Dystopian Elements in Veronica Roth's Divergent Trilogy and Its Film Adaptations

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Abstract

This paper identifies the dystopian elements present in the *Divergent* trilogy, both in Young Adult novels and its film adaptations. The purpose of the dystopian elements, which are concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science, is to engage people (in this case, adolescents) in political action. However, contrary to its purpose, dystopia can fail in its attempt to engage. The endings of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy and its film adaptations can discourage the readership and audience respectively from engaging in political action because the protagonists of both the novels and the films defied an oppressive regime and made sacrifices for the sake of people who would uncritically accept anything as truth.

Keywords: the *Divergent* trilogy, Veronica Roth, Young Adult fiction, dystopia, film adaptation.

Introduction

The aim of the paper is the examination of the *Divergent* trilogy – Veronica Roth's novels as well as its film adaptations directed by Neil Burger and Robert Schwentke – and the identification of dystopian elements in them. The paper employs Helena Duebeck's list of strategies for preserving the status quo that are typical of leaders of dystopian societies to identify dystopian elements present in the *Divergent* trilogy. Theoretical accounts of other critics are also taken into consideration and are supporting and supplementing Duebeck's theoretical framework.

Because Roth's *Divergent* trilogy is an example of Young Adult dystopia, the first chapter (and a subchapter it contains) deals with the traits of literature written for adolescents: Young Adult fiction and Young Adult dystopias as one of its subgenres. A Young Adult dystopian novel can help adolescents not only in solving problems typical of their age but also in serving as preparation for the coming adulthood – the mixture of adolescent and adult concerns makes Young Adult dystopia a complex work.

In chapter two, the definition of dystopia is presented regardless of its target market, i.e. regardless of whether it is written for Young Adults or adults, and the relation between utopia, ideology, and dystopia is discussed. Utopia and dystopia are not adversarial concepts, but united in their purpose of social criticism; both utopia and dystopia aim at social improvement, yet in two different ways – while utopia uses attraction, dystopia uses repulsion. Also, ideology should not be mistaken for anti-utopia as the former is any set of ideas that direct action while the latter stands for ideas that perpetuate the flawed society – the afore-mentioned terms can overlap, but must not be equated with each other.

Chapters three and four are the elaboration of Duebeck's list of strategies accompanied by relevant examples from the novels and films respectively. In addition to withholding information, control of education, continuation of a class system, distractions created by leaders, leaders maintaining traitors, and control of memory, the abuse of science is added to Duebeck's list of strategies used for preserving the status quo. Parts of novels and films that exemplify the afore-mentioned strategies are presented immediately after theoretical accounts of various authors (including Duebeck's), and their combination is a criticism of the concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science.

In the conclusion, the effectiveness of a dystopian narrative is addressed – while it without doubt points out the issues that every society has to deal with, it can nevertheless make people it is addressed to, quite contrary to its purpose, reluctant to act because of the implied risk.

1. On Young Adult Fiction

Young Adult fiction (literature written specifically for adolescents) is not the central concern of this paper; still, it has to be touched upon because the *Divergent* trilogy is an example of the aforementioned literary genre. We will take several authors' accounts of the literary genre of Young Adult fiction into consideration with the aim of extracting common traits of the genre present in these authors' explanations. By supplying the reader of this paper with examples of the genre traits from the trilogy, we support the claim that the trilogy is correctly categorized as Young Adult fiction.

The explanation we start with is that of Melanie Sue Hair, who discusses Young Adult audience, conventions of Young Adult literature, and the impact the genre has on its readership. According to Hair, the target market for Young Adult literature are people who are neither children nor adults but between childhood and adulthood (2) – young adults in the 12-21 age range (1). She lists conventions of the genre of Young Adult literature as well. These include protagonists in the 12-21 age range and their perspective, dealing with troubles that plague young adults, and an experience of a personal growth; a Young Adult novel is easily understood by young adults because of its length (it is fairly short), its short plots, its writing style, and because the diction (language patterns) of a young adult is used throughout the novel (Hair 7) – all these traits make Young Adult literature "developmentally appropriate and appealing" (Hair 8). While reading a Young Adult novel, young adults are "involved in the novel because the characters and the situations the characters encounter are familiar to them" (Hair 16). Quality Young Adult novels (whose plots and characters are not unrealistic and formulaic) are valuable, continues Hair, because they tackle a variety of issues – "self-identity, innocence, death, growth, and tragedy and triumph" (13) – and encourage their Young Adult readers to approach critically their lives and the world they live in (6-7). The result of this critical approach is a reader with enhanced awareness of his/her own life, values, and the world s/he is in because great Young Adult literature widens one's perspective (Hair 13).

The next explanation of Young Adult fiction is given by Sara Buggy, who, similarly to Hair, includes characteristics and influence of the genre in her explanation, but offers different age ranges when talking about Young Adult readers. Buggy informs us that the terms adolescent, teenager, and young adult are synonymous to critics, and that both critics and

publishers usually specify that the age range of young adults is 12 to 18. Consequently, Young Adult fiction is defined as literature written for young adults, and refers to texts that include teen protagonists, a limited adolescent viewpoint (Buggy 7), "adolescent concerns" (Buggy 9) and "challenges of teenage life" (Buggy 10). Challenges and concerns typical of young adults include "[r]omantic relationships and awakening sexuality, identity struggles, problems with parents, heteronormative bias, self-harm, sibling relationships" (Buggy 278), etc. Buggy is aware of the positive impact of such texts on the development of the target audience. "As a literature read by many in their formative years," she claims, "Young Adult fiction has the potential to both influence readers' world view and to shape their future reading habits throughout adulthood" (9). She also informs us of the existence of an extended period of adolescence. Adults that were over-protected when they were teenagers consequently lack life experience and are engaged in activities that used to be considered juvenile. The upper limit of the previously defined age range of adolescents thus becomes 25 instead of 18 (Buggy 292).

Another relevant explanation of Young Adult fiction is given by Lauren L. Reber, who, unlike two previously mentioned authors and similarly to the author who comes next (Patty Campbell's views on Young Adult fiction will be discussed in the next paragraph), completely avoids specifying the age range of adolescence. However, Reber recognizes that adolescence, besides being a period of growth, is also a period when young adults feel awkward, unstable, and insecure; they are unable to fit in, and it seems to them that there are no defined roles for them. The complexity of their existence also includes impulsiveness, uncontrollable emotional reactions, and mood swings. A young adult seeks knowledge of oneself, of others, and of the world, and pursues identity and independence in the process of growing up. Because the struggle of both a Young Adult reader and a character in a Young Adult novel is so similar and because a fictional character is depicted so realistically, the reader develops empathy with the fictional character and is able to identify with the protagonist (Reber 20-21).

When Patty Campbell gives her definition of the genre of Young Adult literature, her focus is on the shape of the afore-mentioned literary form instead on the age of the readers (70) because the essential pattern of an individual literary genre is immanent in the cumulative books – the critic's definition is recognition of already existent "definitive characteristics" (74). According to Campbell, the essence of Young Adult fiction is the protagonist's task of further developing his/her identity and thus growing up (70). The voice

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of a protagonist in a Young Adult novel is that of a judgmental teenager whose viewpoint, and thus understanding, is limited (Campbell 75). Whatever the events described in the novel, in the end (after the external conflict is resolved) it all boils down to a young adult getting answers to his/her internal questions and thus maturing (the outcome is an adult person) (Campbell 70). "The action in a YA is essentially internal, in the turbulent psyche of the adolescent" (Campbell 71); however, "this internal action must not be a contemplative monologue but embedded in straightforward external action" (Campbell 75). Furthermore, the content of the book has to be interesting to its young readership – the book author achieves it by making the book somehow related to the readers' everyday lives (Campbell 75). Sexuality, violence, and death are thus the subjects of Young Adult fiction (Campbell 71). Campbell also lists acts of violence present in Young Adult novels (the protagonist overcomes consequences of a violent act and gains maturity) that real life teenagers have to deal with: abuse by a family member, suicide, homicide, violence in sporting events, bullying, social violence, sexual assault, use of guns, political violence, and war (the Holocaust, although listed, seems to be an exception as teenagers only learn about it – they are not involved in it) (81-2).

