

# Retoryka dziennikarstwa

## Rhetoric of/in journalism

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### The Rhetoric of Healthcare Inequality in Capitalist Classed Societies: Blomkamp's and Romanek's Dystopian Visions

#### Retoryka opieki zdrowotnej w klasowych społeczeństwach kapitalistycznych: dystopijne wizje Blomkampa i Romanka

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#### Abstract

The future of democratic societies has been widely debated among futurologists, including the possible ways medicine could advance, changing the lives of individuals and communities. Yet, what seems a reasonable question to ask is – how the unequal access to healthcare might perpetuate social and economic divisions and turn democracy into tyranny. This paper advances a rhetorical analysis of the reciprocal relations between healthcare and the classed capitalist system as portrayed in two dystopian pictures: Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013). The realities depicted in these movies, as well as their narratives, vary considerably; however, they both present medical advancements as means of and reasons for maintaining or perpetuating social inequality. The two dystopias also warn us of some possible dangers posed by the incompatibility of the capitalist mindset with morality and ethics, presenting corruption in healthcare systems as a result of the class conflict.

Chociaż futurologowie powszechnie dyskutują na temat kierunku rozwoju medycyny i jego potencjalnego wpływu na jednostki i społeczności, rzadziej pojawia się pytanie o dostępność medycyny w przyszłości. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje wzajemne relacje między opieką społeczną a systemem kapitalistycznym ukazane w dystopiiach *Nie opuszczaj mnie* (2010) Marka Romanka i *Elizjum* (2013) Neilla Blomkampa. Oba filmy przedstawiają wynalazki medyczne jako sposób i powód utrzymywania i pogłębiania nierówności społecznych. Wspomniane dystopie ostrzegają przed potencjalnymi zagrożeniami płynącymi z niespójności kapitalistycznej mentalności z moralnością i etycznością i prezentują deformację systemów opieki zdrowotnej jako rezultat konfliktu klasowego.

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#### Key words

capitalism, social stratification, healthcare, dystopias, futurology  
kapitalizm, rozwarstwienie społeczne, opieka zdrowotna, dystopie, futurologia

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## **The Rhetoric of Healthcare Inequality in Capitalist Classed Societies: Blomkamp's and Romanek's Dystopian Visions**

### **1. Introduction**

The advancement of technology has been a key issue in science fiction works and futurology discussions. The topics that are usually associated with the genre, however, especially in cinema, are either the potential dangers of the introduction of artificial intelligence as exemplified by such cult pictures as *The Matrix*, *Blade Runner* or *The Terminator* – or the possibilities brought about by facilitating space travel, illustrated by the *Star Wars* franchise or the *Star Trek* series. In an interview with Robert Potts for *The Guardian* writer of dystopian fiction, Margaret Atwood, has even defined science fiction as having “monsters and spaceships,” differentiating it in this way from speculative fiction. Nevertheless, the more down to earth science fiction works often deal with some immediately relevant issues: they address ecological, political and economic changes, and elaborate on such questions as the future of medicine and healthcare.

There are various hypotheses on the extent medicine can advance and whether there will be a time when all diseases have been eliminated and immortality has been achieved. Much of science fiction is set in worlds where medical technologies are so advanced that protagonists are invariably healthy and there is very little need for medical care. This may be achieved by eugenics, elimination of viruses, invention of a universal vaccine or transplantations, and is exemplified in classic science fiction works such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* where advanced genetic engineering is practiced, Isaac Asimov's *Robot* series in which replacing one's body parts for mechanical ones is commonplace, and possibly H. G. Wells' *Time Machine* whose future world seems to have been freed from pathogens. Repeatedly, the genre has predicted that people would be ultimately ensured protection from illness.

