The Dystopian World of Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games

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(diplomski rad)

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Abstract

The paper analyzes general dystopian features and interprets them in *Hunger Games* trilogy. Although the trilogy is categorized as a young adult adventure fiction by default, it manages to successfully incorporate numerous features that are characteristic for the dystopian genre of literature. Considering that, the first chapter serves as an introduction to the dystopian world of *Hunger Games* and describes its basic structure. This chapter explores the roles of the society and its totalitarian government, which are centered on Hunger Games, the modern version of gladiatorial games, that serves as a main source of oppression, terror, and control. The next chapter focuses on the three prominent ways of control imposed by the totalitarian government: media control, fear as a control, and food as control. The third chapter describes the characteristics of the dehumanized society, marked by the unequal distribution of wealth, separation within the society, distorted values, and reversion of the family roles. The next topic, that paper analyzes, is the use of propaganda and lies of the government, which are the major causes of the severe mass manipulation of the society. The final three chapters describe the atypical hero of the dystopian world of *Hunger Games*, the function of the rebellion, and the role of technology contrasted with the role of the nature.

Key words: Collins, dystopia, *Hunger Games*, control, government, society

Introduction

Dystopian genre in literature can be simply defined as ″utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that only functions for a particular segment of society″ (Gordin et al 1). In other words, dystopias as ″utopia's polarized offspring, turns human perfectibility on its head by pessimistically extrapolating contemporary social trends into oppressive and terrifying societies″ (Sisk 1). The dystopian literature, therefore, represents the downfall of human nature, ″whose corruption and lust for power are inevitable, and not to be remedied by new social measures or programs, nor by heightened consciousness of the impending dangers″ (Jameson 198). Being mainly concerned with aggressive establishment of control in society, an ″individual freedom, especially the freedom to entertain and communicate unorthodox ideas is ruthlessly suppressed in dystopias″ (Sisk 1).

To ensure the uniformity and control of the society more efficiently, the dystopian societies are usually totalitarian with governments that typically enforce their intolerance of difference through persecution of specified marginal groups″ (Booker 11). Accordingly, dystopian societies provide a surveillance of their citizens in a form of Panopticon which ″reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions, to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide-it, preserves only the first and eliminates the other two″ (Akman 9). As a result, the citizens are constantly exposed to the surveillance rather than being spied from the shadows. Another way of control is established by applying the principle of *panem et circentes,* ″designed to promote a hedonistic pursuit of pleasure that will prevent the buildup of potentially subversive political energies″ (Booker 49).

Dystopias often go hand in hand with an advanced technology, because ″if science is rudimentary, then the technological power of the dystopian bureaucracy vanishes along with it and ‘totalitarianism’ ceases to be a dystopia…″ (Jameson 292). The use of advanced technology is important because it enables the dystopian governments to impose surveillance, oppression and violence more successfully.

It is also of crucial importance to note that dystopian literature uses the existing ″value system and extrapolate it into a nightmarish future in order to ask us to reflect on the present″ (Mc Alear 26). This underlines the fact that futuristic dystopian worlds are actually influenced by the contemporary trends because ″it re-places the author's society in a futuristic possible world as it delineates possible outcomes of present trends in clearly recognisable trajectories″ (Millward 11).

Thus, the main goal of dystopian literature is to warn the readers about the possible negative outcomes of dysfunctional systems. The totalitarian societies that use advanced technology to control their citizens by either pleasing them, or threatening them, form the basis for the dystopian worlds. Such dystopian world also exists in *Hunger Games* trilogy. According to that, the paper will analyze and interpret its dystopian features. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the dystopian world of Panem, as it describes the structure of the society and the role of the Hunger Games as a mechanism of oppression. The next chapter analyzes the three prominent ways of the control in the novel: fear, media and food control. The following chapter focuses on the dehumanized society along with its characteristics and functions. The next chapter describes the role of media and propaganda in the novel. The final three chapters are centered on the roles of the dystopian protagonist, technology and the rebellion. Although *Hunger Games* trilogy is mostly categorized as a young adult adventure story, the novels manage to embody numerous dystopian features that will be thoroughly analyzed in the following chapters.

1. Meeting Panem

The world of *Hunger Games* provides an impeccable example of dystopian literature with its remarkable ability to comment or criticize the existing social and political systems by successfully utilizing the prominent principle of dystopian fiction known as defamiliarization: ″By focusing their critiques of society on spatially or temporally distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable″ (Booker 26). Using the literary themes of oppression, hunger, and fear, Collins creates the world that on one hand seems quite improbable and extreme, but on the other, vividly reflects some specific issues in a real world, like social inequalities, ignorance and passivity of the people.

The post- apocalyptic universe of *Hunger Games* trilogy, known as Panem, represents a "messed-up society where freedoms are curtailed in order to protect its citizens from imagined future terrible events" (Spisak 55). The urgency to restrict the freedom of society in order to prevent the next possible apocalyptic outbreak creates the typical dystopian post-war setting, which is evident from the District 12 major's speech about the Panem's history:

> He tells of the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. (Collins, *HungerGames*, 18,19)

However, the necessity for such highly regulated structure of the society is not only motivated by the fear of apocalyptic outbursts, but also by the fear of districts' rebellion. For instance, the powerful Capitol was once almost taken down by an uprising of the districts, known as the ″Dark Days″. However, the rebellion ″was crushed ruthlessly by Capitol, leaving only twelve Districts – the thirteenth, a source of graphite, was reduced to a toxic wasteland and left unreconstructed as a reminder of Capitol's supremacy″ (Thomas 363).

As a result of the war, the Capitol, under the leadership of President Snow, invented Hunger Games, an annual manifestation which stands as a warning for any future rebellious attempts of the districts:

> In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes to participate. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning

> desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins. (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 19)

With its rigid rules, the Games serve as ″brutal and brutalizing demonstration of power, instantiated in the Treaty of Treason as a reminder to the Districts of their subjugation to Capitol″ (Thomas 366). Aside from using games to remind the districts of their inferiority and total submission to the Capital, one of the main aims of the appalling Hunger Games is also to ″entertain a frivolous crowd in a capitol, which revels in the conspicuous consumption the system provides, the fruit of a muscular capitalism that feeds on the twelve districts″ (Clemente 24).

To understand the structure and dynamics of the Panem, it is of great importance to note the function of the Capitol in regards to its relationship with the starving districts. While the people of the districts have to face extremely poor standards of living, the people from Capitol engage in extremes of voracious ostentation, ″the vapid celebration of youth and beauty, and a decadent, sadistic voyeurism ″ (Thomas 362). In other words, it can be said that ″Capitol's monopoly enlivens Marx's observation that 'Capital is dead labour which, like a vampire, only becomes alive by sucking out living labor, and the more it sucks, the more it is lively″ (Thomas 377). So, the poorer the districts are, the more powerful the Capitol is.

