

Power of Images/Images of Power in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

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TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT dystopic novels of our century, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, make use of cinema and television to draw an extremely pessimistic picture of humanity's future, emphasizing their role as essential means for distorting reality and, in the case of the for-dian society,¹ also for providing artificial pleasures which dim the mind. The big and the small screen—Huxley dedicates more space to the former while Orwell to the latter—perform a crucial political function by preventing and repressing protest and, more generally, by conditioning and inhibiting oppositional forces in a fashion that ominously foreshadows the present. This is particularly striking in Huxley's work, published as early as 1932. While for Orwell it was comparatively easy, after World War Two, to predict the potential twisting power of television, Huxley was able to see beyond cinema, the most popular visual medium of his age, envisaging the consequences of the invention of the small screen.

In the standardized societies depicted in both novels the media uphold conformity, denying individuals their own privacy and personal feelings. Simultaneously, they strengthen powers capable of controlling every single facet of their subjects' life by depriving them of all critical attitude. Both societies have been emptied of a sense of history and of memory of the past. In *Airstrip One*, the emptiness is filled by a host of images of propaganda whereas in the for-dian world it is shallowness and sensationalism which nullify any possible counteraction, acting as disabling drugs.

Peter E. Firchow points out that Huxley's antiutopia possesses many of the typical aspects of the American society contemporary with him: "that the United States is the present model for Huxley's vision of the future emerges [. . .] clearly from an essay entitled, 'The Outlook for American Culture, Some Reflections in a Machine Age', published in 1927 [. . .] one of the most ominous portents of the American Way of Life is that it embraces a large class of the people who 'do not want to be cultured, are not interested in the higher life. For these people existence on the lower, animal levels is perfectly satisfactory. Given food, drink, the company of their fellows, sexual enjoyment, and plenty of noisy distractions from without, they are happy'" (455). Bernard Crick remarks that Orwell drew on the features of the totalitarian regimes which developed in the Soviet Union and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and on his personal experience of life in Britain in

the aftermath of World War Two. He was also affected by the thesis expressed by James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941) according to which, in industrially developed countries, there is a trend towards the establishment of hierarchical and technocratic forms of society (7–10; 20–23; 46–47 and *passim*). In particular, the resumption of BBC television broadcasting played a role in Orwell's prominent use of the telescreen: apart from alluding to the USSR, "the general reeling off of triumphant and possibly imaginary production statistics was familiar to wartime listeners to the BBC itself" (21). In Orwell's work the theme of images is reinforced by the use of visual metaphors and of metaphors of the screen as a 'frame', which projects and delimits pictures at the same time.

New media for new worlds

In *Brave New World* the first allusion to the cinema is made right after the initial sequence of the visit to the Conditioning Centre, when the Assistant Predestinator asks Henry Foster if he will go see the new, sensational *feely*: 'Going to the Feelies this evening, Henry?' enquired the Assistant Predestinator. 'I hear the new one at the Alhambra is first-rate. There's a love scene on a bearskin rug; they say it's marvellous. Every hair of the bear reproduced. The most amazing tactual effects' (30). The new 'films', which also stimulate the senses of touch and smell, are perfectly in tune with the hedonistic social picture that takes shape before the reader's eyes: together with the children's erotic play (26–27) and the conversations between Lenina and Fanny and between Henry and the Assistant Predestinator, they characterize a world which reifies individuals and predetermines the satisfaction of sexual desires. Intercourse, frequently practised with changing (and interchangeable) partners, is seen in terms of possession, or rather of 'use' (39; 51). As a matter of fact, the adjective which defines female beauty—*pneumatic*—reveals much about the values of the fordian world. Desire is dead in the *Brave New World*: to admit the existence of it would mean to recognize the failure of the ideal State. That is why all fundamental needs, above all those related with the sexual instinct, are immediately satisfied except for the desire for freedom, which has inevitably been suppressed (Meloni 118).

The cinema plays an important role throughout the story, but especially in the second half of it. In addition to the long narrative stretch devoted to the 'cinematographic' experience of the Savage, references to motion pictures are numerous. The first contact John has with them occurs in the Geography Room of the Alpha Plus school, where he attends the screening of a 'documentary' on the life in the Reserve. The light from the projection recalls the cold sinister illumination of the laboratories and provides Bernard Marx with the opportunity to make advances to the Head Mistress, while the images of the rites performed by the natives set off the students' hilarity. Much to its discredit, the cinema here prompts derision and favours promiscuity:

A click; the room was darkened; and suddenly, on the screen above the master's head, there were the *Penitentes* of Acoma prostrating themselves before Our lady, and wailing as John had heard them wail, confessing their sins before

Jesus on the cross, before the eagle image of Pookong. The young Etonians fairly shouted with laughter. Still wailing, the *Penitentes* rose to their feet, stripped off their upper garments and, with knotted whips, began to beat themselves, blow after blow. [...] In the cinematographic twilight, Bernard risked a gesture which, in the past, even total darkness would hardly have emboldened him to make. Strong in his new importance, he put his arm round the Head Mistress's waist. It yielded, willowily. He was just about to snatch a kiss or two and perhaps a gentle pinch, when the shutters clicked open again. (146-147)

Cinema is also associated with superficiality. Among the things Fanny Crowne envies of Lenina is the fact that she has been on the *Feelytone News* because of her special relationship with the Savage, "visibly, audibly and tactually appeared to countless millions all over the planet" (149). Prophetically, Huxley foreshadows in this sort of newsreel the predominantly lurid character of contemporary television.

