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Bakalářská práce

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Elements of political ideologies present in YA dystopian literature on
the example of Veronica Roth's *Divergent*.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně s využitím pramenů, které uvádím v seznamu použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne

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Introduction

I chose this topic for my bachelor's thesis because of my fascination with the anti-utopian and dystopian genre. Ever since I first encountered Orwell's novel, "1984", as a mandatory read in grammar school, I have been deeply drawn to it. So, when I was thinking about the topic, I wanted to write my thesis on, my mind kept coming back to this genre. Upon some reflection, I have come to understand what it is that makes me gravitate to it the most: it is the ominous atmosphere and the intricate ideologies that govern the societies within these works. Given that most of the books I have read within the anti-utopian/dystopian genre have already been extensively analysed and documented, I made the decision to explore its younger counterpart: young adult dystopia.

The YA dystopia was particularly popular when I was a teenager. However, despite being in the target audience, these narratives had eluded my attention until relatively recently when I started researching the topic. Reading various articles and book reviews, I discovered that the genre offers a wide range of options with books written in the 90s to ones published as recently as 2019. Therefore, I have chosen a highly acclaimed book from the era of the genre's peak in popularity: "Divergent" by Veronica Roth.

The main aim of this thesis is to analyse the society portrayed in the novel in terms of its ideological framework, shedding light on the underlying beliefs, principles, and values that shape and govern the world in a YA dystopia. Moreover, it aims to analyse and illustrate on examples how ideology influences the lives and actions of the characters. Additionally, this thesis seeks to identify any discernible elements of real-world political ideologies present in the novel, as the genre often offers a warning connected to the reader's own reality.

The whole project is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters provide the theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis of the novel.

Chapter One provides a comprehensive exploration of the concept of political ideology, presenting a defined framework for the thesis. It further offers a concise overview and characterization of influential political ideologies, while also establishing ideology's connection to literature.

Chapter Two serves as a thorough exploration of the dystopian genre, tracing its historical development, distinguishing it from utopia and anti-utopia, and highlighting its significance

within young adult literature. It also discusses the defining features of the genre and introduces two typologies of dystopian societies.

Chapter Three contextualizes Veronica Roth within YA literature, exploring her life as a writer, her literary career, and the reception of the “Divergent” trilogy. Final section of this chapter focuses on establishing a frame of reference for the subsequent analysis in terms of story line and important characters.

The last chapter analyses the dystopian society depicted in the novel, focusing on its ideological dimension. Utilizing examples from the novel and drawing on previous chapters, the analysis explores the society’s structure, the ruling ideology, the factions’ ideologies, their roles in society, mechanisms of control, and the challenges it faces.

1 Political Ideology and Literature

This chapter begins by delving into the meaning of political ideology, tracing its development throughout history, exploring its diverse nuances and controversial interpretations. It then introduces a definition that will serve as a frame of reference for the rest of the thesis.

The second part of the chapter offers a concise overview and characterization of ten significant and influential political ideologies. This provides a foundational understanding of the ideological landscape necessary for a successful analysis of the chosen literary work.

The final segment of this chapter explores the relationship between political ideologies and literature, supported by relevant theoretical as well as literary examples. It highlights the role of literature in spreading and challenging ideas, addressing societal issues, and envisioning alternative structures, laying the groundwork for the following chapter.

1.1 Political Ideology

1.1.1 Evolution of the Concept of Ideology

The word *ideology* has been in use for more than two centuries with its origins dating back to the French Revolution and to the philosophers of the Late Enlightenment in Europe. It is generally believed that it was **Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy** (1754–1836), a French aristocrat and philosopher, who first introduced it in his works. Destutt de Tracy originally used the word to describe a new science that would study ideas. The findings of the “science of ideas”, as Destutt de Tracy envisioned it, could be used to improve society both socially and politically. This ultimately gave the term its political connotation (Baradat, Phillips 2017, pp. 8–9). Over time, however, the term came to be associated with a broader concept referring to a comprehensive worldview or set of beliefs and values. Since then, the concept of ideology has been highly contested with philosophers rarely reaching a consensus on the scope of the concept or even its definition. One of the reasons for this could be the wide variety of political thinkers who have developed theories on political ideology based on their, often opposing, socio-political views (Heywood 2021, pp. 2–3).

According to Heywood (2021, p. 3), there was a discernible split between the different theories on ideology in terms of the theorists’ political orientation. In the first group, which had a significant influence on the development of the concept, are **Karl Marx** (Germany, 1818–1883), and the philosophers who later subscribed to his teachings. Marxists generally believed

that ideology is first and foremost a set of ideas that reflects the interests and views of the *bourgeoisie*¹. As such, its main function in society is to conceal the true nature of class society and capitalism from both the oppressed and the oppressors and maintain the status quo. The bourgeois ideology achieves this by providing justification for inequality and by spreading *false consciousness*² among people and especially among the *proletariat*³. Ideology is thus an evil and completely redundant construct that will ultimately be abolished once the proletariat has prevailed (Heywood 2021, pp. 3–4).

Where Marxist thinkers have differed in their theory is in the proposed solutions to this problem. While Karl Marx disregarded ideology as an instrument for socio-political change, younger Marxists began to recognise its importance and potential in their political struggle. **Antonio Gramsci** (Italy, 1891–1937) stressed the need to establish a strong and comprehensive proletarian ideology that could challenge the cultural *hegemony*⁴ of capitalism on the political and intellectual levels and eventually replace it. Moreover, Gramsci argues in his works that the entrenchment of an ideology in society and its culture is the central principle in the ability of a ruling ideology to remain in power – i.e., a ruling ideology ideally controls all aspects of society, e.g., “its art and literature; [...] its education system and mass media; [...] everyday language; and [...] popular culture.” (Heywood 2021, p. 4).

Another group of philosophers, as distinguished by Heywood (2021, pp. 5–6), had their understanding of the concept of ideology transformed by the rise of totalitarian regimes and other major ideological tensions in the 20th century. According to Heywood (2021, pp. 5–6), liberal theorists, such as **Hanna Arendt** (Germany, 1906–1975) and **Karl Popper** (Austria, 1902–1994), made the official ideologies of totalitarian regimes into exemplars of ideology. This view portrayed ideologies as “‘closed’ systems of thought, which, by claiming a monopoly of truth, refuse to tolerate opposing ideas and rival beliefs [...] [and thus] serve as instruments of social control, ensuring compliance and subordination.” (Heywood 2021, pp. 5–6). As Heywood (2021, p. 6) points out, this definition is quite constraining and excludes a wide range of ideologies, such as liberalism.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary (c2023b) defines Bourgeoisie as the ruling class “in Marxist theory: the class of those who uphold the interests of capitalism, or are considered to be exploiters of the proletariat, by virtue of their control of the means of production.”

² Heywood (2021, p. 3) defines false consciousness as “a Marxist term denoting the delusion and mystification that prevents subordinate classes from recognizing the fact of their own exploitation.”

³ Oxford English Dictionary (c2023c) defines proletariat as “[...] the working classes.”

⁴ Heywood (2021, p. 4) defines hegemony as “the domination of one element of a system over others for; Marxists, hegemony implies ideological domination.”

Although there have been efforts to rid the term of its negative connotation and adopt a more neutral understanding, especially after 1960, it has continued to be weaponised by political movements and ideologies to discredit their opponents' views (Heywood 2021, p. 2). According to Heywood (2021, p. 5), one of the first philosophers to study ideology as a neutral concept was **Karl Mannheim** (Hungary, 1893–1947). Mannheim expanded the concept to include the distinction between particular and total ideologies. The former represents “the ideas and beliefs of specific individuals, groups or parties,” whereas the latter encompasses “the entire [worldview] of a social class, society or even historical period.” (Heywood 2021, p. 5). However, he also emphasised that “all ideological systems [...] are distorted, because each offers a partial, and necessarily self-interested, view of social reality.” (Heywood 2021, p. 5). Mannheim's final contribution, as in Baradat, Phillips (2017, p. 9), was his argument that political ideologies cannot be fully understood devoid of their historical contexts.

1.1.2 Definition of Political Ideology

In this thesis a definition of political ideology that Andrew Heywood used in his book *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. Heywood based his definition on the use of the term in the social sciences originally developed by **Martin Seliger** (Germany, 1914–2001). Seliger defined the term political ideology in the 1970s, and it may have been the most comprehensive definition to that time, able to encompass all known ideologies (Heywood 2021, p. 6). Heywood then revised it to fit today's perceptions as well as his own purposes. It reads as follows: “An ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power.” (Heywood 2021, p. 7). Heywood also describes three features that he believes are obligatory for all ideologies, namely: “They (a) advance an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a [worldview]; (b) outline a model of the desired future, a vision of the ‘good society’; (c) explain how political change can and should be brought about [...]” (Heywood 2021, p. 8).

While Heywood (2021) primarily focuses on what can be labelled as explicit ideology in his definition, it is crucial in the context of this thesis to highlight its distinctiveness to the implicit form of ideology, as discussed by Žižek (1994). According to Žižek's perspective, explicit form of ideology (or “ideology in-itself”) refers to a set of ideas and beliefs that serve hidden power interests, while implicit ideology (or ideology for-itself) encompasses the externalization of ideology through practices, rituals, and institutions (Žižek 1994, pp. 10-15). Both forms of ideology play a role in shaping social structures and power dynamics.

1.1.3 Categorization of Political Ideologies

The chosen definition allows this paper to work with a broader understanding of the concept as it emphasizes the role of political ideologies as different frameworks for interpreting and addressing social and political issues (Heywood 2021, p. 8). This raises another controversial but nonetheless important question of how to analyse them and correctly identify their elements in different cultural contexts.

Ideologies are not always clear and coherent in all of their aspects, which allows for a degree of variability and fluidity. As a result, it is possible to distinguish ideological families, which comprise a range of ideologies that differ from one another to a greater or lesser extent but share certain goals and core principles that tie them together (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 162–163). This also implies a further distinction between two types of ideologies: ‘conventional’ and ‘cross-cutting’ ideologies. Conventional ideologies (e.g., socialism or liberalism) have a concentric structure “based on a broad and distinctive set of values, doctrines and beliefs”, with core ideas forming their ‘thick’ centre (Heywood 2021, pp. 9–10). In contrast, cross-cutting ideologies (e.g., anarchism or populism) have a much thinner core, i.e., they are based on a minimal set of ideas and eclectically integrate elements of other thicker ideologies, making them more flexible in terms of their compatibility with other ideological traditions (Heywood 2021, pp. 9–10).

Heywood (2021, pp. 13–15) also presents various models for categorizing political thought and illustrates how these models change and new ones emerge as the ideological debate continues to evolve and expand. The oldest spectrum for categorizing political ideologies is the linear spectrum which divides the field based on attitudes towards phenomena such as change, equality, and economic styles. This model has later been adopted and expanded upon by **Hans Jürgen Eysenck** (Germany, 1916–1997) to better reflect the reality of political debate. Eysenck added to the economic left-right (horizontal) axis the social liberty-authority (vertical) axis which is concerned with attitudes towards personal freedom and state intervention in people’s lives (Heywood 2021, pp. 13–14).

However, even the Eysenck’s spectrum may be slowly approaching its limits as political thought evolves and new trends gain popularity. Heywood argues that these changes have accelerated since at least the 1960s and have led to the emergence of the so-called ‘new’ ideologies, e.g., fundamentalism, ecologism. The new ideologies reflect shifts in political debate and consequently prioritise aspects of the socio-political arena none of which has been

the subject of politics before (Heywood 2021, p. 10–11). New ideologies are characterised by shifting the focus “away from economics and towards culture [e.g.,] people’s values, beliefs and ways of life,” possibly due to the fact that market-based organisation has become almost universal (Heywood 2021, p. 11). Another feature of the new ideologies is the increasing recognition of the diversity of human experience. The second shift is, therefore, from traditional social issues such as economic inequality and class struggle to identity-based issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, i.e., *identity politics*⁵ (Heywood 2021, p. 11–12).

Before delving into the specific political ideologies, it is worth noting that while the ten ideologies have been carefully selected based on a comparison of different sources, there are many other ideological currents that could be included. It is also important to recognize that political ideologies can take many forms depending on a variety of factors such as cultural and historical contexts, and that this overview is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, the aim is to provide a theoretical foundation for the subsequent literary analysis, which draws on some of the key themes and ideas associated with these ideologies. The following segment provides a brief description of ten major ideologies, including liberalism, conservatism, religious fundamentalism, socialism, anarchism, feminism, nationalism, fascism, ecologism, and populism.

1.2 A Brief Overview of Major Political Ideologies

1.2.1 Liberalism

Liberal ideology emerged following the Napoleonic wars, alongside other movements such as socialism. Drawing upon Enlightenment ideals, liberalism of the early 19th century was characterized by its rejection of authoritarianism and despotism. Over the centuries, liberalism has gained significant influence in the Western world and, by dealing with different problems in different settings, has evolved into various political traditions (Freedden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 388–390). Nevertheless, most forms of liberalism share its commitment to individual freedom and individual rights while striving for a more equal society built on toleration and justice. Moreover, they share the belief that in order to protect this society against tyrannical tendencies it needs to place constraints, such as a constitution, on social and political power (Heywood 2021, pp. 18–22). Probably the most notable distinction in liberalism is between

⁵ Identity politics is based on the assumption that oppression and inequality in society stems from dominant groups imposing stereotypes and values on marginalized groups, shaping “how marginalized see themselves and are seen by others. [Its main goal is] reshaping identity to give the group concerned a sense of pride and self-respect.” (Heywood 2021, p. 232).

classical and modern liberalism. According to Heywood (2021, pp. 31–36), classical liberalism emphasizes a minimal state, limited to maintaining domestic order and personal security, while modern liberalism recognizes the need for the state to provide assistance to individuals in achieving their goals and addressing societal issues.

1.2.2 Conservatism

Conservatism is a political ideology that emerged during the French Revolution as a response to the rapid and radical changes happening at the time. It emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional institutions, practices, and values that have proven successful over time. Additionally, conservatism recognizes the inherent imperfections of human nature, values hierarchy and authority, protects property rights, and advocates for limited government intervention in society and economy (Heywood 2021, p. 49).

According to Freedon, Sargent, and Stears (2013, p. 347), conservative thought can be classified into four distinct ‘schools’: “the reactionary, the radical, the moderate, and the New Right.” The reactionary school aims to restore traditional values and social structures from the past, while the radical school seeks to challenge and dismantle the status quo in favour of a new more extreme vision of society. The moderate school aims to balance traditional values and modern progressive ideals, and the New Right school emphasizes individual liberty, limited government, and free-market economics (Freedon, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 347–356).

1.2.3 Religious Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is a political ideology that regards religious principles as the basis for organizing all aspects of public life, “including law, social conduct and the economy [and] politics.” (Heywood 2021, p. 245). Fundamentalists oppose secularization and many other aspects of *modernity*⁶ which they see as a threat to their traditional religious way of life. Although the term was first used in the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and its existence could be argued even before then, it was not until the 1970s that the ideology became a surging phenomenon in politics worldwide (Emerson, Hartman 2006, pp. 130–132).

Fundamentalist tendencies, with varying degrees of political ambition, can be found in most of the major world religions. While some forms of religious fundamentalism can be considered more thin-centred and confined to a specific ideological tradition, such as Christian

⁶ Oxford English Dictionary (c2023d) defines modernity as “an intellectual tendency or social perspective characterized by departure from [...] traditional ideas, doctrines, and cultural values in favour of contemporary or radical values and beliefs.”

fundamentalism among conservatives in the USA (Emerson, Hartman 2006, p. 138). Others may be more thick-centred, encompassing all aspects of society, and may seek to establish a theocracy, as is the case with Islamic fundamentalism in Iran (Heywood 2021, pp. 246–247).

While there are variations in the expression of fundamentalism across different religions, it is often characterized as a coherent political ideology based on a core set of beliefs. One such belief is the view that politics is inherently linked to religion, with the latter providing the society with shared values, and traditional institutions. Fundamentalists also believe that religion is a source of some unchangeable truths that form the foundation of a society, and that modernity actively seeks to undermine them. Finally, fundamentalism is often associated with militancy, since some fundamentalist movements are prepared to defend their beliefs with violence in order to oppose what they see as a secular and anti-religious agenda, but above all because virtually all forms of fundamentalism value a passionate and strong commitment to religion (Heywood 2021, pp. 247–254).

1.2.4 Socialism

Socialism emerged during the early stages of industrialization and developed into a complex political ideology with many contesting traditions. Socialist ideology was closely connected to the newly emerging class of workers whose interests it sought to defend in the hostile environment of industrial capitalism. While socialism and liberalism share some values, such as the belief in reason and progress, socialism criticizes liberalism's idealised concept of the competition-based free market economy on the grounds that it perpetuates economic inequality and exploitation. Socialism encompasses a diverse range of ideological perspectives that offer alternative visions for social and economic systems. The most significant ideological division within socialism is between communism and social democracy, which represent, respectively, radical and authoritarian approaches, and reformist and liberal alternatives (Heywood 2021, pp. 75–76).

