

Violence and Society in Dystopian Fiction

BA Thesis

Includes a work of original fiction



Jonathan de Souza 3467961
Pyreneeën 39 3524VM Utrecht
Universiteit Utrecht

Table of contents.

1. Introduction	3
2. Research	6
3. Informers	14
4. Reflection	30
5. Works Cited	32

1. Introduction

Dystopian fiction became a popular genre after World War II and particularly during the Cold War, because at the time many feared the world was on the brink of total destruction. The genre often reflects political conflicts and social anxieties that have, or are taking place. Mark Bould attributes the technological revolution after World War II to the success of the genre. "The accelerated tempo of scientific development in the postwar period, with all manner of new devices conspiring to transform or threaten people's lives, made the genre seem not only prescient but uniquely relevant, since one of the genre's key themes has always been the inescapable reality of technosocial change"(85). Consequently, stories, which fed on such fears, were popular among readers at the time and many of the novels that were successful have been canonized. Most have become cult classics and are still widely read, with some even making it on to academic curricula's. Novels like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, are just a few of the novels from the Cold War era still being read more than half a century later. While the popularity of Dystopia seemed to die down after the sixties, since the 1990s, a surge of Dystopian novels has hit the market and many of them have gone on to be very successful. Brian Bethune, who wrote about the recent success of Dystopian fiction, says, "In the past century of world wars, financial panics, murderous totalitarian regimes and nuclear threat, dystopias have outnumbered sunny projections by several orders of magnitude. Pessimistic depictions of the future are now everywhere in popular culture"(84).

Dystopian fiction, being a subgenre of science fiction, often contains a futuristic society in which technology has progressed to a point far exceeding the progress of technology in the readers' reality. In her guide to writing fiction, Janet Burroway describes science fiction, and thus to an extent Dystopian fiction, as "dealing with the accomplishments of the human race through science, the dangers to human

feeling , soul and environment”(398). Dystopian fiction distinguishes itself from science fiction by making use of recurring elements in its stories. For example, the featured society is controlled by some kind of oppressive force. In some stories, the characters are aware of their oppression, while in other stories, they are in blissful ignorance to what is happening to them and their surroundings. These stories often make use of violence. Oppressors use it because they are scared of their downfall, suppressed use it because they fear their oppressor and see no other way than to retaliate.

Moreover, the settings are seemingly realistic to the reader, because the conflicts described could be seen as being potentially realistic. In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, published in 1953, giant television screens broadcast violent programs on an endless loop, with families glued to the screens so they don't miss their favorite shows. The novel magnifies current society's obsession with media and violent entertainment. Current news programs blatantly broadcast images of massacres taking place in countries like North Korea and Syria, whose governments rule its citizens with an iron fist and use violence as scare tactics on their own people, proving how realistic Bradbury's futuristic vision was.

Dystopian fiction is linked in some way to events that took place at the time in which it was written. As such, a dystopian story is a criticism of these events. Author Robison Wells, says authors focus on social or political conflicts, which are then intensified in their stories. "Dystopia fits this mold: taking a current problem and extrapolating upon it. *Uglies* addresses body image. *Brave New World* is about our disposable consumer culture and our obsession with hedonistic pleasure and entertainment. *We* criticizes conformity and Communism" (par.5) . The writer uses the story to convey beliefs on a subject. In other words, Dystopian fiction expresses an opinion, which is sometimes public, about the current state of affairs. As said above, violence plays an essential role in Dystopian fiction and is not only used for sensational reasons but also contributes to plot development. Violence became a staple in

post-World War II literature and continued in the same fashion throughout the Cold War period and beyond.

This research paper will analyze the use of violence in three Dystopian novels namely, Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, published in 1962, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, published in 1993. In these novels, violence is not just a means to make the story graphic, or to instill fear in the characters, but the use of violence in these novels is central to their conflicts. Violence is used in the absence of other emotions. Characters have no other way of expressing themselves because other forms of expression are not present. Thus, violence develops in the place where other emotions should be present. In *A Clockwork Orange*, there is a lack of familial bonding and a censorship of language, which makes characters unfeeling towards each other. In *Fahrenheit 451* Books and to a further extent moralities are banned, giving way to characters lacking ethics. In *The Giver*, emotions are absent and as such, the characters do not know right from wrong and are indifferent towards the violent acts they commit. Characters in these novels feel trapped within closed communities and violence is the only way in which they can make themselves heard. It is thus noteworthy to examine what exactly the purpose of violence in Dystopian fiction is and what it does that makes it such a prevalent theme in the genre. In addition to this paper, a short work of original fiction will also be written. The knowledge of how violence works and what it does in Dystopian fiction, which will be acquired through his research essay will be applied to this short piece of fiction. Finally a piece of reflection will discuss the piece of fiction as well as the research essay and how the latter was used to make decisions the former.

