HOPE AND REVOLUTION IN A CRITICAL DYSTOPIA: *THE HUNGER GAMES*

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabancı University
Spring 2015

HOPE AND REVOLUTION IN A CRITICAL DYSTOPIA:
THE HUNGER GAMES

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DATE APPROVED: 27.07.2015

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Cultural Studies, M.A. Thesis, 2015

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Keywords: *Critical dystopia, hope, individualism, solidarity, revolution*

The Hunger Games, by Suzanne Collins, is a narrative embodying significantly dystopian elements such as an oppressive ruling regime, advanced technologies of surveillance, and constant threat on human life, which then transforms into a revolution narrative. This thesis presents an analysis of *The Hunger Games* in terms of notions of hope and revolution, in comparison to classical examples of dystopian literature such as *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. First I look at the discussions on genre limits within utopian literature as well as criticisms brought to utopian thinking in general. Acknowledging hope as an ambivalent concept, I approach *The Hunger Games* beyond the framework of currently introduced sub-genres of critical utopia and critical dystopia. Using the means provided by the concepts of "cruel optimism" and "militant pessimism", I take hope as two different categories and emphasize hope's potential for operating in favor of the existing system as well as being a revolution trigger. Using critical discourse analysis, I examine *The Hunger Games* and the revolutionary interest it embodies in relation to the transition of individual hope to collective hope, through acts of solidarity. Finally, based on the critical approach that the trilogy presents for revolution, in terms of devotion to a leader and use of violence, I examine how power may take over utopian dreams.

ELEŞTİREL DİSTOPYADA UMUT VE DEVRİM:
AÇLIK OYUNLARI

Ceren Alkan

Kültürel Çalışmalar, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2015

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Sibel Irzık

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Eleştirel distopya, umut, bireycilik, dayanışma, devrim*

Suzanne Collins'in *Açlık Oyunları* üçlemesi, baskıcı bir rejim, gelişmiş izleme teknolojileri ve insan hayatı üzerinde sürekli tehdit gibi belirli distopik unsurları bünyesinde barındıran bir anlatıdan devrim anlatısına evrilen bir metindir. Bu tez, *Açlık Oyunları'*nın umut ve devrim bağlamında, klasik distopya örnekleri olan *Cesur Yeni Dünya* ve *Bin Dokuz Yüz Seksen Dört* eserleri ile karşılaştırmalı bir analizini sunmaktadır. İlk olarak, ütopya edebiyatı içerisindeki janr limitlerine dair tartışmalara ve ütopyacı düşünceye getirilen daha genel eleştirilere yer vermektedir. Umut, ikircikli bir kavram olarak ele alınmakta, *Açlık Oyunları'*na eleştirel ütopya ve eleştirel distopya gibi güncel alt janrlar tarafından belirlenen çerçevenin dışından bir yaklaşım benimsenmektedir. Tez içerisinde, "zalim iyimserlik" ve "militan kötümserlik" kavramlarını kullanılarak umut iki farklı kategori olarak ele alınmakta ve var olan sistemin lehine işleyebilme ve devrimi tetikleyebilme potansiyellerine dikkat çekilmekte. Eleştirel söylem analizi ile *Açlık Oyunları* ve bünyesinde barındırdığı devrim arzusu, bireyci umudun dayanışmacı eylemler aracılığıyla kolektif bir umuda dönüşmesi bağlamında incelenmektedir. Son olarak da, üçlemenin devrime yönelttiği eleştirel yaklaşım temelinde, lidere olan adanmışlık ve şiddetin kullanımı bağlamlarında, gücün ütopyacı hayalleri nasıl ele geçirebileceğine vurgu yapılmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Besides my own efforts, this thesis is also a product of the intellectual and emotional support of many others. Among those, first, I would like to thank my advisor Sibel Irzık, who has enlightened my way and enriched my analysis with her precious comments. I would also like to thank my jury members, Ayşe Parla and Başak Demirhan, for the motivation and inspiration they have provided. I am also thankful to The Scientific and Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for offering me a scholarship.

İlkim Karakuş is the one to whom I would like to thank more in particular. She has been right next to me as a supportive academic company, an understanding best friend and a true non-kin sister. Her benevolence and warmheartedness has kept me strong, even at times that strength seemed far away. Tuğçe Aysu is another friend to whom I would like to thank with all my heart. She has given me the joy of living when I needed the most, and I feel very lucky for having her in my life as a two-year flat-mate and a lifetime friend. I also would like to thank Pınar Budan for the solidarity she has offered me during the hardship of writing a thesis. Her soothing nature and friendship has made it easier for me to overcome any kind of crises.

I would like to thank my family, knowing that it is not possible to thank them as much as they deserve. Everything I have accomplished, including this particular thesis, is at least half a product of their efforts. Thank you mom for taking care of me in ways that I could not even think of, thank you dad for your trustful love. It is your unconditional love that has first taught me that I should be caring for other people and not only be considered with myself. And Yağmur, my dear little-sister, by introducing me The Hunger Games, you have a significant role in this piece. Thank you for being a loyal company during this process and thank you more for making me know that you will continue to be one at each and every step of my life. I also would like to thank my grandparents for being my first teachers. You are the ones who injected me with the curiosity for learning, which took me to the path of academia. You filled my childhood with love and still continue to do so, I cannot thank you enough for that. Another special thanks goes to my aunt, Nihan Aksakallı, for being the most benevolent person I have ever known.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Sefa Üstün, my beloved partner. Our discussions on hope constitute the first seeds of this thesis, and I am thankful not only for your precious love and kindness, but also for the intellectual support you have provided.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to people who continue to resist in a world that is day by day getting dystopian. It is you that keeps our utopian hopes alive, thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> *President Snow:* Seneca, why do you think we have a winner?
> *Seneca Crane:* What do you mean?
> *President Snow:* I mean, why do we have a winner? I mean if we just wanted to intimidate the districts why not round up twenty-four at random, and execute them all at one? It would be a lot faster.
> *[Seneca Crane stays silent]*
> *President Snow:* Hope.
> *Seneca Crane:* Hope?
> *President Snow:* Hope. It is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective. A lot of hope is dangerous. Spark is fine, as long as it's contained.[1]

The quotation above is from the movie *The Hunger Games*, film adaptation of the first book of the trilogy bearing the same title, by Suzanne Collins. The dialogue between President Snow (the president of the dystopic country Panem) and Seneca Crane (the game-maker of that year's Hunger Games), takes place right after Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the story and female tribute of District 12, is not punished for her daring act of shooting an arrow near Seneca Crane's head before the Games. The president warns the game-maker, pointing out that Katniss' act is a sign of disobedience and her getting away with it might give hope to others by showing them that it is possible to act against the Capitol and remain unharmed. In the dialogue, Snow's reference to "hope" is noteworthy, since it raises a series of questions in terms of hope and the "danger" it may cause. What he means by defining hope as "the only thing stronger than fear" or why he sees "a little hope ... effective", but "a lot of hope ... dangerous" are the questions that need to be asked for understanding how hope might operate in shaping people's behavior, both for or against the existing system. In the following books of the trilogy, what Snow mentions as "dangerous", comes into being

[1] Although this thesis is about the books and not the movies, I think this quotation is significant for understanding the sovereign's approach to hope in terms of its advantages and disadvantages for the *status quo*, and the representation of hope as a mean of power, as well as its revolutionary potential.

as a revolution. And, in the view of the end, mobilization and revolution become the main themes of the story which has started as a dystopian work. Being born as a result of the curiosity for understanding what it means to have a revolution in a dystopian narrative, this thesis seeks to present an analysis of representations of hope and revolution in a dystopia, together with blurred limits of dystopia and enlarged discussion ground it provides.

Dystopian narrative has mainly arisen in the twentieth century, as the inevitable product of a hundred years of pain and disasters (Moylan, 2000). Within the genre of dystopia, a repressive government is not an exception, but one of the key elements. Dystopias appear generally as places where there is immense control over the subjects and subjugation of individual agency. Domination of the society, and, the individual body's total integration into the collective body through hegemonic discourses can also be listed as common features of dystopias. Questioning and resisting the system are rare attitudes among its citizens, and it is usually impossible for such attempts to succeed. Therefore, with a conventional approach, hope of change is not expected to be found within a dystopia, but only outside it. When we look at the well-known examples of dystopian literature, *Brave New World* (1932) by Huxley and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by Orwell, they constitute a proof to that claim, due to the way that the system operates not allowing revolution to be actualized. In fact, even imagining a change does not seem possible within these societies, except for the rare cases of a few protagonists and a couple of additional characters.

Hope has usually been associated with utopian literature, since utopia describes a better form of living, whereas dystopias are places that are oppressive and dark. Utopia and dystopia were conventionally considered as opposites, and hope was excluded from dystopia. However, current discussions on dystopia underline its difference from anti-utopia, which is against utopianism by definition and approaches it either as dangerous or mere fantasy, and relocate dystopia somewhere relatively closer to utopia. Differing from anti-utopia, dystopia desires change in the existing social structure, but only expresses that desire by using different means than the ones used in utopian writing such as, focusing on the problems of the present and the dangers of a possible future.

In the light of criticisms brought to utopian literature, critical utopia and critical dystopia have emerged as genre blending forms that challenge the binary opposition between utopia and dystopia. Contrary to the assumed opposition between utopia and dystopia, these new narrative forms are close to one another (Moylan, 2000; Baccolini,

2004). They have more open-ended structures compared to their conventional counterparts. To be more specific, critical utopias are more process oriented rather than being blueprint ideals and have more open endings. And critical dystopias have emerged again with more open ends, in which the individual or its agency is not subjugated in a total sense and there is more room for hope in comparison to classical dystopias (Baccolini, 2004).

Utopian and dystopian literature being the expression of social problems and futuristic expectations, the society depicted within a dystopian novel, despite its fictional character, cannot be considered independent from current politics. Although it cannot be taken as the ultimate representative of "the social", the social criticism that a dystopian novel provides constitutes a link between politics and literature. Petersen and Jacobsen define dystopian imagination at the intersection of "conventional social science, literary criticism and science fiction" (2012, p.108). Again, dystopia is an important mean of social criticism due to the estranging ground it provides to its readers, because as Veena Das states, "some realities need to be fictionalized before they can be apprehended" (2007, p.39). Because fictionalization leads to estrangement, which "'remove[s] the imprint of commonness that keeps events which can be socially influenced from getting changed today' (Kleines Organon fur Theater [Small Organon for the Theater], paragraph 43)" (Bloch, 1988, p.226). On that account, *Chapter 2* will focus on discussions of political significance of utopian literature and criticisms brought to it in accordance with changes in the social and political conjuncture. Then, moving from emergence of the sub-genres of dystopia, anti-utopia, to critical utopia and critical dystopia, it will show evolution of the genre in terms of pushing its limits and significance of that evolution to the discussion ground provided by *The Hunger Games*.

Despite the fact that the setting of *The Hunger Games* is not less oppressive than a classical dystopia, it is different from classical dystopias in that it portrays people regaining their agencies and acting upon hope of change, or in this case hope of revolution. It should be stated that revolutionary hope does not exist since the beginning. However hope is not entirely lacking in people's lives, either. Rather, before Katniss' entrance to the scene as provider of a different kind of hope, people, including Katniss herself, were hoping for a better life, but in an individualist manner. It is what President Snow refers to as "a little hope", the one that works for the sustenance of the system rather than challenging it. This hope creates an optimism that keeps people within certain attachments that cause their destruction. Berlant (2011) calls it "cruel

optimism", and uses the concept to explain how people cannot let go of the attachments that actually harm them. The optimism that tributes hold on to for becoming the victor of the Games can be evaluated in that category.

In *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the classical dystopias that I choose to take as points of reference, in order to present a more clear analysis of the changes within the genre limits, hope is not used systematically for people's manipulation as it is in *The Hunger Games*. In *Chapter 3*, moving to discussions on hope, I focus on how individualism might function in shaping of hope, in such a way that it would become one of the key elements used by the hegemon for manipulation of its subjects by keeping them in the state of passivity. This chapter will look at the ways in which people of Panem are kept away from each other on purpose, and how enforced individualism keeps them within the state of cruel optimism and prevents them from developing class-consciousness or acting in cooperation for their collective emancipation. With the intention of presenting a comparative analysis, I will be looking at representation of individualism in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and how false hope or lack of hope might work for the system's continuation in these classical dystopias.

What makes *The Hunger Games* different from its classical counterparts is not only the hope that keeps people within the system, but particularly the one that is revolutionary, the form of hope that President Snow refers to as "dangerous". When Katniss builds unexpected relationships with people who are supposed to be her adversaries, barriers that block off collective hope are tore down. Actually; already at the time she volunteers to join the games in her sister's place and thus sacrifices herself in devotion to her family, it can be told that she embodies the seeds of rebellion. *Chapter 4* will seek to understand the dynamics of cooperation and solidarity that overcome enforced individualism and lead to the transformation of individual hope into collective hope. However it will also include how collective action might also be supplying more power to the authority, and challenge the dichotomic understanding of hope that positions collective action as revolutionary regardless of its context. In relation that context dependency, it will also include criticisms directed to abuse of power in the name of revolution. In the second half of the story, revolutionaries get under the command of the hierarchically organized and armed forces of District 13, and lose their grassroots character. Although depiction of Panem under the oppressive rule of the Capitol is a critical one, the methods used for revolution are not embraced either.

