UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS-INGLÊS

FROM MASTER NARRATIVES TO SIMULACRA: ANALYSIS

OF ORWELL'S *1984* AND TERRY GILLIAM'S *BRAZIL*

por

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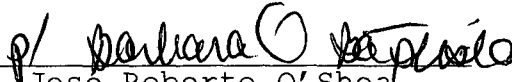Catarina para obtenção do grau de MESTRE EM LETRAS

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ABSTRACT

FROM MASTER NARRATIVES TO SIMULACRA: ANALYSIS OF
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1995

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The subject of the present study is a comparative
analysis between George Orwell's 1984 and Terry Gilliam's
Brazil. The former, a modernist novel, will be representative
of the modernist aesthetics, while the latter, a filmic free
adaptation of the novel, will stand as a representative of
postmodern aesthetics. In a close reading of 1984 elements
that function in conjunction with the plot shall be analyzed,
such as setting, the prevalence of the word over the   image,
the establishment of historical time, and other elements such
as modernist symbols, like costume and the development of the
modernist hero. It shall be   demonstrated how the development
of the plot conforms to a historical background in which to
challenge a master narrative was, by implication, to support an
alternative one. For the analysis of Brazil the elements
selected will be setting (mise-en-scene, lighting, costume),
characterization, the splitting of the hero, the predominance
of the image over the word. The analysis will demonstrate the
weakening of the power of the master narratives to function as
universal referents.

RESUMO

FROM MASTER NARRATIVES TO SIMULACRA: ANALYSIS OF
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O presente estudo faz uma análise comparative entre
1984, de George Orwell, e *Brazil*, de Terry Gilliam. O
primeiro, um romance modernista, servirá com exemplo da
estética modernista, enquanto o último, uma adaptação
cinematográfica do romance, representará a estética pós-
moderna. Através de um *close reading* serão analisados
elementos que funcionam em conjunção com a trama de *1984* tais
como cenário, o domínio da palavra sobre a imagem, o
estabelecimento do tempo histórico e outros elementos
entendidos como símbolos modernistas, como figurino e o
desenvolvimento do herói moderno. Será demonstrado como o
desenvolvimento da trama se conforma a uma cena histórica em
que o desafio a uma meta-narrativa implicava no apoio a
alguma outra. Para a análise de *Brazil*, os elementos
selecionados serão o cenário (mise-en-scene, iluminação,
figurino), caracterização das personagens, a divisão do
herói, o domínio da imagem sobre a palavra. Nossa análise
demonstrará o enfraquecimento da função das meta-narrativas
como referências universais.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study is to present an aesthetic analysis of *1984*, written by George Orwell in 1949, and *Brazil* (1985) by director Terry Gilliam. The analysis of the former, a dystopian novel, shall give us an example of modernist aesthetics in literature, while that same approach to the latter, a film belonging to the postmodern cinematographic canon, shall stand as an example of the posmodernist aesthetics. According to different critics, what postmodernism challenges is the modern "humanist concept of a coherent, continuous, autonomous individual (what paradoxically also shares in some generalized universal human essence)" (Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 108). For critics such as Fredric Jameson and Jean-François Lyotard the reliance on a "universal human essence" links modernism to a legitimation of master narratives. For, "modernism investigated the grounding of experience in the self, its focus was in the self seeking integration amid fragmentation" (108). That modern "focus on subjectivity [which] was still within the dominant humanist framework," also bore that "obsessive search for wholeness" that would lead to "the beginnings of what would be a more radical postmodern questioning, a challenging brought about by the doubleness of postmodern discourse" (108). In that sense, in postmodern aesthetics we observe a strategy to "underline and undermine the notion of the coherent, self-sufficient

subject as the source of meaning or action" (108-9). Thus, it is possible to discover through an examination of the form of these two texts how the aesthetics we find in both is contextualized within the ideologies inscribed within the distinct historical moments in which these texts were made, and how those different aesthetics foreground the ideological changes which have occurred in the transition from Modernism to Postmodernism.

However, it is important to note that by "ideological changes" we are referring less to any specific ideological positions *1984* and *Brazil* might stand for than the way each of these cultural texts are inscribed within ideologies in general as broad referents in one historical moment, and their weakening in another. In other words, we shall not try to determine what is the ideological position that these two works support, rather, our purpose is to examine how Orwell's novel works with ideology in a world where master narratives were still functioning as universal referents, and how Gilliam's film represents a society in which all master narratives experience a crisis.

Moreover, when we accept the weakening of the modern master narratives as a characteristic trait of the postmodern condition, a question arises which is whether postmodern cultural texts are still able or willing to oppose critically the cultural and ideological status quo of Western society, or

if, now, within the ideological vacuum generated by the
decrease in the power of the master narratives, those texts
conform to a form that simply reproduces a new social and
historical reality with the only concern of finding room in the
marketplace. About that latter function of cultural works Jean-
François Lyotard observes that

> the eclecticism is the, ground zero of general
> contemporary culture: one listens to *reggae*, watches
> *western*, eats McDonald at noon and local food in the
> evening, uses Parisian perfume in Tokyo, and 'retró'
> clothes in Hong-Kong; knowledge is a subject for
> television quizzes... By becoming *kitsch*, art flatters
> the disorder that prevails in the amateur's 'taste'...
> But such "whatevér it is" realism is that of the money:
> when there are no aesthetic criteria, it is still
> possible and useful to measure the value of the works in
> terms of the profit one can obtain with them. (*O Pós-
> moderno Explicado às Crianças* 19-20)[1]

Nonetheless, before discussing the function of postmodern
cultural works --and, more specifically, the role of *Brazil*--
as a still challenging artistic form or simply interested in
profiting, we should note that the issue of the crisis of the
master narratives stands in the middle of an intense
theoretical debate. In such debate, though the majority of the
critics do agree on the actuality of the crisis of master
narratives, there is a major argument about its meaning, and
its consequences.

However, we should first see how the master narratives
are defined by some influential critics. According to Lyotard,

> the 'master narratives' *The Postmodern Condition* deals
> with are those which have marked modernity: progressive

>emancipation of reason and liberty, progressive or
>catastrophic emancipation of work (source of value in
>capitalism), enrichment of the whole humanity through the
>progress of capitalist technoscience, and even, when
>Christianity itself in modernity is considered (in
>opposition, in this case, to ancient classicism),
>salvation of creatures through the conversion of the
>souls to the Christian narrative of the martyr love.
>(Lyotard, *O Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 31)[2]

For Jürgen Habermas, what the master narratives deal with --and
what is at stake in the postmodern condition-- is "the project
of modernity formulated in the 18th century by the philosophers
of the Enlightenment [which] consisted in their efforts to
develop objective science, universal morality and law, and
autonomous art according to their inner logic" (*An Incomplete
Project* 9). That project is what Lyotard calls "Idea". He
explains that this "Idea (of liberty, of 'light', of socialism,
etc.) has a legitimating value because it is universal" (*Pós-
Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 32)[3]. For the author, this "Idea"
functions as a referent to all human realities; it gives to
modernity its characteristic mode. For him, that is the
"project about which Habermas says is still incomplete, and
that must be recovered, renewed" (32)[4].

Indeed, Habermas' question is, then, if we should "try to
hold on to the *intentions* of Enlightenment, feeble as they may
be, or should we declare the entire project of modernity a lost
cause?" (9-10); a question that implicitly acknowledges the
crisis of the master narratives. The weakening of that

universal project founded in the Enlightenment is also acknowledged by Lyotard, who states, as put by Jameson, that

> the older master-narratives of legitimation no longer function in the service of scientific research --nor, by implication, anywhere else (e.g., we no longer believe in political or historical teleologies, or in the great 'actors' and 'subjects' of history --the nation-state, the proletariat, the party, the West, etc.). (Preface xi-xii)

In fact, for Lyotard

> we can observe and establish a kind of decline in the confidence that Westerns of the late centuries had on the principle of the general progress of humanity. That idea of a possible, probable or necessary progress was rooted in the certainty that the development of the arts, of technology, of knowledge, and of liberties would be fruitful to humanity as a whole. (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 95)[5]

Though Habermas and Lyotard seem both ready to acknowledge the crisis that the project of modernity is going through, they follow opposite directions when we consider their opinions about its causes. To explain the causes of such crisis, Habermas, "greatly oversimplifying" as he admits, begins by describing the "trend towards ever greater autonomy in the definition and practice of art" ("An Incomplete Project" 10), which ended in the "autonomy of the aesthetic sphere" (10). That autonomy, he argues, became a "deliberate project", allowing the artist to manifest "his own de-centered subjectivity" (10); that is, there was a rupture between the artist's subjectivity and reality itself. Still according to Habermas, by "mid-19th century" painting and literature

witnessed the beginning of a movement in which "color, lines, sounds and movement ceased to serve primarily as the cause of representation; the media of expression and the techniques of production themselves became the aesthetic object" (10). This led to an art more and more alienated from life, falling "into the untouchableness of complete autonomy", an autonomy leading to the surrealist attempt to conciliate once more art and life. But Habermas points two mistakes that destroyed the surrealist revolt: "[f]irst, when the containers of an autonomously developed cultural sphere are shattered, the contents get dispersed. Nothing remains from a desublimated meaning or a destructured form; an emancipatory effect does not follow" (11). Their second mistake was, of course, that by "breaking open a single cultural sphere --art-- and so providing access to just one of the specialized knowledge complexes" (11) (the two others being science and morality) it would be impossible to save society from a cultural impoverishment. As we are reminded by the author, there were, though "less pronounced", similar failed attempts in the spheres of theoretical knowledge and morality.

Lyotard, in his turn, argues that the cause of the current crisis of the master narratives lies exactly in their goal, that of being able to include the whole humanity in one same broad referent. He argues that their own essence implies in the suppression of the so called "minor" narratives, those

of the minorities and individuals. Though Habermas acknowledges the over-extension, under certain circumstances, of any of the spheres mentioned above --art, science, and morality-- into other domains (like the tendency to "aestheticize politics") ("An incomplete Project" 12), for him such circumstantial invasion of one domain over another must not be mistaken for the very intentions "of the surviving Elinghtenment tradition" ("An Incomplete Project" 12). A corollary of Habermas's reasoning is that there still are alternatives for salvaging the project of modernity within the limits of the master narratives.

In contrast, for Lyotard "it is not a matter of an 'abandonment' of the modern project, as Habermas states about postmodernity, but of its 'liquidation' (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 64). He proceeds by saying that "after Theodor Adorno, I have used the term 'Auschwitz' to signify how much the substance of the recent Western history seems inconsistent in relation to the 'modern' project of emancipation of humanity" (95-6)[6]. And, concluding, he asks "what kind of thought can 'restore', in the sense of *aufheben*, 'Auschwitz' including it in a general process, empirical and even speculative, directed to universal emancipation?" (96)[7]. To that, Habermas's implicit answer is that "instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs [the surrealist

movement and its parallels] which have tried to negate modernity" ("Incomplete Project" 12). For Habermas "the types of reception of art may offer an example which at least indicates the direction of a way out" (12). First, he observes that there are two ways of answering the expectations of "bourgeois art": that of the expert and that of the layman, in which the former should face art productions as autonomous problems that must receive a specialized treatment, while the latter should educate himself to become an expert. He resorts, then, to an example by Peter Weiss of a "manner of receiving and relating to art" in which that writer "describes the process of reappropriating art by presenting a group of politically motivated, knowledge-hungry workers in 1937 in Berlin" (13). In the case described by Weiss, young people attending an evening high-school course on "the general and social history of European art" (13), learned how to relate the art works in the museums in Berlin to their own milieu, which was much too different from "that of traditional education as well as from the then existing regime" (13). Habermas believes that "in examples like this which illustrate the reappropriation of the expert's culture from the standpoint of the life-world" it is possible to discover how "art works, which having lost their aura, could yet be received in illuminating ways. In sum" he concludes, "the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled" (13). So, it is in that

theoretical context that we should now consider how postmodern cultural texts are inscribed in the postmodern condition.

Indeed, in this postmodern historical moment, the loss of the power of all master narratives to serve as universal referents makes it relevant to ask whether cultural works are still able to challenge the status quo. Or, if without any universal project to fight for, or, for that matter, to fight against, all that artists can do is to produce works by gathering modern symbols, now emptied out of their original connotations, only to struggle for a place in the market, side by side with the latest software and the fanciest sneakers. That question could be translated in terms of the discussion between Linda Hutcheon and Fredric Jameson about pastiche and postmodern parody. When Linda Hutcheon states that "parody -- often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality-- is usually considered central to postmodernism, both by its detractors and its defenders" (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 93), she is advancing the question on the existence or not of a challenging postmodern art at the center of the discussion on what has come to be generally known as postmodern texts.

In his well-known article "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", Jameson argues that the postmodern cultural context is the "expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination" ("Cultural Logic"

61). As a consequence, the current aesthetic production functions on the same level of late capitalist commodity production in which the artistic work is seen as a best-selling commodity. Thus, the conclusion that follows is that now, as a commodity, artistic production needs no longer to care about its connotations, allowing art producers to gather at random those now empty modernist symbols in that depthless, intense and ahistorical final product which Jameson calls the pastiche. On the other hand, though not denying the existence of the pastiche, Hutcheon answers Jameson's argument by calling our attention to the fact that there is a challenging and subversive postmodern parody. She objects "to the relegation of the postmodern parodic to the ahistorical and empty realm of pastiche" (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 98). For her

> Parody in postmodern art is more than just a sign of the attention artists pay to each other's work and to the art of the past. It may indeed be complicitous with the values it inscribes as well as subverts, but the subversion is still there: the politics of postmodern parodic representation is not the same as that of most rock video's use of allusions to standard film genres or texts. That is what should be called pastiche, according to Jameson's definition. (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 106-7)

Indeed, postmodern parody, as described by Hutcheon, has developed a privileged structure which allows postmodern texts to "install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge" (*Politics* 1-2). The "rock videos" mentioned in Hutcheon's

quotation, as those that are used by Jameson to define pastiche, are similar to a series of television commercials of a certain cigarette brand always presenting a sequence of very short cuttings in which everything seems familiar; a succession of known symbols evoking very brief moments of familiarity which are meant to 'seduce' the viewer. Such sense of familiarity thus created makes it easier for the viewer to associate all those familiar symbols with the product being offered. The final message in the viewer's mind is "go on and buy me", while, at the same time, all the significance associated with the symbols used was painlessly erased. This is not to say that there is no such thing as postmodern parody. Hutcheon states that postmodern parody in film might be the introduction of parody as an "alien form" in the traditional Hollywood film, in a way that the "very self-conscious introduction of the 'alien'... is itself being parodied" (*Politics* 107), like what happens in "Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* [which] parod[ies] and challeng[es], however respectfully, Fellini's modernist *8½*." (107).

Nevertheless, Fredric Jameson presents a very different perspective. For him modern parody and pastiche must be sharply distinguished; the latter engendered by the formal consequence of the disappearance of the individual subject, namely, "the increasing unavailability of the personal *style*," while parody found "a fertile area in the idiosyncrasies of the moderns and

their 'inimitable styles'" ("Cultural Logic" 12-3). Jameson's

reasoning, as it follows, is that

> pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar
> mask, speech in a dead language... it is a neutral
> practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's
> ulterior motives, amputated of satiric impulse, devoid of
> laughter and of any conviction that alongside the
> abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some
> healthy linguistic normality still exists ("Cultural
> Logic" 13).[8]

Hence, in the present study, we shall argue that *Brazil*

belongs to that conception of postmodern parody which goes

beyond the superficial utilization of modern symbols denounced

by Jameson, and that, by using strategies as those pointed by

Hutcheon it questions modern ideals. Under that aspect, a

difference between Gilliam's film and *1984* is that while the

latter presents its critique to modern master narratives

without escaping their 'limits', the former's critique does not

seem to fit in any Idea, in the sense coined by Lyotard. In

other words, the novel --independently of how vicious its

critique might be-- always points to the possibility of an

alternative --and better-- master narrative. The film, however,

presents a critique that simultaneously challenges society

values and beliefs without offering any new collective project

which could come as a new universal referent. In this sense,

Gilliam's film can be seen as an example of Hutcheon's idea of

postmodern parody; though it borrows many of the forms of *1984*,

it is still a film which challenges and subverts Orwell's desire for a master narrative

In Chapter I a close reading of *1984* will be presented in which elements such as setting, language and characterization relate to the development of the plot, specially as they help to assert that in the historical moment in which the novel was written the search for alternatives would necessarily fall within a world conception based on universal ideals --as those of the Enlightenment. As for *Brazil*, it will be necessary to resort to different analytical tools, more adequate to film analysis. Those shall include elements like plot, mise-en-scene and its constituents (setting, lighting, behavior of the figures, and costume).

