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UNRAVELING SPORT AS NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSE IN COLLINS' *THE HUNGER GAMES*

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Abstract

The dissertation aims to explore Neoliberalism with Sport in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. The objective of the research paper is manifold as it also manifests the materialistic deformed sport depicted in Arena which rejects the true motives of sport in order to strengthen the hegemony of Capitol or capitalists. Moreover, it endeavors to prove the ties of sport and media which results in hyper reality, exhibited to justify the prejudices of Neoliberalism. In addition, hints from Marxist critique as well as Post-Colonial critique are taken to investigate the Neoliberal discourse exercised through sport in the text. The significance of the dissertation lies in critically examining the camouflaged cultural pedagogies of Neoliberalism such as sport, which is executed in order to normalize its unjust activities and to keep the system active. The primary tool of the thesis is *The Hunger Games* by Suzanna Collins. The book *Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, Consumption, and Culture* edited by David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk serves as the secondary tool for the critical study. The research gap is the exploration of *The Hunger Games* in the domain of Neoliberalism, specifically as a Sport. Future researchers can explicate the theory of Media Culture by Douglas Kellner in this science fiction.

Keywords

Neoliberalism, Sport, Dystopian fiction, Capitalism, Culture, Media.



1. Introduction

The critical study aims to focus on Neoliberalism, with the lens of Sport in Suzanne Collins' text *The Hunger Games*. The most striking aspect of this study is that it unravels the entangled connection of sport with economics, political and socio cultural institutions within the boundaries of the novel, which facilitate Neoliberalism to exercise its discourse through the former. It is true that Neoliberalism is prevalent in every aspect of daily life as argued by Wendy Brown in her book *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. She claims that "neoliberal reason (is), ubiquitous today in statecraft and the workplace, in jurisprudence, education, culture, and a vast range of quotidian activity" (Brown, 2015). It is due to this reason that sport, which has a panoramic spectrum covering almost every field of life, suits the purpose of the ever dominating all-pervasive Neoliberalism. Also, cultural items like sport are usually accepted and most of the time celebrated by subjects as well as the institutions as it makes it easier for the power to justify its wrongdoings by using it as its tool. The researcher critically analyses the distorted sport depicted in *The Hunger Games*, to deconstruct the strategies of Neoliberalism; the implied system functioning in the text. The system misuses the cultural products of the society such as sport, for the execution of its own motives in disguise. Morality, ethics, sportsmanship and all other positive concepts associated with sport are ironically used to create an illusion of false perceptions such as, a false notion of unity, "active citizenry" (Turmino, 2012). Thus, sport is used to construct a kind of Hyper reality. This argument correlates with Baudrillard's idea of

hyper reality which is defined in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* as something which is constructed by the model of real but has no origin or reality. It is "More real than the real, that is how the real is abolished" (Baudrillard, 1981). As the actual notion of unity, the purpose of sport vanishes under the domination of imposed reality. Also, the artificial arena of sport constructed through technology blurs the boundaries between real and unreal. One of the many aims of sport is to create leaders which become the ideals of the society and bind people together. However, sport in a Neoliberal system does create a leader but that individual becomes the epitome of Neoliberal discourse. Leaders or winners confirm the perception of a flawless system by participating and then celebrating their victory, by taking part in the glamorization, marketing of sport and eventually turning it into a Neoliberal ideal which fascinates the society. Moreover, Marxist critique and post-colonial critique are also briefly concerned to investigate the connection of sport and Neoliberalism with these perspectives. In addition to this, the study targets the ties of sport and media which again confers evidence of the involvement of Neoliberalism in sport. As pleasure accentuated, sport broadcasted by the media is only meant to increase rating or profit and in this way sport merely becomes a product or commodity. Moreover, as media is the only means of communicating Sport to the public. It allows exercise of power to convey only desired information which assists Neoliberalism to maintain its hegemony. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (1988) analyze the same phenomenon in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*.