2. Research

Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, Published in 1962, uses violence as a means of communication. Alex, the main character commits random acts of violence because in his world there are no other forms of expression. He is, like any teenager, unsure of himself, and he consequently becomes hostile to those around him. The English society in the novel is suppressed by a totalitarian regime which is doing everything in its power to undermine the extreme amount of violence taking place in London. Andrew Hammond, who researched British Dystopian novels says of *A Clockwork orange*, "The text's satire is directed not at a domestic political system—a highly regimented, though rarely mentioned, industrial capitalism—but at the identification with Soviet culture exhibited by British teenagers" (672). *A Clockwork Orange* discusses indoctrination, communism and gang violence, topics that were unavoidable during the Cold War. Indoctrination for example, a procedure believed to have been used by communist states during the Cold War, is an important factor in the novel. Mary Beth Norton writes about the North Koreans indoctrinating prisoners of war (POWs). "They undertook 'reeducation' or 'brainwashing' programs to persuade POWs to resist repatriation" (780). People it seemed, were open to such controversial stories in literature as well. In *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, it is said that the success of novels published in the fifties like Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides*, demonstrated how broad-minded the public was to such serious topics (Bould, et al 86). Furthermore, Bould says,

The specific scenarios treated in these texts – near-future Dystopia and global apocalypse respectively – were to become the genre's two most prevalent themes during the coming decade. The latter should not be surprising given that the USSR had tested its first atomic device

in August 1949 leading to widespread anxieties about superpower competition and the imminent likelihood of global destruction. (86)

In the novel, a specific language, called Nadsat, developed by Burgess censors the mention of violence, while still stimulating violent acts. The use of Nadsat cuts violent words and replaces them with words, which are either fabricated or derived from other languages. Because of this, the violent acts and descriptions abundantly present in the novel, are not graphically detailed. The word 'rape' for example does not feature within the novel, even though it does occur under the Nadsat term 'in-outs in-outs'. In the novel When Alex is robbing an elderly lady he says, "I gave her a malenky fair kick in the lotso, and she didn't like that, crying: 'Waaaaah', and you could viddy her veiny mottled litso going purplepurple" (57). Even though the scene is violent, Nadsat makes it seem less so, with words like 'purplepurple' making it sound almost childlike. In his autobiography, Burgess says he did this deliberately. "As there was much violence in the draft smouldering in my drawer, and there would be even more in the finished work, this strange new lingo would act like a kind of mist half-hiding the mayhem and protecting the reader from his own baser instincts" (38).

Alex's acts of violence are the only way in which he knows how to express himself. His voice is literally taken from him and all he is left with is his ability to commit violence. Because of the lack of communication, the characters resort to violence, the only way in which they can vent. Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack, who together wrote an article Alex's angst say, "Alex responds to these different feelings of uncertainty and change, by trying on different costumes, behavioral modes, and verbal mannerisms in an effort to establish what he perceives to be a stable sense of identity" (23-4). When his ability to partake in violent acts is taken away, he stops functioning and becomes more mechanized than

human. Violence is thus a way in which he can express himself and without it he cannot live his life normally.

In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Guy Montag, a fireman, burns books which have become illegal objects in this futuristic society. By taking away books, the government has essentially censored intellectual thinking and in turn has given free reign to violence. The government it seems, solely focuses on exterminating books and other forms of art, and in turn does nothing to control its citizens and the crimes they commit. With television programs continuously depicting violence, the appalling nature of violence is lost. The violence has taken the place of rational thinking and moral choice. No books, means no thinking, which in turn means moral obligation is lost as well. The violence that ensues is a warning of what may yet come once intellectualism dies out. The lack of significant culture and human contact has noticeably altered the way in which Guy and other characters in the novel act. This point is mentioned at the beginning of the novel. "There are too many of us, he thought. There are billions of us and that's too many. Nobody knows anyone. Strangers come and violate you" (16). In their society, violence has become a staple in all forms of media and entertainment and because all other forms of recreation are banned, violence has become a normal part of life, and people do not question its presence. The acts of violence committed in the novel are not necessarily a call for attention. Violence is the characters' only form of expression. Because books and other forms of art are banned, people are unaware that there is something better to do.

Violence is the main theme in the television programs everyone watches. Bradbury describes some graphic scenes Guy and his wife watch on television. "A minute later, Three White Cartoon Clowns chopped off each other's limbs to the accompaniment of immense incoming tides of laughter. Two minutes more and the jet cars... bashing and backing up and bashing into each other again. Montag saw

a number of bodies fly in the air” (94). The media in the story sensationalizes everything and violence has become a form of entertainment. The programs have become dependent on violent content in order to increase their viewership. People in the novel have become jaded and are not as affected by violence as they once were because of their own increasing want of violence. The outcome is that vigilantes increase their hostility in order to seek attention, which begets even more violence. Clarisse, a neighbor of Guy’s, who makes him realize that their community is not perfect, says to him,

I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other...Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid. My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. (30)

This quote shows, how in the novel life has come to imitate art. The violence on the screen is seen as validation to be violent in real life. Because they are not punished for their crimes, characters feel that it is justified to commit random acts of violence, just like on television. The media has come to play an important part in Dystopian novels written after *Fahrenheit 451* as well, because through the media, fear and violence are conveyed to the suppressed citizens in the Dystopian community. Without rational thinking, the society in *Fahrenheit 451* resorts to violence as their only form of recreation. In the absence of relationships, intellectual conversations and other emotions, violence in *Fahrenheit 451* is the only way for the characters to feel or experience something. Because there are no others forms of entertainment, and because of the enormous amount of violence they see on television and in their surroundings, people in the novel have become desensitized and have stopped caring about what happens to others. Thus, with the use of excessive violence, and the loss of moral judgment, society in the novel is broken to the point where there is no hope for their recovery.