Furthermore, considering that Gilliam's work has been relatively poorly investigated, specially when compared to Orwell's[9], a filmography of that director should prove interesting. According to Pablo G. Wright, in 1974, "as a member of Monty Python, [Gilliam] co-directed with Terry Jones the film *Monty Python an the Holy Grail*... In 1976 he made his individual debut directing Jabberwocky, an scatological medieval fantasy based on Lewis Carrol's poem" (2).[10] After that, "in 1979 Python assembled together to make The Life of Brian, an irreverent parody about a Jewish boy who grew up being mistaken for the Messiah [and]... by that time Gilliam

wanted to make three films as a complement to Jabberwocky" (2-

3).[11] As Wright explains,

> one would be based on the Greek legend of Theseus and the
> Minotaur, another would be about the fantasies of a boy
> who travels through time to be disillusioned by his
> heroes [*Time Bandits*, 1981], [and] the last one would be
> about a bureaucrat socially anesthetized, who finds
> refuge from his blue life through a powerful fantasy.
> (3)[12]

The latter was, of course, *Brazil*, the film under study.

One important fact to note is the title of the film under

study, curious enough, since the country after which it was

named never appears in *Brazil*. The story of how Terry Gilliam

got the inspiration for the film should be illuminating.

According to Wright, "the central theme of *Brazil* appeared in a

cold afternoon in 1977, in Port Talbot, Wales" (4).[13]Gilliam

recounted his remembrance of that moment as it follows:

> This place was a metallurgic city, where everything was
> covered by a gray metallic dust... Even the beach was
> completely covered by dust, it was really dusky. The sun
> was going down and was very beautiful. The contrast was
> extraordinary. I had this image of a man sitting there in
> this sordid beach with a portable radio, tuned in those
> strange escapist Latin songs like *Brazil*. The music took
> him away somehow and made the world seem less blue to
> him. (Wright 4).[14]

Gilliam added, still, that "those romantic, escapist sounds

suggested that somewhere out, far from the cinturones

convectores [sic] and the ugly steel towers, there is an

splendid and green world" (4).[15]

That brief account on how Gilliam had the idea for the

film acquires significance when we observe that the only way in

which the country Brazil appears in the film is through the song with the same title; a song that is played several times during the development of the story. Thus, be it through the title of the film or as part of the sound track, we are transported (like the imaginary man in the beach) to a place of fantasy. Not a real tropical country but specially the kind of imaginary paradise which comes to the mind of the people of the developed countries. In this sense, the song adds up to the strategies utilized by the elite within the plot, together with the bright and artificial images scattered throughout the city, to create an environment of simulacra; simulacra in Baudrillard's conception for postmodernism, when "the sign 'has no relation with any reality'... [and in which] as a response to the perception of the disappearance of the real, there is a compensatory attempt to manufacture it, in an 'exaggeration of the true, of the lived experience" (*Cultura Pós-Moderna* 52)[16]. In short, the song helps to create an environment which, as put by Jameson, transforms "older realities into television images" ("Cultural Logic" 85) and other artificial images as we find on billboards and posters. It functions as a significant absence, awaking in the mind of the people of *Brazil* the image of a place that has never existed.

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¹ All quotations from this book have my translation to English. "O ecletismo é o grau zero da cultura geral contemporânea: ouve-se *reggae*, vê-se *western*, come-se McDonald ao meio-dia e cozinha local à noite, usa-se perfume parisiense em Tóquio e roupa 'retró' em Hong-Kong, o conhecimento é matéria para concursos televisivos... Tornando-se *kitsch*, a arte lisonjeia a desordem que reina no 'gosto'do amador... Mas este realismo do 'seja lá o que for'é o do dinheiro: faltando critérios estéticos, continua a ser possível e útil medir o valor das obras em função do lucro que se pode obter com elas" (*O Pós-moderno Explicado às Crianças* 19-20).

² "As 'metanarrativas'de que se trata em *A Condição Pós-moderna* são aquelas que marcaram a modernidade: emancipação progressiva da razão e da liberdade, emancipação progressiva ou catastrófica do trabalho (fonte do valor alienado no capitalismo), enriquecimento da humanidade inteira através dos progressos da tecnociência capitalista, e até, se considerando o próprio cristianismo na modernidade (opondo-se, neste caso, ao classicismo antigo), salvação das criaturas através da conversão das almas à narrativa crística do amor mártir" (*O Pós-moderno Explicado às Crianças* 31).

³ "Ideia (de liberdade, de 'luz', de socialismo, etc) tem um valor legitimante porque é universal" (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 32).

⁴ "projecto de que Habermas diz que permaneceu inacabado, e que deve ser retomado, renovado" (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 32).

⁵ "podemos observar e estabelecer uma espécie de declínio na confiança que os Ocidentais dos últimos séculos punham no princípio do progresso geral da humanidade. Esta idéia de um progresso possível, provável ou necessário, enraizava-se na certeza de que o desenvolvimento das artes, da tecnologia, do conhecimento e das liberdades seria proveitoso à humanidade no seu conjunto" (*O Pós-moderno Explicado às Crianças* 95).

⁶ "Depois de Adorno, usei o termo 'Auschwitz' para significar quanto a matéria da história ocidental recente parece inconsistente relativamente ao projecto 'moderno'de emancipação da humanidade (*O Pós-moderno Explicado às Crianças* 96).

⁷ "Que espécie de pensamento é capaz de 'reabilitar, no sentido de *aufheben*, 'Auschwitz' colocando-o num processo geral, empírico e até especulativo, dirigido para a emancipação universal?" (*O Pós-moderno Explicado às Crianças* 96).

⁸ When analyzing postmodern cultural production in the peripheral nations of capitalism, Celeste Olalquiaga states that "contrary to Fredric Jameson's definition of contemporary pastiche (blank collage)... Latin America's current use of pastiche redeems some of the traditional qualities of parody, although with a layer of cynicism that was absent until now from its discourse" (Megalopolis 75-6). Olalquiaga argues that, at least in the periphery, we can find a subversive parodic subversion of the dominant culture imposed by the central capitalist countries. Actually, she observes that

> Latin America's own version of international culture
> tends toward a hyperrealism of uniquely parodic
> attributes. This 'magical hyperrealism' often inverts the
> image of a colonized people humbly subservient to
> metropolitan discoveries into one of a cynical audience
> rolling over with laughter at what it perceives as the
> sterile nuances of cultures with very little sense of
> their own self-aggrandizement. (Megalopolis 75)

[9]Main books by Orwell include *Animal Farm* (1945), *Burmese Days, Coming Up for Air, Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *Homage to Catalonia and Looking Back on the Spanish War* (1938), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was Orwell's last book, which he finished a few months before he died, in January 21, 1950, in London.

[10]All quotations from Pablo G. Wright present my translation to English. "Como miembro de Monty Python co-dirigió con Terry Jones el filme Monty Python and the Holy Grail... En 1976 hizo su debut individual dirigiendo Jabberwocky, una fantasía escatológica medieval basada en el poema de Lewis Carrol" ("Brazil (de Terry Gilliam), Retrato de Una Sociedad Distopica", 2)

[11]"En 1979 Python se reunió para hacer The Life of Brian, una parodia irreverente acerca de un niño judio que creció siendo confundido con el Mesías... Por esa época Gilliam queria hacer tres películas como complemento a Jabberwocky" ("Brazil (de Terry Gilliam), Retrato de Una Sociedad Distopica" 2-3).

[12]"Una se basaria en la leyenda griega de Teseo y el minotauro, otra trataria de las fantasías de un niño que viaja a través del tiempo para ser desiludido por sus héroes, la última seria sobre un burócrata socialmente anestesiado, que se refugia de su vida gris a través de una poderosa fantasía" (3).

[13]"El tema central de Brazil apareció una tarde fria en 1977 en Port Talbot, Gales" ("Brazil (de Terry Gilliam), Retrato de Una Sociedad Distopica" 4).

[14]"Ese lugar es una ciudad metalúrgica, donde todo esta cubierto de un polvo metálico gris... Aún la playa está completamente cubierta de polvo, es realmente oscura. El sol se estaba poniendo y era muy hermoso. El contraste era extraordinario. Tuve esta imagen de un hombre sentado alli en esa sórdida playa con una radio portátil, sintonizando estas extrañas canciones escapistas latinas como 'Brazil'. La música lo transportaba de algún modo y le hacía [aparecer] el mundo menos gris (en Mathews (1987:viii). ("Brazil (de Terry Gilliam), Retrato de Una Sociedad Distopica" 4)"

[15]"Esos sonidos románticos, escapistas, sugerian que en alguna parte allí afuera, lejos de los cinturones convectores y las feas torres de acero, hay un mundo verde y espléndido (en McGrady (12/12/1985) y Sarris (21/1/1986))" ("Brazil (de Terry Gilliam), Retrato de Una Sociedad Distopica" 4)".

[16]"o signo 'não tem relação com nenhuma realidade'... [e que] como em resposta à percepçãodo desaparecimento do real, há uma tentativa compensatória de manufaturá-lo, num 'exagero do verdadeiro, da experiência vivida'" (*Cultura Pós-Moderna* 52).

CHAPTER I

1984: A Narrative of Nightmare

In the discussion that will presently follow an aesthetic

comparison between modernism and postmodernism shall be

developed. The dystopian novel by Orwell, *1984,* can be seen as

a representative of the former and the film *Brazil*, by director

Terry Gilliam, as a representative of the latter. Therefore,

our main interest in this chapter will be the aesthetic

features of the novel which characterize it as a modernist

text. More specifically still, the main issue to be focused on

under such an approach, and which have come to be challenged by

postmodernity, shall be the great ideologies, here understood

as a "master narratives". By analyzing different aspects of the

novel, like setting, specially as it relates to modernist

architecture; the prevalence of the use of the word over the

use of images; the establishment of historical time; and other

elements functioning as modernist symbols, like costume and the

development of the modernist hero, it shall be possible to

demonstrate how the development of the plot conforms to a

historical background in which to challenge a master narrative

was, by implication, to support an alternative one.

As a dystopia, *1984* "reflects certain political concerns

of its author, its time, and the entire modern age" (Sperber

213). Those political concerns, as we see them, relate to the

ideological problems of the modernist period, "if we take the

term *ideology* here in Althusser's sense as a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as social structure or the collective logic of History" (*The Political Unconscious* 30). In this sense, whole ideological propositions as Socialism and Capitalism will be considered here as "master narratives": narratives functioning as broad points of reference to one's understanding of the historical past, present and of its future possibilities.

In fact, in this chapter it will be posed that apart from the ideological points raised by the criticisms that arise from the plot in *1984*, one feature of the novel which places it in the modernist canon is exactly its reliance on the belief that it is possible to resist domination only within the 'limits' of an alternative master narrative, based on the observation that no other possibility appears within the plot. Such belief, as we shall see in Chapter II, no longer holds when we consider the crisis experienced by all master narratives in the postmodern condition[1]. The consequence of such belief is that, in contrast with what happens in its postmodern filmic adaptation, the whole critique in the novel is presented in terms of modernist referentials like the modernist hero, the modernist conception of architecture and urban planning, and the idea of a coherent historical time in which objective truth can be found. It will be shown how, in a context where master

narratives still hold, the word is privileged over the image both as a device of domination and of resistance.[2]

Indeed, the ideological tool for domination in *1984* belongs to that category here labeled as master narrative. In the plot of the novel, it was "after a decade of national wars, civil wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions in all parts of the world that Ingsoc and its rivals emerged fully worked-out as political doctrines" (*1984* 163). Oceania is not only the name of one of the three "super states" that now dominate the world, but it is also the place where the plot develops. The reader comes to know that Ingsoc, the official master narrative adopted in Oceania, is not much different from the ones adopted by the governments of Eurasia and Eastasia, the other two super states. "Actually the three philosophies are barely distinguishable, and the social systems which they support are not distinguishable at all" (*1984* 157).

Among other references, because Ingsoc would stand for English Socialism, and also due to the physical characterization of the Big Brother as Joseph Stalin, and of Emmanuel Goldstein as Trotsky, many would take the novel as a right-wing book, a point of view questioned by critics like John Lukacs, who claims that differently from Hitler, who called himself a nationalist, Orwell was a patriot. In fact, still according to Lukacs,

> Orwell's conclusion was the opposite of Hitler's, as it was opposed to the views of contemporary neo-

conservatives and Reaganites who have tried to claim
Orwell as their own. This is part of a verminous lie
which has been told again and again in discussions of
Orwell, who belongs no more with the neo-conservatives
than with American intellectuals who remain committed to
the Marxist mode. ("Orwell's Legacy" 122)

Erich From, as Isaac Asimov observes, is another one to call

our attention to the fact that

Books as those by Orwell are powerful warnings, and it
would be a great misfortune if the readers would
presumptuously take *1984* just as one more description of
the Stalinist barbarism without noticing that that book
has also to do with us. (*No Mundo da Ficção Científica*
348)

And in her study where she compares *Brave New World* and *1984*,

Leonida Kretzer claims that "three authoritarian ideologies are

satirized in 1984: the Communist, the Facist and the Roman

Catholic" (*Brave New World and 1984: A Comparison* 99).

However, more important to our approach to the novel than

finding out the real ideological standpoint of its author, as

it is manifested in *1984*, is that need in the plot to resort to

a master narrative be it for the domination and organization of

society, be it for challenging that same domination and

organization. And such need is self evident in Orwell's text.

In fact, there, and contrasting with the effort of the elite in

Brazil to empty out any ideological discourse, the elite of the

Party, or Inner Party as such elite is called, takes the

trouble of creating a complex program to persuade society of

the overwhelming benefits of Ingsoc, or the master narrative

they have to offer: the scattering of hidden microphones and of

telescreens, allowing the unremitting observation of all members of the Party; the Thought Police; the destruction of any documents which could be used to question Big Brother's ideology; the constant remaking of their own historical records so to allow reality to conform to the Inner Party's narrative of history. Such association of repression and brainwashing to doctrinate society suffices to show the significance of the master narratives in the structuring and domination of society in the modern world.

Accordingly, setting, as imagined by Orwell for the plot in *1984,* is consistent with that perspective of the world which is based on master narratives. As we shall see in Chapter II, setting in *Brazil* functions to criticize certain features of modernist architecture. A criticism, however, satisfied only to denote and to denounce the inadequacy of the ideals of such architecture in a postmodern society which lives in an illusive ideological vacuum. On the other hand, though we can also observe a critique of modernist architecture in Orwell's novel, what strikes us is its perfect adequacy to Ingsoc. Indeed, the Inner Party, far from rejecting such modernist architectural ideals, takes profit of its very failures.

But before analyzing how that architecture is used as a support to Ingsoc, it is necessary to determine some of its features. In the settings in *1984* we can find examples of Le Corbusier's conception of architecture which, according to

David Harvey, "emphasized that freedom and liberation in the contemporary city depended in a vital way on imposing a rational order" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 39)[3]. Still according to Harvey,

> In that period between wars modernism acquired a strong positivistic tendency and... established a new philosophical style which would be central in the post-World War II thought. Logic positivism was as compatible with the modernist architectural practices as it was with the development of all forms of science as the avatars of technical control. It was during that period that houses and cities could be freely conceived as "machines to live in". (39)[4]

In short, there is a conception of architecture which would see not only houses but all buildings to shelter people as "machines".

