Film Worlds” (2008), Daniel Yacavone conceptualizes the making and the experience of film worlds using the ideas of Nelson Goodman and Mikel Dufrenne, who both stress the self-enclosed nature of fictional worlds: a film world is singular and self-contained. Dufrenne separates the represented world (the world we live in) and the expressed world (the fictional world the audience temporarily visits). He argues that these two elements form a particular film world (Yacavone, 2008: 94). There is a certain logic – that is rules – to every fictional world. When we watch a film, we should get the feeling that we are part of the world that is represented (95). This is called the suspension of disbelief, because we temporarily believe

that we are located within the filmic universe (Perkins, 2005: 30). Yet, we are not *in* a world, but we are looking outside *at* a construction of a world (38). Moreover, Erwin Panofsky claimed that “the medium of the movies is physical reality as such” and André Bazin stated that “the cinema [is] of its essence a dramaturgy of Nature” (in Cavell, 1971: 16). In *The World Viewed* (1971), Stanley Cavell tries to make sense of film worlds ontologically by studying sounds, paintings, photographs, plays, actors, audience, and movies. Cavell asks himself what happens to reality when it is screened and/or projected. A photograph can be slightly problematic ontologically, since it represents something that is not present.

Photographs manufacture an image of the world (20). The friction lies mostly in the presence of the viewer to the object. There is a natural struggle between “the representation and the acknowledgment of our subjectivity ... [yet] photography overcame subjectivity ... [in other words] photography maintains the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it” (22-23). So when we look at a photograph, we acknowledge that the world of the photograph is real, but also that we are not there. The world of a movie is screened, leading to two functions: it makes the audience invisible, and it screens the existence of the film world from the audience. Whereas the photograph represents a world, the movie *is* a world, and its frame is the screen. The audience is not present in that world at that moment, but is present in its past, like re-living a memory. The answer to what happens to reality when it is screened thus lies in the way certain moments in movies are remembered by viewers. In short, the most conventional way of looking at a fictional world is by conceptualizing it as a singular, self-contained representation of the real world.

## **1.2 Social Contract Theory**

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke both use Social Contract Theory, albeit in a different light, to explain the necessity of society-forming. The theory entails that people’s ethics and political responsibilities depend on an agreement among the group of people, which in turn forms a society. To reside in a society therefore means that citizens have to abide to its laws. Social contract theory has been a part of philosophy for centuries, even Socrates and Plato wrote about it. Hobbes and Locke are two of the most prominent scholars to use it in modern times. Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) is known for his book *Leviathan* (1651) in which he studies society structures and legitimate government. He believes that human behavior is influenced by actions inside people’s bodies, and those acts are in turn shaped by interactions between

individuals. Hobbes thereby concludes that our behavior is formed by laws of nature. Hobbes also reasons that since people are naturally rational and self-interested at the same time, they will willingly succumb to a sovereign authority in order to live in a civil society. John Locke (1632 – 1704), known as an important Enlightenment philosopher, uses the social contract theory differently. He claims that in the state of nature Hobbes talks about, morality does exist. So even though there is no sovereignty or laws for punishment, people are still born with a sense of morality. A society emerges when people come together and give power to a government who will have the authority to make and act on laws for the inhabitants of said society.

Post-apocalyptic settings allow for the emergence of new societies: “Post-apocalyptic fiction captures our collective fears and reworks imaginatively how we might live together” (Curtis, 2015: 5). In the eighteenth century man believed that human societies were formed “in response to the incessantly violent and unstable conditions of nature” (Wright, 2016: 6). Thomas Hobbes called this the social contract theory. In accordance to John Locke’s philosophy, Geoffrey Wright states that “the reason that individuals gather themselves together and restrict their individual and natural freedoms within social boundaries is that their existence in nature is inherently precarious, due to the desires and actions of others” (2016: 6-7). The TV series seems to indirectly use Locke’s theory by stating in the opening sequence of every episode that “we will be tested, by the Earth, by the secrets it hides, and most of all, by each other”. The Earth ‘hiding secrets’ from humans adheres to the unpredictability of nature in Hobbes’ philosophy, and the warning that the characters will have to beware for one another applies to Locke’s notice that the yearning for survival and power of individuals makes them dangerous. *The 100* slowly shows multiple societies that have emerged 97 years after the apocalypse throughout three seasons of the show. We should bear in mind that the TV series *The 100* only depicts the area surrounding former Washington D.C. and does not say anything about the rest of America or the world. The show does not specify where exactly the nuclear bombs hit either. The importance of establishing a society in *The 100* is emphasized as the few Nomads – also called Wastelanders – we encounter live in the Dead Zone and are cast out of any clan often due to birth defects that ‘stain the bloodline’, meaning that because of the nuclear radiation parts of their bodies are deformed. Since the apocalypse has taken place, any form of modern government as we know it has disappeared from the face of the Earth. The idea of a world without pre-existing worldviews or ideologies allows writers to imagine their own values and ideals and project them onto the

film world. Just as in our contemporary world, not everyone agrees on those terms. Consequently, we find “a complex assembly of meanings and symbols, often contradictory in character ... [it is] the inevitable reflection of a multiplicity of viewpoints, beliefs and judgements [sic]” (Yar, 2015: 4). Those different viewpoints are materialized mainly in the organizational structures of the three most prominent societies in *The 100*. Some of the societies that are introduced to the viewers are the Grounders (including the coalition of the twelve Clans and the rebelling Ice Nation), the Mountain Men (those who survived inside of Mount Weather) and the Sky People (also called Skaikru or Arkanians, those who survived on the Ark, of which ‘The Hundred’ are a sub-division). We will analyze these communities and try to find out how they developed over time, according to which rules or laws they emerged, and what types of leaders they have.

### 1.3 Power

Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) was a French philosopher who wrote about the concept of power as an everyday social practice that shapes the way we experience our world. His ideas on knowledge and truth in relation to power dynamics have been used in academic discourse for years. He argues that truth does not have meaning unless it is produced through control (Walton, 2012: 157). Power produces different kinds of knowledge as it gathers information on social practices, for instance through confession, and that knowledge invigorates exercises of power. Foucault believes power and knowledge are closely related concepts, but they are not the same thing. This link can both limit and broaden our ways of thinking. In this reasoning, Foucault introduced his definition of discourse:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth: of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980: 131).

Regimes of truth are therefore produced through discourse, and that discourse in turn is regulated. In other words: what is knowledge, who can produce it and how? It is an institutionalized method of thinking about reality. Foucault emphasizes that power and knowledge are closely intertwined, and they cannot exist in isolation, but always stand in relation to one another. This, of course, gives legitimacy to types of social control.

In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975) Foucault gives two different examples to illustrate that power is everywhere and always present. In the first example, he describes the outbreak of the plague in a 17<sup>th</sup> century town. The town becomes quarantined as it gets closed off from the outside. One person per street is appointed to keep it under surveillance. The streets are monitored by a body of militia and officers, and the gates of the town are observed by posts. All the town's people have to register at the magistrate's office, making surveillance and identification easier. People effected by the disease are quarantined in an enclosed space. The plague, then, stands for chaos and disorder, to which the town's authorities react with order. They make sure that everyone is inside of their homes at certain times, put the effected in a separate building, and guard this surveillance by control. This system "lays down for each individual his place ... by means of an omnipresent and omniscient power that subdivides itself in a regular, uninterrupted way even to the ultimate determination of the individual" (Foucault, 1975: 197). The lepers are exiled to purify the community, and the segmentation of the plague is the consequence of a disciplined society. They individualize the excluded, but also mark that exclusion. The authorities in the town use a form of power that is adherent to disciplinary partitioning. Foucault describes the town as "the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies – this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city" (198). The second example Foucault uses is that of Bentham's *Panopticon*. The Panopticon is a prison where the cells are in an annular building and the guard tower is in the middle. The cells are enclosed, but are not dark nor hidden away. They have two windows to ensure light and are all in vision of one another. Power is consequently both visible (the tower) and unverifiable (the guards). That is the effect of the Panopticon: "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). The Panopticon automatizes and disindividualizes power: it does not matter who exercises it, everyone can operate the machine which can be used to effectively influence behavior of individuals. It may even supervise itself, since it is not simply one set of people opposite another, but many groups of people who can supervise each other. Power, then, is exercised *through* people, it is produced at every level of society (not just at the top authorities), it is constantly in motion: "power is everywhere" (93/205). The key concept here is *self-regulation*. Power is nuanced, normalized and internalized, and individuals start regulating themselves. The Panopticon is thus very different from a prison where control and order is maintained through physical violence. Instead, here the inmates find themselves in "a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (201). In both

examples, the plague and the Panopticon, there is a binary division between two groups of people. Yet, there are some major differences as well. In contrast to the town where power is regulated by those in authority, at the Panopticon it does not matter who exercises power (202). In the town, power is mobilized, everywhere and always visible, and symbolizes both a counter-city and the perfect society (205). It is what Foucault called “the disciplinary society” in which discipline is maintained through violent punishment (209). The Panopticon, on the other hand, reduces power to its ideal form: power is subtly present in all functions and layers of society in order to strengthen social forces (207-8). Whereas the effected by the plague were placed in a dark room in which they could be supervised by individuals in authority, the Panopticon is “a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole” (207). The society is thus penetrated with disciplinary mechanisms that are self-regulated by the people of the community (209).

#### **1.4 Gender**

In *The History of Sexuality* (1976 – 1984), Foucault views sex as a construction within discourses that produce knowledge and truth “which enable the social control of the sexualized body” called bio-politics (Walton, 2012: 166). Sexuality is used politically to initiate sexual heterogeneities, for which power is the key term once again. Homosexuality, which Foucault sees as a recent ‘invention’, creates new subjective spaces and creates questions about the social production of subjectivity, which led to the theory that identity is culturally constructed (Foucault, 1986[1984b]: 105). Although Foucault has never really directly addressed feminism or gender, his theory that the body and sexuality are social constructs rather than natural occurrences did contribute to feminist thinking. Foucauldian-influenced feminism analyzes gendered power relations in the everyday lives of women. It creates a space or vacuum in which former marginalized subjects can rise to power. Yet, there are also feminists who oppose Foucault’s theories as they cannot explain the oppression of women through patriarchal structures any longer. Since Foucault claims that in modern societies power is expressed through docile bodies, and therefore not possessed, it would be impossible for resistance to take place. The idea that truth is opposed to power undermines the initial goals of feminism. Still, feminists remain divided on the matter. Many use Foucault’s ideas to expose patriarchal power in the everyday lives of women, or use his theories to study gender as a social construct and therefore social control over female bodies.

Some feminist film theorists from the 21<sup>st</sup> century have looked at the role of gender in societies, domestic as well as foreign. Two of them are introduced here: Ann Towns and Mary Beth Mills. Ann Towns (2016) notices how most studies on civilization are gender-blind. Scholar Samuel Huntington (1996) identified the main civilizations in our world and distinguished their most important characteristics. He predicted that world politics will be dominated by the clash of civilizations. This theory has led to an intense debate among scholars about the definition of civilizations. In parallel of this discussion, a body of feminist work has developed on feminist civilization scholarship that revolves mainly around the status of women. Towns writes about feminist civilization scholarship in the past decades and sketches two approaches: civilizations as existing socio-cultural entities, in which the analyses are often about the accomplishments of women, and civilizations as discourses or unfolding processes of differentiation, in which theorists ask questions on how representations of the status of women are implicated in what the West is made to be. Both approaches show the centrality of women and/or gender to civilization, which is progressive in itself. Mary Beth Mills (2016) discusses gendered divisions of labor in contemporary feminist theory. In the West we see a pattern where men and women are often expected to do different, often segregated tasks in society, which in turn reinforces hierarchical gender roles and leads to gender inequality. She highlights three key theories that are taken into account here, namely that gendered hierarchies are the product of culturally varied processes, that it is intersectional, and that it derives from a Marxist-feminist viewpoint of artificial gendering in patriarchal societies. She emphasizes that gendered divisions of labor can only be understood as a formation that is shaped by power relations of domination. One can analyze this at three levels: according to the ideological meanings it reproduces, the normative social roles, and individual self-identity of the character. Mills focusses on three occurrences in her essay: feminization of labor, commodification of reproductive labor, and gendered effects of neoliberalization. As these gendered divisions of labor are artificially and culturally constructed, they can be reimagined (3).

Taking the scope of this thesis into account, we will not focus on leadership in relation to race (even though we do see a multiplicity of for instance black and Asian characters in *The 100*) or age (although it is striking that we see an array of very young leaders in the series), mainly because the filmmakers of *The 100* chose not to highlight those aspects, but rather focus on gender. Whether or not genetic leadership qualities are inherent or created will also not be

addressed here due to the size of this research. Moreover, we will only analyze those personality traits that are connected to gender specifically, while other character traits that may be beneficial in leadership positions, such as general intelligence, are not taken into account. The only binary opposition we study here is men versus women, and though other gender types are acknowledged, they will not be part of this discussion. Lastly, sexuality – although significant and especially interesting for *The 100* since at least two of the leading female characters identify as queer – will not be explored because of the scope of this thesis.

