

# The Reflection of Marxist Feminism in Suzanne Collins's *Mockingjay*

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**Abstract**, this journal analyzes Marxist feminism, domination, alienation, class struggle, and revolution that exist in novel *Mockingjay*, especially in regards to Katniss Everdeen as the main character. This character is so interesting to be analyzed because the character represents the idea of Marxist feminism. The main purpose of this journal is to understand more about Marxist feminism in *Mockingjay*. This journal uses sociological approach. The theory used in this study is Marxist feminism. The result of this study is the analysis of intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements of prose. There are some intrinsic elements discussed in this thesis, such as character, setting, conflict and allegory. Moreover, the extrinsic element is the analysis of Katniss Everdeen as the main character in novel *Mockingjay* who represents the effort of Marxist feminism. It provides a description of domination, alienation, class struggle, and Marxist feminism. In conclusion, this thesis provides a discussion about Marxist feminism and its process, especially in regards to Katniss Everdeen as the main character.

**Keywords:** *Marxist feminism, domination, alienation, class struggle, revolution*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Suzanne Collins's *Mockingjay* is one of the interesting popular fictions published in 2010. It is proven by its success in getting the first place of national bestseller novel in its first week on sale.

This novel engages the readers to sense the condition of class struggle. Furthermore, there is also uncommon part in this novel that makes it interesting to be the topic of this study. That interesting part is the existence of a bold and strong woman leading the class struggle in this novel. The woman is the main character of *Mockingjay*, Katniss Everdeen. It is an interesting matter to be discussed in this study because it can be a way to describe the existence of Marxist feminism in this novel.

Therefore, this journal analyzes the reflection of Marxist feminism. It provides an explanation of Marxist feminism, domination, alienation, class struggle, and revolution.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Theory of Class

According to Dennis Dworkin in his book entitled *Class Struggles*, he said that class has definition beginning from the ancient origins until the sophisticated usages. "Class" is known from the Latin word *classis* which had multiple meanings. It referred to either a ship or a navy that was a definition without modern implications (2007: 15).

In past, the Roman had an understanding of class as the deployment to describe the division of Roman people according to their age and property holdings. An early king of Rome, Servius Tullius, undertook this initiative which divided society into six armies or bands (Dworkin, 2007: 17).

Meanwhile, according to Marx, the most important basic of social group is the condition of ownership of production tools, such as: lands, raw materials, buildings, tools, machines, and capital. The ownership of production tools guarantees the necessity fulfillment of the owner and then the improvement of their satisfaction level. Thus, it triggers the appearance of class in society (Marx&Engels, 1968: 35-6).

According to Sztompka, there are two social classes in society such as the class of ownership and the class of workers. "...two class poles that opposite each other: the class of ownership and the class of workers. We can also call them as master and worker, landlord and slaves, oppressor and the oppressed people" (Sztompka, 1993: 199-200).

## 2. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat

Bourgeoisie and proletariat are the products of classes in society created by the economic conditions. According to H.H. Gerth and C. Wright, they said that

...it is obvious that almost always economic conditions of some sort play their part in such 'democratizing' developments. Very frequently we meet with the influence of an economically determined origin of new classes, whether plutocratic, petty bourgeois, or proletarian in character... (1946: 227).

From their explanation, we discover that economic condition has supreme power to create classes in society. People will be claimed as the bourgeoisie when they have high-class level of economic condition. On the other hand, people who are in low-class level will be claimed as the proletariat because they will become the labors of the bourgeoisie.

## 3. Domination

According to James C. Scott in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, he explained that domination happens when the master extracts labors, goods and services. It is explained in this quotation "these forms of domination are institutionalized means of extracting labor, goods, and services from a subject population" (1990: 21).

It is also encouraged by Rosemarie Putnam Tong in her book *Feminist Thought: A more Comprehensive Introduction*. She explained that the master of labors will do any tactic including violence and harassment to make the labors work more effectively and efficiently. She said that "...the employers' interests to use whatever

tactics may be necessary (harassment, firing, violence) to get workers to work ever more effectively and efficiently..." (2009: 102).

## 4. Theory of Alienation

According to Allen Wood that was quoted by Tong, alienation happens "if we either experience our lives as meaningless or ourselves as worthless, or else are capable of sustaining a sense of meaning and self-worth only with the help of illusions about ourselves or our condition" (2009: 101).

