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Dystopia in Contemporary Fiction

Dystopie v současné beletrii

Bakalářská práce

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Studijní program: B7310, Filologie

Studijní obor: Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch – anglický jazyk, ruský jazyk

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Cílem předkládané bakalářské práce je průzkum dystopie v současné anglicky psané beletrii. Konkrétně je analýza zaměřena na projev dystopie v díle Suzanne Collinsové, Veronicy Rothové, Jamese Dashnera.

COLLINS, S. The Hunger Games. s.l. : Scholastic Press, 2008. DANNER, B. Dark Futures: A VOYA Guide to Apocalyptic, Post-apocalyptic, and Dystopian Books and Media. Bowie, Md : E L Kurdyla Publishing LLC, 2012. DASHNER, James. The Maze Runner. s.l. : Delacorte Press, 2009. GOTTLIEB, Erika. Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial. Montreal : MQUP, 2001. ROTH, V. Divergent. s.l. : Katherine Tegen Books, 2011. VIEIRA, F. Dystopia(n) matters : on the page, on screen, on stage. Newcastle upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala pod vedením mého vedoucího bakalářské práce samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 7.4.2020

Podpis

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Anotace

GERASIMOVA, Kseniia. *Dystopie v současné beletrii*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2020. 49 s. Bakalářská práce.

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá interpretací dystopie a některých jejích hlavních rysů v současné anglicky psané beletrii. Pro bakalářskou práci byly vybrány následující antiutopické literární díla: trilogie *Hunger Games* (2008–2010) od Suzanne Collinsové, trilogie *Labyrint* (2009–2011) od Jamese Dashnera a trilogie *Divergent* (2010–2012) od Veroniky Rothové. První část bakalářské práce je věnována identifikaci klíčových témat antiutopické literatury a jejích moderních tendencí. Zbytek bakalářské práce je zaměřen na analýzu vybraných literárních děl. Každá kapitola obsahuje obecné informace o trilogii, její nastavení a analýzu třech hlavních antiutopických rysů trilogie: izolace a její formy, dohled a konflikt mezi jednotlivcem a společností. Analýza se také snaží zohlednit některé jedinečné rysy každé trilogie.

Klíčová slova: Dystopie, *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, *Divergent*

Annotation

GERASIMOVA, Kseniia. *Dystopia in contemporary fiction*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2020. 49 p. Bachelor Thesis.

This bachelor thesis deals with the interpretation of dystopia and some of its main features in contemporary fiction in English-language literature. The chosen dystopian fiction works for the bachelor thesis are *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008–2010) by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner* trilogy (2009–2011) by James Dashner and *Divergent* trilogy (2010–2012) by Veronica Roth. The first part of the bachelor thesis is dedicated to identifying key topics of dystopian literature and its modern tendencies. The rest of the bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis of the chosen literary works. Each chapter contains general information about the trilogy, its setting and the analysis of three main dystopian features in the trilogy: isolation and its forms, surveillance and the conflict between an individual and society. The analysis also tries to take into account some unique features of each trilogy.

Keywords: Dystopia, The Hunger Games, The Maze Runner, Divergent

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Introduction

This bachelor thesis deals with the dystopian genre in contemporary literature and some of its most common features and the way some of them are presented and interpreted by modern authors of fiction.

Dystopia is a genre that originated several decades ago and over the years has become one of the most prosperous genres in literature, especially with the recent tendency towards dystopian and post-apocalyptic works in young adult fiction. Hence, to make the bachelor thesis manageable only three dystopian trilogies were chosen for analysis: *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. These works were selected not only because they were well received and appreciated by readers, but also due to their unique take on these dystopian features.

The first chapter of the bachelor thesis describes dystopia as a literary genre. Despite the popularity of literary dystopia, today there are some controversial issues related to the theoretical definition of the genre, the identification of its structural and typological features. As it is impossible to identify all features of dystopian works over time, this bachelor thesis shall only cover several most prominent features of the dystopian genre with the focus on contemporary trends.

Next, the bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis of selected dystopian trilogies. Each chapter has the same structure. At the beginning of the chapter, there is a brief introduction of the given trilogy. It is followed by a description of the setting of the trilogy, which explains the social, political and historical context of the universe. The last and the main part is the analysis of three chosen dystopian features in the work: isolation, surveillance and the conflict between an individual and society. This part is based mostly on my own observations and analysis. Nevertheless, there are references to other works, which deal either with the aspects of the given trilogy or dystopian features in general.

This bachelor thesis aims to identify key features of the dystopian genre in contemporary fiction and on the example of aforementioned works and within these trilogies spot the unique elements that make them stand out among other dystopian works. Moreover, it is important to understand the way contemporary issues are addressed in modern dystopian fiction. Finally, the analysis provides observation of how dystopia has evolved and what makes it a thriving genre nowadays.

Dystopia

Dystopia as a genre of literature derives from its predecessor utopia – a perfect society – and commonly depicts a broken and significantly altered universe that is contrasting to a contemporary world.

Dystopia commonly portrays a society that has reached a moral, economic, political or technological deadlock due to a series of faulty decisions made by a group of people or mankind as a whole. Brutal totalitarianism, dictatorship, lack of freedom, fear, denunciation, and hopelessness of the struggle – these are the most prevalent topics covered by the genre. Dystopia as a popular genre occurred as a reaction to the horrific events of the 20th century, predominantly the First World War and the following revolutionary transformations. One of the brightest examples of these transformations can be found in Russia, where revolution eradicated monarchy and, as a result, a new Soviet society with Bolsheviks as its leaders was established. Therefore, it is no surprise that the first dystopia, which gained fame and acknowledgement around the world, was created here. In his novel *We* (1924), Evgenij Zamyatin described a highly controlled emotionless society, where an individual becomes just a little cog in the system. Zamyatin established foundations for the future development of the genre; many of the details of the totalitarian system covered or invented by the author later became essential in works of novelists around the world: the violent extermination of opposition, mass media as the main method of propaganda, an elaborate surveillance system, and abnegation of compassion and other emotions.

Present-day dystopias address several new issues. It is mentioned in the book *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature* that “over the last decade, Anglo-American novelists have increasingly turned to the genre of dystopia to explore themes of militarism, environmental risk, media manipulation, and global economic exploitation” (LeeGrubisic, 2014, p. 453). Through literature, authors are expressing their concern and try to raise awareness of vulnerabilities and flaws of our world – limited resources, such as oil or water, climate change, wars, extinction of wildlife creatures and politics of some civilizations (LeeGrubisic, 2014, p. 11). While exploring numerous dystopian books, it is possible to notice that there are more similarities between our modern world and dystopian societies. I shall further develop this topic later in my work while talking about specific dystopian books.

Dystopia can also be considered a logical consequence of utopia. In contrast to the latter, dystopia casts doubt on the possibility of achieving perfection and ideals and existence of a fair social system. Erika Gottlieb mentions in her book *Dystopian fiction east and west: universe of terror and trial* that “if we begin with *We*, *Brave New World*, and *Nineteen Eighty-four*, it becomes obvious that each dystopian society contains within it seeds of a utopian dream. These are articulated by the ruling elite’s original promise when its new system was implemented, a promise that then miscarried (in *We*); was betrayed (in *Nineteen Eighty-four*); or was fulfilled in ways that show up the unexpected shortcomings of the dream (in *Brave New World*)” (Gottlieb, 2001, p. 8).

Utopian novels are replaced by warning novels as writers bring to the reader’s judgment their vision of the further development of human civilization, due to disappointment in the utopian ideals of the past and insecurity in the future. The threat of losing humanity is often reinforced by scientific and technological progress, which makes the spiritual and physical enslavement of mankind possible.

Unlike utopia, dystopia is a more dynamic genre, since the modification of themes and models can be unlimited. A dystopian novel always represents a fictitious society, which, unlike utopia, should not evoke admiration in the reader; it should be depicted in such a way that a repulsive image is formed in the reader’s mind.

Today, the dystopian genre is getting closer to the works of science fiction and post-apocalypse, due to the rapid technological development and its impact on people’s lives. Usually, this means that a person’s individuality gradually dissolves, the concept of humanity is distorted or completely erased, and a person becomes an instrument to achieve an ultimate goal: for example, an experimental subject for scientific research or a necessary victim for maintaining public order. In *Dystopia(n) matters: on the page, on screen, on stage*, Fátima Vieira states that “critical dystopia becomes the narrative space that, not only thematically but even structurally, foregrounds the most urgent issues of our times” (Vieira, 2013, p. 35).

The genre of dystopia is connected with historical reality like no other. It identifies the most dangerous social trends according to the authors, most often contemporary to the authors themselves, such as totalitarianism, fascism and others. The works of this genre are both a reaction to these trends and a prediction of their further development and repercussion. The features of society that cause the greatest rejection in the author’s mind are attributed to some

imaginary society located at a distance – in space or in time. Dystopias are traditionally set either in the future or in isolated places.

Isolationism has always been a common feature of dystopian fiction as well. In this aspect, parallels can be drawn to isolationism in the real world. Similar phenomena were not rare in the course of history. After the Second World War and with the beginning of the Cold War, the concept of the Iron Curtain appeared. The Iron Curtain divided the capitalist and socialist countries, creating an informational and political barrier. For example, in USSR people did not have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners, even if it was necessary for them to learn or practice a foreign language, it was forbidden to leave the country without the sanction of the authorities, and it was very difficult to get permission to marry a foreign citizen. In today's world, isolation of countries is not surprising either. The most vibrant example of such policy is North Korea, a country that has the strictest rules regarding communication with other states. Among other countries that are now partially isolated is the State of Qatar, which at the moment is an object of an embargo by several countries and partially cut off from the rest of the world.

