

Ideology of Hegemony and False Consciousness in YA Literature: A Marxist Study of *The Hunger Games*

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Abstract

*Twentieth century is marked by a significant focus on commodity fetishism encircling almost all arenas of modern society. While few decades ago, literature was designated as an exercise meant only for the educated and blue stocking strata of the society, the literature accessible today is grasping youth in its web owing to its concentration on delineating challenging young heroes and heroines. Hence, YA literature in fiction is broadening its horizons by accommodating blistering issues being confronted by youth such as sexuality, race, identity crisis, depression, suicide and drug addiction. But under the garb of such depiction lies a deep-rooted ideology and false consciousness that is penetrated in adolescent minds gradually. The ideology is imposed typically by means of what Althusser calls RSA's and ISA's. Such hegemonic tools become conspicuous in furthering the exploitation and dehumanization of the proletariat class. The purpose of this research is to highlight the similar underpinnings in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins.*

Keywords: False consciousness, Hegemony, Ideology, ISA's, Reification, RSA's

1. Introduction

Hegemony, in particular, cultural hegemony and false consciousness are the catchwords in the postmodernist critique of literature. Originated in the works of Karl Marx in late 18th century, the concept of "ideology" gained grounds so much so that almost every work of literature has its roots in Marxism. Marx, famously reiterated that "The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist" (Rigby, 1987, p. 145). In every society, the ruling or dominant class nourishes and shapes the common people's mindset according to their own perceptions and by no means do they allow the lower class to stand in their way of hegemony and domination.

Within Twentieth Century, many European thinkers and philosophers girded up their loins to jump into the Marxist pool of criticism to discover novice dimensions. Terms such as bourgeoisie and proletariat deeply attracted authors such as Mannheim and Lukacs. To them, social reality is distorted and falsified in favor of upper class which dumbs the local voices and consequently results in further suppression and crushing of common thinking.

The current study also attempts to ascertain the Marxist notions of ideology, hegemony and false consciousness in *The Hunger Games* which is a magnum opus in YA Literature.

1.1 Research Objectives

In view of afore-mentioned parameter, the research objectives of the current study are as follows:

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- To scrutinize how YA Literature is an embodiment of Marxist thoughts of ideology and false consciousness
- To identify the level of perplexity attached in young dystopian fiction leading to exploitation and violence
- To investigate the distorted impact of hegemony, ideology and false consciousness on tender minds of youth
- To present how literature mirrors dominant superstructure of a society and the class struggle either through rebellion or conscious acceptance of the capitalist thoughts.

1.2 Research Questions

As a key concern, the study will address the following research questions:

- How has the concept of ideology and false consciousness propagated in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins?
- What impact do these novels disseminate on youth within a globalized perspective?
- Can the protagonists of the novel (Katniss-Peeta) be taken as the main agents of perpetrating ideology or vice versa?

1.3 Significance of the study

YA literature has gained a significant ground since 1950's as great amount of juvenile novels were published for entertaining adults. The subject matter and themes of YA literature encompasses the experiences, feelings and viewpoints that a microcosmic young individual can encounter on this macrocosmic planet. Youth can effortlessly be mesmerized into a fictive world by dint of catchy portrayals of characters, highly urban settings, dauntless representation of heroes and heroines and readiness to endanger one's life for the sake of self-glorification and recognition. Authors, within such a parameter, either consciously or unconsciously, drag their readers into a chaotic world of immense bewilderment and confusion out of which arises the "glorified self" of the protagonist. Consequently, literature becomes practical in bringing to light the discrimination, exploitation and maltreatment among the so-called civilized and liberal nations of the world. The study will elucidate in detail how both novels and later movie versions correspond to the Marxist description of ideology, hegemony and false consciousness. By analyzing the key characters, the research will focus to draw a parallel between young dystopian fictions and Marxist thoughts. The study would invariably give a glimpse into how technological advancements can merely serve as ISA's (Althusser).

1.4 Research Method

This Marxist study is narrative and descriptive in nature. For data collection, qualitative methods have been incorporated and a keen textual analysis will be employed for evidence and clarity. Research objectives and research questions have been addressed in the beginning. The sampling frame assimilates one novel i.e. *The Hunger Games*. Since the novel belong to contemporary world and is much-debated upon, I have extracted different newspaper as well as web articles for supporting my arguments. The fundamental concepts of ideology, hegemony and false consciousness would be investigated in plot, characterization and accounts given of the capitalist society.