The vulgar nature of the cinema is then shown in full. John's experience at the *feelies* begins with scented songs played by *synthetic music machines*: "The scent organ was playing a delightfully refreshing Herbal Capriccio—rippling arpeggios of thyme and lavender, of rosemary, basil, myrtle, tarragon [...]. In the synthetic music machine the soundtrack roll began to unwind. It was a trio for hyper-violin, super-'cello and oboe-surrogate that now filled the air with its agreeable languor" (150-151). Then, as the lights of the Feely House go down:

[...] fiery letters stood out solid and as though self-supported in the darkness. THREE WEEKS IN A HELICOPTER. AN ALL-SUPER-SINGING, SYNTHETIC-TALKING, COLOURED, STEREOSCOPIC FEELY. WITH SYNCHRONIZED SCENT-ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT.

'Take hold of those metal knobs on the arms of your chair,' whispered Lenina. 'Otherwise you won't get any of the feely effects.'

The Savage did as he was told.

Those fiery letters, meanwhile, had disappeared; there were ten seconds of complete darkness; then suddenly, dazzling and incomparably more solid-looking than they would have seemed in actual flesh and blood, far more real than reality, there stood the stereoscopic images, locked in one another's arms, of a gigantic Negro and a golden-haired young brachycephalic Beta-Plus female.

The Savage started. That sensation on his lips! He lifted a hand to his mouth; the titillation ceased; let his hand fall back on the metal knob; it began again. The scent organ, meanwhile, breathed pure musk. Expiringly, a soundtrack super-dove cooed 'Oo-oo'; and vibrating only thirty-two times a second, a deeper than African bass made an answer: 'Aa-ah.' 'Ooh-ah! Ooh-ah!' the stereoscopic lips came together again, and once more the facial erogeneous zones of the six thousand spectators in the Alhambra tingled with almost intolerable galvanic pleasure. (151-152)

The *feelies* episode establishes a synthesis between technology and social life. It is one of the three stages, undoubtedly the climactic one, that best embody the spirit of the foradian age along with the Conditioning Centre tour—where emphasis is laid on technology and biogenetics—and the Solidarity Service—an example of 'communal' life which also provides Huxley with the opportunity to mock the new religion.

The passage narrating Lenina's advances to the Savage makes it clear how artificial and de-individualized life is in the Fordian era and how relevant is the role played by the cinema in determining its nature. John's sensations in coming into contact with the young woman's body remind him of the *feelies* thus making this experience, mediated by them, become unnatural to him. The reader witnesses here an all out attack of organized society on what is most private and personal. The cinema, indeed, proves to be an internalized component of the political apparatus: "And suddenly her arms were round his neck; he felt her lips soft against his own. So delicious soft, so warm and electric that inevitably he found himself thinking of the embraces in *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*. Ooh! ooh! the stereoscopic blonde and ahh! the more than real blackamoor. Horror, horror, horror . . ." (174).

John and Mustapha Mond, the *World Controller*, discuss the social role of cinema in the didactical chapter preceding the conclusion of the novel. When the Savage numbers the *feelies*, vulgar and banal as compared to the profundities of tragedy, among the horrors of the New World the Controller points out that they do not have, nor are they supposed to have, other meaning than themselves (200–201). In his desperate battle against vacuity John quotes *King Lear*, resorting to what constitutes for him (but Huxley's voice is also to be heard here) the quintessence of Culture. The Savage has a transcendental idea of culture, which he sees as a natural heritage, an old wisdom transmitted throughout the centuries. This heritage is contrasted to cold dialectic, whose purpose is to restrain thought, setting limits and establishing boundaries. John portrays the world in absolute terms: on one side programmed integration, with all its negative consequences, on the other naturalness which, even though repressed, can be summoned up by reason. He does not understand the complexity of the structures which regulate the Fordian society and denies the reification of spirit, hoping to be able to modify the web of power thanks to personal will and perseverance (Bertinetti, Deidda and Domenichelli 49–50). The deceptiveness of such a hope is shown by Mond's discouraging reply, which reveals that the new society does not confine itself to self-representation and not only rejects the past but filters and reinterprets it according to its own laws, transforming it completely: "But where would Edmund be nowadays? Sitting in a pneumatic chair, with his arm round a girl's waist, sucking away at his sex-hormone chewing-gum and looking at the feelies" (215). One more enlightening episode is worth considering: hidden in the woods, an expert operator shoots the Savage's self-flagellation and makes a 'film' out of it. The rich sample of technical terms and the detailed description of the process of shooting emphasizes the metamorphosis of personal tragedy into a spectacle for the masses. In this example of journalistic malpractice Huxley demonstrates, once again, his ability to predict today's cynical exploitation of suffering as a means to increase ratings:

Patience and skill had been rewarded. He had spent three days sitting inside the bole of an artificial oak tree, three nights crawling on his belly through the heather, hiding microphones in gorse bushes, burying wires in the soft grey sand. Seventy-two hours of profound discomfort. But now the great moment

had come [. . .] ‘Splendid’, he said to himself, as the Savage started his astonishing performance. ‘Splendid!’ he kept his telescopic cameras carefully aimed—glued to their moving objective; clapped on a higher power to get a close-up of the frantic and distorted face (admirable!); switched over, for half a minute, to slow motion (an exquisitely comical effect, he promised himself); listened in, meanwhile, to the blows, the groans, the wild and raving words that were being recorded on the sound-track at the edge of his film, tried the effect of a little amplification (yes, that was decidedly better) [. . .] (what astonishing luck!) the accommodating fellow did turn round, and he was able to take a perfect close-up.

‘Well, that was grand!’ he said to himself when it was all over. ‘Really grand!’ He mopped his face. When they had put in the feely effects at the studio, it would be a wonderful film. Almost as good, thought Darwin Bonaparte, as the *Sperm Whale’s Love-Life*—and that, by Ford, was saying a good deal!

Twelve days later *The Savage of Surrey* had been released and could be seen, heard and felt in every first-class feely-palace in Western Europe (230–231).

Unlike Huxley, Orwell does not place films in the foreground, preferring to reserve much more space to the *telescreen*. The main function of cinema in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is one of political propaganda. Witness to this is the alteration of films, as well as newspapers and pictures, effected both routinely (e.g. 190) and under special circumstances: during the Hate Week, for instance, the sudden change of alliances compels the members of the Party to perform a *tour de force* in order to change all the documents testifying to the previous association with Eastasia (314).

Not only is the cinematographic medium controlled by the members of the Party, and employed to influence their own thinking, but it is also meant to provide the proles with the kind of obscene entertainment suitable to maintain a peaceful social order. The Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, in fact, includes a section specifically devoted to the production of pornographic films (193). William Plank draws an interesting parallel between the proles and the citizens of the fordian society. In Oceania the ‘problem’ of sexual drive is solved by repressing the instincts of the clerical workers while granting free vent to, and indeed encouraging the satisfaction of, the desires of the lower classes: “Orwell’s proles, erotically nourished with state-produced pornography, are the equivalent of the citizen of *Brave New World* who are encouraged to be openly erotic [. . .] The erotic feelies in *Brave New World* are likewise a control device, a massified orgasm” (33). Gruesome ‘entertainment’, on the other hand, is directed to everybody. When asked if he has attended the hangings, Winston replies he will see them “on the flicks” (198): more than real films, the ‘flicks’ are propaganda newsreels (most, if all of them, commissioned by the Party), a typical product of totalitarian regimes and military conflicts. A good description of this strange kind of amusement is provided in a page of Winston’s diary. The gory shots of the ‘war films’, as he defines them, stimulate the elated response of an audience conditioned to the point of enjoying the sight of a child’s arm severed by a bomb (except for the indignation of a prole woman, a feel-

ing allowed to the members of her social group). On this occasion, the cinema is shown in all its socio-technical facets. The explicit mention of video cameras, the precise description of the shots and of the process of filming and, finally, of the audience's reaction, illustrate the production of the images (the technical aspect of the cinema), the images themselves (the spectacular aspect) and the effect of their reception (the sociopolitical aspect):

April 4th, 1984. Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him. first you saw him wallowing along in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopters gunsights, then he was full of holes and the sea round him turned pink and he sank as suddenly as though the holes had let in the water. audience shouting with laughter when he sank. then you saw a lifeboat full of children with a helicopter hovering over it. there was a middleaged woman might have been a jewess sitting up in the bow with a little boy about three years old in her arms. little boy screaming with fright and hiding his head between her breast as if he was trying to burrow right into her and the woman putting her arms round him and comforting him although she was blue with fright herself, all the time covering him up as much as possible as if she thought her arms could keep the bullets off him. then the helicopter planted a 20 kilo bomb in among them terrific flash and the boat went all to matchwood. then there was a wonderful shot of a child's arm going up up right up into the air a helicopter with a camera in its nose must have followed it up and there was a lot of applause from the party seats but a woman down in the prole part of the house suddenly started kicking up a fuss and shouting they didnt oughter of showed it not in front of kids they didnt it aint right not in front of kids it aint until the police turned her turned her out i dont suppose anything happened to her nobody cares what the proles say typical prole reaction they never — (163. Emphasis in the original)

In the first chapter of Goldstein's book, "Ignorance is Strength", a work actually written by the members of the Inner Party, there is a clear allusion to the role of mass media in manipulating public opinion. The cinema is among them, though it is acknowledged that political control has been ensured, above all, by the evolution of television: the invention of the telescreen, a device which can transmit and receive at the same time, is rightly considered of the utmost importance for the maintenance of a police State (335).

The obsessive presence of the telescreen in the Orwellian world makes it the core of any analysis of the role of media in the novel. The screen, immediately introduced into the narration, is described as an oblong metal plate resembling an opaque mirror from which a fruity voice continuously emanates (157). Piercing sounds and military music are also what it often transmits (see, for example, 162; 178).

