

and nasty. In the US, the carnage in Vietnam could be seen on the evening news; the Manson family had recently confirmed the worst conservative fears that hippies were devils; and US Vice-President Spiro Agnew was making appeals to the right-wing 'silent majority' about the need to establish 'law and order' (i.e., the need to suppress potentially revolutionary street demonstrations against war and social inequality). Near the beginning of the picture, in a scene taken directly from Burgess's 1962 novel, a homeless old alcoholic (Paul Farrell) bemoans the fact that there are 'men on the moon, and men spinning around the earth and there's not no attention paid to law and order no more'. This accurately expresses the regressive political atmosphere of 1971, when the youth rebellion of the previous decade was becoming perverse and increasingly commodified. *A Clockwork Orange* at least has the virtue of being a deliberately harsh and provocative vision of its times. The relative darkness of 1970s' cinema would soon give way to Ronald Reagan's 'Morning in America' and, in the brave new world of entertainment that followed, Hollywood would avoid producing any film as unrelentingly disturbing as this.

IV. Duellist

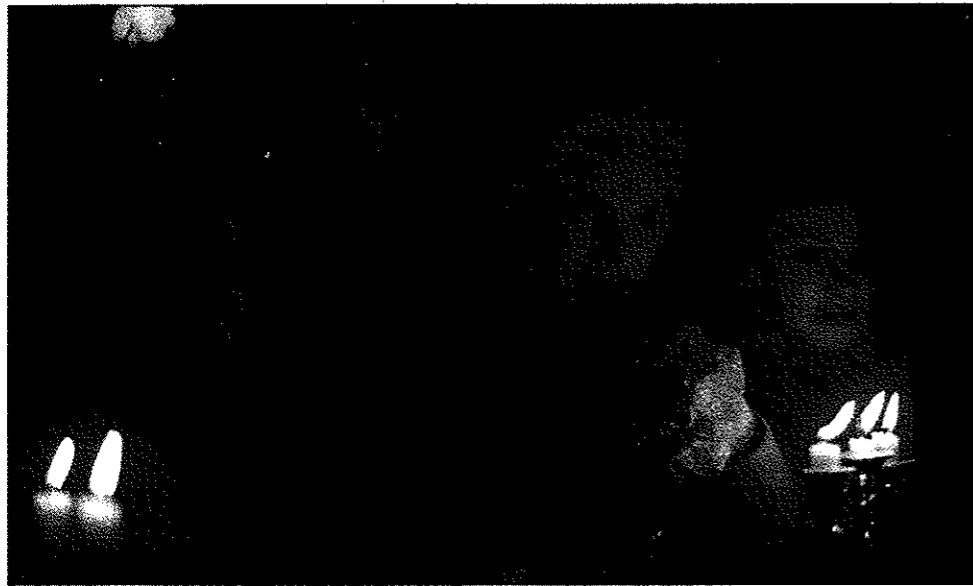
A Clockwork Orange was both a *succès de scandale* and one of Warner's most profitable releases of the 1970s, securing Kubrick's relationship with the studio and enabling him to return to his long-deferred idea of filming an historical epic to rival *2001's* epic of the future. Because his Napoleon project remained too complex and costly, he briefly considered an adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–8), which had been filmed three times in Hollywood, but not since the 1930s. Subtitled *A Novel without a Hero*, Thackeray's satiric narrative offered a panorama of middle- and upper-class struggles for power in early nineteenth-century England, and it probably had special interest for Kubrick because its anti-heroine, Becky Sharp, is explicitly compared with Napoleon – indeed, Becky's downfall coincides with the Battle of Waterloo, and the story as a whole ends in 1830, shortly after Napoleon's death at St Helena. Kubrick nevertheless decided that *Vanity Fair* was too difficult to compress into a three-hour film and instead turned his attention to Thackeray's earliest work of fiction, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon: A Romance of the Last Century*, which was first published as a magazine serial in 1844 and then revised and reissued in a single volume in 1856 under the title *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., of the Republic of Ireland*. This novel tells the story of an eighteenth-century Irish rake, loosely based on an actual historical character from the lower levels of the Anglo-Irish gentry, who seduces his way into the British aristocracy but comes to a bad end; little known outside the academy, it was a relatively minor fiction that could be freely adapted, and was in the public domain. In 1973, on the strength of an outline that concealed the title of the novel and the names of its characters, Kubrick convinced Warner to finance a film version. For the next two years, he set about making *Barry Lyndon*, one of the most remarkable and unorthodox costume pictures ever produced, and one of his most impressive artistic achievements.

Barry Lyndon won several technical awards from the Motion Picture Academy and its first impression on most viewers is one of breathtaking photographic beauty. Its distinctive visual qualities were determined first of all by Kubrick's long-standing interest in realistic, available-light photography. During his work on the Napoleon project, he had become excited by the idea of making an historical film set in a period before the invention of electric power, using as little motion-picture lighting equipment as possible. He also wanted to shoot in real historical locations, somewhat in the manner of the chateau sequences of *Paths of Glory*, avoiding studio sets and modern interpretations of historical costumes – in other words, he wanted to make a film antithetical to *Spartacus*. His motivation was aesthetic and intellectual, but he tried to convince studio executives that a quasi-documentary approach would save money. In 1968, he spelled out his intentions in a memo to potential investors in the proposed film about Napoleon:

I plan to shoot all interiors of the film on location, instead of building sets, as has always been previously done in big budget epic films. Very great savings of money together with an increase of quality can be achieved Because of the new fast photographic lenses we intend to employ, very little lighting equipment will have to be used, depending instead on ordinary window light, which incidentally will look more beautiful and realistic than ordinary light.⁴¹

At roughly the same time, Kubrick shot 468 metres of colour test sequences showing a young man lit by candlelight; but ordinary camera lenses, combined with the relatively





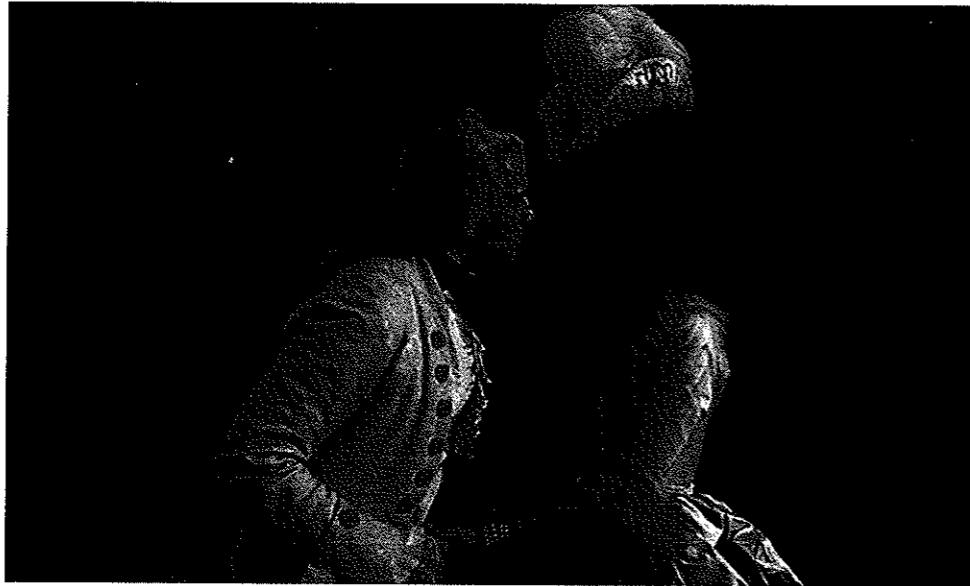
low film speeds of the period, produced unsatisfactory results. By the time of *Barry Lyndon*, he was able to obtain an f 0.7 Zeiss lens that had been developed by NASA for lunar photography. He commissioned Ed di Giulio of Cinema Products Corporation to engineer an old Mitchell camera from the Warner studio so that it would accept three different focal lengths of the Zeiss lens and, with this equipment, photographer John Alcott was able to shoot the candlelit, golden interiors we see at various junctures in the film. Alcott often used booster lights, reflectors and various other types of equipment for the daylight interiors, but always in a fashion that imitates the effect of natural light. For the daylight exteriors, which were shot mostly in Ireland and England, he and Kubrick favoured an Arriflex camera, but eschewed diffusion filters. The landscape images, beginning with the opening shot of a distant pistol duel, have an almost tactile clarity and an exquisite sensitivity to changing patterns of air, clouds and sunlight.

Part of the fascination of the film lies in its documentation of castles, country estates and enormous rooms where we hear shoes clattering on wooden floors and view tapestry and leather-bound books in the light from high windows. The production achieved its air of authenticity not only by virtue of location shooting in Britain and second-unit photography in Germany, but also through minute historical research into every aspect of eighteenth-century life, including clothing, wigs, face powder, military hardware, playing cards, magical paraphernalia, shaving equipment and even such unseen matters as toothbrushes and contraceptives. Kubrick's rage for reality, however, was counterbalanced and even contradicted by an intense aesthetic historicism, which gives his film a quite unreal, painterly effect. He composed many of the shots to resemble images by eighteenth-century



artists such as Hogarth, Reynolds, Chardin, Watteau, Fragonard, Zoffany, Stubbs and Chodowiecki, and he insisted that production designer Ken Adam use these artists for inspiration. He filled the sets with eighteenth-century artefacts and frequently posed the costumed actors and extras as nearly still figures, arranging them in patterns suggested by genre or landscape paintings. (The ex-fashion model Marisa Berenson, who plays Lady Lyndon, and who hardly speaks a word, looks as if she had stepped out of a Gainsborough portrait.) In these and other respects, the film seems to acknowledge that the past is always mediated by historical discourse and artistic representation.⁴² The ordinary Hollywood costume picture, which Kubrick regarded as unrealistic, usually assumes that history can be faithfully reproduced; the ostensibly more accurate *Barry Lyndon*, on the other hand, resembles what Fredric Jameson describes as a pastiche – in this case a detailed imitation of landscapes, architecture, and art, intended to evoke 'eighteenth-century-ness'.⁴³

The film's painterly feeling is intensified by its exceptionally slow, stately pace and tendency to subordinate action to ritual. Kubrick draws out conversations and domestic scenes to the point where they take on the quality of *temps morts*; he dwells upon formal entertainments or state occasions; he requires most of the actors – especially Berenson and Ryan O'Neal, who plays Barry – to maintain highly controlled masks of social decorum; and he builds very quietly to the few scenes involving emotional outbursts and paroxysms of violence. Baldly summarised, Barry's life is filled with adventure, especially in the first half of the film: he fights a duel for the woman he loves and is sent away from home; he is robbed by highwaymen; he enlists in the British Army and survives a grim battle; he escapes from his unit by stealing a uniform and horse from a homosexual officer; he spends a



romantic evening with a young German mother whose husband is away at war; he meets a unit of the Prussian Army and poses as an officer on a mission; his imposture is quickly discovered and he is forced to become a foot soldier; during a battle he saves the life of his commanding officer; as reward, he is taken to Potsdam and assigned to spy on the activities of an Irish gambler; finally, he and the gambler become comrades, escape the Prussians, and live the life of itinerant cardsharps. All this picaresque activity, however, is presented in an extremely leisurely fashion and in an unvarying pace, almost as if it were a series of brilliantly colourful tableaux.

In the second half of the film, after Barry marries an aristocrat and settles into domestic life, things slow even more. The mannered dialogue suggests eighteenth-century neo-classicism, and is spoken with heavy pauses to mark the punctuation. For example, the following simple conversation between the young Lord Bullingdon (Dominic Savage) and Reverend Runt (Murray Melvin), is played at such a calm, steady rhythm and with such regulated silences that it could be written out as lines of verse:

RUNT: My Lord Bullingdon, you seem particularly glum today. / You should be happy that your mother has been married.

BULLINGDON: Not in this way, / and not in such haste, / and certainly not to this man.

RUNT: Do you not like your new father?

BULLINGDON: Not very much. / He seems to me little more than a common opportunist. /

I don't think he loves my mother at all. / And it hurts me very much to see her make such a fool of herself.