Tong also quoted a definition of alienation from Robert Heilbroner. Robert Heilbroner said that "alienation is a profoundly fragmenting experience. Things or persons who are or should be connected in some significant way are instead viewed as separate" (2009: 101).

Based on an explanation in Tong's book *Feminist Thought: A more Comprehensive Introduction*, there are four types of alienation. First, workers are alienated from the product of their labor. Workers are alienated from the product of their labor because the products are taken from them. It is explained in this quotation, "... not only workers have no say in what commodities they will or will not produce, but the fruits of their labor are snatched from them" (Tong, 2009: 101).

Second, workers are alienated from themselves. It happens "...when work is experienced as something unpleasant to be gotten through as quickly as possible, it is deadening" (Tong, 2009: 101). From the quotation, we know that workers are alienated from themselves because they are experienced unpleasant work. They did not enjoy their works.

Third, workers are alienated from other human beings. Based on Tong's explanation, she said that "workers are alienated from *other human beings* because the structure of the capitalist economy encourages and even forces workers to see each other as competitors for jobs and promotions" (2009: 101).

Fourth, workers are alienated from nature. This alienation happens when workers see nature as an obstacle to their survival. It is explained in this quotation "workers are

alienated from *nature* because the kind of work they do and the conditions under which they do it make them see nature as an obstacle to their survival” (Tong, 2009: 101).

## 5. Theory of Class struggle

Class struggle happens because there is a class consciousness. Class consciousness means that the labors realize and aware of their exploitation. It was explained by Marx and quoted in Tong’s book “Marx predicted that as workers become increasingly aware of their common exploitation and alienation, they will achieve class consciousness” (2009: 103).

There are three steps of opposition created in form of class struggle. First, there is an objective interest contradiction among the master and workers. Second, that objective interest contradiction will become subjective contradiction in each class. It causes the feeling of suspicion, hate and hostility. That relationship is called class antagonism. Third, the antagonism will turn into collective action and provide a battle to defeat the opposite class. The battle will be ended by the revolutionary and the defeat of one class among them (Sztompka, 1993:201).

The cause of class struggle is the domination of certain social class. In book entitled *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* by James C. Scott, he explained that the forms of domination mean to extract labor, goods, and services from a subject population (1990: 21). Thus, a class struggle appears to bring down the domination.

## 6. Revolution

According to Lenin, “...the class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defencism...” (Lenin, 1952: 13). From that brief explanation, we can know that the opening gate of revolution is a class consciousness. It is the most significant basic to gain revolution.

Starting at this stage, the labors, the workers, the ally and the proponent are called by the revolutionaries. They unify to conduct class struggle in real combat to destroy the

domination of capitalism. Karl Marx also explained that matters in this quotation:

United, the workers will be able to fight their employers for control over the means of production (e.g., the nation’s factories). If the workers manage to win this fight, Marx claimed that a highly committed, politically savvy, well-trained group of revolutionaries would subsequently emerge from the workers’ ranks. Marx termed this special group of workers the “vanguard” of the full-scale revolution for which he hoped (Tong, 2009: 103).

When the proletariats create revolution, it means they actualize their dreams. It is in accordance with Marx’s dreams which says that revolution is “to replace capitalism with socialism, a non-exploitative, non-alienating political economy through which communism, and “the complete and also conscious return of man himself as a social, that is, human being,” could come into existence” (Tong, 2009: 103).

## 7. Marxist Feminism

Feminism has a lot of types such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, marxist and socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existential feminism, postcolonial feminism, eco-feminism, and postmodern feminism. Each type has specialty matter as the subject. Moreover, Marxist feminism discusses classism as the fundamental of women’s oppression. It is based on the explanation of Rosemarie Tong

“...classical Marxist feminists work within conceptual terrain laid out by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other nineteenth-century thinkers. They regard classism rather than sexism as the fundamental cause of women’s oppression...” (2009: 96).

It is also explained by Ahyar Anwar in his book entitled *Teori Sosial Sastra*. He said that Marxist feminism believes that social class or social structure is the fundamental that causes discrimination of women (2012: 131).

