**A New Logic of Victory in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hanger Games***

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Abstract

Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games suggests a new logic of victory and set a distinguished focus on the unique personality of her heroin which brings to the mind the permanent correlation between all moral values on one hand and the moral values of Islam on the other hand. The Hunger Games World seems to be much more like one big bowl as it links the past, present, and the future. The book's events prove that a character is refined and enriched by the challenges he/she overcomes through his/her lifetime. It presents a picture of contemporary life which is characterized by a condensed an intellectual and spiritual crisis. The word "Hunger" in the novel is metaphorical it denotes the uncontrollable need for political freedom, healthy social system and equal opportunities in life. In the world of Panem's District 12, bread means hope.it represents a survival from hunger. The elites of Panem use hope as a method of control. Katniss embodies the hope of a better world, a liberated Panem. The personal hope to merely survive turns into a collective hope for the possibility of the existence of a better world. She discredits the present democracy, the present population and those in power right now. It points out the limits of the contemporary political system, tyrannical power, dictatorship and extreme brutality based on supreme authority.

Keywords: freedom, authority, social connection, hope, tyrannical power, heroism.

Introduction

This trilogy tackles an unusual mixture of traits in one young adult female. It unfolds the dilemma of a generation of young people who have grown up with realities of economic insecurity and war. The Hunger Games book reinforces some new points of view about hope; firstly: Katniss' survival is due to her connection with others. Though she is tough, self-reliant and resourceful she realizes that social connection is more powerful than any of her personal advantages. Secondly: she acquires her strength from social and emotional intelligence. Successfully she motivates the people to empathize her not by logic and reason but by encouraging them to take humanitarian action. Thirdly: Katniss' worst fears which revolve around the need to kill other people reveal the normal, the rule and not the exception. Her reluctance to kill represents ours under any circumstances; it proves that human goodness can flourish even in the most dehumanizing circumstances. Not only political freedom is targeted in that book, but it is the freedom from the destructive effect of media that is used by the government to strengthen its authority. Information is filtered and modified to serve the Capitol's best interest. The trilogy is a warning against the obsession with entertainment in the wrong way. Freedom of expression, arts, and literature have disappeared and considered to be too dangerous as well. Instead of rebellion against the capitol, people are divided and kept watching without a word of protest. Each district sends two tributes to the games and only one tribute can win the whole thing. Districts kill each other and that is how the government keeps the people from joining forces and rebelling against the Capitol. The research is thematic in its concern and it uncovers some episodes to prove the researcher's point of views.

Suzanne Collins the American novelist has begun her professional career writing for children’s television. The first book in her five-part fantasy/war series was *The Underland Chronicles*, which became a New York Times bestseller. Then it has been sold into 21 foreign territories. Her next series was *The Hunger Games* in 2008 which is a post-apocalyptic, dystopian young adult novel. It was an international bestseller ever since its publication; the novel received great reviews and became a success (Suzanne Collin, biography, 2010,). Many (2012) states that in 2010, Collins was named to the TIME 100 list as well as the Entertainment Weekly Entertainers of the Year list, the book sold 800.000 copies at this year also, and then it is translated to 26 languages and in 2012. The novel was adapted into a film (Wikipedia) and broke multiple box office records. *The Hunger Games* were followed by *Catching Fire* 2009 and *Mockingjay* 2010. The Trilogy became a phenomenon and was considered “the fastest page-turner in publication history”. In spite of its great reception, very few critical articles and books were published about it (Ibid.). It portrays a world struck by wars and people struggling to survive poverty, disease and above all starvation. In a TV Interview with Bibliostar, Collins stated that she inspired the idea of the novel from the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and reality television:

I was lying in bed, late at night one night and I was channel surfing and I found myself going in between reality television programs and footage of the Iraq war and these images sort of began to melt together in my mind in a very unsettling way and that’s when it sort of struck me as the idea of these games (TV Collins)

While Sharyn Pearce, Vivienne Muller, and Lesley Hawkes studied the trilogy as being inspired by 'Roman gladiators' as cited in Arrows (2012), 'Greek mythology' as stated in McConnell (2016), and 'fairytales'. Sara Buttsworth and Maartje Abbenhuis, for example, connect the games with Brother Grimm *Hansel and Gretel* fairytale in their book *War, Myth, And Fairytales (*2017). Suzanne Collins is the daughter of a military historian officer who served in the Vietnam War. (Suzanne Collin, biography, 2010). In this respect, Gray (2014) adds that she spent her childhood years watching footages of the Vietnam War on television although her mother tried to shield them from it yet in vain.

