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Critique of Scientific Optimism in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

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Letter of Recommendation

Pradip Sharma has completed his thesis entitled “Critique of Scientific Optimism in Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2073/09/15 B.S. to 2074/05/10 B.S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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This thesis entitled “Critique of Scientific Optimism in Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Pradip Sharma has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Critique of Scientific Optimism in Suzanne Collions's *The Hunger Games*

This thesis entitled “ Critique of Scientific Optimism in Suzanne Collins’s The Hunger Games explores the negative influence of science and technology in human life using the concept of dystopia coceptualized by Keith Moylan. In the novel advanced science and technology is misused by totalitarian government that has resulted into sense of loss, misunderstanding, maladjustment, identity crisis, and conflict. This novel centers on the theme of propaganda. It is a story about the political mechanism of unspecified American society. The main character of the novel, Katniss is captivated by totalitarian government without reason. After her failed escape attempt, she has been demoted to the lowest level of human captives. She is forced to kill her relatives in the name of purification. Throughout the rest of the novel, Katniss suffers from hunger, fear, paranoia, and identity crisis. She becomes almost lost in the midst of totalitarian governance. She takes journey through the icy waters, dark tunnels, and strange spy chambers of the world’s most mysterious dictatorship government.

Key Words : Utopia, Dystopia, Totalitarian regime, Science , Optimism and science fiction

The present thesis analyses Collins’s novel *The Hunger Games* in the light of the criticism of scientific optimism. The aim of this thesis is to reveal scientific dystopia as the subject matter of the novel. *The Hunger Games*’s inherent debate over the change of the approach to science in aftermath of the demise of the pro-Enlightenment modernity will be identified. Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* deals with the issue of scientific optimism and its underlying factors. Scientific disciplines like genetic mutation and biotechnology have witnessed fresh innovations and inventions like mechanical hounds, fire machine, manipulation of genetic code

and others. These new techniques are supposed to bring relief and comfort in man's existence. Human lives should have been enhanced by the latest scientific inventions. People are usually optimistic about the scientific inventions and innovative ideas. However, the same scientific ideas and innovative concepts begin to rule over human life. Product of genetic mutation are brought up in such a way that they will have to donate their organs to the wealthy business tycoons. Scientifically manipulated beings are actually no less than the machines. Far from doing betterment of humanity, genetic science has put the seed of rift and chasm including anxiety, fear and paranoia in the life of Katniss, so the optimism of the redemptive power of science has resulted into dystopia in *The Hunger Games*.

The characters in the novel are important to preserve the theme of negative utopia. Major characters of the novel Katniss, Gale and Peeta are living in scientifically advanced but shattered society factured by violence and power struggle including loss and betrayal. Their reality of life is more alarming and dangerous than they left behind. The main character of this novel Katniss belongs to the young generation of America that is forced to live in metropolitan location of elite and rich people. Katniss forgets her real name, cultural identity and her own background being lost in the midst of Western technocratic world. She becomes invisible in modern city. Her identity crisis and loss of agency makes her invisible. *The Hunger Games* demonstrates how dystopian view and disillusionment affect the lives of females in metropolis. The obsessive search for the Western cultural model in America resulted in crisis, conflict, and perpetual unrest.

The narrative complexity of the novel further proves its dystopian character. *The Hunger Games* is written in the contemporary political context of America. The work is situated in American society where Katniss is lost in emptiness and hollow of

modern scientific development. *The Hunger Games* reflects the political and social unrest in America because of the totalitarian government. *The Hunger Games* is representative of people's history from below. Suzanne Collins's work moves back and forth in time. Focusing on small events and everyday people, Collins breathes life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen.

Dystopia is a general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, fiction, and cultural politics. Dystopia is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific or objective efforts of betterment of humanity. In essence, it stems from a recognition that enlightenment of human kind is not possible, rather, it is a grand narrative. For this reason, anti-utopian concept is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the dystopian understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to human beings individually. Dystopia relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Fractions of modernity project are scattered throughout *The Hunger Games*. A selection of those dystopian notions relevant for the upcoming analysis of negative utopia in Collins's *The Hunger Games* will lay the foundation for the reasoning of the paper. Collins seems to be profoundly interested in the counter-Enlightenment impulse in the novel, its open anti-rationalism. In *The Hunger Games*, Collins reconsiders the disillusionment of the Enlightenment values and the related critique of humanism. *The Hunger Games* concerns itself with the conflict between rationalism, emotionalism, and religion, which are considered different, but

equally considerable ways of thinking. There are three prominent characters in the novel, each of them exemplifying one of the suggested types of thought, respectively: Katniss, Peeta, and Gale. Collins's apparent passion for science causes the novel's implicit anti-utopian view in terms of science and technology focuses on the dystopian impact of enlightenment project. In a sense, the novel takes another sides with the modern age's idea of the superiority of rationalism, or science.