Where in the previous two examples violence is used explicitly and often written about in detail, Lowery's *The Giver* has a different approach towards the use of violence in Dystopian fiction. In this society, all emotions and feelings are absent and because of that, characters have no notion of what is right and what is wrong. The characters have thus separated their judgment from their moral obligation. Michael Rothberg, who wrote about literature in the age of terrorism, says it contains, "the potential of an active form of spectatorship that engages with 'cognitive and affective registers' of extreme violence where both terrorism and the war on terror have attempted to divorce 'thinking and feeling'" (qtd in Crownshaw 124). People are now more desensitized than ever.

Violence plays an important part in the novel, though it is only hinted at in several sections. Children in the novel who are disobedient are hit with a stick: "The childcare specialists were trained very carefully in the discipline methods: a quick smack across the hands for a bit of minor misbehavior; three sharper smacks on the bare legs for a second offense" (54). Because they attach no emotional meaning to their actions, violence in the novel is not seen as good or bad, but simply as something that is present.

Jonas, the main character, is selected to be a receiver of every memory of the past, so the rest of the community does not have to. The society in the novel does not want to experience fear and anxiety because that leads to other emotions, which have no place in the community. As such, there is only one receiver. This receiver is to remember entire histories, in particular traumatic events on behalf of the community. Although some memories are wonderful to accept, Jonas is also given memories of war, genocide, and starvation. He does not only receive memories from these events, but also the emotions and feelings associated with it. When given a memory of warfare, Jonas finds himself experiencing the pain of a wounded soldier as he immerses himself in the memory . "One of Jonas' arms

was immobilized with pain, and he could see through his own torn sleeve something that looked like ragged flesh and splintery bone... Overwhelmed by pain he lay there in the fearsome stench for hours” (119.) He is gripped with fear when he encounters memories of a violent nature and he does not understand why he has to suffer through them while the rest of his community is allowed to remain ignorant. Jonas sees how ignorant his classmates are when he finds himself playing a game that, to him, all of a sudden carries a different connotation. “It was a game he had often played with other children, a game of good guys and bad guys... he had never recognized it before as a game of war” (Lowry, 133). Jonas comes to realize that with the memories come emotions he has never felt before. He encounters not only sadness and pain, but also love. No one else is able to reciprocate his feelings. When Jonas asks his parents if they love him, they respond by saying, “You have used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it’s become almost obsolete... You could ask, ‘Do you enjoy me? The answer is yes’, his mother said” (127). People who are of no use to the community are swiftly dealt with. Babies who are deemed inferior and elderly people who are unable to carry out tasks are ‘released’. It is only towards the end of the novel that Jonas realizes being ‘released’, means to be murdered. He witnesses his father lethally inject a baby that according to elders had no place in the community. Melissa Gross, who writes about childhood abandonment and violence in literature, says of *The Giver*,

Throughout, citizens who cannot comply with the rules are simply released. This process is a highly formalized part of this carefully ordered society that sanctifies murder at any point in the human life cycle for individuals who do not fit in or who express a desire to be sent ‘Elsewhere.’ Release is performed as a perfunctory part of an assigned duty, without pain, guilt, or remorse. (109)

Jonas knows, through the memories he has acquired, that the baby his father kills did not have to die just because he was inferior to others. The memories are instilling the knowledge of morality within him, which is something the other members of his community lack. Although the characters in *The Giver* are not constantly bombarded with violence, their lack of emotion has made them completely unfeeling towards the acts of violence that they *do* commit. The murders to them, are just another part of daily life, just like the violence in *Fahrenheit 451* is part of that society's life. The characters are aware that at some point they will be 'released' as well. Violence, or at least the knowledge of what violence is, is the key to unlocking emotions and morality in *The Giver*. Jonas knows what the community is doing to the young and the elderly is wrong, because he has recollections of past acts of violence with which he can compare the current acts he perceives. Thus, Violence to some extent is needed for the characters in *The Giver* to distinguish right from wrong.

In conclusion, violence will continue to be an important part in Dystopian fiction. However, the use of violence in dystopian fiction is not to sensationalize the novel or to make it shocking. Violence is used to convey beliefs. Characters use violence as a form of expression. In the formula of Dystopian fiction, a suppressive power that usually censors something and oppresses people, the oppressed characters have to find a way to make themselves heard. This is usually done through violence. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex and his friends are silenced, but they still react through their acts of hostility. They make themselves heard in a society that is doing its best to keep them quiet. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the government has turned its back on the citizens and television and media sensationalize violence. In an effort to attract attention, the characters commit acts of violence, increasing the appalling nature with every consecutive crime, just like the ever increasing acts of violence they see on television. The characters have no bond with one another, which is why they do not care what happens to each other.

