

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ATTACK ON TITAN AND THE HUNGER GAMES:  
DYSTOPIAS WITH AN ORWELLIAN FOUNDATION

by  
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# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Dystopia as a genre has gained the attention of literary scholars as many dystopian works have been analyzed for the elements, reflections, and sociopolitical critiques they carry. 1984 is a popular dystopia, written by George Orwell, which became the steppingstone for other dystopian works. Among these works are The Hunger Games trilogy, by Suzanne Collins, and Attack on Titan, by Hajime Isayama. In this thesis, I explored both texts in the light of 1984, and it became evident that they follow the patterns and integrate elements from the Orwellian dystopia. Then, I explored the character development in all three works, and it showed how the literary medium, the style of the author, and the purpose of the character affect the method and depth of development.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	1
ABSTRACT .....	2
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	6
<i>1984 VS. THE HUNGER GAMES: AN ORWELLIAN</i> FOUNDATION .....	12
A. Geographical and Socioeconomical Layout .....	13
B. Language as a Tool for Manipulation.....	15
C. Violence and Fluidity of Morality .....	18
D. Media and Propaganda.....	20
E. Orwellian Surveillance in Panem .....	24
ISAYAMA’S DYSTOPIA: ATTACK ON TITAN.....	28
A. Geographical and Socioeconomical Layout .....	29
B. Altering History and Censorship .....	31
C. Manipulation of Public Opinion, Media, and Propaganda .....	34
D. Social and Political Issues and Parallelism.....	39
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: NOVEL VS. MANGA.....	43
A. 1984: One-Dimensional Character Serving as a Lens .....	44
B. The Hunger Games Trilogy: Main Character Development that Compliments the Dystopia .....	46
C. Attack on Titan: Thorough Development of a Wide Range of Characters .....	52
CONCLUSION .....	59

APPENDIX I .....	61
APPENDIX II.....	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	67

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	
1. Isayama, Ch. 99, pp. 23 .....	38
2. Isayama, Ch. 99, pp. 24 .....	38
3. Isayama, Ch. 100, pp. 83 .....	38
4. Isayama, Ch. 100, pp. 9 .....	38
5. Isayama, Ch. 70, pp. 41 .....	54
6. Isayama, Ch. 102, pp. 8 .....	54
7. Isayama, Ch. 100, pp. 27 .....	55
8. Isayama, Ch. 103, pp. 30 .....	55
9. Isayama, Ch. 77, pp. 19 .....	58
10. Isayama, Ch. 77, pp. 12 .....	58



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*1984* is a dystopian novel in which Orwell presents his vision of a world under totalitarian rule. This dystopia has been the steppingstone to many more works that followed it not only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. *The Hunger Games* trilogy, by Suzanne Collins, and *Attack on Titan* by Hajime Isayama, are among the dystopias that carry a lot of elements and themes from *1984*. However, only one of these two works so far has been labeled as a dystopia by scholars, and that is *The Hunger Games*. Thus, in this thesis I will delve into the dystopian aspects of *Attack on Titan* and prove that it belongs to the dystopian genre.

Dystopia is defined as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived” (Sargent 9). The term itself was coined by John Stuart Mill who used it in a speech he gave at the House of Commons in 1868. However, just like utopian literature, dystopian literature was present before the term existed. For example, French author Émile Souvestre published his book *The World as It Shall Be* in 1846 in which he presented a dark futuristic vision of a world of that is ruled by consumerism, mechanized, and plagued by greed and mental illness.

The twentieth century became known as the golden era of dystopian literature. According to Tom Moylan, a literary and cultural critic, dystopian literature in the twentieth century was based on “A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life” (Moylan xi). For

instance, Orwell's *1984* is heavily loaded with these elements as Orwell refers to a dark past and reflects on a dark present to warn from an even darker future.

In the early twentieth century, dystopian fiction focused on how the bourgeoisie are capable of perpetuating their power using subtle methods. Later on, the social and political chaos in Germany in addition to the economic collapse that led to the rise of fascism in the 1920s, resulted in the production of dystopian literature in German society as well. In post-revolutionary Russia, the genre became popular because of the social and cultural environment following the massive changes that the Soviet society was experiencing (Booker 25). During this time, there was a rise in the production of dystopian literature in the West, especially in America. This dystopian trend was caused by a number of historical developments at the time including nuclear weaponization, the cold war between America and the Soviet Union, and cultural crisis in America. Thus, dystopian literature has always been shaped by its surrounding sociopolitical circumstances.

The end of the twentieth century involved major restructuring of the economy, political opportunism, and cultural implosion. Consequently, dystopian literature became "less driven by extremes of celebration or despair, more open to complexities and ambiguities, and more encouraging of new riffs of personal and political maneuvers" (Moylan 182). Dystopian novels here start to deviate from their "classical cousins" (Moylan 182). Thus, new works that focus on new themes emerged such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is considered one of the first feminist dystopias, and *Fight Club* which involves mental health and toxic masculinity. This shows that dystopian literature is always changing and shifting due to its connection to its current reality while still holding on to elements from the past. The 21<sup>st</sup> century also had, and

continues to have, its share of political and economic changes and conflicts. In addition to that, the 21<sup>st</sup> century also witnessed an increased awareness of previously marginalized and stigmatized topics. Thus, dystopian works in the 21<sup>st</sup> century managed to integrate sociopolitical critiques, staying true to their “classical cousins” by necessity.

As seen throughout the history of dystopian literature, the works that belong to this genre have always served as a reflection and critique of the sociopolitical situation of their times. Moreover, they served as a forewarning of the consequences of the current situation on the future of the region. Thus, dystopias such as Orwell’s *1984* were viewed as some sort of prophecy and analyzed as such. Baccolini and Moylan gave many examples of such dystopias including Orwell’s *1984* and stated that “the dystopian imagination has served as a prophetic vehicle, the canary in a cage, for writers with an ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued, turn our contemporary world into the iron cages portrayed in the realm of utopia’s underside” (Baccolini and Moylan 2). Intriguingly, the critiques and warnings that the authors present in dystopian literature are never delivered in a direct manner; instead, they are buried underneath layers of science fiction.

The close ties between dystopia and science fiction led to the placement of the genre under the category of pop culture in a dismissive manner by some critics. However, Andreas Huyssen argued that “it makes little sense in a postmodern cultural environment to maintain categorical distinctions between “serious” literature and popular culture” (Booker 174). This dismissal is further rejected when taking a closer look at dystopian literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite becoming more exclusively a pop culture genre, popular dystopian works in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are worth the attention of

scholars as “serious” literature. Yet in reality dystopian works that belong to pop culture are not getting the attention they deserve. Furthermore, it is worth noting that even before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dystopias have been presented using different literary mediums (Murphy 476). Thus, it may well be argued that even though the dystopian genre is leaning more towards the mainstream in the twenty first century, it still carries the same foundation seen in twentieth century dystopias.

*The Hunger Games* and *Attack on Titan* were both published in the twenty first century, and they are both heavily loaded with dystopian elements including corrupt totalitarian regimes, oppression, censorship, lack of freedom, extreme social and economic class division, surveillance, and more. Both works can be compared to George Orwell’s *1984* as they share a lot of similarities, themes, and elements. George Orwell’s *1984*, which was published in 1949, is one of the prominent dystopias that paved the way for 21st-century dystopias as it continues to be popular to this day. According to Dunder and Pavlovski, “The era of fake news, media manipulation and information wars has been beneficent to the lasting fame and continuous acclaim of George Orwell’s *1984*” (Dunder and Pavlovski 583). *The Hunger Games* and *Attack on Titan* followed through the steps of Orwell’s dystopia and have built new dystopian worlds with a foundation that evidently has Orwellian roots. Moreover, both works gained massive popularity on an international level.

In 2012, Scholastic revealed that the United States alone had 36.5 million copies of *The Hunger Games* trilogy available (Lee, as cited in Connors, 2). Moreover, *The Hunger Games* trilogy maintained its spot on the New York Times bestseller list for more than three years (Scholastic). The trilogy also became the all-time bestselling books on Amazon, surpassing the Harry Potter seven-volume series (Haq, as cited in

Connors, 2). By the year 2020, the trilogy had already been published in 51 languages (Goodreads). Moreover, the trilogy got its own movie adaptation with four movies being released. According to the New York Times, the first movie was released, it hit a record ticket sale in box office as it reached 155 million dollars in North America alone (Barnes). Thus, *The Hunger Games* trilogy reached a wide audience internationally both in print and on the screens. Moreover, it also captured the attention of scholars, and it was treated as a part of young adult dystopian literature. However, a lot of the articles that were published focused mainly on gender related themes (Baker and Schak, Connors, Pharr and Clark, Woloshyn and Lane, Guanio-Uluru, Toliver, Kirby). Also, even though *The Hunger Games* trilogy has been talked about in the literature as a dystopia, its Orwellian roots have not been highlighted since it has not been closely compared to *1984* yet.

Similarly, *Attack on Titan* gained massive popularity worldwide. It is an award-winning and New York Times- bestselling manga that became a sensation in pop culture (Kodansha). Moreover, Universal Studios theme park in Japan opened an *Attack on Titan* themed attraction. Also, the biggest *Attack on Titan* gallery will be brought to the 2021 NYC anime convention (Kodansha). The anime adaptation of *Attack on Titan* also became globally popular just like the manga. For instance, according to Parrot Analytics, between January 31 and February 6 of the current year 2021, *Attack on Titan* had 110.5 times the demand of the average series in the US, thus making it the most demanded series in the United States (Parrot Analytics). Thus, *Attack on Titan* has left its mark over the 11 years it took to release all the volumes and complete the manga. Yet, despite reaching such a wide audience and despite being loaded with dystopian elements, sociopolitical critiques, and parallelisms, *Attack on Titan* did not receive

proper attention from scholars in the domain of dystopia yet, and perhaps that is due to its recent completion.

Moreover, it is worth noting the authors' inspirations behind the three dystopias discussed in this thesis. In Anime NYC convention, Isyama revealed that the idea behind *Attack on Titan* was inspired by a painting titled "Kaiju" by Kiyoshi Yamashita, and then he researched the German history going as far as 2,000 years ago (Anime News Network). On the other hand, Suzanne Collins got inspired by real footage from the Iraqi war to write *The Hunger Games* trilogy (New York Times). As for 1984, according to Booker, "George Orwell's *1984* takes its energy from the ability to look back on the worst horrors of the Stalin years-with a side glance at Hitler as well" (Booker 69).

In chapter 2, I will present a comparison between *1984* and *The Hunger Games* to showcase how the latter has the same dystopian foundation. I will focus on the elements of language, media and propaganda, surveillance, fluidity of morals, and geographical and socioeconomical layout. As for chapter 3, I will compare *Attack on Titan* to *1984* and *The Hunger Games* to highlight the dystopian nature of *Attack on Titan*, the themes, and the elements present in it. Finally, in chapter 4, I will discuss the character building in *Attack on Titan* in comparison to the other two dystopias. Through this comparison, I will show how manga as a literary medium brings the characters to life and provides the reader with a vivid experience of the dystopian vision presented.