Different critics have given multiple criticisms to the novel depending on its various issues that the novel raises. Critics have not left a stone untouched to criticize the book which shows the universal recognition of the novel. The critic, Terry Eagleton, argues:

The Hunger Games personalizes the political and social changes in her country over the past few decades in this novel unlike most historical narratives from USA, which are pegged to political events? *The Hunger Games* is representative of people's history, a bottom-up rather than top-down view of a country in flux. By moving back and forth in time and focusing on small events and everyday people, Hawkins creates life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen. (12)

Eagleton sees the structural pattern of the novel. He analyzes the patterning, chaptering and other multiple fractions of the novel. Eagleton praises the trick of the writer to make the first two-third of a book a prologue.

George Daniel looks the novel as one of the best and an excellent pieces of literature. He is enchanted by the magical language of the novel. He points:

The Hunger Games is hardly a work of fiction. This is essentially a dystopian text. It seems like a novel but is a complete story. In

contrast to Anthony Burgess's often-expensive novel it describes events spanning four decades from 1969 to 2009. While amounting to a memoir, Burges is selective in what he presents. However Hawkins presents the bafflement of female characters in scientifically advanced society. (2)

The novel touches the multiple aspects of modern life. In one vein it displays the characteristic of immortal and true love. In other sense it talks about the varieties and change in the nature of love in the span of time. Another critic Kermit Lansner is of the view that:

Collins, Rather than exploring the darker undercurrents of society or the depths of the characters, she seems to make it her goal to stay on the surface. Much of the energy of the novel is spent on long and sensuous descriptions of the effect and impact of ultra modernity. There are too many episodes when the reader has to witness this or that character urinating, and to endure long descriptions of their urine. Whether Collins has been successful in portraying the characters in their organic form or not, it is not clear. (13)

Kermit believes that Collins does a fine job in painting the lead character Katniss, as well as the secondary players. Linda Woodson argues that, *The Road* is "a work affirming the assertion that language shapes reality and often obscures it and, therefore, a work attempting to avoid those possibilities" (94). She concludes that what makes *The Hunger Games* a post-postmodern work is its essentialist nature.

The language has become substantive, describing what actually exists and has meaning; the signifiers of civilization have no referent in this post-apocalyptic world. Katniss feels that the language she had before the catastrophe no longer serves her:

She tried to think of something to say but he could not. She'd had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. (75)

If the language is only a cultural imposition upon human experience, the language regresses to its primitive state once this culture collapses. What is left is a substantive language that is although these critics have raised different issues in this novel, the issue of dwindling scientific optimism is totally absent in their reviews and consistent commentaries. Science has robbed man of his manhood. Science is expected to enrich human comfort and minimize labor. But science has denuded the humanity of human beings. It has denuded the manhood of man. The issue of scientific optimism and Katniss's implicit view on the systematic denudation of manhood is an increasingly new and untested issue. Katniss's denuded manhood is miserable and heart-rending. That is why, the researcher picks up the issue of the critique of scientific optimism in *The Hunger Games*.

The issues of the life in the dystopian age and society are what dystopian novel is clearly concerned about. *The Hunger Games* carries dystopian features and the writer's descriptions often evoke the accounts of dystopia. Gothic elements including the ubiquitous reign of darkness, forsaken sites, and the scenes set at the cemetery increase the civilizational decadence. Moreover, the whole city is suffering from misunderstanding, broken family relationships, cultural decadence as well as nostalgia towards the past. Selfishness crosses boundaries because they provide love and affection to their children based on their success and achievement.

Katniss, once a prestigious person, is now degenerated into neurotic and Paranoia because of the death of parents caused by modern faction system, and she wants to rehabilitate herself through the journey. Her degraded condition in dystopian world is described as:

I have to blink tears from my eyes before I can see it, what looks at first to be a group of dark buildings. Upon further examination, I realize that the buildings aren't supposed to be dark they're charged beyond recognition some of them are flattened. The pavement between them is broken in pieces like a cracked. It resemble certain parts of city ...The city's destruction could have been caused by people. (185)

The critique of Enlightenment universal is central to the thinking of the philosophers of the post-modern period. *The Hunger Games* happens to scrutinize its protagonist's rationalist thinking. The novel is a contemplation of modernity's strategy of betterment of humanity with scientific advancement. The post-structuralist thinker Jean-Francois Lyotard took into consideration both scientific and narrative knowledge. The conclusion he arrived at was that the scientific knowledge was actually marked by a contradiction because "scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all. In short, there is a recurrence of the narrative in the scientific" (Sarup 136-37). The scientific knowledge can only prove its superiority with the help of the narrative. In other words, Lyotard shows that science is like all other human activity (Drolet 25). The dystopia theory considers "degradation" of science. Furthermore, Jacques Derrida also stands up against the Western tradition of rationalist thinking and its premise of reason, formed by the search for certainty and termed "logo centrism" (Sarup 77). Logo centrism is

also in the dystopianist visions seen as invalid and subject to deconstruction. Though *The Hunger Games*'s main protagonist Katniss, primarily affiliates with the logocentric way of seeing the world, her reasoning inevitably involves the deconstructive impulse - the tendency to subvert itself.