The contemporary forecasts of the future are far more pessimistic, however, and it is not the extent to which medicine can advance that is debated. Presently, most of the renowned futurologists likewise believe that the achievement of immortality is a matter of time. Such forecasts are not only publicized in somewhat controversial books such as Ray Kurzweil's *Transcend: Nine Steps to Living Well Forever* which as the title suggest is indeed a program of prolonging one's life, so that in a couple of decades one can be granted eternal existence. Profound studies and analyses are conducted by various scholars who focus on the impact the potential medical invention could have on the contemporary societies. According to historian Yuval Noah Harari, only the richest people will be able to become immortal. Moreover, in his recent book, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, he claims that the working classes will serve as means of production of the technologies to ensure good health for the upper classes, and that the working class itself will not be able to use the equipment. This dystopic vision of civilization would mean perpetuating the classed system that modern technological humanity was striving to abolish (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Latour 1991)

This is a hypothesis grounded in the analyses of contemporary capitalist systems. As Colin Leys notices and elaborates on in "Health, Health Care and Capitalism," there is a widely accepted assumption that it has been capitalism that brought about improvements in health in the past years (7). Having compared health systems in different countries, he argues, however, that this belief is erroneous and it is actually governments' initiatives that promote both health and innovative medicine (7-8). Sociologist, Vicente Navarro, is of similar opinion. In his book, *Dangerous to Your Health: Capitalism in Health Care*, Navarro enumerates the means by which capitalist ideologies actually promote unhealthiness (83-99). In a system where material success is the greatest value and we are encouraged to consume, there is no time for preparing nutritious meals or getting enough sleep. Fortunately, the market provides instant foods, energy drinks and pills to mute symptoms of poor health. Our food, water and air are poisoned as more and more superfluous goods are produced for us to consume. The pharmaceutical market grows as we are led into believing that having muted the symptoms of diseases with pills – we became healthy. In countries with little or no public healthcare, the rich are favored. People are forced to work under unhealthy conditions and their resulting illnesses end up untreated as they cannot afford proper medical care.

These symptoms of inequalities in the contemporary world inspired various modern artists to elaborate on the ways this situation can advance. Seeing that the success of blockbusters is often the result of their luring the audience with action and/or melodrama, most movies which aim for box-office rather than aesthetic greatness skip on intellectual value and do not attempt to encourage reflectiveness,

consistently with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's concept of the "culture industry" (2002). Modern science fiction films tend to use the same capitalist methods to increase their popularity – they are filled with action and drama by which they reach for a broad audience. At the same time, however, they tend to represent current trends of thought among futurologists, occasionally containing a critique of contemporary societies. In this way contemporary cinema can be seen as deconstructing the capitalist system from the inside: being a product of capitalism and visibly using capitalist methods to increase its popularity. This popularity, however, can then be used to deliver a partly concealed critique of capitalist ideologies to a wider audience. Interpreted in such a way, apart from their entertaining and aesthetic function, science fiction films can be seen as an educating rhetorical tool and the director's aim in making a movie can be seen as political or didactic as well.

The following analyses have been inspired by a tradition of rhetorical theorizing and the studies on the rhetoric of power and inequality originating with Foucault (1973) or Latour (1991), as well as with the notions of "social risk" inherent in medical technologies (Harding 1998). According to them, speculative literature, particularly dystopias provide a space for the deliberation on and deconstruction of rhetorical constructs of power and class hegemony. They also involve the pathos that mobilizes resistance with respect to what inspired the futurology's pessimistic visions of exploitation and control of capitalist elites over access to life-saving medical technologies. Through anxiety-ridden visualizations and "fear appeals" the dystopian genres might activate latent cultural resistances and politicize the audiences. As a result, such dystopias might be regarded as "rhetorical situations" (Bitzer 1968) in which the filmic techniques, the ideological content and the narrative forms used become rhetorical acts aimed at breeding identification with the exploited (Burke 1969).

The article consists in discussing the rhetorical dimensions of Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013). The realities depicted in these movies, as well as their narratives, vary considerably; however, they both present medical advancements as means of and reasons for maintaining or perpetuating social inequality.

## 2. Genetic engineering – What is manufactured is owned

The production of *Never Let Me Go* film was initiated by the screenwriter – Alex Garland, who at that time has already produced and written *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine* – both belonging to the science fiction genre. Recently, he has been nominated for an Academy Award for his very socially aware *Ex Machina* which

examines the issue of artificial intelligence and comments on the problem of internet privacy. *Never Let Me Go* is a rather faithful adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of the same title.<sup>1</sup> It is a story of an alternative 1990s Britain where cloning people in order to harvest their internal organs is commonplace. The clones live in isolated places so as not to disturb the regular citizens. Hence, the group of protagonists in the movie is presented as growing up at a seemingly ordinary, yet isolated, boarding school called Hailsham. Apart from the emphasis put on health issues, physical activities and sexual education – the latter being discussed further in the paper – the program of their schooling does not seem to differ from the traditional curricula. We follow the students as they mature and leave Hailsham for another secluded place, where – for a few years – they can organize their time by themselves. Although they are not allowed to work, they are occasionally let out of their lodgings for short trips to nearby towns. Their fear of public places and clumsiness in restaurants and shops calls attention to their detachment from the rest of the society. This setting invokes a nuanced dialogue with the idea of growing social fragmentation, as well as the Foucauldian (1973; 1978) notions of discipline, health regimes and isolation of the ill from the healthy, with a “rhetorical question” of who is it in fact that is in need of a clinical treatment.

