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THE INTERTOPIAN ELEMENTS IN TERRY GILLIAM'S BRAZIL

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“I, Didem Durak Akser, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.”



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ABSTRACT

THE INTERTOPIAN ELEMENTS IN TERRY GILLIAM'S BRAZIL

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Master of Arts in Cinema and Television

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This thesis does a multi-layered reading of the film *Brazil* in terms of form, and style. The analysis sees the utilization of dystopia and utopia in *Brazil* as notions and modes and not as genres. Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* is often commonly treated as a dystopia. A new concept, *intertopia*, is used for describing *Brazil* to indicate its in-between position. The defining elements of intertopia are examined through the dystopian elements in the film as well as the utopian elements for such as the humorous tone, the dream and daydreaming sequences, the notion of hope in the film and the ending.

Keywords: intertopia, utopia, dystopia, humor, hope, satire

ÖZET

TERRY GILLIAM'IN BRAZIL'İNDE İNTERTOPIK ÖĞELER

Didem Durak Akser

Film ve Televizyon, Yüksek Lisans Programı

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Suncem Koçerı

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Bu tez *Brazil* filminin biçim ve stil açısından çok katmanlı okumasını yapmaktadır. İncelemede *Brazil*'de distopya ve ütopya kavramlarına tür olarak değil mod olarak yaklaşmıştır. Terry Gilliam'ın *Brazil* adlı filmi sıklıkla distopya olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Bu tezde *Brazil*'i tanımlamak için intetopya kavramı kullanılmıştır. İntertopyanın tanımlayıcı öğeleri filmde distopik öğelerinin yanı sıra ütopik öğeler, aracılığıyla incelenir. Filmdeki ütopik mod mizahi ton, rüya ve hayal sahneleri, umut fikri ve filmin kapanışı gibi ütopik öğelerden oluşmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: intertopya, ütopya, distopya, mizah, umut, hiciv

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Table of Contents

Abstract	
Özet	
Acknowledgments	
1 Introduction	1
2 A Bitter Utopia	10
2.1. Satire and Laughter.....	13
2.2. Dreams and Fantasies	24
2.3. Hope.....	30
3 Neither Nor – An Intertopia	34
3.1. Madness or Awareness?	35
3.2. Complex Characters	37
3.3. Space and Time	41
4 A Non-Futuristic Dystopia	45
4.1. Technology and Inefficiencies	47
4.2. Surveillance and Power	52
4.3. Satire and Awareness: Materialistic Society	56
5 Conclusion	61
References	63
Appendix	66

Introduction

One can read Terry Gilliam's 1985 film *Brazil*¹ from several points of view: It may be seen to contain modern, postmodern, psychoanalytic, feminist or anti-feminist, cultural, social, political, economic, self-reflexive, oneiric, old and new, futuristic, anachronistic, fantastic, urban, auteur theory and intertextual elements. Gilliam's works are like collages containing homage to significant works of art. He combines all in one; a place that is utopian in the sense that he wants a better world for the characters in his films and his audiences, and dystopian in the sense that he shows what kind of a place the world has and might become.

His characters usually have quests that are romantic and classical. But they also seem as if they are out of this world. The feeling of time in his films is often very abstract; it seems like the near future, the near past or the present all at the same time. Gilliam's unique storytelling and filmmaking style, I argue, is not a remake of the films that he is fond of or an adaptation of literary work but a totally new kind of criticism of the senseless practices in industrial societies. Since this work is limited in space, I will

¹ *Brazil* is a controversial film also for its making and release process. In this study, I analyze the version Terry Gilliam approves the most for it has the ending and the story that he was intending to have. The version I use is the 1999, the "Final director's cut" edition of the film on the Criterion Collection laserdisc DVD box set. For more details: <http://www.criterion.com/films/211-brazil>, last accessed, 21st of February, 2014. For more details on the versions: <http://www.smart.co.uk/dreams/brazfaqb.htm>, last accessed 21st of February, 2014.

mainly talk about the techniques employed only in one of his films - his 1985 film *Brazil* - and how they are used to assess the rise in frustrations of modern life. *Brazil* strongly reflects Gilliam's criticism of the 20th century surveillance state and consumer society; however the film requires a new reading.

Of all the readings of the film, reading it as a prophetic masterpiece or as a reworking of Orwell's thoughts is the most prevalent. In, "*1984. Brazil: Nightmares old and new*," John Hutton calls *Brazil* "a deliberate reworking of Orwell's dystopian vision." (Hutton 1987: 5) However, I argue that despite the similarities between *1984* and *Brazil*, the latter is not a faithful reworking of Orwell's dystopian visions. Like Hutton, Sébastien Lefait, in *Surveillance on Screen: Monitoring Contemporary Films and Television Programs*, argues, because of the surveillance element in the film, "in spite of its title" it should be considered as an adaptation of *1984*. (Lefait 2013) Lefait maintains that as a result of the dystopian tendency of the novel, *Brazil* is a futuristic dystopian film. Written in 1948, *1984* is about a perceived future. For instance the surveillance technologies in the novel were not yet totally available in 1948.

According to an interview made with Gilliam (Sterritt and Lucille 2004: 31) even though Gilliam did not read *1984*, he had a good understanding of Orwell's authoritarian society and considered calling his film *1984 ½* but gave up the title because Michael Radford's film *1984*, which is a direct adaptation of Orwell's novel, was released the same year. Gilliam considered the title *1984 ½* because essentially Orwell described an authoritarian society similar to Gilliam's own theme, and Orwell was a key writer in describing such a fearful situation. Since Gilliam had his own vision, he did not want to name his film *1984* but *1984 ½* as the year 1984 was approaching and he wanted to pay

homage to one of his favorite directors Federico Fellini, and took ½ for the title to honor Fellini’s 8 ½. He also foresaw the possible tendency to liken his film to *1984* and claimed that it is not *1984*, it is different.² In a 2003 interview with Salman Rushdie, Gilliam states that he did not read the novel before the release of the film because he did not want to be accused of ripping it off. (Rushdie 2003) In Jack Mathews’ *The Battle of Brazil*, Gilliam denies that *1984* and *Brazil* share the exact same theme and declares that his film is not about the future. (Mathews 1987: 27) Also in *Terry Gilliam Interviews*, when asked how he dreamt up *Brazil*, Gilliam says:

Nineteen-eighty-four was approaching and I thought it was time to do the cautionary tale, to do *1984* for 1984. I haven’t actually read Orwell. But, I mean, I know the book. It was more Kafka than Orwell I was thinking of; the atmosphere of Kafka intrigues me more, the inability to get hold of this thing that seems to be controlling or determining your life. It was interesting that the thing ended up being as close to the story of *1984*, because I didn’t plan it that way. (Sterritt and Rhodes 2004: 31)

If Gilliam did not plan his film to look like *1984*, why do several scholars call *Brazil* a dystopian film? Does it have more in common with *1984* than Gilliam intended? Is it about the future? When one looks at the contexts of *1984* and *Brazil*, it is unavoidable to compare the two, and yet despite the widespread state surveillance, the resemblance of the protagonists and the plot, they are poles apart in their endings and their overall attitude.

Endings are fundamental to dystopian works. Utopias usually describe a perfect society and increasing hope for a better society than the current one whereas dystopias tend to do the opposite. For the sake of argument, let us assume that *Brazil* is a dystopian film because it has a “sad” ending. Yet the endings are visibly different in the two works since in *1984* Winston and Julia are not killed but are treated and become good citizens

² Considering the amount of criticism towards the utopian dreams of the 1950s, and *Brazil* being a dream country, the title of the movie is a perfect choice.

once again: they rejoin the society. Jill, however, dies in *Brazil* and Sam is believed to lose his sanity. The ending of *1984* tells the readers that there is no way to outwit the system, and warns of a future society where escape may not be possible. The overall feeling is fear. Yet in *Brazil* after being captured by the state, the protagonists refuse to go back to their lives under control: one resists and dies, the other one wakes up from the nightmare to insanity and beautiful dreams. Even because of this controversial ending, *Brazil* deserves a reading other than dystopian.

As detailed later, the ending is not the only provoking feature of the film. The bizarre, satirical mode is also not common in dystopian dramas. Orwell's novel *1984* depicts a future where there is no room for freedom. Freeing one's mind seems impossible. The nightmarish tone of the novel actually introduced the term Orwellian which is as nightmarish and critical as Kafkaesque. When we need to define a police state, a state where the citizens do not have rights we often use the word Orwellian. In the novel, *1984*, Winston, the protagonist and Julia do what the state wants them to do. However from the very beginning of *Brazil*, the nightmarish atmosphere is subtle. It is subtle in the sense that the audiences are warned not by only dark examples but also with an absurd, exaggerated tone. The film seems to work on a formula of "laughter followed by awareness" which I will illuminate in detail later in this chapter. *1984* is tragic, and *Brazil* is grotesque. And this grotesque aspect of it adds a utopian notion to a mostly dystopian *Brazil*. Grotesque is what makes *Brazil*, in my opinion, less fearful.

Other than the tone another crucial narrative difference between the two works is the difference between the characters and the position of the ruling class. In *1984* the ruling class does not live in luxury. The novel describes a well-functioning social,

political and economic system that is not easy to escape, and seems to work almost perfectly on the basis of its founding principles. The ruling class suffers from the society's principles too and their only choice is to accept them deeply, and make everyone believe in the system. It is their utopia whereas it is the citizens' dystopia. However in *Brazil*, there are huge gaps between the classes in terms of material wealth, and both political and social power are determined by possessions and privileges. The elites are not always totally satisfied with the social and economic system as it is not a flawlessly functioning and well-planned one.

Finally, the differences between *1984* and *Brazil* largely come from the grotesque and carnivalesque quality of *Brazil*. Unlike in *1984* Gilliam is less concerned with the psychology of his characters than with the social or political system and technology. In many of his films such as *Twelve Monkeys*, *Fisherking*, and *The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus* Gilliam is less interested in individual characters than the impacts of society and machines on individuals. He does not break this rule in *Brazil*; it is quite the opposite. He deals with things which disturb him through the use of satire not by the notion of pure dystopia and therefore not by causing fear. By depicting individual and complex characters, Gilliam is not aiming at telling the story of an individual man but rather men who are alienated.

During one of his interviews he says "Belief in democracy was that it was going to cut through all that crap, the cheating, the corruption. That's what *Brazil* is about. No matter what the system is, it always goes corrupt". (Sterritt and Lucille 2004: 103) His use of satire is not only for entertainment purposes but, as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it in his influential work *Rabelais and His World*, to liberate people. Bakhtin explains this as:

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance. . . . It was a consecration of inequality. On the contrary, all were considered equal during carnival. . . . This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. (Bakhtin 1984: 9)

The utopian aspect of carnivalesque is visible in *Brazil*, and it resides in demonstrating the dualities such as the rich and the poor, man and nature, man and machines, and fantasy and reality in ridicule. Here grotesque and carnivalesque go hand in hand. By employing grotesque, Gilliam achieves a special type of communication that offers a carnivalesque experience. Nevertheless this grotesque is not pursuing the feeling of superiority at someone more unfortunate than his audiences. Much of the intention behind his humor is to gain the interest of the audiences, and make them laugh at people like themselves. According to Bakhtin “Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people... it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival participants (...) this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives”. (Bakhtin 1984: 11-12)

Laughter subverts power. The authority figures in *Brazil* have flaws, and as the audiences, we closely witness these flaws. We know what is wrong before the protagonist of the film because Gilliam prefers to show us at some instances these disturbances and wrongdoings in the system; even those wrongdoings which all his characters are not aware of.

