

LITTLE POND

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JEFFREY WEHNER

DR. JEANETTE CASTILLO – ADVISER

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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“Have we any greater evil for a city than what splits it and makes it many instead of one? Or a greater good than what binds it together and makes it one?” – Plato, *The Republic*

“An efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced because they love their servitude.” – Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

One of my favorite novels is Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931). It takes place in a futuristic world where people live in perpetual comfort and happiness. Intense emotions and unwanted desires have been eradicated through scientific advances. When any kind of unwanted emotion creeps in, a citizen can simply take a caplet of *soma*, the scientifically designed perfect recreational drug, and forgets about the unhappiness. Everyone belongs to everyone; free love reigns supreme without the fear of unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. All of this sounds like a brochure from *Brave New World*’s (*BNW*) World State. It sounds like what we might call a utopia, a term coined by Sir Thomas More nearly five hundred years ago (More, 1516). The word utopia comes from the Greek word meaning “no place,” which becomes ironically accurate once the veil of happiness is pulled away from a described utopia.

The history of written utopias can be traced back even further, arguably all the way back to the Socratic dialogues in Plato’s *Republic*. In it, Socrates discusses with philosophers and leaders of the time the true meaning of justice, and what that means to their society. Through the many volumes in *The Republic*, they describe several hypothetical “city-states” that have ideal, yet unrealistic and sometimes inhuman, societies (Badiou, 2012). Huxley’s *BNW* has similar parallels in its own false utopia.

In *BNW*, a character named John the Savage becomes the protagonist through whom we vicariously discover the true horrors of the supposed utopia-like World State. John grew up on a “savage reservation,” with Native Americans and his British mother, who was lost on a trip to the reservation in her youth. John grows up in harsh conditions on the reservation, all the while hearing the about wonderful world from which his mother hailed from. She tells him about all the wonderful advancements and how everyone belongs to everyone. John becomes entranced by the idea of this “brave new world” and dreams of one day visiting it. When his dream finally comes true he finds that the wonderland his mother told him about is not what it seems. Certainly, the people of the World State are without suffering, sadness, and despair but they are also without love, art, pain, and everything that John finds worth living for. Later one of the World Controllers explains to John that they cannot have a stable society with intense feelings like love, emotional expression through art, or emotional pain. John realizes the utopia his mother believed in so much was not the kind of world he wants to live in.

What John discovers in *BNW* is that the World State is actually a dystopia, which literally means anti-utopia. The goal of this paper is to show how a described utopia, a term with positive connotations in regards to its described world, can be seen in a negative light and more dystopian. This will be accomplished by looking at the ideal city-state described in *The Republic* and how they are well-meaning on the surface but when examined closely are generally impractical and impracticable.

I will begin with a discussion of utopia in literature followed by a description of dystopian fiction as a genre. I will then discuss various interpretations of Plato’s *Republic* and the “ideal states” described in it that will challenge the view that it is a described utopia. I will then compare some of these ideas and concepts with various elements from popular

contemporary dystopian fiction. This will be accomplished by looking at several examples in the dystopian genre including Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World (BNW)*, George Orwell's *1984* (1948), and the Andrew Niccol film, *Gattaca* (1997). I will conclude with a description of my screenplay including a synopsis and background information for the story.

UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA 101

A discussion of dystopian fiction cannot be made without first acknowledging utopia as its predecessor. The earliest utopian writings were philosophical treatises, political policies, or hypothetical stories. Among these were, as mentioned earlier, Plato's *Republic*. The first time the term "utopia" was actually used was not until the sixteenth century in Thomas More's book simply titled *Utopia* (1516). As mentioned in the introduction the word dystopia came about to describe something as the opposite of a utopia. A similar term was coined decades before the first recording of the word "dystopia." In the early 19th century British Philosopher, Jeremy Bentham used the word "cacatopia" to describe something as the opposite of a utopia. The term did not really catch on but it was used by another British philosopher, John Stuart Mill, in a famous speech to the British House of Commons; "It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians." Although he probably only said "dys-topian" to give context to the uncommon word cacotopia, dystopia became the commonplace term used to describe utopian counterparts (Goodlad, 2008).

While some modern dystopian writings take place in a more realistic world, dystopian fiction is primarily set in a futuristic science fiction world (Moylan, 2000). One of the biggest influences on dystopia as we know it today is in the works of H.G. Wells. Known mostly for his science fiction novels like *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The Time Machine* (1895), and *The Invisible Man* (1897), his work *A Modern Utopia* (1905) was an influential stepping stone of

modern day dystopia. For the first time in utopian fiction a futuristic science fiction setting was implemented (Baker, 1990).