The analysis of different authors' accounts presented above shows that common adolescent concerns include identity, family, death, violence, and sexuality – all of these require brief elaboration and exemplification. When it comes to identity, adolescents are concerned with personal growth and independence – they want to get answers to their questions and gain maturity and adulthood. In the *Divergent* trilogy, Caleb, Tris, and Tobias exemplify this concern – Caleb fits into the Abnegation faction but also pursues Erudite knowledge and decides to change factions; Tris is not good at losing herself, so she chooses to transfer from Abnegation to Dauntless; and Tobias fears becoming Marcus, his abusive father. Family includes concerns related to parents and siblings. An example of the former is Andrew Prior's expectations – he expected his children, Caleb and Tris, to stay in Abnegation, and is disappointed by their choices; the latter is exemplified by Tris's hatred for her brother Caleb because of his treachery (he chose faction over family) and by Zeke taking care of his younger brother Uriah because they do not have a father. There are also examples of death – of suicide (Al committed suicide), of use of guns and homicide (Tris killed her friend Christina's boyfriend with a gun in self-defense), and of loss of parents (Tobias was told his mother was dead; Zeke and Uriah do not have a father since childhood; and Tris and Caleb lost both of their parents). Acts of violence are Peter bullying Tris and touching her (sexual

assault), and stabbing Edward in the eye with the knife because he feels threatened by other people's superiority; also, Marcus exemplifies domestic violence. Lastly, there are examples of sexual orientation and relationships – Tris and Tobias's (heterosexual) relationship is fraught with insecurities, jealousy, and arguing about what they want out of it; Amar and George, as well as Lynn, hide their homosexuality (Amar and George are romantically involved with each other, while Lynn conceals her love for Marlene). Reading about these concerns can help an adolescent in dealing with them, and has as a result a better individual with widened perspective. The fact that the trilogy starts with Tris and ends with Tobias does not matter – what is accentuated is the process of maturing itself.

1.1. *Young Adult Dystopia*

Within this subchapter, Young Adult dystopia as an integral part of a larger entity that is Young Adult literature – as a "subset of young adult literature" (Ames 8) – has to be addressed as well because the *Divergent* trilogy fits into this category too. We will first present several authors' views on Young Adult dystopia and then take a look at the inclusion of hope in Young Adult dystopian novels that the aforementioned authors discuss. By doing so, we will see what they agree on and how their views on the topic differ.

According to Sara Buggy, a Young Adult dystopia blends a young adult person who transforms into an adult and contemporary social problems. Firstly, the development of an adolescent (his/her emerging subjectivity and agency) occurs in a helpful yet stifling struggle with various forms of social forces – parents, religion, school, race, sexuality. The other ingredient is a wider social context and realizations made in challenging it. The setting of a Young Adult dystopia is a negative future where the protagonist opposes the power of an oppressive regime and at the same time becomes a powerful individual (Buggy 21-2). Expressed in Buggy's words, the literary (sub)genre of Young Adult dystopia reinvents "the coming of age trope for young adults, while addressing anxieties of the contemporary era and the roles that teens may have to play in confronting them" (22).

Lauren L. Reber also recognizes the complexity of a Young Adult dystopian novel as it contains both adolescent and political problems – problems of adolescence and the development that is the result of solving them are combined with political acts needed for

solving political issues (45). The function of the inclusion of a political realm is thus the criticism of an adult society (Reber 22). According to Melissa Ames, another YA fiction theorist, dystopias written for young adults combine concerns typical of their adolescent audience and concerns of their adult authors. Young Adult dystopia is an apocalyptic narrative that mediates a fictionalized scenario of an unstable world – within a Young Adult narrative (Ames 7). Texts of this kind "repackage societal concerns from reality, displacing them into the safe comforts of fiction where they are addressed recurrently with more favorable results" (Ames 17). Social and political concerns included in Young Adult dystopias are those of their authors (Ames 8); they are "the concerns older adults have for the future of the country if this so-called apathetic generation remains civically disengaged despite escalating national and global problems" (Ames 16). It is interesting to note that all the afore-mentioned theorists share similar views on Young Adult dystopia. They all agree that a Young Adult dystopian novel is a complex creation that contains both adolescent concerns and those of adults – concerns of contemporary adults are potential concerns of adults to come, of young adults who will become adults. These novels not only help adolescents in solving their problems but also serve as preparation for the responsibilities that are part of the coming adulthood.

Buggy, Ames, and Reber also discuss the inclusion of hope in Young Adult dystopian novels, and that is where their views on the topic slightly differ. Buggy compares dystopias written for adults with those written for young people. The ending of a dystopia written for adults is closed – at the end, the protagonist is completely subdued (281). Dystopias written for adults, Buggy continues,

> lean toward the anti-utopian end of the spectrum, depicting worlds with little hope and endings that resist leading the reader to a better possible future. The only positive potential of such texts lies instead within the reader's interpretation of and reaction to them. If they head the warning presented, readers will be forced to think critically about their own world and what must be done to prevent it from developing into an approximation of the negative future vision depicted. (14)

Because authors of dystopias written for adults expect their readers to be interpreters and make conclusions on their own, their didacticism is not explicit (Buggy 289). On the other hand, dystopias written for young adults are negative depictions of a future world with embedded utopian spaces that are alternatives (Buggy 15). The authors of dystopias written for young adults find inclusion of hope their responsibility, claims Buggy, because open

endings provide hope within and without the novel. The novel's protagonist resists closure and maintains an impulse of utopia – s/he preserves hope and provides an incentive for young people to act. Therefore, the inclusion of hope does not weaken didacticism (authors of Young Adult dystopias encourage their readers explicitly to challenge the regime and change the world by giving them the model of resistance (Buggy 289)) or transformative power of a dystopia, nor is dystopia written for young adults less admonitory when compared with that written for adults just because it rejects closure (Buggy 281-2).

Ames's and Reber's views on the inclusion of hope in Young Adult dystopian novels differ from Buggy's who differentiates between dystopian novels written for young adults and those written for adults because Ames and Reber allow an exception that blurs the line between Young Adult dystopias and adult dystopias. Hope and didacticism, contends Ames, are "two complementary prerequisites often found in young adult dystopia" (14); often, but not always – as we will see. The formula of Young Adult dystopian narratives, Ames claims, is usually an adolescent protagonist who challenges his/her problematic society and in doing so secures a happy ending and hope. However, the absence of a heroic protagonist is a deviation which purpose is to provoke young readership "to ponder the potential effects of political apathy" and "lack of action" (Ames 16). When Reber discusses inclusion of hope, she is aware of the fact that literature affects its audience. She claims that the Young Adult authors' decision to include hope in their dystopian texts is an ethical one, as their audience is impressionable, but it is not a necessity. When there is no hope in the text, it means that the existence of hope is expected outside – in the reader; the absence of hope in the novel is the blank space where a reader is expected to provide a missing heroic protagonist and a happy ending. The role of a reader is an important one and there is value in being a conscious reader because a good reader is a conscious one – when s/he makes reading a conscious activity, reading becomes a choice and not manipulation; by interpreting, a reader develops agency and is not manipulated by the author and his/her values and beliefs (Reber 56-61).

Although Ames and Reber accept that the absence of hope can be a trait of both Young Adult and adult dystopian novels, they are still pro hope in the afore-mentioned texts. That is more evident in Ames's account, where hope is part of the formula of Young Adult dystopias and the absence of hope is a deviation. In Reber's case, the inclusion of hope in Young Adult dystopias is optional; however, not including it would be the wrong decision, whereas including hope is the correct decision and, moreover, an ethical one. Veronica Roth herself made what Reber calls an ethical decision (it was her responsibility, to use Buggy's

expression) and incorporated hope in the open-ended epilogue to her trilogy. In the *Divergent* trilogy, Chicago ceases to be an experimental city and becomes a metropolitan area with its current residents allowed to stay, and with outsiders given an opportunity to move to Chicago. In charge of Chicago are people who do not accept belief in genetic damage, making that metropolitan area one of a kind (*Allegiant* 202). An epilogue to the change that happened is the relatedness of areas that used to be separated – people from Chicago, the fringe, and the Bureau compound travel freely within these areas (*Allegiant* 205). However, fringe GD rebels still exist and see war as a way to achieve the desired change (unlike Tobias, who is fed up with trying to solve problems with violence) (*Allegiant* 208).

After explaining what Young Adult literature and Young Adult dystopia are, and giving examples from Roth's novels that justify classifying the *Divergent* trilogy as both Young Adult literature and Young Adult dystopia in this chapter, we are going to define dystopia regardless of its target audience in the next chapter, encouraged by Reber's statement that "an exaggerated view of society as it might be in the hypothetical future" is what makes dystopias written for young adults and those written for adults similar (5).

2. The Definition of Dystopia

In this chapter, several authors' explanations of dystopia will be presented. These explanations will include thoughts on utopia and ideology as inevitably connected with dystopia, and will expose each other's strengths and weaknesses. At the end, a unified definition of dystopia will be given.

The first definition of dystopia this paper will look at is the one developed by Gregory Claeys who has based it on the concepts of ideology, society, and literature. According to Claeys, the purpose of ideology is instilling fear in people; society created by ideology maintains atmosphere of fear; and literature describes both ideology and society (literary description is an estimate of the future based on reality of the present, an estimate that always involves a society deprived of free will and its loss of control over own existence, and it is a rejection of a prevalent ideal of advancement) (170-1). It is interesting to notice that Claeys understands realized dystopian society as a deteriorated utopia. Utopia is a criticism of an unequal and exploitative present society through presentation of an improved future society. The vision of potentially better future inspires people to act and improve their society. However, utopian improvement must not be mistaken for perfectionism. Claeys considers perfection unattainable because people are imperfect and not all have the identical idea of perfection. His conclusion is that society can regulate imperfections, but they cannot be exterminated (Claeys 148-9). He also points out to the connection of revolutionary change and misinterpreted utopia. What happens in a revolution is not an improvement, but only a replacement of ideals; what happens is a redefinition of human nature, a redefinition that abandons the old and flawed concept of humanity, but a redefinition that itself is flawed because of the tendency toward unattainable perfection. Perfectionism requires alterations of human nature and results in conformity, quasi-religion, surveillance, genocide, and militarization – all of which are typically dystopian (Claeys 166).