They argue that media is under the control of the state and that is why it provides filtered information, selected data that helps to justify the controlling influence of corporations. Furthermore, by exercising propaganda, the media performs in the service of industrialists which govern it and gives assistance by financial aids. It is important to note that when sport is considered as a product of the market, all the sport pedagogies, sport codes, principles, rules, more or less each aspect is fashioned with the mindset of selling this product. This focus leads to the emphasis of materialism and rationalization of inhuman, unhealthy behavior which is completely opposite to the actual purpose of sport. Likewise, in the text *The Hunger Games*, the sport of violence is glamorized and popularized through media in order to create a hype and to justify the flawed motives of the system. The primary tool of the dissertation is *The Hunger Games* which is a dystopian novel by an American author Suzanne Collins. This science fiction comprises of a series of four books *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), *Mockingjay* (2010), *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* (2020). Neoliberalism is defined as an ideology which puts emphasis on free market and economic sustainability with minimal state intervention and the freedom of trade and capital. Modern liberalism and Neoliberalism have evolved from the 19th century classical Liberalism which championed the freedom of individuals in terms of making market decisions and minimum interference of government. Both of these schools of thought, however, bear contrast in regard to their fundamental principles. Neoliberalism is presented by Adam Smith, who argues in *The Wealth of*

Nation that markets functioned by uncontrollable invisible hands demand minimal government interference. Modern liberalism, on the other hand, shaped through the social-liberal tradition lays an emphasis on the obstacles of individual freedom, including disease, discrimination, poverty and ignorance is the result of capitalism. These issues, as modern liberalism advocates, can only be resolved by direct state intervention. This idea impacted the 19th century and resulted in worker's compensation schemes, public funding of schools and hospitals, and many other positive initiatives. By the 1970s, however, the economic stagnation and public debt triggered some economists to return to classical liberalism which then in its revived form is called Neoliberalism. As Neoliberalism is an ideology and policy model which has its sole focus on market and consumption. Rather equality, basic needs, social wellbeing, empathy, it prioritizes competition and monetary benefits. Therefore, every aspect of life under the influence of Neoliberalism loses its essence by getting the color of capital. Market becomes the determining factor, corporations are the new legislators, industrialists turn into rulers, and competition is the new language and money changes into religion. In this case, the government has less to do; except to safeguard the motives of capitalists. As a result, Neoliberalism gains the ultimate hegemony and becomes the only system functioning by exercising its power to mold each institution into a money making machine and project their discourse through them without taking into account the real objectives of these institutions. It is noteworthy that Neoliberalism is responsible for exploitation of marginalized sectors whereas

society as a whole is also suffering from a sense of insecurity and anxiety, yet it is never held accountable. The reason behind this is the ever prevailing invisible functioning of Neoliberalism which operates through institutions. Sport is one of those institutions as discussed in the secondary text, “the tentacles of neoliberalism have been manifested, experienced, appropriated and mobilized within multifarious iterations of sporting experiences, expressions, and structures” (Andrews & Silk, 2012). Despite the fact that sport must be dealt with from a non-materialistic perspective, with an aim of human well-being, compassion and unity; this healthy source of catharsis is being used as a source of capital and manipulation. Politics are overly stuffed in sports to create hype and as a result hatred among nations. This assists power holders in maintaining its control over fragmented continents, mostly third world countries. Cricket matches between Pakistan and India are perfect example. Moreover, corporations with the help of Neoliberal system boost its market by selling the image of healthy sport. Media plays an effective role for portraying this positive depiction of sport both for the system and corporations. In the novel this phenomenon is presented through sponsors and Capitol. Sport being a tool of Neoliberalism is projected as a product of the market. Therefore, all its policies are formed with a mindset of making profit. Consequently, sport is seen as a self-centered entity, opposing the inclusive approach with an unhealthy competition mostly taken on a personal level with no sportsman spirit, to disintegrate society. The researcher aims to confer answers to the following questions in the research paper: Why

is Sport used as a tool to manifest Neoliberal discourse? How is sport exploited by Neoliberalism to the extent that only its distorted form is available to assist Neoliberal ideology in the text? How is the violent deformed sport normalized or camouflaged in society with the aid of Hyper reality produced in the novel? How does the connection of sport and media propagate and glamorize the ideology of Neoliberalism in *The Hunger Games*?