Rapid development and vast spreading of technology in dystopian stories lead to the development of artificial intelligence, thanks to which it is possible to establish total control over society – to monitor the slightest movements that deviate from the norm, which allows destroying nonconformity.

As a result, a person is deprived of his right to internal freedom, freedom of critical thinking and an adequate assessment of what is happening around. Absolute conformism is successively developed in a person and going beyond a certain way of thinking is considered a severe crime.

It is interesting to notice that the majority of dystopian novels do not include religion in its classical interpretation as part of their universe. However, while mythology and religious beliefs are not present, they are usually replaced by a cult of personality and life is subordinated to everyday rituals. Their main purpose is to establish some habits and a certain form of behaviour, meanwhile depriving a person of spontaneity in actions. Therefore, the plot conflict in dystopia occurs when a person abandons his role in the ritual and insists on his path.

Dystopian literature can also be perceived as dystopian writers conducting a kind of scientific experiment on the social nature of human, placing a person in wittingly distorted, deviant circumstances and observing how he will behave. Fátima Vieira also noted that “dystopias identify key themes, trends or issues in the present and extrapolate these, stretching them (sometimes to extremes), before placing them into less familiar contexts for our examination” (Vieira, 2013, p. 40). While making their choices, a person follows one of two possible paths for getting out of a certain situation. They can obey and accept the proposed conditions and as a result lose their humanity, betray their beliefs and ethical principles, but in return, their life will not be endangered. Or they can fight the system, the government, struggle to get a better life, but in this case, the outcome of what they strived for remains uncertain. The protagonist, their friends and family might end up dead and quite often it means a failure for the society as well.

The plot in dystopian fiction is often built on the opposition of an individual or a small group of characters to the ruling dictate. In early works a happy ending was unattainable and all protests and suffering were to no avail. However, in contemporary dystopian literature, especially in young adult fiction, a happy ending is much more frequent outcome. That can also be seen in trilogies *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* that I am going to analyze.

The persistent interest in researching the genre of dystopia is manifested in repeated attempts to develop a universal definition of the term “dystopia”, to classify the subgenres of dystopia, as well as to identify the main features and signs of dystopia, both compositional and linguistic.

Over the past few years, dystopian novels have been experiencing a period of increased popularity among young readers, which is probably due to the always relevant issues for the world community and the popularization of many works due to creation of film or TV adaptations. This applies not only to aforementioned trilogies *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* but also to *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and others.

Typical topics that attract young readers to the dystopian genre are the decay of universal values, unfair social hierarchy, oppression and terror, problems of self-determination, courage, survival and love. Social injustices and other popular topics reflect real-life experiences of some readers or provide them with an opportunity to “participate” in

something they never tried before. As the number of problems that dystopian works address is enormous, in my work I would like to concentrate on isolation, surveillance and conflict between an individual and society. I shall closely examine these issues in *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* trilogies.

The Hunger Games

General

The Hunger Games is a trilogy of dystopian novels written by an American author Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games* universe consists of three novels: *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010), which were followed by four film adaptations in 2012–2015 as the last novel was split into two movies. The story is told in the voice of Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl. In my work, I shall provide observation of the social structure of this universe and some unique features of it.

The Setting

The Hunger Games trilogy is set in the future, after unspecified disasters, wars and other events devastated North America. On the ruins of the former United States, the nation of Panem was born.

Panem originally counted thirteen districts and the Capitol that rules them. The Capitol has a technological advantage over districts; its citizens live in splendour and luxury while in districts people mostly live on the verge of poverty. Seventy-four years prior to the events in *The Hunger Games* there occurred a rebellion called the “Dark Days” against the Capitol. As a result, District 13 was supposedly wiped out and the Capitol punished twelve remaining districts with the annual Hunger Games.

The Hunger Games are a televised competition in which twenty-four selected participants, called “tributes”, fight each other to death in the arena, specifically designed for the show. Tributes – one girl and one boy from each district – are selected via lottery on a Reaping Day. Participation in reaping is obligatory for every child between twelve and eighteen years old. Moreover, every 25 years since the Dark Days there is a special version of Hunger Games with a unique alteration of rules. This is referred to as “Quarter Quell”.

The primary purpose of the Hunger Games is to remind the districts of the Capitol’s ruthlessness, unlimited power and control. Jamey Heit, the author of *The Politics of The Hunger Games*, also provides a theory that “the purpose of the Hunger Games is to encourage political inaction by making life difficult to the point of starvation, and then killing children to make sure that no one considers standing up to President Snow” (Heit, 2015, p. 26). However, for the majority of citizens in the Capitol, who never knew hardships and ordeals in life, the Hunger Games are a source of entertainment, a celebration.

Winning the Hunger Games is rewarding not only for the tribute but for their district as well, as it means that for the next year tribute's whole district will get food and other supplies from the Capitol. For some districts it is crucially beneficial since the wealth is not equally spread between all twelve districts and many people are starving.

Panem is a totalitarian country from every point of view. Unlike some other dystopian works, where the regime is not that harsh, *The Hunger Games* universe is a perfect example of a classic dystopian society, where the government controls the nation in every way possible and has no shortage of means to do that.

Panem's military forces are Peacekeepers. They maintain internal security, ensure the obedience of the laws and publicly punish those who break rules. Most of those who defy the Capitol are either killed or brought to the Capitol to become Avoxes. Their tongue is removed and they are forced to work as servants and waiters for citizens in the Capitol.

Moreover, advanced technologies and genetic engineering allowed the Capitol to create several types of Mutations. They are used predominantly during the Hunger Games on the arena to add an element of surprise and danger for tributes if the show gets boring. One of these Mutations is the mockingjays – small birds that can imitate real people's voices. A mockingjay has also become a symbol of the new revolution.

The society and its dystopian features

As freedom of speech and movement is limited, people live in constant fear for their lives under the dictatorship of President Snow. Being overworked, underpaid and stripped of basic human rights, they suffer in silence before Katniss Everdeen volunteers to become a tribute in the 74th Hunger Games and this changes everything.

Isolation

As I have mentioned, for the majority of Panem's citizens there is no way to get out of their district. In District 12, for example, there is an electrical fence. Its original purpose is to protect people from wild animals coming from the forest. However, as it is officially prohibited to hunt in the woods or even go beyond the fence, it is possible that there is more than one reason for an electrical fence to surround the district.

Even within one district lives can be very different as there would always be rich and the poor. Those, who cannot afford to simply buy everything, have to find a way around the system or they will inevitably die. Thus, in District 12 there is a black market, the Hob, where

people are trading possibly illegal goods. There is also a way to sneak behind the electric fence and hunt at your own risk. The Capitol is most likely aware of these infringements but turns a blind eye. This might seem irrational considering Panem's totalitarian regime, but this can be perceived as one of the small acts of indulgence to keep the districts at bay. Moreover, the Peacekeepers also used to profit from the black market in District 12 as they bought goods and ate there.

Although being wealthy in districts is nothing compared to being wealthy in the Capitol, there is still a tangible gap between the rich and the poor in districts. Some people, mostly officials, thrive, while others have to starve or risk their lives. In such circumstances, people can never trust each other. One of the secondary characters, Gale Hawthorne, who is best friends with Katniss, says that "It's to the Capitol's advantage to have us divided among ourselves" (Collins, 2008, p.15).

Each district has its speciality: luxury items, masonry and military supplies, technology, fishing, electrical power, transportation, lumber and paper, textiles, grain and salts, livestock, agriculture, coal mining. Before the Dark Days, there was also District 13 specializing in graphite mining, which was technically a cover for nuclear weaponry production. The districts are neither communicating nor trading directly with one another; everything is controlled by the Capitol. Travelling around for touristic purposes is not allowed and no one can simply move districts or meet people from other parts of the country if they want to.

Most citizens have no idea of what life is like in other parts of Panem. During the 74th Hunger Games, there is a conversation between Katniss and Rue – a twelve-year-old tribute from District 11 – about their lives back home. Katniss enjoys the talk, but wonders if the Gamemakers are broadcasting this because even though they are not sharing any secret or provocative information, the Capitol still does not approve the idea of people from different districts knowing about each other (Collins, 2008, p. 202).

As media is manipulative and manipulated, it is discovered only in *Mockingjay* District 13 is not in ruins, abandoned and devastated, but still exists, in some ways even better than other districts. Turns out that back in the Dark Days, District 13 and the Capitol ended up in a stalemate situation, because the Capitol was winning the war, but District 13 had nuclear weapons that could destroy the whole country. It was decided that District 13 would only exist as secret underground facilities and would not participate in the Hunger Games. The

Capitol eradicated everything above the ground there and thus District 13 was cut out from the rest of Panem. They developed a specific routine, have a President, Alma Coin, and political system, citizens became soldiers over time and they produce everything they need for survival.

Going back to the rest of Panem, security in all districts is reinforced after Katniss and Peeta defy the Capitol and its rules and win the Hunger Games together. Lenient Peacekeepers are replaced by ruthless ones. People tend to stay at home; freedom of movement is restricted even more because the situation is becoming dangerous and even President Snow admits this. As his politics is based on fear, it is reasonable for him to make stricter rules and separate people from each other as much as possible. Jamey Heit suggests in *The Politics of the Hunger Games* that this serves two purposes: “First, he makes it harder for the residents from each district to coordinate a political response. Secondly, he creates an ironic sense of citizenship across all Panem. The one thing that unites the districts is their shared experience of a life without basic rights” (Heit, 2015, p. 35).