Another important definition of dystopia is given by Keith M. Booker. Booker focuses on the purpose of dystopia to define it, and its purpose is the criticism of deficiency of a specific contemporary society through depiction of an imaginary and distant society (18-9). He also suggests that dystopia and utopia are not adversarial, but united in their intention of social criticism. While an ideal utopian future society criticizes a defective current society,

dystopia does so by warning of negative future consequences, but both dystopia and utopia aim at an improved alternative society (Booker 15). Booker also eliminates the possibility of mistaking utopia with ideology since ideology, unlike utopia, is designed with the purpose of perpetuation of an existing social order and hindrance to political action (3). Booker and Claeys agree that future dystopian society is a critique of a contemporary society. However, their views on ideology differ – while Booker understands it as the opposite of both utopia and dystopia, ideology is an ingredient of both utopia and dystopia to Claeys. Claeys's definition of dystopia, as stated above, includes ideology, society, and literature; the same three components constitute his definition of utopia as well – utopian description in literature is a feasible social improvement supported by idea of equality (154). Bernard Williams's account of ideology can thus aid us in resolving the question of whether ideology is the counter to dystopia or a part of it. Williams rejects claims that ideology is inevitably related to totalitarianism and fanaticism as too narrow and without depth since the term actually stands for values and principles that direct action and that are justified by theory of human nature and society (107-8).[1] This conclusion, that ideology is any set of ideas that direct action, is reinforced even by Booker himself when he states that dystopian criticism of an existing system is pointless if it does not offer a better, alternative system (i.e. ideology) (15).

Further definition of dystopia we would like to take into account is Roger Paden's. According to Paden, dystopia is a description of an evil society in which salvation is an unattainable objective. The described society is a vision of decline of the present society. The dystopian description serves as an incentive for political action – the reader realizes shortcomings of one's society and, disgusted by its flaws, makes improvements that make realization of an evil society impossible. In addition, Paden does not confront dystopia with utopia because they complement each other – they both seek improvement, but through different approaches. What they have in common is the awareness of current society's imperfections and the belief in politically attained salvation; and while utopia uses attraction (a description of a good and desirable society), dystopia uses repulsion. Both utopia and dystopia are confronted by ideology. Unlike utopia/dystopia, ideology (also termed anti-utopia) supports the stability of an existing society. It strives to conserve the existing order of things, and discourages citizens from getting politically involved (Paden 225-6). There are two weak points in Paden's account. First, his discourse contains salvation and perfection;

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[1] Totalitarianism is only one ideology among others (Williams 107).

attempts to avoid an evil society will lead to perfectionism and to decline of a society. Second, ideology as a term marks attempts to conserve a flawed society, which is wrong. However, anti-utopia should be used to denote ideas that support existence of a flawed society.

Lastly, Frauke Uhlenbruch claims that dystopia is a response to contemporary society's tendencies. The author of a dystopia makes references to contemporary society's developments with intention of drawing reader's attention to possible negative outcomes of current tendencies, which include the abuse of scientific discoveries and the exploitation of both people and resources (Uhlenbruch 2.1). She also sees the similarity of dystopia and utopia and presents both as antithetical to anti-utopia. They are both based on reality and offer an experience of an alternative society to a reader – utopia recommends an idea; dystopia warns against current tendencies. Unlike the afore-mentioned concepts, anti-utopia completely rejects alternatives to an existing society (Uhlenbruch 6.1.3). Not only does Uhlenbruch use the term anti-utopia to denote ideas that support existence of a flawed society, but she also confirms Claeys's explanation of identity of dystopia and misinterpreted utopia. She understands that rigorous and exclusive principles rule out opposition and make societies dystopian; the intended improvement translates into stagnation, and utopia becomes totalitarianism (Uhlenbruch 2.1). In such a society, people are deprived of free will and identity for the sake of a seeming perfection (Uhlenbruch 6.1.2).

After consulting several authors on what dystopia is, it is certain that dystopia is a description of an oppressive society and its ideology, and, at the same time, a critique of a contemporary society and its ideology. The oppressive society is a possible consequence of contemporary society – dystopia warns of a future decline and offers alternative ideas that should prevent potentially oppressive society from coming into existence.

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3. The Dystopian Society in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* Trilogy

In this chapter, we will analyze different aspects that make societies dystopian and then look for those elements in Roth's trilogy to prove that her work is dystopian. In addition to the general traits of dystopian societies (oppression, inequality, exploitation, loss of free will and identity) mentioned in the previous chapter, here we will deal with the specific aspects of dystopian societies (availability of information, historical accounts, education, social structure, scapegoating, and application of science) in more detail. According to Helena Duebeck, there are several strategies used for preserving the status quo that are typical of leaders of totalitarian societies – these strategies include withholding information, continuation of a class system, control of education, distractions, traitors, and control of memory (11). Duebeck's list of strategies for preserving the status quo, supplemented by statements of other authors, is applicable to the society described in Roth's novels, which allows us to characterize it as dystopian.

3.1. Strategy #1: Withholding Information

The first strategy that we will deal with is withholding information. Duebeck argues that rulers control availability of information and decide what is true and what is not by forging historical facts (history is rewritten) (3) – and she is not the only one to state so. Keith M. Booker also asserts that governments abuse the past by rewriting it so that it suits their cause. Leaders distort the facts and create a false history that justifies their authority – an official history that is always created by current leaders (Booker 87-8).

In Roth's trilogy, David (a leader of a governmental agency named the Bureau of Genetic Welfare) uses an official (and false) history to justify his authority. He is lying about an existence of a historical period that preceded genetic manipulation when all people were good and lived in peace, and even admits that information is being withheld because the fragmentary information and lies have the purpose of persuading people to do what is expected from them. In the chapter 15 of *Allegiant*, upon their arrival at the Bureau from

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Chicago, Tris and her companions (and we as the readers) are given a brief account of Bureau's roots and purpose by David, the Bureau's leader. According to David, their ancestors had scientifically proven that violence, dishonesty, cowardice, and low intelligence are caused by one's genetic material and that one's genetic material causes the shortcomings of society. In order to create a better society and prolong the period of peace and prosperity, the US government decided to reduce the risk of undesirable genes through genetic manipulation and thus improve the behavior of their citizens – the test subjects in the experiments were chosen on the grounds of their behavior and were given an opportunity to improve the future. However, what happened is that the experiments made humanity worse instead of improving it. Genetic manipulation experiments resulted in damaged genes instead in the improved ones – it has turned out that fearless, highly intelligent, and honest people lack compassion, that people without aggression are complaisant, and that selfless people cannot preserve themselves. The conflict between people with damaged genes and people with pure genes escalated into a civil war known as the Purity War resulting in deaths of nearly half of population. After the war, the Bureau was founded to permanently solve the problem of genetic damage. David and others at the compound continue their ancestors' work, which is restoring genetic purity. Genetically damaged people were placed into controlled environments (one of which is Chicago), concludes David, with the purpose of producing healed genes for future generations (*Allegiant* 54-6).

We find out that the Bureau's noble endeavor described by David is not so noble after all, and what the Bureau really is – a way of maintaining control instead of making their world a better place, when Caleb discovers a contract signed by one of the first participants in the genetic healing experiments and when Nita (a former member of an unsuccessful experimental city who became a member of the maintenance staff in the Bureau) informs us of the existence of evidence of GP war. According to the contract that Caleb found in the Bureau's record room, a participant in an experiment gives consent to the procedures of genetic healing and memory reset. S/he agrees to reproduce so that participant's corrected genes can be passed on. The memory reset procedure is followed by re-education – participants learn about history that is false, and are encouraged to produce offspring. It is also recorded that the families of the participants were extremely poor, so individuals became test subjects in order to obtain money for their families. Furthermore, the contract obliges future generations of participants' offspring to participate in the Bureau's experiments as long as the Bureau finds it necessary (*Allegiant* 93-5). Nita was given a system password by Matthew

(who she refers to as a GP sympathizer) because system passwords are not given to GDs (genetically damaged people) and their access to data is therefore limited. In the storage room, there are old photographs of war and suffering that prove that even GPs (genetically pure people) are capable of conflict (*Allegiant* 109-11) and that the Bureau lies about a "golden age of humanity before the genetic manipulations in which everyone was genetically pure and everything was peaceful" (*Allegiant* 104).

It is also revealed what kind of person David truly is. In one of Tris's mother's journal entries, there is a disturbing fact. When the Divergent population within an experimental city (labeled GP within the Bureau compound) was in mortal danger, it was decided by David that an intervention was needed because deaths of the Divergent meant the loss of healed genetic material – and if it were not for the Divergent population, they would not intervene immediately and would allow people's deaths (*Allegiant* 87).[2] David's idea of a sacrifice for a supposed greater good, which is sacrificing other people's lives, is an evil thing to do, and Tris verbalizes it before sacrificing herself to defeat David, the Bureau, and their concept of dividing people according to supposed genetic damage (*Allegiant* 189).