In keeping with this stylised retardation, Kubrick's most striking camera effect, which becomes a motif, is a long, slow zoom out from a significant detail to a wide shot composed like a painting. The many zoom shots, together with the various long-distance views of gardens, estates and landscapes, are compelling not only for their beauty and sense of the eighteenth-century picturesque, but also because they register minimal movements within the stillness: the stirring of leaves in the wind, the ripple of water, a dog turning its head, a distant human figure aiming a pistol. Significantly, the zoom isn't a camera movement, but an alteration of the focal length of the lens, which creates a very different impression from Kubrick's signature tracking shots: in *Barry Lyndon* the image often looks flat but then slowly widens and takes on the depth of an illusionist painting. Frequently Kubrick will start a sequence with a zoom outward into an establishing shot, which he dissects with conventional close-ups and shot-reverse shots. Ralf Michael Fischer has persuasively analysed this technique in terms of dialectic between painting and motion pictures, or between a pre-photographic historical period and the present day. As Fischer puts it, 'Kubrick wishes to establish whether he can use moving pictures to visualize an age that did not know photography. Therefore, and this has often been ignored, *Barry Lyndon* develops into an exciting oscillation between cinematic and painterly/graphic representation strategies.'⁴⁴

It follows that the technique makes viewers more than usually aware of stillness versus passing time. As in *2001*, but by a slightly different means, motion is slowed and a feeling of transience creeps into the images, as if a clock were ticking behind the still, orderly compositions. The live-action painterly effects are sometimes poignant in their beauty, suggesting that the past is both inaccessible (except through art) and dead. This implication is reinforced at the dramatic level; the passage of time is increasingly freighted with sadness and death, and people eventually take on a ghostly appearance. Something similar happens at the purely cinematic level, with the steady replacement of one image by another. Very few historical films (Welles's *Magnificent Ambersons* and John Ford's Westerns are good examples, though imbued with a nostalgia that Kubrick rejects) give us such a powerfully self-conscious sense of the motion picture as a temporal medium – an experience unlike a painting in the sense that a series of apparently substantial compositions as evanescent as a beam of light pass through the projector, each of them disappearing and 'dying' along with the world they represent.

In other ways, *Barry Lyndon* is deliberately anachronistic. Consider Kubrick's use of hand-held, *cinéma vérité* effects for scenes of violence, including the boxing match between Barry and a fellow soldier, Barry's attack on Lord Bullingdon during a concert and Lady Lyndon's attempted suicide. Consider also the music score. Once again Kubrick draws from the classical repertoire, this time commissioning Leonard Rosenman to select, arrange and conduct several of the orchestral pieces. (Rosenman won the Academy Award, but he told an American Film Institute seminar that he thought the film was 'incredibly long and boring' and that Kubrick's continual replaying of a passage from Handel's 'Sarabande' made

a 'mess' of the music.)⁴⁵ The score favours the baroque over the neo-classical, featuring, among others, Handel, Bach, Mozart and Vivaldi; but it also gives us a modernised version of 'Sarabande' and makes considerable use both of Schubert, a nineteenth-century composer, and the Chieftains, a twentieth-century group that plays updated renditions of traditional Irish tunes. Much the same thing could be said of the many allusions to paintings. Eighteenth-century artists dominate, but certain images seem to be inspired by the nature scenes of the proto-romantic John Constable (1776–1837) and by the candlelit interiors of Adolph Menzel (1815–1905), a nineteenth-century painter of historical subjects.⁴⁶

Whether or not Kubrick intended us to notice these anachronisms, they have an interesting relationship to Thackeray's novel, which is already a pastiche. A great admirer of Henry Fielding, Thackeray had written a picaresque, satiric, self-reflexive narrative, in imitation of eighteenth-century literary conventions. The book claims to be an autobiography, somewhat in the vein of Casanova's more jaw-droppingly adventurous and socially corrosive *Memoirs*, written by Barry from debtor's prison and addressed to his mother; and the manuscript is 'edited' by 'G. S. Fitz-Boodle', a man-of-the-world persona Thackeray frequently adopted for his magazine publications. Some of Fitz-Boodle's footnotes and editorial interventions were cut when *Barry Lyndon* was issued as a novel, but he remained a presence, functioning rather like a Victorian moralist who points out Barry's unreliability and the general wickedness of the eighteenth century. In the concluding pages, he steps forward to summarise Barry's life after being tossed out of Castle Lyndon and to inform us (in lines Thackeray wrote a few years before the Irish potato famine) that 'the thrifty, cleanly, orderly, loyal peasantry of Ireland . . . still entertain the stranger with stories of the daring, and the deviltry, and the wickedness, and the fall of Barry Lyndon'.⁴⁷ In other words, like Kubrick's film, *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* is a self-conscious experiment in historical fiction, creating an eighteenth-century world but viewing it through the lens of a later period.

There are, in addition, other ways in which Thackeray and Kubrick might be said to have a deep-structural relationship. Thackeray originally wanted to be a painter and was keenly interested in visual art; in fact, he drew illustrations for the first edition of *Vanity Fair*, which he subtitled *Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society*. Essentially a caricaturist, he once described the people in his novels as 'puppets'. (At one point Barry remarks, 'I can hardly believe myself to have been any thing but a puppet in the hands of Fate' [p. 42].) In the magazine version of *Barry Lyndon*, he expressed strong admiration for the satires of William Hogarth, whose most famous work – 'A Rake's Progress' and 'Marriage à la Mode' – takes the form of image sequences that tell a story. Kubrick is, of course, also a caricaturist and satirist, and he often treats his characters as puppets. His film uses every opportunity to juxtapose ravishingly beautiful figures with satirical stereotypes that might have stepped out of an illustrated novel. Some of the most memorable moments involve character actors who introduce a grotesque quality into a serenely gorgeous *mise en scène*: Murray Melvin as Reverend Runt, the sly, effeminate cleric who owes his living to the Lyndons and barely contains his disapproval when he reads the marriage vows to Barry;



Patrick Magee as the Chevalier de Balibari, the decadent, aging gambler whose fancy wig, heavy make-up and eye patch make him look like a figure at a Halloween party; and most of all Leonard Rossiter as Captain Quinn, whose preening, cock-of-the-walk behaviour when he leads troops on a parade ground and dances an Irish jig with Nora Brady (Gay Hamilton) is as bizarrely funny as anything in *Dr. Strangelove*.

All this is not to suggest that Kubrick was striving to preserve the spirit of the novel. On the contrary, the film utterly transforms its source. The greater part of Thackeray's *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* is narrated by Barry, whose eventful life, filled with characters that the film omits, is told in a loose, digressive fashion. A handsome and clever fellow, Barry is also a boastful, loquacious scoundrel who calmly admits to beating his wife and probably lies about his more spectacular adventures. His wife is a vulgar woman of no great beauty, and yet she's a difficult conquest; she has lovers of her own and divorces Barry when she can no longer tolerate his behaviour. Kubrick's film is exactly the opposite in all these respects: it has an omniscient narrator and a unified, carefully patterned plot with a three-act structure; it depicts Barry as a quiet, inarticulate man who speaks in a soft Irish accent and seems to feel a certain guilt after he cheats on his wife; and it portrays Lady Lyndon as a fragile, melancholic beauty, easily seduced by Barry, who must be 'rescued' from the marriage.

Equally significant, the film's tone is different from the novel. Thackeray gives us a sometimes shocking but basically humorous tale written by a stage-Irish cad; the attitude of the implied author towards the characters is darker and more judgmental than Fielding's in *Tom Jones*, but the narrative has a rollicking atmosphere. Whether or not the original viewers of Kubrick's film were aware of this, they probably expected something swift,

amusing and romantic, more in the vein of Tony Richardson's highly successful 1963 adaptation of *Tom Jones* (which today looks dated compared to *Barry Lyndon*). Instead, they were given a slow-paced film that builds towards a tragic dénouement, dealing with a relatively sympathetic social outsider who is observed from a godlike perspective. Even when Kubrick takes language directly from the novel, he often moves it into new contexts, making it seem less breezy, more serious. To choose a particularly significant example: in the early pages of Thackeray's first chapter, Barry explains how he and his ancestors were cheated out of their supposedly aristocratic pedigree and how his father, 'Roaring Harry Barry', died a natural death of dissipation while attending the Chester horse races; he then brushes the family history aside in order to move on to his more immediate concerns: 'It was in the reign of George III that the above-named personages lived and quarreled; good or bad, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, they are all equal now; and do not the Sunday papers and the courts of law supply us every week with more novel and interesting slander?' (p. 6) Kubrick appropriates, edits and slightly revises the first two sentences in these lines, placing them in a title card at the end of the picture, where they become the ultimate authorial comment, grimly philosophical in tone, on death as the great leveller: 'It was in the reign of George III that the aforesaid personages lived and quarreled; good or bad, handsome or ugly, rich or poor they are all equal now.'

Much of the tone of the film derives from Kubrick's decision to drop the novel's first-person narration and put its language into the mouth of a godlike narrator, beautifully played by Michael Hordern, who addresses us more in the fashion of nineteenth-century realism than in the archly playful style of a Fielding. Pauline Kael was annoyed by this device, in particular by the way the narrator sometimes tells us in advance what's going to happen; and, given the fact that many critics and film-makers have attacked movie narrators in general as 'un-cinematic', Kael probably wasn't alone.⁴⁸ (There's an interesting connection between arguments against narration in movies and strictures against 'telling' vs 'showing' in novels; the latter were thoroughly debunked by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [1950], and the former have been effectively criticised by Sarah Kosloff in *Invisible Storytellers* [1998].) Most subsequent commentators, however, find the narration in *Barry Lyndon* unusually effective. Mario Falsetto describes Hordern's voice as a sort of aristocratic character, not always perfectly reliable, who represents 'an individuated, privileged point of view' (p. 100). But for all his urbanity and individuality, this narrator expresses many opinions that Thackeray had given to Barry, and as a result he doesn't always seem to be speaking for the ruling class. When he says, 'It would take a great philosopher and historian to explain the causes of the famous Seven Years War,' he sounds more knowingly ironic than Barry in the novel; and when he remarks that the war was the product of kings 'doing their murderous work in the world,' his judgment is more authoritative by virtue of its relative objectivity.

Among his many functions, the narrator helps to create the effect of premodernist fiction by putting us at a distance from the characters and offering commentary on their

motives. Sometimes his remarks are in counterpoint with what we see, as in the first scene between Barry and Nora Brady; sometimes they make explicit what the image suggests, as when Lord Bullingdon is introduced as 'a melancholy little boy, much attached to his mother'; and sometimes they inform us of things not shown, as when we learn that the young German *Frau* with whom Barry enjoys an evening of sex has been enjoyed by other soldiers. Repeatedly, as in the traditional realist novel, the lofty, cosmopolitan narrator invites us to think of the diegetic world as co-terminus with the world we inhabit as readers/viewers; thus he speaks in maxims or truisms ('No lad with freedom and twenty guineas can be unhappy'), and he encourages us to draw on our own wisdom in making judgments (the 'young love' speech at the beginning of the film is a good example of the latter strategy; it's partly ironic and partly meant to draw us into a kind of paternalistic sympathy with Barry).⁴⁹

Occasionally, the narrator also makes us aware of the art of storytelling itself. My favourite example occurs during Barry's seduction of Lady Lyndon, when the narrator appears to be joking about Kubrick's glacial pacing of the action. In the novel, Barry's sexual conquest involves a great deal of busy effort; in the film, it occurs at first sight but almost in slow motion. Schubert plays in the background as Lady Lyndon and Barry exchange long, meaningful glances across a candlelit gambling table; she excuses herself, walks outside and stands in the moonlight, her breasts rising and falling in anticipation. Barry follows and approaches very slowly. She turns to face him. He takes her hands, gazes longingly into her eyes and kisses her delicately but ardently. This wordless, moonlit seduction takes almost a minute and forty seconds of screen time. Kubrick ends it by cutting directly from blue moonlight to daylight on a lake, where the red sail of a boat crosses gracefully from left to right and a second boat, bearing the two lovers, moves towards us. 'To make a long story short,' the narrator says, 'six hours after they met, her Ladyship was in love.'

