

## Back to the Future in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*: A Study of the Dystopian Society in *Mockingjay*

Ahmed Abdelsattar Abdelaziz Keshk

Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University

### Abstract:

*This study deals with the various social, economic, political and even lingual aspects of the dystopian vision in Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games. The data were analyzed by identifying the scenes and the statements found in Suzanne Collins' Mockingjay. The five aspects of analysis are : a) totalitarian government b) political repression, c) dehumanization, d) restrictions of freedom and e) oppression which usually leads to rebellion and at its best a revolution. From these aspects, it can be concluded that Suzanne Collins' Mockingjay is a new futuristic vision of a traditional dystopian work reflecting totalitarian features. Mockingjay can be best viewed as a wakening call of common people to a full realization of their strengths and the necessity of overthrowing their oppressors.*

### Key Words :

- Totalitarianism.
- Dystopia.
- The Hunger Games.
- Suzanne Collins.
- Katniss Everdeen.
- The Mockingjay.

### INTRODUCTION:

The expected future in the light of the existing scientific and technological achievements sounds promising. Yet, Suzanne Collins has shocked the world with another possible horrific and terrifying image of the future. It is an old black reality when human dignity and freedom were seriously endangered. It is a future in which humans learned nothing from the past lessons that existed worldwide and have been warned against repeatedly. It is as if Orwell's clear warnings against future totalitarian regimes were not considered seriously and thus the Capitol of *The Hunger Games* will come to existence soon.

Suzanne Collins imagines a birth of a new dictator in the future (President Snow) to be the heir of Mussolini of Italy, Hitler of Germany, Stalin of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, Napoleon of the Animal Farm and Big Brother of 1984. The only difference is that President Snow will exist in a future supposed to be mentally enlightened and technologically advanced. The future of humanity will definitely deteriorate back to a state which all free and respectable humans fear to think of. Humanity will reach a state where future goes back to be a copy of an inhumane past.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS" :I can find you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you" (*The Mockingjay*, 15)

" Big Brother is watching you(1984.4) "

" Back to the future" is a concept first coined by Rachel Ferreira (2008) to describe another literary work but it is used in this paper to refer to Collins' fears of the possible existence of future totalitarian society in which freedom, individuality and equality never exist. In this sense, this paper is meant to explore Collins' fictional world presented in the famous series The Hunger Games in general and Mockingjay in particular in an attempt to reveal her social ideas and her views about revolution and social change in totalitarian societies. In other words, this study approaches Collins' writings as a struggle against the dehumanizing future totalitarian regimes which might oppress individuals and deprive them of their rights, dignity, freedom, humanity, and even life.

Collins' The Hunger Games is a terrifying vision of a future rudely degenerating back into a totalitarian society where social change is neglected and power worship dominates. In her famous trilogy, Collins frankly expresses her own political views concerning totalitarianism, ideology and social change. This trilogy tells the story of a future technologically advanced society that is planned to be utopian in which freedom, dignity, equality and justice are respected; yet turned to be a dystopian society like many others presented in the works of writers like George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Yevgeny Zamyatin where hunger for everything prevails along with terror, torture, servitude and humiliation.

Such being the case, this study is mainly based on four premises. The first premise is that Suzanne Collins is an anticipated novelist whose fiction seeks to shed light on the oppression and the expected upheavals of future totalitarian societies. The second premise is that the abuse of power leads to the betrayal of revolutionary ideas and consequently to political corruption. The third premise is that individuality is lost in future societies as no sense of freedom is allowed. The fourth premise is that Collins' fiction shows that the idea of utopia cannot be realized and what is planned to be a utopian society changes into a dystopian one or simply another copy of a long fought and permanently rejected dystopian society.

The Hunger Games books are far more than a fictional fantasy. They serve as warnings that reflect the corruption of our human nature and the duplicity of some of today's trusted leaders. As the title indicates, people's pain has become simply interesting kind of amusing games where competition, entertainment, joy and even happiness do exist. Moreover, they are various different painful kinds of games, not even a single one for torturing so many people and at the same time entertaining only the few. It is clearly a place "where you can starve to death in safety". (Mockingjay, 6)

Collins is one of the many dystopian authors who are afraid of the possibility of a bleak and terrible future as a result of war and violence. Suzanne Collins says that she drew her inspiration for *The Hunger Games* from the contradiction between the war in Iraq and the lies in reality T.V. After flipping through the channels one night, she saw the clear contradictions between the coverage of the war and reality T.V. (Wilson, 271).

This might sound normal since the writers of dystopia get their inspiration from personal experience or simply from reality. Dystopian images of the near future can no longer avoid the risk of their inevitability. As the famous writer of dystopia, Ray Bradbury once noted that he is not trying to predict the future as much as trying to prevent it. George Orwell, the famous writer of the dystopian *1984*, expressed his own fears of the future tyranny in dystopian fiction (132). Such novelists, along with Collins, believe that dystopia has already arrived and that its progress to maturity is unavoidable.

In the light of the image of society envisaged in these works, dystopia is "a futuristic anti-utopia or bad place, generally dealing with a societal vision that dramatically addresses universal fears of a monstrous situation" (Rabkin, 9). In dystopian fiction, writers revolt against the idea of utopia by drawing pictures of dystopian corrupted societies where man is portrayed suffering rather than prospering. Dystopian fiction mainly warns against present dangers that might lead to future horrors which will need immediate corrections. In his book, *The Road from George Orwell: His Achievement and Legacy*, Alberto Lazaro explains that A dystopia is often easily imaginable and recognizable and constitutes a warning of possible, immediate future horrors, but at the same time, it may advocate a policy of either no change, or, at least little change (160)

In fiction, dystopia is more of an imagined society that is not only the opposite of utopia, but also the very society that comes closer to the existing societies with every single scientific discovery made to perfect human civilization. Although these scientific discoveries may be the key to an indefinite progress of the human beings toward better health, a longer life and the domination of nature in the interests of humankind; yet history is full of endless examples of those who cannot appreciate these scientific possibilities without taking advantage where "every aspect of social order can be susceptible to human control". (Claeys, *Sergent* 3). It goes without saying that this human control is not something to give away easily.

This explains the reason why most of dystopian writings picture science and technology as means of social oppression and political control.

Dystopian fiction always shows that science and technology serve the ruling regimes to oppress the masses perfectly. "The dystopian imagination", notes Gorman Beauchamp, "posits as its minatory image of the future an advanced totalitarian state dependent upon a massive technological apparatus.(54) "

Most dystopian literature, of the twentieth century and after, deal mainly with totalitarian regimes. This is mainly because many thinkers and writers envisioned the potential dangers of totalitarianism or even some of its features and they seek to warn ordinary people against it. This explains the reason why some novelists resort to exaggerate some of the totalitarian vices in their novels in order to illustrate this potential danger.

Most of these dystopian works portray people working hard without any personal gain, as only the state benefits from their labor. Citizens are never treated as respected individuals since the state considers them only part of a collective whole working for the welfare of the state or its leaders specifically. Thus, any form of individuality , dreams, interests, or thinking is not tolerated to the extent that even naming them is regarded a trivial issue. In *The Hunger Games* , the Capitol and its residents do exactly nothing, they depend on the other twelve districts to work hard to supply the Capitol with everything they need, clothes, food , weapons and even Peacekeepers (officers) whereas these twelve districts are deprived of any form of a dignified life. Katniss Everdeen notes that, "the Capitol depends on the districts for everything. Food, energy, even the Peacekeepers that police us. If we declare our freedom, the Capitol collapses". (*Mockingjay*,168)

Even though it seems to be very hard and depressing for citizens living in such societies, they are even forced to give up their freedom, their rights, and even risk their own lives in order to be barely fed. In *The Hunger Games*, people register their names more than once in a mortal combat (*The Hunger Games*) to entertain the totalitarian president Snow and the citizens of the Capitol in exchange of an additional portion of food.