## **2. Contaminated Purity**

In the previous chapter, I have introduced some of the main theories and concepts that will be used in the analyses that are to follow. In this chapter, the workings of power in the society of the Mountain Men will be discussed. First, I will introduce their community in terms of government, hierarchal structures, and the most important parts of their role in the narrative. Then, I will look at leadership, more specifically to the relation between President Dante Wallace and his son Cage, and the responsibilities they have for the survival of their people. After that I will combine their social hierarchies and political leaders to their culture and the notion of patriarchy. Lastly, the concept of purification will be applied in two ways to the society of the Mountain Men in order to find the roots of their communal ideologies.

### **2.1 The Mountain Men**

The Mountain Men are a relatively small group of people – 382 to be exact – who have survived for almost a hundred years inside Mount Weather, a civilian emergency operations center in Virginia, USA. Most of them speak American English in the series, but the books in other languages as well as the multiple national flags in the background of wide camera shots suggest that there are people residing in Mount Weather who have a different ancestry. Since they have lived inside the mountain for so long, their bodies did not build immune systems against nuclear radiation like the bodies of the Sky People or the Grounders. Therefore, they are locked up inside and most of them have never been to the surface. In order to withstand the little radiation that does infiltrate the mountain, they create so-called ‘Reapers’ from captured Grounders through the Cerberus Project and make them apprehend other Grounders. The people inside Mount Weather drain the blood from those Grounder prisoners and give it to themselves by way of regular blood transfusions. This process is called the Harvest Project. That is how the Mountain Men have managed to survive for so many years. The leader of the Mountain Men is called the President, and when the viewer meets this small colony in season two, Dante Wallace is the one holding office. He is a middle-aged, white, heterosexual male who wants the best for his people. He takes in 47 of the initial hundred Sky People who came to Earth, but he does not tell them about their ways of survival. It is mentioned once that his father was the President before him, and after Dante is deposed, his son Cage takes his place. We can thus assume that the title of President is hereditary, which stands in contrast to the

contemporary United States where there are national presidential elections every four years. We do not see or hear of any council members or congressmen or other political representatives at all, suggesting that the President does not have any advisors and is probably the sole leader of the colony. As a result, Mount Weather in its organizational structure resembles a small kingdom in the Middle Ages.



*Image 2: Dinner at Mount Weather*



*Image 3: Blood transfusion at Mount Weather*

## 2.2 Politics

We know the title of president is hereditary in the society of the Mountain Men and has presumably led to very little protest in the 97 years since the apocalypse. The power struggle we do witness takes place when the Sky People have come down to the Earth's surface and revolves mostly around ethical questions of how far they are willing to go to survive. Cage disagrees with President Dante Wallace on the Harvest Project and rebels against his father by overthrowing him and putting him in lock-up. Both sides will be highlighted in the following sections, including their responsibilities they have towards their people.

### 2.2.1 Leadership: Dante Wallace vs. Cage Wallace

The audience meets President Dante Wallace at the beginning of the second season, when Clarke and 47 others of the hundred juvenile delinquents are captured in Mount Weather. At this point, we do not know what is going on, just that they are cleaned, treated, and locked up. Clarke is the only one who tries to escape, and we find out later that the other 47 have actually already begun to integrate into their little society. Dante explains to Clarke that they mean well, and that he will send out search parties to find possible survivors from the Ark (which has come crashing down from space). Most of the 'rescued' Sky People are relieved and try to settle in at Mount Weather, but Clarke stays suspicious and eventually escapes after finding

out about the Harvest Project. Dante becomes a character who is difficult to gauge for the viewer. On the one hand he is the one who oversees the Harvest Project as well as the Cerberus Project and lies to the Sky People in refuge, but on the other hand he protects them from Cage and even helps Bellamy to fight his son. Cage wants to use the Sky People's bone marrow to help make the Mountain Men resistant to nuclear radiation, and not in a condescending way, but Dante disagrees. After Cage keeps pushing the matter and even goes behind the back of his father to try out the bone marrow method, using some of their own people as test subjects, Dante orders his guard to arrest Cage. However, Dante has already lost too much power: the people in Mount Weather want to go to the surface, and they listen to Cage now. After Cage has seized power and in just one week both the Grounders and the Sky People declare war to the Mountain Men, he eventually goes to Dante for strategy advice, making Dante the wiser leader.



*Image 4: Dante Wallace*



*Image 5: Cage Wallace*

### **2.2.2 Power & Responsibility**

Of course, leaders do not only need to survive individually, but have the responsibility to make sure their entire community survives as well. Wright states that “Hobbes’s reasoning suggests that power precedes morality, not vice versa” (2016: 10). Therefore, leaders should not always do ‘the right thing’ even if that costs them control, but rather hold onto that power at any cost, seemingly using only one rule: the end justifies the means. Clearly, Cage thinks that him being in charge eventually leads to their community being able to evolve, and if that means he needs to make the immoral decision of sacrificing 47 Sky People, then so be it. Even though Cage is clearly the main antagonist in this storyline, the writers show us his motives which may be quite reasonable. The main drive of all of the leaders within the series is to survive, not just individually, but as a people. Their actions, decisions and sacrifices are constantly compared to each other, thereby vindicating their choices. All of these leaders are,

however, mostly sole rulers. “Locke fears [:] that absolute power wielded by a single individual inevitably becomes arbitrary and self-serving” (Wright, 2016: 10). Does Cage really have his people’s best interest at heart at all times? Halfway through the season, it seems as if he is gradually slipping away from that goal and is moving more and more towards a longing to prove his worth, live up to his father’s expectations, and go into the history books as the President who got their people to the surface. His personal desires get in the way of his initial motive to want his colony to persist.

### **2.3 Gender: Patriarchy & Culture**

In “Surviving Armageddon” (1993), a scholarly article on apocalypticism in science fiction, Mick Broderick proposes that “these post-nuclear-war survivalist fantasies “are highly reactionary and advocate reinforcing the status quo by the maintenance of conservative social regimes of patriarchal law (and lore)”” (*Movies xi*). Mount Weather does not only harbor people, but they also possess a legacy of art and literature. Almost all of the characters within this colony were named after famous writers and artists, such as Emerson or Whitman. The viewer is met with visuals of some of the greatest paintings and sculptures in the history of Western culture, as well as large libraries full of books. Mount Weather becomes a place where knowledge of ‘the old world’ is preserved, the world before the nuclear apocalypse. The society of the Mountain Men, therefore, appears to be the closest representation of our own contemporary western society. Dante Wallace even explicitly claims that “[they] are the keepers of history” (S02E07). There is thus a stark contrast between them and for example the Grounders, where the latter are the native people who inhabit the land and the former are the colonizers who feel superior to their enemies. The Mountain Men are “civilized” rather than “barbaric”, even though their actions to survive may be interpreted otherwise. As Williams states: “the notion of “civilization” itself seems problematic” (2005: 312). Notably, both Dante and Cage, and apparently the President before them as well, are older, white, heterosexual men. Not just the preservation of art and literature is a reflection of the old world, but the type of leader is as well. Williams explains that the “collusion between imperial adventure, heroism, and white masculine authority resurfaces in post-apocalyptic texts” (2005: 304). The fact that the majority of the people residing in Mount Weather are in fact white heteronormative characters, and their leader is a white heterosexual male, also contrasts the social progressiveness of the Grounders. In order to study the differences between those

two societies in more detail, the contradiction between the ‘failing’ bodies of the Mountain Men – that is, bodies that are not resistant to radiation – and their ‘thriving’ culture of civilization will be further explored in the following section with ‘purification’ as its key concept.

## 2.4 Purification

Purification is generally a term used to describe a new beginning through cleansing, where “power [is] thrust out and fresh potency drawn in” (Douglas, 1966: 43). It is a term often used in relation to religious apocalypticism, where God or another Divine Power separates ‘the pure’ or ‘the saved’ from ‘the impure’ or ‘the damned’. Foucault briefly touched upon the act of purification in the example of the outbreak of the plague in a medieval town, where the infected were put in separate buildings or even exiled. Purity and impurity is a binary opposition of Otherness, a term that Foucault uses often in his discussions of power. Although not explicitly written about at length, he did give a number of consecutive lectures in France in 1970-1971 called *The Will to Know*, in which he looks at the relation between power, truth and purificatory value (Foucault, 2013[1971]: 228). He claims that the oppositions of innocence/criminality and knowledge/ignorance were long forgotten in debates about purification. The difference between cleansing and purifying for Foucault is that there is a shift from an everyday activity to a ritual (168). In other words, cleansing is an ordinary practice, whereas purifying becomes an exercise of social norms. This is where Foucault’s discussion of power and truth comes in. The law, the government or ruler decides who or what is pure or not (175). Their decisions are justified by suggesting that “impurity is dangerous and intolerable [for society]” (178). Think back to the example of the plague or even the Panopticon: the infected are quarantined and the criminals are put together in a prison, because it would be dangerous for those people to be included in society. Foucault argues that impurity has a negative moral connotation associated with guilt, whereas purity has a positive moral connotation associated with legitimate judgement (191), resulting in a direct relation between purity and truth (189). Purity then becomes one of the reasons for making power dynamics in society appear subtle and natural (59). Consequently, impurity is imposed upon the people who deviate from the norm, that is truth, of that society. Purification is a concept that is almost paradoxically present on two levels within the society of the Mountain Men.

The Mountain Men are not resistant against the remaining radiation from the nuclear bombs that still lingers the Earth. Their bodies were not able to adapt and evolve, since they have stayed inside Mount Weather. Although the mountain is closed off and the air gets filtered and refreshed, there is still a small amount of radiation that seeps into the mountain. Hence, they need genes from bodies that are resistant against radiation, if they want to stay alive. Grounders and Sky People are unaffected by it, so the Mountain Men capture them and use their blood and bone marrow to survive. This is called the Harvest Project. The population is given regular blood transfusions, and when they find out that by taking bone marrow they could survive outside, they start taking it by force from the Sky People. The Harvest Project is led by Cage and is encouraged by his father. The people inside the mountain all know what they do to survive, but it is taboo: it is not to be mentioned or discussed. If one does address it or disagrees with the method, one is exiled (which comes down to capital punishment, for their bodies cannot survive outside). Dante is charged with the decision of what counts as true, just as his father before him. The techniques and procedures that are used to acquire the truth are used as a form of social control (Foucault, 2013[1971]: 175). As we have already seen, according to Foucault, every society has its own regime of truth. Those regimes of truth are produced through discourses, which in turn are regulated by the individuals that make up the population. Although few have some doubts, all of the people inside Mount Weather willingly and consciously have blood transfusions. They know where the purer blood comes from, but they never address it. Their bodies are slowly decaying through the exposition to radiation, but are kept clean by transferring genes from Grounders to themselves. This is the literal purification on a micro-level that the Mountain Men perform to live longer. If we zoom out, we come to a very different understanding. When 48 Sky People of the Hundred are captured, we come to learn more about the norms and values of the community in Mount Weather. The Sky People are different from the Mountain Men, but President Wallace deems them more civilized and cultured than the Grounders. He thus allows them to stay and live among the Mountain Men. However, a clear division remains, and the Sky People are never fully integrated into their society. They have separate sleeping quarters and they are not trusted with information about the existence of the Harvest Project. They are kept apart when it comes to all the major decisions and gatherings. The Mountain Men express multiple times that they find themselves to be superior over the other survivors on Earth, mainly because they have kept Western culture alive. They claim that they are the pure descendants of the Old World, the only pure society that remains of humanity. While the Grounder Clans and the Sky People have adopted new laws, traditions, religions and even language, the Mountain Men

have remained true to the norms and values of our contemporary Western society. Ironically, the blood and bone marrow that is pure comes from the bodies of the Grounders and the Sky People.

By S03E12, all Mountain Men have been killed, thereby wiping out an entire population. The Grounder Clans survive while the Mountain Men do not, leading to “the survival of simpler culture with a purer ethic” (Murphy, 2013: 239). Martha Bartter explains that fictional post-apocalyptic television series depict a world that is filled with “small, self-supporting communities, full of people “just like us” (in Murphy, 2013: 239). After the apocalypse, new types of societies need to emerge in order to cope with the forces of nature and the primal survival instincts of humans. At first glance it appears that the Grounders are a primitive people, and perhaps they are for example in regard to their lack of use of technology, but their enhanced bodies which can withstand radiation suggest that maybe the Grounders are in fact further along in the evolution of mankind and are therefore superior to the Mountain Men. The fact that the series chooses the Grounders and the Sky People to survive while the Mountain Men die out of bodily weakness – namely their inability to tolerate nuclear radiation – shows how much the writers wish to distance themselves from the world as we know it today. They quite literally erase our western culture and civilization from the film world and use the post-apocalyptic sub-genre to elevate other forms of society with different ideologies and (un)written rules than we are used to in our world anno 2017. This is an exemplification of “the idea of “cleansing”: separating the damned and the saved” (Murphy, 2013: 239) that accompanies the core goal of religious apocalypticism. As a result, the communities that remain – in this case the Grounders and the Sky People who are able to adapt to Grounder ethics – can be seen as the new ideal. Martha Bartter identifies such ideal societies as societies where there is less urbanization, less mechanization, and less individualism. One of the reasons why the Grounders are able to survive instead of the Mountain Men is exactly because they are primitive. Because of their primitiveness, they are able to build a closer relationship with nature which will change our world for the better, according to what Murphy called one of our most important inherent desires. The Mountain Men, however, need the clean blood and bone marrow from the people from other communities for their bodies to survive, while they view themselves to be the only pure people left as they are the descendants from the Old World, that is our world. Thus, it appears that the society of the Mountain Men is based on the paradox of ‘contaminated purity’.