If *Brazil* were a real world on its own, the events would not be carnivalesque, but looking at the film from the real world, sitting on our seats and staring at screens, they look like a carnival to us. As Slavoj Žižek says about the Marx brothers’ *Duck Soup*;

“*Duck Soup* does not reside in its mockery of the totalitarian state’s machinery and paraphernalia, but in openly displaying the madness, the “fun”, the cruel irony, which are already present in the totalitarian state. The Marx brothers’ “carnival” is the carnival of totalitarianism itself.” (Žižek 2009: 342) Likewise, *Brazil*’s carnivalesque aspect is the carnival of the societal system depicted in the film itself.

This carnivalesque mode of the film differentiates it from pure or classical dystopias as well as from fiction almost entirely based on reality. *Brazil* being a hybrid and complex film necessitates the coining of a new term. I propose “intertopia”; inter meaning among or between and topia (topos) meaning place. Both inter and topia are of Greek origin, and intertopia is formulated using the same logic as the words “utopia” and “dystopia” are formulated. During my research on the previous use of the word – if any – I found out that intertopia was used by Mihai A. Stroe “as the place between places, the threshold between the Old World (which is nature-unfriendly, man’s products being artificial, non-natural) and the New emerging Ecotopian World (which is nature-friendly, in which the artificial gradually metamorphoses into the natural)” (Stroe 2009: 57) for defining Ernest Callenbach’s novel *Ecotopia*. Stroe’s intertopia is not the same as the one in *Brazil*. Stroe talks about Callenbach’s ecological utopia as a threshold space and “of a virtual future floating in potentiality between two worlds at least” (Stroe 2009: 65). He then names these worlds: nature and culture, matter and spirit, old and new, real-past and virtual-potential future. Stroe’s concept of intertopia is coined to define the space between an ecological utopia and dystopia. Although the intertopian elements of *Brazil* are connected with the dualities such as nature and technology, hope and despair, old and new, *Brazil* is not a film between an ecological utopia and dystopia.

It is highly dystopian with some utopian elements. It is grotesque and therefore contains both tragic and comic scenes. The grotesque elements are depicted within the plot, the characters and the mise-en-scène.

In this thesis, I use intertopia as the grotesque dystopian notion. I also employ intertopia as a place: the physical and the abstract space(s) of *Brazil*. This is a place very much like the 20th century where one could observe the wrong practices of the state, social and economic differences and is also a place where dramatic things happen. However this place encloses hope too, even if it is a slight one.

Despite the various definitions of utopia and dystopia, I will primarily distinguish between them by limiting utopia to the definition of desired places and times and dystopia to the undesired and fearful places and times, and as notions. And therefore I focus on the concept of intertopia to explain the utopian aspects in this dystopian film. Gilliam's use of satiric tools of exaggeration, wordplays, anachronisms, understatement, incompetence, miscommunication, absurdity, fantasy and slapstick help marking the film an intertopia. I advocate treating *Brazil* as a film that engages in different techniques of satire to create a certain level of awareness and then hope in the audiences.

In order to do so, I will first start with a synopsis of the film, and then explore the humorous, grotesque, dreamy and hopeful elements in Chapter 1: A Bitter Utopia. Then I will demonstrate the examples of technology and its inefficiencies, materialistic society, and surveillance and power, which also add to the grotesque element, in Chapter 2: A Non-Futuristic Dystopia. I will conclude the study with an exploration of the both utopian and dystopian elements in Chapter 3: A Satirical Intertopia.

I perform a textual analysis of the plot, the mise-en-scène, the language used and also the characters. In doing so I will be seeking to reveal the non-dystopian notions in the film as well as the dystopian ones and to answer why Gilliam uses humor to convey his message and ask questions. This study is not a genre analysis. It is a textual, multilayered reading of the mode of the film. I did a shot by shot analysis in order to find the dystopian and utopian and therefore the intertopian elements in the film. I analyzed the mise-en-scène, the plot, the characters, the choice of words and jokes – in other words the style and the form. In Chapter 1 I will try to answer questions such as “Why is *Brazil* not totally dystopian?”, “What are the utopian qualities of *Brazil*?” In Chapter 2 I will deal with the dystopian notions in *Brazil* and why it looks like having only dystopian notions. The next chapter is to see the hybrid characteristics of *Brazil*. What makes it intertopian? Is it more dystopian or utopian?

A Bitter Utopia

The word utopia which comes from the Greek: eu (good) or ou (“not”) and topos (“place”) and means “no place”, was first used by Sir Thomas More as the title of his book published in Latin in 1516. Even though the idea of utopia has a long history, until the 17th century utopian literature looked much like the portrayals of a fictional and perfect society. With the changes in the society, the dreams transformed as well, and utopia took on new forms. The drastic technological, economic, political, and social transformations such as the church reforms in Europe, French Revolution and Industrial Revolution opened new ways of thought. Every time a social change arose, the perfect imagined places and ideals changed accordingly. The technological advancements, the social changes in the 20th century, the two World Wars and the Cold War period, laid foundations for different forms and notions of utopias (and dystopias).

Utopia and dystopia are two sides of the same coin. The Greek prefix “dys” means bad therefore dystopia implies a bad place. As individuals have desires and hopes for a better future, the notions of utopia are very varied. The desires take forms thus there are utopias and dystopias of different kinds, and forms with different purposes. Some utopian notions occur under certain circumstances. Political systems change with time and so does technology. As Ruth Levitas points out, the realm of utopia is keen to change, and utopian studies have different traditions:

Broadly, one may divide approaches to utopian studies into two streams. The liberal-humanist tradition tends to focus on definitions in terms of form. In contrast a largely, but not exclusively, Marxist tradition has defined utopia in its function – either a negative function of preventing social change or a positive function of facilitating it, either directly or through the process of the ‘education of desire’. Contemporary utopian studies draws on both these traditions, and definitions of both kinds may be found, although those in terms of form tend to predominate. (Levitas 1990: 1)

Utopia and dystopia have both been explored by many scholars for many decades, have undergone much interpretation, and the distinction or the relationship between them is neither entirely clear nor simple. In *The Utopia Reader*, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent also try to demonstrate these distinctions and relationships and the importance of readers’ interpretations by talking about the changes with time:

(...) the place must be recognizably good or bad to the intended reader. All fiction describes a no-place; utopian fiction generally describes good or bad no-places. Fashions change in utopias; most sixteenth-century utopias (positive utopia) horrify today’s reader even though the authors’ intentions are clear. On the other hand, a sixteenth-century reader would consider most twentieth-century utopias as dys-topias worthy of being burnt as works of the devil. (Claeys and Sargent 1999: 1-2)

Among these definitions utopian satire seems to be closest to the mode in *Brazil*. However *Brazil* is not a story of social dreaming. As Claeys and Sargent articulate, when reading utopian or dystopian literature, the interpretations may vary. Besides *Brazil* is a film, and cannot be explained only with the theories on literature. In this study, even though literary theories supply assistance, I mainly recognize utopia, dystopia and intertopia as modes, notions, tones and techniques, rather than genres.

Brazil is full of visual, textual and further cinematic techniques that represent the director’s and writers’ interpretation of the 20th century. With the use of darker colors, dim lighting and the portrayal of bureaucracy, Gilliam is addressing what he sees as the folly. We, as the audiences, are free in our interpretations but unlike in the process of

reading a book, we are not free of visual imagination while watching the film. *Brazil* being a film and not a literary work does not make it less vulnerable to different interpretations. However because it is not a novel, it cannot be restricted to the definitions of literary genres therefore this study does not see utopia and dystopia as literary genres but notions. With the limitations and possibilities of filmmaking, *Brazil* turns out to be a fusion work.

Dystopia as Satire

There is more agreement on the definition and characteristics of utopia than of dystopia. Both are usually defined as genres but dystopia is every so often defined as a subgenre. Moreover some theories on dystopia (as well as utopia) understand it as a kind of satire, and many others recognize the bond between satire and dystopia. Gilliam takes advantage of his medium and establishes the more hopeful, utopian aspects of his work via satirical device. And this creates a new bond between satire and utopia, in addition to the bond between satire and dystopia. When the gloomy aspects of the 20th century came in, Gilliam offers us hope with satire and therefore laughter. He makes an effort in improving mankind by increasing hope, and showing that a way out can be possible. However he does not necessarily comment on which way is better. The audiences are free to have their interpretations; those who have recognized the horrific aspects of the 20th century societies; that being the surveillance, economic gaps between the classes, limitations to individualism, a lack of powerful and equal law systems will find their own better society.

2.1. Satire and Laughter

Bakhtin talks about the utopian characteristics of the grotesque by calling it “an attempt to subdue demonic aspects of the world”. (Bakhtin 1984: 49) If we apply Bakhtin’s thoughts about the carnivalesque and grotesque to *Brazil*, we realize that the social system created in *Brazil* is not like a carnival itself but rather the humorous aspects of the film are intended for “becoming, change, and renewal” of humanity which are the qualities of the carnival feast according to Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1984: 10). It is not the social situation of *Brazil* which is carnivalesque, but rather the manner by which the message is conveyed. It is in the tone. And the filmic language is carnivalesque not because the characters in the film are aware of the bizarreness of their lives and make fun of it but because the audiences are encouraged to laugh at these exaggerated versions of their own lives.

Jonathan Swift wrote in the preface of his work *The Battle of the Books and Other Short Pieces*, “Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.” (Swift 2007). *Brazil*’s satire intends to show its audiences not only everybody’s face but also their own. When Sam Lowry, our protagonist who is a government officer from a prestigious family meets people from other classes such as the working class: when he meets freelance and therefore illegal plumber (in *Brazil* plumbing is a central state service) Harry Tuttle or truck driver Jill Layton, things get the most carnivalesque. Sam as a conformist bureaucrat does not question his life much and Harry or Jill are like his opposites. Harry

helps people with their plumbing issues because he knows that the central services are not working properly and Jill reports the wrongful arrest of Mr. Buttle without fearing what will happen to her. When Sam and Harry meet for the first time, Sam seems surprised by Harry's confidence and his capability of finding a way out of the system. Jill looks like Sam's dream girl and Sam cannot believe that she exists. When he finds out more about Jill, she tries to save her from arrest without a second thought. With both people, Sam becomes clumsy and we see a different aspect of him: one that is not like how the elites behave in the film.

The overall humorous tone of the film mostly remains even when Jill, Tuttle or the Buttles are alone on the screen too; however, their carnivalesque is one that immediately evokes awareness. Their carnivalesque includes horror and drama but not the grotesque, exaggerated, superficial. Unlike them the ruling class characters seem content about the social, political and economic system that they are living in. The audiences laugh at this class for their absurd behaviors and comments because their lifestyles praise inflated luxury, and are lack of human values. Yet, when we see the Buttles, Jill or Tuttle, it is usually the absurd societal system, the bizarre rules and regulations that we laugh at. We know that these are people trying to survive in an overly materialistic and unfair society. Their dialogues and actions point to the ills in their society, and any humorous quality about those lines or actions are due to the consistent satirical tone of the film and to their interaction with the ruling elite.

Sam does not seem to care about his social entitlements when he is around these people. The moments when Sam and these people meet, are the ones that probably cause

the most thinking in the audiences because we clearly notice the clashes between classes.