The characters in these novels are stripped of everything in life, and when left to their own devices, they turn to violence, the one thing they have control over. *The Giver* paints a somewhat different picture. Here there are no emotions and like the characters in *Fahrenheit 451*, they don't care for each other. In the absence of emotions, they see nothing wrong with the acts of violence committed around them. This is what makes violence in Dystopian fiction unique and also essential. It is not merely there for the sake of the reader, or even for the author. The characters use it to convey fear and anxiety. They use it to make themselves heard. Violence in Dystopian fiction is a form of expression. In the absence of moral choice, emotions, free speech and intellectualism, violence is substituted and it quickly becomes a prominent part of a character's lifestyle.

Informers

The alarm is going off. Sol hears it but tries to ignore it as long as possible. He knows he'll have to get up soon enough. Building F is furthest from the cafeteria and if he doesn't get there in time, he won't be served. He finally drags himself out of bed and staggers into the bathroom. The tiles feel cold beneath his bare feet and his skin has a sickly color in the fluorescent glare. He looks at himself in the mirror; at 22 years old, he is the youngest in his division. His eyes are grey and small, while most people he knows have either black or blue eyes. His hair is dark and wavy and though at times it gets in his eyes, he refuses to cut it short. He's been an Informer about a year now and though he loves his job, at times he feels like something is missing. He showers and quickly dresses, knowing he might not make it in time to get some food. When he gets into the courtyard, it is raining and he suddenly remembers it's Thursday. The Ministry has a scheduled shower every Thursday morning for the agricultural projects outside the base. The layout of the grounds is not the most ingenious of designs; the Cafeteria is at the far end, with building A closest and every building from B to F right behind it, forming a straight line. Across the dormitory buildings, on the other side of a grass field, is the Station, the place where the Informers work when they're not on assignment. The field is recently cut, and the smell of the grass and the rain permeates Sol's nostrils. He debates whether or not he should go back inside to grab an umbrella, but he's already late, so he breaks into a sprint and by the time he reaches building C he's completely drenched. He hears someone is calling out his name. "I knew you were going to be late again."

He looks around and sees Ray, his best friend standing below the awning of B, where his dormitory is.

"How'd you know I was going to be late?"

"Please, you never get up on time and you always forget the rain schedule"

Sol scoffs at Ray, but he knows he's right. The rain schedule changes every few months and Sol Never takes the time to memorize it. Don't bother going to the cafeteria," Ray says, "They've already closed up. But here, I snuck this out for you." He handed Sol a banana.

"You know you can get in trouble for sneaking out food," Sol says, but he thanks Ray and hastily gobbles up the banana in no time. Ray looks at him. He is two years older than Sol, but they've both been Informers for a year.

"You're completely drenched. Come into my dorm, you can borrow one of my uniforms."

When they finally make it to the station the rain is dying down. The commander is waiting for them when they come in.

"You're late," he said.

"Only by two minutes," Ray said.

"Every minute you're late is a minute extra your comrades have to work in order to compensate for your absence. Being late indicates haste, and haste indicates clumsiness. An Informer may never be late, because if he is, he might miss something extremely important. You've both been at this a year. You should know by now how important Informers are to the community"

Sol understands the importance of being an Informer. The Informers division was established 20 years ago, when masses of people started to coordinate terrorist attacks in order to overthrow the government. Some of these attacks, mostly suicide bombings could not be prevented in time. The bigger threats, like mass murder were luckily foiled. The revolution failed, and those that were found guilty were punished severely. This gave way to a new wave of rebels who said that the government had learnt nothing from the uprising. The government promised the people a new form of leadership, which

they called the New Age, one in which hostility would not be used, but would also not be tolerated. An Informer's job is to scour the internet and check peoples activities for any indiscretions that can potentially harm them or the Authority. If someone commits such an offence, Informers have the right to interrogate them, and if found guilty they can be reprimanded for their offense.

Both Sol and Ray look up at the commander and in unison reply with, "Yes, Sir."

"Now, get to your stations and serve the Authority," the commander barks, but there's a small hint of a smile in the corner of his mouth. Sol and Ray dash to their desks. For a brief moment, Sol can't find his pass and he starts to think he's left it in his wet clothes, but he finds it in his breast pocket. *That was close*, he thinks.

A pass holds all the information that a person has. It states which internet sites he is allowed to visit, which careers he is qualified for, and how much food he is allowed to purchase within a specific amount of time. Without this pass, access to all these things is lost. The internet is the place on which everything is done. Other activities that can only be done outside of the internet, such as sports and recreation, are also regulated via the pass.

Sol scans his pass and the screen in front of him comes to life.

"Good Morning", it says

"Good Morning CAM."

CAM, Central Automated Monitor, is the program the Informers use for work. She helps them with sites, addresses and other questions they have. In turn, CAM observes their lives as well, checking if everything is in order.

"Please verify date of birth," It says.

“January 1st 2066.” He responds.

“Welcome, Sol, Identifier number: 225784. We have indicated that you did not scan your pass during breakfast hours at the cafeteria. Is this correct?”

“Yes, I woke up late so I missed it.”

“You have already missed four breakfasts in the past month. If you miss one more, your nutrition privileges will be revoked for a total of two days. Do you understand?”

Sol stares at the screen. He’s not worried about being cut off from food for two days; it’s only a minor indiscretion. He deals with offenses that are far worse than his own. With the community still only 20 years old mistakes are inevitable. Hostile actions still take place on both sides, but the government is constantly coming up with new forms of punishment. This is why the Authority was established, made up of former government employees as well as several advisors. They oversee offenses in the community and handle them accordingly through the Informers division.