### 3. Female Masculinity

In the previous chapter we have seen that the society of the Mountain Men is based on the paradox of ‘contaminated purity’, because of their patriarchal and civilized roots. In this chapter we will see that the Grounder Clans radically oppose the Mountain Men. First, I will introduce the society of the Grounders in terms of their conventions, traditions, and clan divisions. After that, their roots will be exposed by analyzing them as the indigenous, native, primitive people to the land with an emphasis to a renewed closeness to nature. The society of the Grounder Clans appears to be based on violence, and we will study the consequences of this norm for the (gendered) leadership positions in this community.

#### 3.1 The Grounder Clans

The Grounders are the descendants of the people who were able to survive the initial nuclear bombs almost a hundred years ago because their bodies evolved to become tolerant to nuclear radiation. Therefore they are referred to as ‘enhanced’ by some, but more often than not they are seen as savages and are looked down upon by the Mountain Men. According to Williams, there is a “collision of socially degenerating whiteness and primitive imagery” (2005: 306). In *The 100* there indeed appears to be a relation between the decline of the white heterosexual male as the person who fulfills elite leadership positions in a community and the resurfacing of primitiveness. The Grounders are a collection of twelve Clans – including the Tree People, the Boat People, the Desert Clan, Broadleaf, Blue Cliff, Delphi, Glowing Forest, the Lake People, the Plains Riders, Rock Line, Shallow Valley, and Ice Nation – who have come together as allies under the rule of Lexa to fight nature’s forces and the Mountain Men. Commander Lexa is a young female queer leader who was chosen through the process of reincarnation. The spirit of one leader lives on in another person after his or her death, but the only eligible leaders are so-called ‘Nightbloods’ (people who have black blood running through their veins instead of red blood). Lexa is the first ruler to bring together the twelve Grounder Clans, which is why she holds the title of Commander. Every clan has its own leader, and those leaders and the Commander come together in times of war or when negotiations ought to take place. In the end, however, Lexa is the one who makes all the decisions and can therefore be seen as a dictator. She is also protected by many bodyguards and anyone who opposes her is executed, as we saw for example in S03E03 when the

representative of one clan is pushed off a tower as he tried to argue with her. Lexa’s second and most trusted ally is Indra, a black female combat warrior from the Tree People.



Image 6: Grounder Army ready to attack



Image 7: outfits and appearance of Grounders

### 3.2 Indigenoussness & Primitiveness

Paul Williams analyzed the post-apocalyptic movie *Mad Max III* in 2005 and in his article he introduces us to so-called ‘soft places’. He argues that “[the] post-apocalyptic landscape is an expression of two converse impulses: the terrifying contemplation of the empty space of the world after nuclear war, and the exhilaration that this blank canvas is the stage for feats of adventure and heroism” (Williams, 2005: 301). Williams defines soft places as places that are “empty without civilization” and can be “*brought into being* by the colonization process” (2005: 303). We should note here that even though the lands we see in *The 100* are empty, separate from the civilized world before the apocalypse, and “unknown territory” as Williams calls it, there are actually traces of recognition visible in the television series. We see the statue of Abraham Lincoln at Lincoln Memorial and we identify Mount Weather through an old road sign, confirming the coordinates of the Sky People that they are near the area of what used to be Washington D.C., USA. Williams concludes by stating that when we view the post-apocalyptic world as a soft place, that is an empty space outside of human civilization, it can be “an arena for the replaying of the colonial encounter, frightening in its unintelligibility but alluring in its virgin promise.” (2005: 304). It is on the one hand a daunting thought considering our own past between Native Americans and European colonizers, but at the same time it could, as Murphy argued, be seen as a way to start over from a clean slate and do better – or at least different – this time.

In *The 100*, the unruly forces of nature have taken over the landscape. The audience is given endless images of woods, mountains and waters. The people who have survived the apocalypse and are now living in relatively small communities that inhabit the land, but throughout the series multiple wars are taking place when it comes to property. Williams therefore concludes that the images of such a post-apocalyptic setting can be seen “as a form of post-apocalyptic imperialism” (303). In this regard we find that the Grounders Clans can be labeled as ‘the natives’ of the Earth, while the Mountain Men can be seen as ‘the colonizers’, especially after they use torture for bone marrow in order to take over the lands that are inhabited by the Grounders. The Grounders are the first people who lived on the surface of the Earth, since the Mountain Men survived inside of Mount Weather and only come out after 97 years once they have found a resistance medicine to the nuclear radiation and the Sky People have lived in space for almost a hundred years before they finally get to Earth. Therefore, the Grounder Clans can be seen as ‘natives’ to the land. Williams explains a similar process in the television series *The Walking Dead* (2010 –) where their version of the Grounders “take the place of “indigenous,” “native” people: their records are the stories of their oral culture or cave paintings; they live in huts and use spears as weapons” (2005: 306). For a large part, a similar process unfolds in *The 100*. The Grounders are seen as barbaric and brutal, they use tribal face paint, their weapons are spears, swords, and knives, their means of transportation is either by foot or by horse, and their laws are not written down but rather live on in oral tales. Whereas the Sky People and the Mountain Men speak American English as their native language, the Grounders have developed a different language called Trigedasleng. They often speak in that language among each other, and it is translated in subtitles for the audience. Lincoln mentions that only the warriors of the Clans know how to speak English. The fact that in just 97 years these people have developed an entirely new way of communication demonstrates how they purposely wish to distance themselves from ‘the old world’, from the United States of America as we know it today.

The most important desire here seems to be a renewed closeness to natural forces. Amy Murphy emphasizes our inherent desire to return to a closer relationship with nature. She analyzes three types of desire in this regard: “the desire for a new more balanced relationship with nature; the desire for increased citizen involvement in planning decisions; and the desire for a more “tribe-like” scale for one’s community” (Murphy, 2013: 235). These three elements are also visualized in *The 100*. Using nature to your advantage for securing survival, but also respecting your surroundings over technological advancement, is emphasized as one

of the reasons why the Grounder Clans are able to prevail in a post-apocalyptic world. Social agency is an aspect of social organization that is highlighted in this TV show specifically when it comes to female characters who become meaning-makers instead of meaning-bearers, but also when realizing that power exists everywhere in all layers of society, not just in the top level. The Grounder Clans are a reminder of tribe-like communities, living together in small groups of people in huts and other wooden structures. They resemble native tribes, while the Mountain Men are the conservators of western civilization. This leads to tensions between primitive and advanced cultures (Murphy, 2013: 239). Primitive communities – pre-modern societies as Foucault calls them – are based on possessed and exercised power often rooted in violence. Foucault suggests that there is a shift from laws to norms in modern societies. We will explore this claim in the following section.

### 3.3 Violence

Violence can be interpreted in different ways, but the most common idea among modern philosophers is that violence occurs when people are physically or systematically prevented from living up to their potential as human beings (Galtung, 1968: 168). The literal, direct, interpretation of violence always includes a subject: subject [X] did act [C] to object [Y]. In this line of thought, which was a dominant ideology for centuries, power then equaled possession and repression (Foucault, 1980: 83). In other words, in every society there is a sovereign authority who possesses power and exercises said power by enforcing the law on its citizens. Although Foucault does not write extensively on the concept of violence explicitly, he does discuss domination. He defines domination as a state in which people use economic, political or military instruments (for instance weapons) to rebel against existing dynamics of power relations (Foucault, 1983: 129). As we have seen in the example of the plague in a medieval town, he refutes such violence at the basis of society. Subsequently, Foucault takes the subject out of the equation and studies what Johan Galtung called *structural violence*: an expression of systematic and objective oppression that is engrained in societal structures (83). Foucault calls this disciplinary power, where power circulates among and through individuals constantly. Instead of the law – which usually mostly consists of prohibitions – the most prominent apparatus to achieve social control is through norms. The norm – which rather than prohibitions is based on approval – creates an ideal (Foucault, 1980: 94). We had already seen that individuals will ultimately adopt the norm as their own. So, according to Foucault, pre-

modern societies and modern societies distinguish themselves through their different uses of power. In pre-modern societies, power is exercised by a sovereign authority in a centralized position, who coordinates the exercise of absolute control through the use – or at least threat – of violence (Foucault, 1978: 60). The idea of domination, as we saw in the example of the plague, is based on a process of constant control through surveillance. Power is then projected on the body instead of lived. Here is where the shift to modern societies takes place according to Foucault. He argues that surveillance does not only discipline the body, it ultimately also starts controlling the mind, therefore creating a theoretical space of “conscious and permanent visibility” (Foucault, 1975: 201). The use of continuous surveillance gets internalized by the inhabitants of that society, thereby exchanging laws for norms to ensure social control. To make this differentiation more concrete, here is a more relatable, contemporary example. Many countries have ‘public decency laws’, which mostly comes down to the prohibition of nudity on the streets. We are aware that the law states to ‘not be naked in public’. We have learned, since the day we were born, to wear clothes if one goes outside. The norm ‘wear clothes in public’ may seem the same as the law, but it is not. The first tells you what you cannot do, the latter tells you what you should do. We adopt this norm as our own, for we will *want* to wear clothes when we go in public. The law is exchanged for the norm, which in turn is adopted by individuals in society. Hence, in modern societies, power consists in its invisibility and inevitability. There is an invisible structure of power present in every society that becomes naturalized: “invisibility is a guarantee of order” (200) and it is regulated through people. We all act in accordance with certain norms without acknowledging those norms as such. Even if we do not feel power explicitly, there is an establishment of order and disorder present. There are always social hierarchies in every society.

The *Grounders* Clans seem to embody a pre-modern society in Foucault’s words. The most prominent convention among *Grounders*, which is referred to and acted upon multiple times over the course of the series, is ‘blood must have blood’ (‘jus drein jus daun’ in *Trigedasleng*), which is roughly close to our contemporary saying ‘an eye for an eye’. One of the conventions is that if a person kills someone, s/he gets stabbed with a knife for each murder s/he committed. Victoria O’Donnell notes that “a convention is any kind of social or cultural practice used in a narrative that has a meaning that is shared by members of a culture” (2013: 75). It is no written law, presumably mostly because the *Grounders* do not write but rather arrange their lives according to traditions that are orally preserved. The practice of ‘blood must have blood’ is carried out, for example, when Finn Collins is about to be

executed in front of hundreds of people, mainly because Commander Lexa cannot afford to look weak in front of her people, who wish to see blood. Lexa can be a merciful leader, someone who does not necessarily believe that violence is the solution for all societal problems, as we will see in the next section. Yet, even though she is an absolute ruler, she can only do so much while remaining the political leader of the clans. If it were up to her people, they would start a war. Commander Lexa manages to torture just one person of the Sky People, by letting Finn get stabbed for every person who died from his actions. Although Clarke begs Lexa not to go through with it, she knows that if she does not let Finn get tortured, she will lose the faith and loyalty of her people. It is Lexa's responsibility as leader of the Grounder Clans – that has a societal structure based on physical violence – to carry out the convention of 'blood must have blood'. Violence has become more than a once adopted tradition or unwritten agreement, it has become the norm. The society of the Grounder Clans has violence at its roots, and the people within that community are no longer getting projected by or subjected to violence, but they are living it. Violence is the solution, violence means justification, violence exists at the vital base of their society. Individuals of the Clans have adopted the norm as their own, believing that violence is always the answer to every debate, and therefore wish to see the convention of 'blood must have blood' to be carried out at all times. The violence, the decisions some characters make and the morally ambiguous acts from the protagonists invites audiences to think about how the civilization of the Grounders is "inseparable from the violence at its foundation" (Williams, 2005: 307). While the Mountain Men and the Sky People often try to choose a political way of solving problems through debate, the Grounder Clans frequently opt for hand-to-hand combat to resolve their issues.

### **3.4 Politics**

So far we have seen the significance of violence in the society of the Grounder Clans, their role as 'the natives' to the land, their closeness to nature, and we have established that Commander Lexa is an absolute ruler. In what follows we will look more closely at her leadership position, including its history and conventions that surround it. Most importantly, we will see that the roots of violence lie so deep and have become normalized in a way that the leadership position of the Grounder Clans has become embedded in violence. Lexa's responsibilities and sacrifices are discussed in relation to the workings of power in the larger society of the Grounders.

### 3.4.1 Leadership: Commander Lexa

Commander Lexa, also called Heda in Trigedasleng, is the first leader of the coalition between the twelve Grounder Clans. She is the one who formed the coalition in the first place and united the different Clans under her supervision to fight Mount Weather. They have, for instance, created a communication system through fire beacons and horns, which they blow to warn others if the Acid Fog is released by the Mountain Men. The chiefs of the twelve Clans were all branded on their wrists as a sign that Commander Lexa holds the highest rank in their societal hierarchy. The representatives of the Clans meet with her in times of need, for example when the war strategies against Mount Weather are planned or when the Sky People break their truce, but those summits appear to be only for show. Commander Lexa reigns as an absolute ruler and her will is their command. In other words, *The 100* employs the theory of tyranny from Hobbes in the form of Commander Lexa. The Heda is chosen by way of reincarnation, so after she dies her soul will choose another Nightblood to become the next Commander of the Grounder Clans. Her power can be challenged by another Grounder, which happens in S03E4 when Queen Nia of the Ice Nation – also called Azgeda – calls for a vote of no confidence. That means that she challenges Commander Lexa to combat. Queen Nia has her son Roan, Prince of Azgeda, fight for her, but Lexa decides to defend herself. Apparently, a fight until death is the way in which leadership is assigned in the Grounder coalition, thereby again confirming the importance of violence at the roots of this society. Overall, Lexa's authority is rarely questioned because she has proved on many occasions that she is worthy of the Heda title, mostly by being an excellent and ruthless combat warrior. Yet, she also shows a soft side to her character. She shows mercy in various situations and acts upon the law 'blood must have blood' in the absolute minimal sense of the word without losing the faith of her people. Lexa has also united the twelve Clans and tries to make peace with the Sky People through debate. She seems to be one of the few Grounders who actually thinks that creating alliances through debate is the way to live in a peaceful world. This balance between being able to make tough political decisions in times of unrest and choosing to form coalitions among communities through debate appears to make her a great absolute ruler.