The main thread of the story is a love triangle between three protagonists, and the most emotional scenes of the movie focus on their relationship and feelings. In an interview conducted by Peter Sciretta, the director, Mark Romanek, stresses that he did not want the movie to focus on the science fiction motifs. The fictional context was supposed to provide a background to the main themes of love and the “preciousness of time.” This seems to also be how the movie has been presented and marketed – as if the dystopian setting might scare its potential audience off. The film creators' attention to the role of the rhetorical pathos in engaging audiences could be mentioned here. To breed identification (Burke 1969) such narrative motifs are reminiscent of the emotion-laden experiences of families of terminal patients, who are urged to maximize their emotional investment in the relationships that have little future.

Undoubtedly, however, the background story is crucial and cannot remain unnoticed throughout the film. Although over most of the movie it is not the center of action, Ishiguro's vision of an alternative Britain provides an additional dimension to the picture and, arguably, brings out the main message of – at least – the novel. In the dystopian 1990s clones constitute the lowest of the classes – one that is ghettoized, dehumanized and exploited for medical technologies (Harding 1998). The attitudes pervading in the fictional Britain incorporate the view that cloned

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1. It must be acknowledged thus that although it is obvious that most of the observations on the nature of society included in the film are attributable to the original story by Ishiguro, since this article's aim is to analyze the rhetoric of cinematic representations, references will be made to film creators rather than original literary author.

people do not have souls, and although they look like regular human beings, their bodies are considered revolting by the other classes. What might seem absurd at first is that the members of the abused group do not rebel against their destiny, but the picture does provide an answer to this question: the Hailsham children are indoctrinated with an ideology according to which their destiny and purpose in life is – to be used. A powerful rhetorical tool in instilling such perspective in them is the language they adopt. Firstly, the established term for having one's internal organs removed is *to donate*, although – as clearly stated – it is not the clones' voluntary decision to give up their viscera. Moreover, the group identifies with the function thus calling themselves *donors*. They treat the transplantations as a very special and important job and frequently express concern about whether they are or will be good at it. Clearly but nonetheless strikingly, their sense of effectiveness depends on whether they are able to provide many donations – the more transplantations a person can endure before their *completion*, the better a donor she or he is. One can see this motif as related to the classical idea of “false consciousness” in critical theory (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002), as well as to the pop cultural (neo-liberal) rhetorics of self-improvement and competition that are widely explored by Leys (2010).

Another way of increasing the donors' efficiency is the introduction of the institution of *carer* who looks after the clones in between and during the transplantations and keeps her or him motivated, and thus, possibly, useful for a longer time. The clones' perception of the significance of their role is strongly affirmed as already in the opening scene of the movie, when the occasional narrator, Kathy H. says “I'm good at my job. I feel a great sense of pride in what we do. Carers and donors have achieved so much.” Finally, as already implied, dying during transplantation is called *completion*, as if this is how the clones fulfill their destiny. What is also notable is that the teachers at Hailsham call themselves *Guardians* – implying that rather than tending for the students, they are there to protect valuable goods that the children in fact are. Indeed, the teachers at Hailsham certainly represent the concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) – they use their authority to manipulate the students and keep them misinformed. At one point a nonconforming teacher tells the Hailsham children “You are not taught enough,” meaning that they cannot comprehend the significance of their fate and do not understand its unfairness, as indeed by that time the Guardians have formed in them the aforementioned “false consciousness,” preventing them from challenging their status. The clones are raised to believe it is their unavoidable destiny to serve as means of spare parts for the *normal* people whom they seem to idealize – in the case of not only their teachers, but also regular workers, the main object of their envy. The members of the group are, moreover, encouraged to distract themselves

with reading melodrama novels, watching television sitcoms, and creating visual art. The mechanisms seem to work similarly to what Adorno and Horkheimer have described in “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (107-108). As in capitalist societies only the upper classes have access to extensive education, and the members of the lowest class are possibly intentionally kept partly ignorant, while easily accessible mass culture distracts them, discouraging from questioning the system whose victims they are.

