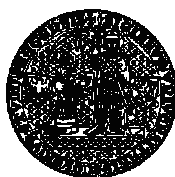


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BACHELOR THESIS

**The Hunger Games Trilogy in Comparison with Classic
Dystopian Novels**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis, titled The Hunger Games Trilogy in Comparison with Classic Dystopian Novels, is my own work and that all the sources I used are included in the reference list.

Prague, April 30, 2013

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis is focused on how the Hunger Games trilogy compares to classic dystopian works.

It is divided into three sections. First, the definition and major features of the dystopian genre are presented. Then I discuss how they are demonstrated in three classic dystopias. The third section focuses on the analysis of the Hunger Games trilogy, as I investigate all the things that are similar to the classics and how they are also innovative. Finally, I summarize the conclusion and decide on a legitimate interpretation of The Hunger Games in dystopian genre.

Key Words:

Dystopia, anti-utopia, The Hunger Games, 1984, We, Brave New World, Collins.

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce porovnává trilogii Hladové hry s klasickými dystopickými díly.

Práce je rozdělena do třech částí. V první části je charakterizován žánr dystopie a jeho hlavní rysy, které jsou ve druhé části demonstrovány na třech klasických dystopických dílech dvacátého století. Třetí část analyzuje samotnou trilogii Hladové hry, zjišťuje co má tato trilogie společného s klasickými dystopiemi a v jakém ohledu je inovativní. Práce je zakončena shrnutím nejdůležitějších poznatků a obsahuje můj názor na zařazení Hladových her k dystopickému žánru.

Klíčová slova:

Dystopie, antiutopie, Hladové hry, 1984, My, Překrásný nový svět, Collins.

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1. Introduction

It took me a long time to find a theme to write my bachelor thesis on. I was not sure if I wanted to deal with a linguistic topic or something concerning literature. One day I heard my friends talking about The Hunger Games books and I became very interested. However, as a student of both English and Czech literature, I am required to go through a substantial volume of compulsory reading within my studies. As such, I rarely have time for pleasure reading, so when The Hunger Games movie came out I went to see it. I thought the film was so amazing that I decided to read the whole trilogy.

Usually when I browse through a bookstore and see the latest best-selling books, I assume that they are only popular because of the hype and therefore not worth reading. So I thought the same about The Hunger Games before I knew anything about it. I mistakenly presumed it to be like the Twilight saga, but I was quite wrong. After reading it I was so impressed by the ideas behind The Hunger Games, since dystopia is my favorite genre. It made me think a great deal about how people behave in the contemporary world that I was inspired to write my bachelor thesis on it.

Can the Hunger Games trilogy be labeled as dystopian fiction? I will examine the new ideas of this trilogy and compare them with classic dystopian literature by looking at the major features and themes. The themes of dystopia and its features will be demonstrated through a brief analysis of a few classic dystopian works. My careful analysis of The Hunger Games sets up the aim of this paper to inspect the different ideas we are introduced to and the extent of the similarity to classics like 1984, Brave New World, and We.

2. Genre of Dystopia

2.1 Definition of Dystopia

We must understand the definition of 'dystopia' in order to elicit the main features of this genre. Dystopia is the opposite of utopia, so first we will take a look at what utopia means. 'Utopia' was first used as the title of a book by Thomas More in 1516. In this book, Utopia is an island where poverty, criminality, and all social differences between people disappeared and were replaced by freedom and equality. These islanders share common property and work only six hours a day for the welfare of everyone on the island. Today the word 'utopia' is generally used in reference to an ideal world with unreachable perfection within a society. It also refers to a prosaic literary genre that focuses on such ideal situations in a state. The term originated from two Greek words: eutopia, which means a good and happy place, and outopia, which means 'no place.' (Ousby 328)

Dystopia, being the opposite of Utopia, is a society where everything is imperfect. It portrays the potential devastating outcomes of drastic technical development and totalitarian regimes. But there is some disagreement surrounding the usage of the terms 'dystopia' and 'anti-utopia'. The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature considers the two words synonymous:

'Dystopia' is often used interchangeably with 'anti-utopia' or 'negative utopia' by contrast to 'utopia' or 'eutopia' to describe a fictional portrayal of a society in which evil or negative social or political developments have the upper hand, or a satire of utopian aspirations which attempts to show up their fallacies or which demonstrate, in B.F. Skinner's words, ways of life we must be sure to avoid. (Claeys 107)

Meanwhile, Harley Ferris explains these terms differently in 'Study in Dystopian Fiction':

"There is some debate between the terms 'dystopia' and 'anti-utopia'. Generally, a dystopia does not pretend to be good, as in the case of '1984' and 'Anthem'. An anti-utopia would, however, claim to be truly in the business of providing happiness for their citizens, as in the case of 'The Giver' and 'We'."
(2)

We will examine the specific features of dystopia to gain a better understanding of how these differences come into play.

2.2 Dystopia and its Major Features

Harley Ferris defines 'dystopia' as an imperfect state where almost all aspects of the lives of individuals are strictly regulated. The society is dominantly ruled by one person or a group of elites who are the only ones to benefit from this kind of regime. Coercion is used to maintain rule and order. Autonomy and individuality are nonexistent; everybody is just part of the whole and anonymity plays a big role in that. Additionally, dissension is considered an important feature of dystopia. Ferris sets down five main themes which can be found in most dystopian works - pluralism in confrontation with individualism, chaos versus order, the precision of language, war versus peace, and finally, humanity.