“Do you understand Sol, Identifier number: 225784?” CAM repeats.

“Yes, thank you.” Sol says, getting irritated. “Can we start now?”

“As you wish. Opening social and messaging”

The Authority founded the IFA, the Internet For All act. Internet usage became a free right and it is through the internet that the population started living. It was the easiest way for the Authority to keep tabs on every citizen in the community. An Informer’s pass gives access to everyone’s internet history, allowing them to scan everyone’s actions and if necessary, act upon them. Sol is observing social and messaging, interactive sites where people connect and interact with each other. The internet gave and still gives access to practically everything. However, to gain access to the internet, you need your

pass. Nowadays, if someone commits a crime, they are not met with hostility; they are usually cut off from their pass for a specific amount of time, depending on how great the crime. Without their pass, the community member's life is essentially put on hold, because their access, to all activities they were allowed to perform, is suspended. The pass is who you are and without it, you basically don't exist. CAM sorts through pages and displays those that have raised flags within her system. Most are minor infractions. Curses. Empty threats. Sol moves on to security footage and finally sees something interesting. He calls the Commander and brings it to his attention. "Good work Sol," He says. "Can you go and interrogate the suspect immediately?"

"Yes, Sir." Sol answers.

"Good. Take Ray with you. He looks like he's about to fall asleep. Some fresh air might do him some good."

Sol looks behind him and sees Ray staring at the screen with glassy eyes, not paying attention to what the screen is showing.

"You feel like going out?" He asks.

"Out where?"

"We're going to interrogate someone, I'll tell you about it on the way."

It's warmer now that it has stopped raining. Their white uniforms reflect the glare of the shining sun. a car is waiting for them at the gates. "So," Ray asks, "Where are we headed?"

"There's a man who stole medicine from the health center. He's been working there for about 2 years now. The scanners caught his pass as he was going out of the pharmacy."

“Which zone is he in?” Ray asks.

Sol, like Ray, hasn’t been out of the first zone in a few months. The Community consists of four zones. The first, houses the largest companies and is thus the wealthiest. It’s also the houses the headquarters of the Authority and the Informers division. The fourth is of course, the most impoverished. People from the first zone are allowed to enter all four, but people from the others are not allowed to visit a zone that is higher than theirs without permission from the Authority.

Sol checks the man’s dossier.

“He lives in the third zone.”

“I hate the third,” Ray says. “The whole place is a pile of rubble, and the buildings that are standing are completely rundown.”

The third zone was perhaps hardest hit in the terrorist plots. Before splitting up into zones, this area housed the largest companies and wealthiest people. After the bombings and the rezoning, the wealth of the families went into building up the first zone and the third was left forgotten, with tall buildings, half destroyed, and a population who are still struggling to survive.

“It’s better than the fourth; those people are freaks,” Sol says.

“You only think that because they look like you,” Ray teased.

“You shut the hell up! You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“It was just a joke,” Ray said.

Joke or not, Ray is right. Sol’s lanky build, his grey eyes, short nose and wavy black hair, are all characteristics found in the people who live in the fourth zone. Sol didn’t know much about his

childhood. His parents had been part of the rebellion and had died, leaving their four year old son to fend for himself. An Informer who had been surveying the damage in what is now the fourth zone found him. He was brought to an institution where they fed and educated him for ten years. After that he started his training to become an Informer himself. He hoped he would never have to go to zone four. Luckily, only Informers that have been on duty for more than 5 years are given assignments to go into the fourth, so he doesn't have to worry about visiting it anytime soon.

He is still lost in thought when Ray starts trying to grab his attention. "Sol? Sol? I think we're here."

Ten years ago this same journey would have taken at least 4 hours. Now, with the newest hydro fuel cars, they can do it in less than an hour. They get out, look around and spot the apartment complex they are looking for. The third zone now houses mining companies and one of their largest exports to the first zone is bauxite. The reddish-brown bauxite dust is everywhere, on the plants, the trees and even on the high buildings. To Sol, it looks as if he's just entered an entirely other planet. As they're walking Ray says to Sol, "Hey, I'm really sorry about what I said in the car. I didn't mean it; I was just messing with you."

"It's fine," Sol says. "Can we just focus on the interrogation?"

"Sure. Let's do this."

They take the elevator to the fourth floor and look for room fifty-one. The people they meet avert their eyes and take up speed so as not to be in their vicinity. Informers usually mean trouble for one or more people. They find number fifty-one and knock on the door. A little boy answers the door. Ray crouches down and says to him, "Hello, fellow. Is your father home?" The boy runs back inside and his presence is replaced by a woman.

“May I help you gentlemen?” She asks, smiling though there seems to be concern in her eyes as she glances from their faces to their uniforms.

“Yes, you may,” Sol answers. “Is this the residence of Rod, Identifier number 609511?”

“Yes, that’s my husband.”

“We’re here to ask him some questions. May we come in?”

The apartment is quant, but nicely decorated. It looks almost normal. If Sol didn’t notice the view of the red buildings and trees in the window, he might just have believed he was back in the first zone. There are several pictures hanging on the wall. Some featuring the woman and the boy they had just met. A family photo with a man they assume is Rod, also features another child; a girl who looks very pale.