But here is 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 tesserae 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. Once, because I had to, and three times for tesserae for grain and oil for myself, Prim and my mother. In fact, every year I have needed to do this. And the entries are cumulative. So now at the age of sixteen, my name will be in the reaping twenty times (*The Hunger Games I*, 13)

In a dystopian society, poor people have the luxury to choose their future end. They have no choice to improve their life and neither any chance to do so. They have no right to choose their leaders. They even have no way to secure their families. All they are offered, and only if they are smart enough, is the opportunity to put an end to their lives. "Anyway, Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker" (The Hunger Games ,I ,17).

However, in every dystopian work there is at least a small group of rebels who resist such oppression and corruption .

No matter how gloomy life can be; no matter how death might be so close and no matter how far totalitarian a regime is growing, there is always a hope for a change led by those who seek a better future regardless of their suffering and their sacrifices. In her bold and brave message to president Snow, Katniss Everdeen reflects this idea by noting. The Capitol has just bombed a hospital full of unarmed men, women, and children. There will be no survivors ... I want to tell people that if you think for one second the Capitol will treat us fairly, you're deluding yourself ... President Snow says he's sending us a message? Well, I have one for him. You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but do you see that? ... Fire is catching! And if we burn, you burn with us! (Mockingjay, 186)

In these regimes, power is worshiped. In their endless search for a complete control over people, these governments go to the extremes. No feeling of remorse or guilt can stop these atrocities. District Thirteen and District Twelve were bombed and totally wiped out in seconds, leaving hundreds of bodies in the streets just to terrify and control the citizens of the remaining Districts. President Snow just ordered that District Twelve to be burnt to the ground simply because Katniss, the face of the rebellion, is from that district. The streets of District Twelve once full of life and children's cries has become "full of the remains of those who tried to flee. Some were incinerated entirely. But others, probably overcome with smoke" (Mockingjay, 5).

The Hunger Games as one of many dystopian novels gives readers an overview of the bleak and terrible future due to human actions itself. Dystopia presents a fearful vision far from the perfect utopia to make people understand that such a future can actually exist one day. Dystopian literature is important to empower the readers to be inspired to make a difference to be better people living a better life. As Claeys states that, "utopian and dystopian works focus almost entirely on social critique" (The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature, 141), leaving it up to the reader to imagine what a world without these injustices and



inequalities would look like. The writers of dystopia try to give a vision to the readers about the probability of a different version of the future. As long as humans have the choice to what kind of future would they have, it all depends then on the human. "So there we have it, an impending dystopia; yet some utopian possibilities. We humans are given the power of choice . It will be more than interesting to see what one we make" (Miller, 7). In other words, dystopia is not a future to be simply averted; it is a version of what is already happening in the world readers inhabit unless people are determined to change it.

As Suzanne Collins states in many interviews that the media, reality programs and wars of today's world are her real inspiration. *The Hunger Games* is an important warning of today's biggest world problems. All the three books of the trilogy should be read in the light of these warning and connections. The first two books, *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, tackle mainly the dangers of powerful media and fascination by reality programs similar to what exists nowadays. The third book, *Mockingjay* introduces the dangers of wars and its devastating consequences.

The story of *The Hunger Games* is narrated in the state of Panem, which is located within what is used to be the United States of America. It is a totalitarian regime to the bone where life is divided into classes. The Capitol comes first then comes the rest of the twelve districts. The Capitol is the place where the government as well as rich and powerful people spend their life in luxury. The rest of the citizens of the Capitol are excluded of such a life. The other twelve districts are strictly ruled by the Capitol. The citizens of the twelve districts live a desperate life full of pain and oppression where they always suffer hunger and bad working conditions. It is a dystopian vision where every district is forcefully obliged to provide goods and services to the Capitol. Every district is fenced literally and metaphorically so that people will never escape. Each district is also assured to obey the Capitol thanks to the merciless armed murderous guards (Peace keepers) who exist in every street and corner of the twelve districts to assure their doubtless obligation.

*The Hunger Games* is a dystopian vision of a society where obeying the totalitarian regime is a must. No one dares to think or dream of changing such a humiliating life. District Thirteen, as the readers knew at the very beginning of the novel, tried to lead an uprising against the Capitol. As a result, the Capitol simply wiped out the whole of District Thirteen in mere minutes. Moreover and as an endless punishment of the uprising, two young children up to eighteen years old - one girl and one boy - are chosen from every district to be sent to the Hunger Games every year just to entertain the Capitol by their fight to death and at the same time to

remind the people of the districts of the power of the Capitol in case they forgot what happened to District Thirteen .

The rules of the Hunger Games are so simple. Each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy to participate. The twenty four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to death. The last tribute standing wins. "Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch - this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy" (The Hunger Games, 18) .

The Hunger Games represents depression and oppression in the worst scenarios. This is to show that there is no way out for the districts, and that they are forever in the Capitol's control. So if the Capitol can easily sacrifice twenty three children like that every year, what else can possibly stop them from wiping out districts in the face of an uprising?

Simply because life of most ordinary people in dystopian societies is meaningless, such acts might look normal to people seeking absolute power. For the sake of power, everything is easily justified and excused. In similar societies, no respect at all is shown to any legal law, neither humanitarian, not to mention a religious one.

People should accept sacrificing their lives with pleasure for no clear reason willingly. Katniss highlights that, "The Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event putting every district against the other ... It is both time for repentance and a time for thanks, intones the mayor"( The Hunger Games, 19). Collins ' vision of young innocent children fighting till death to satisfy the lust for power of certain elite is based in part on the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, in which seven boys and seven girls from Athens every year are sent against their will to be devoured by the Minotaur, a cycle that does not stop until Theseus kills the Minotaur. Collins said, "In her own way, Katniss is a futuristic Theseus" (Margolis, 5).

Collins has noted that there are also many other similarities between the Roman Empire and the fictional nation of Panem. She describes the Hunger Games as "an updated version of the Roman gladiator games, which entails a ruthless government forcing people to fight to the death as popular entertainment". Collins also illustrates that the name "Panem" came from the Latin phrase "Panem et Circenses", which means "Bread and Circuses" (Margolis,2) and refers to the strategy used by Roman emperors to appease the masses by providing them with food and entertainment .

By resorting in its main theme to Roman mythical ideas, Collins has colored its future dystopian society with a historical background. It is

doubtless that *The Hunger Games* trilogy has many similarities as well with classic dystopian literature. Many times readers get the feeling that *The Hunger Games* portrays a classic dystopian society strictly ruled by a person or a group of people and only they benefit from the existing regime. Panem is simply a dystopian state to the bone ruled by a heartless tyrant who always prefers violence to force people to obey him. Compared to other dystopian works, *The Hunger Games* shares six main aspects with this genre. These six aspects are often part of any dystopian novel; namely, science and technology, religion, sexuality, literature and history (Booker,21). Add to what Booker highlights political dictatorship, humiliation, totalitarian government, restrictions of freedom and finally oppression.

The first aspect of fictional dystopian images is science and technology. Like most of dystopian societies, Panem is a technologically and scientifically advanced society. In *The Hunger Games* trilogy a number of scientific accomplishments have been introduced to the readers all of which guarantee the complete control over and the humiliation of the citizens of districts. For example, in *Mockingjay* readers are introduced to endless scientific and technological gadgets that might surprise them, but what is really painful is "a woman who has been forced surgically to alter her features to look more feline; they have even implanted whiskers in her face "(372). In Panem, everything is taken to the extreme. Science is no longer a noble effort to reach a better life conditions, it is rather a way to entertain the president and a tool to guarantee the desired subjugation.