Research papers on the given concepts have also been consolidated. In principle, the study is exploratory in nature following content analysis for discussion.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

As briefed earlier, the study primarily is concerned with only one novels belonging to fiction genre of YA Literature. Therefore, the analysis and conclusions drawn are restricted to only unleashing particular Marxist notions in the specified novels. Also, the study is delimited in terms of explicating socio-cultural influences that the novels harbor.

2. Literature Review

The domain of contemporary critical theory allocates a major portion over debates on Marxism. Marxism is designated as a comprehensive system of analyzing class and society in which socio-political aspects of a society are hindered due to the development of capitalism. Since, Marxism is diverse and wide-ranging in its application, it is commonly misinterpreted and contradictions are abounding due to an overlapping of Marxism with disciplines such as economics, sociology and philosophy. However, the literature review in this study will bring into focus the socio-economic dimension of Marxist theory. Later, the impact of these socio-economic conditions on political system in specific setting will also be scrutinized. For convenience, the literature review is divided into two parts. The first part will elucidate the meaning of ideology and its implications. The second part will discuss the inter-dependency of ISA's and ideology as elaborated by Althusser. It will also shed light on the representation of ideology in literature.

2.1 Genesis of Ideology and its Implications

The concept of "ideology" was first formulated during French Revolution by Antoine Destutt de Tracy meaning "science of ideas". Since then, it is ambiguously conceived as myriad of authors, politicians, intellectuals and philosophers have suggested their interpretations to solve the conundrum of ideology. The notion of ideology is slippery, tenuous and bizarre in its interpretation and Cassels (1996) refer to it as "the most elusive concept in the social sciences" (p. 1). However, keeping in view the prevalence of globalization in modern world, the usefulness and efficacy of the term cannot be denied since ideology has unanimously become a buzzword both in developed and third world countries. The concept gained weight due to Marxist interpretations of false consciousness and commodity fetishism. Owing to political implications inherent in the concept of ideology, it is among the most contested terms today; becoming, in short, "an inexhaustible topic" (Therborn, 1980, p. 1). It is also visualized as "weltanschauung" whereby the denizens of society share a communal system of belief and representation.

Marxist legacy conceptualizes ideology as a distorted and disillusioned image of the real world. To them, ideology turns reality incomprehensible by making it obscure and challenging for human recognition. Terry Eagleton, a British Marxist, in his ground-breaking book *Ideology: An Introduction* categorizes ideology as having more than sixteen meanings. Implicitly or explicitly, however, all these definitions are associated with *The German Ideology* in which Marks and Engels presented ideology as "camera obscura" i.e. a darkened room where ruling ideas of dominant class are supposed to be ideal (Thompson, 1984, p.16).

Ideology, in Marx and Engel's view, operates within civilization as superstructure where ideology serves the significant purpose of hegemony. Capitalist / ruling class appropriates all dominant aspects in order to justify their position as an empowered group. Being assertive, ruling ideology traps the whole system. It obfuscates all sorts of exploitation, violence, tyranny and dictatorship by proffering logical explanations for it. Such ideological practices are visible in the form of slavery, peasantry and proletariats in capitalism. It is, therefore, pertinent to label ideology as a social theory.

Both these theorists, later, delineated that social life is directly connected with political structure. As means of productions are only accessible to dominant class, they are authorized to determine division of labor which is influenced by ideology. Inside such social order, the working class is victimized by dint of amount paid for their labor. However, since the proletariat is deprived of control, they experience alienation because they are treated like a commodity where their labor is bought and sold like a property. In this connection, Marx (1956) states as to how "Concrete labor...becomes the expression of abstract human labor" (Marx, 1956, p. 39).

Karl Mannheim, a German sociologist, attempted to present a non-Marxist notion of ideology in his book *Ideology and Utopia*. Mannheim accredited ideology in so far as it is responsible for shaping the social existence of people. However, his ideas are remote to that of Marxism in that he endeavored to purge ideology of its negative connotations. He distinguished between ideology and utopia and delineated ideology as a system of thought that operates to shield a governing social order. Conversely, utopia is a fantasized representation of future where a revolutionary social change is required for liberating the society from oppressed class. Nonetheless, he invariably argues that all systems as well as utopias are ideologically distorted given that each proposes a biased and egocentric outlook of social reality.