By the end of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first reality television programs became very famous in which the daily lives of a group of people are recorded and broadcasted for all audience to see (Wikipedia about Reality Television). Here, Finland, (2003) maintains that reality programs like Survivor (1997- present), Big Brother (1999- present), The Bachelor (2002-present) and many more were followed and audience sympathized with those characters more than they did with war soldiers. This fact made Collins connect the ugly war of The Hunger Games where young individuals are forced to fight for their survival, manipulated by the game maker, tricked and killed violently on live television with everyone watching. Daniel C. Hallin states that the first truly televised war was the Vietnamese war for it was twenty-four-hour war coverage. Then Alastair Finlan in "The Gulf War 1991" claims that the twenty-four-hour war Media courage of Katniss show while taking part in *The Hunger Games* seems to bring the civilian observer around the world close to the action than before”(p.74)

Baldick (2015) mentions that by the age of eleven, Collins lost her father in the war. All disturbing memories and frightening emotions she felt while watching the war zone where her father used to fight incarnated in her novel, *The Hunger Games*. Chris Baldick explains the term” Allusion” according to the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms as:

an indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place, or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader’s familiarity with what is thus mentioned (pp. 9-10).

The Hunger Games tells the story of a destroyed country called Panem where people starve to death while the rich government represented by the Capital enjoys the riches of all its population. The place is a fictitious, but not outlandish, post-apocalyptic, police-state land. Panem was a very rich and strong country ruled by a ruthless president, Snow. It seems that the people of Panem rose against their president for stealing their riches and keeping them in hunger they” rebel against the tyrant ruling over them and drive him from power” (Ziegler, 2013, p. 174). Thus, he retaliate by publicly executing many rebels as well as bombing district 13 with "toxic bombs” (HG, 2008, p. 83) burring everyone into the ground. For fear of the future rebellion, the hunger games were invented. An assigned gamekeeper designs an arena, select game players from each district, forcing them to fight against each other on live television while equipping them with suitable uniforms, gear, and strategies. People in By the end of the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first reality television programs became very famous in which the daily lives of a group of people are recorded and broadcasted for all audience to see (Wikipedia about Reality Television). Here, Finland, (2003) maintains that reality programs like Survivor (1997- present), Big Brother (1999- present), The Bachelor (2002-present) and many more were followed and audience sympathized with those characters more than they did with war soldiers. This fact made Collins connect the ugly war of The Hunger Games where young individuals are forced to fight for their survival, manipulated by the game maker, tricked and killed violently on live television with everyone watching. Daniel C. Hallin states that the first truly televised war was the Vietnamese war for it was twenty-four-hour war coverage. Then Alastair Finlan in "The Gulf War 1991" claims that the twenty-four-hour war Media courage of Katniss show while taking part in *The Hunger Games* seems to bring the civilian observer around the world close to the action than before”(p.74)

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If Peeta and I were both to die, or they thought we were...My fingers fumble with the pouch on my belt, freeing it. Peeta sees it and his hand clamps on my wrist. "No, I won't let you." "Trust me," I whisper. He holds my gaze for a long moment then let's go. I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonful of berries into his palm. Then I fill my own. "On the count of three?" Peeta leans down and kisses me once, very gently. "The count of three," he says. We stand; our backs pressed together, our empty hands locked tight. "Hold them out. I want everyone to see," he says. I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta's hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a good-bye, and we begin counting. "One." Maybe I'm wrong. "Two." Maybe they don't care if we both die. "Three!" It's too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare. The frantic voice of Claudius Templesmith shouts above them. "Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the 74th Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen, and Peeta Mellark! I give you - the tributes of District 12 (HG, 2008, p. 85-89)