However, even those reinforced security protocols cannot stop the flame of revolution now and no isolation can preserve the country the way it was, no matter how much President Snow wants it.

Surveillance

Panem is a totalitarian post-apocalyptic country; therefore, it is not surprising that all its citizens are under constant pressure. They fear for their lives as they know that the Capitol might see and hear everything. Jamey Heit states that “surveillance is a constant worry and running afoul of the Capitol’s rules can result in significant harm to the point of death” (Heit, 2015, p. 23).

The main character, Katniss Everdeen, is afraid of speaking up as well. When she was younger, she used to bluntly express her opinion about life in District 12 and the government, but as she grew up, she realised that she can get her whole family in trouble for that. There is no freedom of speech or media. The Capitol uses propaganda, fear and the Hunger Games to maintain order.

Speaking of the Hunger Games, it is mandatory to attend the reaping in districts. This refers not only to potential tributes and their families but for every single citizen except for those on the verge of death. According to Katniss, this is one of the Capitol’s ways to keep

tabs on the population (Collins, 2008, p. 17). Both the reaping and the Hunger Games are broadcasted live on television around the whole country. This allows citizens in Capitol to have the full experience of the show.

During the reaping, some also take bets on the next tributes and no one stops them, because these people might be the Capitol's informers and most of the inhabitants of District 12 broke the laws at least once, even though it was for survival purposes.

Watching the Hunger Games and other propaganda is obligatory for all citizens of Panem. The only difference is in how they perceive the show. People in the Capitol watch it for entertainment and people in districts are reminded that this is their punishment for previous rebellion.

In terms of surveillance, the most intriguing and controversial figure to observe is Haymitch Abernethy, winner of the second Quarter Quell and the only mentor for District 12. For the first time, he appears at the reaping being disgustingly drunk as usual. As Katniss is about to cry on cameras, Haymitch, fortunately, stumbles towards her to express his reverence about Katniss volunteering to save her little sister Primrose and falls from the stage afterwards. All eyes and cameras are on him now. To Katniss, this seems to be a lucky coincidence, but Jamey Heit in *The Politics of the Hunger Games* suggests there might be more to the story. According to him, Haymitch acted like a drunken fool to drag everyone's attention away from Katniss so she could calm herself down a little and save face (Heit, 2015, p. 107). A small confirmation of that can be found later in the course of *The Hunger Games* when after the interviews Haymitch says: "It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived" (Collins, 2008, p. 134). This phrase hints that Haymitch is perfectly aware of how important an image is and only pretends to be careless most of the time.

At first, Katniss does not have much respect for her mentor; there is more contempt than appreciation. However, seeing that his tributes are not willing to simply become sacrificial lambs, Haymitch starts taking his job more seriously and proves to be not only helpful but much more intelligent than he first appeared. His reputation of drunkard serves him well in *Catching Fire* because no sensible person could imagine that someone would trust Haymitch with rebellion plans and, therefore, he is not considered a threat. Nonetheless, Haymitch is much more reliable than he seems at first glance. He is the one to take Katniss and Peeta away from prying eyes and ears during their Victory Tour in District 11 to discuss their strategy in this tour to calm the districts down.

During both 74th and 75th Hunger Games Haymitch finds subtle ways to send messages to Katniss and later her allies with gifts from sponsors, even though he could not directly tell them what to do to increase their chances of coming back from the arena alive. Haymitch also gave Katniss a piece of advice, probably the most important and valuable in her life, right before she enters the arena of the 75th Hunger Games. He tells her to remember who her real enemy is (Collins, 2009, p. 298). Haymitch carefully chooses his words and places to say such things because of regular surveillance, but it is obvious that he means the Capitol and President Snow himself.

In almost every situation there is at least one Peacekeeper present, more often a group of them. They surround the square, where the reaping is held. They follow chosen tributes to the train to the Capitol. They guard strategically important places and fences between districts. All this acts as a constant reminder: there is no escaping the all-seeing eye of the Capitol.

The conflict between an individual and society

At the very beginning of *The Hunger Games*, Panem is portrayed as a strong totalitarian country with the almighty Capitol in charge. There is no premise for a rebellion to occur again when the Capitol annually oppresses the districts with the Hunger Games.

The main protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is not a rebel at heart for most of *The Hunger Games*. She breaks rules in District 12 in order to survive and help her family. She and her friend Gale Hawthorne truly and openly express their feelings about the Capitol only in the woods, where no one can hear them because they fear to cause trouble not only for themselves but for their families as well.

Her biggest concern is the Hunger Games as her chances of becoming a tribute are pretty high because of her age and the fact that she signed up for additional food rations, tesserae, for her family and her name will be written on more cards than usual. But it is her twelve-year-old sister Prim who is called during the reaping, despite her name should have been on only one card. Katniss cannot allow her little sister to die in the Hunger Games and thus she is the first person to ever volunteer as a tribute from District 12. Katniss highly doubts that she can win the Hunger Games, but she is not letting others write her off easily.

During the tribute parade, where all tributes are dressed representing their districts, Katniss makes an unforgettable impression on the Capitol's citizens as "the girl who was on

fire” (Collins, 2008, p. 70). This also gives her a chance to get some sponsors, whose presents might save her life in the arena.

Katniss unwillingly keeps showing that she is an exception, not like other people, not like other tributes. No one expected anything from that girl, but she creates precedents in every step of her way. After three days of training for the Hunger Games, Katniss gets a score of 11 out of 12, not only for her skill with a bow and arrow but for her performance as well. She shot an apple in the roasted pig’s mouth to force the Gamemakers to pay attention. She and Peeta Mellark, the male tribute from her district, are called “star-crossed lovers from District 12” after Peeta publicly confessed his feelings for Katniss during an interview (Collins, 2008, 134). They are the first love story in the history of the Hunger Games.

During the first half of the 74th Hunger Games, Katniss shows elaborate surviving skills and even manages to get away from a group of Careers – tributes that were training to participate in the Games from a very young age. She teams up with Rue, twelve-year-old tribute from District 11 and together they destroy all food that Careers have stacked in their camp.

It is when Rue dies and she is unable to save her, Katniss finally understands how unfairly the Capitol treats the nation and hates it for that. Despite the arena is the least appropriate place for acts of rebellion, she wants to show everyone that the Capitol cannot have their way in everything: “I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can’t own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I” (Collins, 2008, p. 233). After decorating Rue’s body in flowers she leaves, determined to win the Hunger Games and make people remember both of them.

When only six tributes remain, the Gamemakers announce the change in rules that allows two tributes from the same district win together now. Katniss finds hope that she can get home without having to kill Peeta or watch him die. However, after Katniss and Peeta are the last ones standing, the alteration in the rules is revoked and they both understand this was all just a trick to guarantee the most dramatic finale of the Games. Peeta has no intention to kill the girl he loves and Katniss hesitates before remembering that she still has nightlock berries that can instantly kill both of them. Knowing that the Games require a winner, they take a risk and try to commit suicide, but the Gamemakers interfere and declare them both the winners of the 74th Hunger Games.

This trick with the nightlock costs everyone dearly because this was an act of disobedience. The tributes must follow the rules and Katniss broke them. Moreover, she showed everyone in Panem that there is indeed another way. That people do not have to suffer and blindly obey the Capitol's rules. Once again she created a precedent, and now it resulted in extreme consequences no one could foresee. As Haymitch says: "Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem" (Collins, 2008, 350).

Now Katniss has to convince everyone in Panem that she was acting out of mad love for Peeta and had no rebellious intentions against the government. She learns that now the Hunger Games would be a never-ending, ongoing cycle for her and her life is in the Capitol's hands. Even after the Victory Tour, she will have to stay with Peeta, marry him, maybe even have kids and at the same time become a mentor for future tributes from District 12.

Right before the Victory Tour in *Catching Fire*, President Snow himself pays Katniss a sudden visit. Even more unusual is his offer to "make this whole situation a lot simpler by agreeing not to lie to each other" (Collins, 2009, p. 21) as this is not a common suggestion for a dictator. This does not necessarily mean respect as it is more likely a sign of despair because President Snow needs Katniss to calm down the districts, where people finally decided to stand up for themselves. According to Jamey Heit in *The Politics of The Hunger Games*, the uprisings started because after the 74th Hunger Games "people are starting to realize that Katniss is a leader and, therefore, she presents an alternative to the image President Snow wants to cultivate. Hope has escaped the Arena and it needs to stop" (Heit, 2015, p. 73). Another proof of that can be found in President Snow's own words during this meeting: "Katniss Everdeen, the girl who was on fire, you have provided a spark that, left unattended, may grow to an inferno that destroys Panem" (Collins, 2009, p. 24). President Snow also threatens to harm her family and friends if there would be a revolution because of her actions in the arena.

No matter how hard she tries, Katniss is unable to convince everyone that she never meant to defy the Capitol and question its power and everything she did was because she could not imagine a life without Peeta. The situation in districts does not get better. Katniss and Gale consider taking their families, fleeing District 12 and going deep into the woods, out of the Capitol's reach but after learning about revolutionary moods in districts Gale abandons this idea. For Gale, an uprising is a hope for a brighter future but this is still terrifying for

Katniss. She never asked to become a symbol of a rebellion, yet she already is in the centre of this, even if she does not acknowledge that.