Perhaps as a way to avoid awareness of the cruel reality, the donors follow their guardians’ recommendations and engage in shallow entertainment. The clones being sterile, there is apparently no reason for denying them the efficient preoccupation constituted by sex, and thus, the teachers scrupulously explain and demonstrate to the Hailsham students the practicalities of sexual intercourse. Apparently, the ordinary standards of morality do not apply to those who are already excluded from the society, especially when keeping them distracted is useful to the citizens of actual relevance lest they constitute social risk (Harding 1998). The exploitation depicted in the movie is based on a rhetorical construct of power, which intrinsically requires persuading the exploited to accept their fate and the exploiters to create a discourse in which their doing is either justified or – invisible to them, made a part of “the landscape in which human action and will flow effortlessly” (Latour 1991, 111). In the story, language and ideology are employed to achieve this aim. As Harding points out, persuasion as regards the needs of the human body has been a part of the medical discourse for years – disease and decay has been made culturally unacceptable and nowadays “the unmedicalised body is a sheer impossibility” (1998, 145).

Because the clones are the focal point of the story, and their childhood and relations are designed to seem familiar, the audience should be able to readily identify with them. However, seeing that the immediate beneficiaries of the exploitation are depicted as ordinary people as well, the audience might be compelled to first imagine themselves in the role of the victims, and later establish their similarities with the ignorant exploiters. The resulting dissonance may indeed inspire the audience to be wary and critical of the discourses of power. Hence, the setting of *Never Let Me Go* can be read as a metaphor of and a warning against contemporary capitalist societies, where inequality and exploitation are commonplace and where many elements of people’s lives are dictated by the market rather than ethics and morality – as Martijn Konings asserts in his summary of contemporary social scientists’ approach to capitalism: “[E]conomic forces are often in conflict with the substance of social life [...] their growth occurs at the expense of communal institutions, and there is something artificial and therefore ultimately unsustainable about this process” (1). At the end of the movie it is revealed that Hailsham

was indeed special and the tendency is to rear clones at places similar to battery farms – a shocking idea when we imagine applying them to people, but something we typically grew to accept or ignore when used for animals. The discourse of deeming some creatures as soulless and unable to feel is also characteristic of capitalist ideologies, according to which, the suffering of animals is a suitable price for higher income (Wilde 2000, 37).

### 3. The celestial body of the upper class

Similar themes, though much more straightforward, can be found in 2013 *Elysium*, whose director, Neill Blomkamp, debuted in 2009 with *District 9*, another tale of a dystopian future treating on racial segregation and ethics of power, while strictly following Atwood's aforementioned definition of science fiction by having both – spacecraft and aliens. The latter do not appear in *Elysium*, which tells a story of the 2154 overpopulated and polluted Earth whose upper class has moved to a luxurious space settlement suitably referred to by the name of the Greek paradise.

Indeed, all the inhabitants of Elysium are healthy, young (at least when it comes to their bodies' appearance) and wealthy. Considering the Elysians' perfect physical condition, the place can be seen as the ultimate invention aimed to facilitate the isolation of the ill from the healthy, as described by Foucault (1973). Yet, arguably this separation is exactly what makes the proletariat able to challenge the class hegemony, for in their disengagement, the elites have abandoned the most efficient discrete "disciplines of power" (Foucault 1975). Instead, to control the working class, the ruling class predominantly uses pure force, and hence barely constrains the underclass' bodies. It also stops paying attention to the "control of the individual consciousness" referred to by Horkheimer and Adorno as an internal part of contemporary economy (2002, 95). The economic system of Blomkamp's future Earth, when seen as separate from Elysium's, certainly seems closer to the idea of anarcho-capitalism, where most social institutions are privatized and consequently only perfunctory in their efforts. It also seems as if rhetorical means of class struggle and containment were no longer necessary.

