

ELYSIUM: AN ALLEGORY FOR CLASS WARFARE – A STUDY

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Abstract

Technology advancements are viewed as developments that are necessary for society. They are considered to be an intrinsic aspect of development, to happen in society, but Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013) a film about the future world (2154) gives a different view of technological developments in society. *Elysium* is a dystopian science fiction film that shows how the role of technology transcends human lives. It shows how technology can be used to live a human's life to the fullest and how limited access to such technology only to the privileged becomes an impairment in the lives of the underprivileged. This paper aims to analyse *Elysium* as an allegory for class warfare, exploring its representation of power dynamics, economic inequality, and social justice. It tries to answer how *Elysium* highlights the harmful effects of social inequality in society and how the film's depiction of governance prompts analysis of real-world political structures and their effects on citizens and what could be proposed to address the disparities in society. The paper concludes by arguing the importance of accessibility of basic necessities to everyone. This paper uses a semiotic analysis of the film to examine the story elements such as narrative structure, character, and plot.

Keywords: *Elysium*, Power Dynamics, Class Divide, Accessibility, Class Struggle.

1. INTRODUCTION

The film (*Elysium*) is meant to be an allegory for class warfare.”(Neill Blomkamp)

Class warfare has been a major topic in various fields, including politics, economics, and sociology. It is the struggle between social classes for power, resources, and opportunities. This struggle is often characterized by tension, conflict, and inequality, where one class holds a significant advantage over the other. *Elysium*, a 2013 science fiction film directed by Neill Blomkamp, portrays a dystopian world, where the elite live on a space station, while the poor struggle to live on impoverished earth. This paper aims to analyse *Elysium* as an allegory for class warfare, exploring its representation of power dynamics, economic inequality, and social justice.

Herbert Spencer was the first to coin the term “survival of the fittest” in his *Principles of Biology* published in 1864 (Howerth, p.488). Indeed, through this phrase, he said that only in nature the strong would be able to survive and reproduce. The weak either had to fail or die or should depend on the strong for its survival. When the weak section depends on the strong for its survival, a structure is created among them. So, by this structure, the strong would become the leader and the weaklings would always be at the end of the ladder. The film *Elysium* shows a similar world with two different classes of people and the conflict between them. The rich reside in a space station called *Elysium* which has all the modern technological facilities; in short, it could be named as paradise. The poor live on the earth, where most of the natural resources have been depleted and they have to depend on *Elysium* for everything. So, this reliance gives power and authority to the strong, and in the due course of time, the strong claim ownership over the weak. Hence, through this possession, they get to decide what the weak should do and what they should get, and when they should get it.

“Karl Marx’s conflict theory states that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power rather than by consensus and conformity, because those with power and authority will try to hold on to it as long as possible by suppressing the poor and powerless. Marx’s conflict theory focused on the conflict between two primary classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat” (Hayes, 2022). The bourgeoisie represents the wealthy and the proletariat represents the working class. In this film, the people living in *Elysium* represent the bourgeoisie, who possess wealth and power, and the people living on the earth are the proletariat, who are the working-class people. This film is an example of how class struggles happen in the modern era.

According to Karl Marx, the classes of the people are defined by the ownership of property (Rummel, 1977). The rich living in *Elysium* has everything at their disposal; they get the best of things. They are not denied access to anything as everything is accessible to them. On the contrary, the poor who inhabit the earth do not own anything. Even their homes are among the ruins and they do not have a proper shelter to live in. They have to work daily or live a proper life to go up to *Elysium*. The poor have to depend on *Elysium* as they are governed by them in an indirect way. The people of the earth are denied access to many things because they are considered just as cheap laborers to help the people in *Elysium*. Due to the overabundance of laboring options the people on the earth are not treated properly. They have many options at their disposal, so they don’t treat any individual on earth as a proper human being. As there are many options and the taking over of jobs (such as policing) by robots the people on earth do not try to revolt against the oppressing people, but rather they try to bend according to the will of the rich.

The aim of this paper is to analyse *Elysium* as an allegory for class warfare, exploring its representation of power dynamics, economic inequality, and social justice. It also answers how the film’s depiction of governance prompts analysis of real-world political structures and their effects on citizens and what could be proposed to address the disparities in society. The paper concludes by arguing the importance of accessibility of basic necessities to everyone. The paper applies Marxism theory to the film *Elysium* and how the director proposes an alternative solution to the social stratification in society. The researcher also highlights the issues faced in society due to technology growth and how it helps certain sections of people

1.1 Review of Literature

‘*Elysium as a Critical Dystopia*’ by Tanner Mirrlees and Isabel Pederson examines the film from three angles: situating *Elysium* within global Hollywood, exploring the genre characteristics and political aspects of science fiction films, and analysing critical dystopia. Tanner critiques contemporary capitalism and its impact on the future depicted in the movie. It also addresses the problematic white saviour narrative and the emancipation of marginalized individuals. Additionally, the article emphasizes the formation of a subaltern community as a means of survival and socioeconomic advancement (Mirrlees, 2016).