In the beginning of the film the Buttles celebrate a warm, traditional Christmas. They are sitting in their living room together. Mrs. Buttle is reading her daughter A *Christmas Carol*, Mr. Buttle is packing gifts and his son is playing with his toys. There is nothing to laugh at in their situation, except for the subtle satirical tone. This tone is carried by the design and ambiguities such as the ugly ducts in the flat that represent state surveillance and power - as well as meaningless - which do not seem to have any useful outcome for the citizens, the interview on TV with deputy minister Helpmann regarding the terrorist attacks and the economy ironically at Christmas time, and the details such as Buttle's son playing with toy soldiers: troopers, who will later arrest his father in real life, and will push him aside without mercy. They were a happy folk celebrating a normal Christmas but anything that was not under their control was satirical.

Laughter comes later when we see the elites such as Sam's mother Ida spending a very different Christmas than the Buttles. She is having plastic surgeries for Christmas. She likes to meet Sam, her friend and her daughter in a fancy restaurant where the menu has a variety of fancy dishes but when the food arrives at the table the different dishes they ordered are actually all the same. The elites seem to have lost their spirit for Christmas, for life, for everything except for what their state wants them to care about. They see Christmas as another reason for shopping and having plastic surgeries; Christmas sank to a material level. They do not remember what values the most in life. Throughout the whole film, we do not laugh at the working class or the freelancer Harry

Tuttle because of their social situation but because it is not hard to sympathize with them. We are happy that these nonconformist people exist but we are also sorry for them since the system is a forceful one. And yet we laugh at the ruling class at all times because they lead grotesque lives.

Exaggeration is also conveyed through the costumes. Ida is wearing a hat that is designed in the shape of a hat when she goes to the restaurant. This represents exaggeration. She brings her dog with her which is to put in a serving plate later. Absurdly enough, they need to go through the security x-rays while they are entering the restaurant, and Ida's Christmas present for Sam, causes them trouble. Ida is apparently a loyal customer of the restaurant but her difficulties entering the restaurant show us that security matters less than loyalty.

Ida's friend Mrs. Terrain with her bandages due to some complications in her plastic surgery, and her effort to match her daughter with Shirley are not less funny. Mrs. Terrain's doctor is called an acid man because of his methods. In order to look younger, Mrs. Terrain takes a health risk. This is how far the ruling class can go. Shirley is wearing braces but she is not a teenager, and unwillingly accepts her mother's and Ida's idea of matching her with Sam. Like she was told, she asks Sam if he needs the salt during their lunch but her timing is always wrong. She is just another victim of this unmerciful society and is maybe as desperate as Sam.

The wannabe elite waiter Spiro and his reactions to a Sam not wanting a dessert and not ordering the food with the number in the menu are some of the most important examples of non-conformism in the film. Sam is no rebel in the beginning. He is not

aware but he does not enjoy his life either. At least he still has some sense, and if he does not want something he says it, and does not conform to the ordering etiquette in the restaurant.

As much as the elites are unreasonable, we can sympathize with Sam because of that. Yet his situation is a complex one. We know that he is stuck where he is. He has a job that is quite prestigious but during the same restaurant scene, we see that he does not want a promotion, and he does not want to live in accordance with the lifestyle his mother (and her social and economic class in general) approves of. The protagonists of dystopias are usually people who work within the system and appear as decent citizens but deep inside they are struggling with the system. Sam is also one. He is not without flaws but is rather ignorant in the beginning. For his unawareness of how other people live, we still have mercy for him. Among the elites we meet during the film, he is probably the most unlucky one. He did not choose to live the way he did. He inherited it.

It is very important that this is so as we know that Harry or Butties are not conformists therefore their fight with the system is not surprising. We expect them to fight for their rights because they already try to have a warm family life and survive. In Harry's and Jill's case it is the fight with the system and the carelessness for the values of the society. When someone like Sam who comes from a wealthy and influential family is not in peace with the system, we are more intrigued.

Sam's situations are ironic and sarcastic at times. With the practice of sarcasm, irony and absurdity, Gilliam wants to achieve awareness about the faults of the society pictured. His film is open to individual readings, but *he prefers the use of laughter than*

fear or pity. The pairing of grim and funny creates irony which is a great tool of satire, and causes thoughtful laughter. By showing us the warm family moments of Buttles and then the problematic relationships of the ruling class, Gilliam makes us choose whom to laugh at. As Bakhtin further explains about laughter:

The Renaissance conception of laughter can be roughly described as follows: Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the universe are accessible only to laughter. (Bakhtin 1984: 66)

Gilliam seems to agree with Bakhtin since he usually takes the humorous standpoint rather than the serious one. *Brazil* causes laughter for a deep meaning or in other words for the sake of truth, and ontological reality. Aspects of the 20th century universe are – maybe not only but definitely equally – accessible to laughter as to seriousness or drama, and Gilliam chooses to show the incongruities. He does not use the negative, mocking aspects of laughter, but the positive aspect of it that is enlightening, healing and winning over fear.

Satire as a Mode or as a Genre

Leon Guilhamet in his *The Transformation of Genre* and Ronald Paulson in his *The Fictions of Genre* distinguish between satire as a genre and satire as a mode. Satire is a strong characteristic of *Brazil*. Here, I also do not use satire as a genre or as a form but as the tone or the mode of the film that constitutes the optimistic and enlightening elements. From the very beginning of the film, it is clear that things are not supposed to be like they appear. The world of *Brazil* is one that seems to imitate the absurdity of real

life and yet it is not real since satire is used as a self-reflexive element to prick the audiences.

Gilliam's audiences are assumed to have a consciousness of what is right and wrong, and a prior knowledge of their own society, that is the 20th century society. Tom Stoppard who is one of the three screenwriters of *Brazil* (with Charles McKeown and Gilliam himself) employs a satirical tone in the language of the film and applies verbal interplays while Gilliam does the same thing with the dreamy mise-en-scène which the subchapter on the subject explains with details.

Gilliam's choice of Stoppard is not by chance since Stoppard is known for his wisely written theater plays, and many scholars praise his use of satire. In their article *A Postmodernist Reading of Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead"*, Noorbakhsh Hooti and Samaneh Shooshtarian argue that "In Stoppard's writing there has always been a departure from conventional norms of character, dialogue and narrative. Moreover, the elements of pastiche, irony, parody, word games, vaudeville, burlesque, self-reflexivity and absence of a frame of reference have become hallmarks of his work". (Hooti and Shooshtarian 2011: 147-162) Hooti and Shooshtarian's words on Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, are applicable to Stoppard's contribution to *Brazil*. According to the Criterion Director's Cut and commentary (*Brazil* Criterion Edition 1996), Rob Hedden's on-set documentary *What Is "Brazil"*, and the documentary *The Battle of Brazil* (1996), Gilliam declares that Stoppard added a lot to the film; for instance the Buttle-Tuttle confusion came from him. He "...helped Gilliam focus on the original treatment's strengths, and brought a more consistent structure to disparate scenes, piecing them together to make the story more of a whole.

He also created some characters and priceless dialogue, and turned some scenes that were already darkly comic even darker.” and “Stoppard’s biggest contribution structurally was the Tuttle/Buttle link, in which a beetle falling into a machine printing arrest warrants leads to the mistaken arrest of Archibald Buttle. In no previous draft was the innocent arrest victim at the beginning of the story in any way linked to the ‘obsessive heating engineer’ Harry Tuttle.” (Morgan 2012: 7)

Like the Tuttle/Buttle pun as Gilliam points out, the practice of names in the film is sarcastic. Tom Stoppard and Gilliam apply wordplays by giving their characters names such as Kurtzmann (meaning short man in German), Helpmann (meaning helping man in German), and Warren. Mr. Warren is Sam’s boss after he accepts the promotion later in the film. Sam’s new office building after his promotion is a warren-like one with many connecting underground passages and confusing corridors, and Sam meets Mr. Warren while he is going to his office for the first time. Gilliam does not only use wordplays to create a humorous environment but also makes use of exaggeration and ridicule to set the general tone of the film.

Exaggeration is in harmony with grotesque. Bakhtin states that “the exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimensions is, according to [Heinrich] Schneegans, the basic nature of the grotesque. Therefore the grotesque is always satire.” (Bakhtin 1984: 306) and he talks about the carnivalesque-grotesque features such as body parts, madness, irony, and satire throughout *Rabelais and His World*. Gilliam’s use of grotesque, visual gags, slapstick and Jonathan Pryce’s physical acting, go hand in hand, and form the visual satirical tone of the film. As shall be explained in detail in the

subchapter on society, the commodification of the body is often ridiculed in *Brazil*, as in Bakhtin's carnivalesque-grotesque.

The first instance in which the satire becomes recognizable is the opening music which is Ary Barroso's 1939 song "Aquarela do Brasil" and it is the leitmotif of the film. This lighthearted Muzak song is played many times throughout the film, and is a central component of the satire. Gilliam chooses to play the same cheerful song at many important instances in the film. By playing it at a slower pace or a faster one or Sam humming the song at the end of the film, and with the repetitions, Gilliam reminds his audiences that this is a motion picture. The leitmotif song works like an alarm. We easily associate this cheerful music with merry times and funny moments, and with grotesque and satire. The events happening in *Brazil* are not at all times as cheerful as the song. This contrast, along with all the other satirical elements in the film give Gilliam's audiences the freedom to think that gloomy events happen but it does not have to be the same way in real life. This seems to prove Linda Hutcheon's words on satire in her *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*:

Satire frequently uses parodic art form for either expository or aggressive purposes when it desires textual differentiation as its vehicle. Both satire and parody imply critical distancing and therefore value judgments, but satire generally uses that distance to make a negative statement about that which is satirized.... In modern parody, however, we have found that no such negative judgment is necessarily suggested in the ironic contrasting of texts. (Hutcheon 1985: 43-44)

Gilliam's choices of ridicule to contrast pretense and reality and his use of grotesque as a means for showing the hidden pieces of reality, burns questions into his audiences' minds. And yet he does not necessarily try to answer those questions or provide any solutions. He also does not purely criticize the ills of the 20th century, but by

underlining the issues, he tells his audiences to be aware of them, and if they are cautious enough, there will still be hope, which constitutes the utopian aspect of the film.

He does not give us any easy moral message, and we are the ones to solve his puzzles. And why does Gilliam use humor to ask questions? According to Henri Bergson in *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, comedy is human, and laughter has a social function (Bergson 1914). For instance, we laugh at people when they behave in a way that gives the appearance of a single mechanism and the impression of a mechanical arrangement. In other words when a human has had their humanity removed.

Sam Lowry's bumbling character with his mechanical elasticity towards the ills of his society and Jonathan Pryce's performance style appear to symbolize the social system that Sam lives in. His tone of voice, gestures, even when wordplays are not engaged (wordplays are details and might require a second viewing, and may be missed by the audiences), contribute to the humor in the film. Brian Dillon argues that with slapstick we see what we expect. (Dillon 2007)

We expect to see people becoming a machine because this is what happens in totalitarian societies. Dillon further argues: "Slapstick is inherently logical: its subject is reason itself, and its form is but a repeated insistence on the relation of cause to effect". (Dillon 2007) This has been defined by Bergson as the mechanical aspect of comedy. Comedy reminds us of what we already know. In order to laugh at a situation, we need to understand the situation. Sam's colleagues sorting out bureaucratic papers as they have been told, Mr. Warren giving automatic responses to his employees, the officer

who is in charge of Buttle's arrest reading out loud Buttle's arrest document are all examples of following the rules of a system without questioning their validity or rationality. All of these actions and many more are supported by relevant mechanical mimics and gestures by the actors.

