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**A Study Dystopian Elements in Suzanne Collins'
The Hunger Games (2008)**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my younger self, glad you kept on swimming through the chaos of life. This is your reminder that whatever lives throws at your face just laugh it out and turn it into a dinner joke. I promise to keep on raising you from the ashes and mend all your gashes

I am proud of you.

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ABSTRACT

Dystopian fiction secured its ground in the world of literature. This research, applying a moral philosophical approach, is designed to examine the elements that shape a dystopian novel which includes the different forms of discipline that a government uses over the body and mind of the citizens. The work focuses on how the dystopian genre contributed vigorously to the moral standards of the real world, touching on issues of reality and the fabric of a destroyed society with the urge to survive. The theoretical part outlines the elements of the dystopian fiction that authors use to shape the plot of their stories. The theory will then be implied to Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger games* (2008) as a case study. In her book, Collins pictures a society that is under full control of a ruling state. Primarily focusing on the protagonist Katniss Everdeen and her role to run against the system of inequality and call for a change.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

YA – Young Adult

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General Introduction

General introduction

Dystopian fiction contributed vigorously to the world of literature, it has evolved through the centuries and gained so much popularity in the literary field. Authors gained inspiration from utopian writings to create their own bestselling dystopian works such as George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Zamyatin's *We* and current YA dystopian fictions like Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, and *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. Dystopian literature is not only an imaginative fictional work but it rather tackles deeper issues and serves as a critic for the political system by using characters that go against what the state preaches and refuse to submit to the rules.

Young adult dystopian fiction saw a huge rise on the charts with a larger fan base than the previous dystopian works, thanks to *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins published in 2008. The plot is inspired by real world events where Collins used to watch footage of the Iraq War on television which inspired the annual televised Hunger Games. In her book, Collins presents a destructive society where themes like social inequality, political oppression and control of the media are very common. This work will tackle these elements in a more profound way as well as the driving force behind using these themes.

The aim of this research is to examine the elements of dystopian literature from a reflective and critical perspective, offering a set of social, political, and psychological characteristics that are prominent in the dystopian works. Furthermore, reflect on how these themes are used to shed the light on the discrimination, oppression, and injustice that people face in society. Moreover, I offer a contemporary study of *The Hunger Games* and its impact on the audience.

To deal with such topic, some questions were raised such as: what are the major elements that shape a dystopian work? How does the author reflect on real world issues by using a set of dystopian elements? What is the role of the dystopian protagonist? In addition, the standing hypothesis of this research answers the above questions and proclaims that: dystopian fiction differs from the utopian genre as one share a positive view on society and the other criticizes and reflects on the world issues. The elements of dystopian fiction are exaggerated to picture a futuristic version of the current reality but also reflect on the world problems to spread awareness for a change.

For the course of this study, articles, books and works done by researchers and other authors' critics were gathered to analyze and work on this dissertation. Despite *The Hunger games* being a trilogy, only the first book of the series is picked for this research. The work explores the harsh reality of living in a dystopian society as well as the power individuals hold to make the world a better place.

The clash of elements of dystopia and issues from the real world is what inspired this work; many readers of *The Hunger Games* questioned the motto behind such an incredibly intense work that in some way felt very familiar. One starts to realize that the society of Panem is no worse than that of his own, they are very similar yet different, dystopian literature envisions a possible future of a society that is under political control and what would happen if people let themselves fall into that hole instead of taking action for a change.

Chapter One

Dystopian Fiction

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1.1 Introduction

Dystopian literature has arisen in the twentieth century as an inevitable product of hundred years of pain and disasters. A dystopian society is not only the opposite of a utopian world but rather collects events and aspects from similar real world issues. The dystopian fiction portrays an apocalyptic society where people are under control by the government; they lack their basic human rights and are firmly mistreated. Moreover, the story usually revolves around a protagonist who refuses to conform to the rules of the government and rather overcome the injustice system by going against what the state preaches. This genre serves as a warning for a possible outcome, but also plants hope for the audience to act accordingly. (Moynlan 11)

Dystopian fiction includes a set of specific elements that distinguishes it from being a utopian fiction. Thereby the use of an apocalyptic environment, the unjust oppression and technological control all shape the plot of a dystopian work. These elements will be illustrated in details throughout the context of this chapter. Veena Das states that “some realities need to be fictionalized before they can be apprehended” (39). Dystopian literature besides being a fictional work, serves as a means of social criticism as it opens the eyes of the reader on what goes behind the system of the government by warning the audience of the possibility of re-living such situations and spread awareness to prevent them from experiencing the same narrative of that of the novel.

1.2 Background of Dystopia

Dystopia stems from Utopia, a perfect world where everything seems to work perfectly, whereas dystopia implies its negation. The term Utopia appeared for the first time by the British writer and thinker Thomas More in his

novel "*Utopia*" published in 1516; describing a city where society is governed by absolute idealism in all its aspects. Moore's first intention was to shed light on the vast gap that separated the utopia created by his imagination and the system of government at the time – in the sixteenth century – which relied on self-interest, greed, and tyranny in all its forms. As for the term Dystopia, it came after utopia by about three centuries. English philosopher and political thinker "John Mil" was the first to use this term when criticizing the government's policy regarding the Irish lands in 1868, inspired by Moore's writings on utopia. (Ward & Waller 1)

According to George Claeys, a professor of the History of Political Thought in London, Dystopia is: "A regime defined by extreme coercion, inequality, imprisonment, and slavery. Often described as a collectivism run wild" (5); in addition, it is a fictional society corrupt and frightening, dominated by chaos. The elements of dystopia vary from political to economic or even environmental issues. Dystopian societies have culminated in a wide range of science fiction subgenres. These stories and novels usually highlight real-world issues related to society, the environment, politics, religion, psychology, spirituality, or technology that may become present in the future.

1.3 Dystopian Fiction

Dystopian fiction emerged in the eighteenth century and has evolved as a genre through the twentieth century, and has continued to grow. It is the stark and definitive expression of the fears of different cultures and their anxieties about the coming future. This genre focuses primarily on speculative fiction concerned with large-scale socio-political issues and power structures that reinforce those issues by having characters contrasting the norms to show the system's impact on individuals.

Dystopian narrative according to Thomas Moylan's description in his book "*Scraps of the Unstained Sky*" 2003 is:

Largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century. A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination. (11)

It warns about what to come; the action often occurs in a recognizable future version. It studies the events that happened when the novel was written and how society's problems are artificial.

This genre saw a wide variety of literary works, such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) or modern dystopian YA fiction seen in *The Hunger Games* (2008) and *Divergent* (2011) where the protagonist is trapped and unable to act freely in the world, which applies to all the characters of the novel. Even friendships are kept to a minimum by the government, which controls other fundamentals. In addition, usually, the author provides this idea that the government promotes the image that the citizens are living in a utopian or better reality than that of the past, where there are constant threats of violence and wars that the public is protected from, hence make the people even more dependent on those ruling the state.

1.4 Identifying the Elements of Dystopian Fiction

There are many dystopian manifestations that are present in dystopian novels, some of which are clearer than others. However, the matter is the

writer's vision and his goals to portray these elements within the novel. These elements often are reminiscent of what the real world is facing and how often people are brainwashed by the media.