An even more astonishing and disgusting scientific development in Panem is the Capitol's mutations. Through manipulating nature and its inhabitants the Capitol has created creatures and places that are intended to satisfy the Capitol's plans, such as Jabberjays (*The Hunger Games*, 52). Jabberjays are male birds that are scientifically mutated in the labs of Panem to spy on enemies and rebels of the Capitol. Jabberjays had the ability to memorize and repeat entire human conversations, and were used as spies to gather words and information from the rebels. Once the people of the districts realized how their private conversations were being transmitted, they used the Jabberjays to feed lies to the Capitol.

Another example of using science to the extremes is the "wild mutations" or "mutts". The novels present three types of bloody mutts; Wolf, Monkey and Lizard mutts. These terrifying creatures were created in the labs of the Capitol by scientifically modifying the genes of humans with the genes of these beasts. These mutts are so blood thirsty and vicious that used to badly harm and even kill any rebel against president Snow.



Tracker Jackers are also an example of a distorted scientific invention in a dystopian society. Tracker Jackers are deadly wasps that are mutated by the Capitol and placed around the districts during the first rebellion. They are larger than regular wasps and their bodies is goldish. Their stings raise lumps the size of plums on their victims, and their venom (engineered to target fear in a victims brain and alter their memories) cause hallucination that can drive people to madness. More than a few stings can kill a person. These Tracker Jackers were used against innocent children in The Hunger Games and were used on a daily basis to brainwash Peeta to convince him that president Snow seeks the best for the districts while Katniss does not seek anything but her hunger for power and fame.

The trilogy also presents many examples of technologically advanced gadgets that were invented to silence any form of rebel and to guarantee a complete surveillance and control over the poor citizens. An example of these high-tech gadgets is a pod which is an obstacle that is designed to release a weapon that can range from a bomb to a group of mutts. Whatever is in the pod, it is always designed to trap or kill whoever comes near it.

Pods, force fields, holograms, advanced solar batteries and magnetic levitation are evidences of the highly advanced technology. Mutts, Tracker Jackers, Jabberjays also are only examples to show the advanced level of scientific researches conducted by the scientists of Panem. But unfortunately, all these forms of advanced science and technology are utilized only to make life easier for its plutocratic citizens, whereas the districts, most notably the outer ones, seem to have progressed little beyond the twentieth century.

Thus, Suzanne Collins exposes myth of technological progress and verifies Orwell's fears presented in 1984. Collins has moved Panem from future back to meet the fears of George Orwell in 1949 where he portrayed a high-tech world where science and technology are used by dystopian societies to humiliate, control and kill their citizens.

The absence of the spiritual dimension is another aspect of dystopian works as they do not believe in any religion and it is not a part of their culture or mentality, and The Hunger Games trilogy is no exception. This partially helps in reflecting the darkness and gloominess of the Panem society due to the absence of religion. The people of Panem think and act like hopeless lost people. Faith will make people feel better, confident , safe and comfortable and all of these feelings are dangerous to the very existence of Panem. Moreover, religion will provide people with a hope for a promising future either now or in the afterlife. Actually, the idea of respecting religion in itself threats and endangers any dystopian society .

Interestingly, people of Panem do not wonder what happens to them after they die; the question even never occurs to them. They do not even wonder why they exist at the first place. They do not ask what their purpose in life can be. Simply, they do not have God. They do not have even an unknown god or any form of worshipping or sacred rituals at all. They do not pray and thus they do not appeal to God when they are in troubles. It is just a materialistic life and nothing more.

This is a very queer state of affairs. Never has existed on earth a civilization or a culture without religion. But the absence of religion completes the overall picture that Collins portrays. Panem is an unhealthy society and the existence of religion will contradict that idea. Moreover, the lack of an explicit mention of religion has managed to deeply explore the role of religion and its place and importance in preserving hope in any normal society .

The third element that Booker mentions is sexuality. Unlike most of other dystopian works, *The Hunger Games* trilogy does not include explicit sexual themes or even hints . Whatever the reason for that is, Collins has implicitly referred to this idea .

Collins' style of writing in tackling sexuality is unlike the famous style of Orwell in narrating the love story of Julia and Winston where lust was a form of refusing the existing regime. However, Collins used this theme to show how cruel and barbarian does Panem deal with its citizens whether males or females. This idea is embodied in the painful story narrated by Finnick Odair himself. Although he is a past Victor of the *Hunger Games* tournament and regardless of the fact that he is so handsome, polite and attractive; he painfully revealed that he was sold before and used as a sex slave for wealthy patrons residing in the Capitol. In order to guarantee the total obedience of Finnick, he is always threatened by the Capitol with real bad savage punishments directed against the only person he loves and cares for, Annie.

This painful confession is broadcasted throughout Panem by Finnick himself to fan the flames of hatred towards President Snow. As Finnick himself declares :

President Snow used to ... sell me ... my body. That is, Finnick begins in a flat removed tone. I was not the only one. 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 (*Mockingjay*, 170).

This instant and other similar ones show how far Panem like any other dystopian state dehumanizes its citizens, turning them into objects designed for sexual satisfaction rather than subjects capable of making their own personal and independent choice even sexual ones. Panem is

acting its best to turn the life of the thirteen districts into meaningless painful one. Simply love can and does threaten the very existence of President Snow.

Love means hope, sacrifice and safety. All of which meant to be absent. If you have a hope for a better future for the one you love, you will sacrifice everything to make him/her safe and happy and by necessity that will end with revolting against the killing, humiliation and the torture of President Snow's regime. This explains the reason why every love story mentioned in the three books was deliberately ended up tragically either by killing or torturing one of them .

The fourth element to *Booker* is literature. Like any dystopian society, Panem has banned any form of creativity and individuality. Thus, any form of literature does not exist throughout the three books. Next to hunger comes another priority to the existence of the Capitol, namely illiteracy. Throughout the trilogy, Collins highlights the idea of illiteracy in many different ways. As a result of poverty, humiliation and hunger, the whole twelve districts lack any form of literary or scientific achievements. Scientific advancement was limited to District Thirteen for military purposes only. Literature, on the other hand, might motivate people to discuss their miserable life conditions and might start a revolution which is a frightening idea to the Capitol. Illiteracy should prevail to ensure the complete dominance of the regime over the districts.

This idea was reflected in the extravagant, highly equipped health care system of the Capitol in comparison to the very poor and traditional recipes based on traditional herbs in District Twelve. Whereas the Capitol sends a medicine to Peeta to cure him in the Hunger Games to keep killing the other tributes, and later on injecting him with chemical advanced stuff to hallucinate him and make him lose his faith in the revolution and thus betray his friends; Prim and her mother still carry a bag full of jars to traditionally cure all of the diseases they know or they think they do. Literature and science have a different role in dystopian societies. They no longer serve the welfare of humanity. On the contrary, they enhance the complete dominance of the governing elite.

The last aspect of dystopian societies is the manipulation of history. Falsifying historical facts is a religion to dystopian presidents through which they guarantee blind obedience of citizens and provide a cover for their lies and disrespected promises. Only the ways of falsifying history differ from one society to another, and from one time to another. In *The Hunger Games*, president Snow remembers only one fact that he keeps reaping the souls of twenty four teenager every year. No one will ever forget that District Thirteen has tried to rebel against the Capitol and this led to the bloody Hunger Games since. Nevertheless, every other single

historical fact is a subject of alteration based on president Snow's vision and needs .

People are made to believe that the Capitol along with the other twelve districts are more prosperous now than in the past because of the wise devoted leadership of president Snow. Actually, Snow achieves this goal throughout propaganda.

