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A Dystopian Look Into the Technology of Tomorrow

Cory Doctorow explores in his story “Unauthorized Bread” the idea that technology morphs into a tool that enables the social entrapment of the poor. A prime example of this in a symbolic sense is the elevators in the Dorchester Towers apartment complex. These elevators were programmed to prioritize the rich occupants in the building, which would lead the poor tenants to wait up to forty-five minutes for a ride. This metaphor by Doctorow is an explicit attempt to visualize the restriction of social mobility on the poor. The elevators symbolically represent a vicious dystopian idea, wherein the poor are trapped, continuously trying to improve their circumstances, but failing because the system is designed against them. This system seems overly conspiratorial, however it was created specifically to extract the maximum amount of profit. By allowing lower class citizens to inhabit the building, the complex could be made bigger than regulation size - allowing for more well-to-do tenants. By keeping the poor hard done by, every amenity can be “spitefully denied”[p.31] ,thereby increasing profit furthermore. Because the poor have nowhere else to go, they begrudgingly accept the conditions, which plays into the profit maximizing scheme. Any attempt to challenge the status quo, such as the “elevator captain” [p.37] system, is used as justification for a potential eviction. Because of this, any amount of resistance is futile, which further traps the less fortunate into compliance. This entire arrangement is not solely propped up by technology, however, technology allows for new and creative ways to benefit from the expense of the misfortunate.