*Image 8: Commander Lexa after a battle*



*Image 9: Commander Lexa on her throne*

### 3.4.2 Power & Responsibility

As mentioned previously, post-apocalyptic settings imply the collapse of governments and systems of law. As Majid Yar puts it: “such post-apocalyptic scenarios [are] centred [sic] upon human existence in the wake of a radical break with life-as-we-know-it” (2) and very often “deal with issues of crime, law and lawlessness, disorder, risk and violence” (3). We had already seen that Hobbes and Locke both reason that “chaos and violence threaten survival” (Wright, 2016: 12). Such a dystopian, chaotic, lawless, violent, post-apocalyptic environment requires a leader who can make ruthless decisions and who is able to demonstrate immoral behavior if that means to save their people. In the post-apocalyptic world, survival becomes the main goal. As Chancellor Jaha says: “Your one responsibility is to stay alive” (S01E01). That is one of the main differences between our contemporary society and the post-apocalyptic world: certain acts are required, tolerated or even stimulated in the latter, but are considered to be illegal or immoral in the other. In a post-apocalyptic setting, it would for instance be accepted to kill another person in order to survive yourself, whereas in our contemporary world that is not tolerated. Murder becomes justified because of the setting in which it took place. However, the main characters, despite acting in a morally ambiguous way, are still the characters we as an audience look up to. As Jacques Derrida already claimed, Heffernan sees “[the] postapocalypse as harboring an ethical capacity to revise and reattune the terms of contemporary social and ecological engagement” (Horton, 2014: 73). This leads not only to the justification of morally ambiguous acts by the protagonists, but also to the redemption of antagonists by rationalizing their actions. Those characters are respected despite or forgiven for their immoral activities. Especially the characters that fill leadership positions in the series are faced with the responsibility to make such decisions.

Wright explains the core of Locke's philosophy as follows: "1) political power is based on common law, not arbitrary individuals; 2) it is fiduciary, that is, it is power that individuals wield for the sake of others, for the sake of the community as a whole" (2016: 14). This, along with Hobbes' observation that power leads to order, is applicable to the character of Lexa. Commander Lexa, though an absolute ruler, seems to have her people's best interest at heart. She continuously chooses to protect the Grounder Clans, even if that means she has to make (personal) sacrifices. Lexa even goes as far as to sacrifice hundreds of her own people to remain politically strong, namely when she secretly leaves a summit at Tondc with Clarke well aware that a missile is about to be launched to those exact coordinates in order to protect the location of their spy in Mount Weather and to inspire her other troops to fight for her (S02E12). She says that "to lead well, you must make hard choices" (S02E10). The agreeing to an alliance with the Sky People is a risk for Commander Lexa, since many of her own people now want her dead. They think she is not able to make the tough decisions that are necessary in their violent, dystopian environment and since she did not explicitly follow the traditions when it comes to Finn's death, she becomes unreliable. Then, after it seems as if the Sky People attempt to poison her, she breaks the alliance, but again, is less strict with the rules than she ought to be. Lexa decides to only torture one person, Raven Reyes, instead of everyone who is present. As Indra explains: "I argued for all of you to die, but the Commander is merciful. She wants only one" (S02E10). Lexa is constantly torn between believing the Sky People or the Grounders, in other words, either trusting Clarke's reasoning or her own advisers' judgments. When she eventually declares that her adviser Gustus is guilty, first she lets her people torture him, and when she needs to kill him in the end, he even then advises her to stick to the rules and to "stay strong". She clearly cares in this moment that she is forced to kill her most trusted adviser in cold blood. Her facial expressions change and emotion briefly crosses her face. She explains to Clarke that she has learned that 'love is weakness' the hard way. She lost her girlfriend, Costia, who was captured, tortured, and murdered by the Ice Nation. That is when Lexa learned that caring is weakness in the dystopian setting of *The 100*. After forming an alliance with the Sky People in the second season, the Grounder Clans and the Sky People fight train together and march towards Mount Weather as a declaration of war. In the meantime, Clarke and Lexa start having feelings toward each other and the Commander begins to show affection. They both give equal orders to the rest of their warriors. Yet, when they arrive at the mountain, it turns out that Lexa went behind Clarke's back and secretly made a deal with the Mountain Men to save her own people, thereby condemning the imprisoned people from the Ark. Lexa explains her choice

arguing that she did what Clarke would have done and justifies her actions by saying that “the duty to protect my people comes first” (S02E15). Lexa exclaims that she does care, about Clarke as well as the Sky People, but she needs to make these decisions with her head and not her heart. The Commander has had more experience living on the ground than Clarke, she has lived there all her life and has been trained to grow into a leadership position since she was two years old. She is well-aware of the consequences of her decisions, but knows that her people have the highest chance of survival when she makes this deal with the Mountain Men. Thereby she chooses the survival of her society over her personal feelings and sacrifices her relationship with Clarke by betraying her trust. Lexa claims herself that “victory stands on the back of sacrifice” (S02E13) and she rules the Grounder Clans accordingly. Commander Lexa leads the Grounder Clans with violence as the main instrument for social control. Violence has for a long time been associated with traditional masculinity. Lexa, however, is of course a woman. The consequences of Lexa’s gender for her leadership of the violence-based Grounder Clans is explored in the next section.

### **3.5 Gender: Female Masculinity**

Violence is often associated with stereotypical masculinity. When Alice Eagly and Linda Carli discuss how women become leaders, they look at arguments from historians, biologists, neuroscientists, and psychologists. When analyzing whether or not men are ‘natural leaders’, they go back to the Darwinian evolution process. According to many evolutionary psychologists, leadership is inherently male because they are naturally more controlling, competitive and dominant than women (Eagly & Carli, 2007: 29). They claim that when humans adapted themselves to primeval environments thousands of years ago, leadership became a trait that was ‘built into’ the male psyche and this notion only developed over time during which humans evolved (30). If we follow this line of thought, nature has caused women to concede authority and power to men through the selection process (30). Hundreds of different types of studies have concluded that men are generally more physically aggressive than women, and often slightly more verbally aggressive as well (36). Of course, claiming that men are more competitive, aggressive, dominant, and controlling than women does not mean anything if we do not know whether or not those character traits are good leadership qualities. Physical aggressiveness usually turns out to be essential to leadership among young adult male groups in certain areas, for examples the military, gangs, or sports. In any other

context, however, physical aggression is unacceptable. Verbal aggression proves to help when leading large organizations, but at the same time can be perceived as intimidating and therefore loses its effectiveness (38-9). Eagly and Carli acknowledge the belief that women appear to be more democratic and collaborative in their leadership positions than men, but they mostly reject the idea of dominance being significant to good governance, and rather advocate personality being of key importance (2007: 119, 39). Michael Genovese notes that even if women hold leadership positions in governments, they are forced to adopt a 'patriarchal language', they have risen to power through their personal social connections, and there is a threat of them being discriminated for their gender (1993: 128).

In the society of the Grounder Clans, it is not necessarily the case that women are discriminated because of their gender specifically. The two largest societies in *The 100* have female leaders, and some of the smaller communities have as well. Many of the Grounder Clans have separate female rulers like Anya, Indra or Queen Nia and the main power struggle among the Sky People takes place between Abby and Clarke, as we will see in the next chapter. The confrontation of gender stereotypes does not apply to the leaders in *The 100*. In fact, it is not addressed at all. Some characters express their concerns about age, but never about gender. The gender of a politician is not a limiting condition within these societies. Yet, female leaders are forced to adopt a 'patriarchal language' as Genovese calls it. The women who live in the communities of the Grounder Clans are all very aggressive, assertive, straightforward, and violent; characteristics Eagly and Carli affirmed can be attributed to traditional masculinity. Commander Lexa being the prime example, if women are to be taken seriously when it comes to politics, they are required to be able to make sacrifices, be assertive in debate, and violent in combat. The Grounder Clans may be a society that is primitive in its closeness to nature, use of physical violence and lack of technology, but when it comes to the traditional binary divisions between men and women, they are consisting of another paradox. Women may not be discriminated on the basis of their gender, but they are forced to adopt traditional masculine character traits in order to succeed or earn respect. What comes into being is a society in which women can rise to higher levels in hierarchy, even reach leadership positions without the risk of being discriminated against for their gender, yet are only able to do so within the discourse of traditional masculinity. The Grounder Clans embody a type of 'female masculinity', in which women are generally the most powerful leaders, but only if they present themselves as having traditional masculine character traits that are in accordance to the social norm of violence.

#### 4. Civilized Primitiveness

So far we have seen that the Mountain Men and the Grounder Clans oppose each other in almost every aspect of society, and are both based on different invisible and inevitable workings of power. The Sky People will, quite literally, transcend both of the previously discussed communities. For the sake of this thesis, I will distinguish the Hundred (the juveniles who are sent to the surface) and – with lack of a better term – the Arkadians (those who stay on the Ark longer and come down after the initial Hundred make sure the planet is survivable). First, I will introduce both groups and briefly discuss their relation to each other, their social order, and a part of their history. Subsequently, the concept of surveillance will be used when looking at the connection between the Arkadians and the Hundred. Then, I will study two separate power struggles among the Sky People in more detail. Since their society is still in the process of emerging and very much in development at the moment they arrive on Earth, their community is one of the most intriguing case studies. Moreover, the society of the Sky People is the most complex one, not only because of the division between the Arkadians and the Hundred and the fact that they are still very much in development, but also because they appear to be the kind of community that portrays our collective hopes and desires for a better future. They are generally seen as the most progressive society when it comes to politics and gender, representing a tendency that is gaining more attention in recent years, and the main narrative of the series is told through the perspective of the Sky People. The focus of *The 100* on the society of the Sky People is why in this thesis we will also go into more depth when analyzing this community as opposed to the Mountain Men or the Grounder Clans. Especially the responsibilities of Clarke, the sacrifices and the decisions she has to make for her people to survive, turn out to be significant when it comes to gendered and political power struggles. Two close readings of scenes in which Clarke's leadership is visualized will be added, in which we will zoom in on her character specifically in order to try and make sense of the protagonist that accompanies the changed nature of the dystopian post-apocalyptic genre. A reimagining of social roles within society, as well as gendered divisions of labor as a way to demarcate one community from the other, ensues and will be analyzed by studying two examples of women occupying traditionally masculine positions. We will see that the Sky People combine both the traditions of the Mountain Men and the conventions of the Grounder Clans in order to create a new ideal society in a post-apocalyptic world.

## 4.1 The Sky People

The Sky People are the first survivors the viewer meets when watching the series, and for one episode it is believed that they are in fact the only survivors of the human race on Earth. Ironically, they have not lived on the planet's surface for 97 years, but rather in orbit of the planet in a large international space station called the Ark, which in turn is divided into twelve separate stations. Even though the Arkadians are descendants from different countries (it is not specified which nations), and during the celebrations of Unity Day children carry the flags of those countries, the only language that the audience hears or sees from them is American English. Their legal documents are in English as well. The Sky People have a council on the Ark, consisting of six council members and one chancellor. At the beginning of the series, Marcus Kane and Abby Griffin are both council members and Thelonious Jaha – a black heterosexual male – is the residing chancellor. The chancellor is chosen democratically by all the people on the Ark, but it is unclear as to when or how those elections take place. In S01E02 the viewer gets a glimpse of how decision making is done on the Ark. The council needs to vote on the debate whether or not to execute 209 innocent people living on the Ark in order to gather more life support for the rest of them. The matter at hand needs a four vote majority, and the council members end up voting three against three. The chancellor is therefore the one to break the tie, but he decides to abstain. That means the voting ends in a tie and the matter is postponed for ten days. Since they have been living on the international space station, new written laws have been put into operation, mostly to preserve as much rations, supplies and resources as possible to live in space for a total of 300 years, for example the one child policy which limits couples to have only one child. The one law that is emphasized multiple times throughout the first season is that every crime is a capital crime. Williams' question of whether a law is 'justly administered or arbitrarily imposed (2005: 307) is a problem that surfaces various times with all of the three established future communities, for example when Abby is sentenced to death by acting Chancellor Marcus Kane because she used more morphine than the legal limit per person in her attempt to try save Chancellor Jaha. After Jaha saves Abby from her fate, he tells Kane that true leadership requires knowing when not to follow the rules (S01E02).

