

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and scientific Research Mohamed
Khider University of Biskra



Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Language and English Literature

**Investigating The Issue of Female Emancipation in Dystopian Fiction through
Margret Atwood the Handmaid's Tale and Suzan Collins' The Hunger Games
Trilogy**

Thesis submitted to the Department of Language and English Literature in candidacy for the degree
of Doctorate in English

Option: **Cultural Studies**

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Academic Year: 2025/2026

Declaration

I, **DJOUHRI Rania**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled: ***“Investigating Female Emancipation in Dystopian Fiction through Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games Trilogy*”*** is my own work and that all the sources I have quoted from have been acknowledged by means of references. Besides, the ideas of this study have not been submitted before to any other institution or University for a degree, and thus, this work is conducted and completed at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rania' with a stylized flourish.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, all praise is to Allah, the most graceful and most compassionate the Almighty, Who gave me strength and good health to accomplish this work.

My sincere and honest gratitude is addressed to Dr. SAIHI Hanane, the supervisor of this thesis, for her invaluable guidance, constant support, and useful feedback over the course of this study. I highly appreciate her patience, endless advice and constant efforts which contributed to the accomplishment of this work.

I also extend my appreciation to the esteemed panel members for dedicating their valuable time to read and evaluate my work. Their constructive feedback has significantly contributed to the improvement of this research.

Special thanks and appreciation are also dedicated to the teachers of this PhD project including: my supervisor Dr. SAIHI Hanane, Prof. HOUADJLI Ahmed Chawki, Prof. CHELLI Saliha, Prof. MEHIRI Ramdhane, Dr. KARBOUA Salim and Dr. KHIDER Salim whose support and motivation over the last years have significantly contributed to my academic growth.

Lastly, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my teachers of M'sila University for their insightful pieces of advice and constant guidance which were instrumental in flourishing my academic endeavors.

Dedication

This work is dedicated with profound love and deep gratitude to:

My **beloved parents, Said and Wahiba**, whose unwavering support, endless sacrifices, and unconditional love have been my greatest source of strength and motivation throughout my whole life.

My **dear beloved husband Soufiane**, my partner in life and greatest source of support with whom I have started this journey. His patience, love, and belief in me have been a driving force to achieve this work. Thank you for being there every time I felt frustrated to bring me up again with your endless motivation and love. This work is also dedicated to our **precious child, my dear Mouatez bi Allah**, who fills our life with joy and happiness. I hope you will be proud of your mother when you grow up. I say to both of you: this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

My **little cherished sister Nadine** who has always provided me with unwavering moral and emotional support. I would like to say: Thank you for being in my life and I hope to attend your PhD viva one day.

My **dear brothers** Walid and Halim and their **beloved wives** Amira and Dalila, respectively, whose constant encouragement is highly appreciated.

My **second family**: To my dear **mother-in-law** Fatoum and to the memory of **my father-in-law** Mohamed who is always alive in spirit.

My **beloved sisters-in-law**: Sihem, Hakima, Assia, Aicha and Chaima and to my **dear brothers-in-law**: Makhlouf and Nidhal.

Finally, to everyone who supported me throughout this journey. Thank you all!

Abstract

This research aims at analyzing the quest of Offred and Katniss, the female protagonists of the *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, respectively, against the oppressive regimes of their societies Gilead and Panem to attain emancipation. It examines the totalitarian elements in each novel as well as the mechanisms of rebellion that the female protagonists go through to set themselves free from the authoritarian regimes. To achieve the objectives of this study, this work draws upon descriptive, thematic, analytical, and comparative approaches. It is based on Foucault theories on power, surveillance and discipline in addition to Althusser theories on ideology and indoctrination. These theories help to understand the different mechanisms of control in the aforementioned novels. In addition, Judith Butler theory of gender performance is significantly used in this research in order to explain how gender roles are deconstructed in feminist dystopian fiction to survive against the totalitarian regimes. An intersectional approach is also adopted to examine how gender intersects with other forms of inequality within dystopian societies. This study addresses the lack of comparative analyses in feminist dystopian fiction that examine female emancipation as a process of agency and resistance rather than solely as a condition of oppression. It reveals that the protagonists reached different fates. While Katniss proves to be successful to overthrow the totalitarian regime and starts new life, Offred does not clearly reach emancipation and her destiny remains ambiguous.

Key words: feminist dystopia, totalitarianism, female emancipation, gender roles.

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General Introduction

Dystopian literature depicts the negative aspects of contemporary social systems and highlights their flaws. It presents futuristic, imaginary worlds marked by rigid control, social inequality, and suppression of individual freedom. Within such societies, the struggle of women against the state's manipulation is sharply magnified revealing the different ways by which totalitarian and patriarchal systems restrict autonomy, manipulate behavior, and shape one's identity. Consequently, exploring female emancipation in dystopian fiction becomes a crucial theme in feminist dystopian literature that sheds the light, not only on the mechanisms of oppression, but also on the strategies of resistance and rebellion which emerge in response in order to attain emancipation.

Background of the Study

The theme of totalitarianism is crucial in dystopian fiction. This latter depicts the government as an absolute, oppressive power which limits citizens' actions and manipulate their thoughts in order to keep them obedient and submissive to the regime. However, the protagonists of dystopian fiction do not submit to the state laws; instead, they are generally thrust into heroic roles and aware of the need to change. They question their position, take risks, endure punishments, lead revolutions and even face death to attain emancipation through resistance and rebellion.

The early dystopian novels, therefore, emerge as a response to the social, political and technological challenges of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Some of the earliest and most influential dystopian novels are H.G Well's *The Time Machine* (1895) in addition to Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924). The former criticizes industrial exploitation and class division while the latter depicts a totalitarian state where collectivism is supported over individuality. Both novels serve as the foundation of dystopian literature and inspire different future authors to write about dystopia. Other dystopian works include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

(1932) which explores the dark side of technology and warns readers about the threats of losing humanity in favor of pleasure. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is another example of the dystopian works which explores the horrors of living under an absolute authority. Being different and unique in terms of critical abilities and style of writing, dystopian writers agree on reflecting the upheavals of the sociopolitical contexts of their times in their novels.

Dystopian fiction investigates different themes which reflect the writers' anxiety towards the sociopolitical context of their times. Themes of dystopian literature include the exaggerated exploitation of power by one dictatorial party that represents the totalitarian state. Moreover, themes like the manipulation of human bodies and minds through strict routine, propaganda, terror and oppression are usually explored by dystopian writers. The use of technology to keep citizens obedient and submissive is another common theme in dystopian literature. Additionally, the loss of individuality which restricts human's freedom and deconstructs his identity in favor of satisfying the government is also a major theme in dystopian fiction. Finally, themes of dissatisfaction and rebellion to set free from totalitarian states are crucial in dystopian works. They reflect the consistent human desire to reach emancipation from oppression, inequality and injustice.

In the very beginning of its emergence, dystopian genre was somehow narrow and limited only to male authors. However, some female writers have started to participate in writing dystopian narratives mainly since the 1970's. Feminist dystopian literature usually portrays a nightmarish society dominated by patriarchal and totalitarian states. It focuses on different, new social issues extrapolated from the real world to fight oppression against women and unveil their marginalized identities. Therefore, female dystopian authors tend to investigate themes which are not tackled by male writers such as challenging patriarchy, representing gender oppression, deconstructing gender roles and the loss of female autonomy. In addition,

they provide readers with open, usually hopeful, endings to encourage female readers to fight against oppression and seek their liberty from dictatorial regimes.

In fact, the birth of feminist dystopian literature is a result of the different feminist movements which have shaped also its evolution throughout time. Writers such as Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins are among the best examples of female dystopian writers who reflect the sociopolitical anxieties of their societies in their works. They are best known for their masterpieces *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy, respectively. These works are going to be analyzed in this research. They explore the ways oppressive structures lead to rebellion and transformation. By doing so, they prove that feminist dystopian literature is not a tool of entertainment; rather, it is a crucial medium which supports feminist efforts to reach emancipation and self-autonomy.

Dystopian literature, particularly feminist dystopia, has been the focus for many literary studies and examinations. There are different researchers and theorists who provide different works and theories that are related to this modern genre of literature such as: Sara Lefanu, Linda Kauffman, Judith Butler, Raffaella Baccolini and Bill Clemente.

Sara Lefanu is a researcher whose critical analysis of science fiction and dystopian literature from a feminist perspective makes a significant contribution to feminist dystopian literature. In her work *Feminism and Science Fiction* (1989), Lefanu examines the ways authors of feminist dystopian fiction use their works to discuss themes like gender inequality and patriarchal oppression. Also, she explains how they create new imaginary worlds where gender roles are subverted. In addition, she claims that such kind of fiction plays a key role to find out new alternatives to the existing societal challenges. Lefanu book contributes significantly in feminist dystopian literature. It is usually used by scholars and researchers who probe the relationship between feminism and speculative fiction and investigate the evolution of feminist themes in literature.

In her essay *Law, Medicine, and the Sex Slave in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* (1989), Linda Kauffman examines oppression in Atwood's feminist dystopia in terms of law, medicine and gender inequality. She discusses the manipulation of women through different mechanisms to enforce compliance and suppress individuality. She also highlights the themes of reproduction and imposing social functions to maintain totalitarian supremacy. Moreover, Kauffman tackles the different rebellious acts in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Therefore, her work demonstrates the threat of totalitarian power on the individuals in addition to the need to rebel against its authoritarian regime.

Judith Butler works on gender performativity has a strong relevance to feminist dystopian literature. Her famous work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) represents gender as a concept that is performed through repetitive actions instead of being innate. In fact, gender roles are imposed in many feminist dystopian works; therefore, Butler theory of gender performance can be applied on this genre of literature to investigate how gender is shaped by societal power structures. Still, *Gender Trouble* is not the only work by Butler that discusses gender issues. In her book *undoing Gender* (2004), she discusses the limitations of gender binary and supports non-conforming gender identities; consequently, she challenges the gender binary standards. This work is significantly related to deconstructing gender roles; a theme that is explored by different feminist dystopian writers in their narratives.

Another work that is produced by Judith Butler and related to feminist dystopian literature is *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993). In this latter, she discusses the theme of marginalization and claims that people are divided into privileged and marginalized groups according to societal and power norms. She refers to those who are marginalized as object bodies. This work helps researchers to clarify how oppressive regimes

maintain control over the marginalized groups by dehumanizing, or even excluding, them to make the privileged take over the rule.

Raffaella Baccolini is also a researcher and a pioneer in feminist dystopian literature. She is well-known for discussing themes like resistance and hope. She is the co-editor of *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (2003). In her work, she introduces the concept of critical dystopia, a subgenre of dystopian literature that advocates hope and goes against the despairingly classic endings of dystopian works. The main idea of her work is thus encouraging resistance and rebellion to challenge the oppressive regimes of dystopian narratives in order to reach out transformation as well as liberation. Therefore, Baccolini has significantly influenced feminist studies. She looks at dystopian literature, not only as means of challenging oppressive systems, but also as means of transformation and reconstruction.

Bill Clemente is a well-known scholar whose contribution to feminist dystopian literature is of paramount importance. He is famous for his critical notions on feminist theory in dystopian contexts. His essay on *The Hunger Games* entitled *Panem in America: Economics and a Call for Political Engagement* (2012) outlines social and economic inequality in addition to political apathy in *The Hunger Games*. He also makes a comparison between the contemporary America and the dystopian world of Panem to reveal current societal upheavals. In addition to exploring themes of social and economic inequality, Clemente also tackles feminist issues that are related to dystopian literature including reproductive rights and systematic power.

Research Problem

In the light of what has been mentioned, this study addresses the problem of how female emancipation is represented within patriarchal dystopian regimes. It focuses on the ways Atwood and Collins portray women's resistance, rebellion and reclaiming self-agency under a totalitarian control in their dystopian novels. Therefore, this research analyzes the dystopian

worlds of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy* by highlighting the manipulation aspects in the novels in order to investigate the quest of the female protagonists Offred and Katniss for emancipation.

This thesis contends that *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* construct dystopia as a space where female emancipation is articulated through both resistance and survival within patriarchal systems of control. While reading Atwood and Collins' novels, one can notice that their works exhibit agreement on some aspects but hold divergent views on others. Consequently, this research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the dystopian fiction develop into a feminist literary form? And what are the key changes which mark this transformation?
2. How can theories of feminism, gender performativity, intersectionality, and power be used to analyze feminist dystopian fiction?
3. In what ways do the selected novels represent mechanisms of control and totalitarian power?
4. In what ways do the female protagonists pursue emancipation? And how do Atwood and Collins portray the aftermaths of the dystopian worlds in Gilead and Panem?

Objectives of the Study

In their novels *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, both Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins, respectively, portray a female protagonist in a dystopian world who is dissatisfied with the government and attempts to overthrow its regime. Therefore, the general aim of this thesis is to investigate the protagonists' journey and their strive against the manipulation to reach their physical and mental emancipation. More specifically, it seeks to figure out the political message that both Margaret and Collins want to convey through their female protagonists.

In order to achieve the general aim of the thesis, this work investigates the ways the female protagonists Offred and Katniss are represented in the dystopian worlds of Gilead and Panem, respectively. It offers fascinating lens to exhibit how political and societal power influence the development of the female protagonists throughout the course of the novels. The governments in dystopian literature tend to create passive, subordinate, and submissive female characters who are often associated with domestic works only. In addition, they are represented as marginalized characters who suffer from oppression, patriarchy and inequality. However, authors of feminist dystopias always tend to create a female protagonist who rejects this stereotypical image of women; consequently, she experiences a feeling of dissatisfaction and seeks rebellion to attain emancipation.

Since the theme of manipulation is of paramount importance in feminist dystopian literature, this work attempts to analyze the different mechanisms of control represented in the novels; in other words, it aims at understanding the ways totalitarianism arises and sustains itself in the dystopian worlds of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Thus, this study delves into the different mechanisms of control and their impact on the female protagonists by exploring themes of fear, conformity and suppression of one's individuality. It therefore provides a detailed description of the strategies that both governments use to manipulate their citizen physically and mentally. It also highlights the common totalitarian aspects that both Gilead and Panem use to keep Offred and Katniss obedient and submissive to the regime. By providing an in-depth analysis of using indoctrination, terror, surveillance and other strategies, this work emphasizes the ways totalitarian regime consolidates its power and maintains its authority over every aspect of human life. Therefore, this study provides a clear comparison between the common and the different mechanisms of control that can be found in the novels.

Since attaining freedom is the main objective of protagonists in feminist dystopian literature, this research aims at exploring female empowerment in addition to investigating the ways dystopian genre influences female development to achieve emancipation by the end of the novel. That is to say, it exhibits the different acts both Offred and Katniss undergo to fight against totalitarianism and set themselves free from its dictatorial regime. As a result, it provides an analytical comparison between Offred and Katniss' quest for emancipation to figure out whether they can attain liberty from totalitarianism at the end of the story or not. In other words, this research outlines the journey of the protagonists to assert autonomy and self-agency against the oppressive system. Consequently, it explores themes related to dissatisfaction, rebellion, survival and emancipation to examine the difference in the character's development in addition to their personal strength within restrictive settings.

In feminist dystopian literature, authors usually resort to gender roles as a useful means for survival and emancipation. Therefore, this research investigates the significance of gender performance to survive against the oppressive regime. It outlines the roles that are assigned to female characters which reflect the regime's oppression and inequality. In addition, it explores how Offred and Katniss use their gender, or deconstruct it, to challenge these societal norms and fight against them. Feminist dystopias usually portray gender as performed rather than innate. Hence, this study analyzes female characters' development by shifting their gender roles from feminine to masculine and vice versa to challenge dictatorship and attain liberty. Therefore, female protagonists can either conform to their natural gender or they are forced to deconstruct it to overthrow the regime, foster autonomy and reclaim their self-agency.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in literary analysis in order to investigate the notion of female emancipation in dystopian fiction. To achieve the objectives of this study, the research draws upon a combination of descriptive, thematic,

analytical, and comparative approaches. Through the integration of these methodological approaches, this research offers a coherent and comprehensive analysis of female emancipation in dystopian literature, contributing to a deeper understanding of feminist resistance within totalitarian narratives in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

The descriptive approach is used to outline the dystopian settings, narrative structures, and socio-political systems depicted in both texts. This approach enables a clear presentation of the totalitarian mechanisms governing the fictional societies of Gilead and Panem, as well as the conditions under which female characters operate. In addition, a thematic approach is also employed to identify and examine key recurring themes relevant to the study, particularly manipulation, resistance and emancipation. These themes are explored across two main analytical chapters: one focusing on the manifestations of totalitarian power and control, and the other addressing the processes and strategies of emancipation. The thematic analysis allows for a focused investigation of how oppression, resistance, agency, and empowerment are articulated within each narrative. Therefore, an analytical approach is also applied to interpret these themes critically. It facilitates a deeper understanding of how the female protagonists respond to and negotiate oppressive structures, revealing the complexities of emancipation within dystopian contexts.

Finally, this study adopts a comparative method to examine *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy side by side. Each analytical chapter includes a comparative section at the end which highlights the similarities and the differences in the representation of manipulation and female emancipation. This comparative perspective enhances the study's critical depth by demonstrating how distinct cultural, political, and narrative frameworks shape different modes of oppression and resistance in feminist dystopian fiction in order to attain emancipation.

In order to strengthen the analytical dimension of this study, the research is supported by selected theoretical insights from Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser. Foucault's concepts of power, surveillance, and discipline are employed as analytical tools to examine how totalitarian regimes in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* regulate bodies and behaviors. These concepts enable an exploration of how power operates not only through overt coercion, but also through internalized control and normalized practices that shape citizens' conduct. Moreover, Althusser's theory of ideology is also used to analyze the mechanisms of indoctrination and ideological control within both dystopian societies. His notion of ideological state apparatuses provides a framework for understanding how dominant ideologies are reproduced through institutions such as education, religion, media, and rituals to secure obedience and limit resistance. A detailed engagement with Foucauldian and Althusserian theories is developed in the second chapter where their relevance to feminist dystopian literature is examined in depth.

The feminist theory is also applied in this research to support the methodological framework of this study by providing critical tools to examine the representation of women, power relations, and gendered oppression in dystopian fiction. Drawing on feminist literary criticism, this research analyzes how female characters are positioned within patriarchal and authoritarian structures, as well as how they negotiate agency, resistance, and emancipation in the selected novels.

Furthermore, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is employed in this investigation as an analytical lens to explore the ways gender roles are constructed, enforced, and regulated in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Butler's framework allows the study to examine that femininity is not treated as a fixed or natural category but as a set of repeated practices shaped by social norms and institutional power. This perspective is particularly useful in analyzing how female bodies and identities are disciplined within

totalitarian contexts. A more detailed theoretical discussion of feminist criticism and gender performativity is developed in the second chapter as well where their relevance to the study of emancipation in feminist dystopian literature is examined in details.

Finally, this study also draws on the theory of intersectionality to provide a more comprehensive analysis of oppression in feminist dystopian fiction. Originally developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality explains how different forms of inequality, such as gender, class, and social status, interact and reinforce one another. Rather than examining gender as an isolated category, this approach highlights the complexity of social experience and the multiple dimensions of power. In this study, intersectionality is used as an analytical tool to explore how various forms of oppression operate simultaneously within the selected novels, allowing for a deeper understanding of characters' experiences and the structures that shape them.

As the study deals with thematic and analytical approaches of Atwood's *The Hunger Games* and Collins' *The Handmaid's Tale*, data are basically collected from the novels as primary sources. Still, secondary sources such as books, articles, dissertations and even websites are also examined and used to support the thesis with the results of various practical studies.

Research Gap and Contribution

This part of the introduction is dedicated to explain the motifs behind investigating this research topic in specific in addition to explore the gap in previous researches that I want to examine. As a female researcher and a PhD student of Cultural Studies, it is not surprising that my interest in literature, civilization and gender studies has guided me to choose this topic of my study which is related to both feminism and gender issues.

Being a fan of Collins' *The Hunger Games* series and Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, I have decided to work on feminist dystopian literature. Margaret Atwood and Suzanne

Collins have made significant contribution to feminist dystopian literature. The former is a productive writer whose works explore themes like: calling for women rights, fighting against oppression and patriarchy, discussing environmental disasters in addition to deconstructing gender roles. She was also a feminist and human right activist who advocated reformation and change. The latter also examines themes like oppression, inequality, corruption and revolution. She is famous for her young adult dystopian trilogy *The Hunger Games*; It is addressed mainly to adolescents who become eager to explore the mysterious future of America through the trilogy.

Although feminist dystopian fiction has received considerable critical attention, several gaps remain within existing scholarship. Most studies tend to analyze feminist dystopias individually rather than comparatively, which limits broader insights into how female emancipation is represented across different dystopian contexts. Moreover, critical discussions often prioritize women's oppression and victimization under totalitarian systems, while giving less attention to emancipation as a process of agency, resistance, and transformation. In addition, scholarly focus has largely centered on gender performance, leaving other forms of resistance and empowerment underexplored. Finally, the intersection between feminist dystopian literature and cultural studies remains limited, resulting in insufficient engagement with the cultural and ideological dimensions that shape women's experiences in dystopian narratives.

After further readings on the same topic, themes like resistance, hope and liberty inspires me to investigate the theme of emancipation in feminist dystopian literature and paves the way to write this thesis entitled: *Investigating the Issue of Female Emancipation in Dystopian Fiction through Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Despite that both terms of freedom and emancipation are related

to liberty, I preferred to use the term emancipation because it is more specific since it indicates the act of being free from oppression or manipulation through revolutions and movements.

In response to the aforementioned gaps, the present study offers several significant contributions to the field of feminist dystopian literature. First, it establishes a comparative analytical framework that examines *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. By juxtaposing Atwood's and Collins's works, the study highlights both convergences and divergences in their representations of female emancipation, thereby enriching comparative feminist dystopian scholarship.

Moreover, this research deliberately shifts the critical focus from female victimhood to empowerment. Rather than viewing Offred and Katniss solely as figures constrained by oppressive systems, the study foregrounds their gradual assertion of agency and their capacity to negotiate, resist, and subvert dominant power structures. Emancipation is thus conceptualized not as an absolute state, but as a process shaped by context, choice, and resistance.

Additionally, the study connects feminist dystopian literature to broader cultural issues by drawing on insights from cultural studies. It examines how both novels engage with contemporary concerns such as authoritarianism, media manipulation, commodification of bodies, and ideological control, demonstrating that female emancipation in dystopian fiction is deeply intertwined with cultural and political realities.

Finally, this research contributes a nuanced understanding of emancipation by exploring different modes of resistance, including silence, storytelling, physical defiance, symbolic acts, and collective rebellion. By emphasizing these varied strategies, the study broadens the conceptualization of resistance in feminist dystopias and underscores the multiplicity of ways through which women challenge oppressive systems.

Thesis Structure

To answer the aforementioned research questions and achieve the objectives of this study, this research is divided into four chapters. The first and the second chapters are theoretical while the third and the fourth chapters are analytical. Therefore, my work is structured as follows:

The first chapter is entitled: Reshaping Dystopian Thinking: Towards Feminist Dystopian Literature. It provides the conceptual foundation of the study by examining the development of dystopian fiction and its transformation into a feminist literary form. It traces the shift from idealized visions of society to their disillusionment, leading to the emergence of dystopian narratives concerned with power, control, and resistance. The chapter also explores the evolution of feminist dystopian fiction and outlines its main themes, offering a general framework for understanding the genre.

The second chapter is entitled: Theoretical Frameworks for Feminist Dystopian Analysis. It establishes the different theoretical framework of the study. It discusses the main feminist concerns through the different waves of feminism and introduces key theoretical approaches, including gender performativity, theories of power, and intersectionality. These perspectives provide the analytical tools necessary for examining the selected texts and understanding the structures of oppression and resistance within them.

The third chapter is entitled: Mechanisms of Manipulation in Feminist Dystopian Worlds: Atwood's *The Republic of Gilead* and Collins' *Panem*. This chapter focuses on the analytical dimension of the study by examining the mechanisms of control in the selected novels. It analyzes how totalitarian systems operate through different forms of power, including surveillance, ideology, and social regulation. The chapter also compares the ways in which control is structured and maintained within the dystopian worlds under study.

The last chapter of this study is entitled: Dystopian Aftermath in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tales* and Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy: From Totalitarianism to Emancipation. This analytical chapter explores the protagonists' quests for emancipation in the selected novels. It examines how the main characters respond to oppressive systems and negotiate their paths toward resistance and freedom. The chapter also offers a comparative analysis of the protagonists' journeys, highlighting the similarities and the differences in their experiences, the outcomes of their struggles, and the fates they reach by the end of the novels.

Chapter One: Reshaping Dystopian Thinking: Towards Feminist Dystopian Literature

Introduction

Feminist dystopian literature is a genre of speculative fiction which depicts an imaginary, futuristic society dominated by a totalitarian regime. This latter is an oppressive, dictatorial system which aims at producing submissive citizens who follow the societal norms blindly without questioning the authority of the system. Dystopian fiction usually discusses themes related to manipulation, oppression and the loss of individuality. Therefore, it aims at warning the readers about the dangers of establishing totalitarian governments in the future. Despite that dystopian literature was male-oriented in its beginning, female authors started to contribute in this genre in the middle of the twentieth century leading to the birth of feminist dystopian literature.

The selected novels of my thesis Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy* are classified among the most brilliant feminist dystopian literary works. Consequently, this chapter provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the development and significance of feminist dystopian literature. It explores the development of dystopian fiction and its transformation into a feminist literary framework by first examining the emergence and the evolution of dystopian fiction as a form of social and political critique. It then focuses on the rise of feminist dystopian fiction outlining its theoretical origins and central themes including gender oppression, control over the body, limitations of freedom, in addition to exploring concepts of resistance and agency. Finally, this chapter introduces the selected novels of this study which are going to be analyzed in details later in the following chapters.

1.1. The Conceptual Emergence of Dystopian Fiction

Dystopian fiction originates from writers' attempts to imagine societies shaped by extreme social, political, or technological forces. These narratives explore the consequences of injustice, oppression, and authoritarian control, revealing how such systems affect both individuals and communities. Far from merely depicting bleak futures, dystopian works offer a space to reflect critically on the present, examining the tensions between power, freedom, and human agency. This conceptual foundation provides the framework for understanding the different dimensions and themes that will be explored in the following parts. Thus, this section aims at exploring the emergence of dystopian fiction, tracing how and why this genre first developed in response to social, political, and cultural concerns.

1.1.1. Exploring Idealized Social Concepts

Living peacefully in a world free of upheavals is an old human desire. Since the dawn of history, human beings were always looking for the best. They kept searching for a hopeful future and a happy life. Such a dream did not stay in people's mind only; however, some of them turned these ideas into concrete literary works. These works were known later as utopian literature which traced back to an old time in history, probably since the existence of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were living in Paradise. As a result, this part of my study takes a brief glance at utopian literature; yet, it does not examine it as an autonomous genre, but rather as a conceptual foundation whose collapse gives rise to dystopian imaginaries. Therefore, the destruction of utopian dreams is crucial to understand dystopian fiction as a literary response to failed ideals, particularly those that promise equality while reproducing systems of exclusion and domination.

In his work, *Utopia and Utopian Thought*, George Kateb defines Utopia as an imaginary world, free of evil, where human needs are all satisfied as much as possible. According to Kateb, Utopia is a place where there is no pain and pleasure is at its fullest (242).

He also explains this term in a more detailed description as he states that a utopian society is a place where:

All conflicts of conscience and conflicts of interest are abolished... all the obstacles to a decent life for all men have been removed, ..., the recoursefulness of modern technology is put in the infettered service of lessening labor and increasing and enriching labor, with, peace, abundance, and virtue permanently and universally obtained. (*Utopia and its Enemies*, 17)

In her *Commitment and Community*, Rosabeth Mass Kanter suggests another definition of Utopia. She claims that it is an imaginary world where every force of human beings cooperates smoothly to make them reach their needs and desires. That is to say their dreams and inspirations are all achieved (1).

According to Booker in his *Dystopian literature: A Theory and Research Guide*, the development of science and technology as well as the sovereignty of reason and logic, which led to the new Age of Enlightenment, had eventually resulted in a burst of utopian thinking (5). With the domination of the Enlightenment Age, new hopes for a better life were increased which made it possible for utopia to exist.

Both Krishan Kumar and Martin G. Plattel agree on the idea that living in a utopian society with is instinct in human nature and always present in human unconsciousness. The former refers to Utopia as “the product of some instinctual ‘Principle of hope’ in the individual human psyche” (43), while the latter suggests that a utopian person is in constant research for a happy life and his dream to live in a society “with paradise like conditions” is a dream that is “unconsciously present” in his mind long time ago (46-47).

As a matter of fact, the desire to live a happy life with perfect conditions was not merely an abstract dream; however, some people mirrored this notion through art and literature. The Greek philosopher Plato is considered as one of the first writers who used their pen in order to

create an ideal society in his work *The Republic* (380 B.C.) where people live in perfect conditions and enjoy their life to the maximum.

The society in *The Republic* is divided into three classes. First, The Guardians is the class which is responsible for ruling. It consists of a small group of philosophers with high intellectual abilities who are well chosen in order to organize the social and the economic activities of the Republic. The second class is The Warriors whose task is to defend the society from any foreign attacks. The last class is known as The Artisans; a group of workers who are responsible for producing food, making clothes and constructing houses (110).

In her work *Science in Utopia: A Mighty Design*, Nell Eurich argues that when each class does its job perfectly, the Republic will be an ideal society because a perfect state requires a perfect man (64). Moreover, George Katib also comments on *The Republic*. He believes that the utopian society in this work is based on justice. He explains that a perfect state can only exist if the right man avoids the wrong deeds to build an ideal society (*Utopia and its Enemies* 25-26).

Despite the fact that Plato's *The Republic* is the first genuine attempt to create utopian literature, the term utopia per se was used for the first time by Thomas More in 1516 as a title for his book *Utopia*. Being inspired by Plato's ideas, More's *Utopia* depicts an imaginary island where people live happily and peacefully. Their life is simply perfect. This island is called Utopia where poverty and disease are totally absent. The idea of writing this book comes from More's social dissatisfaction. According to Fromm, More uses the absurdity of his society to create a place where human insoluble problems can be eventually solved (258).

The ideal society created by More in his work, according to Walsh, is based on communism. This latter suggests that properties are shared by the society members and personal profits are neglected as people work for the state's benefits. Thus, Walsh believes that money and gold are not important in More's *Utopia* making it free of any personal conflict as

long as everything is shared by everyone (41). Furthermore, Karl Kautsky also indicates the importance of communism in *Utopia* when he claims that this work is written to reflect the ways England is presented as an ideal society through communistic lens (122).

People in utopian societies, as Kanter mentions, are not necessarily regulated by laws or higher orders. However, every person is self-oriented. He continues to explain that: “in utopia what people want to do is the same as what people have to do” (51). In other words, the interests of the individual are shared with the interests of the whole society. In addition, personal growth and development are the responsibility of every citizen as long as cooperation is natural to human existence.

As time progresses, many authors were influenced by the ideas of Plato and Thomas More. Hence, other contributions which came afterwards from different writers were added to the history of utopia. To give an example, Francis Bacon and H.G. Wells created a perfect society that is based mainly on technology and science in their works *New Atlantis* (1627) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), respectively. In addition, Johan Andeae’s *Christianopolis* (1619) and Thomas Campanella’s *The City of Sun* (1623) are also influenced by communistic visions. Their works are also based on scientific and technological advances in imaginary, perfect societies.

Although the term Utopia was coined only in 1516, the idea itself is much older. In fact, the quest for utopia exists since the beginning of time. Thus, a utopian society can be found in places such as The Biblical Eden as well as the Greek and the Roman stories of the earthly Paradise (Sargent 12). Plattel advocates this idea as he believes that the dream of utopia has existed since the creation of The Garden of Eden where “man lives in perfect harmony with nature and himself” (47). As a result, utopian writers like Thomas More were influenced by such religious and philosophical texts in order to create the ideal society in their literary works.

In their *Environment and Utopia*, Rudolf Moss and Robert Brown have listed four main features to identify the Utopian genre. First, they consider societies in utopian literature as places that did not exist in the past nor they do in the present. Second, “Utopias are holistic”; that is to say, writers of this genre attempt to create a complete place which covers the perfect conditions of any society. Third, utopian literature is idealistic; in other words, writers believe that it is possible to reach social perfection. The last characteristic is that utopia reflects the status quo of its society and invites to build a completely new social system (24-26).

Authors of utopian fiction depend on imagination in their writings; therefore, fiction makes utopia a distinct genre from other types of social and political documents. As a result, Utopia depicts “an imaginary community, society, or world of a ‘fiction’ that encourages readers to experience vicariously a culture that presents a prescriptive, normative alternative to their culture” (Roemer 3). To explain more, utopian writers start from the observation of their societies in order to change what is needed to be changed. They imagine an opposite world to their society where all problems are solved and all hardships are overcome. Therefore, they use imagination to suggest alternative solutions in their works so that life will be best reshaped. Crane Brinton gives a detailed explanation of these ideas as he mentions that:

The Utopian starts with the proposition, by no means limited to the Utopian thinker that things are bad; next, things must become much better, perhaps perfect, here on earth and soon, or fairly soon, things will not improve to this degree by themselves, but a natural growth or development of things –as they are, a plan must be developed and put into execution. (50)

In his work *From Utopia to nightmare*, Chad Walsh argues that people at that time had a strong belief in man goodness. So, when humans are good, society will be naturally organized and civilized. Eventually, corruption is abolished since a trusted group of people perform their duties honestly without exploiting their power in society. Furthermore, Walsh continues to

claim that standards between the rich and the poor as well as personal happiness are eliminated. Finally, utopias are guided by logic and reason; therefore, people naturally work for the benefits of the whole society and discard individual ambitions (71).

Another important feature of utopian literature, then, is its relationship with reality. Utopian works are significantly influenced by the historical context in which they were written. Thus, they are considered as social criticism of their own time. Consequently, utopian genre is very important for the development of societies as it aims at pushing readers to find better alternative to their problems and to experience better possibilities as Anatole France states: “Without the Utopias of other times, men would still live in caves, miserable and naked...utopia is the principle of all progress, and the essay into a better world” (qtd in. Elliott 86).

In the light of the what have been already mentioned in this part, Utopian literature is the literary presentation of an imaginary and a perfect society where people work for the communal happiness of the state. Hence, everyone is equal since the borders between the rich and the poor are eliminated. Consequently, citizens of utopian fiction embody all the features of an ideal person; their purpose is to work for the good of the collective body rather than focusing on personal ambitions. However, the dream of creating an ideal world did not last so long, therefore, the positive view towards the future has totally changed after different historical events which marked a significant shift in literature.

1.1.2. The Collapse of Idealized Social Visions

People of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries became suspicious about the human nature and started to question its purity. The aftermaths of the Industrial Revolution, the Revolution of 1917, and most important, the First and the Second World Wars had resulted in a significant abandonment of utopian works. Moreover, with the development of technology in the dawn of the 20th century, science started to be considered as a threat for the mankind. George Gissing has best explained this idea in the following lines:

I hate and fear 'science' because of my conviction that for a long time to come if not forever, it will be the remorseless enemy of mankind. I see it destroying all simplicity and gentleness of life, all beauty of the world, I see it restoring barbarism under the mask of civilization; I see it darkening men's minds and hardening their hearts (qtd. in woodcock 81).

The above quote demonstrates that the optimistic view about the future as well as the belief in man's ability to have a perfect life started to fade away during the nineteenth century. Hence, writers of that period became disappointed and lost their hope in the possibility to make a change. Consequently, the idea of creating a utopian world was eliminated marking a significant decline of speculative idealism in literature. Therefore, the decline of utopian fiction had paved the way to the birth of a new genre of literature that is known as dystopian fiction.

The social and political changes of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries made intellectuals doubt the humans' capacities to create an ideal world. This human limitation of abilities led to lose hope about constructing a brighter future and made the utopian dreams out of reach. As a result, this period had witnessed a significant transformation from the optimistic utopian thinking to a pessimistic portrayal of the future societies. Eventually, dystopian literature was born out of the dramatic events which changed human's visions towards the future. Therefore, this part of my study is dedicated to discuss the characteristics of dystopian fiction, shedding the light on some dystopian works in addition to tackling the aspects of totalitarianism which play a key role in understanding dystopian literature.

The term dystopia was first used in 1868 by John Stuart Mill in his parliamentary speech to describe a world that is opposite to utopia. the creation of dystopia is considered as a shift from utopian hope to dystopian confusion (107). He states that starting from the 1890's, different dystopian starts to against the utopian genre which started to fade away (108). That is to say, dystopian literature was born out of the errors of the utopian ideas.