Jennifer Higgle articulates that humor is used to "...activate repressed impulses, embody alienation or displacement, disrupt convention, and to explore the power relations in terms of gender, sexuality, class, taste, or racial and cultural identities." (Higgle 2007: 12) Bergson sees humor as a corrective instrument in society, and Gilliam uses it the same way for the same reasons Bergson and Higgle explain: to show his audiences that they are probably like Sam Lowry, and give them the chance to laugh at themselves, and then realize the outcomes of the oppressive society and, as will be explained later, the surveillance state.

In his article, *Bestial Representations of Otherness: Kafka's Animal Stories*, Matthew T. Powell talks about Franz Kafka's use of grotesque as a device for explaining those aspects of reality whose very existence must remain in shadow in order to maintain a coherent and sustainable reality. (Powell 2008: 130) Gilliam takes advantage of the grotesque for similar reasons and plays around with the "frontier that lies between ordinary life and the terror that would seem to be more real". (Kafka 1976: 417) The ordinary life illustrated in *Brazil* is frightening enough. Furthermore, as Gilliam's grotesque requires prior knowledge of 20th century society, we need to imagine *Brazil's* similarities with the 20th century. Gilliam does not give us much background on his characters or the societal system in *Brazil*. We liken what Sam Lowry, Jill or Harry or the Buttles experience to what we know. It is not the type of situation where we laugh

because the unfortunate events are not happening to us and are happening to someone else. It is rather the contrary. We often see familiar situations especially when Gilliam demonstrates the exercises of the surveillance state which constitute the most powerful dystopian aspect of the film, and therefore a mixture of dystopian and utopians elements at the same time. As much as satire is creating this mixture the dreams and fantasies add to it. Their role in the film is significant because they show the change in Sam Lowry, and also in the audiences in terms of hope.

2.2. Dreams and Fantasies

Gilliam builds a relatable experience for his audiences, and he also makes use of fantasy. Due to the blurring between reality and fantasy, and logical and supernatural in the film, *Brazil* is sometimes considered a fantasy film too. It definitely consists of some dreamy elements however as Elvis Bego puts it the fantastic is created and conditioned by the viewers' or readers' response. (Bego 2013) What is impossible and what is logical change from one person to the other when it comes to ideals. And yet except in Sam's dreams, nothing impossible actually happens in *Brazil*. Some events and behaviors are exaggerated, and *Brazil* is not realistic but it is truthful to reality.

The dreamy elements in the film revolve around Sam Lowry. He has two types of dreams: the natural state of dreams while he is sleeping and his daydreams or fantasies. The two types have similar contents but we loosely know when he is in a natural state of dreaming and when he daydreams for we see him sleeping at night or

during the day in action. Henri Bergson suggests that comic absurdity is of the same nature as that of dreams. Gilliam employs dreams and fantasies or daydreams for comic absurdity as well as showing the change in Sam and his hopes.

Sam Lowry is good at his job but he seems to have problems in his self-actualization since he does not have any wishes but daydreams that reveal his problems. He resembles the characters of dystopias more than the characters of utopias in that sense. Sam is not dedicated to his work even if he is technically savvy. People call him a capable and smart person in the film several times; one time his mother, one time his friend Jack Lint, and another time his manager Mr. Kurtzmann tell him that he is smart. However this does not change the fact that Sam is not totally at peace with the system. He has the qualifications for high ranked government jobs but he does not really care about what he is doing as long as he is almost invisible. At the early stages in the film, Sam seems to be satisfied only with his dreams and fantasies.

Gilliam uses dreams and infantile fantasies to show hope and the changes in the main character though this study does not focus on the dreams on a psychoanalytic level. Dreams are tools to display the change in Sam Lowry's awareness. There is a slight distinction between the dreams and fantasies in *Brazil*. Sam is not content. He has a longing for a better time – a better past or a future, maybe a pastoral past we cannot be sure - but he is keeping a balance. In his *The Principle of Hope* Ernst Bloch argues that humans can find what they lack in daydreams. (Bloch 1986) He says: "Everybody's life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is proactive, is not content to just accept the bad

which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hope at its core, and is teachable.” (Bloch 1986: 3)

Sam at times daydreams and at other times sees dreams while sleeping. We know this because after one of the dream sequences in the beginning of the film, we see him waking up from his bed. His dreams in the beginning of the film are reflections of his daily experiences, not futuristic provisions or fatal signs. Daydreaming is a way of control in *Brazil*. The state does not want its citizens to rebel therefore allows them - only - to daydream but not to have dreams, wishes, hope. As long as they are busy, it does not matter for the state if the employees watch films such as *Casablanca* (d. Michael Curtiz, 1941) which are usually associated with longing for better times. This way they are kept passive. Sam is a passive dreamer too. We cannot compare his dreams with any other character’s dreams in the film since we never see others’ dreaming and yet the system of *Brazil* is one that permits daydreaming at work but does not permit individual imagination or creativity.

Since Sam yearns being an individual he can only fantasize about himself as a hero and his dream girl. And evidently he is a film fan. Sam has the posters of actresses in his apartment such as Marlene Dietrich who upset the traditional gender roles. Judith Butler highlights that we are taught particular roles according to our biological sex and these roles become our gender (Butler, 1993). Jill Layton does not totally fit in within the definitions of traditional gender roles. bell hooks’ words about her personal experience describes to what traditional gender roles restrict women and men: “My brother and I remember our confusion about gender. In reality I was stronger and more violent than my brother, which we learned quickly was bad. And he was a gentle,

peaceful boy, which we learned was really bad.” (hooks 2004: 19) Jill is not weak, and does not feel the need to be gentle. She happens to look almost exactly like Sam’s dream girl, though she is not essentially his dream girl. However Sam likens Jill to his dream girl the first time he sees her at the ministry, because Jill is a strong and independent woman just like Sam’s favorite actresses.

Another figure in one of Sam’s dreams is also a reflection of one of the things in his actual life. The decorative set pieces such as the big Icarus-like statue at the entrance of the ministry are important in identifying Sam’s dreams. The statue is something that Sam literally sees every day, and he sees it in his dreams too. Sam is actually like Icarus himself, with wings, flying. He is independent and powerful. The bits of Sam’s daily life in his dreams tell the audiences that Sam is not happy with his life, and builds his dreams from his daily boredom. Another important part of Sam’s dreams is the nature. Sam has a longing for pastoral and calmer times. This might be because he is tired of the controlled and planned although imperfect urbanism, and is looking for a free, untouched and uncontrolled place. Dreams allow him ignore his complicity. Dreams are his opiate, his brief moments of escape from his boring life, and delusions of himself in the beginning and middle of the film.

Even though in real life Sam has no inclination to rebel, in his dreams he is trying to save his dream girl from a number of monsters: the dogmas of modernity, modern buildings, Sam’s boss Mr. Kurtzmann as a pavement monster, a samurai representing high but destructive technology etc. Dreams are the only safe place without the control of the government however the citizens are overly exposed to the

propagandas of the system; they are not able to independently and freely imagine any alternatives to the world that they live in.

Sam has a good nature and yet he is deeply disturbed by the system. He seems to look for an old Hollywood kind of love, one that is worth sacrificing yourself for, and he does not abandon his dream about love till the end of the film. Sam deals with reality with the help of his fantasies. Probably they are the only things that make him survive. Luckily with time, they lead to his self-realization. After Jill and Tuttle make him see that beautiful things are possible, at the end of the film, because of the torture he loses his sanity but he starts to imagine a life, a real life, with Jill where he does not have wings, and Jill does not look like a film star. As long as he is free and happy, he can settle down for a simpler life. The scene where he imagines himself with Jill living in the woods in a small hut represents his hope for an alternative life in his world. Unlike Winston and Julia in *1984*, Sam and Jill in *Brazil* do not have a place to hide or escape, even temporarily. Escaping to the outskirts of the city where state surveillance is less strong might seem like a possibility however we are not given any certain clues that this is the case. Sam dreams about a rural place and a small house – as the one that Jill carries with her truck – where they have a small garden, and lead a modest and independent life.

Sam's first dream is more utopian than dystopian. He is able to fly, the sky is bright, and his dream woman is alive. He cannot continue to dream though, he is not allowed to. His dream is cut off with a phone call from his boss Mr. Kurtzmann. This is to say that even dreaming is interrupted by state control.

Sam's mother Ida is the first character to bring up the subject of dreams; however she means it as ambitions, wishes or wants. During a dinner she tries to convince her son to accept the promotion. He does not want to accept it, and he tries to communicate this but as he cannot talk to his mother he intends to leave the table. Here Ida says: "You haven't had your dessert". Sam is fed up: "I don't want dessert. I don't want promotion. I don't want anything". Then Ida says: "Of course you want something. You must have hopes, wishes, dreams". And Sam goes berserk: "No, nothing. Not even dreams". He is trying to tell his mother that his dreams are not his or they are the only thing that he has for himself without the obvious state control and does not want to share them with anyone.

Sam's dreams are rather interrupted or unpleasant at other times: they become more dystopian after his first dream. The scene cuts to Sam's dream. This time he dreams about flying in the fields. A thrilling version of *Aquarela do Brasil* is playing in the background. And monoliths are breaking the ground and are rising up in the sky as if unplanned urbanism is taking control of the nature. His dreams become nightmares as in this example. They reflect the dystopian elements of Sam's society. Until the very end Sam keeps on seeing dreams and he also daydreams: he is flying, and Jill is in a cage. In the meanwhile his dreams become worse with reflections from his daily life, and he feels trapped. At the end of the film Sam hums *Aquarela do Brasil* in a joyful manner, and imagines that he and Jill are free from their state and society and are living in a rural area without surveillance and state control. He found solace, and for the first time in his life had a dream of his own. Without any interruptions, pressure or manipulation.

Sam freeing himself of pointless dreams and nightmares, and therefore of the state is rather hopeful than horrific. Sam cannot go back to being the person he was. At least now, he is free.

2.3. Hope

Hope and dreams are interrelated. Utopias usually deal with hope while dystopias deal with fear and therefore nightmares. That is why Sargent calls utopianism social dreaming and defines it as “the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live”. (Sargent 1994: 3) Taking into account Sargent’s wording, is *Brazil* a social nightmare and social dreaming at the same time?

Ernst Bloch’s theories on hope assist us that this point. According to Bloch hope is both an emotion and a cognitive faculty. (Bloch 1995, 1: 12) He claims that hope can be cultivated. As much as he favors the cultivation for hope, he also insists that utopian ideals or notions should be realistic. Gilliam builds hope in his audiences step by step. And he is not holding an unrealistic notion. Maybe if he did, Sam and Jill would be saved at the end or they would be like Winston and Julia. Instead of an end in despair or an unrealistic end where everybody comes and helps Sam and Jill, Gilliam prefers an end with a little bit of hope.

In *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, Moylan distinguishes between a “utopian radical hope” and a “dystopian militant pessimism” (Moylan 2000: 157) Hope is probably the most important characteristic that

distinguishes utopias and dystopias. Ruth Levitas puts this in another way: for her the essential element for utopias is desire for a better living. (Levitas quoted in Collins 1998: 556) Utopias can be unrealistic ideals, and dystopias can be pessimistic versions of the current system; fearful systems that the world is heading for. But what is *Brazil*? Does it predict an improbable future, a very negative possibility? Is it romantically hopeful?

Hope as an Intertopian Theme

Is *Brazil* a more pessimistic or a hopeful film? By showing the ills of the system, Gilliam does not wish to say that there is no hope for an alternative. He only warns us, and with humorous elements and the ending, he gives us hope. In Gilliam's version, unlike the managers of Universal suggested and later did in their version, love does not conquer all because the system does not allow it. Gilliam sees cinema as an artifice, where you abstract, and which eventually leads to grotesque but while he is shaping his films, he is also staying truthful to real life. By showing us the dystopian possibilities he wants to achieve a utopian hope.