Ahmad Faqihudin's ‘*The Struggle of the Lower Class against the Government in the Elysium Movie*’ explores the class dynamics depicted in the film using conflict theory as an analytical framework. The author argues that class struggle persists as long as exploitation exists within society. By examining the characters in the movie,

Faqikhudin illustrates how the class structure is portrayed. Additionally, the author incorporates Stuart Hall's representation theory to support their arguments. The research sheds light on the class struggle experienced by the low-class individuals living on Earth, and it emphasizes how the upper class oppresses the lower class (Faqikhudin, 2015).

"*Artificial Intelligence and Urbanization: The Rise of the Elysium City*" by Mark Munoz and Al Naqvi offers governments and businesses with crucial policy recommendations to help them avoid potential decline and find fresh opportunities for growth and prosperity in a world, where artificial intelligence is the driving force. The paper also explores the significance of Elysium in Greek mythology. Furthermore, it argues for the emergence of artificial intelligence and examines its societal implications (Naqvi, 2017).

'*Social and Political Conflicts in the Elysium Movie*' by Desi Amelia Sari examines the social and political conflicts portrayed in the film. The author analyses the nature of these conflicts and their underlying causes. To analyse the conflicts, Sari draws upon the theories of Lewis Coser and Ulan, as well as the causes presented by Leopold Von Wiese, Howard Becker, and Ralf Dahrendrof (Sari, 2015).

Ewa Mazierska and Lars Kristensen argue in "*Marx at the Movies: Revisiting History, Theory, and Practice*" that mass appeal is necessary for art, especially film, to be effective in bringing about political and social change. They contend that in addition to encouraging filmmakers to produce it and audiences to seek it out, a Marxist cinema historian's job is to discover and re-examine such works of art. The authors also suggest that communism historically utilized cinema as a means of propagating Marxist ideas, although cinema later lost its prominence to other visual communication mediums like television and the Internet. However, cinema and Marxism have not disappeared from political and artistic discussions (Mazierska& Kristensen, 2014).

In '*Marxism and Film*' by Menang M Edward, the author highlights that Marxism is a recurring theme in cinema, with many contemporary filmmakers adopting a Marxist approach in their work. This approach, known as Marxist film theory, has gained popularity since the latter half of the 20th century and continues to be employed in more recent films. Edward argues that film, alongside other mass media forms, has evolved into powerful tools of propaganda and indoctrination. The Marxist approach to film is seen as a means of raising the consciousness of the modern proletariat, aiming to shift their mind-set away from capitalist consumption mentalities rather than attempting to change their ideology altogether (Edward, 2017).

In '*Communication in Capitalist Society*' by Christian Fuchs, the author offers an introductory exploration of the connection between capitalism and communication. Fuchs delves into the process of capital accumulation and delves into topics such as the nature of capitalism, the significance of labour within capitalism, the interplay between the capitalist economy and communication, and the various roles that communication plays within the broader context of the capitalist economy (Fuchs, 2020).

Mariano Zukerfeld's work, '*Platforms and exploitation in informational capitalism*' argues that the foundation of capitalist exploitation lies in the appropriation of unpaid knowledge. Capitalist exploitation serves as the central driving force behind capital accumulation and the historical progression of capitalism. However, Zukerfeld emphasizes that capitalist exploitation is just one form of exploitation within a broader

conceptual framework. To truly grasp the essence of capital accumulation, one must also consider the accompanying processes of regulation and expropriation. Marx's concept of primitive accumulation introduces the notion that capitalist exploitation and the overall accumulation of capital rely on external processes. For instance, stripping peasants of their lands and feudal ties was necessary to compel them to seek employment within capitalist production processes for basic sustenance (Zukerfeld, 2021).

In '*Marking Political Cinema*' Ewa Mazierska explores the concept of political cinema and highlights its elusive nature, which is shared with other concepts within the field of film studies. The prevailing idea today is that "all films are political," drawing from Karl Marx's observation that cultural products reflect both the material and ideological conditions of their production as well as the idea influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein and poststructuralist thought that language not only reflects but also shapes the world. This implies that movies have political overtones by nature and are entangled with social, cultural, and ideological contexts (Mazierska, 2014).

Se Young Kim examines how violent film history has been in "*Cinema Violence and the Ontology of Capitalism*," of course it is a form of capitalism, cinema is violent. According to the author, one of cinema's most important roles is to normalize the brutality of capitalism as it actually exists. Through story and spectacle, cinematic violence aims to elevate Western Cartesian subjectivity and its violent interpersonal ethics. The author builds on Marx's explanation of how the agony of the Other is necessary for the capitalist social structure (Kim, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGY - ANALYTICAL STUDY

This research paper will use a semiotic analysis of the film *Elysium*, as an allegory for class warfare. We have analysed the movie's themes, characters, and plot to understand how they represent the struggles of the working class against the ruling class. We will also use secondary sources such as academic articles, books, and online resources to support our analysis.