## CHAPTER II

### *1984* VS. *THE HUNGER GAMES*: AN ORWELLIAN FOUNDATION

Along with its popularity, *1984* brought key elements into the dystopian literary works in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the major dystopian works in which these elements can be vividly seen is *The Hunger Games*. This trilogy, written by Suzanne Collins, was published between 2008 and 2010. The books present a post-apocalyptic nation called Panem that is located in North America. Panem is ruled by a totalitarian government led by its tyrannical president, Coriolanus Snow. The nation originally had thirteen districts and the Capitol, but following an uprising of the districts, the Capitol destroyed District 13. Then, the Capitol began to hold the annual Hunger Games in which a girl and a boy between the ages of 12 and 18 are randomly chosen from each district to be placed in an arena. In the arena, the tributes fight to the death until only one survivor remains. *The Hunger Games* are live streamed in all of Panem, and it is mandatory for the people of the 12 districts to watch them. A summary of the three books can be found in Appendix I.

*The Hunger Games* and *1984* have been written for different audiences with the former targeting young adults and the latter targeting adults. Yet, both works have a lot of major themes and elements in common. However, the presentation of these elements and the emphasis on each of them differ between the two literary works. This can be attributed to the difference in the sociopolitical context during which they were written. For instance, violence as a form of entertainment is a major theme in *The Hunger Games*, while in *1984* it is a secondary detail. On the other hand, both works showcased the undermining and negligence that impoverished zones suffer from. The parallelism is

evident as both totalitarian regimes presented in the works use media, propaganda, and surveillance to maintain their control over their whole nation. Moreover, we see the different ways in which language can be utilized to manipulate and oppress people. Thus, this comparison between these two dystopias will show how the works from the 21st century that this thesis focuses on carry an Orwellian foundation, especially since this comparison between *1984* and *The Hunger Games* has not been shed light on in previous scholarship. So, highlighting this Orwellian foundation of *The Hunger Games*, will further prove that *Attack on Titan* is also a dystopia since it shares a similar Orwellian foundation to a popular 21<sup>st</sup> century work that has already been categorized as a dystopia.

#### **A. Geographical and Socioeconomical Layout**

The geographical and socioeconomical layout of *1984* and *The Hunger Games* are central to the dystopian vision and the shaping of the dystopia as whole. These two elements play a major role in setting up the dystopia and methods through which the regimes can maintain their control and power over the citizens.

The element of isolation is commonly used in the dystopian genre, and it is present in both *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. In *1984*, the people of Oceania are isolated from the rest of the world, meaning Eastasia and Eurasia. This forces the people to depend on the information provided by the party to shape their ideas and opinions on the two other supercontinents. Thus, this maintains the notion of the self-versus the unknown other that is to be feared and hated because exposing people of Oceania to the people outside their nation can lead to acceptance of the other upon recognizing that they normal citizens just like themselves. This in turn can loosen the grip of the Party on the people



since this grip was established using this fear and hatred towards the other. As for the socioeconomical layout, the Party divided Oceania into three levels. First there is the inner party, which consists of 2% of the whole population, and they are the elites. Then, there is the outer party, which is considered the industrial portion of the population, and last there is the proles which consist of 85% of the whole population and are deemed not necessary for the structure of Oceania (Orwell, 208). The socioeconomical division in *1984* is significant because through this division the Party can focus all their totalitarian strategies on 15% of the population to control them, since the rest of the population is too impoverished to pose a threat to their power.

In the *Hunger Games*, the geographical and hierarchal layouts among the districts are significant because they play into the notions of isolation and class division which are detrimental to how the regimes in these dystopias rule their people. On the geographical level, the districts are separated by electric fences and heavily armed guards, which makes it extremely difficult for the people of Panem to communicate with anyone outside their districts especially that they do not have access to any communication technology such as phones. The districts are arranged from wealthiest to poorest with District 1 being the wealthiest and District 12 being the poorest. Furthermore, there are also socioeconomic divisions within the districts themselves. This is seen in District 12 where there is a well-defined division between the merchant class and the working class. This further strengthens the control of the Capitol over the districts by weakening the unity of districts internally. According to O'Sullivan, these divisions allow the Capitol to control and regulate the behavior of manageable groups" (O'Sullivan 105). This notion of "divide and conquer" is a strategy used by both the Capitol and the Party. However, the Party takes it one step further and uses it on an

individual level by creating a paranoid and distrusting society in which the citizens are in constant suspicion of each other. Hence, the geographical and socioeconomical layout is fundamental in shaping the way that Oceania and Panem is ruled by the Party and the Capitol.

## **B. Language as a Tool for Manipulation**

To begin with, both totalitarian regimes in *1984* and *The Hunger Games* use language as a tool to control and manipulate people. To control people, one must control language as it is the main tool used to think freely and communicate these free thoughts. Mozaffor Hossain noted in his article that language “forms and determines what and how people think” (Hossain 26). For a totalitarian regime, free thought means giving the people the ability to develop rebellious opinions that go against said regime. Language can be controlled in different ways. For instance, it can be controlled in an explicit direct and even forceful manner, which is the case in Orwell’s *1984*. However, it can also be controlled in an implicit manner by using it as a tool to manipulate the subjects of the totalitarian regime as seen in *The Hunger Games*.

In *1984*, the party controls language in a direct and explicit manner. It introduces Newspeak slowly and integrates it into the citizens’ schema. This updated version of the English language altered and eliminated terms to inhibit people’s ability to have free thoughts. For example, instead of having antonyms for words, they just add a prefix such as “un” to the word. So, instead of using the word “bad”, which has a negative connotation attached to it, they would use the word “ungood” (Orwell 51). According to Jean-Jacques Courtine, language threatens the totalitarian regime, because it is the only aspect of a human that cannot be fully surveilled. Thus, the language had to undergo

what Courtine referred to as “Purification”. In *1984* this purification involves obliterating the language itself as Syme, Winston’s colleague, explains to him:

“You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day.

We’re cutting the language down to the bone” (Orwell 50).

The process of language purification cannot be done abruptly because this sudden shift would make the oppression easy to identify which would backfire on the regime.

Consequently, the party had to take measures to ensure that freedom of thought is surveilled and under control while slowly stripping down the language to the bone. This is where the significance of Syme’s words come into play. What is interesting about his statement is that after he said, “you think” he followed that with “I dare say”, and I believe that this is a subconscious response to the measures that the Party takes, via the Thought police, against those who dare to think freely. Thus, as long as language holds the power of freedom of thought, the citizens are not allowed to think for themselves, which is why a different type of control over language is needed through surveillance and censorship as Newspeak continues to gradually replace the English language. Thus, language is controlled and used to suppress people’s free thoughts explicitly in *1984*.

On the other hand, in *The Hunger Games*, language is used in an implicit manner to manipulate people. The choice of words can be best described as the Capitol’s attempt to gaslight the people of the districts, since gaslighting is a type of psychological manipulation that makes the victim feel at fault by the abuser. Thus, language here is used as a tool to control people but in a subliminal way. This gaslighting is first seen in the speech that the mayor of district 12 gives on the reaping day. The speech is the same every year, and it starts with listing all the natural disasters

and war the occurred in North America and how after that Panem was created. The capitol rose at its center posing as the savior that brought peace and prosperity to the people only for them to unappreciatively rise against the capitol hence leading to “the Dark Days” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins 18). In reality, people who have their rights and needs fulfilled do not have the need to start an uprising. However, the capitol changed the narrative, the way Orwell’s ministry of Truth would, to make it seem like they are the victims who were betrayed by their own people. Thus, it is important to focus on the choice of words here as they deliberately chose to call this historical event “the Dark Days” while highlighting the privilege of peace that Panem was granted prior to the uprising and after the uprising ended all thanks to the Capitol.

Moreover, the Capitol also took it one step further by referring to the treaty that introduced the new laws to Panem, including *The Hunger Games*, following the failed uprising as “the Treaty of Treason” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 18). Using the term “treason” holds a negative connotation that would further solidify the self-victimization that the capitol is trying to pull off. The capitol’s deliberate choice of words can further be observed in the terms they used to label aspects of *The Hunger Games*. For starters, the participants in *The Hunger Games* are called “tributes”, and a tribute is defined as “something paid or contributed as by a subordinate to a superior; an offering or gift rendered as a duty” (Oxford English Dictionary). After all the tributes murder each other as they try to evade inevitable death, one survivor remains. However, this survivor is referred to by the Capitol as “victor” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 19) to give the people a false sense of accomplishment and triumph. Even Katniss highlights the manipulation through language during her conversation with president Snow. He states that if the Capitol “release its grip on the districts for even a short time, the entire

system would collapse” (*Catching Fire*, Collins, 21), and Katniss here is “taken aback by the directness and even the sincerity of this speech. As if his primary concern is the welfare of the citizens” (*Catching Fire*, Collins, 22). The fact that president Snow managed to show sincerity in his speech despite being a dictator in reality speaks volumes on his ability to control the citizens of Panem using his words. This showcases how the Capitol uses language in a very implicit and subliminal manner as a tool to manipulate people. Therefore, even though the use and control of language is subliminal in *The Hunger Games*, playing on language to manipulate people is adopted into the trilogy from Orwell’s *1984*.

### **C. Violence and Fluidity of Morality**

Moving on to the next element, violence as a form of entertainment is present in both dystopias, and it highlights the fluidity of morality. In *1984* it appears as a minor detail. However, in *The Hunger Games*, Collins expands this element and uses it as a central theme. In *1984*, people attend public executions, which take place at the park once every month for entertainment. It is considered a popular event, and even children attend the public hangings. Winston’s neighbor mentions that her 9-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter were acting up because they were disappointed that they are going to miss the hanging (Orwell, 23). Similarly, the people of the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* are highly entertained by the livestreaming of *The Hunger Games*, and even the arenas where *The Hunger Games* take place are preserved for touristic purposes. The citizens of the Capitol also sponsor the tributes that they like, and they send them items that can help them survive in the arena. Bets are even made on who would be the victor as if it is a horse race not a game where a group of 24 young people are forced to

slaughter each other. So, violence as a form of entertainment and fluidity of morality present in *The Hunger Games* is rooted in the Orwellian dystopia.