With the strong and satirical criticism of the 20th century society in the film, it is difficult to call it a pure utopia or a dystopia because Gilliam is using a moral voice, and he is not only criticizing or mocking but giving us time to think. Ruth Levitas calls utopia a "desire for a better way of being and living" (Levitas 1990: 10) whereas Krishan Kumar defines it as a "piece of fiction about an imaginary good society" (Kumar 1991: 28) Some scholars attempted to erase the bold lines between utopia and dystopia and tried to describe the hybrid notions as utopian works that may also have dystopian features. Anti-utopias satirize other people's utopias and criticize them and the

hybrid forms usually have two societies: one a utopia and the other a dystopia. Moylan claims that some dystopian narratives have a utopian horizon and can therefore be called ‘utopian dystopias’ while some other dystopias have an anti-utopian theme, and these can be termed ‘anti-utopian dystopias’. In his *Demand the Impossible* Moylan also talks about “classical dystopias” such as *Brave New World* and illuminates “critical dystopias” as:

A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within the utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (Moylan 1986: 10–11)

However these definitions are not sufficient to explain *Brazil* since it does not have a pair of societies nor entirely satirizes a group’s utopia. The definitions also do not include hope and satire and therefore are not sufficient to describe the unique position of *Brazil*

Hutton compares *1984*, the film, with *Brazil* by saying “If neither film offers hope or the possibility of some better form of society, the two represent contrasting and even counterpoised social phenomena” in his *Jump Cut* article. Orwell’s vision is one of defeat and surrender; it is pessimistic, while Gilliam’s film corresponds to an inchoate but very real sense of bitter rage.” (Hutton 1987: 5) However Sam’s insanity at the end is not necessarily one that is desperate. What makes Sam lose his sanity at the finale of the film is not the system but it is the torture. Torture is a tool of the system but if Sam and Jill were not tortured, there might have been another chance because they neither surrendered, nor did they cooperate with the system.

Bergson articulates “The most comic of characters, the dreamer, observes reality as well, but instead of adapting to it he makes his observations adapt to his dreams.” According to this definition, Sam was not a dreamer in the beginning. He was just another cog-in-the-wheel who was asleep. At the end, he became a real dreamer and made his observations adapt to his dreams. He learnt to dream a free new world, at least for himself and Jill.

Neither Nor – An Intertopia

Given the fact that Sam could escape the set of mind given to him by his state, is it possible to call *Brazil* an optimistic dystopia or would this rather be a very optimistic claim? It is better to think of *Brazil* as a hybrid of utopia and dystopia; it is an intertopia. As Hegel suggested “things contain their own opposites within themselves,” *Brazil* is an intertopia that has both dystopian and utopian notions. Revolution is utopian, imprisonment is dystopian, and where a single individual becomes enlightened revolution can be possible – possibility of resistance is intertopian. Both utopia and dystopia need a comparison to reality. And when the social system in *Brazil* is compared to the 20th century social systems, they have a lot in common. Whatever is exaggerated sounds utopian and causes laughter, and whatever fearful sounds dystopian.

However in *Brazil* they are neither and both because when we laugh, we think and become aware and when we fear, we think and construct hope. And we do it gradually. It is not until the end that we call *Brazil* an intertopia. In this chapter I will explore the examples in the film that are not clearly utopian or dystopian or in other words hopeful or pessimistic. These examples appear throughout the whole film in the elements of space, time, ending, plot, and the complexity of characters.

3.1. Madness or Awareness?

Sam's madness in the finale seems bitter especially because we might think that if Sam were aware before, he could have saved everyone. He could have shown that the whole system is not fair, probably there are no real terrorists and human rights should be protected. It was not that he was afraid but he was not aware. He wanted a new life and did not know about it. He did not become aware at the right time to save everyone or to start a revolution. He was complacent. His participation in the future of the society was not meaningful.

The end of the film displays Sam's salvation in Gilliam's own particular way. As Charles Bukowski states in his poem *Some People*, "Some people never go crazy. What truly horrible lives they must lead." By losing his mind Sam is not escaping. He used to be in complicity with the system and was leading a horrible life. When he is tortured, he refuses to return to the life he used to live. But he has two options: to return to his old life and keep on being a good citizen or live in his dreams and have a free mind. Before he became aware, he was not able to imagine a real world without horror. Sam avoids responsibility and does not want any promotion. This is the only way to make his life bearable: no responsibilities in the horrible actions of the government and some spare time for him to dream. Defiance is triggered by imagination. Sam knows how to use technology for his benefit, but only later he starts to use it for good reasons. He uses it successfully to reach to Jill and then save Jill. He is ready to sacrifice his life of certainties for his love.

Gilliam tells us to be aware in order not to become another Sam Lowry. He tells us about his anxieties, and helps us understand our world: the past, the present and the

future. The message he is conveying is: “The reality can be harsh but there is only one world. Your dreams are yours. They can save you.” Sam went mad at the end but madness can actually be victory as Foucault suggests: “under the chaotic and manifest delirium reigns the order of a secret delirium. In this second delirium, which is, in a sense, pure reason, reason delivered of all the external tinsel of dementia, is located the paradoxical truth of madness.” (Foucault 2001: 91) Sam’s second delirium is more beautiful than his first one.

As Fredric Jameson comments,

Utopia itself [is not due] to any individual failure of imagination but is the result of the systemic, cultural, and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners. (Jameson 1982: 153)

The political and societal system in *Brazil* does not easily allow people to become individuals or imagine an alternative to the world that they live in. Especially those who are complacent with the system have to choose between a relatively more comfortable but less free life and a relatively free but less comfortable life. Sam’s prisoned mind achieves awareness.

The awareness levels of the characters in the film depend on their social backgrounds as it is represented. Now, I will look into the characters deeply to analyze their intertopian traits.

3.2. Complex Characters

The complexity of the characters constitutes an intertopian element of the film. *Brazil* has nonconformist characters, conformist characters and a character that is neither at first and transforms with time. The other chapters explored mostly the satirical traits of the characters. These traits can be more reflected in the utopian notion at times and dystopian at other times. I argue that as an intertopia *Brazil* has complex characters unique to it: conformist but satirical, exaggerated characters whom we laugh at, and from whom detect the ills, nonconformist characters who are not in peace with the political system and the intertopian protagonist who we are ready to love and forgive if he learns the truth in the end.

3.2.1 The Intertopian Protagonist

Sam Lowry is inconsiderate of the problems in his society in the beginning. He is almost a selfless and careless human being. He is well-meaning but is probably confused and he is just surviving. He wakes up from his useless daydreams, which are acceptable by the system, to a world where he can imagine better things for everyone and better things are actually possible. If he had cooperated with Jack and Mr. Helpmann, it would have meant victory for the system. It is challenging to fight the system for a little man like Sam but it is not impossible because others are aware of the malfunctions of the social system. Jill and Harry Tuttle are not the only ones who see

folly. The working class families like the Buttles are aware. The kids in the suburb are aware too as we see in the case when they reenact Mr. Buttle's arrest.

Even though Sam is not aware of how people from other classes live, he trusts Tuttle at first sight, and does not turn him in. However the world of *Brazil* is not a simple one. Sam trusted Tuttle without much thinking, but he does not always trust Jill that easily. It looks as if he is under the influence of the slogans "Suspicion breeds confidence" that we see a couple of times in the film.

Tuttle tells Sam that they are all in it together. Tuttle is one fellow who does not like paperwork and who does his job for the thrills. We do not have enough clues to know if Tuttle always works alone or if he has friends however Sam's last dream shows Tuttle and his friends saving him from the torture room. We are given a piece of hope that people like Tuttle might exist.

Sam is a good person in nature and he is conscious of the dullness in his life. He was not an individual and he became one at the finale. At one point in the film Jack asks him how his life is. Sam responds: "marvelous, wonderful, perfect". Even though his life was not so in the beginning, later on he starts to hope, dream and imagine a better, a marvelous life. I do not think that Sam's awareness starts when he sees Jill and that it is all in the name of love. Sam's enlightenment happens before Jill. Sam does not care about his friend Jack or his mother or his boss. He is not easily manipulated. He became a government employee because of his obligations but he does not have any ambitions to promote, earn more money and prestige.

3.2.2 Conformist Characters

The working class or in other words the people who are not working for the bureaucracy in *Brazil* are good people. However it is hard to tell if *Brazil* has any evil characters. The ones, who are conformists, are rather complacent or blind than entirely evil. Unlike in most modern dystopias, Jack is not totally evil either. He was told what he is doing is fine and he is doing his job. He has the freedom to choose but he has a family, and is maybe afraid of not being able to protect them. He is supposedly Sam's best friend but he acts as a spy. The main difference between Sam and Jack is that Sam is seeking redemption from his world whereas Jack is happy with the order.

3.2.3 Nonconformist Characters

Jill is not Sam's dream woman. She simply resembles her. Sam might have learnt about love from the films he watched, but he did not learn how to rebel. However Jill is an intelligent, socially aware and independent woman who does not represent the traditional gender codes. She can resist and refuses to be a part of the system which she knows is a lie, and she earns her living as a truck driver. She is just like the capable, strong women in the posters in Sam's apartment. In his dreams Jill needs help. In real life she does not. It is Sam who learns from her. He does not know compassion in the beginning. The relationship between Sam and Harry, and Sam and Jill shows that system cannot destroy the interconnectedness and the interrelationship of people.

Jill and Harry are easier to comprehend than Sam. We feel what they are for and against. Nevertheless Sam is an evolving personality. He needs to open his eyes. He is

so focused on himself in the beginning. We see the bad side of him when he helps his boss Mr. Kurtzmann about the check that they have to send to Mrs. Buttle. Sam as a smart individual must have guessed that Mr. Buttle died while the case was being investigated. He may not know whether he is guilty or not but Sam should be sorry because he died being tortured. Instead of being sorry, he assists Mr. Kurtzmann in getting rid of the check. Mrs. Buttle does not have a bank account, and Sam agrees to deliver it to her himself. At Buttle's home, he does not care about Mrs. Buttle's grief or Buttle's son's reactions. He even says that he did not have to go there to give the check but he was kind to do so. He tells Mrs. Buttle that at work they do not make mistakes and she can always make inquiries. Sam is still self-centered when he sees Jill. The only moment about the Buttle event we see that Sam might still have a warm heart is when Buttle's daughter tells Sam that she is waiting for her father. Sam looks back and realizes that this might actually be the daughter of late Mr. Buttle.

Ironically during his TV interview Mr. Helpmann says "Bad sportsmanship. A ruthless minority of people seems to have forgotten certain good old-fashioned virtues. They just can't stand seeing the other fellow win." Throughout the film we see that Mr. Helpmann is trying to rationalize every action of the state and call all types of non-conformist activities ruthless. However there is no certain evidence of terrorism in the film.

3.3. Space and Time

Brazil, where hearts were entertained in June,
We stood beneath an amber moon,
And softly murmured 'Some day soon'

The time and space in *Brazil* are unlocatable even though some scholars believe the place to be Britain³ or USA and the time to be the 21st century or the future. There are various readings of the time in the film: the near past, the present or the near future. One very common reading is to look at it from now, the 21st century, and see the film as a prophetic piece. David H. Price argues that *Brazil*'s vision aligns with post-9/11 America in his 2010 article; *Governing Fear In The Iron Cage Of Rationalism: Terry Gilliam's Brazil Through The 9/11 Looking Glass*. It is also easy to find references to *Brazil* in the new surveillance studies.