1.4.1 Government Control

In dystopian fiction, people lose control over their bodies and minds and only follow what the government dictates, and this is assured by taking over the history of the past and manipulating the present, so citizens can never question or have doubtful thoughts that may lead them to build awareness on how the state is controlling them. People are required to follow a specific routine forced by the state, which becomes their whole life. According to Foucault, "Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these forces (in political terms of obedience)" (138). As the state is very good at raising the economy by making people work for them while making the workers believe that they are protected, citizens sacrifice and feel the need to serve the state. Moreover, people start to feel as if they are only subjects, and their whole personality revolves around working. Dystopian people do not mind being under pressure; they believe that being alive is already a gift the government gave them. As seen in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the protagonist Offred is afraid that if she stops giving birth, she will be degraded and sent somewhere where life and death are equal, this is how society manipulated and oppressed women; they were viewed only as birth machines while the government has complete control over their fate.

According to Foucault:

The prisoners' day will begin at six in the morning in winter and at five in summer. They will work for nine hours a day throughout the

year. Two hours a day will be devoted to instruction . . . At the first drum-roll, the prisoners must rise and dress in silence, as the supervisor opens the cell doors. At the second drum-roll, they must be dressed and make their beds. At the third, they must line up and precede to the chapel for Morning Prayer . . . Work and the day will end at nine o'clock in winter and at eight in summer. (6)

Humans' daily lives are dictated and already written; it feels like individuals are not embodying their thoughts and experiences but rather what the government is forcing on them. They cannot choose to do something, think differently, or decide. Their fate is already out there in the hand of the state, and whatever they decide is right for them eventually become their truth. Moreover, they have no choice but to accept that and put their heart and soul into assuring they do their job right either way; they will be punished.

Applebaum stated that people's lives are already written, "determined when and how the prisoner should wake; how he should be marched to work; when and how he should receive food; when and for how long he should sleep" (191). Dystopian people are not waking up thinking about what I will do today; instead, they have a whole schedule for things to be done, with no actual breaks. The government is determined that if people are aware and can think freely, they will lose power over them.

1.4.2 Totalitarianism

Freedom means progress which means development and, therefore, a free society that guarantees free-thinking, reading, and a free culture. So totalitarian regimes are keen to control these matters and never support them. The first to be thought about are those with a different thought system because they seek to

understand society's issues and awareness of them and the course of things around them and therefore educate society on the matter. In contrast, these regimes seek to manipulate awareness to gain control. This theme is prevalent, and prominent in famous dystopian works, whether in George Orwell's *1984* or Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Regarding dystopian fiction, the government plays a huge role in people's lives while convincing society that their actions, beliefs, and ideas are the absolute truth. The government portrays itself as God on earth, and everything else is falsehood; without them, society is miserable and lost. That is how citizens become submissive and dependent. "He felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he was the monster. He was alone. The past was dead, the future was unimaginable." (Orwell 28) Totalitarianism is used to brainwash people that they are not free to do what they want; they already have everything. The government portrays the image that citizens are living their highest quality lives, this is everything they need and more, and there is not any better life out there.

Thus, the control of memory is the main principle of the state. According to Orwell, "Who controls the past, controls the future, and who controls the present, controls the past" (qtd. in Zinn 479). In *1984*, the private time of the protagonist Winston is controlled and rationalized, with no free time for self-activities. Winston is always on his way to work with minimal breaks that do not even count until he gets called for work again. This idea is pushed to remind Winston that time does not belong to him. Like Winston, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred's nightly dreams are constantly interrupted by a ringing bell that wakes her up as her body follows the rhythm immediately. (qtd. in Finigan 436)

Both Orwell and Atwood tackled similar points in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *1984* based on the use of totalitarianism to manipulate the past and dominate the present and the future. For instance, both have powerless protagonists trying to regain their humanity and self-identity taken from them by a hellish society. Memories and languages have been washed and changed to fit the regime's values.

1.4.3 The Use of Surveillance

Dystopian literature is so powerful because it is political in nature. It depicts a dark and disturbing alternate world in which powerful entities oppress citizens and gain control over them, violating fundamental natural values. The problem is not that citizens are told the opposite of what is true. The real issue is that their experiences have become so limited that they need more perspective and language to differentiate between significant concepts.

According to Foucault, the prisoner "must never know whether he is being looked at any moment" but "must be sure that may always be so" (201). Surveillance is used in order to mess with the citizen's mind and threaten him that he may be watched and caught not doing the work, which results in that citizens are always working and therefore benefit the state. This element is ubiquitous in a dystopian society and is used to observe and spy on people so they do their jobs properly. As such, Tyner refers to this as "the induced paranoia of not knowing when one is being watched" (137). Just as seen in *1948*, Big Brother's eyes followed the citizens everywhere; "on coins, on stamps, on the covers of books...asleep or awake, working or eating...in the bath or bed" (Orwell 26). Citizens cannot oppose what is viewed as suitable for them. They are constantly under surveillance; what if they are seen? What if

they get caught doing something else? These threats live in their heads, so they always do their jobs right.

Surveillance is used to sort people, study their actions, and restrict access to places. On top of monitoring them to benefit the government by reducing their rights such as privacy time and individual practices. In addition, *Brave New World* is a scientific society where people are made rather than born; they lack privacy and have a limited lifetime of only 60 years. People are programmed to work in a factory their whole lives while being under constant surveillance.

Similarly, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, women's bodies are considered the state's property. Women were oppressed and given to wealthy families to work and produce children. Nevertheless, women who opposed and rebelled were sent to the colonies, where they would suffer to death and keep the borders under heavy surveillance so the maids would not escape. Women were forced to wear red clothing, so they became recognizable. They are only a toy in men's hands; this is used to mess with women and oppress them psychologically. Offred, the protagonist, is constantly reminded that she is in a better place and that they are worse places she can be sent to. In *1948*, citizens were always under Big Brother's surveillance, either in or out of the city; they were always "seen as well as heard" (Orwell 5). Surveillance is indeed one of the most terrifying ideas of dystopian elements, and it affects the citizens' psychology on a large scale.

1.4.4 Propaganda and False Media

The government is keen to own the past to control the present and the future. So it leads to falsifying all facts and events that do not correspond to its

policy. However, they use soft words such as modification or typos instead of calling it falsification. False media and propaganda are used to control the citizens of the society; sharing only one side of an argument and making the citizens believe they are on the right side of the story. As for information, independent ideas, and freedom, all are strictly prohibited; the citizens are all subject to constant scrutiny and fear of the outside world.

The state uses ideology by pushing ideas to be accurate and make citizens follow them blindly. As Berman mentioned in his work "*Deceptions of the Self in Zamyatin's We*", "the government's ideas and rules "converted them (citizens) to machines" and turned them into "efficient, obedient and essentially mindless" (138). Control works easier when everyone has only one thought system and past events are all changed to fit the new image. Changing the past for the party is necessary because it is essential that people believe they are better off than the previous ancestors and that the standards of living are at a total height. For example, if such a country is considered the enemy, it must always remain the enemy. If the facts of history say otherwise, then this must be changed so history is constantly being rewritten. And not only that, but people must believe it. This is what is called propaganda. As a result of this falsification, a person cannot compare the present with the past, and it becomes difficult for him to reach the truth.

In Orwell's *1984*, all historical records have been deleted, destroyed, and changed. Accordingly, dystopian people cannot compare the present analogies with that of the past. However, in Zamyatin's *We*, citizens know the past and are constantly reminded that they should be grateful to live in better conditions. This element in the dystopian genre is used to show how better the present life is for citizens and how cruel people were in the past.