Furthermore, along with touching upon some principles of Marxist theories on the capitalism, one of the most prominent influences in *Hunger Games* is the Roman Empire. For example, the Games themselves resemble the gladiatorial games as they are often described as ″a gladiatorial combat to the death, fought by teenagers in a vast technologically controlled Arena″ (Thomas 362). More specifically, the idea of the modern victor in deadly Roman Arena also draws influence from *Spartacus,* which Collins confirms:

> There's a basis for the war, historically, in the Hunger Games, which would be the third servile war, which was Spartacus's war, where you have a man who is a slave who is then turned into a gladiator who broke out of the gladiator school and led a rebellion and then became the face of the war. (qtd in Connors 20)

Moreover, the influence of Roman Empire can be also found in a form of Gamemakers, ″the most obvious examples presented in The Hunger Games – depicted as the decadent elite of Rome, drinking and gorging while reviewing the special skills each tribute hopes will bring them sponsorship″ (Thomas 377). In short, the Gamemakers are the intellectual elite that

manipulate and coordinate the events in the Games in order to make sure that the audience is pleased and amused by witnessing the bloody spectacles of the combat.

And finally, the most transparent example of Roman influence can be derived simply from the name of the *Hunger Games* universe – Panem, which stands for Latin phrase *panem et circenses.* For example, the former Gamemaker Plutarch uses the Juvenal's phrase of ″Bread and games″ to explain Katniss the selfishness and corruption of Capitol's people by stating: ″The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore power.″ (Collins223). In other words, as long as the districts provides for their needs, the Capitol citizens can fully maintain their ignorance and ignore social and political injustices.

With voracious citizens of Capitol led by incredibly cruel tyrant President Snow, along with his intellectual elite Gamemakers, and extremely poor people from twelve districts, it is also important to include the role of the police, dissidents, and the rebellious District Thirteen, the three important figures that constitute the society of Panem. The police or Capitol's security force are, ironically, called the Peacekeepers :″district guardians whose debts are often forgiven for their service″ (Clemente 25). What is interesting is the fact that the districts not only provide Capitol with food, resources, and products, but also with security force. This may serve as a potential critique of capitalism because Capitol very much resembles ″in organization and scope a corporate takeover that turns the twelve districts into production centers in a fully integrated economic system that bleeds the people of their potential power and wealth to sustain itself″ (Clemente25).

As for the dissidents or the threats for the nation, they are called Avoxes, i.e ″someone who committed a crime. They cut her tongue so she can't speak," says Haymitch. "She's probably a traitor of some sort″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 77). Interestingly enough, even the voiceless Avoxes have their purpose in the Capitol. For example, they are usually employed for depreciated jobs such as maintaining the work shifts in Transfer network in the sewers, or they work as waiters and domestic servants, which underlines the immense Capitol's greediness and need for constant provision of resources.

To contrast the dystopian qualities of ruthless and controlling Capitol in its relation to poor districts, Collins introduces District Thirteen, the powerful district whose primal source of industry is nuclear weapons and energy, which is thought to be destroyed during the Dark Days. This underground district serves as the distorted version of utopia and an opposing counterpart to oppressive Capitol. For example, the life in District Thirteen is highly

organized, programmed and scheduled, which is evident from Katniss' impression of the life in the district:

> You can go outside for exercise and sunlight but only at very specific times in your schedule. You can't miss your schedule. Every morning, you're supposed to stick your right arm in this contraption in the wall. It tattoos the smooth inside of your forearm with your schedule for the day in a sickly purple ink. 7:00 - Breakfast. 7:30 - Kitchen Duties. 8:30 - Education Center, Room 17. And so on. (Collins, *Mockingjay*, 16)

Although highly regulated, the equality, codependence and involvement of every resident in chores makes district 13 quite utopian as the ″excess of wealth of the state and its patrons is sensibly and tactically motivated in order to produce the consumers required to keep the system functioning and to absorb production″ (Jameson 148). This means that District Thirteen is highly sustainable, and it follows the principle ″to each according to his needs″ (Jameson 149). However, its excessive controlling nature of leadership and administration is to some extent very similar to the Capitol and that is the reason why District Thirteen is not as perfect as it might appear.

So, the modern version of gladiatorial games, combined with the oppressive, technologically and economically superb Capitol that maintains its power by exploiting weak and submissive districts, makes the basis for the dystopian world of Panem, while the Gamemakers, Peacemakers, Avoxes, tributes and seemingly utopian District Thirteen complement that universe.

2. Total Control

Following the footsteps of the classical dystopian novels, *Hunger Games* trilogy offers the world in which any individual freedom is suppressed by maintaining the absolute control of Panem's districts. Being constantly monitored, Katniss cannot help but feel paranoid even after surviving the bloody arena, as she has to appear loyal to the Capitol and convince the President Snow that she does not hold rebellious feelings and that her decision to eat poisonous berries together with Peeta, was only motivated by her love for him, not by the act of resistance to the Capitol's cruel rules:

> I suspect Haymitch initially, but then there's a more insidious fear that the Capitol may by monitoring and confining me. I've been unable to escape since the Hunger Games began, but this feels different, much more personal. This feels like I've been imprisoned for a crime and I'm awaiting sentencing. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 358)

The uneasy feeling of being surveilled resembles the Foucalt's theory of Panopticon: ″a circular prison comprising a central surveillance tower, surrounded by cells along the walls″ (Buggy 54). Since they cannot determine when they are watched, the prisoners have to be careful and behave as if they are constantly monitored as ″the surveillance tower is designed to provide complete visibility to the occupant of the tower, while lightning and design ensure that those incarcerated cannot see the other inmates or establish the degree to which they are being observed″ (Buggy 54).

Another way of control is achieved by imposing extremely violent penalties for quite petty crimes. For example, the Peacekeepers killed the boy from District 4 just because he found and kept the night-vision glasses: ″Sometimes, when we harvest through the night, they'll pass out a few pairs to those of us highest in the trees. Where the torchlight doesn't reach. One time, this boy Martin, he tried to keep his pair. Hid it in his pants. They killed him on the spot" (Collins 203). Furthermore, every citizen must attend the ″reaping″, a ceremony where the tributes are chosen for the Games: ″Attendance is mandatory unless you are on death's door. This evening, officials will come around and check to see if this is the case. If not, you'll be imprisoned″ (Collins 17). And finally, the Games themselves serve as a ″both a symbol of an ideology of oppression and a means of controlling the populace through a stylized act of violence″ (Pavlik 30).

However, the true reason for such rigorous means of control lies simply in the fact that the structure of Capitol, although powerful and merciless, is actually quite fragile and

dependent: ″President Snow once admitted to me that the Capitol was fragile. At the time, Ididn't know what he meant. It was hard to see clearly because I was so afraid. Now I'm not. The Capitol's fragile because it depends on the districts for everything″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 162).

So, to stay in power, the Capitol generates three types of control: hunger, fear and media control, which along with omnipresent violence and surveillance, serves as the basis of total control of districts' citizens.

3.1. Hunger and Food as a Control

In *The Hunger games* universe, food appears to be the one of the most important elements for understanding the power structure in Panem because food ″metaphorically show characters' own political, cultural and personal understandings of the society; and, this makes the food imagery act as a very strong source of power in the hunger inflicted districts″ (Peksoy80). If we take into consideration that the Capitol and districts function like one living organism, then it is possible to conclude that they mutually depend on the transfer of food ″ like the arteries that carry nourishment around the human body, the complex network that brings food to citizens is so much a part of the landscape that it often goes unnoticed" (Wilk qtd in Peksoy 80).

Collins, however, recognizes the significance of food as she uses it to provide ″a clear lens to analyse power and rebellion through theory, surveillance and the art historical genre of memento mori″ (Parks and Yamashiro 138). For instance, the unequal availability of the food underlines the fact that ″the abundance and lack of food is used as a metaphorical power by the Capitol to oppress both the district and Capitol people. While the Capitol gets almost all of their products from the districts, the districts themselves operate at near starvation with little food″ (Peksoy 82).