Furthermore, the certain subject illuminated in Marxist feminism is an independence of women in economic matter. Women are capable of fulfilling life necessities by their own selves.

“Always on call, women form a conception of themselves they would not have if their roles in family and the workplace did not keep them socially and economically subordinate to men. Thus, Marxist and socialist feminists believe we need to analyze the links between women’s work status and women’s self-image in order to understand the unique character of women’s oppression” (Tong, 2009: 98).

Marxist feminism tells us that women must survive for their lives because they are the primary people responsible for their families and for themselves. They wholly survive and struggle by their own power.

## C. METHODS OF THE STUDY

This study uses sociological approach to examine the content of *Mockingjay* by Suzanne Collins. Sociological approach in this study focuses on the social aspect from society of the story in *Mockingjay*.

According to Wellek and Warren, sociological approach uses a theory of an expert of social philosophy such as Marxism to analyze the literary works. He said that “this sociological approach to literature is particularly cultivated by those who profess a specific social philosophy” (1942: 90). Therefore, this thesis uses sociological approach, because it discusses the existence of Marxist feminism.

## D. ANALYSIS

### 1. A Description of Domination Reflected in *Mockingjay*

From Gerth and Wright’s explanation in their book *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, economic condition has supreme power to create classes in society. People will be claimed as the bourgeoisie when they have high-class level of economic condition. In contrary, people who are

in low-class level will be claimed as the proletariat because commonly, they will become the labors of the bourgeoisie (1946: 227).

In page 17 of novel *Mockingjay*, the author gave the description about the distinct habits among district people and Capitol people. District people were described as frugal people because they were in hard situation to survive. Yet, Capitol people behave excessively because they were used to living in extravagant, glamour and easy ways. Collins described that the residents of District 13 were extremely frugal people. Waste was like a criminal activity and there was punishment for it. However, Fulvia Cardew, a Capitol person, had opposite behaviour because she was used to be in glamour and excessive life. It can be seen in this quotation below:

They’re so frugal with things here, waste is practically a criminal activity. Fortunately, the people of 12 have never been wasteful.... But once I saw Fulvia Cardew crumple up a sheet of paper with just a couple of words written on it and you would’ve thought she’d murdered someone from the looks she got. Her face turned tomato red, making the silver flowers inlaid in her plump cheeks even more noticeable. The very portrait of excess. One of my few pleasures in 13 is watching the handful of pampered Capitol “rebels” squirming as they try to fit in (Collins, 2010: 17)

According to the explanation from Scott, the dominant people will do every tactic including violence and abuse to make their labors work effectively and efficiently (1990: 21).

The domination of President Snow as Capitol representative toward districts was not over only in *Hunger Games* and *Quarter Quell*. It continued with more inhuman actions for his rivals and district people who were the labors. There were some inhuman activities such as cutting the labor’s tongue to make them never arguing and selling the labors for prostitutions.

First example of abuse that was practiced by President Snow toward the labors was to cut the tongue of labors as the way to make them

voiceless for arguing. The labors were not allowed to complain and whine when they were working. If there were labors complained and whined, they would be punished. It is described by Collins in page 101, "Pollux is an Avox. They have cut out his tongue and he will never speak again. And I no longer have to wonder what made him risk everything to help bring down the Capitol"(Collins, 2010: 101).

Another example of Capitol domination was to ignore human pride through selling labors for prostitutions. Capitol thought that labors were not human, but they were something could be bought and sold. This quotation below describes it:

"President Snow used to...sell me...my body, that is," Finnick begins in a flat, removed tone. "I wasn't the only one. If a victor is considered desirable, the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it." (Collins, 2010: 162).

That quotation shows the way President Snow treated his labors as things could be bought and sold. He used the power of domination to extract the labors effectively even doing sexual harassment.

## 2. A Description of Alienation in *Mockingjay*

This section discusses two types of alienation such as alienation from other human beings and alienation from worker's self. First, it describes the workers who are alienated from other human beings. According to Tong,

"workers are alienated from other human being because the structure of the capitalist economy encourages and even forces workers to see each other as competitors for jobs and promotions" (2009: 101).