Propaganda is used to justify the cruel behaviors of the state and make believe that they are the ones with good intentions. Victim mentality plays a significant role in the use of propaganda, the government tries to convince the world that they are making the right decision, and they always victimize themselves if it goes against their will. Thus, history is obliterated and falsified for various reasons. In general, it is written by the victors, so a large part remains unknown and is often forged. Even if the writers did not intend to falsify it, it remains one point of view; very few are written objectively.

1.4.5 Environmental Destruction and Apocalyptic Settings

Nature plays a significant role in people's lives. However, when nature becomes your enemy, it sparks a threat and fears to humanity. The dystopian settings are often destructed with climate problems, including pollution, radio waves, machinery, and the overuse of technology. In addition, people have to face all the environmental destruction and cannot escape or run from it as dystopias are considered dangerous places where life is so hard due to the constant wars, explosions, and climate problems that threaten the life of the citizens not only that but the mass production results in significant poisoning either in water or air pollution. The cities are the prominent place where most dystopian citizens live, yet the streets are usually destroyed and empty. The sky is gloomy and dark, with constant rain that leads to floods and the weather is either too cold or too hot.

In a dystopian society where technology overtakes, humankind becomes the last entity on earth; everything else is usually replaced with technological devices and machines. They lack connection with nature and the outside world. The author often describes the city as "lifeless," "dead," "gloomy," "depressing," and "with no life left." However, the citizens believe they are

living in an advanced utopia. The author uses the upcoming future as a real place within dystopian fiction. In addition, all the destruction is human-made, such as mass production and nuclear problems. As a way to enrich the reader with the idea that nature is disappearing if people do not take responsibility and behave the right way. Sickness, starvation, poverty, and famine are the main themes that dystopian citizens struggle with within society.

The reader questions the environment's future if society keeps destroying Mother Nature. The city is in ruins, corpses are everywhere, houses are destroyed, and diseases are widespread. Dystopian settings hold great power in storytelling. How it affects the character's health and life, they become depressed and dirty with the lack of hygiene and technology destroying their peacefulness. In Orwell's *1984*, Winston's setting makes him very sick, and he suffers from constant health problems, and government control makes him even weaker. Other examples such as; *The Fire Sermon* by Francesca Haig, which viewed a substantial nuclear explosion that destroyed humanity where people were born as twins, one in a very healthy condition while the other suffered deformity, same in *The Handmaid Tale*, which led to devastating results such as death and sterilization. "The air got too full, once, of chemicals, rays, radiation, the water swarmed with toxic molecules, all of that takes years to clean up" (Atwood 106)

1.4.6 Technological Control

Technology can have different impacts on a person, either a positive one that evaluates their situation or a negative one that can damage and overtake their humanity. In dystopian fiction, it is primarily the second option, and technology controls people by building a futuristic system in which humans are nonexistent. People in power control the world by inventing a program that

takes over society and turns its people from actual humans to walking robots to benefit themselves by implementing new technological experiences on the citizens.

With the evolution of science and technology within a dystopian society, humans became dependent on technology; it expands their possibilities while also threatening it. As much of a benefit it serves, there is always harm that follows along, especially with the amount of advanced creation that pulls people away from the natural world; rather than help build a better society, the government uses technology as a way to invade the human mind and body and have complete control over them.

Dystopias are not just fictional works. They reflect the flaws of the industrial society and how dependent people are on technology. Moreover, technology can serve as a more significant issue in a dystopian fiction where the whole society is under the technological influence; people are obsessed with their devices (computers, phones...) that are enabled to run from it. It turns the world into a deadly dehumanized society without fundamental human interactions. (Bradbury 1)

1.4.7 Survival

The characters of the dystopian novel are constantly fighting to survive and overcome the boundaries and struggle they face. Usually, the chance of surviving is meager due to the war and environmental situation the country is facing. Moreover, society's living standards are getting higher, and in most literary works, there is some game or prize that the citizens are fighting for. (Marks & Peter 1)

Besides all the oppression, dictatorships, and dehumanization, the citizens must survive in an environment where everything is poisoned; air, water, and food. The characters have no choice but to fight, which usually means going against the government's rules and beliefs, and they have to take some action to escape this hellish situation they are in. Breaking attachment with loved ones as everyone is on the verge of death. The protagonist starts to think with their brains rather than their hearts.

Therefore, a sense of selfishness that eventually leads to betrayal is common in dystopian literature, with allies, friends, or family members turning on one another to escape a brutal punishment. The government plays a significant role in the psychological behaviors of its citizens, either by putting two close people against each other or limiting the chance of living to only a tiny percentage, therefore getting friends and family members to stab each other in the back to survive. This idea is prevalent in dystopian fiction, that not only can it be seen between citizens of the society, but even the members of the government can go against each other in secret either by leaking information or working for another secret society as spies. With limited shortages and means of living, citizens fear hunger and famine and can murder their peers to survive.

1.5 The Role of the Dystopian Protagonist

The protagonist in dystopian fiction is often a basic human living an everyday life -a male or female- yet the circumstances force them to act a certain way. They have a different way of thinking than the rest of society, which goes beyond what the government portrays as accurate. They challenge the norms and try to take serious actions to have a better life. They do not become heroes or heroines because of their appearance or backgrounds but how they influence others. Usually, the protagonist starts in a phase of doubt,

questioning the rules and tasks he is forced to do while noticing that the citizens are miserable and their living conditions are not evolving. Throughout the story, he starts to take action to unlock this mess of a dystopia, and society often puts him in a game or a quest where he fights to survive.

Where the primary goal of the government is to have complete control over people, the dystopian protagonist's role is to spread awareness and acknowledge the citizens on what is going on in the society; often sacrifices their peace and free time to fight for better living conditions. The protagonist starts to feel that the society has become inhuman, sickened at the complacency and tired of the unjust system; therefore the inhumanity pushes the protagonist to take action. . (Scholes, Justin, and Ostenson 1) Nevertheless, their wisdom and vulnerability are enough to make a change. The main goal for the protagonist is to watch the government fall and see humans treated relatively.

In addition, the reader starts to put himself in the position of the protagonist and how his ideas and efforts brought life to society and start to question the future of his actual reality and to make a change. Because the reader is not fully living in that world of the characters in the novel, the author makes him question; what if we end up in reality like that? How can we change that? What are the habits and behaviors that need to be considered? The central role of the dystopian protagonist is to raise awareness of the many political, social, and environmental problems threatening the future, as people need to open their eyes before it is too late.

1.6 YA Dystopian Fiction

The early twenty-first century is recognized as the golden age of young adult literature, which specialized in works read by adults and teens. Likewise,

YA dystopian fictions include some test or ritual that's very dominant in the plot as a way to search for self-identity. Christenbury (2000) explained that the classics are often tough to be discussed and read as they contain complex syntax and vocabulary. So YA fiction comes in handy with everyday vocabulary, more accessible plots that resonate with teens, and more profound political and social issues that engage with adults. (qtd. in Santoli 68)

Commonly, in YA dystopian fiction, teenagers are often rebellious, act like adults, and are given roles much older than their ages. YA protagonists are willing to risk everything to survive, even if that means moving to the adult world as young adults get forced out of their homes, where they live peaceful lives with their parents, into a harsh society where they must prove themselves worthy of survival. Each protagonist takes political actions based on his or her experience. In most scenarios, the protagonist needs clarification. He has no choice but to take action for a change, as most other citizens are unaware of what is happening in society. All this questioning and confusion that the teenage protagonist goes through allows the author to tackle and dive into political issues and keep the adolescent reader interested.