Brazil is a fiction that is about real life but it is not a documentary and does not limit itself to a certain year either. Therefore the time is unlocatable rather than non-existent or imaginary futuristic. It is not taking place in any actual country or time. It is common to liken *Brazil* to a current situation at any time but as Salman Rushdie puts it,

³ In the scene where we see Buttle's arrest receipt, we see that the document says Buttle's religion is written as C of E, Church of England and in a following scene when Mr. Kurtzmann is checking the records the birthplace is the UK however it does not state the current state as UK, because in the address line the country is not stated and there is nowhere else in the movie where a reference is made to any countries. It will not be wrong to assume that *Brazil* is United Kingdom gone wrong, gone dystopic and therefore a new and unlocatable place or maybe the whole world or that the Buttles were migrants.

the location of *Brazil* is the cinema itself. Rushdie explains that in cinema peculiar fusions have always been legitimate. We accept Peter Sellers as a French detective, and a French actor as Tarzan of the apes. In a similar way we accept *Brazil* as all the places the ills of bureaucracy happened. Rushdie sees cinema as an imaginative place where the “plural, hybrid, metropolitan result of such imaginings” take place. *Brazil* is an imagined elsewhere. An alternative place that is in cinema and therefore reflects what cinema means to people.

When we look at *Brazil* we learn that Buttles live in Shangri La Towers⁴ which is another verbal interplay. Buttles are a working class family and the building blocks that they live in are nothing like a paradise. Other than Buttles’ address we do not acknowledge any other addresses in the film.

Any specific clues about the time in the film are the visuals and lines about Christmas. It is Christmas time on purpose to show us how extreme spending can be, and how values and love are losing their importance. The time and the space in *Brazil* are interconnected. We can explain this interconnectedness of time and space with Bakhtin’s interpretation of the chronotope. Bakhtin’s chronotope is the ‘intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature’, and represents the correlation between the fictional literary space of a text and the facets of temporality used to link the narrative together. (Bakhtin 2004: 84) Even though Bakhtin’s theory is closely related to literature, Robert Stam approaches chronotope from a cinematic point of view:

⁴ It is a fictional, paradise like place in James Hilton’s novel *Lost Horizon*.

Seems in some ways even more appropriate to film than literature, for whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual, lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time (usually 24 frames a second), quite apart from the fictive time/space specific films might construct. (Stam 1989: 11)

Brazil feels like a summary of the 20th century – the film being the moment which has the attributes of the events and societies of the whole 20th century with even some possibilities of what might happen in the future. All words and literature are in a continuous dialogue. *Brazil* as a fictional world or a chronotope is in continuous dialogue with the mise-en-scène as well with what was written or filmed before it and what will be written or filmed after it.

There is almost no single instant in the film that the mise-en-scène is not telling us a story about *Brazil*. When Helpmann is answering the questions in the interview, behind him is an eye representing the all-seeing eye representing the surveillance in the political system in *Brazil*.

Societies change, technology advances but the human or system flaws remain. As *Brazil* is a social commentary, it is easy to associate it with different periods: the past (before 20th century), the present (release time of the film; 20th century), and the future (now; 21st century). I believe that as time goes by, more and more reviews will talk about the predictive characteristics of the film. *Brazil* is almost transhistorical. As long as societal problems will exist, these comments will follow.

Time is synchronic for Gilliam. He is very interested in the Middle Ages, and even though *Brazil* does not take place in the Middle Ages, it deploys bricolage and anachronism and the elements of grotesque are to remind the audiences that technology

does not equal to utopia, and sometimes it is the malfunctions of the systems that are archaic, not the technological gadgets.

In labyrinthine world of *Brazil* outdoors feels like indoors, the inside is at outside: the citizens of *Brazil* are connected to the center with ducts and monitors. As the audiences, we do not often see when the citizens are being watched but we are given clues when troopers capture Sam and Jill at Sam's mother Ida's house or when the workers and troopers enter Jill's apartment without her consent. Surveillance and paranoia are everywhere. And at almost no point in the film, the audiences know more than Sam or Jill do. This makes it easier to identify ourselves with Sam, Jill, Harry or the Buttles. The only superiority we have over them is having known what the 20th century societal systems are like and that a surveillance state can eventually capture any citizens who are not getting along well with the system.

Like all the other elements and themes in Gilliam's films, the space and time are much connected to the type of society in the film. The government offices are modern of concrete whereas the slums are like abandoned buildings, separated from the city center with roads surrounded by huge billboards. An additional feature of the time in the film is it being fast. The first couple of times Sam sees Jill in real life is through reflections. One is through a screen in the ministry; the other is through the broken mirror in Buttle's apartment.

Gilliam utilizes every visible detail in the film: the costumes, hair, furniture, and architecture to create a world that reflects his criticism and is truthful to the real world. Not realistic but exaggerated. Not serious but satirical. I will now explore the social criticism in the film through the depiction of technology, and materialistic society, and how they affect the message of Gilliam's work.

A Non-Futuristic Dystopia

Utopian tradition has undergone changes including a modern turn towards dystopia. It is probably because the utopias before the 20th century did not happen, and the future of the past already looks dystopian looking at it from the past.

Tom Moylan in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* claims:

Dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century.... Although its roots lie in Menippean satire, realism, and the anti-utopian novels of the nineteenth century, the dystopia emerged as a literary form in its own right in the early 1900s, as capital entered a new phase with the onset of monopolized production and as the modern imperialist state extended its internal and external reach. (Moylan 2001: xi)

One's utopia can be another's dystopia and vice versa. In other words the description of dystopia is relative to your situation within it. Yet there are some shared beliefs about dystopias and utopias. Except for Ida who is enjoying the benefits of the system or others like her who have the prestige and money, and who are conformists, the life in Brazil is not one that is desired.

Dystopia can be a utopia that went wrong. Dystopia is not the opposite of utopia in the sense that it is not planned. It is the opposite of it in terms of hope. Negative utopia, positive utopia, critical utopia, anti-utopia, anti anti-utopia, satirical utopia, and classic dystopia.... Several scholars use such different terms to explain different types of utopian or dystopian works because the 20th century made both notions important, and they are no longer simple to categorize as societies change quickly.

Rafaela Baccolini and Thomas Moylan differentiate between the old, classic dystopias and the new, critical dystopias:

dystopias maintain utopian hope outside their pages . . . for it is only if we consider dystopia as a warning that . . . readers can hope to escape its pessimistic future . . . the new critical dystopias allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure: the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse within the work. (Baccolini and Moylan 2003: 7)

The concept of critical dystopia is probably the closest definition to that of intertopia, however as Baccolini and Moylan define critical dystopias as criticism towards utopian ideals themselves. It will not be wrong to see *Brazil* as a criticism towards the utopian ideals of 20th century yet it is not comprehensive enough to describe the hope and humor factors in the film.

Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash articulate that utopias and dystopias are histories of the present. They say that dystopias resemble actual societies:

People perceive their environments as dystopic, and alas they do so with depressing frequency. Whereas utopia takes us into a future and serves to indict the present, dystopia places us directly in a dark and depressing reality, conjuring up a terrifying future if we do not recognize and treat its symptoms in the here and now...Utopian visions are never arbitrary. They always draw on the resources present in the ambient culture and develop them with specific ends in mind that are heavily structured by the present. (Gordin, Tilley, Prakash 2010: 2-4)

Gilliam's intertopia reflects his perceptions of the 20th century technology, the misuse of it and therefore the surveillance state. His criticism is not of a future technology and political, economic or social system but the time the film was released. A maybe once utopian idea of excelling in technology, and the all-seeing, all-controlling state became a dystopic reality in the 20th century.

4.1. Technology and Inefficiencies

Brazil is a story that reminds us of the risks of systematization of everything and replacing human emotions with technology. The less the people care for each other, the better it is for the survival of the political system in *Brazil*. In a systemized but not efficient organism that uses inefficient technologies, people stop questioning, and the ones in rule – as they are the ones who set the rules of bureaucracy - enjoy more power and pleasures.

The film opens with the subtitle “Somewhere in the 20th century” and the word “somewhere” represents the contemporary culture enchained by devastating technologies. The government in the film creates suspicion and paranoia rather than spending time on improving the system and finding technologies that save time.

In *The Concept of Utopia*, Ruth Levitas claims:

Evolutionary images of time and social change used to be regarded as synonymous with progress. Images of decline, however, are now much more prevalent – both the idea of a gradual slide into a worsening situation and the fear of dramatic and radical collapse caused by social breakdown, nuclear catastrophe or ecological disaster. (Levitas 2010: 225)

Brazil does not open with a natural disaster. It starts with the camera skimming through the clouds in the blue sky finally reaching the sun. The sing-along song *Aquarela do Brasil* with entertaining lyrics is playing in the background for the first but not the last time in the film. This is an upbeat beginning.

Like the displays on digital clocks, the time appears on the screen: 8:49 P.M. as if to remind us that time is a technological tool as well. The time is not 8.45 or 8.50 but

it is precise: eight forty nine in the evening. The film starting with the camera breaking through the clouds, and getting close to the sun while the merry song is playing in the background does not sound like a typical dystopia. And yet at the end of the following scene, ironically, many TV screens explode on a shop display. It is Christmas time, and citizens of *Brazil* are encouraged to buy new ducts via a Central Services commercial. The presenter tells the viewers to get rid of their old-fashioned ducts, and to buy the new ducts designed for different tastes, even if their old ducts still work. He also tells them to hurry since the stocks may not last. This scene symbolizes several themes in the film such as consumerism and state control which are discussed in the related chapters. It also tells us about the level of technology in the film. However neither we nor the citizens of *Brazil* know exactly what these ducts are for. Due to the high level of control in the world of *Brazil*, we infer that they are most probably for surveillance purposes, and connect every house or office to the center. The presence of Central Services commercial for ducts is also an example of inefficiencies because we never see the citizens using the ducts. Whatever their function is, it is not for the benefit of the citizens.⁵

Our merry song is interrupted by an explosion, and a darker music, when the word Brazil is displayed on the screen as a neon sign. The TV screens look familiar as if they are the products of the 20th century. Thinking about the time the film was released (1985) the technological gadgets or devices in *Brazil* are not necessarily futuristic. The technology in the film is rather a collection and a combination of old (starting from the

⁵ In one scene Sam sends a document through a pneumatic tube and in another one when Sam's heating system is broken, we see pipes but nobody uses the big ducts in the movie or gives us a clue about what they are for. As Sam and Jill are caught in Sam's mother's apartment, one can infer that the mass surveillance is established with the help of the ducts.

beginning of 1900s) and newer (from 1980s till 2000s) technologies. In the interview in the Criterion DVD of the film, Gilliam calls *Brazil* a documentary and adds “I invented nothing. It was all there. I observed things.” While he makes this comment mostly to explain the social critical aspect of the film, it also applies to the gadgets in it since Gilliam and his team used old or already existing gadgets such as typewriters by attaching glass or mirror screens to them. The point in using technology in the film is not to have a futuristic or advanced feel but to represent the battle between nature, humans and the monstrous technologies as in the explosion of the TV screens in the beginning of the film. The presentation of TV screens in the beginning is also to express TV dependency. On one screen which still works after the explosion, we see that the Deputy Minister is attending a program on TV regarding the most recent terrorist bombings. This ongoing battle between the nature/man and technology is visible throughout the film.