A problem arising from such conception of the city and its subdivisions was that people, in that urban environment, became easily transformed into parts of such machinery. Here, it would be interesting to quote some passages in the novel which illustrate how dehumanizing such architecture can be: "in the Records Department, where Winston worked, they were dragging the chairs out of the cubicles and grouping them in the centre of the hall, opposite the big telescreen" (*1984* 11). To put individual workers in cubicles as if they were each a part of a machine to fit perfectly, like a screw in a nut, is an example of the distortion of the original architectural idea of buildings as "machines to live in". The distortion, of course, is to make one a servile part of the machine instead of

a machine to serve one. Another passage in *1984* shows that kind
of perverted distortion in which rational planning functions to
oppress rather than to liberate people:

> He did not know where he was. Presumably he was in the
> Ministry of Love, but there was no way of making certain.
> He was in a high-ceilinged windowless cell with walls of
> glittering white porcelain. Concealed lamps flooded it
> with cold light, and there was a low, steady humming
> sound which he supposed had something to do with the air
> supply. A bench, or shelf, just wide enough to sit on ran
> round the wall, broken only by the door and, at the end
> opposite the door, a lavatory pan with no wooden seat.
> There were four telescreens, one in each wall. (*1984* 179)

This clean, aseptic and rationally constructed environment, not
by chance, is not too far from the functional architectural
design of the Nazi concentration camps.

In *Brazil*, as we shall see in Chapter II, the critique to
that architectural ideal of the house and the city as a
rationally functioning machine strikes us as the contradiction
between its ideal plan and its inability to make real life
comfortable and functional. However, by pointing to such
contradiction, the film's critique aims at showing how that
postmodern society "which prefers the sign to the thing
signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the
appearance to the essence" (Feuerbach in Society of Spectacle
front page) subjects itself to the absurds of a rational
planning that ended up creating an irrational city. Because, in
the context of the film, things do not really have to *be* but

need only to *appear;* in such social structure only "that which appears is good, [and] that which is good appears" (Debord 5).

So, if in the film we witness "[h]ow urban squalor can be a delight to the eyes, when expressed in commodification" (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 76) and in fake images, and how such alienated acceptance of irrationality in urban planning comes as a consequence of the substitution of consumerism for ideology, in *1984* we find a difference. Though in the novel such irrationality might strike the reader as equally absurd, here, social submission to it is an ideological process, it comes as a consequence of the acceptance of the elite's imposed master narrative. While the elite in *Brazil* prefers to scatter bright images to disguise reality, in *1984* the Inner Party urges discipline and submission in the name of Ingsoc.

John Strachey presents an interesting analysis on the issue of rationality in Orwell's novel:

> In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Communism itself, now indistinguishable from Fascism, is depicted as patently irrational.... The lesson of his book is *not* that the catastrophe which Communism has suffered proves that reason carried to its logical conclusion leads to horror; that consequently we must retreat from reason into some form of mysticism or supernaturalism. On the contrary, what Orwell is saying is that the catastrophe of our times occurred precisely because the Communists (and, of course, still more the Fascists) deserted reason. He is saying that the Communists, without being aware of it, have lost touch with reality: that their doctrine has become, precisely, a mysticism, an authoritarian revelation". (Strachey 60)

Together with that turn to irrationalism comes an incongruity
between the propaganda of the ideal aesthetics of the human
being. As Stalin's socialist realism would imagine the perfect
and healthy Communists, and Hitler would advocate the physical
and intellectual superiority of the pure Aryan race, Big
Brother also urges his comrades to exhibit a perfect physical
fitness. Yet, in the same way neither the Soviet nor the German
people ever achieved that superiority proclaimed by their
ideologues, the people of Oceania is also much too far from
such perfectness. Such incongruity can be illustrated by
quoting two passages in the novel. In the first, we find
Winston in his apartment, when the daily session of "Physical
Jerks" are aired by the telescreens. A female voice guides the
exercises which supposedly would help making healthy the
members of the Party:

> '*There*, comrades! *That's* how I want to see you doing it.
> Watch me again. I'm thirty nine and I've had four
> children. Now look.' She bent over again. 'You see *my*
> knees aren't bent. You can all do it if you want to,' she
> added as she straightened herself up. 'Anyone under
> forty-five is perfectly capable of touching his toes'.
> (1984 32)

The second passage shows, through Winston's eyes, what people
really looked like:

> He looked round the canteen again. Nearly everyone was
> ugly, and would still have been ugly if dressed otherwise
> than in the uniform blue overalls. On the far side of the
> room, sitting at a table alone, a small, curiously
> beetle-like man was drinking a cup of coffee, his little
> eyes darting suspicious glances from side to side. How
> easy it was, thought Winston, if you did not look about
> you, to believe that the physical type set up by the

> Party as an ideal --tall muscular youths and deep-bosomed
> maidens, blond-haired, vital, sunburnt, carefree--
> existed and even predominated. Actually, so far as he
> could judge, the majority of people in Airstrip One were
> small, dark and ill-favored. (*1984* 50)

Besides the shocking contrast between reality and the aesthetic ideal presented by the elite as the true physical type, the mentioning of the "uniform blue overalls" should also call our attention. Contrasting with *Brazil*, where we observe a variety of dressing styles which reflects the absence of any ideological paradigm, costume in Orwell's novel is ideologically oriented. Those blue overalls, all alike and working to efface individual differences, are consistent with the idea in Ingsoc that the individual is not important, not, in O'Brien's words, "the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes: only... the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal" (*1984* 197). This situation, in which the cost for implementing a collective project is the annihilation of individual rights, is the kind of example Lyotard uses in his reasoning that the fate of Ideas is "Terror"[5]. If in Terry Gilliam's film the substitution of consumerism for master narrative gives rise to a clothing fashion in which ridiculous garments pass as sophistication, in *1984* each garment works to reinforce the ideology controlling society, as shown in the passage in which Julia is first described in the book. What calls Winston's attention is "A narrow scarlet sash, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League,

[which] was wound several times round the waist of her overalls". In another passage (21), two children appear "dressed in the blue shorts, grey shirts and red neckerchiefs which were the uniform of the Spies". Similarly, a proud father tells Winston how his daughter and two other girls spent a whole afternoon following a man, whom they eventually handed to the police as an "enemy agent" (48-9). When asked how the girls began to suspect the man, the father answers: "[s]he spotted he was wearing a funny kind of shoes --said she'd never seen anyone wearing shoes like that before. So the chances were he was a foreigner"(49).

Besides other functions in the novel, costume also works to establish historical time. But before discussing which elements in the mise-en-scene serve as time referents and how they do it, it would be worth while to determine what is the historical moment depicted by Orwell in *1984*. Despite its title pointing to some 35 years ahead, many have argued that the book was not a futuristic anticipation but the portrait of the post-World War II society. One critic to uphold such thesis was Richard Voorhees, who stated that "'Far from being a picture of the totalitarianism of the future, 1984 is, in countless details a realistic picture of the totalitarianism of the present'" (in Leonida 96).

In fact, there are many elements in *1984* which allow one to sustain that the historical period focused on in that novel

refers to the post-1945 time. Back to costume, the overalls mentioned above are far from resembling what could be called a futuristic clothing design; the same can be said about the uniform of the Spies. Even technology, a motif almost always employed by the science fiction genre to situate plot in the future, when imagined by the author does not show any creative effort to seem futuristic. If we take the telescreens, which Isaac Asimov considers "Orwell's great contribution to the future technology due to the fact that they are television sets functioning simultaneously as transmitter and as receiver" (Asimov 350), we will see that they cannot be seen as a great leap to the future, since "it is an extraordinarily inefficient system to maintain all individuals under control [considering that] to maintain an individual under continued vigilance it is necessary some other person to perform that continued vigilance (at least in the Orwellian society)" (Asimov 350). Also, the physical characterization of Big Brother as resembling Joseph Stalin, and of Emmanuel Goldstein as Trotsky, which we referred to in the beginning of this chapter, helps to situate the plot in the present --Orwell's present-- and not in the future.

But maybe the best approach to that debate on whether Orwell's novel is a futuristic text or not is that which considers it a text about the present and on the implications

it brings to a future that seems always much too close. Such is the reading Paul Alkon makes of the novel, for whom:

> *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will always remain the story of an emblematic year looming ahead of us in exactly the same threatening imminence to the present as it did in 1949 -- not more, not less. It is a disturbing realm of mythic time measured not by calendars but by the speed of our approach to or recession from that changeless world of unideal platonic forms where a boot is smashing a human face --forever. (*Origins of Futuristic Fiction* 156)

More than determining which historical period the novel intended to portray, it is necessary to analyze what is the role played by time and history within the plot. Contrasting with what happens in *Brazil,* in which the issue of time and history is of no concern to any of the characters and neither the elite nor the heroes in the film even mention it, in *1984* it constitutes one of the central issues around which the plot is organized. Again, while the characters in Gilliam's film clearly avoid revealing any ideological motivation towards the effacement of history, as it shall be discussed in the next chapter, in *1984* the importance of ideology as the basis for the destruction of history is stressed in many ways.

Indeed, the issue of historical time is one of utmost importance within the plot of *1984*. Its hero, Winston Smith, is obsessed with establishing the real date; a concern that strikes him when he first starts to write his diary. After setting the date to "April 4th, 1984," he begins to speculate about time, as we can read in the following passage:

> A sense of complete helplessness had descended upon him.
> To begin with he did not know with any certainty that
> this *was* 1984. It must be round about that date, since he
> was fairly sure that his age was thirty-nine, and he
> believed that he had been born in 1944 or 1945 but it was
> never possible nowadays to pin down any date within a
> year or two. (*1984* 9)

This very obsession with the idea of reconstructing history in
a chronological sequence, of rescuing the possibility of
narrating the past based on objective facts, is in itself a
modernist concern in that it reveals a belief in the
possibility and in the need of reconstructing a master
narrative.

Winston's struggle to reconstruct history based on 'true'
facts will take its course in a rather different context than
that postmodern context we find in *Brazil*. In the film, the
coexistence of a number of distinct time referents effaces the
past and freezes time in an eternal present; in *1984* the past
simply does not exist, or it is utterly destroyed. In other
words, on the one hand, in the film's postmodern social scene
where only the superficial appearance of the simulacra counts,
symbols which once functioned as historical referents lose
their 'inner meaning' and are transformed, by the random
mixture of symbols of different cultures and different times,
into simple images coexisting in a time without a past and
without a ticket to the future. On the other hand, what we see
in *1984* is an elite which take the pains to deliberately

falsify historical facts in the name of the master narrative it supports.

Indeed, it is not difficult to find elements to support the thesis that the destruction of history and time is ideologically motivated in the plot of Orwell's novel. For instance, Winston's peregrination in the novel can be understood as a search for objective facts that would enable him to build up an alternative narrative of reality to the one imposed by the Party. It is a move to find "a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 30), if we may resort once again to Althusser's definition of ideology. In other words, it is a personal concern with being able to situate himself in the world, or to reconstruct some acceptable narrative of his own self. Almost till the end of the book, he will believe, as put by Judith Wilt, that "The first secret place is the past... [since] the past remains itself, unchangeable repository of 'ancient' gestures and motives, safe in its unreachable pastness" ("Behind the Door of 1984" 254).

But this very apprehension of the past as something safe and unchangeable will be questioned in the book. While being tortured and interrogated by O'Brien, Winston learns dramatically that even the past might disappear as a reliable referent. Their dialogue follows:

'Who controls the present controls the past,' said O'Brien, nodding his head with slow approval. 'It's your opinion, Winston, that the past has real existence?'

Again the feeling of helplessness descended upon Winston. His eyes flitted toward the dial. He not only did not know whether 'yes' or 'no' was the answer that would save him from pain; he did not even know which answer he believed to be the true one.

O'Brien smiled faintly. 'You are no metaphysician, Winston, 'he said. 'Until this moment you had never considered what is meant by existence. I will put it more precisely. Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other place, a world of solid objects where the past is still happening?'

'No.'

'Then where does the past exist, if at all?'

'In records. It is written down.'

'In records. And --?'

'In the mind. In human memories.'

'In memory. Very well, then. We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?' (*1984* 197)

Despite Winston's protests on the contrary, he eventually learns that O'Brien was right. And although one can argue on the possibility of some political organization being able to control all records and all minds, what remains is the huge effort of the Party's elite to build up a complex system in order to impose their own master narrative on Oceania's population.

Nonetheless, such an effort to create and impose the limits of a master narrative in order to hold power lies in the Inner Party's means to achieve their goal: the word. To support such an idea, we can resort to John Lukacs, who considers that

the most important aspect of the book [is that] which concerns the future of language and, finally, of truth... Indeed, this otherwise spare and economical writer chose to end *1984*, as you know, by adding an appendix on the principles of Newspeak. Orwell was frightened less by the

> prospect of censorship than by the potential
> falsification of history and the mechanization of speech.
> ("The Legacy of Orwell" 122)

Also, Stephen Spender states that "Orwell read the future into the political instruments and ideologies of the 1930's. He was hypnotized almost by the idea that the political will could translate all mental activities, all personal psychology into its instruments" ("Introduction to 1984" 68). And to imagine those instruments --"Newspeak, Double-Think, the arguments of O'Brien, the propaganda of Big Brother, the politics of the Inner Party"-- Spender proceeds, "he need only have read Communist party propaganda, or the speeches of Goebbels, or examined documentary evidence" (68). Such concern with language and its basic element, the word, will contrast notably with the scenery we find in Gilliam's film. There, the crisis experienced by all master narratives will favor a social structure in which images are dominant over the word. In *Brazil,* discourse is shattered and left without a coherent function in a world where the phrase "an image is worth a thousand words" makes a terrifying sense.

But in *1984* the function of the word as one of the basic elements to construe and to construct reality is manifested in a number of ways. As a first example, and interestingly enough, we can choose the telescreen --a device obviously inspired on television. And though the novelty of television was its ability to display images, the image will play only a secondary

role in the use of the telescreen, in a striking contrast with the role attributed to its equivalent in Terry Gilliam's filmic adaptation of that novel. Though it could be argued that television was by the time in which the novel was written a recent invention, therefore still lacking all that technical apparatus for creating images which was developed much later, we should remember that films already presented a well developed technique for the creation and control of the image. In fact, Orwell does add to his telescreens some of such artistry with the use of the image, as when Winston describes the Two Minutes Hate at the beginning of the story. There, we read a passage that follows as this:

> behind his [Goldstein's] head on the telescreen there marched the endless columns of the Eurasian army --row after row of solid looking men with expressionless Asiatic faces, who swam up to the surface of the screen and vanished, to be replaced by others exactly similar. (*1984* 14)

But that kind of resource to visual effects will not appear often again throughout the book.

As opposed to the dominance of the word as it appears in the telescreens of Orwell's novel, in *Brazil*, the mixture of television set and computer which corresponds to Orwell's telescreens is another commodity to be consumed; as such, it must be, at least in its external presentation, as 'seductive' as any consumer's article. The commodity must show, as it does in the film, lively images to deviate the viewer's mind from

reality and its problems, as it can be seen when old black and white comedies and westerns are on air.

But if in *Brazil* 'television' is one more element used to spread images --in a society where images are dominant-- and functions as a tool to falsify reality, in *1984* such manipulation of the image with the help of telescreens rarely occurs. Indeed, although the greatest novelty brought by television, in contrast with the radio, was its ability to air images, the main use of telescreens in the novel is not to present to society some kind of imagetic world, ideal and inexisting. Instead, the most significant use of the telescreens is not to spread but to capture images. This works for the control of society in general and of individuals alone, whenever the Inner Party want to watch anyone whom they think must be surveyed. A few examples, chosen at random, should be enough to illustrate such mechanism of surveillance: in his apartment, "Winston turned round abruptly. He had set his features into the expression of quiet optimism it was advisable to wear when facing the telescreen" (8). Still in his apartment, while performing poorly the obligatory "Physical Jerks", Winston hears the instructor's admonition: "'Smith!' screamed the shrewish voice from the telescreen. '6079 Smith W! Yes, *you*! Bend lower, please! You can do better than that. You're not trying. Lower, please! *That's* better, comrade. Now stand at ease, the whole squad, and watch me.'" (32). And

further on we learn that "It was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away. A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of murmuring to yourself --anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide" (52).