A significant author of dystopian fiction who was undoubtedly influenced by Wells was the Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin, who actually an editor for Wells in the early 1900s (Baker, 1990). Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* was the first dystopian novel to lay out the general tropes that have become so familiar to the genre; a totalitarian society with little freedom, focusing on the actions of one character, who gets involved with a resistance group and confronts the establishment, usually meeting their doom. Interestingly, the setting of *We* is in a futuristic world state in which most of the buildings are made entirely of glass. This allows police to spy and "supervise" citizens more effectively. The concept of an institution in which the subjects are under constant surveillance of the ruling powers was not original to Zamyatin's writing. While the author makes no conscious acknowledgement to this, Jeremy Bentham wrote about a nearly identical concept he called the "panopticon" (Bentham, 1791). Bentham's writing had to do with a prison institution that could be watched over by a single person of authority but it can be applied to institutions other than prisons. Many modern dystopian books and films feature a society in fear of a real life panopticon including *1984*, *THX-1138* (1971), and *Minority Report* (2002).

While some have said that the dystopian genre contains its own set of sub-genres like the post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* (1979) films (Moylan, 2000) or the Young Adult rebellion dystopian books like Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) (Hintz & Ostry, 2003), for purposes of this paper I am mostly only concerned with twentieth century dystopian fiction that focused on satire of modern society and fears anchored in nightmarish visions of the future (Franck, 2013). During the height of totalitarian regimes like the Third Reich, the fear and paranoia of this potential reality became

the central driving force of many dystopian tales such as the World State in *Brave New World* or the Inner Party in *1984* (Baker, 1990). Another major element in most dystopian fiction is the idea of organized injustice. Erika Gottlieb's book "Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial" (2001) describes this idea as being prevalent in the middle ages when the feudal system kept the powerful in power and the impoverished in their place. She goes on to compare this to dystopian stories in which the government seizes people's freedoms in the name of preserving peace and order (Gottlieb, 2001).

The protagonists featured in dystopia are usually social outcasts who are resistant to societal norms. I could not come up with a succinct way to describe a dystopian protagonist's character arc nor could I find a more apt quote than this: "the story of a man resuming his humanity, taking political responsibility for his life, and finally, failing when confronted with the power of the state and his own fearful complicity with it" (Baker, 1990). The lead character in a dystopian world usually has hopes of seeing their ruling power overthrown, hopes of escaping their conditions, or simply surviving. By the end of story, the hope the protagonist once had is either crushed by the powers that be, such as *1984*, or left open-ended such as the strange yet hopeful ending to *Fahrenheit 451* (1953).

CHALLENGING *THE REPUBLIC*

Over two thousand years ago Plato authored the dialogue *The Republic*. It is a Socratic dialogue in which many contemporaries of Plato, led by Socrates himself, debate on the definition of justice and whether the just man is happier than the unjust man. Over the course of the dialogue many "cities in speeches" are discussed; hypothetical communities to illustrate their philosophical and political ideas. Many of the themes covered can be said to be descriptive of a

modern utopia. It is often asserted that Plato had set out to define the ideal state that would last in perpetuity. In fact, the commonly used title for *The Republic* in the ancient days was “On Justice” (Franck, 2013). This becomes ironic when looking at contemporary interpretations of the text.

While *The Republic* is well known as a cornerstone of modern philosophy and political theory, its many concepts have often been challenged in contemporary society. In the mid-20th century, after the emergence of powerful totalitarian leaders like Hitler and Stalin, scholars and philosophers began challenging the classic interpretation of the *Republic*. Some challenged the ideas of Plato’s Republic as that of a dictator’s mindset. (Thorson, 1964). The ideas in the *Republic* start off reasonable enough with discussions of society being a body and each citizen is a cell, contributing in his own way to the greater good. This sounds simple and practical enough but when the subject is delved into further it becomes a little unsettling. Some of Socrates’ concepts and assertions can be particularly unnerving.

One can read many of Socrates’ ideas as that of a single-minded dictator imposing his ideas on his subjects. One of the biggest examples of these ideas is the concept of a very rigid caste system. According to *The Republic* the ideal city-state divided into three distinct classes; the leaders and clergy, the auxiliaries and soldiers, and the rest of the population which would include anyone from merchants to doctors. In this way no one is capable of moving up or down in the system; you are meant to be in the caste you were born into. The fact that the populations of each class is vastly disproportionate is not shied away from but it is not seen as a controversial issue in the *Republic* (Wild, 1963). Rather, it is defended later by claiming that the citizens of each class have their own set of wants and desires. They are whittled down to “wisdom-loving,” “victory-loving,” and “gain-loving.” The leaders, which are framed as benign philosophers and

philanthropists, are “wisdom-loving” and seek only knowledge so that they can better understand how to govern their people. The soldiers and warriors class obviously belong in the “victory-loving” category. The rest of society is lumped into the “gain-loving” category. This seems to be part of the justification of such a rigid caste system (Franck, 2013).