The element of fantasy, science fiction, and political injustice is dominant in YA dystopian fiction, yet female heroines often handle these elements more than males. As Mohr (2005) mentioned how women protagonists created resistance in nontraditional ways: "It is a reality and a future that includes us all in a frame of difference and equality" (280). Women in older literary works were viewed as weak and fatal. As a result, women dystopian writers give women a strong image, where she plays the role of a heroine fighting for life and death in a violent society where everything seems to go against them. Nevertheless, they are leaning back and letting the state control them. They fight for their rights and try to make a change in the world.

According to Sarah K. Herz, in her book: *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges Between Young Adult Literature and the Classics* (1996) she states, YA fiction deals with many themes, such as the question "Who am I?" and "Where do I fit in?" (Cited in Santoli 68) YA dystopian fiction aims to open the reader's eye to his surroundings and what is happening around him. Comparing the world of dystopia to the real world, the reader (teenager or adult) is more familiar with what the government is portraying to be accurate and try to see behind the curtains by examining the news and searching for the absolute truth. Contrary to older dystopian works where adults were the only ones with a point of view on politics, YA fiction allows people to be conscious at a very young age and make their own decisions.

Miranda A. Gren-Barteet illustrates: "I am beginning to know who I am: the rebellious subjectivities of Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior" (Cited in Montz, 11). Katniss (*The Hunger Games*), and Tris (*Divergent*) are both protagonist who rebel and fight their positions. Miranda's imagery in her speech reflects how society is not far from that dystopia. The urge to fight for your role in a society full of men is widespread, as women, to this day, are viewed as fragile and sensitive to secure more prominent roles in the industry. Especially women of color facing sexism and racism can be hefty, yet they do not have a choice but to rebel and fight for their equal rights.

1.7 Conclusion

Dystopian literature witnessed a considerable rise in sales; as a result, it gave birth to the movie adaptation of famous dystopian works such as Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Collins's *The Hunger Games*, which saw a skyrocketing success. The theoretical chapter mainly lies on investigating the origins of dystopia and examines the general themes of dystopian fiction. As

well as giving a background on the term "dystopia," the rise of dystopian novels, and explores the characteristics of the dystopian protagonist, but mainly focuses on the general elements that shape a dystopian work, such as; totalitarianism, surveillance, control of technology, and environmental destruction.

On the other hand, the chapter gives a primary overview of the importance of teaching dystopian literature as a genre and how it reflects real-world events. Thus, it highlights the authors' purpose for writing such cruel yet relatable work and its influence on the audience. Having established that the dystopian literary genre is very unique due to a set of elements that shape the work of a dystopian fiction, the next chapter implies these characteristics in the world of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins.

Chapter Two

The Hunger Games

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2.1 Introduction

Dystopian literature portrays a terrifying version of the future far from a utopia, where people's freedom is invalid and obeying the ruling state is a must. *The Hunger Games* serves as a warning for what is happening today. Collins drew inspiration from watching wars and reality TV shows and balanced her writing position with world events to develop a dystopian masterpiece. The plot of the novel revolves around a hegemonic state called "The Capitol" that has complete control over its citizens by forcing families to send their kids on a survival show called *The Hunger Games*, where they fight each other to death with only one winner who goes home with food and unlimited resources as a prize. This literary genre witnessed a considerable bump in numbers and popularity thanks to works like *The Hunger Games*, and the movie adaption only brought more attention to this field. (Spisak 5)

This chapter dives deeper into Suzanne Collins's world of *The Hunger Games*. The novel portrays two different social classes: one is powerful and extremely rich, while the other suffers from oppression, constant surveillance, and the illusion of the media and reality programs. The author depicts the elements of dystopia in the society of Panem and how that mirrors our human actions. This analytic part of my dissertation shows the power of manipulation, oppression, and the use of the media to control humans by using the dystopian work of *The Hunger Games* as a case study. Furthermore, providing a contemporary analysis of how Collins reflected on the injustice of political system.

2.2 Suzanne Collins and the Reason behind *The Hunger Games*

Suzanne Collins was born on August 8th, 1962, in Connecticut, best known for her YA fantasy novels such as *The Underworld Chronicles* and *The Hunger Games*, both New York Times best-selling series. Collins also specialized in

writing plays and scripts for children's animated series. Her first book, "*Gregor The Overlander*"- inspired by the story of *Alice In Wonderland* - ranked as a best seller like most of her works, building her name as a very successful and respected author. *Gregor The Overlander* witnessed a huge success, followed by a large fan base that continued to support her works and grew even more significant with *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

Moreover, the driving force behind *The Hunger Games*, according to Jen Scott Curwood, "the idea came to her (Collins) one evening when she was channel surfing and flipped from a reality show to footage of the Iraq War" (3). From watching shows on television about the Iraq War and how everything was televised, footage of the brutality and dehumanization triggered the author. At a very young age, Collins witnessed her father leaving to serve as a muse in Vietnam; coming home from school, she used to watch scenes of Vietnamese society and how deadly the living condition was there. Collins used her inspiration behind *The Hunger Games* to portray how the government uses its power to control people and turn them into docile bodies and have constant surveillance over them, leading to a weaker society that is dependent on the state to provide everything for them, which reflects on actual tactics that are used in the modern world.

The novel served as a social criticism of modern governments using the media and reality shows to manipulate and control the citizens. "*The Hunger Games* is part of a genre of post-apocalyptic political fiction, the best-known example of which is George Orwell's *1984*. Suzanne Collins has said that *1984* is a book she reads repeatedly, and *The Hunger Games* shows a great debt to Orwell's novel" (Borsellino 30). *The Hunger Games* is a darker fictional version of the reality TV shows such as *Survivor* and *The Biggest Loser*. Collins created a dystopia where people fight each other to death in a game while being

televised and watched by the rest of society. It depicts an environment where everything seems to go downhill and what the protagonist is willing to do to save it. It perfectly resembles dystopian literature that envisions a possible future and what would happen if we do not get involved in changing it. This paper discusses the resemblance of dystopian elements in *The Hunger Games* (2008) and how these elements are used by the author to reflect on today's society: addressing how humans are being controlled and dehumanized via a controlling power that brainwashes them so they cannot separate between what is genuine and what serves as false entertainment.

2.3 Summary of *The Hunger Games*

Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* is a young adult science fiction published in 2008. The novel is written from the perspective of the heroine Katniss Everdeen who lives in a dystopian country called Panem, previously North America. Many years of rebellion against the Capitol led to the separation of Panem into twelve mistreated and poverty-driven districts where each serves the Capitol that has complete control over them. Any revolt against the Capitol is punished, as seen with District thirteen, which serves as a reminder for a defeated society that has rebelled before. As a punishment for the past revolution, the Capitol organizes the Hunger Games, where two kids from each district – a boy and a girl - are chosen to fight to the death. The winner goes home with unlimited food and access to multiple resources of abundance.

The plot revolves around Katniss, who volunteers for the Hunger Games instead of her little sister Prim, along with Peeta Mellark and other tributes from different districts. The kids are chosen randomly, but it also depends on how much your name is entered for the elimination. Two kids are picked to participate in the games while their loved ones watch the whole thing on television. The use of dystopian elements such as oppression, social inequality,

and constant surveillance provides the reader with the idea that this is no better society than that of Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. The story is told from the perspective of Katniss, a simple girl who lives in District 12 and suffers from the injustice system made by the Capitol; just like the rest of the citizens, her life condition is miserable. In the dystopian society of Panem, people's lives are not taken seriously, and they are only seen as inferior; there is a big chance of dying by starvation; either way, you will die at the Hunger Games. The dominant state ensures that the citizens know they have no control and only follow what the state dictates.

