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MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY 8 MAI 1945 GUELMA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Option: Literature

Empowerment of the Marginalized.
A Marxist Reading of Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games*
(2008).

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in
Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

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Sep. 2020

Dedication

This work is dedicated to
my beloved parents who have always been supportive and caring.

my dear brother “Simou”

my fiancé “Aymen”

“Manel” and “Ritadj”

my beloved friends

Amani BOUCHEBOUT, Maroua Yasmine GUEHDOUR, Chahinèz AYACHI, Boutaina
HAMAI,DI, Fériel ZALANI, Katia KACHI and Hadia GUEHDOUR.

My family

and you

too.

Acknowledgements

“No one walks alone, and when you are walking on the journey of life...you have to start to thank those that joined you, walked beside you, and helped you along the way”

David H. Hooker

The first and foremost thanks go to almighty Allah for giving me the sufficient strength and capacity to accomplish this work.

Special thanks to my supervisor Miss Rima MENIDJEL, without her help, this work would never be accomplished. I am grateful for her efforts in guiding me and for her persistency each time in order to fulfill this paper. I appreciate her patience, her valuable advice and above all her kindness.

I would like to extend an open expression of gratitude to my family, friends to my colleagues and acquaintances with whom i have shared the same experience, and to all lovers of literature.

Abstract

The current study focuses on Marxism and the empowerment of the marginalized category in Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* (2008) which is a young-adult dystopian novel. The main aim of this dissertation is to critically analyse and explore any form of inequality, basically, warfare as well as the domination and superiority of the owning class over the working class. Particularly, the domination of the ruling Capitol over the twelve districts of Panem. This dissertation consists of three chapters in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. The first chapter will provide background information necessary to understand some theoretical key concepts. The second chapter will analyse the characters in the light of the Marxist notion “Power” as it is viewed by Karl Marx and then utilizes the theory of class to discuss marginalization in the novel. The third chapter will first discuss the strategies used by the oppressed people so as to defeat the issue of class struggle, and then will discuss the mission from marginalization to empowerment.

Key words: Marxism, Marginalization, Empowerment, Class, Power, Tributes, Sponsors, Rebellion.

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General Introduction

The concept of Marxism appeared in the nineteenth century. The term is coined after the name of the German theorist Karl Heinrich Marx. The theory is mainly concerned with class stratification; it aims to understand the nature of the distinction between social classes.

In the theory of Marx, the concept of class struggle takes a great place as it is the consequence of social stratification. As a result, the society is, thus, divided into two major classes: the upper class and the lower class. The upper class people are the owners of the means of production whom their own principle is to insure and maintain the continuity of their dominance over the underprivileged people. The lower class consists of the workers whose main aim is to gain their status.

Hence, marginalization was the inevitable result to the Marxist movement which has attracted the attention of many scholars, theorists and writers to produce several works in its regard. Among these writers, who shed light on the notion of class struggle, is Suzanne Collins who did so through her novel *The Hunger Games* which is an American dystopian science-fiction novel written in (2008). The novel depicts the circumstances that led the lower class to revolt in order to reclaim their power and to be an important part in the structure of the society the same as the people of the high class are. The most dominant idea of Suzanne Collins's novel is that every single person has the ability to defeat the arbitrary government.

Katniss Everdeen is the main protagonist and the narrator of *Hunger Games trilogy* who lives in district 12, the poorest district in Panem. Each year, the twelve districts are forced to offer two children to participate in an event called "The Hunger Games", Katniss represents the sacrificed woman by taking the place of her younger sister.

The problematic in this study is summarized in the marginalized category from the hegemonic power structure as they are not only socially marginalized but also politically and

geographically. In this regard, the case of the prominent wealthy people of the Capitol do not produce goods they need, rather, they take those of the people below them in the form of exploitation and although people from the districts are starving and oppressed, they must give all goods to the Capitol is a concrete example.

Through a Marxist lens and by the critical analysis of this novel, many questions need to be answered. The two opposing forces, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; which are in a perpetual conflict, both go against one another to the point that Katniss Everdeen realizes that in order for her and the people around her to have a better life she must work towards a revolution to overthrow the regime. Hence, the question raised here is, were both social classes having equal opportunities? Moreover, Due to this inequality, the working class used strategies to vanquish the oppression performed by the owning class. So what are the strategies used to overcome this inequality?

The novel starkly represents inequality in its numerous forms as that the Capitol which represents the Base has an excess of both food and technology with a small population when compared to other districts which represent the Superstructure. Another form of inequality which is not only between the upper and the lower class, but also within districts themselves, the first two districts received many benefits that the other districts do not, for instance the first two districts had training opportunities for the Hunger Games.

For this reason, we speculate that inequality in all its forms is present, it was a real obstacle for the working class, and it had a massive influence on their lives. Hence, they used many strategies, mainly revolution, to defeat this oppression and tyranny and their ultimate goal is, on the one hand, to establish a classless society wherein everyone is treated the same way and on the other hand to gain their status.

The main aim of the research is to critically explore the representation of class struggle in the novel; emphasizing the marginalized category from the hegemonic power structure, to

prove that the author Suzanne Collins uncovers the layers of the economic struggles at that time and to show that this literary work is a product and a showcase of the manipulation and control of the owning class's ideology over the working class.

The following section reviews previous studies as Suzanne Collins is not the first and only author who examines Marxism, class conflict and social, political and geographical marginalization.

Among other authors, Monalisa M. in her article "Marxism: Meaning, Features and Principles" says that Marxism is strongly linked to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, two German philosophers. It is a broad concept that is related to Karl Marx's both economic and political theories. The major concern of this theory is to discount the struggle between classes that are socially connected (Monalisa M).

According to Gerald Duane Berreman in his book "Race, Caste, and Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification"; society is classified when its segments are split into categories of distinct levels of power, wealth, reward and esteem that is determined either by birth which is specified according to race, sex, and ethnicity, or by achievements which are specified by education, wealth and power (384-386).

Marx believes that power is the main cause of the division between the societies. Furthermore, according to him, power is one of the Marxist approaches that emphasizes on the one hand the relationship between power and class domination and on the other hand, why the oppressed classes; mainly untouchables, seem to welcome their alienation, marginalization and oppression (Jessop 1).

This work uses an analytical and marxist approach where our primary source is going to be a literary work of the twenty-first century, namely Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*. The literary approach which will be used is the Marxist criticism approach as it reflects the

story's events, because it appears that the novel is highly influenced by Marx belief of class struggle.

For instance the Capitol and the 12 districts oppose each other, representing the exploited proletariat who are the producers of goods, and the wealthy Bourgeoisie who are the elite and the consumers of those goods. Similarly, in the novel, the Capitol exploits District 12 for coal, District 11 for agriculture and so on...

Hence, the approach is selected to examine the struggle and clash between the opposed social classes and the strategies used by the oppressed class to overcome this quarrel. Therefore, the study will comprise a general introduction, three chapters with sections, in addition to the general conclusion.

The first chapter entitled A Theoretical Background of the Marxist Theory of Class, this chapter will provide background information necessary to understand some theoretical key concepts and how the theory is adapted in literary works. The second chapter is entitled Analyzing Marxism in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008). The first will focus on the story of Katniss who struggles to survive regardless to the obstacles she faces. This chapter will discuss one of the issues she faces which is marginalization in all its forms and the injustice and the inequity practiced by the Capitol of Panem towards the districts. The third and the last chapter is entitled Overcoming the Issue of Class. This chapter will focus on discussing the strategies used by the oppressed people so as to defeat the issue of class struggle; this chapter will also include a rebellious acts performed by Katniss in order to overcome the issue above mentioned, and finally the mission from marginalization to empowerment. Furthermore, the conclusion will summarize how the philosophy of Marxism coincides with the story events and how it is starkly portrayed in the plot of the *The Hunger Games* novel.

Chapter one: Theoretical Background of the Marxist Theory of Class

This chapter is an attempt to the examination of the Marxist theory; it focuses on defining the theoretical background, shedding lights on some theoretical key concepts regarding the Marxian class theory necessary to understand the theory as well as its adaptation in literary works, and shedding light on the conflicted classes.