Clearly, in the director's representation, rather than improving the living standard of all people, technology is used only for the benefit of the super-rich. It gives them even more power over the poor and reinforces the difference of opportunities, creating a system where it is virtually impossible to be accepted into a higher class in any other way than by being born into it. The protagonists cannot even attempt to climb the class ladder, as they are preoccupied with survival by doing jobs which should be no longer necessary in such a technically advanced

civilization and could instead be automated. Perhaps the purpose of the work imposed on them is to distract and hence prevent them from constituting social risk (Harding 1998). Possibly, by overwhelming the underclass with physical work, the Elysians aim to prevent them from the cultivation of brotherliness which, according to Max Weber, cannot exist “[i]n the midst of a culture that is rationally organized for a vocational workaday life [...] unless it is among strata who are economically carefree” (1946, 357), which the protagonists are certainly not.

Blomkamp’s reference to capitalist classed systems is much more obvious than that of Romanek. Fighting the unjust order is the main theme of the movie although the protagonist is realistic enough not to have volunteered for the task. The picture portrays the inhabitants of Los Angeles forced to either work prolonged shifts under terrible conditions for inadequate wages or to engage in criminal activities. They breathe contaminated air and eat food grown in the soil polluted by production of war machinery and merciless robots, subsequently used by the elites to keep the lower classes under control. In this way, at least, the discipline techniques are used efficiently in Foucault’s terms – with the utilization of robots, the number of relevant people directly exercising power can be minimized and the resistance cannot be aimed at anybody in particular. On the dystopian Earth, to ensure the highest profit, the privatized justice and health systems seem to be McDonalized (Ritzer 2014). Certainly, Blomkamp’s robots lack in any kind of intelligence and creativity which many science fiction writers have predicted them to soon achieve. Although they are grounded in entirely different systems, the literally dehumanized social institutions of dystopian capitalism bring to mind bureaucracy, which Arendt calls “the most social system” (1998, 40). Arendt’s reflections on bureaucracy can as well be applied to Blomkamp’s automated healthcare and justice institutions in reminding that “the rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule” and that it may in fact form the crudest tyranny (1998, 40). As tools of power and parts of capitalism, the robots have to be entirely under (not necessarily active) control, standardized, efficient and predictable. In the case of their interlocutor’s nervousness which is seen by them barely as increased heart rate, they readily offer pharmaceuticals, suggesting that it is the reaction they invoke (and not what invokes it) which should be corrected. In this exaggerated way, they represent Foucault’s concept of “medical gaze” (1973), demonstrating its inescapable constructedness and power. This is how the scientific medical regime enters the rhetorical situation to contain affective responses to injustice.

The pharmaceuticals given out by the robots are no doubt often useful to the earthlings. Obviously, the citizens of the corrupted cities suffer from various medical conditions, which are untreatable on Earth due to insufficient and outdated equipment. This is contrasted with ever healthy residents of Elysium, each of whom has

got a so called Med-Bay – a device with the ability to heal all conditions and diseases, or what the current discourse on health deems necessary to cure. While the name of the machine is devised from the world “medical,” it does not only remedy what contemporary discourses consider as ailments. Med-Bays also reverse signs of aging and apparently have the ability to change parts of one’s DNA as a fashion choice, as in one scene the audience sees a character’s hair color and structure changed. In *Elysium* what Harding sees as applying to some rich older women in contemporary societies is true for all citizens: “Striving for invulnerability is made a normative condition” (1998, 142).

Despite living in luxury and leisure, the elites are not free of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) or the duty to sculpt their “plastic bodies” (Bordo 1995) to fit a current ideal, although the adjustment of one’s appearance is considerably facilitated. In this way the upper class is trapped as if by themselves in the “iron cage of external goods” (Weber 2005, 123). Saved from experiencing a large part of the human condition – as the audience perceives it – the privileged hold onto something they do not understand the value of. Occasionally, some members of the lower class try to enter the otherwise peaceful *Elysium* in order to treat their conditions in a Med-Bay, but in the best case the government deports the intruders, and in the worst – eliminates them. Before they are gotten rid of, however, we can see them disoriented by their surroundings’ extravagance which in the light of their basic needs remaining unsatisfied seems immensely wasteful. The overt portrayal of luxury as gratuitous is clearly designed to breed identification with the underprivileged (Burke 1969) and disdain towards wastefulness. One of the official trailers is even more straightforward about who the audience is supposed to identify with and who constitutes the Other: introducing the world and divisions of *Elysium*, it describes the upper class as “the privileged,” who reside on the celestial body they have built and, while showing the Earth’s slums, complements the introduction with the statement “We live on Earth”.