The narrator isn't simply a wit who provides exposition and passes judgment. He plays a very important role in maintaining the audience's sympathy for the central character, even when that character behaves foolishly or cruelly. When the narrator explains Barry's sudden emotional outburst upon first meeting the Chevalier, he's almost like a barrister defending a client charged with ludicrous or self-serving behaviour; and when he tells us that 'Barry had his faults, but no man could say of him that he was not a good and tender father', he's more convincing than the boastful first-person narrator of the novel. One of his most important functions is his foreshadowing of the action, as when he tells us that an accident will soon take Barry out of military service with the Prussians, or when he introduces a lady who 'will henceforth play an important role in the story'. By giving us more information than the characters possess, he creates suspense and an air of inevitability. This effect is especially powerful during a scene in which we see Barry instructing his son Bryan in the art of fencing. The narrator comments, 'It is impossible to convey what high hopes he had for the boy; and he indulged in a thousand fond anticipations as to his future success and figure in the world. But fate had determined that he should leave none



of his race behind him, and that he should finish his life poor, lonely and childless.' Suddenly, in the midst of a sunlit, cheerful action, the whole outcome of the picture is foretold and an aura of pathos surrounds Barry. The image of young Bryan proudly brandishing a wooden sword takes on a painful, fleeting quality, like a happy memory clouded by the portent of disaster.

The narrative structure of the film is equally interesting. *Barry Lyndon* condenses its source, eliminating incidents and characters; but Kubrick also adds new material, in the process achieving a greater formal refinement and thematic coherence. For example, the pistol duel that kills Barry's father in the beginning is clearly intended to 'rhyme' with the pistol duel between Barry and Lord Bullingdon (Leon Vitali) near the end of the picture, and both scenes are Kubrick's invention. In the editorial coda to the novel, Fitz-Boodle summarises Barry's life after the Lyndon marriage and simply notes in passing that Bullingdon tracked Barry to the spa at Bath and 'administered to him a tremendous castigation in the Pump-room' (p. 225). Kubrick makes duels a prominent motif throughout: we're given three pistol duels, a fencing duel, a practice swordfight between Barry and his son and a bare-knuckle boxing match. The fencing and the fist fight require strength and skill, but the pistol duels are largely wars of nerves, similar in some ways to the film's most spectacular representation of military combat, in which men bearing rifles and dressed in colourful uniforms march straight into the face of opposing gunfire.

The film also has a motif of card playing, a contest more open to chance, guile or deception. The erotic card-game between Barry and Nora at the beginning rhymes with the desolate game between the legless Barry and his mother at the end, and in the middle we're

given several scenes of Barry and the Chevalier cheating at cards. In a fine analysis of this structure, Marvin D'Lugo has argued that *Barry Lyndon* has a 'ludic' view of society, and that the card-game is more significant than the duel in representing the underlying contest to acquire money and power:

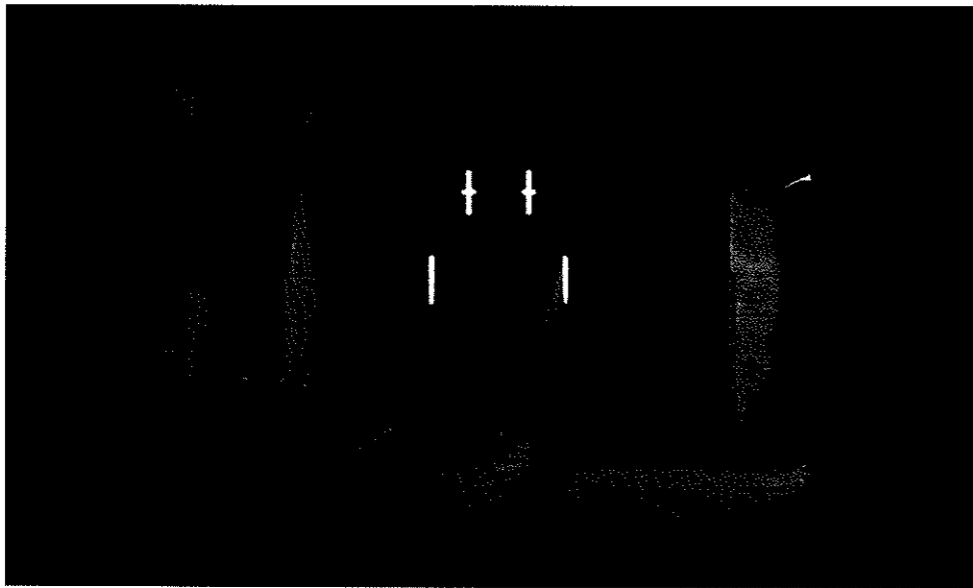
Though the menace of physical aggression and violence embodied in the duel and its grander version, the battle, seem dramatically at the center of events, it is . . . the card game, in which the adversaries struggle with fortunes and not lives, where the true spirit of this world is made manifest.⁵⁰

Without denying that economic forces are at the centre of everything we see and that certain of the card-games involve money, I would argue differently. The outcome of the all various contests is predetermined by the class system, so that games are seldom equal. Duels, moreover, are at the social centre of the action. They may be less obviously economic than the card games, but are more completely gendered and more strongly grounded in social privilege. No matter how much skill is involved or what weapons are used, every variation of the trial at arms provides Kubrick with a stark means of illuminating the ironies and hypocrisies of the British squirearchy.

As an admirer of Max Ophuls, Kubrick could not have failed to recognise that duels have both theatrical value and considerable historic and cultural meaning. (He was also an admirer of Howard Hughes's *Hell's Angels* [1930], which contains a silhouetted pistol duel viewed from a great distance, rather like the one at the beginning of *Barry Lyndon*.) He seems aware that the elaborate rituals and regulations of eighteenth-century duels were vestigial remnants of Europe's feudal society, in which church-administered duels were fought for judicial purposes; no longer fully legitimate in the 'Age of Reason', they nevertheless continued to be supported by an ideology of chivalric virtue and manly 'honour'. In theory, they were supposed to be fought by members of the ruling class, not by peasants or shopkeepers. Kubrick puts great weight on their aristocratic quality: the combatants are described as 'gentlemen' and a formal ceremony, watched over by a referee and 'seconds', positions them as equals who are expected to show grace under pressure. He also depicts a boxing match, which might seem to represent the opposite end of the social scale. (He shoots this match with a low-level, hand-held camera and Foley effects reminiscent of the fight in *Killer's Kiss*; Ryan O'Neal, who had once been a boxer, helps make the action look realistic, but the big fellow who loses to O'Neal keeps swinging haymakers two feet over the star's head.) Interestingly, however, boxing assumed its modern form during the mid-eighteenth century, when Jack Broughton invented a skill-based, largely spectator sport guided by 'Broughton's rules'. At the time there were boxing academies in London in which young gentlemen could learn fisticuffs alongside fencing. Like duelling, boxing was presided over by a referee and, even though it sometimes had a kind of proletarian aura, its standards of conduct were established by the upper class.

The principal irony of the film is that Barry, an Irish *arriviste* who is looked upon with barely concealed contempt by the British lords, exhibits manly virtue in every sort of duel, even the boxing match, which he wins through skilled manoeuvre rather than brute strength, as if he had attended a gentleman's training school. In a sense he's more aristocratic than the aristocrats. His victories on the duelling field, however, take him only so far, since the duel, like warfare and gambling, is at bottom a predatory and barbaric mechanism ruled by hereditary money and power. A social outsider can't truly win (at least not in pre-Napoleonic Europe), no matter how much he masters the rules of the game. Barry and the Chevalier can rig the cards, but even when they cheat they earn relatively little. Barry can seduce Sir Charles Lyndon's wife ('Let those laugh that win,' he tells the dying lord), but he never gains a title from the Lyndon family. The same is true in the case of the supposed 'fair play' of armed battle: unbeknown to Barry, his pistol duel with the blustering, cowardly Captain Quinn is faked so that Nora Brady will be able to marry a British man of property. Near the end of the film, when Barry, devastated by his son's death, gallantly shoots a bullet into the ground and allows the terrified Lord Bullingdon to live, Bullingdon doesn't return the gesture.

The climactic duel with Bullingdon is milked for suspense and played in such slow fashion that it threatens to tip into absurdity (it's amusingly parodied in *Cheech and Chong's The Corsican Brothers* [1984]). Kubrick stages it in what he described to Michel Ciment as a 'tithe barn which also happened to have a lot of pigeons nesting in the rafters The sound of the pigeons added something to this, and, if it were a comedy, we could have had



further evidence of the pigeons' (p. 175). The atmosphere is vaguely religious, with light streaming through crucifix-shaped windows and white doves fluttering in the roof, as if Kubrick wanted to suggest the medieval origins of European duelling; and the slow pacing is justified by the fact that this particular confrontation represents the dramatic culmination of the film in both social and sexual terms: Barry and Bullingdon are a dual or tandem characterisation – rivals not only for what the latter calls a 'great family estate', but also for the possession of Lady Bullingdon.

This is another great difference between the film and the novel. In Thackeray, the Lady isn't especially interested in her son, but Barry repeatedly makes affectionate comments about his own mother, whom he describes as 'Lady Barry'. Thackeray often wrote about young men who are attached to their mothers (the theme reached its fullest expression in *Henry Esmond* [1852], his most brilliant pastiche of eighteenth-century fiction), but Kubrick pushes the mother-son relationship into more obviously Freudian territory, just as he had intended to do in his film about Napoleon. In the process, he greatly heightens the tension between Barry and his unlikely nemesis, bringing the two figures face to face in an over-determined duel. The result is a sharpening and condensation of the film's leading themes. The first half of Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* is a picaresque narrative, but the second half zeroes in on what William Stephenson calls a 'tragedy of manners', featuring a pair of mother's boys who can be viewed as mirror images or ironic doubles, but who represent fundamentally different social types.

In one corner we have Redmond Barry, who, at an early age, loses his virile father in somewhat romantic fashion. Barry forms a strong bond with his mother (Marie Kean) based on their mutual affection and shared conviction that their shabby-genteel family has been deprived of its proper place in society. The mother takes no lovers, even though she's voluptuous and sexually attractive in a matronly, rather earthy way; instead she devotes herself to Barry's welfare and ultimately goads and instructs him in his attempts to achieve ascendancy over the Lyndons. Her son grows up to be a strong, handsome, vigorously heterosexual male who believes that his father was equally strong and who never faces a rival for his mother's attention. When Barry has a son by Lady Lyndon, Mrs Barry tucks the child into bed at night and sits nearby as Barry tells him adventurous bedtime stories. A tough, resilient woman, she becomes Barry's only trusted ally, and she's his single companion at the end, just as she was at the beginning.

In the other corner we have Bullingdon, who also loses his father at an early age. But Bullingdon's father is aged and emasculated – another of Kubrick's paralysed or wheelchair-bound males. Even before Sir Charles Lyndon's death, the son and his exceptionally beautiful young mother form what the narrator suggests is an excessively close attachment; she's a delicate, lonely woman, imprisoned in a dynastic marriage, prone to nervous 'distraction', and he's an equally melancholy youth, unable to resolve an Oedipal conflict that (as conventional Freudian theory would have it) thwarts his ability to achieve normative heterosexuality. When Bullingdon grows up to become a slight, 'feminine' young man, he faces a virile,



opportunistic rival for his mother's affection and a competitor for his patrimony. At the lavish birthday party for Barry's son, we see Barry and Mrs Barry laughing heartily at a magic show, while on the opposite side of the screen the fully grown Bullingdon sits languidly at Lady Lyndon's feet and holds her hand like an aestheticised child/lover.

In Bullingdon's eyes, Barry is not only an Irish adventurer who mistreats Lady Lyndon and lavishly spends her money, but also a 'manly' figure, frightening in his strength, who asserts a castrating power. More than once Barry whips Bullingdon's buttocks with a cane. Bullingdon retaliates by publicly denouncing Barry as a low-born adulterer; and in response, Barry attacks Bullingdon with animal fury. In the climactic duel, however, Bullingdon is able to score a primal victory. The outcome is clumsy and accidental and Barry is already a broken man; nevertheless, Barry suffers a symbolic castration. Legless, he's banished from Castle Lyndon, and Bullingdon recovers his old place beside his sad, lonely mother.