The research aims to prove that dystopian narrative Collins employs has the underlying vision of reflecting how social perfection is reaped away by abusive power of state. The research considers that dystopian society projected in *The Hunger Games* reflects Collins's idea on individual and society. *The Hunger Games*, as socio-political dystopia, depicts the unidentified future where social bliss is under the mercy of the dictator or technocratic authoritarianism. The research seeks to prove *The Hunger Games* as dystopia in socio-political aspects. Applying the dystopian critique propounded by M. Keith Booker, Tom Moylan and others, the research endeavors to explore *The Hunger Games* as Collins' Premonition: how technocratic knowledge in the hands of coercive state, if misused, could be a weapon to torment the people. Those aspects that make *The Hunger Games* dystopia are expected to be explored as the major quest of the research that is based on the Tom Moylan's *The Scraps of the Untainted Sky* and Krishna Kumar's analysis of theoretical aspects of dystopia seeks to explore *The Hunger Games* as novel of dystopia.

Barry Lewis, trying to identify the dominant features of dystopian literature, considers fragmentation and paranoia as examples of dystopian novel. The notion of fragmentation in literary writing concerns the difficulty of the determination of the given novel's theme. "The dystopian writer distrusts the wholeness and completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative" (127). An unambiguous completion of this novel's narrative is not

accomplishable, due to its dystopian project. The guiding principle of the narration thus becomes distortion. The “uncertainty principle” (127) Lewis comes to mention is undoubtedly part of the style of Katniss’s narrating strategy as explained above. Moreover, paranoia, the other prominent concept in terms of the dystopian literature’s critique, is a clearly visible ingredient of *The Hunger Games*. “The protagonist of the dystopian novel sometimes suspects that he or she is trapped at the centre of an intrigue, often with some justification” (130). Katniss dreads the threat that she sees in the figure of Gale. The main protagonist is afraid of being engulfed in Gale’s persuasion. Katniss’s difficulties inherent in his attempts to persuade the authorities of Gale’s threat can be seen as a notion of the conspiring society.

The present research examines the failure of scientific optimism in the novel *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. The protagonist of the novel Katniss struggles to reconstruct her identity in scientifically advanced society. Through her narrating she reveals her suffocation and identity crisis in modern advanced society. The novel begins with the major character’s imprisonment, which has served as the starting point for the crisis in Katniss’s perception of her own identity, whom looking back at the incident, is now trying to put the fragments together to reconstruct her shattered identity. In this process, not only are readers presented with Katniss’s narrative but also that of Clarissa. Katniss’s Collins’ efforts Katniss to take outside the jail but Katniss is informed that the faction members have formed the "The Hunger Games", a rebel group wanting to restore the faction system. During an encounter between the factionless and the faction members, several people are killed. Katniss is invited into a meeting with the The Hunger Games, whose leader, Peeta has made a plan to usurp present government as well as sending envoys

outside the city. Katniss is selected for the expedition, alongside Tobias, Petta and Christina forcefully. But it turns out to be worthless in the dystopian society.

Katniss and her friends feel utterly alone in the world outside the city. They are uncertain and afraid, and the only people that they have to rely on are their friends. As their old home edges closer and closer to a full-on civil war, as the characters find out that their life was nothing but an experiment, as the characters deal with learning that they are genetically damaged. They struggle constantly with an identity crisis outside the city. They have each come to identify with the faction from which they came. Peeta and Caleb are learned, receptiveness on their intelligence and rational more than other characters. Christina and Peter are dauntless, knowing that they are brave and can face their fears better than anyone, and Tobias and Katniss have come to identify as intelligent. However, they become meaningless and identityless in dystopian society. Suddenly, their identities mean nothing. Then, making things only worse, many of the characters are told that their genes are damaged. They are told that they have limitations, making them less than people with pure genes. Tobias, no longer able to identify as Divergent, has no idea what to think of himself. Peeta and Caleb are even more at a loss in this new world. All the characters are turning out to be cog of machine in scientifically advanced society. scientific innovation and advancement have shattered the integrity of values like the ethics of compassion and humanism of characters.

Dystopia is derived from the term Utopia itself originally coined by Thomas Moore in his book *Utopia* completed in 1516. Utopia is the blueprint for an ideal society with no crime or poverty. Whereas Dystopian societies are characterized by dehumanizing and totalitarian governments, environmental disaster or other characteristics associated with a decline in society. Dystopia is described as

imaginative society that has gone wrong due to the prevalence of “exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, famine, ecocide depression, debt, and the steady depletion of the humanity” (Horizon) and injustice, restriction on freedom, strict punitive legal system. Underlying vision of nightmarish society is to warn the world. Baccolini and Moylan recognize “dystopia as warning” as they find the identical admonitory trope in all cases of dystopian imagination. Observing many dystopia instances, they argue that “dystopia, to greater or lesser extent, has served as prophetic vision, the canary in the cage, for writers with ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible socio-political tendencies that could if continued, turn our contemporary world into iron cages”(Horizon).

Our history is full of instances of such expression of fear and horror or its antithetical desire of harmony, peace, progress and human contentment in the nature. Noticing such fictional account of bad political and social conditions” (Mautner 119) or the beautiful imagination of “detailed pictures of society significantly better than that in which the writer lives” (Elliot 110), Krishna Kumar asserts the imaginaries of good or bad society “manifest itself in all ages in all manner of guises (103). It shows that human endeavors to express good or bad picture of society is perennial in the human history. People express the desire of good society or utopian society where they can fulfill their expectations and longings that they could not fulfill in their contemporary real society. Similarly people express the fearful imagination of society or dystopian society because they fear of negative tendency in contemporary leading toward degeneration of system. In both of these expressions of good or bad society can be found corresponding to the problematic issues of the society. Whether society is good or bad depends on how one perceives one’s contemporary world,

there is yet some degree of understanding as to what is making that society bad or good .