2.1 Accessibility

The basic definition of accessibility is the quality of being able to reach anywhere or to use anything that we want. To make it simple in an institution, not everyone can enter easily. To enter into that institution, they have to be enrolled in that particular institution or they won't be given access to enter into that institution. To make it further simple a blind person can't use a lift or a mobile unless and until it's modified according to them. Until then they can't access such things. So, who makes things accessible to everyone, and who has been given access? When the whole world was in lockdown during the pandemic due to Covid the availability of Covid vaccine was first given to the first-world countries and then later on to the remaining countries (Paton, 2020). Who gets to decide these?

The elites and the wealthy are the ones who get to choose who can be given access and who can't be given. This ownership and authority give them power. This denotes a phrase often narrated in Spider-man films, "With great power comes great responsibility". The responsibility of providing everything to everyone and seeing that everyone gets equal opportunities. The director eyes an egalitarian society where everyone gets whatever is necessary for them.

The film *Elysium* gives a clear picture of how the aristocracy creates a boundary and cuts the availability of resources to the plebian or the working class. They are denied access even to the essential elements of life. They are made to toil hard to come up in life or to achieve a ticket to *Elysium*. Such is not the case with the people in *Elysium*. They are provided with all the needed facilities. The film begins with the phrase that the earth's wealthiest inhabitants fled the planet due to overpopulation and to preserve their way of life. The elites moved to *Elysium* which was only made accessible to them. After the phrase, the film follows up with a scene showing young Max De Costa (role-played by Matt Damon) looking up at the sky where the *Elysium* is and thinking of reaching up there one day. He promises Frey that he would also take her along with him. But *Elysium* is introduced to him as something that is inaccessible to him, that he's not worthy not to enter it. So, Max tries to tune himself into a person who is accepted or who is allowed to enter *Elysium*. So, he stops doing small crimes that he has been doing and tries to take up a job so that one day he may be able to enter *Elysium*. This denial of access is what leads to the other aspects that form an unequal society.

2.2 Social Inequality

Social inequality is the underlying theme of *Elysium*. In the film, *Elysium* is portrayed as a utopian world with clean air, wealthy inhabitants, and advanced medical technology. On the contrary, Earth is filled with overcrowded cities, poverty, and disease. The contrast between the two worlds is stark and serves as a representation of social inequality. The film takes this representation a step further by depicting *Elysium's* inhabitants as unwilling to share their resources with Earth's inhabitants.

“Neill draws a line between people who can afford and who have access to healthcare and people who cannot and do not. Blomkamp addresses this issue throughout the entirety of *Elysium*; the most telling way that he does this is through the struggles of the protagonist, Max, who will die if he does not reach *Elysium* and obtain the healthcare that he needs to save his own life. The premise for healthcare in the film is that the people on Earth have little access to it: the resources they have available to them are limited, and many who have terminal illnesses and other diseases or injuries are out of luck due to the fact that they cannot get the healthcare they need” (Peck, 2014). This portrays the social inequality among those in the film and there are many other aspects too shown in the film but Neill stresses the inequality in the medical sector.

The film *Elysium* portrays several aspects of social inequality, including:

Access to Healthcare: In the film, the elite residents of *Elysium* have access to advanced medical technologies that can cure any injury or disease, while the poor inhabitants of Earth are left to suffer and die from preventable illnesses.

Income Inequality: *Elysium* portrays a clear contrast between the lavish lifestyle of the wealthy *Elysians*, who live in luxury space stations, and the broken citizens of Earth who live in slums and struggle to survive.

Immigration: The film depicts the struggle of undocumented immigrants who risk their lives to travel to *Elysium* in search of a better life, only to be met with hostility and violence from the Elysian authorities.

Political Power: The ruling elite of *Elysium* hold all the political power and use their influence to maintain their privilege and control over the resources of the space station, leaving the citizens of Earth with no representation.

Education: The film shows that access to education is limited for the people of Earth, while the wealthy Elysians have access to advanced education and training that allows them to maintain their advantage.

Overall, *Elysium* portrays a world where social inequality is extreme, and the wealthy elite holds all the power and resources, leaving the rest of humanity to struggle and suffer.

“The Marxist view is that inequality is inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Inequality is inevitably produced during the normal operation of capitalist economies, and cannot be eradicated without fundamentally altering the mechanisms of capitalism. In addition, it is functional to the system, which means that powerholders have a vested interest in preserving social inequality” (Peet, 1975). Neill proposes an idea on how to break the inequalities in society. Revolution against such forces is one option but there’s an indirect approach that Neill proposes that there should be regular changes to the system. As everything evolves and changes in time the rules and norms should change along with it to maintain a social balance and equilibrium.

3. ALLEGORY FOR CLASS WARFARE

Elysium makes a clear distinction between the cash-rich inhabitants of *Elysium* and the poverty-stricken inhabitants of Earth. The residents of *Elysium* have all their needs and wants catered to by the droids. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Earth are left to suffer from a lack of the most fundamental amenities like water and food.