To make things even worse, the children of starving families are also forced to apply for ″tessera″, and in that way they significantly increase their chance to become the tribute in the Games:

> But here's the catch. Say you are poor and starving as we were. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tessera is worth a meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person. You may do this for each of your family members as well. So, at the age of twelve, I had my name entered four times. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 14)

So by offering ″tessera″, the President Snow not only demonstrates his complete control over their access to food, but he also makes them dependent on Capitol, which is ironic because Capitol gets all their resources by exploiting the districts. Moreover, ″the system disadvantages the poorest citizens, who must improve their chances of getting harvested by cashing in their odds for meager foodstuff″ (Clemente 25).

To illustrate the importance of food and the symbolism it conveys, Collins often uses it as a literary device for both visual and verbal impact. For example, the reaping ceremony literally ″exposes the status of the eligible children – they are 'produce', a crop to be harvested″ (Thomas 365). Furthermore, the Launch Room, a chamber from where the tributes are transported in the Arena also bears quite transparent allusions: "In the Capitol, they call it the Launch Room. In the districts, we call it the Stockyard. The place animals go before slaughter″ (Collins 143). Also, Collins plays with the word "launch" because it ″refers to the 'lunch' to be served after slaughter since the announcement in the room cautions them to prepare for launch″ (Peksoy 85).

The reason why food is such an effective way of control lies also in the fact that the districts are not only dependent on Capitol's mercy, but they also have to face the problems that the lack of food causes: ″Starvation's not an uncommon fate in District 12. Who hasn't seen the victims? Older people who can't work. Children from a family with too many to feed. Those injured in the mines. Straggling through the streets″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 29). The citizens of districts are so occupied with surviving the food shortages that they do not have time to think about rebellion or resistance. In other words, the ″insidious deprivation is intended to suppress rebellion with physical emaciation, a lack of trust between neighbours, and a heightened fear for their lives″ (Parks and Yamashiro 138).

While the control in the districts is maintained through the restriction of food, the control of the Capitol citizens is achieved through the abundance of food. In Capitol, the abovementioned principle of *panem et circenses* is applied so the citizens become more concerned with "their appearance, food and entertainment, than with politics or the fate of the districts that they consider beneath them" (Pavlik 33). In addition to that, the ″compassion towards other human beings is gone and thus, there is no moral concern about sending children to slaughter″ (Peksoy 83).

The availability of food is also one of the main indicators of Capitol's political and economic success because, ″once food can be stockpiled, a political elite can gain control of food produced by others, assert the right of taxation, escape the need to feed itself, and engage fulltime in political activities″ (Diamond 1999). Since they have excessive amount of food,

the Capitol, unlike the citizens of districts, can focus more on some other aspects of their reign such as planning the new *Hunger Games*, or simply just monitoring the districts.

Food control is also present in supposedly destroyed District Thirteen. However, in that district, the food is not used as a source of oppression, but instead is equally distributed according to the parameters of every resident: ″They have nutrition down to a science. You leave with enough calories to take you to the next meal, no more, no less. Serving size is based on your age, height, body type, health, and amount of physical labor required by your schedule″ (Collins 34). This highlights the excessive controlling manner of the district, as well as it questions the Utopia as ideal society since ″Utopian social order is actually based on discipline, control and supervision. One of the most striking manifestations of this is the radical uniformity of the ideal state″ (Yoran 167). In this case, District Thirteen shows the flaws of seemingly perfect utopian society.

To conclude, in dystopian world of Panem, food is one of the most crucial elements of control, as well as it is the most valuable resource. The control in districts is maintained by the lack, while in Capitol by the abundance of food. To illustrate the relationship one might deem Capitol as a ″hungry ferocious monster while other districts are struggling hard to satisfy its hunger ″ (Peksoy 82).

3.2. Media Control

Another example of imposing the Capitol's reign on districts is using the power of television and media. There are numerous reasons why media seems to be such a powerful source of control in dystopia. For example, without the advanced technology of media, the constant surveillance in Panem would not be possible. Therefore, television and media technology ″is conceived as a totalizing instrumentation of hegemonic control and public surveillance of citizens by technology-based institutions, government bureaucracies and mega-media corporations″ (Rambe, Nel 633). Moreover, the frequent broadcast of violence and punishments increases citizens' responsibility for self regulation so as to avoid pain and brutal disciplinary methods. In other words:

> A citizen that has witnessed public whippings (or any form of discipline) does not have to personally experience the lashings of the whip to imagine the pain and suffering that follows. Sometimes the imagination of the punishment is more severe than the actual course of behavior modification. (Stovall, 70,71)

As a result, the constant surveillance resembling the features of abovementioned Panopticon and combined with brutal methods of punishments ″allows the Capitol to successfully exert power from the distance while enjoying more privileged surroundings″ (Buggy 46).

The control by the media is not only achieved by displaying violence, threats or constant surveillance. The media is also used to censor any flow of information or block any attempt for communication among the districts in order to suppress alliances or rebellions: ″We have so little communication with anyone outside our district. In fact, I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking out our conversation, because though the information seems harmless, they don‘t want people in different districts to know one another ″ (Collins 203).

The controlling effect of media contributes to the stability of the Capitol since ″Snow needs not bother with elections, for his media team keeps the fear of revolution and its consequences alive, necessitating a continued vigilance and requisite security that upholds the status you″ (Clemente 23).

However, the power of the television would not be that strong if the Hunger Games did not exist. The annual broadcast of the Games serves as the most crucial factor in controlling the whole Panem because they have a double purpose. First, the brutalities of the Games remind citizens of districts of Capitol's absolute power and control. By creating the horrible, sadistic, and extreme conditions in the Arena they implement the feelings of hopelessness, fear and reluctance, and thus extinguish any rebellious attempts: ″Another year, they tossed everybody into a landscape of nothing but boulders and sand and scruffy bushes. I particularly hated that year. Many contestants were bitten by venomous snakes or went insane from thirst″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 40).

Moreover, the Games are not only used to evoke the feelings of entrapment and fear in district citizens, but are also used to set the districts against each other. For instance, the broadcast of Victory Tour, in which the victor of the Games has to visit all the districts, proves that statement: ″And this year, I am one of the stars of the show. I will have to travel from district to district, to stand before the cheering crowds who secretly loathe me, to look down into the faces of the families whose children I have killed″ (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 3).

As for the citizens of Capitol, the media also has a great role. For Capitol crowd, the Games are an enormous source of entertainment, so the media has to think of the ways to amuse them or make the Games look spectacular and interesting. Therefore, the Games adopt the qualities of reality shows and Gamemakers often try to manipulate the situations which the Capitol citizens would find interesting:

> Regardless of the fact that for a long time President Snow and his government had full control of media, they still made sure to tell a story, whether by recounting the history of the Hunger Games with emotional footage, focusing on the star crossed lovers story-line during the game itself, or trying to do damage control during the Victors‘ Tour. (Matos 2)

Moreover, the tributes also take the part in the show, as they must appeal to the Capitol citizens in order to attract sponsors in the Arena. They are ″pushed and prodded, draped and depilated at the hands of the Capitol fashionista to provide thematically titillating but commodified images for the delight of Capitol″ (Thomas 375). Because of the presence of television crew and camera, Katniss must always think about her appearance and she often needs to conceal her real emotions in order to make herself strong, likeable and presentable to the Capitol: ″I've been right not to cry. The station is swarming with reporters with their insectlike cameras trained directly on my face. But I've had a lot of practice at wiping my face clean of emotions and I do this now″ (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 41).