Nonetheless, despite the importance of that kind of surveillance mechanism within the complex strategy created by the Inner Party to hold power, when telescreens are not being used to police people they are being employed to narrate reality. And this is in itself one of the keystones to the plan of the elite to hold power: the constant and almost omnipresent repetition of speeches spreading words of optimism based on invented 'facts'. Comparatively, we have on the one hand a society, in *1984*, which still uses modernist referentials, a society which, however oppressed, still needs to be ideologically persuaded. On the other hand, a society, in *Brazil*, which averts any ideological discussion. On the one hand, an elite creating and carefully divulging their narrative of reality; on the other hand, an elite that do not need any collective narrative. In the former case, an intensive use of words; in the latter, words giving way to images, ideals giving way to selfish or individualistic desire.

The use of a speech machine of what should be an image machine appears often in the novel. Even in that passage quoted

above in which the "Two Minutes Hate" is described and in which we can observe some ingenuity with the use of the image, the use of the word is cautiously determined:

> Goldstein was delivering his usual venomous attack upon the doctrines of the Party --an attack so exaggerated and perverse that even a child should have been able to see through it, and yet just plausible enough to fill one with an alarmed feeling that other people, less level-headed than oneself, might be taken by it... and all this in rapid polysyllabic speech which was a sort of parody of the habitual style of the orators of the Party. (*1984* 13)

That is how the pretended discourse of the probably inexisting opposition to the Party is built: with a careful combination of viciousness, plausibility and familiarity.

Some pages later, we find another remarkable example of the use of the telescreen. There, Winston is in his flat, writing on his diary, when he notices that "[t]he music from the telescreen had stopped. Instead, a clipped military voice was reading out, with a sort of brutal relish, a description of the armaments of the new Floating Fortress which had just been anchored between Iceland and the Faroe Islands" (22). We should note that instead of showing images of the ship, the war vessel is just described. Also, calling our attention is the detail that when the telescreen is not airing speeches, it is music -- and not images like the old films we see in *Brazil*-- that it transmits. In another passage words are dominant. Without

images (they aren't even mentioned) "an eager youthful voice" announces:

> Attention, comrades! We have glorious news for you. We have won the battle for production! Returns now completed of the output of all classes of consumption goods show that the standard of living has risen by no less than 20 per cent over the past year. All over Oceania this morning there were irrepressible spontaneous demonstrations when workers marched out of factories and offices and paraded through the streets with banners voicing their gratitude to Big Brother for the new, happy life which his wise leadership has bestowed upon us. (49)

In that passage, situations which could generate powerful ideological images --those "spontaneous demonstrations"-- have their potential of imagery ignored. In his digression over the efficacy of such stream of invented facts, as the announcement that the weekly ration of chocolate had been raised to 20 grammes when the day before it had actually been reduced to that amount, Winston asks himself: "Was it possible that they [people] could swallow that, after twenty-four hours?" And the answer he finds is: "Yes, they swallowed it." (*1984* 50).

Thus, the excerpts above clarify the predominance of the word over the image in the use of a device which, by its own nature, should stress the use of images. The word, sure enough, is employed to convey the master narrative the elite has chosen to impose. But it is not only through the telescreen that we find such manipulation of the word. Indeed, if in Gilliam's film characters are surrounded by bright images, in *1984* optimistic words are unavoidable. Reinforcing the Inner Party's

recreation or narrativization of reality which is aired by telescreens, there are the names of objects. The choice of names is flagrantly ideological; it is based on the need of the elite to make the whole of society believe in their version of reality, however false it might be. And that becomes patent when we consider the war fought by Oceania. It is not a war to be won, nor is it possible for any of the "Super States" to be defeated, as it is explained in the following passage: "[a]s for the problem of over-production, which has been latent in our society since the development of the machine technique, it is solved by the device of continuos warfare (see Chapter III), which is also useful in keeping up morale to the necessary pitch" (*1984* 164-5). But despite the admission that the elite won't even try to win the war, words are disseminated to convince people otherwise. So, for the more ordinary things we find names as "Victory gin", "Victory cigarettes", and even the smelly and slummy building where Winston lives is called "Victory Mansions" (passim).

By the same token, the only possibility of political change within the plot lies on the "Brotherhood" --a group of oppositors we never come to learn if it really exists-- which, supposedly, gather round a text that is simply known as "the *book*" (passim). That a book will function as the central referent for those opposing the elite shows how essential it is to resort to a master narrative in that social context. That

such book was in fact written by members of the Inner Party shows how important it is for the elite to have a domain over any possible master narrative. So important it is, indeed, that Orwell took the pains of actually writing an excerpt of the *book*. In fact, according to Irving Howe, that part of the novel is "[a]mong the best passages in the book [*1984*]... in which Orwell imitates Trostky's style in *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*" ("1984: History as Nightmare" 47).

"Newspeak" is another element within the plot of *1984* which functions to emphasize the significance of the word as an ideological instrument. About it Richard Sanderson reminds us that "most readers have deemed Orwell's self-censoring language a brilliant invention [and] praise for the Appendix [where one finds "an account of its structure and etymology" (*1984* 7)] is often general" ("The Two Narrators and Happy Ending of Nineteen Eighty Four" 587). However, our question is what motivates the Inner Party to develop such "Newspeak". Their motivation is the belief that the control of language might be the ultimate tool to hold power over society, as one member of the Party explains to Winston, in the following passage:

> 'Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need for that. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,' he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction. (*1984* 45)

And a little further the same character gives some more details

of a future world where Newspeak is the only language:

> 'Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the
> slogans will change, How could you have a slogan like
> 'freedom is slavery' when the concept of freedom has been
> abolished? The whole climate of thought will be
> different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we
> understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking --not
> needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness'. (45)

If such goal is achieved there won't even be the necessity of

maintaining a coercive force, since "In the end we [the elite]

shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there

will be no words in which to express it" (*1984* 44).

A final example to illustrate the importance of the word

for the maintenance of power by the elite in Orwell's

terrifying world can be taken from the analysis of the three

slogans of the Ministry of Truth: "War is Peace; Freedom is

Slavery; Ignorance is Strength" (24). So obvious an absurd can

only take place in a society in which the word is an instrument

to falsify --and to control-- reality. There, the word that

contradicts reality is stronger than reality itself, where

ugliness, misery and poverty are available for all eyes to see.

Eyes, however, that seem unable to watch, preferring to read

what, in fact, they are supposed to see. That situation will

contrast utterly with the one in *Brazil,* in which, as we shall

see, all emphasis lies on the creation of an environment as

brightful as a shopping center should be.

Our next step now shall be to discuss the development of the hero, the last element to be focused on in this chapter. Having to deal with so different a social context, it is not surprising that the hero in *1984,* Winston Smith, should present a strikingly distinct development when compared to the heroes in *Brazil,* Sam Lowry and Harry Tuttle, if they can be called as heroes. Our purpose here is to demonstrate that the differences between both kinds of hero are coherent with what differentiates a modernist text from a postmodern piece. In other words, on the one hand there is a hero living in a world in which any opposition to the master narrative imposed by the elite must be carried out within the limits of an alternative master narrative. On the other hand, in the film, there are two heroes trying to find their own way in a society unable to take any master narrative as a solid referent and which, at the same time, is subject to the domination of an elite who tries hard never to reveal their own ideology. Since we shall deal with Lowry and Tuttle in Chapter II, our main interest here is to analyze the modern characteristics of Winston Smith.

One first trait which characterizes Winston as a modern hero is his pursuit for a central cause, a central mystery. Indeed, differently from Lowry and Tuttle, who never seem to be quite sure about the world they live in or what they are supposed to do, Winston will suffer throughout the plot in search for a master narrative which could offer room for

objective truths. As he states in his diary, "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows" (*1984* 67). And since his task to find an alternative ideology implies necessarily a whole social change, he can stand for the universal hero; his cause does not concern only himself but can be extended to all individuals. In Joseph Campbell's words, the modern hero's "problem is nothing if not that of rendering the modern world spiritually significant --or rather... nothing if not that of making it possible for men and women to come to full human maturity through the conditions of contemporary life" (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 388). In other words, since the search for a personal solution is equivalent to the search for a broad social solution, Winston, as a modern hero, will serve as a guide both for the reader and for the members of the society in which he lives. His hope for a better world is our hope; if he finds a final answer, everyone will be able to share it.

Indeed, it is Winston himself who will give us the qualifications of a modern hero. When at work, he is faced with the need to rewrite an old newspaper article in which are mentioned some comrades who had been awarded a decoration by Big Brother and were now in disgrace. In fact, since they appear in his instructions as "unpersons", he concludes that they were already dead. Winston decides that instead of a new article converting the commendation "into the usual

denunciation of traitors and thought-criminals," it would be better to write "a piece of pure fantasy" (40). So he invents a certain Comrade Ogilvy. His imaginary biography begins by telling that "[a]t the age of three Comrade Ogilvy had refused all toys, except a drum, a sub-machine gun and a model helicopter. At six... he had joined the Spies, at nine he had been a troop leader" (40). Ogilvy's personal story follows that same token, till the hero's end when, "At the age of twenty-three he had perished in action" (40). In the whole, Winston makes up a member of the Party totally devoted to their cause, a militant who believed in Ingsoc and who gave his life for it. About that passage, Leonida Kretzer states that "Winston's invention of comrade Ogilvy is the perfect anticipation of the Chinese Maoist ideal which encourages a twenty-four-hour-a-day devotion to the Party" (97) based on his acceptance of a master narrative.

A corollary to such devotion to a cause finds parallel in Winston's own trajectory through the plot. His cause is to defeat Big Brother and his ideology. In that sense, it is not just a man against the elite; it is a struggle between two distinct master narratives, that of Ingsoc and that primarily grounded on objective truth. If he had won, all Oceania would have changed. Conversely, when Winston is defeated by the Party, it is not just the physical and psychological structure of a man that is destroyed; his ideology also finds an end.

This is clear in the passage where O'Brien explains the situation to Winston:

> We are not content with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him. (202)

When, at the end, Winston is eventually defeated, it is the hope of all Oceania, no matter how unaware its people might be of the fact, that is destroyed.

[1]In *Brazil*, the elite make a clear effort to empty out their statements and actions of any ideological connotation. The oppositors to the regime, like the terrorists, never have the opportunity to manifest in any way what are their purposes nor to justify their motives, rendering a struggle without a cause. As for the heroes of the story, Lowry and Tuttle, neither one seems willing to try to substitute any alternative master narrative for that which prevails, despite the fact that none of the two is happy with the social context in which they live.

[2]One should note that it is not a question of different media, in which case it could be argued that it would be natural for a novel to privilege language, and for a film to privilege image. My argument in this study is that in *1984* language is privileged as an instrument for domination within the plot.

[3]All quotations from this book have my translation to English. "[e]nfatizou que a liberdade e a libertação na metrópole contemporânea dependiam de maneira vital da imposição da ordem racional" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 39).

[4]"O modernismo assumiu no período entre-guerras uma forte tendência positivista e... estabeleceu o novo estilo de filosofia que viria a ter posição central no pensamento social pós-Segunda Guerra. O positivismo lógico era tão compatível com as práticas da arquitetura modernista quanto o avanço de todas as formas de ciência como avatares do controle técnico Foi esse o período em que as casas e as cidades puderam ser livremente concebidas como 'máquinas nas quais viver'" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 39).

[5]Lyotard argues that the problem with the legitimating power of the Idea, like the Idea of the people, socialism, liberty, etc, is that it is based on an undefinable concept: "By saying *people*, one does not know exactly about what identity one is talking about" (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 66). In that context, still according to Lyotard, "Any singular reality conspires against the pure universal will" (66). The distance separating the unreacheable Idea of, for example, the 'people', and each individual leads to the imposition of regime of "Terror".

CHAPTER II

Brazil: The Spectacle and the Nightmare

In this chapter it will be presented an analysis of *Brazil,* focusing on cinematic devices. Mise-en-scene, and its constituents --setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures-- as well as the development of the characters, will be analyzed, as these elements relate to the plot. These terms, which were briefly mentioned before, will deserve a longer explanation in this chapter, though a more detailed and practical description of the terms can be found in the Glossary. The explanation of each of them will be followed by examples chosen from the film, *Brazil,* to allow for a theoretical discussion. An understanding of the ideological connotations will be pursued by an analysis of the film's postmodernist aesthetics. The film's blurring of historical periods, lack of a traditional modern hero in the terms discussed in the previous chapter, dissolution of a plot narrative sequence, mixing of different genres --elements that help to define the postmodern artistic work-- can be perceived in the analysis of the film's mise-en-scene emphasis on the image as simulacra, and characterization. Moreover, those elements in the film which contribute to define a postmodern work of art also reveal the lack of a master narrative. Mise-en-scene is the first aspect of *Brazil* to be discussed in this chapter.

According to David Bordwell, in *Film Art: An Introduction*, mise-en-scene can be defined as the "director's control over what appears in a film frame" including "aspects...[as] setting, lighting, costume, [camera movement, camera angle] and the behavior of the figures" (127). In the same work, Bordwell calls our attention to a certain tendency of the "viewers [who] often judge mise-en-scene by standards of 'realism'" (128). The author argues that "notions of realism vary across cultures, through time, and even among individuals" (128). Thus, he reasons that "to insist rigidly on realism" would prevent us to perceive "the great range of mise-en-scene possibilities", while it is much more profitable "to examine the *functions* of mise-en-scene" (128). So, the functions of mise-en-scene in *Brazil* shall be our main concern in the following analysis.

In her study *Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities*, Janet Staiger, while considering *Brazil* as a science fiction film[1], observes that "the mise-en-scène of cities in SF might be understood as utopian commentaries about hopes and failures of today or, inversely, dystopian propositions, implicit criticisms of modern urban life and the economic system that produces it" (22). In the previous chapter we have analyzed, as an element of setting, how modernist architecture plays an ideological role within the plot of *1984*. Presently, we shall discuss what are the functions of

architecture as it appears in Gilliam's mise-en-scene, and how it relates to the modern ideological project within the plot of the film.

In film as in literature, setting can be understood as the surroundings in which action takes place. If in a novel the setting is entirely created by the author, in film it can be completely built as an artificial scenery in a studio, for example, or an already existing place can be used. We should remember that even in a "natural" setting like a real street in a city or a valley in the countryside there are many possible ways to present it to the audience. No matter the director's choice, the very act of choosing implies an intention, a meaning. As we have seen in Chapter I, the architectonic designs which appear in the settings in *1984* give room for them to be criticized and, at the same time, to present very specific functions consistent with the Inner Party's master narrative. By the same token it shall be discussed how the settings created by Terry Gilliam refer to that same modernist aesthetics, specially under the issue of modernist architecture, by undermining modernist functionality.[2] That discussion on architecture acquires even more relevance when we consider David Harvey's statement, for whom "[i]f we experience architecture as communication, if, as Barthes (1975-92) insists, 'the city is a discourse and this discourse is actually a language', then we have to pay close attention to

what is being said" (Harvey 69-70).[3] It is in that sense that we are going to analyze architecture as it appears in *Brazil*.

As Jameson remarks, "[m]ore decisively than in other arts or media, postmodernist positions in architecture have been inseparable from an implacable critique of architectural high modernism and of the so-called International Style" ("Cultural Logic" 44). In fact, *Brazil* refers back, in a form of parody, to the modernist project of urbanization. Thus, the film is consistent with the way postmodern architecture itself approaches modernist urban planning, which was coherent with that conception of logic positivism in which rational organization of society would lead to human happiness, as discussed in Chapter I. *Brazil* seems to assimilate this attitude from postmodernist architects in the conception of all its urban settings. Those settings are consistent with the idea that buildings and cities are "machines to live on", and thus, are ostensibly artificial and automatized --which reveals the modernist concern with the organization of time-- and present a rational division of space, in a reference to that kind of architecture belonging to what has been called by many as high modernism.