During 1960's, ideology was taken as an objective and impartial theory after isolating the political baggage that was once loaded on it. A chief proponent, in this regard, was Martin Seliger who in *Politics and Ideology* defined ideology as neutral set of ideas aimed at justifying social actions regardless of what implications does these actions carry. Taken in this context, ideology is "neither good nor bad, true nor false, open nor closed, liberating nor oppressive" rather it can be any of these (Heywood, 2012, p. 10). Some theorists, however, did not agree with this definition of Seliger. As Andrew Heywood states, "Falsehood is implicit in ideology because, being the creation of the ruling class, its purpose is to disguise exploitation and oppression" (p. 14).

In "Studies in the Theory of Ideology", Thompson (1984) presents a theoretical foundation in the field of ideology. In his view, ideology comprises two principal conceptions-one is the neutral aspect referring towards system of belief where as the second dimension is critical and conflict-laden where ideology is associated with "sustaining the asymmetrical relations of power" (p. 04). After a thorough analysis, he further elaborates upon the idea by stating that ideology is not a one-dimensional phenomenon meant only for a specific class, but it is embedded in social division between "the dominant and the dominated" which also includes a division between state and civil society. (p. 25). Ideology masks the social division between capitalism and proletariat. Hence, bourgeoisie ideology owns a plethora of ideas where division is

marked in oppositions such as “worker / bourgeoisie, savage / civilized, mad / normal and child / adult” (as cited in Thompson, p. 27). Ideology then, if stated in simple terms, becomes a symbolic entity associated with upper class consciousness, thoughts and perceptions.

In *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (2012), Heywood comprehensively extends upon the role of ideas and ideology that they play in individual life. For Heywood, ideology is no better than a “window dressing” that helps in veiling and concealing the stark political realities. Ideology, is then, conceived by working class as a solution to their dystopia. People are influenced by dominant promises of upper class. As a result, world is perceived not as it is, but as it is ought to be by dint of the fact that ideology is able to “blur” the distinction between what “is” and what “should be”. The function of ideology, in this case, is to offer “a veil of ingrained beliefs, opinions and assumptions” (p. 3).

According to Heywood, ideology, from the time of its origin, has always been entwined with politics and class conflict. There is, thus, an ongoing struggle between two contradictory poles; one giving a positive connotation of the term where as the other vice versa. After much contestation of its history, ideology is still equated with “political weapon, a device with which to condemn or criticize rival sets of ideas or belief systems” (p. 5). Later, Heywood enumerates the four dimensions that Marxism imparted to the term of ideology. First, ideology is about mystification, then class struggle, leading to third feature of power and finally its temporariness.

The most comprehensive definition of ideology is posited by Terry Eagleton in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (2002). According to him, Ideology refers to “certain definite forms of social consciousness” (p. 3) which “signifies the way men live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole” (p. 8). It is in relation to such overwhelming practices that ideology takes its roots.

The notion was dissected, after Marx and Engels, by many Marxist critics including European philosopher Lukács who named ideology as reification, in Gramsci, it reflects hegemony and later in Althusser in the form of Ideological State Apparatuses. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), György Lukács took grounds from Marxist notion of ideology and modified it by arguing that class consciousness and ideology are intertwined where bourgeoisie ideology thwarts the proletariat’s sense of consciousness. In order to survive in society, they ultimately correspond to “false order of things” which embodies itself in ‘false consciousness’.

Concept of reification is central to Lukács’s theory. He criticizes capitalist society for basing its relations with proletariat class on “thingification” and “commodification”. Marx’s argumentation of inversion of values between means and its end reflects how upper class utilizes labour production for strengthening their position and status inside society. In the first phase, the workers are taken as objects which results in their estrangement from production. Proletariats are, thus, alienated from society which augments tension and anxiety. Lukács labels this practice as reification i.e. commodity fetishism. Ideology is, in this sense, defined as a social group who owns both power and privilege. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Zizek labels all such discursive

practices as “free floating signifiers” (p. 87) where “individuals live out their relations to a social structure to false ideas which legitimate a dominant political power” (p. 3) while also concealing and masking it to function effectively.