In fact, utopian literature became a subject of criticism. Critics claim that a perfect society is “finished, complete, or unchangeable” (Sargent 103). Hence, such a society would never exist because of the impossibility of human nature to reach perfection. In her work *Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Others*, Maria Varsam compares the two terms by stating that: “utopia is a manifestation of desire and hope for a better world and an ‘unalienated order’ that upsets the status quo” while “dystopia delineates the crushing of hope and the displacement of desire for the purpose of upholding that status quo” (209). Keith Booker also defines dystopia using its historical perspective. In his work *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*, he refers to dystopian fiction as a literary genre that opposes utopian thinking and warns against its consequences. It also criticizes both social and political systems through analyzing utopian assumptions in addition to revealing “their flaws and contradictions” (3).

Dystopian works always show a strong relationship between the present and the future as writers build their expectations in their novels upon the current social and economic systems and they reflect the terrifying possibilities which may result from them. Gottlieb claims: “The writer offers militant criticism of specific aberrations in our own, present social-political system by pointing out their potentially monstrous consequences in the future” (8). Thus, the source of the futuristic dystopian world is the present (Archer-Lean 5-6).

Simply, Dystopia is a utopian place which has different flaws; so, a utopian society will always turn to be a dystopian one. To give an example, Communism and the Nazi regime seemed to create an ideal world; however, when put into practice, they proved to be failure and eventually established a dystopian world instead. Therefore, dystopian literature emerged to reflect the dramatic ending of utopia after the failure of such regimes.

In his work *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*, Booker suggests that dystopian fiction was born to reflect the historical context in which this genre was emerged just like other literary genres (3). Therefore, many thinkers resort to dystopian literature in order to

find new solutions to the social and political issues of the nineteenth and, especially, the twentieth century.

In fact, losing hope in human capacities to create an ideal world was not out of vain. According to Patrick Reedy, the major historical events of the twentieth century as well as the scientific progress contributed to the pessimistic prophecy of the future and failed to inspire utopian premises (175). This failure brought feelings of disillusionment and fear that challenged the idea of perfection which was replaced by dark dystopian thinking. According to Moylan:

Dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century: A hundred years of 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 provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination. (xi)

The world during the twentieth century witnessed a period of destruction and despair that was characterized by the First and the Second World Wars. Thus, the feeling of optimism was restricted by such destructive powers (Claeys 107). Fromm suggests that the brutality and the violence between the European nations eliminate the sense of optimism and create a state of desolation instead (259). Moreover, the rise of Stalin and Hitler regimes as well as Fascist Party led to the breakout of the Second World War and the use of atomic weapons leading to more destruction and chaos in the world. Therefore, dystopian literature was born to reflect this mood of despair which prevailed the world during this period.

As mentioned previously, the repercussions of the massive technological and scientific progress led to the decline of utopia leaving the stage to dystopian fiction. Despite that people became able to overcome many difficulties thanks to technology, different modern problems had been created due to the same reason. That is to say, technology becomes a source of

oppression and tyranny instead of being a tool of development and prosperity (Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* 6). This created a sense of fear within intellectuals who thought of what may happen if the state uses the power of machines against its citizens. Consequently, authors were trying to reflect the negative influence of the exaggerated use of technology and science which would end up in a dystopian world rather than a utopian one.

Another event which contributed to the emergence of dystopian literature is the Revolution of 1917. This latter led to significant political and social transformations in Russia which abolished its monarchy and became a communist state. It also inspired different revolutionary movements around the world in the twentieth century. Probably, the last element which increased the pessimistic views about the future is the new discoveries in philosophy and psychology during the nineteenth century. Such discoveries, in opposition to utopian thinking, argue that individuals are not morally good and the human nature cannot be perfect. Freud psychology, for example, proves that humans are not necessarily rational creatures; however, they have instincts driven by both passion and desire (Walsh 125).

The socio-political climate of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in effect, paved the way the birth of dystopian fiction. In addition, it led to the rise of totalitarian states around the world. Therefore, totalitarianism becomes a major theme in dystopian literature and it is going to be investigated in details later in this chapter.

1.2. Evolution of Dystopian Narratives

Along with the scientific progress of the nineteenth century, the historical events of the twentieth century as well as the new perspectives towards human nature led to the decline of utopia and declared the birth of dystopian fiction. This latter mirrors the fears of writers who put forward images of the future if the ideal thinking of utopia would go wrong and turn against people. Therefore, writers of dystopian literature were urged to reveal the outcomes of what may happen if a utopia breaks down either because one person, or a small group of people,

refuses to conform to the state's collectivism or because the state becomes so eager for power that it turns to be totalitarian. Thus, the major aim of dystopian literature is to warn readers about the dangers of totalitarianism and to make them realize what would happen if things go awry instead of perfect.

Writers of dystopian works attempt to reflect a global concern as they deal with the results behind the challenges that the current world is facing and the nightmarish possibilities that could happen if these challenges are not resolved. Despite the pessimistic view of writers about the future, their real objective behind creating a dystopian literature is to convey social, economic and political criticism in order to make readers more responsible to avoid these dark possibilities. Moreover, they call for social improvement that may raise social and political awareness and guarantee collective and political happiness. In the last decades, some writers preferred to give readers a glimpse of hope at the end of their stories in order to show them that there is still an opportunity for them to escape from dystopia and to build a better society.

The disordered history and its technological advancement made the dystopian genre significantly popular specifically in the second half of the twentieth century. During this period, the most acknowledged dystopian works were produced by pioneer writers such as George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. In his work *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide*, Booker claims that dystopian works criticize the political and social issues to reveal their imperfection in opposition to utopian novels (03). In 1921, one of the earliest dystopian works *We* was produced by Zamyatin and became the ground for the next dystopias.

Being a true advocate for the revolution, Zamyatin highly welcomed the October Revolution of 1917 and wished for the dominance of communism in the Soviet Union. However, and after the success of the communist doctrine, he became suspicious about the government which started to practise its dictatorial supremacy upon its citizens instead of protecting them. Thus, the feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction about the creation of utopian

world had increased. This sense of disillusionment within Zamyatin about the future nightmarish horrors of Stalin regime gave birth to the first genuine dystopian novel *We* (1924).

In his dystopia *We*, Zamyatin predicts the future life in the Soviet Union under the Stalin rule. The novel portrays the life of OneState; a futuristic society where citizens are deprived of individuality, creativity or any form of personal feeling. Instead, they are subjugated to the collectivism of the state and their life is highly manipulated through the Table of Hours which regulates how they live. This work is also considered as a critic against the new technologies which control humans' aspects of life and convert them into blind robots. Zamyatin, therefore, examines the ways totalitarianism imposes an absolute order over its citizens shedding the light on mass surveillance and the loss of individuality for the sake of collectivism.

In the early twentieth century, the predicted terrifying results of the Industrial Revolution in Europe were reflected in Aldous Huxley famous dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1931). This work reflects Huxley's fears about the loss of individuality in addition to the transformation of people into machines especially with the increasing number of factories (Baggini 86). His dystopian novel portrays an "inhuman society controlled by technology, in which art and religion have been abolished and human beings reproduce by artificial fertilization" (Mencütekin 60).

In his novel, Huxley depicts a society with a government which appears at the first glance to be perfect. People in this society are classified according to their physical and intellectual abilities. Their freedom is highly restricted. Yet, the government attempts to keep them happy using different strategies. However, such techniques in fact are used to keep people manipulated rather than happy. In this dystopia, Huxley attempts to show the reader what human happiness might cost.

Inspired by Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell produced one of the most important dystopian classics entitled *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). This

dystopia reflects Orwell's somber experience under the Stalin regime. It portrays the brutality and the dictatorship that Stalin used against his Russian people. It also exhibits the fears of the rise of Hitler Nazism as well as the spread of communism and fascism in Europe. In this dystopia, Orwell depicts a society which lives under a strict control and surveillance, constant wars, and miserable life conditions where the sense of individuality is totally banned.

Female writings are not absent from the wide range of dystopian works. One of the most notable feminist classic dystopias is *The Handmaid's Tale*. Written by Margaret Atwood in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* portrays a futuristic society in the United States where the old notions of family and love are totally abolished. People in this society are classified according to their social functions. The main focus of this novel is on the Handmaid class. The social function of this class is to bear and produce children for a childless family of an elite class. This dystopia is set at a time when natural disasters and pollution significantly decreased the birth rate; thus, women can be only valued according to their reproductive abilities. Despite its feminist touch, this novel fits well the dystopian canon as it warns us about the elimination of individuality and the oppression of women under a totalitarian regime.

During the last decades, Young Adult dystopian genre has come into existence. Usually referred to as YA dystopia, this kind of literature is often addressed to adolescents who find it hard to conform to the conditions of their societies. It attempts to create a rebellious character in order to show the readers the challenges in their modern societies and to make them aware of their social and political issues. According to Hintz, adolescents can also reveal the faults and weaknesses of their government; consequently, they try to revolt against it (9).

In YA dystopias, females are usually represented as protagonists whose identity and growth are developed throughout the story. Fritz discusses the role of young women in this type of literature when he describes the female protagonist of young dystopian literature as

girls “who resist the forces of their broken and corrupt societies to create their own identities, shape their own destinies, and transform the worlds in which they live” (17).

Fritz continues to explain that even women can fight the conventional rules of the regime and rebel against them. He claims that they are able to control their fate because they are strong and powerful enough to make a social or political revulsion in their societies (18). Modern dystopian works such as Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* portrays a corrupt state where a talented young female protagonist can save people from its tyrannical rule. This type of literature attempts to give the audience, especially young adults, hope and confidence to make change in their societies.

1.3. Dystopian Heroism: Dissatisfaction and Rebellion

In dystopian literature, there are always some characters who question the authority of the system and seek emancipation from its tyrannical regime. These characters usually function as the protagonists of dystopian narratives. They adopt different qualities of dissatisfaction, strength, independence and rebellion which make them distinctive from other characters in the novel. Consequently, protagonists of dystopian novels, males or females, do not follow the norms of the system blindly. However, they are aware of the different flaws that are found in their societies, and thus, attempt to rebel against their norms. Usually, dystopian protagonists do not fight the dictatorial system alone. However, they build different relationships with other characters who feel the same dissatisfaction towards the oppressive regime. With each other, they cooperate to overthrow the totalitarian system or to escape from the whole state.

The characters of the dystopian narratives are subjugated to the totalitarian government. They are restricted by the rule and regulated by a strict way of living. They do not have the option to go against the state or to oppose its decisions. However, the protagonists in dystopias are usually people who are disillusioned with the political regime of their societies. As a result, there is always a moment of realization which pushes the protagonists to question the prevailed

system. They innately have a sense of dissatisfaction towards the corruption, the injustice and the tyranny that the regime practises upon its citizens. Consequently, they decide to set free from the indoctrination which shows them that the regime is working for their benefits and seeking their happiness.

In her article *Dystopian Protagonists and the Pursuit of Greatness*, Ashley Anthony discusses the uniqueness of protagonists in dystopian fiction. She explores their distinctive function in their societies and highlights the importance of creating such stories which inspire seeking a positive change in the world. Anthony suggests that without dystopian protagonists, “there would be no story, no promise for change, no successful revolution” (1).

Another important feature which characterizes dystopian protagonists, in effect, is their rebellious nature. In other words, they have a sense of dissatisfaction towards the system which makes them doubt its real intentions. As a result, they always undergo a heroic adventure to seek change. They believe that sacrifice is a necessity and resistance is a must to set themselves free from the cruelty of the authoritarian rule. Consequently, I believe that the previous quote by Anthony emphasizes that dystopian narratives are meaningless if they do not embody a dissatisfied protagonist who seeks change in the dystopian world. Hence, dissatisfaction and rebellion are among the most important themes in dystopian literature.

Along with the disillusionment and dissatisfaction, the protagonists of dystopian novels are always harmed in some ways in their societies which is very clear from the beginning of the story. In addition to being dehumanized by the system, they suffer also from breaking family ties. Thus, the dystopian protagonists feel disillusioned and they search for alternatives to their alienated and isolated situation by seeking their true identity and trying to attain independence. Consequently, the protagonists of dystopian fiction usually go through moral and social growth after experiencing this sense of no belonging.

Briefly, protagonists of dystopian literature symbolize hope in totalitarian regimes. Through their dissatisfaction and rebellion, they serve as a great example of the human desire to change. They refuse to comply to the societal norms. Their main aim is to reach out emancipation and reclaim their individuality. Moreover, they are usually surrounded by other characters who inspire them in their journey to fight against the regime. Whether succeeding or failing to attain emancipation, their dissatisfaction serves as a challenge against totalitarianism and inspires future revolutions.

1.4. A Shift to Feminist Dystopian Fiction

After many years of its emergence, dystopian fiction was mainly male-based literature. It was not until the mid of twentieth century that feminist dystopian literature blossomed leading to the birth of feminist dystopian fiction. After the emergence of dystopian literature, male authors succeeded in reflecting the bleak image of the world that existed at that time. However, this period was characterized by the absence of female authors who did not contribute effectively to dystopian writings until the 1960's.

1.4.1. Origins of Feminist Dystopian Thought

Feminist dystopian thought developed from the meeting point between dystopian fiction and feminist theory. While early dystopian works mainly focused on political oppression and totalitarian control, feminist dystopian thinking introduced gender as a central concern. It argues that systems of power do not affect everyone in the same way. Instead, they often operate through patriarchal structures that regulate women's roles, bodies, and identities. Feminist dystopia therefore shifts attention from general political fear to gendered forms of oppression.

One of the main theoretical foundations of feminist dystopian thought is the idea that gender is socially constructed as I am going to examine in depth in the coming chapters of this study. This idea suggests that society shapes what it means to be a woman through cultural

expectations and social norms. Feminist dystopian narratives build on this idea by imagining societies where these constructed roles become rigid laws. In such imagined worlds, gender is not simply a personal identity; rather, it becomes a system of control.

Feminist dystopian thought is also influenced by theories of power and discipline. In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault argues that “power is exercised rather than possessed” (26). He explains that power works through institutions, surveillance, and everyday practices, not only through visible force (195). Feminist scholars have applied this idea to gender relations. In dystopian frameworks, control over women is often maintained through monitoring, regulation, and internalized obedience in addition to constant physical violence.

Another important theoretical root of feminist dystopian thought is related to reproduction and bodily autonomy. Adrienne Rich argues that motherhood, as a social institution, has historically been used to regulate women’s lives. She notes that motherhood can function as a system of control rather than purely a personal experience (13). Feminist dystopian theory expands this concern by imagining societies where reproductive roles are strictly controlled by political or religious authorities. These imagined extremes highlight the dangers of denying women autonomy over their own bodies.

Feminist dystopian thought is also shaped by feminist literary criticism. Elaine Showalter emphasizes the need to recover women’s voices and experiences from literary history. This concern with visibility and representation influences feminist dystopian theory, which often centers women’s perspectives in societies that attempt to silence them. The dystopian setting makes the consequences of exclusion more visible and more urgent.

In her work *A Literature of their own*, Elaine Showalter has classified female literary progress into three phases. The first phase is known as Feminine (1840-1880). The female literary products of this period are characterized by women’s imitation of male authors’ writings and styles. Some of them used male pseudonyms because they were afraid to write in

a patriarchal society that did not support the education of women. The second phase is known as Feminist (1880-1920). Writers of this period supported women's cause and discouraged oppression against them. They used literature to challenge the traditional image of womanhood. Showalter states that: "women are historically enabled to reflect the accommodating postures of the femininity and to use literature to dramatize the ordeals of wronged womanhood" during this phase (405). The last phase is known as Female (1920 onwards). It is a period of self-discovery and searching for identity in which women stopped imitating male writings; instead, they started to express their own experiences and feelings. Showalter states that: "women reject both imitation and protest" (405).

While reading about Showalter's analysis of feminist literary progress, I have noticed that dystopian literature can be classified under the female phase since it emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. This phase is also characterized by females' search for identity. This latter is discussed in many feminist dystopian works such as Margret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* which prove Showalter point of view (Belsey and Moore 130). Rita Felski demonstrates that feminist dystopian literature belongs to the female phase and the second wave of feminism as she states that this period "justifies the analysis of women's literature as a separate category ... because of the recent cultural phenomenon of women's explicit self-identification as an oppressed group"; consequently, this issue was reflected in literary products which addressed gender issues that reflect "the problem of female identity" (1).

Feminist dystopian thought is also linked to feminist ideas of resistance and emancipation. Bell hooks defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (26). This definition highlights action and transformation. Feminist dystopian frameworks therefore do not only describe oppression; they also explore awareness, resistance,

and the possibility of change. Even limited acts of defiance can carry political meaning according to feminist dystopian literature.

The origins of feminist dystopian thought, therefore, lie in the feminist critiques of patriarchy, social construction, discipline, reproduction, and institutional power. By combining these theoretical insights with dystopian imagination, feminist dystopia develops into a framework that places gender at the centre of social critique. It transforms dystopian fiction into a space where the structures that shape women's lives are exposed, questioned, and reimagined.

Having traced the intellectual and ideological origins of feminist dystopian thought, it becomes necessary to move beyond its formative impulses and examine how these early concerns gradually evolved into a distinct literary tradition. While the origins reveal the philosophical and socio-political conditions that gave rise to feminist dystopian imagination, they do not fully account for the genre's structural consolidation and thematic depth. The following part therefore shifts the focus from inception to development, exploring how feminist dystopian fiction matured as a recognizable genre and identifying the foundational themes that came to define its narrative and critical framework.

1.4.2. The Rise of Feminist Dystopian Fiction

The early famous dystopian novels, known as classical dystopias, were produced by men who created future societies controlled by a totalitarian regime in their narratives. The best examples of these works include: Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), Aldous Huxley *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), William Golding *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) as well as Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). The aforementioned works have different points in common. The authors create a male protagonist who fights against the oppressive government to attain emancipation from its control. In her work *In the Chinks of the World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction*, Sara

Lefanu argues that besides the fact that dystopian literature is “a male bias”, it is also characterized by “a cultural and political male hegemony”. (187)

Starting from the mid twentieth century, female authors became more interested in dystopian literature. This genre attracted women because it allowed them to challenge the dominant ideology prevailed by men (187). In her essay *The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction*, Raffaella Baccolini claims that the genre of science fiction, including utopia and dystopia, attracted female writers who considered this genre as the most appropriate form of resistance and as: “a subversive and oppositional strategy against hegemonic ideology” (519). Consequently, feminist dystopias became more influential and well-known during the 1960’s. This development of feminist dystopia was supported by the three waves of feminism as well as the changes which occurred in women’s life throughout history as I am going to explain in the next chapter (Desmet 31).

Although feminist dystopia became widespread in the middle of the twentieth century, this genre existed long time before. In 1826, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley published her novel *The Last Man*. This latter portrays a bleak future world infested with a plague. It also reflects Mary’s miserable conditions during her life and her sense of disillusionment. Years later, Charlotte Haldane’s *Man’s World* (1926) and Katharine Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* (1937) were published. Both are feminist dystopian novels that portray a society controlled by men. Moreover, they depict women as tools whose sole benefit is their biological function and reproductive abilities. In addition, they are submissive characters who do not try to escape from men’s rule; however, they accept their social function imposed by male characters. Hence, the female characters depicted in the novel are considered minor women who could not raise their voices; therefore, they could never develop into “full human beings”. (Russell 15).

The late 1960’s represent a crucial period in the consolidation of feminist dystopian fiction. Coinciding with the rise of second-wave feminism, this period witnessed intensified

debates surrounding reproductive rights, workplace equality, and systemic sexism. These socio-political transformations provided fertile ground for dystopian narratives that explicitly critiqued institutionalized patriarchy. Unlike earlier texts, which often embedded gender critique within broader speculative frameworks, works emerging during and after this period positioned women's oppression at the centre of dystopian imagination. The genre thus becomes a literary extension of feminist activism, translating political struggle into speculative narrative form.

Feminist dystopian fiction, therefore, witnessed a blast in the late 1960's with works like Anna Kavan's *Ice* (1967), Kate Wilhem's *Baby, You Were Great* (1968) and Pamela Kettle's *The Day of the Women* (1970). Later, feminist dystopia became more famous and well recognized with works that introduce a female perspective such as Alibe Bradley Sheldon's *The Girl Who Was Plugged in* (1973), Margret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (2008-2010).

After publishing Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), feminist dystopian fiction had achieved both thematic clarity and structural coherence. Atwood's work crystallized anxieties surrounding reproductive control, religious fundamentalism, and state surveillance, synthesizing earlier feminist concerns into a powerful and globally recognized narrative. Later works, such as Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008–2010), further expanded the genre's reach by merging feminist critique with young adult dystopia, thereby introducing gendered resistance and female agency to a wider readership. These texts demonstrate how feminist dystopian fiction evolved from a marginal subcurrent into a central mode of contemporary speculative literature.

Taken together, these developments reveal that the rise of feminist dystopian fiction cannot be reduced to the mere appearance of female-authored texts. Rather, it reflects a gradual yet decisive transformation in narrative focus, ideological commitment, and thematic depth.

From its tentative beginnings to its consolidation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the genre has evolved into a sustained literary interrogation of patriarchal power and gendered oppression.

1.5. Central Themes in Feminist Dystopias

Feminist dystopias were highly influenced by the political atmosphere of their historical context. Consequently, female dystopian writers are interested in politics, society and culture. They attempt to show readers that they have chosen dystopian literature because it is the genre of resistance for our times (Baccolini, *Dystopia Matters* 1-4). Therefore, it advocates resisting women oppression and rebelling against it.

Female dystopias narrate dystopian stories through the lens of female characters. In addition, they explore new themes which are different from male dystopian writings. Therefore, feminist dystopian fiction is grounded in a set of recurring theoretical concerns that make it different from dystopian literature in general. While traditional dystopias often focus on political tyranny, technological domination, or totalitarian surveillance, feminist dystopian thought places gender at the centre of social critique. It examines how patriarchal systems structure power, regulate women's bodies, restrict their freedom, and organize society according to rigid gender hierarchies. These themes are not accidental; they are rooted in feminist theory and its long-standing critique of inequality as I am going to explain in the following chapter.

Feminist writers discuss topics about gender representation and challenge traditional gender roles. They object gender oppression and advocate women's freedom by giving the female protagonist some powerful adjectives such as strength, intelligence, rebellion and independence. Moreover, they investigate sexual issues and talk about women's control of their bodies. In many works, female writers discuss how gender identity become a product of a totalitarian regime instead of being instinct and natural. Therefore, they add something fresh

and new to the dystopian genre. In her *The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction*, Baccolini claims that:

Women's science fiction novels have contributed to the exploration and subsequent breakdown of certainties and universalist assumptions – those damaging stereotypes – about gendered identities by addressing, in a dialectical engagement with tradition, themes such as the representation of women and their bodies, reproduction and sexuality, and language and its relation to identity. (520)

One of the most central themes in feminist dystopian fiction is the oppression of women as a structural condition rather than an individual misfortune. Feminist theory has consistently argued that women's subordination is embedded in social institutions. Oppression, thus, becomes systematic and normalized, showing how cultural expectations can evolve into institutional control. Closely connected to this theme is the control over women's bodies. Feminist scholars have long emphasized that the female body is a primary site of political regulation. Adrienne Rich explains that motherhood, as an institution, has historically functioned as a means of controlling women's lives (13). Feminist dystopian fiction builds on this theoretical insight by portraying societies where reproduction, sexuality, and bodily autonomy are regulated by the state, religion, or other authorities. In such frameworks, the body becomes a political territory. Hence, control over reproduction is not presented as a private issue but as a public and ideological concern.

Another key theme is the limitation of freedom. Feminist dystopian fiction frequently tackles restrictions on women's movement, education, speech, and participation in public life. These limitations reflect broader feminist analyses of power. Feminist scholars have applied this idea to gender, showing how control often works through routine practices and internalized norms. In feminist dystopian settings, women may appear to comply with rules, yet this

compliance often results from systematic conditioning and fear. Freedom is then limited not only through punishment but also through constant monitoring and regulation.

Social hierarchy based on gender is another defining theme. Feminist dystopian fiction often portrays societies organized around rigid divisions between men and women, where authority is concentrated in male-dominated institutions. Moreover, it analyses patriarchal, matriarchal and egalitarian societies, thinks of alternative social order and reorganizes gender roles (Ritch 5). Based on Bell's aforementioned definition of feminism, sexism is embedded within social structures. Feminist dystopian narratives, therefore, highlight how gender hierarchy shapes access to power, resources, and knowledge. Thus, the unequal distribution of authority is not random; it is presented as a deliberate system that benefits dominant groups.

Another important theme in feminist dystopian fiction is the role of power structures in maintaining gender inequality. Power is not only exercised through visible institutions such as the state or religion, but also through social norms, cultural expectations, and everyday practices. As Michel Foucault explains, power operates through discipline and surveillance rather than direct force (*Discipline and Punish* 26). Feminist theorists extend this idea by showing that such mechanisms are often gendered, shaping women's roles, behaviors, and identities. In this context, power becomes a system that appears natural but is in fact constructed and imposed, as suggested by Simone de Beauvoir (283). Feminist dystopian fiction exposes these structures to reveal how control is maintained and how it can be questioned. This idea will be elaborated on in depth in the next chapter.

Finally, feminist dystopian fiction consistently engages with the themes of resistance and emancipation. Although it portrays oppressive systems, it also emphasizes awareness and dissent. As a result, Feminist dystopian narratives often depict acts of questioning, memory, and rebellion as forms of agency. Resistance may be limited or risky, but it remains central to the genre's critical function because it leads to emancipation from totalitarian regimes.

Female dystopian writers have created critical and ambiguous narratives. In their works, feminist authors write stories that depict struggle, resistance and rebellion against a hegemonic ideology. Since they advocate liberty and object oppression, they conclude their stories with hopeful, and sometimes open, endings which provide the readers with a sense of optimism. Finally, they use conventions from different works which make their productions characterized by hybridity. Consequently, female dystopian narratives become so distinctive sub-genre of literature compared to male dystopias.

1.6. Concepts of resistance and Agency

Resistance and agency are central concepts in feminist dystopian fiction since they challenge systems of gendered oppression. While feminist dystopian narratives often depict societies where women are subjected to strict control, they also emphasize that such control is never complete. Feminist dystopian thought highlights that even within highly restrictive environments, individuals still have the ability to think, question, and respond. In this context, agency refers to a woman's ability to make decisions, assert her identity, and develop awareness. Therefore, resistance in feminist dystopias refers to the actions, either visible or subtle, through which oppressive systems are challenged.

Sandra Bartky further explains how systems of domination operate through the internalization of norms and expectations. She argues that patriarchal societies shape women's bodies, behaviors, and identities in ways that appear natural but are deeply controlled (*Femininity and Domination* 74). However, this process of internalization does not mean that women are passive. Feminist dystopian thought builds on this idea by showing that awareness of such control can lead to different forms of resistance. When individuals recognize how power operates, they begin to question the authority and, sometimes, reject it.

In feminist dystopian fiction, resistance is not always presented as an open rebellion or a large-scale revolution. Instead, it often appears in quieter and more personal forms. Acts such

as remembering the past, questioning authority, refusing to fully comply, or maintaining a sense of self can all be considered as forms of resistance. These small actions are significant because they challenge the assumption that oppressive systems are total and unchangeable. They demonstrate that control can be resisted even at the level of thought and identity.

Moreover, feminist dystopian thought emphasizes that resistance can take collective as well as individual forms. While some acts of defiance are personal, others involve solidarity, shared experiences, and collective awareness. This idea connects to broader feminist movements, which stress the importance of cooperation in challenging systemic inequality. Even when collective resistance is limited or suppressed, its possibility remains an important aspect of feminist dystopian imagination.

The concept of agency is closely linked to this understanding of resistance. In fact, agency does not necessarily mean complete freedom; rather, it refers to the ability to act within constraints. Thus, it involves both awareness and action. In Feminist dystopian narratives, writers often portray characters who gradually develop this awareness, moving from passive acceptance to active questioning. This shift is crucial as it transforms individuals from subjects of control into agents capable of resistance.

The concepts of resistance and agency in feminist dystopian fiction are often linked to the idea of hope. Although these narratives portray oppressive societies, they rarely suggest that such systems are completely stable or permanent. Instead, the presence of resistance, no matter how small it is, introduces the possibility to make a change. This idea reflects a key principle in feminist theory: systems of domination can be challenged and transformed over time. Drawing on feminist and social theory, both resistance and agency reveal that power is never absolute and that individuals, even under strict control, are still able to think, question, and act against the regime. By emphasizing both subtle and visible forms of resistance, feminist

dystopian thought redefines heroism and highlights the importance of awareness, identity, and action in confronting oppression.

1.7. Selected Novels of the Study: Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Collins's *The Hunger Games Trilogy*

In the middle of the twentieth century, feminist dystopian fiction became an influential and widespread sub-genre of literature. This new kind of dystopia is different from the familiar, male dystopian works; as a result, it contributes in enriching the female writings history. It encompasses different literary products written mainly by female authors through feminist perspectives. In this study, therefore, I have chosen to analyze four famous feminist dystopias: Margret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in addition to Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. This latter includes: *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. As a result, the last part of this chapter is dedicated to give insights about the aforementioned feminist dystopian novels for a better understanding of this research.

1.7.1. About Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Written by Margret Atwood in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* is considered one of the major dystopian works written by a female (Desmet 69). It reflects the negative influence of dystopian societies over women rather than men. That is to say, it highlights the social function of women and the way they are humiliated by their governments. Thus, critics take this work as one of the best feminist dystopias.

The Handmaid's Tale is a prophetic novel that takes place in a future society named The Republic of Gilead; a country that replaces the USA in the late twentieth century. Gilead is described as a theocracy, a Christian country that is based on the Bible. In such futuristic settings, the human race is threatened because of nuclear wars and chemical pollution. This latter affects women's reproduction abilities and leads to a sharp decline in birth rates since most of them become infertile and lose their ability to give birth. As a result, a totalitarian,

Christian group under the name of Sons of Jacob appears to save the human race; they overthrow the US government by making a military rebellion which results in the death of the American President and the members of the congress paving the way to the creation of the New Republic of Gilead.

Sons of Jacob believe that the reason behind the apocalyptic state of the world is women's freedom which led to the wrath of God. Hence, they strip women of their rights including education, occupations, money and properties. Moreover, they classify the citizens into different categories based on their sex. The classification of women is based on their social function as well as their reproductive abilities. Female characters in the novel are divided into six categories: Handmaids, Wives, Aunts, Marthas, Jezebels and Unwomen.

The first category is Handmaids; they are a group of women who are known for their ability to bear children. Thus, they are primarily appreciated because of their fertility. Moreover, they are sent to the Educational Centre in order to learn how to become Handmaids. After that, they are moved to a wealthy family to provide them with a baby. As a result, Handmaids are only considered "sexual surrogates" rather than normal human beings (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 79). Hence, they are valued only for their reproductive abilities.

The second category is called Wives; a group of wealthy women who take care of their husbands. Despite occupying a privileged position in their society, they are still restricted by their social function and considered inferior to men. Moreover, like every woman in the Republic of Gilead, Wives are stripped of their rights to vote, work, read and write. In addition, they perform traditional gender roles of managing their households by controlling their domestic servants: Marthas, a category in Gilead whose social function best exemplified feminine traditional gender roles. Finally, Wives play the role of mothers after the Handmaid gives birth to a baby.

The next category is known as Aunts; they train Handmaids in the Education Centre and instill totalitarian rules in their minds. They force them to watch pornography or related videos in which women are sexually abused, cut into pieces, or raped. The reason behind showing Handmaids such violent videos is to portray the former America as terroristic and violent. Hence, their role is to keep repeating some speeches, especially some Biblical verses, to brainwash the Handmaid's and make them revise "the narratives of their past lives" (Stein 271). Then, there is the category of "Jezebels" who work as prostitutes and used to "serve foreign dignitaries and important government officials" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 79). The last group is called "Unwomen"; they do not perform any of the previous roles; consequently, they are sent to the colonies to do some "hazardous duties like cleaning up toxic waste" (79). No matter what category women belong to, they are always under men's manipulation and oppression.

The Handmaid's Tales is a story that is told by a first-person narrator: Offred; the female protagonist of the novel who encounters different hardships and faces oppression because of her gender. Like many other Handmaids, she is deprived of her real name and labeled a patronym of her commander Fred to become "Offred" as a sign of property. Offred is stripped also of her rights in the patriarchal regime of Gilead. She is forced to encounter a compulsory system of unfair reproduction. Therefore, she is sent to the house of the Commander Fred and his wife Serena where she is obliged to make a sexual relationship with the him to provide the wealthy family with a new born baby.

Atwood's novel belongs to the second wave of feminism. The novel encompasses different forms of storytelling. The protagonist goes back and forth remembering some flashbacks from the past and realizing the bleak reality of the present. Furthermore, the novel deals with different issues including politics, religion, history and literature. It also explores themes like: totalitarianism, religion, sex, gender, loss of identity and most important female

empowerment and rebellion. In addition, it highlights the abuse of human rights in a totalitarian regime by shedding the light on women's oppression. Therefore, *The Handmaid's Tale* is considered as social and political work.

1.7.2. About Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*

Written by Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Game Trilogy* is a feminist adult dystopian fiction that takes place in the future, post-apocalyptic totalitarian government called Panem. Located in North America, Panem consists of a wealthy, technologically advanced city called the Capitol. This latter, under the rule of President Snow, takes control of the surrounding thirteen districts. However, the thirteenth district was destroyed when trying to rebel against the government. As a punishment for the rebellion, the government organizes a reaping day, in which, one boy and one girl from each district between the age of 12 and 18 are selected to compete in an annual event called: The Hunger Games. The competition ends when one of the participants, called "the tributes", stays alive from all the twelve participating districts. The Hunger Games is a reality TV show that imposes on the tributes to fight each other to death in a dangerous arena. The winner and its family are rewarded with food and money to be rich for the rest of their lives. These Games are organized to entertain the Capitol and to keep the districts submissive to its power in order to avoid rebellion.

While writing her *The Hunger Games* collection, Suzanne Collins was inspired by her father's occupation as a militant and a history teacher at college. In addition, she was so emotional and influenced by the brutality of the Iraq War to the point that she found it difficult to differentiate between reality television and its coverage. She has explained that the social and political themes of the novel were created for the purpose to "characterize current and past world events, including the use of hunger as a weapon to control population" (qtd in Blasingame 726). Furthermore, she was interested in Greek myths as well as gladiatorial contests which made her create the dystopian nation of the Capitol. She explains that there are

three phases in gladiator contests: ruthless government, forcing people to fight to death in addition to using these fights as a means of entertainment (727). The collection of this work includes three parts: *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010).

1.7.2.1. *The Hunger Games*

The first part of the collection narrates the story of a female protagonist Katniss Everdeen; a sixteen years old girl from district twelve, the poorest region of Panem where people suffer from starvation. Years ago, Katniss lost her father in a mine explosion; thus, all who remains for her is her mother, her little sister and her friend Gale.

Katniss participates in the 74th Hunger Games after volunteering to replace her sister Primrose who is selected as a tribute on the reaping day. From the same district, Peeta Mellark, who saved Katniss before from starvation, is also selected as the male tribute. Both are sent to the Capitol to be trained by Haymitch Abernathy; the only previous survivor of the Games from the same district twenty-four years ago and who became addicted to alcohol since then.

The male tribute Peeta confesses a longtime feeling of love towards Katniss in a televised show before the Games. Katniss believes that Peeta has merely taken Haymitch advice to show love towards her to gain support and sponsors. During the Game, Katniss allies with Rue, a tribute from district eleven, who was later killed in the arena. As the story progresses, tributes were informed by a rule change in the Game which allows two tributes from the same district to win as a team. Taking the advice of Haymitch, Katniss shows some feelings of love towards Peeta in the arena. However, Katniss uses fake feelings to gain sponsors and win the Game.

After the death of all the tributes, the only survivors are Katniss and Peeta. Before celebrating their victory as the surviving team from the same district, the rules are changed again: Only one tribute must stay alive. Refusing to kill each other, Katniss suggests to suicide together by eating poisonous berries; a solution that the government refuses. Eventually, both

tributes from district twelve, Katniss and Peeta, are declared the winners of the 74th Hunger Games.

By the end of the first part of the trilogy, Haymitch warns Katniss about the government madness she causes because of her final action which the state considers a challenge against the regime orders. Therefore, the only solution is to keep pretending that her rebellious action is a result of her love towards Peeta that implies no intention to stand against the rules.

1.7.2.2. *Catching Fire*

The second part of the trilogy continues as the Capitol provides Katniss and Peeta with luxuries because of their victory in the final Hunger Games. However, Katniss is informed that President Snow is not satisfied with her suggested action of suicide. This latter was seen as a challenge against the regime rules; consequently, it influences the other districts to rebel against the government. For this reason, President Snow threatens Katniss to harm her family and friends if she does not confess that her suggestion is out of her love for Peeta; thus, he asks her to marry him. Meanwhile, Katniss best friend Gale's confession of love towards her makes her decision more complicated.

