Chapter 3

Orwellian Modernity: Utopia/Dystopia and the City of the Future Past

Thomas More is credited with coining the term 'utopia' in the sixteenth century, but More's utopia was by no means the first. Utopias are as old as the history of humankind. In his 1939 lecture titled 'Utopia', H.G. Wells argued that utopias are historically situated, and that they reflect 'our stresses'. He claimed, 'The more disturbed men's minds are, the more Utopias multiply'.[1] In Wells's account, utopias have proliferated during historical turning points, including the Renaissance with its discovery of foreign lands. Wells differentiated between 'utopias of freedom and conduct' and 'utopias of organization'. Of the latter type, Campanella's *City of the Sun* was the first utopia to define socialism, and More's *Utopia* was the first to deal with organization.[2]

The period at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth gave rise to another wave of disturbances and utopias. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and Wells's *When the Sleeper Awakes* (1899) might be the most well-known examples, but they represent only the tip of the iceberg.[3] At the time, the emergence of monopoly capitalism and the scientific management of labour coupled with urbanization, the invention of new technologies of transportation and communication, shifts in the perception of time, movement and subjectivity, and the rise of the new modes of entertainment, and a culture of consumption produced a multitude of distresses that provoked utopian fiction. In this time of transition, Wells imagined in *When the Sleeper Awakes* an archetypal welfare state.[4] Janet Steiger has argued that this book also featured a 'super-city', simultaneously utopian and dystopian.[5] A precursor to cinematic future cities, it took the form of a glass-roofed climate-controlled environment where people were surrounded by advertisements, and treated to 'babble machines' which provided constant news. In this city, a Sanitary Company burned books, and people were rather forced to watch 'kineto-tele-photographs'. Yet, despite a governmental ordering of social services, hierarchies continued to exist, with labourers

(living and working underground) separated physically from nobility.[6] Such architectural motifs and the plot structure of *When the Sleeper Awakes* – which involves the efforts of a couple escaping the tyranny of the city to reach the countryside – recurred in a series of dystopic films throughout the twentieth century.[7] Unlike their cinematic incarnations, however, the protagonists of Wells's book choose to return to the city. In some sense then, Wells's dystopia – of an all-powerful, but failing, welfare state – is also his utopia.

In the 1920s, Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) and Yevgeny Zamyatin's novel *My* (1924), also titled *We*, initiated a new tradition of science-fictional dystopia.[8] *My* was soon to be followed by even more famous science-fictional dystopian novels: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949). Meanwhile, new dystopian films adopted the visual and architectural language of *Metropolis*: that of a modernism of towering high-rises occupied by the ruling classes, and a medieval underground allocated to labourers and common folk. David Desser has contended that, 'While much science-fiction or fantasy literature of the pre-cinematic age was concerned with the creation of utopias, cinema would carry forward the dystopic tradition inaugurated by *Metropolis*'.[9] Films produced in the second half of the twentieth century also adopted or adapted the political structure of *1984* in their scripts. The tradition of dystopian filmmaking continues to be used today to critique the false utopian visions of corporate and state monopoly capitalism.

In discussing the modernity of urban capitalism and the city of the welfare state and its representations, two issues arise – Fordism and science fiction – both of which will be central to our analysis of the two films in this chapter. In the early twentieth century, artists and thinkers became disillusioned with industrial modernity, often because of the exploitation it produced and the alienation it induced. While workers laboured to produce goods they could not afford, consumers were becoming increasingly detached from the conditions – both ecological and human – of their production. One may argue that alienation from the product underwrote alienation from the activity of production and led to the alienation of human beings from each other and from humanity itself. Such a condition of disconnected production and consumption, coupled with the provision of new infrastructural technologies, however, also created fascination for the prospects of an imaginary dual city – a subterranean world of workers, industrial production, criminals, and the wretched versus an above-ground environment of cafes, urban strolling, parks, department stores, and consumption. Tom Gunning has summarized literature's fascination with the underground world that comprised the first half of this equation:

> This underground technological subcity excited curiosity (such as the tours of Parisian sewers) and flights of imagination (such as the underground literary fantasies Rosalind

Williams has chronicled). It also served as a metaphor for the subterranean world of urban underclasses, the city of dreadful delights which likewise excited the voyeurism of urban spectatorship in the form of explorations of the new city's 'other half' by journalists and social reformers.[10]

It is not surprising that one of the greatest utopias of the twentieth century would be a model from within the capitalist system, which would attempt to bridge the distance between these two worlds, as well as between workers and their products. This, of course, was Fordism, which grew from the social idealism of the automobile mogul, Henry Ford.

Fordism promised a better mode of life within the industrial age. Yet, it also relied upon a combination of corporate power and centralized state authority under the economic paradigm of Keynesianism.[11] In this way, Fordism imagined that state power could be used to provide social rights through the welfare state that compensated for the damaging side effects of monopoly capitalism. Indeed, 'postwar Fordism has to be seen less as a mere system of mass production and more as a total way of life'.[12] It aimed to programme not only work but all aspects of life.