Most dystopian literature of the twentieth century deals with totalitarian regimes, which were on the rise at the time of writing, and collectivism also played a significant role in them. Many authors envisioned the potential danger of totalitarianism, and they found it very frightening that ordinary people were so blind to consider this. Because of this, they brought the vices of these regimes to an extreme point in their novels in order to illustrate this potential danger and to be seen as a warning. In these fictional worlds, people work really hard without any personal gain, as only the state would benefit from their labor. Citizens are not treated as individuals since they are simply part of a collective

whole working for the state. A person's ambitions, interests, or ideas are not recognized and sometimes even their names are regarded as unimportant.

Even though it seems to be very hard for citizens living in such societies, they are often able to give up their freedom in order to be fed and to live without responsibility, as was poignantly expressed by Aldous Huxley's nakedly dystopian comment in his *Brave New World Revisited*:

"Free as a bird," we say, and envy the winged creatures for their power of unrestricted movement in all the three dimensions. But, alas, we forget the dodo. Any bird that has learned how to grub up a good living without being compelled to use its wings will soon renounce the privilege of flight and remain forever grounded. Something analogous is true of human beings. If the bread is supplied regularly and copiously three times a day, many of them will be perfectly content to live by bread alone -- or at least by bread and circuses alone. "In the end," says the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's parable, "in the end they will lay their freedom at our feet and say to us, 'make us your slaves, but feed us.'" (Huxley 145)

However, in every dystopian work there is at least a small group of rebels who show that this is not the right way to treat people and that autonomy and individualism are crucial things in life.

Another theme is chaos versus order. In all of these fictional states, there is no place for chaos and surprises, and no way to freedom. The government goes to extremes to attempt to gain complete control of people and regulate all aspects of their lives. They strive to micromanage the lives of all citizens to rid them any kind of independence. Religion generally is not welcome either, with several notable exceptions such as the semi-theocratic Republic of Gilead envisioned by Margaret Atwood in her 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The government will also have regulated every aspect of a person's life, so a pattern of living will also be clearly defined, often verging on the stereotypical. If one understands why and how one exists, there is no need for

religion. Even sex is controlled in such regimes; however, authors approach differently to this issue. Somewhere sex is allowed or even prescribed in a controlled way, in others it's repressed, usually through medication. (Ferris 8)

The precision of language usage is another prominent feature, as shown by the government's aim to control public communication. Many words are crossed out in dictionaries and forbidden to use so that people do not have proper words to use to think about themselves, let alone express their emotions through them. Because of these interventions in language, any kind of meaningful communication between people is made almost impossible, which is exactly what the intention of the ruling elite is.

“Language is vital to communication, and the less capable a human is to communicate, the less communion and intimacy one can experience with another, leaving the State as the only true object of affection in the person's life.” (Ferris 11)

New words are often created to better fit the needs of the regime. They are used as a way to delete all traces of chaos. Even irregularities in the language are removed, since ambiguity is strongly unwanted.

The theme of war versus peace shows us how warfare is a crucial tool used to instill fear into citizens so that they would look up to their leader and follow his laws. The state is usually in war with the rest of the world. It intentionally presents other states as enemies who want to disrupt the peace of a totalitarian society. This is a mean to preserve the people's loyalty to the state. When they are preoccupied with fighting against others, they cannot make any effort to fight for their own freedom.

Last but not least, the attitude towards humanity is a very remarkable theme. One's emotions, spiritual awaking, and creativity are all subjected to suppression. By not having a chance to think about personal feelings and matters, people are not able to realize the extreme flaws of the regime and thus cannot rebel against it.

“It keeps a person focused on their tasks, allowing no time or space to

think, consider, reflect or ponder. One's motivation is not for themselves, but only for the State they are conditioned to love." (Ferris 12)

2.3 Dystopian Protagonists

The main characters of dystopias are unique people with extraordinary qualities. They usually share a common tale and know that they could experience more than the government allows them. They realize that the life they live is not really life as it should be. That is why they desire to unleash and live in freedom. Ferris' description of dystopian protagonists perfectly depicts their personalities:

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. (Ferris 24)

Protagonists are distinguished from the rest of the population by their hopes and desires for a better present or future, which conveniently brings them into conflict with the dystopian establishment. This is discussed in 'Dark Horizons – Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination', which also points out that protagonists are usually the narrators of these stories, as it is essential for readers to be able to identify with them. "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." (Moylan 205)

3. Classic Dystopian Novels

This section will inquire into how some dystopias portray the main themes mentioned previously. While there may be many dystopias worthy of inspection, there are three that stand apart from the rest, being generally singled out as the most epitomic twentieth century representatives of the dystopian genre. This brief analysis will therefore focus on the following three novels: *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and *1984* by George Orwell.

3.1 *We*

Despite some links to Stalin's regime in Russia, Zamyatin does not describe a realistic political system. Collectivism is one of the main features of this fictional state and every member of the society has specific roles and tasks. Names are replaced by identification signs. Even the main character's name is not given, as he is referred to as D-503. The order in the State is determined by a strict schedule and every citizen has to follow the same daily program: Get up, work shifts, rest, eat, and even sex is predetermined by their shared schedule. The only person who is not identified by a number is the leader. The protagonist, who is a genuine admirer of the regime and supporter of its ideology, deals with a burning issue regarding privacy hours. During these hours, people are allowed to do whatever they want to do, so a small amount of freedom is brought to life. D-503 hopes that even these hours will be managed by the schedule so that there will be no place for freedom, which he considers to be evil.