The Hunger Games demonstrates fearful account of society. What makes the world of *The Hunger Games*, dystopic is not simply the scarcity of the food but The Hunger Games's policy to control the Districts through resources-distributive mechanism. The nature of the governing system in the *The Hunger Games* reflects the feature of totalitarian governance that with the help of technology crushes the lives of the dispossessed. Transgression in individual freedom by the ruling system is marked as a characteristic of totalitarian governance. Totalitarian governance functions in arbitrary way that leaves no stone unturned to confirm its own rule. The situation of the Katniss is no different from "canary in the cage" (132). She and the world she belongs to represent the canary in the cage. They do not have voice to speak against the oppressive rule over them. This state of lack of freedom has become norms or habit in the part of people she represents. Her world is so terrible because she is so frightened and helpless due to the difficulties of life. It has no worth to think of freedom if they do not have a food to please their stomach. The most brutal aspect of this lack of freedom begins with one's hunger. The desperation of the society results from the blind policy of restraining freedom. People neither can use their resources nor can they resort to jungle for their survival because an act of entering the jungle is an act of the State's will. The objective of deliberately creating the desperation in the district is to enslave the districts and to use them as their puppet or entertainment. The lack of freedom is background based upon which the Capitol forms structure to use them as their entertainment or amusement.

The dehumanizing use of entertainment as means to terrorize the individual and society makes the world of *The Hunger Games* dystopian that thrives on the worst

treatment of individual. The Gamemaker represents such oppressive force of totalitarian principle that does not even allow death against the wish of the individual. Such issues of social-politics that are making this world difficult to live are brought into notice to warn us.

War and violence is the root cause of the evil which engulfs the peace and progress. To warn such “hunger” of war and violence amid the worst scenario of poverty and hunger of food, Collins’s narrative self-reflexively warns that if state continues to promote the culture of war and bloodshed, the entire humanity will suffer forever. In order to warn the world she infuses an emphatic voice in her heroine who shares her pathetic condition as an individual being in worthless battle. How one goes through pain and suffering when he or she losses his nearer and dearer one in the battle that may victimize anyone in the society tells one of the Collins thematic intentions. She seems to impart the lesson through Katniss that war and violence is the cause of individual suffering in the society. Individual does not desire it. They even fear of it yet the frequency of war has not diminished. Katniss narrates this grim side of battle before her eyes. She expresses her traumatic discontent:

Should I feel relieved, that my father is going to be executed?

Angry, that I came so close...don’t know. I don’t feel anything. My hands go numb, so I know I’m panicking, but I don’t really feel it ‘not the way I normally do. I am overwhelmed either the need to be somewhere else, so turn and leave my parents and Nita and the city where I once lived behind me. (201)

With this awareness, Katniss for the first time shows her rebellious attitude toward the cruelty made upon them by the state administrator. Katniss points toward an urge to demolish such government : “The government that has been threatening ...almost the

year”(269). The state wants to maintain status quo. To pursue this objective state uses any means of control over its population. To control the individual, totalitarian government uses technology as surveillance-apparatus. Spying over the individual activities and behaviors, totalitarian government gathers information related to individual behaviors necessary to maintain the regime. Secret police as surveillance apparatus employs terror tactics to control the citizen.

In general dystopia is understood as opposite of utopia, a vision of beautiful society or heaven like society where no pain and suffering distress the inhabitants of the society. In dystopian envisioning of society prosperity and amity among the dwellers of that society becomes the matter of fantasy. Dystopian society, where human being becomes a soulless matter in the eyes of those who govern it, obliges then to do what the state wishes him/her to do. There is no freedom but fear of freedom. Projecting such that society by one who envisions it has the underlying motif: warning. Where are we heading? This genre of warning warns what if our society goes wrong like the alternative society that is exaggeratingly bad society.

Strength of *The Hunger Games* comes from the fact that it has employed the dystopian technique of estrangement yet maintain the distressing issue of contemporary society to satirize the modern mass phenomena: how straight is diverting today’s youths’ attention from social concern. The warning is suggested along with protagonists’ awareness of the culprit of injustice that triggers in her the courage to dismantle “genetic experimentation”(14). Collins warns today’s society using historical and mythic materials. In this extrapolation of mythic and historical ingredients, and Projecting them in the future, readers are sufficiently informed as to how and what makes the society wrong. In the genre of warning or what Moylan

called “didactic account” that it emanates from the projection of “the contradiction of the society that is present on the very first page” (148).

The Hunger Games as one of many dystopian novels gives an overview of the bleak and terrible future due to the human action itself. Dystopian literature is important to empower the readers to be inspired to make difference to better people. We humans are given the power of choice. This power of choice has the capacity whether our society possesses utopian ideals of peace, progress and harmony or dystopic ideals of disharmony, death and destruction. The conflict of choices creates chaos and social disharmony. The choice of Katniss to go against the state’s choice to prolong own political system creates conflict. Government controls mass media through censorship and propaganda. Capitol controls the citizen through the mass media which are television and books.