In this chapter, we will use two science-fiction films, Lang's *Metropolis*[13] and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985),[14] to talk about the utopian/dystopian aspects of twentieth-century modernity. Both allow us to see and understand the complex relationship between capital, the state, and the city. While *Metropolis* stands as the ultimate example of how capitalism was imagined to shape the city and its urban forms in the early part of the twentieth century, *Brazil* illustrates how the welfare state of the mid-century – which emerged in response to the excesses of capitalism – was imagined to create its own form of totalizing state control over the economy.

A key aspect of the political systems depicted in the two films, and of twentieth-century dystopian visions in general, is a comprehensive system of surveillance. In order to manage leisure and regulate the consumption that was to drive production, the managers of industry needed to create an apparatus that would keep track of the lives of its citizens. Infrastructure provision, schools, police, secret services, health services, and financial organizations thus spread out as an official system of services, which also functioned as a network of controls and a surveillance apparatus. 'This gaze was organized under the premise that no citizen should have anything to hide'.[15] Indeed, those who hid were assumed to be guilty, and those who surveilled were also to be under surveillance.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Michel Foucault termed this web of state social services 'disciplinary apparatuses'.[16] In a series of books, he described the enclosed institutions of the prison, the mental hospital, and the school as the identifiers, containers and tamers of the deviant. Using Jeremy

Bentham's panopticon, a mechanism for the control of prisons, as an ideal, he also described the internalization of this system of surveillance. Foucault contrasted two forms of social control. At one extreme was the blockade, the enclosed institution, established on the edges of society, turned inward toward negative functions – arresting evil, breaking communications, suspending time. At the other extreme was panopticism, an internalized mechanism that improved the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, and more effective. The movement from one project to the other, from a schema of exceptional discipline to one of a generalized surveillance, rested on a historical transformation – the gradual extension of the mechanisms of discipline, and the formation of what might be called, in general, the disciplinary society.[17] Foucault conceptualized disciplinary normalization as a general attribute of modernity. But clearly, Fordism, with its totalizing rationality and orientation towards self-regulation, was the realization of the disciplinary society.

Another key aspect of both *Metropolis* and *Brazil* is that they rely on references to architectural modernism. In particular, while the rest of the urbanscape is depicted through an eclectic mix of architectural styles, the high-rise building in the city is prescribed as the archetypal image of monopoly capitalism. Set fifty-eight years apart, in equally defining moments, such symbolism shows how the films share a similar view of technology (as out of control and as a domineering system). Modernism and the drive toward ever more dominant technology are seen as threats to the 'nature' and wholeness of humankind. Beyond such similarities, however, the two films evoke very different versions of utopia from within their respective dystopias. *Metropolis* proposes the union of spirituality/emotion and rationality, while *Brazil* proposes fantasy and the creative potential of the individual.

The City of Capitalist Modernity

It is very hard to talk about a single *Metropolis* since it is a celluloid film, a cinematic city, and a referenced real city.[18] *Metropolis*, the film, borrows its name from 'Metropolis', the city which is the setting, topic, and structuring device of the film. In turn, this city was inspired both by the Manhattan skyline, and by 1920s Berlin as it appeared in debates on architecture, urbanization and society in Weimar Germany.[19]