Controlling the society by using the reality show of Hunger Games, one cannot deny that ″the mind-numbing effects of this constant exposure to television, by rendering the populace incapable of critical thought, make any genuine resistance to official authority virtually impossible″ (Booker 159). Making everyone engaged in televised display of the Games, the media maintains control at the same time, by entertaining the Capitol and threatening the districts.

3.3. Fear as Control

Applying the typical conventions of the mainstream dystopian novels, Collins successfully creates the world in which many forms of fear are introduced. Restricted freedom, merciless Capitol, violence and Hunger games makes the life in districts horrifying and terrible. So in order to survive, the characters often ″must stay in line and keep their secrets to themselves while they live in fear of being found out and facing various forms of punishment″ (Ryan 19). Like in many other important dystopian works, fear is one of the most important mechanisms in *Hunger Games* trilogy because it denotes and emphasizes the need for reaction, change, as well as it encourages the need for critical thinking. In other words, ″dystopias can encourage deliberation in the reader without having a clearly defined solution by giving a fearful object to our anxieties in order to promote discussion and critique″ (Mc Alear 29).

In *Hunger Games* universe, fear as control goes hand in hand with media control because the broadcast of Hunger Games inflicts the feelings of fear and terror in district citizens: ″Similar to the constant surveillance, the constant fear and guilt becomes another way of controlling the people of the districts and the winners of the Games″ (Hamre 42).

Also, along with the fear of starvation, fear of another war, and fear of Capitol, the annual organization of Games seems to be the most terrifying source of fear. The reason for that lies in ″the fact that it is repeated yearly and that fear never gets a chance to be laid to rest makes sure these thoughts and insecurities are always on the surface, guarantees that people are always worried, and thus end up falling in line and just go about their days not rocking the boat″ (Matos 2).

Aside from the terrifying Games, it is also important to mention the repressive methods of the Capitol that instill fear in the districts. For example, after winning the Games, Katniss encouraged people to openly show resistance to the President Snow. As a reaction to the upcoming uprisings of the districts, the Capitol increased their repressive means of control by employing more Peacemakers, shrinking the supplies of basic necessities, and by physically torturing the people:

> A huge banner with the seal of Panem hangs off the roof of the Justice Building. Peacekeepers, in pristine white uniforms, march on the cleanly swept cobblestones. Along the rooftops, more of them occupy nests of machine guns. Most unnerving is a line of new constructions - an official whipping post, several stockades, and a gallows set up in the center of the square. (Collins, *Catching Fire*, 121)

As a result, the streets of District Twelve become almost immediately empty and the atmosphere of fear is created: ″Even the sight of Peeta and me is enough to make people pull their children away from the windows and draw the curtains tightly″ (Collins, *Catching Fire*, 122). To terrify its subjects, the Capitol also uses technology to implant the feelings of fear resulting in the severe distortion of person's reality. For instance, they use the venom that causes hallucinations to alter and condition the mind of the subject:

> Now imagine that I ask you to remember something - either with a verbal suggestion or by making you watch a tape of the event - and while that experience is refreshed, I give you a dose of tracker jacker venom. Not enough to induce a three-day blackout. Just enough to infuse the memory with fear and doubt. (Collins, *Mockingjay*, 172)

Being quite adept in inflicting fear in the districts, the Capitol creates very hostile and terrifying environment. However, that same fear serves as a driving force for triggering the necessary rebellion, which in the end manages to defeat the terrifying Capitol.

3. Dehumanized Society

In the post-apocalyptic universe of Panem, the citizens of districts have to face numerous difficulties such as the ruthless reign of Capitol, total surveillance and control, constant fear and inevitable starvation, which result in the severe dehumanization of the society. What makes the life in districts awfully dehumanizing are the extremely poor standards of living:

> Our part of District 12, nicknamed the Seam, is usually crawling with coal miners heading out to the morning shift at this hour. Men and women with hunched shoulders, swollen knuckles, many who have long since stopped trying to scrub the coal dust out of their broken nails, the lines of their sunken faces. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 5)

The lack of food and food in general affects the people from districts not only by deepening their desperation, hopelessness, and passivity, but also by debilitating their values and creating a hostile environment among them: ″Food is an innovation or a modern tool in the hands of the Capitol to keep the twelve districts under its own control and highlight class distinction. The starving people attempt to provide food for themselves at the cost of killing their citizens and friends, especially in the Games″ (Sasani, Darayee 37).

Aside from the horrible living standards in districts, it is also of great importance to mention the spectacle of the Hunger Games imposed by the omnipresent media. It occupies people's mind and discourages them from any attempt of resistance: ″Hunger Games and the images are just for absorbing people's attention and entangling them in the images which are based on their needs; though these fake images do not fulfill their needs″ (Sasani, Darayee 35).

Furthermore, the presence of the Games also interferes with the family structure causing the reversion and deterioration of the roles within. For example, Katniss is the breadwinner of her family and she regularly goes to the woods to hunt: ″At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family…. I bought our food at the market and cooked it as best I could and tried to keep Prim and myself looking presentable″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 38).

While Katniss provides food for her family and acts as a mother figure for her little sister Prim, her real mother shows a considerable amount of incompetence and passivity, as she used to suffer from catatonic depression after the death of Katniss's father: ″She didn't do

anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blankets on her bed, eyes fixed on some point in the distance ″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 28).

Her disinterest and inability to overcome depression not only almost destroys the family by starving them to death, but also ruins her relationship with Katniss, as she has to take the responsibility for their survival:

> And some small gnarled place inside me hated her for her weakness, for her neglect, for the months she had put us through. Prim forgave her, but I had taken a step back from my mother, put up a wall to protect myself from needing her, and nothing was ever the same between us again. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 53)

However, even if their mother acts as the head of the family, she can not fully protect them, because her status as an adult prevents her from volunteering to substitute their children in the ″reaping″ ceremony. Unlike her mother, Katniss is allowed to volunteer, and in that way, she confirms her involuntary status as the head of a family: ″But as her sister I could take her place, an option forbidden to our mother″ (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 43).

Another example of reversion of family roles is displayed in already mentioned ″tesseras″. Children, who apply for these tokens, provide their families with barely sufficient year's supply of grain and oil. However, by doing so, they significantly increase their chance of being chosen for the Games:

> At fourteen, Gale, the eldest of the kids, became the main supporter of the family. He was already signed up for tesserae, which entitled them to a meager supply of grain and oil in exchange for his entering his name extra times in the drawing to become a tribute. (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 7)

Moreover, tessera serves as a source of animosity among the district people, since children from wealthier families do not have to apply for them. This confirms the fact that ″tessera″ ″brings inequality and cruelty among the people of districts and it is a political tool in the hands of the Capitol″ (Sasani, Daraye 35). Katniss is also aware of the teserra's effects as she states that ″the Tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can generally count on supper and thereby ensure we will never trust one another″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 12)

Also, the games make it impossible to draw the line between the adults and the children. The presence of the Hunger Games redefines and restructures the characteristic social roles expected from a child or an adult. This results in creating ″an opposition

established between child and adult, or, in the vocabulary of Collins's world, between those who are vulnerable to selection in the Hunger Games and those who are not″ (M Tan 32).