In a twisted way, Socrates describes how best to deal with the immobility of the class system. He admits that one cannot determine a citizen’s rightful place in the community unless they are observed from childhood to help better determine which class they are best suited for. He suggests a primitive eugenics program in which the best and brightest of each class are brought together to procreate in order to produce the best offspring possible. These children would be raised and observed in a sort of public nursery, concealing the identities of the parents. In this way, Socrates throws out the idea of family and traditional parenting in order to make a better class system (Grube, 1927).

The idea of citizens performing only their “naturally suited” abilities is emphasized but nothing is said about determining the natural function of a human being. Nor is anything said about what a citizen should do if their “naturally suited” skills or profession is not in demand (White, 1979). Rather, Socrates asserts a very consumer driven and hedonistic way to determine the demands of society through that of mass consumption; if the citizens become used to the idea of luxurious lifestyles the economy will flourish with demands for a wide variety of services (Badiou, 2012). As blatantly consumerist as this sound, the idea is not without merits since it would stimulate an economy for a time by creating and securing jobs. However, Socrates takes this one step further by saying that a flourishing economy will eventually and inevitably lead to wars between nations with competing economies. This is seen as a good thing in Socrates eyes

because it will create a demand for a class of warriors who will keep the peace inside and outside the city-state.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

A classic of dystopian fiction, possibly the quintessential example of modern dystopian stories, Aldous Huxley started writing *BNW* as a satirical story influenced by the anti-utopian works of H.G. Wells and Yevgeny Zamyatin. While the work started off as a short piece of fiction eventually Huxley realized the potential behind his ideas and vowed to write a novel that, as he put it, would be simultaneously “personal and social” (Baker, 1990). The book can be viewed as a satirical attack on the society Huxley lived in, specifically the consumer based, pleasure seeking, citizens and the dangers of politics fused with scientific advancement for the “betterment” of society. Set in a distant future, individual countries have been replaced with a unified World State in which every citizen has a place and purpose. Every human being under the World State’s control is conditioned from a young age to accept their roles and social status. When not working, citizens are encouraged to spend time at community events such as going to movie theaters known as “feelies” or participating in drug induced mass orgies. When life is hard and a citizen feels sad, they take a perfect drug known as *soma* to subdue their negative feelings. Huxley presents this world in a creepily seductive way.

The first few chapters of the novel gives away most of this information in an almost enticing way that makes the World State rather appealing. But under all that there is a feeling of something missing, of too much conformity, too much acceptance of a drastically different world than our own. I believe Huxley was not damning this future world that he made up in his head; rather, he believed that this is where society was headed so he wrote the book in a way that would seem appealing to a contemporary reader. Interestingly enough, according to Nicholas

Murray's biography on Huxley, the book was very popular amongst college students of the 1950's for its portents of sexual liberation (Murray, 2003).

While Huxley eventually wrote a foreword and an afterword for later editions of *BNW* he never consciously addresses Plato's writings as an influence or inspiration. Regardless of his intentions there are, nevertheless, many similarities between Huxley's World State and the *Republic's* "city in speech." The most obvious similarity is the rigid class system. The caste system is divided into five different categories starting with Alphas at the top followed by Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons. The Alphas are at the top and include leaders and administrators. Betas are just below them with office jobs and similar services. Gammas do menial labor and tasks. Deltas and Epsilons are the laborers and make up a vast majority of the population. This disproportionate population mirrors the classes proposed in *The Republic*. The caste system in *BNW* is rigid not only because citizens are not permitted to move up or down in the system, but because they are conditioned to being happy in societal roles. Every person's job or career is pre-determined for them before they even exist and from a young age they are conditioned to accept, even enjoy the type of work they do. For example, those pre-determined to work in mines are conditioned against liking nature. This is done by presenting the infant Epsilons with flowers while at the same time sending them jolts of electricity in order to associate pain with nature. Huxley's World State has perfected the proposed caste system in *The Republic* by making everyone content in their place.

An even more disturbing similarity is found between the advanced eugenics described in *BNW* with the primitive ideas of eugenics presented by Socrates. As mentioned early his idea involved finding the best citizens of each class and forcing them to procreate. These parents would not know the identity of their children and vice versa; the family unit is essentially

eliminated in this way. As with the caste system, Huxley's World State perfects Socrates idea of eugenics by using science and technology to mass produce human beings. Not only are humans artificially created, their embryos are tampered with to affect the mental and physical conditions after birth. Alphas are made to be the most intelligent and most physically attractive while the lowest class, Epsilons, are stunted and stupefied.