As he had previously done with cinema, Orwell dwells upon the images of the telescreen showing in a precise and unequivocal manner its function and purpose. Once the Two Minutes Hate are over, Oceania no longer hides secrets for the reader. The distorted use of the medium and the ideological artificiality of the message determine an aural and visual pavlovian

reaction on the part of the audience. The Two Minutes start with a screeching sound and finish with the appearance of Big Brother restoring calm and serenity. The spectators' emotional involvement is complete, while all critical attitude is absent: "The next moment a hideous, grinding screech, as of some monstrous machine running without oil, burst from the big telescreen at the end of the room. It was a noise that set one's teeth on edge and bristled the hair at the back of one's neck. The Hate had started.

As usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, had flashed onto the screen. There were hisses here and there among the audience" (165-166).

The narration is interrupted by digressions on the figure of Goldstein, only to resume and reach its climax. Frenzy and hate are replaced by ecstasy when Big Brother's face and the Party's slogans fades in:

In its second minute the Hate rose to a frenzy. People were leaping up and down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices in an effort to drown the maddening bleating voice that came from the screen. The little sandy-haired woman had turned bright pink, and her mouth was opening and shutting like that of a landed fish. Even O'Brien's heavy face was flushed. He was sitting very straight in his chair, his powerful chest swelling and quivering as though he were standing up to the assault of a wave. The dark-haired girl behind Winston had begun crying out "Swine! Swine! Swine!", and suddenly she picked up a heavy Newspeak dictionary and flung it at the screen. [. . .]

The Hate rose to its climax. The voice of Goldstein had become an actual sheep's bleat, and for an instant the face changed into that of a sheep. Then the sheep-face melted into the figure of a Eurasian soldier who seemed to be advancing, huge and terrible, his sub-machine-gun roaring, and seeming to spring out of the surface of the screen, so that some of the people in the front row actually flinched backwards in their seats. But in the same moment, drawing a deep sigh of relief from everybody, the hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother [. . .] Then the face of Big Brother faded away again and instead the three slogans of the Party stood out in bold capitals:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

But the face of Big Brother seemed to persist for several seconds on the screen, as though the impact that it had made on everyone's eyeballs was too vivid to wear off immediately. (168-170)

In *Part I* of the novel everything happens in front of a screen. The very term 'telescreen' recurs dozens of times, often repeated on the same page, thus driving its pervasive presence home to the reader. Rather than something to be watched—the 'recreational' aspect of the cinema, ironical as it may be, is totally missing—the screen is an instrument to spy on people, the extension of the Police eye, an essential element of the heavy-handed, brutal nature of the totalitarianism shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.² It is worth noting that, in Oceania, the Party's methods of maintaining order are very different from those employed in the fordian world. While the Orwellian society resorts to repression and comparatively rudimentary techniques, the

fordian world relies on a much more sophisticated technology. In many respects, Oceania resembles the crude contemporary authoritarian States mentioned by Huxley in his "Foreword" to the 1958 edition of *Brave New World* whereas the fordian society is similar to what efficient totalitarianism could be in the future. In order to render persecution and oppression unnecessary the 'positive' side of propaganda must be as effective as the negative one: what needs to be solved, therefore, is the problem of "making people love their servitude" (Huxley, 1958, xii). Actually, suggestion techniques, genetic manipulation, pleasure-giving drugs and, of course, *feelies* and television, dispense with the need for repression in the fordian society.

Everyone is expected to show an expression of serene optimism to the telescreen (160) and nobody can withhold his/her attention when the plate demands it to announce military victories or magnify the results of industrial production. Reality is systematically and viciously altered: "Day and night the telescreen bruised your ears with statistics proving that people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations—that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago. Not a word of it could ever be proved or disproved" (220).

The telescreen does much more than 'simply' transmit and receive, directly governing several aspects of everyday life. It acts, for example, as a siren to signal both the beginning and the end of all work shifts and as a sort of computer-data bank: by typing 'back numbers', in fact, Winston is able to retrieve the *Times* issues that have to be 'rectified' (189). The telescreen is also a substitute for the alarm clock, as becomes apparent when an annoying hiss interrupts Winston's dream of the Golden Country. Soon afterwards a sharp female voice urges everybody to take their morning exercise, thus demonstrating that the conditioning action of the screen is both mental and physical and that these two aspects are inseparable (183).

The first part of the work closes, as it had begun, by hinting at the telescreen: Winston is sitting in a recess of his living room, out of sight, while a patriotic song comes out of the plate (244). Later this frightening device is referred to much less frequently, only because the reader is now perfectly aware of its function and 'sees' it even when it is not explicitly named. Yet, at times, the peculiar tone of a scene or of the setting are either totally or in part conveyed through the presence of the screen. *Part III* opens, for example, with the description of a cell in the Ministry of Love—itsself a screen of a larger scale, a place without windows devoted to spying, inscrutable from the outside—in which four telescreens stand out, one in each wall (353). The depiction of the cell clearly alludes to the scrutiny of Winston's soul which is going to take place in that building, especially in room 101.