Propaganda is manipulated by Snow to belittle the negative effect of any bad move or decision by him as well as to aggravate any mistake done by the rebels. When Collins was asked about propaganda's role in society, she replied, "There's the voyeuristic thrill - watching people being humiliated, or brought to tears, or suffering physically - which I find very disturbing. There's also the potential for desensitizing the audience, so that when they see real tragedy playing out on, it does not have the impact it should". (A Conversation with Suzanne Collins, 1 ).

Within the previously mentioned context, The Hunger Games also demonstrates five main aspects of political dystopia that combine between bitter reality with a gloomy futuristic vision. The five aspects are: totalitarian government, political dictatorship, humiliation, restriction of freedom and oppression .

Based on Cernak (12), there are six elements of a totalitarian government and almost all of them do exist in The Hunger Games, namely, single party government which is controlled only by a single dictator, secret police that assures obedience of the citizens, over control of the mass media through lies and propaganda, control of weapons by the ruling regime, total control over economy, and a central ideology that controls every aspect of life. The following is an explanation of these six elements as presented in The Hunger Games.

- Single party government controlled by a dictator is clearly embodied in The Hunger Games in Panem where there is no freedom or any form of democracy. The Capitol fights and denies any form of expressing opinions. There is only one figure, president Snow, who is always right regardless of anything else. The twelve districts know nothing about the Capitol nor how life does look like there. All they know is that the Capitol controls them and their lives. This idea is clear in what Katniss Everdeen says, "about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called, the Capitol" (The Hunger Games,6). The word 'rule' used by Katniss to describe how the Capitol treats the other districts summarizes it all. She uses 'rule' instead of lead to give an accurate picture. It is an unhealthy relation since it is a relation between a victim and a victimizer.

- Secret police that assures obedience of citizens by means of terror and torture. In The Hunger Games Collins names them "The

peacekeepers". They are raised and trained by the Capitol to follow their orders only. The peacekeepers often do the whipping and punishment in public to intimidate all people. They simply, "whip you and make everyone watch" says Rue (The Hunger Games, 202) just to guarantee the total obedience to the regime .

•The fourth element is the complete control over economy. This idea is so obvious in The Hunger Games where the Capitol controls the economy of each and every district to its favor only. Every district is forced to work for long hours to produce goods for the Capitol to consume and leave nothing for the districts who live in very degenerating life conditions. Starvation and poverty are very common in the districts whereas people in the Capitol invent new medicines to enable them to eat more than what their stomachs can ever handle. Katniss asks Rue about life conditions in District Eleven, "I'd have thought, in District Eleven, you'd have a bit more to eat than us. You know, since you grow the food. I say, Rue's eyes widen, Oh, no, we're not allowed to eat the crops". (The Hunger Games, 202).

•The Capitol controls all forms of producing or trading weapons. This idea is so clear in The Hunger Games since anyone caught having a weapon of any form is sentenced to death publicly at once. The Capitol fears that if people of the districts hold weapons, they will definitely revolt against the Capitol and will announce their independence immediately. This idea is clarified in Katniss' words when she says: My bow is a rarity, crafted by my father along with a few others that I keep well hidden in the woods, carefully wrapped in waterproof covers. My father could have made good money selling them, but if the officials found out he would have been publicly executed for inciting a rebellion (The Hunger Games, 5).

The last element of a totalitarian government is controlling every aspect of human life. Reading the last previous five elements, one gets the idea that the Capitol controls the life of its members socially, economically and politically. The districts are just following the laws and the rules set by president Snow himself to serve his own interests only. The districts have no right to change or even discuss these rules. They have to follow it blindly "even though the rules were set up by the Capitol, not the districts" (The Hunger Games, 13).

The second feature of The Hunger Games as a political dystopia is political dictatorship. The idea is crystallized in the form of the government in The Hunger Games . The Capitol is mainly a totalitarian regime with a single dictator at its top and very fixed social regime based on the needs and the interests of president Snow and his ruling elite. Furthermore, the Capitol worked its best to repress the citizens in the



districts in order to put an end, and to prevent any possible revolution. Its tool to achieve that goal is the merciless peacekeepers. They master spreading terror to the citizens of the districts by always punishing and torturing those who break the law or threaten the existence of the Capitol in a brutal merciless way. Almost all of this is done usually in public so that everyone can witness their ability to inflict loads of pain to everyone. Katniss painfully notices that: "If the Game makers want to punish me, they can do it publicly. Wait until I'm in the arena and sick starving animals on me" (*The Hunger Games*, 104). Simply humiliating people while torturing them publicly is the creed of the peacekeepers in order to keep the existing regime safe and far from being changed .

Humiliation is another distinctive feature of political dystopian fiction. The idea of humiliation is embodied and reflected by *The Hunger Games* itself. The Capitol uses *The Hunger Games* as a legal way to entertain the elite, to control the citizens and to frighten them. The idea of taking the kids from the districts , forcing them to kill each other while the whole world is watching is just a game to president Snow.

Political dystopia can't go without restriction of freedom. The idea of living in a free society that guarantees the rights of its members to express their thoughts and opinions freely is a far-fetched dream to the citizens of the districts. Even if one thinks of committing the crime of talking something bad about the Capitol is forbidden. And if any citizen is bold enough to talk something bad about the Capitol, the punishment will be cutting his tongue. Katniss explains this idea by saying,:" Pollux is an Avox. They have cut out his tongue and he'll never speak again. And I no longer have to wonder what made him risk everything to help bring down the Capitol" (*Mockingjay*, 104). Actually, citizens are subjects to the Capitol to play games with and to cut their tongues and then calling them names. Everything is possible and allowed except changing the existing political regime.

Finally, oppression is the last but not the least aspect of political dystopia. Oppression is usually one of the main reasons that leads to a revolution against the existing political regime. In *The Hunger Games* oppression led Katniss to do two main acts that are considered a start of the revolution. First of all showing her affection to other tributes during the games where she is supposed to act cruelly and inhumanly. Second of all is planning to commit a suicide with Peeta to challenge the idea of the Capitol of having only one Victor every Hunger Game. Both of these acts are highly criminalized since they reflect an independent socially responsible personality that care for other tributes than participating in the savage entertainment of *The Hunger Games*.

In *The Hunger Games*, blood shedding and cruelty are the main themes that entertain president Snow and thus what Katniss keeps doing is an act of revolution against the tyrant's will. Instead of killing the little black weak innocent child, Rue, Katniss helps and saves her. Similarly, when Katniss is asked to kill the last tribute who offered her food and saved her family many years ago just in order to win the game and save her own life, she prefers to commit a suicide instead. By doing so, Katniss deliberately tries to send a challenging and an awakening message to all of the districts. President Snow might succeed in humiliating them, starving them, torturing all of them and even enjoy killing them, but he will never be able to control their destiny and their solid determination to be independent, respectable and free citizens. Katniss declares this idea frankly by saying:

I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own (*The Hunger Games*, 206 - 237 ).

Actually, Katniss has challenged the authority of the Capitol and threatened to break the oppressive grip of it. But this made the Capitol so angry. The last thing that Snow's regime might think of is a young teen girl challenging or even dare to think of refuting their oppressive decisions. Haymitch Abernathy , Katniss' mentor, warns her against this by telling her that:

Listen up. You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem (*The Hunger Games*, 356 - 357).

There is no wonder then the only song that Katniss remembers and sings like her father did ten years ago is "The Hanging Tree". It is a song of a rebel who is sentenced to death by hanging. The poor man asks his love to flee because in this unfair dystopian society, she will be sentenced to death without trial. The only crime she committed is loving him. They both refuse to let anything separates them or to let the cruel regime win over their solid determination and well. They both decide to die next to each other. Death is a victory for their love over the dystopian life. "Are you, are you, coming to the tree, wear a necklace of rope, side by side with me". (*Mockingjay*, 124). It is simply a state of life in death, and death in a depressing slavery and humiliating life.