Then we are introduced an office with dark furniture, huge ducts, a file cabinet, typewriters, printers and screens. In the next scenes, a single bug causes a huge problem in the bureaucracy of *Brazil*. A government employee is sitting in his office and doing no particularly worthwhile job but watching the news on his screen (which confirms us that an internet-like network is possible in *Brazil*, and internet is the product of the 20th century). He sees a flying bug and desperately wants to kill it. In order to do so he climbs on a filing cabinet, which is still a valid technology even nowadays but is also archaic, and he kills the bug. In this bureaucratic world of technology, literally, a bug in the machine can change the whole story. The smashed bug falls inside a printer while an important official document is being printed: the file about the supposed terrorist Tuttle.

The dead body of the bug causes a mistyping and on one of the copies of the document, the name Tuttle appears as Buttle. This single event of killing the bug is the triggering element in the story, and shows that technology without the control of the human mind does not always make life easier.⁶

We see other malfunctions of technology later in the film. Sam's toast machine and coffee machine do not function properly, the coffee machine spills coffee over the toast machine, and the toast is floppy. This scene starts with a power cut that causes Sam to be late for work. The system is not without its flaws. Actually nothing seems to work properly. These problems occur not only because of the inefficient and ineffective technologies but also because of bureaucracy. Max Weber explains his thoughts on bureaucracy as:

Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational. This consists on the one hand in technical knowledge which, by itself, is sufficient to ensure it a position of extraordinary power. But in addition... holders of power... increase their power... by the knowledge growing out of experience... technical knowledge is somewhat the same position as commercial secrets to technological training. It is a product of the striving for power. (Weber 1947: 339)

Gilliam approaches bureaucracy and technology in a similar way. In *Brazil* the ruling class tries to maintain their position by collecting information and surveillance of the citizens. Weber's following words describe the relationship between bureaucracy and the loss of individuality.

Tony Williams calls *Brazil* a futuristic film in his *The Ploughman's Lunch*

⁶ No matter how important the Buttle-Tuttle confusion is essential to the plot; its main purpose is to satirize the society depicted in *Brazil*. If the bug did not cause the misunderstanding and the papers were printed correctly, Tuttle would be arrested which would still be a mistake but with the bug being smashed, we have a more satirical story.

Remembering or forgetting history article and yet the technology in the film is not more advanced than the 20th century technology. The human workforce has not been replaced by the machines. Except for the surveillance robot, we do not see any robotic machines. The technological devices appear to be from different years in the 20th century. This mixture of gadgets is not uncommon in our contemporary society. It is sometimes for decoration however at other times it is because the governments or institutions do not invest in the newest technologies. Even when they do, they keep the old ones for financial reasons or convenience. Typewriters, filing cabinets can be used in the same room with the most advanced computers as anachronistic technologies therefore even if this mixture of styles and different years creates a grotesque feeling, it is also familiar.

Sam's dreams and fantasies are crucial in the film and they will be covered in the related chapter. Even they include some technological elements. Sam is as free as a bird in his dreams. He has wings which are not biological or natural ones. The material of his wings looks like metal. This is probably to show that neither Gilliam nor Sam is actually not against technology; Sam is only tired of the inefficiencies and inaccuracies. As long as technology is functional like the wings that make him free and allow him to save Jill, technology is good. However, in the world of *Brazil* everything is done the hard or the wrong way, and nobody seems to admit to the problems. The government services cut a hole in Jill's apartment's floor that leads to the Buttle apartment. The workers, who are supposed to fix this hole by replacing it with a cutout circle the size of it, actually have a too small circle and they blame another government institution for the mistake. If we take bureaucracy as a tool of technology we see two bureaucratic inaccuracies; one is the Buttle-Tuttle confusion. The workers tell Jill that the government officers were looking

for Tuttle, and when Jill responds to them there must have been a mistake because it is Buttle not Tuttle, the workers say “We do not make mistakes.” Right after that the circle that they have does not fit in the hole, it is smaller and falls through. This ironic scene is about a bureaucracy that does not work.

In the scene when Sam is trying to call central services about his problem with heating he has to deal with a trippy operation machine voice. He cannot tell them that his problem is urgent, and even though the machine repeatedly tells Sam that central services cannot help him, they record his voice and later two incompetent central services plumbers visit Sam even though we did not expect them to.

The founding principles and rules of the state must be so irrational that Mrs. Buttle not having a bank account creates a problem for the bureaucracy. Nothing is designed for the people but rather for bureaucracy.

With the help of technology; the ducts and the screens, the state probably practices surveillance at all levels. It is not possible to completely separate technology from surveillance since the surveillance elements in the film are related to the political system in the film and the rules of society.

4.2. Surveillance and Power

Originating from the French word *surveiller*, surveillance⁷ means monitoring or close observation over something or someone, and it has a long history, a history that is

⁷ According to the first edition of Oxford Dictionary, surveillance means “watch or guard kept over a person, etc., esp. over a suspected person, a prisoner, or the like; often, spying, supervision; less commonly, supervision for the purpose of direction or control, superintendence.” A Supplement to Oxford Dictionary, 1986 edition defines “surveil” as “to exercise surveillance over (someone), subject (someone) to surveillance.

as old as the mankind. The word surveillance has various implications. For instance mass surveillance, passive surveillance, and visual surveillance all mean different things. Even if surveillance is an old practice, it has been used widely in the 21st century after certain advancements in technology, and it is no wonder that surveillance theory is influenced by the works of writers like Franz Kafka and George Orwell.

Gilliam's *Brazil* has Kafkaesque or Orwellian tendencies though *Brazil* has more in common with Kafka's novel *The Trial*, where he describes the loss of individuality caused by bureaucracy, than with *1984*. The protagonist Josef K. is arrested by two unidentified agents for an unspecified crime, a crime that he did not commit but feels responsible to explain himself. First his life is ruined, later he is killed by the agents. The plot is not very different in *Brazil*. Later in the film Sam is accused of betrayal to the system based upon vague reasons, and he is captured. This leads to a chain of Kafkaesque events. Gilliam likes to pay homage to his heroes who have been great social critiques and philosophers. Like in Kafka's worlds, the people who are arrested actually become guilty at the end.

In his books *Discipline and Punish* and *Power/Knowledge*, Michel Foucault explored the history of punishment, and stated that the power and knowledge relations are inseparable. According to Foucault, in our contemporary societies surveillance has become an important and widely practiced feature. He sought to make sense of how the society of today differs from the society of the past. His findings show us that each process of modernization caused changes in the use of power and that the governments claimed great control over their citizens. For him surveillance works to cause us a feeling of being watched all the time. He also believed that Bentham's idea of the

Panopticon has been applied in many different ways. He was interested in how people use information, and he believed that knowledge is a form of power.

The similarities between Foucault's works and *Brazil* are many but the literature on Gilliam talks about surveillance briefly, and it often mentions paranoia and hyper reality, however, scholars usually only look at the state or mass surveillance. It is possible to argue, nevertheless, that Gilliam gives his audiences a sense of freedom allowing them to question the causes of all types of surveillance, especially the citizens watching over other citizens, in the worlds of his films.

Most dystopias depict an omnipotent state. The powerful state in *Brazil* controls every aspect of its citizens' lives, even their love and is probably one too however the citizens are not aware that they are monitored almost everywhere and Bentham's notion of the Panopticon cannot be fully applied to *Brazil*. Bentham saw Panopticon as a way to control people. However Foucault argues "the Panopticon, on the other hand, must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men." (Foucault 2001: 205) State surveillance over the Brazilites is commonly practiced but through the dreams/fantasies Gilliam gives the message "Another life is possible." Surveillance is not the best protector for the people. Sooner or later the man will seek his freedom.

There is social pressure in *Brazil*. For instance a lady walking her dog on the street warns Sam when he drops his paperwork, and complains about the foreigners ruining their society. The citizens feel the need to warn and control others and they have self-control as in the case of Jack.

The state claims to fight terrorism but the terrorist bombings have been going on for thirteen years. Whether or not the government itself creates terrorism, pretends there is terrorism or there are real terrorists does not change the flaws in the system. It is hypocritical and in all these cases the state is not successful. Nothing works perfectly. The system in *Brazil* can get into people's bedrooms. The citizens do not know when and where they are being watched. In 1985, surveillance was highly practiced by governments but we know that it is exaggerated since the technologies in the 20th century did not necessarily allow for a mass surveillance or the laws do not let the governments to watch everyone in their private homes. Like the tubes in *1984*, there are ducts and tubes in *Brazil* that are used for monitoring or communication services. They tie the citizens to the center. The political system is vague in the film. It can be a totalitarian and fascist government; it can be a capitalist or socialist system since the criticisms in the film are against all systems that go wrong if not run properly. Nevertheless it is a society of control, and upper-class ruled nation state. Civic virtue and the moral education of citizens are very central. Dystopia is often described as an authoritarian or totalitarian form of government, and the political system in *Brazil* is the most dystopian element. In most utopias and dystopias there is a status-quo however *Brazil* is subject to suspected terrorism and threats.

State propaganda is commonly practiced as another authoritarian aspect. Bureaucratic regulations are strict. During a TV interview in the beginning of the film, the interviewer asks Helpmann what he thinks about the terrorist attacks being there for 13 years. Helpmann answers by saying "Beginner's luck". He also calls them "those who cannot see the other fellow win". Helpmann is doing two things here; he is using

understatement to explain such a long terrorist attack and he is praising the taxpayers, and calling them winners and the terrorists – if any – losers. In other words he is saying that the system is favoring some people over the others; like one group's utopia being the other's dystopia.

Lyman Tower Sargent sought a definition for utopia in his article '*Utopia – the Problem of Definition*' and called it a "fairly detailed description of a social system that is nonexistent but located in time and space" (Sargent 1975: 143) however the system in *Brazil* is not totally nonexistent, it revolves around the idea of the oppressive systems in the 20th century.

We do not know whether there is someone above Mr. Helpmann. He is the Deputy Minister but the highest ranked officer whom we see in the film. He is like a Big Brother.

4.3. Satire and Awareness: Materialistic Society

Satire usually criticizes the foibles of the society. According to Gilliam, one of these foibles of 20th century society is consumerism. In an early example in the film, Helpmann directly looks into the camera and wishes everyone a merry Christmas. We see this on the TV screen in Buttle family's living room. In the meanwhile Mrs. Buttle reads *A Christmas Carol* to her daughter. She comes to the end where Dickens says "Scrooge became a second father to Tim". This ironic case of Helpmann who eventually is the head of the evil wishing everyone a merry Christmas and later wearing a Santa

costume at the end of the film, and Buttles having a warm Christmas even if their state is a malicious one, are two of the most important examples of the differences between the classes in the film. And Gilliam does not terminate the irony in the scene with the reference to *A Christmas Carol* but Buttles' daughter tells her mother: "Father Christmas cannot come if we haven't got a chimney". At that instant the troopers enter the room from the whole that was cut in the ceiling and some other break the door whereas another group enters the room by breaking the glass windows.

By changing the ambiance from a warm family scene to a horrific and wrongful arrest, Gilliam establishes the scope between utopia and dystopia. Another detail in the scene that adds to irony is Buttles' son playing with trooper toys. Later this kid will be pushed by the troopers. However this is the point where Gilliam is distinguishing his film from dystopian and horrific films. In *The Scientific World View in Dystopia* Alexandra Aldridge articulates that satire has two characteristics: the predominating negative part, which attacks folly and vice, and the understated positive part, which establishes a norm, a standard of excellence, against which folly and vice are judged. (Aldridge 1984: 6) The government official executes the arrest with the troopers reads the official arrest document in a robotic manner and tells Mrs. Buttle to press harder while she signs the papers. The employment of exaggeration (as in the behavior of the troopers and the government official) and absurdity; from sublime to ridiculous, allow us to be aware of what is sublime and what is ridiculously wrong.