1. Overview of the Marxist Theory of Class

Before dealing with the narrow and profound definition of “Marxism”, some broad and general views are required. The term “Marxism” is derived from the name of Karl Heinrich Marx, who is “A revolutionary, sociologist, historian and economist” (McLellan and Feuer). It is an ideology through which Marx claimed the two main groups that make up a society, “the capitalists” who are those who do not produce stuff they need, rather they take those of people below them which are “labourers” or “proletarians”, as named by Marx, under the form of exploitation (Kenton). Furthermore, Erik Olin Wright and Luca Perrone state that a given class cannot be recognized until it is referred to in terms of the other class (33). i.e., to define and to know one class, it has to be referred to in terms of the other one.

Moreover, according to Bob Jessop, Marxism is a political, economic and philosophical doctrine by Karl Marx; this theory aims at finding how power is divided within a society. According to Karl Marx, the concept of “power” belongs only to one class of a given society, which is the ruling class. Furthermore, in a capitalist system the prominent wealthy people do not produce goods they need; rather, they take those of the people below them in the form of exploitation. Duly, the ruling classes are the ones who are given and granted power to exploit the working classes (Jessop 2-6).

In simple words, in order to figure out the basis and the nature of the distinction between

these classes, both power and dominance should be taken into consideration because they are the pillars that make the huge gap between those conflicting classes; also in the Marxist theory this difference is the result of the class struggle.

Exploitation, as Erik Olin Wright defines “a structure of inter-dependent antagonistic interests in which advancing the interests of exploiters depends upon their capacity to impose harm on the exploited” (Wright 32), is considered as the main reason behind the struggle between the two classes taking into consideration that the workers were being exploited by the capitalists in order to take advantage of them.

However, Jahor Azarkievič denotes that Weber and Marx have defined the concept of social class "as economically determined and genetically conflicting groups, where the presence or absence of property serves as the basis of the separation into these groups" (2). This shows that it is attributable to the prosperity and wealth of each one in a society is what makes that persons obtain either higher classes or lower classes. So, Because of their good economic position, people who belong to the high class or as Marx named the "bourgeoisie" are the ones who possess both power and control.

To put it simpler, the superstructure is the category of a society in which people who have control are using the poor for their own benefits and the latter are obliged to serve them in order to stay alive. i.e., the relationship between these two categories is a master-servant relationship, one orders and the other executes.

In brief, Karl Marx’s social class theory is based on the idea that one society is divided into two categories: the “Bourgeoisie” also named the ruling class and the “Proletariats” also named the working class. These two classes are in a perpetual conflict as a result of the unfair division between them in terms of power and material production, this conflict is known as “class struggle”.

2. Social Classes

Classis is the word from which the term “class” was derived. It was first used by census takers in order to classify the citizens on the basis of wealth for military services (Abdellatif 79). In the same context, Karen Christensen and David Levinson note that “According to Marxist theory, in any human community there are two basic antagonistic classes; the exploiters, the ruling class or bourgeoisie, and the exploited, the subject class or proletariat” (Christensen and Levinson 219). Furthermore, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* clarify that “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other bourgeoisie and proletariat” (Qtd. in Hamilton 5).

In this respect, Simon J Charlesworth provides a broader definition for the term class, he defines it as “a circumscribed way of knowing the world that they did not choose, rather they grew to live within it, they absorbed it as the space absorbed them in demanding that they comport themselves in a certain manner in order to be successful within its parameters” (64). This quote implies two main principles. The first apparent belief is that the belonging of a person to a specific class; be it low or high, is far from free will. This means that a poor or a rich man has no control over his rank and so a rich man has never chosen to be one. The second principle is a consequence of the first one. As a poor man has not decided on his status, he has only to adapt to his class and do his best to melt within and be its model.

Class as a social category in the social construction is not easy to be presented. In her article *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, Paula S. Rothenberg notes “Differences between rich and poor, which result from particular ways of structuring the economy, are socially constructed as innate differences among people. These differences are then used to rationalize or justify the unequal distribution of wealth and power that results from economic

decisions made to perpetuate privilege” (9). This quote shows how people’s differences and hierarchical ranking in the socioeconomic ladder is just an alibi that justifies the dominating class’s cruelty and unfairness. On the one hand, it justifies the lower status that the poor class belongs to. On the other hand, it stands for the huge amount of power and money given to a specific category at the expense of the other.

In simple words, in any society, social class issue is always present; where the classification of the people of a certain community is based on their wealth, power, their educational level as well as their prosperity. In the Marxist theory, a given community is made up of two main classes “the upper class” also named “the bourgeoisie”, and the “lower class” also named “the proletariat”. These two opposing forces go against each other, the lower class is obliged to produce goods for the upper class which is the dominating class and use those goods for their own benefits.

2.1. The Bourgeois

In the capitalist society, there is a class distinction which is based on the division of the members of the society into two main groups, called “classes”, as it is mentioned above, thus the capitalists have an extreme dominance and superiority to the point that they have a privilege that makes them capable of taking advantages from the working class in merciless ways.

The bourgeoisie is the most powerful class which has a great dominance, as it owns and controls the means of production. Therefore, it uses those means to exploit the working class that needs a little income to survive. Hence, the upper class or bourgeoisie is characterized by human exploitation of the lower class or “proletariat” with unjust or cruel manner.

The bourgeoisie is known for its extreme superiority and dominance, on the one hand, it owns and controls the means of production as Berger defines “The wealthy, those in the

ruling class, who own the means of production” (Berger 50), and on the other hand it controls the proletarians’ thoughts and brains as Berger states “the bourgeoisie not only owns most of property in a given society, it also controls the ideas of the proletariat” (Berger 46), in this regard Karl Marx confirms that “The idea of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production”(Qtd. in Berger 46). In the same regard, Bressler confirms “it is the capitalist who decree what beliefs are acceptable, what values are to be held, and what laws are to be formed” (Bressler 171).

To sum up, the bourgeoisie class is the one that owns capitals and have large economic investments in all sectors. To guarantee the continuity of its dominance, this faction exploits the people of the working class whose main goal in life is to provide a living that is a stable income and shelter. To avoid working under such tough conditions, these less privileged people have only one choice which is to revolt against this injustice.

2.2. The proletariat:

To describe the exact meaning of the proletariat, Arthur Asa Burger defines it as “the mass of workers, who [are] exploited by this ruling class” (Berger 44), In a capitalist society where the bourgeois people are the ones who make the rules that the proletarians have to obey, this latter, instead of benefiting from what they work, it is the ruling class which does so. Thus, the workers are severely exploited as Berger confirms “the proletariat, who are terribly exploited and are the source of the wealth of the ruling classes” (Berger 50).

As long as the working conditions are concerned, Adam Przeworski provides a broader definition, he writes “The proletarians were the poor and miserable people who were thrown off the land and forced to sell themselves they were the people who toiled day and night, next

to a machine, in noise and dirt, producing. They knew not what just to survive until the following day so that they could sell themselves again” (55-56). In the same regard Berger confirms that “In bourgeois societies, workers do not take pleasure in their work, according to Marx; they do it only as a means of satisfying other needs. Workers work not for themselves, but for someone else and the work belongs to others” (50).

So, the proletariat or the lower class are the people who work for the upper class, they don't enjoy enough rights like any other, they don't have a social status, they get low income, they are not educated enough to get a better life and they are extremely deprived from their freedom. Despite all this, the proletarians play a significant role in the capitalist society because all the activities are held on their shoulders for the growth of the capitalist society that is why the capitalist society needs them (Przeworski 55).

Due to, on the one hand, the exploitation that the proletarians face and the hard work that they do so as to, only, satisfy the bourgeoisie's needs and on the other hand the mental pressure that they receive, Berger claims “the poor are also victims of alienation; they are alienated from their work, experience themselves only as commodities, and suffer grievously, both physically and psychologically” (Berger 50).

Despite the hard conditions that the proletarians work in and despite the workers' knowledge that they are unfairly treated compared to the ruling class members, some proletarians have a false consciousness about the circumstances that they are going through, others develop a class consciousness which leads them to determine their goals. These members, despite of their fear from the ruling class, want to gain the freedom that they deserve, get totally rid of the capitalist system, establish a classless society where all people, including the rich one are treated the same way, and make an end to the exploitation and tyranny.

