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# The Structural Interpretation of Power and Analysis from Multiple Perspectives in the Hunger Games Film Series

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**Abstract:** After the release of The Hunger Games film series, it sparked a heated and extensive discussion. Many studies suggest that The Hunger Games has rewritten the definition of feminist cinema. Most studies believe that female characters, such as the female lead, subvert traditional female images. There is also a type of research that revolves around new worldviews and perspectives on war in movies. Unlike Hollywood style heroism, movies do not rely on unnatural powers, making them more in line with the real world and triggering people's thinking. This article aims to analyze the ideas conveyed behind feminism and post-colonialism in this series of films. By deeply analyzing the plot and details of the film, combined with existing research theories, this paper analyzes the foreshadowing of the struggle for feminist and postcolonial discourse power buried in the film, as well as how these contents resist, strike, and weaken hegemonism. The specific plot of this movie is the success of resistance, which also has an inspiring effect in reality, adding a profound influence and significant feature to feminism and post-colonialism.

**Keywords:** hunger games; feminism; post-colonialism

## 1. Introduction

The Hunger Games film series is adapted from Susan Collins' novel of the same name. The first novel was published in January 2010, and the adapted film was released in 2012. The Hunger Games series, as one of the prominent films with a strong female protagonist, opened up a new path in the film market and inspired women's expression and cognition in movies [1]. The praise and portrayal of feminism in movies are the main elements that spark discussion. In addition, research from different perspectives such as war perspective, war trauma writing, mythological influence, and cultural differences has injected new vitality into this work, especially postcolonial theory, providing a new perspective for the interpretation of The Hunger Games [2]. The Hunger Games film series is also a product of post-colonialism. In this modern society that focuses on the individual and emphasizes humanistic care, the dual attributes of feminism and postcolonialism portrayed in the film satirize and resist hegemonism. Specifically, the former challenges patriarchy and male discourse power, while the latter challenges hegemony. Their essence is consistent, that is, resistance to hegemonism. This article will use The Hunger Games film series as a case study to analyze and interpret the resistance and weakening of feminism and postcolonialism against hegemonism.

## 2. The Manifestation of Feminism and Post-Colonialism in Films

### 2.1. *Movie Plot*

The work tells the story of the establishment of a fictional country (Panem Kingdom), inspired by certain aspects of American culture and geography. The country was divided into a capital (Capitol) and 12 jurisdictional areas, with significant material and cultural differences. Great division. The new regime regulations issued by the capital city stipulate that the 12 regions under its jurisdiction must pay tribute to young men and women every year to participate in a live TV program called "Hunger Games". All contestants will fight to the death, and the remaining winner will become very wealthy. The female protagonist Katniss was chosen, and she challenges the powerful in the game with her strength and courage, leading her companions to win the game together and subverting the tradition of previous years. People who were in suffering and oppression were inspired by it, and under the leadership of Katniss, they gradually overthrew the oppressive rule.

### 2.2. *Feminism*

The first wave of feminism occurred in the late 19th century to the 1960s, during which various social progress movements and social, political, and economic reforms emerged in the United States. Under this influence, the initial feminist pursuit was more focused on the equality of various rights between women and men, such as women's right to participate in politics, education, work, elections, and so on. In the subsequent wave of feminism, the renowned feminist scholar Julia Kristeva pointed out in her book "Women's Time" that there are differences between men and women, both physically and psychologically. Ignoring these differences and blindly demanding equality is not advisable. Kristeva argues that feminism is not simply about overturning patriarchy, but involves engaging with and transforming it. Feminism emphasizes equality rather than privilege. Patriarchal society requires women to serve and obey men, but feminism advocates for equality between men and women as a fundamental right. In this series of movies, the female lead is not granted any special privileges. Not only the female lead, but almost all female characters that appear have broken and subverted the image of male superiority and female inferiority, no longer serving as models of gentleness, obedience, and virtuous wives and mothers. The female protagonist took on the role of supporting the family after her father's death. She was skilled in hunting and using bows and arrows, representing that sports were no longer exclusive to men. In the movie, she is the leader of the rebel army of Panem, and she flexibly enters the forbidden zone of the forest. This defiant spirit, which is unyielding to anyone, differs from the traditional female image. The younger sister of the female protagonist, Primrose, focuses on portraying her transformation from weakness to bravery, and ultimately, she becomes an outstanding rebel medical staff, demonstrating that women can also take on important responsibilities and exert their strength. Similarly, the highest leader of the rebel army, Coin, is a female leader, and the new ruler who overthrew the old regime of Panem is Paylor, a woman of color. This also shows that the author believes that important leadership positions can also be held by women.