Being submissive to President Snow's orders, Katniss and Peeta are forced to visit the districts as victors and lovers. Moreover, they plan to make a public wedding. However, they encourage rebellion unintentionally when they were visiting the districts because of their daring. Eventually, the mockingjay pin which Katniss wears becomes a symbol of resistance. This leads to increasing uprisings against the Capitol rules in every district. Surprisingly, President Snow organizes a special 75th edition of The Hunger Games to calm down the citizens. It refers to as the Capital Quarter Quell, in which, Katniss and Peeta are forced to go back to the dangerous arena to fight against the previous winners of the Games to death.

Following Haymitch advice, Katniss and Peeta collaborate with other tributes to destroy the arena and escape the Games. Unfortunately, The Capitol figures out their rebellious plan

and captures Peeta. Meanwhile, Katniss is surprisingly rescued by rebel forces from District 13 following Haymitch plan. She later recognizes that she becomes a significant part of this rebellion. She is later informed by Gale that district twelve is destroyed; consequently, she has decided to join the rebels' community in district 13.

1.7.2.3. *Mockingjay*

In *Mockingjay*, the last part of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, the character of Katniss turns out to be more powerful. She becomes the leader of the Revolution whose role is to unify all the districts against the Capitol and its President Snow. Consequently, Katniss is given the name of Mockingjay as a symbol of rebellion. She moves to live in district 13; an underground community of rebels that was believed once to be destroyed. district 13 becomes the source of rebellion under its female President Coin. It also becomes the shelter of district 12 survivors including Katniss family. President Coin is not different from President Snow; rather, she is a cruel woman who would not hesitate to punish anyone who disobeys her orders.

Meanwhile, Peeta is alive but tortured by the government. He is later brainwashed by a bee poison and all his memories with Katniss faded away. Consequently, he is used as a weapon to kill her. When rescued by the rebels, he tries to choke her to death. Hence, he undergoes a mental treatment to be cured. Simultaneously, Katniss is feeling more depressed and frustrated. Therefore, President Coin uses her to fuel the rebellion and win the revolution.

As the story progresses, Primrose is killed in a parachute explosion while Katniss is injured. When she awakes from a coma, she figures out that President Snow is waiting for his execution after the rebels win the war. However, Katniss realizes that things are going to be worst if the revolution succeeded under President Coin's rules. Therefore, she kills President Coin instead of President Snow. Still, President Snow dies as well later in the novel.

By the end of the trilogy, Panem succeeds in destroying the Capitol and wins the revolution. Furthermore, Katniss proves to be able to stop another totalitarian regime by killing

President Coin. Eventually, Katniss and Peeta are married and they have two children in a world free of the oppressive world of The Hunger Games.

Conclusion

this chapter establishes the theoretical basis for the analysis that follows. It has examined the development of dystopian fiction from its early conceptual foundations to its transformation into a feminist mode of critique. It began by exploring the movement from idealized visions of society to their disillusionment, showing how early representations of perfection gradually collapsed. This shift contributed to the emergence of dystopian fiction as a genre concerned with power, control, and the organization of society. It also traced the evolution of dystopian narratives, highlighting their increasing focus on individual experience within oppressive systems. In this context, dystopian heroism emerged as a key element, where characters moved from passive roles to active positions of questioning and resistance. This development reflects a broader change in the genre, emphasizing agency, identity, and the possibility of challenging dominant structures.

Building on this foundation, this chapter explored the evolution of feminist dystopian fiction as a distinct branch of the genre. It showed how feminist dystopia places gender at the centre of analysis, addressing key themes such as the oppression of women, control over the body, limitations of freedom in addition to resistance and agency. It also demonstrated how power operates through social and ideological structures. It finally introduced the selected novels of the study which reflect the theoretical concerns discussed. These works provide a framework for examining issues of gender, power, and resistance within dystopian contexts in the coming chapters.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks for Feminist Dystopian Analysis

Introduction

The second chapter of this study establishes the key theoretical frameworks necessary for examining the selected novels, connecting historical, philosophical, and feminist insights to the literary analysis that follows. It begins by providing a short overview about the feminist theory. Then, it moves to examine the history of women's concerns through the waves of feminism, highlighting how social, political, and cultural concerns have evolved over time. This historical overview establishes the context for understanding the feminist perspectives that underpin dystopian narratives.

The chapter then explores the issue of gender performance, focusing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity which conceptualizes gender as a socially constructed and enacted identity. This theoretical lens is crucial for understanding how dystopian societies enforce and regulate gender roles, and how characters navigate or resist these constraints.

Next, this chapter addresses the different aspects of totalitarianism and mechanisms of social control drawing on the works of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser. Their theories illuminate how power is exercised through institutions, ideology, and everyday practices providing essential tools for analyzing the structures that shape oppression in dystopian worlds.

Finally, the chapter considers intersectional perspectives on inequality, emphasizing how gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and social status. This section builds a more comprehensive understanding of oppression and lays the foundation for analyzing how feminist dystopian literature critiques and challenges multiple layers of inequality.

2.1. Intellectual Genesis of Feminist Theory

The system of patriarchy is marked by male supremacy over women in social, economic and political fields. According to this system, men impose their rule in every domain from government to home making women powerless and subordinate creatures. Consequently, this inequality between the two sexes paved the way to the birth of feminism; a feminist movement that aimed at realizing equality between men and women, putting a limit to sexism and ending oppression against women. Thus, it was considered one of the most inspiring and influencing movements as it continued to spread around the world.

The word feminism is derived from the Latin word “Femina” which stands for women’s concerns. Consequently, it is not concerned with the biological nature of women only; however, it also looks after women’s issues as a social category. That is to say, feminism believes that women’s problems are related to their sex. Hence, the difference between the two sexes determines the organization of societies; as a result, a patriarchal society is characterized by the dominance of men’s power, control and orders.

Feminism has deep roots in history. When it first emerged, it was named The Movement of Women Rights. In 1876, the term feminism was used by Hunburtine Auclert in her journal *La Citoyenne* in which she wrote against male dominance and called for claiming women’s rights that were promised by the French government after the French Revolution. The journal was very influential in raising feminist issues affecting different women at that time. Still, feminism had not gained popularity until the 1890’s when it first appeared in Britain. Then, it reached the United States in 1910. Later, feminism appeared in the Arab World as El-Niswia by the 1920’s. Even though feminism became widespread in the 1900’s, women held feminist beliefs a long time before. By the beginning of the 18th century, different women started to object to male dominance over them as they began to raise their voices against their position either through writings or discussions in order to look for equality with the other sex.

The term feminism is defined, according to the Cambridge online dictionary, as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state”. In addition, this term was also given multiple definitions and interpretations by different theorists and researchers. The first activist movements of feminism made many people think that feminism is a group of “angry women” who want to be equal to men (Hook, viii). However, according to Hook, feminism is more than that, it is a movement that tends to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression against women (viii).

Sometimes the term feminism is referred to as a historical political movement that spread firstly in Europe, then the USA. However, many researchers agree on the fact that feminism is a belief that women are deprived of their rights and enjoy no equality with men because they suffer from injustice and they “have traditionally been dehumanized by a male-dominated society, which they call patriarchy; and that has been always better to be a man” (Faris 2).

Rosalind Delmar is another researcher who defines feminism as “an active desire to change women’s position in society”; she states that a feminist is a person who holds the belief that women suffer from discrimination because of their sex. They also have some needs which are neglected and unsatisfied. Therefore, to satisfy these needs, “a radical change in the social, economic and political order” is necessary (5).

When feminism was just at its beginning, some women had already started raising their voices towards inequality and oppression against women through writing. Mary Astell was a famous female writer during this period as she challenged the belief that the female sex was naturally inferior to men. She claims in her works that women are just as smart and capable creatures as men. Moreover, their subordination is a result of male domination and the little access of females to education.

One of the intellectual movements which helped to strengthen feminism during the 18th century is Enlightenment. Philosophers of this period such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau challenged the inherited privileges of kings and nobles and claimed equality between men. However, he had excluded women. Therefore, excluding women from this right urged them to claim equality with men and to ask for their rights. Still, some writers and philosophers supported the intellectual abilities of women and their aim to reach gender equality. One of the key figures during this period is the Swedish author Sophia Elisabet Brenner who discusses this issue in her poem *The Justified Defense of the Female Sex* in which she addressed issues like women's rights and supports equality between the sexes. She also called for reclaiming female autonomy and self-agency.

The French and the American Revolutions were also among the major events in history to support feminism. Amid the rising demands for liberty, women were also looking for their rights to be equal with men. Consequently, even women from privileged classes began to defend such equality. To give an example, the wife of the second American President, Abigail Adams, recommended the founding fathers to take care of women's issues in the new American changes. In 1789, the foundational document of the French Revolution entitled *The Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizens* called for protecting universal human rights; however, it excluded the rights of women. Therefore, the playwright Olympe de Gouges advocated equality between the two sexes in her work *The Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizens* (1791) as a response to the aforementioned document in order to call for the recognition of women's rights in France.

As time passes, the significant technological changes influenced women's movements to claim their rights. A new middle class emerged due to the growth of trade and industry. However, social functions were determined by gender: men dominated the public realm of work and politics while women were still restricted to the private realm of home.

During this time, a piece of literary works was published to encourage the ladies to stick to their domestic functions: serve their husbands and take care of their children to serve the society as a whole. However, women were still eager to see the public world out of the private realm. Therefore, the emerged middle class of women became also involved and active in those movements. Their contribution became more effective starting from the 19th century as they fought to get their right to vote, reach a better education and perform productive labor. The socialist Charles Fourier was among the famous figures of that time. He believed in the cooperation of men and women far from the unfair patriarchal society. His ideas became widespread in Europe and the US especially during the 1840's and the 1850's.

whether being a social or political movement, feminism tends to fight the belief that women are naturally inferior to men because of their sex. It tries to overcome all the obstacles and to break the different barriers which face them to reach social and political equality and to create economic opportunities in their societies along with the other sex. Thanks to feminism, women could speak up their voices in addition to spread their wishes and desires around the world.

2.2. Addressing Women Concerns through Feminism

The early 18th century was characterized by a strong belief that women are considered naturally inferior to men either on a social, cultural or intellectual level. This belief was inspired by Christian thoughts which look at women, who suffered from inequality for centuries because of their sex, as weak creatures who were always under the control of their fathers or husbands. However, women started to fight oppression and seek gender equality after different historical events including the birth of Enlightenment, the outbreak of the French and the American Revolutions as well as the industrial growth.

For many decades in history, feminism had always represented the voice of women in their quest to reach gender equality. Consequently, this movement went through three major

waves. Each wave triggered a specific aim to achieve this objective. Trying to build a strong identity for women, the leaders of these waves were seeking to guarantee their rights to vote, to work, to get rid of men's sexual domination, to change the stereotypical image of women, and to make women a respected part of society along with men.

2.2.1. Women's Struggle for Suffrage

The real struggle of women against oppression started during the 1850's. As a result, the first wave of feminism is dated back to the period from the second half of the 19th century until the early 20th century. During this time, a group of women known as the early feminists, including educated, white and middle-class women, cooperated to claim equal rights to vote and to access education. In addition, they objected their social function which was restricted merely to the private realm of family and home. As mass production of goods became possible due to the Industrial Revolution, factories were in need of more unskilled workers to work on machines with a low wage. Thus, Women laborers were mainly hired by textile companies for sewing and mending clothes until they got married.

The middle of the 19th century was characterized by the first wave of suffragettes who dominated the feminist agenda both in Europe and in the USA. After granting the right of women to vote in a few countries, such as Germany, different movements appeared from different activists and feminists to reach the same right using different strategies. To give an example, The National Women's Party members in the USA, which was considered an illegal party, started a strike using banners and writings against the undemocratic treatment of women in the state of democracy. They also attacked the absence of women's rights and ambitions in the land of dreams. Due to such events, many activists were arrested and went to jail. This struggle to achieve suffrage continued until the post First World War period.

The domination of men over women as well as the stereotypical image that was given to ladies, who were considered as wives and mothers only, encouraged females to claim for

their right to vote not only for their benefits but for the benefits of men and society as whole. Furthermore, they believed that reaching the right to vote and to work would enable them to perform their private function as housekeepers much better.

The first wave of feminism could influence other feminist movements all around the world. Along with giving women the right to vote, it encouraged them to get engaged in working classes in different domains far from politics. It was also inspired by black feminists who suffered from oppression both on gender and race. Eventually, many Western countries had granted women's right to vote by the end of the first wave after the ratification of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.

Liberal feminism is an early feminist type which appeared in the first wave of feminism. It supports the necessity of integrating women effectively into their societies and encourages equality between the two sexes. Furthermore, it believes both in democracy and in the power of individuals to make men and women equal either in terms of politics or society. It calls for women to create groups with a large number of participants to speak up for their needs and to raise consciousness about their issues.

Along with calling for women's right to vote during the first wave, liberal feminism broadened its concerns in the next waves. It aimed at removing all the traditional and patriarchal beliefs which stripped women of their rights. It also encouraged them to ask for total liberty and to decide their social functions. In addition, it called for other rights such as: accessing better education and professional opportunities, having property rights, changing marriage laws, and most importantly, making women free from oppression and discrimination.

The first wave of feminism, hence, paved the way to future feminist movements to seek more social reforms concerning gender equality. Consequently, gaining women's right to vote expanded women's concerns leading to the birth of a second wave of feminism. This latter addresses new issues such as: reproductive rights and equality at the workplace.

2.2.2. Reforming Gender Roles, Sexual Norms and Racist Issues

“The personal is political” was the slogan of the second wave of feminism which developed during the 1960’s after The Second World War (1939-1945). The slogan of the second wave demonstrates that female personal experiences are related to and affected by political systems. That is to say, their personal concerns including social function, reproductive rights and sexuality are not private matters; rather, they are connected to social, economic and political structures. During this time, women argued that having the right to vote would not end oppression against women nor achieve gender equality. Consequently, “they shifted their attention to reducing inequality in areas from the workplace to the family to speaking candidly about sexual norms” (Kindersly 13)

The second wave of feminism was characterized by Women’s Liberation Movement of the late 1960’s and the early 1970’s which aimed at ending women’s oppression. It addressed new issues such as calling for women’s reproductive rights, ending physical assault, controlling childbirth as well as having the right to legal abortion (57). During this period, women were no more looking for the right to vote; however, they wanted freedom of their personal life including their bodies and feelings. Feminists of the second wave objected the ideas of gender roles and social constructs which were determined by patriarchal societies. Thus, they criticized societal norms which determine women function as a mother and housewife. In addition, they called for women’s right to pursue their educational careers and realize their dreams.

This period witnessed the emergence of radical feminism which sought to challenge the traditional gender roles that were imposed by patriarchal societies. Therefore, they called for a radical change in societies through overthrowing the patriarchal system and reorganizing societies without taking into consideration the standard gender roles of men and women. In addition, they believe that the root of women’s dehumanization refers to their biological structure. That is to say, they wondered why men or women have to do specific functions just

according to their gender. As a result, they thought that the only solutions to set women free from oppression at that time were to make a biological revolution, overthrow patriarchy and eliminate the stereotypical gender roles.

Pregnancy, childbirth as well as abortion are also among the issues that radical feminism raised. They believed that the three of these processes are the worst experiences that a woman can go through. Hence, they called for enhancing technology to help women to raise their children and to avoid this kind of pain. Moreover, they encouraged creating groups of sisterhood that included women who had the same interests.

In addition to radical feminism which focuses on sexual issues, Marxist feminism, also known as socialist feminism, is also associated with the second wave of feminism. Feminists of this type believe that the source of women oppression is the capitalist system. According to the latter, men can always have absolute power and money and they can share their wealth with other men without taking into consideration women. Moreover, it benefits from unpaid women who work at home in addition to low-paid women who work in factories. Thus, according to this type, this system encourages sexism and supports gender inequality; consequently, it calls for the overthrow of capitalism by using a socialist revolution of the economy and calling for equal payment for men and women. In other words, Marxist feminism wants to replace capitalism with socialism; a system that calls for an equal share of properties and wealth regardless of sex or gender. Therefore, Marxist feminism challenges both sexist as well as traditional gender roles.

Marxist feminism is based on the ideas and theories of the German philosopher Karl Marx whose ideas prove that capitalism oppresses women. Another political theorist who adopts the same idea is Friedrich Engels whose theories suggest that family is the root of violence against women. In other words, women are just childbearing machines whose role is to bear, give birth and raise children, in addition to serve their fathers and husbands. Another

key figure of Marxist feminism is Rosa Luxemburg who advocates the right of the woman to work outside her home with equal payment to men. Alexandra Kollontai adopts the same idea. She made women's liberation and gender equality at the top of the socialist agenda. She believes that a woman should be set free from family ties and traditional gender roles so that she can contribute to public and industrial life.

One of the most important events of the second wave is the Miss America Pageants (1968-1969). It was a beauty competition in which a woman was presented as cattle to the audience. Being presented as cattle in this context is a metaphor which aimed at dehumanizing women and portraying them as a state's property rather than independent human beings. Therefore, it reflected women's marginalization and lack of agency in a patriarchal society. The competition aimed at showing that a woman's appearance is more important than her intellectual abilities. This event made women even more furious. They began to make different strikes against the competition to show the world that women were victims of unfair beauty standards. Starting from this event, women's issues of inequality and oppression attracted media attention including TV and journals.

During the 1980's, the second wave of feminism witnessed the emergence of womanism, also known as black feminism, which focused on gender as well as race issues. While the first wave of feminism was dominated by white, middle-class women, Womanism highlighted the injustice and the oppression faced by black women; an issue that white women failed to address. In the quest to build a strong identity, black women established many parties and organizations to attract the world's attention to the oppression they faced because of their color. Black Women Organized for Action as well as The National Black Feminist Organization were among the best examples of black organizations at that time. They aimed at giving women of color a valued position in their societies and raising national awareness about race and gender.

After the long journey to search for their lost identity, women from different parts of the world became frustrated about changing their position and reaching gender equality. Therefore, there was an urgent need to seek alternative solutions to realize the objectives of feminism leading to a third wave of feminism.

2.2.3. Redefining Feminism: Personal Empowerment

The third wave of feminism refers to a group of feminists who appeared at the beginning of the 1990's. They embraced modern ideas which advocate female's personal choice to reach social justice. Therefore, personal empowerment was significantly highlighted at that time. Feminists of the third wave advocated female autonomous control over their identity and personality. In addition, they believed that a woman is free to make her own choices and decisions without male interference. They used media including TV, radio, journals and even the internet, in the last decades, to spread their new ideas.

Although the new generation of feminists appreciated the previous waves, they came to redefine the concept of feminism and to change the typical image that was given to women in the past. Yet, they wanted to keep the same spirit that early feminists had already started. Therefore, it was this generation of female activists who made the third wave of feminism successful as they brought new ideas about women into existence and believed in actions and decisions rather than words. Their objective was not restricted merely to gain social or political rights; however, they aimed at seeking women's rights in every domain of life.

After all the hardships faced by women to reach gender equality, they were no more looking for the right to vote or to control their bodies and feelings; however, they began to ask for total liberation in different fields such as economy, politics, society and religion. Feminists of this wave believed that females were lacking political and economic rights. Furthermore, they wanted to have an income for doing their social function at home just like every citizen in

society. They believed that women should be respected and valued for the key role they played in their societies.

Kimberlé Crenshaw is one of the key female figures during this period. She introduced the term intersexuality which became an important feature of the third wave. This term emphasizes gender relationship with other interests; that is to say, according to intersexuality, gender equality cannot be achieved without taking in consideration other elements of oppression such as: racism, classism and sexism. Consequently, it opposed the idea of female universal experiences and brought attention to women's diversity. Women of color, for example, insist that their fight is not over. Therefore, intersexuality called for women's recognition regardless to their different circumstances which make them unique and distinctive.

Another type of feminism called ecofeminism had emerged and developed during this period. The third wave expanded feminist issues by embracing diversity and intersexuality; therefore, the idea that different forms of oppression are interrelated emphasizes ecofeminist concerns which are based on the fact that nature exploitation or environmental issues can lead to women oppression. Consequently, ecofeminist activists advocated nature protection in addition to gender equality and called for respecting people as well as the planet they live in.

Third wave feminists viewed themselves more powerful, more active and stronger than the other activists from the previous waves. They tend to create a new image of women. In addition, they believed that traditional ways to seek gender equality were no more useful and they started searching for new alternatives. Consequently, this wave is characterized by its "inclination to conform diversity and change" (Larsson 6). The new generation of feminists, therefore, began to increase attention toward women's tendencies and interests. In other words, modern feminists started to use new and more powerful words to refer to women such as girls and ladies to attract new generations. Moreover, they tried to raise women's self-confidence and self-appreciation by organizing different gatherings and parties to discuss women's

interests such as fashion, make-up or shopping far from the stereotypical discussions of home and family.

This wave emphasized also sexual empowerment and freedom by challenging second wave traditional sexual morality. It went beyond seeking reproductive rights and called for sexual freedom and self-autonomy. Feminists of this period challenged the restrictive sexual norms imposed on them and sought the right to marry the person they like regardless to its sex. This led to the emergence of queer sexualities such as lesbians. Unlike the second wave, the third wave put less emphasis on challenging societal norms; however, it focused on women's right to have sex for pleasure without feeling embraced or ashamed. Consequently, this wave advocated issues that were considered as taboos in the previous waves of feminism.

A variety of feminist theories were developed during this period. They were related to law, economy and politics. They dealt with ideas such as discrimination and oppression towards women. Moreover, they discussed different themes about females such as gender, sexuality, class in addition to women's function in their societies. One of the pioneer researchers of this period is Judith Butler; a gender and social theorist who is best known for her famous work *Gender Trouble* which I am going to discuss later in my thesis.

Some other elements which contributed to the success of the third wave are cyber feminism and globalization. The former was created by Donna Haraway to encourage women to be integrated into technology after the development of technology and science whereas the latter helped feminists to gather as many participants as they can from all around the world, of different races and religions, to cooperate and to stand as one against all the hardships they faced.

In 2012, the advancement of technology paved the way to a fourth wave feminism which emerged to complete what other waves had already started. Its ideas are based on social media and digital activism which calls for reclaiming gender identity and social justice, in

addition to ending sexual assault against women. Consequently, technology plays a crucial role in spreading feminist ideas. It could empower the voices of feminists around the world which were once marginalized by mainstream media.

2.3. Gender Performance in Feminist Dystopia

I think that one of the most significant differences between male dystopian literature and feminist dystopian literature is that the feminist writers bring the theme of gender performance into light with a special focus on the ways gender roles are deconstructed usually by female protagonists. For that reason, I dedicate this part of my study to investigate the theme of gender performance in dystopian settings. This part of my research helps to explore the ways female protagonists use gender performance in order to attain emancipation at the end of their journey.

2.3.1. Traditional Gender Roles

I believe that providing the reader with a good overview about traditional gender roles is a necessity in this research. Yet, the two terms of sex and gender are usually overlapped. Consequently, before delving into traditional gender roles, I would like first to explore the difference between sex and gender to facilitate grasping this part of my study.

For many people, sex and gender are similar concepts that may refer to the same meaning; however, they are totally different terms. This idea is demonstrated by Ann Oakley who claims that: “the term, gender and sex are used interchangeably, and thus, incorrectly. We are born, assigned as sex ... Yet, biological sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently nor solely connected to one’s physical anatomy” (16).

There are different researchers and thinkers who provided different definitions to distinguish between sex and gender. Larsson claims that gender is a “a set of characteristics that a society or a culture delineates as masculine or feminine” (4). The suggestion of Larsson proves that gender is based on cultural and social norms. Reeves and Baden also claim that

“sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorize someone as male or female” whereas gender is defined as “the socially determined ideas and practices of what is to be a male or female” (30). In other words, while sex is about the main biological differences between men and women, gender is about the standards that a society usually refer to in order to determine someone’s identity as masculine or feminine. Oakley also provides a clear explanation about the difference between sex and gender. She claims that sex is “the chromosomal make-up” of someone (34); therefore, it is considered as “a biological term” whereas “gender is a psychological and cultural one” (115).

Despite being ambivalent, both sex and gender play a significant role in shaping our identities as human beings. After birth, a baby is first classified into the appropriate sex category as male or female based on its reproductive organ. Therefore, sex, on the one hand, refers to the physical differences between males and females. Gender, on the other hand, is a social process of creating one’s identity based on its sex category as masculine or feminine (Beasley 11). Cranny-Francis is another researcher who defines sex as “a theory about human beings which divides them into two biological based categories, male or female” (7). That is to say, sex is more natural and biological than gender which is defined by society: a female is feminine and a male is masculine.

In our societies, there are already some established standards which must fit the sex category as male or female. These pre-existing notions are usually referred to as traditional gender roles. Spence and Helmreich argue that gender roles assign men and women with distinctive functions which are believed to be so important if each sex category is going to fulfil its task appropriately (4). Amy Blackstone provides a more detailed definition of gender roles that I am going to discuss below. She states that:

Gender Roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups and societies have of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and beliefs about gender. Gender roles are the product of interactions between individual's cues about what sort of behavior is believed to be the appropriate for what sex. Appropriate gender roles are defined according to a society's beliefs about differences between the sexes. (335)

Traditional gender roles, therefore, are identified by the society and influenced by its culture to determine the behavior that has to suit each sex category. In other words, gender roles identify the ways men must dress, speak, talk and vice versa. As a result, they may differ from one community to another based on its cultural norms. This explains why it is weird in our Algerian society, for example, to find a man who has a long hair or wears high heels. According to our established standards, these behaviors are associated with women not men. Consequently, traditional gender roles are against people who do not fit their heteronormativity such as: gays, lesbians and transgenders who are considered as an abnormal category that brings humiliation to its society.

According to traditional gender roles, men are always superior than women. That is to say, the dominant traits such as: power, independence and rebellion are related with men whereas the passive traits like being weak, subordinate and emotional are related with women. Allan Johnson lists different male qualities which are considered as valuable and respected such as: "control, strength, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, decisiveness, rationality, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and control over any emotion that interferes with other core values (such as invulnerability)" (122). In addition, he lists also some feminine qualities including: "cooperation, mutuality, sharing, compassion, caring, vulnerability, a readiness to negotiate and compromise, emotional expressiveness, and intuitive and other nonlinear ways of thinking" (122). Moreover, Lofquist claims that women

are generally seen as more delicate than men; in addition, they are viewed as domestic servants who are supposed to take care of their surroundings regardless to their health or freedom (4). Miller is another critic who makes a distinction between masculine and feminine traits in the following lines:

Caring for dependents, preparing family meals, wearing makeup, and being empathetic are considered feminine, whereas bread-winning, making household repairs, building muscle, and being protective are considered masculine. (150)

Based on the previous classifications that are provided by different thinkers, I can conclude that unlike men, who are usually represented as powerful providers and decision makers, women are represented as wives or mistresses. Consequently, the position of the two sexes is never the same because men are usually given an absolute power over women (Larsson 5). The famous female theorist Simon de Beauvoir also comments on the same point when she argues that “Gender differences are set in hierarchal opposition such that men are superior and women are subordinate. Women’s position is that of the “other” and women are the continual outsiders” (16). The term “other” in this case indicates a sense of women inferiority comparing to men. As a result, gender roles are used to justify patriarchy in different societies where a woman is believed “to be wife and mother” by instinct (Sittichane 25). Furthermore, she is considered as submissive creature and “heteronormative object of desire” (Woloshyn et al 155).

Now, let me explain the relationship between gender roles and the theme of my study. During the second wave of feminism, feminists challenged patriarchy and called for opposing gender roles. Henceforth, the political and cultural atmosphere of this era influenced writers at that time. Writers of feminist dystopian literature, therefore, always tend to create a female protagonist who attempts to go against her natural sex role in order to survive against the totalitarian regime. That is to say, they believe that the gender of their heroines is not really innate; rather, it is constructed out of the dictatorial regime they live in. Their aim is to

challenge the stereotypical image of traditional girls which tend to underestimate femininity and appreciate masculinity. Female protagonists of this genre are no more viewed as domestic servants, rather, they are provided with different masculine traits to attain emancipation because their femininity is not sufficient to survive in the dystopian world they live in (Lofquist 14). As a result, traditional gender roles are significantly changed in feminist dystopian literature.

2.3.2. Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity

Gender theories are group of concepts which appeared between the 1970's and 1980's to study the gender binary, masculine and feminine, in different fields such as: literature, sociology, history and philosophy. One of the most important leaders of gender theories is Judith Butler; a theorist who goes against essentialism and heteronormativity and challenge the traditional binary of gender by advocating different political movements such as LGBTQ¹rights. Butler is well-known for her theory of performativity which is first introduced in 1988 in her work *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*. However, her theory is more elaborated in her influential book *Gender Trouble* (1990).

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir states that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (301). According to de Beauvoir, the feminine gender is not innate; however, femininity is constructed by societal norms and culture. Thus, de Beauvoir claims that sex is biological whereas gender is socially and culturally constructed. Indeed, de Beauvoir laid the foundation for perceiving gender as a social and cultural construct leading to the birth of Judith Butler's theory of gender performance.

Butler expands de Beauvoir's ideas and dives so deep into gender studies that she pushes the boundaries of how gender is perceived. Her most influential works *Gender Trouble*

¹ An acronym which stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer; a group of people who do not fit heterosexual norms.

(1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and *Undoing Gender* (2004) have become a source of inspiration for people who are interested in the study of sex and gender in relation to psychology, history and literature. According to Salih, Judith Butler works have a great impact on people's views towards sex and gender because of her unique ideas (2). In her works, Butler goes against the stereotypical definition of gender as a fixed identity and claims that gender is a performance that is socially constructed instead.

One of the most important ideas that Butler brings into light is claiming that gender is not necessarily limited by sex. That is to say, there is no relationship between sex and gender. Gender is not something fixed; a male does not have to be masculine and female does not have to be feminine. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler states that the doer "might be said to preexist the deed" (33). I believe that Butler's quote demonstrates that gender standards, masculine or feminine, comes to existence after the individual. Yet, the individual can go against these standards because of a social or cultural impact after its birth. As a consequence, none can be born with a specific gender unless this gender is performed. For that reason, gender cannot be determined at birth; thus, it is not fixed nor innate. However, it is shaped over time through continuous repetition of actions and behaviors which are known as performativity that can be influenced by societal and cultural norms. As a result; masculine and feminine can be interchangeable due to these societal constraints (*Undoing gender* 10).

Salih comments on Butler's theory by arguing that it demonstrates that our sexed and gendered identities "are constructed for us within existing power structures" (2). The existing power structures in this quote, I can say, refer to both culture and society. In addition, she states that Butler defines gender as "a doing" rather than "a being" emphasizing her theory of gender performativity (3). Butler's theory of gender performance, therefore, states that gender is a process; a set of actions and behaviors that are done or performed by the individual: "Gender proves to be performative ... In this sense, gender is always a doing" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*

33). While essentialism believes in the natural binary opposition of masculine and feminine, Butler goes against the essentialist claim and advocates gender as socially and culturally constructed. In other words, people have to act or perform according to certain societal and cultural norms. Therefore, gender cannot be limited by a universal concept; rather, it is constructed over time through performance.

Feminist dystopias usually depict a world where gender roles are strictly imposed; thus, people's identity is usually limited and constructed by the government. Consequently, the non-conforming identities have to be eradicated from society. This idea is reflected in Butler's quote from *Gender Trouble* which states that the government usually "punish[es] those who fail to do their gender right" (178). Feminist dystopian works, thus, can be analyzed through the lens of Judith Butler's theory on gender performance.

Since the theme of constructing and deconstructing gender roles is explored in feminist dystopian literature, the use of Judith Butler theory of gender performance is of paramount importance in this research to explore the different gender roles of Offred and Katniss, the female protagonists of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, respectively. This theory helps me to analyze the ways both Offred and Katniss use gender in order to survive against the totalitarian regime of their societies and seek emancipation.

2.4. Totalitarian Aspects in Feminist Dystopian Fiction

While analyzing feminist dystopian literature, one cannot neglect the themes of governmental manipulation which plays a key role in shaping the dystopian novel. This strict control that the state enforces upon its citizens is referred to as totalitarianism. This latter is the kind of rule through which dictatorship and oppression are imposed in order to take control over every aspect of human life and to eliminate any kind of individualism in a specific society. Usually, totalitarian states use a specific ideology or a doctrine in order to keep its citizens

manipulated. This ideology must be accepted and followed blindly by every citizen in order to achieve political and social stability. Stevenson compares a totalitarian state with evil in the following quote:

The evil in a dystopia is usually a faceless, all-encompassing state, bureaucracy, or belief system that annihilates or restricts some set of values the readers believe are indispensable to both their own and the characters' ability to function as fully dignified human beings. (131)

The concept of totalitarianism is dated back to the First World War post era. In 1921, the Soviet Union witnessed the domination of communism, a social equality that can be only achieved through the collective ownership of properties, under the dictator president Joseph Stalin whose government is considered as one of the first totalitarian regimes in history. Stalin's government was followed by Fascist Italy in addition to Nazi Germany, under the rule of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, respectively. Both leaders viewed "nationalism as more important than individual rights and usually forced on the superiority of one group over another" (Cernak 15-16).

In order to keep citizens of dystopian societies physically and mentally controlled, the government adopts different strategies including: imposing a strict discipline, indoctrination, imposing social functions, collectivism, reproduction, and surveillance. These themes are usually discussed and shared by different authors of feminist dystopian literature in their works. Therefore, I am going to explain how these techniques usually operate in dystopian fiction. Still, we cannot neglect that there are other strategies used by the government to keep its citizens manipulated such as dehumanization and manipulating technology which are going to be discussed in the next chapters of this study.

2.4.1. Imposing a Strict Discipline

As mentioned previously, a strict discipline is imposed on the citizens of dystopias in order to manipulate them in different ways. One of the famous ways that the state uses is a well-formed and organized constant discipline, or routine, that every citizen must respect and conform to. In other words, life of dystopian citizens is programmed and regulated by a specific schedule which tells them what to do every minute, every hour and every day turning them into blind machines; consequently, clocks become dominant parts in dystopian narratives (Macey 30). As a result, people of dystopian societies have no option about what they can or cannot do because they are imprisoned in the state's rigid discipline. This idea is well explained in Zamyatin's *We* in which he describes the life in OneState:

Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour and the very same minute, we get up, millions of us, as though we were one. At the same hour, millions of us as one, we start work. Later, millions as one, we stop. And then, like one body with a million hands, at one and the same second according to the Table, we lift the spoon to our lips. And at one and the same second, we leave for a stroll and go to the auditorium, to the hall for the Taylor exercises, and then to bed. (13)

In his novel, Zamyatin explains how citizens of OneState follow a rigid system of living according to the Table of Hours. This latter shows people how to spend every minute of their life, which turns to be a daily routine, shaping one body that conforms the state's system and order (12). According to Cooke, Even having sex or rest are managed by the state according to a strict discipline (*Human Nature in Utopia* 41). As it is constantly repeated, the routine sticks in citizens body indirectly and forever (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 151). Using this strategy, the government does not only transform humans into machines; however, it takes also control over their minds converting them into submissive and blind machines (Berman 138).

Adopting a specific routine, in effect, proved to be effective in controlling dystopian citizens. While keeping their bodies busy, they become exhausted, and thus, their minds become inert organs which have no time to think about the state's totalitarian plans. For this reason, the state's regime prohibits any different action which does not conform to the general routine making it easy for the government to manipulate every citizen as one body. As a result, they eventually lose control over their personal life.

The idea of imposing a rigid daily routine in dystopian novels resembles the life of prisoners in Russia during the Soviet rule which determines the time and the place the prisoners must get up, go to work, receive food and go to bed (Applebaum 191). In her work *GULAG: A History*, Anne Applebaum attempts to explain the difference between the life of prisoners and the life of dystopian citizens. She claims that the former used to walk under a severe surveillance by the army guards. As a result, they follow the strict laws in order to be safe. The latter, however, are submissive willingly and they do not need to be forced to subjugation due to the indoctrination imposed by the state (192).

2.4.2. Indoctrination through Social Functions

Along with using routine to subjugate the dystopian citizens, the government imposes on them a specific social function that everyone must perform. In other words, the state decides what kind of work citizens have to do as long as it serves and satisfies its needs. In addition, it keeps them away of obtaining any political power which may go against the regime principles.

Althusser elaborates the significance of indoctrination in making dystopian citizens accept their social tasks within their societies without even questioning or challenging the system. Since their childhood, citizens are educated and trained to be totally loyal to the regime and to perform what the state decides blindly. Therefore, they are converted into robots. This ultimate submission is achieved through the manipulation of the mind which accepts the dominant ideology and performs its role "conscientiously" (128).