2. Literature Review

Suzanna Collins is one of the bestselling children's authors but the characteristic which differentiates her from others is the impact she has created through her style and message. She has now become a globally celebrated writer “who break(s) through into the universal cultural consciousness” (Armitstead, 2012). Her novels specifically *The Hunger Games* opens a new space to explore, through Dystopian fiction in the genre of Young Adult Fiction and became a driving force for taking this genre in the mainstream as Tara Smith, author of “Scavenge the Stars” affirms that she is “thankful” (as cited in Deliee, 2020) to Collins for giving a new direction to this category of fiction and by putting this genre “more on the map” (Smith, as cited in Deliee, 2020). Likewise, Collins' editor David Levithan, also believes that, by making her readers, literary critics and future writers “to look more closely” (as cited in Deliee, 2020), Collins has not only expanded the dimensions of this genre but also in a way “subvert(ed) YA expectations” while introducing more serious ideas in Young Adult Fiction (as cited in Deliee, 2020). Socio-political ideologies, manifestation of power, media and modern lifestyle are a few major attributes that mark

Collins works. As in *The Hunger Games* she explores these ideas which also reveal her area of interest which influences her beliefs. Thence, her message is aptly communicated, along with the style in which she has chosen to communicate it. Rosen remarks that Collins make her understand the politics of power and its enactment in a “totalitarian future society” (Rosen, 2012) while giving a sense as if “warned by literature” (Rosen, 2012). This also implies that Collins, through her writing wants to spread awareness by educating her readers about the complex, often hidden motives and tactics of system, as acknowledged by editor Levithan, “Not many of us manage to write books that effectively challenge readers to question how they see the world... but that's what Suzanne does” (as cited in Deliee, 2020). Moreover, the writing style of Suzanne Collins is marked as the “style of the future” (Bryn, 2012) which is “short and concise but also edgy” (Bryn, 2012). This approachable writing style adds more convenience to digest these complicated notions. For instance, “declarative sentences” (Ford, 2019) with “simple vocabulary” (Ford, 2019) while confirming the trends of modernist novels made the text understandable and accessible to a wide range of readers. The primary text of this dissertation is narrated in first person narration which is through the protagonist's point of view. This means that exposure and information of both the reader and the protagonist, about upcoming events bear no difference. Consequently, it adds "excitement" (Bookrags, n.d.) and a “dramatic impact” (Bookrags, n.d.) in the novel, rather than a “third party” (Bookrags, n.d.) who apparently observes the things from a distance. With first

person narration, the reader gets the luxury to relate and experience the circumstances with which the protagonist deals. Hence, it aids in fathoming the thematic concerns more aptly. It is noteworthy that Collins has implemented the present tense for the narratology of the novel. It makes the text come alive by giving a sense of real time and space which the reader seems to encounter in present. A reader claims that she was “being pulled into the book” (Goodreads, 2011) as if she was “right there” (Goodreads, 2011). Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum is one of the lenses through which the text is analyzed, for instance, the novel “approaches the simulacrum via reality TV shows” as it presents a hyperreality in which copy or illusion is preferred over “original” (Fernandes, 2016). In addition to this, the strands of colonization and Imperialism are also discovered in *The Hunger Games*. Imperialism is evident by the fact that one entity Capitol governs other sections of the country which are not considered a part of it. Similarly, colonization is represented through the exploitation of resources and by making the districts dependent on the Capitol for basic needs such as food (Grove, 2013). Thus, another political tactic functioning in the novel is food. True to form, “Panem uses food control as a mechanism for suppressing people's uprising against the totalitarian government” (Thomas & Vensila, 2019). It is due to this reason that “food chain” (Thomas and Vensila, 2019) is kept under the control of the Capitol as it meant “holding power over a nation” (Thomas & Vensila, 2019). Neoliberalism is ubiquitous but still camouflaged and not part of the mainstream discourse. Its “anonymity” (Monbiot, 2016) is actually the