3. Class Struggle

Even though it was not born in the Marxist thought, class struggle had a considerable presence in Karl Marx sociological contributions. Class struggle includes the phenomenon of inequality that occurs between classes of society as well as is considered as a result of economic, social and even cultural separation between these classes.

Thus, the conflict leaves a negative impact on society as a whole, in particular the oppressed class. It is highly assumed that socioeconomic status is not the only reason behind class distinction, regarding this Mike Wayne writes “Class designates a social and economic position and it always involves an antagonistic relation between classes. It is not the only cause of social division and conflict and is indeed usually complexly interwoven with other factors, from geography to the other social identities such as ethnicity or gender” (6). This quote conveys that among the reasons behind class conflict is the social and economic unbalance between classes. This issue has a significant effect on putting strong barriers and spreading enmity between the two categories. However influential, economy is inherent with other motives for instance geography, ethnicity and gender which contribute to the split of the society. Thus, the working class is not only socially marginalized but also geographically and politically marginalized.

As a consequence of the socioeconomic-based division of the society, Kailash Pyakuryal notes “the basic condition of class lay in the unequal distribution of economic power and hence the unequal distribution of opportunity” (16). This implies that the categories of society are organized according to their economic status and this latter decides to which class that person belongs. i.e., if the person is born poor and he is from a poor family he would certainly belong to the working class, however, if the person is born rich he would belong to the ruling class,

In other words, the classification of the people is on the basis of their socioeconomic lives that they enjoy. More precisely, it is all about the level of luxury of each person. In depth explanation, the people of the high class are the perfect example; they have almost all materials, funds and everything that can help them establish labour, work and to employ as many workers as they need, these workers are the people of the low class who struggle to equip those of high class so as to enjoy better life conditions and to improve their circumstances.

According to Marta Harnecker, class struggle is divided into three major forms; “political”, “economic” and “ideological” (31). Categorically, the political struggle is about both classes’ hope to gain power. The economic struggle is concerned with all what is related to economy like trades, production relationships...etc. This struggle always occurs between two different classes that are not economically equal. Finally, the ideological struggle is about the difference in the intellectual, cultural, and religious trends of the conflicting classes (Harnecker 31-32).

These three types of struggle are related to each other, in the same view Harnecker confirms “nevertheless, these different kinds of struggle do not exist, separated from one another, but are fused into a single unity which constitutes the class struggle as such or the confrontation of one class with another” (32).

The bourgeoisie is the main cause of the struggle between the classes, by exploiting the efforts of the proletariat, in this case the proletariat decided to take action in order to establish their existence and regain their freedom. For them, the only solution that the proletariat ended up with is to make a huge revolution so as to limit the problems they faced form the part of the bourgeoisie, as well as to limit the phenomena of class in the society.

3.1. Class struggle in literary works

The issue of class struggle existed from the beginning of human life and still exists in the

modern human societies as Karl Marx explains in his book *The Communist Manifesto* “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Qtd. in Wolfson and Funke 580). Class struggle is not a new issue, rather, it existed throughout the history and in earlier ages.

According to Mark Ighile literature is “a form of expression. It communicates, instructs and entertains. It opens vistas of human life and experience to an audience or reader” (Ighile 314). I.e., literature is a fancy tool used by writers to embellish the meaning of life through implementing imagination and reason in a creative way which attracts the reader's attention.

The issue of class struggle is displayed in literary works just as in real life, the literary works talk about the exploitation of the bourgeoisie on the proletarians and explains how the latter are taken advantage of by the system and how they are oppressed and unfairly treated. Thus, class struggle and literature are related to each other, class struggle is mirrored through literature, and the latter is the only way for the writers to convey all societal aspects. In this regard C. David Lisman believes that “proletarian literature, or the committed literature of the Marxist, is considered to be not merely a passive reflection of proletarian social relations” (74) and adds “The proletarian writer reflects economic and social reality not merely by showing the effects of economic and social injustice upon individual personalities, but by creating characters who typify the historic plight that many proletariats experience” (74-75).

Marxists see literature the same as M.H Abrams defines it “not as works created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as ‘products’ of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era” (Abrams 149), this signifies that Marxist concerns are portrayed through literature by authors who tend to convey every single aspect of the Marxist theory and then let the readers analyze and discover class struggle in that literary work. In this regard Tyson confirms “literature grows out of and reflects real material/historical

conditions” (66).

Furthermore, Terry Eagleton confirms “Marxist criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies- the ideas, the value and feelings by which men experience the society at various times. And certain of those ideas, values and feelings are available to us only in literature” (12). This indicated that since literature reflects society and serves to mirror every single aspect, it is used to show what is going on in a given society, what ideologies people follow...etc.

Class struggle affected all aspects of life including literature. Literature is seen by the writers as the only escape through which they can express the problems, precisely class struggle, that face a certain category in the society. As talking about economics, exploitation, needs etc. They see literature as a social product that works on the circumstances of societies and consider it as a mirror that they can see themselves through; also it is considered as a catalyst which enables them to encounter the exploiting class (Namboodiripad 9).

Moreover, as far as literature and Marxist theory are concerned, Richard Abcarian, Marvin Klotz and Samuel Cohen write

The Marxist critic analyzes literary works to show how, wittingly or unwittingly, they support the dominant social class, or how they, in some way, contribute to the struggle against oppression and exploitation. And since critic views literature as just one among the variety of human activities that reflect power relations and class divisions, he or she is likely to be more interested in what a work says than in its formal structure (Abcarian et al. 4638)

Simply put, the Marxist theory and literary works are related to the political, economic and

social status of the community; also literature can express what is covered in reality and that it is the tool that is used to convey all the aspects which occur in the real life.

There are many writers whose are written in terms of the Marxist theory for example Rafey Habib who states that “a working class culture could not be produced within a bourgeoisie economic framework and that the workers could only advance if created for themselves the necessary intellectual weapons in their struggle for liberation” (Habib 538), he means that the proletarians have to develop “intellectual weapons” such as writings, art... etc. which will be used as a way to stop the domination of the bourgeoisie. This indicates that literature, in general, is such an effective weapon for the people of the working class that will help them make their voice heard and thus make an end to the dominance of the people of the high class.

In brief, it is presumed that, literature can serve as a successful tool which can provoke a kind of movement and create a wave of awareness regarding the proletarians to claim their rights as it serves, on the one hand, in mirroring and reflecting all societal aspects, be them good or bad, and on the other hand it serves in paving the way for the workers to revolt. Furthermore, the struggle between the classes altered the societal structure.

3.2. Marxist Criticism

The literary analysis provided by Marxist criticism is based on the historical circumstances, which have direct relations with literature, and assigned with the intention of raising the value of some ideologies that are found in literature. Moreover, Marxist criticism is one of the most complex sociological phenomena; it begins with the works of Marx and Engels. These two theorists always tend to analyze and connect the literary works with the political and the ideological conditions. Among the concepts that the Marxist criticism gives value is understanding “styles” and “meanings” contained in a literary work (Eagleton 3).

Terry Eagleton is one of the theorists who had several contributions as long as Marxist literary criticism is concerned. He defines the Marxist criticism that it is “not a merely sociology of literature, concerned with how novel get published and whether they mention the working class” (Eagleton 3), but also “its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its form, style, and meaning. But it also means grasping those forms, styles and meaning as the product of particular history” (3). By saying so, Eagleton attempts to set forth the main purpose of the Marxist criticism and the objectives it tries to fulfill, according to him, it is an assessment of the political affiliation of literary production, it also examines the class components presented in literature. Furthermore, concerning literary works, he insists that Marxist criticism should not be seen through superficial lenses, however it must be given a deeper attention regarding the form, style and most importantly meaning.

Moreover, Terry Eagleton, when talking about Marxist literary criticism he concentrates on the necessity of considering the historical background by which a particular literary work is produced. Also the Marxist literary criticism relates the ideology to literature, because in every literary work ideology is present as the basis that connects between “mental” and “material” means of production. In addition it can guide the person to understand the ideology through the literary works (Kaur 5). In most literary works, there are many things that intersect with reality. Through what has been mentioned previously, Eagleton clarifies the relationship between literary works and the historical approach of Marxism. In other words everything that is related to history is important and should be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

As it is informally recognized in many societies, there are two common social classes: upper class and the lower class. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels tackle their

ideology and belief about the division of societies based on power, wealth and control.