The story of *Metropolis* takes place in a future, generic city where spatial levels correspond to social hierarchy and function. Above the subterranean workers' city exists an upper-class world of nightclubs, outdoor sports, and heavenly gardens. As the film begins, Freder Fredersen (played by Gustav Frohlich), the son of the Master of the city, is being entertained at the
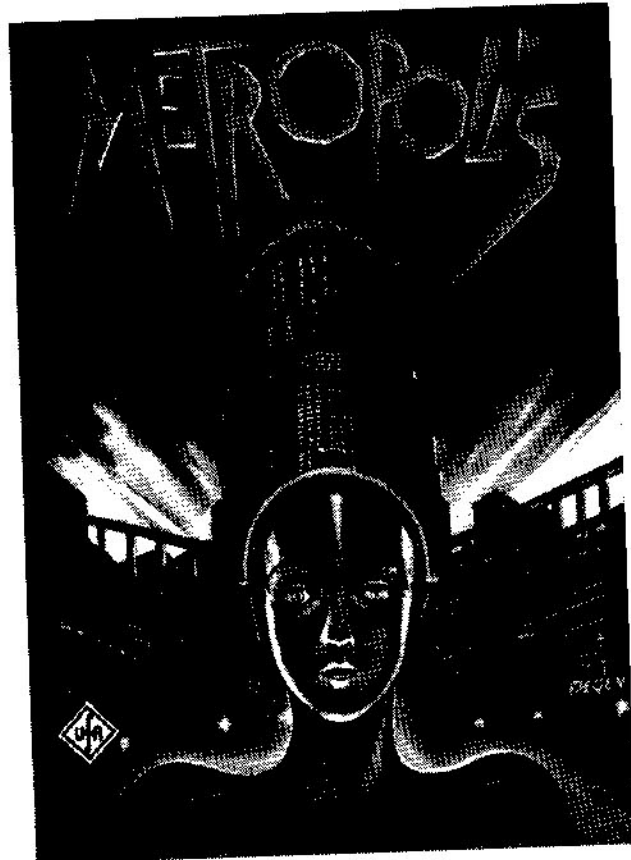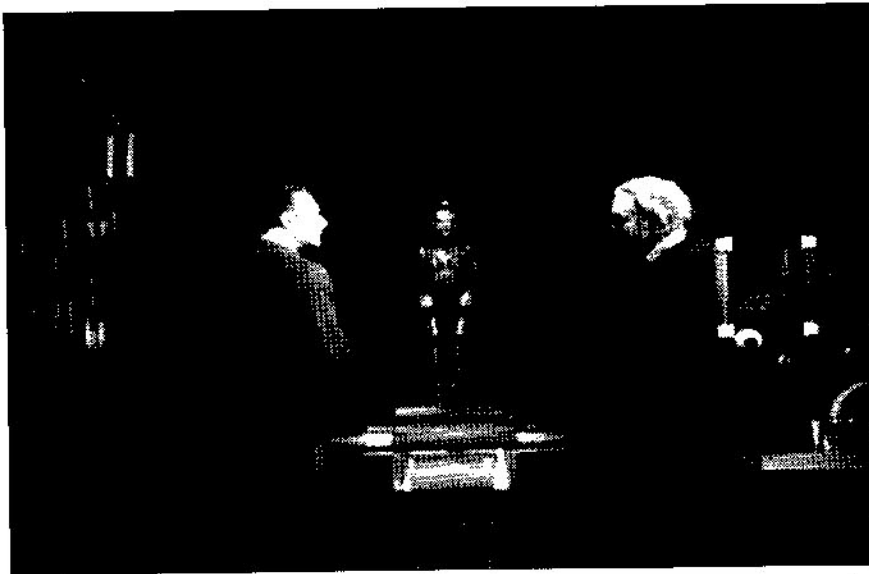
Metropolis (1927).
Film poster.

pleasure garden. However, Maria (played by Brigitte Helm), a beautiful, good-hearted girl from the working sector, makes a sudden and unwelcome appearance there along with a group of working-class children. She instantly, but inadvertently, grabs Freder's attention. Their attraction is shown to be mutual before guards intervene and take Maria and the children away. Afterwards, Freder sneaks into the world of subterranean factories to quench his curiosity about Maria's identity. What he sees there causes him to agonize over the labourers' appalling conditions. He frantically approaches his father, Joh Fredersen (the 'Master' of Metropolis), to discuss the matter, but his father evades him. Highly suspicious of his son, Fredersen recruits a spy to report on Freder. Freder goes to the Machine Room and exchanges identities with a worker so that he can find Maria.

Maria's power is based on her female sexuality. Although, Federson sees her as a challenge because the workers listen to her, she preaches patience to the labourers in the catacombs. It does not matter that Maria is diffusing revolutionary tendencies; her revolutionary potential alarms the ruler of the Metropolis. Federsen next decides to ask the mad scientist Rotwang to make the robot he has been working on look like Maria to sabotage her influence.

Rotwang traps Maria in one of the tunnels with his flashlight, and uses an electrochemical process to transfer her human character into the robot.[20] Once her sexuality is sucked out of her, the real Maria becomes an impotent mother figure.[21] Meanwhile, the robot becomes Maria's double – a powerful combination of human and machine. In particular, Maria's double now has an overt sexuality with which she eludes Rotwang's control and ignites social discontent among the working classes. After an inflaming speech, they rebel, and the city's foundations are shaken. However, when a flood begins to inundate the workers' houses, they realize their uprising will not lead to emancipation but only to their own destruction. Thereafter, the workers turn against Maria's double and burn her at the stake. However, when her outer flesh melts away to expose her machine interior, her subversive potential is undermined.[22] It is at this point that Freder assumes the role of the saviour. He rescues the children from the flood and the real Maria from Rotwang. In the final scene, in front of the cathedral, Freder mediates for the reconciliation of the labourers (people) and Joh (Jehovah) Fredersen.

At the centre of the film is a message that only the heart can mediate between the hand and the mind. In the world of *Metropolis*, the hand is unthinking labour, while capital is the mind. Religion, which is the heart, is the only thing that offers the possibility of reconciliation.[23] Religious symbolism and Biblical references may be found both in the film's plot and the organization of its spaces. However, there is far more nuance in *Metropolis* than a simple dichotomy of heaven and hell, upper ground and underground. Critics have argued a better analogy may be the Tower of


Metropolis. The master of the Metropolis and the scientist Rotwang deliberate over the robot in the making.