Much like Rue's death in *The Hunger Games*, Gale's public corporal punishment in *Catching Fire* is what changes something in Katniss. She starts thinking that maybe her pulling out the nightlock berries instead of killing Peeta was a subconscious protest against the Capitol because deep down she admits "it isn't enough to keep myself, or my family, or my friends alive by running away. Even if I could. It wouldn't fix anything. It wouldn't stop people from being hurt the way Gale was today" (Collins, 2009, p. 121). Katniss found a weakness in the system, showed everyone that they can change something in their lives and the Capitol is not as powerful as it might seem.

The 75th Hunger Games are also the third Quarter Quell, where there is a special alteration of the rules. And taking the situation in Panem into account it does not seem to be a coincidence that according to this alteration the tributes will be chosen from already existing winners in each district. For Katniss and Peeta it means an inevitable return to the arena because Peeta would not allow Haymitch to be chosen.

Even with all the efforts from most winners to fight this decision and cast doubts on the legitimacy of this rule alteration, the third Quarter Quell cannot be cancelled. During the interviews, the tributes find a way to express their protest once more as all twenty-four of them "stand in one unbroken line in what must be the first public show of unity among the districts since the Dark Days" (Collins, 2009, p. 257).

In the arena, several tributes from different districts either risk or sacrifice their lives to help Katniss and Peeta stay alive. Their motifs are unclear until Katniss is rescued from the arena and Haymitch explains that there was a conspiracy to get Peeta and Katniss out and aforementioned tributes were a part of it. Katniss is stunned to finally realize how important she is for the rebellion and Plutarch Heavensbee, the Head Gamemaker, also an oppositionist confirms: "While you live, the revolution lives" (Collins, 2009, p. 385)

Having survived two arenas of the Hunger Games and lost Peeta, Katniss suffers from a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, which is a real diagnosis. It is not surprising that Katniss is not the only winner of the Hunger games expressing symptoms of this disorder. Every winner deals with the mental and emotional scars from the arena on their own – much like soldiers, who came back from wars in real life. Haymitch is

drowning his sorrows in alcohol, Katniss and Peeta experienced awful nightmares after their Games, Finnick Odair, also rescued from the third Quarter Quell, is disoriented most of the time and cannot concentrate, Johanna Mason is afraid of water after she was tortured in the Capitol. No one feels safe anymore, even after the Games are finished, which is why a rebellion is the only hope for so many people.

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss is transported to District 13, the headquarters of the revolution, after her home and whole District 12 was destroyed, while Peeta and some other tributes were captured by the Capitol.

Katniss has to become a true leader, the face of the revolution, their Mockingjay. She agrees to do so but proposes several conditions that are not very satisfying for Alma Coin, the President of District 13. Her politics prove to be not too different from President Snow's dictatorship. Katniss description of her is "another power player who has decided to use me as a piece in her games, although things never seem to go according to plan" (Collins, 2010, p. 63) as she compares her to the Gamemakers and President Snow.

Having accepted her role as the Mockingjay, Katniss appears in various propaganda clips and tries to help as much as she can, never forgetting that her main goal is to have her revenge on President Snow. After Peeta is extracted from the Capitol completely brainwashed, Katniss has even more reasons to want President Snow dead. She successfully manages to unite the country. Even the richest Districts 1 and 2 join the rebellion. As the end of the war is nigh, Katniss and her team are sent to the Capitol to shoot some more propaganda as well as create a diversion and distract the authorities from the team that is going to infiltrate President Snow's mansion. This is not enough for Katniss and she plans to abandon her team and get to Snow's residence.

However, in these circumstances, Katniss starts to turn from an ally to a threat to President Coin as well, as Coin recognises her importance in this revolution. Katniss is more popular than President Coin because people are willing to follow her, while Alma Coin has to use the same control-maintaining methods that President Snow used. When she is no longer needed as a unifying symbol, Katniss is in danger again, because she can see President Coin for who she is – another power-hungry tyrant to rule the country. No matter how good she was in District 13, Alma Coin would not make a great leader of the country.

During filming in the Capitol's evacuated quarters Katniss and her team accidentally set off several traps and lose their captain, she uses this chance to change plans and get to Snow's residence, while everyone presumes that their whole team is dead. After the remainder of the group gets to the City Circle, they see that children from toddler to teenagers form a human shield around President Snow's mansion. Katniss is very close to her goal, but she does not have enough time to come up with a plan when a hovercraft with the Capitol's mark drops bombs on the children. Some of them detonate immediately. Rebel medics rush to help, and among them, Katniss notices her sister, Prim. Only then the rest of the bombs explode, killing Prim and leaving Katniss unconscious.

Losing so many people that knew, loved and cared about slowly sends Katniss into the depths of madness. The rebels have won, the Capitol surrendered, but it does not matter for her. The only thing keeping her in her senses that she will kill President Snow herself. This has become her obsession.

But when Katniss visits President Snow in confinement, he insists that it was not him who dropped bombs on children and if he had a working hovercraft he would rather use it to escape the city, rather than killing all those kids for no reason. This is the moment Katniss realized that she was most likely the one to ensure that Prim would be among the medics when the bombs are dropped. Nothing would change for the best if Alma Coin becomes the new President of Panem as she is even more manipulative and ruthless than President Snow. It is mentioned in *Dark futures: a VOYA guide to apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and dystopian books and media* that "an overthrown government will provide a chance to get things right, thus setting the stage for another dystopia taking the place of the recently-overthrown one" (Danner, 2012, p. 21).

To prevent another totalitarian regime from establishing on the ruins of the previous one at the day of President Snow's execution, Katniss Everdeen shoots President Coin instead and this is the true victory of the rebellion in Panem.

Fortunately, after everything she has been through, all suffering and loss, Katniss still gets a chance of happy ending with Peeta, as in epilogue of *Mockingjay* they live together in District 12 as husband and wife and have two kids.

In conclusion, I would like to say that *The Hunger Games* trilogy is one of the most outstanding modern works in the dystopian genre and provides a lot of material for literary

analysis and research. As Brandy Danner states in *Dark futures: a VOYA guide to apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and dystopian books and media*: “whether the main ideas in the story focus on surveillance, control, relationships, or anything else, many teens will find parallels to their own situations and lives” (Danner, 2012, p. 24) and this explains why *The Hunger Games* novels and films had such incredible success with the audience.

The Maze Runner

General

The Maze Runner a dystopian series by American author James Dashner. The main trilogy consists of *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010) and *The Death Cure* (2011). Two prequel novels were released later: *The Kill Order* (2012) and *The Fever Code* (2016).

The Setting

Thirteen years prior to the events in *The Maze Runner*, streams of solar radiation, Sun Flares, hit the Earth, destroying all life. Irreversible climate change led to serious warming, civilization was in ruins. Moreover, due to the limited resources available, the US government decided to further decrease the population of America. The reduction was achieved by very harsh means – a deadly and incompletely studied virus was released. Unsurprisingly, the virus went out of control and many people began to rot alive, losing their minds. The virus affected the brain, causing headaches, irrational aggressive behaviour in the first stages. The symptoms gradually worsen, and the infected lose their humanity as they turn into cannibalistic zombie-like creatures. The hybrid of these two disasters, cosmic and man-made, was called the Flare.

For the sake of saving humanity, the organization WICKED (World In Catastrophe: Killzone Experiment Department) was created. They discovered that some people, predominantly kids and teenagers, are Immunes. WICKED began risky experiments on those children and their brains to find out what makes some of them invulnerable to the disease. The Maze was the first of three Trials created to place children into specific conditions to study their brain patterns in reaction to certain events – Variables, which would later help to create a cure for the virus.

The events of the first book take place in the Glade. The boys living here call themselves Gladers. They have no memories of their own lives, except for their first names. They also have no idea why they are in the Maze, who created it and what is life outside it like. The Glade is in the middle of the Maze and massive concrete Doors that close at dusk protect Gladers from the dangers of it. The layout of the Maze changes every night and, for the past two years, Gladers have been trying to solve the mystery and find a way out.

Every week the Box (an elevator) comes with some food, medicine and other necessary supplies and once a month it brings a new boy to the Glade – with no memories of his past like the rest of them. For two years living the Glade followed the same routine, but that changed when the main character, Thomas, joins the Gladers. The day after him the Box brings up the first and only girl in the Glade, Teresa, with a note saying she would be the last one, ever. Teresa tells everything is going to change and collapses. Her appearance in the Maze triggers the Ending, forcing the Gladers to look for the way out of the Maze faster because the routine they put so many efforts to establish comes apart, and so does the Maze.

The second and third phases of The Trials are the Scorch Trials and an individual final test that differs for every subject. These shall determine a final candidate, a person with the perfect brain to create the cure. However, as it is not only the information that is needed but the physical brain of that person as well, creating the cure requires the final candidate to undergo a fatal operation.

The society and its dystopian features

In *The Maze Runner* trilogy, dystopian features blend with science fiction, much like in *Divergent* trilogy. A dystopian society here is an outcome of WICKED's vicious experiment on children; an experiment created in desperate endeavours to save the rest of humanity from complete extinction after an environmental catastrophe and subsequent release of a deadly virus.

Isolation

The events of the first book in the series unfold in the Maze, which is completely isolated from the rest of the world and surrounded by the void. The only thing connecting it to civilization is the Box – an elevator that provides people inside with some food and necessities weekly and one new boy every month. As one can naturally assume, the Maze is supposed to have a solution and at least one exit. However, two years of trying to solve that puzzle were to no avail.