In other words, only those who are capable of taking care of their family or those who might survive the games are mature enough to be called adults, evident from Katniss's contemplation: ″They are not our kids, of course …Gale's two little brothers and a sister. Prim. And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us? Who would fill those mouths that are always asking for more? ″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 10)

Some dehumanizing effects of the Games are also manifested in the form of mental disorders experienced by the Victors; they display the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Those mental disorders are ″yet another consequence of war and torture, a consequence we hear about today of veterans after various wars in our time, shell-shocked and traumatized because of war and its horrors″ (Hamre Hauge 45).

The traumas of the Games are vividly displayed in Katniss's nightmares in which she is haunted by the horrors experienced in the Arena: ″I relive versions of what happened in the arena. My worthless attempt to save Rue. Peeta bleeding to death … Cato's horrific end with the mutations. These are the most frequent visitors" (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 51). Those nightmares show that even after surviving the deathly games, one can never really recover from the horrors: ″While these nightmares begin as the simple reliving of trauma, they gradually escalate as living and death, and sleeping and waking, blur in Katniss's almost perpetual stream of nightmares″ (S.M.Tan 34).

Furthermore, unlike the other citizens of districts, the Victors of the games are supposed to live in blissful and carefree prosperity. However, it turns out that they are not left intact by the Capitol, as they often must engage in various immoral requests, which further dehumanize their position. For example, being extremely beautiful and charming, the Victor named Finnick has to prostitute himself so the Capitol would not kill the people he loves: "President Snow used to...sell me...my body, that is.... If a victor is considered desirable, the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 162).

One of the consequences of dehumanization is also a severe separation within the society. For example, the class distinction in Panem is conditioned by the amount of food and wealth. More specifically, it can be said that the class distinction in Panem revolves ″around a consumerist framework that values material acquisition at the cost of human identity, rights, and respect″ (Lucy et al 193). However, the class distinction is not only displayed between the

Capitol and the district citizens. The districts themselves differentiate in terms of wealth, status and privilege. For example, the District 1 which is responsible for the production of luxury items, does not have to experience the excruciating problems of starvation and other existential issues: ″District 1 ride out in a chariot pulled by snow-white horses. They look so beautiful, spray-painted silver, in tasteful tunics glittering with jewels. District 1 makes luxury items for the Capitol. You can hear the roar of the crowd. They are always favorites″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 69). Moreover, the tributes from wealthier districts, such as Districts 1 and 2, also known as the Careers, often volunteer for the Games, since they have better chances of winning: ″Career tributes are overly vicious, arrogant, better fed, but only because they're the Capitol's lapdogs″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 160).

The dehumanization of the districts' society is caused by the alarming presence of games, media and poor living conditions. But the seemingly civilized and sophisticated society of the Capitol also has distorted views of life and reality. In their case, ″abundance of food is normal and therefore not something that is thought bout daily; its presence and availability are taken for granted″ (Hamre 37). The abundance of food is best portrayed in Katniss's observation of the dining table in the Capitol: ″A thick carrot soup, green salad, lamb chops and mashed potatoes, cheese and fruit, a chocolate cake. Throughout the meal, Effie Trinket keeps reminding us to save space because there's more to come″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 45).

Moreover, their ignorance and greed are displayed to such an extent that they vomit the food during the parties so that they can eat more: ″And here in the Capitol they're vomiting for the pleasure of filling their bellies again and again. Not from some illness of body or mind, not from spoiled food. It's what everyone does at a party″ (Collins, *Catching fire,* 75). Not only does that repellent habit display the horrifying decay and corruption of the Capitol citizens, but also ″highlights the social differences between the Capitol and the districts, where food is so scarce that dying of starvation is as common a cause of death as any″ (Peksoy 83). Applying the idea of *panem et circenses*, they substitute their social and political power for food, entertainment and spectacles.

Another example of their deranged lifestyle is their extreme obsession with clothes and fashion, ″which is also a way to deviate people's attention from the cruelties done by the Capitol″ (Sasani, Darayee 38). They are obsessed with their appearance and spend most of their time decorating themselves in order to be more presentable and attractive. This also marks the enormous difference between the districts and the Capitol, which is once more evident from Katniss's observation: ″They do surgery in the Capitol, to make people appear

younger and thinner. In District 12, looking old is something of an achievement since so many people die early″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 124).

Being so deranged and blinded by the constant entertainment and fake imagery from the spectacles of the Hunger Games, they deny the human qualities to the tributes and the people from districts. In other words, ″Capitol citizens view the tributes as objects, gaining scopophilic pleasure from the gaze which they confer on their bodies, clothes, and actions″ (Buggy 62). This statement is confirmed from Katniss's view of Capitol people: ″Hunger Games aren't a beauty contest, but the best-looking tributes always seem to pull more sponsors″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 58)

Perhaps the most extreme example of dehumanization in Panem is the total neglect and unconcern with the children's life. For example, during the Capitol Raid, President Snow places children in front of his mansion as a human shield: ″Toddlers to teenagers. Scared and frostbitten. Huddled in groups or rocking numbly on the ground…. This is for Snow's protection. The children form his human shield″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 331). However, it is the rebellious District Thirteen who orders the bombing of the children in order to completely annihilate the Capitol. This underlines the fact that, when it comes to war, every weapon is allowed, even the sacrifice of children. The disappointment and realization of the corruption in Panem's society is best displayed by Katniss, which summarizes the brutalities of the society that uses children to achieve their goals:

> Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences (…) Snow thought the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control. Coin thought the parachutes would expedite the war. But in the end, who does it benefit? No one. The truth is, it benefits no one to live in a world where these things happen. (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 361)

To conclude, the presence of the Hunger Games, along with unequal distribution of wealth and supplies, are the greatest causes of the severe dehumanization in Panem, marked by the distortion of values, reversion of family roles, class distinction, the desperation of the districts people and greediness of the Capitol people. Therefore, the dehumanized society of Panem serves as an implicit criticism of our contemporary world, considering that such issues, although not to such extremes, still exist:

> By placing a society whose elite's only concern is bread and circuses in the future and where the rest of the population is struggling to get by under its hard rule, it is possible that Collins wants to give us a warning concerning the

direction in which we are heading with regard to political ignorance and desensitising entertainment (Hamre 13).

4. Use of Propaganda and Lies

The most efficient form of the control in Panem is established by the use of media technology. Being installed in almost every household of Panem, the Capitol makes sure that every citizen is completely absorbed by the broadcast. In that way, the Capitol ″succeeds to manipulate the minds of the people by imposing its rules, demands and ideologies through modern technologies such as spectacle without bloodshed and physical war ″(Sasani, Daraye 34). The prevalent use of Capitol's propaganda is focused on the Hunger Games and their attempt to present the Games as the festivity that should be celebrated: "It is both a time for repentance and a time for thanks," Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor!" (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 20).

Furthermore, the propaganda is imposed in almost every domain of Panem, including the school. Once a week, the students have a history lesson, which usually consists of the Capitol's political messages and propaganda: ″It's mostly a lot of blather about what we owe the Capitol″ (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 42). The district citizens are also exposed to the repetitive political messages, which are either about the Capitol's victory during the rebellion or about the Capitol's economic and industrial prosperity. The manner of those televised messages is best described by Booker:

> The film is shot in a sort of quasi-documentary style, but makes no pretense at historical accuracy, instead employing a number of blatantly artificial modernist film techniques in an effort not to narrate the events of the revolution but to convey its significance. (87)

The effects of the propaganda illustrate that even the images of the games are enough to warn the people of the dangers of rebellion, the conditioning which Stovall compares to the paddle that associates students with the punishment for the poor behaviour: ″Just like a wooden paddle hung on a principal's wall, students don't have to have experienced the actual pain to imagine the consequence of poor behavior″ (Stovall 70).