The fluidity of morality allows people to define what is considered “good” and “evil” on their own terms. According to Ameni Hiloui, this fluidity is used by rulers to enforce their own definition of good and evil onto their people (Hiloui, 581). Using this tool allows the Party and president Snow to manipulate the peoples’ definition of good versus evil based on what suits their interest best. The reconstruction of what is considered moral or immoral influences peoples’ behavior and attitudes toward violent actions that they witness, and the people of the Capitol were subjected to this reconstruction. They believe that they are on the moral side because they are under the umbrella of the moral Capitol that brought peace and prosperity to Panem. This belief is further strengthened through the lavish lifestyle that the Capitol offers its citizens. This type of brainwashing that targets morality leads to dehumanizing the people of the districts from the perspective of the Capitol citizens. Even Effie Trinket, who is in direct contact with the tributes of district 12 as an escort, views district 12 as barbaric (Collins, 74). Thus, people at the Capitol do not have the expected negative response towards watching young people die and instead find enjoyment in it. The people of the Capitol only started showing appropriate reactions when they became the targets following the uprising of the districts as Katniss notes their scared faces, labored breathing, and crying (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 338). Therefore, the regimes in both dystopias make use of the fluidity of morality to dehumanize those deemed as a threat to their power.

#### **D. Media and Propaganda**

Media and propaganda, which are dystopian themes given the power that they provide for the regimes in dystopias, are both heavily used in *1984* and *The Hunger Games* to control and influence people. Propaganda is defined as, “a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”

(Jowett and O’Donnell 1). The term itself usually has a negative connotation.

According to Jowett and O’Donnell, propaganda is often viewed as synonymous to “lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare, brainwashing, and palaver” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2). Thus, the exploitation of media and propaganda, which are dystopian elements, are crucial and central for the regimes in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*.

In *1984*, to assume further control over the citizens of Oceania, the Party uses propaganda extensively. They have complete control over the narrative of every piece of news that is shared with the public, and they feed the minds of the people information to benefit and protect the Party’s existence and authority. To begin with, there is the obvious and most famous pieces of propaganda in *1984*, which are the Party’s slogans:

“BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Orwell, 2)

“WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH” (Orwell, 4)

It is worth noting that the slogans are written in capital letters. The Party uses capital letters to present their slogans in a loud and pompous manner (Hossain 27). It serves to strike fear in the citizens and demonstrate the Party’s power and grandiosity. In

addition, having posters with Big Brother's face looming over the citizens of Oceania everywhere serves the same purpose mentioned before. Another propaganda strategy that the Party uses to brainwash people is an annual national festival they created called "Hate Week" (Orwell, 56). This festival includes military parades, lectures, waxworks, displays, film shows, telescreen programs, songs, sculptures, slogans, faked photographs, and atrocity pamphlets (Orwell, 148).

The aim of Hate week is to push the entire population into a frenzied state of hatred towards either Eurasia or Eastasia depending on who the Party deems as the enemy of Oceania, and towards Emmanuel Goldstein who is supposed to be the leader of a mythical anti-Party group called the "Brotherhood" (Orwell, 13). However, the Party is aware that they need to continuously trigger this hate to keep the people brainwashed and not give them any space to rationalize things. Thus, in addition to Hate week, they also have "Two-Minutes Hate" (Orwell, 11) on a daily basis. These two minutes are enough to trigger a state of immense aggression in the people who participate in it by simply watching footage on the telescreen. Winston notes that "uncontrollable exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room... even the thought of Goldstein produced fear and anger automatically" (Orwell, 13). Winston explains that "a hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledgehammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like and electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic" (Orwell, 14). The people's response towards these events and their behavior truly shows how propaganda and media can successfully brainwash people as they react in a way that can be best described as one being subjected to Pavlovian classical conditioning. For instance, people are so blinded by the Party's



propaganda that after six days of the Hate week passed throughout which the citizens of Oceania frantically directed all the hate they can muster towards Eurasia, the Party decided that Eurasia was no longer the enemy, and Eastasia is. All of the people automatically shifted towards Eastasia without a second thought and without even realizing that this shift just happened. Thus, propaganda as a tool is so powerful that not only does it influence people's thoughts and opinions, but it also affects their whole behavior and emotional state.

In the *Hunger Games*, media and propaganda is used by the Capitol to maintain the dehumanized view of the districts among people of the Capitol and to maintain a sense of fear of the Capitol among the people of the districts. However, media and propaganda in *The Hunger Games* is not used in an aggressive manner like the Party in *1984*. Despite the brutal slaughter that takes place in the arena, the Hunger Games are presented in a festive and entertaining manner, and watching the livestream is mandatory in all of Panem. Since the Capitol managed to present a distorted and dehumanized image of the districts to the people of the Capitol, they respond to these games the way people in real life respond to events such as the World Cup or the Olympics. People from the Capitol wait for the tribute trains to arrive in excitement and cheer for them the way fans would cheer for a football team upon its arrival. Just like Hate Week, the Hunger Games also have extensive preparations including an elaborate and extravagant welcome ceremony for the tributes to be presented to the people of the Capitol, prep teams for the tributes, a huge arena created with high technology to control it, and a large stadium to fit in the people of the Capitol so that they can watch the interviews with the tributes. This is because the Hunger Games are the most important propaganda strategy used by the Capitol to remind the districts of their power

and authority over them, and to keep the people of the Capitol desensitized towards the people of the districts. What is intriguing is that propaganda is also used by the rebels in *Mockingjay*, the third book of the trilogy. Just like president Snow tried to use Katniss to extinguish the fire of the rebellion before it even starts, the rebels decide to use Katniss to push the rebellion further by shooting propaganda videos and hacking the Capitol's mandatory broadcast to air them all over Panem. Plutarch, a former Gamemaker who joined the ranks of the rebels, even suggests carrying on with the romance narrative between Katniss and Peeta which the Capitol was using. Thus, it is evident that propaganda is a crucial tool for the Party in *1984* and for the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* to maintain their power over the citizens.

Control over media is central for the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* to continuously influence the citizens using their own narrative that benefits their agenda. Don Latham and Jonathan M. Hollister drew attention to the parallelism between the media in *The Hunger Games* versus in the real world. According to Latham and Hollister, the trilogy offers a reflection and a critique of the information and media practices of our own society (Latham and Hollister 33). In *The Hunger Games*, the government's survival relies on its ability to terrorize the citizens. However, it also relies on having power over media to manipulate it as they please and to control the flow of information and control the way they are presented to the public. The Victory Tour in *Catching Fire* is a good example. The winners of *The Hunger Games* are obliged to visit all the districts and give scripted speeches in which they thank the districts and the Capitol. President Snow tries to use the Victory Tour to convince the people of the romance narrative between Katniss and Peeta so that the people would not view Katniss's actions in the arena as an act of defiance because that would lead to an

uprising. This shows to what extent the Capitol has control over the narrative and over media as mentioned earlier.

Thus, the similarity between *The Hunger Games* and *1984* becomes more evident upon closely comparing the elements of media and propaganda in both dystopias. As shown in this section, the Party relied heavily on media and propaganda to control the narrative and subsequently control the people, and the Capitol followed in suit.

### **E. Orwellian Surveillance in Panem**

Different strategies are used in *The Hunger Games* to trigger panoptic surveillance among the people of the districts, and these strategies stem from Orwell's *1984*. Latham and Hollister also highlight the use of media to spread the fear of surveillance as a way to control people (Latham and Hollister 40). What Latham and Hollister are referring to includes panoptic surveillance, which is the self-monitoring that people engage in due to the belief that they are being watched all the time. The Capitol uses synoptic surveillance as a tool to activate panoptic surveillance among the people of the districts. Keith O'Sullivan discusses Thomas Mathiesen's concept of "synopticon", which is defined "as a post-panoptic space categorised by the surveillance of the few by the many" (O'Sullivan 107). This type of surveillance is seen in the arena of *The Hunger Games* where all of the tributes' movements are viewed 24/7 by all of Panem. The games showcase the Capitol's technological ability to monitor every person's movement remotely. In addition to that, the Peacekeepers, who act as law enforcement, closely monitor the districts. As a result, the people in the districts practice panoptic surveillance both consciously and subconsciously. For example, Katniss looked over

her shoulder out of fear of someone hearing her after muttering “District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins 6), even though she was outside the fence alone in a forest. She goes on to explain how she used to terrify her mother when she was younger because of the things she would say about District 12 and the Capitol. Thus, when one feels like they are under surveillance, they start to practice self-censorship to avoid “unorthodoxy, the detection of which would be detrimental” (Yeo 53). Hence, the Capitol succeeds in forcing the people into a mental state of continuous self-surveillance using synoptic surveillance through media and oppressive law enforcement personnel.

These types of surveillance stem from the Orwellian type of surveillance which is a theme that is heavily present in *1984*. Thus, it further showcases the Orwellian foundation present in *The Hunger Games*. The Party has continuous surveillance over the people of Oceania via the telescreen, which is constantly broadcasting all of the Party’s propaganda, and doubles as a surveillance tool that keeps an eye on every move and every sound that the citizens make. They also have the Thought Police that monitors the citizens for through crime and eliminates any citizen the commits such a crime. For example, Syme, one of the people working on Newspeak, vanish without a trace and was removed from all records because he understood the Party’s aim behind Newspeak too well. No one dared to even mention him afterwards, and everyone acted as if he never existed. All of this, in addition to the “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Orwell, 2) posters seen everywhere, triggers panoptic surveillance. The citizens will avoid any thoughts that do not conform with the Party’s dogma to avoid the grave consequences that come with violating one of the Party’s rules even though the Party

cannot access the citizens' minds to monitor their thoughts. Thus, panoptic surveillance, seen in *The Hunger Games*, stems from Orwell's presentation of this concept.

Surreptitious surveillance is also present in *1984*, and it would have been interesting to see how the Capitol could have made use of this tool in *The Hunger Games*. This is a method used by the Party to make the suspected person feel like they are in a safe private space to express their thoughts freely and get caught in the act. It is the kind of surveillance that Winston was subjected to in order to reveal what he truly thinks of the Party and Big Brother. He was given a false sense of safety by O'Brien who pretended to be a member of the Brotherhood while in reality he is a spy for the Party. Upon feeling safe, Winston revealed his thoughts on the Party only to end up captured and brainwashed into loving the Party and Big Brother again. However, this type of surveillance did not make an appearance in *The Hunger Games*. Instead, president Snow stuck to synoptic surveillance by constantly reminding Katniss that he is watching her.

Interestingly, surveillance in impoverished areas is not as rigorous as in other areas, and that is seen in both dystopias because poverty is viewed by these regimes as an element that weakens the people. In *The Hunger Games*, District 12 is the poorest district, and in it there are illegal actions happening that are overlooked by Peacekeepers for their own interest. The districts are surrounded by electrocuted fences and citizens are not allowed to go beyond the fence. However, in District 12 they barely get a few hours of electricity, so the fence is not electrocuted most of the time, and Katniss goes into the forest beyond the fence to hunt. Ironically, the Peacekeepers are among her best customers because they have been placed in a district with no access to fresh meat. Similarly, surveillance is not as tight in the slums of London where the proles, which is

what these impoverished people are called, live. Thus, illegal items can be found and purchased, such as the diary that Winston bought, which, if found in his possession, can lead to his execution. Hence, this implies that the Party and the Capitol undermine these underprivileged areas because they believe that poverty is the only tool they need to weaken this population. And as long as they are weakened, they cannot jeopardize the power of the regime.