Martin Kessler is another thinker who discusses the importance of ideology in manipulating the human mind to accept its social function. People of dystopian societies believe that it is their duty to hold specific social responsibilities, neglecting their personal ambitions and dreams, in order to sacrifice themselves for the state's welfare. He claims that the human nature in dystopias cannot show any feelings or express opinions which do not fit the dominant ideology; thus, their personal identity is destroyed (568). Consequently, people do not mind being exploited by the government for its own benefits due to the ideological indoctrination of the dictatorial regime.

The theme of indoctrination is best reflected in Ayn Rand's famous dystopia *Anthem*. Children in the world of *Anthem* are brainwashed especially at the age of sixteen. At schools, teachers instill in their minds the fact that they have no control over their bodies; as a result, the government decides automatically their future occupations which fit its needs:

Dare not choose in your minds the work you would like to do when you leave the Home of Students. You shall do that which the Council of Vocations shall prescribe for you. For the Council of Vocations knows in its great wisdom where you are needed by your brother men, better than you can know in your unworthy little minds. And if you are not needed by your brother men, there is no reason for you to burden the earth with your bodies. (18)

I believe that the expression "unworthy little minds" in the above quote indicates undermining the capacity of human's mind and attempts to limit its thinking. In addition, the term "brother men" represents collectivist ideology in the novel. Consequently, indoctrination ensures that bodies are used to the maximum for the economic advantages of the state. It turns people into "slaves" who accept whatever the social function the state decides for them regardless to their own ambitions or dreams, if they have any (Althusser 157).

2.4.3. Uniformity over Individuality

Because of indoctrination, states in dystopian societies reach an ultimate power and an absolute control. That is to say, it is up to the government to decide every small action in citizens' life. Commenting on Orwell's dystopian works, Howe claims that dystopian authors depict a world where the self does not have any kind of value (539). Therefore, the individual choices do not have any importance and they are not taken into consideration. In her work *Exploring World Government: Totalitarianism*, Linda Cernak depicts how totalitarianism operates in a specific society where the government determines citizens' political beliefs, their jobs, the places where they live in addition to the way they must think. Moreover, she demonstrates the role of the secret police who surveils citizens' actions as well as the destruction of human rights in totalitarian regimes (13).

Individuality in dystopian world, as a consequence, is considered as a curse rather than a blessing (Gimpelevich 20). Moreover, personal decisions and thoughts are eliminated and people's actions are highly restricted by the regime. According to the state, individuality opens the human mind to think differently making it hard for the government to impose its control over everyone. However, when everybody is equal and embraces the same ideology, they can be easily manipulated. Hence, the aim of the state is to create a homogeneous society where revolution is less likely to happen. Michael Amey discusses the elimination of personal freedom and thoughts which decreases one's "originality" and increases people's "uniformity". Such kind of manipulation will create a uniform society where people think alike and act alike paving the way to the state to practise its hegemony easily and successfully (29).

Governments of dystopias look at this split of the self from the whole body as sickness and insanity that must be punished (Zamyatin 124). In the world of Orwell's *1984*, reality cannot be seen "except by looking through the eyes of the Party"; it can be found only "in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal" (205). The Party in this case refers to the

dystopian government of *1984*. As a result, when a person is brave enough to deviate from the collective mentality of the state, he will be considered insane and sent to punishment. Moreover, even characters of dystopian narratives feel guilty when they give importance to their personal feelings. They think that they betray the state and go against its discipline which make them less responsible towards their social duties.

The notion of considering a different mind “insane” goes back to the history of the Soviet Union. At that time, any person who goes against the conventional rules or objects the tyranny of the Soviet Union is declared “insane” and sent to psycho-prisons in order to be eliminated from society (Gerhard 43). Surprisingly, the Russian writer Zamyatin was able to predict the tyrannical and the oppressive state that the regime will turn into before the creation of psycho-prisons in the Soviet Union.

2.4.4. Children Reproduction

Family instability is one of the most important themes in feminist dystopian literature. Breaking family ties or friendships helps the government to control its citizens who are supposed to show love and affection only towards the state. For this reason, sexual relationships and marriage are used just for procreation instead of pleasure. In *1984*, Orwell discusses the restriction of sexual relationships when he suggests that the only objective of marriage is to bring new children for the government which attempts to destroy the intimate relationship between men and women and to eliminate any feelings of pleasure from sexual relationships (57).

In dystopian societies, the government plays the role of parents. Children are separated from their family in an early age; then, they are educated to conform to the dominant ideology of the state in order to produce a big number of obedient and submissive bodies. Hence, they are grown up to a property for the government and its product. According to Althusser, Children are supposed to learn how to subdue to the societal norms of the state in order to grow

up as good citizens (128). The government believes that training children to be loyal for the regime in early ages makes it easy to affect them physically and mentally as long as they do not have any previous knowledge or world perspectives. As a result, they are indoctrinated to accept the conventional rules of the regime and its discipline without questioning its authority as Cooke claims: “a child constitutes at birth a ‘tabula rasa’: its personality is plastic, amenable to any mold to which it is subjected,” and converted to be a victim of the state’s manipulation (*Human Nature, Utopia and Dystopia* 382).

Through the strategy of reproduction, therefore, the government benefits from parents and their children simultaneously. While parents are busy using their “docile” bodies to satisfy the state needs, their children are taken and educated in order to create future generation of docile bodies which work for the welfare of the state (Gerhard 52).

2.4.5. Constant Surveillance

Dystopian states find out another way to produce docile bodies: constant surveillance. This latter is used, as James Tyner explains, to create an ultimate submission (137). Furthermore, the dystopian government keeps citizens under surveillance in order to make sure that they are performing their tasks, following the conventional rules; and most important, not having any intention to rebel. Therefore, the dystopian government is always present in the daily life of its people.

The theme of surveillance in dystopian societies is highlighted by Foucault in his aforementioned work *Discipline and Punish*. In this sense, he explains how the body is controlled by Panopticism. According to this latter, people’s actions are always in check; however, they do not know how, when or where they are observed: a citizen “must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment”; still, he “must be sure that he may always be so” (201). Due to the invisible nature of observation, people always watch and control their own actions leading them to adopt a mechanism of self-manipulation and self-surveillance.

Tyner refers to the body which can discipline itself as “the induced paranoia of not knowing when one is being watched” (137). Moreover, Foucault claims that the oppressive class in dystopias follows a strict surveillance of body’s gestures and behaviors in so that it can shape it to meet the state’s needs (138).

Modern totalitarian governments are able to use technology in order to strengthen and spread their hegemony and leadership. They use the means of media such as radio and film loudspeakers to broadcast their message to whole nations and to impose their ideologies. In addition, the act of surveillance became widespread in the twentieth century which can be achieved through cameras in order to spy on citizens and to prevent them from leaving the country (Cernak 19).

Along with watching physical actions, thoughts are also observed and monitored in dystopian societies in order to make sure that citizens are not having any rebellious thinking or an opposition towards the regime. Consequently, citizens are supposed to watch out their actions and even their thoughts all the time because every aspect of their lives is surveilled and regulated; thus, even thoughts are not theirs anymore (Tyner 138). This idea is well explained in Orwell’s *1984*:

It was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away. A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself— anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide (54).

In addition to Orwell, the theme of surveillance is explored in many other dystopian works such as Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* as well as Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. In their novels, authors reflect different concerns such as using technology to surveil citizens and restrict personal freedom through

censorship. Consequently, the theme of surveillance in dystopian literature plays a crucial role in investigating the mechanism of control in totalitarian states. Moreover, it reflects the writer's anxiety about creating a future that is characterized by the loss of privacy and personal freedom.

2.5. Foucault and Althusser Analysis of Totalitarian Power

Authors of dystopian novels always refer to the governments that are portrayed in their works as totalitarian. The aim of the oppressive regime in dystopias is to keep every person under a strict control. Hence, it is of paramount importance for the states to establish a discipline that guarantees an absolute governmental manipulation over citizens. Consequently, the manipulation of both body and mind is a crucial theme in dystopian narratives. Since the physical performance is highly related to the psychological state of the mankind, the process of manipulating people's body and mind occurs at the same time turning citizens into blind robots. That is to say, to achieve a total authority over mankind, both of human body and mind must be controlled (Turner 26). In this sense, the use of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser theories is essential in analyzing dystopian works.

Michel Foucault is a French philosopher whose theories on power, discipline and surveillance are highly related with dystopian literature. He depicts the ways a body can be exploited by governmental power so that it can be used for the state's benefits. In addition, he explains how controlling the body can keep citizens submissive to the regime. In his work *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (1972-1977), Foucault discusses the relationship between power and resistance. He explains the ways individuals can challenge oppressive systems and defeat them when they understand the relationship between power and knowledge. For that reason, knowledge is highly restricted in different dystopian fiction such as Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Orwell's *1984* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Discipline and Punish (1975) is another work written by Michel Foucault, in which, he examines the ways power functions both explicitly and implicitly to regulate people's behavior.

In this book, Foucault tackles the notion of discipline as a major element to hold a political power. He also examines the importance of discipline and how it is employed to create subjugated and docile bodies which become the “object and target of power” that can be regulated, shaped and trained to work for the benefits of the regime (136-138). He further explains that discipline raises “the forces” of the body for the benefits of the state’s economy and decreases the “same forces” in terms of political obedience (138).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault also introduces a new kind of punishment that is known as disciplinary power. According to which, discipline is imposed on individuals through constant surveillance and categorization in order to ensure manipulation and to create a normal, healthy and moral citizen who conforms to societal norms. In fact, the concept of disciplinary power is highly related with dystopian literature which relies on surveillance and punishment as means of manipulation. Therefore, punishment, according to Foucault, is not a means to maintain justice only. Rather, it acts as an ongoing process that is used as “a political tactic” to manipulate and regulate the behavior of individuals within restrictive societies (23).

In the same work, Foucault also examines the impact of surveillance in imposing power. He introduces the concept of “Panopticon”; a prison where prisoners are constantly watched. According to this concept, people start to internalize the norms imposed by those in power in their minds because they are constantly surveilled; and thus, they become self-disciplined subjects: “He who is subjected to a field of visibility ... he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (202-203). Consequently, Foucault’s theories about power and its function within society often lay as a background to understand the relationship between power, surveillance and resistance in dystopian literature.

Louis Althusser is French Marxist philosopher whose theories on ideology play a key role in understanding how indoctrination functions in feminist dystopian literature. In his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970), he elaborates the ways ideology operates

to create a dominant party that manipulates the government. Althusser portrays ideology as a means which maintains social and patriarchal order by using different ideological apparatuses such as education, religion, and media. Consequently, this work discusses how social functions are imposed and indoctrinated in citizens' minds through ideological apparatuses to create submissive and obedient "subjects" (128).

Despite the fact that the state attempts to manipulate the bodies, some citizens stay mentally aware and active to notice the gaps in the social and the economic system and to reveal the states' oppressive plan. Thus, the state attempts to regulate their minds as well in order to eliminate any rebellious thoughts. In his aforementioned work, Althusser examines the ways the mind is used to control the body. He claims that when the consciousness believes that what the body performs is righteous, people can be transformed into productive bodies who believe in the dominant ideology and accept their social functions (157). Consequently, indoctrination and social function are very important to achieve the supreme hegemony of the state and to keep people under physical and mental control.

2.6. Theory of Intersectionality and Social Inequalities

Feminist dystopian fiction has gradually expanded its focus beyond gender alone to include a wider range of social inequalities. While early feminist approaches mainly emphasized the oppression of women within patriarchal systems, more recent theoretical perspectives highlight that gender does not operate in isolation. Instead, it intersects with other forms of inequality such as race, class, and social status. This shift reflects the growing influence of intersectional theory which has become central to contemporary feminist thought.

The concept of intersectionality was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain how different systems of oppression are interconnected rather than separate. She argues that individuals may experience multiple forms of discrimination at the same time and these cannot be understood independently of one another (1242). Feminist dystopian thought adopts this

perspective by recognizing that gender-based oppression is often reinforced by other social hierarchies. As a result, dystopian societies are not only structured by gender inequality but also by broader systems of domination.

This theoretical perspective is particularly useful for analyzing feminist dystopian fiction as it highlights how multiple forms of inequality are enforced within fictional societies. It allows feminist dystopian fiction to offer a more complex form of social critique. It moves beyond a single-axis analysis and instead examines how power operates across multiple levels. Bell hooks emphasizes that systems of domination are interconnected and must be understood in relation to one another (26). In this sense, feminist dystopian frameworks reveal how inequalities are produced and maintained through overlapping structures of power rather than through isolated forms of control.

Another important aspect of this development is the increased attention to marginalized voices and experiences. Traditional narratives have often focused on a limited perspective but intersectional feminist thought encourages a broader and more inclusive approach. Elaine Showalter emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse women's experiences by arguing that traditional literary history has largely excluded or marginalized women's voices. In *A Literature of Their Own*, she shows how female writers were often ignored or placed outside the dominant literary canon, which was shaped mainly by male perspectives (11–15). She calls for a re-examination of literary traditions in order to recover women's contributions and to acknowledge the variety of their experiences across different social and historical contexts. This perspective supports the aims of intersectional feminist thought which seeks to include multiple voices and identities rather than relying on a single, universal representation of women. Feminist dystopian fiction reflects this by engaging with a wider range of identities and social positions, thereby enriching its critical scope.

Furthermore, intersectionality strengthens the critical function of feminist dystopia by connecting fictional representations to real-world inequalities. By imagining societies where multiple forms of oppression are intensified, these narratives expose the complexity of social injustice. They encourage readers to question not only gender roles but also the broader systems that shape identity, opportunity, and power.

The integration of intersectionality, therefore, has significantly expanded the scope of feminist dystopian thought. It transforms the genre into a more inclusive and comprehensive mode of critique, one that addresses the interconnected nature of social inequalities. By doing so, feminist dystopian fiction moves beyond a singular focus on gender and becomes a powerful framework for understanding the complexity of oppression and the possibilities for change. In combination with theories of power and social control, related to Foucault and Althusser, intersectionality provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how societies structure and maintain inequalities which will guide and support the analysis of the selected novels in this study.

2.7. Linking the Theories to Textual Analysis

The last part of this chapter bridges the theoretical discussions of feminism, gender, manipulation and intersectionality with the close reading of the selected novels. It aims at showing how these frameworks provide tools for analyzing the construction of feminist dystopian worlds, the representation of gender, and the mechanisms of social control within the texts.

Feminist theory offers a lens to examine the ways women are positioned in these narratives, including their roles, restrictions, and strategies of resistance. Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity allows us to explore how characters' behaviors, roles, and identities are regulated and performed in societies where gender norms are strictly enforced.

By observing these performances, it becomes possible to reveal the ways in which feminist dystopian societies attempt to control bodies, behaviors, and social expectations.

In addition, theories of power and ideology, such as those of Foucault and Althusser, provide additional insight into the mechanisms through which societies enforce control. On the one hand, Foucault's concepts of discipline, surveillance, and normalization illuminate how institutions, social norms, and practices regulate behavior. On the other hand, Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses demonstrate how ideology shapes subjects and maintains dominance. Applying these theories to the novels helps uncover the structural and systemic forces that sustain oppression beyond individual acts of control.

Intersectional theory further enriches this analysis by emphasizing the multiple and overlapping forms of oppression that characters may experience. This approach helps identify how gender intersects with race, class, and other social categories. It also highlights the experiences of marginalized individuals whose oppression may be compounded within dystopian contexts. Through the lens of intersectionality, the novels reveal broader social hierarchies, offering a more nuanced and multidimensional critique of injustice.

By linking these theoretical perspectives to the textual analysis, the study establishes a clear methodology for reading the selected dystopian novels. The frameworks outlined in this chapter allow for a critical examination of gender, power, and social inequalities revealing how fictional societies mirror, exaggerate, or critique real-world structures. This theoretical grounding ensures that the subsequent analysis is both rigorous and informed, providing deeper insight into the social, political, and ideological dimensions of feminist dystopian fiction.

Conclusion

This part of my study has established the theoretical foundations necessary for analyzing feminist dystopian fiction. It began by tracing the history of women's issues through the feminist theory and its waves highlighting the development of women's social, political, and cultural concerns throughout time. It also explored gender performance through Judith Butler's theory demonstrating how gender is enacted and regulated within society. This framework provides a crucial tool for understanding how dystopian fiction portrays the control of identity, behavior, and social roles.

This chapter also discussed the mechanisms of manipulation and power, drawing on Foucault and Althusser theories. It offered insight into the structural and ideological forces that sustain oppression. These theories illuminate how institutions, norms, and ideology shape both individuals and society providing a lens for analyzing the systemic dimensions of dystopian worlds. This chapter also examined the Intersectional theory, emphasizing the importance of understanding overlapping systems of inequality, including gender, race, class, and social status. Finally, it linked these theoretical frameworks to the textual analysis of the selected novels, showing how feminist, intersectional, and power-focused lenses provide the methodological tools for examining themes of gender, resistance, and social hierarchy.

Having outlined the key theoretical tools, the study now moves to Chapter Three, where these frameworks are employed to examine how the selected dystopian texts represent totalitarianism and the various mechanisms of social and ideological control.

Chapter Three: Mechanisms of Manipulation in Feminist Dystopian Worlds: Atwood's The Republic of Gilead and Collins' Panem

Introduction

The states of dystopian novels are depicted as dictatorial and oppressive governments which have an absolute power to manipulate every domain of human life both physically and mentally. Thus, a strict discipline is imposed on the dystopian people to keep them submissive to the state's supreme power. Hence, citizens become the prisoners of totalitarian regimes that highly restrict their freedom and their actions to make them accept the dominant ideology of the state and follow it blindly. Consequently, this chapter examines the mechanisms of control in the selected novels, focusing on how power is established and maintained within dystopian societies. It analyzes the structures and practices through which individuals are regulated, particularly in relation to gender and identity.

The analysis is supported by the theories of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser. Foucault's concepts of discipline and surveillance help explain how power operates through everyday practices, while Althusser's theory of ideology highlights how control is reinforced through social and institutional structures. The chapter applies these theoretical frameworks to the selected texts and concludes with a comparative section that highlights the similarities and differences in the mechanisms of control across the two dystopian worlds.

3.1. Mechanisms of Control in Atwood's *The Handmaid Tale*

After many years of its dominance by male writers, Margret Atwood is among the first female writers who “turns the traditional dystopia upside down” when she creates her famous feminist dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale* and engages “in the debate about gender and genre” (Howells 5). The main difference between the two dystopias is the fact that Atwood's novel is narrated by a female perspective: Offred, a handmaid who tells her story in a patriarchal totalitarian world and addresses different topics about oppression and gender.

As mentioned in the second chapter, Margret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* takes place in a futuristic setting in the late twentieth century. Barbara Hill Rigney likened this work to the Orwellian dystopia; however, the dystopian world created by Atwood is dominated by “the horrors of theocracy” which ideologies are based on the Bible (114).

In this novel, the old US is overthrown and replaced by a patriarchal social system where females are highly oppressed and stripped of their political and social rights such as voting, holding a property, reading and writing, in addition to making any relationships including love or friendship. Moreover, the state attempts to save fertility after a dramatic ecological issue which led to a serious birth problem among women. Consequently, they become appreciated only for their reproductive abilities to bring new children for the elite families under the new political system (Moylan 15). These children are supposed to grow up and turn to be domicile slaves whose role is to work for the government interest: “the novel depicts a futuristic space in which women's social role have been thoroughly dominated and severely limited by a patriarchal order” (Cavalcanti 20).

In the light of this brief introduction, I am going to analyze the different strategies imposed by the totalitarian government, The Republic of Gilead, and the different kinds of oppression placed on its female citizens to manipulate them in the world of Atwood's *The*

Handmaid's Tale mainly through its female protagonist Offred who narrates her story as a victim of the totalitarian regime and its tyranny.

3.1.1. Manipulation of Reproduction through Social Function

After the emergence of feminist dystopia, debates about female's identity and social functions were highly increased (Kinkley 87). The theme of social functions, thus, is mainly discussed in Atwood's masterpiece *The Handmaid's Tale* through the eyes of Offred, the female protagonist of the story.

In the Republic of Gilead, all citizens, either males or females, are broken down into different classes to be easily controlled by the state and to determine their social function. This latter is imposed by the state through the power of legislation. On the one hand, men are classified into: Commanders, Guardians of faith, Eyes of God, Sons, Economen and Angels. On the other hand, women are divided into: Handmaids, Wives, Aunts, Marthas, Jezebels and Unwomen. While men usually occupy the best and most appropriate positions in the state, women do not have the chance to get a respectful job except for Wives and Aunts who are still manipulated by male characters. As a result, this categorization indicates gender inequality between men and women in Gilead.

Because of the environmental crisis which hits the US, chemical contamination and nuclear radiation threaten human survival and make female fertility decreases to the lowest; therefore, a Handmaid is the most important class in the Republic of Gilead; however, it is also the most oppressed and subjugated one. According to Foucault, the state aims at "obtaining productive service from individuals in their concrete lives" (*Power/Knowledge* 125). So, Handmaids are used for a mere reproductive purpose after being selected and trained in specific centers to accomplish their role properly. According to the state laws, if a woman can give birth to babies, she is safe. If she is infertile, she is declared as "unwoman" and sent to the colonies to do hard labor. Therefore, Handmaids are damaged both physically and mentally. In addition,

they are abused sexually. They become, in effect, “fertility machines” whose sole role is to bring babies for the ruling class (Freibert 282).

In her work *Law, Medicine and the Sex Slave in Margret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*, Linda Myrsiades explores female social functions in the dystopian world of Gilead. She highlights the dehumanization of this class by stating that Handmaids are “reproductive slaves” who are “not entitled to full human status”. She considers them as a tool that is used to carry on the state’s “genes” (228). Offred, the protagonist of the story, is highly manipulated and oppressed by the regime. According to the historian character in the story Professor Pieixoto:

The regime created an instant pool of such women by the simple tactic of declaring all second marriages and nonmarital liaisons adulterous, arresting the female partners, and, on the grounds that they were morally unfit, confiscating the children they already had, who were adopted by childless couples of the upper echelons who were eager for progeny by any means. Men highly placed in the regime were thus able to pick and choose among women who had demonstrated their reproductive fitness by having produced one or more healthy children (Atwood 274-275).

Angela King also investigates the act of Handmaids’ subjugation in her work *The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body*; in which, she claims that women are just recognized by their “reproductive physiology” which turns them into “feeble and passive, literally a receptacle for the desires of the male and incubator for his offspring” (31). Handmaids, in effect, are considered as the government’s property. They are seen as “two-legged womb” and “sacred vessels” whose social role is to carry and to bear children for the elite family of Gilead (Atwood 128). Offred states in the novel that she must go to the doctor once a month for different medical procedures (60). After the Handmaid gives birth to the baby, she is supposed to leave the family and serve a new commander to produce

another baby which is going to be used according to the state's intentions. In the novel, the government looted Janine's, another Handmaid character in the novel, new born baby and send her to another Commander to do the same task.

In Atwood feminist dystopia, a sexual relationship that is accomplished by Handmaids and Commanders to produce an offspring is called ceremony. It is considered as a ritual duty imposed by the state to force Handmaids to have a sexual intercourse with Commanders to bring babies. The wife of the Commander must also attend the Ceremony with her husband. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Commander Fred uses his Handmaid Offred as a means of procreation. Thus, the produced baby can be used for Fred and his wife Serena Joy's interests. Therefore, sexual intercourse in the novel is considered as a tool of oppression instead of a pleasure and Handmaids become nothing but a living, walking womb whose only mission is procreating new babies to serve the state's benefits.

According to Byrne, clothes are very important to identify one's identity (59). Hence, Gilead uses clothes to suppress identity in *The Handmaid's Tale*. citizens in the Republic of Gilead are coded by color-clothes so that every class can be recognized and differentiated from the other. On the one hand, men are supposed to wear black, white or grey to show their power in society. According to Twohig, the black and the white are not really classified as colors because they are "colorless". Moreover, most educated and high-class people are not into colors; however, they prefer to wear black or white (12). In this sense the "colorless" clothes of males in the Republic of Gilead justifies their supremacy and power as well as the upper position they hold in the state. On the other hand, Handmaids, in particular, are forced to wear clothes in red with a white hat. Miner, another philosopher who is interested in studying the image of colors in the story, believes that the red color is a symbol of blood, pain and death (152). This image indicates that female characters are victims of subjugation and terror in the dystopian world of Gilead. Furthermore, I believe that the red color can also symbolize desire

which justifies the use of Handmaids as reproductive machines to meet the commanders' sexual desire in the novel. Therefore, Margaret Atwood uses the image of colors in her feminist dystopia to show the importance of social functions in the novel and to highlight, again, the inequality between genders in the patriarchal society of Gilead.

The theme of manipulation through social function, thus, serves as warning against totalitarianism in dystopian novels. In addition, manipulation of social function in the Republic of Gilead does not restrict females' roles only; however, it also succeeds to manipulate Handmaid's body as an instrument for the state's benefits.

3.1.2. Controlling Handmaids' Body

The Handbook for National Rights Institutions defines reproductive rights as the following:

The recognition of the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents. (UNFPA 13)

In the light of the above definition, reproductive rights indicate people's free will to have a sexual relationship with the person they want, in the place and at the time of their own choice, with their own satisfaction. However, this right is significantly violated in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in which the protagonist Offred, along with many other Handmaids, are manipulated and deprived of their rights. Consequently, their autonomy over their bodies is lost in the novel as mentioned by Angela King in her aforementioned work: a female is "a slave to her reproductive organs/ hormones" (31).

In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault claims that a subject is a tool for political power: “They invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, ...The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (25-26). As a result, a female body is reshaped to be “practiced and subjected” as a sign of its inferiority (Bartky 71). Both theories mentioned by Foucault and Bartky can be applied on Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, in which, manipulating the body of Handmaids is the leitmotiv of the story along with the theme of social roles as I am going to explain in the coming context.

The body of a Handmaid is seen as a governmental property that is used to reach procreative objectives. Consequently, Gilead is a patriarchal society which exploits female bodies for the sake of procreating. In her article, Rubenstein refers to this idea when she claims that Offred sexuality is “indentured” since her body exists only “to be used against her” (103).

As I have previously mentioned, sex in Atwood’s feminist dystopia is a political instrument which meets the government needs. Hence, a female body becomes an object that is invaded many times. Handmaids are continuously raped, let me say, in the novel because they have no choice. Any sign of refusal or dissatisfaction leads to their punishment or even death. Therefore, their bodies become alienated to them. I believe that a female body in the novel is no more a private, secret part of Handmaids’ entity; rather, it is a symbol of subjugation, oppression and tyranny against women which indicates their inferiority in a misogynistic society.

Before the formation of the Republic of Gilead, Offred used to live a normal life. She used to have a family which consists of her husband Luke and her daughter. However, she was separated from them after a failure attempt to escape from the new regime. When she remembers her past normal life, she refers to her body as something alive. However, just after visiting the doctor in the new Republic of Gilead, Offred refuses to look down at her body because it becomes “strange” for her. She keeps wondering how she could wear “bathing suits

at the beach” because different parts of her body were displayed to others. Consequently, she refuses to look at her body because she does not want to see “something that determines [her] so completely” (Atwood 63). I suggest that the expression “determines me” in this quote implies a sense that a Handmaid is only defined by her body; as a result, Offred refuses to be defined by her body only; rather, she wants to reclaim her real identity that existed before being a Handmaid.

After losing control over their bodies, Handmaids are considered now as absent human beings, females who do not exist in the world but their bodies do. According to Myrsiades, Offred is “an absent figure” who is “erased” from her society despite her existence (223). In the lines below, Offred compares her body to a shape of a pear which contains a huge, dark and empty hole inside of it (Atwood 72). She is now thinking of her body as “a national resource” which does not belong to her entity anymore (80). Consequently, the dystopian regime in Atwood’s novel proves to succeed in stealing the most precious personal part of a female: Her body. Offred states:

I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will. I could use it to run, push buttons, of one sort or another, make things happen. There were limits but my body was nevertheless lithe, single, solid, one with me. Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I’m a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glows red with its translucent wrapping (72).

In fact, the most important part of the body for the state is the womb that a female holds. When Moira, Offred’s best friend, does not accept her social function as a Handmaid in the new state, she makes several attempts to escape from the Aunts. However, she is eventually caught and punished for making a rebellious act against the regime. When she was tortured,

both her hands and feet were burnt using cables because they are not important for the purpose of the government according to Aunt Lydia (88).

Even doctors in Gilead are eager to exploit females' bodies to serve their desires. When Handmaids go to the hospital for their monthly check up, the doctor seeks to assist those who have not produced any babies yet by suggesting to make a sexual intercourse with them in order to increase their chances to be pregnant and survive from punishment. Consequently, the laws in Gilead do not restrict Handmaid's body through an obligatory sexual intercourse only; however, it is also forbidden for them to make any interaction with other male characters except for Commanders. Hence, any sign of temptation by the Handmaids can lead eventually to their death. Even when they sleep at night in summer they must be covered with long-sleeved clothes "to keep [them] from the temptations of [their] own flesh, to keep [them] from hugging [themselves], bare-armed" (172).

Along with controlling social functions, manipulating bodies is a crucial theme in the dystopian world of Atwood. After making an in-depth analysis of the novel, I think that the totalitarian regime controls the body to make it exhausted while trying to serve its benefits. Because of this reason, citizens become docile and busy bodies whose minds are too tired to think about the oppressive strategies of the regime to control them. Consequently, they become too passive to think about any act of revolution or rebellion against it.

3.1.3. Manipulation through indoctrination

Along with physical manipulation, the hegemonic power of totalitarianism attempts to control citizens' minds as well. Its aim is to decrease their ability to produce any specific or unique ideas that can threaten the regime stability. The elimination of such intellectual human capacity restricts people's ability to think or to contribute with new thoughts to their societies. Consequently, one of the most useful techniques to manipulate citizens minds in dystopian novels is indoctrination.

According to Althusser, the ideology provides subjects with “ideas” so that their “consciousness inspires” in them; hence, it forces them to “act” basing on these thoughts to serve the needs of the government (157). Based on Louis Althusser theories on the way ideology works in society, females in Atwood’s feminist dystopia are manipulated by the ideology created by the regime to keep them submissive. Totalitarian states, including the Republic of Gilead, use a variety of strategies to make their people believe that they are living in a utopia. That is to say, people of dystopian societies are obliged to believe the unreality they live in because it is imposed by their rulers. Hence, citizens adopt a new identity and their mind surrenders to the new ideology unconsciously. Therefore, the following lines of this work are going to explain how ideology is reinforced over females in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The same theory of Louis Althusser is used later also to explain how indoctrination works in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*.

Indoctrination in the Republic of Gilead is accomplished through Rachel and Leah Re-educational Centre, usually referred to as The Red Centre. Women who prove their fertility are sent to this place to be trained physically, psychologically and politically to be future Handmaids. However, they are simultaneously indoctrinated and brainwashed by the Aunts whose task is to reinforce certain images and forms of behaviors on the Handmaids based on the government needs: “Gilead, said Aunt Lydia, knows no bounds. Gilead is within you” (Atwood 27). Moreover, they try to instill the new laws in their minds to create blind, silent and obedient bodies: “I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject. I feel, for the first time, their true power”, states Offred (263).

Another strategy of mind manipulation is comparing the old world of the US to the new world of Gilead. Aunts at the Red Centre keep emphasizing the negative aspects of women in the old US who are referred to as “defeated women” (47). Moreover, they invite them to forget about their previous identity and adopt a new one which fits Gilead laws and rituals. When one

of the Aunts attempts to remind Handmaids about the difference of the two worlds, she states: “There is more than one kind of freedom, said aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from” (28).

In the above quote, I believe, the first kind of freedom refers to the period before the downfall of the US, compared to the days of anarchy, where women had the “freedom to” do whatever they wanted indicating one’s free will to make decisions. The latter is “freedom from”; this expression demonstrates a freedom from sexual abuse in the new Republic of Gilead. The totalitarian regime thinks that forcing Handmaids to make an obligatory sexual intercourse with Commanders, staying at their home, and covering themselves is a protective technique to save them from strangers’ lust. Consequently, the Aunts teach them to be grateful to have this kind of protection instead of complaining about it (28). Furthermore, Aunt Lydia refers to the old society of the US as “a society dying ... of too much voice” (29). In the latter expression, Aunt Lydia refers to the excessive freedom of speech in the former America. In other words, I think that she implies that expressing different opinions can challenge the regime and create a chaotic society. As a result, women have no freedom to share their ideas in the new Republic of Gilead.

In the Red Centre, Aunts keep introducing the new system of Gilead with its strict laws to Handmaids. Their intention, in effect, is to produce future obedient females who must go against the feminist thoughts to achieve the political objectives of the state. According to Aunt Lydia, for example, love does not matter when making sexual intercourse with Commanders as long as a Handmaid is able to bring new babies to her government: “Love is not the point”, she claims (Atwood 203). Therefore, love as well as friendship are both forbidden in the new Republic of Gilead because the citizen of a dystopian society must not show or declare loyalty to anyone except for its government.

Throughout the novel, the Aunts keep repeating slogans and attempt to instill them in Handmaid's mind. As the story progresses, it becomes obvious that Offred cannot get rid of their slogans as she keeps remembering them every time. She seems to be affected by their thoughts and starts to adopt them because she has no choice nor control over her mind. To give an example, she cannot refer to the ceremony as an action of rape because she is convinced that it is her duty towards the state she lives in to produce babies: "nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose" (Atwood 90). What I have noticed while reading the novel is that the word "some" in the previous quote indicates that the "some choice" left for Handmaids, or any female in Gilead, leads eventually to their punishment. Consequently, no choice is left for them to control their acts or their minds.

One of the ceremonies taught by Aunts at the Rachel and Leah Centre is testifying. This latter refers to the act of recounting one of the traumas lived by the Handmaids to each other. When Janine narrates her story of raping at the age of fourteen and having abortion, Aunt Helena asks the Handmaids:

But whose fault was it? Aunt Helena says, holding up one plump finger.

Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison.

Who led them on? Aunt Helena beams, pleased with us.

She did. She did. She did.

Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen?

Teach her a *lesson*. Teach her a *lesson*. Teach her a *lesson*. (70)

I suggest that the above quote indicates that a woman, in a misogynistic society, is always the one to blame even if she is a victim. Janine is a victim of raping as well as abortion, yet, it is still believed that it is her fault because she is the one who paved the way for raping. As a result, God must give her a lesson through punishment. The repetition of words on a chain

by Handmaids is taught by the Aunts as a strategy to instill thoughts in their minds. Despite that Offred believes in Janine's innocence, she keeps repeating that it's "*Her* fault" with other Handmaids while pointing their fingers at her. As a result, the Aunts succeed in indoctrinating Handmaids with the fact that men are always going to be praised while women are always mistaken even if they are right.

The Republic of Gilead, in effect, proves to be successful in brainwashing the Handmaids' minds and convincing them that all what they are is an "empty" body that is needed to be filled with a baby as Offred states: "What we prayed for was emptiness, so we would be worthy to be filled: with grace, with love, with self-denial, semen and babies ... Oh God, obliterate me. Make me fruitful. Mortify my flesh, that I may be multiplied. Let me be fulfilled" (Atwood 180). Therefore, Offred represents one of thousand minds who surrender to indoctrination as Cixous and Clement claim: "the only word she knows is to serve, and indeed, she serves" (33). Hence, Handmaids' minds are reconstructed again forgetting all about their old hopes and dreams.

3.1.4. Strict Surveillance

Another element which characterizes totalitarian societies in dystopian literature is surveillance as a mechanism of manipulation. Thus, a strict surveillance is imposed on dystopian citizens to prevent them from making any act of revolution or rebellion. In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that a totalitarian power can be established through imposing a social behavior as regimentation which he refers to as disciplinary power (170). Panopticism, introduced by Michel Foucault and already explained in the first chapter, is proved to be dominant in the story. Both the state's surveillance and self-surveillance are prevalent in the novel. Therefore, the freedom of Offred, like every female in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is highly restricted. The door of her room cannot be closed and leaving the house is only permitted for shopping trips.

According to Bartky, in order to achieve an ultimate manipulation, citizens “cannot be maintained without a minute and relentless surveillance” (63). In the Republic of Gilead, censorship is imposed mainly through the Eyes, the secret police, whose role is to watch every citizens’ move in Gilead. Due to their rigid surveillance, Offred learns to watch and control herself even when nobody is there to watch her moves. When Nick, the Commander’s driver is first introduced in the novel, Offred is confused about who he really is: “Perhaps he was merely being friendly. Perhaps he saw the look on my face and mistook it for something else. Really what I wanted was the cigarette. Perhaps it was a test, to see what I would do. Perhaps he is an Eye” (Atwood 22). Bein constantly suspicious leads to the ultimate type of censorship: self-surveillance as Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*; it is used “to induce in the [subject] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So, to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action” (201).