Another version of a fabricated history exists within experimental cities (it is explicitly stated in a contract that Caleb finds in the record room that the participants in the experiments are given a false history). This historical account includes factions and a lie that factional division is responsible for their peaceful way of life (that proves to be not so peaceful). Marcus, an Abnegation leader, talks about factions to the initiates at the Choosing ceremony. Their ancestors thought that conflicts are caused by the human nature that is inclined toward evil. They saw factions as a way to eradicate the unwanted qualities that cause disorder. There are five factions and each is trying to eliminate a certain unwanted quality – Amity wants to eliminate aggression, Erudite ignorance, Candor duplicity, Abnegation selfishness, and Dauntless cowardice. All of these factions contribute to a certain part of their society (Abnegation members are selfless government leaders, Candor members are trustworthy jurists, Erudite members are intelligent scientists and teachers, Amity members are understanding caretakers, and Dauntless members are brave protectors) and make their society better, which provided a long-lasting peace (*Divergent* 24-5). However, what Marcus told the initiates about the peace turns out to be a lie. In a conversation with David and Matt,

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[2] This is what Tobias came to realize and what is summarized in a few sentences – the Bureau "had the capacity to help us, languishing in our factions, but instead they let us fall apart. Let us die. Let us kill one another. Only now that we are about to destroy more than an acceptable level of genetic material are they deciding to intervene" (*Allegiant* 173).

Tris finds out that Jeanine (an Erudite representative) is not the first one who wants to exterminate the Divergent population – her predecessor named Norton had the same idea (*Allegiant* 67). Also, information about the world that surrounds the city is withheld – Marcus explains that the Abnegation leadership had the information about the outside world, but were not allowed to make it public (*Insurgent* 176); when the Abnegation government wanted to reveal the truth about their world, David decided to intervene and the Abnegation were attacked (*Insurgent* 168).

3.2. Strategy #2: Control of Education

The second strategy on Duebeck's list that will be dealt with is control of education. Those who are in charge of a society are aware of the fact that people whose intellectual development is limited are more easily controlled, so they (the government) decide to limit people's education, to keep them uneducated, and incapable of critical thinking and revolt (Duebeck 6-7). In Booker's text as well, interpellation is the term that denotes a construction of an individual subject that is in accordance with the social ideology (55), the construction that begins before a child is born – expectations of its family and its society make it a subject (168).[3] People's behavior is engineered so that the consequence is citizenry with prescribed roles and without a capability to think critically (and thus to criticize the ideology imposed on them by government officials) (Booker 57).

In Roth's trilogy, within the Bureau's compound, people are divided into educated leaders and scientists and uneducated maintenance staff and their roles cannot be changed: "'We pass on knowledge and purpose to our children, instead of relying on appointments or hiring,' says Zoe. 'I've been training for what I'm doing now for my entire life'" (*Allegiant* 66). Limitations are imposed on people according to, and their roles are determined by, their genetic status – GDs can be maintenance staff only, while the roles of leaders and scientists are reserved for GPs. Tobias is quick to recognize the unfairness of the Bureau's system. GPs, who are raised within the compound, are knowledgeable and qualified because they were earmarked for specific positions. GDs (the outsiders), on the other hand, are just given what is

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[3] It is possible that one's predecessors' mistakes are being repeated, as "children are taught the bad habits of their parents and then subsequently pass those same habits to their own offspring" (Booker 122).

needed for survival – menial jobs are reserved for them without an opportunity for professional and social advancement (*Allegiant* 83-4). Nita, who is classified as GD and a former member of an unsuccessful experimental city and who joined the Bureau instead of integrating into fringe population, has limited career choices (*Allegiant* 74).

The Bureau's policy to provide people with the purpose and knowledge is adopted by the experimental cities as well, and the organization has done that for some time, because people who are damaged genetically are destructive, and the purpose of factions is to teach them how to live (*Allegiant* 66). In the cities, people are distributed into factions where they learn what to become, where individuals are one-sided versions of themselves: "the factions that kept me trapped inside one version of myself," claims Tobias (*Allegiant* 41). Within an experimental city, purpose is given to both those who are within factions and those who are out of them. For example, career options of a Dauntless member are limited – s/he can be a member of the city security, or a fence guard (and once one becomes a fence guard, one continues to work there – advancement is unlikely); s/he can draw tattoos or craft weapons within the Dauntless compound, or work with the Dauntless leaders (*Divergent* 56)[4]. Factions prescribe even pastime activities and sexual habits. The examples of idle behavior of Dauntless members include laughter, shouting, and cards; the Erudite discuss books and pursue knowledge; the Amity pastime involves rhymes and games; the Candor are involved in arguments, and the Abnegation wait patiently in silence (*Divergent* 12). When it comes to sexual habits, we are informed of the difference between Dauntless and Abnegation factions – while the Abnegation faction prohibits physical contact before marriage, the Dauntless allow their members to do whatever they want as long as they use protection (*Allegiant* 19). On the other hand, factionless people are those rejected by factions because they once failed to become a part of their preferred faction, so they are poor and homeless now, doing unwanted jobs and getting insufficient amounts of food and clothing in return (*Divergent* 17-8).

3.3. Strategy #3: Continuation of a Class System

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[4] Every faction has its designated jobs.

The third strategy is continuation of a class system. The upper class of a dystopian society, claims Duebeck, is responsible for the subordinated working class that consists of people who are kept uneducated, politically uninvolved, poor, and unable to resist (6). Similarly, Julia Karr, who analyzes Roth's novels in great detail, also emphasizes that a group that is more powerful dictates rights, opportunities, and resources of a subordinated group (111-12).

In Roth's trilogy, the upper class is embodied in the Bureau leaders and scientists and in faction members, while the maintenance staff and the factionless people represent the subordinated working class. Zoe explains to Tris that the Bureau personnel consists of researchers wearing blue and maintenance staff wearing green, and that both groups do what they are capable of to support the cause. Some members of the maintenance staff are former members of a failed experiment (the city tore itself apart) that did not have the combination of corrected genes and factions (factions that are a behavioral component) (*Allegiant* 65-6). Tobias finds out from Nita, a member of the maintenance staff, about the division of the Bureau residents. People with genetic damage are labeled GDs, and those whose genes are intact are GPs (their genes are pure). GPs are related to people who opposed genetic engineering from its beginning. GDs are people from the cities that failed as experiments, their offspring, and people from the fringe. Nita explains to Tobias that fringe residents decided not to live under the influence of the government because they are classified as genetically damaged and thus unequal – they have less money, fewer rights, and fewer opportunities than somebody who is a GP (*Allegiant* 101).

In the trilogy, the city architecture also reflects the class divisions as the experimental city of Chicago is "a patchwork of new, clean buildings and old, crumbling ones" (*Divergent* 17). The part of Chicago inhabited by the factionless is described by Tris as "the stretch of building skeletons and broken sidewalks" with "places where the road has completely collapsed, revealing sewer systems and empty subways … and places that stink so powerfully of sewage and trash" (*Divergent* 17). When repaving roads, the construction workers started working in the city center and worked while they had the materials – because of that, the peripheral roads are in a bad condition (*Divergent* 10). Even the distribution of jobs and food in Chicago is bound to one's class, i.e. faction. For example, the factionless jobs that Tris mentions are a janitor, a construction worker, a garbage collector, a fabric maker, a train operator, and a bus driver (*Divergent* 18). Luxuries such as fresh fruit and cars are available only to factions (the Abnegation excluded) (*Divergent* 106). When Abnegation members try

to help the factionless by collecting food and giving it to them, they are accused of hoarding goods for themselves and withholding fresh food from other factions (*Divergent* 78).

3.4. Strategy #4: Distraction

The fourth strategy is distraction. Leaders consolidate their power, asserts Duebeck, by giving a society something to care about, something that keeps them busy and away from the position of power – a distraction. Leaders present society's endeavors as a way toward the improvement of its existence, so that every member of a society thinks it is for greater good (they are encouraged to think that everything will be improved if they finish their mission) (Duebeck 8-9). Similarly, Booker warns that the regime's praise of the upcoming future is used as a diversion (people do not notice the misery of their present society) that preserves the status quo (117-8). Expressed in Booker's words, "all governments espouse a belief in progress while in fact seeking merely to consolidate their own power" (121).