Though Huxley dedicates little space to it in comparison with the *feelies*, the television set, like the cinema, is integral to fordian life and plays a relevant role in reproducing the mass character of the *Brave New World*. The TV is the most convenient device to prevent people from remaining on

their own in the very few moments in which work, social activities and pastimes do not 'compel' them to share their lives with others.

Bernard feels obliged to report to Lenina about the lack of television in the Hotel of the Reserve before flying there (90) and it is to TV as an instrument that guarantees 'normality' that he must yield afterwards: at the end of a day marked by the utter frustration of his wish to establish a close, communicative relationship with Lenina, Bernard resigns himself to having sexual intercourse with her. Once they arrive at his place, in a most unnatural way for him but perfectly in agreement with fordian rules, he gulps down four tablets of *soma* (the New World ecstatic drug), turns on the TV and begins to undress (83).

Linda gives in to television and *soma* as soon as she returns to her lost paradise. The drug produces such pleasant sensations as to make TV images similar to those of a *feely*. The combination of 'traditional' motion pictures and drug-affected sensations, Huxley suggests, brings about the total physical involvement of the *feelies* which, from a fordian perspective, are both a technological and a 'social' advance as compared to television:

Linda got her *soma*. Thenceforward she remained in her little room on the thirty-seventh floor of Bernard's apartment house, in bed, with the radio and television always on [. . .] on holiday in some other world, where the music of the radio was a labyrinth of sonorous colours, a sliding, palpitating labyrinth, that led (by what beautifully inevitable windings) to a bright centre of absolute conviction; where the dancing images of the television box were the performers in some indescribably delicious all-singing feely. (139-140)

Excessive use of drug soon leads Linda to the Park Lane Hospital. When John arrives there he discovers, to his amazement, that a TV set is located at the foot of each bed, even that of a dying patient. The television is therefore shown to accompany every single moment of people's life, training them to total passivity. Linda cannot, and does not want to, do anything but watch the semifinals of a tennis tournament (181): her blank stare is a symptom of internal emptiness, the basic condition of fordian society, a state fostered by filling the individual's mind with television images.

As we have shown, therefore, cinema, television, and *soma*, construct needs and desires and cater to their fulfilment in the Brave New World, thereby providing the necessary outlet for instinctual forces and greatly helping political stability.

Vision(s) of the (mind's) eyes

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the symbolic meaning and polysemic character of several visual metaphors cannot be ignored. The most important of them is the metaphor of the eyes, though others are worth mentioning too.

In the future society, as we have already noted, people are constantly spied upon: in addition to the telescreen, the Party's eye, Big Brother's huge face is to be found everywhere, on stamps, coins and posters in all streets and buildings. Climbing the stairs of the high-rise he lives in, on each land-

ing Winston has to walk past "one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran" (157).

Orwell resorts to a well-known technique of the cinematographic language, eyes filmed in close-up as a metaphor for conscience and its values, strengthening the connection between visual metaphors and the screens in the text (Lotman 83). The eyes, in fact, are indeed the windows to the soul in Orwell's novel. They can either disclose or conceal new perspectives and are associated with positive or negative meanings according to the different characters and to Winston's capability to see 'through' them. In fact, while he is able, for example, to spot the fierceness in the look of Mrs Parson's children (176) Winston completely misinterprets O'Brien's gaze at the end of the Two Minutes Hate, taking it for an expression of solidarity due to shared feelings and thoughts: "Momentarily he caught O'Brien's eye. O'Brien had stood up. He had taken off his spectacles and was in the act of re-settling them on his nose with his characteristic gesture. But there was a fraction of a second when their eyes met, and for as long as it took to happen Winston knew—yes, he *knew!*—that O'Brien was thinking the same thing as himself" (170–171).

Later, when O'Brien turns off the telescreen in his office, Winston is deceived again. He does not realize that the Inner Party Member is allowed to do that only because he leaves his *eyes* switched on, a perfect surrogate for the plate (302). The police can do much better than Winston, as shown by the fact that everybody needs to maintain an impassive look in front of the screen, because "a single flicker of the eyes could give you away" (187).

The eye metaphor tends to recur whenever the narrator portrays a character or conveys his/her state of mind. Thus, for instance, Syme's sharpness manifests itself in protruding eyeballs, which scrutinize Winston and appear to see right through him (198). On the contrary, the Ministry of Truth's employees have small eyes and wear glasses (a detail deserving attention, as we shall see). They are short-sighted, literally and figuratively, and they all 'look' the same (208). In spite of all his efforts, Winston resembles them, and that is why he repeatedly proves himself unable to 'see' correctly. He is scared by Julia's gaze, for instance, and deceitfully reassured by Mr Charrington's mild eyes, glasses and intellectual air (237). Different though he is, Winston possesses several of the traits that identify the members of his social group: he is an intellectual, loves reading, takes pride in his ingenuity and is often unable to see beyond appearances.

The first meeting between Winston and Julia pivots on the girl's facial expression, which conveys much more than a simple request for help (247). Winston helps Julia get up after she fakes a bad fall in a corridor of the Ministry of Truth: the contrast between the love transmitted by Julia's eyes and the inquisitive coldness of the telescreen, in front of which everything happens, is noteworthy. Later on, Winston meets the eyes of several war prisoners carried away on a truck: their intense gaze, like Julia's, reveals extreme suffering and possesses a humane quality (256–257). On this occasion,

Winston shows how deep is his need for strong feelings and truthfulness, which he searches in other people's eyes, a need which contributes to his misinterpretation of the true nature of the individuals he meets.