By constantly reminding citizens of their inferiority and eternal retribution, the propaganda repetitively uses the events from past to make them still current and actual in the present. Similarly, as they try to keep the memories of ″Dark days″ fresh, the Capitol also uses the same technique for the Hunger Games by organizing the Victory Tours, the pilgrimage during which the victors visit all the districts, and by doing so they subtly remind the districts of the horrors of game:

> If it were up to me, I would try to forget the Hunger Games entirely. Never speak of them. Pretend they were nothing but a bad dream. But the Victory Tour makes that impossible. Strategically placed almost midway between the annual Games, it is the Capitol's way of keeping the horror fresh and immediate. (Collins, *Catching Fire, 3*)

Moreover, the propaganda is also used to eliminate the political enemies. For example, every twenty-five years, the Panem organizes the anniversary Hunger Games named Quarter Quell: ″They occur every twenty-five years, marking the anniversary of the districts' defeat with over-the-top celebrations and, for extra fun, some miserable twist for the tributes″ (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 34). Because the Quarter Quells enables President Snow to modify the rules of the Games, he uses that propaganda to defeat Katniss by placing her in the Arena once again: ″On the seventy-fifth anniversary, as a reminder to the rebels that even the strongest among them cannot overcome the power of the Capitol, the male and female tributes will be reaped from their existing pool of victors" (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 160).

The propaganda aimed at districts tries to convince them that against the Capitol, they are completely helpless, inferior and weak. They should, therefore, accept and understand that the Capitol uses the Games for their own good. In other words: ″Propaganda and censorship combine to subtly convince citizens that the philosophy and the ensuing policies which have evolved from the medicalisation of love are for their own protection″ (Buggy 154).

However, when it comes to the citizens of the Capitol, the media and propaganda are mostly used to censor and spread lies. For example, the media never explicitly states that the high mortality in districts is caused by the lack of food: ″Starvation is never the cause of death officially. It's always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 29). This underlines the fact that President Snow deliberately wants to make his people ignorant as he ″makes sure that its own citizens do not know on what or at whose expense their feasting is done″ (Hamre Hauge 32). Therefore, to make Katniss presentable, beautiful and untouched by the brutalities of deadly games, the Gamemakers decide ″to surgically alter Katniss' body to hide the fact that she has been starving and wounded during the Game″ (Hamre Hauge 32). This illustrates the inability of the Capitol's people to differentiate between the televised spectacle of the Hunger Games and the real people that participate in them.

Another example of spreading lies is Capitol's attempt to conceal the existence of the rebellious District 13, as they are constantly using the same image in the footage: ″She reports that unfortunately a study has just today determined that the mines of District 13 are still too

toxic to approach. End of story. But just before they cut back to the main newscaster, I see the unmistakable flash of that same mockingjays wing″ (Collins, *Catching Fire*, 152).

This shows that in Panem, ″the state deliberately obstructs public access to information about the oppression, rebellion, and suppression″ (Brown 189). Also, another reason for the Capitol's reluctance to describe the causes of the first rebellion is ″likely because the reasons for the past rebellion are still well founded and observable in the current society ″ (Stovall 71).

Moreover, Katniss also has to lie in order to win the Games and survive. First of all, she acts as if she is in love with Peeta, the tribute from her district, in order to appeal to the Capitol citizens and earn sponsors in the Games, which result in the change of the rules:

> The star-crossed lovers…Peeta must have been playing that angle all along. Why else would the Gamemakers have made this unprecedented change in the rules? For two tributes to have a shot at winning, our "romance" must be so popular with the audience that condemning it would jeopardize the success of the Games. (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 243*).*

Because their fake romance is well accepted among the audience, the Capitol decides that the two Victors from the same districts can win. However, when only Katniss and Peeta are left alive, the Gamemakers annul that rule in order to ″guarantee the most dramatic showdown in history″ (Collins *Hunger Games* 337). Being unable to kill Peeta, Katniss decides to commit suicide by eating poisonous berries, which can be interpreted either as an act of defiance or an act of love. In the end, President Snow decides to spare their life. However, in return, he demands that Katniss must act as if she is in love with Peeta, otherwise the districts will interpret her suicidal act as an act of rebellion:

> You have no access to information about the mood in other districts. In several of them, however, people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same? (Collins, *Catching Fire*, 20)

It is also important to mention that the rebellious District 13 also lies by using their own propaganda against the Capitol. For example, when President Snow places children in front of his mansion as a human shield during the raid, it is Alma Coin, the President of District 13, who gives the order to bomb them in order to expedite their victory over the Capitol:

> As the bomb explodes, it sends accusations of injustice and barbarism and cruelty flying out in every direction. Even the most Capitol-loving, Games-

> hungry, bloodthirsty person out there can't ignore, at least for a moment, how horrific the whole thing is. (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 239)

To conclude, in the dystopian world of Panem, everybody lies to get what they want. President Snow lies by using propaganda in order to implement the feelings of hopelessness, fear and passivity in district people. Katniss lies to survive the brutalities of the Hunger Games and District 13 lies to defeat the almighty Capitol. More importantly, the omnipresence of media and political propagandas in the Hunger Games is also used to satirize the ignorance of people in our own world:

> It criticizes the merging of violence with reality-show competition, the way that "news" about celebrities' personal lives distracts us from real problems, and the way that propaganda and popular figureheads rile us up without thought, making us more likely to replace one type of oppression with another. (Bridges 21)

Being bombarded with unimportant reality-shows and other forms of news, we are distracted from more important issues, and therefore vulnerable to lies and manipulation, which is exactly the message that Collins tries to convey with her dystopia.

5. The Hero

The main protagonist in the dystopian world of the *Hunger Games* is Katnis Everdeen, a girl from District 12. Through Katniss' eyes the readers are introduced to the brutal, twisted and often unforgiving world of Panem. Being a heroine, and in many ways the strongest character in the trilogy, her strength and traits are not the results of some unrealistic, supernatural abilities, which are usually implemented in such heroic protagonists. In fact, ″Ms. Everdeen is simply human — an impoverished teen from the Appalachianish District 12 in a dystopic North American country called Panem″ (Maio 200).

