

Female Survival through Gender Performance in Dystopian Aftermath: The Case of Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*

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Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the importance of gender performance to attain female survival in dystopian narratives through the protagonist of *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. This article first attempts to distinguish between sex and gender in addition to understanding the meaning of traditional gender roles. Moreover, it analyses the totalitarian aspects in the trilogy. Finally, Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performance is applied to understand Katniss' gender performance through the course of the trilogy.

Key words: Feminist dystopia ; totalitarianism ; gender roles ; gender performance; masculinity; femininity.

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1. Introduction:

For many years after its emergence, dystopian literature was monopolized mainly by male authors. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that female writers contributed to this genre of literature giving birth to what is known as “Feminist Dystopia”. The latter emerged by the beginning of the second wave of feminism. During this period, women were no more interested in claiming their right to vote; however, they addressed new sexual issues such as fighting physical assault, controlling childbirth as well as having the right to legal abortion (Kindersley, 2019, p. 57).

One of the most important themes which makes feminist dystopias distinctive from male dystopias is gender representation. In many works, female writers claim that gender in dystopian narratives is not instinct by nature; instead, it is a result of a totalitarian ideology that is imposed on citizens and must be adopted. Moreover, they discuss the characters' gender performance; and mainly, they challenge traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society. Consequently, they stand against gender oppression and call for women's emancipation by providing their female protagonists with unusual characteristics which do not fit their feminine genders such as strength, intelligence, rebellion and independence. In addition, they explore sexual themes, especially those which are related to claiming female control of their bodies. According to Raffaella Baccolini, female science fiction discusses different themes like: “the

representation of women and their bodies, reproduction and sexuality, and language and its relation to identity” (2006, p. 520).

Feminist dystopia flourished mainly during the 1960's. However, this genre turned to be more popular with works which adopted a female perspective like Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. The latter is one of the most famous young adult feminists' dystopian collections which I am going to explore in this study shedding the light on the survival of its female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, through her gender performance.

1. Related Reviews of Literature

Recently, the theme of feminist dystopian literature has been the core study of different literary studies and examinations. However, each study focuses on a specific theme through different novels.

In his work, *FEMALE PERSPECTIVES IN THE DYSTOPIAN NOVEL*, Fran Desmet concentrates on depicting how women are represented in feminist dystopias particularly in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* as well as Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. He highlights the way language can be used to serve the question of women's rights. He concludes that language is a highly powerful tool that can be used by subversive individuals along with the leaders of oppressive regimes. Furthermore, it can be used as a means of revolution against dominant ideologies.

Elsa Klingensmith is another researcher who is interested in feminist dystopia. She analyses different novels in her work *Feminist Themes in Dystopias* to show that women and nature are largely ignored in classic male-authored dystopic works, which favor technology and male characters (2016, p. iii). However, female authors can dedicate a special focus on women without ignoring the issue of technology. Elsa analyses George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* as male-authored dystopias in opposition to various female-authored dystopias such as Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Octavia Butler's *Dawn*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Maddaddam* trilogy.

Anika Tabassum Ima is a researcher who prefers to compare the female position in utopian and dystopian fiction in her work *Mirroring Women's World in Utopian and Dystopian novels In Sultana's Dream, Herland, The Bluest Eye and Memoirs of a Survivor*. In this latter, Anika examines the way female authors of different contexts and cultural backgrounds have utilized the genres of utopian and dystopian literature to challenge the social and cultural norms of gender from the early to the late-20th century. She adopts Simone De Beauvoir and Judith Butler's theories to discuss the issue of gender. Tabassum concludes all human beings nourish the same hope for a better future. Thus, utopian and dystopian novels help the

readers to evaluate the world they live in and to appreciate the beauty of life (2016, p. 52).

The aforementioned works focused on feminist dystopias and the representation of females in dystopian societies in general. However, they ignored to limit their investigations to the portrayal of female protagonists and the strategies they adopt to set free from the totalitarian regime. As a result, the previous researches inspire me to work on this article entitled *Investigating Female Survival through Gender Performance: The Case of Katniss Everdeen from Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games Trilogy*; an analytical study that explores the aspects of totalitarianism in the world of *The Hunger Games*. In addition, it portrays the survival of a dissatisfied, rebellious protagonist who adopts different gender roles to achieve her freedom.

2. Introduction to Gender Theories

The period between the 1970's and 1980's was characterized by the emergence of a set of concepts known as "Gender theories". The latter influence the lives of males and females throughout history and changed the views towards the gender binary: masculinity and femininity. These theories tackle different issues such as: the difference between sex and gender, gender roles and gender performance.