The games start, and the tributes are ready to kill one another to survive; the Capitol is throwing parties and celebrating the first drop of blood with unlimited food and drinks; it is always a good show for them. Hovercrafts lift the dead bodies, and the game starts to get complicated. However, Katniss tries her best not to harm any tributes; she even forms alliances with Rue from District 11. Lately, the Gamemakers announce that if two tributes from the same district can make it alive, they will consider them both winners. However, that was only a tactic to play with the psychology of the tributes; they re-announces that there was only one winner. This is when Katniss and Peeta decide to commit suicide which goes against the rules of the games: as an act of rebellion and revolution against the injustice rules of the Capitol. Ultimately, they win the game and get announced as both winners instead of one.

The story, in short, is about a dystopian society suffering from political and social injustice that is forced to sacrifice children for entertainment in an annual game by keeping the citizens under surveillance. That started to change, however, with upraise of the protagonist Katniss against the Capitol, who is viewed as a symbol of rebellion and hope.

2.4 Katniss Everdeen The Girl On Fire

Katniss, the novel's protagonist, is a very complex character dealing with an identity crisis witnessed throughout the book. Her character is defined by the hardships and struggles she faced in District 12 – a dystopian society – where the government has complete control over its citizens. Besides implementing harsh rules and limiting access to basic needs, the government hosts a bloody show where children from each district fight one another to death. Katniss is by no means a perfect character; in fact, she is very aware of her weaknesses, yet she uses her strength and courage to help the people of the district make a change. She is relatable to many people, making her a memorable heroine in YA dystopian fiction.

Katniss, since a very young age, learned to be dependent and takes care of her family; she is a survivor even outside the Hunger Games; her dad passed away in a mine explosion, her mother suffers from depression, and her sister is too young to face the outside world. Therefore, the entire burden is on Katniss herself. She uses her hunting skills to provide for her family. At the beginning of the book, Katniss is very aware of the power that the Capitol holds over the people and cannot voice her opinion, she and her friend Gale hunt illegally in the woods, but they are afraid to be caught. (Collins 5) However, throughout the story, she gets tired of the mistreatment. She decides to start her revolution, which is seen by the end of the book when she and Peeta Mellark - her fellow tribute - decide to take their own lives instead of killing each other at the games, which goes against the rules of the Capitol. As a result, they force the Capitol to announce them both winners, which never happened in the 74 years of the Hunger Games. As Littman reflected on the book, "It will encourage all of us to become more politically aware and active, and not ever to allow ourselves to risk the erosion of our democracy and civil liberties." (178). Katniss' actions

spark hope for people in the districts; if individuals stand up against the system and voice their opinions; they will regain their rights and be treated fairly.

In addition, Katniss is a brilliant character; she is aware of the tactics the Capitol is using to control the Hunger Games tributes, and she is not feeding into that. Cinna, her stylist, is trying to change her appearance with haute couture and costumes that are out of her style; not only that but Haymitch, her Coach, is keen to control her actions and modify her reactions, a strategy to remind her she has no power over her image nor her body. Katniss does not let the Capitol brainwash her; while every other tribute is fighting for their lives, Katniss tries her best to stay neutral and avoid falling into the trap of killing innocent people; she even builds friendships with other tributes like seen with Rue - the tribute from District 11- and how she mourns her death and sings for her. (Collins 234)

Most YA dystopian authors use the first person pronoun to tell the story of their books. As seen in *The Hunger Games*, Collins tells the story from the perspective of Katniss, where the reader - mostly young adults - are keen to incorporate the story of Katniss with that of themselves; her hardships, struggles, and what she is facing reflects their situations. Moreover, by voicing her opinion and rebelling against the Capitol, the reader gets to experience that feeling from the point of view of Katniss and how empowering it feels. Katniss the Girl on Fire is an independent, powerful female heroine who becomes a symbol of rebellion and inspiration for the reader. One of the best characteristics that distinguish Katniss is her love for her family and loved ones. Her appearance may look rude, but she is a very kind-hearted person.

Katniss, from the very beginning, gave the impression of a hero. She cares for her little family by providing them with food; she volunteers for the games to save her sister. She made sure the burial of her ally was done with respect

and love. She faced the cruel and injustice system of the Capitol. Collins created a great example of a dystopian protagonist, Katniss; an average human who "works well, plays well, loves well and expects well." (Meichenbaum 13), refuses to follow what the government dictates for her, does not accept the fact that innocent people are being murdered for the sake of entertainment, she therefore, decides to take action to change the world for the better.

2.5 The implementation of Dystopian Elements in *The Hunger Games*

The Hunger Games (2008) tackles vital subjects that go between political, sociological, and economic elements, such as the control of the Capitol, the mass hunger and poverty, the different social classes, and most importantly, the Hunger Games.

2.5.1 Panem and the Division of the Twelve Districts

After many years of war and conflicts, the country of Panem rose from what was previously called North America and was divided into 13 districts. Panem, with its districts, lived in peace and prosperity for years till the uprising of the districts against the Capitol, where twelve districts were defeated and the thirteen obliterated. As a yearly reminder for this kind of rebellion to never be repeated, the state developed the annual Hunger Games. (Collins 18)

The element of social class is very present in the Hunger Games, not only between the Capitol and the poor districts but even the districts themselves. Communication is limited between the districts; they do not have access to the outside world and are only aware of the ideas and lifestyles within their society. Katniss is shocked how District 11 did not get enough food when Rue explains that to her; just because their main activity is agriculture, that does not mean they are allowed to eat whatever they want; they are not even allowed to have the crops and they will be punished by the Capitol while everyone is watching

them. Even though enough food can be spread through all the districts, the Capitol is not allowing that (Collins 202). Districts are divided by electrical barriers and other wild natural objects like nests to put the citizens inside a box.

It is evident that the poor get the worse of it all, and it is to the Capitol's advantage to divide and cut communication between the people. They do not even try to hide favoritism between the districts, as seen when the Capitol destroyed all the nests that involve the deadly wasps around their living area to protect themselves, and they left the ones near the poor districts untouched. "Another reminder for our weakness, I suppose, just like the Hunger Games, another reason to keep us inside District 12" (Collins 186). As Katniss said, this was just another controlling strategy used by the Capitol to assure that people in the districts are never leaving, and even if they try to escape, they will face the wild animals and turn back.

The Capitol divides districts by having each region produce a different source of living. Districts can only produce some materials together due to the need for more means and knowledge about these sources. This forces the districts to depend entirely on the Capitol so they can be provided with the necessities for their everyday life. In addition, children from Districts 1, 2, and 4 get full access to high-quality training for the upcoming Hunger Games; they are supervised by professional trainers and provided with high-quality combat strategies that assure their safety in the games. As Katniss says "the competition will be far beyond my abilities. Kids from wealthier districts, where winning is a huge honor, have been trained their whole lives for this. Boys who are two to three times my size. Girls who know twenty different ways to kill you with a knife. Oh, there will be people like me, too. People to weed out before the real fun begin." (Collins 36) Fear of others is prominent at Panem, too; the victors from the previous games are mainly the tributes from the more prosperous

districts, which usually form alliances and fight against tributes from the other poorer districts.