This scene also represents disrespect. The troopers do not think it is wrong to push a kid, and Mr. Buttle has to wear a blind shirt. He is arrested for no reason and becomes just a file number as we see in the next scene.

The societal and political system in *Brazil* does not allow for any individuation. The controlling purpose in the life of *Brazil* is to secure welfare. The standard of living among the working class is low, and it is very high for the ruling elites. There is a hierarchy in the society. Individuality is not appreciated or allowed. Dominance of servitude and uniformity or in short bureaucracy is what keeps the system going. Due to the dehumanizing effect of the society, the people become conformist citizens. Love can be an expression of individualism and like all non-economic individual choices, it is controlled.

Consumerism, and materialistic society are two aspects of the 20th century that are both utopian and dystopian. This complexity of materialistic society has been acknowledged by Jean Baudrillard. In his *Systems of Objects* he says: “Advertising is a prophetic language, in so far as it promotes not learning or understanding but hope.” (Baudrillard 1996: 127) Baudrillard expands on this idea in his *Consumer Society*: “The manifest presence of surplus, the magical, definitive negation of scarcity, the maternal, luxurious sense of being already in the land of Cockaigne . . . These are our Valleys of Canaan where, in place of milk and honey, streams of neon flow down over ketchup and plastic.” (Baudrillard 1996: 33) According to him, we buy materials for the fantasy, the utopia that they provide. Just in that manner *Brazil*'s excessive consumerism is a dystopian element that is the utopia of the ruling class.

Sam's mother Ida represents consumption. She is the metaphor for the materialistic commodity culture, as she is a fashion fetish, very satisfied of her position in the society who also enjoys wealth and plastic surgeries. When it comes to the problems of the society, she is careless as we see in the explosion scene in the restaurant.

She does not seem to wonder how the injured people are. Jill is the opposite of Ida with her choices of clothes, her lifestyle and her care for other people.

In *The Battle of Brazil* Jack Matthews claims that Gilliam is interested in “the loss of passion in bureaucratic societies, the willingness of people to surrender their individuality for the comfort and security of acceptance within the system” (Matthews 1996: 10) Just as described, Sam is a passionless bureaucrat surrounded by the substantial amount of propaganda in the film. Though as the society in *Brazil* is stratified, not all the citizens are conformists. Elites believe that there are terrorists whereas Jill does not. Elites are indifferent to other classes. At one scene, a pregnant and disabled woman is standing in the cage like to tube while traveling with desperate looking people. Nobody seems to notice her.

People from different segments work at different jobs, dress and behave differently and live in different places. Jill has only one monitor at her home but she uses mirrors to watch TV in the bathroom. However Sam and Ida have fancier apartments. Money is vital in Brazil. Even the invasion of people’s lives is not for free. People need to pay for the trouble they caused to the state.

Mrs. Buttle asks Sam what they had done with the body (referring to her husband as “the body.”) as if nothing is tangible in this world of *Brazil*. For her, her husband is more than a body but she is using a language that she thinks a government officer can understand. She knows that her husband is dead because there has been a refund of his charges. The best that the government of *Brazil* can do in case of a mistake is an automatic refund. Since Mrs. Buttle does not have a bank account, Sam does an

exception and visits Mrs. Buttle. Mrs. Buttle knows what happened to her husband instantly. The world of *Brazil* is preoccupied with bodies and obsessed with consumption. Just as plastic surgery is very common in *Brazil* people's bodies that die in terrorist attacks or under government torture, point to the commodification of bodies in the film. The elites are insensitive to the explosions. The survival of bureaucracy is the top concern of the government. The operation of it is more important than human life, as if the system replaces the individual.

It would not be wrong to say the system does not favor everyone: the citizens who are arrested have to pay information retrieval charges to the state. It is hard to guess the type of political and economic system in *Brazil* but consumption is highly encouraged by the state.

The society in *Brazil* is structured like a machine, composed of different parts, parts being the citizens and their managers who each execute a task that is usually defined by their family background. It is a system that favors Nepotism. They do their jobs without much thinking. Though the system keeps going on.

Gilliam criticizes the American dream and shows us that there is a dark side of it too. The world is not always portrayed from this alternative point. In a manipulative system, people become a cog-in-the-wheel, and are caught in the operation of the machine. If the human aspects are not taken into account, the oppressive nature of modernity starts to take over.

Conclusion

In this study I have argued that what constitute the intertopian characteristics of *Brazil* are Gilliam's use of satire and grotesque along with exaggeration, verbal interplays, visual gags, understatement, incongruity, references to body, and the theme of love by a deep analysis of the text. It is easier for the audiences to identify common faults in the 20th century societies with the help of exaggeration. Since this is only one reading of the text, it explores only the intertopian elements in the film. I use the 1999, Criterion Final Director's Cut of the film for this is the version that Terry Gilliam most approves of.

If we draw a line between utopia and dystopia on the same axis, utopia being one end point and dystopia being the other, *Brazil* stands between these two points and closer to dystopia. I tried to draw the same line in this study by looking at the utopian notions in the film, then the more complex elements, and finally the dystopian elements. As the dystopian notions of the film have already been explored in other studies, this study shows where *Brazil* touches hope and humor.

Terry Gilliam's contributions to cinema are unique and varied. Since this study is limited in space, it focuses only on a textual reading of *Brazil*. Further research could

compare the notions of utopia and dystopia in George Orwell's *1984* and *Brazil* or Michael Radford's *1984* and *Brazil*.

This study approaches utopia, dystopia and intertopia as notions and not genres. In doing so, it analyzes the plot, the characters, the use of language and the mise-en-scène. All of these elements have both utopian and dystopian characteristics; sometimes more than the other. The literature on *Brazil* usually defines it as a science-fiction film or a dystopian film about the future and based on Orwell *1984*. These descriptions seek a genre classification and therefore the carnivalesque quality of *Brazil* is not the prior concern. Michael Palin, a Monty Python member like Terry Gilliam himself, wrote in his diaries published as a book that he saw Michael Radford's truthful film adaptation *1984* and he was struck by the similarities like the police state. He also mentions that Radford has a wordy, careful approach to his adaptation whereas *Brazil* takes you into the film. His genuine surprise also shows that Gilliam was not aiming at adapting *1984* the novel but 1984 the year and the prior and following years to it – in other words the 20th century.

With all the criticism towards state surveillance, economic gaps between social classes, loss of values and individuality, lack of a legal system based on human rights, *Brazil* has solid dystopian notions. However it also is a satire with a carnivalesque approach. It tries to cause awareness rather than fear. Gilliam uses the devices of satire and comedy to confront the problems of surveillance societies. Drawing on Ernst Bloch's theory of ideology, in which ideology is both a model for an alternative society and criticism of the current ones, Fredric Jameson argues that mass cultural products might have utopian aspects as well. He uses *Jaws* as an example and suggests that the

film has a utopian image of the family. Unlike Horkheimer and Adorno (2001), he looks for utopian ideas in mass culture. In accordance to utopian ideas in mass culture, *Brazil* depicting a society which lost ties with its humanitarian roots, has a utopian image of the future.

This study was set out to explore the utopian and dystopian notions in *Brazil* and approached any fearful, humorous or hopeful examples in the movie as modes only but not a genre. In the core of this study is hope. Not only the hope in the film but also the hope that this study could help us understand *Brazil* and other intertopian works.

In summary, through the presentation of various examples in the film, I have explored the drama followed by humor formula in *Brazil*. Hopefully further research and investigation can shed light on other intertopian works.

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Appendix: Synopsis

Brazil is mainly about the changes in Sam Lowry's life. Sam Lowry is a clerk in the Records, a low level department within the Ministry, in the beginning.

His father Jeremiah, who was probably a high-level government officer himself, died. His mother Ida is a lively woman who likes to get plastic surgeries and lead an extravagant lifestyle. Her plans for her son include Sam to get a promotion with her help and match with her friend Mrs. Terrain's daughter Shirley.

The film starts with an explosion which we later learn that is a terrorist attack. It is Christmas time and everybody is shopping. After the explosion, the government decides to arrest someone called (Harry) Tuttle however things go wrong and because of a clerical error one of the warrants are issued for (Archibald) Buttle.

Mr. Buttle spends a warm Christmas with his family without knowing that he will soon be arrested. Troopers arrest Mr. Buttle and in the meanwhile Buttle's neighbor who lives in the flat above witnesses the arrest. Her name is Jill Layton. She is a truck driver and also happens to be (to look like) Sam's dream girl. Jill knows that the Buttle arrest was wrong and visits the related ministries to report the wrongful arrest.

Sam has a friend from school: Jack Lint. He is married to Allison and they have triplets together. Jack is not as smart as Sam but he is more ambitious and has a higher position in the Ministry.

Sam has a good relationship with his boss Mr. Kurtzmann. Mr. Kurtzmann counts on him and Sam is very relaxed around him.

Buttle is killed during the torture, and according to the government regulations the arrested person pays for his arrest however since Mr. Buttle dies, the government has to refund that money. The task has to be accomplished by Sam's department. Mr. Kurtzmann asks Sam for help. Sam learns that Mrs. Buttle does not have a bank account therefore he decides to pay a visit to her and give her the check himself. When Sam goes to Buttles he sees Jill.

Sam's mother Ida talks to their family friend Mr. Helpmann who is the deputy manager about Sam's position, and Sam gets the chance to be promoted. Sam refuses the promotion first. In the meanwhile when Sam's heating system breaks down, we learn that Harry Tuttle is not a terrorist but a freelance plumber who helps people for free because the government system for heating and plumbing and the workers are not helpful.

Sam thinks about Jill all the time and looks up her name in the government files. However he cannot access all the files as they are classified. He then decides to accept the promotion. Sam sees Mr. Helpmann at his mother's Christmas and after surgery party. He tells him he wants to be promoted. When Sam starts his new job, the first thing he does is to find out more about Jill. Jack works in the same building as Sam, and Sam asks for his help to reach Jill. Jack seems to have the opinion that Jill and Tuttle are both terrorists. When Jill visits the Ministry of Information, Sam's new workplace, Sam acts as if he is in charge, and saves Jill from getting arrested.

Jill without knowing who he is tries to run away Sam jumps into Jill's truck and explains the situation to her. Jill does not believe that there are terrorists. She questions Sam in the beginning but trusts him. On the way Jill takes a parcel from a man and tells Sam that it is a Christmas present for him. Sam is a little bit suspicious.

They are followed by the troopers. They enter a shopping mall and an explosion occurs. At first Sam thinks Jill's parcel exploded however Jill shows him that it was a gift, and they help the wounded people.

After the explosion, they apart from each other. Jill finds Sam in his apartment, and in the meanwhile Harry Tuttle is there to fix the system. Jill does not know him. We learn that neither of them are terrorists. Sam and Jill are about to have a romantic time afterwards however Sam decides to erase the government files about Jill. For the second time they try to have a romantic time but the troopers break in and arrest the two.

The next thing we know is that Jill is killed while resisting the arrest, and torture and Sam is in chains and in an electric shock chair. Mr. Helpmann dressed as Santa Claus and Jack try to convince Sam to accept all the charges and admit to his mistakes however all Sam can think about is Jill. After learning that she is dead, he loses his mind and dreams of being saved by Tuttle and his friends and afterwards starting a new life with Jill in a rural place with no surveillance.