Another similarity comes from the idea of a consumer driven society. Socrates proposes the encouragement of luxurious and lavish lifestyles so that the economy will thrive. Once again, Huxley's novel out-does *The Republic* by having a society revolving around consumption and pleasure seeking. Citizens of the World State are encouraged to do trendy and ridiculous things like Obstacle Golf or going to the "feelies," not to mention the daily ration of *soma* to put aside reality for a while.

A seemingly small but interesting parallel between *BNW* and *The Republic* is pointed to in Matthew Franck's writing on the two works (Franck, 2013). In *The Republic*, Socrates makes a personal attack on the tragic poetry of Homer and ultimately condemns poetry altogether for its impracticality in the social world. Socrates points out that poets have never had as much political influence as a philosopher or powerful aristocrat. Franck argues that Socrates missed the point by comparing the power of poetry to philosophy in that poetry has more indirect but lasting influence on society. Franck claims that Socrates argument was facile and aggressively defensive when it needed not be. In a similar fashion, a scene late in *BNW* shows a philosopher of sorts condemning poetry with superficial arguments. The World Controller, Mustapha Mond, explains to John the Savage that poetry is unnecessary in the World State because citizens are not concerned about expressing emotion. Mond keeps a stash of poetry and religious writings in a safe behind his desk. While Mond claims artistic expression as obsolete and irrelevant, it is

paradoxical that he keeps the works in his safe. He knows the power of the work in that it is persuasive and moving.

1984

Published in 1949, *1984* was Orwell's warning about the dangers of communism as well as capitalism. Orwell's most well-known book, the novel stands the test of time so well that the term *Orwellian* was coined to describe a dystopian world similar to *1984*. (Steinhoff, 1983). The story-world is in a near future where an oligarchical, tyrannical government reigns supreme in parts of Europe, in a nation called Oceania. There is a clear caste system of the highest officials being members of "Inner Party" and lower ranking officials and workers in the "Outer Party." These two castes take up only 2% and 13% of the population, respectively. The other 85% is the proletariat class, or the proles as they are often called in the novel.

Oceania is perpetually at war with one of the other world powers and as a result there are frequent bombings in Air-Strip One, otherwise known as old London, and limited supplies imported to the area. The scariest thing about *1984*'s world is that the government not only controls the politics and laws but is obsessed with controlling how people think. In order to preserve the illusion that the government of Oceania is all powerful they "control" the past by constantly re-writing it. The main character, Winston, has a job re-writing publications to match government predictions or anything else they need changed. While many people are smart enough to realize the governments tampering of the truth, they are also smart enough to not speak up about it. The Party is headed by a supposed all powerful leader known only as Big Brother. While Big Brother never makes a physical appearance in the novel his face is seen on posters and propaganda films. The posters and film emphasize that "Big Brother is watching" everyone all the time. While it may or may not be true, the threat of constant surveillance keeps

society in line and in fear of the system. The citizens of Oceania live in a real life panopticon much like in Zamyatin's *We*.

While Orwell was expressing many of his frustrations with the world around him in the writing, undoubtedly there are similarities between his dystopia and Plato's Republic. The caste system and disproportionate class populations stand out but there is another layer of evil to Orwell's dystopian nightmare. Admittedly, Huxley's World State would be horrifying if it were a reality but to be an individual citizen in that world would be child's play as compared to Orwell's Oceania. The Inner Party is obsessed with controlling what their citizens think. Most citizens are blissfully ignorant of the true horrors of Oceania but some, like Orwell's Winston, must suffer day by day in a twisted world that they cannot have any hope of escaping. Late in the novel, Winston is taken captive by the Inner Party and tortured to the point of mental submission. The man overseeing the torturing, O'Brien, is the only Inner Party official who appears in the book. He has a philosophical, yet somewhat psychotic, conversation with Winston regarding the nature of truth and reality while explaining the concept of Double-Think; asserting a falsehood when the truth is actually known. He uses the example of "2+2=5." He states that the controlling of the reality of that mathematical falsehood is impossible and irrelevant, all that matters is everyone's perception of such a statement. As Winston puts it, "if everyone believes it, does that make it true?" Obviously the leaders of the Inner Party are fanatics concerned only with staying in power.

A disturbing parallel between this and *The Republic* is the emphasis on love for the state. According to Socrates, in order to preserve and maintain the city-state, citizens must focus all of their love and strong emotions toward the state. The idea is that the city-state is the body and the citizens are individual cells working toward a greater good (White, 1979). In Orwell's novel, this

love of the state is taken to an extreme. The Inner Party's goal is for everyone's emotions to be centered around and driven by love and passion for their nation. While the torturing and occasional exiling are saved for those causing bigger problems, the Inner Party regularly distributes propaganda praising Big Brother and condemning the supposed rebellion faction. The propaganda encourages undying love for the Party and an unbending hatred for anyone who opposes the Party.