In the theories of Antonio Gramsci, ideology is meant as a source of cultural hegemony and domination. Hegemony is defined as a means where “the dominant groups in society ... maintain their dominance by securing the ‘spontaneous consent’ of subordinate groups, including the working class. This is achieved by the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups” (as cited in Strinati, p. 153). Hegemony is often triumphant inside such society as poor people are always consciously indoctrinated to accept leadership that is morally and intellectually superior to them. As a result, the subordinate groups are granted concessions owing to the fact that they do not pose any “threat” to the general structure of “domination” (155).

Hegemony, for Gramsci, is not fixed rather it emerges from class struggle; it influences and holds inferior groups by dint of dominant ideology. Gramscian perspective alludes to the significant role played by “intellectuals” in the dissemination of hegemony. To him, the term is not restricted to the people with enhanced mental faculties; rather it is concerned with people, who are in a position to define culture and knowledge for masses. Thus, his ideas become coherent with Frankfurt School and with what was later investigated by Althusser in his ideological state apparatuses (ISA’s).

2.2 Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses (RSA’s and ISA’s)

Institutions and ideology are closely knitted together. Thompson defines ideology as a concept in service of power. Institutions, in this sense, are the ultimate fountain of power and dominance. Thus, the relationship between ideology and institutions is a conspicuous one as institutions, first and foremost, are ideological in nature. They function to propagate all those norms and standards that are actually a reflection of capitalist mentality. Also, institutions are able to form social entities which are synonymous with dominant social order; thus serving as “a form of social cement” (Heywood, 2012, p. 3). In this regard, Meyer, Sahlin, Ventresca and Walgenbach (2009) contend that “in modern social systems, it is fruitful to see social structures not as the assembly of patterns of local interactions but as ideological edifices of institutionalized elements that derive their authority from more universal rules and conceptions” (p. 3).

Ideology constructs “actors” who, in turn, construct ideological social structures. In “Institution, Practice, and Ontology: Toward A Religious Sociology” (2009), Friedland asserts the ideological aspect of institutions and points out that hegemonic language employed by the leaders demonstrate and legitimize power in order to control society at large. Apart from that, both subjects and objects are constituted by the authority to extend the relationship of domination.

Althusser does not incorporate ideology vis-à-vis Marxist view. Althusser casts off ideology as an end product of alienation or false consciousness implanted by capitalists. He borrows Lacanian concept of “fantasy” and maintains that ideology is not a distortion or falsification of people’s situations; rather, it is related to how people reproduce their

circumstances. Ideology is “a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals with their real conditions of existence” (Zizek 123). Althusser’s concepts of RSA’s and ISA’s are fundamental in understanding of ideology. Repressive State Apparatuses includes various institutions such as government, administration, courts, army, police, and prisons etc which functions through physical repression i.e. the explicit form of exploitation and dehumanization. Ideological State Apparatuses, however, consist of an array of religion, education, family, law and politics. By deploying these forms of repression behind a shield, the capitalists are able to push proletariats back to the wall. Since proletariats are impotent in understanding the ideological trap, they are befooled into what is presented to them. The naturalization of this ideology is accomplished via “daily doses” of morality, patriotism, liberalism; the chief exponent of which is mass media. Althusser intones that the basic philosophy behind this oppression and exploitation is “Humanism” which maintains that everything done to the lower strata of society will further their social well-being and prosperity.

The twin concepts of RSA’s and ISA’s highlight the monopoly of state as a tool that is manipulated for the suppression and domination of working class by the ruling society. According to Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, RSA’s (state, police, army, courts etc) intercede and operates in favour of capitalists by repressing the lower class through vicious, aggressive and coercive means. Whenever the dominant order is exposed to threats caused by individuals, the state conjures up Repressive State Apparatuses to do wonders for protecting and shielding the dominant class. The more a threat intensifies, the more a state turns to powerful physical interventions such as incarceration, police and army.

An important dimension of Althusserian theory is want of free will. Althusser states that an individual, being a part of larger scheme of this world, is denied all forms of free will. The way a person behaves or reacts actually is the end product of social apparatuses enforced by capitalists. Technically, the process is termed as “interpellation”. While asserting his point, Althusser states that “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (173) thereby claiming that every individual resides within the circumscribed space of ideology. Although people never recognize this process of conditioning; still, they misconceive their status as “outside ideology” where as in reality, they are the inherent part of it. Althusser states: ““Those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology” (175).