The difficulty of the Maze lies not only in the changing wall patterns but also in creatures that wonder in the passages. These are called “Grievors”, and Thomas describes them as big amorphous monsters with “wicked instrument-tipped appendages protruded from its body like arms: a saw blade, a set of shears, long rods whose purpose could only be guessed” (Dashner, 2009, p. 67). Getting stung by a Griever is extremely painful, but it allows

a person to retrieve some memories from their past, unfortunately, not enough to figure out the purpose of their imprisonment in the Maze.

The Maze has two main functions. First of all, it creates limitations, takes away freedom. Whatever their former lives were like, there is no going back once you are in the Maze. Alby said to Thomas: “Old life’s over, new life’s begun” (Dashner, 2009, p. 22). The Maze limits their desires, dreams, social contacts, skills and much more. It forced the boys to adult quickly as they had to adapt to their new life.

At first, it might seem impossible for a group of fifty boys aged 12 to 16 years to survive on their own. However, they created a properly functioning society of their own by, firstly, adopting a strict set of rules for everyone to follow and, secondly, dividing into several groups depending on the type of activity: growing fruit, doing repairs, cooking and other. At the head of each group is a Keeper who monitors the performance of duties. They have a common leader as well. And although all decisions are made taking into account the votes of all the Gladers, democratically, the leader still has a final say.

As the Maze is extremely dangerous, the boys live in the Glade in the middle of the Maze hence the name “Gladers” they gave themselves. The main rule asserts that no one is allowed to enter the Maze except for the Runners, who go into the Maze every day in search of a way out and make an approximate map.

The second and most important function of the Maze is that it allows scientists from WICKED to gather the information they need by creating specific situations artificially and putting the Gladers into them to see their reactions. Thomas describes it after purposefully getting stung by a Griever and gaining some memories back: “they wanted to test us, see how we’d react to what they call the Variables, and to a problem that has no solution. See if we could work together – build a community, even. Everything was provided for us, and the problem was laid out as one of the most common puzzles known to civilization – a maze” (Dashner, 2009, p. 475).

Raphael Zähringer in his book *Hidden topographies: traces of urban reality in dystopian fiction* provides an argument that “in order to make people devote themselves to the state entirely, one needs to take away other relations which establish strong bonds, namely families, unions, and other social groups” (Zähringer, 2017, p. 25). That is the reason why Gladers are stripped of their identities, their memories are erased, they have no idea about

their families and childhood and even their names turn out to be fake, given by WICKED: Thomas like Thomas Edison, Newt like Isaac Newton or Alby like Albert Einstein. They were all raised by WICKED from a very young age – some of them were orphans, some were given up by their infected parents or taken away forcibly. As they do not have memories of their families and childhood anymore and do not need to worry about anyone but themselves, Gladers are the ideal subjects for the experiment.

However, the topic of isolation is present not solely inside the Maze, but in the outside world as well. After an outbreak of the Flare virus, some towns tried to isolate themselves from the rest of the world in order to stop the infection from spreading among their citizens. In *The Death Cure*, one of such cities, Denver, is described as having a high level of security, patrols looking for the “Crankers” (the infected people) and sending them to special quarantine areas and “the residents have to be tested for the Flare randomly and often” (Dashner, 2011, p. 122).

Unfortunately, even these strict quarantine measures are not enough to eliminate or slow down the virus and thus humanity’s only hope are the Immunes.

Surveillance

Surveillance in *The Maze Runner* series is slightly similar to surveillance in *Divergent* because it is partially justified by scientific purposes. As the Maze is an experiment, all data from it is collected and analyzed by WICKED. There is absolutely no privacy in the Maze because WICKED has two ways to monitor the experiment and its participants.

Firstly, the Creators of the Maze used special beetle blades – small machines equipped with cameras, watching the Gladers everywhere. Seeing this thing up close, Thomas initially mistakes it for a toy rat, but then realizes “it was more like a lizard, with at least six legs scuttling the long silver torso along” (Dashner, 2009, p. 108).

The second way of keeping an eye on experiment subjects is a brain implant called Swipe that all Gladers have. For most of *The Maze Runner*, none of them are aware that WICKED can observe every step of their way and access all the information in their brains, let alone control it. However, there is an episode hinting that the Creators can indeed control Gladers’ minds. When Alby tries telling others what he remembered after being stung by the Griever, someone takes over him and tries strangling him so he would not say anything that could compromise the experiment.

At the end of *The Maze Runner*, when the Gladers finally escape the Maze, they are greeted by WICKED employees. Everyone thought that their struggles were finally over, but the Creators forced one of the Gladers, Gally, to throw a knife at Thomas and the other one, Chuck, to jump in front of it to protect him. There is no way to resist it, only distance mildly reduces the effect of the mind control.

In *The Scorch Trials*, before implementing the second phase of the Trials, a scientist from WICKED reveals that the Maze was only the beginning and while in the Scorch they should not believe their eyes or minds: “All I will say is that sometimes what you see is not real, and sometimes what you do not see is real. We can manipulate your brains and nerve receptacles when necessary” (Dashner, 2010, p. 91).

However, even if constant surveillance is needed to monitor the course of the experiment, the scientific purposes cannot legitimize such intervention into people’s lives and all the suffering they were forced to go through.

The conflict between an individual and society

The main character, Thomas, starts his life like every other kid in the Maze – completely clueless about his past, where he is and why is he in the Maze. Nonetheless, he is different from the other boys as he is not completely disoriented and feels an inexplicable urge to become a Runner and explore the Maze.

Gladers who were stung by the Grievors and gone though the Changing claim that they have seen Thomas in glimpses of memories they retrieved. They do not remember anything bad in particular, but they are very suspicious of him being at least partially responsible for the events in the Maze. One of them, Ben, even attacks Thomas and tries to kill him. This puts Thomas in an ambiguous position. He easily befriends some inhabitants of the Glade, but at the same time, others either avoid him or are rivals with him.

Thomas is not good at following someone else’s orders. He violates the most important rule in the Glade when he ventures into the Maze at sunset to help Minho and injured Alby and the Doors shut behind him. He also does not comply, when Minho tells him to leave Alby and run to have at least a small chance to survive. Instead, he pulls Alby’s body up to the wall with the vines and only then escapes the Grievors with Minho by luring them to the edge of the Maze, where they fall off the Cliff.

Due to his bravery and acumen in the Maze, Thomas becomes a Runner and desperately wants to help figure out the mystery of the Maze and get out. They need to hurry because the Ending of the Maze is triggered and every day it is more and more dangerous to stay in the Glade. After getting stung by the Griever on purpose and regaining memory of his past, Thomas remembers the way out of the Maze. It is revealed that he was originally a part of WICKED and participated in the creation of the Maze trials. However, after having a first-hand experience of the Maze trials, Thomas's loyalty to WICKED disappears.

The main conflict in the whole series lies in the confrontation between WICKED and Thomas. Although he was among original Creators of the Trials and the Maze, Thomas finds it difficult to believe WICKED after what they forced him and the Gladers to go through.

WICKED insist that their goal is worth any sacrifice and that saving humanity should be a sufficient reason for Gladers to keep going through the trials: "continue to respond well to the Variables, continue to survive, and you'll be rewarded with the knowledge that you've played a part in saving the human race" (Dashner, 2010, p. 90). The ways of achieving this ultimate objective should not be judged by ethics since the world is in grave danger. This is why they came up with the Trials plan and had two experiments running at the same time. Thomas and Teresa joined the Gladers, which were Group A, and in *The Scorch Trials*, it was revealed that there is also Group B, which consisted of only girls and a boy named Aris.

Following this logic, WICKED do not neglect lies and manipulation to make their experiment subjects do exactly what WICKED need. In *The Scorch Trials*, the boys, who managed to escape the Maze, are told they are all infected with the Flare virus, which would inevitably kill them, and to get the cure they need to follow WICKED's directives and go through the second phase of the Trials. This is a blatant lie because most of the Gladers are immune to the Flare and do not need a cure and only a few of them control subjects with no immunity.

Manipulation is also a common method of making sure that the experiment goes according to the plan. An explicit example of that is Teresa's betrayal in *The Scorch Trials*. From the very beginning, she was separated from the Gladers, and a boy named Aris took her place. Teresa was sent to Group B with a scenario from WICKED. Together with Aris, they had to make Thomas feel betrayed in every way possible. Teresa had to act like she had no more feelings for Thomas and even put him into a gas chamber, almost killing him. To WICKED this was merely a way to acquire another set of brain patterns, and later Teresa

confessed that they used manipulation and threats to make her comply: “They said they’d kill you if we didn’t do everything just like they told us. No matter how horrible” (Dashner, 2010, p. 432). This involuntary betrayal completely ruined the relationship between Thomas and Teresa, and he was never able to trust her again.

More importantly, everything Thomas had witnessed during the Maze and The Scorch Trials convinced him that WICKED can never be trusted as well. There has always been a catch with them. In *The Scorch Trials*, Thomas was still eager to obtain all his memories, he felt that it would finally provide some sense to what was happening to all of them. However, in *The Death Cure*, he is reluctant to remove the brain implant because “remembering everything didn’t sound good anymore” (Dashner, 2011, p. 33). Thomas and some of his friends are suspicious that it could be another trick, and WICKED might implement some fake memories into their heads or worse.