Indirectly though evidently, *Elysium* also touches upon the connection of race and class, and the forceful insistence on who the intended heroes are may have risen from awareness of racial power relations in contemporary societies. As argued by Bordo, normalizing imagery present in contemporary culture favours some races over others, influencing the identification processes (1995), which, as Burke argues, results in a “mixture of identification and dissociation” (1969, 34). Notably, the citizens of Earth seem to be mostly Hispanic or black, while the residents of *Elysium* are generally non-Hispanic whites. Paradoxically, the actor who was cast as the heroic protagonist, Max Damon, is also a popular white actor who clearly stands out among the Hispanic citizens of Los Angeles. Doubtlessly, selecting a celebrity for the role was a rhetorical act meant to increase the chances

of a broad audience and hence the movie's influence. As mass produced pictures accustom underprivileged groups to identify and empathize with white male protagonists, employing a corresponding actor as the main character increases the chance that the cinemagoers will be able to relate to his struggles. Another reference to ethnicity is, arguably, made through the main villain of the movie – Kruger, whose distinctive attribute is his heavy South African accent. Whether or not Blomkamp's creations of the protagonist and the villain were meant to mock Hollywood conventions, his vision of the connection between race, privilege and class as factors in the availability of healthcare was undoubtedly serious and well-grounded, as the points he makes are consistent with contemporary medical sociology studies, such as David Coburn's "Inequality and Health". Surely, designing the film as what Horkheimer and Adorno call "art for the masses" (2002, 98-99), widens the audience, thus serving the picture's rhetoric function. The moviegoer who leaving the cinema sees the world outside as a "seamless reflection of the one which has been revealed in the cinema" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 99) might with this film shed her or his illusions instead of absorbing them.

#### 4. Conclusions

Apart from touching upon social problems, Blomkamp's films are filled with plot twists, explosions and bloodshed – elements which ensured them considerable commercial success. Much of the screen time of *Elysium* is occupied by gory battles and the pace of the movie is similar to that of an action film. Correspondingly, *Never Let Me Go* could be likened to a romance or a melodrama. Such genre-fluidity increases the target audience, and hence, potentially enables the directors' views to influence more people, though the neo-Marxist messages of the movies are partially latent and might as well seem only an excuse for the dramatic line of action. Nonetheless, according to a literary critic – Erika Gottlieb – dystopian fiction has typically been a projection of its author's fears about his or her own society (115).

Although the genre of speculative fiction has been generally associated with a warning against communist totalitarian regimes, there perhaps has come a time when yet again it is capitalism and its problems that are elaborated on in form of dystopia. This has arguably been a reoccurring theme for instance in J. G. Ballard's and Margaret Atwood's works; however, employing the conventions of the Hollywood productions as rhetorical acts may be more effective in influencing the contemporary public. As predicted by Hannah Arendt (2000), the public sphere would be defunct if social actors stopped deliberating the questions of mortality, immortality and ethics of healthcare systems, even if the discussion moves to cinematography as a new rhetorical regime.

Both capitalist dystopias portray worlds where the advancement of medicine has been a reason for maintaining or – as in *Never Let Me Go* – actually creating social classes. Markedly, the clones have been brought to life in order for the upper classes to live more comfortably. An additional interpretation of this theme would be reading the donors' premature death as a metaphor of the lower classes sacrificing their energy and time producing extravagant goods for the rich to consume. Moreover, in *Elysium* the limited access to healthcare also constitutes the means by which the classed system is reinforced – the citizens of Earth are too absorbed with their efforts to survive to consider rebelling against their unjust fate. Romanek and Blomkamp portray capitalism as an immoral system of corruption where potentially beneficial inventions may be actually used to cause a decline in the majority's standard of living. The directors remind the moviegoers that all medical technologies are connected with social risk, and, using various techniques, they appeal to the audience to identify with the victims thereof. It is not wholly obvious, however, whether they should be seen as rhetors who have an aim in politicizing the audience or who use political issues for their own (commercial) success only. Whether those movies use the capitalist means to deconstruct capitalism or the neo-Marxist ideology to increase their commercial success, they might be a beginning of a new trend in mass culture.

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