Furthermore, postmodernists have criticized the modernist model of urban planning due to its contradiction between its ideal plan and its inability to make real life comfortable and functional. Harvey illustrates such failure as follows:

In relation to architecture, for instance, Charles Jenks dates the symbolic end of modernism and the transition to the postmodern at 15h32m of July 15, 1972, when the development plan of the Pruitt-Igoe habitation in St Louis (a prize-winning version of Le Corbusier's "machine for modern life") was dynamited as an uninhabitable environment for the low income people it sheltered. (45)[4]

Actually, when the urban settings in *Brazil* present some postmodernist architectural features,[5] they do reproduce the postmodernist architects' critique of the idealism imbued in modernist urban plans. The film foregrounds the contradictions of modernist architecture, which are often criticized through the use of humor. The interior of Sam Lowry's apartment, for example, captures very well the ineffectiveness of an apartment built according to a plan where the rational functioning of all facilities was its first intent. Here, everything is electrical, automatic, and organized, however, nothing works properly. To illustrate this point we can refer to the sequence which begins when Sam Lowry is awakened by the phone bell (a very strange and irritating noise); answering the phone is a troublesome thing in itself since it is necessary to plug in a cable in the right hole. Next, he learns that he is late for work due to problems with the apartment's electric plant. A few well placed knocks and the whole apartment comes to life: the blind opens, the wardrobe puts out the suits, the lavatory fills with water, the television set turns on, coffee is made and served together with a couple of toasts. But the coffee machine misses the cup and soaks the overburned toasts; there

is no reason for the tv to be turned on, since he must leave to his office, and some odd equipments keep making noises and flashing for no clear reason, but certainly in a hostile way. The final result is that Sam has to leave without breakfast.

The humorous attack on modernist architectural style is not incidental, considering that Gilliam took the pains to exercise it in practically all urban settings where city life occurs: the home --or house-- settings, the office settings, the building settings, the street settings. Indeed, there are other situations in the film in which the critique of that rational organization of space and time which is so dear to modernist architecture is present. Sam's office at the Records Department, for instance, resembles an assembly line: a long large room badly lit where the workers are disposed side by side without even a stool to seat on, each one with his professional equipments and his own television set displaying, apparently, texts and figures. But instead of an organized production what we have is an enormous confusion which reminds us of Chaplin's assembly line in his *Modern Times*. But if in Chaplin's film the hero goes insane by trying to fit in the system, thus denouncing such inhumane organization of work, in Gilliam's film no one there seems to be interested in working at all; office workers there seem busy only when M. Kurtzmann, the director of that section, is supervising their activities. As soon as he becomes inattentive they change channels to watch

old black and white movies like *Casablanca*, westerns, and some Marx Brothers pictures.

Consistently with such vision, the building of the Information Retrieval Ministry, which is presented as an imposing building from the outside and in its entrance hall, reveals itself as a series of stories divided in long corridors intersecting one another and full of office doors, thus creating a labyrinthine environment. As different shots make clear, there is not an exclusive office for the director of that section where Sam Lowry is bound to after his promotion. The director keeps running along the corridors, followed by his subordinates while shouting orders and taking decisions at random. Again an ideal plan based on rational organization renders a chaotic and arbitrary work system.

When the camera shows the settings representing the overall organization of the city the critique to the high modernist architectural urban planning remains. As noted by Janet Staiger, "symmetry and balance in the city-escapes; orderly and rational mass transportation systems; and efficient, immediate, and extensive methods of communication," which are presented as positive features of architecture in Le Corbusier's blueprints and in utopias like *Things to Come* and *Metropolis,* will also occur in *Brazil;* however, in Gilliam's film "these positive images of the future" can be taken "as signifiers for more troubled notions of how maladjusted and

distorted the visions might become" ("Future Noir" 32). So, what modernist architects believed would lead to a well balanced urban environment is presented in *Brazil* as the basis for an intolerable metropolitan design.

Staiger, in her analysis of the films *Max Headroom*, *Blade Runner* and *Brazil*, understands that "variant attacks on modern architecture as representing twentieth-century late capitalism, commodity fetishism, and a class system cross these texts, as well as an associated fear of an age of information and multinationalism" (33). She observes that while the first two films "link these problems more specifically to multinational capitalism... *Brazil* suggests this is symptomatic of an advanced liberal welfare state bureaucracy" ("Future Noir" 33-4). In pointing "certain predictable results for monopoly capitalism, the welfare state, and the postindustrial information society," which are implied by the cityscape presented in such films, Staiger observes that "those people who live in the most prestigious spaces are clearly elites" (34). Thus,

> despite the grandeur of both real and fictional
> skyscrapers, the remaining characteristics of the future
> noir cities [including the city in *Brazil*] are hardly the
> site of order, beauty and symmetry, of light, vision, and
> progress. Instead, these environments are failures --both
> architecturally and socially. (Staiger 34)

Staiger's observations help to elucidate Gilliam's use of the prop as the element that denounces the architectural and

social failure of the modern urban project. According to Bordwell, a prop occurs "[w]hen part of the setting is motivated to operate actively within an ongoing action" (*Film Art* 132). In *Brazil* the use of props is frequent and significative. As we have seen in the first chapter, in the settings of *1984* posters with the face of Big Brother are strategically scattered throughout the city, as part of the scheme to engender a generalized feeling of the omnipresence of the Party's ideology. In the film, functioning as props, the posters and billboards can be seen as a reference to the posters which appear in the novel. However, in the film, the number of those signs has increased almost to the point of covering all surfaces of the city, and the message has changed because the social context in the film is distinct from that portrayed in the novel. Furthermore, the political slogans in the latter are transformed into a mixture of ideological and commercial propaganda in the former.

Gilliam uses props throughout the film to remind the audience that we are facing a society which functions as an immense supermarket where every commodity is brightly displayed and everything has been commodified. In the opening sequence there is a close of a television set: A tv ad of the new and colorful tubes offered by Central Services is being aired. The new tubes differ from the old ones because of their new colors. The tv ad never explains the use or functions of the tubes; in

fact, though tubes of a variety of shapes appear frequently in the film, their function is not always clear. Indeed, they just seem to be everywhere, in the office, at home, in the streets, giving the expectator the feeling that they constitute an indispensable facility. It makes us think of those advertising campaigns which transform an article to which one has never given a thought, in an absolute necessity. Such necessity of an article, created artificially and privileging its appearance -- its image-- over its use seems consonant with Guy Debord's observation that "The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible. It says nothing more than 'that which appears is good, that which is good appears'" (Society of the Spectacle).

After a close of the tv set, follows a tracking shot which reveals a shopwindow with a number of other tv sets (all identical, except for a strap of a different color in each), all of them exhibiting the same commercial. The camera moves still backwards, disclosing the bright shopwindow circumscribed by the black square of the unlit façade of the shop. The camera stops in a plan américain (see Glossary) and a man pushing a groceries cart full of goods wrapped for present appears from the right. Only his silhouette is visible due to the backlight coming from the shopwindow behind. He wears a hat and an overcoat in the fashion of the 1940's or 1950's. He is anonymous, just like any citizen of the city. When he is right

in front of the shop, the shopwindow explodes violently; an explosion announcing the film's critical attitude toward that society in which commodities are reified. The tv sets, the window-shop, the groceries cart are props foretelling what are the interests of the society depicted in the story: images and commodities. In such a context the best strategy to convey ideology must be through advertisements utilizing bright and colorful images.

These first shots of the film function as a preface, telling us in advance what are the values of the society being portrayed. But more than that, the sequence of the explosion described above foreshadows the critical approach the film will take to that very society and its values. Following the explosion, there is a fade-out and the name of the film is shown written in neon lights. Then, back to the former image, amidst the debris and fire of the explosion, the camera closes again on a tv set still working. The Minister of Information, Mr. Eugene Helpmann, is being interviewed. Answering to a reporter he states that the increase in terrorist activity is due to "bad sportsmanship". Such emptying out of the terrorist activity of any ideological content, transforming it into just a "sport", points to the dilution of the political discourse and practice into an egotistic world where "the image has become the final form of commodity reification" (Guy Debord in "Cultural Logic" 56). The minister of the most powerful

institution, Information Retrieval, concludes his reasoning by saying that "if these people [the terrorists] would just play the game they'd get a lot more out of life." If on the one hand we observe here a critique to the emptying out of the activities of resistance, on the other the film shows that the strategies used by the oppositors to the elite in the postmodern society are, at the same time, challenging and incapable or unwilling to offer any alternative solution, which seems to be the case of *Brazil* itself.

Furthermore, it is possible to establish a parallel between Gilliam's film and Orwell's novel since, unlike the party members' ideological motivation in Oceania, in the film the connotation of the posters has changed due to that society's dilution of any ideological discourse and the crisis of the word. In the society imagined by Orwell what motivated its citizens, specially the members of the Party, was the targeting of their emotions against a military enemy and, underlying that, the belief in a master narrative, the Ingsoc. But in the film, as pointed above, there is a crisis of the word and of the master narratives and a consequent ideological dilution. One can say that in the film the social motivation is not determined by the ideology of a master narrative: what moves people is the desire for a better social rank, which relates directly to the possession of objects, of commodities, in a world where everything has become commodified. It should

also be noted that the terrorists' claims and demands are never specified, making it difficult to tell to what extent that ideological dilution applies to them. Except, of course, for the fact that they do explode symbols of fetish like the sophisticated hotel where Lowry has lunch with his mother, or the tv store which has all its equipments destroyed. In any case, the terrorist's action is devoid of meaning, and the main strategy of the elite is the spreading of pictures, posters and billboards portraying happy families, beautiful sceneries, sophisticated food and so on. It doesn't come as a surprise when we see that the ubiquitous and efficient State in Orwell's novel is converted into a still oppressive but clumsy State in the film; to control people now one needs only to control the images, creating a "spectacle" which is "not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (Guy Debord).

Thus, the process of reification in *Brazil* can be contrasted with the whole apparatus imagined by Orwell to brainwash the minds of the population which consisted, succinctly, of a combination of repression and an incessant ideological and doctrinal discourse, this latter artifice was carried out mainly by the telescreens. But in the society presented in *Brazil* such doctrinal discourse can be easily dispensed with. Here, one is less a citizen than a consumer, as we can attest in the behavior of the government when they

discover that the Information Retrieval had arrested and killed Buttle by mistake: though Jill's attempts to protest against his imprisonment are frustrated by an insurmountable bureaucracy, they send a refund check in the name of Buttle's wife because he was "overcharged" for his interrogation. In other words, there might not be any one to resort to when civil rights are at stake, but you can have your satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.

So if in *1984* the messages conveyed in the posters are clearly ideological and political, always calculated to impose the Party's view of reality, in Gilliam's film the messages about the state are more seductive and subtle. Indeed, in a historical context, governmental propaganda is not a novelty. Hitler had Goebbels, his minister of propaganda; however, in that case, propaganda was responsible for presenting a favorable image of the Nazi regime to the German people: it was a support for national socialism, a master narrative. But in *Brazil*, in a society where master narratives are not capable of mobilizing people, it is difficult to differentiate the state from private capital. Central Services, for instance, seems to be controlled by both at the same time. Even in the judiciary system such differentiation is blurred. When Buttle is arrested, no one tells him of his rights, like the right to remain silent or to have a lawyer; instead, his wife is given a

receipt to sign, as if the law enforcement agents were taking back a merchandise whose installment-payment is late.

By contrast, in the novel the posters are there to dictate. For instance, the posters which appear "all over London" representing "simply the monstrous figure of a Eurasian soldier, three or four metres high, striding forward with expressionless Mongolian face and enormous boots, a sub-machine gun pointed from his hip," (*1984* 121) is at once a calling to mind of the ideological enemy, of Oceania's own ideology, and of the physical menace involving every member of the Party. In the film posters and billboards try to be consistent with an image of a world of happy consumerism. For example, in the novel the oppressive message "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" (*1984* 5), which comes with the depiction of Big Brother' face, changes to a more publicitary tone like "HAPPINESS, *We're all in it together*" (*Brazil*),[6]. In fact, throughout the film billboards are used as images to 'sell' a reality which doesn't actually exist. Staiger observes that

> The route from Lowry's office to the Buttle's home is a corridor (not boulevard) of billboard jammed up against the next billboard. As the camera pans upward, a bleak, nearly desert horizon with factory smokestacks fleshes out an almost vacant landscape. ("Future Noir" 38)

Another moment when props are used with the function of calling the audience's attention to the seductive power of a beautiful image appears in the scene where Lowry is having lunch with his

mother and a couple of her friends at the restaurant of a hotel,

> for although the guests at a fancy hotel can order various meals, they are all served three scoops of -- admittedly different colored-- glop, along with a picture of their 'filet mignon.' [Here], commodification is attacked as fetish and alienating, and postmodernist 'choice' of style is false consciousness. The satire is vicious. (Staiger,"Future Noir" 37)

In order to compare this situation with a similar one in the novel, it is worth while recalling how the author describes a meal in *1984*:

> In the low-ceilinged canteen, deep underground, the lunch queue jerked slowly forward. The room was already very full and deafening noisy. From the grille at the counter the steam of stew came pouring forth, with a sour metallic smell which did not quite overcome the fumes of Victory Gin. On the far side of the room there was a small bar, a mere hole in the wall, where gin could be bought at ten cents the large nip. (41)

While in this atmosphere it is fear and willingness to sacrifice for the Party which make laborers accept (besides hunger) such a disgusting food, in the film all that is needed, again, is to put a bright and colorful picture of the filet mignon one is supposedly eating in front of one's plate of glop. Put differently, the food is disgusting in both the novel and the film. But in the novel its acceptance rests on the belief in a master narrative; a sacrifice in the name of Ingsoc and all it represents: in the name of the war against the external enemy of the nation. Contrasting to that intense ideological background in the novel, in *Brazil*, the whole ambiance of false refinement and the feeling of being

privileged just for being at a fancy hotel are enough to convince the elite that they are really having a feast.

Very much related to the setting, "lighting is more than just illumination that permits us to see the action. Lighter and darker areas within the frame help create the overall composition of each shot and hence guide our eyes to certain objects and action" (Bordwell 133). More than that, certain styles of lighting have been related to several different film genres or schools like the film noir "which portrayed the world of dark, slick city streets" (Schrader 170). Considering that postmodernist films have been characterized for their simultaneous use of different styles and genres, it should be interesting to analyze how the use of light contributes to its parodic structure.

As Hutcheon remarks, "critics, including Jameson, call postmodern ironic citation 'pastiche' or empty parody, assuming that only unique styles can be parodied and that such novelty and individuality are impossible today" (*Politics* 94). Nevertheless, the "ironic citations" of lighting characteristic of other film genres in *Brazil* might prove, along our analysis, to be more than just empty references to old styles; indeed, it might be more accurate to understand such citations as a "double process of installing and ironizing, [in which] parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and

difference" (*Politics* 93). Indeed, in this analysis it is possible to claim that light citations, together with other kinds of citations that appear in the film, contribute for the critical attitude *Brazil* undertakes toward that postmodern society it depicts.

So, in the attempt to use lighting to link past and present and thus to evince the ideological implications of "continuity and difference", Gilliam resorts to lighting styles characteristic of different cinematographic genres or schools, like the gothic, the film noir, the surreal, and the science fiction movies. Beyond the issue of the never-ending roll of quotations in a world where individual style has disappeared, there is a concern in *Brazil* to exploit certain features of the different lighting styles in order to reach a particular mood. For example, except for a few sequences --specially some of Lowry's dreams-- darkness is ever present. And darkness, in the film, is built by means of the lighting resources employed characteristically in not only one but in several distinct cinematographic genres, as it shall be illustrated bellow. In other words, even when we consider only one kind of effect created by lighting resources, like darkness, what we see is not just the repetition of a series of different techniques which are present in films belonging to different genres. It is not, as Jameson argues when stating the death of parody in the name of the pastiche, the mere transformation of "Modernist

styles... [in] postmodernist codes" ("Cultural Logic" 13); what we see is their use in a new context, problematizing already known stylistic signs through their estrangement, and then revealing a purpose and an intention in their own right.