"The only means of ridding man of crime is ridding him of freedom." (Zamyatin 40)

Strong restrictions to humanity are very noticeable. It is forbidden to fall in love, since all love should be devoted only to the Leader. So when the main character fell in love, he got in trouble. Human emotions could result in disobedience of the State when they have desires for individuality and self-

interests. They could possibly invest their energy into their own lives and stop caring for the state, which would then become a real threat to the regime.

Dissension is definitely included in this novel as well. All dissenters live outside the State behind a wall surrounding it. Eventually D-503 falls in love with a member of a secret organization fighting against the regime and so he finds himself being among the dissenters. He resorts to undergoing lobotomy in order to overcome the disease causing his negative feelings against the regime.

The language point of view also makes it an interesting work. Men's signs start with consonants and women's with vowels. In the Russian original, the loyal ones are marked by Cyrillic whereas dissenters are signed by Latin alphabet. The only war in progress is between the regime and the dissenters.

3.2 Brave New World

Huxley approaches his dystopian story differently from Zemyatin. The story takes place in the middle of the third millennium when chemical tampering with human embryos becomes true and begins to substitute natural reproduction. It allows for equipping the potential individuals with everything they would need. It takes place in the World State, more precisely in England, which is under the rule of Mustafa Mond. The order in society is reached by dividing it into five castes – Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon. People are categorized into these castes while still being embryos and they are predetermined to fulfill specific tasks within the society. A drug named Soma, a ban on reading books, and other means are used to make people behave accordingly and to keep the society in order.

Similar to all totalitarian regimes, the emphasis is on collective values. The everything-belongs- to-everyone concept is spread frequently in similar constitutions. The precision of language is obvious. Language has control of emotions, opinions, and thoughts, which makes it very accurate.

Suppression of humanity is huge. The obligatory cure with adrenalin is required to be undergone by people. It helps them to get rid of desires whereas the banning of books prevents people from obtaining knowledge and education.

War is an absent theme in Brave New World. The world is unified and people who do not obey the set rules are isolated from the rest of the society - not to be punished but to protect the majority of otherwise docile citizens. In this sense it is the least violent society in which aggression is not used to maintain the rule, since the chemical manipulation is powerful enough.

3.3 1984 by George Orwell

In contrast to Huxley's work, George Orwell presents violence, schizophrenia, and fear as key tools that make people obedient in his novel. While war is completely absent in Brave New World, it is one of the crucial themes in 1984. The world is divided into three enemy states that are constantly fighting against each other. Winning is not the aim of these battles. The point is to allow people to consume all the industrial products without raising the standard of living, since deficiency is one of the most important aspects of every authoritarian society. Furthermore it helps the government to maintain the unity of people, as they need to focus on combat with the outside enemy rather than rebelling against their own party. Spying and snitching are parts of everyday life and seem to be effective coercive means to make the State's citizens behave accordingly. The fact that people are spied on is openly admitted and constantly reminded by the ubiquitous portrait of Big Brother. Microphones and video cameras are everywhere to notice every single act of disobedience, which in turn leads to the culprit's vaporization. People are intimidated and they have to follow the party's rules in order to not be tortured or killed. Even historical records are revised as a way to conform to the party's intentions and ideology. People are made to believe that the State was much more prosperous now than in the past, because the party deleted any evidence that might be used to prove the opposite.

Dissension is present even in this work, and the protagonist Winston is a part of it. The Ministry of Love is there to deal with dissension, with the purpose to monitor dissenters and bring them back to love of Big Brother at any cost. Human feelings are not allowed except for love to Big Brother and loyalty to the party. People are not supposed to think, they are strongly encouraged to obey the government and to trust it unconditionally despite the lies. The newly invented term Thoughtcrime (Newspeak) describes the criminal act of holding unspoken doubts or beliefs that are in opposition to the party.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits appropriate for the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought -- that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc -- should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thoughts are dependent on words. Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could legitimately wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever. (Orwell)

Language usage is strongly restrictive. All irregularities such as irregular verbs are replaced by their new regular forms to avoid ambiguity. However, it is also enriched with new words such as 'vaporization', 'Newspeak', 'Ingsoc', 'Doublethink', new terms for ministries for instance 'Minipax', 'Minitrue', 'Miniluv', etc. The precision of language here is taken to the highest extreme compared with the other dystopian works mentioned. There are even institutions which deal with correctness of the language as well as the publication of Newspeak dictionaries. Collectivism is a serious matter of course. The state's ideology can be expressed by phrases that are written and repeated almost everywhere: "WAR IS PEACE. FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH."

All the themes that we've identified as crucial for dystopias are present in all classic dystopian works discussed thus far. Now I will proceed to The Hunger Games analysis to determine if its identification as a dystopia is legitimate.