While communism can be strongly fundamentalist in that it promotes a total overthrow of the existing (capitalist) system and the establishment of a classless society through revolution, social democracy leans towards *revisionism*⁷, advocating for a gradual, evolutionary reform of the capitalist system. Furthermore, communism places greater emphasis on central planning and state collectivization, abolishing private ownership, whereas social democracy

⁷ According to Heywood (2021, p. 96) revisionism is “the [...] reworking of a political theory that departs from earlier interpretations in an attempt to present a ‘corrected’ view.”

social democracy rather pursues a balance between a market economy and state intervention (Heywood 2021, pp. 97–98).

1.2.5 Anarchism

The roots of anarchism can be traced back to the 19th century when the socialist movement started forming. As a distinct ideology, anarchism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Anarchist thinkers articulated their ideas about the abolition of the state and the establishment of a free society. Anarchists believe that the state is a repressive force that maintains the existing hierarchies and social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate oppression and exploitation. Without the state and hierarchies, individuals would be free to organize themselves into a society based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, and direct democracy, where everyone has equal access to resources and power (Heywood 2021, pp. 104–105).

Anarchism's rather thin-centred nature allows for high degree of ideological flexibility and a variety of adaptations and combinations – e.g., anarcho-feminism opposes patriarchy as a system of domination arbitrarily upheld by the state (Heywood 2021, p. 109). These often differ in their approach and represent mutually rival beliefs. The most important distinction is that between the social or collectivist forms of anarchism, which draw mainly on socialism, and the individualist forms of anarchism, which, in contrast, have their basis in the ideological tradition of liberalism (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 454–455).

Collectivist and individualist anarchism represent two different approaches to the question of how individuals should organize themselves in a society without rulers or hierarchies. Collectivist anarchism emphasizes the importance of the collective good and collective ownership and reject any kind of while individualist anarchism emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and autonomy. They also differ in their approach to social change, with collectivists often emphasizing revolutionary action and individualists emphasizing the creation of alternative institutions and practices (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 458–461).

1.2.6 Feminism

Feminism is another influential political ideology, and it traces its roots to the beginning of the 20th century. Feminism sees *patriarchy*⁸ as the root cause of gender- and sex-based discrimination and oppression against women, making it feminism's ideological nemesis. By empowering women and challenging gender norms, feminism seeks to dismantle patriarchal systems and institutions in order to achieve gender equality. Moreover, modern feminism aims to completely restructure societal norms and expectations around gender roles and behaviours (Heywood 2021, p. 186).

Heywood (2021, pp. 201–202) argues that modern feminism has diversified and now encompasses a wider range of approaches that draw on different ideological traditions, reflecting the evolving nature of feminist thought in recent decades. It is no longer limited to advocating equal rights for women, modern feminist thought includes issues related to race, class, sexuality, disability, and other forms of oppression and discrimination, and pays closer attention to *intersectionality*⁹ (Heywood 2021, pp. 201–202). However, as Freedden, Sargent, and Stears (2013, pp. 663–664) note, there are certain core themes that remain central to all forms of feminism.

The first core theme is the entrenchment of gender. It refers to the feminist belief that gender roles and expectations are deeply ingrained in society, and that they are reinforced by social institutions, cultural practices, and individual attitudes and beliefs. In other words, they are perpetuated by patriarchy to maintain the status quo of gender inequality in favour of men, which is the second core theme of feminist thought. The third theme is the idea that there is a pressing need for social, political, and economic change in order to achieve gender equality, social justice, and to put an end to oppression. One feminist approach to challenging the status quo is to separate gender, a social construct, from biological sex and to emphasise that biological differences do not necessarily determine gender differences to the extent that is often assumed (Freedden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 665–674).

⁸ Heywood (2021, p. 192) defines Patriarchy as “the dominance of men and subordination of women in society [...]”

⁹ According to Heywood (2021, p. 201), intersectionality refers to “a framework for the analysis of injustice and social equality that emphasizes the [...] or multifaceted nature of personal identity and of related systems of domination.”

1.2.7 Nationalism

Nationalism emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, although the underlying idea is arguably older. As a political ideology, nationalism places a strong emphasis on the importance of the *nation*¹⁰, recognising it as the fundamental basis for all political organization and governance (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 533–534). Nationalism believes that people are naturally divided into distinct nations, each with its own history, traditions, and language and that this determines the nation as the ultimate source of legitimacy for political leadership. Thus, a nation should be able to exercise its right to self-determination by governing itself, protecting its citizens, and preserving its cultural identity (Heywood 2021, p. 124).

Nationalism has often been associated with the evolution of the *state*¹¹, as well as with national awakening and the founding of *nation-states*¹². Moreover, in the post-colonial era, nationalism played a crucial role in many nations' struggle for independence. However, extreme versions of nationalism have also been a source of conflict and division and have been used to justify wars and even genocide in some cases. Thanks to its thin-centred nature, nationalism has taken many forms, ranging from political to cultural or ethnic, and has influenced or been adopted by a variety of different ideological traditions (Heywood 2021, pp. 124–127).

As with other complex ideologies, there are ideological tensions within nationalism that approach issues such as national identity, the role of the state and the source of the national spirit in contrasting ways. The main distinction lies between civic and ethnocultural nationalism. Civic nationalism is inclusive and promotes national unity based on shared values and principles. Furthermore, civic nationalism recognizes cultural diversity within the nation and emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. In contrast, ethnocultural nationalism is more exclusive, emphasizing the nation's hereditary nature. It views the nation as a distinct, homogeneous group with a shared ancestry and culture, and it highlights its uniqueness and superiority (Heywood 2021, pp. 134–136).

1.2.8 Fascism

Fascist ideology emerged in Europe during the interwar period, originating in Italy. The name derives from the Italian word *fasci*, meaning bundle or group. The fascists soon adopted

¹⁰ As in Freedon, Sargent, Stears (2013, p. 530), the word nation refers to a group of people who feel connected to each other “by the chance of birth or birth place.”

¹¹ According to Baradat, Phillips (2017, p. 47): “state is a political term that includes four elements: people, territory, government, and sovereignty.”

¹² Heywood (2021, p. 127) defines nation-state as “a sovereign political association within which citizenship and nationality overlap; one nation within a single state.”

this concept to symbolise the unity the nation through which a nation gains its strength and can prosper. The interests and identity of the individual should therefore be subordinated to the collective identity of the state. At the heart of fascism is the faith in the supremacy of the nation-state, the rejection of liberal democratic values – such as freedom of speech and press or *pluralism*¹³ – and the preference for authoritarianism, militarism, and nationalism. Fascists strive for a single-party state with a strong charismatic leader who embodies the will of the people and commands absolute authority (Heywood 2021, p. 148). Fascist thinkers borrowed elements from different often opposing ideological traditions (e.g., socialism, liberalism) and combined them to fit their own unique worldview, which represented a revolt against the set decadent doctrines of the Western world. Its thought leaders saw it as a revolutionary movement which was supposed to bring about the rebirth or palingenesis of the nation (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 557–563).

Although there have been various manifestations of fascism, it is generally agreed that two in particular – Italian Fascism and German National Socialism (or Nazism) – are the most influential due to their widespread impact and historical significance. These two movements shared most of the values and principles mentioned above (e.g., authority and elitism, rejection of liberal democracy). However, they also had some differences in their approach and goals, which led to the development of two distinct traditions of fascism, respectively, “extreme statism and extreme racism.” (Heywood 2021, p. 158).

For Italian Fascism, the state was an end in itself, aiming to create an ideal totalitarian state that would be worshipped by all loyal citizens working selflessly and obediently towards its prosperity. This belief was reflected in Italian Fascists’ view that the state is the embodiment of the nation. In contrast, for the German National Socialism the state was more of a tool to achieve its goals. Instead, the central role in Nazism was played by racism, which promoted the supposed racial and biological superiority of the Aryan people and aimed to purify it through eugenics and the elimination of ‘inferior’ races. Although racism was also present in Italian Fascism, it played a much smaller role and was largely limited to the promotion of the cultural rather than racial superiority of the Italian nation (Heywood 2021, pp. 158–162).

¹³ Pluralism, as defined by Heywood (2021, p. 29), is “a belief in diversity or choice, or the theory that political power is or should be widely and evenly dispersed.”

1.2.9 Populism

It is generally agreed that populism emerged in the closing decades of the 19th century (Heywood 2021, p. 170). It belongs to the thin-centred ideologies and as such operates within an already established framework. In other words, populism does not exist in a pure form, it appropriates and adapts to the belief system of the host-ideology (Hunger, Paxton 2022). In their study, Hunger and Paxton (2022) argue that critics and social theorists frequently conflate populism with the underlying ideology, rather than analysing it as a separate phenomenon. Moreover, the term is used today as a negative label and, therefore, not many people openly subscribe to it, making it difficult to define as a distinct ideology (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, p. 578). Nevertheless, there are certain themes that tie the different types of populism together. Firstly, populists believe society is comprised of two groups: the pure, ordinary people, and the corrupt, detached elite or establishment. Secondly, they assert that the only source of morality in politics are ordinary people. Therefore, ordinary people should have the authority to both legislate and implement laws, assuming that they will always act in the interest of the common good or *general will*¹⁴ (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, pp. 588–591).

Populism can be classified into left-wing and right-wing variants, depending on the groups or institutions that the populists target as the elites. Left-wing populists typically criticize corporations, wealthy individuals, and international financial institutions, while right-wing populists often focus on immigrants, globalists, and cultural elites. Both types of populism, however, capitalise on the public's belief that the political establishment is corrupt and unresponsive to the needs of ordinary people by meeting demand with supply (Freeden, Sargent, Stears 2013, p. 597).

1.2.10 Ecologism

Ecologism is a political ideology that challenges anthropocentric views of nature and sees *industrialism*¹⁵ as its main adversary. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of nature and the need for environmental protection, drawing from ecology, the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between animate and inanimate nature (Heywood 2021, p. 206). Ecologism is a complex ideology that encompasses different tendencies, including shallow or humanist

¹⁴ Heywood (2021, p. 133) defines general will as “the genuine interests of a collective body, equivalent to the common good; the will of all, provided each person acts selflessly.”

¹⁵ Heywood (2021, p. 213) provides a distinction within ecologism between industrialism as a “super-ideology,” an “economic system,” and a “philosophy,” highlighting its dedication toward “large-scale production, the accumulation of capital and relentless growth [...] materialism, utilitarian values, [and its] absolute faith in science and a worship of technology.”

ecologism and deep ecologism. Shallow ecologism seeks to address environmental issues through gradual, reformist means while taking human needs and goals into account, often working within existing systems. In contrast, deep ecologism rejects human superiority and seeks transformative change, often through grassroots activism and direct action, challenging core assumptions of industrial society – e.g., recognizing the intrinsic value of all species, regardless of their usefulness to humans (Baradat, Phillips 2017, pp. 331–333). As much as these forms of ecologism may differ in their approach, they share a set of core commitments such as ecological restructuring, and the promotion of non-violence and peaceful means to achieve change and ecological justice (Freeden, Sargent, Stears (2013, pp. 503–504).

1.3 Literature and Political Discourse

1.3.1 Literature as a form of art and its role in society

The role of literature in society and its relationship with political discourse, values and morals have been argued in literary and philosophical circles for a long time, even though, it can be argued, somewhat one-sided until the 19th century. This intellectual discourse revolved around two distinct viewpoints. On the one hand, there were artists who supported aestheticism and the notion of “art for art’s sake,” asserting that the primary objective of art should be the pursuit of aesthetic beauty and emotional expression. On the other hand, there were advocates of didacticism, arguing that art always has and should continue to serve a social purpose by conveying moral or instructional messages to its audience and addressing issues in society (Casement 1987, pp. 101–111).

Literature was particularly impacted by this debate as it inherently extends beyond the conventional definition of art: a product of human “creative skill and imagination [...] appreciated primarily for [its] beauty or emotional power.” (Oxford English Dictionary c2023a). In comparison to other art forms, literature has a more direct and accessible relationship with society due to its narrative nature and engaging qualities. Scholars and philosophers have extensively explored the literature-society dynamics, with Albrecht (1954, p. 426) summarizing their theories highlighting some of the key characteristics.

Firstly, literature serves as a more or less comprehensive reflection of a particular society, encompassing its values, beliefs, traditions, and attitudes towards social and political issues. This would mean that literature offers insights into different perspectives, cultures, and historical periods. Secondly, literature possesses the power to actively influence and shape society. This characteristic is in a way related to the first because by reflecting society, literature

also “confirms and strengthens [its] cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs.” (Albrecht 1954, p. 431). On the other hand, literature has also been used as a means of challenging and subverting ideas of the ruling ideology (Albrecht 1954, p. 433). The following examples demonstrate the ongoing ideological tensions surrounding literature.

Throughout history, literature has been deemed both as beneficial and dangerous for its perceived impact on society. Efforts to control the content and dissemination of literature on the part of those in power have been observed all around the world, often resulting in censorship and the persecution of dissenting authors (Albrecht 1954, p. 433). Examples of such instances include Nazi Germany, where book burning and suppression of critical works, such as those by **Erich Maria Remarque**, occurred (Ritchie 1988, p. 638). Similarly, formally communist countries in post-World War II Europe banned and persecuted authors whose works they deemed subversive or critical of their regimes, e.g., **Milan Kundera** in former socialist Czechoslovakia. Additionally, restrictions were imposed on numerous works by Western authors. Banned literature had to be distributed through underground practices, i.e., samizdat (Johnston 1999, pp. 115–126).

Censorship is not exclusive to totalitarian regimes; it exists in varying degrees and forms all around the world. According to ABC News’ article, the United States has witnessed an increase in debates over book bans in schools. Left-leaning groups may seek to ban or censor books they perceive as racially insensitive. One such example is “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” by **Mark Twain** that has been removed from the required reading list of a school district in California for the use of ethnic slurs. In contrast, right-leaning groups may propose bans on literature they deem corrupting or promoting divisive left-wing theories (such as “All Boys Aren’t Blue” by **George M. Johnson** (Alfonseca 2023).

1.3.2 Literature as a means of spreading and challenging ideas

Literature has long served as a powerful vehicle for transmitting knowledge, values, ideas, and traditions. Its influence can be traced back thousands of years, when stories were passed on orally in small communities by bards or story tellers. Genres such as fables, fairy tales, legends, and myths were popular because they offered both entertainment and valuable moral messages and wisdom. In addition, they embodied the everyday struggles and concerns people faced at the time, provided a spark of hope for better future amidst the unforgiving nature, and “fostered a sense of belonging” in the community (Zipes 2007, pp. 1–2).

Prior to the invention of the printing press in 1455, handwritten literature was accessible only to the wealthy, academics, and clergy due to the high reproduction costs and low literacy rates among common people. Such literature primarily dealt with philosophy, political, and religious thought, and was often controlled by religious leaders or other authority (Gillette 1990, pp. 8–11). This was also true in case of Southeast Asian cultures (e.g., Korea) which had already been using similar printing techniques for several centuries before Gutenberg’s model was invented (Gillette 1990, pp. 5–6). The invention revolutionized accessibility of literature and allowing for literacy rates to rise and ideas to spread. As socio-political changes unfolded in subsequent centuries, an increasing number of individuals sought to engage in religious and political discourse, envisioning different ways to improve society (Gillette 1990, pp. 8–11). While not all literature explicitly promotes ideological narratives, it can still convey ideas and elements associated with or influenced by political ideologies (Farrell 1942, pp. 261–262).

Firstly, there have been literary works that can be interpreted as supporting the dominant ideology of its time and place. One such example is the American Western literature. Western literature often reflects the ideals and values associated with the frontier, including notions of rugged individualism, exploration, and conquering the harsh wilderness. These themes and narratives can be found in **Zane Grey**’s works (e.g., *Riders of the Purple Sage*) and can be interpreted as reinforcing the prevailing ideologies of the United States during that time (Blake 1995, pp. 212–215). Another prominent example of a literary genre utilized to promote a ruling ideology was socialist realism. It emerged as the official literary movement in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and became influential in other socialist countries as well. It aimed to depict a glorified vision of socialist society, emphasizing the achievements of the working class, collective efforts, and the ultimate triumph of socialism. One of the prominent authors associated with this movement was **Maxim Gorky** (e.g., *Mother*) (Morson 1979, pp. 122–132).