“symptom and cause of its power” (Monbiot, 2016). Though, it has contributed to a number of crises such as “the offshoring of wealth and power...slow collapse of public health and education, resurgent child poverty, the epidemic of loneliness, the collapse of ecosystems” (Monbiot, 2016). Despite being the driving force of various multidimensional crises, Neoliberalism is never held accountable. This is because it has become “pervasive” (Monbiot, 2016) to the extent that it changes into our second nature and a part of our collective unconsciousness. Therefore, none of us question it as a manipulative governing ideology. Competition is considered as the “defining characteristic” (Monbiot, 2016) by Neoliberalism which shapes citizens as merely “consumers” (Monbiot, 2016) of their markets and whose “democratic choice” (Monbiot, 2016) can only be best exercised by “buying and selling” (Monbiot, 2016). Neoliberalism believes that “market” (Monbiot, 2016) is the only mechanism of progress and for its smooth working, minimum involvement of government is required. That is why “Tax and regulations should be minimized, public services should be privatized” (Monbiot, 2016). Moreover, working class or labor does not need power or recognition of their rights as that would cause “Market Distortions” (Monbiot, 2016). Contrary to this, inequality is redefined as “virtuous” (Monbiot, 2016) and “a generator of wealth” (Monbiot, 2016) whose trickle-down effect enriches the whole society. Hence, attempts to produce an equal and just society are “counterproductive” (Monbiot, 2016) as Market is the determining factor which will automatically give everyone “what they deserve”

(Monbiot, 2016). It is due to this reason that the upper class justifies their unjust hegemony over resources and power, as obtained through “merit” (Monbiot, 2016) and therefore it is illogical to question them. In this way, in this cut-throat competition, one who fails is declared as “losers” (Monbiot, 2016) and nobody is responsible for his exploitation. Therefore, it is true to say that “Neoliberalism has brought out the worst in us” (Verhaeghe, 2014). Sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, has also deftly opined dilemma of paradoxical Neoliberal age as “Never have we been so free. Never have we felt so powerless” (as cited in Verhaeghe, 2014). Classical liberalism is the founding school of thought which gave birth to its other variants such as Modern liberalism and Neoliberalism. This fundamental theory is based upon the notions of individual freedom, less involvement of government and supported “laissez-faire economics” (Britannica, n.d.). Adam Smith presented the ideology of classical Neoliberalism in his work *The Wealth of Nations*, in which he argues that there is an “invisible hand” (Britannica, n.d.) which controls the market. Thus, there should be “minimum government interference” (Britannica, n.d.). With the passage of time, liberalism evolved into different traditions. Modern Liberalism’s focal point is the “impediments to individual freedom - including poverty and inequality” (Britannica, n.d.). These are the repercussions of Capitalism. It can only be removed through “direct state intervention” (Britannica, n.d.). Sport is a cultural product which is often taken as a source of healthy entertainment and communal harmony. However, the reality in this era of guileful Neoliberalism is always blurred

and hidden. For example, Cricket is the most celebrated sport in South Asia but evidence shows that cricket also depicts the political paraphernalia of the region. Akhtar affirms “Even rivalry on the fields reflects political tension” (Akhtar, 2021). In order to solidify his argument, he explains that “under the backdrop of the T20 Cricket World Cup, it has become clear that sports and politics, are, in fact, indivisible” (Akhtar, 2021). It was also quite prominent in the recent Pakistan versus India Cricket match which revealed its political coloring through the reactions on sportsmanship of Virat Kohli, India's captain, when he congratulated the Pakistani team for winning the game. This simple act of healthy sport was then dubbed by Hindu right-wing as a revolt (Akhtar, 2021). Moreover, Indian Muslim bowler Mohammed Shami became the victim of “online abuse” (Akhtar, 2021) to the extent that he was told “to return to Pakistan” (Akhtar, 2021). On the other hand, Sheikh Rashid “explicitly” (Akhtar, 2021) marked Pakistan's win as a “victory of Islam” (Akhtar, 2021). This shows that under the guise of sports, the political discourse is always exercised to maintain and propagate the ongoing narrative which will be definitely in the favor of power, as it will be further debated in the dissertation. Sports, under the domination of Neoliberalism, change into a money-oriented institution which Ali explains with the reference of Pakistan Super League; a professional T20 cricket league organized by the Pakistan Cricket Board. The writer reveals in his article that these kind of cricket matches in which success of a league is proportional to the “interest of the capitalists” (Ali, 2022) are now become a “global phenomenon” (Ali,