Most certain claim of *The Hunger Games* is for the significance of moving beyond the imposed framework. In the first half of the story, that claim corresponds to working towards formation of a different sociality by moving beyond enforced individualism, thus hope could be collectively formed to bring about social change. Whereas, in the second half of the story, it is about breaking the bonds of devotion to a leader and recognition of the dangers that abuse of power may bring. Criticism directed to war and systematic use of violence, even by revolutionary forces, is made clear by Katniss' attitude towards President Coin, the commander of District 13. Through the position Katniss takes, the concepts of revolution and leadership are questioned and dangers of utopian promises are acknowledged. By withholding a happy-ending in the conventional sense, it is shown that use of violence can hardly bring an ultimate happy-ending, since its memories will not be erased. *The Hunger Games* does not give a prescription of a revolution or have claim of showing the ideal system. The most certain claim about Collins' intention in writing the trilogy would be telling that she writes against hierarchy. In *The Hunger Games* the main critique is directed to centralization and abuse of power. This is done by being critical either about the Capitol or District 13. In this regard, in Chapter 4, significance of questioning the means used for revolution, the dangers of devotion to a leader, and unquestioned use of violence will be discussed in detail in addition to revolutionary potential of cooperation and solidarity.

Ghassan Hage (2003) conceptualizes society as a mechanism for the production and distribution of hope. As a more current example of its genre, *The Hunger Games* carries more potential for discussions on hope and revolution, and therefore for discussions on society. It also articulates explicitly what have been subjects of social sciences. Individual hope that is fed by the rivalry of the Games, covering up of solidarity by the mask of romantic love, hedonistic culture in the Capitol, use of media as a means of manipulation are all examples that could be given to what capitalism does in a more subtle way. The change in people's subjectivities, overcoming enforced individualism, formation of collective hope and then coming face to face with devotion during the route to revolution are just a simple list of the variety of points that *The Hunger Games* opens to discussion, and that make it a significant subject of analysis.

Part of *The Hunger Games'* significance lies at its genre blending character. What starts as a classical dystopia gains a critical dystopian character by portraying how people regain their agencies and get involved in revolutionary attempts. Then it evolves into a critical utopian narrative, which turns its criticism to the means of revolution as

well as dangers of devotion and leadership. Therefore, it is also possible to say that it is a text that is even blending the already blended limits of the genre. Having a structure that challenges the conventional limits of the related genres provides *The Hunger Games* the necessary ground for opening conflicting values and norms to discussion. Thus, just because it starts as a dystopian narrative, it does not continue as one and its plot allows an end to the subjugation of individual agency. Likewise, just because it adopts a critical dystopian character, it is not limited to giving only bits of revolutionary hope and staying away from showing the route it takes for a revolution. And last but not least, just because it evolves into a story of a revolution it does not limit itself to the celebration of revolution regardless of showing its potential problems such as devotion to a leader and the use of violence.

CHAPTER 1

FROM BLUEPRINT UTOPIA TO CRITICAL DYSTOPIA

Utopia is a concept that is too broad to be considered only as a literary genre. It basically means the good place that is a non-place, and "for most contemporary utopian theory [it] is no longer a place but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world" (Ashcroft, 2007, p.411). In addition to that conceptualization of utopia, utopianism is also defined as, "expressions of desire for a better way of being" by Levitas (2010), "process or moment of change" by Sargisson (2003), and "social dreaming" by Sargent (1994). Each of these definitions is significant for pointing different aspects of utopia. The definition made by Levitas, defining utopia as desire for a better way of being marks the broadness of the concept since it might include several desires that are perceived as better by their holders. Whereas, defining it as a process, as Sargisson does, is significant since it underlines that utopia is not a blueprint ideal, or a destination to be reached, but the route that we take towards the better. And the route, the process, is determinant in what would constitute that "better". By defining it as a process rather than an unknown but idealized future, it allows the present's inclusion in utopia, and becomes more successful in calling people to action for making a change for the better. Lastly, defining utopia as "social dreaming" and subtracting the adjective "good/better" from its definition allows nightmares, i.e. dystopias to be perceived as part of that collective dream. Such an inclusive approach paves the way to opening the assumed binary of utopia and dystopia to question. In that sense, each of these definitions is similar to different points that Bloch makes in his definition of utopianism.

Bloch (1986) broadens utopianism beyond the field of literature and includes every vision of a better way of living in his definition. For him, utopianism is an impulse of desire for the better that can be transferred to a variety of things, and it is not a blueprint ideal but a process fed from the undecidedness of the "not-yet" (ibid.). For

him, hope is based on that "not-yet" quality of utopia, since "hope is not confidence. Hope is surrounded by dangers, and it is the consciousness of danger and at the same time the determined negation of that which continually makes the opposite of the hoped-for object possible" (1988, p.16). Based on that description of hope, dystopia might very well coexist with hope. However, it used to be considered as the opposite; a sub-genre of utopia, from which hope is excluded. Looking at its origins, the reasons of that consideration are made clear.

Dystopia is a much younger genre compared to utopia. It has born as a result of loss of hope for a better future. Therefore, the setting of dystopia, which usually takes place in the future, is dark and oppressive. Being direct products of their time and space, neither utopia nor dystopia can be thought abstracted from the social and political contexts which they emerge from. Although that might look like a very general fact about literature per se, in case of utopian and dystopian writing the author's intention is also based on building that relation with the social. Despite the opposition attributed to these two genres, for understandable reasons, they have much in common to be categorized as genre opposites. They share the general calling of utopianism; what Sargent identifies as "social dreaming", but they achieve it through different strategies (Moylan & Baccolini, 2003, p.5). The opposition is overcome by utopias written in the 1960s, and they were followed by dystopias written in the same manner. These new forms of "critical utopia" and "critical dystopia" enlarged the genre limits within utopian literature, and provided more complex representations of the social which would not coexist in either of the former binary categories. As an example to these new forms, The Hunger Games, starts as a post-apocalyptic dystopia where public criticism is included, and evolves into an attempt and realization of a revolution. The complexity of its plot enables it to approach notions of oppression and individualism, as well as political consciousness, revolutionary hope and finally abuse of power in the same story line.

1.1. Political Significance of Utopian Literature

Ursula K. Le Guin (2000) states in the preface to her book, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, that science fiction writers are "liars who tell the truth". Using metaphors or

symbols, the (science) fiction writer presents her readers a world different than their own, and the possibility of an outlook relatively freed from bias. By that definition she refers to the power of estrangement and its significance for overcoming the ideological impositions throughout the years spent living in this world. Being the key element of utopian literature, estrangement provides a "renewed perception" that makes us see the world with a new perspective, "it shows the world in sharp focus in order to bring out conditions that exist already but which, as a result of our dulled perception, we can no longer see" (Varsam, 2003, p.206). Through literature, reality becomes a matter of interpretation, and "[t]hrough the devices that 'make strange' our perception of the world, dystopian texts continually demand readerly attention to our relationship to the real world," to have us question our actions (ibid.). By reflecting on current events, but doing it with the means of fiction and in a future setting, it gives today a historical character and opens it to discussion, more than it could by means of reality.

In addition to estrangement, part of utopia's political significance lies in its proposition for the possibility of an alternative to the existing system. The continuation of a system is dependent on its ability to reproduce the conditions of its production, including ideological conditions (Althusser, Balibar, & Bidet, 2014). And whatever that system is, it has to be convincing about the impossibility of an alternative, since its continuation is based necessarily on that conviction. In other words, the stability of a system is significantly related to how successful the hegemony operates in making the subjects believe in lack of its alternatives. Thus, building their ideas in that ideological frame, members of a society would think that the best they can achieve is within the system and the only way they can have a better life is searching for it again within its limits. This means, people will be assigning their hopes to the system, rather than seeking a way out of it. Therefore, utopian genre is revolutionary regardless of its content, since it marks the possibility of a system that is both better and different than the one we already have. As Jameson states, "The Utopian form itself is the answer to the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible" (2005, p.232). And that is confirmed by Ahmed as the following; "The Utopian form might not make the alternative possible, but it aims to make impossible the belief that there is no alternative" (2010, p.163). In short, as the system convinces people to the impossibility of an alternative, utopias try to do the opposite. They show different forms of social organization that are preferable to the current one and inject people with hope; they propose alternatives so that we would not be left alone with the hegemonic discourse

that we are lacking an option. And they do that not only by referring to the possibility of a different world, but also by presenting a sneak peek of its course.

As stated before, utopianism is defined as "social dreaming" by Sargent and that phrase is interpreted by Somay (2010) with a Freudian approach. The difference between a dream and utopia is that utopias are more conscious statements of possibilities and potentialities than dreams. However the analogy of social dream functions perfectly for understanding the relationality between utopias and history. According to Somay's interpretation, contrary to the conventional conception that associates utopias directly with the future, as social dreams, utopias are expressions of our previous and current fears and desires in a different symbolic realm. In other words, utopia becomes a process which preserves its links with the past and exists in the present. Le Guin (2000) also states in her preface that science fiction is not predictive, but descriptive. She underlines that science fiction writers should not be expected to give information about the future. As an example, she says that when she writes about androgynous human beings, she actually does not foresee that we will be androgynous a thousand years from now; rather, she sees that in some way, we already are. In other words, she does not write about an expectation, but takes bits from what she sees today, and presents it as a whole to the collective gaze of her audiences. That is also a valid way of describing what is done in utopian writing. However, the future is not totally out of the picture when we are talking about utopian thinking. The accumulated influence of the past and the present is reflected on the possibilities of a different future. In other words, utopia is based on the present but has an orientation towards the future. Writers of utopian literature might not have an intention to predict the future, but they certainly have an intention to change it. To state it in another way, utopias are not places expected to be reached; rather they are places of desire. But again, these are today's desires; the depicted places in utopias are where today's problems are fixed. Since we care about the future, either hoping for the better or fearing the worse, we expect things to change.

> Hence, historical circumstances were important catalysts for the writing and enthusiastic reception of literary utopias, not only because they provided familiar topics that would both ground and energize utopian narratives and because they helped readers to desire a better world, but also because they sensitized readers to the meaningfulness and usefulness of a literature that viewed the world as a collage of cruel contrasts in need of fixing. (Roemer, 2010, p.94)

Acknowledging utopian literature's bonds with the present and history is explanatory for understanding the changes within the genre limits and thus the different structure and content of *The Hunger Games* from *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Being products of a political conjuncture which Soviet Union is a powerful actor the latter two have a different attitude towards collectivism than *The Hunger Games*, which is a product of our current neoliberal world. *The Hunger Games*, written in the individualism of twenty-first century, approaches collectivism as a necessary component on the route towards a social bettering, whereas the other two as the source of totalitarianism and destruction of individual agency. However, it should be noted that, *The Hunger Games'* approach to collectivism is a cautious one that keeps in mind the historical knowledge, and in the course of the story we are warned about its potential to evolve into totalitarianism.

If we accept utopia as the desire for a better world, its point of origin is hard to track back, because we cannot know when a better world is imagined for the first time. However, we can rely on the first written example, that has survived, and Sargent (2010) says that, "such visions occur in earliest written records we have seen, such as a Sumerian clay tablet from 2000 BCE" (see section 1.06). Although this statement does not give us an exact time of origin for dreams of a better world, it clearly shows that it was long before the word *utopia* was coined by Thomas More in 1516. So, we can easily say that, either as part of their religion, or mere imagination, people used desire and hope for a good place since ancient times, and the idea of a non-existent good place has a longer history than the term. This brings us to Ernst Bloch (1986), who defines utopia as an impulse inherent to human beings. In his magnum opus, *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch takes the term utopia out of its literary limits and puts it back to daily life. He sees hope in every aspect of human life, from daydreams to advertisements. According to Bloch, individuals have dreams of a good life, and they are animated by these dreams and by their longing for the better. He characterizes this as utopian energy, and recognizes the fact that it can be transmitted to different aspects of life. However there are also approaches that want to keep utopia within certain limits, and one of those is Kolakowski. His attempt is for preventing utopia's losing its particular political meaning by being used in reference to every human desire for the better and claims that using utopia as such a general concept would put everything done by people, either collectively or individually, in order to improve their conditions, and also religious images of paradise into the category of utopia (1981). Therefore, he suggests putting

limits that would narrow the limits of its conceptualization, which have enlarged historically. One of his suggestions in terms of those limits was requirement of completeness of an idea for it to be called utopian. In other words, for him, utopias should be "not ideas of making any side of human life better but only beliefs that a definitive and unsurpassable condition is attainable, one where there is nothing to correct any more" (ibid, p.230). That completeness claim is what Bloch necessarily opposes due to its implication of idealness. For him, utopian is the good, and the better, but not particularly "the Good" (Anderson, 2006, p.694). Focusing on the "not-yet" of the future, Bloch underlines its undecided character and expresses that "a good way of being is 'still not'" (ibid, p.695). Bloch's interpretation of utopianism as a Marxist, might constitute an answer to the critiques brought to utopianism by Marx and Engels, who "saw [it] as individual fantasy applied to the workings of class society and as such claimed that it was unrealistic, impracticable, and unscientific" (Honeywell, 2007, p.243). With Bloch's touch, utopianism started to gain a meaning that is not limited to a blueprint fantasy as Marxists saw it, which is an approach that is also adopted by *The Hunger Games*, both in terms content and structure.