The change in the rules of the games before Katniss’ victory was inevitably impossible but the power of unity forced the game makers consequently to submit to the idea of change. In *The Hunger Games*, the country is divided into isolated districts, whose citizens are forbidden to communicate with another. Each district specializes in a different industry--wheat, coal, fishing, etc. The 12 districts support the wealthy city called the Capitol, where people live in absurd narcissistic wealth. Each year, as a spectacle for the citizens of the Capitol and as a way for the government to exercise its control over the population of the 12 districts, the Capitol hosts the Hunger Games, in which a boy and girl from each of the districts (known as a tribute) is chosen by lottery and forced to fight to death. Katniss, the heroine of the novel, describes District 12 as a place where one can “starve to death in safety.”(HG, p. 6) Her journey starts from her ability to survive the famine in her district by hunting for her family. She grew up watching many people die out of starvation yet the government never pinpoints starvation as a cause of death “Starvation is never the cause of death officially. It is always the flu, exposure, or pneumonia. But that fools no one.” (ibid., p. 28) She takes the reader to her daily struggle for food that one can easily associate with her when she described her eating manners saying "I always eat as I'll never see food again" (ibid., p. 56). When she volunteered instead of her sister Prim in the Hunger Games, her first fear was who will feed her family. At the Capital, she was fascinated by all the food that they have and spent most of her time there either eating or describing food. She is judged as being barbaric because of the manner of eating a notion that troubled Katniss a great deal. “Barbarism’ that is ironic coming from a woman helping to prepare us for slaughter. And what’s she is basing our success on? Out table manners” (ibid., p.14). In the arena, her first lifeline was finding food and when she failed to do so she blew up her enemies' food. Her first thought after winning the games was "no more fear of hunger" (ibid., p.310) because all her days have been “consumed with the acquisition of food. Take that away and I’m not really sure who I am, what my identity is. The idea scares me some.”(ibid., p. 311) People in District 12 received a tesserae “supply of grain and oil for one person,” (ibid., p. 13) while the people of the Capital get their food with a press of a button:

What must it be like, I wonder, to live in a world where food appears at the press of a button? How would I spend the hours I now commit to combing the woods for sustenance if it were so easy to come by? What do they do all day, these people in the Capitol, besides decorating their bodies and waiting around for a new shipment of tributes to roll in and die for their entertainment? (HG, 2008, p. 65)

In the light of what happens in The Hunger Games, George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984 might be considered as a prophetic literary work, on one hand, William Soskin (1949) notes that:

George Orwell’s novel escorts us so quietly, so directly, and so dramatically from our own day to the fate which may be ours in the future, that the experience is a blood-chilling one…The story of official pursuit has the suspense and melodrama of a super-detective novel but instead of an exercise in criminal chase we are confronted with the grim pursuit that hangs over the head of every modern man.

Orwell perceived the future danger that Man was doomed to face, his novel was an attempt to awaken us years ago. He proved the absolute corruption of absolute power. He foreshadowed the barbarian nature of Man, his transformation to an unfeeling machine. Orwell never approved the overwhelming technological advance, never felt optimistic about that. The fictional world of his literary work never got far away from reality. He was always referring and warning about Man’s tendencies toward militarism, savagery, dehumanization.

In 1984, Orwell was implicit as usually criticizing that kind of government that was controlling both the intellect as well as the emotions of its citizens. Orwell’s created the idea of dividing the government into many parties and ministries. The world of 1984 is divided into three states. It was really an anti-utopian society. He succeeded in portraying the image of a terrifying government. Furthermore, Orwell anticipated the dangerous role played by the media. The Newspeak that is used in 1984 aim was to reduce the number of words in the language. Eventually, that would lead to less opportunity to think. Less thinking equals less question and criticism of the government. That would definitely result in the disappearance of imagination and finally surrendering to the existing system. This was wholly political. It represented a powerful means by which the party retains its hold over its citizens.