In the hall of the Information Retrieval Ministry, for instance, the use of underlighting, "which is often used to create dramatic horror effects," (Bordwell 134) contributes to convey the feeling that we are at the door of evil. The shot which reveals the elevator, with its partially transparent door which allows light to cut the silhouette of its passengers, constitutes a motif of gothic films, like *The Shining*, by Kubrick, representing the evil that comes from the underground. Thus, light artifices once used for creating fear and the expectation of facing Evil in gothic films are borrowed by Gilliam for similar purposes. But the director aims the fear he creates at a different target. Because evil here is not the old crippled monster; evil, in *Brazil*, is the labyrinthine and bureaucratic modernist organization of work. The 'monster' behind that gothic hall is the modernist rational planning of society where

> people are conditioned to obedience, freedom is
> eliminated, and individuality is crushed; where the past
> is systematically destroyed and men are isolated from
> nature; where science and technology are employed, not to
> enrich human life, but to maintain the state's
> surveillance and control of its slave citizens".
> (Hillegas 3 in Staiger 27-8)

In short, a lighting technique adopted by an older filmic school or genre reveals new ideological connotations when utilized in a new cinematographic context.

In other situations Gilliam chooses some film noir light effects. Such choice doesn't seem to be casual. For a better understanding of the reasons for Gilliam's choice, we should refer to Paul Shrader's claim that "Film noir is not a genre," while preferring to define it not "by conventions of setting and conflict but rather by the more subtle qualities of tone and mood [and]...also [as] a specific period of film history, like German expressionism or the French New Wave" ("Notes on Film Noir" 169-70). Those "qualities of tone and mood" are fit to *Brazil*, specially when we consider some of the film noir stylistics, which "creates a mood of *temps perdu*: an irretrievable past, a predetermined fate, and an all-enveloping hopelessness" (Notes 176), and its themes, like "a passion for the past and present, but also a fear of the future" ("Notes on Film Noir" 177). All these elements --the mood of *temps perdu*, the fear of the future-- which can be found in *1984*, are recovered in *Brazil* to be the subject of irony and challenge.

We can observe such irony and challenging in the sequence in Lowry's apartment when the air conditioning system has stopped working. Here, the light which comes from unidentified sources outside the apartment projects strips of shadow on the walls, thus mimicking some lighting elements of the film noir

such as the use of "oblique and vertical lines" instead of "horizontal" ones, "[a]s in German expressionism" (Notes on Film Noir 175). In the same sequence, we can identify other characteristics of the film noir, as the "equal lighting emphasis" (Notes on Film Noir 175) given to actors and setting, as when the shadow hides the character's face as he talks. In the frame both the character and the setting are shadowed elements. What is stressed in this sequence by the film noir lighting style is the helplessness of the dweller when faced with the authoritarian planning of his house which, along the plot, will become more and more autonomic and hostile. Under this point of view what we observe is again the critique to Le Corbusier's "machine to live in". When Schrader says, referring to the film noir, that "[o]ne always has the suspicion that if the lights were all suddenly flipped on, the characters would shriek and shrink from the scene," (Notes on Film Noir 175) we feel that it applies perfectly to Sam Lowry's situation. It is as if the shadow over the character and the setting can suggest an unbearable weight over him.

But in *Brazil* it is not enough to appropriate other styles through citation and to subvert their original connotations. It is not just a certain modernist architectural conception of the house which is at stake here. The very social context which influenced the film noir stylistics is also

challenged. In the original social situation there was, according to Schrader,

> [t]he disillusionment that many soldiers, small
> businessmen, and housewife/factory employees felt in
> returning to a peacetime economy [which] was directly
> mirrored in the sordidness of the urban crime film...
> like *Cornered* (Edward Dmytryk, 1945), *The Blue Dahlia*
> (George Marshal, 1946), *Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell,
> 1947), and *Ride the Pink Horse* (Robert Montgomery, 1947).
> (Notes 171-2)

In *Brazil*, however, Gilliam is not really interested in the sordidness and crime pervading American postwar society; when he quotes the film noir, he just takes profit of that pessimistic mood to aim his camera at different targets such as "the hierarchies and bureaucracies of the social welfare state, also associated with the monopoly capitalism" (Staiger 22), and a postmodern society in which everything has become commodified. In that sense, by "constest[ing] our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property... [the film] works to foreground the *politics* of representation" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 93-4).

In the late forties and in the fifties, films like the ones mentioned above presented plots...

> in which a service man [would] return from the war to
> find his sweetheart unfaithful or dead, or his business
> partner cheating him, or the whole society something less
> than worth fighting for. The war continues, but now the
> antagonism [of the film noir] turns with a new
> viciousness toward American society itself. (Schrader
> 172)

In such films of urban crime and corruption, the lighting style of the film noir with its oblique shadows of a blind on the wall --suggesting a window and an external space invisible to the audience-- or the hiding in the darkness of the actor's face during the dialogues would enhance the feeling of threat coming from anywhere, thus creating expectations like: who will come out of the shadow? Will he shoot? What are the real intentions of that voice, coming from a character whose countenance one cannot see? In other words, lighting helped to create tension, thus reflecting the corruption and inefficiency of that peacetime economy of the 1940's.

But *Brazil* points to a different direction. Instead of denouncing a corrupt police and state, it aims at the privatization and bureaucratization of the postmodern police and state. Instead of the post-war urban crime consisting of robbery, deceit, and murder, in the postmodern society crime is the misconduct of the consumer. Again, we can use the scene beginning with Lowry trying to get the air conditioning system fixed. In the shots that follow, crime and corruption give way to consumer's satisfaction and to state bureaucracy: Lowry's and Tuttle's crime was to fix the air conditioning without governmental authorization. Gilliam film suggests a transformation: those who were originally corrupt law enforcement agents in the film noir have become the technicians who work for Central Services, the bureaucratic state agency.

When both sides of the law meet it is not Tuttle's gun but Lowry's requirement for a 27B/6, a formulary (and not warrant for arrest) that incapacitates one of the workers and forces them to retreat.

Finally, the dark settings of the film noir which traditionally add up to a dramatic situation and a depressing mood are again subverted through the simultaneous citations of other 'texts' and through humor: Lowry and Tuttle stumble onto one another like Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy; Tuttle's black suit resembles so many ninja films belonging to that stream which followed the success of Bruce Lee's martial arts films; furthermore, when Tuttle leaves he does it like Spider Man or Batman. At the end, the workers leave promising revenge, like in some westerns, when the bad guys are ordered to leave the town by the xerif and his men. In sum, the use of lighting styles originally employed in other cinematographic genres and schools functions, in *Brazil*, to emphasize that that postmodern society replaced ideology and master narratives for consumerism.

Besides functioning as an idea for the historical period in which the plot takes place, costume and make-up --as important aspects of the mise-en-scene-- can also indicate the characters' profession and social rank. Costume can also appear in the film frame as props. As Bordwel observes, "Film genres make extensive use of costume props --the six-gun, the

automatic pistol, the top hat and cane" (*Film Art* 132). In *Brazil*, a list of costume props would include Lowry's mother's absurd hats, the Japanese mask used by Jack Lint --Lowry's friend and a torturer at the Information Retrieval-- and the already mentioned ninja suit used by Tuttle and the terrorists[7]. In short, "costume motifs function to unify the film's overall form" (Bordwell 132).

In *Brazil*, one of the first things that calls one's attention is the variety of dressing styles. There is a mixture of incongruous clothes: Lowry and other servants of the state bureaucracy wear suits from the 1940's and 1950's fashion, his mother wears expensive and kitsch gowns, Tuttle is always in his ninja costume, the doorman appears in a medieval costume at a sophisticated party, the uniform of the chief of the security police --with a silver shining cap and an oblique white strip across the chest-- resembles that of the officers of the German Kaiser's army, while the heavy overcoats used by the lower ranked officers make them very similar to those of the nazi army.

One of the effects created by such multiplicity of costume styles is to reproduce the postmodern clothing fashion, in which there is no prevailing style and everyone is free to dress as one pleases, thus combining garments of different epochs and cultures. This phenomenon could be included in what Jameson, referring to historicism in architecture, calls a

"cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion," ("Cultural Logic" 69-70). In this process of cannibalization,

> [t]he historical tradition is reorganized as a museum culture, not necessarily of the high modernist art, but of local history, of local production, the way things were once made, sold, consumed, and integrated into an everyday life lost long ago and often romanticized (life from which all vestiges of oppressive social relations can be purged). By presenting a partially delusive past, it becomes possible to give some meaning to local identity, maybe with some profit. (Harvey 273)[8]

However, a closer examination of costume in *Brazil* will reveal other implications, and instead of a mere reproduction of a condition in which "the interlacement of simulacra of the daily life gathers in the same space and in the same time different worlds (of commodities)" (Harvey 271)[9], a critical attitude toward the postmodern society arises again. For instance, this unpatterned fashion might indicate a freedom of choice but the falsity of such freedom is exactly one of the postmodern cultural issues which are questioned in the film; the film points out the fact that, with the possibility of combining any different garments, there is an emptying out of the original historical, cultural or ideological connotations of these garments: it is the chance to choose between one meaningless symbol and another. If we consider Mrs. Lowry, a member of the elite, we will see that though she can afford expensive clothes, her personal options uncover just fetish thus ending in ridicule, as it becomes so evident with the

shots that show her having lunch with Lowry and her friends. There, she wears a tight black skirt, a blazer mimicking a jaguar skin which evinces the volume of her breasts and the narrowness of her waistline; she also wears an extravagant red haired wig and, on top of all that, a hat in the same pattern of the blazer and in the shape... of a shoe. In the preceding scene, at the plastic surgeon's office, her face is stretched, grotesquely painted, and eventually covered with adhesive plastic, thus transforming her in another of the "manufactured women" (Staiger 35) of the upper class. This combination of costume and make-up creates fierce irony of a character that, despite her availability of money and presumable endless possibility of choices, is presented as futile and obsessed with the vain pursuit of eternal --and plastic-- youth.

Yet, if in the monopoly capitalist society portrayed by Gilliam all that its elite can make of so many options is merely to aspire to futility and fetish, for the less favored members of society even this illusive range of choices is denied. For most of the characters, who all seem to work in some bureaucratic department, wear costumes which reproduce monotonously the fashion of late 1940's and beginning of the 1950's: men with dark suits and women with discrete dresses. As for the technicians and workmen, the old conventional overalls is all that they have, except for some ironic extra garments: the workers in a factory also wear a gas mask (which they use

even during a volleyball game in their leisure hour); and the workers at Central Services, besides the red colored overalls, exhibit a cap with a ridiculously long brim.

Still, other connotations can be devised. Besides pointing to the apparent large range of choices in postmodern society and the futility of its elite, the variety of costume styles which reproduce the fashions of different historical periods helps to complicate the identification of time. This complication of time identification is reinforced by other elements, like the first shots succeeding the appearance of the name of the director, when the audience is informed that the story begins at 8:49 P.M., "somewhere in the twentieth century". Other elements functioning as props and stressing the lack of a definite historical time are, for instance, the technological devices appearing throughout the film, like the strange robot with a camera that is being tested when it captures Jill's image and allows Lowry to see her for the first time in the video. Yet, if such devices could refer, at first sight, to a futuristic and computerized society, their very presentation in an old fashioned design prevents us from making a clearer assessment of the historical period in which the plot takes place. Just to exemplify how technology complicates time identification, we can briefly analyze the computers in the film. If, on the one hand, they make reference to an advanced (futuristic) technology capable of unifying television and computer technology all at once, on the other hand, the old

fashioned design of keyboards --resembling those of any old typewriter-- combined with a screen too small which needs a magnifying lens to be watched --thus referring to a time when technology was not so developed-- adds up to create, in Gilliam's world, "a new connotation of 'pastness' and pseudo-historical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces 'real' history" (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 71). Nonetheless, instead of just presenting "the present by way of the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotypical past," ("Cultural Logic" 72) Gilliam's film goes beyond such acritical attitude when it shows that these old designed futuristic devices are incapable of bringing happiness to the people and only recover their use value when functioning as instruments for torture and oppression.

In fact, in Jameson's discussion of pastiche and parody, he recognizes the value of Doctorow's novels, as postmodern texts, since they present a more problematic view of history. Jameson's words on Doctorow's *Ragtime, Loon Lake,* and *The Book of Daniel* --that they "establish an explicit narrative link between the reader's and the writer's present and the older historical reality" ("Cultural Logic" 73)-- apply to the treatment of history in *Brazil.* Despite Gilliam's inclusion of so many elements pointing to different historical periods, the use of costume gives us that link, allowing us to identify two

distinct historical moments: our own postmodern time and that which was the period portrayed in *1984*. So, however paradoxical it might seem, costume functions simultaneously to problematize time identification and to determine the relation between two specific historical moments: the past and the present.

To understand how those two historical moments are restored in the film, however, we should first comment briefly on the issue of historical time in Orwell's novel. When we refer to the period portrayed in *1984,* we must remember that despite its title, which would place the plot some thirty five years ahead of the time when it was written, the author's intention, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was really to depict the post World War II period. On that matter Isaac Asimov observes that

> Many people believe that *1984* is a science fiction novel. However, almost only one aspect of that book would make someone suppose that such is true; the fact that it was *simulatedly* (emphasis mine) placed in the future. Such assumption is without foundation. Orwell did not have any feeling of the future, and the displacement of his story is less temporal than geographic. (1984 349)[10]

It is that historical moment in the plot of the novel --that period following World War II-- to which that past portrayed in *Brazil* refers. Such link between the two works is present in the choice of costumes of all those characters in the film who wear those dark suits and dresses of the late 1940's and early 1950's. So, by the costume fashion of that period, Gilliam

places his film in the same historical time which is implied in the plot of *1984*.

However, a number of readers have taken for granted that the social context in *1984* is that of the Soviet authoritarian society. This includes Asimov, who explains that "[t]hat London in which the story is placed does not occur thirty five years in the future; rather, it moves a thousand and six hundred kilometers to the East, as far as Moscow"[11] ("1984" in *No Mundo da Ficção* 349). In fact, as we have seen in Chapter I, the many evident allusions contained in the book to the USSR allowed many to consider it an anti-socialist tract. According to Graff, even Orwell "realized that people who were reading *1984...* were taking the book as a neo-conservative tract" ("Orwell's Legacy" 127). Gilliam seems also to be aware of such misreading: in his filmic adaptation of the novel, when he chooses the Western clothing fashion --instead of the blue overalls used by the members of the Party in the novel-- to refer to the post World War II period, he is privileging that reading of Orwell's novel that considers it a critique not against Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party but against capitalist society of that time. In other words, the reference in *Brazil* is to the post-World War II period, as in the novel, but not to the Soviet state of that time; rather, it refers to the Western capitalist society. In this way, Gilliam gives us a chance to revisit Orwell's positions. In a postmodern time

which proclaims "the end of ideology, art, or social class" ("Cultural Logic" 57), the director actually updates a discussion on the real targets of *1984*.

Finally, the 1940's is not the only temporal link existent between the film and the novel. Though we can understand the futuristic elements of *1984* as a disguise to allow the author to portray more freely the political and social situation of his own current times, one other possible interpretation arises: such artifice can also be understood as a way to alert to the possible radical future development of the social context in case no important change would occur in the status quo of post World War II period. Put simply, the book can be seen as a prediction of the future. According to this latter interpretation *Brazil* also refers to our present postmodern society of monopoly capitalism. In this sense, the film establishes another temporal link with Orwell's novel: the 1980's in which the clothing fashion cannibalizes styles of all epochs and places in an apparently random combination that can be seen as an attempt of consumers to create their own individual identities, but which the film presents more as a passive acceptance of the never-ending roll of fetish fabricated to satisfy the needs of the market. In other words, Orwell's novel allows for two different interpretations: one is that the novel can be referring to the author's own historical time, as an allegory --political in that sense; the other can

be seen as Orwell's perception of the 1980's as a possible and terrifying future under a modernist perspective. For Gilliam, it is the portrait of our postmodern present, where modernist referents are found to be all in crisis. However, it becomes clear that Gilliam's use of different genres, historical periods, and emphasis on the power of the image as simulacra places the film within a postmodern context, not just to foreground that moment but as a critique to a cultural and political condition which is presented to us as nightmare.