Katniss finds herself entangled in such traumatic torture enforced through “Government message on television that is mandatory to watch”(32). The control is further enhanced through the control of the economy. Capitol imposed strict laws in the economic front. Every district should work hard and produce goods for the Capitol and left nothing for the Districts. People in the district are forbidden to consume and enjoy their own production. It causes starvation and poverty that has become common things in districts. “I have thought”, says Katniss, “in District Eleven, you would have bit more to eat than us. You know, since you grow the food" (45). Surveillance over the individual through the technology has been one of the issues of individual privacy in the contemporary world. Exaggerating this contemporary issues of individual being spied, Collins projected them as means to show how the strict control over the citizen can make the life in the society a hell. The images of high-tech means of surveillance indicate one of the worst ways the state uses to control the citizens. Referring to

Amey's discussion on Dystopia, Pat Wheeler says that "unremitting surveillance that in many dystopian societies forces to internalize state's regulatory powers so that it becomes the principle of their own subjection"(1).

Ubiquitous media screw, position locator chips injected inside the body and other means of surveillance are used in the horrified *The Hunger Games*. To regulate behavior of the individual and make them obedient the state positions the secret police in standby. The sole objection of this surveillance is to instill in the individual at believe that state can know everything. By this belief state tries to ensure system sustainability. Therefore, utopian vision that state prevalence can bring happiness and harmony has been self- reflexively subverted in the dystopian narrative about the *The Hunger Games*. As Andrew Milner notes that in the dystopian society the state creates such program to which the dwellers on it cannot resist to the hive-like society. The reason they cannot resist may be that they are even aware of the mechanized mind of themselves. Milner observes in many dystopian works the trope of resistance:

The situation is for different in recent dystopias and novels, films, and stories. In such works, the hive or machines or machine- hive becomes an important feature or the major setting for the work. The hive or machine is to essential condition of human life. To resist to hive or machine is to rebel against the entire social system, and, as often not, the protagonist is crushed, destroyed, or rendered trivial. In such works the hive or machine becomes the symbol for thing in human social life that can render us helpless, insignificant, and inhuman. (49)

In *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins has created dystopian vision that utilizes creative and political engagement. Collins focus on her protagonist's coming of age in an extrapolated version of contemporary U.S society. In doing so, she expands the

dystopian from by drawing on a range of textual influences to enrich the social detail and the narrative conflict of what is inherently open ended multi-volume series. While set within the familiar of account of new beginning in a post-apocalypse world constitute primary vehicle for “Divergents”, in her first volume she transforms that popular mode into a “critical dystopia” by self-reflexively spinning an “inter-textualweb that draws on the substance and form of sources as varied mythic narratives, feminist fiction, survivalist adventure. Collins has demonstrated that there is not single factor contributing in Social disharmony but many factors that cause to make the world hell. In Collins's alternative future she attributes these evils fundamentally to human choices, pointing toward the human choice’s position in human life, she weaves several strand of through that provide evidence how human choices lead to if world would be good or worse. The only choice of sustenance of political system leads it to believe in the curtailing of the individual freedom that might pose as a treat to this choice of system sustainability. The same choice of status quo catalyzes to protagonist an aspiration to go this system.

One of the brutal aspects of the choice made by the central government is its policy of economic exploitation. The central government manages the resources in such way which benefits only the citizen of the capitol. The capitol enjoys all the system sustainability. The same choice of status quo catalyzes to intervene in the public life in most tyrannical way that ultimately begets in the protagonist an aspiration to against this system.

One of the brutal aspects of the choice made by the central government is its policy of economic exploitation. The central government manages the resources in such way which benefits only the citizen of the capitol. The capitol enjoys all the treasures the districtsproduces while the producers of good are left with no

consumption of its own toil. Such economic exploitation by the capitol contributes to further intensifying the misery and predicament of the people. Katniss describes such poverty-trodden state of life in her contrasting it with Capitol's huge luxury. She describes, "I turn back to the world we are driving away from the train tracks. The huge expansion of field. And in the distance, the Hub barely visible in the haze that covers the city's skyline. It's a strange feeling, seeing it from that place, like it I can still touch it if I stretch my hand far enough, though I have travelled very far from it" (4).

In *The Hunger Games*, Collins seems to comment on the same possibilities. Technology itself does not help humanity or create havoc. Its advantage or disadvantage depends on how they are used or with what purpose. The world of *The Hunger Games* is made dystopia because of capitol's hidden motive to employ these technological gadgetry not to enhance life of the dispossessed but to subjugate them thereby ensuring its own power of exploitation.

As Booker notes that in the dystopian fiction "both thought and feeling are strongly discouraged in this society and much of the technology goes into the development and production of goods designed to hedonistic pursuit of pleasure that will prevent build-up of potentially subversive political energies and for this hedonistic pleasure the dystopia government glorifies science as a main symbol of power" (49). In *The Hunger Games*, technology has been used as an "opportunity for the Capitol to keep tabs on the population as well because there is camera crews like C.C TV perched like a buzzard on rooftops" (16). It shows that there is technology not for large humanity but for those who possess it and use it in their benefit.