Despite the heavy overtone of blackness and sadness of the overall events of the story, Collins does balance *Mockingjay* with episodes of happiness and love, like Finnick's and Annie's wedding, and the lovely family life of Peeta and Katniss later on. This in turn helps readers not to

be depressed and thus keep reading the book as well as maintaining their faith for a better tomorrow. Suzanne Collins succeeded in achieving this by carefully selecting her own language in a narratological matrix that fascinates her readers worldwide.

It is quite clear that the trilogy's theme is very gloomy, brutal and bloody; yet is handled so tactfully and tastefully at the same time. This balance is indeed hard to achieve. It is not fun at all to put kids in a gladiator game where they kill each other to teach young children lessons about injustice, resilience and individuality; yet Collins succeeded in solving this complex dilemma. This necessitates the importance of analyzing the language, setting, structure, the theme and the characterization of the *Mockingjay* that enabled Collins to achieve that.

The *Hunger Games* trilogy takes place in an unspecified future time in a dystopian nation of Panem, on the ruins of North America, in place of the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico, which failed to survive. The country consists of the wealthy Capitol located in the Rocky Mountains and twelve (previously thirteen) poorer districts ruled by the Capitol. The Capitol is lavishly rich and scientifically advanced unlike the other states that live in unbearable poor conditions. The narrator of the trilogy as well as its protagonist is Katniss Everdeen, who lives in District Twelve, the poorest region of Panem where people die of starvation.

As a punishment and a reminder for a past rebellion (called *The Dark Days*) against the Capitol where the twelve districts were defeated and the thirteenth was wiped out, one boy and one girl from each district are selected by lottery to participate in the annual *Hunger Games*. The participants are called tributes and are forced to fight to death in a dangerous arena. The winner is rewarded as well as the district he / she presents is also rewarded with food and supplies for only a year. The *Hunger Games* is carried on just to entertain president Snow and his elite as well as to remind the poor dying districts of what the Capitol is capable of if they think of revolting against the governing regime.

Each book in the trilogy is divided into roughly equal three sections of nine chapters each. In the case of the *Mockingjay*, the book is divided into "The Ashes", "The Assault" and "The Assassin". On another level of analysis, *Mockingjay* is logically divided according to the protagonist's mental and emotional state as well as her reaction to the surrounding circumstances. This is symbolized in the titles chosen to the different chapters of the book.

In many interviews Collins highlights the idea that this 'divided into three' format comes from her playwriting background, which taught her to write in a three-act structure. This format actually serves the story a lot. The first chapter always introduces the problems that Katniss faces to the

reader, the second is always the climax where Katniss chooses the far most unexpected solution to respond to what was mentioned earlier and the last is the outcome of her deeds.

Suzanne Collins has made the decision to write *The Hunger Games* from the point of view of the first person. Collins tells the story completely from Katniss Everdeen's point of view. The opening line of each book of the trilogy begins with the first personal pronoun 'I' to indicate that the reader will see the story from the protagonist's perspective. "When I wake up,..." (*The Hunger Games*, 3), " I clasp the flask between my hands... " (*Catching Fire*, 3), and " I stare down at my shoe " (*Mockingjay*, 3).

The persona 'I', the first person narrative point of view brings focus to how Katniss views the world and other characters. This puts the reader into a point of view that is close to the events of the story. This makes it easier for the reader to relate and connect to Katniss. This intelligent choice of narrative technique by Collins is suitable to the nature of the story. Since Katniss is living in a world far different from ours and goes through extreme things, it is important for the reader to connect to Katniss in order to plunge into the action and cruelty of *The Hunger Games* and to have a firsthand experience of the violence and the horror. Sharing and following Katniss' thinking process allow the reader also to understand and justify her temporary irrational and unexpected decisions and actions .

On the language level, Suzanne Collins comes up with some newly coined words related to ancient Rome and its games of gladiators which is obviously one of the biggest inspiration for her. This idea is clear in words such as Panem, Hunger Games and many more other words.

Panem is mainly a word of Latin origin, meaning "bread". It also refers to the Roman poet Juvenal's comment, "Panem et Circenses", which means "bread and circuses". This is an ironic comment of ancient Rome society that cares only about corn bread and bloody gladiator games without paying attention or respect to anything else in life. "Panem et Circenses" then refers to full bellies and entertainment of the Capitol no matter how hard the districts struggle to live day by day. "So that's what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 233).

The title '*Hunger Games*' itself can be interpreted in several ways. As it may literally describe the miserable state of the citizens of the districts who got familiar with lacking food for days and weeks. It may also refer to the Capitol citizens' hunger for entertainment. Or simply the attributes' hunger for survival and winning the games.

Within the same context, the absence of the names of the districts to be replaced by mere numbers is an excellent choice by Collins. Since they are only numbered, citizens are deprived of having any feeling of national

identity and thus they have nothing to rebel for. This choice also completes the dystopian image of the novel where nothing counts or has an identity except the Capitol and its president.

Interestingly, the names Collins chooses for her characters signify their social and cultural backgrounds. Observing the names of the characters, one can easily note that the names of the residents of the districts tend to be pastoral while the Capitol people's names are borrowed from antiquity. Moreover, the sounds of the names reflect the nature of the characters. For example, the name chosen for the heroine, Katniss. The use of the fricative /s/ reflects strong independent dominating character that silences her opposers. Adam Pufford explains this idea in his detailed study by clarifying that:

Katniss sounds strong and feline with 'niss' giving an impression of a sibilant hiss - very representative of her fierce and somewhat surly personality and that, like a cat, she is a hunter(12) .

Other examples of names such as Octavia, Flavius, or Plutarch are inspired by influential people of the ancient world, while Castor and Pollux stem from Roman and Greek mythology. Furthermore, the president of Panem's first name, Cornelius, comes from the name of one of the most prestigious and famous families of Rome, the Corneli, and his surname Snow evokes his sadistic behavior and his cold blood in murdering children.

Characters from the Capitol are also identified through their various speeches. Katniss describes their accent as "Odd vowels, clipped words, and always a hiss on the letter s...no wonder it's impossible not to mimic them" (*The Hunger Games*, I, 60). Their language contains catch phrases and sometimes is a bit archaic, like Effie Trinket's "May the odds be ever in your favor"(*The Hunger Games*, I, 19) . These are just an examples of how far Collins does her best to use the language in order to reflect the discrimination and the isolation against the people of the districts by those of the Capitol.

Like other dystopian writers, Collins has coined some new vocabulary of her own. For example, "avox" which is word describing a slave - someone who has been punished for a 'crime' or even of expressing his own opinion and thereby made a mute servant. There is a reason for coining such a word. The Greek prefix 'a' means without and the Latin 'vox' means voice. So 'avox' means 'without voice'. Another word that Collins has coined is 'propos' . This word is used by the rebels and the game makers as well. 'Propos' means propaganda serving a certain tactical target. The word comes from French 'propos' meaning 'subject'. Another example of words invented by Collins is 'mutt'. It refers to a terrifying genetically engineered beast. Mutt can be derived from 'mutant'



, or from the Latin 'mutare' (to change) or even from 'mutton head' meaning a dull, stupid, emotionless person. All of these three meanings reflect an abnormal, changed and stupidly following any order creature.