Accordingly, this theory of class struggle is clearly present, precisely, in the first part of the fictional trilogy series by Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* (2008); class struggle is the most flagrant topic in the novel, the author uncovers the layers of the economic and social struggles where the prominent wealthy people of the Capitol do not produce goods they need, rather, they take those of the people below them in the form of exploitation. Although people from Districts are starving and oppressed, they must give all goods to the Capitol in order to survive and hoping that their living conditions will be better. Throughout the coming chapter will show how this literary work is a product of a showcase of the manipulation and control of the owning class over the workforce, namely, the Capitol over the twelve poor districts.

Chapter Two: Analyzing Marxism in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008)

Young-adult literature is written for teenage readers, in this regard Steven VanderStaay in defines it as “literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. Such novels are generally of moderate length and told from the first person” (1). His definition indicates that the novels whose main character is a “teenager” and which tackle the same kind of problems that the characters may face, attract basically teenagers’ attention to read.

The Hunger Games (2008) is a contemporary young-adult novel which deals with one of the major issues in the modern world which is class struggle. Throughout the first trilogy of the novel, the conflict between classes as well as the relationship between them is starkly present and easily seen. Consequently, this chapter attempts to shed light on the class struggle and provides a Marxist analysis of *The Hunger Games* through its characters that represent two totally different social classes.

Thus, the first section of the chapter provides an overview about the writer Suzanne Collins and her novel. The second section discusses how the issue coincides with the events within the novel and how the characters encountered and faced the issue of marginalization in all its forms with concrete examples.

1. Introduction to the Author and Her Work

Suzanne Collins is a well-known author for her prevalent novels: “*The Hunger Games Trilogy*”: *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Movingjay* (2010), in addition to other novels and realizations. This section provides a short biography of the writer Suzanne Collins and a brief summary of the novel under study.

1.1. Suzanne Collins Biography

Suzanne Collins was born on August 10, 1962 in Hartford, Connecticut. She is an American author and screenwriter. Because of her father's job and due to the fact that he was an Air Force officer, her family moved several times to many places like New York and Brussels. At Indiana University, Suzanne graduated from high school in Alabama and then studied theatre and telecommunications at Indiana University, after that, at New York University; she was a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts (Cunningham).

In 2008, Suzanne Collins wrote "The Hunger Games" trilogy which received a critical success and a wide popularity and saleability, it was one of her most successful works, it is read by all age categories: adults, teenagers...etc. The novel tells the story of the domination of the Capitol which obliges the twelve poor districts to participate in a televised competition to fight each other till death with only one player remained alive who will be then announced as a victor. Katniss Everdeen, the main protagonist of *The Hunger Games*, Petta Mellark and Gale attracted the teenagers' attention. The first part of the trilogy was then followed by the two other parts *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mokingjay* (2010) respectively, and thus gained a lot of attention by both critics and fans; the three parts were then labeled as best-seller for the years (Cunningham).

Moreover, the novel echoed due to the realization of its story-based film, Cunningham states "By that time [2012] more than 30 million copies of the trilogy were in print in the United States alone, and e-book sales were particularly robust" (Cunningham). Thus, the film helped increasing the success of the novel especially when actors have nailed their roles worthily.

1.2. A Brief Summary of the Novel

The Hunger Games (2008) novel by Suzanne Collins consists of three main parts entitled

“The Tributes”, “The Games” and “The victors” respectively. And each part consists of nine chapters. The story of the novel is about the dominating Capitol and the mistreated twelve districts of Panem, the so called “The Hunger Games” is an event which is a televised competition in which two children, one boy and one girl, from each district are forced to sacrifice and fight each other till death (Collins 19), the only child remained alive is then declared as the winner of the hunger games of the year.

Regarding the rules of the game, Suzanne Collins writes:

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 twentyfour 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 (18).

The first part entitled “The Tributes”, starts with the main character and protagonist Katniss Everdeen, whom the novel is centered on, narrating the events of the whole novel. Through this part, readers are informed about, on the one hand, the main characters of the novel Katniss, her younger sister Prim, her mother, Gale her best friend and Peeta. And on the other hand both Katniss’ and Peeta’s living conditions.

Katniss a teenage girl from district twelve in Panem, also known as the hunter, she lives with her mother and younger sister and whose father is dead, thus, she is the one responsible for her family by providing food and taking good care of them, she says

It was slow-going at first, but I was determined to feed us. I stole eggs from nests, caught fish in nets, sometimes managed to shoot a squirrel or rabbit for stew, and

gathered the various plants that sprung up beneath my feet. Plants are tricky .Many are edible, but one false mouthful and you're dead . I checked and double-checked the plants I harvested with my father's pictures. I kept us alive" (Collins 51).

She took care of her family as her father is dead, she provided them with food no matter how, the circumstances obliged Katniss to take the role of looking after her mother and sister and she literally managed to do so.

In the day of reaping is the day of choosing children, named as tributes, from the districts to fight each other, the selection process of the tributes is based on picking names randomly from glass balls, one glass ball consists of girls' names and the other one contains boys' names. The escort of district twelve tributes announces "Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor!" (Collins 19), against all odds, Katniss's sister name, Prim, is the one which is picked, and thus Prim is the girl who is chosen as a tribute. Katniss immediately volunteers to sacrifice instead of her younger sister. When Katniss volunteers she gasps "I volunteer, I volunteer as tribute!" (Collins 22).

The other selected name from boys' glass ball was Peeta who has a crush on Katniss since his childhood. Hence, both selected tributes were taken to the Capitol with other tributes from the other districts in order to be prepared and to get ready for the hunger games. Surprisingly, after they start the training process and during a held interview, Peeta announces his crush for Katniss. "Ladies and gentlemen, let the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games begin!" (Collins 147). These are the words said by the announcer Claudius Templesmith to start the event.

The second part entitled "The Games" in which the tributes of all districts are taken to the arena after being trained. From the very beginning of the game, Katniss was other tributes' aim of attack. Thus they did everything in order to get rid of her but they couldn't. Katniss

became a friend with Rue, a girl from district eleven, who helped her. Not so lucky, little Rue was killed by a tribute and Katniss feels devastated after Rue's death. All of a sudden and unexpectedly, it is announced that this year the rules are unusual and two tributes can win only if they are from the same district.

The third and the last part of the novel is entitled "The Victor", after the announcement of the new rules, Katniss immediately goes looking for Peeta. She fed him, helped him, took care of him and moved him into a more secure place.

After Peeta gets well, only three tributes are remained alive: Peeta, Katniss and Cato; Katniss and Peeta manage to kill Cato. Unexpectedly again, it is announced that the rules are changed back, only one winner is allowed to be crowned as a victor, this announcement obliges Katniss and Peeta to choose who is going to kill the other and it cannot be helped, but, as everyone know the love shared between the two, Peeta and Katniss used it as a way to oblige the Capitol to declare them as victors, in addition to this, they threaten the Capitol by committing suicide by eating "night locks" under the slogan: we die together of we win together. Suddenly, the announcer shouts: "Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark! I give you — the tributes of District Twelve!" (Collin 345). Eventually, they are both crowned as victors. This was a rebellious act against the dominating Capitol that no one dared to do before.

2. Experiencing class struggle in *The Hunger Games*

The novel under study is highly influenced by Karl Marx's theory of class division. Therefore, this section provides concrete examples and proofs about how the poor people are treated by the rich. Particularly, how the ruling Capitol are treating people from the poor districts in Panem.

In Panem, the main goal behind the game created by the Capitol is to show and continue their boundless and ruthless dominance. This ruling class only craves for a total control over poor people making their only and ultimate goal be survival. However entertaining for the Capitol, the persecuted district residents are conscious of the game's tyrannical reality. Unfortunately, the victims have nothing to do to stop it and even though there is one winner at the end of the game, the only winner is always going to be the Capitol (Pharr and Clark 181).