In conclusion, the presence of similarities between *1984* and *The Hunger Games* is significant. Both of these dystopias capitalize on the use of language, media, propaganda, violence, surveillance, and more by totalitarian regimes to control and oppress their citizens. Despite the few differences in how these elements are presented due to the difference in the sociopolitical context during which they were written, the Orwellian foundation is significantly present in *The Hunger Games*. Therefore, once the next chapter sheds light on the similar foundation present in *Attack on Titan*, its belonging to the dystopia genre will become evident.

## CHAPTER III

### ISAYAMA'S DYSTOPIA: *ATTACK ON TITAN*

*Attack on Titan*, also known as *Shingeki no Kyojin*, is a Japanese manga written and illustrated by Hajime Isayama. It was published between 2009 and 2021, and it consists of 34 volumes. Manga is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of Japanese comics and graphic novels with a wide range of ratings from G rated to R rated. Going back to *Attack on Titan*, it consists of elements and themes that are typically seen in the dystopia genre. This became clear upon comparing it to the two dystopias in this thesis which are considered steppingstones for other dystopian works. *Attack on Titan* shares many elements and themes with *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. The geographical and socioeconomical layout, the alteration in history and censorship, the manipulation of the public opinion and the fluidity of morals, and the sociopolitical critique embedded into the plot all serve to prove that this manga belongs to the dystopia genre.

*Attack on Titan* takes place in a post-apocalyptic world following the rise of giant humanoid creatures called Titans that attack and consume humans. The people have no recollection of their history as the ruling class erased the people's memories of the past. Thus, they do not know from where the Titans emerged, and they believe that they are the only surviving population in the world. They live in confinement behind three massive walls to protect themselves from Titans that continue to exist 100 years after they drove humanity to the brink of extinction. The land is called Paradis Island and is ruled by a monarchy. However, the king, Fritz, is nothing but an image while behind the scenes the real rulers are the corrupt chancellors. The military in Paradis Island is divided into three main divisions and one training division: the Scout

Regiment, also known as Survey Corps, the Military Police Regiment, known to be corrupted, the Garrison Regiment, and the Cadet Corps. The story follows Eren Jaeger, his friends, and the Survey Corps as they battle corruption, uncover the truth, and find themselves at war with a world that they must save. The full summary of the manga can be found in Appendix II.

In this chapter I will be discussing the dystopian elements present in *Attack on Titan* that not only will allow it to be labeled it as a dystopia but also will showcase how his dystopia shares significant similarities with the renowned dystopias, *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. Thus, I will be focusing on geographical and socioeconomical layout, altering history and censorship, manipulation of public opinion, media and propaganda, and social and political issues and parallelism.

### **A. Geographical and Socioeconomical Layout**

As seen in *The Hunger Games* through the distribution of the districts and their isolation, the geographical layout of the dystopia plays a significant role in shaping the dystopian vision because it aids the regime in that vision by maintaining their power and authority over the people. Similarly, in *Attack on Titan*, the geographical layout of both Paradis and Marley contribute notably to the dystopian vision.

To begin with, the geographical layout of Paradis aims to isolate the people of Paradis from the outside world. It also aims to divide people according to their socioeconomic class. Both of these aims are also present in the geographical layouts of *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. Paradis is made of three circular walls: Wall Maria, Wall Rose, and Wall Sheena. Maria is the outermost wall, Rose is the middle wall, and Sheena is the inner wall. The way Paradis is constructed brings to mind Tommaso Campanella's



utopia, *The City of the Sun*. However, Isayama's work is far from utopian. These walls are supposedly meant to protect what remains of humanity from titans. In reality, these walls aim to isolate the people of Paradis, who are actually a race called Eldians, from the rest of humanity and trick them into believing that living behind the walls and being ruled by the monarchy is their only option to survive. Thus, with no way out, the people easily submit to the ruling class. Pixis, the Garrison's chief official, says to Erwin that "even under these most severe circumstances there have been no riots. It's because the king, the bureaucrats, and the public share a common fate – they've all been cornered inside these walls" (Isayama, ch. 55, pp. 11). Interestingly, the upper-class, which consists of noblemen and the royals, live in the district behind the inner wall, which is considered the safest area. The rest of the citizens are divided between the outer and the middle wall, except for people that belong to the lowest socioeconomic class, they live in an underground district, isolated from the rest of Paradis. This is reminiscent of Orwell's socioeconomical layout in *1984* as it is similar to the concept of inner party, outer party, and proles. The excessive privileges of the rich and the geographical marginalization of the impoverished is seen in all three dystopias, *1984*, *the Hunger Games*, and *Attack on Titan*.

Moving on to the geographical layout of Marley, it is also designed in a manner that showcases the element of isolation and dehumanization. They have areas that are designated for Eldians who remained outside Paradis to live in them. These areas are called internment zones, and they are similar to the districts in *The Hunger Games* which are isolated from the Capitol and from each other. The Capitol people's lack of exposure to the district people makes it easy for the Capitol to dehumanize the people of the districts. Similarly, Eldians are imprisoned in these zones, mistreated, discriminated

against, and isolated from the rest of society. This geographical layout serves to shunt Eldians in order to reinforce the stereotypical view of them as the evil other. Just like the party in *1984* strengthens its grip over the people using the fear and hate of the evil other, Marley uses that same strategy by making Eldian isolated, feared, and hated. Furthermore, the notion of isolating the evil other geographically is not only restricted to Marley. All the nations in the world of *Attack on Titan* have internment zones for Eldians. This shows Marley's influence on how other nations view and treat Eldians. Thus, the isolation of Eldians all over the world aims to limit the world's exposure to Eldians and maintain this dehumanized image in the minds of people. Thus, the notion of dehumanization is present in all the three dystopias discussed in this thesis, with the root of this element being in Orwell's *1984*.

## **B. Altering History and Censorship**

One of the domains that the dystopian regime needs to control to maintain power over the citizens is history and information. This is seen in *1984* where the Party alters history to fit their narrative and control all the information being released to the public. This is also seen in *The Hunger Games* where Panem's history is presented from the Capitol's gaze. Similarly, alteration and omission of history and censorship of information are present in *Attack on Titan*. This is yet another dystopian element that makes an appearance in the manga, which further supports my claim that *Attack on Titan* is in fact a dystopia.

In *Attack on Titan*, alteration of history to maintain control over the people is one of the central themes in the manga which adds to the evidence of it being a dystopia. The alteration of history is a dystopian element present in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*, and as discussed before it is used as a tool by the regime to control people by controlling the

narrative. The people of Paradis have very limited knowledge about their history, which they learn at school. All they know is that 107 years ago, the human race was about to go extinct because of titans, and the ancestors of the people of Paradis built three walls to protect what remains of humanity. Moreover, there were no records left from the day before the titans attacked (Isayama, ch. 2; Isayama, ch. 55). In reality, this vague history was fabricated by the rulers after altering the people's memories. Thus, alteration of history is heavily presented in this dystopia as the very existence of the world in it is centered around this altered history.

Alteration of memories is a fictional tool present in *Attack on Titan* that is used to control people and manipulate them. One can argue that through brainwashing, the Party in 1984 also has its own version of control over memories, which is proven by how the people shifted their hate from Eurasia to Eastasia without even remembering that they have been throwing all their hate and aggression towards Eurasia for the past six days (Orwell, 180). In *Attack on Titan*, the memories of the people of Paradis have been erased using the power of the founding titan that was in the hands of Karl Fritz, who was the king of the Eldian empire before it fell. This is where alteration of history comes into play again. In reality, Eldia used to be an empire that ruled most of the world using the nine titans as weapons of mass destruction. This empire was totalitarian and brutal in its ruling, it led to a massive death toll and the perishing of countless cultures and races. Eventually, inner conflicts started within the empire, fueled by hunger for power. This gave Marley, one of the nations that was oppressed by Eldia, an opportunity to rise again. When Karl Fritz became the king of the Eldian empire, he believed that his empire must pay for its crimes, and so he conspired with Marley to bring the empire to its demise. He then took as many Eldian people as he can, confined himself along with them behind the three walls

on the island that became Paradis. Then, he erased all of their memories about the outside world and the empire of Eldia and replaced them with a memory of an apocalyptic event in which titans inexplicably appeared causing humanity to almost perish, with the people of Paradis being the sole survivors. This shows how much of a powerful tool alteration of memories is when it comes to maintaining continuity of power over the people.

Just like the case in *1984*, censorship is used in *Attack on Titan* as a tool to maintain control over the information that should remain hidden from the public to protect the ruling class's power. Intriguingly, those who attempt to seek more information about the truth end up vanishing, which is similar to what the Party did in *1984*. For instance, Erwin Smith, the commander of the Survey Corps, lost his father because he was questioning the history that the royal government presented to the citizens. Erwin recounts when he was a curious child and he asked his father, who was a teacher, about the vague history of Paradis. His father explained to him that "the history texts the royal government distributed were full of mysteries and contradiction" (Isayama, ch. 55, p. 17). He also shared with him his suspicion that the royal government altered the citizens' memories. Since Erwin was a child, he ended up telling his friends about this conversation. The Military Police ended up questioning him about it, and the following day, his father mysteriously died in an accident. Moreover, Armin, one of the main protagonists, lost both of his parents because they made a hot air balloon in an attempt to explore the world outside the walls. They were murdered by the first interior squad of the military police, unbeknownst to Armin. If they were to succeed, they would have discovered that the royal government lied about the extinction of humanity beyond the walls. Thus, the totalitarian regimes need censorship and continuous monitoring over the flow of information to keep the public in the dark and control them easily.

Creating a character that the people can hyperfocus on, positively or negatively, to manipulate them is a strategy used in both dystopias, *1984* and *Attack on Titan*. As mentioned before, the Eldian people in Paradis do not know about their true history. Similarly, the people of Marley and the rest of the world did not know the truth either, but they had a different version of the story fed to them by Marley's regime and a noble Eldian clan called the Tyburs who lived an aristocratic life in Marley while Eldians suffer in the internment zones. Their version of the story talks about a hero from Marley named Helos that defeated the Eldian empire and the undefeatable King Fritz by joining forces with the Tyburs. In reality, Helos does not even exist. This goes to show how those in power have full control over the narrative, and shift in it as needed to serve their agendas. Helos is similar to Emmanuel Goldstein, the supposed leader of the Brotherhood in *1984* whose actual existence is questionable. Though one is idealized and the other is villainized, they are both used for similar manipulative purposes that capitalize on the sense of self vs the evil other. Therefore, the strategy of creating a figure for the people's focus to be centered on is an effective strategy in manipulating people which Orwell used in *1984*, and Isayama brought his own version of this strategy into *Attack on Titan*.