A description of District 2 describes how workers are alienated from other human beings. When every district in Panem had a combat with Capitol, District 2 did not have. It happened

because District 2 had favored relationship with Capitol. They got more food and better living conditions than another district in Panem. District 2 could achieve the facilities because they become Capitol peacekeepers. Peacekeepers were the armies who committed to all Capitol orders. It is described in quotation below

First of all, every district is currently at war with the Capitol except 2, which has always had a favored relationship with our enemies despite its participation in the Hunger Games. They get more food and better living conditions. After the Dark Days and the supposed destruction of 13, District 2 became the Capitol's new center of defense, although it's publicly presented as the home of the nation's stone quarries, in the same way that 13 was known for graphite mining. District 2 not only manufactures weaponry, it trains and even supplies Peacekeepers (Collins, 2010: 80).

Based on that quotation, every district in Panem was the labors of Capitol included District 2. However, Capitol alienated District 2 from another district with some benefits. Therefore, District 2 became peacekeepers who did harassment and violence toward district people to work for Capitol.

Second, the alienation happens when workers are alienated from themselves. According to Tong,

"workers are alienated from *themselves* because when work is experienced as something unpleasant to be gotten through as quickly as possible, it is deadening" (Tong, 2009: 101).

This alienation attacked Katniss Everdeen when she made propaganda with Capitol rebels. She had to pretend in combat and say a slogan that was prepared for the short propaganda. However, it became a difficult thing for her. She did not enjoy her work because it became something unpleasant for her. She could not be herself in that work. It can be seen in this quotation

“People of Panem, we fight, we dare, we end our hunger for Justice!” That’s the line. I can tell by the way they present it that they’ve spent months, maybe years, working it out and are really proud of it. It seems like a mouthful to me, though. And stiff. I can’t imagine actually saying it in real life—unless I was using a Capitol accent and making fun of it (Collins, 2010: 69).

From that quotation, it describes how Katniss must do unpleasant thing for her. Therefore, alienation attacked Katniss because she did not enjoy her work. She had to be someone else in her work.

### 3. The Role of Katniss Everdeen in Class Struggle and Revolution

Class struggle is conducted due to the existence of dominant class. According to James C. Scott in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, he explains that

“...these forms of domination are institutionalized means of extracting labor, goods, and services from a subject population. Typically, domination contains a strong element of personal rule...” (1990: 21).

Here, the domination was shown by President Snow and President Alma Coin. President Snow led Capitol to extract other district for slavery. It is shown in page 80 “...District 12 became the Capitol’s new center of defense.. 13 was known for graphite mining...manufactures weaponry...” (Collins, 2010: 80).

Then, the domination of Coin was shown through her action, using Katniss as her puppet to become a mockingjay that would collect and trigger the rebellion in every district. Meanwhile, she always watched Katniss and gave her threat by punishing her friends.

“...punishing my prep team’s a warning,” I tell her. “Not just to me. But to you, too. About who is really in control and what

happens if she’s not obeyed. If you had any delusions about having power, I’d let them go now.” (Collins, 2010: 50).

Thus, Katniss Everdeen decided to become the main character of the class struggle of defeating Capitol. Every word and action ordered by her would decide the condition of Panem. It is told in page 11:

Of course, I hate the Capitol, but I have no confidence that my being the Mockingjay will benefit those who are trying to bring it down. How can I help the districts when every time I make a move, it results in suffering and loss of life? (Collins, 2010: 11).

Every movement of Katniss in combat with Capitol must cost human souls. Some people died, family, friends, strangers frequently had to be taken away because of the combat. Thus, there was incertitude inside of Katniss for being a mockingjay initially. Otherwise, after she gained class consciousness, she realized that she must struggle to bring down Capitol. Katniss consciousness was gained after she mused over every situation that happened around her. It is explained in this part of the novel:

Image flash through my mind: the spear piercing Rue’s body in arena, Gale hanging senseless from the whipping post, the corpse-littered wasteland of my home. And for what? For what? As my blood turns hot, I remember other things. My first glimpse of an uprising in District 8. The victors locked hand in hand in night before the Quarter Quell. And how it was no accident, my shooting that arrow into the force field in arena. How badly I wanted it to lodge deep in heart of my enemy (Collins, 2010: 29)

The memory of every terrible situation caused by Capitol inhumanities had triggered her class consciousness, so that finally she decided to defeat Capitol.