2.1. Analyzing Characters in Terms of the Marxist Theory

As it is mentioned before, Marxism mostly negotiates the conflicts of the ruling class over the working class. *The Hunger Games* is considered as a great example that indicates different Marxist elements. It reflects the materialistic characteristics of the society, in which the Capitol of Panem has a huge dominance over all the districts. Panem contains thirteen districts and it witnessed remarkable prosperity after it was considered as a weak country. This is what the Marxist ideology involves; the people with low grade (the districts) are in the service of the wealthy people who have control over them (the Capitol).

As long as class struggle issue is concerned, district twelve, where the two major characters Peeta and Katniss belong, is one of the poorest districts. This district is characterized by an extreme poverty to the point that its citizens are starving as Katniss declares "our part of district 12, nicknamed the Seam, is usually crawling with coal miners heading out to the morning shift at this hour" (Collins 4). District 12 is considered among the sources of production that work for the Capitol of Panem. The inhabitants of this district are known to work in mines, including Katniss. There is also the district 11 were people of are famous by agriculture, and as mentioned earlier, all products are returned to the Capitol. Not only this, but also President Snow has prevented the districts from dealing with each other

with the purpose of preserving the Capitol's economy. It can be seen from the following quotation that describes the situation of the districts, when Katniss and another girl from another district named Rue are talking with each other and then Rue says "It's interesting, hearing about her life. We have so little communication with anyone outside our district ... I wonder if the game makers are blocking out our conversation ..." (Collins 203).

2.1.1. Katniss

Katniss is the main character in this novel and she is the one who tells us the story. She is strong and independent, right away she is identified as the hunter and gatherer for her family, a role traditionally thought of as that of the "man of the house". Now, granted she is the oldest in her family and there are no more men left, particularly a man to help her family. She hunts with Gale not because she needs his help but like a group of men hunting together (Madelynn 2). Katniss, who was among the victims chosen by the Capitol in order to participate in this game is considered as a symbol of rejection of the Capitol's rules, and the writer considered it the first step to make people of districts revolt to regain their freedom.

It is known that the purpose of making this game is always in favor of the Capitol, but Katniss was not led to these conditions. It can be seen from this quotation "Yes, they have to have victor, the whole thing would blow up in the game makers' faces. They'd have failed the capitol. Might possibly even be executed, slowly and .painfully while the cameras broadcast to every screen in the country" (Collins 344). Katniss explains the trick that she made in order to survive from this game; she faked eating poison berries with her competitor Peeta Mallark. Katniss and Peeta got so much attention by making this act in order to get away from this game. From this, Katniss starts opposing the laws of the Capitol in order to improve her living conditions as well as that of the people of districts.

2.1.2. Peeta

Peeta is a piece of what Marx calls “the proletarians”. Even though he lives in one of the poorest districts of Panem but compared to Katniss he and his family never struggle to have food unlike Katniss and her family do. However, he provides her and her family with food in the form of help and kindness. After being selected as a tribute to fight in the arena, he is considered as one of the victimized children of Panem due to the Capitol’s absolute power. Peeta is aware that the ruling Capitol is using him and other children as a way of entertainment and to reach their cruel aim, this quote shows how Peeta is apt to the Capitol’s cruelty and that he is conscious of being morally and physically used “... to show the Capitol they don’t own me. That I’m more than just a piece in their Games” (Collins 236).

2.1.3. Haymitch Abernathy

Haymitch is the mentor and the advisor of the two tributes, Katniss and Peeta, from district 12. Although he belongs to the districts but after winning the Hunger Games he became a rich man as promised by the enacted rules of the Games by the Capitol. He provided Katniss and Peeta with advices as he has already experienced the Game, he is “one of the most influential characters in terms of political impact” (Heit 89). Heit adds that Haymitch “reduces politics in the context of the Hunger Games to a simple and constant goal: survival” (89). Even though he benefited from being previously crowned as a victor but his hatred towards the Capitol still exists. Psychologically speaking, Katniss won the games because she took his advice, that of “staying alive” (Collins 60), into consideration and she managed to stay alive in the arena and then be crowned as a victor at the end of the games. In addition to that, Haymitch represents victory since he considers the Capitol as an enemy.

2.1.4. President Snow

President Snow represents the ruling upper class. Snow rules Panem in despotic and

dictatorial manner, so that he can control the poor citizens who belong to the districts and in order to benefit from them by operating and exploiting them. He is the one who obliges each and every district to provide him with two children to fight in the arena. Each district seeks to work day and night to provide everything that serves the Capitol. President Snow was not satisfied with this amount of unjust rule and exploitation, he organized kind of competition under the name of “*The Hunger Games*” which is according to him is a sort of entertainment. President Snow shows up only in particular occasions, whenever he shows up it seems like he is very powerful and everyone, especially townspeople of districts, fear for just seeing him. As he represents the upper class he represents cruelty and tyranny as well.

2.1.5. Claudius Templesmith

Being part of the ruling class, the “bourgeoisie” as termed by Marx, Templesmith is the announcer of the games. Describing him, in the novel, Katniss says “Claudius Templesmith’s voice booms down from overhead” (Collins 244). Both his high pitch of voice and the way he speaks represent leadership, dominance and superiority. Being a member of the bourgeois society, he follows the same as what president snow and other members do as far as psychological as well as physical oppression is concerned. Thus, Claudius’ belonging to the bourgeoisie justifies his oppressive behaviour.

2.2. Class struggle in the Plot

The two opposing categories in this novel are the people who live in the districts of Panem and the “Gamemakers” of the Ruling Capitol, as Mardalena states “Plot ... is the arrangement of events that make up a story. Many fictional plots turn on a conflict or struggle between opposing forces, that is usually resolved by the end of the novel” (Mardalena 27). In other words, the struggle of power between the bourgeoisie who are the Capitol and proletariat who

are the Districts as well as the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed and between the exploiting and the exploited is clearly seen throughout *The Hunger Games*.

Explicitly, the events coincide with the Marxist class theory, where the bourgeoisie rely on the proletariat to produce the goods that they need rather than making them themselves, when reflecting this theory to the novel, the Capitol forces the thirteen districts to produce whatever they need, and the people of the districts are obliged to do so. Here is what the twelve districts are responsible of: luxury items, masonry and weapon, manufacturing, technology, fishing, power and electricity, transportation, lumber, textiles, grain, livestock, Agriculture, coal mining and nuclear technology, respectively (Hedash).

In depth explanation, the novel under study represents the struggle between classes, it talks basically about the working class, mainly the people who live in districts of Panem, and how they are forced to produce the goods for the Capitol's benefits, to sacrifice and take the risk and fight each other until death just for entertaining the Capitol. The fact that the oppressing Capitol is watching how the children are killing each other and consider this death game as an entertainment is itself oppressing. Collins writes "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do" (19). The Games are clearly seen as a sign of social stratification, in this regard Collins says "This is the capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy" (18).

In the eyes of the people living in districts, The Hunger Games are used as a technique of "punishment", contrarily; it is an entertaining technique for the Capitol who are not interested in being materialistic, rather, they interested in showing the social differences principally their dominance and superiority (Wilson 102).

Before start giving examples about oppression in the novel, it is necessary to understand what does the word "reaping" mean, which refers to the day when the Capitol to choose

children from districts to fight in the arena. The word *reap* itself is oppressing, according to the Oxford Wordpower dictionary the word *reap* is defined as “to cut and collect a crop”. The dictionary provides an example for better understanding: “you reap what you sow” which means to be responsible for what you have done (“Reap”). When reflecting this explanation on the novel, in the day of reaping, the Capitol reaps children and forcing them to fight each other until death as if children have made a mistake and they then have to be responsible for doing so.

As it is above mentioned, class struggle is depicted perfectly through the novel, not only between the two main categories, but also between districts themselves. In depth explanation, not only the poor districts are at the mercy of the Capitol but also the wealthier districts are so. In this light, Collins asserts “... The competition will be far beyond my abilities. Kids from wealthier districts, where winning is a huge honor, who’ve been trained their whole lives for this ... Girls who know twenty different ways to kill you with a knife” (Collins 36). On the light of this quote, it is clearly seen that even within the twenty districts of Panem, there is a gap between the rich and the poor. Some tributes from districts are richer than other tributes of other districts.