Love broadens Winston's horizons. In and from the antiquary's room he enjoys what in Oceania's grim and repressive world are extraordinary sights, such as the spectacle of Julia wearing make-up and the artless light-hearted gesture of the huge prole woman hanging the washing out (278-279). So extraordinary is what can now be 'seen' that Winston even has the opportunity to glimpse his innermost nature, in the episode of the appearance of the rat. He does not take advantage of this moment, however, as Julia inadvertently touches the most sensitive chords of his own personality, causing him deep emotional disturbance: "did you know they attack children? [. . .] And the nasty thing is that the brutes always—'*Don't go on!*'—said Winston, with his eyes tightly shut" (281). In room 101 Winston will finally face his greatest fear, the dread of rats, and the subconscious conviction of being similar to them (they assail children, just as he had done to his dying little sister by snatching her chocolate ration). Winston's terror, therefore, is the acknowledgement of his own egoistic and predatory nature. In actual fact, one might look at things from a different perspective. Given the Party's emphasis on the negation of individuality and absorption into a collective entity, Winston may not have to face his own evil nature so much as the guilt complex originating from having shown love for himself. His slow progress in seeing beyond appearances, proceeding throughout the novel, comes significantly to a stop in the episode of the rat, which is the culmination of the misunderstandings of the first part of the book.

As expected, the term 'eye' is widely employed in the novel, occasionally repeated within a few lines. Orwell utilizes many other nouns and verbs belonging to the semantic field of vision. The most interesting case is that of the verb 'to see', which is employed as 'perceive through the eyes', 'understand' and, at times, in both senses at once. When O'Brien enters his cell, for instance, Winston supposes the Inner Party Member has been captured but he is soon disenchanted: "Yes, he saw now, he had always known it" (365). Unfortunately, it's too late: Winston's eyes can now only watch the guard's cudgel ready to strike.

In Oceania, it is impossible to see reality with eyes different from those of the Party. On one occasion, O'Brien's gaze occupies Winston's entire visual angle and then 'swallows' him, thus bringing about his melting into the collective being: "He was in a cell which might have been either dark or light, because he could see nothing except a pair of eyes. Near at hand some kind of instrument was ticking slowly and regularly. The eyes grew larger and more luminous. Suddenly he floated out of his seat, dived into the eyes and was swallowed up" (368, emphasis added).

The physical and psychological condition of the political prisoners 'cured' in the Ministry of Love can be easily detected from their eyes. The representative sample offered in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ranges from the "troubled eyes" of Ampleforth the poet to the evasive look of the man-

rodent to the disproportionately big eyes standing out of the bony face of the convict "filled with a murderous, unappeasable hatred of somebody or something" (357-361).

Needless to say, the attack on Winston's deviant personality is also delivered through physical aggression against his eyes: during the interrogation, for instance, a glaring light is directed against them until they run with water (367). In room 101 O'Brien threatens Winston by placing the cage with the rats in front of his face and 'reminds' him that "Sometimes they attack the eyes first": in this episode, the comparison between rats and Inner Party Members (or rather, intellectuals in general) is forcefully drawn (406).

The final purpose of torture is to teach prisoners to negate the 'objectivity' of optical vision in order to substitute for it the subjective and changeable vision of the mind. It is not by chance that Winston's utmost fight to preserve his own individuality takes the shape of a claim on the right to see 'objectively': Orwell underlines this attempt by repeatedly employing the possessive form to refer to the protagonist's eyes ("my eyes", "Winston's eyes", "his eyes": 375) when O'Brien tries to make Winston 'see' five fingers while showing him four.

After the ordeal of torture Winston observes his devastated body and unrecognizable face reflected in a mirror: the eyes, however, have not been utterly subdued, thus proving that the complete erasure of his individuality has yet to be achieved (393). As a matter of fact, until the final expiation, Winston's re-education remains partial and it is accomplished with great difficulty and torment.

Glasses are connected with a number of negative meanings and characters in the novel, as we have already seen in regard to the antiquary. Even Winston wears them, like any other clerk of the Ministry of Truth and most members of the Inner Party, including O'Brien. Lenses are nothing but the materialization of the mental screen through which intellectuals—integrated in, and subjugated to, the system—watch reality. When Tillotson's glasses flash hostilely at him, Winston is incapable of recognizing himself as part of that very system within which he plays exactly the same role as his colleague (192). Like Tillotson, he loves his work—document 'rectification'—even when, or rather especially when, altering the past becomes much more of a challenge than mere routine tasks and requires the use of one's brains.

The link between glasses and mental labour is more explicit in *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* Part III. Some of the officers who interrogate Winston in prison are not "ruffians in black uniforms but party intellectuals, little rotund men with quick movements and flashing spectacles" (367). *Flashing spectacles*, that is to say the kind of glasses worn by men who serve power and are nothing else than automatons, men-telescreens endowed with frames and light emission power.