Gayatri C. Spivak pointed out that people in developing countries are marginalized, subordinate, and seen as "others" who are different from those in dominant societies. And among them, third world women have become a silent group due to the suppression of dual power discourse. In this series of movies, the female protagonist is born in the poorest 12th district. Among her companions, Lulu from the 11th district and the newly elected leader of the Benevolent State, Pella, are also female characters. They choose to use their perspectives to narrate the story on camera, and their identities can be mapped to the voices and symbols of third world women in the real world.

### 2.3. Post-Colonialism

Post-colonialism emerged in the 1970s, and the 2012 film series "The Hunger Games" was a product of the development of postcolonial theory. According to the postcolonial perspective, Western thought and culture, as well as the values and traditions of its literature, and even various forms of postmodernism, are imbued with a strong sense of national superiority. Therefore, Western thought, and culture are always considered to occupy a dominant position in world culture. In contrast, non-Western Third World or Eastern traditions have been marginalized. Or occasionally play a role as the "other" relative to the West [3]. In The Hunger Games, the Kingdom of Panem represents a divided society, with the Capitol acting as a colonial power that oppresses and rules over the other twelve regions through its system, culture, and ideology [2].

Postcolonial theory originates from a reflection on Western colonial history, focusing on the unequal distribution of power in colonial and colonized relationships, as well as the resulting cultural conflicts and identity reshaping. These theories provide new theoretical tools for understanding the power relations in movies, especially the examination of the congressional district as a power subject, and how characters in the drama seek survival and resistance in the complex relationships of colonization and colonization, upper and lower classes. In the metropolitan area, the loyal host Cesar Freeman stated: "Over 100,000 people are eagerly watching this year's Tributes for the first time, and sponsors also get to see them. The importance of this moment cannot be overstated." This reflects that the tribute from the twelve districts is just a plaything for the entertainment of the urban area, and they disdain the tribute, believing that they are always superior to the oppressed people. The hosting of the "Hunger Games" is a day of hardship for the twelve districts, causing families to break down and people to feel anxious and frustrated. However, for the capital district, it is an incredibly exciting entertainment activity. In Hunger Games 3: Mockingjay (Part 2), President Snow, the ruler of Panem, reveals his true feelings to the public: Our enemies are not like us. They do not share our values. They have never known our comforts and beliefs. And they despise us for it. Make no mistake. They are not coming to liberate us. They are coming to destroy our way of life. Every move and gesture exude a strong sense of superiority.

Postcolonialism emphasizes protest against colonizers and the restoration of subjectivity, constantly striving to make its own region no longer "silent" and to rebuild its discourse power. However, the process of rebuilding subjectivity is often chaotic and confused, requiring constant resistance against authority and oppressive forces [4]. In the first installment, the female protagonist Katniss volunteered to replace her sister. After listening to Katniss' touching speech in "The Hunger Games 2: Catching Fire", multiple scenes depicted the same gesture. In the original work, it was written as follows: "At first, it was one person, then another, and finally almost everyone raised their left hand. They placed the middle three fingers on their lips and then pointed them at me... It meant gratitude, admiration, and saying goodbye to the loved ones." This action symbolized silent resistance to cruel hunger games, even the capital, and rulers, and was the gaze of the colonized towards the colonizers. From the perspective of postcolonialism, the Capitol acts as an oppressor, while the other twelve districts are subjected to oppression. The Capitol deprives the people of these districts of their voice through the operation of power discourse, denying them the right to express dissatisfaction publicly [2].

## 3. Multi-Perspective Interpretation in Movies

### 3.1. The Role of Feminism

The wise and brave female protagonist Katniss ultimately defeats the hegemonic ruler Snow, and then Paylor, a woman of color, is elected as the new leader by those who support peace and equality, symbolizing the end of hegemonism and power politics.