As I have already mentioned, Thomas is not willing to obey WICKED’s rules or blindly trust anyone. Before the scientists get a chance to forcibly remove their brain implants, Thomas and some of his friends escape WICKED headquarters to Denver. There they meet another former Glader, Gally, who managed to survive and now joined The Right Arm – an organization opposing WICKED.

The Right Arm claim that their purpose is to get rid of WICKED and use their resources to help people, both healthy and infected, instead of wasting everything in a vague hope to find a cure. This idea seems appealing to Thomas at first, and he agrees to help them. Unfortunately, later it turns out The Right Arm does not plan to take over WICKED headquarters and manage the situation properly. Instead, they are planning to plant the explosives in the building and destroy it. Thus, Thomas ends up conflicting with them as well, because they do not even care about innocent Immunes that WICKED had kidnapped and hidden somewhere inside.

Thomas has to return to WICKED headquarters and pretend that he changed his mind and wants to help them develop a vaccine. WICKED tell Thomas that he is the Final Candidate, the missing piece they need to complete a blueprint for the cure. The choice was between him and Teresa, but the scientists explain that she has a way of doing exactly what they want, unlike Thomas: “Your tendency toward freethinking is what ultimately determined that you are the Final Candidate” (Dashner, 2011, p. 317). All the choices Thomas made, all his resistance to WICKED was actually what made him even more attractive as a test subject.

No matter how important finding a cure for the Flare can be, Thomas already knows that even if he sacrifices himself and allows WICKED to perform fatal brain surgery on him, there is still no guarantee that it will be enough to create the vaccine. The scientists try to act confident in front of Thomas, but he is already aware that WICKED are kidnapping Immunes again to run the Trials again with new subjects (Dashner, 2011, p. 322).

When almost all hope is lost and scientists nearly started operation on his brain, Thomas is saved by Chancellor Ava Paige, the leader of WICKED. She provides him with a map of the building and instruction to get the Immunes and bring them to a safe place through a portal as they are the only hope of humanity now. She believes that there is no point in tortures and Trials anymore, therefore, no need for vivisection.

Thomas, most of his friends from the Glade and Group B and other kidnapped Immunes successfully escape the WICKED headquarters and the building collapses right behind them. The portal led them to a safe place to start a new life there.

The story ends on a hopeful note with Chancellor Ava Paige's letter to her colleagues in WICKED, where she states that even though they were never able to come up with the blueprint for the cure, they still managed to save the world by preserving the Immunes: "we have sent the brightest, the strongest, the toughest of our subjects to a safe place, where they can begin civilization anew while the rest of the world is driven to extinction" (Dashner, 2011, p. 388).

To sum up, I would like to point out that in *The Maze Runner* series, James Dashner used a rather common idea of an apocalypse being a result of a deadly virus outbreak to create a unique thought-provoking story and raise the issues of morality, ethics and possible outcomes of our decisions, which is why the series is among the most popular in young adult dystopian fiction.

Divergent

General

Divergent is a young adult dystopian fiction trilogy and a writing debut of American author Veronica Roth. The trilogy consists of *Divergent* (2011), *Insurgent* (2012) and *Allegiant* (2013). Later a related book, *Four* (2014), introduced five short stories told from the perspective of one of the trilogy's main characters – Tobias Eaton, also known as Four.

The setting

The story takes place in post-apocalyptic America, specifically in Chicago. The society is divided into five factions. These factions were formed to overcome the vices that people believed to be the reasons that nearly brought them to the brink of death. Each faction has its emblem, leader or group of leaders and dress code.

Candor was formed by those who blamed hypocrisy and deceit for the malfunctions of human nature. Therefore, their emblem represents scales in a circle. Members of Candor dress only in black and white. They compete with Amity because they believe that Amity members are two-faced and always lie to prevent conflicts. Members of Candor make good lawyers and judges.

Erudite is dedicated to knowledge and intelligence. It was created for those who saw the solution in education and elimination of ignorance. Emblem of the fraction is the eye denoting the mind and curiosity. Many members wear glasses, although their vision is perfect. Erudite must wear at least one piece of blue clothing. They are rivals with Abnegation, considering their methods of government ineffective. Their leader is chosen based on intelligence quotient. Members of this faction primarily become teachers and scientists.

Amity is dedicated to peace, kindness, generosity and neutrality. Their emblem is a tree. Amity was formed by those who considered war and strife the biggest flaws of human nature. Members of this fraction are usually dressed in red and yellow. They do not have an official leader, only a representative. They are friendly and supportive, so they make good caretakers.

Dauntless is dedicated to courage and the elimination of fear. It was created for those who blamed cowardice for previous failures of the society. Emblem of this faction is flame. They differ from other fractions in that they wear mostly black clothes, tattoos and piercings. This faction has the rule to have an odd number of leaders. During the events in *Divergent*,

there are five leaders in Dauntless. Their role in society is keeping secure the fence surrounding the city and protecting the citizens from all kinds of threats.

Abnegation is a faction dedicated to selflessness. The clothes are all grey and simple. The only jewellery allowed is a watch. Their emblem represents their nature – two hands connected in a handshake. Women of Abnegation usually collect their hair in a bun or ponytail, while men cut their hair short. They avoid mirrors in their daily life in order not to succumb to vanity and they do not even celebrate birthdays. Officially, this faction does not have a leader. The city's council consists of fifty members of Abnegation solely, as they are considered incorruptible, who are selected based on their moral qualities and professional skills. It is believed that “those who want power and get it live in terror of losing it. That's why we have to give power to those who do not want it” (Roth, 2011, p. 42).

Each faction contributes to society, and all its members have a common set of character traits. There are also outcasts called factionless, who were not fit for any faction or dropped out of their faction for some reason. They live in sewers and empty subways, work on undesirable positions and get little food and clothes as payment.

At the age of sixteen, every teenager has to pass an obligatory aptitude test. Passing this test is the main criterion for who you are, what you can do and where you belong in life. Through testing, a certain basic attribute of a person is identified and that determines their affinity to one of the factions – Abnegation, Dauntless, Erudite, Amity or Candor. According to the creators of the system, this shall allow a person to be assigned to the group that they are best suited for. The standard is that one person can incline towards only one faction. But there are no rules without exception. These exceptions are called Divergent – people with multiple inclinations, whose test show uncertain results. They can belong to several factions at once. This situation is considered unacceptable. Divergent have to hide their results as the government is afraid of them, because they are difficult to control, and tries to get rid of them.

The society and its dystopian features

In *Divergent*, the classical system of dystopia can be traced and the structure of a totalitarian society is shown: there is a convoluted complex of hard training, psychological tests aimed at making a person a “controlled being” is described. There is an intention to create a man, who will without question obey all orders from above. But the system crashes when Divergent appear – people with a “different” consciousness, with a special view of the world. Due to their innate features, they cannot become just “cogs” in a totalitarian machine.

Isolation

One of the mechanisms of control in *Divergent* is isolation. As I have mentioned previously, the city is surrounded by a fence and Dauntless soldiers are guarding it. This eliminates all contact with the outside world. During the first two parts of the trilogy, there is no indication that there even exists any civilization beyond the wall. The only known thing is that there are Amity farms behind the fence, but everything apart from it remains a mystery.

Inner division of the society into factions is a quintessential and unique feature of *Divergent* series as it is a very specific interpretation of isolation. This is not simply about separating people into five definitive groups according to their beliefs and inclinations, but also about how all members of different factions try to distance from one another and how they see each other. While children from all factions attend the same school together for the first few years, the actual interaction between them is not encouraged. They tend to stick to groups by factions in their free time. The same applies to adults, as there are no gatherings or events involving members of several factions at once. The only exceptions are work-related meetings and the Choosing Ceremony. People in general also do not fancy the idea of associating with members of different factions other than their own.

Everyday life in *Divergent* follows a specific pattern system and factions are key elements in that. They create rules and traditions that people are supposed to follow. Veronica Roth describes the setting of the world in *Divergent* quite in detail, stressing that “faction customs dictate even idle behaviour and supersede individual preference” (Roth, 2011, p. 14). For example, Erudite are supposed to study all the time and Abnegation have to be quiet, humble and submissive. They shall never put their needs before other people’s, express curiosity or show any feelings neither in public nor at home with their family. Defiance of norms of the faction is not welcome, even if you do not approve of them. If a person does not fit their faction there is a sense of loneliness inside, even if he or she still technically remains a member.

The motto of this society says “Faction before blood”. This means that only your faction shall determine who you are and family ties are not that important. It also means that if a person transfers from their original faction, they will not have an opportunity to live with their family anymore or meet them regularly. Relationship between factions is so dire that transferring is generally recognized as an act of treason and some families will not even visit their kids in new factions, even when allowed to. Neophytes who fail their initiation also do

not have an opportunity to simply return home to their faction and family. Once the choice is made at the Ceremony – there is no going back to the way things were. To ease the process of changing allegiance from family to faction after transfer members are not supposed to talk about their previous faction.

The isolation is even worse with factionless. It is emphasized that “to live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community” (Roth, 2011, p. 19). Becoming an outcast is a fate worse than death for some people in this world, as there is no purpose in life without a faction.

At the very end of the second book, *Insurgent*, it is revealed that is life beyond the fence and many years ago a group of people intentionally isolated Chicago, built the wall around it and created the whole system of factions: “We have formed your society in a particular way in the hope that you will rediscover the moral sense most of us have lost” (Roth, 2012, p. 170). It is vaguely explained that the world has been damaged and people in this city, especially Divergent, are “the cure” and they are needed outside the wall.