The Hunger Games also comments on dystopic state of injustice. What is most distressing in life is to endure injustice before the court which is supposed to curb all

injustice and prevent misdoing. However society of *The Hunger Games*, celebrate their inhuman and unjust political game, like reaping days, in front of the “justice Building” (34) where innocent tributes are selected for their blood in arena that is intended to appease the blood-thirsty Capitol audience disregarding the individual suffering and feeling of terror. Like any soldier in the battle field, Katniss narrates the terror and horror of the war:

Even over the chatter of the people around us. I hear the gunfire when it starts, just snaps and claps in the micro phones. I tap the glass in front of me a few times, and the camera angles switches... forced their way in to. On the table with in is a pile of small boxes-ammunition-and a few pistols. It's nothing compared to the guns the people here have in all their abundance, but in the city. (364)

Dystopias are negative utopia, images of future so terribly imperfect that given a chance, people would prefer to flee as far as their wherewithal can possibly take them. Such nightmarish vision of future runs through the images of “irreversible intractable bureaucratic administration, and authoritarianism and economic exploitation” (Williams 384). Harold L. Berger identified such images of hardship and horror in most of the dystopian literary work. Andrew Milner further explores that the dystopia circumstance of the downfall of human species stems from choices human made for their vested interest. He identifies the state regulation and control as the central trope in the recent dystopian works. He observes, ... this we believe, is why so recent works, dystopian and pessimistic, have central scene in which the protagonist is imprisoned or bound or allowed to walk free only on the condition of perpetual surveillance or control. We find literal binding of the protagonist or strong capture or containment imagery, in every major dystopian work(49).

The Hunger Games demonstrates the some tendency of human deficiency in choice that lead to chaos and disharmony. The social living of characters is nightmarish, freedom is censored. Katniss states:

The lights start to recede, the patches shrinking like puddles of water drying in the sun. Then I realize that the red lights were people- people, disappearing, their lights going out. I stare out at the screen, unable to wrap my mind around such substantial loss...when war was finally over and people demanded a permanent solution to the genetic problems...designed experiments to restore humanity. (124)

War, genocide, mutation, and genetic experimentation degenerate humanity in the level of machine. The protagonist expresses her dissatisfaction and rebellious thoughts against canonical convention, the results in the conflict. government became interested in negating certain genetic predispositions toward undesirable traits in its citizens. These traits – “fear, low intelligence, dishonesty, aggression, selfishness” (123) – were what ultimately led to everything that was bad in society. The government began to try to correct these negative qualities via genetic manipulation; however, the alterations had disastrous consequences when they took effect, resulting in damaged genes.

Human beings are not machine that can be programmed forever. They have emotions, desires and feelings and desires for freedom. If the state efforts to control the personal freedom of people forever it generates permanent conflict between individual and state. The opening of the novel also casts light upon the conflict and ending also highlights upon the possible conflict. First and foremost, Katniss sacrifices her own life at the end of the novel for the good of her friends and everyone in the city. She enters the Weapons Lab in Caleb's place -- knowing that she could

never let him walk into his own execution. Despite all of the wrongs that Caleb had done to her, he was still her closer, and she would always love him. She would never be able to live with herself if she didn't take his place.

Collins's dystopian attitude towards society can be traced in the use of language too. "Despite the initial silence the counter narrative is often accomplished by way of language" (Moynan 23). She uses terminologies that link the fictitious world and real dystopia world. The like: "Divergent", "game", "Bureau" and "Experiments" have multiple meanings one of the meanings can be associated with the invisible politics of ruling class elite. George Denial argues:

Frequently sponsored by the urban elites, yet increasingly practiced and consumed by the populace the ancient city skyline became dominated by sporting venues and monuments, perhaps no better exemplified than in the towering structures of the Coliseum and Circus Maximus in Rome. And it was with the emergence of the modern in 18th and 19th century in Europe sport and urbanization became inextricably entwined. (2)

Johnson by using the language related to dystopia wants to focus on the possible misuse of language by ruling class elites.

Collins casts her light upon the state's cruelty upon people. The citizens of any state have rights to secure life, liberty and happiness. Instead of providing security to the citizens, ruling elites in *The Hunger Games* promotes mechanism that can benefit only few people who are under the touch of elites. A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control.

Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a

current trend, societal norm, or political system. Katniss criticizes the bleak picture of the society:

I don't belong to Abnegation, or Dauntless, or even the Divergent. I don't belong to the Bureau or the experiment or the fringe. I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me—they, and the love and loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could. I suppose a fire that burns that bright is not meant to last. (188)

Collins' emphasis on sense of the powerlessness of Katniss in the face of the oppressive and brutal government run by a massive bureaucratic institution. Paranoia is very evident among the character who lives in fear and who are being monitored, betrayed or manipulated. The standard of living among the classes is lower than in contemporary societies. However, Katniss questions society although she is in great suffering. The Bureau decides to brainwash everyone inside of Chicago using a technique called memory serum. Katniss and her friends do not want this to happen (obviously) because that is equal to just murdering everyone.