### **C. Manipulation of Public Opinion, Media, and Propaganda**

The alteration of history coupled with media and propaganda gives the regime the ability to control and manipulate public opinion. This is seen in both dystopias, *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. In these two dystopias, media and propaganda play a crucial role in preserving the dictatorship's power over the nation. Although media and propaganda are not a central theme in *Attack on Titan*, they are present in the manga, and the manipulation of people is evident from both regimes involved in the story.

This control over people's thoughts and opinions starts to appear early in the manga. For instance, in chapter one, Armin gets beaten up by a boy for saying that "the human race should eventually go to the outside world" (Isayama, Ch. 1. P. 44). He then proceeds to explain that the royal government's policy dictates that even being merely interested in the thought of going to the outside world is a taboo. It is interesting to see children reacting aggressively to any small breach in the royal government's policy because it shows how this sort of control is continuously moving from one generation to the other. This also brings to mind the children in *1984* that are always on the lookout for anyone who opposes the party and are excited to watch people get hanged (Orwell, 23).

Control of media is central in dystopian literature, so it makes sense for this element to make an appearance in *Attack on Titan*. In terms of media in Paradis Island, there is only one newspaper called Berg Newspaper. The royal government has full control over what gets published in it, which is fitting for a dystopian regime. Peaure, a new journalist at the Berg, described the newspaper as "the King's PR department" (Isayama, Ch. 60, P. 17), and proceeded to add that before he started working at the newspaper, he used to believe "all of this fiction" (Isayama, Ch. 60, P. 18). This conversation came in response to the royal government's decision to publish a story that portray the Survey Corps as the villains that attack innocent citizens, and the Interior Brigade as the heroes that laid their lives to save and protect these citizens. The Survey Corps were getting closer to the truth and to possibly exposing the royal government's corruption. Thus, the royal government decided to use the power they have over the media to incite the people to turn them against the Survey Corps and justify the military attack against it. This control over media is seen in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. The Ministry of Truth in *1984* is responsible for publishing newspapers and has full control over the

information presented to the people (Orwell, 43). Similarly, the Capitol is the only source of news seen in the Hunger Games trilogy. For instance, before the rebels could hack into the Capitol's broadcast, all of Panem was getting news about the rebellion from the Capitol's perspective (*Mockingjay*, Collins 294). Thus, the regimes in these three dystopias are shifting the narrative and presenting false information that influences people's opinion. This shows how control of media is a key element in dystopian literature.

Manipulation of people is yet another dystopian element presented in *Attack on Titan*. The manipulation of Eldians living outside the walls starts at a young age to continue producing submissive generations that do not pose a risk of rising against Marley. Marley manages to portray Eldians as devils to the whole world, including Eldians themselves. Eldian parents in internment zones are forced by Marley to spoon feed their children information about their ancestors' sins, just like the mayor of District 12 in the Hunger Games is forced to remind his people of their ancestors' sin of rebellion on yearly basis (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 18). Eldians tell their own children that devil blood runs through their veins (Isayama, Ch. 86. P. 20). For example, Gabi, who is an Eldian child training to become a warrior for Marley, had a conversation with Kaya, another Eldian child living behind the walls. In this conversation, she communicates her belief that Eldians should continue to pay for the crimes of the Eldian empire. When Kaya questions her beliefs, Gabi keeps on parroting the same argument, which is that their ancestors committed terrible crimes and killed a lot of people. She does not have another argument, nor did she have the opportunity to form any sort of opinion on the matter other than what was ingrained in her mind at a young age.

Moreover, the power of propaganda as a tool commonly used in dystopias is seen in *Attack on Titan* more vividly due to the literary medium it is present in. Marley uses propaganda to manipulate other countries as well into believing that Eldians are devils that must be treated as enemies. Willy Tybur, the head of the Tybur family, showcases the power of propaganda through an event that he organized and invited rulers to it from all countries to convince them to go into war against Paradis. The event involved extravagant preparation that brings to mind the preparations for Hate week in *1984* and the preparations for games in *The Hunger Games*. The most significant part of this event in terms of propaganda is the theatrical reenactment of the events leading up to the defeat of the Eldian empire, which includes of course the gruesome crimes of Eldia. This strategy was used to trigger an emotional response from the audience for them to become susceptible and easily influenced by Willy Tybur who is narrating the events during the enactment (Isayama, Ch. 99 – 100). I believe that the use of Aristotle's theory of persuasion as a tool for effectively delivering this elaborate piece of propaganda to the audience is evident. This theory includes ethos, pathos, and logos. Willy Tybur establishes his authority and is already seen as a credible source of information to the audience due to his reputation, which falls into the Ethos element in the theory. However, to add to that he uses his charisma and body language to effectively maintain this aura of trustworthiness. For instance, (see figure 1 & 2) he bows humbly but confidently to the audience, and then starts his speech with his arms and his palms open which indicate honesty and openness (Pease, 28). The second element, pathos, relies on the audience's emotional state, which has been already targeted by the reenactment and left in a vulnerable receptive state. Additionally, the mood and the tone of the speech must appeal to "the passions or the will of the audience" (Demirdogen, 192) to persuade them



emotionally. Thus, Willy Tybur hardens and softens his facial expressions as needed which influences the mood of the speech (See figures 3 & 4). He also shifts his tone from a calm one to one that holds a sense of danger and urgency to elicit the audience's fear for their own and their nations' safety. Next comes appealing to the intellect of the audience, which is also known as logos, the third element in the theory. Willy Tybur does that by revealing the true history of how the Eldian empire fell and by presenting information on how the military attacks against Paradis have been going. Thus, the reader experiences how powerful propaganda can be not only through words but also through visual art that showcases in great detail how the person in power uses propaganda effectively.



Figure 2 - Isayama, Ch. 99, pp. 23



Figure 1 - Isayama, Ch. 99, pp. 24



Figure 3 - Isayama, Ch. 100, pp. 8



Figure 4 - Isayama, Ch. 100, pp. 9

The fluidity of morality, which is present in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*, is also present in *Attack on Titan*. This fluidity is what allows Marley to influence public opinion not only on a national level but on an international level as well. Thus, they manage to tamper with people's definition of good versus evil based on what suits their interest and serves their agenda. This is seen in the dehumanizing and demonizing of Eldian people as the world continues to hold the new generations accountable for crimes that they were not even born yet when they were committed. As mentioned earlier, Eldians living in internment zones are also on Marley's side of morality and following its logic. This is crucial for Marley to ensure that the Eldian empire does not get a chance to rise again. More importantly, they also did so to maintain full control over the individuals that inherit the powers of the seven titans that Marley took over after the Eldian empire fell because only Eldians have the ability to possess the powers of titans. Thus, fluidity of morality is used and abused in all three dystopias to dehumanize and villainize the other.

Hence, in *Attack on Titan*, the concept of manipulation of people is heavily present. Moreover, media and propaganda are used as tools by the rulers to serve their agendas. Furthermore, the rulers also take advantage of the fluidity of morality to bend and mold people's definition of what is moral. All of this aligns with the dystopian patterns and elements seen in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. This further proves the dystopian nature of *Attack on Titan*.

#### **D. Social and Political Issues and Parallelism**

*Attack on Titan* is loaded with social and political issues seen in both Marley and Paradis. Salam Abbas Mahmoud stated that *Attack on Titan* "is a bestselling manga that treated dramatically some political and social issues" (Mahmoud, 5048). The dystopia genre is

often loaded with critiques, and reflections on social and political issues in a subtle manner. In addition, dystopias often include parallelism with events or aspects of the real world. Thus, it is fitting for *Attack on Titan* to have its own share of said issues and parallelisms with the real world.

To begin with, corruption as a dystopian element is present in all three dystopias. For example, in *1984*, the Inner Party live a luxurious life and has exclusive access to goods that none of the citizens have access to (Orwell, 168). In *The Hunger Games*, the people of the Capitol also live a lavish life with access to luxurious foods and items while the people of the districts live in poverty (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 65). Similarly, there are three types of corruption in *Attack on Titan*: government corruption, military corruption, and civilian corruption. Starting with the royal government, a supposed descendant of the Fritz family is presumably the king of Paradis as far as the citizens know. However, in reality he is nothing but a puppet that is not even from the Fritz family, and the rule is in the hands of four wealthy noblemen. Their true corruption is revealed when they are given false information that the second wall has been breached, and they order the Military Brigade to shut all the gates and not let any refugees come in. Hence, they decided to prioritize their wealth over saving the citizens (Isayama, Ch. 61). Similar to the royal government that they serve, the military brigade in Paradis is also corrupt. For instance, they are seen getting drunk on duty and throwing their responsibilities on novice soldiers (Isayama, Ch. 1 & 31). Moreover, corrupt civilians are also present in Paradis. When titans attacked one of the districts, a greedy merchant blocked the evacuation gate with a carrier full of merchandise which slowed down the evacuation process and increased the death toll among the Survey Corps (Isayama, Ch. 5). Thus, the society in *Attack on Titan* reflects the corruption of its rulers, and its rulers represent their

society. The representation of corruption might slightly differ from one dystopia to another. However, that does not take away from the significance of having a pattern of corruption present in all three dystopias discussed in this thesis, which showcases the similar dystopian foundation they all share.

Moving on, there is a striking parallelism between the Marley-Eldia dynamic and the Nazi-Jew dynamic. Starting with the smallest detail, armbands, it is well known that the Nazis used to make Jews wear armbands to identify them as Jews. Similarly, Marley forces all Eldians to wear armbands for the same reason and are heavily punished if caught not wearing it. Moreover, the Marleyan government does not allow Eldians to have jobs that allow them to climb up the socioeconomic ladder. Similarly, Nazis did not allow Jews to go into careers that can influence the society such as education and politics. Moreover, both the Marley and the Nazi governments used brutality against the people they oppressed (Mahmoud, 5054). Mahmoud in his article mentions the power of political speech on people which is a tool used by both the Marleyan and Nazi governments. This tool is used to ignited hate and to justify the government's attitude and actions toward the oppressed other. Furthermore, since all the titan science that Marley has comes from Eldians, this implies that Marley used Eldians as experiment subjects just like the Nazis did to the Jews. This goes back to the concept of reflecting on and critiquing political and social issues in the dystopian genre. Just like *1984* reflects on the horrors of Stalin and Hitler (Booker, 69), *Attack on Titan* also reflects on the horrors of Hitler.

As it has been demonstrated, *Attack on Titan* evidently belongs to the dystopian genre. Dystopia is a unique genre on its own. Thus, it has patterns and elements that make it identifiable across different literary mediums. The dystopian regimes presented

in dystopias typically share a pattern of taking control of language, history, memory, and representation. These regimes tend to use tools such surveillance, censorship, manipulation, propaganda, and violence to maintain control of the people. These are the regimes seen in *1984*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Attack on Titan*.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: NOVEL VS. MANGA

The dystopia genre is primarily seen in novels, and these works have their own method of character development. Orwell in *1984* made his protagonist, Winston, a one-dimensional character that serves as a lens for the reader to see Orwell's dystopian world through him. On the other hand, *The Hunger Games* mainly focuses on the character development of the main characters. As a manga, *Attack on Titan* offers the reader an in-depth look into a wide range of complex dynamic characters. Thus, in this section, I will be delving into the characters of the three dystopias and showcasing how manga as a literary medium approaches character development differently.