3.1 Sex and Gender: Identical but Ambivalent

Sex and gender are two significant concepts that contribute to identifying human identity. Although they look similar, there is a notable difference between these two terms which influences the views towards men and women.

The first thing to do after babies' birth is to identify their sex, either male or female depending on their sexual organ, giving them the first identity in their life. Consequently, they are raised according to the gender which suits well their sex: masculine or feminine. In other words, it is the gender that determines the way they behave, their relation to people, ideas and nature, and even the way they view themselves (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2002, p. 56).

Sex, in effect, is the major biological difference between men and women as Cranny-Francis et al. refer to as: "a theory about human beings which divides them into two biologically based categories, male or female" (2002, p. 7). Therefore, sex is the "chromosomal make-up" of any person which determines their physiological structure (Oakley, 2019, p. 34).

While sex is about the physiological difference that is based on the genital organ, gender is considered a social process that determines the social practices of men and women according to their sex identities (Beasley, 2005, p. 11). That is to say, it is a society that identifies people's gender based on their sex. If someone is a man, he must be masculine; whereas, if someone is a woman, she must be

feminine. Consequently, sex is natural while gender is societal and constructed.

According to Oakley, whereas “sex is a biological term, gender is a psychological and cultural one” (2019, p. 115). She claims that social conditions cause psychological differences between the two sexes. Simone de Beauvoir is another theorist who believes that gender is constructed by society. In her book *The Second Sex*, she states that: “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1973, p. 301). That is to say, a woman is not born feminine by nature; however, her gender is constructed by society. She implies that gender is an active process that emerges from culture instead of sex per se. Thus, the body is a passive tool that is used to receive cultural compulsion; therefore, gender is a social construct.

Some other theorists who agree with the same idea are Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman. In their article *Doing Gender*, they claim that gender is not about what someone is; however, it is about what someone does in interaction with other people (2019, p. 140).

Briefly, people are not born feminine or masculine; however, their gender is determined by the society based on their sex identities. In other words, their social functions are not given to them at birth; rather, they are socially constructed. Therefore, gender is not instinct but a socially organized activity as Reeves and Baden explain: “Sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorize someone as

female or male; whereas gender refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what is to be female or male” (2019, p. 30).

3.2 Gender Performance: Butler Theory

Judith Butler is considered one of the leading theorists of gender studies who goes against the essentialist claims that believe in the binary opposition of sex and gender. In her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she explores the difference between the two terms.

According to Butler, sex does not necessarily determine gender. Unlike sex, gender is something performative. It is not what someone is; instead, it is what someone does, a set of acts, a verb rather than a noun, and more precisely, “a doing” instead of “a being” (1999, p. 25). It is a process that ends with a result to be recognized. Moreover, it is not restricted to a universal concept; however, it is constructed from a set of repeated actions that can be developed through time (1999, p. 43). Consequently, it is impossible to determine gender at birth; however, gender can be only determined when it is performed through a set of repetitive behaviors which are going to build a gender identity at last.

Judith Butler refers to biology and socialization to distinguish between sex and gender. On one hand, sex determines the categorization of people. On the other hand, gender is socially constructed and determined by social norms and social values.

Consequently, people have the right to choose their gender, masculine or feminine, and perform the gender they want even though they are restricted by their sex. Therefore, even though gender is socially constructed, it stills a matter of choice since sex does not necessarily go in parallel with gender. That is to say, not every female is feminine and not every male is masculine.

3.3 Traditional Gender Roles

While sex refers to the biological organs which classify people into male or female, gender is more an abstract term that refers to a group of characteristics that classify people into masculine or feminine. Yet, there are already some pre-existing stereotypes that determine the features and behaviors of masculinity and femininity. These stereotypes are referred to as “traditional gender roles” and they are usually determined by societies. That is to say, males are characterized by strength, independence, bravery, and leadership while females are characterized by tenderness, softness as well as sensitivity.

Traditional gender roles determine even the way men and women dress and speak. To give an example, dresses, skirts ,and high heels are only for women. Therefore, it is inappropriate for a male to wear such female clothes. Moreover, unlike men, women are not supposed to talk or laugh out loud in the streets because it goes against their feminine gender nature. These constant attitudes towards men and

women make people take gender characteristics for granted being unaware of the real definition of gender.