Babel, a famous Biblical story, to which Maria actually refers during the film.[24] Babel (or Metropolis) is a utopia. For having challenged the divine by building it, mankind is doomed by God to a life where nobody can speak the same language.

In *Metropolis*, the contrast between worlds is extreme. Above the catacombs are the slums where the workers live. Nondescript tall apartment buildings, with regular grids of windows, are cramped together around a square with a bell in the middle. The general atmosphere here is dark and dingy, and there is no natural light. Tunnels and industrial lifts connect this workers' city to the machines, on the third level. As the workers submissively queue in the tunnels for their shifts, the camera frames them from behind as a 'mass' without faces (individuality). The central machine consists of a multilevel theatrical stage of stepped balconies with workers each facing a separate display device on its walls. The workers run three types of machines and, hence, spaces: Moloch, Paternoster, and the Heart Machine.[25] Their mechanistic movements operate as they the machines serve to critique the inhumane conditions under which they labour.

Meanwhile, above ground, the privileged occupy spaces elevated according to their status within society. The architecture of the high-rise apartment buildings here appears in both Art Deco and Modernist styles, but both utilize glass and iron extensively. Inspired by New York City, this is a city of multiple levels.[26] Biplanes and airships frequent the sky, and
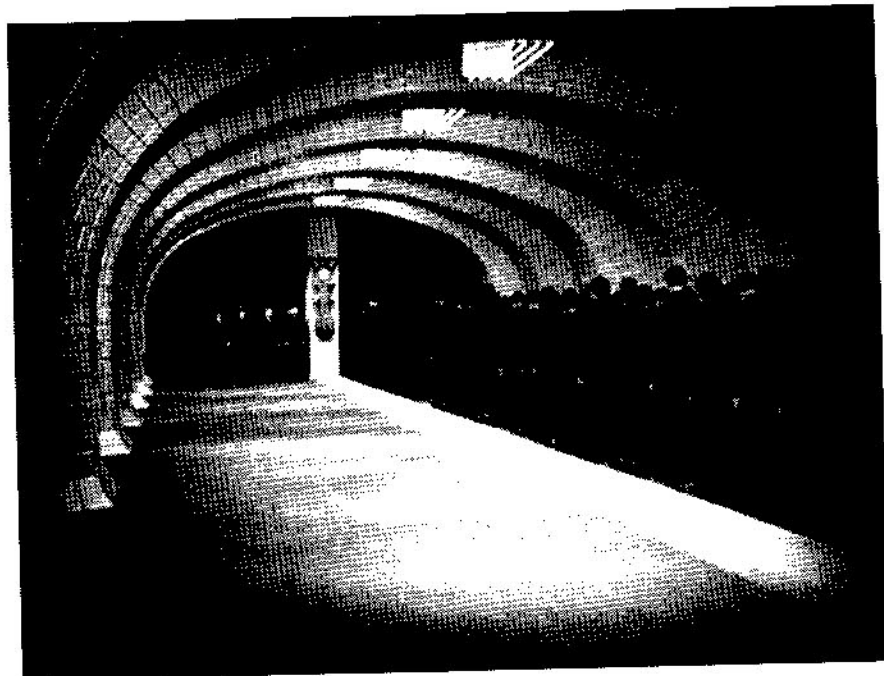
Metropolis. When their shifts are over, workers descend to their underground city.
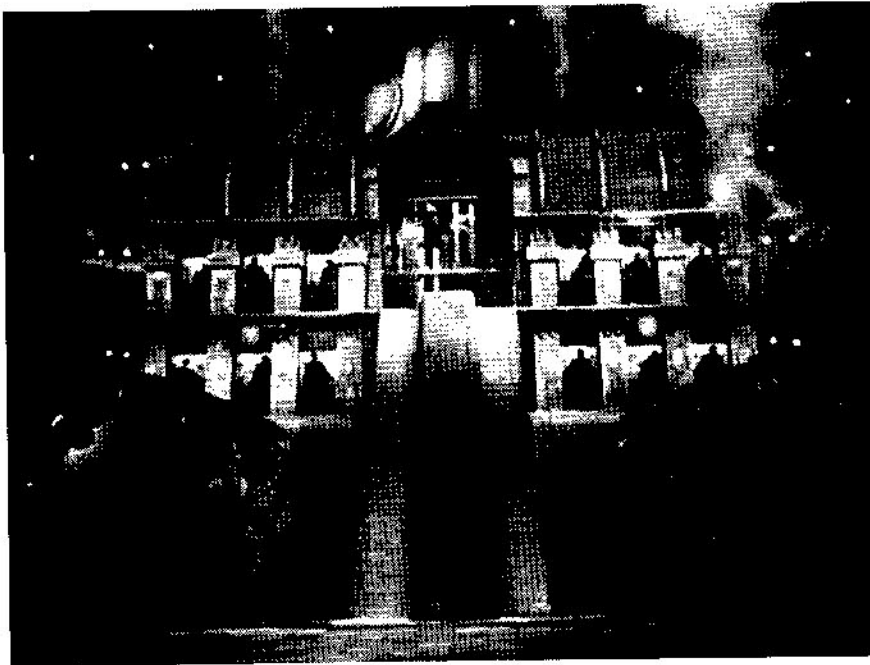
Metropolis. Workers operate the 'Moloch' machine.