Interestingly, the names of the different types of 'mutts' themselves are also meaningful. For instance, "Jabberjays" which are genetically modified birds that eavesdrop and recount entire enemy conversations in a mimic of the real voice. Jays are commonly known birds enhanced by using the alliteration to become easy to remember. 'Jabber' is a noun first cited in Gulliver Travels in 1735, meaning to talk a lot. This makes clear the purpose that this mutt serves. Jabberjays are told to have mated with Mockingjays creating new subspecies. Mockingjay is the nickname for Katniss and the symbol of the rebellion. The choice of the word 'Mocking' by Collins reflects the nature and the role of Katniss in refusing, challenging and facing the oppressive rules of the Capitol by every possible means.

Throughout Mockingjay , Collins points two main motifs. At first, Katniss tries hard to discover her real identity as the Mockingjay. She always thinks and rethinks of the necessary transformation she must undergo. For every word she says and every step she takes, Katniss searches for those wings to fly her away and into a peaceful utopian world. Believing at first that the hard part of this transformation is over, she finds out that being the Mockingjay is a painful, bloody and a harmful experience.

Mockingjay also introduces another motif of real or not real that applies mainly to Peeta. As Peeta fights hard to clarify his memories - his true memories from the distorted fabricated ones - he keeps asking his trusted friends the same question, "Real or not real?" He is trying hard in his own way to find clues about his own identity and his love for Katniss amidst a complex wave of distorted memories.

The same motif of "Real or not real?" is presented in another aspect of Mockingjay. Katniss is searching since the first page of the novel for a real character that she can trust whether on a personal level (either Peeta or Gale, or may be both) or on a tactic level (either Coin or Haymitch). In a dystopian society, reality and justice are usually mixed up by the regime with unreality, lies and injustice.

The cycle of death and rebirth is another strong motif throughout Mockingjay . Beginning with the first chapter entitled "The Ashes", the novel introduces and narrates many instances of more death either physical death of those who fought against the dystopian regime or emotional and psychological death of those who lost their lovers. The main characters of the Mockingjay keep struggling to carry on with their lives after their loss, including Katniss, Peeta and Gale. All of them

emerge from these crucial struggles and loses to eventually reborn with new challenging concepts of life. The story line of *Mockingjay* moves from the ashes to the cold hard wintry war to spring at the end where there is a hope of a peaceful present where justice does exist.

Next to the motifs of the *Mockingjay*, this research studies Collins' style of drawing her characters. It is worth noting that the main characters of dystopia are generally unique people with extraordinary qualities. They usually face the same life threatening tale and know that their destiny is to face more than what their government allows. They criticize their life conditions and fight hard to improve them. They usually seek freedom, justice, equality and dignity. Ferris analyses the personality of the dystopian protagonists by saying that:

What sets them apart from the countless others is their decision to question, their willingness to challenge presumptions, their thirst for knowledge and experience, and courage to risk their comfort to make life better. While these are all admirable qualities in the opinion of most, it requires stepping out of a comfort zone and being willing to hurt for the cause. The reason these protagonists are truly heroes is that they are not, in general, merely doing this for their own good, but for the good of the entire human race. It becomes irrelevant in the story whether the person lives or dies in the process. The determinant of their success is whether or not they improved the situation for those to follow.(24) .

Protagonists of dystopian works are distinguished by their vision for a better future and their efforts to improve the present to reach that future. The protagonists of these stories are usually the narrator of their stories in order to enable readers to identify with them and to share every moment throughout the whole story. Moylan highlights this idea by noting that, "the narrator's perception is an important sign in the genre for signaling and documenting the discrepancy between the world as he/she experiences and the world he/she desires... Without a successful process of identification the reader will not be convinced of the narrator's critique.(205) "

Collins' primary success in *Mockingjay* is partially due to characterization, particularly, the character of Katniss the protagonist. Collins has described Katniss as being "an independent strong survivalist, lethal but good at thinking outside the box". Katniss' past hardships (her father's death - her mother's illness and her poverty) have made her a gladiator. She has no other solution but to challenge her depressing life conditions and to fight hard to change them to better ones. These hard life conditions made her love and trust no one except her young sister Prim.

Katniss then quickly adopts "kill or be killed" policy and coldly accepts the idea of thinking about how she will kill the other competitors during

the games. This idea is solidified by the fact that Katniss is a highly skilled archer, hunter, tree-climber and trapper. These skills helped her and her family to survive and guaranteed her success in the Hunger Games.

Despite all of the assumed coldness and earned skills, Katniss is still extremely relieved at not having to kill her enemies. This indicates that what is great about Katniss, and the reason she perfectly fits to be the Mockingjay is, her human side. She fought the bloody nature of president Snow. She refused to kill Peeta to win the games instead she preferred to sacrifice her own life.

Even after being chosen as the Mockingjay, Katniss knew that the truly important role she is assigned to is to organize and to solidify the rebels not to be a fake poster girl. Yet, this is why she is the perfect choice of a poster girl.

No matter how Katniss claims that she is an emotionless lady, what makes her so distinguished is that she cares for others before herself. From the very beginning she volunteers for the games to save her sister. Throughout the games, she saved the lives of Peeta and Rue many times. Simply, she was a real human being in a selfish fake world full of lies and humiliation.

Even when Katniss agreed to be the desired Mockingjay, she did that under the condition that all the victors from the previous Hunger Games will be granted immunity, and she got to kill the tyrant Snow herself to save the world from his devilish acts.

Next to the main protagonist comes Peeta Mellark, the male tribute from District Twelve. He is the son of the town's baker and has two older brothers. Many of the talents that Peeta shows at the arena are an outcome of his work as a baker as well as a member of the school wrestling team. He is also talented at hand-to-hand combat, wielding knives and starting fires. Peeta is also talented for speaking to crowds and convincing them. Peeta is not only responsible for making the crowds of the Capitol fall in love with Katniss, but he is also capable of turning his pain into words that definitely convince people to support him.

Another major character of Mockingjay is Gale Hawthorne. He is Katniss' best friend, whom she met while hunting in the forest four years before the beginning of The Hunger Games. Katniss has some feelings for him throughout the first two books, but she finds out that he is totally different from her in the Mockingjay. His hatred for the Capitol has blinded him and led him to forget a big part of his human side. He is willing to kill innocent people or to cross any line in order to defeat the Capitol.

Finnick Odair is another tribute and friend of Katniss. He is described as a handsome tall young man with incredible green eyes. Finnick puts on flirtatious personality convincing many ladies of the Capitol that they are his only love. In *Mockingjay*, he reveals the truth that president Snow rents him out to women and in case he refuses, president Snow will kill the only person he loves, Annie Cresta. Finnick dies defending Katniss in her fight against president Snow's army of mutts .

Another major character and the mentor of both Katniss and Peeta is Haymitch Abernathy. He is one of the victors of the Hunger Games twenty five years ago. Now he is always drunk for most of the time with harsh, ironic and disappointing comments all of the time. His overt sarcasm covers pure love and sympathy for Katniss and Peeta as well as pure disgust towards president Snow and his regime. Drinking to Haymitch is the only way out to forget what he witnessed during the Hunger Games twenty five years ago.

The last character that deeply affected Katniss as well as the events of the story is Primrose "Prim" Everdeen. She is the younger sister and the only sibling of Katniss. She is the one whom Katniss volunteered to replace in the Hunger Games. Katniss feels and acts as her mother and the one whom Katniss cares about so much. Unfortunately and against all the odds, Prim's death in a cold blood way has broken down Katniss' heart into pieces that she will never be the same old Katniss ever again. Even her death has taught Katniss a lesson in the hardest way ever about her true enemy and the real betrayer of the revolution, President Coin, whom Katniss kills bravely later on risking her own life and reputation in return.