“You’re here to ask me something?”

Both Sol and Ray turn around. Standing in the center of the living room, is a man who looks older than the one in the picture, but is undoubtedly the same one. He looks worried but for some reason Sol thinks that he’s not worried about their presence; something else is on this man’s mind.

Sol, trying to figure this man out, is silent for a while so Ray jumps in saying, “Yes, indeed we are. Rod, do you work at the health center?”

“Yes, I’m part of the night crew that cleans the place.”

“I see,” Ray says. “And did you enter the health center’s pharmacy two nights ago?”

“I enter it every night. Pharmacy’s got to get cleaned up too.”

“Quite right, are you aware then, that when you entered the pharmacy, your pass got scanned, and that medication was reported missing the following day?”

Rod sits down. His hands are a bit shaky and beads of sweat are beginning to form on his forehead. Sol notices Rod's wife in the kitchen, standing completely still, her eyes focused on her husband.

"There's no point in denying it," Ray continues. "The whole thing was recorded."

"If you know that it is me," Rod says, "Then why this whole back and forth?"

Sol answers him, "Well, for one thing, we'd like to know why?"

"It was for Mae, my daughter. She's sick and she needs the medicine."

"Then why not just take her to the health center?"

"Don't you think I've tried? My pass won't allow access for her, and she's too frail for a job of her own. I had no other choice."

Sol checks his portable screen. Mae, Identifier number 609427. Seventeen years old. She should have been working a year now already.

Sol and Ray look at each other. Ray nods towards the door and he excuses them for a minute. In his entire year as an active Informer, Sol has never come across such a case. Stealing is a regular offense that he has dealt with many times. But he has come across a case where someone has stolen for another person. He has always considered all thieves selfish and Rod's actions confuse him.

"What should we do?" Sol asks Ray.

"There's only one thing we can do. He broke the law, and now we have to punish him."

"But he didn't do it with malice thought. He's trying to help his daughter."

"That doesn't matter. You know the rules. Stealing, regardless of purpose, is an unlawful act and should be dealt with accordingly."

“I guess you’re right.”

“I am. Now let’s get this over with and go back home.”

They go back inside and the little boy from before is sitting next to his father in the living room. Rod’s wife is still in the kitchen, moving around, but not really doing anything. Rod stands up when they come back into the living room.

“Rod, Identifier number 609511,” Ray says, “you have stolen from your community and have thereby broken the law. We have no other choice but to cut you off.”

Rod’s wife makes a tiny squeak sound and she calls her son towards to her.

“Kindly hand us your pass and the medicine you took.”

Rod walks to the dining table, opens a small box and hands them his pass.

“You are hereby cut off from the internet, from outside activities that require a pass, from working and from entering any government building.”

“How long will it last?” Rod asks.

“That is up to the Authority to decide. Once your case has gone to the court, you will receive notice of the length of your punishment.”

“But that could take months,” Rod protests. “I still have a family to feed. How will I buy food if I can’t get into the shop?”

“Your wife is able bodied,” Ray replies. “Perhaps it is time she got a job. And now, the matter of the medicine. Please hand it over.”

“No, I won’t give it to you. Take my pass, take it permanently, but leave the medicine. Mae needs it.”

“We are not in the business of making parleys,” Sol says. “We are sorry, truly we are, but we need the medicine.”

“No, you can’t.” Rod’s pleading now.

Sol looks at Ray. He doesn’t know what to do any more.

Ray is starting to look agitated. He turns to look at Rod’s wife and son. “Hand over the medicine,” he says. “Or we will be forced to confiscate all of your family’s passes and cut you all off.”

At this threat, Rod’s wife speaks up. “Rod, go get the medicine. We’ll figure something out. Don’t let this get out of hand.”

Rod looks defeated and quietly shuffles out of the room. His wife is looking at them. She does not look angry, she doesn’t even look scared. She just looks dejected. Rod stays away a while, and Sol begins to wonder if he is even coming back. Then, just as he is about to follow where he went, Rod comes back out, followed by a girl. She looks even worse than in the photo. Her cheeks are sunken. She’s all skin and bones and there are several small bald spots on her head. Rod throws a bag of bottles at them that Sol catches.

“Here’s the medicine,” he growls. “Take it. But before you leave I want you to look into the eyes of the girl you have killed.”

Mae looks at them. She’s scared, and she pulls her father close to her. Sol looks at her and feels helpless for a moment. He can’t look away from her green eyes, the only part of her face that still looks alive.

“Daddy,” she says. Her voice is clear but the words come out in short sentences. “They didn’t do... anything wrong., they’re just doing their job... You always say... Everyone has... a job to do... that’s what you say... right daddy?”

Rod is crying now. "Yes, Mae. I said that. But not if they know that what they're doing is wrong. You're going to die and they could have done something about it. They preach that there's no more hostility in the community, but I know better. You," he says pointing at Sol and Ray. "You are killing an innocent girl. Her blood is on your hands and there's no worse crime than that."

Ray wants to say something but Sol cuts him off. "We must be going. Thank you for your cooperation and we hope you have a pleasant life. Sol can't help but breathe a sigh of relief when they're back in the car. He can't get Mae's face out of his head.