above the streets are skywalks and high-altitude bridges. The ground level features nightlife, particularly Yoshiwara's – named after a neighbourhood in Japan famous for entertainment. It is here that Maria's double does her tempting dance, and where the Gothic cathedral is located that appear in Freder's hallucinations of the Seven Deadly Sins. Here, streets are dark with smog and shadows of buildings above. Rotwang's house is located here, a thatched-roof Germanic house set amid skyscrapers. This house triples as a secret entry to the catacombs, a shrine to Rotwang's beloved, deceased wife (Hel),[27] and a laboratory where scientific experiments take place.[28]

In these utopian upper levels, social reproduction is substituted by physical reproduction, as represented by sports. The stadium is the civic centre for youthful upper-class males. But women are excluded from it. They make an appearance only in the Eternal Gardens and Yoshiwara – where their purpose is to please men. Their outfits and hairstyles emulate those of the Weimar Republic's famous flapper girls. On these upper levels of Metropolis, servants are old, and they serve to regulate and monitor. The highest level belongs to its Master of the Metropolis, Joh Fredersen. His office features high ceilings, oversized furniture, and a huge carpet, all of which enhance the feeling of a modernist monumentality. Federsen's circular desk faces a large glazed wall, which provides views onto the city. But in the back of his office, this master capitalist has an audiovisual device with which he can survey and also communicate with his workers. This device anticipates

Metropolis. Multi-levelled traffic flows in this city of the future.

the use of video surveillance in today's city. But in Metropolis, surveillance serves only the private capitalist, allowing him to maximize output from factories. In this sense, the film portrays an incredibly simple world where politics is driven not by diverse economic factors but solely by the needs of its production. In contrast, surveillance will become the logic and function of the state apparatus in *Brazil*, having attained a far more complex quality similar to the more complicated social structure of the welfare state.[29]

The City of the Welfare State

As in *Metropolis*, 'Brazil' is the name of an imaginary city that is the setting and topic of the film. Brazil, the city, is characterized by bureaucracy, state oppression, blandness, and suspicion, and it is plagued by a system of failed hyper-planning. The protagonist, Sam Lowry (played by Jonathan Pryce), finds refuge in dreams that, as a superman, he saves a beautiful girl from the dark forces of ruin. He works at the Department of Records, 'Information Retrieval', the sanguine name given to a ministry which conducts torture. He prefers being an insignificant clerk at Records rather than being promoted 'up the ladder of Information Retrieval', like his former friend Jack Lint (played by Michael Palin).[30] However, his socialite mother, Ida Lowry, who is well connected to people such as the Deputy Minister of Information Retrieval, Mr. Helpmann, has higher ambitions for her son.

Brazil (1985). Film poster.

The film opens to reveal the cityscape, and then descends to street level and a scene of Christmas shopping. The first failure of the techno-bureaucratic system, which is seemingly unnoticed by the passers-by, is the snow-like fire-fighting foam that is emerging from a shop front. An interview with Mr. Helpmann, broadcast on TVs in shop windows, reveals that the ongoing fight with terrorism is perceived as a game by the authorities, rather than a symptom of dissent. The 'terrorists' – those that the government sees as potential dissidents – are to be charged, he explains, with the expenses of their arrest and litigation. System failures follow one after the other. A typo on an arrest warrant leads security troops to break into the flat of the Buttle family instead of that of the Tuttles, and to the abduction of Mr. Buttle instead of Mr. Tuttle, the supposed terrorist. Meanwhile, in Sam's flat, basic services go out of control, and he has to call for Central Services, which turn out to be slow, inefficient and complicated. Coincidentally, to his aid comes Mr. Tuttle, the real rebellious engineer (played by Robert de Niro). All the first sequences in the film establish the ineptitude and violence of the state apparatus and the climate of paranoia and manipulation in which this operates against ordinary citizens.

With citizens vulnerable to an arbitrary and unaccountable bureaucracy,
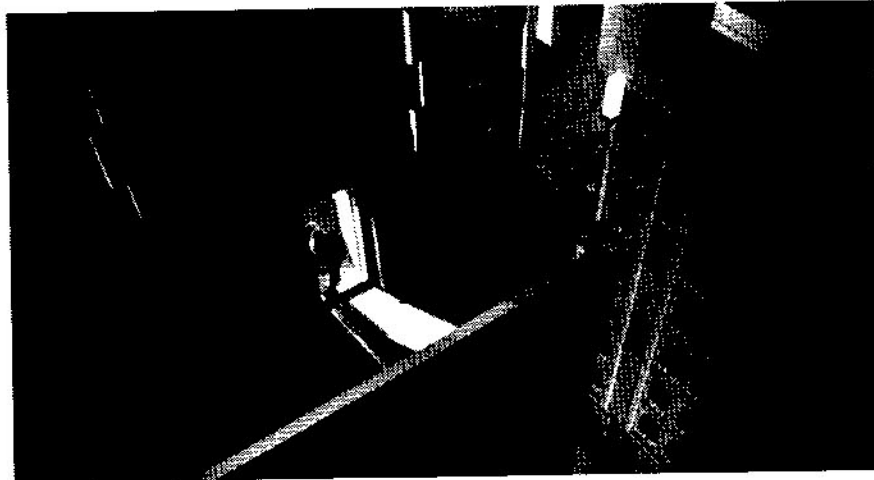
Brazil. Sam and Tuttle, the alleged terrorist outside Sam's apartment.