Secondly, there have been works that challenge prevailing ideologies and societal norms. Writers have used literature to provide social commentary, address societal shortcomings, and offer visions for progress or warnings of potential societal pitfalls. This category is also quite large, including individuals as well as whole genres. One such example is feminist literature, which emerged as a distinct movement in the late 19th century and focused on portraying the experiences of women and confronting issues of gender inequality and discrimination through literature. A prominent feminist work was “The Yellow Wallpaper” by **Charlotte Perkins Gilman** (Mandal 2016, pp. 50–51). Another example of a literary work critical of society is “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wallstreet” by **Herman Melville** which criticises early

capitalist American society for its dehumanizing nature (Thapa 2012, pp. 223–231). Finally, genres such as satire has often been employed to comment on the state of society at their time – e.g., “Gulliver’s Travels” by **Jonathan Swift** (Thornley, Roberts 1984, pp. 81–82).

Finally, utopian literature has played a significant role in exploring and challenging prevailing ideologies by envisioning ideal societies or leading a dialogue and provoking discussion. These imaginative works critique existing societies, propose alternative structures and inspire reflection on societal norms. One of the earliest instances of this genre is **Thomas More**’s “Utopia” published in 1516 (Pavlova 2022, p. 13–15). The following chapter further deals with this genre and addresses some of the differences within it.

In summary, it is important to acknowledge literature’s multifaceted nature and the diverse ways in which it can be interpreted. While some genres may be perceived to be explicitly ideological others may employ more subtle means of messaging. Literature’s longstanding tradition of social commentary provides a valuable platform for political dialogue and socio-cultural transformation, while also fostering space for exploration, questioning, and reimagining of the world.

2 Dystopia and YA Literature

This chapter embarks on an in-depth exploration of the dystopian genre, delving into its historical development, placing it in the context of the broader utopian literature, examining its distinctiveness from its counterparts, utopia and anti-utopia, while also acknowledging their shared characteristics. Moreover, this chapter focuses on the dystopian genre targeted at children and young adults, recognizing its significance within this specific literary context.

In the first subchapter, we will trace the historical development of utopian literature, shedding light on its origins and its gradual evolution towards anti-utopia and dystopia. These two genres will then be discussed more extensively, exploring the defining elements which set them apart by examining influential works in the genre. This part should provide a comprehensive literary-historical understanding of the genre and its role in society, essential for this thesis.

The second subchapter aims to further broaden the theoretical basis for the final analysis of “Divergent” by Veronica Roth by delving into the significance of the dystopian genre within literature targeted at young adults. With a focus on young adult (YA) dystopian fiction, this section will examine the specific elements that characterize dystopian narratives in this context. These are also demonstrated on influential literary works in the genre. Finally, this chapter discusses the genre’s surge in popularity, and its subsequent decline, while considering possible reasons for this trend.

2.1 Utopian Literature

All three of these literary genres – utopia, anti-utopia, dystopia – share a common origin, rooted in the exploration of societal ideals, critiques, and speculative visions of future or alternative societies. According to Pavlova (2022), the roots of utopian literature, in a broader sense, can be traced back to the year 1516 with the publication of **Thomas More**’s book “Utopia”, which ultimately gave the genre its name. More not only authored the book but also coined the term itself, deriving its meaning from two related Greek words in a clever play on words: “Eutopia [meaning] good place and Utopia [meaning] nowhere.”¹⁶ (Pavlova 2022, p. 14). In other words, this term was used to describe an ideal society that, though desirable, could never truly exist in reality (Pavlova 2022, pp. 9–15).

¹⁶ Translated from Pavlova (2022, p. 14): „Eutopia – dobré místo a Utopia – nemísto.“

More's book also served as an inspiration for the emerging utopianism, a complex philosophical thought current dedicated to the systematic transformation of humanity and civilization towards a more noble and equitable state (Sargent 1998 and Pavlova 2022, pp. 13–14). In a contrasting response, the literary traditions of anti-utopia and dystopia began emerging a couple of centuries later as genres, offering critical perspectives on the flaws and dangers of utopian aspirations (Pavlova 2022, p. 28).

2.1.1 Utopia

Pavlova (2019, pp. 66–73) states that authors like **Tommaso Campanella** (Italy, 1568–1639), and **Francis Bacon** (England, 1561–1626) as well as others, who continued in More's tradition, structured their works in a similar manner. More's "Utopia", Campanella's "The City of the Sun" (1602), and Bacon's "New Atlantis" (1626) all share common themes and features. First common feature is in their description of an ideal society, which is somewhere remote, completely isolated, and independent from the rest of the world. Secondly, it is the portrayal of their utopian societies as steady and unchanging, detached from the ordinary flow of time and external developments. Thirdly, it is the requirement for individuals to conform and surrender to the collective in order to attain utopian objectives. Furthermore, these authors utilized a narrative framework of dialogue or travelogue to convey their visions, which allowed them to provide a detailed account of the social, political, and economic structures, emphasizing the organization, and functioning of their idealized communities (Pavlova 2019, pp. 63–73). Additionally, they are prime examples of utilizing the genre to comment on their own respective societies, juxtaposing the shortcomings of their times with their utopian visions of "general welfare and equality"¹⁷ (Pavlova 2019, pp. 77).

As Pavlova (2019, p. 77) demonstrates in her thesis, the evolution of the literary genre encompasses both form and content. In terms of content, utopian literature reflects the ever-changing societal aspirations, concerns, and values of different historical periods. Consequently, themes have been incorporated over time, thanks to their significance within specific historical contexts. As the first example Pavlova (2019, p. 72) provides Bacon's "The New Atlantis" for its novel orientation towards future and scientific progress typical of the 17th century humanism. Another example is **Edward Bellamy**'s (USA, 1850–1898) "Looking Backward, 2000–1887" (1888), which presents a one-corporation state/nation where social and economic equality have been achieved, class divisions eliminated, resources are shared, all

¹⁷ Translated from Pavlova (2019, pp. 77): „všeobecného blaha a rovnosti.“

people work for the nation, and where “only the best and most beautiful individuals are allowed to marry”¹⁸ (Pavlova 2019, pp. 73–74). Bellamy’s novel was then criticised by another utopian author **William Morris** (UK, 1834–1896). His “News from Nowhere” (1890) introduced a romanticised vision of a socialist society which in contrast to Bellamy’s is not “forcefully” imposed top-down but rather bottom-up creating a society without inherently authoritarian hierarchies. Pavlova (2019, p. 74) considers it to be “one of the last great utopian projects”, arguing that “most other works admit a negative impact of [their] project.”¹⁹

The way utopian ideas were presented was also evolving. According to Pavlova (2019, p. 74), while earlier works depicted a static, “already perfect” society, later utopian literature tended to present societies more dynamically. These societies are still better than the authors’ reality, nonetheless, they are also more aware of their own imperfections and actively strive for utopia even though they know they will not be able to achieve it. Pavlova (2019, pp. 74–75) gives two examples of such utopia: one is **H. G. Wells’** (1866–1946) “A Modern Utopia” (1905) which also breaks in other ways with the classical utopian tradition; and the other one is **Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s** “Herland” (written in 1915, published in 1979), an all-female society where most of “the socio-economic problems that plagued [earlier utopian] authors [...] have been solved [...] thanks, among other things, to the elimination of the male part of the population.”²⁰ These two works also illustrate how utopian genre expanded also in form to include various subgenres (e.g. futurism, science fiction) and narrative techniques.

Similar utopian aspirations in society can be found in later anti-utopian and dystopian works as well, although with the mandatory dark twist typical of the genre (see sec. 2.1.2). Even YA fiction explores these themes, one such example is the “Divergent”, where a society recognises the “not-yet-perfect” state it is in, blaming mainly human nature. In a pursuit of utopia, they actively try to mould human nature, however, ultimately fail (see sec. 4.1).

2.1.2 Anti-Utopia, Dystopia

According to Pavlova (2019, pp. 81–85), the emergence of anti-utopia and dystopia as distinct genres marks a significant shift in the exploration of societal ideals and critiques. While

18 Translated from Pavlova 2019, pp. 73–74): „Svatba se dovoluje pouze nejlepším a nejkrásnějším jedincům.“

19 Translated from Pavlova (2019, p. 74): “Román [Williama Morrise] reprezentuje jeden z posledních velkých utopických projektů, většina dalších děl totiž připouští negativní dopad projektu.”

20 Translated from Pavlova (2019, pp. 74–75): „Zdá se, že sociální a ekonomické problémy, které trápily autory předchozích textů, jsou v Zemi žen vyřešené mimo jiné také díky eliminaci mužské části obyvatelstva.“

utopia presented idealized visions of a better society, anti-utopia and dystopia present a vision of a worse or a negative one. The shift away from utopia started happening as early as the first half of the 18th century with the rise of satirical portrayal of “ideal” societies, such as the ones in **Jonathan Swift’s** (Ireland, 1667–1745) “Gulliver’s Travels” (1726). The protagonist becomes disillusioned with the concept after encountering various absurd and flawed societies during his voyages (Pavlova 2019, pp. 78–79). According to Claeys (2017, pp. 355), anti-utopia was then “[fuelled by industrialization, growing social inequality, and the increasing popularity of socialism and Social Darwinism²¹], [and] it emerged into a fully formed genre in the last decades of the [19th] century.”

2.1.2.1 *Characteristics of the anti-utopian and dystopian genre*

In terms of narrative structure, as in Pavlova (2019, p. 100–101), anti-utopian and dystopian works often follow a pattern that unveils the true nature of a seemingly ideal society. This structure typically involves introducing a protagonist, who is loyal to the regime at first but then becomes aware of the flaws and dangers lurking beneath the surface of the utopian facade. As the story progresses, the protagonist navigates through the oppressive or dysfunctional elements of the society, unveiling its dark secrets and challenging or trying to escape the established order and ultimately fails. The entire story is typically suffused with fear and anxiety due to, among other things, “the hyper-realistic way the world is constructed and the author’s writing style” and narration.²² (Pavlova 2019, p. 142). Authors often use detailed visual description to further add to the uneasy feeling permeating the dystopian world – e.g., elaborate urban planning, *functionalistic*²³, futuristic and dehumanizing architecture (Pavlova 2019, pp. 94–95).

According to Pavlova (2019, p. 81–82) anti-utopian and dystopian works challenge the notion of attainable utopias by examining the consequences of striving for societal perfection and presenting “an image of a disastrous future.”²⁴ The themes explored in anti-utopian and dystopian literature often reflect the anxieties and concerns of the time in which they were written. Therefore, in the 20th century, as Pavlova (2019, pp. 82–83) suggests, the focus of

21 Oxford English Dictionary (c2023e) defines Social Darwinism as “the theory that societies, classes, and races are subject to and a product of Darwinian laws of natural selection.”

22 Translated from Pavlova (2019, p. 142): „světy tohoto typu fikcí jsou realistické až hyperrealistické, a to jak na rovině metody výstavby světa, tak i stylu autorova psaní.“

23 Oxford English Dictionary (c2023f) defines functionalistic as “relating to functionalism; esp. characterized by an emphasis on functionality or practicality.” In this context used as a hyperbole, its extreme form; the only impracticality in such system would be human nature.

24 Translated from Pavlova (2019, pp. 82–83): „Jedním z úkolů antiutopií a později i dystopií je představit katastrofální budoucnost.“

“anti-utopian and dystopian discourse revolved around two prominent issues: totalitarianism and the misuse of scientific and technological progress to establish dictatorial control over people.”

Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015, pp. 26–29) constructed a typology of dystopias (anti-utopias) based on how these dystopian systems operate and what means the ruling groups use in terms of maintaining power and control. The authors of the study distinguish two basic types: “**technical** dystopia, which relies on a specific method, and **epistemological** dystopia, which is based on terror.”²⁵ They further subdivide technical dystopias into two categories: scientific, where “science is the only means of sustaining society and bringing about social good,”²⁶ and mathematical, where “it is mathematics that is the primary method of social engineering.”²⁷

Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015, pp. 108–110) then support their typology by providing examples for each of the three types. A typical example of technical scientific dystopia is **Aldous Huxley**’s (UK, 1894–1963) “Brave New World” (1932). The society portrayed in the novel utilizes advanced reproductive technology, psychological conditioning, and drugs to control and manipulate its citizens, aiming to maintain stability and conformity (Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek 2015, pp. 53–61). On the other hand, **Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin**’s (Russia, 1884–1937) “We” (1921) represents a typical mathematical dystopia, where individuals are assigned numbers instead of names, where happiness is achieved by abolishing freedom and individuality (Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek 2015, pp. 45–53). Lastly, an example of epistemological dystopia is **George Orwell**’s (UK, 1903–1950) “1984” (1949), which depicts a society under constant surveillance, managed by a system that constantly reinvents itself by rewriting history and weeding out potential resistance, brutally breaking individuals into obedience (Naxera, Stulík, Bílek 2015, pp. 34–44).

In comparison, Claeys’ (2017, pp. 10–15) description of five different prototypes of dystopian societies, which Pavlova (2019, pp. 114–118) adapts for her categorization of dystopias, is based on social organization. The first type, as described by Claeys (2017, pp. 10–11), is a “highly **militarized or war-centred society** [, where everyone is formally equal and despises luxury].” Such society emphasises conquest and progress. The second type is “**slavery**,

25 Translated from Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015, pp. 26–29): „Prvním typem je technická dystopie založená na specifické metodě, druhým typem je pak epistemologická dystopie založená na teroru.“

26 Translated from Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015, pp. 26–29): „věda je jediným prostředkem pro udržení společnosti a přináší společenské dobro.“

27 Translated from Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015, pp. 26–29): „Matematika je vnímána jako primární metoda sociálního inženýrství.“

where brutality and violence are the main means of the relationship between the ruling class and the citizens.”²⁸ (Pavlova 2019, p. 114). The third type is **political despotism**²⁹, which ultimately leads to a totalitarian dictatorship. Its usual “governing principle [can be described] as fear or terror.” (Cleays 2017, pp. 11–12). The fourth type is the “**carcerotopia**, or the prison state[, completely isolated from] the outside world.” This system is usually defined by “[surveillance,] uniformity, depersonalization, group discipline, and the sublimation or loss of identity.” (Cleays 2017, p. 13). According to Claeys (2017, pp. 13–14), “**rigid ostracism** [...] offers [the fifth] dystopian prototype”, where certain groups are perceived as diseased or subhuman and are subsequently separated from the rest of the population. In addition to these five types, Pavlova (2019, p. 116) introduces a sixth type, “a world based on **hedonism**, where the main philosophy of life is the pursuit of happiness and the satisfaction of pleasure.”³⁰ She further states that these types do not always exist in pure form, often one novel has features of two or more systems.

Pavlova (2019, p. 116) further states that these types do not always exist in pure form, and that often one novel can exhibit features of two or more systems. Our analysis supports this observation, as the society in “Divergent” integrates elements of several prototypes. The most prominent of which are rigid ostracism (of nonconforming people) and despotism (see sec. 4.5.1).

2.1.2.2 *Prominent anti-utopian and dystopian novels*

Both Pavlova (2019) and Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015) extensively discuss some of the most prominent examples of anti-utopian and dystopian literature mentioned, including, among the ones already mentioned, **Ray Bradbury**’s (USA, 1920–2012) “Fahrenheit 451” (1953). These works vividly depict societies ruled by oppressive totalitarian regimes that utilize surveillance, manipulation, and the suppression of critical thinking to protect the status quo in the name of utopia. They unmask the erosion of personal liberties, the dehumanization of individuals, and the dangers of conformity. A notable commonplace theme in these works is the role of language in pushing the ruling ideology onto citizens as well as manipulating and constraining the way they think (Naxera, Stulík, Bílek 2015, pp. 34–69).

28 Translated from Pavlova (2019, p. 114): „Jedná se o společnost, kde brutalita a násilí jsou hlavními prostředky ve vztahu mezi vládnoucí třídou a občany.“

29 Oxford English Dictionary (c2023g) defines despotism as “the exercise of absolute authority.”

30 Translated from Pavlova (2019, p. 116): „Šestáým a posledním druhem společnosti je svět, kde se hédonismus stává hlavní životní filozofií.“

While Naxera, Stulík, and Bílek (2015) use dystopia as an umbrella term for the whole anti-utopian genre, the works they discuss can also serve to demonstrate the distinctions between anti-utopia and dystopia. As noted by Pavlova (2019, pp. 142–144), “while these two genres share significant similarities, there are instances where they can be fundamentally different.” The main distinction between them being the absence or presence of hope for either the protagonists or humanity: “while anti-utopia emphasizes [...] how every attempt to establish a utopia ultimately turns into a hell for its inhabitants [where there is no escape], [...] dystopia offers this possibility of escape.” (Pavlova 2019, p. 142). So, for example the protagonist in “1984” is in the end brainwashed by the regime and all hope for him, and by extension for every other individual, is quashed (Naxera, Stulík, Bílek 2015, pp. 34–43). In contrast, the protagonist in “Fahrenheit 451” manages to escape, and, as he finds a community of like-minded people, there is a glimmer of hope for humanity (Naxera, Stulík, Bílek 2015, pp. 62–70). Pavlova (2019, p. 142) concludes that this distinction is a trend that, since the first half of the 20th century, has been moving from a pessimistic anti-utopia that warned against the pursuit of universal happiness to a dystopia that seeks a free society balancing individual and collective well-being. Consistent with the analysis (see sec. 4.5.2), “Divergent” aligns with the dystopian tradition, which is also prevalent in most YA fiction novels, as it is part of their appeal to their target audience (see sec. 2.2.2).