Apparently not far away from Orwell’s vision of the future Collins created her own vision of *The Hunger Games* world being set in a near future where countries have been destroyed and replaced by 12 Districts under the control of the Capitol. And in order to strengthen its tight control over the districts, the Capitol organizes games each year where 24 helpless children, 2 from each district, have to fight to the death in a wild arena filled with dangerous animals and cruel tactics to destroy the teenagers, both physically and psychologically. The winner, after killing all the others to survive, has to deal with the pain, the nightmares, and the Capitol's control. Forced to appear on camera constantly, physically changed and shaped for entertainment, the tributes remain all their lives tied to the Capitol and its murderous president. Katniss is one of the tributes. She volunteers for her sister and takes her place in the arena. Since that first step, she starts embodying rebellion.

Collins addresses today’s people, the present representation of nowadays power and authority and the present population.

Everyone,” Plutarch tells him. “We’re going to form a republic where the people of each district and the Capitol can elect their own representatives to be their voice in a centralized government. Don’t look so suspicious; it’s worked before.”

“In books,” Haymitch mutters.

“In history books,” says Plutarch. “And if our ancestors could do it, then we can, too. (Mockingjay, 2010, p. 45)

It is a clear invitation for the readers to reconsider his/ her own actions and help prevent the extinction of our planet. Collins points out the limits of our political thinking and the improvement needed to take place. Collins never suggests a solution as every system has its flaws and because it is impossible to create the perfect one. Through Katniss, Collins shows her message claiming that improvement is achievable if it concentrates on a global human effort. Steven Zeitchik, of the Los Angeles Times adds that Robert Thompson, a professor of media and popular culture at Syracuse University states: ‘The Hunger Games’ has this feeling of being contemporary and political but without being really clear what its politics are” (P, 2). And as Katniss puts it explaining that through postmodern men dilemmas are complicated yet there is hope for salvation:

But one day I’ll have to explain about my nightmares. Why they came. Why they won’t ever really go away.

I’ll tell them how I survive it. I’ll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I’m afraid it could be taken away. That’s when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I’ve seen someone do. It’s like a game. Repetitive. Even a little tedious after more than twenty years. But there are much worse games to play. (Mockingjay, 2010, p. 390)

Control, supreme authority, and power are the main keywords upon which the political structure of Panem city based on. President Snow embodies all the tyrants and dictators existed ever, he believed that ‘even the strongest cannot overcome the Capitol’ and warns Katniss against the rebellion’s intentions. All his sadistic entertainment and extreme thirst for brutality suggest his tight control and exclusive authority in Panem. And in order to set all his plans in action, he planted the atmosphere of war every now and then in his Capitol. In the third book where a civil

In the third book where a civil war takes place, a rebellion from the people against the Capitol’s tyrannical authority, Collins said herself: “I don’t write about adolescence. I write about war” (2018 Collins, An Interview). She specifies the major theme of her books and the target she wants to reach – teenagers, to prepare them for their coming of age. In Plutarch’s words, war is something humans carry within themselves, nurtured by this self-destructive impulse and this constant needs to unleash violence, thus it is doomed to repeat.

“Are you preparing for another war, Plutarch?” I ask.

“Oh, not now. Now we’re in that sweet period where everyone agrees that our recent horrors should never be repeated,” he says. “But collective thinking is usually short-lived. We’re fickle, stupid beings with poor memories and a great gift for self-destruction. Although who knows? Maybe this will be it, Katniss.” (Mockingjay, 2010, p. 379)

In this quotation, Plutarch's words do not bring comfort, yet they are genuine. He has some hope for the future. Because Collins doesn’t want to make everything clear, hope is an essential thing according to people as it is the source of fear by President Snow: “A little hope is effective. A lot of hope is dangerous. Hope is fine, as long as it’s contained.” By Catching Fire, he’s modified his stance: “Fear does not work when there is hope.” (HG, only in the movie, not the book)