2022). This cultural product has now become a commodity through which capitalists produce capital. For example, “there is heavy bombardment of brands wherever you look – be it inside the stadium... or on your television and mobile screens” (Ali, 2022). Not only this, but cricketers are also turned into advertising agents selling different industries by “wear(ing) brands’ logos on their shirt sleeves” (Ali, 2022). Moreover, as economic value is the sole priority, common men get neglected in the glamour of these sport leagues.

3. Research Methodology

The research entails a content-based, textual analysis of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* as the primary text. The applied theoretical framework is Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews' edited book on “Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, Consumption, and Culture”. The reviews pertaining to the aforementioned author, novel and theory form the secondary sources of the thesis. Both print and electronic media have been utilized as secondary sources. It is a qualitative research with a specific focus on the grounded-theory style. It is an inductive style and not an interdisciplinary research.

4. Discussion and Analysis

Investigating Neoliberal Motives Camouflaged Under Sport Through the Lens of Hyper reality and Marxist Critique The study unravels the deformed sport depicted in *The Hunger Games* in which all the healthy notions typically associated with sport work otherwise. Thus, sport becomes a product of the free market and in this way provides a solid ground for Neoliberalism to play its game. As a result, corporations and markets are declared responsible to formulate the sport codes, rules, regulations and

various other factors related to sports. Moreover, the dissertation also traces the connection of sport and media which functions to glamorize and hide the motives of Neoliberalism. Media projects a specific image of the system and its functions while playing a pivotal role in shaping the consciousness of the subjects. In addition to this, the thesis examines the phenomenon of sports heroes with the aid of this novel. Winners of the sport are showered with luxury and fame but at the same time are bound to present and defend the deformed sports while becoming ideals of the nations. The strategy of divide and rule depicted in the novel and the portrayal of the people of districts as inferior creations in order to justify the oppression of Neoliberalism manifested through sport directs the study to take guidance from Post-Colonial critique. Furthermore, the class stratification in the novel which provides the stimulus to power to exercise its control, is understood through Marxist critique. The study is put forth with an objective to secure the true essence of healthy sport while revealing the manipulative motives of the dominating system of Neoliberalism, by using Suzanne Collins' novel. Therefore, the research is an attempt to revitalize sport in its real shape which would be beneficial for the mental as well as the physical health. It also spreads awareness regarding the fact that seemingly ordinary positive fundamentals of society can also be misused. The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins is one of the most appropriate texts recently produced which provides an insight into the politics and narratives of modern societies. The text, being a product of this era, gives space to the modern crises which is analyzed in the dissertation by taking

the novel as a focal point. The Hunger Games reveals many of the controversial ideas of Neoliberalism; class difference being one of them. The way both Capitol and districts are portrayed in the novel highlights the stratification. Katniss, consumed by the poverty of her district, ponders over the ruling city as: "What it must be like, I wonder, to live in a world where food appears at the press of a button? How would I spend the hours I now commit to combing the woods for sustenance if it were so easy to come by? What do they do all day, these people in the Capitol, besides decorating their bodies and waiting around for a new shipment of tributes to roll in and die for their entertainment?" (Collins, 2008). Whereas, district is defined by her as "District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety" (Collins, 2008). This disparity clearly relates with the Marxist idea of class struggle where districts are the proletariats and Capitol is bourgeoisie. The clash between them is derived by the exploitation of the upper class and by ignoring the rights of the lower class, this ultimately shapes the class struggle prominent in the novel as well. One may argue that if inequality leads to clashes as pointed out by Marxist critique then it may not favor Neoliberals. In reality, inequality provides capitalist labor, power and keeps their markets in function. Proletariats work for the upper class to survive. Meanwhile, Bourgeoisie controls the capital and means of production. In this way the workforce always stays dependent and under the influence of the ruling class. Same is the case in the novel as the conversation between Rue, a twelve-year-old tribute from the agricultural district and the protagonist reveals "I'd have thought, in District Eleven, you'd