it falls to the film's independent-minded heroine, Jill Layton (played by Kim Greist), to attempt to redress Mr. Buttle's arrest. At the Ministry of Information, however, Sam recognizes Jill as the woman he has been repeatedly saving from monsters in his dreams. But the real Jill defies such objectification, and turns out to be a truck driver in overalls, with short hair. She does not seek, or need Sam's help. The real Jill will transform Sam, and inspire him to exit from his protective cocoon.

It is the Buttle arrest, a typical failure of the system, that ultimately connects Sam and Jill through a series of coincidences. Sam visits the Buttle family to deliver a cheque in compensation for the wrongful arrest. But in the process, his delusions are stripped away and he realizes he is a part of this system that devastates innocents. There, he catches a glimpse of Jill again. But when he attempts to investigate her at work, he realizes that her documents are classified. In order to access them, he accepts the job promotion his mother has arranged. But his new job is infinitely more dehumanizing than his previous one.

Soon, Sam discovers it will not be easy to find information on Jill. Because she witnessed a wrongful event (the Buttle arrest), the ministry now treats her as a terrorist. Sam next 'volunteers' to trace her whereabouts for the ministry. But when Jill shows up in the ministry lobby once more, Sam protects her from the other officers using his new rank. Jill is highly suspicious and tries to evade Sam, who, to her, looks just like any bureaucrat. However, after Sam finally imposes himself on Jill, they learn to trust each other.

Eventually, Sam's associations with Jill and Tuttle turn him into a suspect, too. Jill and Sam share an affectionate moment at Sam's mother's apartment after which Sam decides to save his new-found love by deleting her files

Brazil. The security apparatus at the reception of the Ministry of Information puts Jill on display to herself.

at the ministry. To do this, he sneaks into Mr. Helpmann's office after hours. However, upon his return, a Buttle-style attack disrupts the couple's bliss: Jill is exterminated, and Sam is arrested for interrogation. During his interrogation, Sam escapes from reality by dreaming of being saved by Tuttle and escaping with Jill to the countryside. In Gilliam's version of the film, the end remains ambiguous.[31] It is unclear whether Sam really escapes, or just dreams of doing so. Sam's torturers, Mr. Helpmann and Jack, conclude, 'He's gone,' as Sam hums the movie's theme song, 'Brazil', to himself.

In the making of the film, the spaces of the city and the settings for the ministry scenes were mostly appropriated from unused industrial buildings. Although the genre is science fiction, the film did not necessitate elaborate studio-created 'imaginary' sets and was shot mostly on location in the UK and France. Commenting on its setting, Gilliam has said he favours science fiction as a genre because it allows the abstraction of the real.[32] Thus in Brazil, the landscape of the city is only perceptible as fragments, and no overall view is ever given. The milieu is one of calculated deception. Promotional billboards on either side of the highway block views of adjacent industrial wastelands just as propaganda signs and posters within the city seek to mask social realities. Many such billboards feature Orwellian slogans, similar to those in *1984*: 'Happiness: We're All In It Together', 'Mellowfields', 'Top

Brazil. Clerks hurry about in the Department of Records. When the boss disappears, they tune their TVs to an old western.

Security Holiday Camps', 'Luxury Without Fear', 'Fun Without Suspicion', 'Relax In A Panic Free Atmosphere'. Meanwhile, at the Department of Records and the Ministry of Information, workers are barraged with slogans: 'The Truth Shall Make You Free', 'Information Is The Key To Prosperity', 'A Ministry Of Information', 'Help The Ministry Of Information Help You', 'Be Safe: Be Suspicious', 'Loose Talk Is Noose Talk', 'Suspicion Breeds Confidence'.[33] Often tautological in structure, these messages stand in for the self-defying purpose of the techno-bureaucratic system.