Here is a summary of general dystopian features which will be looked for in the Hunger Games trilogy, to prove its dystopian character:

- Dissension
- Precision of language / innovative language
- War with an outer enemy
- Suppressed humanity
- Using violent means to set order
- Collectivism / anonymity

4. The Hunger Games Trilogy

The Hunger Games trilogy was written by Suzanne Collins and named after the first book of the trilogy – The Hunger Games, published in 2008. It was followed by the second book - Catching Fire (September 2009), and the third and final one - Mockingjay (2010). These books appealed to a lot of people and became popular very quickly. They made it to the lists of top books in many newspapers and have been awarded many prestigious prizes. The Hunger Games trilogy has been translated into 26 languages and became hugely popular with readers of all ages. It is also one of the bestselling books in recent years along with Harry Potter and Twilight.

The Hunger Games is often referred to as a dystopian or science fiction work which takes place in a post-apocalyptic world. The story is told in the state of Panem, which is situated within the territory of what used to be the United States of America. This state is ruled by a totalitarian regime, wherein Panem is divided into the Capitol and twelve other districts. The Capitol is the seat of the government where powerful and rich people live in luxury and have everything

they want. As such, citizens of the Capitol are very superficial and wasteful. The other twelve districts are strictly ruled by the Capitol. District citizens live in poverty, suffer from hunger, and work incredibly hard. Each district is obliged to provide goods and services to the Capitol in a given area. There is no freedom whatsoever. Every district is fenced in and guarded so that people could not escape. There are several guards in each district who are there to keep order and are ready to report or punish people who fail to obey the rules set by the Capitol. It is said at the very beginning that there used to be a thirteenth district, but because of a huge uprising it is believed to have been destroyed by the Capitol. And as a punishment for the uprising, two 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.

Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must ever be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. 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. 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. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion.” Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 18)

4.1 Inspiration

Suzanne Collins has said that her first inspiration for writing the Hunger Games arose from the Greek myth about Theseus and the Minotaur. As we know in the beginning of this classical story there is a falling out between Crete and Athens. Minos, the king of Crete, decides to punish the Athens. Every year seven young boys and seven maidens from the Athens are sent to Crete as a punishment and thrown into the Labyrinth to be devoured by the monster Minotaur. Collins explains that it was a strong moment for her when she came to the realization that this was the worst possible punishment for the people of Athens, realizing that it is much worse to kill people's children than to kill the people themselves. And just as Theseus was the hero who volunteered to kill the monster in order to keep him from killing more children, Katniss, in The Hunger Games, can be seen as a modern Theseus. Another classical inspiration for this trilogy was the Roman Gladiator games. They were games organized by a ruthless powerful government where people were forced to fight to the death and it all was made into a popular spectacular entertainment. Collins reveals that all these elements are combined in The Hunger Games. Collins was also inspired by contemporary issues such as our fascination by reality programmes:

There is another level to the hunger games which is much more contemporary and it deals with our sort of fascination with reality television. And you will see a lot of aspects of that also because the games are televised across the country of Panem and it is mandatory that you watch them because they are not only to be entertainment, they are the reminder that the districts are being punished for their uprising against the Capitol.

One night I was lying in bed and I was really tired and I was just sort of channel surfing. I was flicking through images of reality televisions where young people were competing for millions of dollars or whatever. And then I was flipping and seeing footage from the Iraq war. These two things began to fuse together in a really unsettling way. And it was I think the moment when I got the idea for Katniss's story. (Collins)

4.2 Plot

The Hunger Games tells the story of Katniss Everdeen who lives with her mother and younger sister Primrose in District Twelve. Katniss's father died many years ago during an explosion in the pit where he worked. This is one of the reasons why she tries very hard to aid her family. She very often secretly escapes along with her close friend Gale to hunt in the forests surrounding the district; despite it being a forbidden area. One day during the annual reaping (the event where two children are randomly chosen to participate in the Hunger Games), her sister is chosen and Katniss decides to volunteer herself so that they wouldn't take her sister. On the train to the Capitol she starts getting to know Peeta Mellark, the male tribute chosen from District Twelve, and their coach Haymitch Abernathy, who won the Hunger Games in the past and since then he has lived a life of alcoholism. In the Capitol all tributes are trained for several days, introduced to the Capitol people, even their image is improved in the struggle to win the favor of some sponsors, who can help them in the arena by sending needed gifts. Peeta publicly admits his feelings for Katniss, who is advised to pretend to be lovers with Peeta in order to get the sponsors. In the Arena Katniss befriends Rue, a tribute from District 11, and feels very anxious when Rue is killed. More than half way through, a change of rules is announced that allows two tributes from the same district to win the games together if they survive as the last ones. From that moment on, Katniss and Peeta begin to work as a team and struggle to be the last two standing. When they are the last survivors and other tributes are dead, they appear to win the Games but the rules are changed again. Only one victor can leave the arena alive. Katniss shares poisonous berries with Peeta and they both are about to commit suicide so that the Capitol has no victor. The Capitol realizes it would be a big loss for the Capitol so Katniss and Peeta are eventually allowed to leave the arena together. However, Katniss's deed is perceived as defiance against the Capitol, so President Snow becomes furious. Katniss develops genuine feelings for Peeta, but during the time in the Arena she is confused because she has feelings for her friend Gale as well. The Capitol gets upset with her defiance so

Haymitch advises her to pretend that she did it out of love and not because she wanted to defy the Capitol.