For example, when we compare Katniss with other children of other districts, it is noticed that other children are already prepared for the fights in addition to enjoying some facilities unlike Katniss who only started her training by the time she had arrived to the training center. Furthermore the author confirms “The exceptions are the kids from the wealthier districts, the volunteers, the ones who have been fed and trained throughout their lives for this moment. The tributes from 1, 2, and 4 traditionally have this look about them” (Collins 94).

Another reflection of class struggle in the novel is depicted when the Capitol honors the tribute remained alive and his/her district by providing them with a simpler and easier life,

and indulging them with gifts and stuff that they need, while other districts, unlike them, suffer from hunger. In this regard Collins states “The last tribute alive receives a life of ease back home, and their district will be showered with prizes, largely consisting of food. All year, the Capitol will show the winning district gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation” (19).

Furthermore, the time when oppressed people of the twelve districts are busy with struggling to achieve their survival, rich people from the oppressing Capitol are busy with being gorgeous attractive and nice looking. In this regard, Collins confirms “They do surgery in the Capitol, to make people appear younger and thinner. In District 12, looking old is something of an achievement since so many people die early ... here it is different. Wrinkles aren't desirable. A round belly isn't a sign of success” (124). To put it simpler, the residents of the Capitol adopt a system of social stratification with the citizens of the districts; they enjoy all what is luxury; they do not only gain power at the expense of poor people, but also gain better physical beauty at the expense of the district people's looks. The Capitol's beauty standards were too high to be expected to be seen in the people of districts who work hard and suffer just to earn slices of bread.

"Rue's death has forced me to confront my own fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us. But here, even more strongly than at home, I feel my impotence. There's no way to take revenge on the Capitol. Is there?" (Collins 236). This quote, once again, depicts the weakness of the districts' victims in contrast to the higher class dominance. Katniss' grief over the death of her friend Rue and her internal struggle caused by losing a partner is only a consequence of a bigger struggle, that of class struggle. This incident only fuels the hatred inside Katniss' heart towards the capitol people, worsened by the inability to revenge. This scene proves how little is the lower class' voice compared to the higher one.

Once more, Katniss' internal struggle carries on "I want to do something ... to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I" (Collins 236-237). After the feeling of anger and unreachable revenge, Katniss' thoughts went far to be challenging. By the time she realized there was no place for armed actions, there came time for longing self-recognition. She finally wants to prove that she and her murdered friend were not only tools for the Capitol but have their own presence and voice.

"I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking out our conversation, because even though the information seems harmless, they don't want people in different districts to know about one another" (Collins 203). The bourgeois own a complete authority over the proletariat, even "Days of hunting and gathering for this one meal ... it would be a poor substitution for the Capitol version" (Collins 65). Marx's view of the bourgeois overpassing the proletariat is depicted in the quote. The victim players cannot even contact each other for the little things. Evidently "the gamemakers" are seen to be dominating all aspects of life of the proletariat, even the least of them.

The Capitol owns massive wealth of all kinds, people living there are capable of doing anything, while townspeople from districts do what they ask them to do, in this regard, Katniss says "Maybe being the least prestigious, poorest, most ridiculed district in the country has its advantages. Such as, being largely ignored by the Capitol as long as we produce our coal quotas" (Collins 203). This quote coincides with Marx's thoughts about the bourgeois and the proletariat. The proletariat are asked and then forced to produce goods, meanwhile, the bourgeois just take those goods for their own benefits.

Conclusion

The Hunger Games is a novel that poses social problems, particularly, class struggle and the exploitation of people from the lower class. It shows their struggle, it reveals more of the injustice against them as well as their attempt to attain equal rights and if not just to get rid of the oppressor. The Capitol by handling the Games, are reminding the townspeople of their low status, lack of freedom and inferiority which is very oppressing and cruel. Thus, *The Hunger Games* novel events extremely coincide with Karl Marx's theory, the relationship between the exploiting and the exploited in terms of production and procurement of resources and the relationship between the oppressing and the oppressed and how they are forcing them to do things that they cannot actually bear and for the Capitol's own benefits since this latter sees the others below them as half humans rather than entirely humans.

Chapter Three: Overcoming the Issue of Marginalization

This chapter tackles how the underprivileged and oppressed people hope for a classless society wherein everyone is treated the same way and how they try to overcome the Capitol's oppression in its rigid forms along book one. Thus, this chapter starts with strategies, moves to rebellion and finally ends up with empowerment.

1. Strategies Used to Defeat the Class struggle

The oppressed people cannot speak up or take an action for anything, be it their economic status, poverty or even their lack of food because the government is the only one which controls and owns the means of production. Thus due to this extreme social inequality, the marginalized and oppressed category is obliged to apply some strategies in order to overthrow the undesirable tyrannical regime and oppression that they receive or at least minimize the harm.

In addition to the tributes' presence in the games, their looks play an important role in gaining aids during the games "Not only are the tributes' behaviors important, but their appearances and the personas that they choose to take on are important as well" (Harvey 85). The reason why the tributes have to be in their finest looks is to gain as many sponsors as they can to help them later in the games in getting supplies as the following quote says "The tributes' success in the Games is closely tied to the type and amount of sponsors they receive, as many of the citizens of the Capitol sponsor a tribute by sending those supplies during the games" (Harvey 85). Thus, winning sponsors is very important for the tributes, the more sponsors a tribute wins, the more chances of staying alive the tribute will have.

Winning the games did not only depend on survival skills of the tributes on the field, but also on playing smart to get the maximum of facilities. Gamers like Katniss could make use

of the sponsors which were allowed to contribute in sending aids to the fighters. That is to say when Katniss' rivals were only focused on their physical strength, she tried to make people like her so as to be shown and thus gain sympathy and attention of the public for as many sponsors as she could.

The enemy's weapon was another Katniss' strategy for defeat as Brianna Bruke confirms “she must enact the very ideology of the system she despises in order to survive” (59) and she adds “Katniss enacts the tactics of the system to survive” (59). Katniss thought that the best way to defeat the tributes is by applying the same principle the Capitol adapted, thus she “is forced to use the politics of Panem against her fellow tributes” (Bruke 59), the quote continues to explain that she has “to use hunger as a weapon in order to win the Games” (Bruke 59). Which means she focused on keeping her rivals hungry in order to survive. Katniss' smart moves prove that sometimes the key in fighting an enemy is to learn from his same strategies.

2. Rebellion

Due to the extreme social inequality, pressure, dominance and superiority of the Capitol and due to poverty, the fact that the inhabitants of the districts “battle starvation” (Collins 20) in addition to the fact that the ruling Capitol forces the poor people to produce goods and not allowing them to benefit from them led the poor people to revolt, in this regard Holt warns that “an oppressed class must either be cared for or become a threat” (Holt 255). The same as Marx believed that “the proletariat will one day spontaneously develop the class consciousness needed to rise up in violent revolution against their oppressors and create a classless society” (Tyson 54) because “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (Selden et al. 82).

Equally, class-consciousness is a significant factor which helped the poor people to take an action against the dominant class, in this regard; Robert Van Krieken et al. clarify that

Class consciousness means the members of a social group have fully awareness of the true situation, by realization of the nature of exploitation. Members of class develop a common identity, recognize their shared interest and unite, so producing class solidarity. The final stage of class consciousness and class solidarity is reached when members realize that only by collective action they can overthrow the ruling class, and takes positive steps to do so (40).

Generally speaking, the main reason behind the disobedience is seen from the very beginning of the novel, townspeople of the districts' extreme poverty and the way the Capitol treat them. Furthermore, they do not only oblige them to produce the goods and never benefit from them but also they oblige the families to sacrifice their children for the Capitol to be entertained.

In this regard, Shau Ming Tan comments "Thus, the system is constructed to turn children into agents of their family's survival: adults cannot provide, but children can. Childhood is stripped away as families and adults offer up their children as potential sacrifice" (4). This means that the Capitol is obliging the children to take the responsibility of their families which is not habitually occurring. For instance the district which is responsible of producing luxury items are not allowed to benefit from them, they are made only for the Capitol and the same thing for the rest districts.