have a bit more to eat than us. You know, since you grow the food,' I say. Rue's eyes widen. 'Oh, no we're not allowed to eat the crops.' 'They whip you and make everyone else watch'". The phenomenon of misusing basic needs in order to retain hegemony is explored in the form of sport in the novel. As it is written "All year, the Capitol will show the winning district gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation" (p. 19). The games become a tactic to keep the individuals indulged in the struggle for survival and remind them that their lives are under the control of Capitalists. The impression of hyper reality is produced to make people accustomed to oppression by justifying and ironically glamorizing the exploiters as well as by rationalizing injustice. As Michael L. Silk and David L. Andrews argue, sport is used to produce the hyper reality of propagandas such as the good America: "the "innocent" Disney-produced Little League World Series children's baseball tournament that acts to reinforce the notion that America is "a morally superior, righteous" place and that any critical attacks on it are misguided at best and criminally unsubstantiated at worst" (White, 2008, as cited in Andrews and Silk, 2012). In the text, Effie Trinket from Capitol is an escort for the District Twelve. The character employs rhetoric to glamorize and celebrate the violent sport which works to shape the games as a festival as she chants "Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor". "That's the spirit of the Games" The notion of Hyper reality is also produced by imposing this artificial form of reality over the real one. For instance, all the people in districts are bound to appear for the reaping, an

event when the tributes for upcoming game are chosen. Also, the text oozes with imperative sentences which reflect the control and the burden of command as "After the reaping, everyone is supposed to celebrate" and "The Capitol requires us to treat The Hunger Games as a festivity". The words "supposed" and "requires" depict how the imposed reality is an obligation for all to adhere to. Not only this but districts suffer by dint of this obligation to watch games on television being transmitted through live broadcast. This is ironic as well as a torture some method to impose the kind of narrative which is in favor of the system. It also highlights the significance of media in infusing hyper reality. Thus, media is one of the effective tools to achieve the goal of image building. Since sport is a product of the market as an impact of Neoliberalism, media not only plays its role in creating hyper reality but also acts as a monetary source which attracts the sponsors through ratings and presentations of tributes. As Katniss asserts: "I'm glad for the cameras now. I want sponsors to see I can hunt, that I'm a good bet". The industry of the games goes on by urging the capitalists to invest in the tributes. Television is the pivotal medium of communication in the novel which is responsible for transmitting the selected chunks of information approved by Capitol while justifying the hegemony of the powerful over the oppressed. Chomsky also argues in his media theory that consent for economic, social and political policies is infused in the public mind through the propaganda of mass media. The constant presence of cameras as Katniss remarks: "We have to stand for a few minutes in the doorway of the train while the cameras gobble up

our images” and when Effie says: “Your mentor has a lot to learn about presentation. A lot about televised behavior”. Whereas, the protagonist gets the directions from Effie: “Just remember, Katniss, you want the audience to like you”. Meanwhile, Katniss complains “Why am I hopping around like some trained dog trying to please people I hate?” Likewise, the last strike of “the star-crossed lovers from District Twelve” is a marketing strategy to attract the audience and sponsors. All these factors contribute to the argument that the portrayal of sport's paraphernalia shaped through hype, fascination, marketing and a big dose of entertainment mold this cruel act of oppression to something acceptable or even celebratory. Resultantly, a deformed sport is presented as a visually appealing, materialistic exhibition where the economic value carries more weight. Debunking the Neoliberal Deformed Sport manifested through Sport Heroes, Technology and Colonial mantra. The disfigured form of sport that exists in society, whose reflection Collins presented in her novel assists Neoliberalism in projecting its manipulative policies. In another opinion it is argued that ultimately Neoliberalism itself is responsible for the birth of this distorted sport. As it is noteworthy that due to money oriented discourse of Neoliberalism, Sport is also seen as a commodity whose evidence is given by Andrews and Silk by declaring World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) “a neoliberal poster child” because it “operates overtly for profit” (Butryn, as cited in Andrews and Silk, 2012). It is therefore operated in society by keeping in mind the market. This corrupts the essence of original sport. For example, Sport heroes mostly considered as