In the second book, *Catching Fire*, President Snow tells Katniss that her act unleashed rebellion in some districts. People, inspired by her defiant behavior in the arena, begin to disobey and try to fight against the Capitol. Katniss is then forced to persuade the people that what she did was caused by her feelings for Peeta and not because she wanted to rebel. She promises to marry Peeta publicly under threats made against her family and friends. Meanwhile, the victors visit each district one by one to try and appease the situation, but it only makes the rebellion stronger. The mockingjay pin, which Katniss wears, becomes the rebels' symbol. Then waves of uprisings start occurring in almost all districts. After every 25 hunger games, a special one called *The Quarter Quell* takes place. This year, on the seventy-fifth Hunger Games, it is announced that 24 former victors will participate, and that Katniss and Peeta are to compete with the other past victors. When they are in the arena again, Haymitch, along with Plutarch (a new gamemaker, who cooperates with dissenters), and other tributes manage to break the arena and rescue Katniss and some others. Katniss is taken to District 13, the one thought to be non-existent, and there she gets the news that the Capitol had destroyed District 12 and captured Peeta.

The third book, *Mockingjay*, starts with the introduction of what life is like in District 13. Katniss is there as a refugee, along with her mother and sister, Gale, Haymitch, and a few other tributes. Katniss dutifully embodies the mockingjay as a symbol of rebellion. Not only does she shoot videos to support the rebels, but she also visits some districts and participates in combat. Meanwhile, Peeta and some others are rescued and brought to District 13. Because Peeta was brainwashed, he regards Katniss as an enemy and attempts to choke her when they reunite. So he undergoes rehabilitation but he is still not completely recovered when Katniss, Gale, and some others set off for a mission to the Capitol to assassinate President Snow. Eventually Peeta joins them. Katniss figures out that the President of District 13, Coin, probably wants Peeta to kill her for being a troublemaker and disobeying her rules. Some

members of their group die during the journey to the Capitol so only Katniss, Gale, Peeta, and two others are able to reach it. Katniss's sister dies during one bombing and Katniss guesses that President Snow is responsible for the bombing and her sister's death.

When at last the Capitol is overthrown, with the president awaiting in prison to be executed, all the victors decide that there will be one more game with the Capitol's children to punish the former leaders. Katniss finds out from Snow that Coin is the one responsible for the bomb assault. She gets chosen to execute Snow with her arrow, but at the time of the execution she decides to shoot Coin instead. Snow dies in the riot that was launched by her own actions. In the end, Katniss avoids imprisonment because a psychiatrist declares her to be insane. As for the others, Gale starts to work in District 2, Katniss's mother sets up a hospital in District 4, and Katniss eventually marries Peeta and have children together.

4.3 Characters

4.3.1 The Protagonist – Katniss Everdeen

Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of this trilogy, is a courageous sixteen-year-old girl from District 12. She is a skilled archer, which makes her a really good hunter. Katniss is a strong person who has experienced a lot despite her young age. Because of her father's death, she helps out her family as much as she can. Her courage is obvious from the very beginning when we see her defying rules. She regularly goes hunting in the forests in order to feed her family. She also volunteers to go to the arena in place of her sister, even though there is a high probability that she will be killed. So not only does Katniss give up her own comfort to make the lives of others easier, she would also risk her own life for her loved ones. Her defiance against the Capitol inspires the whole state of Panem to follow her lead and fight for a better future. She is extremely determined and willing to sacrifice her own life to change the unfair and harmful system. Katniss also behaves in a much more mature way than most sixteen-

year-olds. Not only does she have to fight against Snow's regime, but eventually against Coin as well, whose rule she considers as harmful for people as the Capitol's. But there are some moments which might be regarded as morally questionable, namely in the third book where she votes for one more Games organized for the Capitol children. This is surprising since Katniss works so hard to stop the suffering and killing of innocent children due to the struggle for power. But her desire for revenge causes her to make contradicting decisions. Is this act not as distasteful as the ones carried out by the Capitol? Is it necessary to make children of the Capitol pay for all the evil done by their parents? These are the kind of questions that would spring into readers' minds.

4.3.2 Other Characters

The other characters featuring in the trilogy will only be described with telegraphic brevity

Peeta Mellark: a male tribute from District 12, in love with Katniss

Haymitch Abernathy: Katniss and Peeta's mentor, a winner of the fiftieth Hunger Games

Effie Trinket: District 12 escort

Gale Hawthorne: Katniss's friend

Prim Everdeen: Katniss's sister

Mother Everdeen: Katniss's mother

Madge Undersee: the mayor's daughter who gives Katniss the mockingjay pin

Mayor Undersee: the mayor of District 12

Cinna: Katniss's stylist

Rue: a female tribute from District 11

Caesar Flickerman: a television host, interviews tributes before entering the arena

President Snow: the president of Panem

Finnick Odair: the male tribute in Quarter Quell from District 4 who wins the sixty-fifth Hunger games

Annie Cresta: Finnick's love

Mags: a female tribute in the Quarter Quell who volunteers for Annie Cresta

Johanna Mason: a female tribute in the Quarter Quell

Beetee: a male tribute in the Quarter Quell from District 3

Plutarch Heavensbee: the Head Gamemaker secretly working for rebels

President Alma Coin: the president of District 13

4.4 Inclusion of Classic Dystopian Features

As stated previously, a classic dystopian society is strictly ruled by a person or a group of people and only they benefit from the regime. Panem is a totalitarian state ruled by President Snow who uses extreme violence to make people obey his rules. Compared to other dystopian works, the means of coercion he uses are considerably more aggressive. The citizens of the districts do not have any freedom; they are not allowed to leave their districts and have to work hard for the Capitol. They themselves are very poor and do not even have the basic necessities for life. The punishment for disobedience is getting whipped or, worse, death.