Our next issue is the role of the word and the image. As discussed in Chapter I, language, or the word, plays an important role in *1984*. There, the development of "Newspeak" plays a role which could be paralleled to what Jameson states about pastiche:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. ("Cultural Logic" 69)

Clearly, the intention of the Party is not to borrow momentarily the original English language but to transform Newspeak into a new normality. The difference is that in *1984* a new language of words (however abnormal) replaces the previously existing one, while in the film it is a language of images and simulacra which arises as its substitute. The first

is politically engaged; the second is empty of content, of political connotation. The former situation is one of discourse against discourse, of master narrative against master narrative. That can be illustrated when we consider that the utmost symbol of resistance to the domination of the Party lies in what is known in the story as *the book* (14), a master narrative. Even Orwell's telescreens, despite the images which they display, will emphasize the word in practically all messages that are aired, with their flow of absolutely false news and a "bombardment of [also false] figures" (51), which makes us think more of the radio than of a television set.

In the film there is no need for such a linguistic equivalent, since in the society depicted in *Brazil* images are dominant, thus contrasting with Orwell's belief "that you can't know the truth if you do not pay attention to abuses of the word" (Lukacs 123). In the novel, the falsification of language and its meaning leads to the falsification of reality itself, as it becomes clear when we consider the slogans of the Ministry of Truth: "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength" (24). In the film, the decrease in the power of the word to give a true account of reality occurs through its replacement by the image; the word is not abused, it just loses importance to the image as an instrument to depict reality.

But these images come as simulacra, as in "Plato's conception:... the identical copy for which no original has

ever existed" (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 70). Thus, while the abuses of the word perpetrated by the Party, in *1984*, function to disguise the reality of an oppressive government and the exploitation to which its people is submitted, the creation of simulacra through the spreading of images reproduces a reality which has never existed, and behind which the elite can pretend it is possible to have a society functioning completely devoid of any ideology. In this sense, the society depicted in *Brazil* is, using the words of Jameson, subject to

> Faceless masters [who] continue to inflect the economic strategies which constrain our existences, but no longer need to impose their speech (or are henceforth unable to); and the postliteracy of the late capitalist world reflects, not only the absence of any great collective project, but also the unavailability of the older national language itself. ("Cultural Logic" 69)

Jameson's words can be better understood when we consider that Big Brother's face, which stands for the face of ideology, is eliminated from the plot in Gilliam's film. In other words, hidden behind the delusive surfaces of commodities and an empty discourse, the masters in *Brazil*'s postmodern society become "faceless".

Furthermore, if in the postmodern the elite hides their faces, the modernist hero's profile has also changed. With the crisis of the master narratives, to which one could hold on during modernism, comes the crisis of the modernist hero, to whom one cannot hold on anymore as a universal guide to some final answer or hope; a hero unable to hold any longer to any

central questioning in these postmodern times. As Harvey puts it, "[t]he characters [in postmodern fiction] do not contemplate how to unveil or to disclose a central mystery, being forced instead to ask 'What world is this? What one must do in it? Which one of my selves should do it?" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 52).[12] So Winston, the modernist hero of *1984,* would not fit in the postmodern plot of *Brazil.* The consequence is that that hero in *1984* once obsessed by the search of objective truth, by the search of an alternative master narrative to Ingsoc, that hero is split in two in Gilliam's film, Sam Lowry and Harry Tuttle, and contextualized within a postmodern reality. For, in the film the splitting in two of the modernist hero will work to prevent the universalism of the heroic search. In other words, the modernist hero, one and universal, gives way to multiple heroes who are incapable of encompassing a universal proposition; there is, then, a reducing of the struggle of each of these 'new' heroes to little private fights which are devoid of any political content: they simply resist to whatever might oppress them, without any alternative master narrative to offer.

In fact, *Brazil's* heroes, Sam Lowry and Harry Tuttle, work for the state government: the former is a civil servant initially working at the Records Department, a bureaucratic agency, and lacking any ambition; the latter, a heating engineer, becomes a terrorist because of his aversion to "paper

work". Both feel oppressed by the bureaucratic structure of the society they live in, each of them finding his own personal answer to escape from what is in the way of their happiness. These two characters demonstrate how the modernist hero's search for a master narrative as a universal "good" is replaced by Lowry's and Tuttle's personal searches in *Brazil*'s postmodern culture of images and simulacra.

Sam Lowry's apparent lack of ambition places him in a lower class as a civil servant at the Records Department. In truth, Lowry's romantic dreams do not conform with the social and professional rise which enables one to own more and more commodities. However, because his deceased father was an important figure in the government, but especially because his mother has very intimate relations with the right members of the elite, he is offered a promotion from time to time, which he always refuses. Despite their differences, we could establish a parallel between Lowry and Winston in that neither one can accept what society offers as a way to happiness. As Winston cannot believe in Ingsoc, the dominant master narrative in *1984*, Lowry is not tempted by the fake images of beauty and wealth which abound in a society whose values are based on consumerism. But such inability to adjust fosters very different attitudes in both characters: while the hero in *1984* starts his search for what he thinks might be the 'true past' by looking for the grounds to challenge the "reality" offered

by the Party, Lowry literally dreams about other possibilities; in fact, it is "only in his [Lowry's] dreams that he manages to defeat the bureaucracy" (Rogers 40). Although he confirms hotly that he has got no dreams or ambitions when asked by his mother (after refusing one more promotion), the very way the shots are edited works to contradict him. From the shot in which Lowry declares his "lack of ambition" there is a cut which takes us to one of his recurrent dreams. In these dreams, he always appears "dressed in [a] shiny armor, soaring through the clouds by means of a set of large, white, feathered wings. [There], he tries to save Jill, who is held by the 'forces of darkness' in a large black cage" (Rogers 40). So his ambitions lie not in reality but in his romantic dreams of a true love to be lived in peace in the country (the countryside also appears frequently in his dreams).

Lowry seems contented in dreaming to evade his disillusions with reality till he finds Jill, the perfect copy of the woman of his dreams (It is interesting to note that here the original is an oneiric image, while the 'copy' is the real human being!). After that, his behavior changes: his initial apathy disappears and he accepts his promotion to Information Retrieval so he can have access to her file. Now a passionate man, his new attitude will put him in contact with the many shapes of governmental State oppression. Again we can make a parallel with Winston Smith. Winston was conscious from the

beginning of the risks for those who dared to challenge the Party. Nevertheless, the only personal alternative he envisions is to oppose the State; the change he seeks is not just an individual change but a collective one. In contrast, such ambitious task never occurred to Lowry. While the hero in Orwell's novel tries to enter a clandestine revolutionary organization, Lowry never makes any attempt to get politically involved. For instance, when bombs begin to explode in the restaurant where he is having lunch with his mother and friends, and he is asked by Mrs. Terrain if there was nothing he could do with those terrorists, his answer is: "It's my lunch hour. Besides, it's not my department."

Of course it is not just a question of being individualistic. As we have already seen, the contexts in the novel and in the film are different. In the former, it is the members of the Inner Party who write *the book*, thus offering that fake alternative master narrative which will entrap Winston. In the latter, as pointed above, there is not a clear 'official' master narrative to be opposed to, a situation which allows the terrorists to be labeled as "bad sportsmen" by authorities; their struggle being emptied out of any ideological baggage. Another difference between the two plots is that in the novel the love between a man and a woman is treated as a political issue, Winston's search for happiness and love entails revolutionary concerns. This can be

illustrated by what he concludes after making love to Julia, that it was "[n]ot merely the love of one person, but the animal instinct, the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that would *tear the Party to pieces*" (emphasis mine) (*1984* 103). In the film, the relationship between a man and a woman is of no political concern and for Lowry, to achieve love represents just a personal conquest without any social or political implication.

However, despite the absence of an ideological motivation in Lowry's attempts to conquer Jill's love, it is exactly this behavior that will make him clash with the structure of society. Believing she is a terrorist, he will try to protect her from the repressive forces of the State and this will make him start breaking the covert rigid rules of the State. So, again, if Winston Smith's emotional involvement with Julia, in *1984*, was a corollary of his conscious intention to defy the State, what we see in *Brazil* is the opposite: because of a personal attraction for a woman, Sam Lowry, one of the heroes of the film, begins to follow unknowingly the path of the terrorists. And here, it is important to stress that Lowry is never willing to adopt a more political attitude. While trying to protect Jill, and then committing a series of 'political crimes', he still criticizes her for being (while he still thinks she is) a terrorist.

As for Tuttle, the other postmodern hero in the film, the situation seems at first to be somewhat different. He is not motivated by an emotional involvement, but he consciously decides to evade the rules of the State. The dialogue that happens between him and Lowry while he fixes the air conditioning is illustrative:

> Lowry: "Wouldn't it be simpler to work for Central Services?"
> Tuttle: "Bah! I couldn't stand the paper work. Listen, this whole system of yours could be on fire and I couldn't even turn a kitchen tap without doing out a 27B/6. Damn paper work."
> Lowry: "I suppose one has to expect a certain amount."
> Tuttle: "Why? I came into this game for the action, the excitement. Going anywhere, travel light. Get in. Get out. Wherever there is trouble... a man alone. Now they have the whole country sectioned of. Can't make a move without a form."

In this dialogue, as we can see, both Lowry and Tuttle touch some important points as the motivation to defy the State and the strategies chosen for it.

It should be interesting, however, to recall Winston Smith's motivation in Orwell's novel: the hero in *1984* opposes the official master narrative not only as an individualistic struggle, but because he is concerned with the lack of alternatives for society as a whole. Contrasting to this, Tuttle's first alleged reason to quit his regular job was the senselessness of the bureaucratic system, a position which could be the starting point for a broader opposition to the State. However, as his explanations proceed, we learn that he

ends up as an outsider. His motivation, similarly to Lowry's, is not to offer, for instance, an alternative way of organizing the State or society; it is restricted to his own satisfaction: action, excitement, sense of freedom. Even his acknowledgment of State restraint on people's freedom to come and go is not enough to make him adhere to any collective project. The idea that he could be a member of a revolutionary group on account of the ninja suit he wears, which is similar to those used by the terrorists who put the bombs in the fancy hotel restaurant, is also arguable when we consider his admittance of working alone. By acknowledging that he prefers to perform alone, and even when he admits that to begin his illegal activity it was like entering "into this game", he is reinforcing the strategies of the elite to empty out the terrorist activities of any ideological motivation.

So, at the end Tuttle's attitude doesn't really differ much from Lowry's. It is worth while noting that in the dialogue above, which is presented in the middle of the film, Lowry sees bureaucracy as something natural since he already "expect[s] a certain amount [of paper work]." In any case, both postmodern heroes are unable to do more than to adopt a defensive and individualistic attitude. As a modern hero, Winston's alternatives are to win or to lose his cause against Big Brother, and if in his defeat he eventually accepts the official master narrative, for Lowry that is not a possible

option, since the elite's strategy in *Brazil* is exactly to avoid any ideological proposition. In a world where all master narratives seem to be in crisis, without any to refer to, escaping from reality might be the only solution for those who do not fit in it.

According to Richard Rogers, when referring to *Brazil*, "it is only through our dreams that we can escape an unbearable and unsympathetic reality," ("1984 to Brazil: From the Pessimism of Reality to the Hope of Dreams" 44). He argues "that [in *Brazil*] hope does not lie, [contrasting with *1984*], in reality (externally, in truth and history), but in dreams (internally, in fantasy and the human spirit)... [and that such] provides a more optimistic view because of the strength of the human spirit" ("1984 to Brazil" 41). Our view, still, points to a different and rather pessimistic direction. Winston also dreams in the novel by Orwell. In his dreams, full of sadness, he progresses till he is able to remember part of his childhood. With that, indeed, he recovers part of the past. Not the constantly altered past displayed by the Party but something closer to the 'real past' that he has seeked throughout the whole plot of the novel. Lowry's dreams, on the other hand, point to an evasion from reality. "In his dreams, he and Jill escape to live a happy and simple life in the country. In his dreams, he and Tuttle manage to destroy the Information Retrieval building" (Rogers 40).

However, contrary to Rogers' statement that "*with his dreams* ... Sam actually does defeat the bureaucracy" ("1984 to Brazil" 40), we can state that the dreams in *Brazil* are the final trap with which bureaucracy eventually defeats both heroes of the film. Rogers forgets to mention that though Lowry maintains his love affair, achieves happiness and destroys the headquarters of bureaucracy in his dreams, it is in those same dreams that Tuttle is "smothered to death by a maelstrom of official papers" (*The Film Yearbook* 105). Since, as in a surrealist film, the borders between dream and reality are often blurred, it becomes impossible to claim that Tuttle's death never happened in the "reality level", as part of the plot. Also, when plunging definitively into an oneiric world after being "essentially lobotomized," (Rogers 40), Lowry loses any possibility he ever had to try to change, or even to escape, the bureaucratic society. Significatively, there is a great resemblance between the final oneiric image with Lowry and Jill living together in the countryside (for instance, in the obvious artificiality of its colors) and the pictures of fake happiness in a fake world displayed in all the posters and billboards presented in the film. In their last and desperate attempt to resist, both our postmodern heroes succumb, one killed by all that "paper work" he detested so much; the other, doomed to stay forever alive in a world of simulacra.

[1]It is not the purpose of this study to determine whether *Brazil* is a science fiction film or not. In truth, the mixing of elements of so diverse genres in one only work makes it difficult to classify a postmodern work as belonging to any specific genre. As it occurs with other elements 'borrowed' from modern artistic works, in Gilliam's film elements of science fiction --as the technological motif-- are used to reinstall and to subevert the genres to which those elements originally belonged.

[2]- Modernist functionality is here understood as Le Corbusier's "machine to live in", as it is explained in Chapter/I.

[3]"Se experimentarmos a arquitetura como comunicação, se, como Barthes (1975-92) insiste, 'a cidade é um discurso e esse discurso é na verdade uma linguagem', então temos de dar estreita atenção ao que está sendo dito"(Harvey 69-70).

[4]"No tocante à arquitetura, por exemplo, Charles Jenks data o final simbólico do modernismo e a passagem para o pós-moderno de 15h32m de 15 de julho de 1972, quando o projeto de desenvolvimento da habitação Pruitt-Igoe, de St Louis (uma versão premiada da "máquina para a vida moderna"de Le Corbusier), foi dinamitado como um ambiente inabitável para as pessoas de baixa renda que abrigava" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 45).

[5]According to Harvey, "Ficção, fragmentação, colagem e ecletismo, todos infundidos de um sentido de efemeridade e de caos, são, talves, os temas que dominam as autais práticas da arquitetura e do projeto urbano" (96).

[6] This poster makes a direct reference to a real billboard which showed a white middle class American family in a car. The family is constituted by the father, mother, son and daughter and puppy. They are all smiling in the confort of the car and under their hats. This billboard became famous due to a picture by Margaret Bourke-White in 1938, called "Vítimas da enchente" (F.S.P. 30/9/94 6-6).

[7]Lowry's mother's hats can stand for the ridicule of the elite's fetish in *Brazil*. Lint's japanese mask, besides identifying the System's torturers with their "faceless masters", makes reference to capitalist globalization, specially as it appears to Americans and Europeans as the 'Japonese menace'. And the ninja suits makes one think of action films, and not of political ones, as a guerrilla uniform would do.

[8]"[a] tradição histórica é reorganizada como uma cultura de museu, não necessariamente de alta arte modernista, mas de história local, de produção local, do modo como as coisas um dia foram feitas, vendidas, consumidas e integradas numa vida cotidiana há muito perdida e com freqüência romantizada (vida de que todos os vestígios de relações sociais opressivas podem ser expurgados). Por meio da apresentação de uma passado parcialmente ilusório, torna-se possível dar alguma significação à identidade local, talvez com algum lucro" (Harvey 273).