District 12 suffers the most among the other districts and can barely face the harsh living conditions. People of this area are the last to receive resources from the Capitol in lower quantities, leading them to hunt illegally and create black markets, such as The Hob, where they trade and sell their hunting produce in exchange for other materials. More prosperous families, as well as the Peacekeepers, are usually the ones buying from people of the Hob. The relationship between the Capitol and the poor districts is more of a supply-and-demand relationship. In addition, the citizens need a Tesseract which is a way to get food, however, the person's name will be repeatedly added to the Hunger Games for each Tesseract they take. Katniss reflects on how "someone like Madge, who has never been at risk of needing a Tesseract, can set him off. The chance of her name being drawn is very slim compared to those of us who live in the Seam" (Collins 13). Citizens from wealthier districts mainly 1, 2 and 4 often get easy access to their necessities they do not need to trade or get a Tesseract. Whereas people from districts like 11 and 12 got their names entered more times, the risk of being picked for participation in the Hunger Games is higher. Most of the citizens got their names entered two times, at least due to the lack of food supplies and the need to be fed to survive.

Moreover, District 12 has it worse than all of the others. Older people cannot work; children are left hungry, the chance of getting injured in the mines is high, and starvation is widespread. After Katniss' father passed away in a mine explosion, her mother suffered a depression episode; she could not cope with the harsh reality, so she locked herself inside her head and could not move on. They were given a small amount of money to cover their monthly needs while expecting the mother to find a job, but she did not. Her husband's death

and terrible living conditions affected her mental health, so she closed herself in her room, unable to cope with the grief. (Collins 25)

Katniss's unnamed mother's mental illness was not taken seriously by the Capitol or the citizens of the districts, which represents how the Capitol does not understand or care about mental health problems. In addition, Katniss had to do everything herself, from house chores to hunting and providing food, to being the father and mother for her little sister. "I know I will never marry, never risk bringing a child into the world" (Collins 311). Katniss views Panem as a living hell and only cares about keeping her little sister safe; she volunteers for her sister and wants to win for her only to have enough food to survive peacefully. Moreover, aging is considered a big thing because so many die very early; if someone has wrinkles and symptoms of aging as if he achieved something big. On the contrary, the Capitol - where the majority live longer - wrinkles and aging is not desirable (Collins 125)

2.5.2 The Survival Show the Hunger Games

The main event that takes place in the society of Panem is the survival show that is the Hunger Games. According to the state of Panem:

The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. As punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to death. The last tribute standing wins (Collins 18)

The Gamemakers do not care about the lives of the people fighting. They only care about drinking wine and wanting to go home. "It's excellent shooting; I turn to the Gamemakers. A few are nodding approval, but the majority of them are fixated on a roast pig that has just arrived at their banquet table" (Collins 101). Katniss is mad that she is giving her all, yet these people do not even try to show that they care about her life; food matters more to them. This idea by Collins shows how the ruling system only cares about themselves and not the citizens' lives.

The amount of cruelty Katniss has witnessed in her life is enormous, from people of the mines that her mother used to take care of, yet the tributes' ways of killing one another are highly inhuman; how badly Peeta is bruised with burns all over his body and the damage Cato did to his leg. Even Katniss had to shoot her arrow and kill the boy from District 1 to protect her little ally Rue. The Capitol is turning the tributes into monsters. With that, the thought of avenging Rue and making her death unforgettable sparks a fire in Katniss. This scene addresses how it takes something big and terrible to happen for people to take serious action. Before this point, Katniss tried hard to avoid killing anyone; she did not want to rebel or fall for the Capitol's trap. However, this changed with Rue's death, when she held her three fingers to the screen to salute the people of District 11, not only to say goodbye but to announce her revolution against the Capitol. She is done with being a "trained dog trying to please people she hates" (Collins 9); something has to change, and she will be the one doing that.

The Gamemakers announce that if two tributes from the same district can make it alive, they will announce both winners. However, in a dystopian environment, this is quite unbelievable. After all, they re-announced that the rules had been revoked and only one winner was allowed (Collins, 342). To

continue their romance show, Katniss and Peeta decide to commit suicide by eating poisoned berries together instead of killing each other. Lastly, fake romance is not the only show the tributes are putting on, building friendships and alliances within the games is a prevalent thing as well, mostly the strong tributes of wealthier districts bound together to fight the weaker tributes.

In addition, the crucial environmental destruction makes the tributes suffer harder. Wild dogs, poisoned berries, and wasps are hazardous; they have stings the size of a plum, and most people cannot tolerate more than a few stings. When the wasps follow the Careers, they catch Glimmer, and in an instant, she starts to feel hysterical and black out; she stays in a coma until the Hovercraft comes to retrieve her dead body (Collins 191). The Capitol provides the tributes with weapons and fighting supplies stored in Cornucopia. In this place, tributes fight to get hold of better the armory, "the real sport of the Hunger Games is watching the tributes kill one another. Every so often, they do kill a tribute just to remind the players they can" (Collins 177). The lack of water and food within the arena makes the tributes suffer even harder; campfires go out of control and start to eat up the place. Katniss believes the Gamemakers make them up add some spice to the games because no deaths were counted that day.

The fact that the Capitol considers people suffering as a way of entertainment shows how careless they are. The people of Panem have accepted the idea of the Hunger Games as a yearly activity and a feast for the Capitol, where they watch kids shed blood and put on a show of survival. However, families want their kids to return home safely, even if that means killing other tributes from other districts. This strategy normalizes crimes and makes people turn to one another. As Gresh the New York Times Best Selling author for *The Hunger Games Companion* points out, "At what point does a child shift from

killing for survival to killing out of habit?" (145). The Capitol sacrifices innocent children and manipulates them into killing one another as the only way to survive, promising a reward of food and necessities that would make them survive the harsh living conditions of Panem.

2.5.3 The Control of the Capitol

Whereas the citizens of Panem accepted their faith to participate in the Hunger Games each year, there is no proof of what happened to District 13 or the reasons that caused the rebellion. The Capitol implemented the new rules, and the citizens obeyed them. They made the Hunger Games look like a debt of society that the citizens are obliged to face. "Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand another rebellion." (Collins 18) As Katniss mentioned, the Capitol has complete control over the districts, and the citizens have accepted that they may be picked for the Hunger Games and have no other option but to fight for their lives. Katniss starts to feel like a trained dog only working to please people she does not like and questions how the Capitol is so unfair to them; on the Capitol, she mimics: "look how we take your children and sacrifice them, and there is nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last of you just as we did in District Thirteen." (Collins 19) What happened to District thirteen lived up as a hallucination for the other districts, as a reminder to never rebel against the Capitol again.

In addition, Collins uses symbolism to refer to the contestants of the games as "tributes". A tribute is something that indicates the worth, virtue of something or a payment by one ruler or nation to another in acknowledgement of submission as the price. Moreover, the contestants of the game have no issue

volunteering for the games. The game became a natural event for them and they are ready to sacrifice their lives for the Capitol. On the other hand, the Capitol is portraying the image that the people of Panem owe their lives to the sate because of their previous rebellions that lead to destroy district thirteen.

Another way of controlling the citizens is by limiting access to their production. They can only produce a limited shortage of raw and finished materials. Each district can only produce one type of resource. Hence, the citizens depend on receiving other materials from the Capitol. Katniss is constantly wondering what it must be like to live in a world where food appears at the press of a button. What do the people in the Capitol do all day, besides decorating their bodies and waiting for a new shipment of tributes to roll in and die for their entertainment? (Collins 65)

The Capitol has control over all sources with easy access to food and supplies; they have all the time to have fun watching weaker people fight each other to death. On the other hand, the districts suffer to feed themselves and are anxious about their loved ones at the games. The citizens lack fundamental human rights, including safety, food, and job opportunities. Therefore they are only toys at the hands of the Capitol; they only follow what the people in power dictate for them, which makes them easier to control.