Effectively, there were many rebellious actions by the persecuted districts over the dominating Capitol performed mainly by Katniss who is considered as the main figure of the disobedience, she says "I want to tell people that if you think for one second the Capitol will

treat us fairly...you are deluding yourself. Because you know who they are and what they do...we must fight back” (Collins 99).

Katniss refuses turning a blind eye, keeping silent and hands crossed, thus, her refusal of the entire situation leads her on the one hand to do her best to fight the persecuting government which leaves psychological and physical damage, and on the other hand to rebel, in this regard, Murphy claims that “Katniss’s awareness that she is being manipulated ultimately forces her ... to reject the parameters of the game entirely in order to escape it (204), and even though she was aware that her actions would be harmful for her and thus for each and every district and that it will risk a severe punishment and that the Capitol will never tolerate disobedience but she continued acting in rebellious ways; Green-Bartlett proclaims Katniss’s rebellious actions will certainly cause bad ramifications like “punishment”, “imprisonment” and even “death” (34). But she says after doing one of the rebellious performances “Everyone stares at me in disbelief” (Collins 102) which indicated that she knows well that she is sacrificing her life for doing so.

Berger talks about “Marxist whose actions show how people are being exploited and how the masses are given a false consciousness of their state and possibilities by bourgeois ideology” (46-47). When relating the quote to Katniss, it appears that her consciousness has defeated the bourgeois' tyranny. First, Katniss volunteering as a tribute instead of her younger sister then collaborating with other tributes ruined the bourgeois' rules of separation. Second, the death of Katniss' ally resulting in her showing love and respect disappointed the rulers' intentions. Finally, Katniss forcing the Capitol to crown her and another tribute as victors goes, again, against the defined rules. These acts resulted in devastating the game rules and thus the whole regime.

Taking into consideration previously mentioned aspects; a detailed explanation can be developed. First, Katniss volunteered instead of her younger sister was like she was challenging the regime, because the Capitol is doing its best to show to the people its dominance and that they can take the children while their families can do nothing about it. The Capitol tends to cover the reaping as if everyone is happy “Let’s give a big round of applause to our newest tribute!” (Collins 24) and they are enjoying every single part of it as if it is an entertaining event, contrarily to how the people from the districts are feeling about it, as for them it is a tragic event.

Second, when the tributes are taken to be trained and prepared for the games, while the Game makers were ignoring her presence, Katniss made her best to draw their attention when she delivered an arrow right where they were sitting, she says “I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers’ table” (Collins 101). This rebellious action, indeed, grabbed their attention and she says “thank you for your consideration” (Collins 102) and she, herself, confesses that her act was done “in the most disrespectful manner possible” (Collins 104).

Third, the mockingjay pin was first a symbol of luck and fortune for Katniss but her intentions was to use it as a challenging tool against the Capitol and to remind them of the previous rebellion as the Capitol used to use those birds in order to snoop on what the citizens say (Collins 43) those mockingjays “They’re ... something of a slap in the face to the Capitol.” (Collins 43), which indicated that Katniss uses whatever she finds beneficial and what can be destroying for the Capitol.

Fourth, Katniss’s alliance with Rue, She loved her even though they both know that in the eyes of the Capitol they are enemies and that they are totally not allowed to be allied with each other as the rules of the games are enacted, Katniss admits after each one of them is

gone that she is “feeling somehow worried. About Rue being killed, about Rue not being killed and the two of us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone” (Collins 211). In addition to this, Rue’s death effected Katniss’ thoughts and her anger against the Capitol grew. In “Fury and defiance” (Bruke 61) Katniss’s actions like singing and taking good care of Rue’s body and showing love and care for the other tributes totally contradicts with the rules and principles of the games which made the Capitol angry.

Fifth, “the other couples, standing stiffly apart, never touching or acknowledging each other, as if their fellow tribute did not exist, as if the Games had already begun,” (Collins 79); While all the tributes presented themselves each one alone Katniss and Peeta presented themselves together as if they can never be separated, holding each other’s hands, Katniss narrates “Presenting ourselves not as adversaries but as friends” (Collins 79). The holding hand attitude was later referred to as the “... the perfect touch of rebellion” (Collins 79). Katniss’s attempt to show the Capitol that she and her lover Peeta are going to commit suicide is a rebellious action that nobody dared to do or even thought of in the previous hunger games, and this was one of the most threatening actions against the government in this regard Henthorne confirms “a double suicide would subvert the ideological purpose of the games, which is to dramatize the government’s absolute power over its citizens” (102).

Katniss was afraid that the scenario of her and Peeta being lovers would fail, she says “Prim, my mother, Gale, the people of District 12, everyone I care about back home could be punished if I can’t pull off the girl-driven crazy-by-love scenario Haymitch has suggested” (Collins 351). By good fortune, the scenario succeeded; however satisfying and pleasing for the people of districts especially Katniss, it is provocative and threatening for the Capitol and worrying for President Snow to the point that Haymitch, Katniss and Peeta’s advisor, warns them “Listen up. You’re in trouble. Word is the Capitol’s furious about you showing them up

in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem" (Collins 350).

In the Games, it is very necessary to have one tribute as a winner; Katniss says "they have to have a victor." (Collins 338) that is why she acted that way so as to impose the Capitol with two choices rather than one habitual rule, either they allow for two winners to be crowded as victors or no winner at all which will not suit the rules of the game because "Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces. They'd have failed the Capitol" (Collins 338), seemingly, Bruke states "not having a victor would spoil the entire TV extravaganza and prevent the Capitol from winning the game it has been playing" (60). Katniss herself admits "It seemed too rebellious" (Collins 365). Katniss was obliged to act these ways in order to prevent oppression.

As long as Marxism is concerned, Rebellious is exactly what Marx expected from the proletarians, moreover, in his theory he expected that one day people who belong to the working class will absolutely revolt in order to get rid of the tyrannical regime. Effectively, in the novel Katniss started to "build up the class awareness expected to ascend in rough insurgency against their oppressors" (Tyson 54).

Awkward and sacrificing, Katniss's actions had rebellious intentions from reaping until the end of the games. She stood against the Capitol's regime, she manipulated the ruling Capitol exactly the way she wanted to, in the manner that serves her own interests and hence achieved the desired result. Despite of her weakness in terms of power and even though she knows that the ruling Capitol will not tolerate disobedience but she totally refuses being "subservient to the ruling power system" (Tyson 53).

3. From Marginalization to Empowerment

According to Peter Barry "the aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society based

on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange” (156).

Moreover, Berger believes that their main aim is “to overthrow the class system and help institute a classless—that is, communist—society, in which each gives according to ability and gets according to need” (Berger 47).

So, after the struggles and the physical as well as the mental pressure that the poor suffered from because of the oppressive ruling society, they were obliged to rebel, disobey and revolt against the tyrannical and brutal government so as to win their freedom, Christensen and Levinson think “The struggle between these two classes is the driving force transforming the human community, eventually producing the classless communist community” (219-220). Hence, as it is above explained, they used strategies then they revolted and rebelled.

From the very beginning of the novel, Katniss’s extreme fear from the Capitol, its ruling systems, its absolute power, its extravagant dominance and its cruelty led her to rebel hoping that she will help in overthrowing the tyrannical regime. People who belong to the working class living in the districts are deprived from freedom; they were not free even when they talk to one another because the Capitol was all the time spying on them. Since pressure generates explosion, Katniss used the Hunger Games televised event as an occasion to revolt against who took advantage of their influence and proscribed her and other people from expressing themselves.

Despite of Katniss’s weakness in terms of power and control, she managed to succeed in her actions, Springen regarding this confirms that the people who struggle from being oppressed they “use brains and courage to survive, despite their lack of power” (qtd. in Pearce et al. 66). Taking into consideration that the first rebellion before the hunger games event frightened the citizens of Panem and that it seemed like they will never expose themselves to

danger anymore just because the ruling tyrant Capitol horrified them, but Katniss took the risk, spoke up and made her voice heard with expressing herself through rebellious performances. Nussbaum insists that “people behave badly when nobody raises a critical voice” (43) and that “people behave badly when the human beings over whom they have power are dehumanized and de-individualized” (44).