This process of “interpellation” turns individuals into “always-already subjects” i.e. misrecognition of self. Althusser also indicates a discrepancy installed in the term “subject” which may refer to “free subjectivity ... author of and responsible for its actions” (182). The result is that:

“Individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself.’ There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.” (182)

Thus “individual psychology is a social product” (Eagleton 4). And simultaneously literature is a refined artistic expression of capitalist mentality where bourgeois representation is given a passive and limited space. Both Macherey and Lukács also distinguished illusion / fiction and ideological / realistic depiction of human totality in literature and fiction. According to Lukács, “great art combats the alienation and fragmentation of capitalist society, projecting a rich, many-sided image of human wholeness” (qtd. in Eagleton 13). Hence, any true art will encompass all dimensions of society with a critical and realist outlook while also providing “codified ways of interpreting reality” (Eagleton 13).

Ideology and ideological state apparatuses are, thus, an indispensable and inseparable part of literature and fiction. The study will now canvass these concepts as elaborated in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* both of which are a part of young adult literature.

3. Ideology and False Consciousness *The Hunger Games*

The Hunger Games is a fictional novel by Suzanne Collins published in 2008. It is an exquisite replica of Marxist class struggle taking place anywhere in history. The novel belongs to dystopian genre of fiction. Typically dystopian novels are “usually dark, pessimistic, and often reflects paranoia, alarm or hysteria” (Kaplan 147). The novel provides readers to foresee a dystopian world of future where elite class is hammering the poor strata via overwhelming dominance of science and technology. The novel displays impoverished individuals whimpering under capitalist rule. An undercurrent of suffering and extreme misery can be felt in *The Hunger Games* when one encounters wretched and abject masses in service of authority by offering themselves as “tribute” in order to extinguish the conflagration of revenge burning inside the hearts of ruling class. The novel offers its readers to be a part of its dismal world and pick up the debris of grief and misery that is piled up and scattered on almost every page.

The landscape of *The Hunger Games* is painted on the canvas of social, political and economic exploitation of labour class in a world of tomorrow. The plot of the novel is nightmarish and revolves around the binary opposition of superior versus inferior, civilized versus primitive and society versus individual. The title of the novel *The Hunger Games* refers towards an event executed every year in Panem—a country of thirteen districts that is under strict dominance of capitalist demagogues. The aristocracy is delineated as power drunk that is determined to crush down all resilience arising in underprivileged sections of society. The paradox is apparent when on one hand, the poor inhabitants experience torturous hunger turning them into debilitating subjects while on the other, the elite class thrives and prospers at the cost of starving population.

The thirteen districts of Panem revolted against the tyranny of the “shining Capitol” in distant past. According to elite mayor: “The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games” (Collins 17). Since the hunger game was devised as a penalty, it is “both a time for repentance and a time for thanks” (18) for the dominant class. Marxist overtones in these lines clearly demonstrate that how capitalist, inside a society, maintain their control by creating false consciousness. The poor working class is befooled into believing that they committed a crime by standing against the ruling class.

Dehumanization is employed as a hegemonic and ideological tool. In a society governed by the political laws of Capitol, the novel exquisitely sketches out the socio-political tussle and inherent restlessness between upper and lower class. The value of human life is reduced to minus scale where they are treated as worse than animals; still there is no considerable response from any side. The Capitol in the novel appears to be callous and brutal by dint of the worthlessness and disregard shown towards human life. Instead of being humanistic, the entire nation enjoys these games via media and other technological accessories. Media thus, in Althusserian context, becomes an ideological state apparatus that is subservient to capitalist class and functioning ludicrously and absurdly.

Labour exploitation and dehumanization can be interpreted on the same grounds. For Kant, an individual is exploited unjustly when he is treated as “instrumentally or merely as means” (Shields 173). The purpose of dehumanization can be either cognitive or ideological because it is capable of performing “specific ideological functions in specific contexts and in relationship to specific groups” (Marcus 21). Within the world of hunger games in Panem, dehumanization performed the function of allowing the Capitol to retain harsh decisions in a more impersonal, rational and detached manner (Haslam 252). This dehumanization led the inhabitants of Panem into a false delusion that they are human less, deformed and can survive only for the “pleasure and fun” of the elite class.