"We could have done something for her Ray. We could have updated her pass so she could be admitted to the health center."

Ray looks at Sol and says, "They can always apply for special admittance for her, though now that her father has stolen and lost his pass, I doubt they'll get it. Don't beat yourself up about this. They brought this on themselves; he should not have stolen. And that's the end of it. Our job is to punish the guilty, not to reward them."

Sol is deep in thought. He knows Ray is right, but just because he is right, doesn't make it any better. He ponders what he can do and when he finally thinks of something, he surprises even himself. He takes his phone out and calls the Commander. He picks up at the first tone.

The commanders voice crackles at first, but then it becomes clear. "Everything go alright?"

"No, not exactly," Sol answers. "He got angry and hit me in the face." Ray turns to Sol and gives him a look of complete confusion.

"He did what now?"

"He hit me in the face, sir. Requesting permission to enact the ultimate punishment."

There's silence on the line for a while. The commander hasn't given orders for this in almost 2 years. The ultimate punishment was established about three years after the new age. Citizens were at some times still very hostile towards Informers and the Authority, but wanting to stay true to their word, the Informers could not retaliate with violence. The Authority came up with a new form of punishment. Those who acted violently towards Informers, would have a loved one removed from their vicinity, usually a child or a spouse. They would then be brought to the first where they would be taken care off until they were of working age, or if they were already passed that age, they were immediately given jobs; usually ones that the citizens of the first found less desirable. As the years passed, violence dwindled down, and so did enactments of the ultimate punishments. However nothing is ever really gone, and the punishment was still used once in a while.

"Sir, are you still there?" Sol asked.

"You're aware of what you're asking? It's not a matter to be taken lightly."

Sol promises that he knows what he is doing.

"Then yes, permission granted."

Sol hangs up and looks at Ray.

Ray's mouth is hanging open but he soon turns his stunned expression into one of anger.

"What the hell have you done? He didn't hit you, If the Commander finds out you lied, we could both be cut off"

"Then let's make sure he doesn't find out. Hit me."

"What? I can't hit you. No hostile action. Ever. Don't you remember the oath we took."

“Either you hit me now, or we can wave our lives goodbye.”

Ray shakes his head at Sol and says, “I can’t believe you’re making me do this.”

He swings at Sol and his fist hits him right below the nose. Sol’s upper lip gets cut and starts bleeding profusely.

“Now what genius?” Ray says, rubbing his hand.

Sol can’t help but laugh even though his lip really hurts. Ray joins in when he sees Sol’s face.

“Now,” Sol says, still chuckling. “We go and take that girl from them.”

They go back up to apartment fifty-one. People who see them are once again scurrying like rats to stay out of their way. Ray says he doesn’t understand why they’re running away like that.

“This may be a room full of monkeys, but it’s not a village of idiots.” Sol says.

“What the hell does that mean? I think I may have hit you too hard.”

“It’s something I heard once. And it means that they may look stupid, but they have the common sense to know when there’s trouble.”

They get to fifty-one and knock. There’s wailing coming from inside and Rod opens the door this time, tears streaming down his face.

“Good Lord,” He says when he sees Sol’s bloody face and swollen lip. “What happened to you?”

“Don’t you remember?” Sol asks

Rod looks at them questioningly and shakes his head.

“You did this. You hit me when I took the medication and then we went outside to talk to our commander.”

“No, no no,” Rod stammers, shaking his head. “That’s not true”

“My partner saw you do it. Who do you think the Authority will believe.”

Rod is still shaking his head, he finds a seat, sits and starts rocking back and forth. His wife comes in to the living room, looks at Sol and says, “Haven’t you done enough for one day. You can’t possibly cut me off too. How will we feed our children.”

“It’s too late for that madam,” Ray says “We’re here to enact the ultimate punishment.”

Both Rod and his wife look at them as if they’ve just spoken in another language. But they start to understand and their confusion is replaced by horror.

“No,” Rod exclaims. “You can’t take my boy. Not for something I didn’t even do”

His wife falls to the ground and starts screaming. She’s pleading with us, offering anything in their home. Anything but their son.

Sol clears his throat and says, “We haven’t come to take the boy. We’re here for the girl.”

Rod doesn’t understand. “But she’s sick, what can you possibly want with her.”

“I see potential in her,” Sol says. “We’ll have her treated in the first zone and she’ll make an excellent worker.

Rod is starting to understand what’s happening, but his wife is still on the ground. She’s pleading with them not to take any of their children. Sol tells them that they’ll have time to say goodbye. A vehicle from the health center will be by in a few hours to pick the girl up and take her to the first. Rod looks at

them, tears streaming down his face, but he doesn't look horrified anymore. He looks grateful. They leave him, still consoling his wife on the floor, and head to the car. They ride back home in silence.

When they're almost back, Ray turns to Sol and says, "What you did was wrong. It's against the law and it goes against our oath," Sol wants to respond, but Ray stops him. "But it was still good that you did it.

Just don't expect me to ever do something like that again." He's smiling now and Sol's smiling back.

"Thank you," he says. Don't worry, I won't risk something like that again. There was just something about that girl. I don't understand why all we do is punish the guilty, can't we also help protect the innocent."