Dystopian literature is primed to evolve in response to the changing world. According to Shiau (2017), the genre was experiencing decline in “the volume for a period entering the 1970s, [but] the variance within the genre broadened.” The rise of environmental concerns, fears of overpopulation, resource depletion, and rapid technological progress, dystopias emerged that depict post-apocalyptic settings or incorporate elements of science fiction (Shiau 2017). Another development in the genre was the growing number of female narrators (Pavlova, p. 119). One prominent example reflecting these shifts is **Margaret Atwood**’s (1939) “The Handmaid’s Tale” (1985) which presents a society in the middle of environmental and social breakdown, resulting in the establishment of totalitarian theocracy where women are effectively enslaved (Naxera, Stulík, Bílek 2015, pp. 77–85). In the late 2000s and 2010s, dystopia underwent a revival in literature as it “exploded in popularity among young adults”, becoming closely intertwined with this genre (Shiau 2017).

2.2 Dystopia in YA Literature

Goodreads (c2023a) define young-adult literature (also referred to as YA fiction) as a genre of literature specifically crafted for “adolescents and young adults, roughly ages 13 to

18.” YA stories predominantly feature adolescent protagonists, enabling readers to relate to characters experiencing similar challenges and growth. In YA, the storytelling style and language are generally accessible to younger readers, while also addressing a wide range of topics relevant to “the age and experience of the main character”, such as coming-of-age, identity, friendship, love, family, self-discovery, and societal issues. Beyond that, YA literature can “span the entire spectrum of fiction genres.” (Goodreads c2023a). Dystopia became one of the most prominent and influential subgenres within its ranks.

2.2.1 The rise of dystopian themes in YA literature

According to Shiau (2017), the trend was started in the 1990s with **Lois Lowry**’s (1937) first book, “The Giver” (1993), of what would later become a quartet, which drew on the classical dystopian novels “while managing to popularize the genre among young adult readers.” With its adolescent protagonist, thought-provoking narrative and imaginative world-building, this book set the stage for the subsequent growth and popularity of dystopian themes in YA literature Shiau (2017). However, while the novel was popular, “it wasn’t until the 2000s that readers started to find a plethora of dystopias lining the bookshelves of the YA section” (Hintz, Basu, Broad 2013, p. 2).

Shiau (2017) mentions that the genre’s major surge in popularity in the 2000s is thought “to be a symptom of the pooling anxieties that followed 9/11 and other troubling geopolitical events.” Furthermore, the genre’s success among adolescents can be mainly attributed to **Suzanne Collins** (1962) publishing her first book in the “The Hunger Games” series in 2008. This triggered a wave of other successful publications trying to meet the rapidly growing demand (Hintz, Basu, Broad 2013, pp. 1–2). The Divergent trilogy can be considered as one of the most successful works in the subsequent era (see sec. 3.3). However, according to Hrdličková (2016, p. 20), the quality of individual titles in this era can differ greatly, which might have been one of the contributing factors to the genre’s decline in popularity in the later 2010s (see sec. 2.2.3).

2.2.2 Typical characters, themes, settings, and other characteristics of YA dystopian fiction

Dystopian YA fiction draws inspiration from earlier “adult” dystopias while incorporating distinct elements that resonate with its adolescent audience. These YA dystopias often depict worlds as bleak and dystopian as their earlier counterparts, frequently featuring a futuristic apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic setting (Hrdličková 2016, p. 20). One notable example of this is **Ernest Cline**’s (1972) “Ready Player One” (2011), which takes place in a

future on the brink of societal and environmental collapse where people escape reality into a virtual world of seemingly endless possibilities (Hrdličková 2016, pp. 17–19). Another prominent example is the world depicted in “The Hunger Games” series, where a society was built on top of the ruins of a civil war that destroyed our world (Hrdličková 2016, p. 9).

The dystopian world depicted in “Divergent” is a little bit different from this description. Although, it has an apocalyptic setting, it initially seems that the society is doing relatively well. This might be due to fact that Tris, the protagonist and narrator, has limited experience of the world she lives in (sheltered childhood in a relatively stable environment) (see sec. 4.3.1). In contrast, the protagonist in “The Hunger Games” was born into the most impoverished part of her world, experiencing all the implications of a dystopia first hand from the start (see sec. 3.3.2).

Thrust into this world, according to Hrdličková (2016, p. 20), is a typical YA dystopian hero: a young teenager (frequently a girl) who “initially appears to be an ordinary member of their generation, which helps the reader identify with the hero.”³¹ As the story unfolds, the hero’s distinctive qualities that set them apart become increasingly more evident: “they are brave, fearless, mature for their age, determined, or have unexpected experiences compared to their peers. [Moreover,] they do not fit into the boxes that the current system sets out [and,] like the adolescent readers, they feel that society rejects them because of their difference.”³² (Hrdličková 2016, p. 20). The protagonist in “Divergent” serves as the perfect illustration in this context. The young heroine stands out in a literal sense, being identified early on in the story as a Divergent. The theme of rejection is heightened, as the society sees her kind as a significant threat to the system and makes a habit of eliminating them (see sec. 4.4.2).

Like in adult dystopias (see sec. 2.1.2.1), the hero’s realisation of the regime’s oppressive or unjust nature leads to personal and then to systematic rebellion. This process in YA dystopia, often involves a moment in the story that “makes the [teenage] protagonist to a natural moral role model.”³³ (Hrdličková 2016, p. 21). A notable illustration of this occurs in “The Hunger Games” when the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, defies the brutal tradition of the annually held competition by refusing to kill her friend at its end, making her the symbol of the following

31 Translated from Hrdličková (2016, p. 21): „Všichni protagonisté se zpočátku jeví být obyčejnými příslušníky své generace, což usnadňuje čtenářovu identifikaci s nimi.“

32 Translated from Hrdličková (2016, p. 20): „Jsou stateční, nebojácní, na svůj věk vyspělí, odhodlaní či ve srovnání s vrstevníky mají nečekané zkušenosti. Nezapadají do škatulek, jež stávající systém vytyčuje. Podobně jako adolescentní čtenáři mají pocit, že je společnost pro jejich odlišnost odmítá.“

33 Translated from (Hrdličková 2016, p. 21): “Zásadní zlom ve všech dystopiích pak představuje moment, který z protagonist dělá přirozené morální vzory.”

revolution (Hrdličková 2016, pp. 10–11). Another example is from **Nancy Farmer**'s (1941) "The House of the Scorpion" (2002), where human clones are kept as livestock for organs and body parts to maintain the elite young and healthy. Here the main protagonist, Matt, who is a clone, embarks on a journey of moral growth, proving that he has more humanity in him than most "normal" humans (Hintz, Basu, Broad 2013, pp. 175–181).

In "Divergent", there are several instances of Tris' moral maturing, but the pivotal moment happens near the conclusion of the book. After her mother sacrifices herself, Tris embraces her own difference and chooses to intervene and prevent the killing of more innocent individuals from her faction. Her determination and skills she picked up during the initiation process transform her into a natural leader (see sec. 3.4.2).

Hrdličková (2016, pp. 21–22) further highlights two aspects that contribute to the appeal of dystopia for young readers. Firstly, it is the presence of relatable young protagonists. They serve as reference characters and their experiences, emotions and struggles are often given priority in the narrative. Secondly, it involves projecting the negative rigidity of the dysfunctional system onto the older generation. This allows rebellion to be directed not against abstract concepts, as may be the case in adult dystopias, but "primarily against the older generation responsible for the failure of the original utopian ideal or the generation clinging stubbornly to [outdated] rules."³⁴ (Hrdličková 2016, pp. 21–22). For illustration, in "Divergent", Tris gradually realises that the values of the system have been eroded over time, due to corrupt and power-hungry leaders who purposefully drive a wedge between the factions (see sec. 4.4.2).

Moreover, the genre often offers a more action-oriented and fast-paced narrative structure, engaging readers with thrilling adventures, and creating a sense of urgency and suspense (Hintz, Basu, Broad 2013, pp. 7–8). A notable example is **James Dashner**'s (1972) "The Maze Runner" (2009), where the main protagonist awakens in a mysterious maze with no recollection of his past. The plot revolves around the characters' attempts to escape the maze, encountering thrilling obstacles and unravelling secrets as they progress (Readr 2014).

Lastly, while both adult and YA dystopias may lean towards dark and bleak narratives, the difference is that YA fiction, in addition to addressing themes such as teen angst, often place

34 Translated from (Hrdličková 2016, p. 21–22): „svoji vzpouru protagonisté směřují [...] primárně vůči starší generaci, která zapříčinila selhání původně utopického ideálu, případně vůči pokolení, jež se nefunkčních pravidel drží za každou cenu.“

significant emphasis on themes of resilience, hope, empowerment, and the belief in the transformative power of change. These stories inspire young readers by showcasing the protagonists' determination, courage, and ability to challenge the oppressive systems they encounter. As Hrdličková (2016, pp. 21–22) states “[the young characters] persevere in their resistance and eventually prevail, leading to an improvement in conditions or even the salvation of the entire civilization.”³⁵ The new young generation that rebels against systems of oppression is here associated with the notion of hope for a better future which is also in alignment with “the self-conception of young people [of today].”³⁶ (Hrdličková 2016, pp. 21–22). Additionally, themes of friendship, love, and self-discovery are also prevalent, offering messages of solidarity and the potential for personal growth amidst adversity (Hintz, Basu, Broad 2013, p. 45).

2.2.3 Conclusion: Impact and legacy of YA dystopia

When discussing YA dystopia, it is common for people to conflate the realms of literature and the film industry. While the two often intersect in popular culture, with successful novels being adapted into movies, it is important to differentiate between them when examining the genre's impact, legacy, and its current state.

In literature, the term “young adult” can be traced back to the 1960s in the USA, when it was created to serve as a helpful guide for teenagers to discover engaging reading material. Over time, the genre grew in popularity, and with the release of the first book in the J. K. Rowling's (1965) “Harry Potter” (1997) series, it became immensely popular among adult readers as well. Rowling is widely considered to have “kickstarted a YA novel-to-blockbuster-movie boom and waned in an era of speculative fiction.” (Haupt 2019).

According to Naruseviciute (2022), YA fiction proved to be a lucrative market for Hollywood and after the last film in the “Harry Potter” series had been released in 2011 it “left a void in the film industry that needed to be filled.” Just a year after that, the first film adaptation of “The Hunger Games” franchise was released to an enormous success at the box office. This set off a wave of YA dystopia adaptations, with over 20 movies being produced in the following 4 to 6 years. Although some of the adaptations have been considerably successful, none of them reached the success of Collins' and the initial enthusiasm quickly faded. In addition to Naruseviciute (2022), who argues that this was mainly due to oversaturation, there are others

35 Translated from Hrdličková (2016, p. 21–22): „dospívající postavy ve svém odporu vytrvají a nakonec zvítězí, což vede ke zlepšení poměrů, případně dokonce k záchraně celé civilizace.“

36 Translated from Hrdličková 2016, p. 21–22): „odpovídá obecně přijímanému (sebe)pojetí mladých lidí [...].“

who blame the genre itself for being inherently repetitive, formulaic, and shallow – relying too much on the “chosen one” principle, only grazing the world of oppression, and dealing in fantasy and romance (Oladele 2021). Notable examples of semi-successful adaptations of the era are “The Divergent Series” and “The Maze Runner” trilogy (The Numbers c2023a,b).

The literary genre experienced an undeniable surge in popularity following the release of “The Hunger Games”, even before its film adaptation. The additional success it received after the movie was released, prompted many authors to attempt to replicate it. However, because of the lack of innovation, these endeavours soon encountered a similar fate as Hollywood adaptations, facing an oversaturation of formulaic stories. One example is **Kierra Cass’** (1981) “The Selection” (2012), which Hrdličková (2016, pp. 12–14) criticizes for its low quality and failure to meet the standards of dystopia; a label which it used for marketing. However, according to Cortez (2021), YA dystopia has managed to evolve beyond the blockbuster scheme. Later successful novels, such as **Neal Shusterman’s** (1962) “Scythe” (2016) and **Samira Ahmed’s** (1968) “Internment” (2019), have been much more innovative in their approach to the genre. For example, “Scythe” presents a world where humanity has achieved mastery over every aspect of existence and a chosen few are tasked with the responsibility keeping “control [of] population size and are the only people who can end a person’s life.” (Cortez 2021). On the other hand, “Internment” takes place in a near-future United States, where “[Muslims] are forced into internment camps [...]” (Goodreads c2023b).

In conclusion, YA dystopia has undergone a transformation rather than disappearing entirely. The shift in reader preferences has seen the emergence of titles that embrace innovative approaches. These titles mark a departure from the romance-focused earlier YA novels, in that they offer bleaker, more realistic narratives, and address specific concerns that the authors believe have been overlooked by the genre. The younger generation’s growing involvement in activism and the notion that yesterday’s anxieties are today’s realities may have rendered dystopian literature less appealing as a means of escapism, which would explain the decline in popularity. However, the genre’s ability to reflect the world we live in and provoke critical thinking ensures its continued relevance in the future (Ali 2019).

3 Veronica Roth and the Literary Context of “Divergent”

This chapter aims to contextualize Veronica Roth and her literary work within the realm of YA literature. The first subchapter delves into Roth's life and journey as a writer. The second subchapter provides an overview of her literary career, spanning from her early works to her most recent novel in 2023. The third subchapter explores the literary context of the “Divergent” trilogy, examining its reception among readers and critics. The final section provides an overview of the key characters and story line in “Divergent”.

3.1 Life of Veronica Roth

Veronica Roth, an American novelist and short story writer, was born in 1988 in New York but spent most of her childhood and teen years in Barrington, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Growing up in this environment left a significant imprint on her, as some of her literary works take place in this area, including her famous trilogy (see sec. 3.4.2) (Blumberg 2016). She was the youngest of three siblings in a family of five. Roth's parents divorced when she was five years old, leaving her mother to manage work and raising three children on her own before she later remarried. Veronica developed a strong and positive relationship with her mother as well as with her stepfather, while her connection with her biological father remains a topic she prefers not to discuss in detail publicly (Kidd 2014 and Niver 2015, p. 10).

From a young age, Roth displayed a passion for reading and developed a particular fondness for dystopian novels. In an interview for ScreenSlam (2014, sec. 00:50–01:18), she revealed her early love for the genre, mentioning iconic works such as “The Giver”, which she discovered at the age of ten. She continued exploring dystopian tales, including “Brave New World”, “1984”, and “The Hunger Games” which ignited her imagination with their captivating narratives. This passion soon translated into writing. According to Mortensen (2016, p. 8), it was “in year 7 [(middle school)], [when Veronica] began writing her own stories.” She went on to win a prestigious award for her writing in high school. Teachers described her as both hardworking and talented Mortensen (2016, p. 8). In addition, it was also in high school that young Veronica expressed interest in Christianity and has been openly religious ever since. This was unexpected given that neither of her parents practiced any religion, especially considering her mother's resentment toward her strict religious upbringing (Niver 2015, pp. 13–15). Religiosity is a recurring theme in Veronica Roth's works, and though not as pronounced, it is also evident in “Divergent” (see sec. 4.3.1).

After graduating from high school and initially attending Carlton College in Minnesota, Roth reassessed her choices and decided to apply to “Northwestern University [...] and ended up attending and graduating from [its] creative writing program.” (Niver 2015, pp. 15–16). It was during her senior year at Northwestern during a winter break that she started writing and finished her first book. After some time and attempts, she successfully secured an agent and managed to sell the book to a publisher, all before her graduation in 2010 (Niver 2015, pp. 18–20).

In the same year that her first book hit the shelves (2011), Veronica Roth also embarked on another significant chapter of her life by getting married. She and her photographer husband, Nelson Fitch, reside in the Chicago area (Niver 2015, p. 86). Her dedication to her craft and storytelling prowess has led to remarkable success in the literary world. As of 2023, she proudly holds the title of a New York Times bestselling author for five of her books and book series, solidifying her position as a beloved and influential figure in the fiction genre (Roth 2016b).