The Hunger Games shows the importance of the idea of togetherness by emphasizing the danger of the ultimate power of the government. Games combine people of different sorts but in *The Hunger Games* these games divided and weakened them in order not to be able to rebel against the injustice of the Capitol. Competition in these games established a class distinction. The government of the Capitol holds most of the wealth and power. They control people by putting them in different districts. Even Katniss is used to gain the power “[Coin…] gives my eulogy. Praise for the girl who survived the Seam and the Hunger Games then turned a country of slaves into an army of freedom fighters. "Dead or alive, Katniss Everdeen will remain the face of this rebellion. If ever you waver in your resolve, think of the Mockingjay, and in here you will find the strength you need to rid Panem of its oppressors." (The Mockingjay, 21.28) They will use her voice to gain support from others and then gain power over the capital. Katniss’ revolutionary nature enacts a picture of a collective struggle.

"I don't know how to say it exactly. Only…I want to die as myself. Does that make any sense?" he asks. I shake my head. How could he die as anyone but himself? "I don't want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I'm not."

I bite my lip, feeling inferior. While I've been ruminating on the availability of trees, Peeta has been struggling with how to maintain his identity. His purity of self. "Do you mean you won't kill anyone?" I ask.

"No, when the time comes, I'm sure I'll kill just like everybody else. I can't go down without a fight. Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to…to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games," says Peeta. ( HG: 10.71).”

Yet, being a skillful hunter never gives her the justification to be a killed killer. Her worst fear was the need to kill other people:

You know how to kill,” says her friend Gale in the first book. “Not people,” she replies, filled with horror at the idea. When she actually does kill a girl named Glimmer, she’s wracked with guilt and throws herself over the body “as if to protect it. (Jeremy Adam Smith, 2012)

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman (2007) in his Greater Good essay, “Hope on the Battlefield.” writes that:

The study of killing by military scientists, historians, and psychologists gives us good reason to feel optimistic about human nature, for it reveals that almost all of us are overwhelmingly reluctant to kill a member of our own species, under just about any circumstance

In times of war, people no longer reserve admiration for beauty, intelligence, or bravery. They look up to those who possess the skills to ensure basic survival. Katniss is exceptional and unique; she is the standard upon which all rules are measured.

That's when I hear the scream. So full of fear and pain it ices my blood. And so familiar. I drop the spile, forget where I am or what lies ahead, only know I must reach her, protect her. I run wildly in the direction of the voice, heedless of danger, ripping through vines and branches, through anything that keeps me from reaching her. From reaching my little sister.”(Catching Fire, p. 79-80)

Unlike the citizens of the Capitol who violently and brutally exploit the 12 districts of the country of Panem, she gained the sponsorships through winning people’s sympathy, and emphasizes Haymitch's advice to the heroes, Katniss, and Peeta when he stated that “If you really want to stay alive, you get people to like you,” (The Hunger Games - Catching Fire, chapter 17) says their drunken, traumatized mentor, Haymitch. It’s the first advice he gives to the heroes, Katniss and Peeta, and a surprising amount of the film’s action revolves around their efforts to win people’s sympathy, which results in “sponsorships” that help them in their most desperate moments.

The heroes succeeded in arousing a humanitarian action by powerful, heartfelt sympathy and emotions rather than by logic and reason “I wanted the audience to recognize you when you’re in the arena” says Cinna dreamily.” Katniss, the girl who was on fire.” (HG, Chapter 76) Cinna says these words to Katniss in Chapter 5 as he prepares her dress for the opening ceremony of the Hunger Games. She understands how necessary it is to make Katniss stand out, not just for the sake of vanity, but because he knows that appearances in the Hunger Games can have a significant, tangible effect. By standing out during the ceremony, for instance, Katniss can attract fans that might not otherwise have noticed her, and among these fans may be sponsors who could provide gifts that might prove critical during the Hunger Games.

Katniss’ power is unlike the Capital’s one. Her power flows from social and emotional intelligence, not strength and evilness

“Peeta, how come I never know when you're having a nightmare?” I say.

“I don't know. I don't think I cry out or thrash around or anything. I just come to, paralyzed with terror,” he says.

“You should wake me,” I say, thinking about how I can interrupt his sleep two or three times on a bad night. About how long it can take to calm me down.