In Roth's trilogy, distraction is created by the Bureau and factions. The Bureau claims, and makes sure that others think so, that the solution for the problems of their society is not helping poor people in crime-stricken areas but healing supposed genetic damage. In the Bureau's building, there is a sculpture that symbolizes its mission and is, at the same time, an example of distraction *par excellence*. The sculpture consists of a cracked rock and a tank filled with water that hits the stone drop by drop. Zoe explains the meaning of the sculpture – the stone represents the problem of genetic damage, the tank filled with water is the solution, and drops are the application of Bureau's measures which require time (the problem cannot be solved immediately) – and shows an impression in the stone created by drops to Tris, who then feels hope and patience communicated to her by the sculpture (*Allegiant* 64-5). Hope and patience Tris feels operate as distractions – they distract her temporarily from seeing what is really going on in the compound. Later in the novel, Tris visits the fringe – it consists of "makeshift homes, made of scrap metal and plastic tarps, piled up right next to one another like they are holding one another upright," and in the aisles between these makeshift houses people are "selling things from trays, or carrying buckets of water, or cooking over open fires" (*Allegiant* 140). When Tris inquires about the help for fringe people (who face not only starvation but also crime as the fringe is a dangerous place – those who cannot defend

themselves will not survive (*Allegiant* 103)), Amar tells her that the Bureau members are helping them by treating genetic damage, while feeding them would be as if "putting a tiny bandage on a gaping wound" (*Allegiant* 141). This is another example of Bureau's distraction techniques: to shift focus from the real issues in the society by offering a highly plausible scientific cause to be pursued.

In experimental cities, factions are so preoccupied with their own issues, goals and hardships that they do not care about the factionless who live in poverty. The same can be said about the Divergent population. Lynn, one of the Dauntless, considers the Divergent a government conspiracy and only a distraction, and concludes that people are "so busy worrying about the Divergent [who are considered dangerous] … that … [they] forget to worry about what the leaders are doing" (*Insurgent* 72).

3.5. Strategy #5: Maintaining Traitors

The fifth strategy is maintaining traitors. According to Duebeck, leaders need traitors to maintain power – leaders present somebody who is a member of a society (and therefore familiar with their society's structure) as a traitor. People are afraid of traitors and are encouraged to hate them because traitors (whose activities include resistance, sabotage, and terrorism) are a threat to the society's mission. By putting the blame on traitors when things go awry and taking care of rebels (hunting and killing them), leaders ensure that people will need their protection and be loyal (Duebeck 9-10). Scapegoating is another term, used by Booker, that describes how government manipulates people into identifying themselves against a specific marginal group (hatred for a specified Other unites the majority) (72). A dystopian government specifies and persecutes a marginal group (a scapegoat) that differs from the norm, and people, intolerant of a minor difference, are aggressive toward a specified scapegoat (Booker 10-11).[5] When the very possibility of resistance is suppressed by the government, the government itself again creates a scapegoat because the government needs

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[5] Blythe Woolston explains how difference can be confused with danger, how danger leads to fear, and fear to violence. When one encounters somebody familiar, one's mirror neurons (a part of the brain responsible for imitation of behavior, empathy, and development of social bonds – cooperation and communication) are more active, which means more cooperation and communication. However, when one encounters somebody whose ethnicity or race is different, mirror neurons are less active and the reaction is fear of the unknown (Woolston 79).

the Other to further solidarity among members of the society and to exercise its power against the Other (Booker 158).

In the *Divergent* trilogy, fringe rebels are used as a scapegoat that endangers the mission of the people at the Bureau. David uses their attack to put the surveillance equipment into the fringe territory and to prove his lie about aggression of GD people. The process of scapegoating fringe rebels consists of several phases. First Nita and the fringe people attack the Bureau with the intention of stealing the death serum from the Bureau's Weapons Lab. Invaders from the fringe are clad in black, masked, and armed. Their collaborator Nita wears an identical mask (*Allegiant* 116-8). After their unsuccessful attempt to steal the death serum, Tris, however, notices that the people injured by explosions (that were set off as diversions during the attack) are all wearing green, i.e. that the wounded are all members of the support staff (*Allegiant* 121-2). Tris is also told by Amar, en route to the fringe, that they have always monitored the fringe (as it is an area inhabited by genetically damaged people that is in the immediate vicinity of the Bureau's compound) and that the attack on the Bureau prompted David to order placement of surveillance equipment in the fringe territory in order to prevent possible future attacks (*Allegiant* 139-40).

In Chicago, the Divergent are branded as traitors as they are disrupting the harmony of their neatly categorized factions and cannot be controlled – in her conversation with Eric, Jeanine calls them rebels (*Divergent* 111). Another example of resistance to norms within Chicago is the case of a Candor boy in the factionless society. After the revolution of the factionless people in Chicago, Edward, a factionless man, destroys faction bowls symbolizing their life in factions with a sledgehammer (*Allegiant* 21-2). However, their revolution results in oppression instead of freedom. Evelyn, the leader of the factionless, thinks of the factionless order as of change but Tobias, her son, is of different opinion. Tobias knows that making all people factionless against their will is similar to factions that deprived people of choice and kept them under control (*Allegiant* 15-6). What Tobias thinks is proved by what Tris witnesses – an aggression of the factionless toward those who violate their rules; a group of young factionless people was beating a Candor boy because he was violating factionless dress code (he wore only black and white – colors of Candor faction – so Tris gave him her blue sweatshirt) (*Allegiant* 26).

3.6. Strategy #6: Control of Memory

The sixth strategy is control of memory. Leaders control people's memory by suppressing it or by making it unreliable because their lies have to remain hidden. Fear is used for suppressing people's memory – if something that they remember is in contradiction with what the leaders say, people will decide to turn a blind eye to obvious facts because they will be eliminated if they do not obey rules of their society (their thoughts and awareness are being under control this way). When it comes to making memory unreliable, lack of intelligence causes short memory – which leaders are taking advantage of to justify their actions by telling people not to trust themselves but their leaders (Duebeck 4-6). There is also a possibility of literally erasing people's memories, as researchers have found a way to delete certain memories of mice. The discovery can be a useful tool in fighting PTSD, addictions and phobias, according to Woolston, but she also warns of its abuse in social control (82).

The dominant method of memory control in Roth's novels is by means of a chemical named the memory control serum. Matthew gives an explanation of the workings of the memory serum – only explicit memories (such as one's name and his/her hometown) are the target of the memory serum, while implicit memories (one's ability to speak, or tie a shoelace) remain intact. The loss of some memories that are important (such as historical facts or scientific discoveries) is inevitable; however, people can relearn those afterwards – after one's memory is reset, one is disoriented for several days and thus easily influenced (*Allegiant* 154). An example of memory suppressed by fear is the death of Matthew's girlfriend (and we can also assume that memory is made unreliable by controlled education). In his conversation with Matthew, Tobias finds out that Matthew had a girlfriend who he lost due to the Bureau's stance on genetic damage. The Bureau disapproves of mixed relationships – they accept only relationships of heterosexual GPs because they can produce GP offspring. GDs are considered inferior. Matthew's girlfriend (classified as GD), who disagreed with the Bureau's ideology and openly challenged their position, was attacked by GPs. The assailants evaded harsher punishment due to supposed inferiority of GDs. In the attempt to remove damaged genes, she had to undergo a surgery that resulted in her death (*Allegiant* 169).

3.7. Strategy #7: Abuse of Science

After dealing with Duebeck's strategies for preserving the status quo, we find it necessary to supplement Duebeck's list with an additional strategy – the abuse of science. When science is abused, argues Booker, the purpose of science becomes not discovery, but instrumentality. An instrumental science that is accepted uncritically deprives people of the ability to think independently – scientists lack creativity and are limited to certain research areas that provide useful tools for control of population and conquest (Booker 28-9). In Booker's words,

> science as open inquiry into the unknown has ceased to exist in this oppressive society, being replaced by a purely instrumental technologism in the service of the state. The probing, searching, questioning nature that presumably informs true scientific inquiry runs strongly contrary to the needs of this strictly controlled society. (70)

Furthermore, Jennifer Lynn Barnes argues that what researchers in a dystopian society do is not science. Their theory is given to and uncritically accepted by them as a fact and they are taught from their very childhood how to conduct their research. Also, whenever there is data that disproves the accepted theory, they are willing to twist it so that it fits or even to ignore it. Instead of taking the data that could disprove their theory into consideration (as would real scientists do and which is a genuine scientific method), they neglect research outcomes that change their conclusion (Barnes 27). An argument similar to Barnes's can be found in Booker's text. Historical periods have dominant paradigms that determine types of scientific research and results of the conducted experiments. When inconsistencies between paradigms and factual data start to accumulate, old paradigms are replaced by new, more accurate ones (Booker 41-2). However, in a dystopian society, this change is stifled.