The term "manga" was coined by Katsushika Hokusai in 1814, and it consists of two ideographs that mean "whimsical" and "picture" (Orbaugh 114). However, according to Orbaugh, some have traced back the origins of manga to the twelfth century. Manga has become Japan's most significant artistic export culturally and economically (Orbaugh 112). Going back in time, manga was extensively used as a tool for propaganda between the mid-1930s and 1945. At the time, Japan was at war with China, and that led to increase in censorship on the Japanese side as it was extremely hard for artists to produce anything that is not supportive of the government (Orbaugh 115). Currently, there are a variety of genres in manga, but the most common genres are science fiction and fantasy. Interestingly, manga uses a lot of science fiction elements from other media and culture. However, it also integrates thematic and ideological elements that "derive from the specific history of modern Japan and its relations with other nations in an explicitly international context a fact that may explain its ever-

growing popularity in an increasingly globalized world” (Orbaugh 121-122). As a matter of fact, manga has been directly linked with the development of science fiction as a genre in Japan (Orbaugh 112). The format of manga and the artistic tools used in it allows the author to create a thoroughly built vivid world inhabited by complex well-developed characters. This makes it an effective literary medium for dystopias to be presented and delivered to the reader through an immersive reading experience.

Thus, this chapter will start with a close reading of the one-dimensional character development in *1984* and the complex character development in *The Hunger Games*. Then, the character development in *Attack on Titan* will be thoroughly discussed to showcase how manga as a literary medium further enhances the development of characters and the reader’s experience.

#### **A. 1984: One-Dimensional Character Serving as a Lens**

In *1984*, the protagonist, Winston Smith, is the eyes of the reader in the book. He is an everyman type of character, which means he is an ordinary man going about his daily life. Interestingly, after reviewing the literature, there were no scholarly articles written about Winston’s character. This shows how his character does not add much to the dystopian vision that countless scholars took interest in. Perhaps the design of his character did contribute to the success of the book though. This can be attributed to his lack of complexity, which makes it easier for the reader to pay their full attention to the dystopian vision that Orwell is presenting. Winston does manage to push the readers to become invested in his daily life due to the information that the reader learns about Oceania and the Party through him.

The reader does not often get emotion or facial expressions from him to connect with and even his tone does not change much. For instance, when he speaks, his dialogue is usually followed by only one descriptive word to reflect his tone such as “said Winston patiently”, “said Winston vaguely”, and “said Winston, fascinated” (Orwell, 90, 94, 95). Winston finally shows more emotions when he is faced with a traumatic event at the end of the book where he gets caught, tortured, and brainwashed by the party using fear-based strategies. For example, he begs O’Brien to direct this torture towards Julia as he screams “Do it to Julia!... I don’t care what you do to her. Tear her face off...Not me! Julia!” (Orwell, 286). This, however, could be intentional to showcase the effect of the Party’s oppression on the individual as he becomes used to masking his emotions and expressions for his own safety.

Hence, Winston is mostly a static character throughout the book as he barely goes through any changes in the story. He is introduced at the beginning of the book as a mundane character who is against the Party, and he continues on that same flat line all through the book up until the end when he gets brainwashed. The only additional element to Winston’s character is the romantic element after meeting Julia. This made him go from keeping his opposition towards the party to himself to sharing it with Julia, his love interest, and O’Brien, the inner party member that tricked Winston into revealing said opposition. However, aside from that, the element of romance did not change or add any more depth to Winston’s personality as he focused more on his physical lust towards her as it is stated that “she had become a physical necessity, something that he not only wanted but felt that he had a right to” (Orwell, 139). Moreover, it is worth noting that Winston is the most developed character in the book. The reader does not get the chance to delve into the depth of other characters in the



book as they only know about the characters what their lens, Winston, knows. However, even Winston is presented from the third-person perspective of the narrator which creates an additional barrier between the character and the reader.

*1984* is a dystopia built in a detailed and complex manner. However, the same cannot be said about its protagonist. Despite being the main character, Winston is such a single layered character that his existence does not add much or take away much from Orwell's dystopian vision. However, his character does serve its purpose of offering the reader an insight into this dystopia effectively.

### **B. *The Hunger Games* Trilogy: Main Character Development that Compliments the Dystopia**

Moving on to *The Hunger Games*, since it is a young adult novel, the targeted audience needs to connect with the characters on a personal and emotional level for the dystopian vision to come through. Also, the targeted audience, young adults, relates a lot to romance. According to Michael Cart, contemporary romance is popular among readers, and that is why the most popular YA authors focus on this subgenre in their work (Cart, 115). So, Collins capitalized on that element in terms as one of the main themes in the trilogy to attach the readers to the characters, which in turn allows the characters to serve their purpose. Collins wanted the readers to connect with the characters because she is trying to send a message to adolescents. As Roberta Seelinger Trites states, "Collins believes that she is writing about war in an effort to teach teenagers about its violence and the problem with being a voyeur during times of war" (Trites, 16). Moreover, the literary medium being a trilogy gave Collins a lot of space for character development. Thus, the main characters in *The Hunger Games* are well fleshed out and serve their purpose efficiently.

Katniss, the protagonist, and Peeta, the deuteragonist, are complex and fully rounded characters. They are both dynamic characters that experience a lot of changes throughout the Trilogy. Katniss and Peeta face internal and external conflicts and go through multiple behavioral and emotional changes. As the reader goes through these changes along with Katniss and Peeta, an emotional connection is established with these characters. This kind of connection allows the reader to live through Katniss and Peeta's experience which makes the consequences of living in a dystopian world more vivid, which in turn further adds depth to the dystopian vision.

Katniss's character development showcases the effects of the regime's oppression and dictatorship and the effect of all of the traumatizing events associated with the regime on her. Katniss at the beginning is portrayed as the breadwinner and the protector of her family which consists of her mother and younger sister. After becoming a tribute, Katniss goes through significant character growth as she goes from being the person who is trying to follow president Snow's orders to save herself and her loved ones, to the person who is demanding to execute Snow herself. Unlike Winston who is going about his life without getting involved in any traumatic experiences up until the end when he is captured, Katniss goes through multiple traumas that play a key role in the shift in character that she experiences. Interestingly, each trauma seems to serve a purpose in terms of Katniss's character development. Her father's death in a mine accident and her mother's emotional unavailability pushed her to step up at a young age as head of the house and become resilient. The long-term effect of her father's death on her character and mental health is seen in the first and the third book. In the first book, *The Hunger Games*, she says, "five years later, I still wake up screaming for him to run" (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 5). In *Mockingjay*, she has a hard time accepting Gale's

idea of blowing up a former mine full of people in District 2, and the whole event triggers her as it unfolds, and she asks herself “what did we just do?” (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 2009). This sort of continuity makes the character more realistic and allows the reader to relate to her on a personal level as many teenagers go through traumatic experiences themselves.

Furthermore, Katniss’s near-death experiences in the games and the threatening of her loved ones made her submissive towards Snow’s commands. The death of Rue and Cinna sparked a sense of rebelliousness in her which became even stronger following the bombing of District 12 and the torturing and brainwashing of Peeta at the hands of the Capitol. Katniss achieves a new level of maturity and awareness following the bombing of civilians at the Capitol which leads to her sister’s death. According to Trites, “Katniss’ awareness of the ethical stakes increases when, in *Mockingjay*, she realizes that Gale is using human nature against itself to design brutally lethal weapons” (Trites, 17). This is when she realizes that Coin, the president of District 13 who appointed herself as the new president of Panem, is an oppressive dictator with a hunger for power just like Snow. In other words, Katniss realized that all those seeking power are corrupted by it. Thus, Katniss, who already reached a point where she is no longer concerned with saving herself, ended up assassinating Coin and attempting to commit suicide after that.

So, in terms of character development, Katniss comes a long way from being the person who wants no trouble with the Capitol and just wants to get out of the arena alive to carry on with her life to becoming the face of the rebellion and forcing her way into the frontlines of the battle. Interestingly, towards the end of the trilogy Katniss gets one last moment of character development. She loses this sense of empowerment and

resorts to living a peaceful life as a “sad and traumatized adult” (Trites, 25) along with Peeta away from everything. According to Trites, “she has become this shadow of herself because the corruption of two governments has succeeded in making her wish to self-efface her own potential power” (Trites, 26). Thus, by the end of the trilogy, Katniss no longer resembles herself as all what is left of the powerful character that the readers were introduced to at the beginning of the trilogy is an empty shell. This showcases vividly the outcomes of being a pawn in a corrupt and oppressive regime’s game.

What makes Katniss’s character growth journey even more engaging is that Collins made it a point to always keep the reader in the loop of Katniss’s emotional state at almost every moment throughout all three books. Some examples can be seen below:

“Imagining my home makes me ache with loneliness” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 54)

“I can’t help it, I’m hyperventilating now” (*The Hunger Games*, Collins, 193)

“I stand there, feeling broken and small” (*Catching Fire*, Collins, 61)

“Feeling the smile that’s so wide it must look like a grimace” (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 27)

“I let my anger propel me into my greatest demand” (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 40)

These quotes are a sample of the wide array of emotions that Katniss showcases such as melancholy, panic, helplessness, happiness, relief, anger, and much more. Unlike the case with *1984* where the reader gets a very shallow insight into Winston’s emotional state, in *The Hunger Games* the reader gets to vividly experience Katniss’s different emotional states due to Collins’s detailed descriptions and choice of words.

Similarly, Peeta, previously a sweet baker boy, also goes through so many experiences that influence his character’s growth. His personality becomes stronger, and

he starts to present an empowered persona as he matures, only for his progress to go to waste after getting brainwashed by the Capitol using fear conditioning and a certain venom. This allowed the Capitol to reprogram Peeta's mind and memories for him to view Katniss as an enemy that must be killed. This is similar to the fear-based brainwashing that Winston got subjected to in 1984 which ended with him absent mindedly loving Big Brother. However, unlike Winston, with Peeta his story does not end there. The reader follows Peeta through his journey of healing as the character painfully goes through a phase of having to question what is real and what is not real. For example:

Peeta: "Most of the people from Twelve were killed in the fire."

District 13 Soldier: "Real..."

Peeta: "The fire was my fault"

District 13 Soldier: "Not real..." (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 272).

Thus, just like Katniss, Peeta becomes a shadow of himself, and by the end of the book he also ends up being a disempowered traumatized adult.