Contrarily to what the bourgeois believe, that in the Marxist theory the proletarians are “warring factions that accomplish little or no social change” (Tyson 54), Katniss’s hope for a radical societal change and for a better life with a classless society, she made numerous steps for her own benefit as well as the oppressed people’s benefits including her mother and her younger sister, Brianna Bruke claims that “Collins gives Katniss and readers hope by arguing that one revolutionary act of courage and sympathy can create social change” (61).

For example when Katniss decided to consume the poisonous berries, Bruke states that by “Utilizing her food knowledge to undermine the political system. Collins shows in this moment that knowledge leads to self-determination and empowerment” (60) and that “this is powerful message for young readers who, in maturing, may be starting to grasp that they live in an exploitative system they may not fully endorse, even as they benefit from it” (60). These two quotes state one more strength Katniss owns which is her knowledge about food and indicates that the list of things that you own may help in doing something that serves you. Her food skills prove that the knowledge she owns, although not in direct relation to politics, allow her reach “self-determination” and thus defeat political enemies. One can draw a lesson that the knowledge of the world is useful but not always used in agreeable situations.

In the same regard Miranda A. Green-Barteet argues that “by perpetrating rebellious acts, Katniss and ... learn that such acts can be both transformative and empowering” (34), which indicates that Katniss’ rebellious performances will never go with the wind, her acts will

certainly guarantee strength for her even the minimum of what she exactly wanted to reach, her acts may make a radical, remarkable and considerable change or at a significant empowerment as far as power and control are concerned.

Furthermore, Green-Barteet adds “Katniss ... become self-governing subjects who are capable of directing the outcome of their own lives rather than remaining passive objects able to be controlled by their societies” (34). As long as Katniss is able to engage in such disobedient acts, she knows well that she can govern and drive her own life by herself without being oppressed by the government. Moreover, committing rebellion will be sooner or later, Murphy comments “Do whatever violence is necessary in order to escape from having to commit more violence” (204). As if Katniss engaged even if she will reach nothing and that engaging is already and itself empowering.

Despite Katniss' courage to stand against capitalists, having high hopes of being rich and to “live what remains of her life on her own terms” (Green-Barteet 42) as she says “Then we'd be rich as Haymitch” (Collins 37), her mother reacted in a total opposite way. Her mother's reply “I don't care if we're rich. I just want you to come home” (Collins 37) tells much about the effect of the oppressor on the minds of the poor. This is to tell that the oppressed sometimes do not develop class-consciousness and accept their realities without any risk taken.

Tyson states that “Financial success is simply the product of initiative and hard work” (54) and that “if some people are poor it is because they are shiftless and lazy” (54). Both the working class and the ruling class prove these two quotes wrong, being poor is not the result of being lazy; rather, it is because of being exploited and oppressed.

All in all, Marxist empowerment is inevitable because of the natural tense relationship between the two ideologies. In the sense that the relationship between Marxism and

capitalism appears in the strong presence of one over the other. This presence starts with capitalists but is soon taken by the Marxists as a determined result. Berger states that “Marxist heroic figures expose capitalist ideology and lead revolutions to overthrow the class system and help institute a classless ... society, in which each gives according to ability and gets according to need” (47). This quote best describes how people of districts struggle to gain their status in a capitalist society. Through launching opposing movements on capitalism Marxists try to create a balanced society in which people’s ability is its need and its reward lies only in their need.

General Conclusion

In many societies, there exist two different social classes; the upper class representing “the bourgeoisie” and the lower class representing “the proletariat”. The relationship between the two classes has always been rivalry. Generally, the lower class is apt to exploitation and dominance by the upper class. The latter obliges the proletariat to produce goods for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, in the form of an extreme exploitation. Hence, poor people are in continuous struggle to improve rich people’s lives rather than improving their own life conditions.

The opposing relationship between the two social categories poses different issues. Although both share the same space and time, the proletariat still struggle with class stratification and with their status which determines their social belonging. Another problem appears in the exploitation and marginalization of the lower class under the Marxist government. It totally dominates the hierarchy of power and exclude the poor people from all its concerns, be it social, geographic or politic.

In order to make a specific analysis of the issue, a Marxist study is needed. Thus, this thesis analyzes Suzanne Collins’ first part of the trilogy *The Hunger Games*. It is a young-adult dystopian novel, in which class distinction theory is perfectly depicted. The major conflict in *The Hunger Games* is between rich and poor, exploiter and exploited and between oppressor and oppressed. Particularly, the tension rises between the districts’ people of Panem and the ruling class of the Capitol, who are known as being tremendously powerful governors. One evidence proving their control over poor is the thirteen districts of Panem providing goods to the Capitol, and the latter having domination over all of the produced merchandise.

The novel also highlights another form of class stratification within the lower class. It

consists of two sub classes represented in different districts; extremely poor districts and wealthier districts. Although the wealthier enjoy more privileges, they share the same hatred for the capitol and long for the same goal which is to overthrow the regime. This class consciousness is necessary to engage in a revolution.

For many reasons, the tension rises between the districts' people and the capitol caused rebellion. First, the government's tyranny and cruelty against the victimized inevitably led them rebel. Also, this marginalized category needed a societal change after realizing that the government's extreme social inequality can only be overthrown by taking action. Another reason is the dangerous degree of oppression performed against the persecuted people, driving them to what is known as Pressure generates explosion.

Katniss, being a part of the oppressed, is the main figure of the novel as well as the rebellion. Her high hopes in gaining freedom from tyranny helped her carve a way towards weakening the powerful. In spite of the Capitol's absolute power, she could take numerous actions that threatened the regime by longing for equality, freedom and classlessness.

All in all, the novel consists of a clear message. The exploitative system benefiting from and at the expense of the oppressed highly reflects the Marxist theory of class and material production.

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Résumé

La présente étude se concentre sur le marxisme et l'autonomisation de la classe marginalisée dans le roman dystopique appelé *The Hunger Games* (2008) de Suzanne Collins. L'objectif principal de cette thèse est l'analyse critique et l'exploration de toute forme d'inégalité, de guerre ainsi que de la domination et de la supériorité de la classe royale sur la classe ouvrière, non seulement socialement mais aussi politiquement et géographiquement. En particulier, la domination du Capitole au pouvoir sur les douze districts de Panem.

Cette thèse se compose de trois chapitres en plus de l'introduction et de la conclusion. Le premier chapitre fournira les informations de base essentielles nécessaires pour comprendre certains concepts théoriques de base. Le deuxième chapitre analysera les personnages à la lumière de la théorie marxiste vue par Karl Marx et utilisera ensuite la théorie de la séparation pour discuter de la marginalisation dans le roman. Le troisième chapitre examine d'abord les stratégies que les personnes opprimées utilisent pour vaincre la cause de la lutte des classes, puis discute de la tâche de la marginalisation à l'autonomisation.

Mots clés: Marxisme, Marginalisation, Autonomisation, Classe, Pouvoir, Hommages, sponsors, rébellion... etc.

ملخص

تركز الدراسة الحالية على الماركسية وتمكين الفئة المهمشة في الرواية الديستوبية المسماة العباب الجوع لسوزان كولينز الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة هو التحليل النقدي واستكشاف أي شكل من أشكال عدم المساواة، الحرب وكذلك سيطرة وتفوق الطبقة المالكة على الطبقة العاملة ، ليس فقط اجتماعيًا ولكن أيضًا سياسيًا وجغرافيًا. على وجه الخصوص ، هيمنة "الكابيتول" الحاكم على اثنتي عشرة مقاطعة من "بانيم".

تتألف هذه الرسالة من ثلاثة فصول بالإضافة إلى المقدمة والخاتمة. سيوفر الفصل الأول معلومات أساسية ضرورية لفهم بعض المفاهيم الأساسية النظرية. الفصل الثاني سوف يحلل الشخصيات على ضوء النظرية الماركسية كما يراها كارل ماركس ثم يستخدم نظرية الفصل لمناقشة التهميش في الرواية. يناقش الفصل الثالث أولاً الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها الشعب المضطهد من أجل هزيمة قضية الصراع الطبقي ، ثم يناقش المهمة من التهميش إلى التمكين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الماركسية ، التهميش ، التمكين ، الطبقة ، القوة، تحية، تمرد، الرعاة... الخ.