As I've already suggested, one result of these formal and substantive transformations of the novel is that Kubrick creates a much more sympathetic picture of the eponymous hero than Thackeray had done. Barry in the film is portrayed as a romantic young swain of considerable glamour and phallic power who discovers the underlying brutality of eighteenth-century Europe and is transformed by the experience into a ruffian, a trickster and a fortune hunter. It comes as a shock when, during a rich carriage ride with his new wife, he blows pipe smoke into her lovely face, but we know the sources of his cruelty. His inevitable downfall has less to do with his acquired ruthlessness than with his proud and mistaken belief that he rightly belongs to the ruling class. The death of his beloved son (a chip off the old block, in contrast to the effete child of the Lyndons), is also the death of

what Barry presumes will be a dynasty. The film pulls out all the sentimental stops when the boy dies, treating his passing in the manner of Victorian fiction and any number of novels in which a similar event signals the fall of an aristocratic family (for two very different twentieth-century examples, see Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*). But Barry has never been an aristocrat insofar as the British are concerned. Despite his skill and nerve as a duellist, despite his extravagant campaign to buy his way into a title, he remains a colonial subject who is easily duped, conscripted and exiled. He seems always aware at some level of his outsider status. His tears during the protracted death-bed scene with Bryan – a rare moment of full-out pathos in a Kubrick film – are similar to those he sheds when his friend Captain Grogan (Godfrey Quigley) dies on the battlefield and when he first encounters the Chevalier de Balibari in Prussia. In all three cases, Barry weeps because of his intense love for his Irish countrymen and family, without whom he is completely alone.

Critics have generally undervalued Ryan O'Neal's portrayal of Barry. At the time the film appeared, he was a major Hollywood star (his tears in the saccharine but wildly popular *Love Story* [1970] are as copious as the ones in *Barry Lyndon*) but, despite or perhaps because of his box-office appeal, he was regarded as little more than a handsome leading man with a talent for light comedy. His open, innocent-looking face and sturdy, athletic build were ideal for the role in this particular film, and his off-screen reputation seemed to feed his performance – an ex Golden-Gloves fighter, he had a reputation as a Hollywood bad boy and was notorious for cheating on his wives with his leading ladies. His star image apart, however, he exhibits considerable range and subtlety. The character of Barry as Kubrick conceives him is courageous, resourceful, charming, but not highly intelligent or articulate. The social world he inhabits, whether as a common soldier, a gambler, or a wealthy husband, often requires him to be silent or to operate behind a mask. He and Lady Lyndon barely exchange words, and in some of his most important scenes with the other characters, he merely listens. For an actor, this sort of work is more difficult than it looks. O'Neal is on screen at nearly every moment of the lengthy film and must indicate different stages of Barry's life – the callow youth, the unscrupulous adventurer, the loving father and the tragic loner – chiefly through unspoken reactions and minimal facial expressions. He nicely conveys Barry's contradictory aspects – his quick temper and subdued cleverness, his cruelty and tenderness, his emotional shifts from pride to despair. His seduction of Lady Lyndon is convincingly romantic; his fury at Bullingdon in the concert scene is unnerving; and his awkwardness when he tries to behave like an aristocrat – as when he admires the 'the colour blue' in a painting or listens in smiling, eager silence to the conversation of a nobleman at a garden party – is perfectly calculated.

Our last view of this skilfully acted and many-faceted character is different in style from the rest of the film – a freeze frame in the manner of the French New Wave, showing him from behind as Mrs Barry assists him into a carriage.⁵¹ One of his legs is amputated at the knee and he leans on a crutch. The relatively banal, almost snapshot-looking

composition seems to enhance the atmosphere of desolation. Next we see a self-consciously beautiful, painterly shot of Lady Lyndon in her gilded cage at Castle Lyndon: gaunt, almost sepulchral, barely having survived her attempted suicide after the death of Bryan, she sits in the pale light of a window, hovered over by her son and her retainers, and signs a bank draft with a quill pen. An insert shows that she is paying Barry an annuity of 500 guineas – a not inconsiderable gift. The attentive viewer will also notice that the date on the draft is 1789, the year of the French Revolution.

Much has been made of the date. Critics usually argue that Kubrick wanted to end the film by subtly announcing the advent of revolution and democracy. An equally strong motive might have been a desire to make the film resemble the novel, which is a story viewed in retrospect, from the other side of an historical divide. Whatever Kubrick's intention, it should be pointed out that his implicit attitude towards European society and politics is somewhat different from Thackeray's. (And in any case, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era were highly prosperous years for the British landowning class.) The author of *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* and *Vanity Fair* was a sort of anti-Dickens, critical of the eighteenth century but instinctively attracted to the pre-revolutionary world. His early fiction is contemptuous of the bourgeoisie, virtually oblivious of the peasants and working poor and unsympathetic towards social upstarts like Barry and Becky Sharp. He might admire the daring of his swashbuckling rogues, but he doesn't pity them when they meet disaster. Above all, he's against Napoleon. Late in *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, when the aging narrator looks back on his adventures, we can almost hear Thackeray's voice breaking through the fiction: 'Yes, the old times were the times for gentlemen, before Buonaparte brutalized Europe with his swaggering Grenadiers, and was conquered in his turn by our shopkeepers and cheese-mongers of England here' (p. 99).

Thackeray and Kubrick are alike in their refusal to depict the eighteenth century as either an Age of Sensibility or an Age of Enlightenment (this last despite Kubrick's tendency to see the period in terms of elaborate manners and the suppression of emotion). Instead, they place emphasis on the harshness and brutality beneath the period's façade of aristocratic beauty. But Kubrick, a Jewish-American who eventually settled into a British country house, found it much easier to identify with a social outsider like Barry Lyndon, whom he depicts as an unwitting and unsuccessful rebel against his times. For roughly similar reasons, Kubrick identified with the Corsican upstart Napoleon, who gained ascendancy over France's old regime and became one of the founders of the modern world. Compared to Napoleon, Barry is an ordinary fellow, a soldier rather than a general, swept along by history; but in certain ways, Kubrick uses Barry's brief rise and fall as a foreshadowing of Napoleon's historically momentous adventures. I suspect that Kubrick's entire interest in the late eighteenth century is rooted in his desire to explore the conditions that give rise to Napoleon. I also suspect his reference to 1789 functions less as an optimistic tribute to democracy than as a portent of the Napoleonic era and a nod to a film he never made. Kubrick had intended to portray Napoleon as a tragic superman – both a dictator

and a force of Enlightenment liberalism, worthy of being placed in structural relation to the killer ape and the Star Child in *2001*. He was unable to realise that ambition, but it became a kind of structuring absence in *Barry Lyndon* and one of the chief reasons why he was inspired to turn Thackeray's unruly novel into a film of such beauty, strangeness and emotional force.

V. Horrorshow

In 1975 Kubrick was among five directors that Warner approached for the upcoming production of *Network* (1976); he expressed interest, but screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky, who wanted to be the film's auteur, rejected him (LoBrutto, pp. 410–11). Perhaps because *Barry Lyndon* had encountered a lukewarm reception from the US press and was a relative disappointment at the box office, Kubrick next thought of something more commercial: a generic horror picture in the vein of *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Omen* (1976), both of which had generated huge profits and contributed to a cycle of Hollywood pictures about gross-out, supernatural terror. Given the noirish tenor of his previous work, horror was certainly not an unexpected theme for Kubrick to explore. He was unable to find a suitable property, however, until Warner's production chief, John Calley, sent him the page proofs of Stephen King's *The Shining*, which tells the story of a psychologically troubled family of three trapped in a huge, demonic hotel during a winter storm. King's popularity was on the rise (when it was published in 1977, the novel quickly shot to number eight on the US best-seller list), and for the leading role in the film adaptation Kubrick was able to attract a major star – Jack Nicholson, whom Kubrick had at one point considered to play Napoleon.

Kubrick rejected a screenplay that King himself had written, choosing instead to develop a script in collaboration with Diane Johnson, the author of, among other books, *The Shadow Knows* (1974), a psychological mystery novel Kubrick had at one point been interested in adapting. *The Shadow Knows* is the alternately sad, wryly amusing and frightening story of a divorced mother of four who lives with her children and nanny in a housing project and who fears that an unknown person wants to kill her. Like *The Shining*, it makes the reader wonder if the central character is mentally disturbed or truly in danger (ironically, 'The Shadow knows' is a line of dialogue in an early chapter of *The Shining*). Given its female point of view, it would have been an unusual project for Kubrick; but, as Diane Johnson herself once noted, her novel also has certain features in common with Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovella*, which later provided the basis for *Eyes Wide Shut*.⁵²

The script Johnson and Kubrick ultimately wrote for *The Shining* differs from King's novel in several respects. It dispenses with most of the family's history before arriving at the hotel, it kills off the kindly hotel chef and it ends with the father freezing to death in a maze rather than dying in a fire that destroys the hotel. When the film was released, King publicly criticised it on the grounds that the tone was satiric and the depiction of the father almost completely unsympathetic. In an interview with *Playboy* magazine, he described Kubrick as 'a very cold man' who had 'great difficulty conceiving, even academically, of a

supernatural world,' and who 'couldn't grasp the sheer inhuman evil of the Overlook Hotel'. He concluded that Kubrick had 'looked for evil in the characters and made the film into a domestic tragedy with only a few supernatural overtones'.⁵³ Leaving aside his remarks on Kubrick's personality, his description of the film was essentially correct. The novel is, in fact, much more extravagantly supernatural and animistic, and certainly more forgiving of the doomed, alcoholic father, whose last words to his son are 'Run away. Quick. And remember how much I love you.' (In 1996, King produced a bad adaptation of the novel in the form of a five-hour TV miniseries that featured King in a cameo role, wearing garish make-up and conducting a ghostly orchestra in the hotel; it ended in sentimental fashion, with the father's benign ghost appearing at his son's college graduation to declare paternal love.)

For all their differences, however, King and Kubrick were alike in thinking that *The Shining* provided what King described as 'a chance to blur the line between the supernatural and the psychotic'.⁵⁴ Kubrick said much the same thing in an interview with Michel Ciment, in which he emphasised the importance of King's plot:

It seemed to strike an extraordinary balance between the psychological and the supernatural . . . This allowed you to suspend your doubt of the supernatural until you were so thoroughly into the story that you could accept it almost without noticing . . . The novel is by no means a serious literary work, but for the most part the plot is extremely well worked out . . . I've never been able to decide whether the plot [in any film] is just a way of keeping people's attention while you do everything else, or whether the plot is really more important than anything else, perhaps communicating with us on an unconscious level which affects us in the way that myths once did. (p. 181)

The film maintains a balance between the psychological and the supernatural chiefly in the way it treats two characters: Jack Torrance (Nicholson), an alcoholic, would-be writer who has recently sworn off drinking and is reduced to doing menial work; and Jack's son, Danny (Danny Lloyd), a five-year-old who in the past has been the victim of a violent 'accident' at the hands of his drunken father. When Jack takes a job as the winter caretaker at the luxurious Overlook Hotel, he begins to experience what appear to be hallucinations and psychotic symptoms. By the end of the picture, however, we have no choice but to conclude that the ghosts who urge him to murder his wife and child are not simply in his mind. Danny, for his part, seems at first to be a disturbed little boy who suffers from horrific fantasies and a split personality; but early on, after he meets hotel chef Dick Halloran (Scatman Crothers), we suspect that he has a gift of 'shining' or ESP, which enables him to see directly into the hidden past and the traumatic future.

The is-this-happening-or-is-he-crazy quality that Kubrick tried to sustain for much of the film is precisely the quality that Tzvetan Todorov and other literary theorists have described as the 'fantastic'. According to Todorov, fantastic narrative isn't simply a story containing supernatural occurrences, but one that challenges the reader's ability to explain events

as either imaginary or supernatural. He describes the form as follows (for the sake of readability I've refrained from entering 'sic' after the masculine pronouns):

An inexplicable phenomenon occurs; to obey his determinist mentality, the reader finds himself obliged to choose between two solutions: either to reduce this phenomenon to known causes, to the natural order, describing the unwonted events as imaginary, or else to admit the existence of the supernatural and thereby to effect a modification in all the representations which form his image of the world. The fantastic lasts as long as this uncertainty lasts; once the reader opts for one solution or the other, he is in the realm of the uncanny or of the marvelous.⁵⁵

Todorov's analysis suggests a continuum of effects involving three different ways of handling causal explanations in fiction: first is realism ('known causes'), then what Todorov's translator, Richard Howard, terms the uncanny (psychological causes, though it should be emphasised that Todorov isn't a Freudian and uses psychology in a more general sense) and, finally, the marvellous (supernatural causes). Two-thirds of the way down this range, at the point where the uncanny is on the verge of becoming the marvellous, we find what Todorov names the fantastic 'genre'. His exemplary text is Henry James's 'The Turn of the Screw', in which the uncertainty about how to explain events is never resolved – in other words, *pace* Edmund Wilson's famous interpretation of James's story, we never know whether the ghosts are real or figments of the governess-narrator's sexually repressed imagination.