3.2 Literary Works

Veronica Roth made her debut as an author with a dystopian trilogy, collectively known as the Divergent series. Published in 2011, the first book in the trilogy, “Divergent”, quickly became a global sensation. Roth continued the series with two more instalments – in 2012, “Insurgent” was released and a year later in 2013 the series’ final instalment, “Allegiant”, was published. The “Divergent” series captivated readers of all ages and secured Veronica Roth’s status as a prominent figure in the YA fiction genre (Niver 2015, pp. 87–96). According to HarperCollins Publishers (c2023) website, “more than 32 million copies of the Divergent series have been sold worldwide.” Thanks to this success, the book series was later adapted into an eponymous feature film series.

Throughout her literary career, Roth has also written short stories. Most of the earlier ones are set in the Divergent universe. In 2014, she published a collection of short stories titled “Four: A Divergent Collection”, some of which serve as a prequel to the storyline in the trilogy, while others offer a different perspective and run “parallel with the events of Divergent” (Roth 2016a). In 2017, Roth published the last short story, “We Can be Mended”, set in the Divergent universe after the events of “Allegiant”.

In 2017, Veronica Roth began exploring different themes and settings with the publication of the first novel in her duology “Carve the Mark”. This marked “her first book outside the

Divergent series [...]. The sequel, *The Fates Divide*, was released in 2018.” (Blumberg 2016). The duology represents Roth’s turn toward science fiction in her writing.

Roth’s enthusiasm for the sci-fi genre is further emphasised by the release of her book of short stories in 2019, titled “The End and Other Beginnings: Stories from the Future”. Each of the six stories is set in a different advanced, and futuristic world and accompanies various characters facing “deeply human problems.” (Roth 2019a).

In 2020, Veronica Roth made her debut in adult fiction with her standalone fantasy novel, “Chosen Ones”. The novel follows a group of five people who, some 10–15 years earlier, “defeated an evil overlord [...]” (Blumberg 2016). The story explores their struggle to navigate life after their epic victory, reflecting on the ideas of heroism and trauma (Roth 2019b).

Veronica Roth’s 2022 novel, “Poster Girl”, is one of her latest works in the dystopian genre. According to Blumberg (2016), “the dystopian mystery [...] is set 10 years after the overthrow of an oppressive government [where the] imprisoned daughter of [a government] official is offered her freedom in exchange for locating a missing girl.” The mission is dangerous and takes the protagonist on an uncomfortable journey of “digging deeper into the past – and her family’s dark secrets [...]” (Roth 2022).

Veronica Roth’s latest novel, “Arch-Conspirator”, was published in February 2023. The story is a “reimagining of [the legend of] Antigone [set in a future, where all Earth but one city] is a wasteland.” (Roth 2023).

3.3 Critical and Readers’ Reception of the Divergent Series

“Divergent”, the first book in the eponymous trilogy, was published in 2011 and quickly gained prominence during the height of the YA dystopian genre’s popularity (see sec. 2.2.1). While the trilogy has been compared to Suzanne Collins’ works, it stood out from the rest due to, among other things, its action-filled, imaginative, and gripping narrative. The novel received both critical acclaim and widespread popularity among readers. As of 2023, the novel has received over 3.7 million ratings on Goodreads, with 76 % giving it at least four stars out of five (Goodreads c2023c). Just like “The Hunger Games”, “Divergent” was later adapted into a feature film. While its success was not as remarkable, it garnered enough acclaim to warrant subsequent adaptations. The second movie saw considerable success as well, but the third one underperformed, leading to the cancellation of the fourth instalment (second part of “Allegiant”) (see sec. 2.2.3) (Naruseviciute 2022).

As mentioned in section 3.1, Roth wrote “Divergent” while attending university. Coincidentally, it was in Psychology 101, one of the classes she took out of interest, that she stumbled upon the idea for her book. The concept of exposure therapy, covered in the course, served as a foundation for the entire plot of her debut novel (see sec. 3.4.2) (The Guardian 2013, sec. 0:37–1:17). Another possible inspiration or influence could have come from the Harry Potter books, where the students at the wizarding school, Hogwarts, were sorted into four different “houses” based on their personality. A parallel that can be drawn to the five factions depicted in “Divergent” (see sec. 4.1) (Waldman 2014).

The novel was on the whole met with very positive reviews, with readers praising its engrossing narrative, action-filled plot, and the complexity and realistic development of the protagonist. However, there were also notable weaknesses pointed out by James (2011) and other reviewers, including the novel’s simplistic and implausible world-building, lack of deeper societal critique compared to earlier dystopian novels, and the delayed start of the main plot. While James (2011) enjoyed the book, it did not provide a profound critique of society, in her opinion. The latter also aligns with Roth’s own statements about her trilogy. In an interview with The Guardian (2013), Roth expressed that her primary intention while writing the series was not to criticize society as a whole, but rather to focus on individual perspectives. She emphasized, “I didn’t really write it [...] to point the finger, that much, at society, but I did write it to, kind of, point the finger at myself.” (The Guardian 2013, sec. 03:54–04:48). In another interview, Roth answered the interviewers question if the novel was a mirror to society, with: “maybe a little [...] classically, dystopian books are supposed to be a warning [...] Divergent for me is a little bit more fantastical [...] so it’s a little more imaginative, not as harrowing.” (ScreenSlam 2014, sec. 01:50–02:40).

3.4 Character List and Story Line of “Divergent”

This section aims to establish a frame of reference for the subsequent analysis of the novel. Firstly, it provides a brief overview of the key characters (including main characters and significant side characters), describing who they are and what role they play in the story. Secondly, this section outlines the plot, organizing it into six main parts, and highlighting the most important events.

3.4.1 List of characters

Good characters

- Beatrice (Tris) Prior – the main protagonist and narrator, Divergent.

- Tobias (Four) – instructor at the Dauntless compound, Tris’ love interest, Divergent.
- Christina (Candor transfer), Will (Erudite transfer), Uriah (Dauntless-born) – Tris’ closest friends at Dauntless compound.
- The Priors – Natalie (mother, Divergent), Andrew (father), Caleb (Tris’ slightly older brother).
- Tori – administrator of aptitude tests, tattoo artist at Dauntless, critic of the system.

Evil characters

- Jeanine Matthews – main antagonist, leader of the Erudite faction.
- Eric – one of the leaders of the Dauntless faction and Jeanine’s spy.
- Peter – a Candor transfer, torments and harasses Tris as well as others.
- Molly, Drew – Peter’s cronies.
- Marcus – influential member of the council, one of the Abnegation leaders, Tobias’ abusive father.

Ambiguous or neutral characters

- Albert (Al) – a Candor transfer, initially a friend of Tris, then a traitor of her trust.
- Edward – Erudite transfer, ranked first after Stage One, gets stabbed and leaves.

3.4.2 Outline of the plot

“Divergent” is a futuristic dystopian novel set in a divided version of Chicago, where society is organized into five factions based on different virtues (see sec. 4.3). The story follows Beatrice Prior, a sixteen-year-old girl from the selfless Abnegation faction (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.1 Opening

The story begins with Beatrice preparing for her aptitude test and the Choosing Ceremony. She contemplates whether to stay with her family or leave them for a possibly more suitable faction (a desire to join the Dauntless faction). Her aptitude test turns out inconclusive, meaning she is Divergent (exhibits aptitude for more than one faction – Erudite, Dauntless, Abnegation). Tori warns her not to tell anybody but does not elaborate on the danger Beatrice is in or from whom. At the Choosing Ceremony, Beatrice chooses Dauntless (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.2 Beginning of the Dauntless initiation – Stage One

Directly after the ceremony, the new initiates ride the train to the Dauntless compound. Beatrice, who now goes by Tris, befriends her fellow initiates Christina, Will, and Albert. She gets insulted by Peter, who will continue bullying her throughout the initiation. Tris meets Four

(Tobias) who is their instructor and Eric, a Dauntless leader. The initiates learn that they will be ranked by their progress in each of the three stages and that only the top ten will be made members (there are 20 initiates) (Roth 2021).

During the first stage the initiates learn how to shoot a gun, throw knives and they practice hand to hand combat. Albert would be forced to stand in front of a knife-throwing target, but Tris stands up for him. Christina is forced to hang over a chasm for an act of cowardice (wanting to stop her fight with Molly). Peter beats Tris to a pulp. On the next day, they take the initiates on a field trip to the fence. Also, the first initiation ritual takes place, the traditional game of capture the flag. Tris proves that she has a bright mind by climbing the Ferris wheel, with Four, to find the location of the second team. Tris' team wins thanks to her. She meets Uriah and makes a new friend (Roth 2021).

Nearing the end of stage one, Tris gets harassed by Peter, Molly and Drew. She then takes her fury out on Molly by unexpectedly beating her into submission in a staged fight, kicking and punching her while she is already on the ground (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.3 Dauntless initiation – Stage Two

After the first stage the rankings are up for the first time. Peter is furious he has only ranked second and stabs Edward in his eye, out of envy, when everyone is asleep. Uriah invites Tris to join him and the other Dauntless-born initiates on an initiation ritual for the Dauntless-born, ziplining from the top of the Hancock tower (Roth 2021).

The second stage of training starts. In this stage initiates are injected with the simulation serum and face their deepest fears. Tris excels at this because of her “divergence”, she is aware when in a simulation whereas the others are not. Four now knows that Tris is Divergent, she begins to suspect he is one too. Their connection is growing. Meanwhile, the Erudite publish their propaganda articles accusing Abnegation of various things. Peter antagonizes Tris about them (Roth 2021).

Everyone is emotionally drained from the simulations, except for Tris who can manipulate them. In fact, she is doing so well that she ranks first after stage two. However, she now must hide her divergence more than ever, because she is under the watchful eye of Eric, whom she overhears one night talking with a woman about hunting the Divergent rebels (Roth 2021).

Tris gets once again harassed but this time it is even more serious. This time Peter, and Drew are joined by Albert, who has ranked last and will most likely be cut unless someone quits. They kidnap Tris and try to push her over the railing at the chasm but Four steps in and saves Tris. Albert tries to apologise to Tris, who turns his apologies down, and he commits suicide out of shame. Eric calls it an act of bravery (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.4 Dauntless initiation – Stage Three

Four takes Tris to the “fear landscape” where the third stage will take place, to show her his fears. He has only four. One is of his father, Marcus, who abused him as a child and was the reason why Tobias (Four) left Abnegation. Tris learns his real name and they kiss (Roth 2021).

Tris decides to visit her brother in the Erudite sector, which is against the rules. She learns about the impending conflict between Erudite and Abnegation. She is brought to Erudite headquarters and meets Jeanine, recognizing her voice as the woman who was talking with Eric. She is suspicious of Tris and questions her about her aptitude test results, which were deleted by Tori, and the training simulations at Dauntless. Tris manages to ease her suspicion for now and gets sent back to Dauntless. Eric is waiting for her, and it is evident that Jeanine asked him to confirm Tris was not lying. Four (Tobias) once again saves Tris by making up a story about a fight they had which led to her running away (Roth 2021).

The final trial is in the fear landscape. This time everybody knows they are in a simulation. The aim is to go through all fears one would have as quickly as possible, either by manipulating the simulated reality or calming oneself down in the face of fear. Tris ranks first by a long margin. Molly and Drew get cut and are now factionless. Everyone at the Dauntless section including the new members get injected with a “tracking device” (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.5 Culmination of the plot – Erudite attack Abnegation

Tris uncovers the Erudite’s plan to use the tracking devices to control the Dauntless faction, however, it is already too late. She wakes up in the middle of the night and realises all Dauntless are under a mind control program. They board a train toward Abnegation. She finds Tobias (Four) who is also awake, turning out to be Divergent, and they pretend to be under control of the program. They get off in Abnegation and the purge begins. Dauntless leaders are complicit. Tris shoots Eric as they try to escape. But they get caught and are brought to Jeanine, their Divergent status compromised. Jeanine proceeds to explain what she has planned, then she injects Tobias with a modified version of the serum, which turns him against Tris. Jeanine

gives out the order to execute Tris as she is no longer of use to her. Tris' mother, Natalie, comes to her rescue and sacrifices herself (Roth 2021).

Tris ends up having to kill Will who was chasing after her. She then finds her father (Andrew), Caleb, Marcus and others from her former faction hiding in the basement of some building. She becomes a natural leader of the group and sends most of them to Amity to seek refuge, while she would go stop the mind control simulation (Roth 2021).

3.4.2.6 Novel's conclusion

Tris manages to locate the control room at the Dauntless compound, taking Peter as a hostage, who turned out to be working for the Erudite as well. Andrew (Tris' father) is killed trying to Dauntless guards from Tris' way. Tobias is guarding the control room, still under the simulation. Tris cannot shoot him, so she gives him the gun and waits for him to shoot her, but that does not happen. Tobias wakes up and together they turn off the program. Tris, Tobias, Caleb and Peter (as a hostage) then board the train to Amity. Uncertain future lies ahead (Roth 2021).

4 Analysis of the Ideological Dimension of the Novel “Divergent”

This chapter of the thesis focuses on the analysis of the dystopian society depicted in the book “Divergent” by Veronika Roth, specifically in its ideological dimension. The analysis draws on the theoretical knowledge presented in chapters 1–3 and utilizes illustrative examples from the book, interpreting them within the context of the novel’s narrative. The chapter consists of five parts, with four dedicated to the analysis and one serving as a summary.

The first part provides an outline of the society’s structure, and the nature of its political establishment. The second part delves into the essence of the society’s ideological framework, exploring the main ideas of the ruling ideology, its function as a justification for the faction system, and its interdependence with the particular ideologies of the factions.

The third part offers a detailed description of each of the five factions, highlighting their customs, norms, and the roles they fulfil in society and how all this is determined by their respective ideology.

Part four examines the mechanisms employed by the society to maintain its structure and stability. And concludes with a discussion of the challenges faced by this society, the issues it grapples with, and how the dystopian decline manifests within its confines.

4.1 Structure of the Society

The society in “Divergent” is divided into five distinct factions, “it has been this way since the beginning of the great peace.” (Roth 2021, p. 30). Each faction is characterized by a specific virtue that its members must live by and a vice that they strive to eradicate (see sec. 4.3). These factions are technically equal and working together “toward a better society and a better world.” (Roth 2021, p. 36). Nevertheless, the society is designed in a way that promotes a relative separation between the factions. While individuals from different factions coexist within the same society, they predominantly interact with members of their own faction. This separation is especially evident in their living arrangements, where each faction has its own sector within the Chicago area. These sectors reflect the lifestyle of the faction it houses, which also could not be more different, as each faction contributes to a different sector of society (see sec. 4.3).

During their upbringing, children from all factions attend the same schools until they reach the age of sixteen. Then they undergo an aptitude test that assesses their innate abilities and personality traits and presents them with the faction they best align with. Then they get to

choose which faction they want to become members of. Their education continues with the initiation process at the faction they chose. If they fail to meet the requirements of the respective faction, they are forced to live among the other “factionless” on the outskirts of society. Factionless are so to say the unofficial 6th faction: “They live in poverty, doing the work no one else wants to do. [...] In return for their work they get [little to no] food and clothing.” (Roth 2021, p. 25). They are looked down upon by most of the population and everyone is afraid of ending up like them.

The political power is entirely vested into the hands of a council “of fifty people, composed [exclusively] of [Abnegation] representatives [...], because [they are] regarded as incorruptible [...]” (Roth 2021, p. 30). Abnegation governs and makes decisions on behalf of the society as a whole. The council members are chosen by their peers and should be the best role models of selflessness and altruism. Other factions are also invited to speak at the council meetings and advise the government, but they do not have the authority to make decisions, which some, especially Erudite, find frustrating. On the faction level, there are again major differences with regard to leadership. For example, the Erudite select their “sole representative, [...] based on [...] IQ score.” (Roth 2021, p. 30).

4.2 Ideological Framework of the Society

When examining the ideological framework of the society, it becomes evident that it operates on two distinct levels of organization. The first level encompasses the main overarching or total ideology, while the second level comprises the specific or particular ideologies of each faction (see sec. 1.1.1). At the higher level, ideology serves as the guiding principle for the entire society, establishing a collective framework of beliefs that justify the structure of society. At the lower level, the faction-specific ideologies contribute to keeping the whole system and ideology operational, by implementing the necessary measures within their specific field of focus.

At its core, the main ideological framework revolves around the justification of the five-faction system. This justification includes two key aspects. Firstly, the historical necessity for the establishment of the system as a response and the perfect solution to past conflicts and challenges. Secondly, the democratic nature of the decision to adopt this structure, highlighting that it was driven by the collective will of the people. By emphasizing these aspects, the ideological framework seeks to provide a solid basis for the existence of the five factions and the societal structure they represent (see sec. 1.1.1).

An explicit representation of the ruling ideology can be found in Marcus' speech at the Choosing Ceremony: "Decades ago our ancestors realized that it is not political ideology, religious belief, race, or nationalism that is to blame for a warring world. Rather, they determined that it was the fault of human personality—of humankind's inclination toward evil, in whatever form that is. They divided into factions that sought to eradicate those qualities they believed responsible for the world's disarray." (Roth 2021, p. 35). This speech captures one fundamental belief of the ideology, that the root cause of all evil is the flawed human nature. Moreover, it highlights the utopian aspirations of the society – changing human nature. Consequently, factions are not only perceived as the most effective means to attain a better and more harmonious society, in a way, they are also regarded as the already perfect solution, that only needs more time "fix" the human nature for good.