1.2. Changes in the Utopian Discourse and Emergence of Sub-genres

The term *utopia* was introduced as a neologism[2] by More, from two Greek words *ouk* (reduced to *u*), which means "not" and *topos*, which means "place". Thus, in an ironic way, utopia etymologically means a place, which is a non-place (Vieira, 2010, p.4). Whereas, it has gained another and a more specific meaning by a poem that exists on the front pages of all the original editions of Thomas More's Utopia, which ends with the following two lines:

> "…Wherefore not Utopia, but rather rightly,
> My name is Eutopie: a place of felicity." (More, 2013, p.xx)

So, despite its etymologic origins, by the playful touch of the poem between two words, *utopia* and *eutopie*, the term utopia acquired a double meaning and started to be used for non-existent good places. However, the non-existence is translated as impossibility in daily use (Kolakowski, 1981), and how that translation occurred can be

2 a term that is born out of the need to name what is new

understood only by tracking back the points of change within the utopian discourse and emergence of the sub-genres of dystopia and anti-utopia.

1.2.1. Dystopia and Anti-Utopia

In the eighteenth century, "utopias made use of Enlightenment discourses on progress, perfectibility, reason, sociability and reform" (Pohl, 2010, p.63). Human beings were accepted as rational beings capable of working perfectly once they are organized perfectly. In other words, people are thought to have the capacity for changing things and having control over them. What was at stake was to act upon that capacity. Looking at the societal formations in utopias, we generally see a social commitment on the part of its inhabitants. The sense of belonging to a community is at its zenith and people are freed from selfishness, since the happiness of the individual is innately linked to the happiness of the community. In the nineteenth century, utopian tradition continued with the fascination for developing industrial technologies at first, and then with utopian socialism and cooperation of people. However, Freud's definition of human beings as beings with desires and fears, which are construed as posing threats to rational action, together with the catastrophes brought by world wars and revealing problems of industrialization weakened the enlightenment tradition of seeing human beings as fully rational beings and led to skepticism about humanity's capacity to act in a disinterested manner (Claeys, 2010; Freud & Crick, 1999; Moylan, 2003). "Enlightenment optimism respecting the progress of reason and science was now displaced by a sense of the incapacity of humanity to restrain its newly created destructive powers" (Claeys, 2010, p.107).

That distrust prepared the emergence of dystopian and anti-utopian sub-genres, but not the death of utopianism. Industrial revolution, with the technology associated with it, was still a fascinating phenomenon for some people. Mass production was seen as capable of bringing an end to humanity's suffering. Industrial revolution held no limits; it could end the scarcity of food, clothes or shelter. However, not everyone shared such a view of the Industrial Revolution, and there remained people who were skeptical because of its potential destructiveness. And although Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels see utopianism as mere fantasy for not being based on social facts and processes, revelation of the inequalities and suffering caused by capitalism led to the rise of socialist utopias.

In the twentieth century, when former utopias were finally actualized, in the embodiment of The United States and the Soviet Union, and failed their utopian character in their realized versions, utopia's totalitarian potential was revealed. People from different parts of the world, who approached these two societies as accomplishment of their utopian ideas and tied their hopes to them, witnessed how these societies failed to meet their utopian expectations. And as a result, they fell into a state of disillusionment for utopianism in general. Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are pioneer examples of such disillusionments. While the former directed its critique to the capitalist utopia and increasing consumerism especially in American society, the latter is an example of the socialist anti-utopias that became prevalent with the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. The loss of hope caused by failed utopian attempts got worse after the two World Wars which marked twentieth century with "exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of the everyday life" (Moylan, 2000, p.xi).

Dystopian literature gained more power as a genre that articulates warning against possible futures by taking today's problems and building on them. Dystopia communicates that things are not okay, and that if we do not start doing something today, it might be too late in the future. Contrary to its generic sibling utopia, which is substantially linked to hope and possibilities of change, in dystopia oppression and subjugation reach their extreme. Dystopia generally depicts a world where there is immense control over the subjects, so the system is hard to challenge or to change.

> [T]he dystopian imagination has served as a prophetic vehicle, the canary in a cage, for writers with an ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued, turn our contemporary world into the iron cages portrayed in the realm of utopia's underside. (Moylan & Baccolini, 2003, p.2)

Although it is a form of warning, it should not be taken as the author's predictions about the future. Rather it is an exaggerated version of today, as well as the depiction of one of the possible futures as a warning, so that it could be avoided before it comes. Because in the context of the enforced optimism of our age, "recognition of the wretched is revolutionary" (Ahmed, 2010, p.168). And this wretchedness is not inevitable (ibid.). Recognizing that wretchedness, dystopia stands against the idea of optimism that strengthen people's the ties with the current order, as well as approaches cautiously to the idea of progress, which make people have ultimate faith in the future,

and encourage them to take part in the evilest collective actions unquestioningly. In that sense, it can be said that dystopia shares Benjamin's approach to progressive understanding of history, and its role in the growing of fascism (Löwy & Turner, 2005). In other words, rather than totally excluding hope as anti-utopia does, dystopia is simply based on revealing current problems that fail to be recognized and challenging the idea of progress by conveying the message that these problems will not be fixed by themselves, unless action is taken. "If utopia is about hope, and satirical utopia is about distrust, anti-utopia is clearly about total disbelief" (Vieira, 2010, p.16). However, there is no clear exclusion of hope in dystopias, moreover "dystopias that leave no room for hope do in fact fail in their mission" (ibid, p.17). Because, their primary aim is to make people realize that it is impossible to create an ideal society, and what they can do is to construct a better one (ibid.).

Fitting (2010) suggests that dystopia and anti-utopia can be differentiated from one another by looking at whether the darkness of the text is in its setting or its plot. Anti-utopia "draws its energies, to a good extent, from the strength of utopia. It is possible that utopia could thrive without the stimulus of anti-utopia, but it is impossible for the anti-utopia to do so on its own" (Kumar, 1987, p.6). Anti-utopia is born out of the conservative eighteenth-century intellectuals' skepticism, and it could never have emerged without literary utopia. Therefore, the position it takes against utopianism is what defines anti-utopia, whereas it is not the case with dystopia. Dystopia, although it describes a darker future than today, still leaves room for hope and utopian thinking, whereas anti-utopia is the total rejection of utopia and possibilities of change. Booker defends dystopia's role as a revolutionary genre in contrary to opposite conceptions as emphasizing its potential for providing "fresh perspectives" and the supportive relation it has with utopia:

> If the main value of literature in general is its ability to make us see the world in new ways, to make us capable of entertaining new and different perspectives on reality, then dystopian fiction is not a marginal genre. It lies at the very heart of the literary project. Moreover, if dystopian fiction can energize the imagination and provide such fresh perspectives, then the fears of critics like Fredric Jameson that dystopian thought may be inimical to positive visions of historical change appear unfounded. Dystopian thought does not disable utopian thought, but merely acts as a healthy opposing voice that helps prevent utopian thought from going stale. (1994, p.176)

Dystopia is clearly a text written in pessimism, however pessimism should not be interpreted as elimination of utopian thought. Bloch (1986) mentions two different kinds

of pessimisms: “resigned” and “militant”, which are helpful for understanding how utopian thinking and dystopian narrative can coexist in a single text. Simply put, resigned pessimism can be understood as thinking, “it is too bad, so I cannot change it,” whereas militant pessimism is the opposite, “it is too bad, so I should change it.” And the claim of contemporary dystopian author’s is that dystopia does not have to give the former message, but it shall base its pessimism on the latter.

Baggesen (1987) takes these terms and adopts them to his terminology as utopian pessimism and dystopian pessimism. Moylan opposes that new terminology, since it assumes that dystopia has no place for hope and is the same as anti-utopia. Therefore, he comes up with the term anti-utopian pessimism and suggests that dystopian texts’ relationship with pessimism should be approached as if they are on a spectrum, which goes from utopian pessimism to anti-utopian pessimism (Moylan, 2000, p.153).

> Although most dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives, a few affiliate with a eutopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope (or at least invite readings that do); while many are false “dystopian” allies of Utopia as they retain an anti-utopian disposition that forecloses all utopian possibility; and yet others negotiate a more strategically ambiguous position somewhere along the antinomic continuum. (Moylan & Baccolini, 2003, p.6)

Introduction of utopian pessimism to the terminology of dystopian literature is significant for understanding the sub-genres, critical utopia and critical dystopia, as well as the internal dynamics of *The Hunger Games*, which have an important role in people’s mobilization for a revolution.

1.2.2. Critical Utopia and Critical Dystopia

After years of lacking hope and a great decrease in utopian literature, which has also been interpreted as its death, in the 1960s, with the rise of student movements, hope for change was regained. By the change and possibility of change put forward by ecologist, feminist and New Left thinkers, utopia entered another phase of ascent. Even former skeptics such as Marcuse were welcoming the re-emergence of hope. He announced “the end of utopia”, not because utopias were unworthy or impossible, but because the time for their realization had come (Kumar, 1987, p.399). The utopian texts written in those years were literary expressions of the critiques brought to the genre, especially by feminists who took part in “celebrating and critiquing utopianism” (Johns,

2010, p.174). Feminists have benefited from visions of better societies, but they also question utopias that are so static and prefect that they are inalterable and would "use coercion to maintain their perfect order" (ibid.). Thus, "feminist utopian authors and critics have generally side-stepped the blueprint form to privilege instead a 'process' or 'reproductive' or 'critical' model" (ibid.). Those new utopias, which emerged in the 1960s, did not have the claim of perfection and reflected the potential problems of a better society in their narratives. Their assertion and claim were not for the best, but for the better. These new forms of utopian literature are significant in terms of challenging the limits of the genre, since they are both utopias and dystopias at the same time. Traditional utopias have been called "classical", "blueprint", or "end-state" utopias (ibid.), whereas critical utopia has come into existence as a result of the critiques brought to utopia from that perspective. They were "the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition," and they "eject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream" (Moylan, 1986). These contemporary examples are process oriented and open ended as they were neither perfect, nor inalterable.

Lastly, in the 1980s and 1990s, due to the "policies of neoconservative and neoliberal "reformers", the norm became the upward redistribution of income, the gap of inequality increased, social rights that had been gained through years of struggle were lost, and when all these were combined with unemployment and continuing discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, dystopia rallied (Moylan, 2000, p.184). However, there were examples that could not be classified as dystopia in its conventional form. Sargent interpreted examples of that new dystopian form as "critical dystopia" and described them as being both eutopias and dystopias, which "undermine all neat classification schemes" (1994, p.7). In the 1980s and 1990s critical dystopias continued to make room for the utopian imagination within the dystopian form and present an alternative to left authoritarianism and orthodox-Marxists, with the feminist and ecologic perspectives they include (Moylan, 2000, p.195). In critical dystopia, unlike dystopia in the classical sense, the individual is not subjugated at the end of the story (Baccolini, 2004, p.520). A critical dystopia does not provide a closed and comforting conclusion; it leaves the ending open for its characters to make choices and deal with the responsibility of the choices they have made. Baccolini sees letting its characters have responsibility as crucial; "It is in the acceptance of responsibility and accountability, often worked through memory and the recovery of the past, that we bring the past into a living relation with the present and

may thus begin to lay the foundations for utopian change" (ibid, 521). Memory and accountability are the main elements in *The Hunger Games* that prevents the story from having a happy-end that would comfort the reader. Katniss, the protagonist, who has taken an active part in the war fought against the ruling regime's forces, cannot not have peace with herself due to the memories of war since they are hard to cope with. Through the responsibility it assigns to its characters, as well as staying away from a comforting end enables sustenance of a critical perspective among its readers. With the ground that critical utopia/dystopia provides, *The Hunger Games* manages to preserve the complexity of its political position and present a more detailed criticism on intersecting relations of power.

1.3. Conclusion

Utopian thinking having its roots in an unknown past is very crucial for understanding people's desires for a better way of living, whereas the changes in utopian discourse show how people's perception of its possibility has changed.

The disappointment of attempted utopias, the recognition of the totalitarian potential of blueprint utopias led to distrust and disbelief in a better future and therefore brought with it the genres of dystopia and anti-utopia. Utopia came to the edge of disappearance. However, as stated before, being fed from the context it is written in, in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, utopian literature has transformed itself according to changing tendencies of its time. Therefore, instead of letting itself be abolished, it has taken a new form and preempted the critiques based on its blueprint and static character (Roemer, 2010, p.102).

Thus, from times that dystopia and anti-utopia were considered the same, utopian literature has gone into a state of challenging the taken for granted opposition of utopia and dystopia. Utopian texts that do not depict ideal societies as well as dystopian texts that contain hope within have emerged. Thus, "critical utopia" and "critical dystopia" were born as forms of literature in which generic purity is broken and the dichotomy of utopia and dystopia is challenged. And therefore, utopian dreaming stayed alive despite critiques brought to it and growing anti-utopian tendencies. Utopian literature, though considered as having lost its primary status, is saved from being dead completely.

Rather, it has changed its form and taken a more critical stance against the idealized world image that it used to represent. This is a transformation which was necessary to save utopian genre from causing its own destruction. Through critical utopias, utopian imagination was reclaimed without putting aside the critiques brought to its classical form, and it was shown that utopian thinking is possible without falling into totalitarianism.

Critical dystopia is defined by Moylan as the following:

> [negotiating] the necessary pessimism of the generic dystopia with a militant or utopian stance that not only breaks through the hegemonic enclosure of the text's alternative world but also self-reflexively refuses the anti-utopian temptation that lingers in every dystopian account." (Moylan & Baccolini, 2003, p.7)

Although *The Hunger Games* is a text that involves features from both these critical forms of utopian writing, critical dystopia might be considered as the form it fits the most.