Moreover, as the mockingjay, a symbol of revolution, Katniss was also going to end the slavery in Panem. The slavery would never end

when Panem was going to be led by the greedy person who was crazy of power, such as President Snow and President Coin. Thus, Katniss decided to end her responsibility as the mockingjay by executing President Coin. Page 356 shows that scene

“The point of my arrows shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead” (Collins, 2010: 356).

The dreams of revolution that wanted to be achieved in *Mockingjay* consist of freedom, peace, and equality. The district people wanted to be free from the domination and slavery. They expected to have peaceful and equal life. Thus, they struggle firmly to bring down Capitol.

A dream of equality is shown through this quotation below. It described about the egalitarians who would build government in equality.

“If we win, who would be in charge of the government?” Gale asks. “Everyone,” Plutarch tells him. “We’re going to form a republic where the people of each district and the Capitol can elect their own representatives to be their voice in a centralized government.” (Collins, 2010: 81-82)

After gaining revolution, people would create new government of Panem which was called republic. Then, they ran the government equally through democratic election for the representatives of district people in government.

Another revolution dream of district people is a freedom from domination, slavery, and violence. They wanted to escape from Capitol slavery and oppression.

“To have escaped the endless hunger and oppression, the perilous mines, the lash of our final Head Peacekeeper, Romulus Thread. To have a new home at all is seen as a wonder since, up until a short time ago” (Collins, 2010: 6).

#### **4. Marxist Feminism Reflected by Katniss Everdeen in *Mockingjay***

Marxist feminism tells us that woman must survive for her life because she is the primary person responsible for her families and for herself. She wholly struggles and stands on her own power. Based on Tong’s explanation about Marxist feminism, she said that:

...always on call, women form a conception of themselves they would not have if their roles in family and the workplace did not keep them socially and economically subordinate to men. Thus, Marxist and socialist feminists believe we need to analyze the links between women’s work status and women’s self-image in order to understand the unique character of women’s oppression... (Tong, 2009: 98).

Based on the theory of Marxist feminism, Katniss Everdeen, the face of revolution in *Mockingjay* has the main role to represent Marxist feminism. There are some parts of the novel that prove the reflection of Marxist feminism by Katniss.

Katniss Everdeen was the guardian of her mother and sister after her dad passed away to fulfill daily necessities. She went to hunting in woods to feed her family. It is shown in this part,

“here began countless days of hunting and snaring, fishing and gathering, roaming together through the woods... there’s no District 12 to escape from now, no Peacekeepers to trick, no hungry mouths to feed” (Collins, 2010: 123).

Katniss Everdeen survived for her life without being dependent to man power economically and it made people admired her. That was told by Delly, her neighbor in District 12. Delly said that

“Katniss was always so amazing, I never dreamed she would notice me,” says Delly. “The way she could hunt and go in Hob and

everything. Everyone admired her so.” (Collins, 2010: 179).

Another reflection of Marxist feminism by Katniss is the way she made decision by her own self without others influence. It was described when she was in doubt to become a Mockingjay. She considered everything which occurred in her life and finally she decided taking that role.

It turns out the question that’s been eating away at me has only ever had one possible answer. But it took Peeta’s ploy for me to recognize it. What am I going to do? I take a deep breath. My arms rise slightly--as if recalling the black-and-white wings Cinna gave me--then come to rest at my sides. “I’m going to be the Mockingjay.” (Collins, 2010: 30)

Based on the explanation above, we can conclude that Katniss Everdeen truly represents the existence of Marxist feminism. The reflection of Marxist feminism can be seen through her struggle for herself, her family, and the entirety of Panem.

## E. CONCLUSION

Katniss Everdeen as the major character of the *Mockingjay* has the most important role for the entirety of the story. She has internal and external conflicts that require her to show off her strong power. Suffering, depression, getting confused and being chaotic are things that must be faced by Katniss Everdeen to prove that she is not submissive and dependent. She becomes the guardian of her family and the symbol of revolution to fight Capitol. She passed the process to reach revolution through class struggle.

Katniss Everdeen has succeeded to pass all of the process proving that she is an independent woman who can survive by her own self power and bring down domination to gain revolution. Katniss Everdeen who became the leader of class struggle opposing Capitol proves the

existence of Marxist Feminism in novel *Mockingjay*.

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