Later in his speech, Marcus reinforces the idea of necessity of the factions by stating: "In our factions, we find meaning, we find purpose, we find life. [...] Apart from them, we would not survive." (Roth 2021, p. 36). The last part elicits an emotional response in the audience, a deep fear of a life without a faction, which most see as a fate worse than death. This reflects the fact that, in the society a person derives their identity primarily from the faction they belong to – a faction is seen as "the most important social unit." (Roth 2021, p. 288). One's faction should be given priority even before family (see sec. 4.4.1).

The wide acceptance and deep-rooted nature of this ideology is evident throughout the novel, as Tris frequently reflects upon these concepts in her quest to find her place in society. Near the conclusion of the first novel, she shares an interesting thought with the reader: "If I survive, I will undoubtedly go on to do far more difficult things than even that, like live without a faction, something I never imagined possible." (Roth 2021, p. 266). So, despite the harrowing experiences Tris has had to endure by this point, she is still haunted by the uncertainty of a life without a faction.

4.3 Ideology by Faction

The framework of each faction represents a manifestation of the broader ideological perspective described in the previous section. The faction system's existence and principles serve as a response to the societal goal of changing human nature. Each faction addressing a different vice they deemed accountable for the humanity's perpetual suffering. Since people were able to identify five fundamental vices (selfishness, cowardice, ignorance, aggression,

duplicity) they formed five factions promoting corresponding virtues. They are Abnegation, Dauntless, Erudite, Amity and Candor.

The factions are distinct communities, each with their own physical spaces, rules, and practices. They are designed to create an environment that allows for individuals to be fully immersed in the values and virtues of their faction. This is especially true of the young people who despite attending the same schools are brought up and educated separately: “The hallways are cramped, [...] they are one of the only places where the factions mix, at our age.” (Roth 2021, p. 14). This could be one of the contributing factors why there are so few *faction transfers*³⁷. By the time individuals undergo the aptitude test and have the opportunity to choose a different path, they will often have been sufficiently indoctrinated to decide to remain in their native faction (see sec. 4.4.1).

4.3.1 Abnegation

The Abnegation faction focuses on selflessness to counteract selfishness and promote altruism. Their values emphasize action over identity, with norms “designed to encourage acts of self-denial” and denial of one’s own will. They engage in government, teaching, healthcare, and background administrative work, they also often work among the factionless to improve quality of life. Abnegation follows a traditional family model or live in celibacy and group-housing outside of marriage. They wear plain grey clothing, which promotes their values of modesty and self-denial. They disapprove of the Erudite’s lifestyle, promoting individual pursuit of knowledge and curiosity, which they perceive as selfish. In contrast, they get along quite well with Amity and work with them on a variety of projects (Roth 2021, pp. 289–291).

The Abnegation sector is the first one we encounter as it is home to the protagonist. This quote summarizes it best: “The houses on my street are all the same size and shape [...] made of gray cement, with few windows [...]. Their lawns are crabgrass and their mailboxes are dull metal.” (Roth 2021, p. 27). As demonstrated in the quote, this part of the city is deliberately designed to reflect the ideology of Abnegation. Everything from architecture to clothing, to haircuts, is designed to facilitate an environment in which “forgetting oneself” is easier which in turn protects them “from vanity, greed, and envy, which are just forms of selfishness.” (Roth 2021, p. 27).

³⁷ Faction transfer is a person who chooses a different faction than the one they were brought up in.

When describing her home, the protagonist also shares her feelings towards it: “To some the sight might be gloomy, but to me their simplicity is comforting.” (Roth 2021, p. 27). This highlights her sentimental attachment to the place where she grew up. Also, she further elaborates on the reasoning behind the “protective” measures implemented by Abnegation, explaining a misconception other factions hold against them that the “reason for the simplicity isn’t disdain for uniqueness [...]” Rather it is a mindset they promote in the sense that “if [they] have little, and want for little, and [...] are all equal, [they] envy no one.” (Roth 2021, p. 27).

This uniformity of the Abnegation faction is further emphasized when Beatrice and her family arrive at the Choosing Ceremony: “We climb the stairs instead, following [my father] unquestioningly. [...] soon [we] are engulfed in the mass of gray fabric ascending cement stairs in the half light. I settle into their pace.” (Roth 2021, p. 33). Without a second thought every member of the faction follows the Prior family up the stairs letting other factions use the elevator instead. This scene is particularly powerful, capturing the faction’s collective identity and unified nature, as every individual is “subsumed into Abnegation’s hive mind, projecting always outward.” It creates almost a hypnotic atmosphere, as Beatrice describes “the uniform pounding of feet in [her] ears and the homogeneity of the people around [her].” (Roth 2021, p. 33). This demonstrates how the ideology can evoke a sense of belonging in a person.

The adherence and dedication of Abnegation to their faction norms is evident in their behaviour as they gather at a table at the school cafeteria before the aptitude tests. As described in the quote: “At the Abnegation table, we sit quietly and wait. Faction customs dictate even idle behavior and supersede individual preference.” (Roth 2021, p. 16). The quote also suggests that other factions have their customs regarding idle behaviour (see sec. 4.3.2–5).

A notable instance that exemplifies another aspect of the Abnegation ideology is when Tris selflessly and without a second thought defends a friend (Albert) by putting herself in harm’s way. In the situation where Albert would have been subjected to knives being thrown at him, Tris speaks up and volunteers to take his place, pointing out: “Any idiot can stand in front of a target [...]. It doesn’t prove anything except that you’re bullying us. Which, as I recall, is a sign of cowardice.” Despite the instructor’s (Tobias) goading her to give up, she perseveres: “‘You about done, *Stiff*?³⁸’ asks Four. I remember Al’s wide eyes and his quiet sobs at night and shake my head.” (Roth 2021, pp. 101–102). This act also highlights the interconnectedness of selflessness and courage, or as Tobias (Four) relates it: “I have a theory that selflessness and

³⁸ *Stiff* is a derogatory term used for Abnegation members – mocking their asceticism.

bravery aren't all that different.” (Roth 2021, p. 198). Tris realises this connection later on when both her mother and father sacrifice their lives to save hers.

Religion also holds significant position within Abnegation, even though not all members actively practice it. This aspect becomes evident when Tris finds herself trapped in a water tank, believing she is going to die, remembering that “[her] mother submerged me in water when I was a baby, to give me to God.” And suddenly she realizes that she is “glad [to have] shot Eric in the foot instead of the head.” (Roth 2021, p. 255). This realization suggests that her actions, though driven by self-preservation, align with a moral framework influenced by her religious upbringing.

4.3.2 Dauntless

The Dauntless faction embodies bravery and courage, aiming to conquer cowardice and cultivate resilience among its members. There is, however, a division among the Dauntless: there are those seeking literal fearlessness and those emphasizing boldness in the face of fear. Dauntless focuses mainly on city security, including guards, monitoring, and firefighting. They can also train to be paramedics and do construction work at heights. They also can work at their compound as nurses, tattoo artists, or entertainment fighters. Family life is quite varied. Their clothing reflects their emphasis on athleticism, as they wear tight, black clothing, extravagant hairstyles, tattoos, and piercings. They have a strong relationship with the Erudite but their values clash with Amity (Roth 2021, pp. 297–299).

The Dauntless compound serves as the book's second location, characteristic for its underground setting. The compound consists of a complex network of tunnels, hallways, and chambers, reflecting the faction's nature: dark, secretive, and dangerous. At its centre is the Pit, a sprawling open cavern with facilities built into its towering rock walls. The atmosphere is characterized by the fact that there are “people [...] everywhere, all dressed in black, all shouting and talking, expressive, gesturing.” The narrow paths and steps that connect the different areas, lack barriers to prevent falls and groups of children run on them. There are also notably no elderly people around (Roth 2021, p. 47). The description vividly captures the intense, adventurous, and chaotic atmosphere that permeates the Dauntless faction. It portrays the environment in which their ideology thrives, providing the ideal setting for their principles to be put into practice, starting from a young age.

An explicit representation of the Dauntless ideology, which centres around the unwavering belief in bravery, is the following quote from Eric's speech after the final stage of

initiation. It exemplifies their core principles: “We believe in bravery. We believe in taking action. We believe in freedom from fear and in acquiring the skills to force the bad out of our world so that the good can prosper and thrive. If you also believe in those things, we welcome you.” (Roth 2021, p. 239).

The whole initiation process of the Dauntless faction, as explained by Four (Tobias), is based on the belief “that preparation eradicates cowardice, which [the Dauntless] define as the failure to act in the midst of fear.” (Roth 2021, p. 54). This belief is central to their ideology, and for those born into Dauntless, risk and danger become ingrained in their identity. They embrace daredevil acts as a form of entertainment, finding thrill and excitement in pushing the boundaries. One such example is when Tris gets invited to watch as Uriah shoots a muffin off Marlene’s head using a pellet gun. When asked why they would do it he answers: “She bet me I couldn’t aim well enough to hit a small object from one hundred feet, [...] I bet her she didn’t have the guts to stand there as I tried. It works out well, really.” (Roth 2021, p. 162).

The dynamics within the faction and among the members are complex and hierarchical, as Tris observes, when she gets invited to come along on an initiation ritual for the Dauntless-born: “The Dauntless-born initiates are like a pack of dogs. If I act the wrong way, they won’t let me run with them.” Despite their differences, there is a sense of unity among the Dauntless. Tris reflects on this camaraderie which stems from risking their lives together, in contrast to Abnegation’s unity in sameness: “This isn’t like that. We are not the same. But we are, somehow, one.” (Roth 2021, pp. 128, 135). This camaraderie among the Dauntless is further characterized by a sense of carefree spirit which manifests even in serious situations. For example, while waiting for the aptitude tests at the Dauntless table: “They are laughing and shouting and playing cards.” (Roth 2021, p. 16).

4.3.3 Erudite

The Erudite faction seeks knowledge and intelligence to combat ignorance and promote curiosity and enlightened thinking. They value knowledge, understanding, and innovation. Erudite work as doctors, teachers, scientists, and researchers, making them one of the two essential factions³⁹. They do not see the logic behind marriage, with couples often bound only by their children. Wearing blue clothing is common for the colours calming effect and wearing glasses as a symbol of intelligence. They collaborate closely with Amity for food production and have a similar relationship with Dauntless. Their relationship with Abnegation, on the other

³⁹ Essential factions are those that take care of the society’s basic needs – such as food and healthcare.

hand, is strained due to clashing values. Erudite criticize them for being illogically selfless and inefficient which translates into their government methods (Roth 2021, pp. 300–301).

The Erudite compound is the third and last faction we get to read about in the first book. Tris secretly makes a trip there to see her brother. The Erudite live in large stone buildings situated near the marsh. Their headquarters is an enormous library inside the central building with “bookcases [lining] the walls on [each] side [...] [that are] decorative more than anything, because computers occupy the tables in the center of the room, and no one is reading.” (Roth 2021, p. 205). Another notable fixture that catches Tris’ eye is a great portrait of the Erudite leader, Jeanine Matthews, with “a large plaque that reads [knowledge leads to prosperity].” (Roth 2021, p. 205). The Erudite compound aligns with the faction’s ideology, emphasizing the accessibility of knowledge for all and the technology’s role for progress.

The relentless pursuit of knowledge is a central aspect of the Erudite ideology, which becomes evident through various interactions and observations made by Tris throughout the story. One such instance occurs in the cafeteria before the aptitude tests, where the Erudite are seated “at another set of tables, [engaged in] chatter over books and newspapers, in constant pursuit of knowledge.” (Roth 2021, p. 16). This portrayal illustrates how the Erudite spend their free time. This is further underscored in the interaction between Christina and Will, which shows that constant learning is commonplace and expected among Erudite: “‘What did you do, memorize a map of the city for fun?’ says Christina. ‘Yes,’ says Will, looking puzzled. ‘Didn’t you?’” (Roth 2021, p. 81).

At another point in the story, Will expresses a subtle critique of Abnegation’s governing style, suggesting that their focus on selflessness may come at the expense of comfort and prosperity. He remarks, “I just think that comfort and prosperity are not a priority for Abnegation, and maybe they would be if the other factions were involved in our decision making.” (Roth 2021, p. 188). This viewpoint, although more balanced, borders on the ideology of Jeanine, who strives to uproot the leadership of Abnegation (see sec. 4.4.2).

Further in the story, the awkward reunion of Tris and Caleb at the Erudite compound, where Tris managed to slip away to during her initiation, highlights the contrast between the two, as they both are in the initiation process. Trying to internalize the ideals of their respective factions, they both changed their appearance. Tris finds it disconcerting to see Caleb dressed in blue and wearing unnecessary glasses, possibly to seem more intelligent. Similarly, Caleb is taken aback by Tris wearing all black and sporting a tattoo: “‘You have a tattoo,’ he says, his

voice muffled. ‘You have glasses,’ I say. I pull back and narrow my eyes. ‘Your vision is perfect, Caleb, what are you doing?’” (Roth 2021, p. 206).

The Erudite ideology manifests at a significant moment of the story when, under Jeanine’s orders, Tris is captured and placed in a water tank intended as her execution. As Tris finds herself in this perilous situation, she becomes aware of a camera pointed at her. In that moment, she realizes: “they’re watching me—no, studying me, as only the Erudite would. To see if my reaction in reality matches my reaction in the simulation. To prove that I’m a coward.” (Roth 2021, p. 254). The purposeful choice of drowning as the method of execution highlights the Erudite’s analytical and calculated approach to everything, acting in accordance with their ideology.

4.3.4 Amity

The Amity faction embodies values of harmony and peacefulness, prioritizing forgiveness, self-sufficiency, and kindness. Their emphasis on joy, beauty, and celebration sets them apart from other factions. As the second essential faction, Amity is responsible for food production, with members primarily working in agriculture and related occupations. Their communal living fosters strong bonds, creating close-knit groups based on friendship and shared specialties. They do not have a formal leader, only an advisor to the government. Clothing guidelines are flexible, requiring only a touch of red or yellow to evoke joy. They have good relationships with all factions except Dauntless, as their conflict resolution tactics often clash. Amity shares a special bond with Erudite, relying on their technology. They also cooperate with Abnegation and Candor in matters of religion (Roth 2021, pp. 292–293).

While the Amity sector is not explored in the narrative, the reader gets a faint idea of what its atmosphere is like. In the final chapter of the first book, the group of survivors, including Tris and Tobias, board a train headed towards the Amity sector. As Tris gazes out the window, she reminisces about her childhood visit to the home of Amity: “The train turns, and I see the city behind us. It will get smaller and smaller until we see where the tracks end, the forests and fields I last saw when I was too young to appreciate them.” (Roth 2021, p. 281). This imagery suggests a return to nature, reminiscent of the Amity faction’s emphasis on peaceful coexistence with the environment. And it is a vision of a place where communal bonds are strong, and a sense of peace pervades.

Another instance where the nature of Amity’s ideology becomes apparent is during a field trip to the fence. Tris unexpectedly encounters her friend, Robert, who had transferred to Amity.

Tris describes the encounter like this: “After a second’s hesitation, he moves toward me and folds me in his arms. I stiffen. Only in Amity do people hug each other in greeting. I don’t move a muscle until he releases me.” (Roth 2021, p. 83) This interaction showcases the ideology’s emphasis on warmth and communal bonds fostered within the Amity faction. Furthermore, Robert expresses concern for Tris’ well-being, as she is badly beat up from the day before, and suggests she go back home. When she refuses, Robert retorts with a rhetorical question: “Wouldn’t it be easier if [your goal in life] was [to just be happy], though?” (Roth 2021, p. 84). This interaction encapsulates the essence of Amity’s ideology, which centres around cultivating a happy and contented life, embracing simplicity, and finding joy in the little things.

As Tris watches the Amity truck drive away with Robert, she envisions an alternative life in the Amity faction: “I see another possible life in my mind’s eye. I see myself in the back of the truck, singing with the girl, though I’ve never sung before, laughing when I am off-key, climbing trees to pick the apples, always peaceful and always safe.” (Roth 2021, p. 84). However, the harsh reality sets in as the story progresses to its conclusion. As Tris and the other survivors ride the train towards the Amity sector, she acknowledges that it is only a temporary refuge: “The kindness of Amity will comfort us for a while, though we can’t stay there forever.” (Roth 2021, p. 281). Tris realizes that they must confront the impending threats of Erudite, leaving behind the dream of a perpetual peaceful existence in Amity.