CHAPTER 2

MOBILIZATION OF HOPE IN DYSTOPIAS – 1: HOPE WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Like utopia, hope is oriented to the future, but still a product of the present. Zournazi defines the present as, "the only moment I can talk about or express with any confidence. And so if I am going to find hope I have to find it within what we are living" (Zournazi, 2002, p.110). By that definition, she marks the significance of the conditions of the present in forming our hopes and expectations about the future. The relationship of hope with the present is important, since the present determines our mental map and therefore also has a great effect on how we interpret certain events, as well as how we act upon them. As formerly mentioned, in *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch (1986) states that every human being has a "utopian impulse"; an inherent desire and hope for the better. Contrary to the conventional understanding which positions hope as the opposite of fear, he defines hope ("Not-Yet Conscious") as the opposite of memory (No-Longer-Conscious). For him, hope is not just an emotion, because it is anticipatory. Rather, it is a "directing act of a cognition" (Bloch, 1986, p.12) and this is what gives hope a utopian function. However, it should be noted that hope, emerging in the context of the present, is not always a directing force towards a collective bettering. It is possible to have individual hopes, as well as collective ones, and, individual hope might easily operate in the wellbeing of the existing system rather than changing it. In that regard, different kinds of hope might exist in examples of utopian and dystopian literature. In other words, although hope has a significant role in the emergence and accomplishment of utopias, hope itself is not utopian per se. It is the object that hope tends towards that gives hope a utopian function. And what that object is determined very much under the influence of the values and norms imposed in the present. Such as in the modern capitalist current world of ours hope being "reduce[d] […] to dreams of upward social mobility". Therefore, in the context of capitalism, improvement within the system occupies more place in people's hopes than the hope of any revolution

(Hage, 2002, p.152). This makes it crucial to look at what kind of hope or hopes a dystopian text includes, rather than looking at whether it includes hope or not (ibid.).

For *The Hunger Games* we can talk about various kinds of hope operating either for or against the system. Besides being a trigger for the realization of a revolution, hope has also been used as a means in the hands of the President for keeping his subjects under control. This form of hope, let alone having a utopian function, operates against the formation of a utopian hope. However, what marks *The Hunger Games* as a rare example of its kind is giving place to hope of change not only as a possibility, but as an accomplishment. In other words, there are two kinds of hope operating in *The Hunger Games,* (1) the kind that keeps people attached to the system by giving them a reason to live, which is a pacifying hope serving the preservation of the status quo, and (2) the kind that has a utopian function, making people realize the possibility of an alternative and thus encouraging them to challenge the system.

Brave New World, *Nineteen Eight-Four,* and *The Hunger Games* as examples of dystopian literature that differ from one another on significant terms. And one of these terms is the way they approach and represent hope. This chapter will be evaluating how the first form of hope operates within the context of *The Hunger Games,* together with the differences and similarities it shows to two classical examples of dystopian literature, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eight-Four.*

Brave New World is a happiness dystopia, where hope is eliminated to a great extent, since the necessary recognition of wretchedness of the system is prevented by imposition of happiness on its citizens. Whereas, in *Nineteen Eight-Four* oppression and prohibitions play a more significant role for the continuation of the system than manipulation of hope. The ideological impositions are made more explicitly and rather than being based on individual bettering offs, they mainly consist of devotion to a leader and hate for his opponents. However in *The Hunger Games*, manipulation of hope can be recognized very easily. Because the hegemon rather than assassinating each and every tribute he collects, designs a game that allows one of them survive. Therefore, the Games, which also used for spreading fear, turns into a source of hope and another mean used by the President to keep his subjects in the state of non-action. The different attitudes among these three novels; *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games* will be the focus of this chapter together with a detailed evaluation of the notions of happiness, devotion, hegemony, social mobility, and optimism.

2.1. The Social, Economic and Political Structure of Panem

Bloch has stated that hope is an impulse that is found naturally in all human beings, and it can be directed to different objects (1986). In other words, people look for the better, regardless of what that "better" is. Ambiguity and abstractness of "good", and therefore better, easily turn it into a matter of perception rather than a concrete phenomenon. And hegemonic discourses are determining factors on the formation of that perception. Therefore, on a more general basis, whether one would have hope for changing the system and making the world a better place, or have hope of social mobility, as in capitalism, is highly related to how their perception is shaped by social norms and values. In order to understand how hope is used as a means for the sustenance of the system, the socio-political structure of Panem, the setting of *The Hunger Games,* and the rules of the Games should be handled in detail. In this regard, the speech given by the mayor of District 12 during the reaping is a good point of reference for understanding the former, and it is narrated by Katniss as the following:

> He tells the story of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (*The Hunger Games*, 21)

Mayor's telling shows us that Panem has been a powerful country since its foundation. It is a country founded in a post-apocalyptic era and was probably the single victor of several wars that are referred as brutal. The official discourse tells that Panem has brought "peace and prosperity to its citizens"; however, this claim contradicts with the inhumane conditions of hunger and punishment they are exposed to. We also learn that there has been an uprising in recent history (exactly seventy-four years ago) and it was brutally suppressed. In other words, Panem was not only a powerful, but also an oppressive country. However, the official discourse reproduces history by calling the days of uprising as "Dark Days" and the uprising as "treason" (We understand that from

the name given to the treaty signed after the suppressed uprising: "Treaty of Treason"). Thus, the state is positioned as the supplier of peace whereas the rebels are positioned as traitors, which will provide the necessary legitimate ground for its oppressive practices. The districts which are positioned as guilty through the official discourse are punished by the Hunger Games in memory of the Dark Days, so that they will never come back.

The economic structure of Panem is based on division of labor and each district is responsible for the production of certain goods. However, any exchange between the districts is forbidden, and these goods are not for their own consumption. They are obliged to give everything they produce to the Capitol, and in return, the Capitol is responsible for the redistribution of what is produced in the districts. So, the districts' only legal access to food is through the Capitol's mediation. Even District 11, the district that is responsible for agriculture, is banned from consuming what it produces. In order to prevent them from breaking the ban, the Capitol exercises intense power through the "peacekeepers", its armed forces. As the Capitol is capable of controlling the food, the most basic need of people for their survival, it is capable of controlling the people who think their only access to food is through the Capitol. In other words, besides exploiting the labor of the districts, the Capitol makes them dependent on itself and puts another obstacle on the flourishing of an uprising.

The Capitol, unsurprisingly, is not equal in its redistribution of goods. As the district number increases (such as from District 1 and 2, to 11 and 12) starvation gets worse. In District 12, starvation is so intense that Katniss describes it as "where you can starve to death in safety" (*The Hunger Games*, p.6-7). The inequality among the districts makes itself clear in the tributes' chances of winning the Games. Katniss states that inequality as the following:

> In some districts, in which winning the reaping is such a great honor, people are eager to risk their lives, the volunteering is complicated. But in District 12, where the word *tribute* is pretty much synonymous with the word corpse, volunteers are all but extinct. (*The Hunger Games*, p.27)

The tributes from Districts 1 and 2 constitute the majority of victors in the history of Hunger Games. They are enthusiastic to join the Games, and unlike other districts, being a tribute is not equal to death for them; it is something that brings pride. These districts, which get a better share from the redistribution of goods, do not suffer from starvation and they are more integrated into the system. These tributes are called Career Tributes, since they start getting ready for the Games from a very young age and almost

build a career on that, whereas districts such as 11 and 12 are very low in their chances of winning the Games, due to lack of preparation and weak bodies caused by malnutrition. The economic system of Panem is not a system that functions like capitalism, however the socio-economic classes resemble the classed society of capitalism. In a sense, although it does not imitate the classes in a capitalist system, we can say that Panem has a classed structure.

In addition to inequality among the districts in terms of their share from the production, their communication with one another is very. When Katniss is talking to Rue, she realizes how their communication with one another is cut intentionally.

> It's interesting, hearing about her life. We have so little communication with anyone outside our district. In fact, 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. (*The Hunger Games*, p.243)

2.2. The Hunger Games and Rivalry

Hunger Games is sort of a reality show organized by the Capitol. Every year, two children (a girl and a boy) are selected from each district, and they are put into an arena for fighting to death with one another. The only child who can manage to survive till the end of the game is awarded with food and luxurious goods for herself and her family till the end of her life. In addition, the district she belongs to is given extra food for a year, so the event becomes important not only for the tributes and their families but also for the districts. The Hunger Games are designed in a way that people, actually children, are assigned as rivals of one another.

Together with being uninformed about each other's lives and conditions, the rivalry imposed upon them through the Games is intended to operate against the formation of any solidarity. Katniss tries to find logical reasons for her caring about Peeta, because the forced pragmatism upon her makes her think that she should not care for someone other than herself within the Games. It is contradicting to the rules of the game and she worries if she shows any sign of interest in someone's well-being other than her own; that might make her seem weak on the eyes of the sponsors, who have a significant effect on the tributes' destinies through the gifts they send (*The Hunger Games*, p.299). The competitive nature of the games makes one's survival dependent on

her ability to kill others or watch them being killed. As distinct from many other possible ways of spreading fear, such as gathering these children and executing all of them in public, an organized event like Hunger Games shows the significance of making these children kill each other publicly and letting only one of them survive. Such a system, besides making them one another's enemies, also gives them a small hope of survival. The hope of survival, through which they are turned into enemies, prevents them from recognizing who the real enemy is. Their hopes are tied to the sponsors from the Capitol, who are actually responsible for their misery, and their hostilities are directed to one another, who are actually exposed to a similar kind of exploitation and suffering. In this way, their chances of recognizing that they are actually on the same side are decreased, and the emergence of some sort of class consciousness is prevented. Therefore, their hopes of emancipation stay on the individual level. Rather than having "collective hopes", which they hold in common, they have "competing hopes" which leads to an increase in conflicts, and therefore lack of solidarity (Braithwaite, 2004; McGeer, 2004).

2.3. Cruel Optimism about Winning the Games

The fear spread by the Capitol and the lack of solidarity keep people away from thinking of an alternative and having hope for changing their conditions in a collective sense. However, the Games, besides being a deadly event give them a hope of individual salvation. The gifts that are given to the victor and her district at the end of each game constitute the basis of their hopes within the system. And that creates a different attachment to the annual blood bath, than a game that would mean hundred percent death. In other words, they are attached to the scene of being the victor of the game. That attachment causes them to develop a sort of optimism that they could survive and reach a higher standard of living that they could not obtain in any other way. What they could get after becoming the victor is not something they can imagine with the knowledge they have gained during their lives spent in the districts. So, before putting them in the arena the Capitol makes them taste every bit of the luxury they could own. That attachment is a cruel one, since it destroys them in the end. Lauren Berlant (2011) phrases "the object of desire" as "a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us." The "object of desire" in this context is being the victor, and in

addition to surviving, the bettering of living standards, gaining glory. Using such a phrase enables us to encounter the incoherence of our attachments as an "explanation for our sense of our endurance in the object". As we get closer to the object, we get closer to the things that it promises. Berlant declares all attachments as optimistic, and some of these optimisms as cruel. "Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object." That object can be problematic, either because its realization is impossible, or too possible but toxic (Berlant, 2011, p.33). In the case of Hunger Games, winning the games is problematic for both reasons, since their chances of survival are very low, and even if they survive and become the victor, it is impossible to live the comfortable and free life they imagine, because of the continuous surveillance of the state and the catastrophic memories of the Games. But still, people do not develop a collective reaction for the abolishment of the Games because for most of the people who have internalized the discourse, the current way of living is the only possible way and changing the system does not fit within the limits of hope. Therefore, hopes and dreams become more and more about what can be obtained within the system, such as being the victor and living in wealth. These can be interpreted as *The Hunger Games* counterparts of being successful at work, getting rich and making a "good marriage" in our world.

Berlant, in her book *Cruel Optimism* (2011), particularly asks the questions of why people cannot leave forms of life that do not work out, and why they cannot give up on attachments that cause their own destruction, as is the case in *The Hunger Games*. People are selected through a lottery and put to an arena where they will most probably be killed, and beginning with the time they are selected, their sole purpose becomes winning the Games. They consider themselves in a state of *impasse;* they will either be killed by the Capitol's armed forces if they get involved in a defying act, or die in the arena. The latter carries the possibility of survival, whereas the former seems like a certain death. They cannot imagine an alternative way that would keep them alive other than playing the Game according to its rules. And after being elected as a tribute, winning the Games becomes the only thing that can bring them happiness.

2.4. Technologies of Control

Happiness is not an emotion that is free from social construction, since it is all about associations. Through associating certain forms of being with happiness, we are

directed toward certain things. So happiness becomes a means for controlling the people as well as reproducing social norms by defining them as social goods (Ahmed, 2010, p.2). In *Brave New World*, the production process of happiness is pictured more clearly than its implicit production in the system we live. The hegemonic discourse on happiness functions in such a way that it directs people to the state of optimism: One should try to find happiness, be optimistic about the future and try to preserve the happiness she owns. And when that discourse is accompanied by the fact that happiness is about associations, it turns happiness into a means of manipulation. People who search for happiness are directed to certain objects or ways of living through discourses on happiness. In *Brave New World* happiness and joy are so diffused in every bit of the society that they do not leave any room for anything besides itself. "The freedom to be happy restricts human freedom if you are not free to be not happy. Perhaps unhappiness becomes a freedom when the necessity of happiness is masked as freedom" (Ahmed, 2010, p.193). That is why the savage's claim of his "right to be unhappy" makes sense.