In Roth's novels, technology used for control of population includes surveillance equipment, aptitude tests used by factions to categorize people, the Bureau's tests for determining the purity of one's genes, and various serums used as weapons. Matthew, a researcher at the Bureau, supplies information about the genetic research that is conducted there. Besides observation (that includes noticing, recording, and analysis), there are many low-risk projects (that require approval from the council lead by David) for development of genetic treatment and serums (the purpose of serums is maintaining order among genetically

damaged people – for example, the memory serum is used for stopping city and fringe rebels). At the compound, the technology for genetic readings is also developed and used to determine whether someone's genes are damaged or healed. Matthew's explanation of the process is simplified – in the past, people at the Bureau mended the genes of Tris and Tobias's ancestors; genetic trackers that were included in the correction are the indicators of genetic healing, but not necessarily (not in all cases) – they are only strongly related and it happens that genetic trackers appear in genetically damaged individuals. Matthew is using a program for depicting particular parts of somebody's DNA in a way that is simple and understandable, but it is still beyond test subjects' (Tris's and Tobias's) comprehension. He concludes his explanation with the statement that the parts of DNA marked by the program are healed genes and genetic trackers – and only combined do they indicate genetic healing. Tris is skeptical about what has been shown to them, unlike Tobias who considers it true and empirically proven (*Allegiant* 71-5). In her conversation with Christina (who, as well as Tobias, accepts the belief in genetic damage as a scientifically proven fact), Tris expresses her skepticism again. Christina says that scientists at the Bureau have the proof that people with a certain type of genes behave badly – and this evidence, that a certain set of genes causes bad behavior, gives them a reason for labeling somebody as genetically damaged. To Tris, who disagrees, it seems that the Bureau scientists' criteria for deciding whether someone is genetically damaged or not is arbitrary, and that it is as if claiming that something as trivial as a certain eye color means damage of one's genes – and thus worse behavior. Tris also argues that scientists, despite their intellect, are given in advance what to look for (and they, consequently, discover what they are expected to), and concludes that the belief in genetic damage only makes one group of people treat the other group badly (*Allegiant* 106-7). Tris's skepticism is surprisingly reinforced by Matthew's doubts about the Bureau's belief system. Matthew offers a different view on human nature. According to Matthew, blaming people classified as genetically damaged for misfortunes of their world is over-simplification, as well as is accepting certain pieces of information as absolute while turning a blind eye to whatever is in no accordance with their accepted beliefs. He values knowledge and continuous learning and sees them as solutions to their problems. He also lends a book on human biology to Tris and tells her that being human means being aware of oneself and of one's world (*Allegiant* 92).

Seven strategies presented in this chapter – withholding information, control of education, continuation of a class system, distractions created by leaders, leaders maintaining

traitors, control of memory, and abuse of science – prove that the society described by Veronica Roth is dystopian. Used for preserving the status quo, these strategies are typical of leaders of totalitarian societies (in this case, David) and anti-utopian (to use the term from chapter one of this paper). The future dystopian society described by Roth in her novels serves as a social critique, and the ways of maintaining the status quo listed here is exactly what she criticizes. She opposes concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science.

4. The Dystopian Elements in Film Adaptations of the *Divergent* Trilogy

In the previous chapter, by using theory of various authors (but mostly relying on Duebeck's account), we successfully isolated the dystopian elements (concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science) present in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy. In this chapter, we will search for the afore-mentioned dystopian elements in film adaptations of Roth's novels, in Neil Burger's *Divergent* and Robert Schwentke's *Insurgent* and *Allegiant*. In each of the following subchapters, the recapitulation of theory for each strategy that is used for preserving the status quo (withholding information, control of education, continuation of a class system, distractions created by leaders, leaders maintaining traitors, control of memory, and abuse of science) will precede the examples from the afore-mentioned films, the examples relevant for the discussion of this paper.

4.1. Strategy #1: Withholding Information

In dystopian societies, leaders withhold information and rewrite histories. They decide what others should know, thus omitting certain pieces of information, and fabricate official histories because it suits their cause and justifies their authority.

In Robert Schwentke's *Allegiant*, when Tris and others arrive at the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, they go through decontamination because of the toxicity of the outer world. After the decontamination process, they are shown a video containing scenes of genetic manipulation and of armed conflict; the narrator (presumably David) tells them about their ancestors trying to improve humanity and about the unpredictable consequence of their intention. The voice tells them about the scientific discovery of mapping and editing human genes. What they (and the audience) can see is a scientist and a test subject whose brain is being examined as well as a needle of a syringe entering a cell and extracting genetic material. The next scene is of a needle of a syringe entering a cell again, but this time the material is being injected; a woman

who can walk again stands up and hugs a child (a grandchild maybe), while two relatives react in the background (a man is smiling, and a woman is amazed by what she sees). In what seems to be an ad made by a corporation, a man offers excellence and perfection. The voice resumes its narration, and talks about a disaster that ensued. Genetic alterations, instead of improving humanity by erasing unwanted qualities, further divided people and resulted in war and devastation. Scenes of protests, riots, and war machinery are on the screen as the voice goes on – thousands of people protesting against genetic manipulation, the police with helmets and shields intervening, aircraft flying in formation, multiple rocket launchers, explosions and clouds of smoke as a result of the missiles hitting the target. After the war, the Bureau was established by people who were not genetically modified in order to purify the human genome (scientists trying to make the human genome 100% pure are shown on the screen). It is their mission to restore the altered genetic material to its previous state, and everyone who participates in their work contributes to the better future (participants in the experiment of Chicago, that is supposed to bolster genetic healing, are also part of the Bureau's endeavor – we can see a procession of people going willingly toward the wall surrounding Chicago).

Later in Schwentke's *Allegiant*, when Tris meets David in person, we find out that individuals with altered genes are damaged, as excess in one quality leads to lack in others. Excess in bravery leads to cruelty; too peaceful an individual is passive; and abundant intellect results in less compassion. David assures Tris his intention is to save genetically damaged people and that the Bureau scientists work on that – their theory is that people whose genes are damaged can have their genes restored to previous state if they spend enough time in a safe environment such as Chicago. They rescue people from the toxicity of the fringe and place them in safe environments – and Tris proves their theory as her genetic purity is the result of the safe environment. David enables Tris to experience her mother's memories by using a device called memory tabs that consists of two small circular pieces – one for each temple. The device transports her to the reality of the fringe, where a girl addresses her as Natalie and tells her they need to hide. Tris replies that she is not Natalie, but sees a reflection of a young Natalie when she looks at the sheet of metal on the ground afterwards. The fringers are chasing and snatching children, but they run away when the Bureau soldiers appear. A Bureau soldier tells Natalie/Tris not to be afraid and that she will be taken to the safety of the Bureau. After they are rescued from the fringe, the children are shown the same video that was shown to Tris and her companions from Chicago. However, Natalie's

supposed memories are a far cry from what Tobias experiences during a supposed rescue mission – the Bureau soldiers are actually taking children from their parents and they are being reeducated by David within the compound. It turns out that David only cares about consolidating his power. In Providence, Tris finds out from the members of the council that David is in control of Chicago (division of people into factions is his creation) and that he brought her there only to extend his funding – he lied to her when she asked him about intervening in the conflict within the Chicago experiment by saying that they have to convince the council that the intervention is a reasonable thing to do; his examination of her genetic material was more important to him than the lives of citizens of Chicago because he was only interested in the consolidation of power. On their way back to the Bureau, he tells Tris that sacrifice is needed for peace, but he only sacrifices other people's lives – he intends to erase memories of people of Chicago and bring the factions back. David talks about sacrifice to Peter as well when offering Peter to do his (David's) dirty work of erasing memories in Chicago in exchange for a better job, and Peter astutely observes that David is not making any sacrifices – what David was actually talking about was sacrificing other people's lives, including Peter's.

In Neil Burger's *Divergent*, right before aptitude testing, a woman speaks about the faction system, which, as was stated earlier in the text, is nothing more than David's means of control. She tells the future faction members that there was a war in the past that urged their founders to create the faction system with the aim of preventing future conflicts and thus creating lasting peace. Similarly, in Schwentke's *Insurgent*, Jeanine claims that peace was a meaningless expression and an elusive ideal prior to the establishment of their city by the founders. The faction system is what makes the peace attainable. The division of people into factions is based on personality and attitude and every faction contributes to the stability of the society. However, it turns out that a stable and peaceful society was never achieved, as it was constantly plagued by turmoil. In Burger's *Divergent*, Natalie sneaks in the Dauntless compound to warn Tris not to reveal her Divergent identity to anyone, and in doing so reveals that people have always felt threatened by the existence of Divergents – so it turns out that their lasting peace kept by factions is a lie.

4.2. Strategy #2: Control of Education

In dystopias, the social ideology is imposed on people by the government. An individual is constructed according to the expectations of his/her society, his/her behavior is engineered, and roles are prescribed. Such citizenry is limited intellectually, incapable of critical thinking, and more easily controlled.