One more episode is worth mentioning. During the re-education treatment, when O'Brien grants Winston permission to pose him a few questions, his glasses shine with an "ironical gleam" (383): such an anthropomorphic

metaphor is further evidence that the glasses of the integrated intellectual are merged and work as one with his eyes, since 'educated' eyes have the ability to filter and distort reality without making use of lenses.

The meaning of dreams,³ as with many other elements in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is far from univocal: dreams can be prophetic or deceiving, and they provide both an instrument for and an occasion of psychological (self) analysis. They represent one of the very few possible 'personal' experiences in Oceania because they are not rationally controllable. By spying into dreams the Thought Police can understand if the heart of an individual, in addition to his/her brain, also loves and obeys Big Brother. That is why, to be completely 'reclaimed', Winston "must not only think right; he must feel right, dream right" (401). On the one hand, therefore, dreams sharply contrast with the telescreen since they express and symbolize the triumph of the inner self. Yet, on the other hand, they are similar to the screen in that both supply the Police with apt tools with which to investigate the most hidden secrets of the human soul.

As has already been pointed out, the protagonist's understanding of both external reality and his subconscious nature grows slowly and laboriously along the narrative. In the beginning Winston remembers having ascribed a sense of hope and freedom to the voice that, in a dream, had promised to meet him "in the place where there is no darkness" (177), which eventually turns out to be the torture cell of the always illuminated Ministry of Love. Later however, through the oneiric experience, he is able to recollect some significant moments of his childhood and to make his own guilt feelings and fears emerge. The two apparently disjointed parts of the first dream the protagonist has in the novel are linked by their emotional intensity and both originate from strong feelings unknown to the new society. Winston does not quite grasp the meaning of the image of his mother and sister sinking in the dark water but deems himself responsible, one way or another, for the sacrifice of their life (181–182). The setting shifts then to the Golden Country and the dream becomes prophetic as Winston witnesses Julia's 'political act': she undresses gracefully and nonchalantly, with a gesture "belonging to the ancient times" which reminds him of his mother's warm embrace to protect her little daughter (182–183).

In the second half of the book the veil hiding his unconscious from him is partially torn, or rather made much thinner. Waking up with a start in the antiquary's room, Winston recollects the bombing raids and the shelters where he sought refuge with his family, the dark room where he lived as a child and his chronic hunger. He also remembers one day stealing his sister's chocolate ration, fleeing and finding nobody home upon his return. In a place he perceives as his own, Winston can finally reach within himself and break free of the oppressive sensation of having killed his mother. Yet, not even this dream enables him to arrive at the heart of his unease: in fact, Winston does not realize that he feels his nature as fundamentally egoistic (294–298).

While he regains strength, waiting to confront the final decisive trial of room 101, Winston dreams several times. He finds himself in the Golden Country or in other luminous places with Julia, his mother and O'Brien. Orwell renders perfectly the conflation of different settings and the inclusion into mental activity of external elements peculiar to the oneiric reality. As a matter of fact, the brightness of the places he dreams of is nothing but the "strong light on his face" of the cell where he is sleeping (396).

The episode in which Winston wakes up from a *reverie* shouting his love for Julia is worth noting (400). Dreams are the last refuge for personal feelings but, unfortunately, the integrity of this refuge can be violated: O'Brien's presence in Winston's dreams since he first promised to meet him "in the place where there is no darkness" is indeed a proof that the Party reaches the innermost recesses of everybody's mind right from the outset.

Several other screen metaphors are found in the text, but they are less pervasively present and less symbolically relevant than those we have analyzed so far. Windows are normally associated with a positive meaning, even though not systematically. Their contrast with the telescreen is established from the very beginning when Winston, looking through the panes, grasps that the real world is totally divergent from the picture of it drawn by the Party and sees it as a cold and deserted place constantly swept by Big Brother's gaze (158). Yet, just as with the telescreen, the view offered by Winston's window never changes, always showing the grim spectacle of bomb explosions and propaganda posters covering the street sides. Furthermore, through the panes, as through the screen, people can be spied upon by the Police helicopters (158).

The opening in the antiquary's room shows how 'extraordinary' the view offered by a window can be. From it, in fact, Winston repeatedly enjoys the sight of a prole woman hanging the clothes out in a sunny courtyard (275, 278; 346-347). The vision of the woman, the perception of her authenticity and of her potential for instinctive rebellion, also provides Winston with the opportunity to plunge himself into the past and ponder over the present. Windows, therefore, help advance awareness of the true reality of things and show a different, better perspective which gives hope and supplies people with at least a mental way out. Is it by chance that the Ministry of Love, where room 101 is situated, lacks any opening whatsoever?