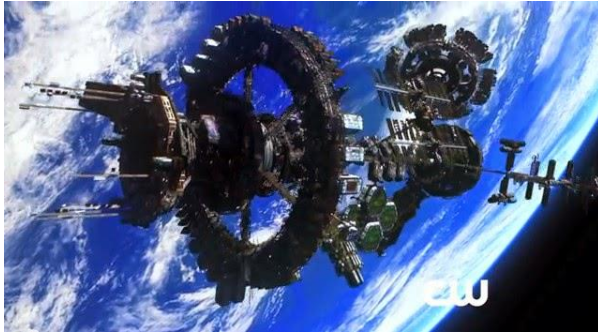


Image 10: Ark Station in space



Image 11: Arkadia on Earth's surface

When the audience meets the Grounder Clans, the Mountain Men, and the Sky People, they are met with an already existing new social order and power hierarchy, which is often accompanied by their own laws and political system. The hundred underage prisoners from the Ark who reach the Earth's surface, however, do not have any of that. There is no hierarchy, no system, and no rules. The one hundred prisoners under the age of eighteen are on the planet's surface trying to survive, but they have no way of communicating with the Ark and many of them feel 'free' after been in lock-up for so long. They would like to break all ties with the Ark and start over as their own little colony. That also means that the laws that were written for them on the international space station do no longer apply once they have reached the Earth. As Clarke mentions in the prologue: 'on the ground there is no law'. Wright uses the theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on survival and human instincts to analyze apocalyptic television series. Many of his observations are applicable to *The 100*. Wright states: "Hobbes and Locke both reason that the need to defend oneself, or preserve oneself, from constant threats from other human beings is the fundamental reason for societal formation" (2016: 7) and concludes with: "without a self-evident hierarchy among individuals of the same species, decisions about the use of life-giving resources are settled by what Hobbes and Darwin both call "competition"" (Wright, 2016: 8). Most of the hundred juvenile delinquents do not want anything to do with their former laws, ideology or leader, but at the same time there is no hierarchy within this group, making it difficult to become an organized community. Bellamy Blake is the first person who seems to be calling the shots, mostly because of his tough exterior, his age (he is not a minor anymore but secretly infiltrated the drop ship in a guard's uniform in order to protect his sister Octavia), and the fact that he has several adherents who follow his orders. Bellamy makes new rules as he sees fits along the way, but Finn Collins defies him, throwing his own argument that 'there are no rules' back in his face (S01E02). Bellamy tolerates Finn's behavior, most likely because there is no legal form that states he is correct. As Wright noticed: "in their natural state, individual humans are

roughly equal in terms of physical and mental ability ...therefore, [there is] no natural order but a constant struggle (2016: 7). Clarke Griffin also almost immediately rebels against Bellamy and continues to depend on her own instincts. When the hundred juvenile delinquents reach Earth, Clarke is the one who immediately tries to organize a trip to Mount Weather to get supplies and subsequently forms a search party of those willing to listen, but there are many characters who do not want to follow her lead because of the lack of rules. Bloom argues that “since every community organization must share assumptions, goals and practices, every group must make it a priority to create its own “constitution”, establishing its mission, its goals, and the way it intends to go about achieving those goals” (Bloom, 1999: 13). The hundred underage offenders do not agree on a common goal at all, since about half of them wish to take off their wristbands to let the Ark think they are dead, whereas the other half wants to establish radio contact with the space station and build the foundation of a colony of sorts. This leads to multiple discussions, fights, and even hand-to-hand combat for leadership. According to Bloom, these fights will not solve the problem of organization: “since order and law is [sic] the basis of all civilization, a basic tenet of such a constitution must be nonviolence. ... Violence must be viewed ... [as] a symptom of the breakdown of the social order and therefore a problem for the group” (Bloom, 1999: 13). In other words, Bloom advocates rational decision making based on in-depth political discussions, thus favoring governments and law enforcement. For a few episodes it seems as if Clarke agrees with Bloom’s assessment, since she is the one who constantly advocates debate. She even literally states that they need rules to become an organized community, which is what they need to survive in her opinion (S01E04). However, just a couple of episodes later, we see Clarke slowly changing because of the experiences that she goes through on Earth. First she claims that they should not always tell the others the truth, and after Finn needs a certain medicine to live she takes it a gigantic step further by tolerating and even encouraging Bellamy to torture Lincoln, a captured Grounder. The torture of Lincoln is vindicated because they need his knowledge about which medicine to use in order to save Finn’s life (S01E07). Clarke progressively uses more and more violence to protect herself and her people from life threatening situations. In S01E08 she decides to bring back guns to the camp as a means to defend themselves against Grounder attacks, claiming that they need to be ready to fight. Clarke eventually goes as far as to go behind Finn’s back and asks Bellamy to follow them with a few people and to bring guns to the negotiations with Anya (S01E09). This decision demonstrates that there is not just a lack of trust between the remaining communities of the human race, but also a lack of trust among the first hundred Sky People living on Earth.



Image 12: Sky People's outfits and appearance



Image 13: The Hundred struggle for power

## 4.2 Surveillance

Surveillance is generally perceived as “the focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction” (Lyon, 2007: 14). David Lyon writes about Surveillance Studies after 9/11. Surveillance literally means ‘to watch over’ (2009: 2). In this line of thought, the concept has been around for centuries; farmers watch over their crops, parents watch over their children, and governments or rulers watch over their people. This is not necessarily a bad thing, not at all even. In recent years however, especially since the emergence and increased growth of technological advancements, surveillance has gained a negative connotation. Whether you are talking about the totalitarian state of George Orwell in *1984* or *Big Brother* the reality TV series, continuously being watched by an all-seeing eye (read: video camera’s) in which every movement is supervised, is often perceived as an invasion of privacy (2007: 197). ICT’s, that is information and communication technologies, have played a major part in this development, as they “are utilized to increase the power reach and capacity of surveillance systems (2009: 3). Not just security camera’s, but also personal data traffic through social media sites for example make sure that every individual can constantly be located. Lyon notices that after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 western governments have become more strict and expansive in their surveillance under the guise of security, for instance at airports. He argues that we have become a culture of control: a surveillance society in which surveillance appears in everyday life (14, 7). Now let us jump back to twentieth century Foucauldian theory. Foucault made a distinction in kinds of surveillance between his example of the plague and the Panopticon. The outbreak of the plague in one medieval town was an exceptional case in its larger society, in which the leper was exiled, in other words, chaos was removed from order. The Panopticon on the other hand represents a normal or permanent

situation in which the disordered are to be ordered, in other words, chaos was overcome by order. As we have already seen, power here is exercised without division, which makes up the disciplinary mechanism. Foucault's panopticism and Lyon's surveillance society can easily be linked to one another, but are not the same. Both view surveillance as an institutional and organizational structure with monitoring strategies, in which its "subjects become the bearers of their own surveillance" (Foucault[1975] in Lyon, 2009: 28). As we have seen in the section on violence in the previous chapter, Foucault suggests that laws are replaced by norms in modern society. In a surveillance society, more or less the same process occurs. The behavior of the prisoners in the Panopticon is influenced because they are always visible to each other and to the tower, and their behavior stays the same even if there are no guards inside the tower. In our own society, we do not always see camera's or policemen walking around, in fact, they are not always watching us, but we still act *as if* they are. Yet, whereas panopticism is based on equality, Lyon's surveillance society is based on categorization (10). Foucault suggests that surveillance affects people equally, while Lyon argues that surveillance systems sort out and filter people, in which individuals are distinguished from other individuals, leading to a 'social sorting' (22). By going through personal data, companies and governments are able to categorize people into different social groups by labelling them in accordance with for example their race, gender, age, education, and so on. In the extraordinary example of the Sky People in *The 100*, I would argue that it is not necessary one or the other. The relation between the Arkadians and the Hundred is a complicated one, based on surveillance, and leads to equality as well as individualization.

The hundred underage prisoners on the Ark are sent to Earth as an experiment to see if the planet's surface is survivable. They each get a wristband before they are put together in one so-called Exodus Ship. The dropship in which they travel lands somewhere in the region of former Washington D.C., but because of the rough landing the communication devices are shut down. The radio does not transmit to the Ark anymore. The only signals the Arkadians receive from the Hundred come from the wristbands. The wristbands read each juvenile's vitals such as blood pressure, body temperature, breathing and pain. Abby Griffin closely monitors each individual, especially her own daughter Clarke, but she also categorizes and groups them together by trying to find patterns among the vital signs and label those accordingly. On the one hand, the wristbands are the instruments that make the Hundred a group, yet on the other hand, the wristbands allow the Arkadians to distinguish every individual and categorize them. The Hundred quickly become aware of the purpose of their

wristbands, and some wish to take them off. The Arkadians will think they have died so they will not come down to Earth themselves, thereby setting themselves free and not having to obey the laws of the Ark. Nevertheless, the necessity to establish their own community with their own rules becomes clear over time. There is a constant struggle between advocates and opponents when it comes whether or not to take the wristbands off, which constantly comes back to the question whether surveillance keeps them safe or trapped. Most people listen to what their leader advises, but among the Hundred, there is no leader. A power struggle ensues between Bellamy and Clarke, and later on between Clarke and Abby.

### **4.3 Politics**

The power struggle for leadership among the Sky People is much more complex than the two societies we have discussed before, because they are not yet one organized community. When the hundred juvenile delinquents first reach the ground in the drop ship, there is a competition between Bellamy Blake and Clarke Griffin. When the Ark is still in space, Diana Sydney tries to overthrow Thelonious Jaha, and when the Ark reaches Earth, it is uncertain whether Abby Griffin or Marcus Kane becomes chancellor. After setting up Camp Jaha, also known as Arkadia, there is a leadership competition going on between Abby and Clarke. Then, when they come into contact with Farm Station, Abby and Marcus unite against Charles Pike, who eventually is chosen to become the new chancellor of Arkadia. For this thesis, we will focus on two separate power struggles: A) Clarke vs. Bellamy, and B) Clarke vs. Abby. Clarke is viewed here as the ultimate leader of the Sky People and she is also the main protagonist of the show, which is why her character will be studied in more detail than the others. After that, I will look at the responsibilities Clarke burdens herself with and the way in which she transitions from an ordinary young girl to a successful political leader. Both parts will be exemplified by close readings of one particular scene.

### 4.3.1 Leadership: Bellamy Blake vs. Clarke Griffin

Bellamy Blake is the only person of age among the Hundred. He snuck into the drop ship in a stolen guards uniform after he tried to kill Chancellor Jaha to protect his sister Octavia. Not only is he the only adult among the juvenile delinquents, he is also tall and has a rather rough exterior. He has a small group of adherents who follow his orders from the moment they reach Earth.



*Image 14: Bellamy Blake*



*Image 15: Clarke Griffin*

Clarke Griffin is the daughter of a council member, has a lot of knowledge about medicine because she grew up watching her mother Abby work as the Ark's surgeon, and is the only one among the hundred underage offenders who knows that the Ark is dying.

Both Bellamy and Clarke have strong personalities and are not afraid to exclaim their opinion. Both of them wish to establish some sort of community, but they strongly disagree on how the camp should be organized. Even though Bellamy and Clarke have different character traits, they appear to be equally powerful among the Hundred. This is where problems arise, according to Charles Darwin: "As the individuals of the same species come in all respects into the closest competition with each other, the struggle will generally be most severe between them" (Darwin in Wright, 2016: 4). Bellamy and Clarke do not just have to compete over power or leadership, but they also need to fight for food, for weaponry, and they need to defend themselves against Grounder attacks. On the ground, among the Hundred, there are no rules. Yet, as Hobbes already stated, if a group of people wishes to survive in nature together, they will need a single leader who carries out rules as s/he sees fit (Wright, 2016: 9). Wright nuances Hobbes' stance by adding that taking the hundred juvenile delinquents as young adults with equal chances of survival leads to a lack of social order, therefore resulting in natural chaos and a continuous struggle for power (9). Hobbes' resolution is to trust one person with the power to run the society, thus creating "a hierarchy in which power ensures order" (9). Although in theory they both seem fit to lead, the narrative, camera position,

camera movement, background music and facial expressions say otherwise. First, I would like to highlight a few instances in which Clarke seems to gradually gain respect from Bellamy. Second, I would like to analyze one specific scene in a close reading to see how the visual and audible elements emphasize these statements.

In S01E03, Atom is unable to reach a place to hide before the acid fog is released by the Mountain Men. Once the poisonous gas comes in contact with his body, it causes his skin to burn and it paralyzes him. Raven Reyes later explains that the effects of the acid fog are extreme pain and will inevitably lead to a slow death. Bellamy is the one to find him first, and Atom begs him to kill him so that he will not have to endure pain any longer. Clarke joins them and concludes that he will die either way. Bellamy is not able to do what is required, but Clarke starts humming a soft melody, stroking Atom's hair, and slowly but steadfastly stabs a knife through his throat without really changing her facial expression. Clarke uses a combination of motherly instincts (soft, reassuring voice and humming melody) and being able to do what is necessary (almost mercilessly killing Atom by hand). This scene leaves Bellamy in awe and new-found respect for her. Halfway through the first season, Bellamy starts to look at Clarke when it comes to making decisions that have consequences for the entire community, for instance when they need to make a choice on whether or not to torture Lincoln, the captured Grounder. Bellamy increasingly asks for Clarke's opinion, and by the time the second season starts, both Bellamy and the remaining people of the Hundred have unconsciously accepted Clarke as their leader. This shows that trying to forcefully take power and self-proclaim authority, as Bellamy tried to do at first, will not sustain: "power is not seized but rather entrusted" (Wright, 2016: 13). This idea is similar to Foucault's suggestion that power only exists when it is given. The hundred minors gradually start to follow Clarke's lead and begin to acknowledge her leadership without her being officially chosen as their leader.