GATTACA

Similar to *BNW* the 1998 film *Gattaca* showcases a world with a social caste system determined by genetic manipulation. Parents are encouraged, though not required, to have their children undergo genetic manipulation to maximize the potential of their genes. They can even pay extra to use genes from other people in order to give their children more of a chance to excel in certain areas such as athletics, mathematics, or music. The ethics of this process are questionable even to characters within the film. The main character, Vincent, is born without any genetic modifications and is called a "faith-born" since his parents let fate decide his genes. Faith-borns are known as "Invalids" while those born with genetic modifications are known as "Valids."

The ethics of this genetic process come into question when employers discriminate potential employees because of bad genes. This is known as "genoism." While this practice is illegal within the film, the law is ignored. There is a thoughtful quote by Vincent about the discrimination he faces throughout the film; "I belonged to a new underclass no longer determined by social status or the color of your skin...we now have discrimination down to a science." The plot involves Vincent impersonating a Valid citizen in order to one day become an astronaut. *Gattaca* shares a common theme with *BNW* with its stunning technological advances

that come with a price. Though there would have been no advanced technology at the time of *The Republic*, the concept of geno-ism is an indication that Socrates' ideas on eugenics are unjust and downright fascist. When a clear division is set up between those who are worthy and those who are not, whatever the banal or insignificant reasoning may be, human rights can easily be thrown out the window.

While it is unfair to condemn *The Republic's* dystopian qualities without acknowledging its historical significance, the parallels between dystopian fiction are quite unnerving, in particular with *The Republic's* proposed caste system. While fictional novels and films do not present reality, the stories examined here illustrate the dangers of the proposed ideal state found in Plato's writings.

LITTLE POND: A DYSTOPIAN SCREENPLAY

I will describe the elements of the dystopian books and films I am inspired, influenced, and paying homage to in my script. The biggest elements I would like to pull from other stories in this genre include an over reliance on inadequate technology, escapism through perpetual consumption of pleasures, very rigid class division, and the government's control of the population through genetic engineering.

An obvious influence on my story is Orwell's *1984*. The biggest element from this story that I would like to implement in mine is the perpetual fear of the powers-that-be. The citizens of Orwell's Oceania live with the constant threat of being watched by Big Brother even though they can never be certain if they are being watched or if Big Brother himself actually exists. The idea that the ordinary people do not fully comprehend the powers in charge. Another element from this book that I want to emulate is in the description of the setting; the buildings in *1984* are

described as very grey and old looking while still looking like they could only exist in the future. I want this drab urban aesthetic to come across in the description of my story world.

A movie that pulls from Orwell's work but also presents an original world and story is Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985). This is the movie that made me want to write this screenplay. Set in a world much like Orwell's, the government in this story is too caught up in bureaucracy and paperwork to be efficient in any way. According to the audio commentary on the DVD release of the film's Director's Cut, Gilliam wanted the film to be a critique of the society as he saw it at the time. He describes his experience with "the man" and "the system" as never looking out for anyone but itself (Gilliam, 1985). Because of this I do not think he was trying to say that the government is inefficient because of inadequacy but because it wants to do everything it can to work against the common man. The film is full of scenes in which characters try to do simple things but confronted by bureaucracy and paperwork. Not only is the bureaucracy itself flawed and inefficient but the technology is much the same. There is an over reliance on machines that don't work, which is actually the starting point of the movie's plot. This inefficiency in the system and technology is something I want to come across in my screenplay.

Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931) has many elements I want to put into my story. This book is set 500 years in the future where human individuals have become mass produced cogs in a machine that is a totalitarian regime. A large percent of the population are genetically engineered to be intellectually inferior (known as Gammas, Deltas, Delta-Pluses), but able to perform manual labor and menial tasks so that the intellectually superior (Betas, Alphas, and Alpha-Pluses) can live in comfort. Money doesn't really exist in this story; citizens are provided for by the system with shelter, food, entertainment, and the perfect drug known as Soma. Everyone is conditioned from a young age to accept the way of the world and their place in it.

Even those smart enough to have some sort of critique of this world are hindered because they are too reliant on the system or they fear their fate if they question too much. Huxley's world shows how blandly efficient, yet terrifying, humanity can become under the right circumstances (Baker, 1990). The reliance on and simultaneous fear of the system is something that will come across in my story. The upper class citizens in my world are constantly immersed in entertainment media and are fine with the status quo as long as they get their fix. My main character, Guy Faron, will be similar to *BNW*'s protagonist in that he is considered odd and unfitting in his society because of his inquisitive and unorthodox manner. Even though he questions the society he is too complacent and feels too powerful to actually do anything about it. Also, the idea of the intellectually inferior working for the rest of society may come across in my story.