As far as a literary character can be drawn, Panem's president, Coriolanus Snow, is one of the epitome of savageness. Anyone who enjoys and laughs at sending children to fight till death is actually a sick, evil incarnate. He masters manipulating other people in order to achieve what he desires. He seeks to hurt everyone and feels success inventing new ways for destroying others financially, emotionally and physically. President Snow simply enjoys distorting the meaning of pure innocent things and yet he chooses a white flower as a symbol of his presence. According to president Snow, children have become possible attributes ready for killing each other, and white roses, once a symbol of purity, have become a sign of imminent danger. "[The Rose] whispers. I can find you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you now" (*Mockingjay*, 15). To normal people, the white rose that Katniss finds in her room is just an ordinary flower, but this white rose sends a horrifying message to Katniss by president Snow and thus it is not pretty or innocent any more.

Even after his capture by the rebels, Snow saves no effort to hurt Katniss. He shows no respect for the death of her only sister. Like any

dystopian tyrant, he is stubborn and tries his best to belittle the achievements and the sacrifices of the others in comparison to his own thinking. Snow hurts Katniss at the last time he sees her by saying, "Prim's death was so wasteful, so unnecessary... In fact, I was just about to issue an official surrender" (Mockingjay, 356). This is the worst painful thing he can say to a grieving Katniss. The idea that he was just about to surrender and thus her sister died in vain with no clear reason is actually breaking Katniss' heart into pieces and it is just torturing her more and more. There is no way that such an arrogant tyrant would ever surrender. He is just doing what he does the best, torturing and hurting people by all possible means. There is no wonder then that president Snow dies by being stepped upon by thousands of his victims and their melancholic relatives.

It is not only Collins' characterization that attracts the reader, her skilful use of symbols does that as well. From the very first word - hunger - of the trilogy, Collins suggests new layers of meaning to her readers. The word 'hunger' might refer to hunger for food, the hunger of the Capitol citizens for entertainment, the hunger of the participants to survive at any cost, or may be all of that.

The word 'tribute' is a symbol reflecting how the Capitol treats people as payment. Being a tribute confirms the meanings of losing identity, freedom and humanity just to entertain the Capitol's citizens.

Another important symbol that reflects the dystopian life of District Twelve is the fence surrounding it. The fence symbolizes the impossibility of the people of District Twelve to get out of the District or even to get out of their small primitive society. Simply they have to accept this life as nothing will ever change. The Capitol will always run things, children will always be sent to die in vain and the rest of the District will starve till death. However, this kind of life can never last forever. The fence itself has gaps through which Gale and Katniss can sneak out. The same applies to the humiliating life conditions that the Capitol imposes on the citizens of the Districts. Those only who seek freedom can sneak out and if they are bold enough, they can change it and knock down the fence ( humiliating life) for good.

Another major and a leading symbol is the Mockingjay. Even before Katniss, the Mockingjay was already a symbol of rebellion in Panem. During the Dark Days, the Capitol genetically succeeded in engineering Jabberjays, all male spying birds that memorize conversations and talks of the rebels and repeat the exact voices back to the Capitol. However, when the rebels started to feed them lies, the Capitol abandoned the breed and left them to die. The breed started then to mate with female Mockingjays. Mockingjays then are birds that should never have existed



exactly. These birds can imitate melodies perfectly and thus became a symbol of happiness and hope out of the womb of despair and frustration.

After Katniss, the Mockingjay has become a symbol of a mistake, a failure and something that was embarrassing and shameful to the Capitol. It was never supposed, not even allowed, to exist at any cost. Especially not out of the depressing, merciless tight control of the Capitol. Mockingjay has become a symbol of a better future and of a rebellion of any era seeking freedom and social justice.

The Mockingjay pin that Katniss wears is a symbol itself. This pin that Katniss puts on before the Hunger Games symbolizes her family and her society that are always backing her up unconditionally against the tyranny of president Snow. The pin is giving Katniss a feeling of comfort and safety cause it reminds her of her mother, her sister and her best friend Gale that gives her determination to win the games and to put an end to Snow's regimes .

The fire is another symbol that has different meanings. It is interesting to note that Katniss has changed throughout the trilogy from being ' a girl on fire ' created by Cinna for the opening ceremonies to a girl whose spirit catches fire for the rebellion, to a girl who almost dies by the fire of the Capitol defending her right for a better future. In all these stages, the fire is a symbol of the courage, the determination, the bravery and the strength that Katniss has. She demonstrates this bravery when she volunteers to be the attribute instead of her sister, fighting against president Snow and sacrificing herself in every time she defends the helpless and the poor .

The hand gesture ( a raised up hand with three middle fingers pressed together ) is also a meaningful symbol. This gesture symbolizes unity with people striving to survive and backing each other in their fight for a better future.

Finally, president Coin herself is a symbol of how damaged and corrupted anyone can become if they allow their lust for power to blind them. Coin is a symbol of a rebellion gone wrong, of a victim that became a victimizer once she got the opportunity. The big difference between Coin and Katniss is that Katniss is using authority for the human welfare while Coin symbolizes a character seeking authority in itself using human welfare as a cover for her goal.

A reader of the three books will notice that every chapter of every book starts with an arrow that is directed either forward or backward. These arrows actually indicate two things. First, the general psychological and mental mood of Katniss whether she is optimistic and seeking the hope of a better future or depressed and overwhelmed by the injustice and humiliation of the tyrant regime. These arrows also indicate the different

stages of the revolution since they are used as advanced indicators for the reader to be ready to receive any good news or another setback.

It is yet so interesting to note that the last chapter of the last book (*Mockingjay*) begins with a backward directed arrow. Although this chapter witnesses the confession of the true love feelings between Peeta and Katniss and it also tells a part of the story far away from blood and killing. Yet, Collins chooses the direction of the arrow to be back warded. In fact, this makes a perfect sense since Collins is determined to send a hidden message to her readers. her message is simply that in our real life those who seek love, life, peace, justice and green vivid colors - if ever existed - are sentenced to live alone in derelict places like District Twelve. While those who seek power at any cost will be back again as leading figures and official men just like Plutarch. The black circle will be complete sooner or later. While there is no doubt that *The Hunger Games* trilogy in general and *Mockingjay* in particular aim to entertain their readers, they also send a message. A message that change is possible and needed in today's society at any cost.

In other words, all tyrants are the same whether at the past, present, or at the future. Dystopian societies, in all their aspects, are considered serious imminent danger to human freedom, welfare and progress. Collins finds no difference between Snow, Coin or Plutarch and the circle goes on. The only difference is the tyrant's name and all else is the same evil lust for power.

From the very beginning of the trilogy, Suzanne Collins is clearly interested in the tension between the oppressed and the oppressor. Whereas at *Mockingjay*, Collins stresses an important idea, namely, the dominating elite will be always corrupted by seeking power whereas the dominated citizens' own belief and awareness of their rights and the need to defend their dreams of a better future is their own salvation of a dystopian life.

To conclude, *Mockingjay* does not suggest that ordinary people are incapable of fulfilling their own utopian dreams. On the contrary, *Mockingjay* can be best viewed as a wakening call of common people to a full realisation of their strengths and the necessity of overthrowing their oppressors.

It is worth noting that Suzanne Collins does not suggest a second revolution led by Katniss or anyone else. A second revolution will mean only another fire to start another endless vicious circle. This is simply because any revolution in itself is not the target, it is a better society that is the goal. Katniss ends the trilogy by saying that , "That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow

that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on " (Mockingjay, 388). Suzanne suggests a futuristic vision of a new generation that learned the lesson from their grand parents and works hard to save the future from going back to past bitter experiences.

Collins' fear of power and its corrupting effect, on any serious attempt to socially change any society to better conditions, is not limited to any certain time. It becomes clear when Peeta and his wife Katniss are determined to warn their babies about everything they had to face and went through, or else there will be much worse future games to play .