Considering the positive connotations of happiness, a world like *Brave New World,* where most of the people are happy and healthy, could easily be categorized as utopian. However, *Brave New World*, rather than losing its dystopian character, opens happiness to question and challenges its positive connotations. Through estrangement, it offers its readers a new perception of a feeling which is taken for granted. It shows how happiness can be one of the technologies of control, a way of "making people love their servitude" (Huxley, 2007; Ahmed, 2010). As the Director explains, the stability of the system is built on happiness and the secret of happiness is stated in the book as, "liking what you've *got* to do" (Huxley, 2007, p.12 – original emphasis). Besides mass production of human beings, for the sake of a standardized labor force, through conditioning and *hypnopedia*, people belonging to the same cast are standardized in psychological terms and made to "like their unescapable [sic] social destiny" (ibid.). However, showing the artificial production of classes, Huxley marks the assumed inescapability of those people from their so-called "social destiny," which is neither inherent to them nor inescapable. Rather, it is the conditioning and interference to their genetics, which turns it into an inescapable destiny. The system first produces its people in a standardized form for increasing their effectiveness in terms of production, and then manipulates their values and tastes according to their role in the social division of labor. Therefore, neither their destiny, nor their objects of happiness are natural. Conditioning and *hypnopedia* are more direct and intentional versions of what hegemony does in a

figurative sense. Through *hypnopedia* they not only control, but also directly shape people's judgements, desires and decisions. Therefore, they would not desire anything besides what the system offers them, and they would be fully happy with their conditions. The Director explains *hypnopedia*'s operation as the following:

> Till at last the child's mind *is* these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions *is* the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too – all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides – made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are *our* suggestions! (Huxley, 2007, p.23)

In that regard, *Brave New World* is no place for a revolutionary because almost everyone is satisfied with the system; they are in a state of pure happiness. The lack of equality and freedom is hidden behind the curtains of happiness, and in the extreme cases where the system fails to make people happy, it offers soma. Soma can simply be defined as a happiness drug. In the world Huxley creates in *Brave New World*, people literally do not have the chance and right to be unhappy. Since all they can desire and reach is happiness, they are not capable of becoming critical about the system and they work in harmony for its continuation.

Panem, unlike the world Huxley creates, is a place where people are lacking the means of satisfaction, and therefore capable of producing critical thoughts about the system. This can be interpreted as only the people who are dissatisfied with the system can have critical thoughts, however Collins also gives an exception to that general claim. Critical thoughts about the system might also emerge from more advantageous classes. Like the couple that Katniss saw in the woods as they were caught by the Capitol's peacekeepers. As she tells that to Peeta, she says that they had "the Capitol look", so most probably they have escaped from the Capitol and run into the woods. She expresses her confusion on why people would leave a place like Capitol, with a lot of advantages. But, Peeta says that he would also leave the Capitol like those people. Being almost the most advantageous group of the whole country, these people having problems with the system and risking their lives for leaving, rather than staying and benefiting from its offerings, constitutes an example to falsification of the claim that the criticism can only be born out of people who are lacking the means of benefiting from the system. The inequality can also be bothering to the advantageous group, if they have a developed a sense of sympathy, and start to desire equality and freedom, rather than a system based on exploitation although it favors them in compare to many others. And again, they might realize the restrictions brought upon them under the cover of luxury

and entertainment. In other words, "it's not simply the poor who want to get a better situation, but people in general need to have that hope of something different to look forward to" (Zournazi & Mouffe, 2002, p.126).

This shows that the social/economic class does not directly determine one's attitude to the system, but together with several other dynamics, we can say that it still has a great effect. In the case of *The Hunger Games*, risking one's own position and life is inversely proportional to the things they are afraid to lose, and directly proportional to growing sympathy for the tributes, and rage against the Capitol. Because as much happiness they have in their lives, they become more anxious of losing it (Ahmed 2010, 161). When Katniss visits District 11 during the Victor Tour and sees how the conditions are even worse in here than her own district, she understands why they have the courage for a rebellion.

> Well, I've learned one thing today. This place is not a larger version of District 12. Our fence is unguarded and rarely charged. Our Peacekeepers are unwelcome but less brutal. Our hardships evoke more fatigue than fury. Here in 11, they suffer more acutely and feel more desperation. President Snow is right. A spark could be enough to set them ablaze. (*Catching Fire*, p.83-4)

The first rebels are from districts that suffer more, and due to that suffering less integrated to the system. They are the ones who already have given everything they have, and got almost nothing in return. Whereas, District 1 and 2 which get a greater share from redistribution of the goods, are the last districts to join the revolutionaries. The difference of attitudes in joining the rebellion, the different level of criticism about the system among the districts is a proof for the relationship of integration/satisfaction with being critical.

> Just by looking at the District 2 rebels, you can tell they were decently fed and cared for in childhood. Some did end up as quarry and mine workers. Others were educated for jobs in the Nut or funneled into the ranks of Peacekeepers. Trained young and hard for combat. The Hunger Games were an opportunity for wealth and a kind of glory not seen elsewhere. Of course, the people of 2 swallowed the Capitol's propaganda more easily than the rest of us. Embraced their ways. But for all that, at the end of the day, they were still slaves. And if that was lost on the citizens who became Peacekeepers or worked in the Nut, it was not lost on the stonecutters who formed the backbone of the resistance here" (*Mockingjay*, p.226)

The fear for losing what is at hand works to some extent for Katniss as well. When President Snow visits her and threatens her with her family's and Gale's life with her own, not exactly happiness, but fear of losing the people she loves and cares for

makes her act in accordance with the Capitol. Following President Snow's orders, by acting as if she is in love with Peeta, she tries to convince people her berry act was not intended to bring any harm to the Capitol, but merely was result of her desperate love for Peeta. Her attempt of killing the rebellion, because of her own fears, does not find response in the districts and not needed in the Capitol. Referring to the districts Katniss says, "If my holding out those berries was an act of temporary insanity, then these people will embrace insanity, too" (*Catching Fire*, p.88-9). Whereas in the Capitol, "the berries were only [perceived as] a symbol of a desperate girl trying to save her lover" (*Catching Fire*, p.96).

Districts and the Capitol are the two sides of Panem. Despite the poverty and starvation among the districts, for the Capitol, luxury and overconsumption is the norm. They have a hedonistic culture and physical appearance has a great importance. In Panem, hope is distributed unevenly. Looking from that perspective, the gap between the standards of these two different parts, and their differing amount of access to hope, the system of Panem resembles capitalism. Happiness for the residents of the Capitol, for Katniss' and Peeta's prep teams, and a lot of people alike, is painting themselves in bright colors, following the latest fashion trends, drinking and eating even after they are full, and watching the Games. These things constitute the "good life" in the Capitol, the steps that should be taken in order to reach that prescribed life. As people living in the districts suffer from starvation, Capitol's residents are living in luxury, where they have so much food, that they use a special drink for vomiting so they can continue eating (*Catching Fire*, p.97). These people knowing that they are being fed and entertained by the government are not critical about the inequality between themselves and people living in the districts. Actually, they are hardly aware of that inequality, since they are perfectly integrated to the system and internalized its discourses. For them, children killing one another in the arena is not something brutal or miserable, but an exciting event, which they can enjoy. Although their approach seems monstrous, they are not represented as such in the books. Rather, the effect of the social is emphasized, and these people are acknowledged as products of social norms by Katniss. "Who knows who I would be or what I would talk about if I'd been raised in the Capitol?" (*Catching Fire*, p.46). They enjoy watching the Games, and make bets on who will survive the fight to death. To put it simply, residents of the Capitol and the districts do not have any shared experiences, and one's pain is the other's joy. Because the districts' "lack of hope is converted into [their] hope for the future" (Ahmed, 2010, p.188). And the good life

relied on a political economy in which some people had to work to give others that leisure time. In other words, the suffering of the districts is the precondition for the luxury in the Capitol, and consciously or unconsciously, they make their choices on the others suffering and working in order that they can have "the good life". Therefore, as the privileged group of the country, ordinary people of the Capitol do not develop critical ideas about the system in the same manner with the ones in District 11. "There is no danger of an uprising here among the privileged, among those whose names are never placed in the reaping balls, whose children never die for the supposed crimes committed generations ago" (*Catching Fire*, p.90).

Within the borders of the Capitol, we see more similarities with modern capitalism, such as media being one of the most significant strategies of manipulation and creating discourses on people's appearances (Althusser, Balibar & Bidet, 2014; Foucault, 1978). However, the media, which gives joy to the residents of the Capitol, gives fear to the people living in the districts. Besides, we can say that the bodies of the people living in the Capitol are more shaped by power than the bodies of the ones living in the districts. In other words, although the districts look as if they are oppressed more, actually they can be considered free in compare to the Capitol people. Because in the districts, the system fails to use technologies of control other than surveillance. Modern technologies of power are mostly used in the Capitol, and the power exercised on the districts does not imitate modern power, rather it calls for Foucault's (1977) sovereign power. President Snow is recognized as the sovereign, power is exercised from top to down and punishments are given publicly as a way of reestablishing the sovereign power. It is important to give the punishment in public, since that is the only way the reestablishment of sovereign power would be recognized by the others. However, it also carries a "danger" for the sovereign. Because the one who is being punished also gets the chance of making herself public, and transform into a hero, like the case in *The Hunger Games* (Foucault, 1977, p.67). Besides, modern power is more successful in terms of ideological impositions than the sovereign power. The circulation of power among people makes it and its discourses less fragile to counter-discourses. And that might be one of the reasons why developing critical thoughts about the system and gaining political consciousness, which leads to a revolution are more likely in *The Hunger Games* than *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

However, criticism alone is hard to be translated into revolutionary action unless it is supported by imagining an alternative and hope for its possibility. Therefore, we can

say that, dissatisfaction with the system is not equated directly with an urge to change it. That claim is also supported by examples of people trying to find a way out of the system without destroying it. Rather than changing, or trying to change it in a total sense, these people try to build a living outside the system, by running away and/or hiding from it. To these kinds of attempts, Katniss and Gale's idea of running to the woods, as well as Julia's (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*) whole life style can be given as examples. These attempts are for developing strategies for dealing with the hardships of the system rather than overthrowing it completely. Unlike Winston, who is interested in fixing the problems of the system and making a total change, Julia only cares about how her life is affected by it and all her attempts are for developing strategies to live as she wants. For her, revolution is not a possibility, she does not have any idea of an alternative system, and rather than trying for what she sees as impossible she prefers escaping as much as she can.

> Ursula K. Le Guin's story "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" concludes an ambiguous utopia/dystopia with the words "they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas". They do not stay to address collectively the problem at the heart of Omelas, but leave individually, presumably to find or make some other, better, place. (Levitas 2003, p.14)

What Levitas points out about Le Guin's story (1993) resembles the position that Katniss considers to take by running into the woods, Julia finding ways for living as she wants rather than directly challenging the system and John, the savage, starting to live a life on his own. The common point of these three attempts is none of them being successful. Julia is caught while she is in the cabinet that they think they could hide from the system, the savage is caught by the people of Brave New World and forced to commit suicide, whereas Katniss changes her mind before getting involved in such an attempt and decides directly to challenge the system instead.

However, in *The Hunger Games*, at the end of the second book of the trilogy, Katniss sacrifices her own life as well as her loved ones and destroys the arena with an arrow. What transforms her from being a person who is ready to kill others to save herself, or who is willing to run into the woods so that she can hide from the Capitol's rage, into someone who sacrifices everything she has and everything she is for the total abolishment of her "enemy" is one of the questions that I will try to answer in the next chapter, among with many others on collective hope, solidarity and abuse of power.

CHAPTER 3

MOBILIZATION OF HOPE IN DYSTOPIAS – 2: REVOLUTIONARY HOPE

> Hunger cannot help continually renewing itself. But if it increases uninterrupted, satisfied by no certain bread, then it suddenly changes. The body-ego then becomes rebellious, does not go out in search of food merely within the old framework. It seeks to change the situation which has caused its empty stomach, its hanging head. The No to the bad situation which exists, the Yes to the better life that hovers ahead, is incorporated by the deprived into *revolutionary interest*. (Bloch, 1986, p.75 – original emphasis)

In Panem, certain districts, such as District 12, are in constant state of hunger, and people are living in fear of being elected for the deadly Hunger Games. However, Hunger Games does not mean death in a direct sense, but it keeps the small possibility of survival within itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, people who are chosen for the games stick to that hope of survival. Chapter 3 was about the operation of hope in that sense, so that it served the continuation of the system. The hope of surviving the Games can be thought as the piece of bread promised in a state of hunger. And when it is followed by people's hopelessness about changing their present conditions, it keeps them within the old framework. As the story proceeds, we witness the emergence of a revolutionary interest, and the transformation of the object of hope from surviving within the existing social order into a hope that gives them the motive to change it. The transformation is caused and then accelerated by changes in people's social conditioning. Enforced individualism that has kept people of Panem within the old framework leaves its place to collective hope, with the introduction of a character like Katniss, who turns people's conventional ideas on solidarity and survival upside down. Her acts of solidarity and defiance within the arena serve as a model and show them the possibility of rejecting the old framework that is offered by the Capitol, and creating a new one.

The first thing this chapter seeks to analyze is the variables that mark the difference between *The Hunger Games,* and *Brave New World* & *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which enable realization of a revolution. One can be stated as the level of political

consciousness among the residents of Panem exceeding the conventional level of other examples of dystopian literature. Which also affects the level of internalization of state discourses and devotion to the leader.