But people are frightened mostly because of the existence of the Hunger Games. As Collins once pointed out, the worst thing which can be done to human beings is to kill their children. Not only do people in Panem get their children taken away to likely get killed, they are also forced to watch that. While all district citizens are scared and suffer a great deal, inhabitants of the Capitol get excited about it and the annual games are eagerly anticipated - it is a big show and entertainment for them.

The people of the Capitol are going nuts, showering us with flowers, shouting our names, our first names, which they have bothered to find on the program. The pounding music, the cheers, the admiration work their way into my blood, and I can't suppress my excitement. Cinna has given me a great advantage. No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire. For the first time, I feel a flicker of hope rising up in me. Surely, there must be one sponsor willing to take me on!

And with a little extra help, some food, the right weapon, why should I count myself out of the Games? Someone throws me a red rose. I catch it, give it a delicate sniff, and blow a kiss back in the general direction of the giver. A hundred hands reach up to catch my kiss, as if it were a real and tangible thing. “Katniss! Katniss!” I can hear my name being called from all sides. Everyone wants my kisses. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 70)

Individualism is also something unwanted. All people in districts live under the same conditions. But the rules in some districts are even stricter than in the others. Katniss and Gale are lucky to live in District 12 where the fences are not as heavily guarded, so they are able to escape to forests to hunt and spend some time out of the terror.

Dissension is very obvious in this trilogy. It starts in the first book with Katniss’s plan with the berries, and increases in the second and third book. In *Mockingjay*, the dissension is spread in almost all districts and it turns into a real war between the Capitol and districts led by District 13. Every trace of dissension is faced with cruel and harsh punishments. For instance, when the victors stop by District 11, where Rue is from, one man whistles Rue’s song as the crowd salutes Katniss, and that is regarded as defiance:

“A pair of Peacekeepers dragging the old man who whistled to the top of the steps. Forcing him to his knees before the crowd. And putting a bullet through his head.” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 62)

In classic dystopias, war with an outside enemy is often used to make people concentrate on an outside threat, thereby not allowing them to criticize the rule or fight against it. In the *Hunger Games* there are no outside wars. President Snow does not need them in order to maintain control of people, because the games are a much more powerful tool. His rule is very strict and it does not allow for any chaos. But when the war breaks out between the Capitol and District 13, it is very helpful for Coin’s regime. With everyone concentrating on the war and fighting against Snow’s rule, they fail to notice how bad Coin’s regime really is. This issue will be discussed in detail later.

4.5 Language of the Hunger Games

From the language point of view, the precision of language is not the same as in 1984. Suzanne Collins comes up with some newly created words or words referring to ancient Rome and its Gladiator games, one of the biggest inspiration for her. This is obvious in words such as Panem, Hunger Games, and more.

Panem is a Latin word, meaning “bread”. It also refers to the Roman poet Juvenal’s comment, “panem et circences”, which means ‘bread and circuses’. This comment is a satirical metaphor for ancient Rome society, it speaks of how the society needs only bread from the corn dole and bloody gladiator games.

“Thirteen was used to hardship, whereas in the Capitol, all they've known is *Panem et Circenses*.” “What's that?” I recognize *Panem*, of course, but the rest is nonsense. “It's a saying from thousands of years ago, written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome,” he explains. “*Panem et Circenses* translates into 'Bread and Circuses.' The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power.” I think about the Capitol. The excess of food. And the ultimate entertainment. The Hunger Games. “So that's what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses.” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 223)

The similarity in attitude between ancient Rome citizens and Panem society is apparent, as Adam Pulford insightfully points out:

“The country of Panem, with its districts all feeding and providing for the greedy and bourgeois inhabitants of the Capitol, is a clear allusion to the Roman Empire, and the rebellion and subsequent invasion of the Capitol by the districts echoes Rome’s fate.”

The title 'Hunger Games' can be interpreted in several ways. The word 'hunger' can be interpreted literally to refer to the food-deprived citizens of the districts, the Capitol citizens' hunger for entertainment, or the hunger for survival of the games participants. The fact that victors are allowed to send food parcels to their districts also gives meaning to this interpretation of literal hunger.

The absence of the districts' names is an interesting choice from the linguistic point of view. Since they are only numbered, citizens are prevented from feeling national identity, and that is why there can be nothing to rebel for. Even this forced anonymity can be seen as matching the generic dystopian matrix.

Names of Collins' characters are used to differentiate their cultural background and social status. The district people's names are rather pastoral whereas the Capitol people's names are borrowed from antiquity. Katniss, Primrose, and Rue are named after plants. Their names also imply their character features.

"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. By contrast her sister's name, Primrose, immediately portrays a more delicate nature" (Pulford)

Names such as Octavia, Flavius, or Plutarch are inspired by significant people of the ancient world, whereas Castor and Pollux come from Roman and Greek mythology. The president of Panem's first name, Cornelius, is derived from the name of one of the most prestigious families of Rome, the Corneli, and his surname Snow evokes his cold behavior.