REFERENCES

I. Primary Sources:

- Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire*. New York: Scholastic, 2009.
- Collins, Suzanne. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic, 2010.
- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008.

II. Secondary Sources:

- Alvarez, Andrew. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part I: How a revolution Dies?" *The Princeton Buffer*. Vol.6, No.12 (2014). pp.1-3.
- Beauchamp, Gorman, "Technology in the Dystopian Novel". *Modern Fiction Studies*. Vol. 32 (Spring 1986). pp.52-59.
- Beckerman, Jim. "Thirty Years after 1984, the Dystopian Continue with Hunger Games: Mockingjay". *North Jersey*. Vol.11, No. 20. (2014). pp.1-9.
- Bi, Faye. "Review: Suzanne Collins' Mockingjay". *Written Word*. Vol. 3, No. 8 (2015). pp.1-22.
- Boghani, A. Mckeever, "Mockingjay Quotes and Analysis". *Grade Saver*. 29 June 2014 Web. 22 August 2015.
- Booker, M. Keith. *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2012.
- Cernak, Linda. *Totalitarianism*. Minnesota: Abdo Consulting Group, 2011.
- Claeys, Gregory and Lyman Tower Sargent. *The Utopia Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.
- Claeys, Gregory. *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Collins, Suzanne. "A Conversation with Suzanne Collins". Scholastic: Scholastic Press, n. d. Web 23 November 2011.
- Collins, Suzanne. "Conversation with the author of The Hunger Games Trilogy". Interview by Sheila Marie Everett. Scholastic. July, 2014.
- Demonicco, Rick. *The Hunger Games: Tribute Guide*. New York: Scholastic Inc, 2012.
- Derschowitz, Jessica. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part I: What Critics are saying?" *CBS News*. November 20, 2014.
- "-Dystopias can be beaten: The Hunger Games As a Dystopia in the Age of New Media". *The Hunger Games on Tor.com*. Teressa Jusino. Fri, April 15, 2011. American University in Cairo. 22 August 2015 <<https://www.tor.com/2011/04/15/dystopia-can-be-beaten-the-hunger-games-as-a-dystopia-in-the-age-of-new-media>>

-Ferreira, Rachel Haywood. "Back to the Future: The Expanding Field of Latin-American Science Fiction". *Hispania*. Vol. 91, No.2 (May, 2008), pp.352-362.

-Ferris, Harley. *A Study in Dystopian Fiction*. Journal of Research Across the Disciplines. Jacksonville University: Jacksonville University 2012.

-Fitz-Gerald, Sean. "What is Everyone saying about The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Vulture ?" Vol. I, (2014). pp.1-3.

-Gresh, Lois H. *The Unofficial Hunger Games Companion*. New York: Macmillan, 2015.

"-Is The Hunger Games the Modern Equivalent of Brave New World or Nineteen Eighty-Four?" Quora. 26 August 2015. <[www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)<

"-Katniss Everdeen". Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. 10 September 2015. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/katniss\\_Everdeen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/katniss_Everdeen)<

-Kjos, Berit. "Breaking the Mockingjay: A lesson for our own Revolutionary Times". *Crossroad*. Vol.8, (2012). pp.1-4.

-Lazaro, Alberto. *The Road from George Orwell: His Achievement and Legacy*. Bern: Peterlang, 2011.

-Marglios, Rick (8 August 2015). "The Last Battle: With Mockingjay on its Way, Suzanne Collins weighs down on Katniss and the Capitol". <<https://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/home885800312/the-last-battle-with-mockingjay.html.csp>> School Library Journal. Retrieved 30 August 2015.

-Margolis, Rick (November 1, 2008). "A Killer Story: An Interview with Suzanne Collins, Author of The Hunger Games". <<https://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6590063.html>> School Library Journal. Retrieved 30 June 2015.

"-May The Odds Be Ever In Your Favor: The Language Of The Hunger Games". Oxford Dictionaries.com. American University in Cairo. 22 August 2015 <<https://www.oxforddictionaries.com><

-Míckova, Lucie. *The Hunger Games Trilogy in Comparison with Classic Dystopian Novels*. MA Thesis. Charles University in Prague, 2013. Prague: Charles University in Prague .

-Miller, Laura. "Fresh Hell: What is Behind the Boom in Dystopian Fiction for Young Readers?" . *A Critic At Large*. Vol. 14, No.6, (2010). pp.17- 26.

-Miller, T. "The Coming Utopia/Dystopia and Communal Possibilities". *Spaces of Utopia: An Electronic Journal*. Vol. 1 (2012). pp.1-7.

"-Mockingjay". Good Reads. American University in Cairo. 29 August 2015. <<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/8812783-mockingjay><

"-Mockingjay". Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. American University in Cairo. 22 August 2015. <<https://Wikipedia.org/wiki/Mockingjay><



- Moylan, Tom et al. *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and Dystopian Imagination*. Oxford: Routledge, 2003.
- "-Orwell in Panem: What The Hunger Games owes to 1984". *Matter of Facts*. 26 November 2013. American University in Cairo. 22 August 2015. <<https://matteroffactblog.wordpress.com><
- "-Peeta Mellark". *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*. The American University in Cairo. 29 August 2015 <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/peeta-mellark><.
- Petersson, Sara. "The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins: Entertainment or Social Criticism?" *Humanities and Theology*. Vol.12. (Autumn 2011), pp.1-20.
- Pufford, Adam. "May the Odds be Ever in your Favor: The Language of The Hunger Games". *Oxford Dictionaries*. 5 September 2012. 5 April 2016. <<https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2012/09/the-language-of-the-hunger-games><
- Quigley, Berniw. "1984, Brave New World and The Hunger Games". *The Hill*. Vol. 4, No. 4 (2014). pp. 1 -18.
- Rabkin E. S. *Atavism and Utopia*. In E.S. Rabkin, M. H. Greenberg &J.D. Oleander (EDs), *No Place Else: Exploration in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.
- Sara, Siswantia. "Political Dystopia in Suzanne Collins The Hunger Games". MA Thesis. U of Texas, 2015.
- "-Suzanne Collins". *Suzanne Collins*. 5 August 2015. <<https://www.suzannecollinsbooks.com/bio.htm><
- "-Suzanne Collins". *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*. 5 August 2015 <<https://en.wikipedia.org><
- "-Symbols in The Hunger Games: Katniss, The Mockingjay, and Humanity at its Best". Teresa Jusino. *The Hunger Games on Tor.com*. 22 March 2012. <<https://www.tor.com><
- Sztabnik, Brian. *A Hunger for Dystopia: Critical Thinking on the Journey to Self Discovery*. New York: Miller. 2014.
- "-The Hunger Games Universe". *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*. The American University in Cairo. 22 August 2015 <<https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/The-hunger-games-universe><
- "-The Hunger Games". *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*. The American University in Cairo. 15 August 2015. <<http://thehungergames.wiki.com/wiki/the-hunger-games><
- "-The Hunger Games". *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*. 12 September 2015. <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/the-hunger-games><
- Wilkinson, Tara. "Every book is not The Hunger Games". *The Librarian*. (June 2014). pp.1-17.

-Wilson, Andrew. "Hunger Games and Dystopia". *First Things*. Vol.4, No.3 (2013). pp.6-11.

-Wilson, Leah. *The Girl Who was on Fire: Your Favourite Authors on Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games Trilogy*. Texas: Benbella Books, 2010.

- Zoelman, Maaïke. "The Foundation and Building Blocks of Modern Young Adult Dystopian Worlds: Narratology and Appropriation". *The New Utopians*. Vol.3. 2015. pp. 1-25.