Yes, *Elysium* can be interpreted as an allegory for class warfare. The film depicts a future society (Egalitarian society) where the rich and powerful live on a luxurious space station while the poor are left to fend for themselves on an overpopulated and polluted Earth. The contrast between the two societies highlights the massive wealth gap and inequality that exists between the upper and lower classes.

The struggle of the main character, Max, to gain access to medical treatment that is only available to the elite residents of *Elysium* can be seen as a representation of the struggle of the working class to gain access to essential resources that are often monopolized by the wealthy. The portrayal of a small group of wealthy individuals controlling the government and using their power to maintain their wealth and status is also reminiscent of the power dynamics of a class-based society.

Overall, *Elysium* can be viewed as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked class inequality and the importance of creating a more equitable society.

3.1 Consequences of Social Inequality

The film encourages us to see the consequences of social inequality. Social inequality creates divisions among people that ultimately lead to harm. In *Elysium*, the wealthy inhabitants do not want to share their resources with Earth's inhabitants, which results in conflict between the two groups. The consequences are catastrophic, with the inhabitants of Earth resorting to violence to force the inhabitants of *Elysium* to share their resources.

The social inequality portrayed in the film has several consequences, some of which are:

Economic stagnation: In the film, the lack of access to education and economic opportunities on Earth means that the population is trapped in a cycle of poverty. Without access to education and job training, people are unable to improve their economic situation, which leads to economic stagnation.

Social unrest: The people on Earth in *Elysium* are depicted as being angry and resentful towards the wealthy inhabitants of the space station, which creates social unrest and tension. The resentment is fuelled by the stark contrast between the opulence of *Elysium* and the poverty and deprivation of Earth.

Migration and displacement: In the film, people on Earth attempt to migrate to *Elysium* to access advanced medical technology and better living conditions. This leads to conflict and displacement as the wealthy inhabitants of *Elysium* try to keep the poor out.

Environmental degradation: The overpopulation of Earth in *Elysium* leads to severe environmental degradation, with polluted air, water, and land. The lack of resources and infrastructure also means that waste is not properly managed, leading to further environmental damage.

Elysium illustrates the devastating consequences of social inequality, including lack of access to healthcare, economic stagnation, social unrest, migration and displacement, and environmental degradation.

4. MARXIST ANALYSIS OF ELYSIUM

Marxist theory provides a framework for understanding the class struggle depicted in *Elysium*. Karl Marx states that society is divided into two classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He defines the bourgeoisie as the ones who own the means of production, and the proletariat as the ones who sell their hard work to the bourgeoisie. Marx stated that the proletariat is exploited by the bourgeoisie, by extracting surplus value from their labour and using it to maintain their own wealth and power.

In *Elysium*, the residents of the space station represent the bourgeoisie, while the inhabitants of Earth represent the proletariat. The film portrays the exploitation of the inhabitants of Earth by the residents of *Elysium*. The space station is protected by a strict immigration policy that prevents Earth's inhabitants from entering, despite the abundance of resources available there. This policy is enforced by a brutal security force that uses violence to keep Earth's inhabitants in their place. The inhabitants of Earth are forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions, producing robots that in turn police them and sometimes harm them as it did with Max when he was standing in line to go to work.

A Marxist analysis of the film would look at how the class struggle is depicted and how the film portrays the relationship between labour and capital.

The film portrays the wealthy elite on *Elysium* as hoarding resources, technology, and medical care for themselves, leaving the poor on Earth to suffer and struggle to survive. This can be seen as a critique of capitalism and the way that wealth inequality perpetuates itself.

Moreover, the film also highlights the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. The protagonist, Max, is a former car thief who works in a factory on Earth. He suffers from radiation poisoning and is in desperate need of medical care. However, he is denied access to the advanced medical technology available on *Elysium*. Instead, he is given pills to manage his pain, which ultimately leads him to seek a dangerous way to access the resources he needs.

Furthermore, the film also critiques the idea of meritocracy. In the world of *Elysium*, the residents of the space station are portrayed as believing that they deserve their privileged lifestyle because they have worked hard and made the right choices. However, the film suggests that this is not entirely true, as the wealthy residents of *Elysium* were born into their privileged positions and have access to resources and opportunities that the poor on Earth do not.

Elysium can be analysed through a Marxist lens as a critique of capitalism, wealth inequality, and the dehumanizing effects of an economic system that prioritizes profit over people. The fight between the ruling class and the working class is portrayed in the movie, along with how this struggle upholds the status quo and causes the poor to suffer while the wealthy live luxurious lives.

4.1 Power Dynamics in Elysium

Elysium is a society where power is concentrated among the wealthy elite. The inhabitants of *Elysium* enjoy an abundance of resources, including advanced medical technology that can cure any disease, and robots that perform all menial tasks. They also have access to a wide range of amenities such as luxurious homes, swimming pools, and golf courses. In contrast, the people of Earth live in poverty and squalor, with limited access to resources and basic healthcare. They work in hazardous and poorly paid jobs and are subject to the whims of the oppressive government and its robot enforcers.