Another glimpse into the lives of Amity is once again provided in the cafeteria before aptitude testing. Sitting on the floor in a circle, “a group of Amity girls in yellow and red [is] playing some kind of hand-slapping game involving a rhyming song. Every few minutes [Tris hears] a chorus of laughter from them as someone is eliminated and has to sit in the center of the circle.” (Roth 2021, p. 16). This demonstrates their light-hearted nature and enjoyment of simple pleasures in the form of a game played in a collective of friends.

In contrast, the light-heartedness and kindness, as they are promoted in Amity, do not appear to thrive within the Dauntless faction. This becomes evident when the only Amity transfer, confronted with the first test of courage, chooses self-preservation and a factionless life over risking death by jumping from a moving train onto a rooftop: “‘I’d rather be factionless than dead!’ The Amity boy shakes his head. He sounds panicky. [...] I don’t agree with him. I would rather be dead than empty, like the factionless.” (Roth 2021, p. 42). This shows the Amity’s appreciation of life in all its forms.

4.3.5 Candor

The Candor faction values honesty and openness through both praise and criticism in all aspects of life. They believe in the pursuit of truth, disregarding personal feelings when making judgments. Their jobs involve close cooperation with other factions, serving as advisors in various professions. This makes Candor the glue of the faction society. There is no private life and parental roles in Candor focus more on protection than instruction. Members of Candor are only allowed to wear black and white clothes, symbolizing their understanding of truth. They have a problem with Amity, because they will lie to keep peace, and Erudite for their deceitful and manipulative nature. They also criticize the Abnegation government for lack of transparency. Candor maintains a positive relationship with Dauntless, as faction transfers between the two are common (Roth 2021, pp. 294–296).

Although the specific location of Candor remains undisclosed and unexplored in the narrative of the first book, their distinct mannerisms and communication style provide insights into their cultural and ideological identity. The cafeteria scene portrays Candor's distinctive behaviour: "At the [other] table [...], Candor boys make wide gestures with their hands. They appear to be arguing about something, but it must not be serious because some of them are still smiling." (Roth 2021, p. 16). This showcases that Candor values open and lively discussions of any kind as long as everyone is honest. These values align with the faction's belief in revealing the truth and avoiding manipulation.

The emphasis on honesty and straightforwardness within Candor is further reinforced by Christina's statement, when she is overheard by people she has been gossiping about: "We try to be pretty honest about our feelings in Candor. Plenty of people have told me that they don't like me. And plenty of people haven't. Who cares?" and "I like to think I'm helping them by hating them, [...] I'm reminding them that they aren't God's gift to humankind." (Roth 2021, p. 64). Christina's words exemplify the core principle of Candor, where individuals are encouraged to express their true opinion without any reservation.

In another conversation with Tris, Christina reveals she misses her home in Candor, arguing that while "some things are the same, [...] [like] everyone at [Candor] is just as loud as everyone [at Dauntless], [...] it's easier there. You always know where you stand with everyone, because they tell you. There's no ... manipulation." She then continues to explain the nature of the initiation at Candor, at the conclusion of which they make them drink "truth serum" and so that they "spill all [their] secrets, [and as consequence] have no desire to lie about

anything, ever again.” Roth 2021, p. 216). This practice of unveiling one’s secrets through the initiation process underscores Candor’s commitment to transparency and the eradication of deceit within their faction.

In the last chapter, Tris is uncertain of how Candor will respond to the attack on Abnegation. She contemplates: “They wouldn’t side with the Erudite—they would never do something that underhanded. But they may not fight the Erudite either.” (Roth 2021, p. 280). This highlights Tris’ trust in the moral integrity of Candor, not to join the aggressor. However, she also acknowledges their commitment to honesty and transparency, which could potentially lead them to choose neutrality instead of direct confrontation in the conflict.

4.4 Style of Maintaining Society’s Structure and (In-)Stability

The society in “Divergent” uses a number of mechanisms to maintain its structure, system and ideology. However, there does not seem to be a centralised entity that would exert its power and control over the entire population, at least not in the first novel of the series. Rather, the population seems to regulate itself as a one collective organism. In the beginning of what the ruling ideology calls “Great Peace”, there was a collective push to restructure society. A faction-based society was created to combat the inherent weaknesses of humanity and, over time, to create a utopia by means of social engineering. As each of the five factions enjoys almost complete autonomy, most of the maintenance mechanisms are implemented at their level. Each faction is responsible for the conformity of its members.

The reader learns about the true nature of the society and its dystopian nature in contrast to other works of this genre, such as *The Hunger Games*, only as the story progresses. This is mainly due to the fact that the protagonist had a fairly sheltered childhood, and it is only as she comes of age (16 in the book) that she moves out of this comfort zone and comes into conflict with reality (see sec. 2.2.2). In this respect, the work approaches the typical structure of anti-utopias (see sec. 2.1.2). However, it retains the clear hallmark of a YA dystopia, where the heroine blames herself for not fitting in and tries to prove herself at all costs. An example of this is Tris’ leap into the hole that serves as the entrance to the Dauntless compound for initiates: “I look at the hole again. Goose bumps rise on my pale arms, and my stomach lurches. If I don’t do it now, I won’t be able to do it at all. I swallow hard. I don’t think. I just bend my knees and jump.” (Roth 2021, p. 44). She is the first one to jump, mainly because she feels the need to distance herself from her former faction in order to be accepted.

4.4.1 Mechanisms of maintaining society and ideology, social stability

Two of the most crucial mechanisms used in the society are conditioning and indoctrination. Although each faction employs different methods, the underlying principle remains the same: moulding the beliefs, values, and behaviours of young individuals to align them with the ideals of their respective faction. Natalie Prior (Tris' mother) explains it like this: "Every faction conditions its members to think and act a certain way. And most people do it. For most people, it's not hard to learn, to find a pattern of thought that works and stay that way." (Roth 2021, p. 257). The early stages of conditioning and indoctrination happen through different institutions and actors. It involves primarily family and teachers but also peers and siblings who correct each other's behaviour. For example, in Abnegation, children "aren't supposed to speak at the dinner table unless [their] parents ask [them] a direct question." (Roth 2021, p. 31).

The Choosing Ceremony is a significant institution in the society. It is a pivotal point in the lives of young adults of 16 years. As it is supposed to give the system credibility, it is presented as an opportunity to "honor the democratic philosophy of [their] ancestors, which tells us that every [individual] has the right to choose [their] own way in this world." (Roth 2021, p. 35). However, this ceremony only creates the illusion of free choice, as the options are limited to the predetermined factions. Furthermore, on the day before the ceremony, everyone undergoes an aptitude test to determine the faction they are best suited for. They are given a day to reflect on their results and think about their upcoming choice but are forbidden from discussing it with others. They cannot even talk about it with family members. The choice they make does however have a profound effect on their future, as they only get to choose once. For many it is a dilemma because "choosing a different faction means [forsaking one's] family. Permanently." (Roth 2021, p. 25). Hence the motto: "Faction before blood."

After the Choosing Ceremony, they officially become initiates in their chosen faction and the second stage of conditioning and indoctrination begins, as they now must prove that they are worthy of becoming a member. Each faction has different ways of testing the initiates' dedication and adherence to faction norms: "I doubt all the Erudite want to study all the time, or that every Candor enjoys a lively debate, but they can't defy the norms of their factions any more than I can." (Roth 2021, p. 16). If they fail to fulfil the expectations placed on them, they lose their right to live within any of the faction communities and are outcast to live factionless. In this way, the system gets to effectively separate the wheat from the chaff, getting rid of inconvenient individuals, who either cannot or will not conform, ensuring that no disruption or

rebellion will come from the inside. Ostracized from society, the factionless work for just enough food and clothing to survive.

The system instills and feeds this fear of having to live factionless in every member of the society, as it makes them more likely to comply and follow the rules, preserving the structure. This quote summarizes how the society views factionlessness: “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 2021, p. 22). And the following one aims to demonstrate how parents contribute to the indoctrination: “My mother told me once that we can’t survive alone, but even if we could, we wouldn’t want to. Without a faction, we have no purpose and no reason to live.” (Roth 2021, p. 22). That this fear is deeply ingrained in young people is exemplified when Christina makes the decision to risk her life hanging over the chasm (an underground waterfall in the Dauntless compound) rather than leave the faction: “If you can hang over the chasm for five minutes, I will forget your cowardice. If you can’t, I will not allow you to continue initiation.” (Roth 2021, p. 68).

In the realm of fears, at least one more is utilized to sustain the society, as Tris states: “I think the system persists because we’re afraid of what might happen if it didn’t: war.” Which again suggests that the society more or less regulates and maintains itself. Everyone feels the societal pressure to conform and uphold the values of their respective faction because otherwise, it might fail.

The societal pressure goes hand in hand with peer pressure, which is more relatable for younger readers, as it operates more specifically. For example, Tris remembers how her brother “scolded [her] for not giving [her] jump rope to a little girl on the playground who didn’t have anything to play with.” (Roth 2021, p. 17). Or on a less innocent note, when Al (Albert), driven by peer pressure and fear of being cut from the Dauntless initiation, betrays Tris’ trust, and aligns himself with Peter in a devious act of desperation. They kidnap Tris and threaten to throw her down an underground waterfall. Out of shame, Albert later commits suicide.

Technology plays an increasingly significant role in the course of the story. In spite of being initially presented as a tool for security, monitoring, and improving agriculture, it unassumingly takes on a more sinister role. The simulation serum, used during aptitude tests and the Dauntless initiation, was designed by Erudite, among other things, to identify nonconforming individuals (Divergents) and subsequently kill them. Divergents defy conformity by default, as Natalie Prior explains what it means: “We can’t be confined to one

way of thinking, and that terrifies our leaders. It means we can't be controlled. And it means that no matter what they do, we will always cause trouble for them." (Roth 2021, p. 257). In other words, they cannot be completely conditioned or indoctrinated.

The danger Divergents face is repeatedly emphasized throughout the narrative. One example is Tori, who warns Tris more than a few times, talking about her brother, whose aptitude test was inconclusive⁴⁰ and who was murdered by the corrupt Dauntless leaders, when they found out: "On the last day of simulations, they found his body in the chasm. Said it was a suicide." (Roth 2021, p. 155). The simulation serum is then modified and used as a mind control tool, effectively turning the Dauntless faction into a "brain-dead [...] army" for the Erudite (Roth 2021, p. 269).

The final mechanism of maintaining the society is isolation from the outside world. The city is surrounded by a fence, whose purpose remains unknown in the first book. Apparently, one of the most important jobs of the Dauntless faction is to guard it. During the field trip there, Tris notices one peculiar thing about the only gate in the fence: "The lock is on the outside. I bite my lip. Why would they lock the gate from the outside and not the inside? It almost seems like they don't want to keep something out; they want to keep us in." (Roth 2021, p. 81).

4.4.2 Societal problems – social stability

The society depicted in the novel is far from the stable and harmonious system it is portrayed to be. As the story progresses, we learn that it grapples with a range of challenges across multiple fronts. Firstly, there is the pressing issue of environmental degradation, although its description seems to be given the least priority in the narrative. So maybe it is in a stable however dire state. Secondly, it is the evident decay of values and rise of corrupt leaders possibly within each faction. However, the most immediate and critical problem lies in the escalating ideological tensions between the Erudite and Abnegation factions, which have presumably been building up for quite some time, pushing the society closer to the brink of conflict. With a final push from the Erudite, the society plunges into an open conflict, fulfilling its dystopian potential not only for individuals (Divergents and the factionless) but for the whole population of the city.

⁴⁰ Showing aptitude for more than one faction, meaning the person is Divergent.

4.4.2.1 *Environment*

In the beginning, the city is portrayed as worn-down and in decline, primarily due to resource scarcity: “Five years ago, [they] repaved some of the roads. [Then] they ran out of materials. The roads [in the more peripheral parts of the city] are still cracked and patchy”. (Roth 2021, p. 13). As the story unfolds, the reader gains a deeper understanding of the city and its surroundings, showing the desolate and neglected state of much of the urban landscape: “Behind us, most of the buildings [...] looked well-tended. In front of us is a sea of crumbling concrete and broken glass.” Beatrice, shares her impression of the place: “The silence of this part of the city is eerie; it feels like a nightmare.” (Roth 2021, p. 88). The degradation of the natural environment is also subtly referenced a few times throughout the narrative, with the most significant mention of a draught drying up the river and transforming Lake Shore Drive into a marshland (Roth 2021, pp. 88, 132).

4.4.2.2 *Decay and corruption*

The decay of values in the Dauntless faction first becomes evident in the clash between old and new rules of fighting. During the first stage of initiation (physical) Eric makes each sparring couple fight until one of them “is unable to continue.” He represents the new ruthless approach to being Dauntless, while Four (Tobias) upholds the old honourable approach, suggesting the possibility of conceding. Here is an illustration of the argument: “Eric narrows his eyes at Four. [...] ‘In the new rules, no one concedes.’ [...] ‘A brave man acknowledges the strength of others,’ Four replies. ‘A brave man never surrenders.’ [Eric retorts].” (Roth 2021, p. 65). This disagreement highlights the contrasting priorities within Dauntless, reflecting a decay of values and a division within the faction.

Another sign of the faction’s values going off rails is during the initiation ritual (a game of capture the flag) where nobody seems to know how to work together as a team. This is captured in the short exchange between Tris and Tobias: “‘Teamwork doesn’t seem to be a Dauntless priority.’ Four says: ‘It’s supposed to be a priority. It used to be.’” (Roth 2021, p. 92). A vice also becomes a prominent characteristic of a Dauntless member: “Winning capture the flag is a matter of pride, and pride is important to the Dauntless. More important than reason or sense.” (Roth 2021, p. 99).

The Dauntless began putting wrong things on the pedestal of bravery, such as Albert committing suicide. Once again it is Eric who is associated with the idea of decaying values, as he holds the eulogy: “Who among us is brave enough to venture into that darkness without

knowing what lies beyond it? Albert was not yet one of our members, but we can be assured that he was one of our bravest!” (Roth 2021, p. 182).

Yet another instance from the Dauntless compound takes place after Edward (Erudite transfer who placed first after the first stage of initiation) got stabbed in the eye. The absence of punishment for the perpetrators is frustrating and ironic for Tris and her friends. As Tris highlights: “The most ridiculous part is, in any other faction it would be brave of us to tell someone what happened. But here...in Dauntless...bravery won’t do us any good.” (Roth 2021, p. 125).

Tris learns that murder is also commonplace in the Dauntless compound. Just for context, officially, there has not been one murder in the city since Tris was born. The victims are primarily other Divergents who were discovered. When Tris expresses her doubts, Tori retorts: “These people taught you how to use a gun. They taught you how to fight. You think they’re above hurting you? Above killing you?” (Roth 2021, p. 155). Later in the story she overhears Eric talking with a mysterious woman, who turns out to be Jeanine (the leader of Erudite), about searching for Divergents among the new initiates. This confirms Tori’s allegations and further uncovers that corruption has spread high up the Dauntless chain of command.

The specific ways in which the Erudite values and character have been decaying is not as well explored in the book, as is the case with Dauntless. However, it seems that while the gradual decline of the latter began a relatively short time ago, the Erudite have been in decline for much longer than that. This contrast is best captured in this quote, where Tris contemplates the society’s founding principles: “Maybe Dauntless was formed with good intentions, with the right ideals and the right goals. But it has strayed far from them. And the same is true of Erudite, I realize. A long time ago, Erudite pursued knowledge and ingenuity for the sake of doing good. Now they pursue knowledge and ingenuity with greedy hearts.” (Roth 2021, p. 126). Tris further expresses that she could not leave the Dauntless faction “because, in the brief moments that [she has] loved it [there], [she] saw a faction worth saving. Maybe we can become brave and honorable again.” (Roth 2021, p. 126).

While the corruption and decay among the Dauntless and Erudite is increasingly evident, we do not learn much about the other factions’ states. Tris herself only wonders “if the other factions suffer from the same problem.” (Roth 2021, p. 126). However, the fact that in Abnegation a violent and abusive father (Marcus) could become one of their most influential political leaders, who are supposedly “selected by their peers for their impeccable character

[and] moral fortitude [...],” hints at some underlying foul play. Or at least a personal moral failure and at how the ideology of any faction can be misused (Roth 2021, p. 31). There is not a direct confrontation between Tris and Marcus in the first book, however, she does let him know she has found out the truth about him abusing his son (Tobias): “‘Not all those Erudite articles were full of lies,’ I say, narrowing my eyes at Marcus.” (Roth 2021, p. 280).