Aside from Peeta and Katniss, only two side characters showcased relatively significant character development, Haymitch and Gale. Haymitch, Katniss and Peeta's mentor, went from being an alcoholic who is intoxicated all the time to becoming protective of Katniss and Peeta, one of the main pillars in their support system, and part of the rebellion. As for Gale, he is the typical masculine figure, and he is Katniss's best friend. Like Katniss, Gale shows his hatred toward the capitol from the beginning in the first book. At first, he wishes to runaway from the district and take Katniss with him. However, as the story progresses and the rebellion starts, Gale immediately joins their ranks. His character development is seen in the deterioration of his morality as he

slowly slips into becoming a war criminal, which is a shift in his character that was initially triggered by the Capitol's bombing of District 12. Gale's character showcases the fluidity in morality discussed earlier but from the perspective of a district citizen. He does not only dehumanize the people of the Capitol, but also Districts 1 and 2 since they serve the Capitol. For instance, when the commanders meet to discuss how to take over a mountain full of the Capitol's military equipment, Gale shows no mercy when he suggests blowing it all up and killing the people of District 2 that work inside it in the process. Katniss states that "Gale has no interest in preserving the lives of those in the Nut... this is one of his death traps" (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 203). This is because, as Trites states, "Political power has corrupted Gale" (Trites, 24). Gale, who states that he is following "the same rule book" as president Snow, is also seen devising a plan that would lead to a genocide with a massive death toll among civilians including Capitol children (*Mockingjay*, Collins, 186, 357). This shows how desensitized Gale became towards killing other human beings as he acts on the basis of the cause justifies the means.

While it is interesting to follow through the thorough character development of the characters mentioned above, there are some characters that would have further enriched the dystopian vision had they been fleshed out by Collins. Characters such as Cinna, Plutarch, Cressida, and Mesalla are all Capitol citizens that chose to side with and join the rebellion, and it cost some of them their lives. Thus, it would be interesting to find out what lies behind the extravagant façade of the Capitol that led actual Capitol citizens to join the ranks of the rebels. It would also be interesting to learn what factors and experiences led them to break out of the Capitol's typical pattern of dehumanizing the people of the districts.

Ultimately, Katniss and Peeta served their purpose in *The Hunger Games*, and Collins managed to skillfully showcase the consequences of war, violence, and corruption on adolescent characters. Collins was able to reach her aim and deliver her message so clearly because of the complex and layered character development with in-depth insights into the main characters' emotional state throughout the trilogy. This created a strong and deep connection between the reader and the characters. Since it is young adult fiction, pulling the readers towards Katniss and Peeta by engaging them in their romantic lives allowed Collins to grab their attention and ensure that her message was received.

### **C. *Attack on Titan*: Thorough Development of a Wide Range of Characters**

The development of characters in *1984* and *The Hunger Games* differed according to the purpose of the author, the literary medium in which they are present, and the purpose they serve in the book/s. Similarly, the development of characters in *Attack on Titan* is also different especially because of the literary medium they are presented in. Manga is one of the literary mediums that offers the author/manga artist a lot of space to develop dynamic well-rounded characters because of its flexibility when it comes to length. For instance, *Attack on Titan* has 34 volumes with a total of 139.5 chapters. Additionally, the characters get to showcase their personalities and emotions directly to the reader because each character has their own voice. Moreover, the visual art in manga adds another dimension to the characters through their facial expressions and body language. The reader also gets to directly witness the interactions and dynamics between characters through this art and through the dialogue.

*Attack on Titan* starts with three main characters, Eren Jaeger, the protagonist, and Mikasa and Armin, the deuteragonists. Eren shows that he has a rebellious personality from the beginning as he fights with his mother about wanting to join the Survey Corps and go on missions outside the walls. However, Eren experiences a lot of changes in his personality and beliefs throughout the manga, and some of these changes are extreme. What makes Eren's character development intriguing is that Isayama does not go with the typical heroic protagonist trope. Instead, he turns Eren into a controversial character that leaves the readers questioning and debating whether at the end he can still be considered a protagonist or whether he is leaning more towards the role of the antagonist.

Isayama tapped into the fluidity of morality and how it can be shaped and reshaped by external events. At the beginning, Eren has one goal, which is to kill all the titans and achieve freedom from the walls. He is presented as an impulsive and stubborn boy. Yet, as the story unfolds, the truth behind the world he lives in turns out to be much more complicated and layered. This leads Eren to the realization that he needs to also kill humans to reach the freedom he seeks for his loved ones. Also, another factor that plays into his extreme shift in character is the Attack titan's ability to see the past and the future. As a result, Eren's sense of morality crumbles and the boundary between humanity and monstrosity becomes blurry. In Eren's case, this blurriness leads him to commit genocide and eradicating 80% of the human population. This change in Eren's character is also seen in the visual art, which communicates his emotional state to the reader in a vivid manner (See figures 5 & 6). Eren goes from showing so much emotion in his facial expressions, to wearing a blank numb facial expression. However, behind the numb façade, Eren is also seen breaking down in front of Armin as the boy who just



wants to be with his best friend and his love interest still exists inside his now roughened and emotionless persona. Thus, Isayama highlights the notion of a gray zone between good and evil where a person is neither purely good nor purely evil but is just being stirred by external factors and circumstances. This is seen in Eren's case and also in the case of side characters such as Reiner and Gabi which will be discussed later.



Figure 5 - Isayama, Ch. 102, pp. 8



Figure 6 - Isayama, Ch. 70, pp. 41

Moreover, in terms of character development and morality, it is interesting to see how the sense of morality plays out in different ways according to each character. For instance, Armin, Eren's childhood best friend, had his share of experiences that influenced his sense of morality. He lost both of his parents at a young age, and then he lost his only remaining caretaker, which is his grandfather. Also, as a Survey Corp, he witnessed the gruesome deaths of his comrades and had near death experiences, the most prominent one being when his whole body got burned and he was on the brink of death. He also had to face the revelation of the truth about the world he grew up in. Even though most of his experiences are either similar to Eren's or shared with him, he still maintained his sense of morality but found himself obliged to engage in a gruesome act against Marley. This is seen through the comparison between his facial expressions

when he used the Colossus titan and caused a massacre, and Eren's facial expressions when he used the Attack titan to commit his first genocide (see figures 7 & 8). While Eren's facial expression was flat and void of emotion, Armin on the other hand was showing a lot of remorse. Thus, this sense of morality and its fluidity differs from character to character as they respond differently to the circumstances surrounding them.



Figure 7 - Isayama, Ch. 100, pp 27

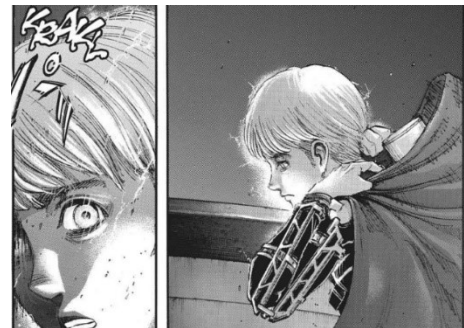


Figure 8 - Isayama, Ch. 103, pp 30

In *Attack on Titan*, a lot of the side characters are also thoroughly developed and experience a lot of growth and changes. The reader is also provided with the backstories of these characters. This allows the reader to get a holistic view on the effect of living in a dystopian world on different individuals with different personalities and experiences. Moreover, the reader gets to see the effect of living under the rule of power hungry, oppressive, and brainwashing regimes from both sides, Paradis, and Marley. This is not seen in the other two dystopias discussed in this thesis. In *1984* there is no exposure to anything outside the Party, and in *The Hunger Games*, the reader does not get much information on the side characters that come from the Capitol.

The thorough development of side characters is interesting in *Attack on Titan* and adds depth to the dystopian vision as the reader gets to see a wide diversity of

characters from different sides of the story interacting. Since this dystopian world is presented to the reader mostly through dialogue rather than narration, thoroughly developing side characters is needed to provide the reader with a holistic view on this dystopian world and its effect on people from different perspectives. A noteworthy example would be Reiner. He is a side character, and he was one of the children being trained by Marley to become warriors and inherit one of the titans. Through Reiner, the reader gets insight into the life of an Eldian child living in the internment zone, and an adult Eldian warrior. The Eldian children that pass the training and inherit a titan are granted the title of “Honorary Marleyans” which would allow them and their families to live outside the internment zone. This kind of responsibility causes a lot of pressure on a child on top of the pressure caused by having to go through military training at a young age. In Reiner’s case, his mother pushed him to join the training and inherit a titan so that they could go out of the internment zone and unite with his father who is a Marleyan. The brainwashing of Reiner by his mother is evident in the manga. For instance, she tells him “In our veins flows the blood of the devils who once did very bad things...that’s why your father isn’t here too. Because your father is a Marleyan” (Isayama, ch. 94, pp. 27). Thus, Reiner is subconsciously coerced into volunteering to train and become a warrior, which affects his character growth and decisions in the future.

Moreover, Reiner’s sense of morality is worth analyzing due to the changes that said morality goes through, hence highlighting its fluidity yet again, and the immense impact these changes have on Reiner’s psychological state. At the beginning, just like any other Eldian child in the internment zone, Reiner is completely convinced that Eldians are devils that must atone for their sins. He has the Marleyan mentality

embedded into him as he dehumanizes Eldians living in Paradis, which contributes to his warrior persona. Thus, he did not have a problem with breaching wall Maria and causing a massive death toll just to be able to enter Paradis and infiltrate the Survey Corps. However, after Reiner met his peers in the Survey Corps and established social relationships with them, he realized that they are normal people just like him. So, Reiner developed a Survey Corp persona. This character development led to the embedding of two clashing personas within Reiner. This in turn led to a clash between his beliefs and reality, which led Reiner into a state of dissociation. Thus, he ends up shifting uncontrollably and subconsciously between two personas, the persona of a Marleyan warrior, and the persona of the Paradis Eldian Survey Corp. This showcases yet another result of experiencing internal conflict that influences a person's sense of morality. On one hand there is Reiner's sense of morality being subjected to a reality shock and on the other hand there is the morality of warfare and the brainwashing he was subjected to. For instance, Marco, a fellow Survey Corp, accidentally overheard Reiner and Bertolt talking about their mission which led to revealing their true identity in the process. Here Reiner's warrior persona was in charge, so Reiner attacks Marco and pins him, then he commands Annie to remove his gear so that he cannot escape an upcoming titan. He even yells at Annie for hesitating and says, "have you started to feel compassion for this evil race" (Isayama, ch. 77, pp. 12). However, when a titan reaches Marco, Reiner dissociates (see figures 9 and 10). As seen in figure 10, Reiner's Survey Corp persona takes over as he witnesses Marco's death in terror with no recollection of him being the cause behind his death. This persona is very different than his warrior

persona that took over him as seen in figure 9 before he dissociated. This shows how the fluidity of morality differs in its presentation and effect from character to character.