Kubrick was always interested in grotesque combinations of the commonplace and the wildly satiric or fanciful, and he was instinctively drawn to any kind of story – Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Schnitzler's *Traumnovella*, for example – that blurs the line between reality and dream or fairy tale. One of the interesting aspects of his adaptation of *The Shining*, however, is that it runs the entire range of narrative possibilities described by Todorov. An aura of weirdness or outright derangement haunts the film from the very start, but everything is motivated by the typically realistic situation of a 'nuclear' American family undergoing economic and psychological stress. The early scenes show us Jack's job interview with the corporate manager of the Overlook Hotel (Barry Nelson), a lunch-table conversation between Wendy (Shelley Duvall) and Danny, and a visit to Danny from a paediatrician (Anne Jackson). These and a few later scenes are so firmly grounded in down-at-heels, quotidian materials of domestic drama (the mother chain-smokes, the son eats a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, a TV set plays in the background) and so inflected by touches of deadpan humour (the ash on the mother's cigarette keeps getting longer as she talks with the paediatrician) that, in 2005, a clever group of film-makers was able to construct a mock trailer for *The Shining*, choosing clips that make the picture look like a slightly whimsical family comedy.⁵⁶

The early sequences also invoke the Freudian uncanny, which always depends upon a background of domestic realism: when Danny eats his sandwich, he speaks to 'Mrs Torrance'



in the gravelly voice of his apparently imaginary friend Tony, who 'lives' somewhere in his mouth; and when he brushes his teeth, he has a terrifying vision and an apparent seizure. As the plot develops, bizarre events proliferate (for most of the film, only Wendy seems immune from ghostly visitations) until we reach the point where it becomes difficult to decide whether or not we should suspend disbelief in the supernatural. When Jack walks into the Gold Ballroom and orders a drink from the satanic bartender, Lloyd (Joe Turkel), we reach a crisis of interpretation and enter the zone of the pure fantastic. Somewhat later, when Jack is set free from a food locker by the ghost of the former caretaker, we encounter the film's first unambiguously supernatural event (unless we want to assume on little evidence that Jack or somebody else is dreaming everything from here until the end) and we move into the zone of Todorov's 'marvellous'. The climactic scenes never entirely release their hold on realism or Freud, and some of the repeated images, such as the elevator of blood, retain an ambiguous status; but the film ends with a carnival of ghostly sadism and sexual decadence (chiefly homosexuality and a hint of bestiality), and with several allusions to myths and fairy tales.

Among the many commentators on *The Shining*, only Michel Ciment has noticed the degree to which the film can be understood in terms of what he, like Todorov, calls 'the genre of the fantastic', which for him constitutes a 'shock between what is real and what is

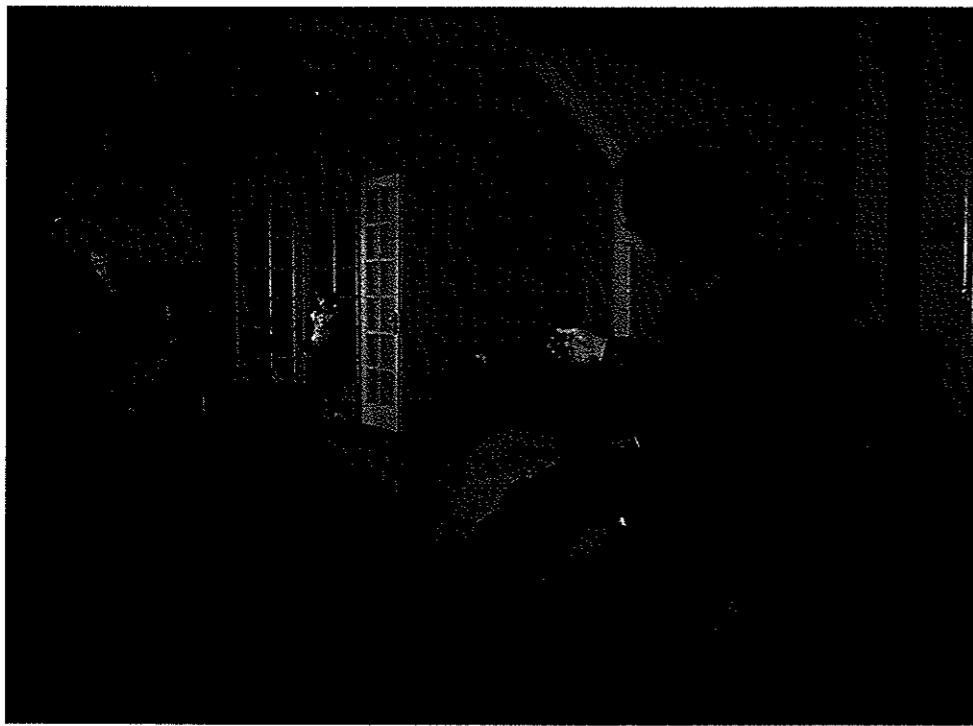
imaginary' and a 'breach in the recognized order of things' (p. 125). Ciment argues that, for this reason, *The Shining* belongs in the same generic category as *2001*, and he points out a remarkable number of things that the two apparently unrelated films have in common: they both eschew off-screen narration in favour of intertitles (in *The Shining* the titles announce events or mark the passage of time in increasingly short intervals); they both use a mixture of modernist and romantic music (*The Shining* mingles Ligeti, Penderecki and Bartok with a 'Dies Irae' derived from Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, which is orchestrated by Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind); they both take place inside large man-made structures controlled by non-human entities (the extremely large and fascinating sets for the two films were constructed at the same British studio); they both tell stories of characters who are trapped between a hostile outside world and a murderous figure on the inside who destroys their technical equipment; and, most significantly, 'In either film, the spectator is incapable of supplying a rational explanation for what [she or he] has witnessed' (p. 125).

Viewed in this light, a number of scenes in *The Shining* seem to echo *2001*. For example, the aerial photography at the beginning of the film bears a certain resemblance to the famous 'star gate'. Danny's wide-angle journey on his tricycle down the corridors of the Overlook, culminating in an astonished gaze into an impossible world, is not unlike Dave Bowman's climactic journey aboard the *Discovery* (at one juncture, Danny wears a sweater decorated with a NASA rocket ship). By the same token, the scene in which an ambiguously 'subjective' camera roams around the sickly green-and-purple room 237 in the Overlook, accompanied by the muffled sound of a heartbeat, is similar to Bowman's exploration of a mysterious, interstellar hotel suite. But when Ciment describes the two films as belonging to the same 'genre', he creates confusion, since we normally think of science fiction and gothic horror as distinct generic types. Fortunately, we have Rosemary Jackson's modification of Todorov's theory, which helps to clarify the situation. 'Fantastic narratives,' Jackson writes, 'confound elements of both the marvelous and the mimetic . . . They pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world . . . into a world whose improbabilities are closer to the realm normally associated with the marvelous.' The key to the fantastic has less to do with generic features than with the instability of the narrative's internal logic or rules of probability. It therefore becomes possible 'to suggest a definition of the fantastic as a *mode*, which then assumes different generic forms'.⁵⁷

To explain the specific instability of the fantastic mode, Jackson appropriates the optical term 'paraxis', which is a region where refracted light rays seem to converge in the formation of an image – the region inside a camera obscura, for example, or in the reflected depth of a mirror. 'In this area,' she remarks, 'object and image seem to collide, but in fact neither object nor reconstituted image genuinely reside there: nothing does.' The paraxial area can serve as a metaphor for 'the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely "real" (object), nor entirely "unreal" (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two' (p. 19). Interestingly, *The Shining* gives us several

instances in which Kubrick, like many horror-movie directors before him, plays with this kind of spectral ambiguity. As Mario Falsetto has pointed out, there are several times in the film when we are unsure whether a shot is 'subjective' or 'objective'. A similar effect is created by the long tracking shot (somewhat reminiscent of *The Killing*) in which Jack walks down a hallway in the Overlook and enters the Gold Ballroom, where he encounters a large party: in a single movement, we travel from the 'real' into the 'unreal', with no clear boundary between the two and no way to determine if both are truly 'there'. Notice also that a dressing-table mirror in the Torrance family bedroom is used to create a sort of confusion between reality and image: when Wendy serves Jack his breakfast in bed, much of their conversation is photographed in the mirror, and the perspective is evident only because the writing on Jack's T-shirt is reversed; when Danny later sneaks into the bedroom to get his toy truck, we see Jack sitting on the edge of the bed in a sort of trance or depression, his image doubled by the mirror; and towards the end of the film, Wendy looks into the mirror and sees the hidden meaning of REDRUM, a word Danny has written backward on the bathroom door.

The genre, as opposed to the mode, of *The Shining* is gothic horror. Jackson contends that this type of fiction, which originated in Europe during the late eighteenth century, was developed in reaction against a dominant rationalism; for that reason, she believes the



gothic, like the grotesque, with which it participates, has often functioned as 'an art of estrangement' and a critique of 'capitalist and patriarchal orders' (pp. 175–6). Perhaps so; *The Shining* can certainly be read along those lines, and has been.⁵⁸ But as Robin Wood and others have pointed out, a good many horror films are ideologically reactionary.⁵⁹ In this regard, we should also recall that some gothic fiction tends to express a latent, romanticised nostalgia for a lost aristocratic world, symbolised by ruined castles and old dark houses. From Horace Walpole and Henry Maturin to Henry James and Daphne du Maurier, a certain kind of upper-class architecture has been essential to the spooky but fascinating *mise en scène* of ghost stories – indeed the very term 'gothic' derives from that architecture.

One of the clever aspects of *The Shining* is the way it updates the traditional style, eschewing gothic design and expressionistic lighting while at the same time emphasising the architectural splendour of a dead aristocracy. (The only place where Kubrick alludes to old-fashioned horror-movie lighting is the scene in which Jack has a conversation with the hotel's bartender; a row of soft lights along the bar illuminates the men's faces from below, giving them a demonic look.) The Overlook is a thoroughly modernist building modelled partly on the Timberline Lodge in Oregon and partly on art director Roy Walker's research into twentieth-century hotel architecture across America (the men's room in the bar is based on Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Arizona Biltmore), but it's also a kind of castle perched atop a mountain. It has a high-ceilinged lobby, a dumb-waiter that Danny regards as a 'secret passage', a maze of haunted hallways and numerous locked rooms. In typical *moderne* style, it mixes streamlined materials with 'primitive' artefacts, in this case from native-American culture; indeed we learn from the hotel manager that the building sits atop what was once an Indian burial ground. One almost expects clichéd horror music to accompany this sort of information, but it turns out that the hotel is haunted not by Indians but by descendants of the white barbarians who destroyed the Indian culture – in particular by jazz-age sophisticates. As the manager tells Jack, the Overlook was 'one of the stopping places for the jet set before anyone knew what the jet set was'. All the 'best people' have stayed there, including four presidents and 'lots of movie stars'. In the lobby, a gallery of photos of the rich and famous from the old days (most of which Kubrick found in the Warner studio's archives) serves as a modern version of the spooky family portraits on the walls of gothic castles.

Nearly all the modern variants of gothic horror turn their haunted buildings into expressions of the characters' mental states – outward manifestations of individual isolation and unconscious sexual fears. In the Stephen King novel, the Overlook is both a psychological space and an organism with its own mind, complete with topiary shrubs in the grounds that come alive to menace the characters. Kubrick takes a more realistic approach, strongly emphasising the ways in which the building's luxury feeds Jack's resentment of his family and his fantasies of becoming a playboy author in the mould of Scott Fitzgerald. During his job interview, he seems to relish his surroundings and easily waves aside any concerns for Wendy and Danny. Twice in the early scenes, as the camera tracks

around the hotel, we see him turn and look back at pretty girls who are leaving for the winter. Except for a few perfunctory endearments he addresses to Wendy in the presence of the hotel manager, he never shows affection for his mousy wife, and he never plays with his son, who spends a good deal of time watching TV. Jack becomes lively and sociable only when ghosts appear; they recognise him, call him 'sir', and, despite his flannel shirt and work boots, immediately accept his credit at the bar. In room 237, the classic locked chamber of spooky stories, always symbolic of sexual knowledge, he encounters a naked ghost in a bath (a twist on the shower scene in *Psycho*) who embodies all his desires and disgust for women; at first she's lithe and beautiful, but then she's an aging hag covered with oozing scabs. Not long afterward, in the blood-red toilet of the ballroom, he becomes the hotel's supreme 'caretaker', making direct contact with his feelings of white male supremacy and murderous rage.