Handmaids in the novel are not only watched by the secret police; rather, they are surveilled also by “the eyes of God”. One of the religious quotes that the Commander reads at the end of the ceremony is: “for the eyes of the Lord run to and from throughout the whole earth, to know himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him” (Atwood 88). The Commander uses this verse from the Bible to remind the Handmaid that she is always under the surveillance of “God” and she must purify her heart towards him by serving the state’s need.

Another element of surveillance in the novel is Handmaids per se. Handmaids are not allowed to go shopping alone; rather, every Handmaid must go with another one to watch over each other: “We aren’t allowed to go there except in twos. This is supposed to be for our protection though the notion is absurd: we are well protected already.” (22-23). Hence, every Handmaid is the spy of the other, Offred continues: “She is my spy as I am hers” (23).

Therefore, if anything happens to one of the pairs, the other one is the one to be blamed and she must be punished (23).

When walking together, Handmaids are constantly surveilled: they are not allowed to speak with each other unless there's something really worthy to talk about. Furthermore, it is forbidden to exchange any ideas, information or talk about their personal relationships with commanders. While walking with her co-handmaid Offred states: "Besides me, Ofglen is also silent" (32). In fact, even friendship is not permitted in Gilead because they were "suspicious"; therefore, Handmaids keep avoiding each other "during the mealtime line-ups in the cafeteria and in the halls between classes" (79).

The last element of surveillance in the novel is "the wings". They are important part of the Handmaids clothes which surrounds their faces and hinders them from seeing the world clearly as Offred explains: "If I turn my head so that the white wings framing my face direct my vision towards it, I can see it as I go down the stairs, ... and myself in it like a distorted shadow" (12).

The theme of surveillance in *The Handmaid's Tale* indicates, again, male's supremacy over females in the novel. According to Foucault, females are constantly watched without even being watched since "the female gaze is trained to abandon its claim to the sovereign status of seer [the masculine]" (Bartky 67). Surveillance in the novel is mainly male-directed. It is imposed not only by the Eyes but also by Commanders, Guardians in addition to every male citizen in Gilead: "the imperial [or the masculine] gaze defines the identity of the [female] subject, objectifies it within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalternity and powerlessness" (Ashcroft et al. 2007).

3.1.5. Compliance through Terror

One of the most significant themes raised by Atwood in her novel is oppression and religious intolerance. The dictatorial regime in dystopias usually resort to terror and tyranny to

maintain discipline and to punish those who go against the rules. Foucault is interested in the way masters impose their power and threaten the prisoners' biological existence. In his work *Discipline and Punish*, he discusses how masters impose their right to punish, and even to kill, their subjects to maintain discipline. Consequently, the prisoners of dystopian societies must undergo torture as a means of totalitarian control (54). Similarly, the Republic of Gilead maintains its power due to the state of fear it creates among citizens. Throughout the novel, citizens of Gilead suffer from a terrible physical abuse; they are harshly beaten and electrocuted using cattle prods.

One of the significant symbols of terror used in the novel is Men's Salvaging Ceremony. In this latter, corpses of dead people are hanged and displayed for citizens on the Wall, not only to restrict their thoughts of rebellion against the regime, but also to show their sovereign power as well. Offred compares the bodies hung on the Wall with "chickens strung up by the necks in a meatshop window; like birds with their wings clipped, like flightless birds, wrecked angels" (Atwood 254). She also describes the terrible view of the corpses in the following lines:

Beside the main gateway there are six more bodies hanging, by the necks, their hands tied in front of them, their heads in white bags tipped sideways onto their shoulders. There must have been a Men's Salvaging this morning. I didn't hear the bells. Perhaps I've become used to them (35).

I suggest that the last line of the above quote implies that citizens become familiar with death and torture. Therefore, they accept the tyranny of the dictatorial regime even though it's a wrong practice. Offred continues her words: "These men, we've been told, are like war criminals. It's no excuse that what they did was legal at the time: their crimes are retroactive. They have committed atrocities, and must be made into examples, for the rest" (36-73). Offred words indicate, once again, the powerful influence of indoctrination on citizens' minds.

According to Offred, the corpses stay hung on the Wall for days before they are taken off. Consequently, citizens cannot just turn a blind eye; however, they must see the terrible view of the hung bodies (35-36). The ceremony of punishment is not restricted only to men; however, women are also considered in the so-called Women's Salvaging Ceremony. In this latter, a woman is ordered to execute another woman to death and hung the corpse to be displayed in public in addition to force other women to see them (252).

The totalitarian regime of Gilead also imposes its power of fear through the Eyes and the Guardians of Faith. The Guardians, however, are not real soldiers; rather, they exist for daily routine procedures and policing. Their function is significant in Gilead to watch over citizens to make sure they do not stand against the laws. The effect of this traumatic experience on Offred is demonstrated when she imagines Luke's, her ex-husband, destiny. After their failure attempt to escape, she is separated from him and has no more information about his fate. Thus, she believes that he is killed by the state. She states that:

I also believe that Luke is sitting up... the hair is ragged, the back of his neck is nicked, that's hardly the worst, he looks ten years older, twenty, he's bent like an old man, his eyes are pouched, small purple veins have burst in his cheeks, there's a scar, no, a wound, it isn't yet healed...He finds it painful to move his hands, painful to move. He doesn't know what he's accused of. A problem. There must be something, some accusation. (Atwood 98)

Offred detailed imagination shows the brutality of the dictatorial regime over its subjects. According to Masur, this is the consequence of watching public execution which make people familiar "with scenes of agony, brutality, and suffering" (97).

3.1.6. Suppressing Identity and Individuality

The Republic of Gilead is a place where "autonomous self is seriously undermined" (Tolan 164). That is to say, citizens of Gilead, women in particular, have lost their autonomy

over their selves. They are totally manipulated and surveilled. According to Tolan: “if there is no way to know your society, except through your society, the individual is left defenseless against any concerted effort to manipulate their reality” (166). Consequently, citizens of Gilead are left no choice to control or to defend themselves; hence, their identity as well as individuality were deprived from them turning them into one similar body whose own role is to serve the government.

In his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Discourse on Language*, Foucault argues that the subject faiths, beliefs and identities totally embraced without questioning their truth (181). That is to say, the dystopian prisoners are not free to decide who they are; rather, they are forced to accept what the state wants them to be. Even religion in Gilead is not tolerated. Since the dominant religion is Orthodoxy, people who follow other religions must be executed as offred witnessed: “only two hanging on [the Wall] today: one Catholic, not a priest though, placarded with an upside-down cross, and some other sect I don’t recognize.” (Atwood 184).

After the US fell down and replaced by the new Republic of Gilead, the constitution is suspended and females lost both their individuality and their identity. Women are deprived of their right to birth control as well as abortion. In addition, they are excluded from their occupations and obliged to give up on their back accounts and personal properties. As a result, they become totally dependent on men. The best example is Serena Joy, Fred’s wife, who was an excellent politician in the past. Now, her rights are abandoned by the state laws and she has to depend on her husband. As a female, Serena holds no power; however, her function is restricted to females’ traditional gender roles. Her role is to take care of her house and surveilles women who work there. She is obliged to respect the ceremony rituals and help her husband to have a sexual intercourse with another woman to serve the state: “She doesn’t make speeches anymore. She has become speechless.... How furious she must be, now that she’s been taken at

her word”, claims Offred (46). The same thing goes with Aunts who, at first, seem to hold a power in their society. Yet, they are also slaves of the state just like any female; they are seen as tools that are used by the government to train Handmaids (19).

According to Michel Foucault, a totalitarian regime usually seeks to connect between punishment and education (*Discipline and Punish* 87). This idea is reflected in the novel in which the rulers of Gilead use torture to make females forget about their life in the Pre-Gileadean society. Their aim, in effect, is to destroy any memory which may help them to recall their past identities.

While reading the first pages of the novel, I have noticed that female’s loss of identity is clear from the very beginning where Offred is introduced as “something without shape or name” (Atwood 8). In addition, Offred is referred to as “something”, not even a human being. She is nobody, with no power, no value, no rights, even her name does no longer exist. However, it is replaced by Offred just like the other Handmaids in the novel such as Ofwarren and Ofglen. On the one hand, Offred’s new name which includes the preposition “of” indicates that she is the property of her Commander Fred, the Handmaid of Fred. She does not belong to herself anymore; instead, she belongs to her master. On the other hand, it shows the sovereign power of the one who forms the name “Fred” (Loigu 40). Later in the novel, Offred feels sorry for losing even her name. She compares it with a “buried treasure” that she is going back to “dig up” to show how worthy her name is for her. She states:

My name isn’t Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it’s forbidden ... I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I ’ll come back to dig up, one day. I think of this name as buried. This name has an aura around it, like an amulet, some charm that’s survived from an unimaginably distant past. I lie in my single bed at night, with my eyes closed,

and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark. (Atwood 80-81)

Another strategy used by the government to destroy citizens' identity is breaking their previous family ties. While narrating her story, Offred has some flashbacks where she tried to escape with her family. Eventually, they are caught and separated. Her daughter is taken away to another family while her husband's fate is uncertain. Thus, Offred is caught and sent to the Red Centre to be brainwashed so that she forgets about all her family relationships.

Along with depriving Handmaids' names and breaking their family ties, the government surveilles and controls every place in Gilead: the house, the market, the hospital as well as the brothel. Consequently, the state leaves no chance for its citizens, especially Handmaids, to have some privacy. Eventually Offred and the other females in Gilead do not enjoy any sense of individuality or uniqueness. The simplest example in the novel is forcing Handmaids to wear the same red, long dresses with the white wings surrounding their faces. Thus, Offred is given no opportunity to be different or special from the other Handmaids: "Handmaids wear long red dresses from top to toe" according to the laws, "Everything except the wings around my face is red", states the narrator (12).

The destruction of knowledge is another strategy to eradicate citizens identity. The new state of Gilead destroys every previous source of human knowledge including books, newspapers, schools and universities to limit people's, especially females, awareness: "Doctors lived here once, lawyers, university professors. There are no lawyers anymore, and the university is closed", states Offred (27). This supremacy over knowledge is "issued by those who are entitled to speak"; therefore, the values which are associated with a feminine voice are totally excluded (Jones 119).

Foucault agrees with Jones in his work *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, where he argues that it's man who claims the authority over knowledge

production (131). Yet, Aunts are not the case. Due to their social function, they are permitted to read and write unlike the other females of Gilead who are deprived of everything related to intellectuality or thinking, still, Aunts' contribution of authority is based on "a male voice" which tells them what to say and what to teach (Jones 120). Therefore, female bodies in Gilead have no power of words. Their amount of words is very limited so that they cannot express their feelings or share their ideas freely: "[the commander] has something we don't have, he has the word", says Offred (Atwood 85). Later in the novel, she could barely recall some words which are too difficult to understand now: "My tongue felt thick with the effort of spelling. It was like using a language I'd once known but had nearly forgotten" (143). As a result, the Republic of Gilead succeeds to reach every aspect of Offred's life. Its power attains both her identity and individuality. Eventually, Offred fails to control her body, mind, uniqueness and memories.

3.1.7. Routine as a Tool for Discipline

The last aspect of totalitarianism in *The Handmaid's Tale* is imposing a strict routine over citizens to force discipline. Through this strategy, the dystopian world of Atwood can maintain its power and keep social order in Gilead. According to Foucault, it makes "possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body" in various ways (*Discipline and Punish* 137). Besides, imposing discipline increases the possibility of subjects to produce; that is to say, it makes them participate in the economic interests of the government. Simultaneously, it helps also to decrease their political forces in terms of holding power; therefore, they become totally submissive to their rulers (138).

Dystopian societies follow an everyday routine to establish a disciplinary power. Every minute of their life is organized by a specific schedule which must be respected by all citizens. Hence, anyone who deviates from this schedule is going to be punished; consequently,

respecting time in *The Handmaid's Tales* is very important: "The bell that measures time is ringing. Time here is measured by bells, as once in nunneries", says Offred (Atwood 12).

One of the best examples of routine is the ceremony. This latter must be performed in a specific time that neither the Handmaid nor the Commander should neglect. Even the Wife must be present there at the right time. Another example of imposing routine in the novel is respecting everyday prayers and attending group rituals. As a result, following a strict routine in Atwood's novel is not a tool to maintain discipline only; rather, it is imposed as means of oppression to manipulate the citizens of Gilead and ensure governmental supremacy.

To conclude, the totalitarian world of Gilead believes that to make a person behaves in a specific way, it must first dominate the way s/he thinks. As a result, it exploits both female bodies and minds to ensure full submission and to create obedient subjects who work for the state welfare. Moreover, it adopts different strategies which are discussed previously so that it can reach its ultimate objective: to manipulate females both physically and mentally.

3.2. Mechanisms of Control in Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*

The theme of totalitarianism and governmental control has been a subject of study in the three parts of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. Since I am working on the whole trilogy, I have decided to explore the elements of control through giving some examples from the three books instead of working on each novel alone. As a result, this part of my thesis is going to highlight the aspects of totalitarianism in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* to show how Katniss Everdeen, the Protagonist of the story, along with other citizens of Panem, are manipulated by the higher class of Panem.

According to Cernak, there are different characteristics of dystopian societies in the world of *The Hunger Games*. First, there is a ruling party that controls the rest of the classes in Panem which is known as the Capitol. Second, the government uses terror through the secret police to maintain control over citizens. Third, the state manipulates media and propaganda in

addition to technology and economy. Finally, the government imposes a specific ideology to manipulate citizens' mind and turn them into submissive bodies (12).

3.2.1. A Single Party Government: The Capitol Versus the Districts

The society of Panem in *The Hunger Games* is divided into two main classes: The higher class or the bourgeoisie and the lower class also known as the proletariat. The former refers to the Capitol; the dictatorial, ruling regime which reinforces its control and laws on the rest of Panem. It is represented by the character of President Snow; a dictator ruler who is ready to sacrifice children's life for his own benefits. The latter refers to the other districts, mainly District 12, the poorest one in Panem and the hometown of Katniss that I am going to focus on in this chapter. The other districts also belong to the proletariat who are responsible for production from luxury items to coal mining.

On the one hand, the Capitol controls every aspect of life in Panem. People of the Capitol are at the top of the hierarchal structure. They enjoy wealthy and luxurious life. They also depend on the districts to produce anything they need such as luxury items including silver and gold in addition to clothes, weapons and even food. Moreover, this class manipulates technology, weapons, media, economy and medicine. As a result, the Capitol becomes: "a totalitarian state which has an ultimate control upon its citizens (Connors 204). Eventually, the freedom of individuals in Panem is highly restricted and democracy is totally lost as Foucault states: "[the Capitol] reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (*Power and Knowledge* 30).

In addition, the Capitol imposes a system of coercion to control citizens' actions and behaviors to create docile bodies. This system develops a sense of phobia of the government. Thus, the state of fear makes citizens unable to question this authority nor to rebel against it. Foucault discusses this idea in *Discipline and Punish* where he claims that:

A policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior... If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labor, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination. (138)

Proletariat in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, on the other hand, is divided into different districts which produce different items to the government. Therefore, they are not equal in terms of wealth. The first and the second districts are the richest in Panem. District 1 is responsible for providing luxury items to the Capitol and benefits from this service. District 2 is responsible for producing and training the peacekeepers whose presence is very important for maintaining the stability of the government. Consequently, its relationship with the Capitol is totally beneficial. The other districts are very poor. They suffer from poverty, hunger and sickness. This unfair division between the districts creates hatred that the Capitol uses to maintain its power. Anthony Pavlik explains the use of this technique in his essay *Absolute Power Games* as he claims that: “Panem’s Capitol holds the power of differentiation and judgement while its citizens have limited or no access to that power”; therefore, they live under the dictatorship of the capitol (40).

Citizens of District 12, the hometown of Katniss, suffer from an extreme poverty. They are not allowed to own any means of production. Besides, they work hard in mines and risk their lives for the sake of providing food to their families and producing coal to serve the government needs. To better explain this idea, Peksoy compares the regime with “hungry ferocious monster” while the role of the other districts is to work hard “to satisfy its hunger” (82).

Katniss talks about the government’s rule in the very beginning of the novel; she mentions that: “I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country,

Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 7). In this quote, Katniss talks about the Capitol for the first time in the story. I think Katniss’ use of the word “rule” instead of lead or monitor implies some kind of power and domination and shows that the government dominates every aspect in Panem and manipulates its citizens both physically and mentally.

The people of the Capitol are characterized by their obsession with clothes. They spend too much time taking care of their appearance which makes them totally different from the proletariat. In the first part of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss claims that unlike the people of the Capitol which make surgeries to look better, being old in District 12 is a great achievement “since so many people die early” (124). Moreover, the classy, strange and unusual design of the Capitol’s clothing helps the rulers, according to Sasani and Darayee, to “deviate people’s attention” from their cruelties and oppression (38). The importance of physical appearance in the Capitol is also demonstrated by Katniss’ remark when she notices that having sponsors in the Game is not about being strong or intelligent; however, it is about the physical appearance of the tributes (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 56-57).

Another feature which shows the Capitol privilege over the districts is the absence of their children from the Hunger Games. Instead of participating in the Games as tributes, they just enjoy sitting with their wealthy families in their luxurious houses watching the tributes killing each other with excitement. Katniss believes that the people of the Capitol cannot think of rebellion simply because their children would never participate in the Hunger Games nor fight with each other to death (*Catching Fire* 79).

Another example of the Capitol’s control of its citizens is reflected also in *Mockingjay* where Katniss found a white rose, she states that: “Positioned on my dresser, that white-as-snow rose is a personal message to me. It speaks of unfinished business. It whispers, *I can find*

you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you now” (Collins 13). This quote indicates the strict manipulation and surveillance that President Snow practices over his citizens in Panem.

The regime of the Capitol described by Collins in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, in effect, is an authoritarian, totalitarian regime. Pavlik summarizes this authoritarianism in the following elements: “antidemocratic actions; political and economic rule by elite; monopolistic control of the mass media, military forces, and weapons; and a politic of systematic violence and terror against those depicted systematic enemies” (32). Moreover, the Capitol gives too much attention to food, appearance and entertainment so that its political concerns about Panem decreases to the lowest (33).

3.2.2. Manipulation of Food

In *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Collins sheds the light on different kinds of control which are going to be discussed in this part. One of the subjects which becomes under the manipulation of the Capitol in Panem is food. This latter is highly restricted by the government that usually makes the citizens, especially those of District 12, starve to death. Hence, bread is depicted in the first part of the trilogy “as a means of survival” (Gilbert-Hickey 2). Consequently, the districts attempt to meet the government needs so that it provides them with some food.

Citizens of Panem are responsible for producing food to the Capitol; yet, they cannot enjoy consuming their own production. In the first part of the trilogy, Katniss is talking to Rue, a tribute from District 11, and thinking that they enjoy eating more food since they produce the crops. However, Rue’s response is surprising: “Oh, no, we’re not allowed to eat the crops” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 197). Also, the districts must wait for the government to satisfy their hunger because trade between them is totally forbidden. Therefore, the lack of food becomes a familiar issue that one does not think about every day because “its presence and availability are taken for granted” (Hamre 37).

The Capitol, unlike the rest of Panem, enjoys plenty and variety of food. This is exactly what Katniss remarks in one of the Capitol's tables after she becomes a part of the Games in *The Hunger Games*: "A thick carrot soup, green salad, lamb chops and mashed potatoes, cheese and fruit, a chocolate cake. Throughout the meal, Effie Trinket keeps reminding us to save space because there's more to come" (Collins 43-44).

The oppressive regime uses a specific strategy to provide citizens with food that is called "tesserae". When I first encounter this word, I thought that it is used by the government to help the citizens from starving. Later, I have realized that it is just another totalitarian trick to dehumanize them. Tesserae refers to putting children's name in the list of the possible tributes who are randomly chosen to participate in the next Hunger Games in exchange for grain and oil so that they can feed and help their families. Unfortunately, this technique increases the chances of the volunteers to participate in the Games and face death. In the first novel of the trilogy, Katniss clarifies:

You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tessera is worth a meagre year's supply of grain and oil for one person. You may do this for each of your family members as well. So, at the age of twelve I had my name entered four times. (14)

Unfortunately, the people of the Seam are the main victims of tesserae due to the poor conditions they undergo in District 12 where people "can starve to death in safety" (7). According to Clemente, tesserae "disadvantages the poorest citizens" (25). Consequently, most of their children can be chosen in the reaping day. This fact causes conflict between the poor people who need to add their names for tesserae and those who are not concerned. The best example is Gale's resentment towards Madge, the mayor's daughter, whose chances in participating in the Games are much lower; consequently, she does not need "to sign up for tesserae" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 14).

In addition to the struggle of social position, the tribute who wins the Game is awarded by the Capitol with extra food for the next year. Eventually, the tributes in the arena are enemies who feel no sympathy towards each other for the sake of being rewarded and saving the people of their districts. Hence, the real aim of this technique is to raise mistrust and hatred between the citizens of Panem to keep them disconnected from each other and to prevent them from forming any ally against the government (Henthorne 47). Children of wealthy families, however, are not concerned with tesserae since they do not have to worry about providing food to their families. According to Sasani and Daraye, this technique is considered as a political tool used by the Capitol to create inequality and cruelty among the districts of Panem (3). It is used mainly to humiliate citizens and to remind them that they are helpless creatures who need the government to survive.

The government of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, in effect, follows what is referred to as “panem et circenses”. This latter is a Latin word which means “bread and circuses” in English. According to the Grammar Monster Dictionary:

It refers to a concept prevalent in ancient Rome, where the government would provide its citizens with free food and entertainment in the form of lavish spectacles, such as gladiator fights, chariot races, and theatrical performances. The phrase highlights the strategy employed by the ruling class to keep the population content and distracted from important political issues and matters of governance.

I suggest that the “lavish spectacles” in this case refers to the Hunger Games while the “ruling class” is represented in the Capitol. Plutarch Heavensbee, the head game maker, explains to Katniss: “Thirteen was used to hardship, whereas in the Capitol, all they've known is *Panem et Circenses*”; he continues to clarify that it is a Latin expression written about Rome: “Panem et Circenses translates into ‘Bread and Circuses.’ The writer was saying that in return

for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power.” Katniss wonders about the Capitol, food and entertainment and replies: “So that's what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 128).

In the second part of the trilogy, Katniss depicts the picture of the government rulers when she attends a party at the President House. According to her, they throw up what they have already eaten for the sake of eating again and having fun (*Catching Fire* 86). According to Peksoy, this behavior indicates the inequality between the people of the Capitol and the rest of Panem “where food is so scarce that dying of starvation is as common as a cause of death” (83). Unlike the districts, food therefore is considered as means of pleasure for the Capitol rather than a source of survival.

The manipulation of food becomes a subject of discussion in the third part of the trilogy as well. In *Mockingjay*, District 13, which comes to existence again after 75 years, is very careful about the nutrition a person needs: “you leave with enough calories to take you to the next meal, no more, no less” (Collins 24). I think that after all this time, District 13 has to follow strict measures to show up again to the point that even food “become secondary to survive” (Kress 234).

To conclude, the lack of food in Panem is highly intentioned by the Capitol that uses this technique as a means of control. Consequently, citizens become too busy providing food to their families that they do not have a time to think about standing against the regime laws.

3.2.3. Manipulating Technology

The world of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, like many dystopian worlds, is introduced to the readers as technologically advanced. However, this technology is manipulated only by the Capitol which uses advanced science to control the citizens of Panem and to prevent any thoughts of resistance or uprisings among the districts. According to Lockwood, science is not

a terrifying tool; rather, the way it is used can make it frightening (118). Therefore, technology in *The Hunger Games* is not used to help or to meet the needs of the citizens; instead, it is used by the Capitol as a means of power and manipulation.

The government in *The Hunger Games trilogy* manipulates different kinds of advanced weapons. Moreover, no one is allowed to produce or own a weapon except for the citizens of the Capitol. As a result, any act of creating, buying or selling weapons is forbidden and leads to a severe punishment. Thus, anyone who performs such acts in Panem is considered as a rebellious citizen whose fate must be death. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is among the very few people who owns a weapon in Panem. She talks about this kind of manipulation in the following lines: “My bow is a rarity, crafted by my father along with a few others that I keep well hidden in the woods ... My father could have made good money selling them, but if the officials found out he would have been publicly executed for inciting a rebellion. (Collins 6-7)

The Capitol uses physical weapons such as swords and arrows to keep the tributes under control. In *Catching Fire*, President Snow threatens Katniss while visiting her house. He obliges her to declare to the audience that her attempt to suicide at the end of the first part is out of love and not an act of defiance against the government. He is afraid that this act will encourage other citizens to rebel and spread uprisings among the districts. Therefore, if she does not obey President Snow’s orders, he will harm her family and her beloved ones (49).

The manipulation of weapons is also demonstrated in the annual Hunger Games where the government uses advanced weapons to kill the tributes. Moreover, the tributes are supported by different weapons to attack and kill each other inside the arena. Furthermore, the advanced technology in novel leads to the creation of genetically modified creatures known as mutations or mutts. There are different examples of mutations used by the government throughout the story to manipulate citizens as Katniss points out:

No mutt is good. All are meant to damage you. Some take your life, like the monkeys. Others your reason, like the tracker jackers. However, the true atrocities, the most frightening, incorporate a perverse psychological twist to terrify the victim. The sight of the wolf mutts with the dead tributes' eyes. The sound of the jabberjays replicating Prim's tortured screams (*Mockingjay* 176).

The old jabberjay, a male bird mutation, is an advanced weapon used by the Capitol to manipulate the tributes' mind. Katniss, in *Catching Fire*, hears the sounds of Prim, Gale and her mother when she is closed to the place of the jabberjays in the arena. She starts hallucinating and almost driven crazy; however, she later realizes that the sounds come from the birds instead of her beloved ones. Unlike Katniss, Joanna is not affected by the sounds, she cannot actually hear the sounds of her beloved ones because, unlike the rest of the tributes, the people she loves are all gone: "They can't hurt me. I'm not like the rest of you. There's no one left I love", says Joanna (357). Still, Old jabberjays are not only used to influence people's mind; rather, they are also made to memorize and repeat human's conversation as a means to spy on the enemy. Wild mutations are another example of advanced technology in Panem. They include wolves, monkeys and Lizard mutts. These creatures are typically used to murder anyone who dares to stand against the Capitol's rules.

The Capitol also uses advanced technology to brainwash the minds of people. The best example of mental manipulation in the novel is the use of tracker jackers; genetically modified wasp mutations created by the regime. The tracker jackers attack anyone who shakes the stability of their nests. Their venom is used to affect the brain and to cause hallucinations. when Peeta is captured and tortured, the government uses the tracker jackers' venom to brainwash his mind and make him detest Katniss. Therefore, he is turned into a human weapon whose role is to kill Katniss at any cost. That is to say, the Capitol succeeds in brainwashing Peeta's

mind who thinks now that Katniss is his main enemy. As a result, he “becomes what the Capitol perceives as the ultimate weapon against Katniss” (King *(Im)Mutable Natures* 115).

Along with weapons, the world of Panem is also characterized by the advancement of medicine. However, it is not used for the benefit of the citizens except for those who belong to the ruling class. This latter develops medical treatments and surgeries to change their looks and make their appearance looks unique and different. According to Katniss being old in District 12 is an achievement because the people of this district die early from starvation (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 122)

The advanced medical treatment can be also used in the Games when the tribute is able to gain more sponsors. After being burnt in the arena during the 74th Games, Katniss succeeds to receive a cream to cure her wounds which are recovered after a very short time. Furthermore, when they both win the games, Katniss and Peeta have a recovery to heal their wounds. The former is able to hear well after curing her ear while the latter is able to walk again after placing an artificial leg that seems to be very natural. One may wonder, why does the Capitol help the tributes if it wants to control them? My answer is that: this is another strategy used by the state to manipulate citizens indirectly. In fact, the Capitol’s real aim is not to help the tributes; rather, it attempts to give a good picture of the government who is ready to reward those who obey its rules and those who win in the Games by killing other tributes and survive.

3.2.4. Manipulating Media and Propaganda

In *The Hunger Games trilogy*, Suzanne Collins brings also the theme of controlling media into discussion. The Capitol highly manipulates media and propaganda in Panem. It depends on live streaming and broadcasted propaganda to maintain stability and control and to hide reality. The government controls what the citizens must watch. When I am introduced to the novel, I have realized that The Hunger Games have been broadcasted for 74 years, after the fall of District 13. As a result, they become the television event of every year. Most of the

citizens have grown up with this event so that they become familiar with the brutality of the Games. They are supposed to follow the Games from the reaping day until only one tribute remains alive in the arena.

According to Jowett and O'Donnell, propaganda is defined as "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (7). This definition indicates how propaganda is used to impose a certain behavior and to manipulate someone's thoughts. Consequently, the television is a significant tool in Panem. It must be available in every district and in every house. There are also some televisions in every public place in the streets. It is mainly used to air the Games so that every citizen in Panem watch them. The government uses this strategy to manipulate citizens' mind and prevent them from revolting or rebelling against the regime. Therefore, media is just another way used by the Capitol to attract citizens' attention and to fulfil its own needs (Sasani, Darayee 35).

Interviews and live streaming are remarkable in the novel. They are used by the Capitol to concentrate on the tributes' fashion and appearance and to forget about the atrocity of the Games. Citizens of Panem become addicted to interviews before and after the show. They wait them passionately to choose their favorite tributes. According to Blasingame, "The 24 newly famous teenagers are the guest stars of several days of festivities, all of which are televised, including pageants and interviews which make them the darlings and heroes of the general populace" (724).

For the tributes, interviews are very important. Being fashionable and telling important stories in the interview help them to attract the citizens and gain more sponsors. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss focuses on telling her love story with Peeta to receive more gifts in the Games which help her to survive. In her dialogue with Haymitch, she states that "one kiss equals one pot of broth" (Collins 19). In effect, I conclude that interviews are a way of

entertainment and manipulation that are used to cover up the real objective behind the games and encourage them. Therefore, propaganda in Collins' trilogy does not affect the citizens of Panem only directly; rather, it threatens them indirectly and implicitly (Arendt 345).

3.2.5. Maintaining Discipline through Terror

Since the use of terror becomes a widespread topic in dystopian fiction, Suzanne Collins has also explored this theme in her trilogy. According to totalitarian systems, citizens who do not follow the norms must be punished severely. Being afraid of punishment, therefore, costs citizens both their individualities and identities.

Terror in the trilogy is represented in the "peacekeepers", the secret police in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. The Peacekeepers' role is to frighten the citizens and terrify them in public to maintain discipline in Panem: "They whip you and make everyone else watch", states Rue (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 202). After the end of The Games in *Catching Fire*, Katniss and Peeta make a victory tour around the districts. In District 12, Katniss remarks the strict surveillance of citizens made by the Capitol through electric fences to keep stability: "Then I see the watchtowers, placed evenly apart, manned with armed guards, so out of place among the fields of wildflowers around them" (55).

Another example of using terror is limiting the freedom of speech through punishment. In other words, peacekeepers detect those who dare to act or to speak against the Capitol's rules. Eventually, they are turned to be avoxes and slaves to the ruling class. According to Katniss, an avox is: "Someone who committed a crime. They cut [his]tongue so [he]can't speak" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 76). "Avox" is a new word created by Collins per se. It is originated from the Greek language where "a" is a prefix refers to "no" and "vox" refers to the English word "voice". One of the examples of avoxes is "Pollux" who lost his voice after committing a crime and served the Capitol for a long time: "Pollux is an Avox. They have cut

out his tongue and he'll never speak again. And I no longer have to wonder what made him risk everything to help bring down the Capitol” states Katniss (*Mockingjay*, 62).

Terror in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* is not reflected through the peacekeepers only; however, the Games per se are a means of despotism and tyranny starting from the reaping day until the end. In her interview with James Blasingame, Collins stresses the idea that the Games are used “as a weapon to control populations” (726). In addition, Pavlik suggests that: “The Games are the ultimate terror tactic because they are played with the lives of innocents” (30). In the reaping day, citizens of every district are gathered to figure out fearfully who are the new victims that are going to fight to death in the arena. The word tribute in Panem equals “corpse” (26). Consequently, tributes do not treat each other as human beings; rather, they consider their enemies as less than animals that must be crushed to survive in the arena.

Killing, therefore, becomes a means of power in *The Hunger Games trilogy*. Foucault explains how death is used by President Snow to maintain its supremacy and to stop the first rebellion. Hence, he refers to death as a tool that masters use to demonstrate supremacy (*Discipline and Punish* 17). In *Catching Fire*, killing is also highlighted to prevent hunting in the woods. According to Katniss, this action is illegal and may lead to a severe punishment such as death (Collins 12).

According to Clemente, the real objective behind the Hunger Games is not to entertain the ruling class only; however, they are made to recall the citizens of Panem “of the Capitol’s relentless power” (24). That is to say, the Games are amusing and terrifying at the same time. They exist mainly to reflect the dictatorship of the Capitol and its dominance as it is ready to do anything even killing innocent people just to hinder thoughts of revolution or rebellion against the regime. Helen Day agrees with Clemente; she claims that: “a further insult within this sacrifice of children is the requirement to treat the Games as a festive sporting event: entertainment” (173). Therefore, the Capitol’s aim is to eradicate any sense of hope of

uprisings in the districts. Katniss also explains the reason behind establishing the Games in the first part of the trilogy:

This is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen." To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 22).

The Quarter Quell is an exceptional part of the games that takes place every 25 years. Through the Quarter Quell, The Capitol reminds the rebels that they are the first responsible for their children's death because they dare to stand against the regime laws. Moreover, the adults in each district are also responsible to select which children are going to present them in the reaping day. Consequently, the Capitol tries to create a human disconnection through the Games; a gap between adults and children which kills their relationship and hinders any attempt to rebel.

Enforcing terror through killing children is then a crucial theme in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. According to Kress, it is absolutely "impossible not to fear a government which sacrifices the life of its children so easily" (233). In *Mockingjay*, Gale is exhausted of children being killed each time. He is not blaming the Capitol only, but everyone who is accepting the games passively and silently from the higher authorities to the parents who approve to send their children to slaughter. He claims when talking to Katniss (Collins 35).

In order to attract the attention of watchers in Panem, the Capitol tries constantly to keep the games more exciting and amusing "to produce a worthy Game" (Ryan 102). Hence,

the game makers always attempt to bring new challenges in the arena to make the tributes meet and kill each other instead of running away and hiding. The Capitol; thus, does not accept any silent death. Rather, it seeks for a bloody, brutal ending of the tributes to make each game looks “fresh and new” (101).

3.2.6. Dehumanization of the Proletariat

People who undergo dehumanization lose their human characteristics; moreover, they are abused physically, mentally and psychologically. Katniss demonstrates the ways people in District 12, especially the Seam, are dehumanized. She explains how they work in mines and undergo unendurable conditions of living: “Men and women with hunched Shoulders, swollen knuckles, many who have long since stopped trying to scrub the Coal dust out of their broken nails, the lines of their sunken faces”, states Katniss (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 5)

The theme of dehumanization is significantly discussed in Collins’ Trilogy. people of District 12, along with the other ones, are not treated as human beings; rather, they are seen as property, a tool of entertainment which is used to make the ruling class have fun. Thus, they are highly dehumanized. During the Games, the Capitol neglects the fact that the tributes are also young human beings who must live and enjoy their life instead of being murdered. On the contrary, the Capitol enjoys what is happening inside the arena. They consider the Games as a horror movie while the tributes are just actors who die by killing one another and never go back in the following scenes. Actually, not only the Capitol dehumanize the tributes; however, even the tributes consider their enemies as less than human beings and kill each other in the most brutal ways just to please the government sick desire of entertainment and survive the Games.

The theme of dehumanization is also highlighted through children abuse in *Mockingjay*, the third part of the trilogy. According to Peksoy, the moral concern in Panem vanished and the Capitol has no problem with sending children to slaughter (83). To give an example,

President Snow shows no pity when he turns children's bodies into a shield to protect his house. I think that Katniss' quote below implies that everything is permitted to protect the ruling class in Panem even sacrificing children's life. It indicates how children's life is definitely cheap regarding to the one of President Snow:

I no longer feel allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despise being one myself. I think that Peeta was onto something about us destroying one another and letting some decent species take over. Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences. You can spin it any way you like. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 212)

3.2.7. Manipulation through Indoctrination

In Collins' trilogy, the Capitol imposes a central ideology on the citizens that everyone must follow: "the rules were set up by the Capitol, not the districts", states Katniss (*The Hunger Games* 14). Thus, every person in Panem must obey the rules in order not to be punished. According to these rules, citizens learn that the Capitol is always normal while the districts are labeled as abnormal. The normal, then, is the one who controls, surveilles and corrects the mistakes done by the abnormal. This is Foucault's explanation to the strategy used by the government in his work *The History of Sexuality* to control the brains and the behaviors of the citizens to maintain its control over them and to ensure their blind submission (199).