After the games, the Capitol turns "the arenas (to) historical sites... popular destinations for Capitol residents to visit, to vacation. Go for a month, re-watch the games, tour the catacombs, and visit the sites where the deaths occurred. You can even take part in reenactments" (Collins 145). The Gamemakers treat the Hunger Games as a celebration; they wait the whole year for the festival to take place, with a bunch of delicious food and drinks to be served to them. People of the Capitol can revisit where the games took place

and enjoy all the destructions the tributes caused. On the other hand, the winner of the games is forced to re-watch the whole show and see the tributes he faced kill one another. The Capitol does not miss a chance to plant trauma and violence in people.

Katniss explains that each time she wakes up, she hopes for things to be better, for this to be over, but it is always just the beginning of more torture (Collins 195). According to Elizabeth M. Rees, "casual comments against the government lead to death - or life – as Avox, rendered mute and forced to live a life of slavery serving the wealthy denizens of the capitol" (qtd. in Wilson 43). The Capitol limits information and only shares what shows them as superior by manipulating their purpose to look like they are helping the districts. The Capitol punishes traitors and turns them into servers: by cutting their tongues and giving them the name of an Avox. The idea of emotional control is very prominent, not only physical pain but mental as well.

The Gamemakers announce that if two tributes from the same district survive, they will make them victors together, yet at the end, they announce again that only one tribute will be considered a victor. As a way to separate the lovebirds and watch them fight one another and therefore have the best show ever. The Capitol's main reason for hosting the show is to watch loved ones and people from the same district fight for each other's blood. There where Peeta and Katniss decide to commit suicide which goes against the Gamemakers' policy and makes the Capitol image look very bad. If they did kill themselves, the audience will not have it right and will go feral on the Capitol, so they announce them both winners.

2.5.4 Surveillance and The Media Illusion

The last dystopian element that will be analyzed within *The Hunger Games* is the overuse of surveillance. Citizens are constantly watched by the Peacekeepers that work as police in Panem. They give orders and monitor the citizens to ensure they are not rebelling or dismissing the rules. When Peeta and Katniss sneaked to the roof to avoid being heard, they wondered if someone was watching them and hearing their conversation. The Peacekeepers were also limiting the time for Katniss' family to see their daughter before she got enlisted in the Hunger Games. (Collins 40)

Moreover, tracker devices are inserted deep in the skin of the forearm of the tributes before they enter the arena so the Gamemakers can trace every single move of the contestants, and cameras are recording the whole show. Katniss never felt alone during her time-fighting in the Hunger Games; cameras were always watching her, just like she used to watch the games from home. Nevertheless, she cannot show how sick and weak she is becoming because she knows sympathy and looking in pity does not help. "I cannot afford to get upset, to leave this room with puffy eyes and a red nose. Crying is not an option. There will be more cameras at the train station" (Collins 34). Katniss questions every single behavior of herself because she is televised and watched by people. Even though the audience is more interested to see the deaths of the tributes, her actions are calculated, and she is aware that everything she does will be aired. For instance, Katniss wonders what her mom and sister think of her first fiery debut; are they hopeful for her or afraid that she is fighting 23 tributes? The thought of how her little sister Prim must feel when she sees her helpless gives Katniss the courage to stay strong. (Collins 240)

According to Wezner, "the Capitol ensures compliance with constant surveillance by informers and Peacekeepers, but also with frequent theatrical

reminders of the districts' powerlessness and the potential punishments for disobedience." (149) The Capitol uses advanced technology to televise the Hunger Games and make the citizens watch the bloody shed show to prove they have complete control over the individuals. The Capitol wants the citizens to have fun watching their young people use violence to shed blood and kill each other in an aired game. It builds terror and triggers a dark side in people, especially children; they are growing up watching people constantly murder and betray one another. Whereas people from Panem are stressing over their kids' lives, the Capitol, on the other side, is celebrating the games.

In addition, being watched by the audience gives the tributes the urge to show off themselves; despite the goal of the Hunger Games is to kill one another for them to win, the tributes want to give a show, as seen when Clove threatens Katniss to kill her in a way that the Gamemakers would love just the way he killed Rue from District 11. Clove and his allies also tried to prevent Peeta from receiving the sponsored medicine that he desperately needed. (Collins 287) The tributes are aware that they are being watched, and for them to receive sponsors, they need to please the Gamemakers by putting on a show and get attention from the viewers, so they end up using all sorts of violence, aggression, and barbarism to kill other tributes.

To sum up, technological surveillance controls and manipulates citizens. With different methods, such as big screens that air the deadly games for people of all ages to see, monitors that spy and follow people's steps, Hovercrafts that gather dead bodies, and access to track people from above. There is no place to hide. The Capitol uses technology to spread propaganda; forcing people from all districts unite and watch the games by making them believe that they care about

people's unity. However, instead, their purpose is to watch people fight to the death and remind them how powerless they are.

2.6 Contemporary Analysis of *The Hunger Games*

The role of dystopian books is to influence the readers and spread awareness on topics such as injustice, violence, and the importance of having a stable and better society. This genre's concept has a very strong effect on its audience, mainly younger generations, through implementing a worse version of an imaginative society that portrays real-world events such as wars, oppression, and child abuse and the possibility of it transmitting into our real world. The author of *The Hunger Games* explores these deep themes while wishing for her message to spread among the right readers willing to create a world of peace and equality. Hill (2012) claims, "By witnessing futuristic societies no one would want to inhabit, adolescent readers can imagine a future they desire, envisioning a present that can begin to build toward that future" (102). Collins does not hide the barbarism of the humans and how their actions are the main source of society's problems but also reflects on how these humans can love and have sympathy if they take the right action to change for the better.

Collins portrays Panem as the hell version of today's world by portraying it as a dystopia where people lack fundamental human rights, which enables the reader to think and imagine what would happen if things went in that direction and how they would end up. The readers are hoping for Katniss to survive the games and create a different reality for her people; at the same time, they are reflecting on their own behaviors and working on themselves to avoid creating such a world of struggle. The author quietly did her job right to influence people. Burke states, "Panem is both a consumer-driven and thinly veiled version of the United States, now a dictatorship, and a vision of our future if our current national ideologies and policies persist" (57). Panem is involved with

different kinds of weaponry and military operations, just like the United States and several countries in the world. People in Panem have a similar relationship with the ruling class vs. the working class, the Capitol being the powerful entity, while districts like 11 and 12 suffer to feed themselves.

In an interview with James Blasingame (2009), Collins states, "The sociopolitical overtones of *The Hunger Games* were very intentionally created to characterize current and past world events, including the use of hunger as a weapon to control populations" (726). It is very clear that Collins, in sharing her opinions, feeling, and ideas, is criticizing today's society and government by portraying that in her novel as a way to educate people on what is going on yet spread awareness for a change. The Capitol uses food to oppress the citizens and make them thirsty and starving, it can afford food to feed all of Panem, yet they restrict access and let people starve to keep them under their control. District 11 is not allowed to eat the food they grow, and hunting is illegal; same with Teserra, the citizens will get food, but their names will be entered for the selection of the Hunger Games. The winner of the game is given food as a reward for killing other people.