In *Allegiant*, a group consisting of the main character, Tris Prior, her boyfriend, Tobias “Four” Eaton, and several their friends leaves the city, they are brought to the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, who conducted the experiment on Chicago and controlled the city. After the study indicating that certain genes in people create a predisposition to bad qualities and provoke undesirable behaviour and United States government’s failed attempt at genetic improvement of humankind, which resulted only in damaging genes, people with flawed genes started the Purity War against the government and non-damaged individuals. The Bureau of Genetic Welfare was formed to solve the genetic problem and they came up with a long-term experiment of putting a big group of people into a secluded area and live like that until several generations later the genetic purity will be restored in their descendants.

This revelation proves that isolation and segregation were not only on the level of factions or the city but also on the level of genetic structure in people, as genetically damaged people are not thought of highly. Although they are not significantly discriminated, they are also not considered important or good enough. They can never become leaders or acquire any good position in the Bureau. Genetically pure individuals were well-educated, “their worlds saturated by experiments and observation and learning”, and genetically damaged were usually leftovers of these experiments, “where they only had to learn enough to survive until

the next generation” (Roth, 2013, p. 215). While legally they are equal, in reality, damaged people are poorer and are more likely to be accused of violence and crimes. Manipulation with human DNA was supposed to improve the society, yet it resulted in destroying it and wiping out half of the population of the country. And then instead of atoning for their sins, unifying the state and rebuilding it that way, the government blamed everything on genetic impairment and focused on separating people and pretending that they do everything to help them and take care of the problem.

Surveillance

Surveillance is another feature of *Divergent* series that is constantly present and has a great impact on the everyday life of common people.

First of all, people are observed by members of their faction and others. This is particularly true for Abnegation, as they are selfless, meaning that they are not thinking about themselves, but pay attention to people around them and their needs. Even though it is only their habit of observing others and they do it for some egoistic purpose, it still puts pressure on a person to know that their actions are watched and subconsciously validated.

Secondly, in Dauntless surveillance is even more open and obvious. One of its forms here is rankings – instructors watch closely and evaluate the progress of initiates on each stage. One of the leaders oversees the training process of neophytes to find possible Divergent and dispose of them, as it is later revealed. On the second stage of initiation, which is a fear simulation, they collect data about what terrifies initiates fears and how they deal with it. Video footage of that is sent to Dauntless leaders as well. On the third stage, Dauntless authorities are present to witness how initiates pass their “fear landscape”. This is very personal and can even appear humiliating, as facing the deepest fears is extremely hard, but there is no such thing as privacy in Dauntless.

One of the main characters, Tobias Eaton, nicknamed Four, who is Dauntless instructor during the first book, works in the control room with security cameras. He is the one to warn Tris about the fact that Dauntless leaders are watching her. In *Allegiant*, Four explains that he meant that “there were cameras everywhere, all the time” (Roth, 2013, p. 150).

Dauntless, as they are trained to become guards and police, are also able to keep an eye on what is happening in the city via security cameras. This can be seen near the end of

Divergent, as Tris finds Four under simulation overseeing the attack on Abnegation from Dauntless control room. The room has dozens of monitors, each showing a part of the city or Dauntless compound.

In *Allegiant*, it turns out that such complicated system of security cameras was not invented by Dauntless or any other faction themselves, but rather implemented by the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, who had full access to these cameras and kept monitoring the experiment in Chicago through them.

The infuriating part about this discovery, especially for Tris, is that the Bureau was watching them all the time, taking notes, learning from them, but they never intervened, when the city needed that. They did not prevent the attack on Abnegation, masterminded by Erudite, who used a special serum on Dauntless to transform them into hypnotized obedient machines. Moreover, the Bureau took the exact opposite step. They provided Erudite with an advanced serum to encourage the genocide of Abnegation because Abnegation intended to reveal the truth about their city being an experiment. They did not avert deaths of several Dauntless, who committed suicide following Erudite orders in simulation. They valued the experiment more than the lives of dozens of people and considered a revolution in the city to be a better option than having a risk of failure of the whole experiment.

Thus surveillance is again proved to be a mechanism of control and manipulation, albeit disguised as an instrument for a greater good.

The conflict between an individual and society

The plot of almost every work in the dystopian genre, as I have noted above, is focused around the confrontation between an individual and the system, usually totalitarian. In *Divergent*, a teenage girl becomes this hero opposing society. For the author, the main goal is to attract the attention of the appropriate audience for which the work is intended. Therefore, readers can identify themselves with the main character, and empathy with the hero goes to the personal level forming strong bonds and thus immersing the reader deeper into the story.

The main character of the book, Beatrice Prior, grew up in Abnegation. However, she always admired the Dauntless and secretly dreamed of breaking out of her faction, but felt obliged to her parents. The complication lies also in that Beatrice is not like her peers, who live and act according to laws and rules without considering that there might be something

faulty about them. Their lifestyle does not provoke any rejection in them. There is no attempt on their part to somehow change the situation. Even Beatrice's brother frequently tells her to "just do what you're supposed to" (Roth, 2011, p. 14).

Beatrice has always suspected that she does not belong to Abnegation as she feels that she is not selfless enough, even though she was raised in this environment and tried to meet their standards and behave accordingly. She cannot fully commit to looking out for other people. She tries to hide it and even fight it. Her dissenting nature causes an inner conflict between expectations coming from her family and her faction and her true desires. Even at her test Beatrice is unable to conceal her curiosity, asks questions and part of her immediately regrets it, realizing it is "a mistake, a betrayal of Abnegation values" (Roth, 2011, p. 15).

As a result of the aforementioned factors, Beatrice is one of the few people to get an uncertain result in aptitude test. Finding out that she is a Divergent and can belong to Erudite, Abnegation and Dauntless at the same time makes everything only worse. It exacerbates her anxiety, leaves her with more questions and puts additional pressure on her.

Turning to the etymology of the word "divergent" and "divergence", its fundamental meaning can be summarized as "discrepancy". This term is widely used in various sciences. According to its key meaning, the name of the novel carries the meaning of some kind of discrepancy, but, speaking of a person, one can guess that it means "dissenting".

Beatrice struggles to decide whether she should pursue her dream and transfer to Dauntless or stay in Abnegation and keep trying to fit in. "Sixteen years of trying and I'm not good enough," – these are her thoughts right before the Choosing Ceremony (Roth, 2011, p. 30).

It is crucial to notice that this particular concern of not being good enough follows Beatrice throughout her whole life and the whole series. On one hand, the desire to fit in, become a worthy member of society makes her stubborn and determined as she does not like to give up in any circumstances. It makes her relentless because when someone considers her to be a weakling or underestimates her, her immediate reflex is to try and prove them wrong. This is what keeps her going and potentially makes her a role model for young readers, as it teaches them to remain persistent. On the other hand, the fear of not being good enough for something and necessity to prove herself also forces her to make ill-considered decisions and act imprudently, which causes her a lot of problems over time.

After joining Dauntless and changing her name, Tris finds it hard to socialize and fit in her new faction due to her Abnegation upbringing. Loud laughter, tears and even smallest signs of affection and other emotions expressed publicly are incomprehensible to her at first and slightly disgusting. This shows how severely the way she was raised affected her, although she was not exactly fit for Abnegation. Other Dauntless-born and transfer initiates tend to call Tris “Stiff”, as this is a common nickname for Abnegation.

During the initiation, Tris has to constantly prove herself to others, while also fighting off her fear of not being good enough and constant thoughts about her family and life in Abnegation. She cannot help but compare it to her new life in Dauntless. At first, she has more doubts than appreciation, but over time she grows to love Dauntless routine and lifestyle. It fascinates her as it is drastically different from what she was used to. She hopes that this is the place where she belongs.

However, Tris notices a few disturbing moments in Dauntless too. Something is wrong as her new faction drifts off further and further from its initial values and it can be seen in their leaders and strategies they use. Several years prior to events in *Divergent*, leadership in Dauntless changed and so did the training methods and standard behaviour for the whole faction. For example, one of the new leaders, Eric, turns out to be extremely ruthless as he insists that initiates should fight till the end, until one person is unable to continue, while previously there was an option to concede. Dauntless faction manifesto states “We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another” (Roth, 2011, p. 111). However, it is clear that now faction has strayed far from those initial ideas and goals.

It is important to mention that at that point Tris has no intention to rebel, go against the system or change the way Dauntless or any other faction lives. Everything she does is either to fit in her new faction and fully become a part of it or it is for the sake of her life or someone she deeply cares about. She is still only a usual sixteen-year-old girl who just wants a normal, safe and steady life. She craves having some certainty, a place in this life and society. But it is her divergence, her major difference from others that makes her an outstanding character and also complicates her life in some ways.

While maintaining control over actions and behaviour can be rather simple in dystopias, it is the control of the minds that leaders struggle with. In *Divergent*, Dauntless leaders want their initiates to not only to act according to their rules and orders but also to do

so without hesitation. Four mentions: “Intentions are the only thing they care about. They want you to think a certain way. So you’re easy to understand. So you won’t pose a threat to them” (Roth, 2011, p. 162). This is also the reason why Dauntless are following a directive from Erudite leader Jeanine Matthews, hunt down Divergent in their faction and kill them, claiming these occasions to be simply accidents or suicides.

Divergent is a huge problem for ambitious and power-hungry leaders such as Jeanine Matthews because are unpredictable, they are not affected by traditional simulation. They are able to remain conscious and realize the falsehood of what is happening to them in simulation. It is impossible to maintain order and complete obedience while there are such people. Since factions are expecting a certain type of thinking and behaviour, Divergent is destined to break these expectations and create chaos. To people inside the system, they are dangerous.