4.4.2.3 *Ideological tensions*

The growing ideological tensions, especially between Erudite and Abnegation, become increasingly prominent in the book. From Tobias’ perspective it is due to this mistake the people of different factions in the society have been making for a long time, maybe since the beginning: “‘We’ve all started to put down the virtues of the other factions in the process of bolstering our own. I don’t want to do that. I want to be brave, and selfless, and smart, and kind, and honest.” (Roth 2021, p. 236). This realization underscores the divisive mindset that has led to the escalating conflict and emphasizes Tobias’ desire for a more inclusive and united society. This however goes directly against the ruling ideology of the society, which backs the division into factions. Another person who has realised the true nature of the faction-based utopia is Tris’ mother Natalie. Natalie manages to save her daughter’s life and during their reunion they have this exchange: “‘But I betrayed you. I left you.’ [...] ‘You’re my daughter. I don’t care about the factions.’ She shakes her head. ‘Look where they got us. Human beings as a whole cannot be good for long before the bad creeps back in and poisons us again.’” (Roth 2021, p. 257). The disregard for other faction’s values can be considered the “bad creeping back in” as Natalie put it.

Throughout the narrative, the conflict between Abnegation and Erudite is characterized by mutual disapproval and holding stereotypes of each other. It becomes evident that the Erudite faction is driving the animosities, as they prepare for a revolution against the Abnegation government. Propaganda articles are released, strategically designed to create division and fuel dissent against Abnegation. These reports, intended to sway public opinion in Erudite’s favour, include such claims as “Abnegation [is] withholding luxuries like cars and fresh fruit from the other factions in order to force their belief in self-denial on everyone else.” These openly antagonistic claims are then supported by seemingly rational arguments that carry the underlying suggestion of revolution as they “[discuss] the failings of choosing government officials based on their faction, asking why only people who define themselves as selfless should be in government.” (Roth 2021, p. 157).

Tris engages in several arguments about politics with her peers providing important details about the nature of the ideological tensions. For example, she warns her brother Caleb about the deceit and manipulation within the Erudite faction: “This isn’t Candor. There are liars here, Caleb. There are people who are so smart they know how to manipulate you.” However, Caleb initially dismisses her concerns, leading to a confrontation where Tris criticizes the arrogance and greed of the Erudite: “At least I know what I’m a part of, Caleb. You are choosing to ignore what we’ve known all our lives—these people are arrogant and greedy, and they will lead you nowhere.” Caleb also raises a valid point about the nature of their upbringing in Abnegation: “How much do I know [about Abnegation]? How much did they allow me to know? We weren’t allowed to ask questions, Beatrice; we weren’t allowed to know things!” (Roth 2021, p. 207).

Another argument she has is with Will (a transfer from Erudite) at the Dauntless compound. Tris voices her concern that the Erudite might be planning to overthrow the government, to which Will responds dismissively: “No, they’re not. They’re arrogant and dull, [...] but they aren’t revolutionaries. They just want more say, that’s all, and they resent Abnegation for refusing to listen to them.” (Roth 2021, p. 147). Will’s argument represents how the Erudite use common sense and sympathy to garner even this seemingly insignificant support among the factions.

Unlike the whole of society, these ideological efforts of Erudite seem to have been personified in one person: Jeanine Matthews. She is portrayed as the mastermind behind the uprising, and the corrupting force gaining Dauntless leaders on board with her coup attempt. The idea of a personified evil is first introduced at the Dauntless compound as the mysterious female-voiced entity behind hunting Divergents. Tris later learns it was Jeanine giving instructions to Eric: “Combat training shows you nothing. The simulations, however, reveal who the Divergent rebels are, if there are any [...]” And reminding him of the reason why she had had him appointed: “Your first priority is always finding them. Always.” (Roth 2021, p. 165). With the attack on Abnegation, Jeanine is identified as the culprit of both atrocities.

After Tris is captured and brought before Jeanine, she unveils her plan to Tris, knowing that Tris will be executed later: “We’re tired of being dominated by self-righteous idiots... your Dauntless leaders were happy to oblige me if I guaranteed them a place in our new, improved government.” She paints a picture of a better world of wealth and prosperity, but Tris questions the cost: “At whose expense? [...] All that wealth... doesn’t come from nowhere.” To which Jeanine replies matter-of-factly: “Currently, the factionless are a drain on our resources, [...] as

is Abnegation. I am sure that once the remains of your old faction are absorbed into the Dauntless army, Candor will cooperate and we will finally be able to get on with things.” (Roth 2021, p. 250). Jeanine’s proposed new society would constitute of three of the original factions (Erudite, Candor, Amity), while the remaining two factions would merge into one. This unified faction would be tightly monitored and controlled by technology, manipulating free will through the use of the simulation serum. The factionless would most likely be subjected to similar fate, or systematically murdered. The aim is to eliminate threats and obstacles, ensuring unimpeded progress without dissent towards a true utopia.

The reader gets a glimpse of what such society would most likely look like during the plot culmination. The mind-controlled Dauntless soldiers march into the Abnegation sector and start ruthlessly executing political leaders without any awareness of their actions. The idea of absence of self-awareness is heightened as Tris witnesses Tori (bitter critic of the system) “push a gray-clothed man to his knees [...] and, with sightless eyes, fire a bullet into the back of the council member’s skull.” (Roth 2021, p. 245).

4.5 Summary of the Analysis

The structure of the society is one of both unity and division. It revolves around the coexistence of distinct factions, each contributing to the functioning of the society in its own unique way. However, upon closer analysis, we have uncovered hidden complexities, ideological conflicts, and social divisions lurking beneath the surface of this seemingly balanced utopian system, revealing its dystopian features. These underlying tensions eventually culminate in an uprising fuelled by a rival ideology. Now, to summarize our findings, we will put them into the context of the theoretical foundation of this thesis.

4.5.1 Typology

In examining the dystopian society depicted in “Divergent” it is important to first consider its classification within existing typologies (see sec. 2.1.2.1). According to Naxera, Stulík and Bílek (2015), two fundamental types of dystopias can be identified: epistemological and technological. Upon analysing the work, it becomes evident that “Divergent” incorporates elements from both categories.

One aspect of epistemological dystopia is the pervasive fear of social exclusion (factionlessness), which the society instils in people to make them more likely to conform to the norms of their respective faction and by extension to the ruling ideology. This existential

terror often surpasses the fear of physical harm or death as exemplified by Albert, who for the fear of being cut betrays his friend and later commits suicide. Another example is the case of Christina when she has to make a decision between either risking her life or becoming factionless. Another element which could be attributed to the epistemological type is the clandestine persecution of “natural rebels” Divergents, who are ruthlessly eliminated, as seen in the fate of Tori’s brother (see sec. 4.4.1).

The society also exhibits elements of technological dystopia. More specifically its scientific form, which is characterized by a worldview that emphasizes science, and technological advancement as the means to improve and control society (see sec. 2.1.2.1). As such, technology plays a crucial role in sustaining the entire society. It is particularly indispensable in their agriculture and food production (see sec. 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). Simulation serum is integral to the aptitude testing process, as well as conditioning during initiation at the Dauntless faction (see sec. 4.4.1). However, it is likely that there are other far-reaching aspects of technology’s influence within the society. So, the scientific technological type may have a greater potential for the trilogy as a whole.

Another significant typology of dystopias, proposed by Cleays (2017) and Pavlova (2019), categorizes dystopias based on social organization into six prototypes (see sec. 2.1.2.1). Once again analysis shows that the novel incorporates elements from several of these prototypes, each with varying levels of development and importance in the narrative.

The first prototype identified is carcerotopia or prison state which can be characterised by complete isolation of the society from the outside world (see sec. 2.1.2.1). While this aspect is present in the novel in the form of a fence surrounding the city (see sec. 4.4.1), it is the least developed and could be interpreted as merely a characteristic commonly found in the utopian literature (see sec. 2.1.1).

The second prototype whose elements can be found in the novel is rigid ostracism, characteristic of the separation of a group of people marking them as diseased (see sec. 2.1.2.1). This one is directly represented in the practice of banishing individuals deemed as unwilling or unable to conform, labelling them, among other things, as “empty” (Roth 2021, p. 42). These banished individuals, collectively known as the factionless, are subjected to a form of slavery which is another prototype. However, the depiction of factionless living conditions and their experiences remains relatively limited in the first book, as we only read about people being

banished without actually experiencing what it means, other than what the narrator tells us (see sec. 4.4.1).

The fourth and last prototype present in the society is political despotism, or in this case, we would suggest modifying the name slightly to ideological despotism, which better reflects the nature of the entity exercising absolute authority (see sec. 2.1.2.1). This is because the manipulation and control of individuals is primarily carried out on the faction level (e.g., through peer pressure) by means of ideological indoctrination rather than solely through political means. Factions are to a certain point autonomous and self-regulating with “local” ideological leaders. While political despotism, as defined by Pavlova and Claeys, emerges later in the trilogy with Jeanine’s attempt to establish an unprecedented dictatorship (see sec. 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.3).

4.5.2 Dystopia or anti-utopia?

The novel initially presents a society that appears relatively benign, and only as the story unfolds, do the protagonist’s experiences gradually reveal the true extent of its flaws. This would align more with the characteristics of anti-utopian literature, which criticises the pursuit of utopian ideals as a path that ultimately leads to “a hell for its inhabitants [where there is no escape].” (Pavlova 2019, pp. 142) (see sec. 2.1.2.2). However, the novel can be classified within the dystopian genre, as the protagonist perseveres through hardships, sorrows, and sacrifices, and emerges with a glimmer of hope at the end (see sec. 4.3.4).

4.5.3 Elements of ideology

In terms of ideological analysis, the narrative of “Divergent” contains both explicit and implicit examples (see sec. 1.1.2). However, direct parallels to specific real-world ideologies, as discussed in the overview section 1.2, do not appear to be common. Nevertheless, one notable element that aligns with a real-world ideology is the utilization of propaganda and smear tactics by Erudite to manipulate public opinion. By portraying the Abnegation government as the corrupt elite and positioning themselves as ordinary people seeking to bring about political change, Erudite employs a strategy typical of populism (see sec. 1.2.9 and 4.4.2.3). Furthermore, as populism usually accompanies a more thick-centred ideology, and taking into account the society that Jeanine aims to establish (authoritarian, heavily controlled, systematic extermination of groups deemed a burden on society), it is not difficult to see a form of fascism as the host-ideology (see sec. 1.2.8 and 4.4.2.3).

Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis was to analyse the society, and its ideological system, depicted in Veronica Roth's novel, "Divergent". To facilitate this comprehensive analysis, the first three chapters laid the necessary theoretical groundwork as well as provided ideas and valuable insights into the analysis-relevant fields. These included respectively: political ideologies, utopian literature (utopia, anti-utopia and dystopia), and the life and literary work of Veronica Roth.

The first chapter of the thesis examined the concept of political ideology, tracing its historical origins and exemplifying the evolving understanding of the term by presenting key perspectives from notable political philosophers such as Marx, Gramsci, and Mannheim. The chapter highlighted two approaches to the concept, drawing from the works of two current political philosophers, Heywood and Žižek. These served as primary points of reference for the analytical part of this thesis. Additionally, the chapter demonstrated the workings of ideology in practice by providing an overview and characteristic of ten influential ideologies in the real world, whose elements were searched for in the analysis. This section concludes with a discussion of the interconnectedness of literature and political discourse of its respective time, emphasizing the continual importance of literature as a means of social commentary.

The second chapter of the thesis focused on utopian literature, tracing its origins and development from writers like More and Campanella, and highlighting its reflective nature of socio-historical contexts. Moreover, it explored the genre's shift from utopia to anti-utopia and dystopia, examining notable works for typical themes, forms, and types of depicted societies. The chapter's main part explored the genre's newest counterpart, YA dystopia, discussing its unique characteristics and relevance within young-adult fiction, laying another dimension for the purposes of the thesis. It concluded with a discussion of the genre's surge in popularity with the publication of "The Hunger Games", and the possible reasons for its subsequent decline, highlighting the genre's continual significance, despite the backdrop in marketing, and the effect it has had on young readers.

The third chapter of the thesis focused on the life and literary work of Veronica Roth, providing insights into her background, inspirations, and creative process. These details enhanced the understanding of Roth's novel, "Divergent", and the society it portrays. Additionally, this section discussed the novel's overwhelmingly positive reception by readers

and elaborated on some of the weaknesses identified by critics, providing a well-rounded characterisation of the novel.

In the final chapter of the thesis, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of the dystopian world presented in Veronica Roth's "Divergent". Our analysis focused on four key aspects: the societal structure, the underlying ideological framework, the methods employed to maintain the status quo, and the far-reaching tensions and other problems the society faces.

Firstly, the analysis examined the structure of the society, characteristic for its distinctive faction system with seemingly utopian aspirations. It further focused on introducing the process of initiation for new members (adolescents), alongside the implications of failing. And finally, it provided a brief description of the political system led solely by "selfless" politicians; a system deemed superior to democracy while also being one of the sources of ideological conflicts.

In the second and third part of the analysis, we focused on exploring the ideological dimension of the novel. We identified two levels of ideology in alignment with Mannheim's concept of particular and total ideologies. The total ideology serves here as a means of social cohesion, i.e., the glue that holds the society together, a common ground for everyone. As such it must be intelligible for everyone (including the reader). Consequently, our analysis uncovered that the ideology predominantly takes on an explicit form (e.g., Marcus' speech) to ensure its accessibility and understanding to younger readers. The particular ideologies, on the other hand, work on smaller scale, typically within one faction (though there are some overlaps due to faction transfers). Each organized and working in a different manner. Each dependent on the existence of the overarching ideology and its preservation, one of the few things all five factions have in common, that and self-regulation. These ideologies typically protrude into all aspects of faction members' lives (including school, work, and free time). Consequently, they are more about being implied (implicit in the members' behaviour), although there are explicit tenants to every faction as well. As the analysis shows amongst the factions there are some serious tensions.

In the fourth part, the analysis focuses on identifying the various mechanisms that the society uses to maintain the faction-based status quo, while also presenting its gradual descent into chaos through the rising tensions and other significant problems (e.g., moral decay, corruption etc.). Notably, our examination of this section unveiled the presence of elements from two real-world ideologies: populism and fascism, particularly evident within the Erudite

faction under the rule of their current leader. In addition, we contextualized our findings from the analysis by drawing upon theoretical foundations, including the two typologies and the distinction between anti-utopia and dystopia.

One potential limitation of this thesis could be the exclusive focus on a single book within a three-volume series, suggesting an incomplete analysis. However, it can be also argued that the selection of the first volume was deliberate, as it usually provides the most detailed depiction of the ideological workings of society. This reasoning also aligns with the genre's general tendency to spread the story into multiple instalments, giving the readers more material to explore. Consequently, the first book in a series often captures the protagonist's initial stages of development, characterized by a less critical perspective on society.

Considering the potential for future research, the trilogy certainly promises a great volume of thought-provoking material and an opportunity for analysing the disparity between social reality (as the story progresses in the remaining two novels) and its distorted image, through the lens of ideology; a concept explored by Karl Mannheim in his "Ideologie und Utopie" (1929).

Additionally, an interesting idea for further research would be to survey the popularity of the dystopian genre among the current generation of teenagers and explore the underlying reasons for its appeal or lack thereof. This exploration could shed light on the current state of YA dystopia, and the cultural and societal factors that contribute to the genre's reception. Additionally, such research would offer valuable insights into the preferences of contemporary adolescent readers, which could translate into more realistic, interest-based language teaching.

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Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Marek Maléř
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ivan Čipkár, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	Přítomnost prvků politických ideologií v YA dystopické literatuře na příkladu knihy <i>Divergent</i> od Veroniky Roth.
Název v angličtině:	Elements of political ideologies present in YA dystopian literature on the example of Veronica Roth's <i>Divergent</i> .
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu a popis dystopické společnosti a jejího ideologického systému známého románu Veroniky Roth, "Divergent". První tři kapitoly poskytují teoretický základ, který se zabývá konceptem ideologie, utopickou literaturou (utopií, antiutopií a dystopií) a životem a dílem samotné autorky. Čtvrtá kapitola se pak zabývá analýzou samotného románu, přičemž se zaměřuje na strukturu společnosti, ideologický rámec, mechanismy udržující status quo a také na problémy, které dělají společnost dystopickou.
Klíčová slova:	Politická ideologie, young-adult reader, YA dystopie, dystopie, antiutopie, utopie, <i>Divergent</i> , Veronica Roth,
Anotace v angličtině:	This bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis and description of the dystopian society and its ideological system of Veronica Roth's famous novel, "Divergent". The first three chapters provide a theoretical foundation that explores the concept of ideology, utopian literature (utopia, anti-utopia and dystopia) and the life and work of the author herself. The fourth chapter then analyzes the novel by itself, focusing on the structure of society, the ideological framework, the mechanisms that maintain the status quo, and the problems that make the society dystopian.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Political ideology, young-adult reader, YA dystopia, dystopia, anti-utopia, utopianism, <i>Divergent</i> , Veronica Roth,
Přílohy vázané v práci:	-
Rozsah práce:	73
Jazyk práce:	Anglický