I am also pulling many elements from the book *Children of Men* (1993) and its film adaptation of the same name. The book and film are very different but the basic premise is the same; humanity's ability to reproduce has diminished leaving no newborns for 20 years and the collapsing society has fallen under the power of a repressive government. While both plots play out differently, they revolve around a man trying to help a pregnant woman escape the clutches of the government so that her baby will not become a political tool. The idea of infertility will be in my story but it will be a lie perpetuated by the system. There will be these clinics known as N-Fertility which claim to assist newly-weds in having children. Most women will have fertility problems but some won't. These women will be hunted down by the government under the guise of performing research to help solve the infertility issue. But in reality they are either killed or made sure to never have babies themselves ever.

I will also be pulling a few elements from Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). This story is set in a future where an apathetic government has let gang violence overrun society. The buildings and public areas are vandalized and covered in graffiti. The main character, Alex, spends his nights with friends prowling the streets and countryside searching for victims to rob, rape, and even murder. The police eventually catch up to him but only after his friends betray him. The gang violence and inefficient police will be a part of the "middle class" in my story. This area of the metropolis will be almost like a refugee camp for those around the world who managed to escape the horrors of the apocalypse. It will be a very diverse population that is full of gangs or middle aged people trying to keep their heads down and just survive. The police in this area aren't inadequate, they're just lazy; they arrest people whenever they are suspicious or if they just feel like beating someone up. They also lazily fill out arrest reports which is why Guy's job is important.

While there has been an explosion in popularity of Young Adult dystopian novels and films in the last decade (Sturgis, 2013), I want to avoid some of the pitfalls of these kinds of stories. For example, the film adaptation of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* has received mixed to negative reviews from critics. The acting and directing has been praised but the script has been criticized for bland dialogue and repetitive scenes (Nusair, 2014). The recent film adaptation of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, has also received mixed reviews from critics. A common complaint is that it comes across as a blatant copy of many dystopian films in recent years. (Kermode, 2014). What these reviews say to me is that studios are cashing in on the current trend in dystopian stories with rushed adaptations. While I want my script to pay homage to many dystopian stories that have influenced me I also want to avoid coming across as yet another trite dystopian cash-cow.

I will write a rough treatment of the screenplay but first I will describe not only the fictional world the story is set in but also its backstory, which will only be implied in the actual screenplay. In essence, this story takes place in a post-apocalyptic world about five hundred years in the future. The apocalypse came after a series of conflicts known as the Endless Wars. These wars came about after a revolutionary discover of an element called Tycho, a highly potent fuel source. It was abundant for a while after its discovery but the greed of humanity soon saw to its diminishment. As Tycho became more and more scarce, governments began hoarding as much as they could. When there was no more left to find, nations began to fight for Tycho.

The conflicts were between poorer nations at first but eventually the world super-powers needed a way to stay on top. They began employing scientists to modify Tycho to use in terribly powerful bombs. These bombs became the main weapon in the Endless Wars and would level entire cities, leaving only craters full of radiated Tycho. The super-power countries eventually realized that the wars could not continue without significantly diminishing the human population. Peace terms could not be agreed upon so instead, the few nations with the resources to do so set up a massive network of Tycho rocket bombs around the world. The idea was for this mass of bombs to be a deterrent and defense system for further warfare on any nation. If one nation decided to use Tycho bombs, the defense system would fire all rockets within range of said nation and obliterate it. While this kept peace between the more powerful nations, weaker nations still fought for Tycho. Inevitably, one of these “defense systems” eventually went off, destroying an entire country in minutes. However, this set off a chain reaction of Tycho rockets being launched all over the world. As part of being a deterrent, these defense systems were designed to be very difficult to stop so by the time anyone could have done anything it was much

too late. Civilization in its entirety was destroyed within an hour of this chain reaction. This event came to be known as The End.

While most major cities were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people lived through the bombings. Many places tried to keep things together as a community but most plunged into anarchy. In one of the few places able to maintain society was a once very wealthy industrialist named William Kingston. A once greedy, capitalist type, Kingston saw that his money was no longer useful for personal gain and set about trying to re-establish civilization with what little resources left. He went with a mining team to one of the Tycho bomb craters and discovered that the element could be extracted from the bombsites and could be processed into fuel. Kingston eventually convinced the few remaining wealthy people in the world to pool their resources together to help rebuild civilization, if only on a small scale at first. They set up in a relatively undamaged area with Tycho bombsites nearby. A small city began to form in this area. Kingston and his partners named it Statera, the Latin word for balance. Their idea was to balance the distribution of Tycho for everyone. Once enough Tycho was extracted and refined, the process of rebuilding became faster and faster. People around the world who could make safe passage to Statera made their way to the city. Kingston was known as a great leader and philanthropist by that time, and continued to live up to his reputation.