Fredric Jameson has made the interesting point that Stephen King's novel depicts Jack as 'a writer of some minimal achievement and a classical American *poete maudit* whose talent is plagued and stimulated by alcoholism' (a sort of there-but-for-the-grace-of-God version of King himself), whereas the film depicts him as 'someone who would like to *be* a writer' (p. 93). As Jameson notes, Jack in the film certainly produces what the French would call 'du texte', but the result, depending on your point of view, is either the ultimate dada novel or an 'empty auto-referential statement' (p. 93). As a writer, Jack can only repeat himself – an appropriate action for a man who loves the storied, leisure-class atmosphere of the Overlook and who wants, as he tells Danny, to stay there 'for ever and ever and ever'. This obsession with the hotel gives a materialist spin to King's novel and to the conventions of occult or supernatural horror movies of the 1970s, transforming what Jameson calls their 'nostalgia for an absolute Evil' into nostalgia for the class certainties of 'the still Veblen-esque social system in the 1920s' (p. 97). Here again the film invites comparison and contrast with *2001*. Like the Star Child at the end of the earlier film, Jack experiences Eternal Return, but with a vengeance; frozen inside the hotel maze, he becomes an emblem of 'repetition, with all its overtones of traumatic fixation and the death wish'. At the last moment, he's absorbed into a 1920s' photo on the lobby wall, where his spirit remains forever in 'the space of thralldom to the past' (p. 98).

But the Overlook isn't simply the physical manifestation of Jack's desires for wealth and fame; it's also an ironically domesticated space – a terrifying 'home' that makes the entire Torrance family feel what the novel calls 'cabin fever'. At this level, the film invites Freudian interpretation; and, in fact, when *The Shining* was released, Diane Johnson told interviewers that, as preparation for writing the screenplay, she and Kubrick had read Freud's essay, 'The Uncanny' (1919), which attempts to explain the sources of what Freud calls the 'common core of feeling . . . in certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening'.⁶⁰ In his essay, Freud notes that the German word *Unheimlich*, meaning 'unhomely', is akin to the English word 'uncanny', which has an Anglo-Saxon etymology meaning 'unknown' or 'unfamiliar'; he goes on, however, to argue that uncanny feelings,

which we experience more strongly in art than in life, are stimulated not by strange or unearthly phenomena but by unconscious fears of a quite 'homely' kind, originating in the family and often expressing themselves as symbolic fantasies of castration at the hands of a father figure. Kubrick's film makes darkly humorous allusions to this theory. When the hotel manager shows the Torrance family their humble apartment in the staff quarters of the Overlook, Jack looks around the place with a slightly ironic grin and says, 'It's very homey.' Near the climax of the story, Jack bashes in the door of the apartment with a fire axe and calls out, 'Wendy? I'm home!'

Like King's novel, the film shifts its point of view from one member of the family to another; but it distributes the greater part of the subjective shots almost equally between Jack and Danny, maintaining a balance between two apparently Freudian perspectives. On the one hand, we have the father's narcissism, violent frustration and death wish; on the other, the son's latent sexual desires and emotional conflicts. From the latter viewpoint, the plot seems flagrantly Oedipal, dealing with a male child's struggle against a castrating father who, even though he is absent much of the time, inhibits full access to the mother. At one point, Danny and his mother watch Robert Mulligan's *Summer of '42* (1971) on TV, becoming absorbed in the scene of a beautiful older woman inviting a handsome boy into her kitchen; and, at the end of the movie, when Danny escapes the hedge



maze where Jack is trapped, he runs straight into Wendy's arms and kisses her on the lips.

In the interest of giving some of these events the atmosphere of a child's imagination, Johnson and Kubrick supplemented their reading of Freud with Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1973), a Freudian analysis of fairy tales, which argues that certain kinds of grisly stories provide children with therapeutic ways of dealing with primal anxieties. Thus, the film contains several references to fairy tales and violent cartoons such as 'Road Runner'. As she's shown around the Overlook, Wendy comments, 'This whole place is such an enormous maze I'll have to leave a trail of bread crumbs every time I come in.' Later, when things become menacing and violent, Jack resembles a half-sleeping giant that Danny fears to disturb in the bedroom, and he acts out the role of the big bad wolf ('little pigs, little pigs, let me come in') when he chops down a locked door to get at Wendy and Danny.

In one of the best commentaries on the film, William Paul discusses most of these details, but also makes the important point that *The Shining* uses Freud for revisionist ends. The most radical and disturbing aspect of the film is that Jack Torrance isn't, as Freudian analysis would have it, an imaginary menace or a fairy-tale monster created by a child's projected anxieties; he's a realistic character who despises his wife, who feels ambivalence towards his son and who actually becomes a crazed axe murderer. This situation is quite rare.



The villain in horror movies is usually a stepfather, as in *Night of the Hunter* (1955) and *The Stepfather* (1987); a mother, as in *Psycho* (1960) and *Mommie Dearest* (1981); or a demonic child, as in *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*. Significantly, Robin Wood's influential psychoanalytic theory of the horror film, which argues that the monster or the demonic 'other' represents a return of the repressed and a key to any individual film's ideological purpose, contains not a single example of a motion picture in which the monster is a white male patriarch.

One of the distinctive features of Steven King's fiction is that it contains several monstrous fathers or father figures. Kubrick's film seizes on this quality and, to a greater degree than King, locates the propensity towards evil in a father's psychology. Jack Torrance appears to be guided and assisted by ghosts but, at the ideological level, it hardly matters whether the ghosts are real or figments of his imagination; he's urged to do what he already wants to do. Furthermore, nearly all the ghosts who have speaking roles or significant scenes, including the sexual revellers we see near the end, are white males. (The exceptions are the Grady sisters, who are victims of their father, and the voiceless woman in the bath, who seems to have been a suicide.) Jack's male rage and the mainsprings of his violence are vividly revealed in his speech to Lloyd in the Gold Room – a frightening scene, but also a parody of a bar-fly's confession, played by Nicholson in a broad, squirming style. Tormented



by writer's block and guilt, Jack explains that he suffers from a 'white man's burden' caused by 'the old sperm bank upstairs':

JACK: I never laid a hand on him, goddammit . . . I wouldn't touch one hair on his god damned little head. I love the little sonofabitch. I'd do anything for him. Any fucking thing. That bitch! Long as I live she'll never let me forget what happened. [Pause] I did hurt him once, okay? It was an *accident!* Completely unintentional. Coulda happened to anybody. It was *three god damned years ago!* The little fucker had thrown all my papers over the floor. All I tried to do was pull him up! A momentary loss of muscular coordination!

An equally chilling moment comes when little Danny sits in his father's lap and asks, 'Dad, you would never hurt me and Mommy, would you?' In a dreamy tone, Jack replies, 'I love you, Danny. I love you more than anything in the *whole world*. I would *never* do anything to hurt you. You know that, don't you?' Here and elsewhere, as Paul argues, Kubrick 'redirects Freud's Oedipal drama to the original myth'.⁶¹ Freud's version, as everybody knows, begins with Oedipus killing his father Laius at the crossroads; Paul reminds us, however, that the Greek myth begins earlier, with the parents abandoning the child and



the father mutilating his son by piercing his ankles and tying them together (hence the name Oedipus, which translates as 'swollen foot'). Freud seems to repress or conveniently ignore the incident of paternal abuse, but Kubrick faces it squarely, dramatising 'something so insistently repressed in Western culture, the hostility of the father toward his own son' (Paul, p. 344).

The film's play with the myths of psychoanalysis, as well as its uncanny emotional atmosphere, are reinforced by its visual design, which everywhere invokes the symbolic/allegorical implications of a maze: the aerial shots of the Torrance family Volkswagen travelling up a mountain towards the Overlook give the impression of a maze; a literal hedge maze is situated on the grounds of the Overlook; a model of the maze sits on a table inside the building; the numerous hotel hallways create a maze; and a maze pattern can be seen on the carpet where Danny plays with his toy truck. By virtue of this design, the film provides many opportunities for Kubrick's characteristic wide-angle tracking shots down tunnels or corridors, intensified here by sudden twists around corners to reveal new passageways. The idea for the twisting and turning probably had its origins in 1974, when Kubrick first saw test reels photographed by Garrett Brown's Steadicam, a gyroscopic device that maintains a stable image in hand-held or other kinds of previously impossible circumstances. When he came to make *The Shining*, Kubrick wanted the Steadicam to move at extremely low levels representing the viewpoint of a child, and he hired Brown to come to England as the camera's operator. Hence we have the exhilarating, amusing and suspenseful shot of Danny on his streamlined tricycle, pedalling furiously across the grand rooms and deserted hallways of the Overlook, his wheels alternately rumbling and muffling as he passes over floors and carpet. We travel along behind him, skimming just above the floor in his wake, fearing what we might see at the next turning. We also have the climactic chase sequence through the hedge maze, which cuts back and forth between the travelling viewpoints of Danny and his axe-wielding father (limping along incongruously as the 'swollen-foot' character), and culminates with a close-up of the father frozen in the snow. After the more-or-less subjective 'tunnel' shots that move swiftly down hedgerows and hotel corridors, the film concludes with an 'objective' camera movement reminiscent of Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad*, Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) and a typical episode of Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*. The eye of the camera slowly tracks, zooms and then cuts into the photo of Jack at a fourth-of-July party at the Overlook in the 1920s.

The image of Jack frozen inside the maze may be intended as an allusion to the Minotaur, as several critics have suggested, although this mythical creature (a half-man, half-bull who ate children) is said to have inhabited a labyrinth, not a maze. The labyrinth, some form of which exists in virtually every culture, is normally a circular pathway that spirals towards a centre; the maze, an equally familiar construction, is box-like, filled with dead ends and a bewildering array of passageways. You can't truly get lost in the average labyrinth, but the whole purpose of a maze is to trick you. The former is 'unicursal', leading in and out, a metaphor for an eternal return or a journey towards understanding; the latter is a puzzle, a metaphor for entrapment

and death; hence *The Shining* makes an interesting contrast with Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), which ends with a girl being pursued into a labyrinth by her evil stepfather. The two forms, however, sometimes become interchangeable, not only in critical writing (Michel Ciment refers to the hedge maze in *The Shining* as a labyrinth), but also in the Greek myth of the artist-technician Dedalus, who constructed a labyrinth, who was imprisoned there with his son Icarus and who built wings with which they could escape. Dedalus's labyrinth was designed to conceal the Minotaur, who demanded human sacrifice; Theseus entered the labyrinth to slay the monster and was helped by Ariadne, who gave him a ball of string to mark a way out. *The Shining* evokes several of these associations and, like the Greek myth, seems to combine the implications of labyrinth and maze. Christopher Hoile has remarked that, by the end of the film, several myths and fairy tales are bound up together: 'the father, son, and mother, who before isolation show the tensions psychoanalysis has identified with Laius, Oedipus, and Jocasta, once trapped in the Overlook Hotel take on a fairy-tale version of Minotaur, Theseus, and Ariadne or Ogre, Jack the Giant Killer, and the Ogre's kind wife'.⁶²

In addition to Theseus and Jack the Giant Killer, the film (like the novel) alludes to Hansel and Gretel. All three stories involve cannibalism, a theme introduced early in *The Shining* by means of the Torrance family's conversation about the Donner party. The three stories also concern children or young men who cleverly manoeuvre through unfamiliar surroundings to defeat monstrous antagonists, just as Danny, aided by his mother, uses analytical skills and exploration of the hotel and its hedge maze to defeat his murderous father. For Danny, the maze/labyrinth leads to growth rather than death. William Paul has pointed out that the conclusion to the film is prefigured when Jack stands over a model of the maze and seems to look down at Wendy and Danny, who are exploring the actual maze outside. The overhead camera angle condenses the different possible meanings of 'overlook': it gives Jack a spectacular view and makes him seem an omnipotent 'overseer' or 'caretaker' (in an earlier scene, he tells Wendy that during his job interview he felt as if he 'knew what would be around every corner'); but it also 'overlooks' important lessons that can be learned at ground level (Paul, pp. 347–8). The focal and spectral ambiguity of the shot (Is it subjective or objective? Animated or photographed?) is appropriate to its double symbolic implication: it portends Jack's gradual descent into the imprisoning maze of his own mind, and at the same time his son's victory over a menacing environment.