Within Panem, notions of democracy and freedom suffer a drastic change as dictatorship gives meaning to these concepts. Surveillance and oppression employed by government in the form of ideological and repressive state apparatuses serve as the saving grace for wretched humanity. The misery of famine-stricken third world in the face of high-tech dictatorship is apparent when an upper stratum enjoys hunger games through media broadcasting, RFID chips, cameras and 3D holograms. Instead of portraying picture from both perspectives, media is utterly biased by making all around perceive reality through gentry’s eyes. Consequently, upper class is touted as overly beneficent in offering the impoverished for making their lives through these games which clearly express the sick mentality of power-drunk.

ISA’s and RSA’s are seen in full swing throughout Panem. In order to sustain delicate social order, colossal cordon of police force is at full disposal of the Capitol with the mission of curbing any resilience and keeping the districts under subjugation and poverty. Simultaneously, Capitol offers ludicrous pretexts to justify the political system and the excessive show of power and force. Marxist overtones of state as tool of repression reverberate here as all technology is in the interest of upper class since it is unapproachable for the people of all districts. State is, then, an instrument to cement ruling class’s hegemony and control. RSA’s are a brutal force which offer only one relation between State and common masses i.e. the relationship of exploitation and repression.

Criticism of ideology of dominance and power is demonstrated in *The Hunger Games* through female protagonist Katniss. She epitomizes the true spirit of resilience and rebellion in the face of hard-hearted dictators with full confidence. Resonating Frederic Jameson, her predicament is emblematic of “dominant cultural logic or hegemonic norm” (Jameson 06). Despite the clouds of oppression that hang heavy on Panem, Katniss records her consistent hope and optimism that one day, the districts will enjoy

unrestricted freedom and happiness. The readers can visualize the horror of life and dance of death at liberty in 12 districts where the young reap the punishment of a righteous rebellion. Katniss exposes the real face of Capitol by asserting: “. “What must it be like, I wonder, to live in a world where food appears at the press of a button? ... What do they do all day, these people in the Capitol, besides decorating their bodies and waiting around for a new shipment of tributes to rill in and die for their entertainment?” (Collins 65). Entertainment through blood will serve dual purposes of breeding fear and attaining unquestioned power.

Katniss's battle for survival displays her attractive capacities at best. She, no more, remains a fictional character rather she surmounts her all feminine weaknesses and acts like a heroine. She is raw and sincere; courageous and hopeful. Hence, she symbolizes a fighter harboring inside all weak and down-trodden people of Panem. Every now and then, she is tempered by the iron-handed velvet glove of Capitol. Although the ideology of domination and powerlessness is strongly stamped on all the 13 districts yet the determination, humanity and love for impoverished fellow beings remains an indispensable part of Katniss' personality. She yells at the brutality of Capitol; weeps for miserable mobs and shows her uncompromising nature in the face of the authorities.

The unlimited power of Capitol reverberate Marx's reflection that “Capital is dead labor which, like a vampire, only becomes alive by sucking out living labor, and the more it sucks, the more it is lively” (247). This is how Capitol in *The Hunger Games* also exposes the despicable face of capitalism in 21st century where all authority is centered on the chosen few and the rest of all the inferior beings are expected to follow the commands blindly with no argumentation. Ideology, hegemony, ISA's and RSA's-all are instrumental in bringing about the annihilation of any one raising the banner of protest. While reading through the pages of the novel, one gets shuddered on the inhuman treatment which is the hallmark of *The Hunger Games*. In a sense, *The Hunger Games* become an ideology of elite strata to maintain their control through “fear” and usurp the privileges of the half dead people. The only saving grace Capitol can offer is the slogan coined as “May the odds be ever in your favor” (Collins 18) which is sarcastic and speaks voluminously of Capitol's brutish behavior.

Capitalism, in the novel, works like an ulcer by becoming the consumers, eating up the resources and assets of Panem and reducing workers into machines so that the inhabitants must “sell not only her or his labour force, but also personality, self and ultimately perhaps also soul” (Vandenberghe 880). The function is achieved by creating hegemony of hunger all through the novel and all institutions of the society promote and encourage this most primitive form of retaining control. By starving people and offering food randomly is the hammer for implementing their hegemony and false consciousness resulting in torture, pain and death.