The residential area, where the Buttles (and above them, Jill Layton) live, is called the Shangri La Towers.[34] Far from the suggested utopia, however,

Brazil. Sam and Jill drive on a highway lined with commercial ads that block out the grey, polluted industrial landscape.

its run-down units are reminiscent of those in public housing projects from the 1960s and 1970s in America or social housing projects in France from the same era. Jill and the Buttles, though, belong to a lower social class than Sam and Ida. Shangri La Towers is littered with trash, and crime is widespread, with youthful mobs having taken control of open spaces. On the other hand, Sam's tidy apartment building presents the image of a futuristic scheme – a utopia. In actuality, these scenes were shot in Marne-la-Vallée, at a huge apartment complex, Les Espaces d'Abraxas (The Spaces of Abraxas, 1978–1983). Designed by Ricardo Bofill,[35] these buildings used inexpensive concrete technology with echoes of Classicism in a self-conscious effort to create a 'palace' for low-income residents.[36] In the film, Sam's apartment – and indeed all other upper-class spaces shown, including his mother's, the plastic surgeon's, and the restaurant – are hardly connected to the messy ground at all.

Such an expectation of physical order carries over to Sam's workplace at the ministry. There, Sam is scolded not for poor performance but for having a pile of documents on his desk that are supposed to be filed away. After his promotion, Sam moves to an office on a higher floor, but both environments share the same décor of exposed ducts and piping. John Mathews has suggested that these architectural elements are reflective of the control of the individual by the state – 'as if the ducts are umbilical'.[37] The world of state control starts in the private realm of the home, such that any unsanctioned individual act, even fixing a broken duct, may be interpreted as a terrorist act. In *Brazil*, it is the unchecked access to technology, coupled with the lack of individual agency, that creates a sense that the world is out of control. But in *Metropolis*, it is the technology, itself, that goes out of control.
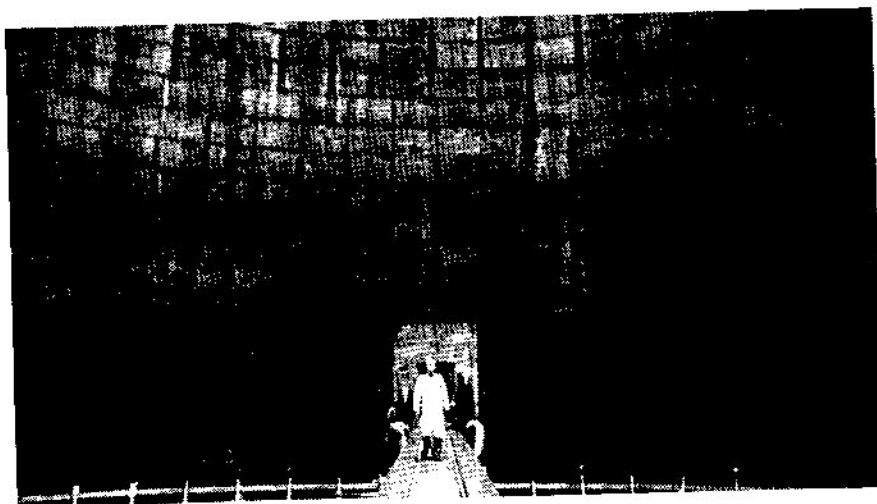
Brazil. Inside the torture chamber, a microcosm of the whole city and nation.

The Place of *Metropolis*

Metropolis emerged out of the specific economic, political and artistic concerns of Weimar Germany and its relationship to the US as both competitor and model. *Metropolis* triggered immense public debate then, as now. Even its making was a spectacle.[38] Theorist Siegfried Kracauer was one of those who condemned the film because its symbolism was comparable to that which allowed the Nazi Party to rise to power between World Wars I and II. Indeed, Kracauer argued that the film was proto-Nazi:

> The whole composition denotes that the industrialist acknowledges the heart for the purpose of manipulating it; that he does not give up his power, but will expand it over a realm not yet annexed – the realm of the collective soul. Freder's rebellion results in the establishment of totalitarian authority, and he considers this result a victory.[39]

Elsaesser has further argued that the depiction of crowds, as sheepish and easily manipulable, reinforced the acceptability of totalitarian points of view. 'Little did it matter that Nazism detested modernist architecture and that it promoted an anti-urban, "blood-and-soil", back-to-the-land settlement policy'.[40] On the contrary, for parts of *Metropolis*'s set designs, Lang chose the language of architectural modernism, which was at the time associated with socialist politics. Nevertheless, Lang voiced fears of technology and industrialization, and proposed the heart as the mediator. This was a role which the Nazi Party, and Hitler himself, would claim for itself in the next decade.[41] Hence, although the architectural aesthetic might not have been shared by the Nazis, they were able to embrace its narrative and its central mediator/saviour figure.[42] Kracauer's tainted and angry opinion, connecting the film to Nazism, has greatly influenced interpretations of it to this day. But these have distracted from the more important aspects of it that relate to the modernity of capitalism.[43]

Andreas Huyssen's interpretation in 'The Vamp and the Machine' (1981) brought a new approach to the criticism of *Metropolis*. Huyssen argued that Maria's double was a harbinger of destruction that affirmed the Weimar fear of out-of-control technology, and more archaic fears of out-of-control sexuality.[44] In Elsaesser's review:

> Huyssen saw the robot's female gender as a conservative counterstrategy: through the false Maria, *Metropolis* demonizes female sexuality, and her threat justifies the male fantasy of strong leadership, needed to keep the forces of the feminized masses as well as of a potentially destructive technology under firm control.[45]

The figure of the robot, however, allowed *Metropolis* to discard the dangerous side of feminine sexuality and tame what remained. After her

sexuality is transferred to her double, Maria is no longer attractive to Freder.[46] Meanwhile, her dangerous attractive qualities are burned at the stake.