Although she does not embody any remarkable physical qualities, she is certainly not weak and powerless. The source of all her strength is actually her survival instinct, the prevailing quality that makes her such a powerful individual. Because of her father's death in a mine explosion, Katniss has to rely on her survival skills very early in her life and thus, she becomes the breadwinner of her family:

> It was slow-going at first, but I was determined to feed us. I stole eggs from nests, caught fish in nets, sometimes managed to shoot a squirrel or rabbit for stew, and gathered the various plants that sprung up beneath my feet…. I checked and double-checked the plants I harvested with my father's pictures. I kept us alive. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 51)

Her hunting abilities, accompanied with her proficiency in using bow and arrows, are consequent results of her extraordinary willingness to survive: "She's excellent," says Peeta. "My father buys her squirrel. He always comments on how the arrows never pierce the body. She hits every one in the eye." (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 89)

Along with the masterful use of bow and arrows, her survival instinct also teaches her to be aggressive, especially in situations when she needs to confront the tributes in the Arena or challenge the authorities of the Capitol. For example, ″she shows signs of being quick-tempered and forceful on numerous other occasions, such as when she reacts to the game-makers' indifference by shooting an arrow into the mouth of the pig upon which they are feasting″ (Buggy 61). This shows that she is not only a survivor, but also a fighter that needs to be taken seriously. In fact, her survival instinct combined with her bravery encourages her to rebel against the Capitol:

> All I was doing was trying to keep Peeta and myself alive. Any act of rebellion was purely coincidental. But when the Capitol decrees that only one tribute can

> live and you have the audacity to challenge it, I guess that's a rebellion in itself. (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 17)

When fighting her enemies, Katniss is vicious, brave and aggressive, especially in the situations when she needs to defend herself. However, she is also extremely cunning, observant and adaptable, which helps her outsmart the Capitol government. For example, she manages to completely transform her appearance and act in a more presentable and charming way, so as to attract the sponsors from the Capitol audience: ″I survived my interview, but what was I really? A silly girl spinning in a sparkling, dress. Giggling…. Silly and sparkly and forgettable″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 135).

What define her character are also her maturity, unselfishness and motherly care for her little sister Prim. Even though she is quite young, ″she does not seem to consider herself a child—instead, she reserves that label for characters such as Prim and Rue: the small, innocent, and ultimately, victimized characters″ (S.M.Tan 32). Her protective nature and caring for her family is displayed on numerous occasions. For example, she makes sure that Prim never applies for the ″tessera″, she volunteers as a tribute when Prim is selected during the 'reaping', and she always resists the temptation to run away in the woods and live more pleasantly because there would be no one to take care of Prim aside from her incompetent mother:

> I can see the hills I climbed this morning with Gale. For a moment, I yearn for something . . . the idea of us leaving the district . . . making our way in the woods . . . but I know I was right about not running off. Because who else would have volunteered for Prim? (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 26)

Another example of Katniss' unselfishness is shown in her decision to sacrifice her life during her second time in Arena. The decision is not only motivated by her will to keep Peeta alive, as he saved her numerous times during the first Games, but also by her defiance to the Capitol: ″The beauty of this idea is that my decision to keep Peeta alive at the expense of my own life is itself an act of defiance. A refusal to play the Hunger Games by the Capitol's rules″ (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 227). Along with compassion, strength, and intelligence, Katniss has a power to affect people with her presence and personality. In other words, she is quite charismatic, which Peeta confirms: ″She has no idea. The effect she can have″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 91).

By embodying all these virtues, Katniss represents a perfect heroic figure that seems to be more associated with the young adult adventure genre than dystopia. However, that is not completely true, because Katniss is also attributed with traits that make her an excellent

archetype for dystopian character. For example, hunting, supplying family with food, and surviving the extreme conditions of life in district ″prompt her reflections on the social/political context of her life, including the mining accident that claimed her father's life and the heavily monitored lifestyle imposed by the Capitol″ (Lucy, et al 191).

Being actively engaged in dynamics of life in her district, she becomes aware of Capitol's social and political injustices quite early in her life:

> When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble.So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 7)

She, however, understands that her rebellious character contrasts with the passivity of the people from her districts, which makes her an outsider and a minority. Even after surviving the first Hunger Games and becoming the symbol of the revolution, she still feels trapped and imprisoned in her world. For example, she realizes that everyone wants to use her power for their own selfish reasons, making her a puppet:

> First there were the Gamemakers, making me their star and then scrambling to recover from that handful of poisonous berries. Then President Snow, trying to use me to put out the flames of rebellion, only to have my every move becomes inflammatory. Next, the rebels ensnaring me in the metal claw that lifted me from the arena, designating me to be their Mockingjay, and then having to recover from the shock that I might not want the wings. (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 58)

After surviving numerous ordeals, it becomes apparent that ″ her ability to stand against the evil she faces is directly attributable to her taking time to understand it″ (Connors 9). Being the puppet in the pointless war, she realizes that there is no one she can trust, which further deepens her desperation: ″I no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despise being one myself″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 361).

In the end, the rebels do win the war, but Katniss does not find the satisfaction, as she has to face all the negative war outcomes. She ″has been betrayed by two different governments and by her first love, and the only way she has been able to heal is to isolate herself from others and have only limited contact with the few beings she trusts″ (Seelinger

Trites 25). Moreover, not even by alienating herself does she find comfort, as she is constantly haunted by nightmares in which she dreams of all the people she has lost:

> A terrible nightmare follows, where I'm lying at the bottom of a deep grave, and every dead person I know by name comes by and throws a shovel full of ashes on me. It's quite a long dream, considering the list of people, and the deeper I'm buried, the harder it is to breathe. (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 365)

However, being a survivor and a strong individual, Katniss manages to overcome her suffering in the end. Although she is still traumatized by nightmares, she tries hard to focus on the greater things in life and ultimately, she uses her experience to teach her children to be survivors like her:

> I'll tell them how I survive it. I'll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I'm afraid it could be taken away. That's when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I've seen someone do. It's like a game. Repetitive. Even a little tedious after more than twenty years. But there are much worse games to play. (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 373)

As she teaches her children, she also teaches the readers. Being a brave survivor and a tortured dystopian archetype, she becomes a great role model, because she teaches the readers how to be courageous, confident and more importantly, always critical of one's surroundings.

6. The Rebellion

In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the rebellion plays one of the most important roles. In contrast to many dystopian novels, in which any attempt of rebellion is usually violently suppressed, an act of rebellion in the dystopian world of Panem is successfully conducted. By adding the rebellion in the trilogy, Collins tries to show that, on one hand, every individual should fight for one's right and challenge the unjust system. But on the other hand, she demonstrates that winning the war does not necessarily bring positive outcome in the end.

The central forces of the rebellion in Panem are District Thirteen, and more importantly, Katniss. Even though there once was a rebellion in the history of Panem, also known as the Dark Days, Perksoy states that ″we never learn whether or not there existed some utopian society for every one before the first rebellion″ (80). After the supposed annihilation of District Thirteen, the Capitol establishes the Hunger Games: ″The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 19). After the establishment of the Hunger Games, no one dares to oppose the Capitol until Katniss volunteers to enter the Arena instead of her sister, and therefore, involuntarily conducts the first act of rebellion, which citizens recognize:

> But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's place, and now it seems I have become someone precious. At first one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 25)

Soon after that, ″being nicknamed 'the girl on fire' she provides the spark that eventually leads to a second uprising among the districts″ (Hamre Hauge 2,3). Even President Snow recognizes Katniss's potential of catalyzing the uprising as he explains the consequences of such action:

> Do you have any idea what that would mean? How many people would die? What conditions those left would have to face? Whatever problems anyone may have with the Capitol, believe me when I say that if it released its grip on the districts for even a short time, the entire system would collapse. (Collins, *Catching Fire,* 25)

However, only after the second Games does the rebellious District 13 reemerge from the plot. They also recognize Katniss as their symbol of revolution: ″We had to save you because you're the mockingjay, Katniss," says Plutarch. "While you live, the revolution lives"

(Collins, *Catching Fire,* 360). By using Katniss, District 13 begins to operate their resistance.