District Twelve is labeled as a place where inhabitants are doomed to starvation in complete “safety”. And apart from this trickery, hunger games focused on fight to death among tributes from all the districts thus employing the principle of “divide and rule” as it stands in the best interest of the Capitol. By making the poor people blood thirsty for each other's blood, the Capitol perpetrates the ideology of false consciousness as anyone victorious will be “showered” with food and luxuries till the commencement of next

hunger games. By encouraging hunger games, the Capitol is able to mask its hideousness and keeps away the focus from general atrocities it is committing.

Apart from all this, the Capitol also is able to retain the image of a vigorous and prosperous nation even for those who are living below poverty line. Capitalism as tools of hegemony and domination is expressed when the writer exposes that Capitol never admitted that people are dying of starvation. RSA's function to safeguard the interests of the dominant class in this case as when the Peace Keepers (police force) are "called in to retrieve the body, starvation is never the cause of death officially. It's always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia" (26).

The mayor as an ally to RSA's presents a ludicrous eulogy to the origin of hunger games and the "shining" role of Capitol in bringing about "peace and prosperity to its citizens" (Collins 17). He simultaneously intimidates and threatens the people not to resist the authority lest it might result in extreme devastation and misery for them. Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses appears in full swing all throughout his speech. According to Swift "Poor nations are hungry, and rich nations are proud; and pride and hunger will ever be at variance" (282). Panem, too, is a poignant example of hunger and elite's arrogance that reveals the Marxist concept of repression as a keynote. Collins expresses elitist mentality thus:

"Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch—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" (17).

People from Panem experience this claustrophobic world to the marrow yet they are silenced until it is Katniss Everdeen who sows the seed of rebellion. The very stage built for selection of tributes is set up before a building dubbed as "Justice Building" which highlights the bigotry in upper gentry by emphasizing the conflict of justice and injustice. Even the rules of hunger games function as both punishment and reminder for Capitol's power. The tyranny of government is also apparent the way they force the citizens to labor yet the genuine fruits of this toil are forbidden to the people. In a question pertaining to coal, Katniss replies "Just what we buy and whatever we track in on our boots" (193). It reveals the tendency of the people to rebel and survive on their own.

Katniss experiences an ideological complexity when she retaliates to the cruelty of Capitol. For her, winning and attaining the "reward" of food does not stand as nourishment for submission to tyrannical rule; rather it acts like a symbol of freedom. She realizes how starvation can turn the citizens into defeatists and this is what creates an implicit craving in her to survive with dignity. She is well-aware of the hideousness that children are indoctrinated in a culture of monopoly and hegemony so as to keep them under control by hook or by crook. Food, both as a tool of reward (satisfaction) and punishment (starvation) becomes RSA's via which children are given this false consciousness that if they ever rebelled against Capitol's rule, they will be rooted out

from the surface of the earth. In a way, culture is shaped by oppressive governance with all out support from state and its state-of-the-art technology. Despite all these controlling tactics, Collins transmits a strong message to her readers through the revolutionary remaining parts of *The Hunger Games* Trilogy i.e. *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. Her stance is that one must not surrender in the face of the ruling bigotry; one should, rather, stand up resolutely to eradicate the discrimination of powerful / powerless within society. At the same time, an undercurrent of extreme inequality is perceptible. The novel draws strong parallels between first-world and the third-world countries of the current global village where the growing “hunger” of rich countries for technological advancement and freedom will eat away individual essence and only the robots will exist meant to be ruled by capitalist society.

4. Conclusion

The study highlighted the role of Marxist concepts of ideology, hegemony and false consciousness in young adult literature. In the words of Bertolt Brecht “Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer to shape it.” Thus, *The Hunger Games* novel also presents a ravishing as well as frightening tale of poverty and domination. Within the global perspective, teens are influenced heavily by the televised subjection and marginalization of the poor working class. However, since the efforts are only scanty to put an end to this Marxist class struggle, the novel successfully and extensively portrays a terrain to illustrate the battle for struggle on two extreme levels. For poor, it’s the battle for survival; for Capitol-it’s the battle for domination and supremacy.

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