Characters from the Capitol are also defined through their speech. 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". Their language contains catch phrases and sometimes is a bit archaic, like Effie Trinket's "May the odds be ever in your favor".

Collin's also came up with new created words such as avox, propos, jabberjay, mockingjay etc.

An 'Avox' stands for a mute slave punished for a crime. The Greek prefix 'a' means 'without' and the latin word 'vox' means 'voice' therefore 'avox' literally means 'without voice'. The word 'propos' is a blend of 'propaganda spots'. 'Mutts' is used to refer to mutations, mutant animals, created by those who organize the games. Etymology dictionary says that the word 'mutt' is a shortening of the word 'muttonhead', which means 'dog', 'mongrel' or just 'unknown derivation'.

The names of the mutts themselves are also quite inventive:

A jabberjay is a genetically enhanced bird that can eavesdrop and recount entire enemy conversations in a mimic of the real voice. Jays are a common bird and using alliteration is, like rhyme, a nice naming format as it becomes more memorable. Jabber – of onomatopoeic origin and first cited as a noun in the *OED* in *Gulliver's Travels* in 1735 – meaning to talk a lot, makes it clear what the purpose of this mutt is. Jabberjays are said to have mated with mockingbirds thereby creating a new subspecies – the mockingjay. Mockingjay becomes a nickname for Katniss as the face of the rebellion and the double sense of the word mocking makes it an apt choice for challenging the rule of the Capitol. (Pulford)

4.6 From Totality to Totality

In every totalitarian state, citizens long for freedom and human values. They dissent, rebel, and when they manage to overthrow the government they hope for a better future. All this can be seen in Panem. District 13 was the place where all dissension began. Since it was a district focused on producing nuclear weapons, its inhabitants had many powerful weapons to use against the Capitol. Because of this advantage, they were able to gain independence, and in

exchange they agreed not to attack the Capitol. The district is hidden underground, everything on the ground had been demolished. The people in other districts were informed that District 13 had been bombed, destroyed, and does not exist any more. There was a connection between District 13 and some dissenters in other districts and even in the Capitol. Therefore Katniss and some other tributes were successfully rescued from the arena during the Quarter Quell and brought to the Thirteenth District. District 13 tries to overthrow the Capitol and helps people in other districts. But it raises a question as to whether the life in this district is better than in the rest of the state and if it guarantees more freedom and a better future.

Even though the regime in this district is not as violent as President Snow's, it cannot be considered liberal. This system seems to be totalitarian as well, for several reasons. Firstly, people have to follow a common routine that is quite strict. Every citizen has a daily schedule which is written on their forearms. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are also scheduled. Everyone can get only a certain amount of food which is appropriate for his body - no less, no more. There is a strict thirty minute down time with family. People are not allowed to have pets. Katniss, as an important person for them, was made an exception and was allowed to go hunting. However, she could only go a certain distance within a safe parameter. And even with a tracking device on her ankle, she was not allowed to go unsupervised.

In the morning, I see that 7:00--*Breakfast* is directly followed by 7:30--*Command*, which is fine since I may as well start the ball rolling. At the dining hall, I flash my schedule, which includes some kind of ID number, in front of a sensor. As I slide my tray along the metal shelf before the vats of food, I see breakfast is its usual dependable self--a bowl of hot grain, a cup of milk, and a small scoop of fruit or vegetables. Today, mashed turnips. All of it comes from 13's underground farms. I sit at the table assigned to the Everdeens and the Hawthornes and some other refugees, and shovel my food down, wishing for seconds, but there are never seconds here. 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, Mockingjay 35)

The question is whether this anonymous, stereotypical life of people with no free will is really what the people who managed to get out of the Snow's rule hoped for. It is still a place where the government is micromanaging every aspect of the citizen's lives, everything runs according to a schedule, everyone has the same clothes, and rationed food and property. This bleak irreversibility of totalitarianism can be construed as a minor dystopian feature.

Coin's true intentions are not revealed until the very end. Katniss was rescued only to be used as a tool to motivate others, to fight against the Capitol and to kill Snow. So President Coin did not do this to allow the people to live their lives outside of tyranny but as a way to achieve power. It is obvious when she assaults civilians or when the decision about one more lap of Hunger games is made to punish the Capitol people. Coin's deeds can be considered just as evil as Snow's. She is responsible for Prim's death and she does not care for killing people in order to win the war. Humanity has no value in her regime, as in the Capitol's. The Capitol used Peeta in the media to tell people to stop fighting, which was considered bad, but District 13 used Katniss for the purpose of boosting the people's appetite for fight, which is the same.

Even though Katniss has some doubts, she eventually realizes Coin's ulterior motives out of the struggle for power. And from speaking to the imprisoned Snow, she finds out that it was actually Coin who bombed the Capitol children, not Snow:

We both know I'm not above killing children, but I'm not wasteful. I take life for very specific reasons. And there was no reason for me to destroy a pen full of Capitol children. None at all." I wonder if the next fit of coughing is staged so that I can have time to absorb his words. He's lying. Of course, he's lying. But there's something struggling to free itself from the lie as well. "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. There was no real resistance after that. Did you know it aired live? You can see Plutarch's hand there. And in the parachutes. Well, it's that sort of thinking that you look for in a Head Gamemaker, isn't it?" Snow dabs the corners of his mouth. "I'm sure he wasn't gunning for your sister, but these things happen." "My failure," says Snow, "was being so slow to grasp Coin's plan. To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with Thirteen barely scratched. Make no mistake, she was intending to take my place right from the beginning. I shouldn't be surprised. After all, it was Thirteen that started the rebellion that led to the Dark Days, and then abandoned the rest of the districts when the tide turned against it. But I wasn't watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I'm afraid we have both been played for fools. (Collins, Mockingjay 356)