The screenplay takes place many years after these events and by that time Statera's government has been lost too corruption, the corporations control much of the politics and legislation, and the citizens have been mentally imprisoned by mass-consumption and instant gratification. Much like in the stories *Brave New World*, *Children of Men* and *Gattaca*, human reproduction has become intrinsically tied to the powers in charge of Statera. Most citizens cannot conceive naturally because of the cumulative radiation from Tycho fuel sources. Instead

those who want children must go to N-Fertility clinics to get aid from doctors and scientists. These facilities claim to help people have healthy children but in reality it is a form of population control. Even the few people who can have children naturally are required by law to go these N-Fertility clinics to register their pregnancies.

The areas surrounding the central city are urban and suburban areas called the Medius. It is overcrowded with a mixed population from around the world. This area of Statera was once great like its center but has deteriorated since William Kingston's III radical changes to the city. It is basically a refuge for anyone who escaped the horrors of the apocalypse around the world. The people here are not comfortable and certainly not happy but they have no power; they are constantly watched and monitored by the city's police by day and by night local gangs own the streets. This is what I like to call the "Clockwork Orange" area because of the gang culture that will permeate. There will be constant robberies, rapes, even murders and the buildings will be rundown and covered with graffiti. It's not a nice place to be but it's better than the outer regions of the city.

The outer region is called the industrial sector and contains the Tycho craters/mines and the factories where it is refined. This area will be mostly unknown to the people in the inner regions of the city. It is a hell on earth where people are sent if the regime deems them unfit for society. Facilities similar to N-Fertility will be in this area constantly cloning new human fetuses that they grow and genetically modify for slave labor in the industrial sector. One of the scenes in the screenplay will take place in a mine in this industrial sector.

Because of the constant fumes and pollution spouting out of the factories in the industrial sector, the whole metropolis is always shrouded in grey fummy clouds. This is another reason for people to wear their EyeBoxes, to ignore what ugliness of the real world. The only place in the

city where it is possible to above the clouds and to see the sun is to go to the top of the Statera Building or the massive towers that dot the city.

Here is a logline for the story; “a disillusioned and complacent man stuck in the bureaucracy of a totalitarian regime is recruited and compelled to aid his once estranged wife in an escape plan for her small resistance group.” The story begins with a man named Guy, my not-so-subtle nod to the protagonist in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1951). He’s small, wiry, and all around awkward. His backstory will not be delved into much in the actual screenplay so I will briefly describe it here. Many years before the events in the script, Guy had a wife named Charlotte and they both worked in the Statera Building. They were one of the few lucky couples to be able to conceive naturally and eventually Charlotte became pregnant. By law they were required to attend appointments with doctors at N-Fertility clinics. This was before either Charlotte or Guy had any fear or distrust of the system so they gladly went. Charlotte soon began to realize that the clinics did not have her unborn child’s wellbeing in mind. She realized too late that the so called doctors were killing her baby from the inside and preventing her from naturally conceiving ever again. Eventually, they lost the baby from what the doctors vaguely described as a “common complication in natural pregnancies.” This was the downward spiral for Guy and Charlotte’s marriage. While both grieved as any couple would, the event shook them both into realizing the truth about the world they lived in. Eventually Charlotte took action and became an outspoken activist against N-Fertility and Statera’s government. Guy reacted in the exact opposite way. He became complacent and apathetic to his situation and had no part in Charlotte’s activism. Over the course of a couple years as their marriage dissolved Charlotte became a well-known figure to the few who would listen. Eventually enough people listened that government wrongly accused her of treason and she had to go underground. Guy was taken into custody

since they were still married. Charlotte did not step forward to help Guy so Guy had no choice but to give information about Charlotte to secure his own release.

The screenplay actually starts a few years after this when Guy has moved up the ladder at the Statera Building and has a rather high profile job as an “information adjuster.” He basically re-writes police arrest forms in elaborate ways so that the arrested will more likely be severely charged. It’s a despicable job, Guy knows, but he has become complacent and apathetic to the world around him. He is different from the rest of society because he refuses to constantly wear his EyeBox which constantly blares ads and commercials into the wearer’s ear unless they are using it. Instead of constantly being entertained by the mainstream media he diverts himself with classical music and paperback books, items that are considered taboo and only circulate in sort of black market. If he’s not wearing his EyeBox he usually diverts himself with his own imagination, constantly slipping into a daydream fantasy story.

