

SO SUE ME, ALREADY

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I've recently been alerted to this:

Hugo Award-winning novelist Harlan Ellison has come out of obscurity and is suing the makers of a new sci-fi thriller film starring Justin Timberlake, claiming that the film is a total ripoff of a prize-winning short story he published in 1965. The copyright suit, which was filed Wednesday, claims that In Time, which is written and directed by Andrew Niccol (The Truman Show, Gattaca) borrows a substantial amount of material from Repent, Harlequin!

Although Ellison has not seen the film himself, he claims that both works are based on the premise of a "dystopian corporate future in which everyone is allotted a specific amount of time to live." If successful, the injunction would prevent the film's release on Oct. 28 and he will then consider suing the makers of Equilibrium, Aldous Huxley, Lois Lowry, P.D., James, Anthony Burgess ... do you see where we're going with this?

What I see is that some lawyers are going to make some money.

Over the years I am several times been accused of stealing, plagiarizing, etc. when I wrote THE GIVER. Once it was by the late author Ira Levin, who said I had taken details from a book of his called "This Perfect Day," a book I had never (and still have never) read.

(I just looked it up and read about it, and see that it is a dystopian novel with many similarities to THE GIVER, mainly in the concept of uniformity—clothing, food, etc.—in the community)

Someone else has said THE GIVER bears many similarities to Ayn Rand's "Anthem," another book I haven't read.

And to "Logan's Run?" I've never seen that film.

And to a movie...I'm forgetting its name...which starts in black and white and later turns to color (no, not Wizard of Oz!)...but it was a movie that was made a long time after THE GIVER was published. Ah! "Pleasantville!" That was the title!

And on and on.

Apparently Harlan Ellison...whose work I have not read...wrote a story about a dystopian society. So have a zillion others both before and after THE GIVER.

(When I tried to find the name of "Logan's Run" I googled "films set in the future" A list of HUNDREDS came up.)

There are only a certain number of ideas out there. If you are going to make up a future society, you are very likely going to create some elements that someone else has thought of, is thinking of, will think of.

Once I got an accusatory letter from a woman who was taking a writing course. She had submitted a manuscript. Later she read THE GIVER, though it had stolen her ideas, and that probably the teacher of the course had been intrigued by her unpublished work and had shown it to me.

Didn't happen, wouldn't happen.

For the record, I did read "1984" and "Brave New World" in college when I was seventeen years old.





They were a sign that appeared to be ordinary, but in fact they were a sign of a new world. They (if