[9]"[o] entrelaçamento de simulacros da vida diária reúne no mesmo espaço e no mesmo tempo diferentes mundos (de mercadorias)" (Harvey 271).

[10]Muitas pessoas julgam que *1984* seja um romance de ficção científica. No entanto, quase um único aspecto desse livro levaria alguém a supor que de fato assim é; o fato de haver sido ele *simuladamente* (emphasis mine) situado no futuro. Tal presunção não procede. Orwell não possuía nenhum sentimento do futuro, e o deslocamento de sua história é mais geográfico do que temporal. ("1984" in *No Mundo da Ficção* 349).

[11]"A Londres em que a história é situada não avança trinta e cinco anos no tempo; antes, desloca-se no espaço mil e seiscentos quilômetros para Leste, até Moscou" ("1984" in *No Mundo da Ficção* 349).

[1212]As personagens já não contemplam mais como desvelar ou desmascarar um mistério central, sendo em vez disso forçadas a perguntar "Que mundo é este? Que se deve fazer nele? Qual dos meus eus deve fazê-lo?" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 52).

CONCLUSION

The present study has argued that from a comparative analysis of the aesthetics in *1984*, a modernist novel, and that in *Brazil*, a postmodern film, it is possible to perceive how the former is inscribed in the historical context of modernism, thus foregrounding the importance of master narratives. As the plot in *1984* is limited by master narratives which still functioned as strong referents Gilliam's *Brazil,* on the other hand, reveals the crisis of master narratives in postmoderninty. Its plot presents the weakening of the power that master narratives used to have and which seems to be at stake now. For those purposes, some elements were selected to be analyzed in each work. In the novel, setting, the hero, the predominance of the word over the image, and the establishment of historical time were analyzed. In the analysis of the film the focus was on mise-en-scene, the spliting of the hero, the predominance of the image over the word, and the absence of a historical time.

The first element which was analyzed in *1984* --setting-- was approached from the kind of architecture it presented, specially as it relates to modernist ideals. As we have seen, the buildings depicted in the novel are consistent with that conception of a house as a "machine to live in", in the phrase coined by Le Corbusier. As a machine, all constructions in the book are designed to be rational and functional. According to

David Harvey, that conception was based on the belief that the imposition of a "rational order" was vital for achieving "freedom and liberation in the contemporary city" (*Condição Pós-Moderna* 39). In *1984*, however, that same architectural concept serves a rather different goal; instead of a free society, the master narrative of Big Brother aims at creating a world where "a boot [would be] stamping on a human face --for ever" (*1984* 212). By the same token, the interior of the Ministry of Love, for instance, reproduces the rational organization of the Nazi concentration camps. What remains, then, is that the architectural conception which was originally concerned with creating an urban environment favorable for a free society fits perfectly to fulfill the needs of an oppressive regime. That is the kind of contradiction which Lyotard uses to argue against the possibility of salvaging any master narrative. As he states, there is no "'modern' project of emancipation of humanity" (*Pós-Moderno Explicado às Crianças* 95-6) capable of including what happened in Auschwitz.

Nonetheless, as a work inscribed in the modern context, there is no indication within the plot in Orwell's novel that a solution could come from some strategy outside the master narratives. Thus, Wisnton, the hero of the novel, struggles for an alternative for Ingsoc within the range of master narratives. In fact, in such a context, what one observes is the predominance of the word, or language, as a means to

support ideological positions. This is illustrated by important elements in the plot as the creation of "Newspeak" by the Inner Party, the constant ideological speeches aired by the telescreens, and the falsification of history through the destruction and recreation of written texts. On the other hand, the hope of opposing the power of the Inner Party rests on the possibility of using "the book" as an alternative master narrative. The fact that "the book" was, after all, written exactly by the governing elite appears, first, as a strategy to prevent the success of any opposition, since, in that case, the oppositors would be following Big Brother's own directions; second, it reveals the understanding by the elite of the significance of the master narratives as the basis either for maintaining power or to conquer it.

In that context, the task of Winston Smith, the hero in *1984,* is that of the modern hero: to propose and to fight for a universal cause, which can be shared by the whole of humanity. In his struggle against Big Brother, Winston is close to Habermas' position, that one should not give up the project of modernity, despite the problems brought by the 20th century to the

> expectation that the arts and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings. ("Incomplete Project" 9)

When Habermas asks if we should "try to hold on to the *intentions* of the Enlightenment" ("Incomplete Project" 9), it reminds us of Winston asking himself whether there still was hope to change the status quo in Oceania, because, in both cases, we sense the implied belief in a master narrative as the foundations for a universal project.

Furthermore, at the basis of Winston's struggle to present an alternative master narrative to Ingsoc is the attempt to recover a coherent historical time in which objective truth can be found. Thus, throughout the plot Winston will try to collect fragments of the past which would eventually allow him to reconstruct history in a chronological order; this attempt is equivalent to the attempt to recover the necessary background for implementing his own master narrative. On the opposite side, the Inner Party's thorough effort to destroy history reflects a similar concern with defending their own ideology.

When we move the focus from Orwell's novel to Gilliam's film, the treatment history receives in the latter's plot acquires a very different connotation: the characters in *Brazil* are not worried about the importance of establishing a precise historical time. And while the elite in *1984* try to destroy history, in the film history is overtly ignored by the elite. Thus, there is a difference between the attitudes of the two elites toward history. In the novel, the Inner Party's interest

is to freeze history at that point where they hold power through the imposition of their own master narrative. In *Brazil*, though, we have a society of consumers showing an "appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events and 'spectacles'" (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 70); it is a world in which the past has gradually lost its function as referent, "leaving us with nothing but texts" (70). In that context, the elite has no need to resort to any master narrative, nor, consequently, do they need to offer any historical background to justify their ideology; what they need is to feed society with "a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum" (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 70).

Thus, the fundamental function of discourse in *1984* --a tool to doctrinate society-- disappears in the society depicted in Gilliam's film, and the word gives way to the image as an ideological instrument. If in the novel the word is used to falsify reality, in *Brazil* it is the image, as a simulacrum, that plays that role. But, again, there is a difference: in *1984*, the falsification of reality functions to support a determinate master narrative --Ingsoc-- while in *Brazil* the function of the image is to replace an absent --or hidden-- master narrative. In short, in a context where master narratives still serve as referents, the word is needed as a means to foreground them; when their function as referent

disappears, the function of the word is also weakened. And the image comes to take its place, not to lay the foundations of any master narrative, but to conceal the lack of it.

Furthermore, in a society in which history was --in Jameson's term-- "effaced", the characters can no longer think of the future; not, at least, in a historical perspective. The only way they understand the future, then, is given with the new opportunities for acquiring and waiting for the 'latest' commodities. There is no dream of the future in a collective level, as it was still possible in *1984*. For instance, in the novel, Winston dreams of a "Golden Country". There, a woman appears who, with a gesture, throws her clothes aside. What strikes Winston in that gesture is that

> [w]ith its grace and carelessness it seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm. That too was a gesture belonging to the ancient time (*1984* 28).

This dream reveals a concern with the future; a future in which the promise of human emancipation and happiness is implicit in the universal projects of modernity. But a similar gesture to that in Winston's dream will appear in *Brazil*. It appears in the scene in which Jill, in the hall of the Records Department, is trying to discover the fate of Buttle, her neighbor, who was arrested by mistake. There, in the hall, a clumsy robot is being exhibited, whose function is to watch people and air the

images it captures to a television network; its function is to help with the police work. When the robot gets too close to Jill, she puts it aside with an annoyed gesture, making it spin around pathetically. In her gesture one can see not the annihilation of an oppressive culture in the name of a new one to come or some lost project. What one sees in that gesture is the very disillusionment with the promise of happiness, justice and moral progress that the control over nature through technology would bring. It is a gesture which seems to annihilate all promises of all master narratives. In this sense, the technological devices which appear in *Brazil* are there less to create a futuristic device than to discredit that promise of achieving human emancipation through the progress of science and technology.

Finally, a categorization of *Brazil* must be determined. In the film there are elements which Jameson points as characteristic of the pastiche. The absence, for instance, of a personal and unique style, which gives room to that gathering of so many different cinematographic genres and styles. Also absent is "any great collective project" ("Cultural Logic" 69): and the random mixture of symbols and signs can be observed in the society depicted by Gilliam. But this is not enough to classify *Brazil* as just a pastiche, or "blank irony". A difference between parody and pastiche is that while pastiche seeks to 'seduce' the viewer, or audience, by transforming

modernist symbols into postmodernist codes, postmodern parody seeks to stimulate the feeling of estrangement in that same audience. In truth, Gilliam's film is far from being a commodity easily consumed by masses of spectators. If in pastiche there is a process of emptying out of any possible connotation originally existing in the symbols shown, remaining just the beauty, the "intensity" of the familiar surface, in *Brazil* there is not an emptying out of meaning, but rather the confrontation between the familiar and the strangeness of the now altered context. As Hutcheon argues,

> postmodern parody does not disregard the context of the past representations it cites, but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from that past today --by time and by the subsequent history of those representations (*Politics of Postmodernism* 94).

Examples of that strategy can be found in the film, such as the references to the film noir style of lighting to reproduce its pessimistic mood but now applied to a new political, economical and social context.

The simulacra that appear in *Brazil* do not make the film a commodity easier to be consumed, since they surround not the audience but the characters. According to Jean-Paul Sartre,

> Things never cease to emit 'simulacra', 'idols', which are simple envelopes... The pure and *a priori* theory made of the image a thing in itself. But our inner intuition teaches us that the image is not the thing" (*A Imaginação* 7-8).[1]

When Gilliam brings together on the screen those seductive simulacra and the oppression of the elite, the poverty of the people, and the destruction of nature, all the symbols which are emptied out of their connotations within the plot acquire a rather new and problematic connotation. When the director shows to the audience characters indifferent to the terrors of torture, the blurring of the limits between the State and private capital, and even to the bombs of the terrorists, as we see in the scene in which the fancy restaurant is bombed and the band starts playing folkloric Jewish songs, he is denouncing not only the loss of that "inner intuition" referred to by Sartre which allows people to differentiate the image from the thing itself; he is also pointing to the horrifying consequences of that process.

Another aspect of the film which reinforces the thesis that *Brazil* is not one more "flat postmodern text" is its refusal to present a happy ending, so dear to the cultural industry of Hollywood. In fact,

> Universal, the American distributor, realizing that this [*Brazil*] was not a goofy fantasy romp like *Time Bandits*, wanted to slice the movie below two hours running time and change the despairing ending to one of upbeat, successful escape, thereby rendering the entire movie essentially meaningless. (*The Film Yearbook* 104)

And even its "despairing ending" is presented in a rather problematic way. By way of ending the film with an oneiric sequence, Gilliam resorts to a surrealist filmic strategy, in

which, as Ismail Xavier explains, "instead of moving in the direction of an illusion of continuity, its editing creates an associative network of images which frustrates the expectations of whoever was expecting a trivial narrative with clear space and time references" (*O Discurso Cinematográfico* 95).[2] In his final dream, Lowry is set free from the huge torture room with the help of the terrorists lead by Tuttle. Next, there is a cut to a shot in which they explode the Ministry of Information Retrieval, and Lowry manages, at last, to run away with Jill to live happily ever after in the countryside. However, next, and in the same dream, he sees Tuttle disappear, covered by all that paper work which he hated so much, and, in another unexpected turn of events, we are taken back to the torture room where Lowry sits all strapped and "lobotomized". It is worth noting that in other moments in *Brazil* the transition from dream to 'reality' occurs in a way to make it difficult, if not impossible, for the viewer to determine which is which thus rendering an open ending. In sum, the sad ending and the absence of closure give room to a more critical perception of reality; instead of having a mere Hollywood product made only to entertain and without any further consequence, Gilliam's film not only creates a parody of the postmodern context but also leaves to the audience the decision about the connotations of the film.

Ultimately, we should remember that the song that gives the title to *Brazil,* and which flows throughout the whole film as a dream of an unreachable paradise might be more than just another element adding to the environment of simulacra that pervades the plot. It might be also understood as an optimistic reminder that though in the postmodern culture all master narratives are in question, we are invited to try some old tools --those revisited modern symbols-- with a different purpose in mind, or to examine them under a different point of view, if we are not ready yet to pursue a horizon of happiness for humanity.

[1]"As coisas não cessam de emitir 'simulacros', 'ídolos', que são simplesmente envelopes... A teoria pura e *a priori* fêz da imagem uma coisa. Mas a intuição interna nos ensina que a imagem não é *a* coisa" (*A Imaginação* 7-8).

[2]"Em vez de caminhar em direção a uma ilusão de continuidade, a montagem cria uma cadeia associativa de imagens que frusta as expectativas de quem espera uma narração trivial com referências de espaço e tempo claras" (*O Discurso Cinematográfico* 95).

GLOSSARY

All cinematographic technical terms included in this glossary are based on definitions found in *Film Art: An Introduction*, by David Bordwell.

costume: "costume motifs may function to unify the film's overall form" (133). Costume can help to establish the historical time in the plot, the social rank of the characters, their profession, their nationality, etc.

framing: In a film, "the frame is not simply a neutral border; it produces a *certain vantage point* onto the material within the image. In cinema the frame is important because it actively *defines* the image for us" (167).

framing angle: "the frame implies an **angle of framing** with respect to what is shown". Although "the number of such angles is infinite...[i]n practice, we typically distinguish three general categories: the straight-on angle, the high angle, and the low angle" (175).

framing distance: "the framing of the image stations us not only at certain angle and height... but also with respect to distance. This aspect of framing is usually called camera distance. Some examples are the **extreme long shot,** in which "the human figure is barely visible" (176). "In the **long shot,** figures are more prominent, but the background still predominates" (176). In the **plan américain** ("American shot"),

permits a nice balance of figure and surroundings. Shots at the same distance of nonhuman subjects are called **medium long shots**" (176). "The **medium shot** frames the human body from the waist up. Gesture and expression now become more visible" (176). "The **close-up** is traditionally the shot showing just the head, hands, feet, or a small object; it emphasizes facial expression, the details of a gesture, or a significant object" (176). "The **extreme close-up** singles out a portion of the face (eyes or lips), isolates a detail, magnifies the minute"(176).

framing height: Though related, camera angle and framing height are not the same thing; it refers to the height at which the camera is positioned (175).

framing level: it is also possible to "distinguish the degree to which the framing is 'level'. This ultimately bears on the sense of gravity governing the filmed material and the frame" (175).

lighting: "lightning shapes objects by creating highlights and shadows" (133). "A highlight is a patch of brightness on a surface". There are two basic types of shadows: "attached shadows and cast shadows" (134). The four major features of film lighting are "its quality, direction, source, and color" (134).

make-up: helps to change actors to look like "historical personages" (133), monsters, aliens, older or younger, etc.

mise-en-scene: in film, the term is used to signify "the directors control over what appears in the film frame". It includes "setting, lighting, costume and the behavior of the figures" (127).

prop: "when part of the setting is motivated to operate actively within the ongoing action... [it is called] a prop" (132).

setting: it can be an already existing locale, in the country-side or in an urban area, or an artificial one can be made in a studio.

APPENDIX

Film: *Brazil*

Studio: Universal

Director: Terry Gilliam

Producer: Arnon Milchan

Screenplay: Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown

Photography: Roger Pratt

Music: Michael Kamen

Reel time: 142 minutes

US opening: Dec 18

Cast: Jonathan Pryce (Sam Lowry), Robert De Niro (Harry Tuttle), Katherine Helmond (Sam's mother), Ian Holm, Bob Hoskins (Central Sevices's workman), Michael Palin, Ian Richardson, Peter Vaughan, Kim Greist (Jill), Jim Broadbent, Barbara Hicks, Charles McKeown, Derrik O'Connor, Kathryn Pogson, Bryan Pringle, Sheila Reid, John Flanagan, Ray Cooper, Brian Miller, Simon Nash.

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