The power dynamic in *Elysium* is reinforced through the use of technology. Elysians have access to advanced medical technologies that cure any disease, while people on Earth suffer from illnesses that are incurable due to a lack of resources. The robots on *Elysium* are also designed to serve and protect the interests of the wealthy elite, while the robots on Earth are used to keep the poor in check. This use of technology reinforces the power dynamics between the rich and the poor, emphasizing the stark contrast between their living conditions and access to resources.

4.2 Economic Inequality in Elysium

“*Elysium* is both a metaphor for immigration but also a dire warning about our society’s extreme inequalities of wealth” (Collins, 2013)

The economic inequality in *Elysium* is evident from the start of the film. The people of Earth live in poverty, with limited access to resources and basic healthcare. They work in dangerous and poorly paid jobs and are subject to the ideas of the oppressive government and its robot enforcers. In contrast, the citizens of *Elysium* live in luxury, with access to advanced medical technology, robots that perform all menial tasks, and a wide range of amenities such as luxurious homes, swimming pools, and golf courses.

The economic inequality in *Elysium* is also reinforced through the use of currency. The citizens of *Elysium* have access to an abundance of resources and can purchase anything they desire with ease, while the people of Earth struggle to make ends meet. This disparity is highlighted when Max, the protagonist of the film, needs to raise a large sum of money to access medical technology in *Elysium*. He is forced to undertake a dangerous mission to steal information from a wealthy businessman, highlighting the desperation and inequality faced by the poor.

4.3 Social Justice in Elysium

Elysium raises important questions about social justice and the responsibility of society towards its most vulnerable members. The film portrays a stark contrast between the living conditions of the rich and the poor, highlighting the injustices of a society that privileges one group at the expense of another. It also raises questions about access to healthcare and the importance of ensuring that all have access to the resources they need to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

The film also explores the role of individuals in creating social change. Max, the protagonist of the film, is a working-class man who is determined to make a difference in the lives of the people of Earth. He risks his own life to access the medical technology on *Elysium*, with the hope of using it to cure his illness and help others in need.

4.4 The Depiction of Class Warfare

Elysium depicts a society that is deeply divided along class lines. The wealthy inhabitants of *Elysium* enjoy a life of luxury, with access to advanced medical technologies, clean air and water, and ample resources. In contrast, the inhabitants of Earth live in squalor, struggling to survive amidst pollution, crime, and disease. The film portrays the working-class people as oppressed and exploited, while the privileged elite live in a state of luxury and blissful ignorance.

The depiction of class warfare in *Elysium* is evident in the stark contrast between the two worlds. The Earth is portrayed as a barren, polluted, and overcrowded planet, where working-class people struggle to survive amidst poverty and despair. In contrast, *Elysium* is depicted as a utopia, a space station where the privileged few enjoy a life of luxury and abundance. The film highlights the extreme disparities between the two worlds, emphasizing the disparity between the rich and the poor.

5. THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EXACERBATING THE DIVIDE

Elysium also explores the role of technology in exacerbating the divide between the two classes. The advanced medical technologies available on *Elysium* are portrayed as a symbol of the technological advancements of the privileged elite. The inhabitants of *Elysium* have access to technologies that can cure any disease or injury, while the inhabitants of Earth have limited access to medical care and suffer from illnesses that are easily treatable on *Elysium*.

The film also portrays the use of advanced robotics as a means of controlling working-class people. The robotic police force, employed by the government, is depicted as a powerful tool for suppressing dissent and enforcing the status quo. The robotic police force is controlled by the wealthy elite, who use it to maintain their hold on power and suppress any attempts at revolution or rebellion.

5.1 The Class Divide

The most prominent theme in *Elysium* is the class divide between the rich and the poor. The inhabitants of *Elysium* live in a world of abundance, with every luxury at their fingertips. They can use advanced medical technology to cure any ailments, while the people of Earth suffer from a lack of basic healthcare. The people of *Elysium* are also protected by advanced security systems, while the people of Earth are left to fend for themselves.

The film portrays the wealthy as heartless and uncaring, with no regard for the suffering of those less fortunate. They see themselves as separate from the people of Earth, and they are willing to use any means necessary to maintain their status quo. In contrast, the people of Earth are depicted as a struggling underclass, who are desperate for a way out of their misery.

5.2 Allegory of Class Warfare

The film *Elysium* presents an allegory for class warfare, where the rich oppress the poor, and the struggle of the working class for equality is portrayed. The film portrays the rich as a heartless and ruthless ruling class that is willing to do anything to maintain its power and privilege. The film's protagonist, Max (Matt Damon), represents the working-class hero who rises against the oppressive system to fight for equality and justice.

The film uses symbolism to represent the class struggle. *Elysium*, the luxurious space station where the rich live represents the wealth and privilege of the ruling class. The space station is depicted as a utopia, where everything is perfect, and the residents live a life of luxury and abundance. The ruined and overpopulated Earth represents the struggle of the working class, where the majority of humanity lives in poverty and deprivation. The film depicts the stark contrast between the two worlds, highlighting the class divide and the struggle for equality.