The beginning of the script shows a flashback sequence that Guy is dreaming. The script will have several flashback sequences in which Guy vaguely recalls his childhood. Guy wakes up and goes to work, running late as usual. He talks to his friend, Zeeks, while eating lunch and finds out that Zeeks has obtained a black market item that mutes constant EyeBox ads and commercials, simply called Ex-Ad. Guy acts disinterested, not wanting anyone to know about his unsavory contacts within the black market. But that night he goes to his music and book dealer and asks for Ex-Ad. The dealer begins acting suspiciously but gives Guy what he asks for. This is when the inciting incident of the story occurs. After having the Ex-Ad installed, three masked people with guns confront Guy and threaten him with blackmail. They tell him that if he does not retrieve a certain set of security codes from Statera database that they will turn him in. They

reveal that they have been watching the black market dealers and customers, waiting to trap the right Statera Building worker. Guy has no choice but to comply.

Guy goes to work the next day, late again, and sets about retrieving the codes from his work computer. He is almost caught by a colleague, Parsons. Parsons informs Guy that their boss, the Minister of Investigation, needs to speak with Guy. Guy goes to speak with the Minister, Edgar Maynard, who warns him not to be late again and essentially tells Guy that he is expendable. When Guy gets back to his computer the codes have transferred but indicates that they cannot be used without a Statera official present. He calls his blackmailers and tells them about the issue. They tell him to come to them at a certain street Medius for further instructions.

Guy reluctantly goes to the Medius, a place he has never been and is rightfully fearful of considering his position in the Statera Building. He finds the street and waits in an alley. He is quickly found by three young men who he thinks are going to rob him but are actually working for the blackmailers. They take him into their hideout and sit him in an interrogation-like room. The blackmailers come in, obscuring their faces still. Eventually it is revealed that one of them is Charlotte. After some heated words between the estranged couple Charlotte shows Guy what she has been up to since they last had seen each other. She spent years making an underground network to find women in the city who could conceive naturally but who haven't been registered with N-Fertility. Now she has a few dozen couples who are either fertile, expecting, or with newborns. Her plan is to escape the city with them. After some convincing and pulling at his heart strings, Guy agrees to help her cause.

The next step in their plan involves stealing a vehicle big enough to transport the people. They plan on stealing a transport truck from one of the Tycho craters. Guy goes there with a squad of Charlotte's spies and thugs. While they are working on finding a truck, Guy wonders

off from the group and finds himself in the middle of the Tycho craters. He sees the thousands of mentally vacant cloned slaves as well as the many people the Statera officials have lobotomized including his friend Zeeks. Guy and the squad barely escape from the crater before some guards show up but this is a turning point in the story for Guy. He no longer wants to stay as a big fish in a little pond in the Statera Building, he wants to defy the “man” and escape with Charlotte and her people.

The next day at work, Guy is trying desperately not to show his utter contempt with his boss as he’s lectured again about being late. Guy is rather defiant to Maynard, and after their talk it is revealed in a conversation between Maynard and Parsons that they have been suspicious of him for a while and will now have him under surveillance.

That night Guy returns to Charlotte’s hideout. This will be the low point of the story when all hope is lost. Although Guy is now under the suspicion of Maynard, it is one of Charlotte’s accomplices who brings the police, betraying the entire operation. The police show up and raid the whole hideout. Most of Charlotte’s employees are killed and many of the pregnant couples are taken in. Charlotte and Guy manage to get out with at least a few of the women. With no other choice left, they decide to escape the city that very night. They make their way back to the Tycho crater where they have a hacked vehicle ready. After loading all the women into the truck an alarm goes off, locking down the entire place. Guy realizes that he still has Statera access and decides to stay behind to lift the lockdown. Charlotte gets away but Guy is captured by SAFE officers.

After this point in the story it will be left up to the viewer to decide what’s real and what’s in Guy’s head. Guy wakes up strapped to chair with Parsons and Maynard standing over him. Maynard informs Guy that Charlotte and the others were also captured but this is revealed

later to be a lie. In fantastical instance of bravery and violence Guy escapes his restraints and kills Parsons and then pursues Maynard. Along the way SAFE officers try to stop Guy but in his fantasy he is the hero, conquering anything they can throw at him. Eventually he finds Maynard and right as he's about to kill him it is revealed that Guy fantasized this escape and is actually now lobotomized, working at the bottom of a Tycho crater. The very last scene in the script is Charlotte with the pregnant women. They safely escaped Statera and their fate beyond that will be ambiguous but hopeful now that they have escaped the clutches of totalitarianism, tyranny, and oppression.

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