### **Close Reading**

We will now analyze one specific scene from S01E12 of *The 100* in which the significance of the power struggle between Bellamy and Clarke is explicitly visualized. I have chosen this particular scene, because I think it is a turning point in the competition between them. Lots of events, where sometimes Bellamy and sometimes Clarke wins over the crowd, lead up to this moment. When analyzing a particular scene of a film in regard of its formal elements, one needs to pay attention to narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, acting, editing and sound

(Gocsik et al., 2013: 37-46). The scene I have studied occurs near the end of the episode (00.36.55 – 00.38.37). The Hundred must decide whether to pack up their belongings and leave camp to try and reach the Grounder Clans on the Eastern shore, or stay at the campsite close to the dropship and mark that area as their territory by fighting off the expected Grounder attack with guns.

Mise-en-scene is the way in which everything in a frame is positioned. It includes “setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of figures” (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010: 118). The scene starts off with two circles. The inner circle consists of the characters Jasper, Bellamy, Clarke, Finn, and Octavia, while the outer circle is made up of the remaining hundred who are still alive. The audience gets to see the faces of the characters in the inner circle, but the outer circle is one big blur signifying that those are the masses, the people who will follow whoever will win the debate. The composition within this frame is the logical choice, since the viewer is more familiar with Jasper, Bellamy, Clarke, Finn, and Octavia than with the others, as they have had more screen time and their personal background stories have been told to some extent in previous episodes. All of the hundred juvenile delinquents are wearing clothing in dark colors such as dark blue, dark green, brown and black, mostly because those are still the outfits they were wearing when the drop ship hit the ground, but also because they are good camouflage colors within the woods in which they are residing. Moreover, they are covered in mud, rain, and sometimes blood due to the recent fights and weather circumstances. This does mean, however, that the characters are clearly perceived as a group and no individual jumps out when it comes to appearance. There is very little lighting in the scene. It is a dreary day without sun – as any other day there it seems – , they are surrounded by trees, and their appearances are dark, creating little contrast between the individual characters or between them and their surroundings. The camera is placed between the inner- and outer circle, facing the characters in the inner one, leaving the outer circle visible in the background. Since Jasper, Bellamy, Clarke, Finn, and Octavia are filmed in the foreground, their faces and bodies are sharper and more detailed than the blurring masses of the outer circle.

This is where we come to the cinematography of the scene. Cinematography literally means ‘writing in movement’, and according to Bordwell and Thompson this notion is mainly about *how* the scene is filmed rather than *what* is filmed within the scene (2010: 167). The scene I analyzed employs little movement among the characters, since they are generally standing still except for Bellamy and Clarke, who rotate their bodies consistently to be able to speak to

every person in the outer-circle. The camera rotates slowly and mostly consistently around the inner circle, and only zooms in on Bellamy and Clarke at the end of their respective speeches when they make their final statements. Because they are standing in a small circle, the viewer never sees the reaction of all of the other characters to what is being said, but rather the reaction of a few. The consistent rotation also leads to the fact that when another character is speaking, like Octavia or Finn, his or her body is not always within the frame. The only times the camera moves slightly faster than usual, is when a flat character is in the line of sight of Bellamy or Clarke during their speeches. The perspective in terms of height stays the same throughout the entire scene, namely on eye level. Not making a distinction in low-angle or high-angle shots when filming Bellamy and Clarke illustrates how they have equal leadership qualities, use equally good arguments, and have equally as much chance to win over the crowd. Both Bellamy and Clarke nod along during some parts of their speeches, also emphasizing that they agree on some basic points, but disagreeing on how to deal with those issues. Bellamy and Clarke are also the only ones who use small hand gestures, mostly by pointing at the ground or the group at large to bring their point across. “Editing may be thought of as the coordination of one shot with the next” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010: 223). The transitions between the shots of the inner circle and the close ups of Bellamy and Clarke are rather abrupt, alternating quite quickly and are clearly noticeable for the viewer. The rate at which the close-ups of the two candidates change gives the audience an image of restlessness, a sense of panic, and the threat of impending danger.

According to Bordwell and Thompson, sound in film is one of the hardest elements to analyze, since we are so used to hearing sounds all the time that we do not pay attention to them as much, and because we are unable to freeze sound in order to study it more closely (2010: 269). The scene from *The 100* does not contain much diegetic sound, that is “sound that has a source in the story world” (284). We hear one character speaking at a time, and at the end of the two speeches characters from the outer circle chant “yeah’s” and occasionally murmur indistinctive words. Since the beginning of the scene, nondiegetic sound is added underneath the surface. Nondiegetic sound comes “from a source outside the story world” (284), in this case in the form of instrumental background music. Noticeably, the music becomes louder after the initial discussions taking place among the characters who make up the inner circle and Bellamy and Clarke begin with their speeches. Bellamy is up first: the nondiegetic sound consists of low tones that are played in a slow building rhythm. The height and the tempo of the tones give the impression of a dangerous, antagonistic atmosphere. Once

Clarke starts speaking, the tones of the background music change immediately. They are higher than before and are used in a higher tempo, resulting in a faster rhythm. This music grows louder and stronger, and in contrast to before, implies inspiration, strength, and heroism, and reaches an epic climax after Clarke gives her final order. The nondiegetic sound accentuates and strengthens the visual image (Gocsik et al., 2013: 45). It is not uncommon that music is used to enhance the actions on screen, and here it is employed to show how Clarke will overrule Bellamy.



*Image 16*



*Image 17*



*Image 18*



*Image 19*

By studying the narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, actors, editing and sounds of one particular scene, the preference of the writers becomes evident. Especially the camera movement and position, as well as the use of nondiegetic sounds, make the scene a visual and audible example of the power struggle between Bellamy and Clarke.

### 4.3.2 Leadership: Clarke Griffin vs. Abby Griffin

Abby Griffin was a council member on the ark, and is considered to be the best qualified doctor among the Sky People. A few weeks after the Ark reaches Earth, she is named chancellor by Marcus Kane. When Camp Jaha and the drop site of the hundred juvenile delinquents finally merge together, however, most of the latter do not blindly follow Abby's rule.



*Image 20: Abby Griffin*

What follows is an implicit power struggle between Abby and Clarke. In S02E07, Abby is speaking to the Sky People and tries to make them understand that she has the final say. Clarke, however, publicly rebels against her mother and they make eye contact, challenging each other. Despite the legitimate power position that Abby occupies and the force with which she exercises control is firm, the Sky People instinctively seem to consent to Clarke's leadership. Moreover, the Commander of the Grounder Clans, Lexa, only wishes to negotiate with Clarke and requests her specifically, thereby acknowledging her as the official representative of the Sky People. Where does the trust of the hundred underage offenders and the respect of the Grounders come from? First of all, Clarke holds the advantage of time over Abby. She simply reached the Earth's surface months before Abby did, giving Clarke the time she needed to win the trust of the juvenile delinquents and to establish a position of leadership towards the Grounders. Nevertheless, there are two aspects that should be taken into account when analyzing the power struggle between Abby and her daughter: age and sacrifice. Clarke's age seems to be in her disadvantage, since she – just like Commander Lexa – is still seen as a minor by some of the older Sky People. Abby firmly argues that whatever Clarke has been through does not make her an adult, but Raven claims that “she stopped being a kid the day you sent her down here to die” (S02E05). When Abby and Marcus discuss the Grounder troops, Abby remarks that “they are being led by a child”, after which Marcus replies: “so are we”, thereby acknowledging Clarke's influence and leadership (S02E09). The older Sky People increasingly start to believe that the hundred juvenile delinquents stopped being children when they came to the ground, because they had to do many morally ambiguous acts in order to survive. Despite her young age, Clarke has managed to win the respect of the Grounders and have them listen to her judgment. In the third season, she is even

wanted by many Grounder Clans who proclaim her to be ‘the commander of death’. She and Lexa negotiate without Abby and plan a war against Mount Weather while Abby waits outside of the tent. Mostly, that is because Clarke is able to do what must be done, to make the hard decisions that are needed to ensure the survival of their people, the most prominent example being when she kills her boyfriend with her bare hands to spare an onslaught. She is able to make an “unimaginable sacrifice in the name of a democratic ideal” (Wright, 2016: 16). Self-sacrifice appears to be of importance when it comes to filling leadership positions in society. It becomes increasingly more clear throughout the second season that Clarke is the one giving out orders, for instance when she orders Bellamy to infiltrate Mount Weather against Abby’s will. All of these instances in the power struggle lead up to a direct confrontation between Abby and Clarke, where the both of them stand in front of each other with warriors and guards behind them, ready to attack if needed. Chancellor Griffin orders the Grounders behind her daughter to stand down, but Clarke bluntly remarks that: “you may be the chancellor, but I am in charge” (S02E11). This demonstrates how political power and legal leadership do not always coincide and how power is placed within the will of the people even without a system of law (Wright, 2016: 16). Authority is thus implicitly transferred from Abby to Clarke. Clarke tells Abby: “You need to trust that I know what is right for us”, which is another example of Hobbes’ philosophy in which he states that people should give up part of their free will for an absolute ruler (in Wright, 2016: 9). Williams claims that in post-apocalyptic settings, the lead character is required to fill the role of hero, even if that character’s aim is different, making him or her a ‘reluctant hero’ (2005: 308-9). *The 100* confirms that “[Clarke] may defend civilization, but cannot rejoin it” (Williams, 2005: 309). Clarke keeps defending ‘her people’ as she refers to them, Skaikru, but she does not go back to Arkadia at the end of the second season. In fact, she is not even welcome anymore after Pike’s rise to Chancellor. She walks away from Bellamy and tells him that she cannot rejoin the Sky People because of what she has been through and the sacrifices she has had to make. However, after having lived in the wilderness for months, she joins Commander Lexa and the Grounder Clans before eventually going back to Arkadia.

### **4.3.3 Power & Responsibility**

One of Clarke’s biggest personal sacrifice has been killing Finn Collins. Finn and Clarke have grown very close since they have been on the ground, and eventually they fell in love. After Clarke is captured by the Mountain Men, Finn does everything in his power to search and find

her. He goes as far as to torture a Grounder and mercilessly killing eighteen innocent people in a Grounder village, among whom were many elderly people and children. In order to stop the Grounder Clans from attacking Arkadia under Commander Lexa's rule, Clarke tries to persuade her to agree to an alliance. Lexa eventually approves of the forming of a coalition after Clarke gives her useful information about their common enemy in Mount Weather, but on one condition: to have Finn pay for his crimes. After all, 'blood must have blood'. To do so, he must suffer the pain of eighteen deaths, meaning he would be very severely tortured in front of hundreds of people. Finn is tied up to a pole awaiting his punishment while Clarke still attempts to persuade the Commander to have mercy on him, all in vain. When Clarke realizes there is no way out of this situation, she asks Lexa if she can say goodbye to him, a request that is granted. Clarke ends up killing Finn by slowly stabbing a knife through his heart, soothing him in the meantime and telling him that he is going to be okay. Finn thanks her once he realizes she saved him from severe torture by the Grounders. This at first glance immoral action of Clarke leads to hateful eyes of her own people. She explains herself to her mother, saying "They would have tortured him. I had to. I had to. I had to. What did I do?" (S02E08). While Kane, Abby and Indra verbally fight over the rights to Finn's body, Clarke steps in and negotiates with Lexa about a truce. Clarke immediately goes on with the order of business as if nothing has happened. She does not take time to grief because she feels the responsibility for her people inside Mount Weather. In the meantime, Raven is mad and unforgiving towards Clarke, but when she witnesses how the Grounders torture Gustus (the first adviser of Lexa) and realizes how Finn would have endured the same torment, she starts to understand Clarke's decision. Commander Lexa emphasizes later that she understands the gravity of the personal sacrifice Clarke has made: "What you did tonight will haunt you until the end of your days" (S02E08). Clarke, being the ultimate leader of the Sky People, needs to make huge personal sacrifices, thereby giving up her soul, in order to have her people live. She states herself that "I bare it so that they don't have to" (S02E16). Clarke is increasingly letting go of her former morals, norms and values and gradually transforms into a survivalist leader in Lexa's image. She effectively combines knowledge of her own advanced civilized background to an acquisition of traditions and conventions on the Earth's surface that seems to be more fitting in the post-apocalyptic environment. Here, a close reading will be added of a scene near the end of S02E16. By analyzing the mise-en-scene, cinematography, and sound of this particular scene, we will see how the filmmakers decided to visually show the suffering of and change in Clarke because of what happened in the narrative rather than explicitly name it.