In Panem, especially in the districts, people are dissatisfied with the system, and by that, I do not only mean the protagonist and a few additional characters. Unlike *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, dissatisfaction is more common in Panem and it is spread to a wide variety of people from District 12 to some residents of the Capitol. It is very important for the development of critical ideas about the hegemon and recognition of his oppressive rule. However criticism at the individual level needs to be publicized in order to translate into political (or class) consciousness and collective action. And that can only be done by expressing critical ideas and sharing common experiences. At that point, telling the truth, or getting involved in several acts that deviate from the norm constitute important triggers for political consciousness' transition to rebellion. So, in addition to political consciousness, its expression as a political act will be analyzed within this chapter.

In *The Hunger Games*, we see the protagonist taking part in relationships that are neither expected nor approved by the Capitol. People, who are assigned as each other's rivals, who are supposed to be adversaries, become friends. Katniss' relationships with Rue and Peeta are friendly and affectionate. In total contradiction with the nature of the games, she even risks her life for saving theirs. In the enforced individualism of Panem, that makes a significant difference in people's perceptions. Trust that has been lacking in people's relations is regained and carries with it the formation of a more revolutionary hope. This new hope is the hope of a collective bettering outside the existing framework, which is significant for the flourishing of a rebellion.

However, the rebellion's evolution to a more organized revolution with armed forces requires mentioning District 13's introduction to the scene. District 13 is said to have been destroyed by the Capitol's forces in the previous rebellion and its persistence is kept as a secret from the rest of Panem. After several turning points in the flow of the story, its existence is revealed and it starts to take control over the revolutionaries and incorporate them into its armed forces. District 13 is another power holder that is criticized throughout the books, and although the story never evolves into an ultimate critique of revolution per se, it presents a critical approach to devotion to a revolutionary leader and systematic use of violence. Therefore, *The Hunger Games* trilogy is not only significant for handling hope within the system in a critical manner and showing its

transformation into revolutionary hope, but also for offering a critical approach to revolution and revolutionary violence.

In the first section I will be looking at the formation of a political consciousness and social conditions of its expression. It will be followed by a section, which focuses on the role of solidarity and the overcoming enforced individualism in the formation of a collective hope that leads to revolutionary practices. Then, the third section of this chapter will be on militant pessimism and its significance for breaking the attachments of cruel optimism. And the last section of this chapter will be on the critique of power and the potential dangers of revolution, such as devotion to a leader and the unquestioned use of violence.

3.1. "Yelling About the Capitol": Political Consciousness and its Expression

Revolutionary hope requires certain social conditions for its emergence, and at the top of that list of requirements, there is the need to have that hope, in other words, dissatisfaction with the current system. In a system where everyone is happy regardless of their class, such as in *Brave New World*, class stability is guaranteed. However, people's recognition of the problems with their conditions constitutes the first step towards a revolutionary imagination. Ahmed states, that being a revolutionary does not only "require a belief in the possibility of revolution", but it also requires a belief in its necessity (2010, p.172). Otherwise, the possibility of change would not mean anything for people who do not look for a change. That constitutes the reason why it is that hard for any revolutionary idea to emerge in *Brave New World*, where there is great hegemony of happiness. It is so intense that it hides all the social inequalities and wretchedness of the system under its superficial cover. As Sara Ahmed states in her book *Promise of Happiness*, people should recognize wretchedness of the present and have one of the basic preconditions of making a change: "pessimism about the present" to dream of a better future (ibid.).

Although it is very critical for the formation of political consciousness, it would be misleading to state this pessimism as the only factor that is required for a political criticism. People could be dissatisfied with their current conditions but still believe that no alternative is possible (Gramsci, 1971). That is how they would continue to stay

within the existing order and to put it in Bloch's terms, how they would search for their bread in the existing framework.

At that point, sharing critical ideas and miserable experiences gains more importance, since it gives birth to the recognition of the sociality of their problems and through the trust developed between one another, form a collectivity. Sharing certain experiences and critical ideas about the system is significant for the formation of a collectivity, especially in oppressive systems such as dystopias. Because as people talk with one another, they spread a different knowledge than the one produced by the hegemonic discourse. In other words, they take the first steps of counter-hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). In all three of these novels, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Hunger Games* trust and expression of criticism show several differences. The relationship between Katniss and Gale begins during their hunting sessions as a survival strategy, and then develops into a trustful friendship where they can express their critical ideas about the Capitol without the fear of being informed on. However, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* people are suspicious in their relationships. Children spy on their parents, and everyone is a potential Thought Police. In such an environment no one is trustable, so Winston chooses to keep a diary and write his feelings, thoughts that deviates from the norm, as well as the truth the way he remembers it, before it is changed by the Party. Throughout the story he develops several relationships. He meets Julia, a young woman who hates Big Brother and the prohibitions of the system. They start a romantic and sexual relationship, but their relationship does not satisfy Winston's craving to have someone who cares to know and tell the truth, someone who understands him. And although Winston enjoys the relationship he has with Julia, what makes him more excited is the possibility of his ideas being understood by O'Brien. The meaning of being understood is so crucial for Winston, that after it turns out that O'Brien is not on his side, but he is a Thought Police agent, who eventually becomes Winston's torturer for his thought related crimes, Winston still enjoys being understood by him and having someone that "can be talked to". Talking is important for Winston, because he wants to tell the truth and make it public. Foucault names the act of telling the truth that comes from "below" and directed towards "above" as *parrhesia* (Ross, 2008). Although Winston and O'Brien as he knows him, cannot be positioned exactly as the below and the above, telling the truth in the distrustful environment of Oceania is a similar risk to take, and his desire to tell everyone the fact that the truth is being changed by the Party makes him a *parrhesiastes* (ibid.). Later, when O'Brien reveals himself as a Thought

Police agent and tortures Winston for his "rehabilitation", for a while Winston insists on saying what he thinks is true. Telling the truth becomes a political and a performative act in such circumstances. After O'Brien is revealed as a Thought Police than Winston's every attempt to tell him what he thinks is true is a blow against the hegemonic discourse, a form of defiance. This is so because, truth is one of the means used by the Party for the reproduction of its legitimacy. People's thoughts that have already been restricted by means of the "New Speak" are also manipulated by the changed historical facts. That is another reason for truth's becoming the war-field of the hegemon and anyone with rebellious thoughts. However, at the end, the destructive nature of torture overcomes Winston's agency and he is turned into another obedient citizen. Therefore, the hope of revolution that he gains through his relationship with O'Brien and Brotherhood is lost. As a conventional citizen of dystopia, he is defeated by the hegemon. That is not only defeat of revolutionary hope, but also defeat of any trustful bonds between people.

In *The Hunger Games*, state discourse presents Panem as a unity, but social devotion is not as it is in *Brave New World*; nor there is devotion to the state as there is for the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. When we leave the protagonists aside and look at the general social tendency in these two novels, if the major emotion in *Brave New World* is happiness, it is possible to say that the two major emotions in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are love and hate. Love for the Big Brother is compulsory and in order to make the Party, in the embodiment of Big Brother, the sole object of love, love or any sexual desire between individuals is forbidden. People get married, have sexual intercourse and make children, but all of these should be done for the Party's wellbeing rather than personal desires. Manipulation of hate is made more explicit through the "Two Minutes Hate" sessions when everyday people spill out their hatred against the "traitors" of the Party and the Big Brother. Love and hate become important elements in the construction of a community. As Ahmed says, *"we love, we hate, and this hate is what brings us together*" (2004, p.43 – original emphasis).

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* people are not allowed to have personal relations in which they can talk about their intimate thoughts. This is similar to the attitude of preventing the building of a collectivity that we see in *The Hunger Games*, but it is not done by setting people as rivals. It is accomplished through the direct prohibition of any relations of love. The Thought Police does not only detect people with dissident ideas, but also prevents relationships of trust between people. They are assumed to share a

single worldview, which is the one that is imposed by the Party, and they do not say anything that would fall out of the limits of that, since they cannot risk committing a thought crime. Thought crime is considered the greatest of all crimes in Oceania, and the basic control mechanism over how people think is through changing the language in a way that it would prevent people from creating new ideas. The ideas that people develop autonomously, beyond the Party's control are considered as threats directed to the system. The system is not based on making people happy with their conditions, but rather taking away the means of creating an alternative to the system, even at the cognitive level. That is why having someone who has critical thoughts about the Party carries that much meaning for Winston. And again it is because of the same reason that his relationship with Julia does not satisfy him completely, although it does to a great extent. What he is looking for is someone looking for reality and the freedom to express that reality. But he lives in a world where these two are considered crimes. Julia, on the other hand, having been born after the Party has come to power, does not question what is real or not. She accepts that the Party is invincible, and cares for her own wellbeing within the system. And though she has critical thoughts about the system and the prohibitions it puts, she does not have any purpose of changing them. What she cares about is not the truth being constantly changed by the Party, but the effects of the prohibitions on her life. So, rather than getting involved in any rebellious attempt, she tries to overcome these effects in a covert manner. Winston is not like her. First, he realizes that history is constantly being changed for the Party's sake, and then recognizes the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). So, he wants to change the "false consciousness" that people are trapped in. His primary problem with the system is its manipulation of reality through that mental production and the prohibition put by the system on its expression of the truth. Unlike Julia, what he desires is not changing the way he lives solely, but being able to express the truth as he knows it because he sees the prohibition of truth as the source of the Party's power. The meaning he assigns to O'Brien is on that basis. Winston builds a romantic and sexual relationship with Julia, but what makes him more excited is the possibility of his ideas being understood by O'Brien.

> Winston had seen O'Brien perhaps a dozen times in almost as many years. He felt deeply drawn to him, and not solely because he was intrigued by the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prize−fighter's physique. Much more it was because of a secretly held belief or perhaps not even a belief, merely a hope that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was not perfect.

> Something in his face suggested it irresistibly. And again, perhaps it was not even unorthodoxy that was written in his face, but simply intelligence. (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.13)

The meaning of being understood is so crucial for Winston that after it turns out that O'Brien is not on his side, and he actually becomes Winston's torturer for his thought related crimes, Winston still enjoys being understood and having someone that "could be talked to".

> He had never loved him so deeply as at this moment, and not merely because he had stopped the pain. The old feeling, that at bottom it did not matter whether O'Brien was a friend or an enemy, had come back. O'Brien was a person who could be talked to. Perhaps one did not want to be loved so much as to be understood. (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p.264)

The emphasis on the significance of sharing the knowledge on how the system works for Winston in Nineteen Eighty-Four cannot be thought without the context that this book has emerged from. Limitations on knowledge, prohibitions and intense imposition of certain ideologies mark the world of twentieth century. Devotedness to a leader and love for one's nation can be counted as other characteristics of the regimes of the time Nineteen Eighty-Four was written. However, in *The Hunger Games*, people are not in such a state of devotedness to the system or its leader, as they are in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Neither are they happy as the people in *Brave New World*. That might be explained by the changes in the way that capitalism is perceived. As neoliberal economy politics gained more power, the gap between the economic classes grew and inequalities became more visible. Therefore people's commitment to capitalism evolved from being based on satisfaction to hegemonic discourse of lack of alternatives. As the product of such a social and political context, in *The Hunger Games* it is not as radical to have critical thoughts about the system as it is in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*. When Katniss talks with her friend Gale in the woods, outside the borders of District 12, where they go hunting for extra food, they express their thoughts without being afraid of one another. The relationship between Katniss and Gale is a remarkable one, since it is the first example of solidarity that takes place in the books. Through the years they have spent together in the woods, they have developed their own strategies for feeding their family, and once they started to act as a team, they have become closer as friends. Other than each other, their devotions are limited to their families. And after the reaping, when Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place, the crowd is impressed by her self-sacrificing act because, as Katniss states, "Family devotion only goes so far

for most people on reaping day. What I did was the radical thing" (*The Hunger Games*, p.31). Impressed by her act, people show their disapproval through silence: "So instead of acknowledging applause, I stand there unmoving while they take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong" (*The Hunger Games*, 28-9). Then they make a sign, by touching their lips with their three middle fingers and holding it out to Katniss. It is a sign specific to District 12, showing admiration and saying good-bye to a loved one (*The Hunger Games*, 29). That sign and the resisting silence also show that being critical is not specific to Katniss and Gale; rather it is commonly held, but also could not be expressed. Such a collective criticism is not a common phenomenon among other examples of dystopian literature. Although there are marks of political consciousness in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is limited to the protagonist and a very small number of people who share the critical ideas of the protagonist. In these examples, what we see is an almost perfect integration to the system. That integration is either provided by happiness and satisfaction or devotion and oppression. However, unlike *Brave New World*, where people are "happy" with the system and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where people are in a state of devotion, people living in Panem under the Capitol's rule are neither happy with the system nor devoted to it. They are kept under control through fear and repression rather than consent and ideological impositions. They are suffering from starvation and their or their children's lives are under the threat of a more brutal death together. As it had been stated above, what keeps them in the state of resignation is the fear imposed upon them by the Capitol together with lack of hope for the success of any revolutionary attempt. It is true that their conditions are not equal, but the Games offer a sort of social mobility, especially for those who have a greater chance of becoming the victor. In that sense, Panem may be considered as similar to the modern capitalist system, and just like other political/economic systems where social mobility is possible, people's hopes are tied to that possibility. But the possibility of mobility is not the same for everyone. In a stratified society, the lower the social group one belongs to, the lesser are her chances for social mobility. Therefore, people who lack the chances of benefiting from what the system offers to others become less hopeful about the system. Dissatisfaction and knowing that it will continue in the future makes these people less integrated into the system; in other words, lack of hope within the system opens the gates of a more critical approach (Zournazi, 2002, p.98). But critical thinking does not translate into action in the environment of hopelessness.