Feminist writer Elena Ferrante has expressed clear feminist views in interviews. The two female protagonists in her Neapolitan Quartet demonstrate strong self-awareness

and a deep sense of femininity. Throughout their lives, they support and reflect one another, showcasing a persistent bond of mutual growth and resistance to patriarchal constraints [5]. In the movie, there are many scenes of "girls help girls". In the setting of the character's background, the female protagonist's family loses the only male pillar, her father, so she takes on the responsibility of raising her mother and sister. It can be seen as a microcosm of the family, reflecting the social operation of denying and challenging the male centered patriarchal system. In *The Hunger Games*, characters such as Rue from District 11, Effie Trinket from the Capitol, and Johanna Mason, a former victor, all offer crucial support to Katniss. These women — coming from marginalized districts, elite circles, and competitive environments — embody a cross-class solidarity among women. They also symbolize women from different classes, whether they are from the bottom, top, or same level, they are willing to support and help the female protagonist. This female solidarity challenges traditional stereotypes that portray women as petty, jealous, or incapable of cooperation, suggesting instead that women — like men — can form powerful alliances rooted in mutual respect and shared goals. Not only can boys have brotherhood, but girls can also unite, understand the big picture, and resist and accomplish the same thing together.

The resistance to feminism is reflected in the transformation of understanding and thinking about gender relations. Kristi Lobeck discusses the embodiment of feminism throughout *The Hunger Games*, especially in the lead female character Katniss Everdeen, and argues that Everdeen can be seen as a manifestation of third-wave feminism in its fluidity of sexuality and support of female empowerment. Lobeck also advocates a further study on the male protagonist Peeta who shows many feminine features, which can broaden gender studies [6]. While traditional narratives often revolve around polygamous or love-triangle scenarios, this film series subtly explores women's perspectives on romantic relationships, marriage, and emotional autonomy. The female protagonist had no choice but to form a couple with tribute from the same district in the *Hunger Games*, but in their hometown of the 12th district, the female protagonist already has a family like boyfriend. In the public eye, the mainstream of "palace intrigue" dramas is usually due to the inclusion of multiple wives and concubines, and this drama reverses gender and depicts the thinking of girls in the face of polyamorous situations. In the movie, there is no melodramatic plot of two men fighting for favor from beginning to end, or the female lead "bringing both of them into the harem", which means that there is no pathological catering to the simple matrilineal social system centered on women. If the narrative merely catered to female-centered fantasies without critical reflection, it would risk reproducing gender-based dominance in reverse, replacing male hegemony with female hegemony. However, the film strives to depict a balanced portrayal of respect and equality regardless of gender. What the movie aims to convey and objectively depict is the widespread existence of multiple pursuers, regardless of gender, and the need to present equality and respect for individuals.

At the beginning of the story, the female protagonist openly states her desire not to have children, while her male partner expresses a different viewpoint. This reflects a broader contemporary trend in which women's willingness to bear children is decreasing, partly due to the unequal costs of reproduction between genders, demonstrating the trend of declining female fertility in the current era. The willingness of men to have children is higher than that of women, and the cost of childbirth is different between men and women. Childbirth often leads to career interruptions, the glass ceiling effect, and penalties associated with motherhood, all of which contribute to lower fertility willingness among women, which may be the reason for the difference in fertility willingness between men and women [7]. In addition to considering material conditions, in certain environments, if women believe that the results of education cannot bring happiness, they can only choose to curb fertility from the source, which is also the most intuitive resistance to hegemonism.

### 3.2. *The Role of Postcolonialism*

There are two representative figures of hegemonism in the film. The first one is President Snow, who oppressed the supporters of the Hunger Games who had favored the Panem for many years. He consistently ignores the suffering of the working class in order to maintain the pleasure and comfort of himself and his elite peers. Whenever opposition arises in any district, the regime responds with ruthless suppression. The second is the commander-in-chief, Koin, who led the rebel army against Snow's tyranny. "... She never liked you. She doesn't like anybody, Either she can't control..." One way or another, this war is going to come to an end. They promised a free election. Maybe she's starting "to see you as a threat". At the end of "The Hunger Games 3: Mockingjay (Part 2)", Coin authorizes a bombing that targets a crowd of civilians, including children, in a strategic ploy to blame Snow and justify her own rise to power — revealing her disregard for innocent lives and her desire to consolidate authority as a new hegemon. One characteristic of the ruling process was that the connections between the districts were cut off, and there was only one railway connecting all the districts from the capital to the first to the twelfth districts. At the same time, the spread of news was also tightly controlled by the Capitol. In the process of fighting for freedom, the rebel army must first awaken and rebuild the people's independent consciousness step by step. In the initial capital, they used various excuses to reverse the order of priorities, believing that the revolution of the rebel army led to poverty and hardship in various places. "I am done being a piece in his game. District 12, District 2. We do not fight. Except the one the Capitol gave us. Why are you fighting the rebels? You're neighbors. You're family". Though it manifests as a cultural phenomenon, the act is inherently political, reflecting deeper struggles over narrative control and identity representation. The struggle in the cultural field is essentially a cultural resistance initiated by marginalized groups against the dominant narrative imposed by ruling powers. It is to replace the distortion of one's own mistakes by the ruling class and mainstream culture with a more authentic and correct "representation" of oneself and one's relationship with others [8].