The film's antagonist, Secretary Delacourt (Jodie Foster), represents the ruling class's ruthless and heartless nature. She is willing to do anything to protect the privilege and power of the ruling class, including sacrificing the lives of the poor. The film's climax, where Max sacrifices himself to bring equality to humanity, represents the working class's struggle for justice and equality.

The film portrays a society divided between the rich and powerful, who live in luxury on *Elysium*, and the poor and oppressed, who are forced to live in squalor on Earth. The narrative presents the struggle of the poor and oppressed to gain access to the resources and privileges enjoyed by the rich and powerful. This struggle is portrayed as a conflict between two classes with irreconcilable interests: the working class and the capitalist class.

The film's visual imagery reinforces this allegory. Earth is depicted as a bleak and polluted wasteland, where people are crowded together in squalid living conditions, struggling to survive amidst violence, crime, and disease. In contrast, *Elysium* is portrayed as a pristine and beautiful utopia, where people live in spacious mansions, enjoy lush gardens, and receive advanced medical treatment. The contrast between the two worlds is stark, emphasizing the vast social inequality that exists between the two classes.

The film's characters also embody this allegory. Max, the protagonist, is a former criminal who becomes a symbol of the working-class struggle against oppression. He is initially motivated by a desire to save himself, but he gradually becomes aware of the injustice and inequality that exists in his society. He is joined by other working-class characters, such as Frey (played by Alice Braga), a nurse who cares for the sick and needy, and Spider (played by Wagner Moura), a revolutionary who leads the resistance against the ruling elite.

5.3 The Struggle for Resources

Elysium is often portrayed as a utopia, a paradise where there is no struggle or want. However, in reality, any society, even one as advanced as *Elysium*, will still face resource limitations and the struggle for those resources.

One example of this struggle for resources in *Elysium* can be seen in the film of the same name. In the film, the people on Earth struggle to survive without access to the advanced technology, medical care, and resources available to the citizens of *Elysium*.

The struggle for resources in *Elysium* becomes even more pronounced when the citizens of Earth attempt to breach the heavily guarded space station and access its resources. This leads to conflict and violence as the citizens of *Elysium* fight to protect their way of life and resources from those they perceive as intruders.

Overall, the struggle for resources in *Elysium* serves as a reminder that even in the most advanced societies, there will always be some level of inequality and competition for limited resources. It highlights the importance of addressing issues such as poverty, access to healthcare, and environmental sustainability to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

5.4 Class Struggle in Elysium

"According to Wright, class analysis aims to study class formation, class struggle, and the historical trajectories of social change. Thus, Wright points out that the Marxist concept of class is not meant to be used simply in the description and analysis of the structural properties of society. It is also, fundamentally, meant to provide a way of understanding the class formation and class struggle." (So, 1991)

The central theme of *Elysium* is class struggle. The film portrays a world where the rich and powerful have all the advantages, while the poor and working class are left to suffer on an overpopulated and polluted Earth. The film's portrayal of this struggle is not subtle, with the wealthy elite living in luxury on *Elysium* while the working class struggles to survive on Earth.

The contrast between *Elysium* and Earth is stark, with *Elysium* having all the luxuries and conveniences while Earth is shown as an overpopulated slum. The film also highlights the inequality in access to healthcare, with *Elysium* having access to advanced medical technologies that cure any disease, while people on Earth are left to suffer from illnesses and injuries without adequate medical care.

Furthermore, the film also depicts the working class as being exploited by the wealthy elite, with Max being exposed to lethal doses of radiation while working in a factory. The factory workers are shown as being overworked and underpaid, with the wealthy elite benefiting from their labour.

The film also portrays the wealthy elite as being willing to use violence to maintain their privilege, with the use of robots and mercenaries to maintain order and protect their interests.

“In class struggle analysis, consciousness is seen not as an outgrowth of class contradictions but, rather, as a historical process emerging out of class struggle. Borrowing from the formulations of Therborn (1986) and Giddens (1982), class consciousness can be classified into three levels” (So, 1996).

- 1) Proximate consciousness
- 2) Generalized consciousness
- 3) Transcendence consciousness

“Proximate consciousness emerges when members in the subordinate class try to defend their interests in the immediate locales that affect their daily life. This consciousness usually starts in the workplace” (So, 1996). In this film, Max attains this consciousness when he is affected by radiation at work. So, he demands to be healed soon as he doesn’t have much time. This makes him revolt against the system in place.

“When class members begin to express concerns over class issues other than those located in their immediate locales, they develop generalized consciousness” (So, 1996). This happens when Spider lends his support to help Max but makes him fight for his cause which is that everyone should get everything. He makes Max steal data that may help them to enter *Elysium*.

“Transcendence consciousness develops when the subordinate class members see themselves as belonging to the ascending class – a class that is more progressive than the existing dominant class; a class that develops out of the most advanced forces of production; and a class that represents the future of all the people in the society” (So, 1996: 48). At the end of the film, Max sees himself as one of the elites as he has the key to it, and the droids in the Elysian act at his command.

6. POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND GREED

Elysium also highlights the role of political corruption and greed in exacerbating the divide between the two classes. The government officials on *Elysium* are portrayed as corrupt and self-serving, catering to the needs of the wealthy elite at the expense of the working-class people. The government officials use their power to maintain the status quo, ensuring that the wealthy elite continues to enjoy their privileges while the working-class people suffer.

Elysium also touches on the theme of political corruption and greed, as seen in the character of Secretary of Defence Delacourt, who is willing to do anything to maintain the luxurious lifestyle of *Elysium*'s elite.

Delacourt is shown to be corrupt and greedy, willing to manipulate the system to her advantage and use violence to maintain her position of power. She is willing to go to great lengths to prevent the poor from accessing the medical resources available on *Elysium*, even if it means breaking the law.

This can be interpreted as a criticism on how political graft and avarice can widen the already significant wealth disparity. Delacourt and other powerful figures on *Elysium*

are not interested in solving the root causes of poverty and inequality on Earth, but rather in maintaining their own power and privilege.

Furthermore, the film also highlights the complicity of the wealthy elite in perpetuating the status quo. The wealthy residents of *Elysium* are portrayed as turning a blind eye to the suffering of those on Earth and being content with their luxurious lifestyle at the expense of others.

"*Elysium*" is a commentary on how political corruption and greed can exacerbate inequality and perpetuate the status quo. The film portrays the wealthy elite as complicit in the suffering of others, highlighting the need for systemic change and social justice.

6.1 Resistance and Solidarity

Despite its grim depiction of a dystopian future, *Elysium* offers a message of hope through its portrayal of resistance and solidarity. Max's journey to *Elysium* is not merely a quest for personal survival, but a struggle to challenge the system of exploitation and inequality that perpetuates suffering for so many.

In *Elysium*, resistance and solidarity are also key themes that are explored. The film portrays the struggle of the working class on Earth against the oppressive system that keeps them poverty-stricken and denied access to the resources they need to survive.

The protagonist, Max, becomes a symbol of resistance when he is transformed into a cyborg and given enhanced abilities that allow him to fight back against the oppressive system. He becomes a hero to those on Earth, and his actions inspire others to join in the fight against the ruling class.

Solidarity is also highlighted in the film, as we see how the characters come together to support each other in their struggle. Max allies with a group of revolutionaries who are working to overthrow the ruling class on *Elysium* and bring equality to all of humanity. The characters support each other in their mission and work together towards a common goal.

The film also explores the idea of sacrifice for the greater good. Max and the other characters are willing to risk their lives to fight for what is right and bring about change, highlighting the importance of putting the needs of the community above one's self-interest.

Overall, *Elysium* portrays resistance and solidarity as powerful tools for social change. The film highlights the need for collective action and unity in the face of oppression and inequality and the importance of sacrificing for the greater good.

7. THEMES OF ELYSIUM

One of the most prominent themes of *Elysium* is income inequality. The film portrays a world where the wealthy elite has hoarded all the resources, leaving the rest of humanity to suffer in poverty and illness. The people on Earth are forced to live in squalid conditions, with little access to healthcare, education, or basic necessities. Meanwhile, the people on *Elysium* live in a utopian paradise, free from any of the problems faced by those on Earth.

This theme of income inequality is especially relevant in today's society, where the wealth gap continues to widen. "According to a 2023 report by Oxfam, the richest 1

percent grabbed nearly two-thirds of all new wealth worth \$42 trillion created since 2020, almost twice as much money as the bottom 99 percent of the world's population. During the past decade, the richest 1 percent had captured around half of all new wealth" (Thériault, 2023). *Elysium* serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of allowing such extreme wealth inequality to persist, highlighting the potential for societal collapse and the suffering of the majority.

Another theme of *Elysium* is the struggle for social justice. Throughout the film, we see the characters fighting against a system that is rigged against them. Max, the protagonist, is forced to turn to crime to survive, and he eventually becomes a revolutionary leader, fighting for the rights of the people on Earth. The film also portrays the corrupt nature of the political system, where those in power are more concerned with maintaining their wealth and status than with helping those in need.

The struggle for social justice is an important theme in today's society, as we see protests and social movements fighting against systemic oppression and inequality. This movie provides as a timely reminder of how crucial it is to stand up to injustice.

7.1 Social and Political Context

Elysium presents a dystopian future where the space between the rich and poor is so vast that the elite lives in luxury and abundance, while the majority of humanity suffers from poverty and deprivation. This social and economic inequality is not just a fictional construct of the film; it reflects the contemporary social and political context of the world. In recent years, there has been much discussion and apprehension surrounding the widening income gap and the consolidation of riches among a small group of individuals. "According to the new Oxfam report, the richest one percent grabbed nearly two-thirds of all new wealth created since 2020, worth \$42 trillion, almost twice as much money as the bottom 99 percent of the world's population" (Tanzi and Dorning, 2021).