### Close Reading

This relatively short scene occurs near the end of S02E09 (00.39.08 – 00.40.41) when Abby offers Clarke the ashes of Finn to scatter and help her say goodbye, but Clarke refuses to take them. She is done being ‘weak’ as Lexa calls it and tells her hallucination of Finn that “love is weakness”. This is the moment she acknowledges that she needs to change in order to bring her people home safely, she needs to be able to make the hard choices and disregard her personal feelings. At first the frame is small in the sense that we only see Abby and Clarke’s faces during their conversation, but the most interesting part of the scene is what follows. Clarke retracts from Abby toward Lexa and disappears into the Commander’s tent with her. The moment she walks away, the camera is positioned diagonally behind Abby. The audience is looking over Abby’s shoulder to Clarke’s retreating back, giving the viewer an almost motherly perspective on the situation. The camera position changes when the door opens to the Commander’s residence and we are placed on the inside watching first Lexa and then Clarke enter. Clarke is quite literally following in Lexa’s footsteps, making it clear that she is fully accepting her norms and values in life and is willing to change accordingly. There has not been made use of low- or high-angled shots, but the camera is placed on a neutral height throughout the whole scene. The scene takes place at night, so both the inside as well as the outside are dark, yet the outside is dimly lit through the use of torches. Therefore, when they enter the Commander’s residence, Clarke again literally walks from the light into darkness. This is the only movement that is employed in this shot. The details on Clarke’s face gradually disappear as her face is engulfed in blackness. After four seconds the speed of motion changes. More frames are appearing per second, resulting in a slow-motion effect which slows the pace of the action (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010: 172). In this case, slow-motion is used to emphasize the transition we see in Clarke, forcing the viewer to dwell on this moment of change (172). The transition from being a caring, loving, and natural leader who simply wants to protect her people, to a ruthless, coldhearted, survivalist leader who is able to think through political strategies in a dystopian world has explicitly been made visible through the use of lighting and camera movement. Throughout the entire scene, the filmmakers made use of nondiegetic sound. We hear slow and sad violin music during Clarke’s conversation with both Abby and the hallucination of Finn, and a soft, dramatic soprano voice that resembles a part of an opera which only grows stronger, graver and more intense as Clarke walks toward Lexa, building a sense of suspense for the viewer. It is not known what piece of music is used here. The diegetic sounds are of equal symbolic importance here. After the conversations, we hear some indistinctive chatter among some of

the Grounder guards and the sound of Clarke's footsteps as she walks firmly and determinately towards the Commander to fulfill her role as leader of the Sky People. Furthermore, we hear the door creaking as it opens and closes. The closing door signals the end of the scene.



Image 21



Image 22



Image 23



Image 24

By making use of lighting, camera positions, movement and sounds, the filmmakers of *The 100* have chosen to explicitly visualize the transition in Clarke from caring to coldhearted, from loving to ruthless, by emphasizing her following in the footsteps of Commander Lexa and the slightly exaggerated shift from light to darkness, giving the impression of Clarke giving up her soul to lead and protect her people. Clarke thereby already partly expresses character traits that are associated with both traditional masculinity and stereotypical femininity. The society of the Sky people appears to be the most progressive when it comes to gender in leadership positions. While the society of the Mountain Men is embedded in patriarchal structures and the society of the Grounder Clans are rooted in female masculinity, the society of the Sky People allows for the rise of feminism in the sense that women can

become leaders in all layers of the community and are able to adopt a patriarchal language without losing their femininity or personal character traits. In what follows we will analyze the importance of gender when it comes to power dynamics in the society of the Sky People, by looking at two examples in which female characters fill traditional masculine roles in the community.

#### 4.4 Feminism

Since the white, patriarchal, heterosexual societal norms have disappeared, the person who is to fill in the power vacuum can be anyone who falls outside of that cultural normativity. We have seen in what way women are able to fill leadership positions in *The 100*, but we might wonder how other roles of status are filled within societies. Every society has a multiplicity of roles, such as politicians, doctors, warriors, scientists, hunters, teachers, and craftsmen. Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood argue that the psychological sex differences between men and women are derived from the roles they fulfill in their community, as “each sex develops behavioral tendencies that are appropriate for its typical roles” (Eagly & Carli, 2007: 34). That means that within a society there are certain cultural expectations in relation to roles that are considered to be either masculine or feminine and sex becomes related to social practices (Mary Holmes, 2009: 186). Since gender is therefore ideological – which coincides with Foucault’s theory of gender as a social construct –, and all ideologies have disappeared from the face of the Earth in the post-apocalyptic world, the link between our bodies and the roles we fulfill in society fades as well. Eagly and Carli explain how those roles do not necessarily have to stay the same over time, but are able to transform and evolve, thereby “reflecting the ability of each sex to perform various roles depended fundamentally on inherited physical attributes [and] changes in the psychology of women and men [that] follow from changes in their roles” (Eagly & Carli, 2007: 34). In the area of feminist film theory, Mary Beth Mills analyzes the massive recruitment of flexible and cheap female labor forces in industries like food processing, textiles and low-wage manufacturing. She argues that “global capital relies on a gendered division of labor in which women dominate in jobs with the lowest levels of pay and authority, while men occupy most of the positions at the supervisory and managerial ranks” (Mills, 2015: 7). Since there is no such thing as money in the post-apocalyptic film world of *The 100*, the discussion would mostly revolve around questions of authority in this regard. Tasks like food rationing or other domestic responsibilities are often considered to be

secondary or inferior based on patriarchal assumptions. These traditions lead to the idea that women would lack the capacity to produce social and economic value, to the naturalization of women's subordination in jobs, and to a Butlerian notion of an everyday performance of masculine authority and paternalistic control. After 9/11, some theorists place gendered divisions of labor in a neoliberal era. Neoliberalism advocates people who are independent, self-reliant and productive rather than citizens who have less social value because of their lack of productivity (13). These neoliberal hierarchies tie in with the gendered hierarchies that Ann Towns describes. Productive labor is then often associated with masculinity, whereas unproductive labor is often linked to femininity. Neoliberal societies tend to value productive (masculine) work over social (feminine) reproductive work which generates an increasing division. McDowell links these notions to masculine qualities of intellectual ability. The gendered effects of neoliberalism have also been critiqued for the idea that it values individualism and therefore identifies gender inequality as a personal responsibility, whereas it does not take into account ideological structures that reproduce such hierarchies in the first place. There is alternatively also a body of feminist work that studies the enrolment of women in nontraditional female occupations like computer programming or law. Mills concludes that the study of gendered divisions of labor remains central and significant to feminist theory and its aim to pursue gender equality. We will see that the Sky People is the only society in *The 100* that really comes close to this theory of gender equality.

So far we have seen that women can now fill elite leadership positions in post-apocalyptic communities. In what follows we will study how this notion trickles down to the rest of society. *The 100* shows various female characters who appropriate male normativity without losing traditional feminine character traits. In these characters we see traits that are generally attributed to heteronormative male stereotypes without parting from their femininity, and we see women filling roles in society that in our contemporary world are usually linked to masculinity. The goal of the following two analyses is two-fold: we will study to what extent two female characters from the series conform to and deviate from the features that are generally attributed to the heteronormative male stereotype, and in what way their occupations are a reflection of culture or nature, of civilization or primitiveness.

#### 4.4.1 Raven Reyes as the Rocket Scientist

Raven Reyes was the youngest Zero-Gravity Mechanic on the Ark in 52 years and is now the primary mechanic of the Sky People on Earth. She got a perfect score on her tests and even though her health condition should prohibit her from space work, that rejection was overruled because she was exceptionally good. One of her nicknames is ‘The Princess Mechanic’.

Although she is still very young herself, she did not come to the ground with the hundred juvenile delinquents. When on the Ark, she finds out that the Council is lying to their people and she confronts Abby Griffin about that. Instead of reporting Raven, Abby makes a deal with her. She is to repair a 130-year old escape pod and make it ready for launch. The initial idea is for Abby to use it herself and go to Earth to find Clarke, but after she is put under arrest, Raven makes the jump herself. She is soon incorporated into the small community of the hundred juvenile delinquents and becomes their explosives expert. Raven is also the first person who is able to establish radio contact with the Ark and later with Bellamy when he is spying for the Sky people, she takes out the electricity of Mount Weather by dismantling the dam, and she builds numerous bombs, bullets and grenades. Furthermore, she is willing to sacrifice her own life in S01E10 to blow up a bridge that would delay any Grounder attacks. Lindsey Morgan, the Latino actress who plays Raven on the show, describes her character as this: “Raven is just a real badass. She is a guy’s girl, very intelligent, fierce and tough. She is a huge asset because of her intelligence... I see Raven helping girls become interested in science, engineering, and mechanics. She makes it look cool”. The idea that scientific and technological advancements are connected to men is refuted, but at the same time the aspect of ‘manliness’ or masculinity remains. Raven is portrayed as ‘a boy’s girl’ with an athletic body, always wearing her hair in a ponytail, wearing cool jackets and generally has a rather aggressive attitude. She is constantly breaking the rules and seems to have a short temper as she punches multiple people whom she disagrees with at times, including Clarke. She is also portrayed to have a tough body. After John Murphy shot her in her spine, she needs to undergo surgery. Yet, there are no anesthetics or sterilizing equipment. Raven makes the decision to have surgery anyway without any anesthetics or pain killers. Eventually she ends up with permanent nerve damage in her leg. She is still recovering from that surgery when, in S02E09, she is falsely accused to have poisoned Commander Lexa and is therefore tied to pole and tortured by the Grounders. One by one they cut through her body with knives, yet apart from the occasional scream or gasp, she never cries or begs for them to stop. *The 100* appears to play with the arbitrary relation between toughness and the male body. John Arnold and

Sean Brady explain it as follows: “The idea that male bodies can prove their manliness through showing that they can endure pain, and the implicit contrast between ‘hard’ male bodies over which men have ‘mastery’ and the ‘soft’ bodies of women, is an idea that seems to be reconfigured in different historical periods” (Arnold & Brady, 2011: 443). In S02E16 Raven is tortured again, this time by the Mountain Men who try to acquire her bone marrow. She does not go down without a fight, in fact she fights off a few doctors by biting and kicking them, but eventually she is tied to the table after they tasered her twice. *The 100* proves that Raven, a woman, can in fact endure pain and that that notion is not directly connected to the male body. At the same time she possesses certain traits that are generally considered to be masculine, depicting her as a boy’s girl. Even though the filmmakers do not reveal much about her sexuality to the audience – except for her romance with Finn Collins before the first season – there is a huge part of the fandom who have started a trending topic on social media with the hashtag #GiveRavenReyesAGirlfriend (Wilken, 2016: par. 9). Apart from Raven’s survival skills, she is one of the most highly educated people on science among the Sky People. Once she lands on Earth and finds the hundred juveniles, she is able to get the communication systems of the dropship back online and contact the Ark in space. She is also able to make bullets out of scrap metal and create improvised bombs. Her most significant accomplishment is dismantling A.L.I.E., an A.I. (artificial intelligence) who wishes to make new nuclear bombs (and was responsible for the original apocalypse, as we learn later on). She saves not only the Sky People with her advanced knowledge of technology, but all who are left of the human race. Even the Mountain Men are less educated and progressive than her. She is therefore held at high esteem among all communities and eventually respected by all remaining societies and their leaders.



*Image 25: Raven Reyes during torture*



*Image 26: Raven Reyes in a spaceship*

#### 4.4.2 Octavia Blake as the Combat Warrior

Since men have been the norm when it comes to power for such a long time, female leaders are always seen in comparison to, a deviation from, or an adaptation to male power. American war films are usually about wars that have been fought in the past, and since almost all of those wars were fought by men, men are over-represented in those films. Even though there are examples of combat female warriors, the majority of military personnel at the front have always been men. Women usually joined the army as for instance medical nurses. Today, women are allowed to join the military and it has generally become more accepted in Western society, yet it can still be a bit controversial and it is definitely less common for a woman to join the military than a man. Nevertheless, the post-apocalyptic genre allows for a new ideal. There are no rules as to how many women are combat warriors, or whether women are leaders of fighting units or entire communities even. It is a new day and age, a possible future so to say, where rules, laws, norms and values have changed. As an audience we accept this change without questioning, because we view it as a fictitious world where anything is possible and these new 'rules' are respected (Ritzenhoff & Kazecki, 2014). Ritzenhoff and Kazecki argue that "films create heroes/heroines and propagate them in diverse cinematic forms by establishing male heroism in combat and portraying the heroism of women in non-combat situations but in a context of war" (2014: 1). This is definitely not the situation in *The 100*, and one of the prime cases of evidence on that statement is Octavia Blake. Octavia is the younger sister of Bellamy Blake and was named after the Roman imperial family. She was part of the hundred juvenile delinquents and the first one of the Sky People to set foot on the ground. She was placed in lock-up for being born as a second child, and before that she lived in a small space under the floor of their cabin. She has been confined all her life and once she reaches the Earth, Octavia becomes adventurous and spontaneous. When a lethal virus hits the drop ship camp of the hundred juvenile delinquents as a means of the Grounders to make them weaker, Octavia's body turns out to be immune. Lincoln tells her: "I knew you were one of the strong ones" (S01E10). Her physical appearance becomes increasingly more tough-looking, even though the sensual touch we saw in the beginning of the series remains lingering in the background. She has an average height and has long dark hair. In S02E10 she challenges Indra because she wants to learn how to fight, and she is beaten up by one of Indra's warriors. Octavia gets hit over and over again, but she keeps getting up. Indra later comes to Octavia's tent and tells her that she fought with mere aggression without using ratio, but nevertheless she was impressed: "A strength of spirit like that is rare, it must be guided ...