“It's not necessary. My nightmares are usually about losing you,” he says. “I'm okay once I realize you're here.(Catching Fire, p. 88)

Manipulating the emotions of the “Hunger Games” audience was the source of victory in these games, on the contrary with the defeated characters who adopted violence and brutal behavior. In his essay” The Power Paradox”, GGSC Faculty Director Dacher Keltner presents a new source of power:

A new science of power has revealed that power is wielded most effectively when it’s used responsibly by people who are attuned to, and engaged with, the needs and interests of others.

And that:

Years of research suggest that empathy and social intelligence are vastly more important to acquiring and exercising power than are force, deception, or terror.

Throughout *The Hunger Games*, Collins proves that social connections trans pass absolute power and independence. Katniss’ self-reliant character surrenders to her realization of the importance of her interdependent with other people. When one character tells her she’s a survivor, her reply is “But only because someone helped me.”(HG, Chapter 7) Katniss is tough and resourceful, but, in the end, it’s her ability to connect with others that saves her. “Our lives aren't just measured in years. They're measured in the lives of people we touch around us”. (Catching Fire, chapter25 for the movie)

Katniss’ victory in *The Hunger Games* is achieved by survival through hardships. Her attitude concerning success creates a new logic of victory. It suggests a distinguished way to overcome moral dilemmas. Perseverance and holding on to hope is more powerful in postmodern wars. Addressing Rue, her new ally, she says I’m going to win for the both of us now:

I really think I stand a chance of doing it now. Winning. It's not just having the arrows or outsmarting the Careers a few times, although those things help. Something happened when I was holding Rue's hand, watching the life drain out of her. Now I am determined to avenge her, to make her loss unforgettable, and I can only do that by winning and thereby making myself unforgettable. (The Hunger Games, 18.62).

Unlike others like Haymitch, who resorted to alcohol after his trauma, or Mrs. Everdeen who surrender to silent depression after her husband’s death. Katniss faces her troubles and doubts heroically. Collins choice to give Katniss a history of misfortune added to her popularity as a great character. The continuous change and transformation Katniss’ undergoes help to give more real features to her. The tone totally changes from Katniss hating Peeta to loving him. She starts to look for him because of the rule change and finds him. Then she starts cleaning him off from the wound that Cato gave him. When Peeta starts talking about if he dies and Katniss won’t let him finish and then she kisses him

Yes. Look if I don't make it back-" he begins. "Don't talk like that. I didn't drain all that pus for nothing, “I say.” I know. But just in case I don’t-“he tries to continue. “No, Peeta, I don’t even to discuss it, “I say, placing my fingers on his lips to quiet him. “But-" he insists impulsively, I lean forward and kiss him, stopping his words (Collins, p. 268).

The continuous change in her character brings change even to the rule of the games itself. Then comes the part where they changed the rules.

"Claudius Templesmith's voice booms down from overhead, congratulating the six of us who remain. (…) there’s been a rule change in the Games. (…)Under the rule change, both tributes from the same district will be declared winners if they are the last two alive."(Collins, p. 244).

Thus, that would end up being the case at the end of the “Games”. Katniss’ heroic decision to be the face and symbol of the uprising for the sake of others has taken its roots from the act of self-sacrifice often repeated for the good of her loved once throughout the novel. She does the heroic act and saves her younger sister from the Games by sacrificing herself:

Then something unexpected happens. At least, I don't expect it because I don't think of District 12 as a place that cares about me. But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's place, and now it seems I have become someone precious. At first, one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means good-bye to someone you love. (HG, 29)

Suzanne Collins gives her readers the hope to promote the almost-gone values in real life. From only a family belonging, Katniss has become a society belonging. Peeta and Katniss refusal to kill one another at the end of the games prove Collins' concept about human dignity which can be preserved even in dehumanizing and barbaric situations. Definitely, she gives us some characters that care nothing for human dignity. But these characters are portrayed more like monsters than as people. The new concept of Victory and the suggestion for getting out of man’s dilemmas was fulfilled in Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games; the book is an updated version and representation about how a heroine is portrayed today’s younger generations. (Frankel’s, 2010)

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