The access to food and problems of daily life occupy a greater place in people's minds due to their urgency. For that reason, Gale's expression of his rage against the Capitol out loud seems pointless to Katniss and she asks herself, "What good is yelling about the Capitol in the middle of the woods? It doesn't change anything. It doesn't make things fair. It doesn't fill our stomachs" (*The Hunger Games*, p.17). This sentence of hers is the result of lacking any revolutionary interest. However, later on, after Rue's death, before she covers her dead body with the flowers, she says,

> I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to *show* the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I. (*The Hunger Games*, p. 286 - my emphasis)

What Katniss does is not a verbal expression of her criticism, but something that she does with an urge other than filling her stomach, or saving someone's life. Although it is an act rather than a verbal statement, it is a performative expression of criticism, an expression of the truth to the faces of the Capitol, and the people of Panem that these people called as tributes are not pieces in their games but actual human beings.

3.2. "The Perfect Touch of Rebellion": Solidarity vs. Enforced Individualism

According to the description made by Jacobs,

> The ideal citizen of dystopia is fully integrated with the social formation and has no self to express. The regimes of power in these classic dystopias understand free agency as based in individuality, and they use every means available to destroy any kind of identity that is separable from and potentially at odds with the collective. (2003, p.92)

However, *The Hunger Games*, as a product of an age of individualism, falls apart from other dystopian texts, in terms of its approach to individuality. Unlike the conventional understanding in dystopian literature, in *The Hunger Games* individualism is part of the hegemony. The Games are designed in such a way that people are forced to act according to their individual interests rather than acting collectively. Therefore, they are prevented from forming any kind of solidarity that would actually provide them the necessary ground for exercising their agencies. In other words, rather than individualism being the basis of free agency, their agencies are broken by enforced individuality,

which keeps them attached to the only hope offered by the regime of power. So, rather than individuality being the basis of agency, it becomes the source of control over people.

Another obstacle preventing the citizens of Panem from acting in solidarity and gaining class-consciousness against the Capitol is the layered inequality among them. Panem is a classed society, and the most basic of these classes are the Capitol people vs. the district people. However, formation of a collectivity within the district people is also prevented by the means of the inequality among them. Even people belonging to the same district may have different class experiences, such as Madge, the mayor's daughter, and Katniss or Gale. Besides living in a constant state of hunger, for the poor, reaping is another unfair experience. The children of the poor families have their names written for additional times in order to get tesserae (extra food) for their families. Therefore, chances of their names being drawn are much greater than the names of children from families with relatively better conditions. Katniss and Gale live at Seam, the poorest part of District 12. However, Madge, the mayor's daughter, has better conditions than Katniss and Gale, although they belong to the same district. The inequality between children from different classes is shown through Katniss comparing chances of their names being drawn.

> You can see why someone like Madge, who has never been at risk of needing a tesserae, can set him off. The chance of her name being drawn is very slim compared to those of us who live in the Seam. Not impossible, but slim. And even though the rules were set up by the Capitol, not the districts, certainly not Madge's family, it's hard not to resent those who don't have to sign up for tesserae. (*The Hunger Games*, p. 16)

What is interesting about that conflict is that at least one of the parties is aware of the fact that the Capitol is responsible for that inequality, and they should not be blaming Madge for her better conditions.

> Gale knows his anger at Madge is misdirected. On other days, deep in the woods, I've listened to him rant about how the tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can generally count on supper and thereby ensure we will never trust one another. "It's to the Capitol's advantage to have us divided among ourselves," he might say if there were no ears to hear but mine. (*The Hunger Games*, p.16)

That passage shows that neither Katniss nor Gale is in a state of mind that is desired by the Capitol. Rather, they do not only keep the Capitol responsible for their conditions, but they are also aware of its intentions in creating such an inequality.

Besides, it also makes clear the trust Gale has for Katniss.

In *Brave New World*, there are several examples of friendship between people. One of these is the superficial friendship of Lenina and Fanny. Fanny is like the embodiment of social norms. She constantly warns Lenina for her acts that even slightly diverge from the norm. Another example of a weak friendship is the one between Bernard Marx, the protagonist, and Helmholtz Watson. Their relationship is basically built on their shared criticism about the system and its forced happiness. Other than their ideological divergences, they have hardly anything in common. Even the reason for their critical positions is given as different; for Helmholtz's it is superior intelligence, whereas for Bernard, it is a physical defect. Then, when Bernard meets the savage, and becomes famous through him by promising other residents of Brave New World the chance of meeting this "exotic" figure in return for their admiration to himself, his criticisms start to dissolve and along with his integration to the society, his friendship with Helmholtz starts to deteriorate. The same can be told for his relationship with the savage John. At their first encounter, they have more common thoughts about the problems of the system in Brave New World; however, when Bernard recognizes that John provides him the necessary fame within the system, he starts using him for that, and their relationship evolves into an exploitative one. We can say that the common reason that lies behind Bernard's becoming a distrustful friend both for Helmholtz Watson and John the Savage is the same: the hope he gains for bettering his position within the system. In a world like Brave New World, where hope is lacking due to ultimate happiness among its citizens, the reason that Bernard still can have hope for bettering his position is the same reason that makes emergence of critical ideas in his mind possible. He is physically different from other members of his caste and therefore he cannot enjoy happiness as other citizens who are designed perfectly for their castes. So, he gets tied to the chance of fixing the disadvantages of his imperfection through the fame he gains. Therefore, once more the system overcomes the undesired relationships within itself.

As we have seen in the previous section, it is not allowed for people to have intimate relations with one another in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Sex is a duty for reproducing new citizens devoted to the Party; love and devotion can only exits for Big Brother, and trusting another human being is almost impossible. There are undercover Thought Police agents, and even one's children are capable of spying on their parents. Therefore, if people can develop any critical thoughts about the Party, it is impossible to

share them with another person. In such distrust, Winston builds a romantic and sexual partnership with Julia, and an intellectual relationship with O'Brien. He trusts both of them, and especially with Julia this trust is reciprocal. However, as expected from a dystopia with a conventional story line, his trust for O'Brien turns out to be a false one, and due to tortures put by him, Winston betrays Julia, and impossibility of cooperation or solidarity is once approved.

In contrast to these examples, *The Hunger Games* bases revolution on interaction and cooperation. As Katniss gets involved in the games as a tribute, she develops several friendships with her adversaries. The first of these alliances is with Peeta, other tribute of her district. The alliance starts as a form of play-acting, which is imposed by their stylists. It is a significant detail that the mentor interprets this act as an act of rebellion.

> "Whose idea was the hand holding?" asks Haymitch.
> "Cinna's," says Portia.
> "Just the perfect touch of rebellion," says Haymitch. "Very nice."
> […]
> I know what Haymitch means. Presenting ourselves not as adversaries but as friends has distinguished us as much as the fiery costumes. (*The Hunger Games*, p.96)

During the opening ceremony, they present an image of solidarity by holding hands. And when Peeta declares his love for Katniss in a public talk show, they become "star-crossed lovers" all around the Capitol and the rest of Panem. In the course of the story, basically due to Peeta's loving and caring manners, their relationship becomes a real friendship, if not a romantic relationship.

We see the same unexpected attitude when she develops a friendship with Rue, District 11's eleven year old girl tribute. The relationship they have, till Rue is killed by one of the other tributes, is much closer to friendship and solidarity than interest based alliances that are commonly held in the competitive environment of the Games. Rue's being killed becomes a breaking point for Katniss'. Her grief and rage overcome her self-interestedness within the Games and her ideas about the Capitol gain a clearer form.

> I can't stop looking at Rue, smaller than ever, a baby animal curled up in a nest of netting. I can't bring myself to leave her like this. Past harm, but seeming utterly defenseless. To hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us.
> Gale's voice is in my head. His ravings against the Capitol no longer pointless, no longer to be ignored. Rue's death has forced me to confront my own fury against cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us. (*The Hunger Games*, p.286)

As Rue dies, she acts in full compassion, sings a song to comfort her as she dies, and puts flowers around her dead body. She says that she has done that because she wanted to show the Capitol that Rue is not just a piece in their Games, that Rue is more than that. Her act affects people of District 11, and for the first time in the history of the Hunger Games, a district sends a gift (a bread) to the tribute of another district. "For whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who's not your own" (*The Hunger Games*, p.289).

During the Games the Capitol makes an announcement of a change in the rules. The rule which permits only one tribute to be declared as the victor and to survive is changed to allow two tributes belonging to the same district to become victors together. After that change in the rules, Katniss and Peeta start acting together for their survival. The following solidarity they build is an expected thing, since they are no longer rivals of one another. However, what is more important is Katniss's putting her life at risk several times to save Peeta, which is purely against the nature of the Games. Katniss's individual hope for her personal survival transforms into saving Peeta and making survival a possibility for both of them. The change in the rules is a determining factor in their relationship with Peeta. It can be interpreted as being made with the intention of giving a better show to the audiences by making Katniss and Peeta at first allies, and then by a second change in the rules, positioning them again as enemies. However, before Katniss, Peeta commits a deviant act in terms of the norms of the Games, and says that he is ready to die. His self-sacrificial act is followed by Katniss's courageous and daring act of bringing out the poisonous berries and risking her life once again rather than giving up on Peeta. However, it would be a misinterpretation if her act is considered as mere sacrifice. It is clearly stated in the books that she turns her death into a weapon that is directed against the Capitol. Her main intention is to outsmart the game-makers, and rather than choosing to die with Peeta, she plays strategically and keeps both herself and Peeta alive. These acts of sacrifice and solidarity impress other people and plant the seeds of a more collective solidarity that has been lacking during the years that have been spent in fear.

In contrast to the devotion to the system and the society, which replaces the role of family in people's lives in *Brave New World*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in *The Hunger Games*, we see a devotion to the family. For example Katniss, in her daily life, spends hours in the woods, putting her life in danger by breaking the rules to feed her family,

and when her sister is elected for the Games, she sacrifices herself for her. Considering what she does, and what she avoids doing (such as acting in accordance with President Snow), Katniss is motivated by protecting her family and not bringing any harm on her mother and sister. Her efforts to stay alive in the arena are also related to that purpose. In other words, it is not only for her own survival that she struggles, but also in order to be able to take care of her family in the future. Later on, we see that this devotion and self-sacrifice is expanded to people other than her family. She develops a sort of devotion to her friends that she gains during the Games. At first, she risks her life for Rue, then they build a relationship that does not fit in the limits of what is expected from the tributes considering the structure of the Games. Contrary to the cases in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the devotions and sacrifices in *The Hunger Games* are not from one party to the other, but they are reciprocal instead. After the rule change is declared and Katniss learns that both she and Peeta can be victors, she directly goes to save him. She cares for him so much that that she almost sacrifices herself for him. To get him the medicine he needs, she goes into a potential blood bath, and the only reason she can get out of there alive is Tresh, the male tribute of District 11, who saves her from another tribute and does not kill her though he had the chance. When she comes back to where they hide with Peeta and tells him about that, Peeta realizes that she no longer sees Tresh as an enemy and says that it is better if Cato kills him, rather than themselves. That was an expected attitude within the norms of the Games; however, what Katniss thinks falls out of these limits; "I don't want Cato to kill Tresh at all. I don't want anyone else to die. But this is absolutely not the kind of thing that victors go around saying in the arena" (*The Hunger Games*, p.357).

In the arena, Katniss did not have extreme qualities that gave her an advantage over the other tributes. However, Foxface was the smartest, and Cato and Tresh were the most powerful. Katniss, together with Peeta, becomes the victor. What they have that the others did not is acting in solidarity. Katniss overcomes the worst of all the conditions by the help of others such as, Rue, Peeta, and even Tresh. Thus, her survival is not her success alone, but a result of cooperation. Therefore, the significance of cooperation is emphasized for overcoming even the smartest and the most powerful.

When these unexpected moves of solidarity occur in the arena, they find response in the districts. Katniss becomes an important figure for the people of Panem because what she does at the end of the game is not just an act of defiance that would give them encouragement, but also a risk that is taken to save somebody else's life. When it is

combined with her previous self-sacrifices, either for her sister or for Rue, she becomes the symbol of solidarity that has been lacking for years. The Games, which have been used as a weapon of the Capitol for years, a way of reproducing the hegemony through feeding the rivalry between people and preventing them from forming any kind of solidarity with one another, become origins of counter-hegemony.