Ray looks at him and says, "I know how you feel. But that's not the way things work. An Informer does not make the world a better place; he makes it more efficient. Remember that okay?"

Sol nods. He knows Ray is right, but he also knows that he saved a life today. And that feeling is even more empowering. This feeling may have been what was missing. The question now is, how to go on feeling it.

4. Reflection

As I already mentioned in the research part of my thesis, I wanted to write a short piece of fiction using the knowledge I gained while writing my essay. The bulk of my research was meant to examine the role of violence in Dystopian fiction. I came to find that violence is essential to Dystopian fiction because it is mainly used by characters to express themselves. After writing the research I came up with the question of whether or not a short piece of Dystopian fiction could be written without the excessive use of violence. The characters would have to find other ways in which to express themselves. I decided to depart from what is normally done and to write a piece of fiction with as minimal violence as possible. The idea for the story was simple enough; violence would be banned in this particular society and any use of it would be met with something other than hostile retaliation. In practice, the idea was somewhat more difficult. I found it somewhat challenging to abstain from any and all mention of violence especially since violence was a key fixture in the genre and not just present for sensational reasons. This was another point I had to keep in mind. If I were to use violence, it had to serve a purpose. I could not just have people hitting each other for no reason at all. Eventually I was able to write the story with only one instance of violence. I made sure that the scene served a greater purpose in the story than just one of sensationalism.

My research however, was not only about violence, but also on Dystopian fiction. This to me meant I would not only have to focus on the importance of violence in my short story, but also on other aspects that make Dystopian fiction unique. For example, the story had to contain a futuristic setting and features technological advances. I did not completely focus on this aspect of Dystopian fiction, but I made sure that the setting was futuristic and I mentioned several progresses in technology, the ability to alter the weather for example. The passes everyone carries are already reminiscent of how passes are

used in public transportation. I set the bar even higher by making the pass an essential part of daily life. Without the pass, there is no access to food, the internet or even a character's job. Thus without a pass, a character's life is paused and they are unable to go on.

There are two groups present in Dystopian fiction namely, the oppressor and the oppressed. This is also a point in which I deviated from the norm. While the main character in Dystopian fiction is usually one of the oppressed characters, I chose to focus on one of the oppressors in the story's society. I wanted to look at Dystopia from a different perspective than how it is usually done. Granted, I'm not the first to do this; *Fahrenheit 451* also focuses on someone who follows orders of the regime, however, whereas Guy eventually turns on his government, I wanted my character to remain content with his position in society throughout the story. Yet, I did not want to create a character without any depth or an emotional side. Dystopian fiction tends to be very black and white when it comes to the two groups it presents. A character is either oppressed and good, or a character suppresses and is evil. I wanted a character that did not have to be defined as being only evil. I wanted Sol to perform his duties but also question if he could do more to help those around him. In doing so, the setting mostly remained the same. Like most Dystopian fiction there is one entity that exerts power over the citizens namely the Authority. However, because I wanted to focus on Sol, I only briefly wrote about the Authority.

I wanted to write a short piece of Dystopian fiction. However, I wanted my story to be different from others and yet still be similar. The essential parts of Dystopian fiction are still present within the narrative, but the other parts that are woven around it are as original as I was able to make them. By writing this short piece of fiction, I wanted to show that even though Dystopian fiction makes use of recurring elements, the story does not have to conform to the genre in its entirety. Dystopian fiction can be as original as the writer wants it to be.

5. Works cited

Bethune, Brian. "Dystopia Now" *Maclean's* 125.13 (2012): 84-8. Web.

Bould, Mark, et al. eds. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. Oxon: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Del Ray, 1981. Print.

Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. New York: Norton, 1986. Print.

Burgess, Anthony. *You've Had Your Time: The Second Part of the Confessions*. New York: Grove, 1991.

Print.

Burroway, Janet. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to the Narrative Craft*. 8th ed. Boston: Longman,

2011. Print.

Crownshaw, Richard. "Deterritorializing the "Homeland" in American Studies and American Fiction After

9/11." *Journal of American studies* 45.4 (2011): 757. Web.

Davis, Todd, and Kenneth Womack. "'O My Brothers': Reading the Anti-Ethics of the Pseudo-Family in

Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*." *College Literature* 29.2 (2002): 19-36. Web.

Gross, Melissa. "The Giver and Shade's Children : Future Views of Child Abandonment and

Murder." *Children's literature in education* 30.2 (1999): 103-15. Web.

Hammond, Andrew. "'The Twilight of Utopia': British Dystopian Fiction and the Cold War".

The modern Language review 106.3 (2011): 662-681. Web.

Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. New York: Yearling, 1997. Print.

Norton, Mary Beth, et al. Eds. *A people & A Nation: A History of the United States*. 9th ed. U.S:

Wadsworth, 2011. Print.

Smolla, Rodney A. "The Life of the Mind and a Life of Meaning: Reflections on Fahrenheit 451." *Michigan*

Law review 107.6 (2009): 895-912. Web.

Wells, Robison. "Social Commentary in Dystopian Fiction?" *Dystopia Blog Series*. N.p. 23 May 2011.

Web. 17 Oct. 2011