Louis Althusser's work "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," where he introduces the idea of ideological function, categorizes individuals into "subjects." He states that a human being, who is subjected to ideology involuntarily, turns into a "subject," as his outlook on the world will be shaped congruently with the state's beliefs (157). However, he claims that "what is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (155). Thus, this "imaginary relation" will dictate how individuals perceive themselves in the world and what social function they will occupy. A person's ability to identify oneself is perceived through the lens of social practices that are imposed on people

through ideology. Therefore, it is in the state's best interest that people view themselves as "subjects" (not as individual identities); once they identify themselves as such, they act and think according to the ideology's chief principles, and fail to break the circle—they cannot imagine themselves outside of the ideological framework.

The Hunger Games also plays a central role as the main protagonist's way of resistance to the totalitarian regime, where women are exclusively valued for their reproductive function and are mentally and physically abused by the patriarchal ruling class. While writing helps the main character to discover her individuality and reconnect with the past, in Collins's *Katnis* the main heroine, employs writing to reconstruct her body, which has been disciplined and exploited for the state's benefit.

In a dystopian world, bodies are represented as powerless and feeble, being reduced to constant oppression and regulation from the state, which engages discipline to achieve its devious aim. As Michel Foucault in his text *Discipline and Punish* describes it, discipline is a tool that made "possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body" materialized in different ways (137). One of them focused on a scrupulously designed and organized everyday routine, which had to be followed by everyone in society. This coercion grants the ruling elite a perfect opportunity to force people into submissiveness, turn them into robots that are trained to do with preciseness exactly the same thing as everyone else does. Every day and every hour of people's lives is prescribed and directed by the government, prohibiting people any involuntary deviation from the rigid schedule. In fact, it is through the use of such a strict disciplinary system that social order can be established where people become totally subservient and oblivious to the omnipotent power of the state. Foucault in his work elaborates on this idea and explains that "discipline increases the forces of the

body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (138). In other words, once a human body becomes totally disciplined, two things happen. On the one hand, the body increases its productive potential and can benefit the state economically, and, on the other hand, it becomes completely obedient, posing no difficulties for the state’s control. Thus, inadvertently, the citizens of most totalitarian regimes resemble prisoners because of the rigid discipline that the state requires of their bodies.

Foucault discusses the implementation of discipline in penitentiary institutions in *Discipline and Punish* and quotes at length Léon Faucher, who drafted the rules for a Parisian prison:

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

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

Similarly, characters of *The Hunger Games* follow exactly the same routine. People, to be exact Numbers, live day after day according to the Table of Hours—a detailed schedule of their lives organized and put together by the state. This Table, proclaimed by the main protagonist as the “heart and pulse of One State,” dictates how people should spend every minute of the day—everyone is doing precisely the same thing in unison, creating a giant organism that acts and moves alike—to shape one body, which

can be easily regulated through discipline and order(12). Collins, depicting a typical day in the life of One State resident, writes:

Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour and the very same minute, we get up, millions of us, as though we were one. At the same hour, millions of us as one, we start work. Later, millions as one, we stop. And then, like one body with a million hands, at one and the same second according to the Table, we lift the spoon to our lips. And at one and the same second, we leave for a stroll and go to the auditorium, to the hall for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed.

(13)

Such eerie unanimity does not allow any foreign action that is somehow different from the rest, making it very simple for the government to exercise its control and at the same time use people's productivity for its advantage. This never-interrupted and never-ending routine sucks out any creativity or desire to learn from these people, turning them into one giant mass of pliable material, easily trained and molded. Foucault elaborates on this "time-table" method of discipline and asserts that, because it "establishes rhythm, imposes particular occupations, regulates the cycle of repetition," it allows the state to obtain the same blind compliance from its citizens as commanders get from their soldiers in the army (149). The rigid breakdown of time into hours, minutes, and seconds and disciplinary control of gestures and movements in the military eliminates any free movements and adjusts "the body into temporal imperatives," which, if repeated continuously, stay in one's body forever (151).

By the same token Katniss and other characters in *The Hunger Games* "precisely established meals, obligatory walks" that smears any traces of individuality and makes them robotic and identical, like "innumerable waves" in one big "mighty

flood”(Collins 7). As Keith Moylan points out in his article “Human Nature, Utopia, and Dystopia,” “virtually every aspect of life is subjected to purportedly rational central planning. Numbers live a meticulously scheduled existence from cradle to grave, walking, washing, working, recreating and retiring largely in unison” (386). Even such an intimate act as sex is regulated in the Table of Hours, when twice a day “the single mighty organism breaks down into its individual cells” for the Personal Hours (Collins 13). It should be noted that the Personal Hours, even though they allow you to do what you wish, are still an allotted period of time in a closely regulated Table of Hours, which orders people when to have sex or rest. Moreover, the meticulously crafted Table of Sex Days also directs and assigns which Number you can “make use of” on certain days, determined by exact calculations of sexual hormones in your blood for perfect chemically proven match (22). This lifestyle undoubtedly reminds of the rigorous discipline of prisoners or soldiers, who do not have the freedom to do what they want, but instead have to abide by the firm system of laws and regulations.