Generally, traditional gender roles exist mainly in patriarchal societies to justify men's supremacy over women using heteronormative norms since women are considered "a heteronormative object of desire" (Woloshyn et al, 2013, p. 155). Patriarchal societies view women as weak, dependent creatures who are destined to serve men and to live under their control because women are "naturally born to be a wife and a mother" (Sittichane, 2009, p. 25). Consequently, traditional gender roles along with heteronormativity make people adopt unconsciously the general stereotypical image of gender towards men and women.

According to heteronormativity, men and women are expected to perform their gender roles based on their sex. However, men and women can deviate from, and therefore, break the traditional gender roles. In her work *Undoing Gender*, Butler explains clearly this idea. She argues that gender is "the mechanism" which produces and naturalizes the notions of both masculinity and femininity; yet, these notions can be "deconstructed and denaturalized" (2004, p. 42). Moreover, she claims that the gender binary, masculine and feminine, can be changeable according to some specific social norms and cultural constraints (2004, p. 10). That is to say, gender is not a constant concept; however, it can be changed from being a traditional role that is determined by society to a personal act that is driven by

specific individual desires and needs. The latter leads to gender deconstruction which I am going to explore later in this article.

3. Totalitarian Aspects in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*

One of the major themes which are discussed in dystopian novels is totalitarianism and its effect on dystopian citizens. Linda Cernak defines a totalitarian government as a state which takes control over the different aspects of human life as the following:

In a totalitarian state, citizens are told which political beliefs they should hold.... The government tells citizens what jobs they must do, where they must live, and what they must think about government policies and leaders. Secret police spy on citizens, and there are a few, if any, individual civil rights (2011, p. 13).

The theme of totalitarianism has become the focus of different dystopian studies. Suzanne Collins is one of the most famous writers who explore this theme in her masterpiece *The Hunger Games*. The latter is a feminist dystopian trilogy that takes place in a post-apocalyptic totalitarian government called Panem. The Capitol, under the rule of President Snow, is a part of Panem that is characterized mainly by being a wealthy and technologically advanced city that manipulates the other thirteen districts of Panem. After trying to stand

against the governments rules, the thirteenth district was destroyed leaving the rest of the districts under the oppression of The Capitol. As a punishment, the government decides to organize The Hunger Games; a realistic TV show in which one boy and one girl aged between twelve and eighteen are supposed to fight each other to death in the arena. The games end when only one tribute remains alive and is declared a victor.

Cernak summarizes the aspects of totalitarianism in *The Hunger Games* as follows: a single-party government is ruled by a dictatorial regime, the use of violence and terror, the manipulation of mass media using propaganda, the manipulation of technology and weapons, and the use of indoctrination to manipulate citizens life and to control their bodies and brains. (2011, p.12).

First, the loss of democracy under a single authoritarian party is the main theme in *The Hunger Games* in which the country of Panem is ruled by the dictatorial state: The Capitol, as Katniss Everdeen explains in the novel: "...about the people who ruled our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol" (Collins, 2008, p. 6). According to Pavlic, the people of the Capitol in *The Hunger Games trilogy* give more attention to entertainment, food, and appearance instead of thinking about the fate of the districts (2012, p. 33).

The use of terror is a major aspect of totalitarianism in dystopian fiction. It is used to frighten the citizens and to keep control over them. Terror is reflected in *The Hunger Games* through the peacekeepers who use violence to manipulate people as Rue, one of the tributes, mentions in the novel: “they whip you and make everyone else watch.” (Collins, 2008, p. 202). Moreover, the use of terror to keep citizens under control is manifested in *The Hunger Games* per se. According to Clemente, there are two reasons behind the existence of *The Hunger Games* in the trilogy: first, to entertain the higher class crowd of the Capitol, and second, to remind the citizens of the districts of the government’s extreme power (2012, p.24).

Totalitarianism through terror and violence is also explored in *Catching Fire*. During the first Quarter Quell, the government attempts to remind citizens that their children are facing death in the games because of their will to stand against the regime. Thus, it is the role of the adults to vote and select the children who are going to represent their districts in the games (Collins, 2009, p. 207). The use of terror has also been discussed in *Mockingjay*: “Snow thought *The Hunger Games* were an efficient means of Control”, Katniss states (Collins, 2010, p. 361). According to Gale, the Capitol is responsible for children’s death inside the arena: “They don’t know what Katniss? That tributes – who are the actual children involved here, not your trio of freaks – are forced to fight to death?” (2010, p. 64).