I can make you a great warrior Octavia of the Sky People, if you are willing to do what it takes to become my second” (S02E10). She quickly becomes Indra’s apprentice and learns how to fight in combat. Her choice of weapon is a sword and she starts to use a horse as her primary means of transportation. Octavia is an example of the observation that “women ... are gaining agency in violent conflict situations, replacing and supplementing male combatants, and questioning the processes of masculinization of heroes” (Ritzenhoff and Kazecki, 2014: 2). Octavia’s free-spirited and uninhibited personality slowly transforms into bravery and courage, as she is – for example – used as Reaper bait twice. Octavia quickly becomes one of the toughest combat warriors among the Sky People. Near the end of the third season, she kills Charles Pike in cold blood out of revenge because he killed her boyfriend, Lincoln. At the same time, Octavia has a great capacity to love, protect, and socialize with others. She is the first one of the Sky People to adopt Grounder culture, learns their language Trigedasleng, puts war paint on her face and acquires two Grounder tattoos. Octavia also becomes a balanced character who on the one hand has masculine character traits like aggression, violence, and strength, but on the other hand possesses feminine features as well for she is caring and nurturing towards others. She also shows mercy on multiple occasions, mainly to protect others from harm, for example Indra’s daughter. Furthermore, many of the heterosexual male characters find her attractive and although she acquires fighting skills and a sense of ‘toughness’, she still gets portrayed as a young woman with an eye-catching body and a kind of sexuality that gets interpreted as tempting by many of her fellow fighters. The most significant embodiment of Octavia as a combat warrior, is when in S04E10 the Grounder Clans call for a fight to the death. One warrior from every clan gets tagged and thrown in a battle in which the strongest combatant may win. The clan that the victor represents is allowed to take the bunker and survive the next wave of radiation. All other clans will die. Octavia, as the representative of the Sky People, is the least favorited contestant of this battle, but she is the only one from her society that is physically, mentally and emotionally capable of participating, as well as one of the only Sky People that knows and respects the conventions, rules and traditions of the Grounder Clans.



*Image 27: Octavia Blake with  
Grounder face paint*



*Image 28: Octavia Blake in Grounder attire*

Where Raven's character represents technological advancement, mechanics, science, and intellectual cleverness, Octavia's character epitomizes hand-to-hand combat, tribal face paint, violence, and primitiveness. Both are exemplifications of two diverging forces that tend to unbalance the society of the Sky People. The Sky People, quite literally, transcend both the Grounder Clans and the Mountain Men in their progressiveness on two levels. First, their female inhabitants are able to fill roles in society that are traditionally attributed to masculinity while maintaining certain traditional feminine character traits. They therefore surpass both the patriarchal society of the Mountain Men and the violent, female-masculine society of the Grounder Clans and present the audience with a progressiveness that comes closest to feminists' contemporary perception of and hope for gender equality. Second, the Sky People are both civilized and primitive, a combination of the remnants of the cultured old west and a newfound relation to nature; they have knowledge of advanced technology and use automatic weapons as well as settle in the tribal-like environment of the post-apocalyptic world and respect its newly emerged conventions. Raven and Octavia, notably both women, are the embodiments of those two tendencies that exist simultaneously in the community of the Sky People, resulting in a society that is the epitome of 'civilized primitiveness'.

## Conclusion: Utopian Dystopia

*The 100* is presented as a post-apocalyptic dystopian television series. The classification of the genre is of great importance. Some scholars prefer to use the umbrella term ‘utopianism’, defined as “the imaginative projection, positive or negative, of a society that is substantially different from the one in which the author lives” (Claeys and Sargent in Marks, 2015[1999]: 6). In other words, a utopian perspective gives us a positive view on the future, and a dystopian perspective gives us a pessimistic view on the future. Foucault’s heterotopia literally translated means ‘no-place’, a place that is inhabited by the notion of ‘otherness’. Walter Russell Mead explains it as follows: “Utopia is a place where everything is good; dystopia is a place where everything is bad; heterotopia is where things are different” (1996: 13). Many words are employed to describe possible futuristic societies, yet what is striking is that it often seems as if those concepts are on far different sides of the spectrum. Amy Murphy argues in her article “Our Post-Apocalyptic Imagination as Utopian Desire” (2013) that those extremes are not the case, in fact, utopia and dystopia are often entwined. She reasons that even though these kinds of TV series can be considered as dystopian fiction when looking at the aesthetics, the narratives of those series are frequently organized in such a way that they reveal the larger, utopian desires of our contemporary western society, especially when it comes to certain values and ideals (2013: 234). In *The 100*, the post-apocalyptic setting leads to a dark, dreary, fearful aesthetics. There are hardly any buildings anymore, almost everything that was built by men has been destroyed. Because of the rivalry between the existing new societies, there is a constant threat of war. The characters live in a violent environment where they have to struggle to stay alive. The eradicated world also lacks organizational structures, and the danger of natural forces makes it hard to survive. All of these circumstances show how the aesthetics of *The 100* give the impression of a dystopian world. Yet, certain types of social order and hierarchies may demonstrate quite the opposite.

Dystopian or utopian fiction is presented in accordance with the world we live in. According to Barton Palmer, *The 100* is realist in that the series is recognizable as a world *like* ours, for instance that the world is populated by characters who are essentially similar to us (in Sanders, 2008: 172). However, he adds, those spheres are definitely not exactly the same, since they are “also marked by an often startling alterity, a “difference” that is the textual figuration of fear or desire or perhaps, more commonly, a complex mixture of the two. Dystopian fiction presents us with futures that conform to our deepest terrors – and wishes.”

(Palmer in Sanders, 2008: 172). Here, Palmer affirms Murphy's argument that utopia and dystopia are not mutually exclusive. In the narrative we frequently find the desire to start over, the wish to organize the world differently this time around, the longing for a clean slate. Those fictional worlds can therefore be seen as a way to project our hopes and fears onto an empty canvas. Majid Yar similarly states that post-apocalyptic fictions "refract contemporary social concerns into the domain of storytelling, thereby dramatizing the tensions, conflicts, fears and contradictions with which a society is wrestling" (2015: 3), while Peter Marks highlights the more positive side to that idea, saying that "utopianism embodies what they [Claeys and Sargent] see as 'social dreaming'" (2015: 6). Either way, there is a relation between the fictional post-apocalyptic world and our own contemporary world, which moves away from the present and toward a possible future (Palmer in Sanders, 2008: 175). This empty canvas – to stay with the analogy of the painter – is a chance for new ideologies to emerge. Murphy emphasizes that in many post-apocalyptic narratives, the apocalypse itself is perceived "as an opportunity for a final showdown between opposing worldviews" (Murphy, 2013: 239). With the eradication of all civilizations, societies, communities, religions, ideologies, political systems, nations, and cultures, all of the existing worldviews disappear. It is a "complete reimagining of social life functions as a serviceable working definition of the utopian genre, and the endless diversity of those projections incorporate options and possibilities, hints, warnings and aspirations" (Marks, 2015: 5).

In short, the post-apocalyptic subgenre is often set in a dystopian world with dark and dreary aesthetics, but the narrative that accompanies that setting is often a representation of the dreams and desires we have, an escape from the struggles we are dealing with in our contemporary world today, and an exemplification of our wish to start over. *The 100* offers us multiple newly emerging societies and cultures. In this thesis we have studied the power dynamics within three new societies according to a Foucauldian theory of power with a focus on politics and gender. Through those analyses it appears that said communities are engrained in paradoxical roots. First, the society of the Mountain Men is based on 'contaminated purity'. It very much resembles our own contemporary Western civilization. As the preservers of history, art and literature and the maintainers of Western culture, they view themselves as the superior and pure descendants of the Old World. This perspective corresponds to religious purification, where the apocalypse separates the 'saved' from the 'damned'. On a banal level, however, the bodies of the Mountain Men are not able to survive in the post-apocalyptic world. They need to cleanse themselves by having blood and bone marrow transfusions from

the inhabitants of other communities. Moreover, their government is engrained in patriarchal structures, having a middle-aged white heterosexual male leader. Second, the society of the Grounder Clans is based on ‘female masculinity’. It has violence at its foundation, and over time the law that embedded said violence has transitioned into the norm. Women fill strong independent roles of leadership and fighters in this society, but they can only do so in accordance with violence, a concept that is traditionally attributed to masculinity. Especially Lexa – the political commander of the Grounder Clans – is bound by these constrictions and finds herself in a position of constant self-sacrifice and responsibility for her people. Women can become meaning-makers in society without being discriminated on the basis of their gender, but are only able to do so by adopting a patriarchal language of masculinity. Third, the society of the Sky People is based on ‘Civilized Primitiveness’. The relation between the Arkadians and the Hundred is based on surveillance, another Foucauldian concept that shifts from imposition to self-regulation. While the Mountain Men embody the colonizers and the Grounders symbolize the natives, the Sky People transcend both societies in two ways: 1) female characters can fill traditional masculine roles in society by partially adopting a patriarchal way of life without losing their feminine character traits resulting in a feminist social progressiveness, and 2) they are both a technologically and scientifically advanced people with knowledge of history and culture, as well as able to adapt to the post-apocalyptic world by regaining a close relation to nature and implementing primitiveness to their everyday lives. The society of the Sky People can therefore be seen as the epitome of social progressiveness and an exemplification of our Western desires for a better future. The three paradoxes that relate to each of the societies according to a Foucauldian theory of power seem to lead up to a grand paradox of the genre itself. Though sold as a dystopian television series, *The 100* appears to be very progressive when it comes to the political narrative and characterization of women. The series portrays our collective hopes *and* fears by effectively comparing and contrasting different embodiments of power dynamics in three divergent societies, thereby glorifying the post-apocalyptic world. Hence, *The 100* should not be presented as a dystopia, but rather as the paradoxical ‘utopian dystopia’.

## Discussion

Before conducting this study I had the feeling that the dystopian post-apocalyptic genre was a relatively new emergence in contemporary popular culture and that in the last few years at least a change in its nature had taken place. By analyzing the way in which power operates in the TV show *The 100*, those expectations started to take shape in the paradoxical roots of societies that would later lead to a redefinition of the genre. Here, I would like to dwell on the cause of and the implications for this analysis.

Apocalypticism is about an eradication of the human race, which in popular culture at the very least takes the form of a reduction in population. The remaining people who are the preservers of humanity are seen as the ‘saved’ and often take the lack of law, government, and ideology as an opportunity to ‘do things differently’. As Horton and Heffernan argued, the emergence of post-apocalypticism – as opposed to apocalypticism – took place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, postmodern philosophy became a radicalization of and a break from modern philosophy at the same time. Thinkers in this time state that humanity should stop holding on to the legitimacy framework that would explain everything, because it only leads to horrors. One of the most important theories explaining this statement comes from Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998). Lyotard problematizes the notion of wanting to die for an ideal. We need to get off of that one island of truth, and sail between various lands in order to realize that everything holds some form of accuracy. It is not about discovering a new system, but rather about decomposing an old one. This perspective creates the possibility of space for small narratives to accompany the grand narratives of modern philosophy. Alternative modern views are able to rise within western society, such as feminism or the civil rights movement. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there seems to be a feeling in Western society – especially among young adults – that our world is dying and we need to find a new Lyotardian island (Vermeulen and Van den Akker, 2010: 4). If the world is lost, then we need to find new ways to give it meaning anyway. We are aware that one island, or one truth, is not necessarily better or worse than the other, but we realize that we need to make the best choice there is for a new world (12). The sense of hopelessness is fueled by all sorts of events, but one of the turning points might have been 9/11. The suddenness and size of the terrorist attacks that day have shaken Western belief systems and added to a stronger longing to a different – better – world. *The 100* shows multiple societies that have emerged since the apocalypse, and all of their social systems and ideologies are justified to some

extent. Yet, although it is acknowledged that no society is perfect, it is clear that the Sky People are generally seen as the best way to give meaning to the world.

Furthermore, the fact that the makers of *The 100* chose to focus on politics and gender specifically when it comes to imagining a new social order, has given it the reputation of a radically progressive television series. First, the bisexuality of the protagonist Clarke has sparked positive reviews, because although homosexuality very slowly starts to find its way into film, bisexuality is very rarely given the same platform. Moreover, queerness is not addressed as an issue at all. As Lindsay MacDonald formulates “it’s given all the pomp and circumstance of announcing [someone is] wearing shoes” (2016: par. 12). Sexuality and gender are simply seen as individual characteristics and are never viewed as non-traditional or as a deviation from the norm. Second, the audience is presented with an array of independent, tough women and successful female leaders in all areas of society. Third, the vulnerability of men is represented without prejudice, as well as cases of emotional loss and even PTSD with detailed persistency for the entire run of the show. Fourth, even though violence takes place in the post-apocalyptic film world of *The 100*, that violence is never sexual. Women or children especially need not be afraid necessarily for being sexually assaulted, because it does not seem to exist. On the other hand, *The 100* may not always be as progressive as it wishes to be. First, the approach of not addressing sexuality and gender as an issue may lead to forms of gender-blindness. We must not forget that gender is and probably will always be significant when it comes to leadership or demarcating one civilization from the other. Claiming the opposite might be perceived as ignorance. Second, even though ethnic minorities are represented more and better in this television series, black characters are still often second in command or end up failing to be successful. Moreover, Latino’s may be fairly well personified by multiple characters, Asians are still very much under-represented.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have focused on politics and gender in relation to a Foucauldian theory of power. Other significant elements in relation to post-apocalypticism in film may be the role of artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies, the aspect of religion in a dystopian world, an in-depth analysis of queerness and sexuality, or the concept of race as an area in which power operates in society. In order to come to a full understanding of ‘utopian dystopia’ in post-apocalypticism, extensive research ought to be conducted on all of these elements. This thesis should be considered an initial attempt to redefine the dystopian post-apocalyptic film genre and as such can be used as a basis for further research.

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