ideals of a society and are supposed to depict positive healthy ideas which in turn work for the betterment of society. The winners of any particular sport are the representatives of their nations and that is why people follow them blindly. Neoliberalism exploit this very phenomenon. The Victor of the deformed sport becomes the epitome of Neoliberal narrative and is bound to present, secure and popularize that same narrative. As in the novel, though Katniss with her acts triggers defiance, but as a representative of the system she and Peeta act to ensure that their actions do not raise an uprising. Rather it is merely a simple action of love as Haymitch informs “You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena... your only defense can be you were so madly in love you weren't responsible for your actions” (Collins, 2008). To communicate this narrative of an innocent star cross lover, Katniss is presented as a naive girl rather than a fighter. For this purpose, the protagonist is dressed for her interview in bright yellow frock with minimum makeup to portray her as “A young one. Fourteen at the most. Innocent. Harmless”. Katniss aptly discloses the significance and politics of sport heroes who become lifetime tools of the system. “Although I do not yet understand Cinna's design, it's a reminder the Games are not yet quite finished”. Moreover, in order to become the winner of the games, participants are supposed to abide by the rules no matter how unjust or illogical they are. In this way, the tributes not only accept but justify the rules as well. True to form, Katniss acts as a star crossed lover to give hype to the games and to attract sponsors for survival as she accepts “To say my

thoughts aloud would be tipping off the audience that the romance has been fabricated to play on their sympathies and that would result in no food at all". Sport is taken as a source to prevail harmony, unity, compassion and a healthy competition in society. Contrary to this, these positive factors associated with sport are ignored or disfigured by Neoliberalism to gain their own motives. As The Hunger Games disintegrate the society by the differentiation of victors, "Career tributes are overly vicious, arrogant, better fed, but only because they're Capitol's lapdogs". Neoliberalism propagates against labor unions and believes that the workforce should not be given their rights so that they will not be able to stand against oppression. The disunity in society propagated through violent games serves this purpose of the system. These games are used as a tactic to disfigure the notion of harmony in society as the protagonist reveals "Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch - this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy". This also has parallels with the handy principle of colonization i.e. divide and rule. As individuals in the novel are divided through the boundaries of Capitol and Districts, further fragmentation takes place through games. One who stays faithful to the colonizers or in this context, Capitol, is then gifted with fame and wealth while alienating the rest of the society. Colonizers loot the resources of colonized people in the name of civilization and the white man's burden. Similarly, in the novel Capitol control the means of production of districts through Neoliberalism implemented via sports. Furthermore, this idea of pitting one district

against the other is still relevant in present times as it can be seen that weaker countries, mostly marked as third world countries, are set to compete with each other by the economically strong First World countries in order to keep them busy in their conflicts. As a result, the former never rise against their exploiters. For instance, the wars between Pakistan and India are usually triggered by European Countries and America. The fundamental goal of sport is to encourage a healthy lifestyle which has a positive impact on the mind and body. However, sport, under the influence of Neoliberalism, only propagates the motives of the system and is only judged through its market value. Therefore, in The Hunger Games it is shown that even the brutal games function without any objection in society. Rather than making individuals sensitive to oppression, inequality and violence which is a symbol of rational mind, this deformed sport drives in the opposite direction. The Hunger Games desensitize the masses pertaining to bloodshed and even turn this into a source of entertainment. "It was considered very anti-climactic in the Capitol, all those quiet, bloodless deaths. Since then, there's usually been wood to make fire". Sport is a cultural product. It is for this reason that it is not usually critically examined but thoroughly celebrated in every section of society with an inclusive mindset and recognized as a stimulus of collective pleasure. However, when this sport loses its essence then it converts into a self-centered activity with an exclusive approach for which personal monetary benefits and pleasure on the cost of others' lives is the focal point. In the context of the novel, amalgamation of technology