The regime of dystopian citizens that controls their time and movement in space does resemble the “rezhim” of GULAG prisoners in Russia under Soviet rule. Citizens of *The Hunger Games* have similar lifestyles to GULAG prisoners, as they comply with the same daily routine. However, there is one chief distinction between the two that needs to be addressed. Anne Applebaum in her book *GULAG: A History* illustrates the living and working conditions of the camp prisoners and emphasizes the systematic “regime” of labor camps that “determined when and how the prisoner should wake; how he should be marched to work; when and how he should receive food; when and for long he should sleep” (191). This description does sound similar to the strictly regulated lifestyle of Katniss in *The Hunger Games* one

detail that seems to separate these two worlds. As Katniss depicts it further, camp prisoners marched to work with armed guards behind them shouting: “A step to the right, or a step to the left, will be considered an attempt to escape—The convoy will fire without warning” (192). They had rifles constantly pointing at them and forcing them to conform to the laws of the prison; thus, they had to march in strict rows in silence, fearing for their lives. Conversely, in a dystopian world, people accept the regime as an essential component of their lives and willingly follow it, as if pre-programmed, day after day. People are convinced that it is their duty to serve and sacrifice themselves for the state’s well being, annihilating their identities and personal happiness and blindly embracing their social responsibilities as a result.

The protagonist in *The Hunger Games* works for the government and believes that they are fulfilling an important task. Katniss is in charge of a critical assignment to design and build a spaceship, the *Integral* that will allow One State to possibly expand its powers and conquer other civilizations. Correspondingly, another character in, whose job is to forge information presented in the media to ensure that “every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct” (36). They become so entrenched with their social duties that they turn into “subjects,” whose sole function is to live and work in order to satisfy the government’s wants and not “interfere with the progress of the great State Machine” (Collins 25).

In this way the close analysis of *The Hunger Games* through the critical perspective of dystopia, the research concludes that dystopias thrive in socio-political commentary. Though it is difficult to identify exact intention of the author, Collins’s narrative style in *The Hunger Games* indicates her intention to comment on how state has gone wrong in different phases of history. Much literature can be found dealing with individual vs. state, freedom vs. oppression dystopia is one of them. It is defined

as society characterized by poverty, squalor or oppression. Most authors of dystopia explore at least one reason why things are in that way. Dystopia usually extrapolate elements of contemporary society and are read by many as political warning. Many purported utopias reveal a dystopian character by suppressing justice, freedom, and happiness.

By projecting the precarious world of the USA into future narrative, Collins tries to comment on ideal vision of society itself. State cannot be perfectly good. It is in a way a comment on the utopian vision of the society. Utopian vision of the state portrays such vision in which state acts perfectly to make the human living in the society beautiful and harmonious. There are many instances. Plato forwards Ideal State which categorized freedom according to the characteristic of the individual. Objective of the categorization was to make the strong and self-reliant. But later the same vision becomes the tool of slavery.

The Hunger Games comments on the same tendency of the human being. Collins provides several cues as to why and how our living under the advanced state is difficult. The narrative of *The Hunger Games* progresses in such a way it lets readers guess possible reasons of the perversion in the present time. The story of the Faction based society in the *The Hunger Games* is no different from the societies of the modern advanced state. New form of exploitation and torture replace the old form of exploitation and torture. Human beings have come to the point of the time when they can neither have chance to live in society peacefully nor can they move to the nomad state. The main theme of it revolves around the dystopian attitude toward the socio-political norms in the advanced state. It is said that emergence of the state is for protection of all people who come under the state. But in reality this utopian vision of ideal state functions only for particular segment of the society. Only the powerful can

rip the benefit of the state presence. The world is engulfed by such disparity. The Capitol, the center of the nation, has to do nothing but can enjoy the world's riches. On the other part people work hard yet are vulnerable to the scarcity, hunger death and destruction. Taking advantage of their vulnerability and state power they make the lives of the dispossessed intolerably painful.

Collins presents the terrible new world living under the state which cannot be perfectly beautiful and harmonious until they do not recognize the principle of equality and co-existence. In order to critique such lapses in the modern political authority, Collins uses the dystopia "as it resonates with numerous politically motivated critique of modern society" (174). *The Hunger Games* is terrible world because the government in it rules with oppressive forces. It compels the weaker and vulnerable to participate in the battle. The objective is cruel. Such cruel objective of killing the innocent in the arena and broadcasting it as deterrent to prevent possible rebellion cannot sustain the political system or status quo. This attitude needs to get reformed.

Human civilization is moving towards uncertain complexity. The human history Of civilization has progressed much but human beings have not left their primitive instinct. They have developed technologies but that technology is used not to further humanity but to deteriorate the human condition. Such phenomena are severely criticized in *The Hunger Games*. The Capitol can help the seam in the time of their hunger. The state should be progressive and life-enhancing rather than a life-denying force. Oppression and suppression may prove the opposing voice but not forever. With this implication, Collins calls for reform in the states, attitude toward citizens demanding to rise from the ashes of destruction. Utopia promises for ideal

society through scientific development. Hence, Collins demolishes the utopian optimism focusing on the horrendous impact of science and technology.

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