Recent literature on the Weimar period has unearthed other literary and artistic works that reflected fears of industrialization and the public visibility of women.[47] Indeed, the 'Whore of Babylon' and the myth of Babylon were part of the popular imagination to which Lang's film contributed.[48] On the other side of the spectrum, the *avant garde* celebrated the film's depiction of a modern city, for which Berlin had come to stand. In 1912, Egon Freidel described Berlin as:

> a wonderful modern engine-room, a giant electric motor, which executes with incredible precision, speed and energy a plethora of complicated, mechanical tasks. True, so far the machine lacks a soul. The life of Berlin is the life of a cinematograph theatre, the life of a brilliantly constructed homunculus-machine.[49]

Elsaesser argued that Freidel's description was equally suited to *Metropolis* and *Berlin* both of the late 1920s. He suggested:

> *Metropolis* is not so much a film about machines as it is itself a machine, made up of parts fitted together, whose intricate clockwork elements are as much the human passions, anxieties and aggressions as they are the pistons, flywheels and dials.[50]

As this description of the film makes clear, this is not only industrial modernity but machine modernity; not about the machine dictating human action and movement, but about humans being, invoking, evoking and emulating the machine in matters of social organization.

Lang was critical of the dehumanization that was brought by industrialization, yet at the same time he was fascinated by machines. Elsaesser maintained that:

> Unresolved in this debate and yet wholly underpinning it, was the relation of Weimar Germany to America. If *Metropolis* did not get to grips with the real effects of mechanization and rationalization, it was not least because Weimar Germany did not finally come to grips with Fordism and Taylorism just as the film industry never resolved its schizophrenic attitude to Hollywood.[51]

Steiger has explained that in 1920s and 1930s film, set and story lines were highly influenced by H.G. Wells's super cities, and maintained a conversation with the unbuilt architectural projects of modernism, such as *La ville contemporaine* (the Contemporary City) by Le Corbusier.[52] For example, Le Corbusier himself advocated a social formation, of hierarchy and paternalism, similar to that portrayed in *Metropolis*.[53] The formal features of architecture were also similar:

(slab-block high rises and peaked skyscrapers, breathtaking vistas from the more significant buildings, diffused lighting); symmetry and balance in the cityscapes; orderly and rational mass transportation systems; and efficient, immediate, and extensive methods of communication.[54]

Yet, *Metropolis* did not only feature modernist architecture; it displayed an array of eclectic architectural styles and was not up-to-date in its depiction of mechanization and rationalization. One of the main criticisms of the film had to do with the representation of contemporary technologies. Why would workers have to carry out tasks requiring intense labour when Ford's assembly line had reorganized the working environment? Why would people walk up the stairs when escalators were now common in many department stores? Why, finally, would the city of the future be vertical when urbanism was spreading horizontally into sprawl?[55] Clearly, today we can see how architecture portrayed in these films was nowhere near as 'futuristic' as the systems of governance and control they depicted. In Metropolis, there is no state as such, no politicians or bureaucrats, but only the capitalists who envision all – who oversee the division of labour and production, and maintain order and infrastructure. In *Brazil*, it is the state that has assumed this paternal role.

'The Location of Brazil'[56]

The question, 'Where is Brazil?' (or 'What is Brazil?'), has caused much speculation. Is it located in the real, geographic Brazil? In an imaginary place? In the song that precedes the film? Or in a time past? Commentators have responded differently to these questions, but all have emphasized the importance of the title. Perhaps, no other film title has been so enigmatic. For example, Salman Rushdie, one of the film's long-term admirers, has observed that 'The location of Brazil is the cinema itself, because in the cinema the dream is the norm'.[57] The prevalence of fantasy sequences in *Brazil* and the particular evocations of the song 'Brazil' avoid any direct reference to the country, Brazil. Indeed, Gilliam recently stated in an interview with Rushdie that he chose the title not because of its references to a modern country but because of a song with the same title.[58] He is quoted as saying the same in a 1985 newspaper article, and subsequently in the book *The Battle of Brazil*.[59] According to these sources, Gilliam also originally wanted to call the film '1984½' as a dual tribute to George Orwell's novel *1984* (1949) and Federico Fellini's film 8½ (1963). But when Michael Radford's cinema adaptation, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, came out before his film, Gilliam had to search for another title.[60]

Thematically, the most likely location of Brazil is Thatcherite England, where Gilliam lived in the 1980s, a milieu that witnessed the collapse of