also takes place to corrupt the original purpose of sport. The games operate via technology that gives ultimate control to the system to alter this cultural item in order to maintain hegemony and to increase popularity. Thus, economic value. For instance, when the games become dull, Gamemakers add some twist through artificial fire which is mentioned by Katniss as the flames “have an unnatural height, a uniformity that makes them as human-made... Things have been too quiet today. No deaths, perhaps no fights at all. The audience in the Capitol will be getting bored”. In addition, the idea of trackers injected in the bodies of tributes intimates in the novel to hint the notion of surveillance. It restrains individuals from escaping the oppressive system and affirms the irony of individuals’ freedom. By highlighting the dangerous future of artificial intelligence and artificially manufactured species, which can be misused by power, Collins hints that every institution irrespective of its lucrative ability can be manipulated. It then works otherwise when given in the hands of a system relishing exploitation. Collins structures this novel in first person narration to confer a sense of real experience rather than that of a distant observer. It is done so to make the readers understand the gravity of issues. Moreover, the novel is narrated in present tense in the pattern of the stream of consciousness. For instance, Chapter thirteen ends with “Then, without even rustling a leaf, her little hand slides into the open and points to something above my head”. Meanwhile, Chapter fourteen begins with the same trail of thought: “My eyes follow the line of her finger up into the foliage above me”. This kind of narration gives a sense of

continuity, of real time and space. In this way, the text seems to imply its relevance to the present times, not only in the terms of thematic concerns but also through its structure and language. In addition to pointing out the modern crises, the text appears to hint at its solution. Collins applies the framework of Spivak's *Affirmative Sabotage* which argues that the instruments of colonialism can be turned into the tools of decolonization. In the concerned text, the tactic of Neoliberalism which is the hunger game, is used to trigger revolt as well as to humiliate power as Capitol becomes “the joke of Panem”. In a nutshell, *The Hunger Games* debunks the manipulative politics of the system but at the same time provides a ray of hope to fight back the exploitation of Neoliberalism.

5. Conclusion

The research aims to debunk the deformed sport which is an impact of Neoliberalism that has altered the cultural products such as sport for its multifarious motives, with the prism of Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, Consumption and Culture edited by David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk in *Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games*. The study further explores the reasons due to which sport is one of the most effective tools of Neoliberalism to implement its discourse. Moreover, technology and media, which provide paraphernalia for Neoliberalism to exploit sport, are also revealed in the context of the novel. The objective of the critical study is practical in terms of securing the real form of sport in society by exhibiting the manipulative ideology of Neoliberalism which disfigured the aforementioned. Suzanne Collins, in her novel, depicts a violent form of sport in the name of

Hunger Games which is self-centered, unhealthy, and market-oriented. These characteristics assist Neoliberalism to exercise the latter's ideology. This is evident through the notion of sponsorships, ratings, bets, deadly competition, and the association of basic needs with winning a sport, infused in the novel. Furthermore, the phenomenon of sports heroes, introduced through Katniss and Peeta, explains how national figures propagate the Neoliberal discourse. The paper also reveals the formation of Baudrillard's Hyperreality with the help of rhetoric and media which aids Neoliberalism to camouflage its motives. Technology also functions in designing an unreal arena for games and surveillance. True to form, the study unravels how Collins depicts the tracking devices which are injected into the bodies of every tribute. In addition to this, to untangle the ties of sport and Neoliberalism, post-colonial perspective is also touched upon. The description of districts as savages is to justify the oppression of Neoliberalism manifested through sport.

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