Danny has an ally not only in Wendy but also in Halloran. During the writing of the film, Kubrick was unsure how to deal with these characters. In his notes on the screenplay, he observed that King had made Wendy 'strong and uncomplaining', and he asked himself, 'Why does she stay with [Jack]? Decide. Weakness? Physical? Love?'⁶³ In the end he took a satiric approach, dropping a good deal of dialogue that Diane Johnson had written for Wendy and transforming her from a relatively 'rounded' personality into a naive, almost laughably fragile and fearful character who clings to a troubled marriage. To play her, he chose Shelley Duvall, an eccentric performer best known for the off-beat comedy, sexiness and pathos she brought to several of Robert Altman's best films (she's a long-legged LA biker

in *Nashville* [1975], a ditzy and fascinatingly weird young single in *Three Women* [1977] and the perfect Olive Oyl in *Popeye* [1980]). On the set, at least from what one sees in Vivian Kubrick's documentary about the making of *The Shining*, he treated Duvall with almost as much contempt as Jack treats Wendy, thereby contributing to the skittish quality of her performance. Some of her scenes were cut from the released film, but enough remain to make it clear that she's playing the sort of wife who might defer to Jack and at the same time drive him crazy. Her limp hair, string-bean body and trailer-park twang are an affront to Jack's sense of himself, and her timidity fuels his sadism. When she holds him at bay with a baseball bat, his elaborate condescension and darkly funny threats (he's a bit like an exasperated husband in a TV sitcom) tap into a vague irritation the audience has been encouraged to feel about Wendy, almost pushing the film into overt misogyny. Even so, Kubrick upsets our assumptions about the two characters. Despite Wendy's wilting anguish and horror-movie screaming, she subdues Jack fairly easily: she knocks him out, drags him into a storage room and locks him away for the winter; when he escapes and chops down her door, she nicks the back of his hand with a butcher knife and he runs away whimpering.

No such luck for Halloran, Jack's only victim and the subject of the film's only direct representation of grisly violence. In the novel, Halloran helps to defeat the forces of evil and becomes Danny's surrogate father. Kubrick and Johnson initially planned to invert this role, turning the gentle, affable chef into a secret ally of the hotel's ghosts, a killer who helps to murder the entire Torrance family. Instead they retained King's original conception of the character but killed him off to demonstrate Jack's ferocity and undercut the audience's expectations of a last-minute rescue. Pauline Kael was rightly disturbed about this strategy: 'The awful suspicion pops into the mind,' she wrote, 'that since we don't want Wendy or Danny hurt and there's no one else alive around for Jack to get at, he's given the black man.'⁶⁴ The only subsequent critic to discuss the issue in any detail is Dennis Bingham, who, in a long footnote to an essay on the critical reception of *The Shining*, points out that the theme of racial genocide is introduced early in the film, when we learn about the Indian burial ground beneath the Overlook; this detail reinforces Kubrick's Freudian approach to the story (Freud compared the unconscious history of the individual to the buried, archeological strata of historical sites), but also lends an air of primitivism to the film. According to Freud, primitive man, child and neurotic adult are alike in their propensity to animistic thinking. Halloran's conversation with Danny in the Overlook kitchen seems to imply a link between blackness and childlike animism, and therefore makes Halloran a kind of primitive. The situation isn't helped by the strange pictures of nude black women with big Afros on the walls of Halloran's Florida bedroom – pictures which, as Bingham remarks, resemble the kitschy art collected by Alex's family in *A Clockwork Orange*.

The film's treatment of Halloran originates with King, who more than once wrote about what Spike Lee describes as the 'magical Negro'. (See, for example, *The Green Mile*.) It might also be noted that Diane Johnson had written about un-supernatural black characters in *The Shadow Knows*, which is told from the point of view of a middle-class white woman.

Kubrick was perhaps aware of the 'magical' problem, and his plan to make Halloran into a killer might have been a subversive, if risky, way of treating it. But no matter which way Kubrick turned, he was likely to fall into a trap. When a working-class black character communicates with ghosts or demonstrates ESP in the context of a Freudian-inflected, supernatural story about white people, he can't avoid seeming like a product of racist imagination. Bingham argues that Kubrick, who wasn't a deliberate racist, may have wanted to treat the stereotype of black atavism ironically and somehow mixed it up with 'the satiric attitude toward the noble images of 1950s and 1960s white liberalism that moved him to cast James Earl Jones as Major Kong's bombardier in *Dr. Strangelove*'. If so, the joke doesn't work. Bingham concludes that 'Kubrick's confused attitude toward women is compounded with his confused attitude toward blacks: he seems not to have thought very much about either (perhaps the only modern issues he hasn't thought about very much).'⁶⁵

Paradoxically, although the audience roots for Danny, Wendy and Halloran, Jack dominates the film. This is partly because the monster is always the most compelling character in a horror movie and partly because Jack is played by a gifted star performer. Nicholson's acting style in the latter part of the film, however, is almost camp – as when he puts his head through a hole in a door and shouts an improvised line, 'Heeere's Johnny!' In keeping with the mixed modes of *The Shining*, he begins as if he were working for Roman Polanski and ends as if he were working for Roger Corman. Richard T. Jameson has emphasised the way he boomerangs back and forth between character and star and between good acting and bad acting: 'Jack Nicholson plays Jack Nicholson playing Jack Torrance playing Jack Torrance as King of the Mountain.'⁶⁶ The result is a killer clown and a particularly evil Lord of Misrule, but also a somewhat pathetic bum-madman-bully, an inept actor who leers with Nicholson's trademark nasty grin, tries to behave like the rebellious inmate of a mental hospital in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and flings crude insults like a parody of the oil rigger-artist in *Five Easy Pieces* (1970). In other words, Jack is a bad version of Nicholson, played cleverly by Jack Nicholson.

In interviews when the film was released (one of which can be seen in the Vivian Kubrick documentary), Nicholson recalled a conversation with Kubrick in which the director told him that actors try too hard to make the performance 'real', when 'real' isn't always interesting. This idea originates not with Kubrick but with Stanislavsky, the ultimate realist;⁶⁷ nevertheless, it serves as an appropriate motto for the unusual effects Kubrick seems to be trying to achieve. In film after film, his performers veer back and forth between realism and caricature; often the starring actor (James Mason in *Lolita*, Ryan O'Neal in *Barry Lyndon* and Tom Cruise in *Eyes Wide Shut*) is a straight man who works alongside bizarre supporting players, but sometimes the star gives a comically stylised performance. Nicholson obviously belongs in the second category. During his bar-room speech to Lloyd, he behaves like a homeless schizophrenic who has been given one great moment in the dramatic spotlight; when he comes to the phrase 'a momentary loss of muscular co-ordination', he mimics smallness and quietness, drawing out the words with embarrassingly broad

sarcasm, whining and making big derisive gestures. During his later conversation in a men's room with a surreal English butler (Philip Stone, who had played subservient characters in Kubrick's two previous films), he seems like a vaudeville comic. 'What do they call you around here, Jeevsie?' he asks with elaborate cheerfulness. When the butler identifies himself as Delbert Grady, Nicholson does a double-take and arches his eyebrows: 'Uh,' he says, clearing his throat and grinning as if he wants to share his amusement with the audience, 'Mr Grady, haven't I seen you somewhere before?' Grady says no, but then weirdly claims that he has always been at the Overlook, where Jack has always been the 'caretaker'. In another crazy reversal, Grady adds that he had to 'correct' his family in order to fulfil his duties as caretaker. Then his mask of servility drops, revealing a steely disciplinarian who quietly but forcefully exhorts Jack to 'correct' his own family and do something about 'an outside party, a nigger, the nigger cook'. Nicholson pauses for a beat, lifts his eyebrows again, and asks, 'a nigger?' The reaction suggests that Jack's suppressed racism, already revealed in the earlier conversation with Lloyd, has been given a new outlet.

At several points, Nicholson conveys a barely contained violence – when he throws a tennis ball against the walls of the Overlook, for example – and his mouth and eyebrows work overtime when Jack enters his manic phases. The expressive extremes of his performance aren't to everyone's taste, and his dark portrait of fatherhood may be one of the reasons why *The Shining*, after a profitable opening, never achieved the ticket sales the studio expected. On the other hand, his work is very much in keeping with the conventions of popular horror, which usually mingles bloody terror with carnivalistic comedy. His anarchic jokes and repeated evocation of his star persona are so memorable that they potentially subvert the film (as scary monsters often do in more conservative pictures). In the last analysis, however, his portrayal is well suited to Kubrick's absurdist style. When the picture was released, Kubrick indicated that he wanted to make one of the most frightening movies of all time. If that was the case, he didn't succeed. What he made is an intellectualised, formally rigorous, genuinely disturbing satire of American paternity – a film that runs somewhat against the grain of King's novel and the horror-film cycle of its day. The satire is all the more troubling when Jack Torrance's misogyny, racism and bad-boy grin are enshrined in the hotel picture gallery, haunting the audience until the very end.

Notes

1. Stanley Kubrick, letter to Anthony Harvey, in Harvey's papers at the Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana.
2. Pauline Kael, who seemed never to have read Jonathan Swift, argued that *Dr. Strangelove* 'opened a new movie era' because 'it ridiculed *everything* and *everybody*' and 'concealed its own liberal pieties'. It was dangerous, she argued, because it didn't 'tell us how we are supposed to regain control'. As a result, the 'new generation enjoyed seeing the world as insane; they *literally* learned to stop worrying and love the bomb'. See *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 78.

- Andrew Sarris thought that *Dr. Strangelove* was 'not a bad movie by any standards', but that it was 'grossly overrated'. See *Confessions of a Cultist: On the Cinema 1955/1969* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), pp. 119–22.
3. Robert Brustein, 'Out of This World', reprinted in Mario Falsetto (ed.), *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), pp. 136–40.
 4. Henry Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 15. All other references are to this volume, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
 5. Quoted by Louis Menand, 'Fat Man: Herman Kahn and the Nuclear Age', *The New Yorker* (27 June 2005), p. 96. All other references are to this article, and page numbers are indicated in the text. See also Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi, *The Worlds of Herman Kahn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
 6. The quotes in this and the previous paragraph are from Fred Kaplan, 'Truth Stranger than Strangelove', *The New York Times* (Sunday, 10 October 2004), p. 21. Almost twenty years after the release of the film and shortly before Kahn died, Kaplan asked him what he thought of *Strangelove*. Assuming that Kaplan was talking about the character and not the movie, Kahn replied, 'Strangelove wouldn't have lasted three weeks in the Pentagon. He was too creative.'
 7. Ed Sikov, *Mr. Strangelove: A Biography of Peter Sellers* (New York: Hyperion, 2002), pp. 196–7.
 8. See James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 68–82.
 9. Blocker's agent quoted by Billy Budd Vermillion, 'Dr. Strangelove', in Gene D. Phillips and Rodney Hill (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Stanley Kubrick* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2002), p. 91.
 10. Roger Ebert, *The Great Movies* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), pp. 154–6.
 11. John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 89–92.
 12. Volker Fischer, 'Designing the Future: On Pragmatic Forecasting in *2001: A Space Odyssey*', in Hans-Peter Reichmann and Ingeborg Flagge (eds), *Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 103–19.
 13. Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men and Star Maker* (New York: Dover, 1968). I am grateful to Jonathan Rosenbaum for acquainting me with Stapledon's work.
 14. Quotations in this paragraph are from the screenplay of 'Journey beyond the Stars' in the special collections department of the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy, Los Angeles.
 15. Quotations in this paragraph are from the 31 August 1965 screenplay of *2001* in the special collections department of the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy, Los Angeles.
 16. Quotations in this paragraph are from the 14 December 1965 shooting script of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in the special collections department of the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy, Los Angeles.
 17. Michel Chion, *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (London: BFI, 2001), p. 71.
 18. Production Code Administration files, Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy, Los Angeles.