The manipulation of media is also discussed in *The Hunger Games*. Propaganda is used by the Capitol to control its citizens. According to Katniss, the officials “are airing the Games or some important government messages on television that it’s mandatory to watch” (Collins, 2008, p. 8). In the three parts of *The Hunger Games*, both media and propaganda are highly used by the government to gain support and maintain its control.

The economy is also a subject of manipulation in dystopian fiction. In *The Hunger Games*, The Capitol imposes its control over the economy. It pushes citizens to work hard to produce food. However, they work only to satisfy the government’s needs. Consequently, people are not allowed to consume or use their production: “I’d have thought, in District Eleven, you’d have a bit more to eat than us. You know, since you grow the food,” Katniss wonders. “Oh, no, we’re not allowed to eat the crops”, Rue replies (Collins, 2008, p. 202). Hence, the twelve districts become familiar with starvation which turns out to be a major theme in *The Hunger Games*. Unlike the twelve districts, The Capitol people attend parties and throw up food for the sake to eat more. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss mentions that “here in the Capitol they’re vomiting for the pleasure of filling their bellies again and again. Not from some illness of body or mind, not from spoiled food. It’s what everyone does at a party” (Collins, 2009, p. 75).

In *Mockingjay*, food is also consumed according to people's needs in District 13 as Katniss explains "You leave with enough calories to take you to the next meal, no more, no less" (Collins, 2010, p. 42). According to Kress, District 13 in *Mockingjay* has been isolated from Panem for 75; therefore, its only aim is to survive against the odds. Hence, pleasure for District 13 is "secondary to survival" (2010, p. 243).

Along with media and the economy, the government manipulates different kinds of advanced weapons that are not allowed to be used in the districts to avoid any kind of rebellion. Consequently, people who create, sell, or buy any type of weapons are considered criminals whose punishment must be death. Katniss states that if the government discovers that she owns a bow she will be "publicly executed for inciting a rebellion" (Collins, 2008, p. 5).

Another example of manipulating advanced weapons is the use of the old jabber jay in *Catching Fire*. An old jabber jay is a genetically modified bird that is created by the Capitol to manipulate tributes brains. Inside the Quarter Quell arena, both Katniss and Finnick are hearing the sounds of people they love. Katniss hears the voices of her mother, Prim and Gale while Finnick hears the voice of Annie Cresta. They were driven crazy before they know that the source of the sounds comes from the old jabber jays. Unlike Katniss and Finnick, Joanna is not affected by the birds: "They can't hurt me. I am not like the rest of you. There's no one left I love" (Collins,

2009, p. 418). Old jabber jays can also repeat human discourses; consequently, the Capitol uses them to spy on the rebels of District 13 and to restrict their moves.

The aspects of totalitarianism, in effect, are explored through the three parts of *The Hunger Games*. The trilogy demonstrates the ways the dictatorial regime, presented in the Capitol ruled by President Snow, imposes its rules over the rest of Panem using different strategies to maintain control over the districts and to manipulate the citizens both physically and mentally.

4. Survival through Gender Roles: Dissatisfaction and Rebellion

Usually, females in dystopian literature are passive characters whose role is mainly restricted to and determined by men. However, some female writers objected the passive role of female characters in their narratives. Suzanne Collins is one of these writers who create a female protagonist with a traditional male role. Consequently, she clearly challenges the familiar traditional gender roles. Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, is a dystopian character who feels dissatisfied towards the government's oppressive regime and decides to stand against its totalitarian rules. Katniss Everdeen is not a typical female character; rather, she is the type of girls who possess masculine features. However, it is found that she subdues also to feminine traits when she feels that the government

must consider her as an innocent, adorable lady instead of a rebellious threat.

5.1 Katniss Masculine Gender Performance

In *The Gender Knot*, Allan Johnson has identified some “male qualities” 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)” (2005, p. 122).

Katniss Everdeen is a young girl who strips herself from feminine norms. Her masculine traits were exposed from the very beginning of the story from the way she dresses wearing her old father's jacket, trousers, hunting boots and a cap. In addition, her brave masculine feature is shown when Katniss takes her father's role after his death and prepares herself to go hunting illegally in the woods.

The huge gender difference is noticeable between Katniss and her little sister Primrose. Her feeling of hatred towards Prim's cat is far from feminine stereotypes of love and caring. Katniss states that: “[The cat] hates me. Or at least distrusts me. Even though it was years ago, I think he still remembers how I tried to drown him in a bucket when Prim brought him home” (Collins, 2008, p. 4).