The Capitol always stresses the importance of The Games to its citizens. It makes them sacrifice their children's life to please the government. This latter makes the Games a sacred event that every citizen must wait passionately every year. In addition, they are supposed to welcome this terrible show with happiness and love. According to Katniss, the Capitol makes them deal with this event "as a festivity, a sporting event" that must be welcomed with "repentance" and "thank", comments the mayor. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 19). Moreover, Effie Trinket, a female game maker, launches every new year of the Games with her famous

quote: “Happy Hunger Games and may the odds be *ever* in your favor!” (20). I suggest that using the word “happy” in this case implies a sense of indoctrination. It mirrors the way the Capitol turns something bloody and terrifying into something happy and amusing to make the tributes sacrifice their lives to entertain the ruling class of Panem.

The Districts of Panem are totally separated and disconnected. Moreover, traveling between them is highly forbidden according to the rules. Consequently, citizens do not know anything about each other. All what they know and must accept is what they see on television or what they learn at school. Therefore, media is used in this case as a strategy of indoctrination. That is to say, the Capitol encourages hatred between the Districts through propaganda to hinder any attempt of union against the Capitol.

One of the most important thoughts that the Capitol instills in the tributes mind, in effect, is to treat their enemies as objects rather than humans (Borsellino 34). When Katniss is about to join the Games, she met her friend Gale who advises her to take a bow as he refers to the Games as “just hunting” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 48). When I passed by this expression for the first time, the first impression that came to my mind was that Katniss was going to a hunting journey to hunt and kill animals; as if she was not going to deal with real human beings inside the arena!

Another example I passed by in the first part of the trilogy that shows the influence of indoctrination on the tributes’ minds is Titus, a male tribute from District 6. He is so brutal and savage whose dehumanization goes to the extreme. In addition to killing his victims, he eats their hearts as well! (139). Hence, the Capitol succeeds in brainwashing the citizens who become familiar with killing and accept it as a part of the Games. Consequently, they are forced either to be killed or to be killers to survive inside the arena.

Another example of indoctrination is the use of tracker jackers that I have already talked about in this part of my thesis. They are used by the Capitol to brainwash people’s mind. The

stings of these wasps cause hallucinations and can lead to madness. As I have already explained, they are used against Peeta to make him believe that the Capitol is working for his benefits and to convince him that Katniss is his main enemy.

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Mechanisms of Control in Gilead and Panem

Having examined the mechanisms of control in each novel individually, it is now essential to undertake a comparative analysis in order to identify their similarities, differences, and underlying structures.

The totalitarian regime in *the Handmaid's Tale* is based upon a patriarchal, theocratic society where religion plays a key role in manipulating citizens. Women in Atwood's novels are stripped of their rights and subdued to restrict gender roles. As long as women are valued for their fertility, the government classifies them into different categories. Handmaids are the most important, yet, the most oppressed category in the Republic of Gilead because they are seen as reproductive machines rather than human beings. Unlike the Republic of Gilead which maintains control through patriarchy and theocracy, The Capitol in *The Hunger Games* manipulates its citizens mainly through a terrifying spectacle to prevent them from making any attempt of rebellion.

While Margaret Atwood puts an emphasis on women categorization and social function, Suzanne Collins emphasizes unequal division of classes in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. On one hand, The Capitol represents the ruling party and the bourgeoisie of Panem. This study explored the ways the Capitol manipulates propaganda, food, technology and medicine to keep citizens submissive and obedient. On the other hand, the Districts represent the Proletariat in Panem; they reflect the oppressed people who work for the benefits of the government. Katniss Everdeen, the female protagonist of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, is from District 12: the poorest District in Panem. Consequently, Offred and Katniss' roles are both

determined by their governments, in addition, they belong to the most oppressed class in their societies.

Physical manipulation is one of the major elements of totalitarianism. This theme is explored by both Atwood and Collins in their novels. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Handmaids are stripped of autonomy over their bodies. That is to say, a body of a Handmaid is viewed as a state's property that is used only for reproductive purposes. As a result, Handmaids do no longer enjoy sexual rights; rather, they are controlled through ritualized rape, known as the Ceremony, in order to produce an offspring to the government. Similarly, the body is also manipulated in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* through the games per se. The Capitol forces two children from each District to join the Hunger Games and fight each other to death after providing them with different trainings and pieces of advice to win the games and enjoy a luxurious life.

Another technique used by the governments of Gilead and Panem to maintain physical manipulation is surveillance. This latter is reflected through the Eyes in *The Handmaid's Tale* whereas it is reflected through the Peacekeepers in *The Hunger Games*. Both of them serve as surveillance tools whose role is to maintain control and prevent rebellion. Consequently, physical manipulation in the novels plays a key role in preventing rebellious thoughts and maintaining totalitarian stability in dystopian novels.

According to oppressive regimes, controlling bodies is not enough to sustain totalitarianism; therefore, manipulating minds is a significant theme in feminist dystopian fiction. This idea is tackled by both Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins who discuss the theme of indoctrination. While Atwood examines this theme through Rachael and Leah Educational Centre, Collins examines the same theme through the Hunger Games and advanced technology.

On the one hand, Handmaids are sent to the Educational Centre after being tested for their fertility. While there, Aunts teach them to be future Handmaids and brainwash their minds to accept their new social function in Gilead using the Bible, slogans and testifying. On the other hand, citizens of Panem are mentally manipulated through the annual repetition of the Hunger Games; that is to say, children grow up to be familiar with the terrifying spectacle of the Game. As a result, they become heartless tributes who kill their enemies in the most brutal ways. Indoctrination in *The Hunger Games* is also reflected by Jabberjays and tracker jackers; genetically-modified creatures designed by the Capitol in order to manipulate the minds of its citizens.

Manipulating citizens through terror is another strategy used by the totalitarian regimes of Atwood and Collins' novels. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, terror is reflected mainly through public executions known as Salvagings; through which, corpses of executed people are displayed on the wall for days to ensure that citizens will see them sooner or later. In addition, while in the Educational Center, Aunts usually use means of punishment such as cattle prods to terrify the Handmaids and force them to accept their new social function. In *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, however, terror is demonstrated through the brutality of the Games per se. This latter serves as a reminder of the consequences of rebelling against the Capitol. By forcing the Districts to watch their children fighting to death, the Capitol ensures total submission and prevents any kind of rebellion. Even the Eyes and the Peacekeepers in the novels serve as instruments of terror as well as surveillance. Therefore, terror in dystopian fiction aims at suppressing individuality, preventing rebellion and ensuring an absolute compliance.

The oppressive regimes of dystopian fiction treat their citizens as states' property; therefore, the theme of dehumanization is tackled in *The Handmaid's Tale* in addition to *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Handmaids in Atwood's novels are dehumanized because they are not considered as human beings; rather, they are viewed as reproductive machines whose only

value is to bring new babies to the state. Moreover, they are stripped of their original names and given new names that signifies possession and belonging to their Commanders. Similarly, citizens of the Districts and Panem are also dehumanized but in a different way. The Capitol deals with children of the Districts as a tool of entertainment. Children of the Districts, whose suffering becomes a great spectacle for the State, grow up watching the Hunger Games every year. Therefore, tributes do not consider their enemies in the arena as human beings; however, they treat each other as less than objects and every tribute learn to kill its enemy in the most brutal ways.

One last totalitarian aspect that is shared by *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy* is the loss of individuality and personal identity. Women in Gilead are classified according to strict gender roles. Each class is signified by specific clothes that determine their role. That is to say, Gilead makes each group of women looks similar leaving them no opportunities to make their own decisions or have their personal dreams. Handmaids, as I have mentioned, were given new names that make them lose their identities and turn them to be a property of Commanders.

The loss of individuality is tackled by Suzanne Collins as well. Like in the Republic of Gilead, the Capitol divides its Districts into different functions. Each District is specialized in a specific industry; thus, it serves the economic benefits of the Capitol. Therefore, it limits personal choices and suppress individual dreams. Moreover, The Capitol controls the personality of its tributes especially before the Games as they undergo different trainings which make them question who they really are. Katniss has to submit to different gender roles throughout the trilogy until she lost her identity. As a result, individuality is usually suppressed in dystopian fiction demonstrating the dangers of totalitarian states where identities and personal dreams are significantly eliminated.

Conclusion

Through their masterpieces *The Handmaid Tales* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, both Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins create futuristic societies where totalitarianism and dictatorship become the main issues of their worlds: The Republic of Gilead and Panem, respectively. The authors prove to be successful to warn their audience and to create more responsible young generation who is aware of the dangers of totalitarianism through highlighting the different elements of dystopian societies in their aforementioned novels.

This chapter, in effect, analyzed the various aspects of totalitarianism from Offred and Katniss perspectives focusing on the similarities and the differences of the mechanisms of control that can be found in both works. What is important to mention now is that both female protagonists are not satisfied with the manipulation and the terror they live in. Therefore, the next chapter will explore the evolution of both heroines: From manipulated and dehumanized subjects into dissatisfied and rebellious characters. As a result, in the last chapter of my thesis, I am going to investigate the different strategies both Offred and Katniss use to fight the regime and seek emancipation.

Chapter Four: Dystopian Aftermath in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*: From Totalitarianism to Emancipation

Introduction

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, dystopian societies are characterized by the domination of a totalitarian government. The latter aims at manipulating its citizens both physically and mentally using multiple techniques. However, not all the characters of dystopian literature are satisfied with this situation. In dystopian fiction, there is always one character, or group of characters, who questions the authority of the government and tries to rebel against it. When dystopian literature first appears, the dissatisfied protagonist is usually a male character; later, feminist dystopias create a female heroine who attempts to revolt against the regime. Offred and Katniss, the female protagonists of *The Handmaid Tales* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, respectively, are both dissatisfied with their living conditions and gender performance in their societies. Eventually, they adopt revolutionary thoughts that go against the regime rules. Consequently, Offred and Katniss become the symbol of rebellion in The Republic of Gilead and Panem, respectively. Their dissatisfaction pushes them to develop self-empowerment and seek emancipation from the totalitarian, oppressive rule.

This chapter, therefore, aims at investigating the different mechanisms of rebellion that both protagonists use in the novels to reach their emancipation from totalitarianism. It also highlights the way gender roles are subverted as a way to survive through the application of Judith Butler theory of gender performance. In addition, it underlines the power of language, breaking sexual rules and reclaiming the past to attain liberation in *The Handmaid's Tales*. Furthermore, it analyzes the evolution of Katniss in her journey to seek emancipation in Collins' Trilogy. This chapter also adopts an intersectional perspective to examine how different forms of inequality shape the protagonists' experiences and influence their paths toward emancipation.

4.1. Offred Quest for Emancipation in *The Handmaid's Tale*

In the dystopian world of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood creates a society where traditional gender roles are imposed to the extreme in an attempt to distort its citizens' true identity; thus, she integrates gender essentialism with "dystopian traditions" (Feuer 83). In the Republic of Gilead, gender roles are constructed through the biological sex of men and women. Both genders are assigned with different functions in their society. However, the gender classification of women reflects a retrograde view of feminine performance. Women in Gilead are seen as passive and inferior to men. Their only function in society is to be wives, do house chores, produce babies; or do toxic work in the colonies. Therefore, the government left no choice for the women of Gilead but to conform to its strict gender performativity. Anyone who tries to subvert these roles must be punished. However, I believe that the retrograde notion of femininity does not fit the character of Offred. This latter proves that Judith Butler's critics on gender essentialism are valid when the character is not necessarily determined biologically; rather, the social and cultural environments construct its gender as a means of survival or liberation.

The hierarchal structure of Gilead divides women into different classes; each class is related with a specific gender role. Apparently, Wives seem to have power in Gilead because they are married with the most powerful class of men: Commanders. However, it is not the case; it is true that Wives occupy a privileged position in their community but they are totally powerless and inferior to their husbands. In addition, they must attend during the Ceremony while Commanders are having a sexual intercourse with Handmaids for the purpose of giving a new baby to the government. Furthermore, they are subdued to a strict femininity norm which links their value in society with their beauty and physical appearance. I believe that the function of Wives in Gilead proves that you do not have to occupy a privileged position in your society

to be powerful; however, sometimes you need to challenge this position and perform some acts which help you to seek your self-emancipation.

The strict traditional roles are not imposed on Wives only; yet, the burden of performing house chores in the Commanders' house is imposed on Marthas. Like Wives, Marthas are submissive and powerless; they have no control over their bodies and they represent one of the best examples of traditional feminine roles: domestic servants. There are also Handmaids, the "national resources" of Gilead and the main focus of this study (Atwood 80). Handmaids are supposed to produce an offspring to the government. As a woman, I guess a Handmaid is the most oppressed female class in the Gileadean society. Handmaids are obliged to have a sexual intercourse with Commanders without love or even desire. Also, they have to go through pregnancy stages. Eventually, they are obliged to give up on their babies after giving birth and sent to another Commander house to repeat the same process again and again.

However, some female characters go beyond the stereotypical image of women in Gilead. They are aware that the government is trying to limit their gender performance and they are not satisfied about their function. Thus, this part of my research aims to shed the light on the character Offred who refuses to subdue to the totalitarian regime of Gilead and its traditional gender roles. She does not accept to be valued only for her fertility. Therefore, I am going to highlight Offred's dissatisfaction about her position as a Handmaid in addition to explain the different rebellious acts that she has to perform to seek her self-emancipation. Offred proves to be no more the passive feminine character who has to produce babies; however, she adopts more masculine traits of bravery and rebellion which subvert the traditional image of femininity in Gilead.

4.1.1. Handmaids Dissatisfaction towards the Gileadean Regime

After being deprived of their real names and given new names that make them the Commanders' property, Debrah Raschke believes that Handmaids still have a great chance to

reclaim their own identity. In her work *Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale: False Borders and Subtle Subversions*, Raschke claims that using "Offred" rather than the sentence "I am of Fred" increases the chances of every Handmaid to construct "herself as an "I" (259). In other words, the fact of not using the subject "I" in this case gives Handmaids some subjectivity of their own, and thus, it helps them to gain some self-autonomy and reconstruct their own identity. Consequently, one of the first steps that any dystopian character goes through to reach this aim is dissatisfaction against totalitarianism.

Feminist Dystopian fiction is characterized by the female protagonist dissatisfaction towards the regime and her rebellious thoughts against it. Offred, the protagonist of Atwood's masterpiece, is among the Handmaids who are captured, brainwashed and sent to the Commanders' houses for the purpose of producing a baby. Some critics such as Bouson and Joannou believe that Offred embraces the traits of a retrograde traditional female. Bouson believes that she is passive and incapable of controlling her fate (154) while Joannou thinks that she is a mere "weeper" whose only function in the novel is to be "a victim" (148).

After reading and analyzing the novel, I do disagree with critics like Bouson and Joannou. I believe that Offred is not a passive character; rather, she is a brave rebellious heroine who deconstructs the gender roles of Gilead and fights the regime in her own ways that are going to be discussed later in this chapter. Offred is not totally brainwashed. As the story progresses, the reader can notice that she is not happy with the glossy picture of the protected Handmaids that the government tries to show them: "I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it's shameful or immodest but because I don't want to see it. I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely", claims Offred (Atwood 63). I suggest that the expression "determines me" demonstrates a sense of manipulation that Offred rejects. Her feeling of frustration towards her function in Gilead makes her question the power of the government upon her life decisions and have a strong desire to subvert its rules. Thus, she seeks

a physical and mental emancipation. She attempts to break the picture of the stereotypical image of a traditional female and to look at herself like a “distinct individual differentiated from others” (Stillman and Johnson 73).

Offred is totally conscious about the authoritarian practises over her mind and body. She does not believe in the utopian image that the government tries to instill in her mind. However, the beginning of the story shows that she is afraid of punishment because of her independent thinking. Later in the novel, she starts to grow rebellious and revolutionary thoughts to regain her body and reclaim her identity. Once, when Offred enters to her room, she has a great desire of stealing something and hide it for her own: “I would like to steal something from this room. I would like to take some small thing, the scrolled ashtray, the little silver pillbox from the mantel perhaps” (Atwood 77). Thus, the act of stealing something that belongs to the Commander’s house raises her feeling of satisfaction and “make [her] feel that [she has] power” (77).

Before Gilead, Offred used to study at university, that is to say, she is among the educated females of Gilead who are able to read and write. As a result, she is conscious about the false theocracy of Gilead whose rules are supposed to be based on the Bible. The government justifies raping Handmaids by telling them the story of Rachal and Bilhah from the Bible which claims that a wife can have children through her maid womb: “Give me children, or else I die. Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? Behold my maid Bilhah. She shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her” (85).

The above quote demonstrates the story of Rachal and Bilhah that is always told before the Ceremony without referring to the Bible. When the barren Rashal requests her husband Jakob to give her children after a deep longing for them, he replies with disappointment that her infertility is beyond his control. Consequently, she asks him to use her maid Bilhah to have

children and make them their own. Similar to Rashal, Wives in Gilead are barren and can only have children through their maids. Offred deep inside knows that the government falsifies the biblical verses and changes them to justify gender essentialism. Yet, she is unable to check because women in the new Republic of Gilead are not allowed to think and write, or even to own any source of knowledge (85).

According to the Christian complementarianism, men and women complete each other. Each of them is assigned with specific gender roles to perform in their societies. This idea is advocated by Piper and Grudem who believe that the Bible “has shown us in Scripture the beauty of manhood and womanhood in complementary harmony” (35). He also claims using a biblical context that love is necessary between the husband and his wife because the two of them “shall be one flesh” (35). However, the fact that Offred is not able to recall the verses, in addition to her inability to check the Bible context raise her feeling of dissatisfaction toward the gender essentialism of Gilead.

Another important feature which characterizes the female dystopian protagonist is her cooperation with another group of dissatisfied characters to resist the regime. It is mentioned previously that the government restricts friendships between Handmaids and limits their conversations to the lowest. Yet, we can find different Handmaids in the novel supporting each other and connecting secretly as an act of dissatisfaction to regain even a small part of their identity.

The character of Moira, who is sent to the Education Center to be a Handmaid, is a good example of a female character who does not subdue to the gender performance that is imposed on her. She succeeds in expressing her dissatisfaction when she escapes from the center after she imprisons one of the Aunts. Unfortunately, Moira is captured and punished severely. Offred is surprised when she notices her feet because “[they] did not look like feet at

all. They looked like drowned feet, swollen and boneless, except for the colour. They looked like lungs”, states Offred with disappointment (Atwood 88).

Thus, the other Handmaids feel sorry for their mate and decide to: “[steel] extra paper packets of sugar for her, from the cafeteria at mealtimes, [smuggle] them to her, at night, handing them from bed to bed. Probably she didn’t need the sugar but it was the only thing [they] could find to steal”, states Offred (88). Even the smallest act of assistance is considered as rebellious; yet, Handmaids still encourage each other to reconstruct their identity and to regain some control over both their bodies and minds. This proves that some citizens in totalitarian regimes are not definitely brainwashed; rather, they still hold on their own ability of thinking and feeling. Irele supports this idea when stating that: “individuals only partially embody the values of the community even when these are presumed to have been fully internalized” (20).

Before the construction of The Gileadean Republic, Moira used to be a lesbian female. Therefore, her personality subverts the rigid heterosexual rules of Gilead. This fact justifies her refusal to be a Handmaid and her escape from the center. In addition, it justifies the reason why there is no “of” that is supposed to express property in her name. After her punishment, Moira is sent to the brothel to work as a prostitute. Despite that it is not what fits her appropriately, she still thinks that it is better than performing the role of a Handmaid and she compares her new life with “Butch paradise” (Atwood 232).

Briefly, Moira is represented as a strong female character who refuses to submit to her gender role. Her rebellious character represents resistance against oppression. She proves that rebellion and regaining self-liberation from oppression is possible. Thanks to her, Offred believes that the Aunts are “less fearsome” than she used to think (125). Even before Gilead is constructed; Moira was the friend of Offred who always supported her with power and hope. Consequently, she is a source of inspiration, not only for Offred, but for different Handmaids.

Another example of Handmaid's dissatisfaction in Atwood's story is the female character Ofglen; a Handmaid who is sent to the house of the Commander Glen to produce an offspring. Ofglen is a good example of a strong women who symbolizes female power in the novel. Offred describes Ofglen as she walks "demurely, head down, red-gloved hands clasped in front, with short little steps... She may be a real believer, a Handmaid in more than name" (23). That is to say, unlike Moira, Ofglen performs her gender role perfectly that Offred doubts whether she is a true believer of the system or she is just acting as a Handmaid: "I can't entirely believe it. I think of her as a woman for whom every act is done for show, is acting rather than a real act. She does such things to look good, I think. She's out to make the best of it" (35).

As the story progresses, Offred discovers that Ofglen is a part of a secret rebellious organization called Mayday. However, the end of Ofglen in the novel is not really expected. She ends up by hanging herself after revealing that she is involved in the resistance movement. Though it appears to be a coward move, I believe that it's rather a brave one. I argue that Ofglen chooses to die rather than to reveal the fact of her mates who belong to this underground movement. In addition, she decides to commit suicide instead of getting arrested by the Eyes. This signifies Ofglen's clinging to resistance. Even in her last moments, she selects to suicide and reclaim her own body instead of giving up and killed by the regime.

In fact, Offred is also inspired by Ofglen. Before her death, she encouraged her to join the secret movement and to be a part of Mayday in order to escape from Gilead. Their secret conversations along with other members symbolize the power of a group defiance as Foucault states in his work *The Subject and Power*: "where there is power, there is a resistance" (82). This quote justifies the government's fear of any communication between Handmaids or any other members of the Gileadean community. When Ofglen dies, Offred feels relieved and thankful because "she's dead, and [Offred is] safe she has died that [Offred] may live" (Atwood 263).

Thanks to her surroundings, Offred grows a sense of power and becomes another symbol of Handmaids' dissatisfaction and resistance. In addition, she is also aware of her paramount importance as a reproductive machine for the government. Without Handmaids, The Republic of Gilead cannot produce any new babies. Therefore, Offred's importance raises her feelings of self-agency. Being involved into the underground movement, she declares her challenge against the totalitarian regime of Gilead and develops her sense of power.

4.1.2. Reclaiming the Past

Indoctrination is one of the main strategies that Gilead uses to manipulate its citizens mentally. After women are selected to be Handmaids, they are sent to the Education Center where they are brainwashed to forget about their past life, and thus, lose their identity. Consequently, reclaiming the past through memories becomes an act of both rebellion and survival in dystopian novels. The thoughts of the past are seen as rebellious because they help Handmaids to regain their identity and set them free from the mental control of the totalitarian regime.

After being manipulated both physically and mentally, Offred feels dissatisfied and goes through different acts to attain self-emancipation from the oppressive control. Thinking about her life before the construction of Gilead raises the feelings of rebellion in her mind to rebuild the former America once again. Hence, being aware of the life she once had turns Offred to be more subjective female member and increases her individuality in her society. Therefore, reclaiming the past becomes a symbol of resistance against the Gileadean regime.

One of the things that Offred, along with other Handmaids, still recalls clearly is her former name. Handmaids' name before the construction of Gilead contains no "of"; consequently, they belonged to no one; they were not properties that men could own according to the regime rules: "I want to be held and told my name. I want to be valued, in ways that I am not; I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name, remind myself of what I

once could do, how others saw” (281), states Offred. Unfortunately, the Gileadean government deprives them of their real names and creates for them new ones which turns them into a property of their Commanders. Thus, recalling their names help Handmaids to regain their own identity far from the false image that the government creates for them. Moreover, it raises their sense of individuality; in other words, having totally different names make the Handmaids feel unique instead of having the “of” preposition in the beginning of their names which makes them all similar to the government. As a result, it turns them from property of the Commanders into owners of their own bodies.

Throughout the story, I have noticed that Offred recalls her name and keeps holding onto it but it is never mentioned for the readers. When Offred is talking to herself, she mentions that her real name is not Offred; rather, she has a different name that nobody uses in the Republic of Gilead because it is not allowed to be used anymore. She also mentions her real name to Nick, her secret lover whom I am going to talk about later in this chapter. At first, she tries to convince herself that “it does not matter”; yet, she confesses that she is totally “wrong” (80). Offred’s confession to herself that her real name matters is a rebellious thought per se because she knows that not using a real name equals a suppressed identity. Moreover, there are some Handmaids whose name is revealed in the novel such as Ofwarren who was referred to as “Janine”. The following lines from *The Handmaid’s Tale* indicates the strong secret connection between the Handmaids who have never given up on their real names; instead, they keep exchanging them privately to increase their feeling of individuality and uniqueness:

We learned to whisper almost without sound. In the semi-darkness we could stretch out our arms, when the Aunts weren’t looking, and touch each other’s hands across space. We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, and watching each other’s mouths. In this way we exchanged names, from bed to bed: Alma, Jannie, Dolores, Moira, June (9).

Offred does not recall her real name only; however, she still also remembers her former family: her husband Luke and her daughter. In the new Republic of Gilead, Offred lives with the Commander and his wife. Her sexual relationship is out of political purpose and has no relationship with desire as I am going to discuss later in this chapter. Offred now feels empty inside; she has no real family to feel warm with. In the novel, she mentions that she is missing someone; then, she talks about her need of a real man; someone she can feel satisfied and safe with: “Can I be blamed for wanting a real body, to put my arms around? Without it I too am disembodied”, Offred wonders (97). Just after these lines, Offred compares her cold bed with “...snow. There’s something dead about it, something deserted” (97). This comparison expresses her feelings of emptiness that did not exist in the former United States.

Feeling dissatisfied with her new situation in Gilead is considered as an independent rebellious thought which goes against the standards of the new regime because it makes her search for a better life she once had with her real family: “Lying in bed, with Luke, his hand on my rounded belly. The three of us, in bed, she kicking, turning over within me ... I’m not frightened ... If I thought this would never happen again, I would die” Offred remembers (87). I propose that this quote shows the happiness that Offred lived in the past when she was pregnant with her baby girl. In fact, being far from her family pushes Offred to rebel and seek emancipation for the sake that they can be gathered once again. Offred was satisfied with her husband. She had a real life with her small real family. The last line of the quote indicates that Offred is still clinging to some hope to live this life once again. She is still holding on self-emancipation despite the falsified life she is living. I am also attracted by Offred’s expression “I would die” which shows, I think, that Offred is nothing without her home, family and love; consequently, she prefers to die rather than living the life that the authoritarian Gilead imposes on her. This expression reminds me also of Ofglen who selects to hang herself just to set her body free from totalitarianism.

Another element that comes to Offred's mind during her life in Gilead is the memory of her mother. This latter was involved in feminist groups before the new regime is established. However, Offred was not keen on her activities as a feminist because her rights were granted in her country. Hence, Offred mother's felt sorry for her daughter's way of thinking because nothing is really taken for granted. Offred recalls her mother words: "You young people don't appreciate things ... You don't know what we had to go through, just to get you where you are" (114). This is another memory that makes Offred hate the new Republic of Gilead and to think about the rights that she once had. It encourages her to search for her emancipation, to rebel against the regime and to restore her suppressed rights.

Another element I would like to explore about Offred flashbacks is the way she used to dress. In the new republic of Gilead, Handmaids are obliged to cover both their heads and bodies with a long red dress, red veil, in addition to white wings surrounding their faces. When Offred meets the Japanese women tourists, who come to visit Gilead, she recalls the way she used to dress earlier and comments "it has taken so little time to change our minds, about things like this (...) I used to dress like that. That was freedom" (Atwood 31). The quote indicates that the government attempts to make women comfort to gender roles through indoctrination and it almost succeeds in doing so. Offred continues: "I remember the smell of nail polish ... I can feel her shoes, on my own feet. The smell of nail polish has made me hungry" (32). Still, Offred does not feel familiar with such outfits anymore as she states later:

It's been a long time since I've seen skirts that short on women. The skirts reach just below the knee and the legs come out from beneath them, nearly naked ... the high-heeled shoes with their straps attached to the feet like delicate instruments of torture ... Their heads are uncovered and their hair too is exposed, in all its darkness and sexuality. They wear lipstick, red outlining the damp cavities of their mouths (31).

I guess that the expression “it’s been a long time” indicates that Offred is recalling her life before Gilead where women used to wear short skirts. It is worthy to mention that the struggle that Offred has in her mind and the contradictory feelings she feels towards the women appearance is a rebellious act. The first quote exposes Offred hunger for her previous outfit that she compares with “freedom” while the second one indicates her awkwardness towards the same outfit. Even though the story is just at its beginning, she notices that she feels unfamiliar with such clothes which make the Japanese women nearly “naked” while all what men can see in Handmaids is “the white wings only, a scrap of face, [their] chin and part of [their] mouth” (32). In addition, she compares the high heels with “instruments of torture” and she feels uncomfortable with Japanese women uncovering their dark, sexual hair and putting red lipstick in their mouths. Both quotes show that Atwood wants to prove the power of indoctrination on women’s mind through her character Offred in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Despite being forced to wear her new red outfit not really long time ago, Offred is no more comfortable with such clothes that she used to wear once with her own will in her previous life.

Reading is the last thing I would like to talk about in this part. When the Commander provides Offred with a magazine, another issue that I am going to explore later, she feels fascinated because she thinks that magazines have been burnt. Since both reading and writing are not permitted for women in Gilead, Offred recalls when she used to read them. At that time, she did not know that having a magazine to read is a bless. She considers her “longing” for magazines as “absurd” because she used to read them in different places including dentists’ offices, planes and hotel rooms (Atwood, 144). She used to see them as an instrument to kill time when she was waiting for her husband, then, she “throw them away ... and a day or two later [she] wouldn’t be able to remember what had been in them” (144). Therefore, recalling her ability to read, something she is not allowed to think about now, ignites Offred’s desire for knowledge again to reclaim her stolen mind that have been brainwashed by the government.

Even after the indoctrination attempts and the different identity that the regime creates for Offred, she refuses to let go her true self and real identity. This proves that Offred, unlike the traditional female character, is an active, rebellious and a brave female character who refuses to be a private property of the commander. Moreover, she is never ready to give up on her original self; rather, she is searching for different ways to revolt against the regime laws and to set herself free from its totalitarian rules.

4.1.3. Breaking Sexual Rules

In the totalitarian regime of Gilead, sexuality is highly restricted for both men and women. Handmaids are allowed to have sexual relationships with no one but Commanders. Therefore, any other intercourse which goes against this rule is viewed as rebellious and leads to punishment. Yet, even the sexual relationship with Commanders is forbidden when it takes place out of the Ceremony settings. In the light of this introduction, this part of my study is dedicated to explore the forbidden sexual relationships that the Handmaid Offred has gone through in the novel with both her Commander Fred and her secret lover Nick. As a result, it underlines Offred attempts to break the sexual rules of Gilead and to regain her oppressed body, and therefore, reach emancipation from its authority.

Before analyzing Offred's sexual relationships in the novel, I would like first to express my appreciation to Margaret Atwood, the writer of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Through her masterpiece, she proves to me that power is within us, and sometimes, it is born from the most broken part of us. Offred can play with the rules of Gilead as it shifts the function of her body from a manipulated object into a tool of empowerment. In other words, she can discover that power lies in her body per se. The act of turning it from an oppressive object into a means of power shows how smart the protagonist is. Therefore, she can regain her body twice: Once when she controls the Commander and once when she regains her romantic desire with Nick, the Commander's driver.

4.1.3.1. Offred's Secret Affair with the Commander

The first time Offred goes against the sexual laws of Gilead is when the Commander offers her to meet him for sexual purposes out of their Ceremony schedule which is supposed to be once a month. Instead of controlling her body, it is Offred's turn now to use her body to manipulate the Commander. Offred confesses that:

Occasionally I try to put myself in his position. I do this as a tactic, to guess in advance how he may be moved to behave towards me. It's difficult for me to believe that I have power over him, of any sort, but I do; although it's of an equivocal kind ... There are things he wants to prove to me, gifts he wants to bestow, services he wants to render, tenderness he wants to inspire (193).

I guess the term “equivocal” in this quote is not used randomly; however, it can have two interpretations: the first one refers to an ambiguous kind of power; that is to say, it is true that Offred figures out a way to manipulate the Commander; however, everything happens under his own conditions in the place and the time he wants. Also, we cannot neglect that despite that Offred uses her body to control the Commander, it is still against her will to do so. Booker comments on this idea in his *Dystopian Literature: A theory and Research Guide* when he mentions that: “outside the bounds of impersonal handmaid ceremony, [Offred] submits not out of private loyalty or feeling, but merely out of her firm understanding of the workings of power that are involved” (80). The words of Booker indicate that Offred is not having a relationship with her Commander out of love or desire; rather, she is actually obliged to do so. Thus, Booker believes that no matter how Offred controls the commander, the oppressive rule is still present.

The second interpretation of the word “equivocal” in the above quote, I suggest, refers to the suspicious kind of relationship that Offred is having with her Commander. In other words, both Offred and the Commander are doing something against the rules of Gilead. For

the Commander, this forbidden relationship satisfies his desires. For Offred, it satisfies her eager for emancipation from his control. Consequently, both of them are using the other to satisfy his needs disregarding the sexual laws of Gilead.

Another act of subverting Gilead sexual rules in search for emancipation is playing scrabble² with the Commander. This latter invites Offred “to play Scrabble ... as if [they] were an old married couple, or two children, seemed kinky in the extreme, a violation in its own way”, (Atwood 143). Offred finds it weird to play with the Commander thinking of it as a rebellious sexual act done by “a married couple”. Still, she feels hunger for words because she is not allowed to read and write; consequently, she accepts to play the game with him. During the game, Offred feels that freedom is dominating her body. In the past, she was not fond of playing intellectual games like scrabble. She remembers that people used to play this game when there is nothing enjoyable on TV long time ago. However, now “it's something different. Now it's forbidden, for [them]. Now it's dangerous ... It's as if he's offered [her] drugs” (130). Offred compares playing scrabble with drugs as something she was addicted to once and now it is forbidden to have it again. She also compares playing this game with freedom in the following lines:

The feeling is voluptuous. This is freedom, an eyeblink of it. *Limp*, I spell. *Gorge*. What a luxury. The counters are like candies, made of peppermint, cool like that. Humbugs, those were called. I would like to put them into my mouth. They would taste also of lime. The letter C. Crisp, slightly acid on the tongue, delicious. (131)

Even though Offred does not spend that much time in Gilead, she later figures out the amount number of words she has lost and does not remember anymore. The fact of forgetting

² According to Oxford learner's dictionaries, scrabble is “a board game in which players try to make words from letters printed on small plastic blocks and connect them to words that have already been placed on the board”. See: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/scrabbletm>

words proves the power of Gilead and its indoctrination its over citizens' mind. Offred starts feeling that the Commander is treating her much nicely. She describes their meeting to play scrabble "like being on a date" or a "conspiracy" especially when she sneaks secretly to his office and asking her for kissing goodbye when she is leaving (131).

Once again, Offred and the Commander challenge Gilead rules and its gender performance when the Commander provides her with his wife's dress to take her to the brothel in order to satisfy his sexual needs. Thus, Offred finally can put on a different outfit for the first time since she has been a Handmaid. Offred is aware that putting on different clothes is a sin; yet, she relates this sinful act with freedom. Far from what a Handmaid is supposed to wear, Offred experiences a sense of freedom and individuality. She is no more covered with a red long dress and a veil; she feels much visible now: "You expect me to put that on?" at first, Offred asks the Commander in surprise. Yet, she accepts his offer anyway because "there is something attractive in the idea. [She's] never worn anything remotely like this, so glittering and theatrical ... so sinful, so free". (213)

The Commander does not offer Offred scrabble and new clothes only; however, he provides her also with a magazine as a gift; something she thinks it does not exist anymore. Therefore, she wants them "with a force that made the ends of [her] fingers ache" (135). Offred compares the magazine with an "endless love" which makes "pain overcome and transcended" (144). He even dares to give her a pen and a notepad to write on; something that Aunt Lydia describes as "envy" (168). Offred feels too powerful when she holds the pen in her hand: "I can feel its power, the power of the words it contains", states Offred (173).

The Commander is described by Sarah Morrison as the hero from romantic plots who "despite the possible damage to his status comes to recognize the heroine's innate superiority and court her honorably" (320). This quote corresponds with what I have mentioned earlier in this part that Offred is able to regain some control of her body when she uses it to manipulate

the Commander. Moreover, the word “superiority” indicates a clear subversion of the stereotypical image of an inferior female. The fact that the Commander is sacrificing his position to arrange their meetings like dates, provide Offred with presents, and make her feel different increases the possibility that she is no more considered as a Handmaid; rather, she is viewed as “a unique individual” female (320). As a result, their sexual relationship is not about having sex only; however, it goes to its extreme. It shifts from a political relationship which aims to produce an off-spring into a more personal connection to satisfy their needs in addition to break the sexual rules and subvert the gender roles of Gilead.