When Erudite execute their plan to use Dauntless in the attack on Abnegation, this is the turning point for Tris. She could have simply backed off, found her family and retreated to Amity sector, yet she decides to put an end to the massacre and free Dauntless from simulation they are under. This is a manifestation of her courage and her Divergence as well. She finally stops trying to associate herself with only one faction and accepts that she is different: “I am not Abnegation. I am not Dauntless. I am Divergent. And I can’t be controlled” (Roth, 2011, p. 225). Together with Four they successfully destroy the simulation, free Dauntless from Erudite control and take the data about attack simulation with them to Amity. Unfortunately, enormous damage had already been caused and the system slowly started to fall apart.

In *Insurgent*, the conflict escalates rapidly as Erudite now openly hunt down Divergent, Dauntless are split into traitors and loyal, Amity wants to remain neutral and Candor is not supportive either.

For Tris, the situation now is not only about returning to normal. Her main concern becomes to find out the truth behind the attack on Abnegation, because to her “the truth has a way of changing a person’s plans” (Roth, 2012, p. 17) and she believes it to be more important than dealing with the current outcome of the attack. She learns that her previous faction was entrusted with some life-changing information, the kind that is worth killing for or dying for.

At that point, another group steps out of the darkness. It is unveiled that over time factionless grew to become an organized group, a cast. They are not scattered throughout the city anymore and even found themselves a leader – Evelyn Johnson-Eaton, Tobias’s mother, who was presumed dead before. Their goal is to get rid of Erudite as a whole and establish a new form of government, a new society completely without factions. Tris does not trust factionless as well as Evelyn and she does not believe that eradication of a whole faction of Erudite, erasing all their data, research and other information and creating a factionless community is the right thing to do. Thus, she is again opposing the group to follow her path.

To retrieve the information her parents and half of Abnegation died for, Tris is willing to risk her life and she does so several times, without thoroughly weighing the consequences of her actions. She betrays Dauntless, factionless and her friends and boyfriend in the vague hope of saving the data, she does not know much about. She does not act directly against factionless but does not comply either. This is why someone calls Tris Insurgent – “a person who acts in opposition to the established authority, who is not necessarily regarded as a belligerent” (Roth, 2012, p. 149).

In *Allegiant*, when the information about their city being an experiment is finally revealed to everyone, it creates panic and chaos at first. Evelyn Johnson and her factionless allies insist that everyone should remain in the city and unite against oppressors, who used their society for scientific purposes like guinea pigs. Tris cannot agree that solving the problems in the city is more important than finding out the truth about their existence and the experiment. Tris remains a truth-seeker, a type of person to go beyond limits simply to have a full understanding of the situation. She does not want to believe in lies and she is not content with barely knowing enough to survive in this society. This might be also related to her Divergent nature and makes her antagonize with Evelyn and her regime, as Evelyn slowly turns into a selfish tyrant.

After escaping the city with several of her friends and arriving in the Bureau of Genetic Welfare Tris has to face another obstacle which is discrimination of people based on their DNA structure as in some of them it is believed to be damaged. Even though at first this division by genetics makes sense, Tris later realizes that no specific gene mutation or absence of it should influence a person’s life or define someone. The same can be applied to factions. Previously Tris held to her Divergence to be her salvation and at least one thing that remained the same when her whole world came crumbling. Having found out that Divergent is just a

name for people with healed genes she reconsiders it. She wonders if anyone ever truly needs to be identified as Divergent or some faction or “if we can just be friends or lovers or siblings, defined instead by the choices we make and the love and loyalty that binds us” (Roth, 2013, p. 149).

Following the disclosure about the Bureau’s support and involvement in the attack on Abnegation and their intention to reset the experiment in Chicago with the help of memory-erasing serum, Tris can no longer remain loyal to them. On one hand, Tris does not want to destroy the Bureau with a death serum as some other rebels did, even though they are manipulative and cruel. On the other hand, her city is at the edge of war between Evelyn with her loyal factionless and the Allegiant – a group of former faction members who believe in that system and want to restore it.

The only way to stop the Bureau is to get to the Weapons Lab and release the memory-erasing serum within the building before the experiment is reset. However, this is a suicidal mission, because it is protected from breaking in with a lethal serum that no one can survive. Tris is selfless like Abnegation and cares about the people more than she cares about her own life. She is smart like Erudite, so she can quickly adapt to new circumstances and see through the deceit. She is courageous like Dauntless and she is brave enough to go through something that can and will get her killed. Her whole life was built up to this one moment, hence the reason Tris decides to go to the Weapons Lab through death serum instead of her brother Caleb, who was initially assigned to the task to redeem his past sins.

Tris overcomes the effect of death serum, but she has to confront David, the head of the Bureau of Genetic Welfare, who would do everything it takes to protect the idea of experiments for genetic healing and keep them from shutting down. Tris manages to release memory-erasing serum but succumbs to her wounds after David shoots her multiple times and dies.

Moments prior entering the Weapons Lab Tris shows no sign of hesitation as she thinks: “I don’t belong to Abnegation, or Dauntless, or even the Divergent. I don’t belong to the Bureau or the experiment or the fringe. I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me – they, and the love and loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could” (Roth, 2013, p. 481). Tris makes an ultimate sacrifice for the long-term good and it is lucid for her to do so as this is her nature, this is who she is above all factions and genetic purity.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that while *Divergent* trilogy does not stray far from traditions of dystopia, it presents a unique take on certain features of the genre, such as the reason of isolation, and a structural division of society according to their aptitude. An appealing, yet realistic main character along with a wide range of socio-philosophical issues covered, make this trilogy not only relevant and popular among a wide range of readers, but also an enticing work to analyze.

Conclusion

Dystopian literature has always anticipated change. The most dangerous, from the point of view of the authors, social, political, scientific or technological trends of the modern world find their expression in the dystopian genre.

The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins can be considered the closest to classical dystopia, as it deals with a totalitarian society under dictatorship of one leader, where all aspects of life are regulated by the corrupted government and citizens live in fear for the entirety of their lives. It expresses one of the most popular dystopian issues – an oppressing political regime and life in constant terror, where the elite thrives while everyone else is abused in one way or another. However, the Hunger Games themselves are a unique mechanism of control because of their consistency – they are a perennial event that everyone is forced to witness as a punishment for previous sins. Created as a penalty, the Hunger Games gradually evolved into an elaborate show and the sight of children slaughtered in the arena is not unbearable anymore, but rather amusing for the elite. Even the winners cannot forget about the Games, as they are obliged to become mentors for future tributes. This ongoing unfair cycle seems intolerable for contemporary society, but this exaggeration is the way of warning concerned readers about what may happen in some distant future if people tolerate and justify oppression and violation of basic human rights. Moreover, unlike many previous dystopian works, *The Hunger Games* introduced a strong young and determined character that many young adult readers can look up to. Katniss Everdeen is an example of how one ordinary person can become a national hero and change not only her own life but the country in general for better, even if it starts with something as little as a handful of berries. All this resulted in remarkable popularity of the series.

On the other hand, *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* trilogies are more focused on issues concerning scientific discoveries and regulating life with the help of science. Both of these trilogies also address the question of morality.

In *The Maze Runner*, an uncontrollable virus released by the government resulted in a global pandemic. Horrible experiments on children that followed, kidnapping many of them from their families, numerous deaths, lies and suffering were all justified by the supreme goal to save humanity from complete extinction. The scientists were reluctant to admit that there was no need in continuing the experiments, as creating a vaccine was most likely unachievable. And even if it was possible, there are still a lot of ethical questions: whether it

is acceptable to use children in those experiments, whether the goal can justify all means and whether it is fair and right to sacrifice dozens of lives to save millions. Previously, science did not have that much weight in dystopian literature and scientific progress was usually depicted through advanced technology used to implement surveillance ubiquitously. However, science is now one of the fastest progressing areas in our society, and it is important to not forget about morality these days. The trilogy also shows how the desire to lower the population artificially and control it can lead to disastrous consequences.

Divergent trilogy goes even deeper into the impact of scientific progress on society and how this can lead to a dystopian future over time, should this progress take a wrong turn. The topic of improving human nature is not new to literature; however, *Divergent* takes this issue further, implying that experiments on genetics may lead to almost irreversible damage and dystopian future.

Both *Divergent* and *The Maze Runner* trilogies suggest that humanity should be more careful and cautious about the direction and tendencies of scientific progress, while *The Hunger Games* trilogy focuses more on political issues.

It is also important to notice that the issues of isolation and surveillance were not equally depicted in these three works, but the conflict between an individual and society was the central part of all of them. *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* focus mostly on surveillance, as there is a constant feeling inside every character that they might be watched, even when there seems to be no threat. *The Maze Runner* is mostly prominent for its isolation theme because the main character and his friends are isolated from their families and the rest of humanity for the major part of the series.

It should also be mentioned that during the analysis of *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* trilogies there was a slight problem with the lack of sources other than the trilogies themselves to support the arguments. This is mainly caused by the fact that these two works have very specific structures and settings that are not exactly typical for classical dystopia, yet they are still among the most popular dystopian fiction books for young adults.

Due to the number of other contemporary dystopian novels and dystopian features that were not analysed deeply in the thesis, it would be possible to follow up with other analyses, which would take into account more works in the dystopian genre and other significant aspects.

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