Another masculine trait that contributes to shaping Katniss' personality is the ability to control her vulnerability as she states: "So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts" (Collins, 2008, p. 7). This feature helps her on the reaping day as she can hide her vulnerable state as a strategy to keep the tributes away from her: "I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reaping tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction" (2008, p. 53). Moreover, Katniss is good at hiding her physical feeling of pain as well. Katniss shows her stubbornness to surrender and uses her mental perseverance to get the treatment when she burns her leg: "I can't show weakness at this injury. Not if I want help. Pity does not get you aid. Admiration at your refusal to give in does" (2008, p. 209).

Katniss' brave and rebellious character is also considered a masculine trait that helps her to survive in the arena and eventually leads to the Civil War in *Mockingjay*. Her rebellious personality is reflected in the three novels. Thanks to her masculinity, she can save Peeta in the three parts of *The Hunger Games*.

Being influenced by her father's death, Katniss has always followed his steps in breaking the government rules to take care of her family. In the first part of the trilogy, she makes the woods a source of food although just being inside is illegal. She also trades in the Hob, the black market, to feed her family. Furthermore, she possesses a

bow with arrows that goes against the Capitol's rules of having an illegal weapon. Katniss' brave personality is also reflected when she decides to volunteer instead of her little sister Prim on the reaping day. Moreover, when the game makers ignored her moves for evaluation, she shoots her arrow targeting an apple that is near to their head neglecting the fact that they are part of The Capitol. Another act of bravery is when Katniss covers Rue's grave with flowers; an act that goes against The Capitol rules.

The last act of rebellion in *The Hunger Games* is when Katniss threatens the government to suicide with Peeta in case one tribute must stay alive. Knowing that there must be a victor in The Hunger Games, Katniss challenges the government rules to stay alive in the arena. Though she just wants to save their lives, she encourages rebellion in the other districts. In *Catching Fire*, she states:

The berries. I realize the answer to who I am lies in that handful of poisonous fruit. 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. (Collins, 2009, p. 143)

In *Catching Fire*, The Capitol declares the Quarter Quell to calm down the uprisings among the districts and to return Katniss to the arena: "The Capitol hates me so much, I 'm good as dead now", says Katniss (Collins, 2009, p. 216). Yet, she keeps fighting the rules of the government and plays The Games under her own rules. She refuses to kill Peeta again as an act of bravery and resistance: "The beauty of this idea is that my decision to keep Peeta alive at the expense of my own life is itself an act of defiance. A refusal to play The Hunger Games by the Capitol 's rule" (2009, p. 293). Moreover, Katniss rejects to subdue the Capitol rules when the poisonous frog spread around the arena. She decides to stay with Peeta and rescue his life instead of running away on her own. She believes that it is her chance to encourage rebellion and save the districts from the bleak world of The Capitol: "My refusal to play the Games on the Capitol 's terms is to be my last act of rebellion" (2009, p. 321-322).

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss wakes up on the destruction of District 12, her hometown. Therefore, she decides to join the underground resistance movement in District 13 and to be the leader of the resistance as she declares: "I'm going to be the Mockingjay" (Collins, 2010, p. 35). According to Olthouse: "A mockingjay will fight to protect its nest, and at this point Katniss's nest has expanded to include not just her family and friends, or even just the people in her district, but all of the innocents of Panem" (2012, p. 52).

All of the masculine characteristics mentioned above fall under Johnson's stereotypical male traits and remain with Katniss throughout the three parts of *The Hunger Games*. Katniss uses every masculine aspect through the trilogy to make herself an uneasy target, show dissatisfaction and stand against President Snow's dictatorial rule.

5.2 Katniss Feminine Gender Performance

After identifying the characteristics of the masculine gender, Allan Johnson has also listed some feminist traits that include: "cooperation, mutuality, sharing, compassion, caring, vulnerability, a readiness to negotiate and compromise, emotional expressiveness, and intuitive and other nonlinear ways of thinking" (2005, p. 122).

In *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Katniss has to perform what Judith Butler refers to as the parody of the original gender; that is to say, Katniss is supposed to perform her original gender which is feminine. Consequently, she finds herself obliged to act as a feminine lady to satisfy the government's needs and to be considered less threatening in addition to raising her chances to win The Games and survive. According to Henthorne, Katniss learns how "to parody gender, to borrow Judith Butler's terms, masquerading in ways that destabilize the binary opposition between male and female that patriarchal control is based upon" (2012, p. 45).