Ironically, they use the same technology and tricks like the Capitol. For example, they use propos, the short films that ″are used to rouse support for the rebels and to send a message to President Snow that the resistance is resolutely strong″ (Buggy 79). Furthermore, they are capable of inventing dangerous, inhumane weapons such as a delayed bomb that operates in this way: ″A bomb explodes. Time is allowed for people to rush to the aid of the wounded. Then a second, more powerful bomb kills them as well″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 177).

Although District 13 is supposed to be a utopian counterpart to the dystopian Capitol, Katniss realizes that the leader of the rebels, President Coin, is as ruthless and power hungry as the Capitol. First, President Snow tells her that it is District 13 who ordered the bombing of the Capitol children, which were placed as his human shield, not him: ″However, I must concede it was a masterful move on Coin's part. The idea that I was bombing our own helpless children instantly snapped whatever frail allegiance my people still felt to me. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 342)″

Then, she finds out that Coin purposefully killed her sister Prim by sending her to the front line as a medic during the bombing of the children, in order to mentally break Katniss : ″Did Coin do it, hoping that losing Prim would push me completely over the edge?″ (Collins, *Mockingay,* 346).And finally, her doubts of the rebels' corruption are confirmed when Coin decides to organize the last symbolic Hunger Games: ″What has been proposed is that in lieu of eliminating the entire Capitol population, we have a final, symbolic Hunger Games, using the children directly related to those who held the most power″ (Collins, *Mockingjay,* 353)

Even though the rebellion against the Capitol is successfully conducted, Katniss's personal rebellion is achieved only after killing President Coin and avenging her sister's death. Realizing that ″President Coin is just as unethically ruthless as the man she plots to overthrow, Collins wreaks havoc upon that "girls will be boys" attitude with an internal rebellion, one that culminates in Coin's assassination by Katniss herself″ (Gilbert-Hickley 2,3).

To conclude, the rebellion in the *Hunger Games* trilogy shows that overthrowing one corrupted system only results in the establishment of another, similarly corrupted system. The Capitol is definitely more brutal and unforgiving than the rebellious District 13, but the controlling manner of President Coin's leadership and the forthcoming final Hunger Games imply that the rebels will rule as equally brutal as the Capitol. Therefore, the rebellion only indicates the possible formation of the next dystopian society. By killing the representatives of the two cruel systems, Katniss's character emphasizes the individual rebellion against the

injustice, which underlines the fact that every system has its flaws and that only the power of an individual can bring it down

7. Technology vs. Nature

The use of the advanced technology in Panem is one of the most crucial pieces of evidence that illustrates the dystopian quality of the *Hunger Games,* because in dystopia, ″technology is an inherently evil, dehumanising force that will inevitably lead to the moral, intellectual or physical destruction of mankind″ (Surry Web). In the dark world of the *Hunger Games,* technology is one of the most important tools of oppression used by the government of the Capitol. For example, the technology is used to broadcast the Hunger Games every year. In that way, the Capitol, through technology, imposes ″structural constraints and controls that deprive people of the ability to make independent decisions, and put them under permanent surveillance ″ (Dima-Lanza, qtd in Ramba- Nel 633).

What is characteristic for the dystopian world of Panem, is that the natural world is completely banished, neglected and controlled by the Capitol. The nature is manipulated by the technology, which only emphasizes the controlling power of the Capitol, meaning that they do not only have control over people, but they can also control the nature. For example, they manipulate the weather conditions in the Arena, either to provoke the combat among the tributes or just to please the audience by stimulating extremely deadly situations:

> This was no tribute's campfire gone out of control, no accidental occurrence. The flames that bear down on me have an unnatural height, a uniformity that marks them as human-made, machine-made, Gamemaker-made. Things have been too quiet today. No deaths, perhaps no fights at all. (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 172)

Furthermore, not only are the authorities of Capitol using nature for their own benefits, but they are also trying to alienate the district citizens from those benefits. For example, they surround the districts with an electrified fence in order to ensure that no one from the districts goes to the woods: ″In theory, it's supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods - packs of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears - that used to threaten our streets″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 5).

Not only that; the Capitol also makes sure that their own citizens are completely detached from nature, as almost everything in the Capitol is modified, resulting in the creation of an extremely artificial and plastic environment: ″All the colors seem artificial, the pinks too deep, the greens too bright, the yellows painful to the eyes, like the flat round disks of hard candy we can never afford to buy at the tiny sweet shop in District 12″ (Collins, *Hunger Games,* 59).

Perhaps the most transparent indicator that shows how technology is successfully used to depict the dystopian features of the novel is simply the fact that the Capitol could use the technology to improve the life of all citizens, but instead, they use it for killing, controlling and instilling fear: ¨In addition, being in possession of technology that could potentially feed a large number of starving people, the cruelty towards the starving districts is only made more obvious by the Capitol's gluttony ″ (Buggy 32).

Similarly, as the technology in the novels is associated with the destruction, corruption and degeneration of the totalitarian system, the nature in the novels is used to evoke a glimpse of hope. For example, when she feels desperate, Katniss sings a pastoral lullaby, a song full of natural images that promise a different, more humane future:

> Deep in the meadow, hidden far away
> A cloak of leaves, a moonbeam ray
> Forget your woes and let your troubles lay. (Collins, *Hunger Games*, 52)

Moreover, the natural imagery also further implies the triumph over the artificial and brutal dystopian system, as the ″trilogy ends in an almost pastoral scene of family: Katniss looking out on her children, who play with the happy innocence that she was once denied″ (S.M.Tan 41)

While the technology is used to amplify the degeneration and the cruelty of the dystopian society in Panem, nature, on the contrary, is used as an opposing device that denotes rebirth, hope and revival of the humanity, unaffected by the desire to impose control, suffering and death to the people.

Conclusion

A modern version of gladiatorial games combined with the totalitarian reign of ruthless Capitol over poor districts in a post-apocalyptic future, forms the basis for the dystopian world of Panem. The annual manifestation of Hunger Games not only serves as an ideal weapon that the oppressive government uses for establishing various ways of control, but it also serves as a monument of the extremely dehumanized, unequal and perverse society. Conjoined with the omnipresent media, the Games maintain the control by entertaining the Capitol people and instilling fear in district people at the same time. Moreover, the Games are also a perfect source of propaganda, because on one hand, they glorify the power of the Capitol government, and on the other, they constantly remind district people of their retribution and weakness. Being completely absorbed in a spectacle of the Games, the people become unaware of various forms of injustices imposed by the ruling authorities, such as severe dehumanization marked by the separation within the society, unequal distribution of goods, distortion of values and reversion of family roles. Along with Hunger Games, another tool used for suppression is introduced in a form of technology. It not only enables the panoptic manner of surveillance but it also allows the authorities to manipulate the nature and create deadly weapons in order to ensure their complete domination. The only features that do not completely coincide with typical dystopian characteristics are represented in the roles of the rebellion and the protagonist. Even though the successfully conducted rebellion does symbolize the victory over the totalitarian system of Capitol, the reestablishment of the final Hunger Games conjectures an equally tyrannous reign of the rebels. As for the protagonist, being a tortured individual aware of unjust systems, Katniss succeeds to resemble a perfect dystopian archetype. However, her heroic portrayal, strength and willingness to survive are the crucial traits that deviate from the norms of dystopian hero. Although the totalitarian, cruel and unforgiving world in *Hunger Games* trilogy does implement a majority of dystopian features, an unusual individual victory over the corrupt system is needed because it sends an encouraging message to young adults about the importance to mobilize, react and always be critical about their surroundings.

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