3.3. Revolutionary Hope and Militant Pessimism

When rebellious attempts start to take place in several districts, Snow tries to convince Katniss to dissuade people from an uprising by telling her how an uprising will cause the death of many people. That is, he threatens her with the possibility of violence, and by doing that, he reproduces the ideology that what they already inflict on the districts is not violence. He convinces Katniss that if any harm comes to people because of their revolutionary attempts, the responsibility is Katniss'. Therefore, he makes her feel guilty about herself. But Gale refuses to accept that discourse, and we see his approach to being safe and being in danger in the following dialogue between him and Katniss:

> "And it's my fault, Gale. Because of what I did in the arena. If I had just killed myself with those berries, none of this would've happened. Peeta could have come home and lived, and everyone else would have been safe, too."
> "Safe to do what?" he says in a gentler tone. "Starve? Work like slaves? Send their kids to the reaping? You haven't hurt people—you've given them an opportunity. They just have to be brave enough to take it. There's already been talk in the mines. People who want to fight. Don't you see? It's happening! It's finally happening! If there's an uprising in District Eight, why not here? Why not everywhere? This could be it, the thing we've been—" (*Catching Fire*, p.121-2)

And later, during an internal struggle that Katniss goes through, she first fears from any danger that she might cause to her family by taking part in the provocation of an uprising, but then she realizes that they are already in danger under the rule of the Capitol:

> Now comes the harder part. I have to face the fact that my family and friends might share this fate. Prim. I need only to think of Prim and all my resolve disintegrates. It's my job to protect her. I pull the blanket up over my

> head, and my breathing is so rapid I use up all the oxygen and begin to choke for air. I can't let the Capitol hurt Prim.
> And then it hits me. They already have. They have killed her father in those wretched mines. They have sat by as she almost starved to death. They have chosen her as a tribute, then made her watch her sister fight to the death in the Games. She has been hurt far worse than I had at the age of twelve. And even that pales in comparison with Rue's life.
> […]
> Prim ... Rue ... aren't they the very reason I have to try to fight? Because what has been done to them is so wrong, so beyond justification, so evil that there is no choice? Because no one has the right to treat them as they have been treated? (*Catching Fire*, p.148)

She interprets their conditions as "so beyond justification, so evil that there is no choice". This is a direct example of how Katniss' pessimism takes the form of what Bloch refers to as militant pessimism (1986). This form of pessimism requires two things: (1) recognition of the problems of the present, rejecting happiness (Ahmed), and (2) having hope for change, believing in the possibility of an alternative (Bloch). What people of Panem, including Katniss were lacking was the second of these preconditions. They were already critical about the system, although they were dulled to some extent by the individual hope of winning the Games. However, they did not deem total emancipation from the system possible, which causes their suffering.

As possibility of collective action and the power it provides against the Capitol realized by the people, they develop a different perception of emancipation.

> A theory of collective hope has to provide resolution to the inevitable conflicts that arise from competing hopes. To put it more constructively, it needs to provide a framework for understanding how individual aspirations are coordinated to bring about a groundswell of opinion that certain goals are worth striving for, that there are pathways to their accomplishment, and that the collective has the capacity to move things along toward the achievement of these goals. (Braithwaite, 2004, p.132)

We see self-sacrificing acts of several tributes in order to save Peeta. They make these sacrifices for the revolution's sake and with a desire for a better future, despite the knowledge that they would not live in that future. Both Mags and one of the morphlings, in other words two tributes from different districts, give up on their lives for Peeta's survival. This is an act that could only be done by a great motive for a collective emancipation. So, even though they would not be part of the future, they still care for its establishment.

3.4. Revolution, But How? : Critique of Power

Katniss throws an arrow to the force field of the arena of the second Hunger Games she takes part in as tribute. After that radical attempt of hers, she is saved with a hovercraft from District 13, and that takes the district beyond being a subject of rumor and introduces it as a significant actor of revolution. District 13's introduction causes a twist in the story line and being controlled by the hierarchically organized forces of the newly introduced district revolution gains a more organized character.

Despite being a counter force to the Capitol, District 13 is not depicted as a utopian place. It is described by Katniss as being "even more controlling than the Capitol" (*Mockingjay*, p.43). She also mentions its resemblance to the Capitol: "They have a whole team of people to make me over, dress me, write my speeches, orchestrate my appearances—as if that doesn't sound horribly familiar—and all I have to do is play my part" (*Mockingjay*, p.12). She feels that she is again becoming a piece in some other's game. She defines Coin as "another power player who has decided to use [Katniss] as a piece in her games" (p.70). As revolution gains more power, so does Alma Coin. She appears as another sovereign figure in antagonism towards President Snow. Recognizing how power operates, Katniss approaches President Coin cautiously and warns other actors of revolution, such as Plutarch and Fluvia about how they would be disposable for the sovereign (Coin) when they are no longer useful for her cause. In that sense they are actually not that different from tributes that are disposable for the Capitol, and despite differences in degree, when a system is made up of a power figure and its subjects, the subjects can immediately become dispensable.

Another problem Katniss has with District 13 is its use of violence not only as a mean of resistance, but also as a way of reproducing its power. When she sees her prep team held captive by the district's forces and takes her mother to take care of them, describes her mother's reaction in the following way;

> It takes her a minute to place the three, given their current condition, but already she wears a look of consternation. And I know it's not a result of seeing abused bodies, because they were her daily fare in District 12, but the realization that this sort of thing goes on in 13 as well. (*Mockingjay*, p.59)

Katniss' critical ideas about District 13 is reflected in her narrative of her mother's disappointment when she sees that the forces upon which she has tied her hopes for a

better future have the same potential to act as brutally as the Capitol. The tendency of District 13 to inflict violence on people with whom they are at war is not shared by Katniss, and one reason for that can be stated as her recognition of the social effects of being raised in the Capitol. Recognizing the difference caused by social conditions, she does not assign full responsibility to the Capitol people for their ignorant attitudes to the annual slaughter of district children, and therefore she cannot legitimize the violence directed to them. However, by many of the revolutionaries, including Gale, violence is accepted as a legitimate means that does not need to be questioned in the context of war. Legitimization of violence goes so far that when Coin proposes organizing one last Hunger Games for the Capitol's children, it is accepted by a couple of old tributes. Katniss' significance lies on her deviant acts in different contexts, such as collectivism under the rule of the Capitol and individualism under the rule of District 13. In the environment of enforced individualism, she gets involved in unexpected cooperative acts, whereas in District 13, where people are obliged to act as a collective body, she deviates from the norm by acting on her individual decisions.

> And now Coin, with her fistful of precious nukes and her well-oiled machine of a district, finding it's even harder to groom a Mockingjay than to catch one. But she has been the quickest to determine that I have an agenda of my own and am therefore not to be trusted. She has been the first to publicly brand me as a threat. (*Mockingjay,* p.70)

After Coin's proposal for another round of Hunger Games, Katniss sees that the new system is pretty much the same with the old one, only under the rule of revolutionaries, and primarily Coin's. However this time Katniss takes a quicker action and chooses to kill the new sovereign, whom she sees as more dangerous within the new circumstances of Panem, rather than the old one and assassinates Alma Coin instead of President Snow.

Katniss's sister Prim's death by a weapon designed by Gale is a very significant indicator of how victims might turn into perpetrators and how violence might take control of a revolution. However, I argue that reading *The Hunger Games* as a pacifist novel, which only directs its criticism against the use of violence would be a misreading. The call made by Katniss to the rebels after the bombing of a hospital in District 8 shows that the political position of the books is not in favor of the total exclusion of any political use of violence, but against turning it into a mean for the production of another power center.

> ‘I want to tell the rebels that I am alive. That I’m right here in District Eight, where the Capitol has just bombed a hospital full of unarmed men, women, and children. There will be no survivors.’ The shock I’ve been feeling begins to give way to fury. ‘I want to tell people that if you think for one second the Capitol will treat us fairly if there’s a cease-fire, you’re deluding yourself. Because you know who they are and what they do.’ My hands go out automatically, as if to indicate the whole horror around me. ‘This is what they do! And we must fight back!’
> I’m moving in toward the camera now, carried forward by my rage. ‘President Snow says he’s sending us a message? Well, I have one for him. You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but do you see that?’ One of the cameras follows as I point to the planes burning on the roof of the warehouse across from us. The Capitol seal on a wing glows clearly through the flames. ‘Fire is catching!’ I am shouting now, determined that he will not miss a word. ‘And if we burn, you burn with us!’ (*Mockingjay*, p.118)

District 13 is a district organized in military order, where “[t]hose over fourteen have been given entry-level ranks in the military and are addressed respectfully as “Soldier.” (ch1). Its social and political structure is depicted in clear resemblance to Soviet socialism. The control mechanisms it applies on its subjects, its difference from rest of the country (world), its threat to use nuclear weapons against the Capitol and its being a second power center other than the Capitol can all be listed as evidence for that resemblance. Taking into consideration the Capitol’s resemblance to capitalism with its hedonistic culture and excessive consumption habits, it is possible to say that *The Hunger Games* directs its criticism to both utopias of the twentieth century.

Rejection of these two models goes hand in hand with the trilogy’s approach to utopian thinking and conceptualization of it as a process for bettering off, rather than a blueprint prescription of an ideal. In The Hunger Games, considering the darkness that continues to some extent in the post-revolution period, it is possible to say that revolution is not represented as a route for a happy-ending, but it certainly does with a happier one. Therefore, I argue that the main course of *The Hunger Games* is not for statement of “the Good”, but humanly desire for changing life towards the better, and the human capacity to be and bring that change.

CONCLUSION

The Hunger Games is simply a "mockingjay" story, a hybrid bird, which Katniss refers to as "a slap in the face to the Capitol", like herself (ibid.). Mockingjay is not just a symbol on Katniss's pin. Rather, it has a metaphoric significance for the revolution.

> During the rebellion, the Capitol bred a series of genetically altered animals as weapons. The common term for them was muttations, or sometimes mutts for short. One was a special bird called a jabberjay that had the ability to memorize and repeat whole human conversations. They were homing birds, exclusively male, that were released into regions where the Capitol's enemies were known to be hiding. After the birds gathered words, they'd fly back to centers to be recorded. It took people awhile to realize what was going on in the districts, how private conversations were being transmitted. Then, of course, the rebels fed the Capitol endless lies, and the joke was on it. So the centers were shut down and the birds were abandoned to die off in the wild.
> Only they didn't die off. Instead, the jabberjays mated with female mockingbirds, creating a whole new species that could replicate both bird whistles and human melodies. They had lost the ability to enunciate words but could still mimic a range of human vocal sounds, from a child's high-pitched warble to a man's deep tones. And they could re-create songs. Not just a few notes, but whole songs with multiple verses, if you had the patience to sing them and if they liked your voice. (*The Hunger Games*, p.52)

The creation story of mockingjays foreshadows Katniss's evolution from a weapon of the Capitol to a weapon directed against it. With a meta-level approach, it might bring up the question of whether the books also serve as another type of Hunger Games, and despite their system-friendly position as a best-seller, can we think of them as having a function of creating a discourse against the system.

As a best-selling novel and a blockbuster movie when filmed, its involvement of a media critique for being means of manipulation of the masses is interesting. In other words, it is an element of popular culture, which might seem to be in contradiction with any critical political message it carries. However, as the story continues, and when the

media starts to be used by the revolutionaries in order to reach more people, the approach to the media gets a little more complicated than it seems at the beginning and the media gains a dual function, both for or against the existing system. Like Hunger Games becoming the event where the first seeds of rebellion are sowed, turning into a means of propaganda in the hands of the revolutionaries, the media becomes another slap in the face of the Capitol. *The Hunger Games'* political position might be explained with the same attitude. Of course my tendency to think as such can be a product of a wishful thinking, and like the other examples of young adult dystopia, which have been popularized lately, *The Hunger Games* might very well be just another example of commodification of revolution. And the space allocated for revolution can be interpreted as hegemony's taking over any idea that might contribute into its critique and have a counter-hegemonic voice. Therefore, I can say that *The Hunger Games* leaves us within the dilemma of two options that seem mutually exclusive. For Benjamin, in order to be a high quality piece, a text should have political concerns for making a change, rather than being part of an entertainment literature. Talking on his behalf, considering the popularity it has gained, especially after being filmed, I think he would say for *The Hunger Games* that, "it has turned the struggle against misery into an object of consumption" (1998, p.96). Agreeing with the fact that *The Hunger Games*, as part of popular culture might be a way of directing people's revolutionary energies to a safer ground, and keeping away from the system, I make my claim for the possibility of coexistence of the stated two options.

For me, despite its popularity, the beauty of *The Hunger Games* lies in the questions it allows us to ask, rather than the answers it gives. It is an interesting example of a dystopia, since it tells the story of a revolution. But after doing that, it gets more interesting because when the revolution is accomplished, in other words when the sovereign is overthrown, there are still things to do. Neither the revolutionary forces nor the new system after the revolution are represented as ideal. Their problems are represented, but again they are not represented as worse than the former rulers and the former system. In other words, the narrative of *The Hunger Games* neither gives up on the righteousness of rebellion in order to point its problems, nor legitimizes its problems in order to state its righteousness. While District 13 has been the main reason that the Capitol was not capable of suppressing the rebellion, the rebels themselves and commanders of District 13 too do not fall short in terms of using systemic violence, as well as deploying similar traits of oppression they seem to have inherited from Capitol.

By putting all these together, instead of adhering to a non-critical revolutionary rhetoric, or inhibiting violence within revolution altogether, *The Hunger Games* puts forward an understanding of revolution that goes beyond the notion of "revolution as an end to be reached". Rather, the way revolution is constructed is that of a route, and the means deployed are of critical importance for they constitute, if not determine, the outcome, and therefore the revolution. Through that criticism, "ends justify means" discourse is problematized and it is shown that memories of violence are hard to cope with, and victims of a particular system might turn into perpetrators of another when they start holding means of power in their hands.

Leaving aside the discussions on ambiguity of *The Hunger Games'* position as a political text, I think it is a more complicated text than it seems with all the intermingling ideas that it provides within a single text. It is beyond doubt that is maintained through forcing the limits of dystopia, in other words, the dissolving the distinction of dystopia and utopia.

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