Before starting *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is not interested in beauty standards. Her only concern is to find a way to provide food for her family and to take care of them. However, after being selected as a tribute, Katniss recognizes the importance of looks for both the Capitol and the audience: “*The Hunger Games* is not a beauty contest, but the best-looking tributes always seem to pull more sponsors” (Collins, 2008, p. 70). Therefore, it is obligatory now for Katniss to act feminine to gain the sponsors help and the audience’s sympathy so that she can survive the games.

Cinna, Katniss’ stylist and designer, has a key role in shaping Katniss’ feminine gender to capture the attention of citizens and to enrich her chances to gain more sponsors. However, after making her more “girly”, Katniss is no more comfortable with her new self. Her fashioned dresses, exaggerated make up, and soft body makes her traditionally feminine. When she looks at herself for the first time in the mirror, she describes herself as a “creature” that she can no more recognize (Collins, 2008, p. 139). This implies Katniss’ objection to the government’s obsession with looks and beauty. Yet, her mentors want her to appear like a sweet, beautiful lady for the audience to get their sympathy and win *The Games*.

As the story progresses, Katniss learns how “to act” feminine and uses that for her advantage. She gradually starts to manipulate the audience’s minds. Before *The Games* begin, she can attract the audience’s attention with her dress that is on fire to represent her

district that is responsible for producing coal. She states that: "Cinna has given me an advantage. No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire" (Collins, 2008, 81).

Another feminine way that helps Katniss to gain sponsors and to survive several times is her affectionate relationship with Peeta. Romance is far from Katniss' masculine gender; however, she is supposed to create a tragic love story between her and Peeta. The audience admires this relationship between the couple from District 12; thus, their possibility to survive in the arena is gradually increased. According to Henthorne, Katniss becomes a part of this fake love story so that she can get more gifts from sponsors (2012, p. 102). At first, Katniss refuses to engage in such a relationship; however, she is told by Haymitch that Peeta makes her look desirable (Collins, 2008, p. 164). Thus, he increases her chances to win the games.

The aspects of feminine gender are repeated in the three parts of *The Hunger Games*. Katniss's performance of feminine gender helps her to win The Hunger Games in the trilogy. Acting as "a girl" saves Katniss several times in the novels. Thanks to her feminine performance, Katniss can gain sponsors and sympathy. Eventually, she can survive in the arena and beat The Capitol; a step which marks Katniss' survival and the collapse of the totalitarian regime in the last part of the trilogy.

6. CONCLUSION

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy* is a feminist dystopian novel that discusses totalitarian aspects and their effect on the citizens of Panem. Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the trilogy is a strong stubborn female whose character develops throughout the three parts of *The Hunger Games* to fight against the dictatorial regime and to gain emancipation from the Capitol totalitarian system. As a result, this article investigates Katniss' complex gender roles in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* and draws different conclusions.

This article first provides a brief overview of feminist dystopian literature and its characteristics. Then, it discusses briefly the theme of gender theories by exploring the difference between sex and gender as well as explaining traditional gender roles. It dedicates a short part to dealing with Judith Butler as one of the pioneer leaders of gender theories. Moreover, it investigates the different strategies of totalitarianism in *The Hunger Games*. In the end, this article analyses Katniss' gender roles and the hybridity of masculine and feminine gender traits that help her to survive in the Panem dystopian world.

This article reveals that Suzanne Collins challenges the traditional gender roles through Katniss Everdeen. Katniss is not a stereotypical traditional girl; rather, she is more of a masculine character who subdues feminist traits only when necessary in the games so that she looks desirable and gains more support. Therefore,

her “parody” of the original female gender and exaggerative girliness is significant to look less threat-like and to increase her chances to survive in the arena. Consequently, the ambiguous shift between masculinity and femininity in the trilogy indicates the importance of embracing more than one gender for one’s special needs.

To conclude, deconstructing gender roles in dystopian novels is a key theme in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games Trilogy*. Consequently, the latter reflects her objection to traditional gender roles through her protagonist Katniss Everdeen; a symbol of dissatisfaction and rebellion who stands against the dictatorial regime of The Capitol. Thanks to her shift of gender between masculinity and femininity, Katniss can eventually survive and gain her emancipation leading to the collapse of totalitarianism in the dystopian world of *The Hunger Games*.

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