4.7 Reflection of Today's World in The Hunger Games

As Suzanne Collins mentioned, the media, reality programmes and wars springing from today's world were her inspiration. She wrote down very important warnings concerning the biggest world problems nowadays, which should be considered and realized by everyone. All three books of the trilogy must be read in the intended order to understand these warnings and connections. While the first two books focused mainly on the problems of powerful media and fascination by reality programmes, 'Mockingjay' introduces a theme of wars and their consequences on people's lives.

In the first book we are introduced to a terrifying tyrannical society which brings us to think about totalitarian societies and about violence in the world in general. However, totality and its possible tragic impacts on people and their lives have always been written about mainly in classic dystopian works. In the past, the threat of totality was perceived as more acute by many people because the concept of totality was obviously appearing and rising in many countries at that time. Nowadays there are several totalitarian states, especially

the communist ones, and it can still be regarded as a serious problem. However, the theme of the powerful and influential media can be considered highly important since it affects the whole contemporary world.

People tend to accept and believe everything said on the media, which can be very manipulating. Media is a powerful tool that is often used to make people believe in certain things. This is not only seen in totalitarian states, but also in the rest of the world. We are lapping up things shown in the media. Once a country has been presented as terrorizing, the public will believe it to be so. Politicians, especially, can easily use the media to influence people, just as President Snow does. People in districts believe that District 13 was destroyed, and in Katniss and Peeta's love. People in the Capitol are also so confused that they do not see how bad it is that real children are dying in the games as they watch with excitement. This brings us to think about the excitement that people feel when watching reality programmes. In these programmes, people participate mainly to win money, but as a result we are allowed to see into what would otherwise be their private lives. We see them laugh and cry, and often make fun of their pain and suffering. Collins says that we are getting confused about what is real and what is fiction:

There is so much programming, and I worry that we're all getting a little desensitized to the images on our televisions. If you're watching a sitcom, that's fine. But if there's a real-life tragedy unfolding, you should not be thinking of yourself as an audience member. Because those are real people on the screen, and they're not going away when the commercials start to roll. (Collins)

There are many reality television tropes in the Hunger Games: Participants undergo a makeover like in American Idol, and they have their own prep teams. The Quarter Quell in Catching Fire is like an all-star edition of the Hunger Games. Katniss and Peeta's showmance, a new word which means a show romance, is a tactic used to get more fans.

When Katniss and some others are rescued from the arena and we find out about the existence of District 13, it arises a bit of hope that all the evil could end and people could live in a better world. But humankind's hunger for power appears to be even stronger than the longing for a peaceful life. Besides the fact that life there is not what people expected, everything is presented in a different light in Mockingjay. The battle against the Capitol stems from Coin's desire for power, and she is capable of doing anything to help her reach it. 'Mockinjay' is mainly about how people use warfare to achieve power, and the consequences of these wars. Desolation, emotional loss, suppressed lives, and human rights violation can also be found in today's world.

5. Conclusion

The Hunger Games trilogy has many similarities with classic dystopian works. It is set in a future time, and tells a story of two types of totalitarian regimes - one very violent and one like communism. Both of them are very restrictive for the state's citizens. All major dystopian features are present in this trilogy:

- Dissension - represented by Katniss, Plutarch, other tributes, District 13 and eventually almost all districts
- Collectivism – can be found in all districts except for the Capitol, mainly in District 13
- Using violent means to set order – Hunger Games, bombing, whipping, killing people, torturing
- War – between the Capitol on one side and District 13 and other districts on the other side
- Language innovation – words as mutt, avow, jabberjay, mockingjay, etc., using words and names as allusions to the ancient world
- Suppressed humanity – people are not free, emotions, spiritual awaking or creativity are wanted neither in Snow's rule, nor in Coin's

Katniss is a typical dystopian dissenter who longs for a better future and is willing to make many sacrifices for this cause. She refuses to go with the flow and wants to swim upstream. The Hunger Games trilogy does not feature any recognizable equivalent of the classic dystopian motif of a political administration using a foreign threat as a way of uniting the domestic population and using war conflict to re-channel energies that might otherwise create social unrest. However, the District 13 can be used as a loose analogy of this scenario, namely the fact that it serves as an *outward* warning example which makes the population of the other districts fall in line. Therefore, The Hunger Games can definitely be labeled as a dystopian fiction.

Literature can often be used to reflect upon the world and its problems. As the world go through constant changes, so do literary themes. In addition to

the threat of totality, which is still present today, Collins uses certain themes that are relevant to the problems in our world. She aims to warn us against blindly believing in whatever the media presents to us, and to reconsider our fascination with reality programmes. Collins also draws out the fact that the endless desire for power can be extremely dangerous and how much people can suffer from the desolation caused by wars.

The Hunger Games has a combination of a thrilling plot, a courageous protagonist, historical and mythological references, and a compelling depiction of contemporary world problems and vices. This trilogy has much to say to its readers and may even increase the interest and popularity of the dystopian genre.

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