Figure 10 - Isayama, Ch. 77, pp. 19



Figure 9 - Isayama, Ch. 77, pp. 12

All things considered, the method and extent of character development is different in all three dystopian works depending on the purpose that the author wants the characters to serve and the literary medium. Thus, Winston in *1984* needed to be one dimensional to showcase how individuality perished because of the Party. On the other hand, Collins had to showcase in depth Katniss's struggle for her character to serve its purpose of connecting with the young readers emotionally and delivering Collins's message. Finally, *Attack on Titan* as a manga presented a different method and style of character development by giving both main and side characters their own voice and backstories in addition to the visual art present in the medium. This is necessary for the reader to get an in-depth view of the complex multilayered world that Isayama created.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

As mentioned before, *1984* is a popular dystopia that was published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It gained the attention of media and scholars due to being perceived as a prophetic warning of an imminent future. *1984* became the steppingstone for other dystopian works that developed their visions with an Orwellian foundation. This carried on to some of the 21<sup>st</sup> century dystopias including the two popular works presented in this thesis, *The Hunger Games* and *Attack on Titan*. However, so far only *The Hunger Games* have been labeled as a dystopia while *Attack on Titan* is still considered uncharted territory in the dystopian domain.

In this thesis a close comparison between *1984* and *The Hunger Games* showed that the latter has an Orwellian foundation. This is due to the significant similarities between the dystopian elements and themes present in *1984* and *The Hunger Games*. Similarly, the elements and themes in *Attack on Titan* are not only evidently dystopian, but also of Orwellian origin in terms of foundation. By highlighting the similarities between *1984* and *The Hunger Games*, and subsequently between these two dystopias and *Attack on Titan*, it became clear that *Attack on Titan* belongs to the dystopian genre. All three dystopias discussed in this thesis delved into media and propaganda, censorship, alteration of history, manipulation of the public opinion, fluidity of morality, dehumanization of the other, geographical and socioeconomical layouts that involved isolation and class division, and much more. Thus, this thesis proved that first, *The Hunger Games* has an Orwellian foundation, and second, *Attack on Titan* is indeed a dystopia.

Moreover, after analyzing some of the characters in the three dystopias, it became evident that character development depends on the purpose of the author, the literary medium in which they are present, and the purpose they serve in the book/s. Manga as a literary medium involved a different method of character development due to the presence of visual art and dialogue in manga. The visual art and dialogue allows the reader to see the facial expressions and body language of characters as they interact with each other and their surroundings. Also, the flexibility of manga in terms of length gives the author more space for character development. Getting the opportunity to engage and connect with most of the characters in the manga and witness the effect of living in a dystopian world on them adds to the clarity and vividness of Isayama's dystopian vision.

Dystopian works have always been known to carry sociopolitical critiques within their pages. Furthermore, dystopias tend to reflect on an ever-changing present and in some instances, what said present entails for the future. This is one of the main reasons why dystopias are worth scholarly attention, which applies to *Attack on Titan* as well. *Attack on Titan* is loaded with sociopolitical themes and critiques that demand close analysis from scholars in future literary studies on dystopia.

## APPENDIX I

### *THE HUNGER GAMES* TRILOGY – SUMMARY

The first book, titled *The Hunger Games*, follows the story of the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. She is a 16-year-old girl who lives in District 12, the most impoverished district. In the reaping, which is what the event to choose tributes is called, Katniss volunteers as a tribute to replace her sister. Katniss along with Peeta Mellark, the male tribute from District 12, are taken to the capitol. There, they witness the luxurious life of the Capitol people who watch *The Hunger Games* live streaming for entertainment and participate in them by sending items to the tributes as their sponsors. In the arena, Katniss puts on a romantic act with Peeta for the viewers in the capitol to gain sponsors. This leads Seneca Crane, the head game-maker, to the fatal decision of announcing that if a pair from the same district survive at the end, they would win. However, when Katniss and Peeta remain as the sole survivors in the arena, Seneca makes another announcement that there can only be one victor in *The Hunger Games*. So, Katniss and Peeta threaten to commit double suicide which would leave *The Hunger Games* with no victor. Thus, Seneca is forced to announce both Katniss and Peeta as the victors of the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games. President Snow viewed Katniss's actions as an act of defiance, and to fix her mistake she must convince the people of Panem that what she did was out of desperation due to her romantic involvement with Peeta.

In the second book, titled *Catching Fire*, president Snow visits Katniss and explains to her that any more acts of defiance like the double suicide threat that happened at the end of *The Hunger Games* could spark an uprising. He threatens to hurt her loved ones if she does not continue to convince the public that this was just an act of star-crossed lovers. To do that, Katniss must make use of the victors' tour since she gets



to say a speech in every district, and she must marry Peeta. However, the victors' tour does not go as planned because the districts' repressed rage against the tyranny of the Capitol is beginning to rise. Thus, the Capitol starts to become even more violent and oppressive with the districts. As a way to get rid of Katniss, the tributes for the 75th Hunger Games are selected from the pool of victors in each district as a way to celebrate the quarter quell of the games. It is later revealed that some of the other victor tributes are working with the rebels to make sure Katniss and Peeta survive and are extracted from the arena since Katniss is now the face of the rebellion. Katniss gets rescued from the arena, but Peeta and two other victors get captured by the Capitol. At the end of the book, we learn that the Capitol obliterated District 12, and District 13 still secretly exists.

The third book, titled *Mockingjay*, follows the rebellion of the districts against the Capitol. The rebellion is led by Alma Coin in District 13 which turned out to be a heavily armed underground district. Coin wants Katniss to shoot propaganda videos from the safety of District 13, but Katniss demands that she is sent to the districts. Meanwhile, the Capitol airs propaganda videos of Peeta speaking against the rebellion and asking Katniss to stop supporting them. However, it is evident that Peeta has been subjected to torture and brainwashing. Later on, Peeta is rescued, but he had already been programmed to view Katniss as a threat that must be eliminated. Katniss goes to the Capitol with an assault squad, but she is secretly planning on assassinating president Snow on her own. Peeta, still relatively affected by the brainwashing, is sent by Coin to join the squad because she sees Katniss as a threat to her power. Katniss heads towards Snow's mansion with Gale, her close friend, and blend into the crowd of Capitol refugees who sent their kids to the front of the mansion upon Snow's request.

Unbeknownst to Katniss, the rebels drop bombs on the children and the aid workers using one of the Capitol's hovercrafts to turn everyone against Snow. This leads the rebellion to succeed. Katniss later on finds out that the bombs were dropped by the rebels. Coin names herself the new president of Panem and suggests holding another Hunger Games with tributes from the children of the Capitol. Katniss realize that they are replacing a tyrant with another tyrant. So, in the public execution of Snow, she ends up executing Coin instead of Snow. However, Snow also ends up dead after being attacked by the people attending the execution. At the end, Katniss and Peeta start their own family as they continue to deal with their PTSD.

## APPENDIX II

### *ATTACK ON TITAN – SUMMARY*

After 100 years of peace behind the walls, two intelligent titans called Colossal and Armor titans break into the first wall which leads the unintelligent titans to attack the people that live behind the first wall. The protagonist, Eren Jaeger's, mother dies in this attack, and Eren, who already wants to join the Survey Corps when he grows up, becomes even more determined to join them so that he can fight Titans. After joining the Survey Corps, Eren discovers that he inherited the Attack titan from his father with no recollection of how he inherited it. He aims to go back to his home, which was destroyed when the first attack happened, to enter the basement where his father, Grisha Jaeger, has hid information about the secret of Titans. Krista, one of the new members of the Survey Corps, reveals that her real name is Historia, and she is the direct descendant of the Reiss family who are the true monarchs of Paradis Island. This leads to a coup d'état which overthrows the fake king and his corrupt chancellors as Historia becomes the queen.

Everything is finally revealed when Eren and the Survey Corps reach the basement. It turns out that all the nations around the world have continued to exist and flourish. The people of Paradise Island are actually Eldians, the enemies of a nation called Marley. A hundred years ago, Eldians ruled the world using the power of the intelligent titans. The tyrannical Eldian empire engaged in ethnic cleansing and colonization of lands. Later on, a civil war started between the families that held the titan powers in the Eldian empire. This gave the nation of Marley, which was oppressed by Eldia at the time, an opportunity to rise against its oppressor. Thus, Marley, led by the Marleyan hero, Helos, plotted against Eldia and took over seven of the nine

intelligent titans. The war ended with the defeat of the Eldian empire as its king, named Fritz, withdrew to Paradise Island, and took with him as many Eldians as he can. He built the three walls with colossal-sized titans inside them that could crush the whole world if activated to ensure that no one would try to attack Paradise Island. The Eldians that were left outside Paradise Island were forced to live in intermittent zones, separated from the rest of the society, as they were subjected to oppression and segregation. Marley became a powerful nation as it became an expansionist state as it engaged in colonial practices by taking advantage of Eldian warrior units that were given the intelligent titans.

After finding out the truth, Eren infiltrates the intermittent zone located in Marley and there he learns that the people he once thought of as enemies are ordinary citizens just like the people beyond the walls. However, these people were taught to view the people behind the walls as demons. Thus, just like they think that they do not have a choice but to eradicate the “threatening other” to save themselves, he also does not have a choice but to eradicate them to save his people. At this point, Willy Tybur, the head of the Eldian Tybur family that secretly holds the highest authority in Marley, reveals in a festival that has attendees from all over the world the truth about the history of the Eldian-Marleyan clash. In reality, Helos the Marleyan hero does not exist, and Fritz, the king of Eldia at the time, is the reason behind Marley’s victory. King Fritz was ashamed of Eldia’s savage history and the infighting happening between the main Eldian families. He was against the oppression of Marleyans, so he developed a plan with the Tybur family to end the reign of the Eldian empire. They created the persona of Helos to make it seem like the Marleyans rose against Eldia and were victorious. King Fritz moved as many Eldians as he can to rule them peacefully behind the walls and

used the powers of the Founding titan to manipulate their memories making them believe that titans mysteriously appeared in an apocalyptic event that led to the annihilation of all humanity except a small population of survivors that ended up building the three walls and living in safe confinement behind them. The Founding titan can control titans and people, erase memories, and manipulate the physiology of Eldians. As for the titans in the walls, Fritz never planned to use them as he took a pledge renouncing war. Only the royal blood is bound by this pledge, and it was passed on from generation to generation in the royal family along with the founding titan. Thus, in reality the world was protected by King Fritz's actions.

After Willy Tybur announces war on Paradise Island, Eren commits a genocide in the festival. The war starts between Eldia and Marley, but then Eren activates the titans in the walls using the power of the Founding titan, which he also inherited from his father. The titans proceed to destroy the world as Eren's friends in the Survey Corps and some Eldian warriors from the intermittent zone that serve Marley rush to try to stop him. Eren's friends manage to kill him since that is the only way to stop him. This ends the attack, and the titan powers vanish. Then, Eren's friends regain a memory that Eren had temporarily erased, and they find out that Eren wanted them to kill him all along as part of his plan. This way the world would be too destroyed to continue with the war that Marley announced, and the world would have been saved by Eldians hence making them heroes. Finally, in the last chapter, a glimpse of the future is shown; the wars are back, the titan power seems to be resurfacing, and history is repeating itself.

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