4.1.3.2. Offred Secret Affair with Nick

The second time Offred breaks the sexual rules of Gilead is when she falls in love with the Commander’s driver Nick who apparently shares with her the same feelings. The relationship between Offred and Nick is not the same as the relationship between the Commander and the Handmaid. Rather, their relationship is not obligatory; it is done with their free will, out of love and desire in contrast to the Ceremony raping. According to Barbara Ehrenreich, “the only subversive force appears to be love” in dystopian fictions (34).

Offred believes that Nick is different; their relationship is more romantic. Ehrenreich describes such characters as “the fairy-tale” princes who is supposed to set women free (161). Offred’s feelings towards him makes her think as if they are fairy-tale lovers: “We look at each other. I have no rose to toss; he has no lute. But it’s the same kind of hunger. Which I can’t indulge” (Atwood 177). Offred does not have to function as the Commander mistress when she is with Nick because he is able to fill her emptiness and makes her feel more feminine: “love, it’s been so long, I’m alive in my skin, again”, states Offred (241). She is even ready to let go her will to leave Gilead just to stay with him. However, she blames herself later for this thought “telling this, I’m ashamed of myself”, Offred confesses (248). The fact that she is able to stay in Gilead because she loves Nick is a rebellious act itself because Handmaids can make sexual

relationships only with their Commanders during the Ceremony. As a result, Offred is able to defy the Gileadean control over her body and regain it once again through her intimate relationship with Nick.

Later in the novel, Nick is proved to a member of The Eyes, the secret police of Gilead. When he goes to arrest Offred for her rebellious actions, she feels frustrated because she trusts him:

I expect a stranger, but It's Nick who pushes open the door, flicks on the light. I can't place that, unless he's one of them. There always that possibility. Nick, the private Eye ... he comes over, close to me, whispers, "It's all the right. It's Mayday. Go with them". He calls me by my real name" (Atwood 268).

While reading this quote, I was fascinated myself when I realized that the plane chauffeur Nick is an Eye. Even though he was not directly introduced as an Eye, his function in the novel seems to be more than just a driver. To give an example, he arranges the secret meetings between Offred and the Commander. In addition, Serena Joy trusts him blindly when she arranges his meeting with Offred because she thinks that her husband is infertile. Actually, what is more surprising is that Nick turns to be a member of the Mayday resistance underground movement and he is here to rescue the women he loves! While he is pretending to arrest her, he asks her to run into the black van to set herself free from Gilead and its totalitarian rule. Yet, the ending of the novel was so ambiguous that Nick's true identity is not revealed; consequently, one cannot figure out whether he is really an Eye who is going to arrest Offred, or a member of Mayday who is going to rescue her life instead!

The previous analysis of the heterosexuality between Offred and the Commander in addition to Offred and Nick is considered as a means of emancipation. Dubino explains such relationships in dystopian worlds as an indirect "attempt to compensate for the lack of attention and validation they get in their own lives" in addition to "absent themselves" from the "routine

world' (107-108). Therefore, through these rebellious acts, Offred is viewed as an individual unique human being who is able to set her body free from the highly restricted sexual rules that Gilead imposes on her.

4.1.4. The Power of Language: Offred's Narratives

“The act of writing is the act of making soul ... the quest for the self”. (Anzaldúa 319)

In the light of this quotation, this part of my research is dedicated to investigate the importance of language in dystopian fiction to reclaim one's self and attain liberation. Since literacy is banned in different dystopian novels, some protagonists use writing as a means of self-liberation from the totalitarian regime they live in. However, women in Gilead are not permitted to read and write; thus, Offred figures out another way to narrate her story as a strategy to control her body and her mind and to seek self-emancipation from the authoritarian government of Gilead. Linda Kauffman comments on using language, written or spoken, by claiming that: “the medium changes, but the mood remains the same” (222). Offred decides to tell her story even though she is not sure about her audience. Therefore, she becomes the main narrator of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as she seeks to speak up her voice in a society where women are always silent: “Exiled, imprisoned, cloistered, or ‘shut up,’ epistolary heroines are deeply subversive because for them writing [or narrating] itself is an act of revolt”, claims Kauffman (226).

In order to narrate her story, Offred does not use a pen and a paper. Since both tools are forbidden for women in Gilead, she ends up by recording her tale using a tape-recorder: “It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along. Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden” states Offred (Atwood 41). Offred is not certain about whom she is recording for. She does not know who is her audience or who is going to listen to her tale; however, she decides to narrate her story any way hoping that one day her tale will be heard by someone as explained in the quote below:

You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else. Even when there is no one. A story is like a letter. Dear You, I'll say. Just you, without a name ... You can mean more than one ... You can mean thousands ... I'll pretend you can hear me. (34)

The character of Offred is usually dissatisfied with her position in Gilead because she is not treated as a real human being; she is rather a procreation machine. For that reason, Offred has never felt at home; she is always feeling strange in her room and in her country. She must behave as a Handmaid who is homeless, powerless and even speechless. Thus, Linda Myrsiades suggests that Offred "must create a space she can claim as hers, a storied place that allows her to possess her whole self" (230). Consequently, she seeks to find her real home and reconstruct her true identity through narrating her tale: "My self is a thing I must now compose" (Atwood 66). Therefore, she resorts to recording her story as a shelter of her own where she can speak up her voice and set her thoughts free against the totalitarian laws of Gilead: "Offred refuses to be silenced, as she speaks out with the voice of late twentieth-century feminist individualism, resisting the cultural identity imposed on her" (Howells 99).

In her work *Dark Knowledge in The Handmaid's Tale*, Reesman mentions that Offred's "voice offers a moving testament of the power of language to transform reality in order to overcome the oppressive designs imposed by human beings" (6). Through these few lines, Reesman proves that Offred attempts to seek her emancipation through the use of language. She underlines the significance of recording for Offred to overcome the oppression in Gilead. Reesman is not the only one who advocates the use of language as a tool of rebellion, Beran is another critic who defends Offred's ability to select language to speak up her revolutionary thoughts (71). Thus, recording in this case enables the narrator to liberate her thoughts, and even worst, to share them with someone else. Consequently, Offred is challenging Gilead's

indoctrination by telling her story to set herself free from its manipulation and “to reconstruct her fragmented selfhood and to justify the choices she has made” (Rubenstein 105).

Offred’s narration is also reflected through Atwood’s use of first-person perspective in her novel. As a result, the rebellious character of Offred exists since the beginning of the story as she is narrating her life experience in a world which deprives women even of their right to speak. Moreover, I guess that the title of the novel is not randomly selected. It indicates the power of narration in dystopian fiction. Offred’s tale becomes a means of rebellion, and therefore, liberation. Hence, Offred’s storytelling is “a criminal act” (Stein 269), through which, she rejects the Gileadean laws and challenges the authority of its regime. Furthermore, Offred is already aware of the paramount importance of words for Gilead. It helps women to set their minds free and help them regain their individuality. This justifies the reason why both reading and writing are not allowed for women. When Offred is talking about the supremacy of her Commander, she mentions that “he has something [Handmaids] don’t have, he has the word” (Atwood 85). I believe that Atwood uses of “word” here can be interpreted as language that can be both written or spoken.

In his work *Margaret Atwood’s Rhetorical Epilogue in The Handmaid’s Tale: The Reader’s Role in Empowering Offred’s Speech Act*, David Hogsette explores the importance of language manipulation for Offred. He claims that language is able to shift her function in the novel from passive to active subject. Therefore, her voice turns her into a rebellious female character who challenges the authoritarian rule of Gilead in her quest to seek emancipation (265). In addition, he supports Offred’s recording of her life story in Gilead as a means of survival: “Writing, or in her case speaking out, validates an individual’s existence; it proves the writer-speaker was, at some point, or still may be, alive” (269). Hogsette sheds the light on the role of language in emphasizing Offred’s existence in Gilead. I believe that the word “alive”

indicates a sense of subjectivity; a sign that no matter how the government attempts to silence Offred, she is still there subverting the rules with her own language, her own voice.

Along with Hogsette, Cixous also supports writing, or narrating, for suppressed women who suffer from their silence in their societies. In her work *The Laugh of the Medusa*, she argues that language helps women to reclaim their bodies which have been stolen by strangers and to return “[their] goods, [their] pleasures, [their] organs, [their] immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal” (395). Like Hogsette, Cixous highlights the importance of language for Offred to reclaim her suppressed body which turns to be nothing but a reproductive machine. Consequently, narrating her story becomes an asylum for the liberation of her body.

In her work *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf emphasizes also the role of writing, or speaking in Offred's case, in promoting the oppressed “freedom to think” (34). In dystopian societies such as Gilead even thinking is highly limited. Handmaids are not allowed to have independent thoughts or unique ideas. For this reason, indoctrination is used to manipulate their minds from thinking individually. In the Education Center, Aunts teach them the same ideas, recite the same biblical verses and try to instill them in their minds gradually until they have nothing to think about. Through language, Offred is resisting the regime; she can “record what [the government] erase” (Anzaldúa 319). She widens her space to think of her life position. It helps her to recall her past memories as mentioned previously in this chapter. Furthermore, it encourages her to think constantly about the oppressive rule of Gilead while telling her story. Therefore, recording becomes the “dwelling space” of Offred where she can embrace both her body and her mind (Mairs 412).

Offred is tired of being controlled; rather, she wants to be the master of her own destiny. She believes that she can manipulate her fate through narrating her tale. She has faith that every narrator is able to control the end of his story and to choose whether it ends either happily or

sadly; she mentions that: “If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it. I can pick up where I left off” (Atwood 41). However, when Offred is narrating her story, she keeps her fate uncertain. All we know is that Offred is supposed to be arrested by Nick; who is supposed to be a member of the Eyes; however, he turns to be a member of the underground movement. Consequently, he asks her to get into the van to rescue her life. The words “darkness” and light” in the quote below demonstrate that the future of Offred is unknown as Atwood prefers to keep the end of her story opened to the readers to show them that there is always a light in the darkest places. Offred ends her tale by stating that:

The van waits in the driveway, its double doors stand open. The two [men], one on either side now, take me by the elbows to help me in. Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can't be helped. And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light. (269)

As many critics who advocate the use of language in dystopian literature to defy oppression, I also argue that it becomes a symbol of revival and self-emancipation. Dissatisfied characters in dystopian world resort to writing or narrating as means to reclaim their self-agency and to reconstruct their identities. Thus, they become both strategies of survival and emancipation. Briefly the use of language helps characters to defy the ruling ideology” (Althusser 139). It also participates in changing their reality since “reality is expressed and perceived through language” (139).

4.2. Katniss Quest for Emancipation in *The Hunger Games*

According to Brown and St. Clair, female protagonists of dystopian novels “come to know themselves and they resist letting themselves be defined by others ... They are courageous, enthusiastic, and determined” (49). Similar to Offred, Katniss is among such

protagonists who refuse to subdue to the rules of their government. According to Brown and St. Clair definition of female dystopian protagonists; Katniss challenges the traditional image of women. Influenced by her life in District 12 and by her father's death, she turns to be more like a masculine female, let me say, whose masculine traits help her to survive in the arena against the other tributes. Simultaneously, she learns to adopt feminine traits also to serve her needs when necessary.

In the light of this introduction, this part of the last chapter of my investigation aims at exploring the quest of Katniss to reach emancipation throughout the three novels: *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. It explores her self-development throughout the novels shedding the light on Katniss' deconstruction of gender roles. As a result, it analyzes each novel alone to highlight how she uses both her masculine and feminine traits to overthrow the regime in her quest to attain emancipation.

In Suzanne Collins' world of *The Hunger Games*, every year, one boy and one girl from the twelve districts are selected to appear on a TV show and fight each other to death until only one tribute remains alive. Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl is selected to participate in the seventy-fourth annual Hunger Games after she volunteers to join the Games instead of her sister Prim. Together with Peeta, both teenagers become the tributes of District 12. They are sent to the Capitol with their monitor Haymitch to receive some training before they start fighting in the arena.

In the first part of the trilogy, *The Hunger Games*, Katniss undergoes different stages of a gradual self-discovery. Before being selected to participate in the Hunger Games, Katniss used to live with her mother, father and little sister Primrose, usually refer to as Prim. Katniss' father has had a great effect on her personality. He was a coal miner who always breaks the rule to protect his family mainly from hunger in District 12 "when you can starve to death in safety" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 7). After his death, Katniss suffers from her mother

depression and she finds out that she is the only one who can take the responsibility of her family: “all I knew was that I had lost not only a father, but a mother as well” (28), states Katniss. This latter denaturalizes the gender roles and replaces the function of her father; therefore, her character reflects masculine norms rather than feminine ones (Miller 146).

4.2.1. Katniss Masculinity: A means of survival

After her father’s death, Katniss becomes the only provider of her family. She is ready to do anything just to make them survive. Therefore, she reaches a certain level of power that makes her go beyond the stereotypical adolescent female to protect her family. The dystopian world of Panem makes her “envision utopian possibilities” (Broad 121). That is to say, Katniss develops a sense of self-agency and grows a feeling of hope throughout her journey to seek emancipation from the totalitarian regime. Moreover, just like Offred, such protagonists “refuse to accept the status quo or inevitable defeat. They are constantly challenged to come up with creative solutions to escape” (Cunningham 121). One should bear in mind that Katniss’ main objective, at first, was just to survive, not only against the tributes in the arena, but also against the hard conditions of living in District 12. However, her revolutionary thoughts start to develop in the novel gradually to reach its climax in the last book.

Similar to Offred’s character, Katniss is also dissatisfied with the oppressive regime of Panem. She inherits this dissatisfied and rebellious character from her father who used to take her to the woods and teach her how to hunt to provide food for their family or to find medical herbs that help her mother to cure the patients of District 12. As a result, Katniss becomes very skillful in using bow and arrows to hunt. Furthermore, she goes and trade in the Hub; an illegal act which strengthens the relationship between the people of District 12 who usually trade in this black market. Even some Peacekeepers become the clients of Katniss because she provides them with delicious strawberries and fresh meat that can be only found in the woods.

The fact that the Peacekeepers, who are supposed to prevent illegal acts in Panem, are trading in the Hub proves that there is a gap in the government's manipulation of its citizens. This gap encourages Katniss and gives her a hope to build a better future. According to Despain, it is the oppressive government of Panem that pushes its citizens to make rebellion because of the poor conditions they live in. If people are starving from hunger and cannot offer food in legal ways, they will resort to illegal acts to provide it (71). Indeed, the three acts of hunting in the woods, owing weapons as well as trading in the black market of District 12 are viewed as rebellious and lead to a severe punishment. However, Katniss is not afraid; she refuses to surrender to the Capitol's manipulation and let her family starve. Thus, as long as she can protect her family, she is ready to sacrifice her own self: "let them call the Peacekeepers and take us to the community home, I thought or better yet, let me die right here in the rain", states Katniss (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 31).

While reading the novel, I have noticed that Katniss function in Panem is far from doing a traditional feminine role of a woman who takes care of the domestic affairs of her house. Katniss is not the type of adolescent girls who are interested in beauty, love, marriage or even having kids (10). Her character is very different from the character of her mother and sister. The two of them represent femininity in the novel. Her mother reflects the traditional image of women who take care of their domestic affairs. After her husband's death, she experiences depression and becomes too passive as Katniss describes her: "she didn't do anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blanket on her bed, eyes fixed on some point in the distance" (27).

In contrast to Katniss, her sister Prim is described as a beautiful and sweet twelve years old who cares for people and even animals. While talking about her cat, Katniss confesses that she "tried to drown him in the bucket" but her sister "begged" and "cried" to keep him alive (5). In addition, Prim is a female character who is interested in cooking and taking care of

flowers. However, she is not as brave as her sister Katniss. In fact, she is too weak that “the woods terrified her, and whenever [Katniss] shot something, she’d get teary” (35). Therefore, both Prim and her mother are depicted as conventional female characters who exhibit fragility and too much sensitivity.

Even though she is a female, Katniss is forced to adopt masculine traits in a very young age after her father’s death. She is not interested in cleaning or cooking; rather, she has to hunt in the woods and trade in the Hub to protect her family from starvation: “at eleven years old with Prim just seven, I took over a head of the family. There was no choice”, says Katniss (28). In addition, she is ready to give up on her sympathy toward others for the sake to survive. When she was followed by a lynx in the woods, she was comfortable with its company; later, she becomes forced to kill the animal to sell its pelt and provide food to her family. After killing the animal, she confesses that: “[she] almost regretted it because he wasn’t bad company. But [she] got decent price for his pelt” (8).

Broad claims that Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games* subverts the traditional gender roles “that keeps female protagonists waiting at home, and proclaims that girls can do anything boys can do, including strategize, make demands, and even hunt and kill” (117). Being the protector and food provider of her family, Katniss adopts gender roles which are usually associated with men. Even Katniss’ outfit is similar to her father’s clothes. Katniss is not fond of girly dresses; she describes her everyday outfit in the following lines: “I swing my legs off the bed and slide into my hunting boots supple leather that has modelled to my feet. I pull on trousers, a shirt, tuck my long dark braid up into a cup, and grab my forage bag” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 5). The quote shows that Katniss usually puts on her hunting boots, trousers, a shirt, in addition to her cap; clothes that are usually masculine rather than feminine. The only trait in the quote that looks feminine and may differentiate her from men in such outfit is her long braid.

In fact, Katniss masculine identity is not innate; rather, it is constructed out of the oppressive regime and the circumstances she has undergone. This fact proves Butler's theory of performance that gender is not something born; however, it is socially constructed. For that reason, we can say that Katniss experiences an "immediate struggle" as referred to by Foucault in his work *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (90). Based on Foucault suggestion, Katniss is not fighting against the Capitol; instead, she is fighting against starvation. That is to say, she is not consciously acting rebellious to challenge the Capitol; however, she is just trying to survive and save her family from hunger. She views any kind of rebellion is meaningless (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 15) because "She has no idea. The effect she can have" as Peter mentions in the novel (90). Therefore, Trites believes that Katniss is not aware of "the degree" of her power because she is busy seeking survival (1).

In the Reaping day, women are supposed to look beautiful and wear dresses. When Katniss is back from hunting in the woods, she has to put on her mother's light blue dress to get ready for this big day: "my mother has laid out one of her own lovely dresses for me. A soft blue thing with matching shoes" (15). I think that the word "thing" in these lines demonstrates Katniss' unfamiliarity with dresses. When her sister comments on her beauty in the dress, Katniss feels uncomfortable towards her appearance and replies "and nothing like myself" (16). The word myself here implies that Katniss is not comfortable with her new look because she is not used to wear such feminine outfit; in addition, she feels more comfortable with her hunting style. Thus, to be a lady is not included in Katniss's list (Green-Barteet 37). In fact, Katniss' feminine outfit during the Reaping Day proves that gender can be restricted by the environment in which we live. Consequently, it proves once again Butler's theory that gender is a result of cultural construct.

Before starting the Games, tributes are supposed to go to the Capitol to meet their monitors, make interviews and have some trainings. In order to be evaluated, Katniss attempts

to show the Game makers her skills on hunting; yet, they are ignoring her because they are busy talking, laughing and eating. To attract their attention, Katniss shoots her arrow targeting an apple near of the Game markers. Instead of being punished, they feel so astonished and impressed by her brave spirit. Once again, her courageous behavior in front of the Game makers saves her from being punished. Moreover, Katniss is aware of the importance of cameras to win more sponsors while she is training. After this scene, Katniss feels grateful for the cameras even though she dislikes acting in front of them; she states that: “I’m glad for the cameras now. I want sponsors to see I can hunt” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 160).

4.2.2. Katniss Femininity towards Prim

The fact that Katniss adopts masculine traits does not deprive her of her innate femininity. When Katniss mentions the word love in *The Hunger Games*, she states that Prim is the only one she is certain she loves (11). The affection of Katniss towards her little sister makes her do whatever it takes to protect her. Yet, her only fear is to stay with folded arms against the government if her sister is going to be selected in the lottery of the Reaping Day: “I protect Prim in every way I can, but I’m powerless against the reaping. The anguish I always feel when she’s in pain wells up in my chest and threatens to register on my face”, says Katniss (16). Unfortunately, Katniss fears become true when her sister is chosen as the tribute from District 12 in the Reaping day. Therefore, and out of her affection towards Prim, she volunteers to take her sister’s place: “I volunteer as a tribute”, declares Katniss (23); an act that never happened in the history of Panem. Katniss describes the reaction of citizens as she states:

But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim’s place, and now it seems I have become someone precious ... almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means goodbye to someone you love (25)

It is clear from the above quote that Offred's step of volunteering to participate in the Games instead of her sister makes her "precious" for the people of Panem who feel both thankful because she dares to save her sister and sorry for her because it might be her last daring act towards the government. I suggest also that the word "shift" is not used randomly, however, it may indicate a moment of transformation in Katniss' life after doing this step. It is not difficult to notice that not allowing the government to take her sister as a tribute challenges Panem's rule: "On live television, all over Panem, she introduces a radical new idea: that it is important to care about other people; that it is the most important thing in the world", claims Borsellino (31). Therefore, caring for others and feeling sympathy towards them is a feminine trait that Offred exhibits to save her little sister from participating in the Hunger Games because she is too weak to fight the tributes in the arena. However, Katniss is aware of the cameras that broadcast the procedures of the Reaping Day in every house of Panem; thus, she acts as a strong and a brave lady: "I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reapings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 24).

Just like Atwood's *The Republic of Gilead*, Collin's Panem attempts to break any friendships or family ties among citizens. Therefore, such relationships are highly restricted: "Family devotion only goes so far for most people on reaping day", states Katniss (31). Yet, the above quote of Borsellino indicates that Katniss brave act, in front of all people of Panem, proves that there is some affection between family members in the world of Panem.

Despite that their clinging to family can be different, Both Katniss and Offred appreciate their family ties and they do not allow the regime to break them. In contrast to Peeta's brothers, who kept silent and helpless when he is selected as a tribute, Katniss is ready to sacrifice herself for her little sister even if it costs her own life. Thus, Katniss volunteering instead of her sister can be justified by her innate undying notion of maternal protection"

(Mitchell 128). Consequently, Katniss can perform both masculine and feminine roles just to save her family (Miller 48). The Game makers are fascinated with Katniss' bravery and accept her volunteering as a tribute. Eventually, she is declared as the first tribute from District twelve not knowing that this sixteen-year-old girl is going to make another revolution in the history of Panem; a fact that is going to be explored in the coming novels.

4.2.3. The Girl on Fire

In his interview with Caesar, the host of the tributes in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Peeta Mellark declares his love feelings towards Katniss in front of the cameras to reach the whole of Panem. However, being seen as a romantic couple makes Katniss frustrated because she does not want to seem as an easy target weakened by love. Yet, her monitor Haymitch has another opinion. In an attempt to convince her to play the role of lovers, he argues that: "Do you think he hurt you? That boy just gave you something you could never achieve on your own. He made you look desirable!" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 132).

People of the Capitol enjoy a luxurious life and their only objective is to be entertained; hence, having a romantic couple from the same district who are supposed to fight against each other is very interesting for them. Haymitch believes that Katniss is cold and not friendly. Moreover, he compares her charm with "a dead slug" because she is not desirable and she cannot attract sponsors or even survive depending just on herself (116). As a consequence, Beulen claims that Katniss has a great opportunity to survive because of this romantic relationship (22). Despite that she is not familiar with the feminine romantic roles, Katniss eventually becomes aware of the significance of acting like "star-crossed lovers" because "it's an absolute requirement if [she] want[s] any more help from sympathetic sponsors" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 239). As a result, being a couple from the same district fighting to death inside the arena is very interesting and it grants both Katniss and Peeta more sponsors.

Moreover, it makes the audience more sympathetic towards their situation and helps them survive the Game.

In fact, it is not only Haymitch who supports Katniss to act like Peeta's lover; rather, Katniss' stylist Cinna also encourages her to hold his hand in front of the cameras during the ceremony to be more attractive for the audience. Since, the people of the Capitol are obsessed with beauty and physical appearance, Cinna is supposed to design clothes for Katniss that make her more desirable. Before the Games, he made her a flaming dress that produces fire when she spins around to represent District 12 which is known for producing coal. When she sees herself, she feels satisfied and likes herself, not because she looks girly, but for the sake of being admired by the audience:

Remember, heads high. Smiles. They're going to love you! I hear Cinna's voice in my head ... As I gain confidence, I actually blow a few kisses to the crowd. The people of the Capitol are going nuts, showering us with flowers, shouting our names. Cinna has given me an advantage. No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire. (69)

Comparing to the Republic of Gilead where beauty is highly appreciated, the quote above also indicates the importance of the physical appearance and femininity for the people of the Capitol: the more beautiful you are, the more sponsors you can get; and therefore, the more opportunities you have to survive the Games. Thanks to the dress, her fake relationship with Peeta in addition to her feminine performance, Katniss figures out how to manipulate the audience and she becomes known as Girl on Fire (69). In fact, the team of District 12 finds difficult to transform Katniss' identity and to make her more feminine; she confesses that: "I'm not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious. By the end of the session, I am no one at all" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 116). Still, Katniss is constantly influenced by her masculine gender. After

the interview, she feels disappointed about her feminine style and comments: “What was I really? a silly girl spinning in a sparking dress, Giggling” (133).

Based on Allan Johnson lists of masculine and feminine traits, already mentioned in the second chapter, I can conclude that the character of Katniss in *The Hunger Games* is a mixture between masculine and feminine traits. According to Moreaux: “Katniss embraces both aggressive diligence and subdued compassion” (3). The former “aggressive diligence” is represented in her masculine qualities that she adopts to survive while the latter “subdued compassion” is reflected in her feminine qualities of love and caring for others, especially towards her sister Prim. Such mixture significantly contributes in the story progress; and thus, in Katniss emancipation. Even though she is represented as a feminine character who takes care of others, Katniss is forced to adopt a masculine gender role to survive from hunger especially after her father’s death. Later on, she discovers that masculinity is not enough to set herself free in the arena; as a result, she resorts to feminine gender performance to look desirable and gain more sponsors. It is also worthy to mention that the protective feminine innate love towards Prim is not similar to romantic love that Katniss has to perform in the arena; a point that is going to be discussed in the following parts of this chapter.

After being trained and interviewed, now it is time for the tributes to get inside the arena. Unfortunately, surviving does not require an exaggerated make-up or a charming dress. The rules are clear, the twenty-four tributes are supposed to fight each other to death until only one tribute remains alive: the victor of the Games. After being declared as a winner, the victor is supposed to experience a rich life with its family. Consequently, the tributes are forced to do their best in order to survive the Games and to enjoy a luxurious life. The experience of Katniss Everdeen inside the arena is not usual; she is affected by two main events that significantly change the course of the story. Even though she believes that rebellion “doesn’t change anything” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 15), Katniss challenges the government rules twice

during the Games. The first challenge is when she appreciates Rue's death while the second one is when she attempts to suicide with Peeta; two actions that change the future of the whole Panem.

4.2.4. Katniss' Relationship with Rue

It is during the Games that Katniss meets Rue, a tribute from District 11. Being unable of killing each other, both Katniss and Rue become allies and friends: "I realize, for the first time, how very lonely I've been in the arena. How comforting the presence of another human being can be", Katniss states (204). Rue is just a little girl who reminds Katniss of her sister Prim. Katniss proves that her feminine quality of caring is not only dedicated to her family; however, she really cares about the people who surrounds her regardless of who they are. In the following lines, Collins demonstrates that both Katniss and Rue trust each other blindly regardless to the rules of the Games: "Rue has decided to trust me wholeheartedly ... as soon as the anthem finishes snuggles up against me and falls asleep. Nor do I have any misgivings about her as I take no particular precautions" (206).

During the Games, Rue is targeted with a spear and badly injured. Before her death, she stays strong and helps Katniss to keep cool and carry on without her. Rue's death affects Katniss significantly and ignites her rebellious thoughts against the Capitol. After Rue is gone, Katniss expresses the deep hatred she feels towards the government; she realizes that her real enemy is not hunger per se; instead, it is the government that makes their bodies "a piece in their Games" (230). Therefore, Katniss refuses to be treated as an object to satisfy the regime's obsession with entertainment; rather, she wants to prove that every tribute is a human being that must be valued and appreciated. In addition, she has a deep desire to reclaim herself and to set free from the brutality of these Hunger Games in order "to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force [them] 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 is Katniss (230)

According to Wilkinson, The Games are “so powerful” because tributes are constantly surveilled (70). Being aware of the importance of cameras in the Games, Katniss learns how to use “her position, her visibility, as a message” for her favor to get more attention (71). According to the rules, when one of the tributes is killed, the other must leave so that the body is gathered and taken away. However, Katniss challenges this rule when she stays there to cover Rue’s body with flowers and hide her “ugly wound”, in addition, she kisses her body before she leaves (230). Katniss does her action on purpose in front of the cameras to demonstrate that the government cannot manipulate everything and everyone in Panem no matters what it uses to reach its purpose; she states:

They’ll have to show it. Or, even if they choose to turn the cameras elsewhere at this moment, they’ll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then and know I did it ...“Bye, Rue,” I whisper. I press the three middle fingers of my left hand against my lips and hold them out in her direction (230-231).

Many critics comment on this important scene from Collins *The Hunger Games*. According to Mitchell, Katniss does this act out of her “innate” femininity (128). In addition, Koenig claims that the flowers represent “Innocence, youth loss and human compassion” (43). In other words, through flowers, Katniss wants to show the citizens of Panem that Rue is innocent just like her little sister Prim. She is condemned with death because her only crime is being declared as a tribute in the reaping day. She wants to show them also that people are losing their lives in a very young age just to please the government obsession with entertainment. In addition, despite that the government highly restricts human connection and relationships, Katniss is demonstrating a sense of human’s empathy towards others. Therefore, Katniss is not aware that Rue’s death is not just another scene to entertain the people of the Capitol; yet, it is another step that paves the way towards revolution.

Indeed, Katniss' feminine sympathy towards Rue is similar to her caring for her little sister Prim. In fact, the acts of caring for someone, feeling sorry for their death and covering their bodies with flowers have never happened before in the history of the Hunger Games. As mentioned in the previous chapter, children are brainwashed to treat their enemies in the arena as objects; therefore, they kill each other without mercy because they are not viewed nor treated as human beings. The aforementioned acts prove that Katniss and Rue are not affected by this norm; rather, they treat each other as sisters who cooperate to save one another.

After Katniss' sympathy towards Rue's death, District 11 provides her with a piece of bread as a symbol of gratitude for taking care of Rue. According to Despain, this small act indicates that it is better for people to cooperate as a team instead of being "isolated from each other" (245). Henthorne has also commented on the same idea by claiming that sending a piece of bread to Katniss is not just a rebellious act; however, it proves that the attempts of the Capitol to disconnect the citizens from each other are not always successful (104).

In fact, Henthorne's point of view reminds me also of the secret connection of Handmaids and their support to each other in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Indeed, providing Katniss with bread is not the only behavior that appreciates Katniss' tenderness towards Rue. However, when Thresh, the other tribute from District 11, has the chance to kill Katniss, he shows mercy and lets her go. Therefore, Katniss, Rue, Thresh and District 11 have not challenged the rules of human disconnection only; instead, they attempt to use the Hunger Games against the Capitol by showing the importance of empathy to the whole people of Panem. Yet, this is not Katniss' only act of rebellion. The following part of this work explores Katniss' most significant rebellious act in the trilogy which ignites the feeling of revolution among the people of Panem.

4.2.5. Katniss' Relationship with Peeta

The theme of romance in *The Hunger Games* "is never the main focus"; however, it is just a means which contributes to the characters' development (Stamper 17). That is to say,

Romance in *The Hunger Games* exists only to help Katniss to reclaim her self-agency and develop her power. During the Games, Katniss keeps faking her romantic feeling towards Peeta. Knowing that using her masculine qualities is not enough to survive, she learns how to perform feminine roles to get more sponsors. Tom Henthorne argues that Katniss learns how to use “both masculinity and femininity” and perform them “depending on [her] needs and desires” to realize her objective: survival (45). He continues explaining that deconstructing gender functions and performing the feminine role when necessary turns Katniss into “a radical figure, one that challenges the ideological foundation of Panem itself” (45). Fortunately, Katniss could receive different aids such as medical treatments and food inside the arena thanks, not only to her masculinity, but to her romantic scenes with Peeta. When Peeta is wounded in his leg, Katniss imagines Haymitch talking to her:

I can almost hear [Haymitch] snarl. ‘You’re supposed to be in love, sweetheart. The boy’s dying. Give me something I can work with!’ And he’s right. If I want to keep Peeta alive, I’ve got to give the audience something more to care about. Star-crossed lovers desperate to get home together. Two hearts beating as one. Romance. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 253)

Based on Butler’s theory of gender as a cultural construct, Katniss usually resorts to conforming the social norms to seek emancipation and survive the Games. In effect, she learns how to take control of herself and develops a female power through her fake relationship with Peeta. According to Meghan Gilbert-Hickey, Katniss performs “femininity and heterosexuality” for the sake of receiving some “bread not just for herself but also for vulnerable, kind Peeta ... her femininity is performed, but the very notion that she’s willing to perform it is an act of “feminine” nurturing” (100).

After Rue has gone, The Capitol sudden decision to change the rules is surprising for Katniss and every other tribute in arena. The Game makers suddenly declare that there can be

two winners instead of one; however, both winners must be from the same district. After this announcement, Katniss and Peeta attempt to find each other to work as a team to survive the Games. Eventually, they remain the last two survivors in the arena. Both Katniss and Peeta feels relieved because they are going to be declared as the winners of the 74th annual Hunger Games. Unfortunately, that is not the case; the Game makers give up on their promise and announce again “The earlier revision has been revoked ... only one winner may be allowed” (Collins, *The HG* 331-332).

After changing the rules once again, Katniss feels frustrated and figures out that it is the Capitol plan since the beginning to entertain the audience by having two victors instead of one; however, it “never intended to let [them] both alive” (332). All they want is to reach the most dramatic end in all versions of the Hunger Games: two lovers from the same district are fighting each other to death. Both Peeta and Katniss are not able to kill each other. Katniss confesses that she cannot go home without him by her side because she cares for him: “If he dies, I’ll never go home, not really. I’ll spend the rest of my life in this arena trying to think my way out” (333).

Katniss feels sensitive towards Peeta because he saved her life once from starving before the Games. She is also aware that he is a part of her identity because they belong to the same district. In this moment, Katniss thinks quickly about a way to save them both; so, she pulls out poisonous berries and threatens the government to make a dual suicide. It is as if Katniss is challenging the Capitol in front of the whole Panem: either they both win or they both die. According to the Henthron, not having a winner is not going to ruin the sacred celebrations of the government to demonstrate its power only. However, just like in *The Handmaid’s Tales*, making a suicide expresses “agency and free will” of the tributes; two characteristics that are not allowed in Panem (102).

Katniss proves once again that she is intelligent. First, she uses the cameras as means to share human compassion when Rue dies. Then, she uses the rules of the Games against the Capitol. She is so aware that not having a victor is against the rules of the Games because without “a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol”, Katniss thinks (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 333). As a result, she challenges the government to declare them as victors or to lose them both (Green-Barteet 40). At this moment, President Snow realizes the threat that Katniss have upon his government because her actions may spread rebellious thoughts among the people of Panem.

The climax in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* which “[sets] in motion the whole chain of events that led to the Mockingjay revolution”; therefore, is “Katniss’s little trick with berries” (Dunn et al. 71). In other words, the turning point in Collins trilogy is when Katniss and Peeta attempt to make a dual suicide. For Katniss, this act is not done intentionally to spread rebellious thoughts in Panem; rather, she thinks about using the poisonous berries as means to save herself and her mate from death in order to survive the Games (Green-Barteet 39). However, the government does not consider their act as a means of survival; instead, it thinks that attempting to suicide is a direct challenge against the government and its rules. In fact, it is this small act of Katniss which ignites revolution in the coming two parts of *The Hunger Games Trilogy* as I am going to discuss later.

4.2.6. A symbol of Hope

Katniss’ attempt to make a dual suicide with Peeta is her first true step toward emancipation. Through their alliance and rejection to play according to the rules, both Katniss and Peeta are declared as victors and survive the Games. When I first read the novel, I asked myself: Is this the end? What is next? I was thinking that finally the cross-lovers from District 12 are free and they can enjoy a luxurious life with their families. But I have realized later that this is just the beginning; a turning point in the trilogy which changes the destiny of Katniss,

Peeta, and the people of the whole Panem. Both Katniss and Peeta do not know that through their attempt to suicide, they are going to build a new future for Panem.