In a three-sided mirror Winston observes the devastation torture has caused to his body, a destruction which reflects the condition of his soul. The mirror somewhat reproduces the illusory three-dimensional reality of the cinema, as it provides distinct perspectives of the same image and delimits a three-surfaced space whose missing side is occupied by the spectator:

He had stopped because he was frightened. A bowed, grey-coloured, skeleton-like thing was coming towards him. Its actual appearance was frightening, and not merely the fact that he knew it to be himself. He moved closer to the glass. The creature's face seemed to be protruded, because of its bent carriage. A for-

lorn, jailbird's face with a nobby forehead running back into a bald scalp, a crooked nose and battered-looking cheekbones above which the eyes were fierce and watchful. The cheeks were seamed, the mouth had a drawn-in look. [. . .] Except for his hands and a circle of his face, his body was grey all over with ancient, ingrained dirt. [. . .] But the truly frightening thing was the emaciation of his body. The barrel of the ribs was as narrow as that of a skeleton: the legs had shrunk so that the knees were thicker than the thighs. He saw now what O'Brien had meant about seeing the side view. The curvature of the spine was astonishing. The thin shoulders were hunched forward so as to make a cavity of the chest, the scraggy neck seemed to be bending double under the weight of the skull. At a guess he would have said that it was the body of a man of sixty, suffering from some malignant disease. (393)

Shortly after having looked at his external appearance, in room 101 Winston is forced to face his internal fears. The specular position of the figures illustrates the function of this much dreaded place which is nothing more, and nothing less, than a 'magnifying mirror' where prisoners can, and indeed must, see what they truly (feel they) are.

Finally, photographs, as documents, are manipulated and used instrumentally by the regime. Aaronson, Jones and Rutherford's picture, testifying to their role as leaders of the Revolution, reappears in O'Brien's hands when he shows it to Winston only to deny its existence and to educate him to see according to the *doublethink* technique (372). The snapshots of Winston and Julia's love-making, instead, are employed more as tools of humiliation and psychological pressure than as simultaneous demonstration and negation of factual reality (398). In Oceania, the function of photographs, just as of documents in general, is not the recording and revelation of facts but the supply of 'evidence' to be blatantly twisted at the service of the Party's needs.

Both Huxley and Orwell strongly denounce visual conditioning and the political use made of it: in fact, in the dystopic worlds described by the two authors images and screens constitute fundamental means of exercising mental and physical dominance over people. Also, their condemnation implicitly extends to the distorting power of media in non-fictional reality and to their frightening future potential.

However, there are a few noticeable differences between the two novels. In addition to watching, in Oceania an essential part of the process of repression entails being watched. In that society political indoctrination, and visual brain-washing in particular, are violent and pervasive. The members of the Inner Party do not want to daze their subjects' minds so much as to train them and bend their resistance: more than prevent from thinking, they impose *their own way* of thinking. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* images generally possess a very negative meaning and the telescreen, whose presence is obsessively felt in the novel, is the principal instrument of totalitarian control and invasion of privacy. On the contrary, in the fordian society conditioning mainly rests on the earlier stage of genetic engineering. Cinema, and

television to some extent, produce effects comparable with those generated by *soma*, dulling people's wits and providing an outlet for their primal needs: they are, therefore, associated with pleasure, though artificial, for the majority of the members of the Brave New World. Thus, while Orwell describes the working of a repressive apparatus, Huxley portrays the annihilation of any possible residue of individual personality in the members of the superior caste (the only ones who could still have a trace of it) and the regulation of physiological needs through the dispensation of visual and/or physical pleasure, as is the case with the *feelies*. From this point of view the world depicted by Huxley is undoubtedly more 'advanced' than the one imagined by Orwell, and does not have to resort to torture to correct deviations.

The peculiar organization of the *fordian* and the Big Brother societies determines the different kind of danger to which they are exposed and the methods they adopt to cope with it. In the *fordian* world the disturbing elements are represented by a dissatisfied Alpha-Plus who wishes to experience the deep emotions and passions crushed by the system and by a 'savage' who reads Shakespeare and leaves his confinement in the Reserve. In Oceania the threat to the system is embodied by a deviant intellectual who does not conform to the 'logic' of power. The enemy to face is thus the force of Nature and Art on the one hand and intellect on the other. That is why in Oceania (visual) conditioning is aimed at affecting rationality whereas in the New World it intends to erase Culture and to control instincts by catering for them.

In conclusion it is worth remarking that, despite its relevance, in *Brave New World* the visual element is only *one* factor in the process of social control. Furthermore, though it is recurrent, the visual theme appears to be formed by 'discrete units' and it is explicit, easily detectable on the surface of the narration. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, instead, the visual element has both an overt and a metaphorical character. Besides, in this work the frequent use of visual metaphors strengthens the sensation of the ubiquity of power and shows that the pervasive presence of the Party's eye in the story has also been translated into narrative technique.

NOTES

1. The Brave New World counts time from the 'advent' of Ford, and employs the abbreviation A.F. instead of the familiar A.D.
2. The proles do not have telescreens in their houses or in their bars (218; 232). Their ignorance and the outlets provided by the Party (beer and pornography) make police control unnecessary.
3. The affinity between dreams and cinematographic vision has been pointed out in many contexts, from experimental psychology to psychoanalysis to film theory (see Costa 63 and 65). According to Pier Paolo Pasolini cinema is fundamentally *oneiric* for the elementary character of its archetypes—the habitual (and therefore unconscious) observation of the environment, mimicry, memory and dreams—and for the prevalence of the pre-grammaticality of objects as symbols of visual language (171–172).

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