The film portrays the elite's indifference to the plight of the poor, where they live in a utopian world of health, wealth, and happiness while the majority of humanity struggles for basic necessities such as food, water, and healthcare. The social and political context of the film reflects the real-world issue of the lack of access to essential services like healthcare, education, and sanitation for the poor, while the rich have access to the best facilities.

To fully appreciate the film's critique of class warfare, it is important to understand the historical and cultural context in which the film was made. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened in many nations as a result of the emergence of neoliberal economic policies in the late 20th century and the expanding power of transnational businesses. "In the United States, the top 1% of earners now hold more wealth than the bottom 90%" (Tanzi and Dorning, 2021). The effects of economic inequality are particularly evident in healthcare, where access to quality medical care is often limited to those who can afford it.

7.2 Allegory and the Film's Message

Elysium uses an allegorical framework to critique the effects of class warfare and the neoliberal economic policies that perpetuate inequality. The film's allegory is evident in its depiction of *Elysium* as a symbol of the wealthy elite who have abandoned the rest of humanity to fend for themselves. The space station is a gated community that offers its residents access to advanced medical technologies and luxurious lifestyles,

while the rest of humanity is left to suffer on an overpopulated and polluted Earth. The film's protagonist, Max, represents the working class, who are exploited by the wealthy elite and struggle to survive in a harsh and unforgiving environment. Max's journey to *Elysium* to access lifesaving medical treatment represents the struggle for access to quality healthcare in the face of economic inequality.

The film's use of allegory is also evident in its depiction of immigration. The residents of *Elysium* are portrayed as hostile to immigrants from Earth, who are depicted as a threat to their privileged way of life. This echoes contemporary debates about immigration and how anti-immigrant sentiment is often used to justify policies that perpetuate inequality.

8. RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The film *Elysium* is relevant to contemporary society, where the disparity between the rich and poor continues to widen. *Elysium* highlights the importance of access to basic necessities such as healthcare, education, and sanitation for all. The inability to obtain the aforementioned fundamental necessities poses a major obstacle to the impoverished population's capacity to overcome poverty and attain social mobility.

The film's portrayal of the ruling class's indifference to the plight of the poor is also relevant to contemporary society. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals has created a world that is not favourable to all. It only facilitates the elite whereas the other class people have to work hard and depend on those wealthy people for everything.

This paper uses Marxist theories to analyse the movie and how those theories could be applied in this present era. Revolution is essential to fight against social inequalities but what kind of revolution is needed is important. The film suggests that there should always be a change in the system (rules) according to the present needs. The director suggests that violence is not the key to creating a new society. He suggests making changes to the rules and norms according to the situation that favours everyone and provides everything to everyone.

9. FUTURE STUDY

Is there any scope for future research through this movie, yes, there is certainly scope for future research through the film *Elysium* and its allegory for class warfare. Some potential avenues for further exploration include:

Intersectionality: *Elysium* focuses primarily on class divide, but there are also elements of race, gender, and other social identities that intersect with class in the film. Further research could explore how these intersections shape the experiences of the characters in the film, and how they relate to broader social inequalities.

Comparative analysis: *Elysium* is just one example of science fiction that explores themes of class struggle and dystopian futures. Future research could compare and contrast *Elysium* with other films, television shows, and books that explore similar themes, to gain a deeper understanding of how these themes are represented in popular culture.

Political economy: *Elysium* presents a world where the wealthy have access to resources that are denied to the poor. Future research could explore the political and

economic structures that underlie this unequal distribution of resources, and how they relate to real-world inequalities.

Social movements: The characters in *Elysium* engage in acts of resistance against the wealthy elite, but the film does not delve deeply into the social movements and organizing efforts that might underlie such resistance. Further research could explore the ways in which social movements can challenge systems of inequality and oppression, and how they might be represented in science fiction.

Overall, *Elysium* offers a rich starting point for exploring the complex relationships between class, power, and resistance in popular culture and in the real world. There are many potential avenues for further research and analysis, which could shed light on the ways in which social inequalities are constructed, contested, and ultimately transformed.

10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Elysium* is a gripping film that highlights the harmful effects of social inequality. The film serves as an allegory for class warfare and highlights the ever-widening disparity between the rich and poor. While the film is fictional, it provides us with an insight into the consequences of social inequality and reminds us of the importance of equal access to resources to ensure a more equal and just society. *Elysium* serves as an allegorical critique of class warfare, offering insights into the consequences of economic inequality, healthcare disparities, and anti-immigrant sentiment. The film's metaphorical framework allows it to explore these issues in a futuristic setting while still drawing clear parallels to contemporary society. By depicting a world divided by class and highlighting the struggles of the working class against oppressive systems, *Elysium* calls attention to the urgency of addressing social and economic inequality. The film ultimately encourages viewers to consider the importance of resistance, solidarity, and the potential for technology to bring about positive change. As discussions about class warfare and economic inequality continue to shape public discourse, *Elysium* remains a poignant reminder of the consequences of inaction and the possibilities of collective action for a more just future. The paper concludes by arguing the importance of accessibility of basic necessities to everyone.

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