At the very beginning of Burger's *Divergent*, Tris herself elaborates on the faction system. She was told that the war was so devastating that the result was utter destruction of the world beyond the city limits. Their founders built the wall that surrounds their city for the safety of the citizens, and divided the citizens into five factions to maintain peace. The five factions described by Tris are as follows – Erudite, Amity, Candor, Dauntless, and Abnegation. According to Tris, Erudite values are logic and knowledge so they, consequently, know everything. While listening to Tris speaking, the audience can see a woman carrying test tubes in the center of the frame; on her right is a woman using the microscope, and a man on her left is doing the same; in the background, there is a group of scientists using various lab equipment. Amity members, continues Tris, are farmers who value kindness, happiness, and harmony, and her narration is accompanied by scenes of people working in the field – the audience sees Amity members harvesting green plants, putting them in bags, and then emptying the bags into larger receptacles that are placed in a farm trailer connected to a tractor; besides seeing two farmers, a man and a woman, smiling at each other, and hearing Tris' narration, the audience can also hear laughter of the workers. The values of Candor members are honesty and order; because of that, they are always honest (even if the truth could hurt somebody). A gavel hitting a circular surface can be seen. The people closest to the audience are standing, conversing, and using gestures; people in the middle of the room are sitting; on the opposite side of the room, two people are arguing and gesticulating at each other in front of several judges who have a pair of scales on the wall behind them. Dauntless are fearless protectors, the police and soldiers of their city, says Tris. We can see people wearing black, carrying nightsticks, and running through the city. Several Dauntless members are climbing a very tall building without any safety harnesses and are standing on the edge of the rooftop. And last but not least, Tris describes her own faction – Abnegation. Abnegation members are selfless public servants who run their city's government. We see an Abnegation member taking the hand of an elderly man in order to get him on his feet; there are more of

them, helping people who are dressed poorly and malnourished – they are giving them water and food. The next scene is of government officials counting votes – there are several Abnegation members at the desk; members of other factions have gathered around forming a semi-circle and are either raising their hands or not (they are voting in favor of or against something). What Tris informs us about is how the faction system, which allows only one virtue per individual, constructs its citizens and prescribes their way of thinking and life – an individual can be either Abnegation, Dauntless, Candor, Amity, or Erudite. Later in Burger's *Divergent*, we can see that Tobias, who does not want to be just one thing, has symbols of all factions tattooed (he shows them to Tris) because he wants to be brave, as well as selfless, and honest, and intelligent, and kind.

In Schwentke's *Allegiant*, Regina, David's associate, gives the task of monitoring Chicago to Peter and Caleb; Peter is reluctant to accept it, but gives in as it is either the task of surveillance or the banishment to the fringe. Tobias encounters Christina, who wears the same uniform and carries a weapon, and then learns from Nita how to use the head gear and personal drones (three circular hovering devices of small size that are controlled by hand and that expand one's field of vision and protect from bullets). Every Chicago refugee is given a role, including Tris who is considered a potential associate by David. Peter's unsuccessful attempts to advance prove that roles given to people are permanent. In Schwentke's *Insurgent*, Peter asks Jeanine for advancement opportunities: "I would like a position in your regime. Ideally I would like a position with some advancement opportunities. I may be Dauntless but I'm not just some meathead." Jeanine replies that his ambitions will be discussed after he proves his worth to their regime. However, when Tris disarms Peter and threatens to kill him, Jeanine does not care because he is just another worthless guard. In Schwentke's *Allegiant*, Peter perseveres in his intention to advance but is deceived again. David offers Peter a better job in exchange for help in Chicago. However, it turns out that David's promise was a lie when the chamber Peter is in (the serum vault in the Erudite headquarters) starts filling with the memory serum. He manages to escape, but is left in the toxicity of the fringe, without the permission to enter the Bureau.

4.3. Strategy #3: Continuation of a Class System

In a dystopian society, the upper class is a group of people more powerful than the subordinated working class, and the latter is perpetuated by the former – the upper class is in control of distribution of resources, and it dictates rights and opportunities of the subordinated group, whose members are underprivileged.

In Schwentke's *Allegiant*, after the decontamination process, Tris is prompted to put her arm into the opening in the wall and is marked with a symbol resembling a barcode. Christina notices that their marks are not the same. Later, when Matthew escorts Tris to meet David, we find out that her barcode is used for accessing the higher level of the compound. When she puts her wrist under the scanner, the door to the elevator opens and in there the scanner recognizes her as genetically pure. Tobias notices that his mark on the wrist, compared to Tris's, has one bar less. When he tries to open the door Tris managed to open, the access is denied. When she asks David why all people cannot enter the higher level of the Bureau, where laboratory and David's office are placed, he tells her that the separation of pure and damaged people is a rule and a necessity. Besides dividing people within the compound according to their genetic status, David also prolongs the division by adding new members to both groups. An example of David's activity are children who are taken from the fringe, whose memory is erased, and who are then re-educated to fit in one of the two groups according to supposed genetic damage – such was the case with Natalie, Tris' mother, who was taken from the fringe, raised in the Bureau, and presumably became David's associate. Another example of the continuation of the class system are roles given to Chicago refugees – Tobias and Christina, as well as Caleb and Peter, are considered genetically damaged and thus a lower class, and are given roles accordingly (Tobias and Christina are soldiers, while Caleb and Peter surveil Chicago); Tris is genetically pure and a potential David's associate. There is also a difference in living conditions between the lower level of the Bureau and the upper one – the upper level, inhabited by leaders and scientists, is a spacious and comfortable area, while the lower level is crowded with soldiers and surveillants. When Tobias enters the higher level by using Regina's access information, he breaks the Bureau's rule and David's soldiers are given orders to execute him because he did what he was not allowed to do.

In Chicago, the division (the upper class that are factions and the lower class that are the factionless) is perpetuated by faction leaders who decide who satisfies the faction criteria and who gets expelled and thus factionless (an example of it is the initiation into the Dauntless faction that Tris goes through in Burger's *Divergent*; the rankings list shows the results of the initiates, and they are promoted or expelled according to their rank). The upper

class of Chicago is also reluctant to share its resources with the disadvantaged members of their society – when the Abnegation faction starts helping the factionless by giving them food, there are allegations that the Abnegation are hoarding goods and that they are not to be trusted. In Burger's *Divergent*, Tris finds out from Peter that there are allegations of corruption and incompetence against the Abnegation in the news – he informs her that the entire Abnegation faction is considered corrupted and incompetent in the press and that it is accused of stealing resources, incompetence, and domestic violence, all of which prompted Tris and Caleb to transfer to Dauntless and Erudite respectively.

4.4. Strategy #4: Distraction

The dystopian government provides its citizens with a mission that averts their attention from the real problems. Every member thinks s/he contributes to social improvement by participating in the society's mission. However, what actually happens is that people get so preoccupied with the government's promise of a better future that they become unaware of the present misery and are simultaneously kept away from the position of power.

In the conversation with Tris in Burger's *Divergent*, Jeanine expresses the opinion that the human nature is a problem that the faction system is trying to resolve. The human nature is a weakness responsible for keeping secrets, lying, and stealing, the weakness that needs to be overcome. Suppressing that weakness, the enemy that needs to be eradicated, is an ideal of the faction system that puts factions above everything else (not just above family but also above helping the poor). Factions suppress the fundamental human nature in the attempt to maintain peace and social stability. The threat to the stable society that comprises five factions are individuals who cannot be controlled, who are rebellious, and an embodiment of unwanted past qualities ("They are in essence the worst of what humanity used to be") (Schwentke's *Insurgent*). Jeanine concludes, in Schwentke's *Insurgent*, that it is their obligation to maintain peace and civilization as they are the last humans; the wall enclosing their city may protect people from the toxicity of the outer world, but they must confront the inner toxicity on their own.

Jeanine mentioning the toxicity of the outer world brings us to David's distraction. To David and people at the Bureau, solving the problem of genetic damage is a priority instead of

trying to solve the problem of the toxicity of the environment, which is the real problem. David uses supposed genetic damage as an excuse to kidnap people from the fringe, brainwash them, put them under his control, and thus perpetuate his reign. On route to Providence, where they will meet with the council, David tells Tris that her help "has ramifications for people all over the world" (Schwentke's *Allegiant*). However, this proves to be false.

4.5. Strategy #5: Maintaining Traitors

Dystopian governments need traitors because people need protection and are loyal to their leaders when there is somebody who poses a threat to the society's mission. Resistance to social norms is used by leaders, who make it clear who the rebels are, so that the majority is united in fear and hatred of a marginal group.

In Burger's *Divergent*, after meeting Tori during the aptitude test and getting inconclusive results, Tris meets Tori again in the Dauntless compound while browsing tattoos. At first, Tori is reluctant to converse with Tris, but then tells her that her decision to choose Dauntless was a mistake and that she will be exposed. Tori warns Tris she is in danger because she is considered a threat to their society – she does not fit into their categories and therefore cannot be controlled – but also hopes Tris will act as Dauntless so that the people she is a threat to do not find out about her divergence. Later in the film, Natalie visits Tris secretly to warn her she is in danger. Natalie asks Tris about her test results and finds out the results were inconclusive, i.e. Tris is Divergent. Natalie tells her not to talk about it, neither to her friends nor instructors, and not to trust anyone. "People have always been so threatened by Divergents. But now Erudite is looking for them everywhere. They are actively seeking them out," reveals Natalie (Burger's *Divergent*) – they do it because Divergents do not conform; the mind of a Divergent works in various ways and it scares people. Natalie tells Tris to keep her true self hidden before disappearing after their conversation is interrupted by a Dauntless soldier.