In fact, Katniss believes that she succeeds in surviving and protecting her family from poverty and hunger. However, things turn to be much different than what she has expected. Just after the Games, Haymitch blames Katniss for her courage to challenge the Capitol and states: “Listen up. You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand if being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 345). In other words, the Capitol does not accept that Katniss' attempt to suicide is for the sake of surviving; however, it believes that her rebellious act is intentionally done to make them “a joke” in front of the people of Panem. In order to justify her behavior and save herself from this trouble, Haymitch advises her to pretend that she is “so madly in love” with Peeta that she is not “responsible for [her]actions” (345). As a result, Katniss recognizes that she is stuck with her feminine performance that she has to carry on to save herself from punishment.

When President Snow comes to reward the victors, he looks into Katniss who describes his eyes “as unforgiving as a snake's”; she continues: “That's when I know that even though both of us would have eaten the berries, I am to blame for having the idea. I'm the instigator. I'm the one to be punished” (352). By the end of the first novel, Peeta is feeling frustrated when he realizes that Katniss feeling of love is fake and performed “to keep [them] both alive in the arena” (361). After her experience in the Hunger Games, Katniss develops her self-agency. She is no more the foolish girl who believes in the government promises. She becomes the first female character who stands against the government principles. She proves that she is able to play their Game but in her own terms and conditions. Not knowing that she ignites the torch of hope in every citizen in Panem, Katniss' rebellious acts have led to start the revolution against the Capitol and its head President Snow.

4.3. Katniss Quest for Emancipation in *Catching Fire*

The second novel of the trilogy *Catching fire* starts after the survival of Katniss and Peeta in the 74th Hunger Games. Now, they must be prepared for the Victory Tour through which they travel throughout the twelve districts and go back to the Capitol to celebrate their victory with the people of Panem. The Victory Tour is held, not only to celebrate the winners' survival in the arena, but to remind every citizen in Panem that the government manipulates everything and every person including the victors.

After the berries event in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss's bravery to challenge the rules is spread among the twelve districts and influences their people who start to make uprisings in *Catching Fire*. Her act becomes the torch which ignites their hopes to take a step forward and to change their destiny. According to Borsellino, Katniss and Peeta's claim that their rebellious act is just out of love is viewed as "counterproductive" (35). In fact, before their attempt to make a dual suicide, they declare their love more than once making themselves "loyal to something more than the Capitol" (35). As a result, accepting their relationship from the beginning is considered as a flaw in the totalitarian system of the government. After their attempt to suicide, President Snow addresses Katniss: "if the Head Gamemaker, Seneca Crane, had had any brains, he'd have blown you to dust right then" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 24). Unfortunately, Seneca Crane is killed as a punishment for his mistake.

In fact, even Katniss, who was just trying to save herself and Peeta from death, is not aware about the impact these little berries can have on the future of Panem: "All I was doing was trying to keep Peeta and myself alive. Any act of rebellion was purely coincidental", states Katniss (22). The term "coincidental" demonstrates that Katniss's challenge against the Capitol is not on purpose because it is done unconsciously. Leah Wilson provides an example of the influence of Katniss act on the districts in *Catching Fire* where an old man who belongs to District eleven whistles the melody of Rue to Katniss as a kind of support to her. Unfortunately,

the old man is shot dead right then leaving Katniss worried about the fate of the innocent people who are influenced by her act.

President Snow insists that she must pretend that her act is not out of defiance; rather, it is out of her deep love towards Peeta; otherwise, the whole system of Panem “would collapse” (26). Before the Victory Tour, he visits Katniss to warn her that her act of rebellion is an enough “spark” which can make the districts “ablaze” (74). Hence, Katniss does not have to prove her blind love towards Peeta to the people of Panem only; yet, she is supposed to prove that to President Snow per se. According to Beulen, Katniss is not involved in heteronormative relationship because she wants to; rather, her main objective is to survive. Again, she must perform a character that does not fit her real personality: I mourn my old life here. We barely scraped by, but I knew where I fit in”, states Katniss (Collins, *Catching Fire* 10). Therefore, Katniss has only two options: either to become the rebellious girl who challenges the system or to stay the romantic girl who cannot live without her lover Peeta (Wilson 32). Of course, it is clear that the first choice costs her both her life in addition to the life of her family. As a warning to Katniss, President Snow states that:

You have no access to information about the mood in other districts. In several of them, however, people viewed your little trick, with berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And a girl from District Twelve of all places defies the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same? What is to prevent, say, an uprising?” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 25).

I think that using the expression “a girl from District twelve” demonstrates that President Snow is trying to underestimate the value of Katniss since District twelve is the poorest in Panem. Thus, for President Snow, it is ridiculous for a helpless girl like Katniss to challenge the oppressive totalitarian regime of the Capitol and stays alive. However, Katniss is not really afraid of the Capitol because she thinks that the system has to be very weak “if a

handful of berries bring it down” (26); yet she is worried about the fate of her family especially after the death of Seneca Crane. In order to keep her family safe, she is now obliged to carry on her feminine performance with Peeta during the Victory Tour to survive with her family and her friends.

According to Gottlieb, even after her survival in the Hunger Games, the latter keeps destroying Katniss’ “private world” (11). That is to say, Katniss and her family cannot live the luxurious life they are promised to live. However, Katniss is supposed to carry on her performance to convince both President Snow and the people of Panem that her attempt to suicide is not a rebellious act as they believe. Therefore, the fake couple arranges a fake marriage after Peeta’s proposal to Katniss in the Victory Tour as Katniss states: “Peeta gets down on one knee, pours out his heart, and begs me to marry him. I, of course, accept ... the Capitol audience is hysterical, shots of crowds around Panem show a country besotted with happiness” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 80). After this big proposal, President Snow visits the couple to surprise them and shows satisfaction towards the couple (80)

Katniss attempts to satisfy President Snow cannot suppress her real identity. During the Victory Tour, she is smiling to the people, accepting their flowers and showing her thanks. Once again, the personality of Katniss is affecting the people of Panem unconsciously. Even her acceptance to marry Peeta, that is supposed to calm down the uprisings among the districts, inspires the people to resist the Capitol and carry on the rebellion. After her failure to convince the people that her suicidal attempt is not an act of defiance, she feels “a sense of relief” rather than frustration because “the questions of whether [she] can succeed in this venture have been answered” (81).

Unlike Offred who is affected by her surroundings, Katniss is able to affect and inspire the people around her. After being accused of challenging the system, she starts to wonder about her true self and to question the actual objective of her act. In the quote below, Katniss

is rethinking about her action of trying to make suicide with Peeta using berries. She believes that their worth does not lie in saving herself or saving Peeta. But their real value lies in defying the rules of the Capitol. It is in this point that Katniss starts to figure out her power in Panem when she decides to act as her actual self. As a result, the coming events are getting more complicated and Katniss becomes a real threat against the regime. Katniss claims that:

The berries ... If I held them out to save Peeta because I knew I would be shunned if I came back without him, then I am despicable. If I held them out because I loved him, I am still self-centered, although forgivable. But if I held them out to defy the Capitol, I am someone of worth (126)

After Katniss' attempts to calm down the resistance fail, President Snow announces surprisingly the 75th Hunger Games known as the Quarter Quell by getting back the old winners, including Katniss and Peeta, to fight each other again to death in the arena. Obviously, the Quarter Quell is held to prove that rebellion must be punished and to remind the rebels that: "even the strongest among them cannot overcome the power of the Capitol, the male and female tributes will be reaped from their existing pool of victors", declares President Snow (181). This latter aims at showing the people that even the previous victors of the Hunger Games, who were promised a lifetime of luxury, can go back to the arena if they try to challenge the government. Katniss experiences a sense of despair since she is aware of the aim behind the Quarter Quell. She believes that the tributes are the "embodiment of hope where there is no hope", and now, they must kill each other "to show how even that hope was an illusion" (183).

Since Katniss grows a sense of self-awareness, she does not play according to the rules of the Games once again as she refuses to kill the other tributes inside the arena. From now on, her objective is no more personal; she is not trying to protect her family only. Her objective now is much political and her rebellious acts against the Capitol are made consciously. Her main goal is to save the people of the whole Panem by overthrowing the oppressive regime of

the Capitol. She feels grateful for both Cinna “who risked everything by undermining President Snow and turning [her] bridal silk into mockingjay plumage” and for the rebels who “might be fighting to bring down the Capitol at this moment” (274). Consequently, Katniss decides to “be strong” because “[her] refusal to play the Games on the Capitol’s terms is to be [her] last act of rebellion” (274-275).

When the Game makers reveals the poisonous fog in the arena, Peeta is too slow to escape it. Therefore, Katniss saves his life for the second time: “I think of the eyes glued to the television screens in the districts, seeing if I will run, as the Capitol wishes, or hold my ground” (307). I believe the expression “as the Capitol wishes” exhibits the Capitol attempts to change the character of Katniss. President Snow arranges the Quarter Quell to make her kill the other tributes including Peeta. By doing this, he will prove that she is still manipulated by the government and change people’s opinion about her rebellious character in an attempt to emphasize that rebellion against the Capitol is not possible. Even though Katniss could escape and save her life, she goes against the expectations of President Snow and decides to slow down and save Peeta’ life.

During the Quarter Quell, Katniss knows very well that the enemy is not the other tributes; rather, it is the Capitol “who starves and tortures and kills [them] in the arena. Who will soon kill everyone [she] love[s]” (389). Surprisingly, it is not only Katniss who is aware of this fact. However, the rebellious spirit which spreads among the districts affects the other tributes as well; hence, they cooperate together and help Katniss to defy the Capitol: “We had to save you because you're the mockingjay, Katniss ... While you live, the revolution lives”, says Plutarch (398). Eventually, Katniss shoots her arrow directly through the force field which surrounds the arena leading to its total destruction; a step that makes me questions the coming events in the last part of the trilogy in which Katniss believes that she can make a difference because she is no more manipulated by the government. She is now the Mockingjay; a

nickname that is inspired by the birds and the dress designed by Cinna to Katniss as a symbol of rebellion: “Feathers ... You're like a bird” states Ceasar. ‘A Mockingjay ... It's the bird on the pin I wear as a token”, Katniss replies (262). Still, Ceasar is aware that her dress is not just her token; rather, it “is resonating in an entirely different way throughout the districts” (262). This proves once again Byrne’s claim on the importance of clothes to determine one’s identity (59). While Offred clothes represent her oppressed class, Katniss clothes exhibits her rebellion and leadership.

The self-agency of Katniss keeps developing throughout *Catching Fire*. After the revolution breaks out in different parts, Katniss decides to lead the revolution in Panem. She is now aware about her influence on, not only the people of her district, but the people of the whole Panem: “the bird, the pin, the song, the berries, the crackers, and the dress that burst into flames. I am the Mockingjay the one that survived despite the Capitol's plan. The symbol of rebellion” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 398).

After the destruction of the arena, Peeta is captured by the Capitol and brainwashed while Katniss is rescued by District 13 which is believed to be destroyed once. Yet, District 13 turns to be a more powerful underground community of rebels under the supremacy of President Alma Coin whose aim is to destroy the Capitol and win the Presidency of Panem. After figuring out that her hometown District 12 is totally destroyed by the Capitol, Katniss decides to join the underground government of rebels just like Offred does. However, unlike Offred, Katniss becomes the leader of rebels which paves the way to the beginning of the last part of Suzanne Collins’ trilogy known as “*Mockingjay*”.

4.4. Katniss Quest for Emancipation in *Mockingjay*: The Symbol of Rebellion

During the Dark Days of rebellion, the Capitol created genetic modified male birds known as jabberjays to spy on the rebels by recording their conversations and conveying them to the Capitol. However, the rebels were smart enough to use the jabberjays against the

government. When they discovered the Capitol plan to spy on them using jabberjays, they started to give them wrong information. Thus, the Capitol abandoned them to nature and left them there to die. Surprisingly, the male jabberjays survived when they connected with female mocking birds leading to the birth of a new kind of species known as mockingjays. This new kind of birds cannot record human conversations anymore but it can imitate any melody or tune. Therefore, the mockingjay becomes a symbol of hope and rebellion for the people of the districts in Suzanne Collins' trilogy.

Personally, I believe that Suzanne Collins chooses the mockingjay to represent Katniss for two reasons. The creation of mockingjays is not intended by the Capitol; therefore, it proves that the Capitol cannot control everything. Since it did not want them to exist, they become a symbol of rebellion against the system rules: "Mockingjays are living symbols of the Capitol's short sightedness and prove that it isn't invincible" (Lockwood 122). Similarly, Katniss exits in the Games and inspires the people of the districts due to the Capitol's disregard for her participation in the Games on behalf of her little sister. Just like the existence of mockingjays in Lockwood quote, Katniss' challenge of the rules makes the Capitol possible to defy. In addition, When Katniss is about to die after the explosion because of her injuries, she is rescued and becomes more powerful than before (King, *(Im)Mutable Natures* 114). Therefore, Katniss is represented as a Mockingjay in the last part of the trilogy; a symbol of rebellion and resistance.

The second reason why Collins chooses the mockingjay to represent Katniss is, I believe, its hybridity. As I have mentioned, mockingjays were created so that Jabberjays survive. They are a combination between male Jabberjays and female mocking birds. Therefore, they represent both masculinity and femininity. Similar to mockingjays, Katniss also adopts both masculine and feminine gender roles. As a mockingjay, Katniss uses her

strength to attain “legitimacy and privilege” (Halberstam 2). In addition, she resorts to her feminine qualities of caring and sympathy toward others.

After destroying her hometown and capturing Peeta, Katniss experiences a sense of trauma. At the very beginning of *Mockingjay*, she is trying to recall the events and remind herself about whom she is: “*My name is Katniss Everdeen. I am seventeen years old. My home is District 12. I was in the Hunger Games. I escaped. The Capitol hates me. Peeta was taken prisoner*” (Collins 7). After joining District 13, President Coin succeeds in convincing Katniss to be the Mockingjay, the leader of rebellion and its voice, to gain emancipation from the totalitarian regime: “I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution”, states Katniss (11). When she recognizes her power, she is no longer caring about her family and friends only; yet, she is thinking about the future of the whole Panem.

The use of propaganda becomes crucial theme in the last part of the trilogy. The television, which used to broadcast the annual Hunger Games, is now a tool of a propaganda war between the Capitol and District 13. Both of them uses propaganda to gain more supporters by their side. The rebels aim at broadcasting videos about the revolution throughout Panem using “propaganda spots” (Collins, *Mockingjay*29). When she visits the hospital in District 8, the cameras broadcast emotional pictures of Katniss with the patients to gain people’s support. Katniss is surprised about the people from different Districts who are by her side and she realizes that “[she] was their Mockingjay long before [she] accepted the role” (55). Unfortunately, the hospital is bombed when she left. It is right then when Katniss addresses President Snow through the cameras. In the quote below, she uses the cameras for her benefits once again to address a serious threat to President Snow. Comparing to Offred’s internalized rebellion, Katniss rebellion against the Capitol is more externalized. That is to say, Katniss announces the war against President Snow in front of every citizen in Panem. Therefore, she becomes the face of propaganda whose role is to speak up the rebels cause and unify the

districts against the Capitol: “President Snow says he's sending us a message, well, I have one for him. You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but do you see that? ...Fire is catching! ... And if we burn, you burn with us!” (59-60).

Every time Katniss subdues to a certain role in the trilogy, she proves Butler's theory of gender performance. When she accepts to be the Mockingjay, Katniss is obliged once again to perform a role that is imposed on her. She states that the rebels want her to perform “the role they designed for [her]” (11). She later adds that: “a whole team of people to make me over, dress me, write me speeches, orchestrate me appearances” (11). The expression “designed for me” demonstrates a shift in Katniss's role from trying to convince people that she is in love with Peeta into being the leader of the revolution.

Whereas Offred's role shifts from being political into personal, Katniss's function in the trilogy changes from personal into political. At first, President Snow obliged her to perform the feminine role of the romantic girl to survive with her family. Now, President Alma Coin designs her a political role of leadership to save the future of Panem. Henthorne believes that the function of Katniss as a Mockingjay is not really different from her function as the Girl on Fire. Both of them manage “her words, actions and appearance ... to achieve certain effects” (75). Weznar also believes that the character of Katniss as a Mockingjay is manipulated; thus, she “serves as persona rather than person” (153).

My first impression about District 13 when I first read the novel was positive. The rebels and their President Alma Coin seem to fight against the Capitol to defy its regime and to construct a “a centralized government” in which both the districts and the Capitol “can elect their own representatives” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 50). However, as the story progresses, I have realized that District 13 is not much different than the Capitol. Both of them are using Katniss to meet their own needs. In addition, it is President Alma Coin per se who proposed to arrange the 76th Hunger Games using the Capitol's children as tributes to take revenge. Thus, Pavlic

claims that Coin's system does not really differ from the inhumanity that the Capitol practises upon its citizens (33).

Later in the novel, Katniss Little sister Prim is killed in a bomb attack. Everybody believes that President Snow is the one to blame. However, the story reveals that it is Gale who designs the bombs to look exactly like the Capitol's ones. After their creation, they are stored and protected in District 13; therefore, President Alma Coin decides to use the bombs and sacrifice the life of children, including Prim, to make President Snow responsible for the accident and turn people against him. This fact is later revealed to Katniss by President Snow who accuses President Coin for killing her little sister intentionally.

When Katniss realizes that President Coin is as brutal as President Snow, her belief to build a new peaceful Panem fades away; she feels no more loyal to "these monsters called human beings" even if she is one of them because "something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 212). According to Pavlic, Katniss is not sure about Snow's words; however, she "knows the kind of military tactics that rebel leaders like Coin and Gale are willing to deploy in pursuit of their own supposedly justified means" (34). Katniss believes that: "Snow thought the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control. Coin thought the parachutes would expedite the war. But in the end, who does it benefit? No one" (212).

When the war is about to end, a public execution of President Snow takes place. As Katniss is preparing to shoot her arrow to kill him, she surprisingly changes her mind and kills President Coin instead: "the point of my arrow shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead", states Katniss (209). This act proves that Katniss is not willing to end the war with the Capitol only; however, she wants to build a whole new peaceful Panem and President Coin is far from achieving this

objective. The following words of President Snow takes a place before the death of President Coin:

‘My failure,’ says Snow, ‘was being so slow to grasp Coin's plan. To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with Thirteen ... she was intending to take my place right from the beginning. I shouldn't be surprised. After all, it was Thirteen that started the rebellion that led to the Dark Days ... But I wasn't watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I'm afraid we have both been played for fools.’ (201)

I suggest that the above passage indicates that President Coin is similar to President Snow. She is also eager to authority and she uses Katniss to achieve supremacy and defy Snow to take his place. Pavlic justifies Katniss’ act of killing President Coin instead of Snow by suggesting that “one form of absolute power cannot be used to replace another” (35). Still, President Snow cannot escape death as well; he was murdered during the chaos which followed President Coin assassination. By Killing President Coin, Katniss does not attain emancipation from the totalitarian regime of the Capitol only; however, she sets herself free from the imposed gender performance on her character. She can finally perform what she believes is true regardless to the cameras and the oppressive regime.

By the end of the novel, Katniss combination of gender roles helps her, not only to attain emancipation, but also to throw up the oppressive regime of the Capitol and construct a new Panem. Katniss ends up marrying Peeta instead of Gale, Katniss’ best friend and one of District 13 rebels. After being involved in the bomb attack which killed her sister to win the rebellion, Katniss and Gale’s marriage seems to be impossible. According to Myers, Katniss “has a strong moral code, a sturdy sense of right and wrong ... At the core of her morality is steadfast loyalty to her family” (140-1). Consequently, marring with Gale means “a betrayal of

one of her highest values: the preservation of innocent life” (142). The words of Myers are supported by Katniss claim that:

What I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 218)

It was surprising for me to figure out that the epilogue in *Mockingjay* portrays Katniss and Peeta married together with two children in the new peaceful world of Panem that is free of oppression, wars and most important, free of the Hunger Games. Despite that ending with marrying Peeta and raising children is far from Katniss character, it is still her personal choice to adopt the feminine domestic gender role of a wife and mother; and therefore, she is no more restricted with imposed gender performance. According to Katherine Broad in her work *The Dandelion in the Spring: Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games Trilogy*, both protagonists lay the foundation of a utopian futuristic world in form of a “a stable, loving and safe home and family” (125).

Katniss; as a result, is not an subject of manipulation anymore; rather, she proves to be able to reclaim her body, reconstruct her real identity and develop self-agency. Unlike Offred whose fate remains unknown, Katniss clearly reaches emancipation at the end of the story by overthrowing the totalitarian regime that still exists in *The Handmaid's Tale*. However, Katniss experiences a post-war trauma as she can never forget about the Games: “how can I tell them about that world without frightening them to death? My children ... I will tell them how I survive it”, states Katniss (Collins, *Mockingjay* 219).

4.5. Emancipation in Feminist Dystopias: A Comparative Analysis of Offred's and Katniss's Journeys

Despite being both dissatisfied with their situation, Offred and Katniss's mechanisms of defiance against the regimes are not the same. While Offred's rebellion against Gilead is internalized, Katniss rebellion against the Capitol is externalized. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred does not demonstrate her direct rebellion against the government; however, she resists the system through private thoughts and memories which exhibit an intensive struggle against the ideology of Gilead. She is engaged in a silent rebellion using memory and language. In addition, her internal monologue filled with flashbacks and emotions makes her restore some parts of identity and individuality. Even her sexual relationships with the Commander and Nick were secret from their surroundings. The function of Offred, thus, shifts from political to personal. At first, her relationship with the Commander was political that aims to produce an offspring to the government; later, this relationship becomes more personal. As the story progresses, Offred uses the Commander to regain autonomy over her body and reclaim her individuality.

Unlike Offred, Katniss rebellion in *The Hunger Games* trilogy is external. At the beginning of the novel, she did not intend to rebel against the government; however, her rebellious acts were made to provide her family with food in order to survive. Similarly, her attempt to make a dual suicide with Peeta was not to challenge the government; rather, her rebellious action was for the sake of survival. As the story progresses; Katniss starts to influence her surroundings. Therefore, she is engaged with an externalized rebellion against the government and becomes the leader of the revolution. In opposite to Offred, Katniss function in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* shifts from personal to political. After different attempts to survive against the odds, Katniss transforms into a Mockingjay; the leader of the revolution against the oppressive regime.

Fighting through internal or external rebellion, both Offred and Katniss deconstruct the gender roles imposed on them through different acts of rebellion. The former challenges the gender norms imposed on her through her internal narratives, flashbacks and breaking sexual rules while the latter subverts the gender roles by going against the traditional image of femininity. She embraces different traits that can belong to both genders including: empathy towards others, emotional vulnerability, rebellion and leadership. In addition, both female protagonists are involved in underground movements of rebellion: Mayday and District 13. Therefore, both female characters deconstruct traditional gender roles by subverting them. Their behaviors reflect how women can use their marginalized positions to fight the societal norms and seek emancipation from imposed traditional roles.

The totalitarian regimes of Gilead and Panem attempt to break family ties to consolidate its power. Therefore, citizens of dystopian states are allowed to show loyalty only for the government. However, this is not the case with Offred and Katniss who keep holding on their family members and refuse to give up on them. Although Offred is captured and separated from her husband and her daughter, she keeps talking about them in her narration. Even after being brainwashed in the Educational Centre, she could not forget about them. She always remembers her life in the former America with her family and feels the warmth of their existence.

Despite that Katniss is not separated from her family at the beginning of the novel, she proves to be loyal to her family when she hunts in the wood and trade in the Hob; two illegal acts that lead to immediate punishment. However, Katniss prefers to sacrifice her life to provide her family with food and make them survive. The sacred relationship between Katniss and her family is demonstrated once again when she volunteers to participate in The Games instead of her sister Prim. Katniss believes that her little sister is too sensitive and too fragile to participate in the Games; consequently, she replaced her to save her from an inevitable death. Through

memory or sacrifice, both Offred and Katniss succeed in overcoming the States' attempts to break family ties; therefore, they resist oppression and reclaim a significant part of their personal identity.

The relationship with their surroundings plays a key role in Offred's and Katniss' journeys to reach emancipation. Offred is affected by her surroundings mainly Moira and Ofglen. Moira teaches her that rebelling against the rules is not possible, after being punished because of rejecting her social function, Moira was given another role to perform which better fits her personality. Through Ofglen, Offred becomes aware of underground network of rebels called Mayday. Therefore, Offred realizes that resisting the totalitarian regime of Gilead is always an option.

Unlike Offred, Katniss is the source of inspiration to her surroundings in The Trilogy. Her acts of defiance in front of the cameras encourage the people of the Districts to take the first step towards rebellion. Starting from volunteering to play the Games instead of her sister until she becomes The Mockingjay, Katniss could inspire the people around her to cooperate together and throw the regime. Thanks to her, the citizens of Panem do longer think of surviving; rather, they start to seek emancipation from the totalitarian regime of Panem.

Resorting to suicide is another act of defiance shared by both novels. Even though it is not reflected through the protagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Ofglen's attempt to suicide has a deep psychological and emotional influence on Offred. After being revealed as a member of the underground movement of rebels, Ofglen prefers to suicide and claim her body rather than being killed by the government. After Ofglen's death, Offred is inspired by her determination not to betray her friends. Therefore, Ofglen suicide contributes in intensifying the sense of resistance in Offred's mind.

Similar to *The Handmaid's Tale*, resorting to suicide to reclaim one's body is raised by Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games*. At the end of the first part, Katniss warns the Game

makers that she is going to make a dual suicide with Peeta unless they declare them both winners. Katniss resorts to suicide as a solution to survive the Games instead of being killed. This act of attempting to make a suicide is the torch which ignites revolution in the coming parts of the trilogy.

The importance of gender performance to survive in dystopian novels as Judith Butler claimed is also examined by both writers. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Republic of Gilead is based on heteronormative norms; consequently, anyone who goes against this norm must be severely punished. In addition, performing sexuality in this novel becomes crucial to reclaim one's body. Hence, we can notice that Offred often resorts to sexual relationships to seek physical emancipation and regain her body. Similarly, Katniss in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* performs both genders to survive in the arena and overthrow the regime as mentioned previously.

It is also worthy to mention that Offred and Katniss uses the most important part in the story against the government. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred uses her body to rebel against the regime. She first makes a sexual intercourse with the Commander out of the Ceremony settings. Then, she is engaged with a sexual relationship with Nick. Katniss, in *The Hunger Games*, uses the rules of the Games against the government when she attempts to make a dual suicide with Peeta as explained above.

From an intersectional perspective, the journeys of Offred and Katniss toward emancipation are shaped by different but overlapping forms of inequality. While both characters experience gender-based oppression, their social positions influence the nature and extent of their resistance. Offred's role within a rigid patriarchal system limits her agency and confines her to more subtle and internal forms of resistance. In contrast, Katniss operates within a system structured by both class and political control, which allows her a more visible and active role in challenging authority. This comparison shows that emancipation is not

experienced in the same way, but is shaped by intersecting social forces that define each character's possibilities for resistance and transformation.

By the end of the novels, the females' protagonists of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy* reach different fates. On the one hand, the totalitarian regime in The Republic of Gilead did not collapse; however, it is still there with its oppression and dictatorship. Atwood concludes her novel by demonstrating that Offred is arrested by The Eyes. However, it is uncertain whether Nick, a part of the underground movement and a member of the Eyes, saves Offred or really arrests her to be executed for her rebellion against the laws. On the other hand, Katniss proves to be successful in overthrowing the regime of the Capitol, creating new government and starting new life with Peeta and her children.

Conclusion

In the light of the previous analysis of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, I can conclude that Offred's and Katniss's journeys for emancipation call for an urgent need for social change when necessary. Through internal or external rebellion, both Offred and Katniss resort to rebellious acts to liberate themselves from the totalitarian regime they live in. Atwood and Collins shed the light on the importance of gender performance to liberate oneself within a dystopian society. Both protagonists challenge the stereotypical image of a traditional female and go beyond the binary system of gender roles. In addition, each one of them has to undergo certain circumstances and perform different acts of defiance in order to seek emancipation from totalitarianism. An intersectional approach is employed in this chapter to analyze how overlapping forms of inequality influence the protagonists' experiences and their pursuit of emancipation. Despite reaching different fates, Offred and Katniss prove to be successful in challenging the rules of their governments. Consequently, both of them are able to reach a certain degree of emancipation through subverting the system norms and rebelling against them.

General Conclusion

This study investigated the theme of female emancipation from oppressive regimes in dystopian fiction through the analysis of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale* and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. The female protagonists of these novels fight against the totalitarian regimes of their governments in order to reach emancipation. Consequently, this work provided a theoretical background about dystopian and feminist dystopian fiction. It then explored the different aspects of manipulation used by both governments to manipulate their citizens. Finally, it discussed the mechanisms of rebellion that the female protagonists Offred and Katniss used to fight the dictatorial regimes and seek emancipation.

In order to achieve the aims of this research, this study compared the mechanisms of both control and rebellion through different perspectives of writers: Atwood and Collins. In addition, it drew upon descriptive, analytical, thematic and comparative approaches. Foucault and Althusser theories were used in this research to investigate how totalitarianism sustains itself in dystopian fiction. Judith Butler's theories on gender were also used to understand the ways gender roles help the protagonists Offred and Katniss to survive against the oppressive regimes of Gilead and Panem, respectively. Furthermore, the theory of intersectionality was employed in this research to analyze how overlapping forms of inequality influence the protagonists' experiences and their pursuit of emancipation

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women are stripped of their rights and individuality. Their personal freedom is limited by strict gender roles imposed by the Republic of Gilead. Being an oppressed Handmaid and the narrator of her story, the main character Offred struggles to reach emancipation. She starts to question the utopian image made by the government and compares between the former America and the New Republic of Gilead. The oppressive system pushes Offred to develop different acts of defiance against the regime. Although these acts are considered rebellious and lead to punishment, she grows a sense of individuality and refuses to

subdue to her social function. Her transformation throughout the novel exhibits her internal strength. Moreover, her character shifts from being a victim into a rebellious female who attempts to survive against the totalitarian system of Gilead to reach emancipation.

Similarly, the female protagonist of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Katniss Everdeen, develops different acts of defiance to fight against the totalitarian regime of the Capitol. Being a citizen from District 12, Katniss learns to feed her family and protect them in a very young age. Like the New Republic of Gilead, the oppressive regime of the Capitol develops the character of Katniss in terms of resisting the governments and growing self-autonomy. At first, Katniss lost her identity and had to perform different gender roles that the Capitol and District 13 imposed on her; eventually, she becomes unable to recognize her real identity anymore. However, later in the novels, Katniss develops survival skills, undergoes emotional challenges and involves into resistance movements to reclaim her true identity and self-agency. Consequently, in her attempts to survive the Hunger Games, Katniss shifts from the plain girl from District 12 into the Mockingjay, a symbol of rebellion to fight the oppressive system of the Capitol and gain freedom.

In order to understand how totalitarianism affects the development of the female protagonists in the aforementioned novels, this thesis provided a detailed examination of the totalitarian elements in the worlds of Gilead and Panem. The totalitarian aspects in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy* are based upon an oppressive regime that uses different techniques to dominate every aspect of human's life. However, these aspects are reflected by two different female perspectives. Therefore, the study provided a comparison between the mechanisms of control in the aforementioned novels.

To investigate how the female protagonists, Offred and Katniss, strive against the totalitarian regime to survive and reach emancipation, this study examined the different acts of defiance that both female protagonists undergo to achieve this objective. Offred and Katniss

are both female characters who are dissatisfied with the living conditions they live in. Therefore, they question the authority of their governments and try to rebel against the oppressive systems of Gilead and Panem.

In the light of what have been mentioned, this research revealed that Offred could not reach an ultimate emancipation. Her fate is still unknown for the readers who are left with an open-ended conclusion that does not clarify whether Offred is arrested, punished or liberated. In contrast, Katniss, along with the other citizens of Panem, could reach emancipation after the Capitol's downfall. She starts new life in a new government with her husband Peeta.

The end of the novels clarifies the difference between classic and modern dystopias. The ending of *The Hunger Games* is more hopeful and positive comparing to the ending of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Yet, we cannot say that Offred's ending is totally pessimistic. Since Atwood left the door open for the readers to question Offred's destiny, I think that there is always a hope that Offred is rescued by Mayday and reach emancipation together with other members. Despite that it not clear whether she reaches emancipation or not, I believe that Offred's acts of rebellion makes her mind and body free from the manipulation of the totalitarian system unlike the other women of Gilead who accept their marginalized position and follow the norms blindly.

Before concluding this thesis, I would like to thank Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Collins, the authors of *The Handmaid's Tales* and *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, respectively, for their masterpieces. Thanks to them, we learn that there is always a torch of hope in the darkest places, that family ties are highly appreciated and cannot be easily broken, that every woman is a fighter and can make a change in her society. Through their female protagonists, Offred and Katniss Everdeen, both writers teach us that fighting against oppression is always an option and it can be only done when the individual embraces personal sacrifices.

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ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل مسيرة السعي نحو التحرر التي تخوضها أوفريد وكاتنيس، البطلتان الرئيسيتان في روايتي *حكاية خادمة وثلاثية ألعاب الجوع* على التوالي، وذلك في مواجهة الأنظمة القمعية في مجتمعاتهم غيليا وبانم. كما يتطرق البحث إلى مظاهر الأنظمة الشمولية في كل رواية، إضافة إلى آليات التمرد التي تخوضها البطلتان من أجل التخلص من هيمنة الأنظمة الاستبدادية. ولتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة، يعتمد هذا البحث على المناهج الوصفية، الموضوعية، والتحليلية. كما يركز على نظريات ميشيل فوكو حول السلطة، المراقبة، والانضباط إلى جانب نظريات لويس ألتوسير حول الأيديولوجيا والتلقين. هذه النظريات تساعد على فهم آليات التحكم المختلفة في الروايات المذكورة. إضافة إلى ذلك، فإن هذا البحث يعتمد بصورة أساسية على نظرية جوديث بتلر حول الأداء الجندي وذلك من أجل تفسير كيفية تفكيك الأدوار الجندرية في الديستوبيا النسوية كوسيلة للبقاء في مواجهة الأنظمة الشمولية. كما تم اعتماد النظرية التقاطعية لتحليل كيفية تداخل النوع الاجتماعي مع أشكال أخرى من اللامساواة في المجتمعات الديستوبية. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى سد النقص القائم في التحليل المقارن في أدب الديستوبيا النسوي، من خلال معالجة تحرر المرأة باعتباره عملية قائمة على الفاعلية والمقاومة، وليس مجرد حالة من القمع. كما تكشف أن البطلتين تصلان إلى مصيرين مختلفين؛ فبينما تنجح كاتنيس في إسقاط الشمولي وبدء حياة جديدة، لا تحقق أوفريد تحرراً واضحاً ويظل مصيرها غامضاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الديستوبيا النسوية، الشمولية، تحرر المرأة، الأدوار الجندرية

Résumé

Cette recherche vise à analyser la quête d'Offred et de Katniss, les protagonistes féminines de *Le Conte de la Servante* et de *Les Jeux de la faim Trilogie* respectivement, face aux régimes oppressifs de leurs sociétés, Gilead et Panem, afin d'atteindre l'émancipation. Elle examine les éléments totalitaires présents dans chaque œuvre ainsi que les mécanismes de rébellion que traversent les protagonistes féminines pour se libérer des régimes autoritaires. Pour atteindre les objectifs de cette étude, ce travail s'appuie sur des approches descriptives, thématiques et analytiques. Il se fonde sur les théories de Michel Foucault relatives au pouvoir, à la surveillance et à la discipline, ainsi que sur les théories de Louis Althusser concernant l'idéologie et l'endoctrinement. Ces cadres théoriques permettent de comprendre les différents mécanismes de contrôle à l'œuvre dans les romans susmentionnés. En outre, la théorie de la performativité du genre de Judith Butler est largement mobilisée dans cette recherche afin d'expliquer comment les rôles de genre sont déconstruits dans la dystopie féministe comme moyen de survie face aux régimes totalitaires. Une approche intersectionnelle est également adoptée afin d'examiner comment le genre interagit avec d'autres formes d'inégalités dans les sociétés dystopiques. Cette étude comble le manque d'analyses comparatives dans la dystopie féministe qui envisagent l'émancipation féminine comme un processus d'agentivité et de résistance, plutôt que comme une simple condition d'oppression. Elle révèle que les protagonistes connaissent des destins différents. Tandis que Katniss parvient à renverser le régime totalitaire et à entamer une nouvelle vie, Offred n'atteint pas clairement l'émancipation et son destin demeure ambiguë.

Mots-clés : dystopie féministe, totalitarisme, émancipation féminine, rôles de genre.