In the process of colonial rule, emphasizing the confidence and superiority of one's own culture while belittling the culture of the colonized is a means and way of governance. Said first took a multicultural stance and adopted a cultural "hybridization" strategy to oppose cultural hegemony. He emphasized the importance of adhering to the position of cultural diversity and hybridization and regarded this position as an effective way to break free from cultural hegemony [9]. In the movie, the Mockingjay brooch brought by the female protagonist from the 12th district to the capital city is a cultural hybridization and implantation, showcasing the unique identity of the 12th District to the Capitol and, through media broadcasts, to the entire nation through the city and hunger games. This is a symbol of cultural resistance to hegemony and the struggle for cultural independence in colonized areas. In the subsequent movie plot, the rebel army also seized on the characteristic of chirping birds as a symbol and signal of rebellion. In the later stages of the war between the rebel army and the capital city, the leader of the rebel army, Koin, repeatedly organized Katniss to shoot promotional videos, continuously strengthening the cultural confidence of the masses, achieving the restoration and reconstruction of local traditional culture, and laying a solid foundation for the later resistance against the colonizers in the capital city.

These behaviors gradually accumulate over time, ultimately evolving into a conscious and powerful form of resistance and counterattack by the colonized. In the movie, Katniss and her companions successfully win the hearts of the people, lead the rebel army to victory, and personally end the life of the hegemonic ruler, becoming a rebellion against hegemonism.



#### 4. Discussion

In reality, there is neither such a vicious hunger game nor the need to solve hegemonism and power politics through killing. In reality, feminism and postcolonialism seek to reshape discourse power through strategies such as decentralization and diversification. By comparing the original works, it is found that the novel has many delicate psychological descriptions, and the film's shots have infectious and impactful power, which can directly bring people emotional value: anger towards the congressional district, sympathy for the impoverished and underprivileged people, and fear of killing. The alienation of time and space often brings visual sensory impact and can also make the audience feel the philosophical and fate reflections in the text [10]. Focusing the camera on these sharp contradictions amplifies the hidden social issues in reality and further conveys deeper ideas. In the plot of this movie, the female protagonist plays the role of a "Mockingjay" in Panem and the rebel army, and this movie also serves as a symbolic Mockingjay in the real world, acting as a messenger of resistance and awareness. As the film says, "Fire is catching", a phrase that symbolically conveys the film's inspiring influence on both feminism and postcolonial thought. And multiple news reports indicate that the movie did indeed have a positive impact. The Hunger Games contributed to the rise of female participation in archery. After the release of the first Hunger Games movie, many archery vendors reported a significant surge in business, with courses fully booked and recurve bows remaining out of stock for extended periods [11]. In a 2016 report, about half of the female archers surveyed were influenced by "The Hunger Games" and started engaging in this sport [12].

In the fast-paced era, we should not only focus on short, flat, and fast-paced film and television works but also on more profound and excellent works that can explain valuable and meaningful truths in a simple and understandable way. Especially, we should pay attention to the struggles and challenges faced by marginalized populations, and resonate with audiences while provoking deeper reflection.

#### 5. Conclusion

This film is not only a product of the times but also promotes and advances women's independence and liberation. The research findings of this study indicate that feminism and postcolonialism have resisted and weakened hegemonism, indicating that films, as cultural carriers, have contributed to the dissemination of feminist and postcolonial perspectives, thereby encouraging critical reflection on hegemonic structures. This study provides valuable reference significance for future research in this direction, mainly affecting the analysis of films containing feminist and postcolonial elements, which often reduce their analysis to simple praise or criticism — "yes" or "no", accurate or inaccurate — while overlooking the crucial role these works play in resisting hegemonic centrality. Future research should focus more on exploring and encouraging feminist and postcolonial works for in-depth exploration.

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