According to Sarah Rees Brennan, "how deeply the hunger games goes into the questions of reality versus illusion and the examination of the media's current fascination with manufactured reality, as well as humanity's enduring fascination with violence. The idea of children killing each other is horrible, and yet so morbidly alluring." (qtd. in Wilson 3)

By creating a show that people are taking each others' lives and forcing the citizens to watch it, the Capitol is normalizing crimes and killing one another as a source of enjoyment, as people want to see the tributes from their district win so they can all benefit from the prize that is food and supplies. In other words, these people are not in their right minds to think like this; they are brainwashed

and manipulated by the Capitol to accept this violence. On one side, the Capitol wants the citizens to conform to their ideas and rules; having only one thought system going around makes them easier to manipulate. But on the other hand, they do not show themselves as inadequate or cruel instead, they blame it on society that the Hunger Games came as a debt for their previous rebellions.

What is fascinating about *The Hunger Games* is that people of different ages can connect to the plot and characters of the novel. Hintz and Ostry reflect on one of the targets that YA dystopian fiction aims for are that adults may have taken the wrong direction and followed what the government dictated for them, but it is never too late for the newer generation to act upon and change the route of things. Younger people can continually create a better reality. "New utopias and dystopias for children and young adults are being written today, reflecting the uncertainties and possibilities of our time. Utopian and dystopian writing for children and young adults will continue to be central for the young readers who are shaped by its questions and challenges" (17). Young adults characters are the real hope towards a better world, they are young, powerful, and filled with enthusiasm. Collins stepped out of their comfort zone and gave birth to a female heroine who is neither superhuman nor perfect. Katniss is a normal human being, and we witness her growth as a character within the book; she is brave but careful, savage but kind. The representation of the identity crisis that Katniss experienced can resonate with many young girls who are trying to find a sense of self.

Using the star-crossed lovers' persona, Katniss manipulates her reality for her benefit. It does not matter how she is viewed as long as it works and the audience feeds into it. By playing this tactic, the audience is getting a better show and is rooting for the lovers to survive together; it resembles how the media can put on a fake show only to benefit from it. Katniss is aware that the

audience's perception of her is important because they can sponsor her while in the games, sending her supplies like food and medicine. "The weight of the populace's expectations weighs heavily on Katniss, influencing her actions and feelings" (Brennan 4). After Peeta declares his love for Katniss, she channels this new character of the star-crossed lover to gain favor from the viewers.

Moreover, Collins uses the idea of suicide as a form of rebellion against the Capitol. The government tried to break YA into pieces and to set people against one another to avert rebellion. As a result each person would think selfishly and cause a destruction from the real goal which is fighting tyranny. However, the Capitol failed in achieving such a goal where the rules dictate that the games have only one winner, Katniss and Peeta succeeded to change that. By trying to commit suicide which goes against the ideas of the Capitol as a way to let them know that they do not have full control over their fate, as long as people are rebelling they can gain their rights back. Collins shows at this moment that "knowledge leads to self-determination and empowerment. This is a powerful message for young readers who, in maturing, may be starting to grasp that they live in an exploitative system they may not fully endorse, even as they benefit from it" (Burke 60). This scene sparked hope in the people of the districts; this is the first time in 74 years of the Hunger Games that the rules changed, thanks to the protagonists that instead of accepting their fate, they tried to make a difference where they both go home safely, defying the injustice system of the Capitol.

Booker points out that dystopian literature "should encourage the reader or viewer to think critically...Then transfer this critical thinking to his or her world" (5). Even though the violence in *The Hunger Games* may feel extra to be true, the reader is always questioning the possibility of what if that becomes his reality and act upon it to avoid these consequences. The presence of love and

sacrifices really paid off and showed how much of a difference people can make in society. Katniss, a female heroine, is the epitome of women's power; teenage girls start to look up to her, voice their opinions, and search for the rights of equality. Being a female protagonist excludes all the stereotypes society has put on females and confirms that even women can save the world.

2.7 Conclusion

The Hunger Games is a forward indictment of a dystopian society that oppresses its citizens via using multiple strategies such as surveillance and survival shows to keep them under their power. The story tells the suffocative hegemony of twelve districts by a powerful state, "The Capitol," in which they use starvation to control people in a survival game where kids fight one another to death. Collins delivered her message perfectly; she portrayed a violent society that suffers daily by including a rebellious protagonist who exposes the government, rejects the oppression, and refuses to keep silent on the mistreatment. The moral behind this YA dystopian novel is quite clear if older generations learned nothing from past mistakes and failed to protect the government, younger people have all the time and ability to think, reflect and make a change.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

The Hunger Games, besides being a fictional work, digs deeper into social, economic, and political issues humans face daily. Dystopian literature is shaped by a set of elements that create an enjoyable plot that readers of different ages find relatable and exciting. YA dystopian genre emerged to accomplish the perspective of younger generations by implementing adult content, therefore delivering to both worlds. From televised footage of the Iraq War and surfing between channels to survival shows, Collins drew the inspiration to create her dystopian novel that tells the story of a violent society where injustice and oppression take over human rights. She saw the necessity to reflect on the political issues that people face by picturing a hegemonic system that forces people to fight to the death on an aired game. The end of the story gives the reader a glimmer of hope that if individuals start to think and face the cruel, unfair system, they can change the route of their lives.

The aim of this paper was not only to analyze the elements of dystopian literature but also extend the message behind using these characteristics to spread awareness and open the eyes of the readers. Thus, the given hypotheses were proven to be true, as the literary devices that shape dystopian fiction are tools used to reflect real world issues. The prominent elements used in the novel are an accurate reflection of the real world, however, the connection between some of *The Hunger Games*' themes and the real events felt a bit of stretch as some elements were too exaggerated to fit the concept. *The Hunger Games* is a literary piece that depicts different political, societal, cultural and even psychological aspects and predictions that are inevitable in real world. With a female heroine who struggled to find her role in a society; her hardships, unfair treatment, and struggles shaped her to be a role model for female characters in dystopian literature and created a strong persona for the upcoming protagonists.

In order to clarify the theoretical foundation of this research, the first chapter provided an overview of dystopian literature and the general elements that embody this genre. It also discusses the role of the dystopian protagonist and their impact on the novel's plot. Moreover, the chapter studies the moral behind teaching dystopian literature and how it criticizes, reflects, and educates the reader on bigger issues rather than just being another fictional work. In regards, the second chapter attempted to analyze the dystopian elements of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, as well as the driving force behind the bestselling novel and the lessons the author wanted to deliver to the audience. To tie all the dots together, this research was concluded by reflecting on the ideas Collins used to criticize the real world; a contemporary analysis is given to prove the moral of this hypothesis.

Long story short, Collins's *The Hunger Games* depicts a dystopian society where most people suffer from inequality and the control of the media. It represents a powerful government that has full control over its citizens by limiting access to food and supplies, therefore rendering the citizens dependent on them. By forcing children to participate in an aired survival game, the Capitol reminds the citizens how inferior and weak they are. Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* is a powerful addition to the longstanding tradition of dystopian literature. It is a timeless piece of literature marked as a blueprint in YA dystopian fiction and inspired newer works to come.

The goal of this study was to depict the different dystopian elements that are prominent in the first book of The *Hunger Games* series; however, the second book (*Mockingjay*) and the third one (*Catching Fire*) will be a unique and additional idea for further research. Another potential literary work that can be investigated within the dystopian genre is *Animal Farm* by George Orwell which will make a great topic as well as to compare older dystopian novels with

newer YA fiction and how did the ideas and problems authors talked about in their plots have changed with the course of history, as well as the development of the protagonists from different periods of time.

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