In Schwentke's *Allegiant*, there is no genuine resistance until Tris and her companions from Chicago arrive; until their arrival, there is no one who poses a threat to the supposed Bureau's mission of rescuing children from the fringe and putting them into safe environment

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where they will live longer and maybe produce healed genes – no one except the fictitious fringers who steal children that the Bureau is trying to save. There are, however, those within the Bureau (Matthew and Nita) who are aware of the Bureau's true purpose and resent David, but they are greatly outnumbered so their attempt at resistance would be futile; they decide to go along instead until an opportunity presents itself because they know what happens to those who transgress. Without Matthew and Nita's help, Tris and others would fail in their resistance – Tobias would neither survive his execution if it had not been for Matthew, nor he could go through camouflage wall and to Chicago afterwards without Matthew's ID card; Tris could not have destroyed the valve that controls the distribution of the memory serum if it had not been for Nita who gave Tris the weaponry and drones. In conclusion, Matthew and Nita helped them find out the truth, go to Chicago, prevent David from erasing memories of an entire city, end the conflict among people of Chicago, and reveal the truth to citizens of Chicago.

4.6. Strategy #6: Control of Memory

Leaders of dystopian societies suppress people's memory, make it unreliable, or literally erase it in order for their lies to remain hidden. One's memory is suppressed by fear of being eliminated; intellectually limited people will trust their leaders rather than themselves; and memory erasure is an abused scientific discovery.

In Schwentke's *Allegiant*, when Tobias visits the fringe, he finds out that the children's memories are being erased so that they have no recollection of their identity and of past events – they are not being saved, but stolen and brought under David's control. Nita and Matthew are aware of the Bureau's actions, but decide to do what is told to them because they know what happens to people who are disobedient. People who resist the Bureau's rules either have their memories erased or are executed. The example of the latter is the unsuccessful attempt to kill Tobias after he entered the higher level of the Bureau, which he was not allowed; the example of the former is David's unsuccessful attempt to erase memories of the people of Chicago after they abandoned his faction system.

Tobias and Christina join the Bureau soldiers when they go to the fringe to save the fringe children from the hellish conditions they are growing up in. The leader of the supposed

rescue mission tells them, while still in the aircraft, that their mission is humanitarian but they still need weapons as the fringe is dangerous, and warns them to stick to the protocol because the fringe is more dangerous than Chicago and they were not supposed to join them. When in the fringe, Tobias notices that something is off (the fringe people are running away from them and the children do not want the Bureau soldiers saving them; the father of a boy Tobias is chasing is murdered accidentally by another soldier, and the boy is taken away) but when he asks the mission leader about their actions, he is told to do what he is expected to do. The children are lined up in a row and are breathing in an orange gas, one by one, using a mask that resembles oxygen mask. When Tobias asks Nita what is going on, she tells him that the children are being vaccinated. However, when Christina approaches with the boy who was chased by Tobias and who has no memory of his identity and his father's death, Nita reveals that the orange gas is used for erasing memories.

Upon their return to the Bureau from the fringe, Tobias grabs Regina and uses her barcode to enter the higher level of the Bureau compound, where only GPs are allowed to go. He tries to persuade Tris that David is not to be trusted and that they have to leave for Chicago, but she is adamant in her intention to join David on his way to Providence. After David and Tris have left using David's ship, the military aircraft used to travel to the fringe appears where David's ship used to be and the soldier who was the mission leader during their visit to the fringe offers Tobias transportation to Chicago. Tobias is reluctant to accept, but the soldier is persistent and persuades him by saying that going back to Chicago is not against the rules. However, during the flight, Matthew warns Tobias that he is not being taken to Chicago – David, who controls everything, is the only one whose ship can go through the camouflage wall, and he arranged Tobias's murder because Tobias should not have seen what he had seen in the fringe. Soldiers try to kill Tobias but he fends off their attacks; after the crash, Matthew and Tobias are the only survivors, and the former helps the latter by giving Tobias the card so that he can go through the camouflage wall and to Chicago.

4.7. Strategy #7: Abuse of Science

When independence, criticism, discovery, and creativity are not allowed, science ceases to be what it is and becomes an instrument in the hands of an oppressive regime, while

scientific discoveries are merely tools created by scientists whose research areas are limited and used by oppressors for social control.

In Burger's *Divergent*, right before aptitude testing, a woman dressed in Erudite blue addresses a room full of future faction members, who will cease to be dependents and become full-fledged faction members. The woman explains that aptitude testing is based on one's personality, and that the result of the aptitude test is a faction that suits one the most. She tells them that they can choose a faction regardless of their test results; however, she also states that the choice of faction that is in accordance with their test results is considered "the best way to ensure success within the faction system" (Burger's *Divergent*), and warns that their choice of a faction is irreversible. On the day of the Choosing Ceremony, before the beginning of the ceremony, Jeanine Matthews (the representative of the Erudite faction), in her conversation with the Priors, states that every candidate should trust his/her own judgement (his/her own assessment of oneself) and choose the desired faction freely, but she also advises Tris "to choose wisely" (Burger's *Divergent*) as if suggesting the choice of the Erudite faction to Tris. Tris is shrewd and understands they are not expected to choose but rely on test results that tell them what to do as free will is unwanted. This is made clear later in the film when Jeanine explicitly states that "the brilliance of the faction system is that conformity to the faction removes the threat of anyone exercising their independent will" (Burger's *Divergent*). Furthermore, Jeanine uses chemistry to wipe away one's personality (history, emotions, and thoughts); she uses simulation serum on Tobias and he attacks Tris – Tris tries to talk to him but he cannot hear her.

The memory serum used by the Bureau, similarly to Jeanine's simulation serum (it was developed by her), erases one's memory and thus identity. Alongside the afore-mentioned memory serum, there are also the Bureau's weaponry (that Tobias learns about from Nita) and their advanced surveillance system developed by David's associate Regina who states that it was a result of "a labor of love" (Schwentke's *Allegiant*), which clearly indicates her misconception of science.

Seven anti-utopic strategies typical of leaders of totalitarian societies (strategies that support the existence of a flawed society, reject alternatives, and thus preserve the status quo) – withholding information, control of education, continuation of a class system, distractions, traitors, control of memory, abuse of science – detected in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy in the previous chapter can also be found in Burger's and Schwentke's film adaptations of Roth's novels *Divergent*, *Insurgent*, and *Allegiant*. Similarly, the creations of the afore-

mentioned film directors (Burger's *Divergent*; Schwenke's *Insurgent* and *Allegiant*) contain dystopian elements (concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, an abusive application of science) that serve as social criticism. This striking resemblance urges us to conclude that they are all united in their opposition to concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science.

Conclusion

As a criticism of a contemporary society, dystopia, be it a dystopian novel or a dystopian film, draws people's attention to contemporary social problems and attempts to engage them in political action. The *Divergent* trilogy, Veronica Roth's dystopian novels, as well as its film adaptations directed by Neil Burger and Robert Schwentke, draw our attention to concealment of information, falsification of historical accounts, education that results in one-dimensional individuals and the poor, a social structure where some are privileged more than the others, governments that mislead the public, and an abusive application of science – and try to encourage us to get politically active in order to resolve the afore-mentioned problems.

Novels and films for adolescents always imply a model of resistance, encourage challenges to an oppressive regime, and can initiate changes in the world. However, one can ask whether writers and film directors have really been engaged in political action, i.e. whether they would ever take up the model of resistance they are offering people they are trying to engage. Lauren L. Reber thus warns us that there is value in being a conscious reader/viewer because the readership/audience, by interpreting, develops agency and is not manipulated by the writers' and film directors' values and beliefs. We can assume that the works of writers and film directors reflect their values and beliefs, that they (writers and film directors) present a certain ideology to the readership/audience. Yet, is writing novels and directing films enough? Can they improve the society/world by creating a fictionalized dystopia (that is actually a criticism of contemporaneity)? Is their attempt to engage, which is the purpose of dystopia, effective? We can assume that they are, like Matthew and Nita, small in number and looking for like-minded individuals who will contribute to social improvement.

Contrary to writers' and film directors' intentions, the readership/audience can feel discouraged by dystopia. At the end of Roth's *Allegiant*, the Bureau's residents learn about diversity of people and that difference should not be interpreted as inferiority. They are given the truth about human beings, yet they are nevertheless manipulated into believing something they did not choose (they are re-educated after memory erasure) just as they were manipulated by David to accept the belief in genetic damage. Furthermore, Roth's protagonists use strategies typical of leaders of dystopian regimes to improve humanity and they succeed in their intention. It is certain that Tobias and David are not the same, but one must ask whether

humanity's level of spiritual and intellectual development depends on the leaders, and whether the majority is less capable and accepts everything uncritically. Similarly, at the end of Schwentke's *Allegiant*, Tris reveals the truth to citizens of Chicago (they discover that there is an organization that controls their existence), but it seems they accept it just as easily as earlier "truths" (David's and Jeanine's) were accepted. The film directors' protagonists do not resemble dystopian leaders in their endeavor to reveal the truth to people, but one must ask how long their knowledge will last before they accept something else and turn against the protagonists' benevolence. Because David and the Bureau are not defeated (he is observing them) and are technologically more advanced, one can expect a war between the Bureau and Chicago, and Chicago residents being subdued again. So, it comes as no surprise that individuals are reluctant to expose themselves and their loved ones to danger, or to even sacrifice their lives in order to help people have better lives, the same people who would just as easily accept some other form of truth (that lacks validity) as accurate.

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