19. For an interesting description of the prologue and a discussion of scientific theories that interested Kubrick throughout his life, see Anthony Frewin, '2001: The Prologue that Nearly Was', in Reichmann and Flagge, *Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 129–35.
20. Kael's review is collected in Stephanie Schwam (ed.), *The Making of 2001: A Space Odyssey* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), pp. 144–6.
21. Andrew Sarris, 'Science Fiction: *The Forbin Project*', in *The Primal Screen: Essays on Film and Related Topics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), pp. 201–3.
22. See R. Barton Palmer, '2001: The Critical Reception and the Generation Gap', in Robert Kolker, (ed.), *Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 13–27. See also Tom Gunning, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment', in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 5th edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 818–30.
23. Max Kosloff, in Schwam, *The Making of 2001*, p. 180.
24. Annette Michelson, 'Bodies in Space: Film as Carnal Knowledge', in Schwam, *The Making of 2001*, pp. 212–15.
25. Charlie Kohler, 'Stanley Kubrick Raps', in Schwam, *The Making of 2001*, p. 247.
26. David G. Stork (ed.), *Hal's Legacy: 2001's Computer as Dream and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997). All other references are to this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
27. 'Playboy Interview: Stanley Kubrick', in Schwam, *The Making of 2001*, pp. 274–5.
28. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common, in Willard Huntington Wright (ed.), *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1954), p. 6.
29. Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929–1968* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1968), p. 196.
30. Alexander Walker, Sybil Taylor and Ulrich Rachtli, *Stanley Kubrick, Director* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), p. 162. Raymond Durnat, 'Paint it Black: The Family Tree of Film Noir', *Film Comment* vol. 6 November 1974), p. 6.
31. Carl Freedman, 'Kubrick's *2001* and the Possibility of a Science-Fiction Cinema', *Science Fiction Studies* vol. 23 (1996), pp. 300–17.
32. Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human* (London: Penguin, 2000).
33. Janet Staiger, 'The Cultural Productions of *A Clockwork Orange*', in Stuart Y. McDougal (ed.), *Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 37–60.
34. Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 16. All other citations are from this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
35. Colin Burrow, 'Not Quite Nasty', *The London Review of Books* vol. 28 no. 3 (9 February 2006), p. 20.
36. Peter J. Rabinowitz, 'A Bird of Like Rarest Spun Heavenmetal', in McDougal, *Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange*, pp. 109–30.
37. Kevin Jackson, 'Real Horrorshow: A Short Lexicon of Nasdat', *Sight and Sound* (September 1999), p. 27.

38. John Alcott, interviewed in Michel Ciment, *Kubrick: The Definitive Edition* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2001) p. 214.
39. David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 1–7.
40. Sade quoted by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 69–70.
41. Quoted in Eva-Maria Magel, 'The Best Movie (N)ever Made: Stanley Kubrick's Failed *Napoleon* Project', in Reichmann and Flagge, *Stanley Kubrick*, p. 159.
42. For a discussion of how Kubrick interprets the past through the present and at the same time makes us feel that the past is inaccessible, see William Stephenson, 'The Perception of "History" in Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*', *Literature/Film Quarterly* vol. 9 no. 4 (1981), pp. 251–60.
43. Fredric Jameson uses 'pastiche' to describe *Barry Lyndon*, and tends to equate the technique with postmodernism. See 'Historicism in *The Shining*', in Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 91–2.
44. Ralf Michael Fischer, 'Pictures at an Exhibition? Allusions and Illusions in *Barry Lyndon*', in Reichmann and Flagge, *Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 169–83.
45. Rosenman quoted in Falsetto, *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 404–5.
46. See Fischer, 'Pictures at an Exhibition?', pp. 176–7.
47. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon; a Romance of the Last Century*, ed. Edgar F. Harden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 226. All other references are to this edition, and page numbers are given in the text.
48. Pauline Kael, 'Kubrick's Gilded Age', *The New Yorker* (29 December, 1975), p. 51. For a dissenting view, see Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'The Pluck of *Barry Lyndon*', *Film Comment* (March–April 1977), pp. 26–8.
49. Writers on the film have disagreed about whether the narrator is reliable or unreliable. See Mark Crispin Miller, 'Kubrick's Anti-Reading of *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*', in Falsetto, *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 226–42. For a different view, see Sarah Kosloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
50. Marvin D'Lugo, 'Barry Lyndon: Kubrick on the Rules of the Game', *Explorations in National Cinemas, The 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part One* (Pleasantville, NY: Redgrave Publishing Company), p. 40.
51. Ryan O'Neal isn't the actor we see in this last shot; Kubrick uses an actual amputee who doubles for the star.
52. Diane Johnson's comments on her work with Kubrick in 'Writing *The Shining*', in Geoffrey Cocks, James Diedrick and Glenn Perusek (eds) *Depth of Field: Stanley Kubrick, Film, and the Uses of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 55–61. This essay describes a significant scene that Kubrick seems to have cut from the film for reasons of length: as in the novel, Jack discovers an old scrapbook containing fairy-tale plots and details that help him in his writing. The scrapbook is a 'gift' from the hotel ghosts, motivating Jack's sudden transition from deep depression to manic energy; it can be glimpsed sitting beside Jack's typewriter at one point in the release

- version of the film. Other cuts from the original release print included a scene near the end in which we see Wendy and Danny recovering in a hospital. For detailed information on this and other trims, see *Monthly Film Bulletin* vol. 47 no. 562 (November 1980).
53. Stephen King quoted in Ursula Von Keitz, 'The *Shining* – Frozen Material: Stanley Kubrick's Adaptation of Stephen King's Novel', in Reichmann and Flagge, *Stanley Kubrick*, p. 187.
54. Stephen King, 'Introduction', *The Shining* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001), p. xvi. All further references are to this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
55. Tzvetan Todorov, 'Henry James's Ghosts', in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 179. All further references are to this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
56. <www.liquidgeneration.com/content/a55hat.aspx?cid=1680>
57. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 34–5. All further references are to this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
58. See Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 172–8. See also David Cook, 'American Horror: *The Shining*', *Literature Film Quarterly* vol. 12 no. 1 (1984), pp. 2–5.
59. Robin Wood, 'American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s', in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 70–94.
60. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 226. All subsequent references are to this edition, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
61. William Paul, *Laughing/Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 343. All further references are to this volume, and page numbers are indicated in the text.
62. Christopher Hoile, 'The Uncanny and the Fairy Tale in Kubrick's *The Shining*', *Literature/Film Quarterly* vol. 12 no. 1 (1984), p. 8.
63. Quoted in Von Keitz, 'The *Shining* – Frozen Material', p. 190.
64. Pauline Kael, 'Devolution', in *Taking It All In* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1984), p. 6.
65. Dennis Bingham, 'The Displaced Auteur: A Reception History of *The Shining*', in Falsetto, *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, pp. 304–5.
66. Richard T. Jameson, 'The *Shining*', in Falsetto, *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, p. 251.
67. 'I recall a comment recorded in a book called *Stanislavski Directs*, in which Stanislavski told an actor that he had the right understanding of the character, the right understanding of the text of the play, that what he was doing was completely believable, but that it was still no good because it wasn't interesting'. Kubrick interviewed in 1972 by Philip Stock and Penelope Huston in Gene D. Phillips (ed.), *Stanley Kubrick Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), p. 131.

Part Five

LATE KUBRICK

I. Warriors

Alan Dwan's *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) stars John Wayne as a battle-scarred Marine sergeant who sacrifices himself for his unit and in doing so earns the respect of John Agar, a young recruit who had been trained by Wayne and who previously regarded Wayne as a heartless bully. The film ends with a sentimental tribute to the fallen Wayne and a recreation of the famous *Life* magazine image of the Marines raising the US flag on Mount Suribachi. Like many American boys of my generation, I saw this movie in re-release when I was about eight years old. The tear-jerking plot, however, interested me not at all. I was fascinated with the combat scenes (some of which were made from newsreel footage) and especially with the military gear – the helmets, ammo belts, canteens, carbine rifles and machine guns. Afterward, I played war with other kids, imagining I was a Marine. I remember thinking that, if I owned a movie camera and the right military equipment, I could frame the action so as to screen out clothes lines, telephone poles and anything else that would interfere with my imaginary world. I suspect that Stanley Kubrick may have had a similar experience; in any case, his last war film deals with a generation of soldiers fighting in Vietnam who had seen Hollywood combat movies of the 1940s and 1950s, and who absorbed their warrior spirit.

The Vietnam War was a logical subject for Kubrick but, like most other Hollywood directors (with the exception of John Wayne), he waited until the war was over before he made a picture about it. In 1983, just prior to the success of Sylvester Stallone's reactionary *Rambo* series and towards the end of a cycle of darker films about Vietnam that included Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978), Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986), Kubrick began work on an adaptation of Gustav Hasford's

spare, often surreal novel, *The Short-Timers* (1979), which is loosely based on Hasford's experience as a Marine newspaper correspondent and sometimes combatant during the Tet offensive and the battle of Khe Sanh. Kubrick commissioned Michael Herr, the author of *Dispatches* (1977), a much-admired collection of battlefield reports from the war, to help write the screenplay and serve as associate producer. According to Herr, who had also written the voice-over narration for *Apocalypse Now*, Kubrick developed the treatment of the film, which he entitled *Full Metal Jacket*, a term he found in gun magazines; Herr composed the first draft of the script; and the two men collaborated on subsequent revisions.¹ Gustav Hasford was consulted during the process and came to London to do some of the writing but, even though the basic plot and a good deal of the language of his novel were used, he contributed little new material.

The film was shot chiefly at Bessingbourn Barracks in Cambridgeshire, which 'played' the US Marine training station at Parris Island, and at the disused Beckton Gasworks factory in East London, which art director Anton Furst designed to look like the bombed-out city of Hue. (Unlike previous Vietnam movies, this one centres on urban combat; a few palm trees were flown in from Spain to provide landscape, and aerial views of tropical jungle were photographed by a second unit.) John Olson's *Life* magazine photos of Hue influenced some of Furst's designs but, as Thomas Doherty has pointed out, the film creates something more akin to a 'hallucinatory dreamscape, not a geographical space'.² Shooting in primary locations began in 1985 and took slightly more than a year, partly because of Kubrick's many retakes, but also because two of his principal actors, Vincent D'Onofrio and Lee Ermey, were injured in separate accidents and needed time to heal.

The completed film has an unorthodox, two-part structure, linked by the narration of the leading character, Private Joker (Matthew Modine). The first part, which I've described in some detail earlier in this book, expands on a relatively short section of the novel, treating daily life at a single Marine barracks in almost as detailed and documentary a fashion as Frederick Wiseman's *Basic Training* (1971), at the same time telling the story of a conflict between a frightening drill instructor, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman (Ermey), and an inept hillbilly recruit, Private Leonard Lawrence (D'Onofrio), whom Hartman dubs 'Gomer Pyle'. The climax is staged in the barracks toilet: Pyle, clad in underwear and holding a loaded rifle, lowers his head and gives the drill instructor a 1,000-yard stare; grinning and sighing with feral pleasure, he murders Hartman and then commits suicide.

As critic Brad Stevens has noted, these killings resemble the violent Oedipal scenarios in *A Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*, and as a result the film almost stops cold.³ Part two begins abruptly in Da Nang, where the camera follows a miniskirted prostitute as she sashays across a street to the music of Nancy Sinatra's 'These Boots Were Made for Walking' and approaches Joker and a military photographer, Rafterman (Kevyn Major Howard), at a sidewalk café. Joker has been assigned an alienating job writing newspaper propaganda for the Marines and he takes a cynical but easygoing attitude towards the

Vietnamese hustlers and thieves who live off the American troops. Longing to see action, or, as he puts it, to be 'in the shit', he deliberately offends his smarmy editor (John Terry), who retaliates by sending him into the most dangerous zone of the Tet offensive. The film meanders in this section, not picking up steam until Joker reunites with his friend Cowboy (Arliss Howard) and joins the Lust Hog squad, who ultimately confront a deadly sniper in the ruins of Hue.

Bill Krohn has observed that the unexpected elimination of Hartman and Pyle, who were the only characters capable of sustaining a story, condemns us for a time to 'wander into regions bordering dangerously on nonsense'.⁴ Kubrick told interviewers that he wanted to 'explode the narrative structure' (quoted in Krohn, p. 2) and, in the aftermath, he gives us not only fragmentation and aimlessness but also a mixture of styles or modes. The opening scenes of the second part, beginning with Joker's negotiation with the prostitute and extending to the point where he meets the Lust Hogs, are essentially realistic, if darkly absurdist. When the Lust Hogs approach Hue, however, the film makes an overtly self-reflexive, 'Brechtian' gesture: a TV crew executes a hand-held 'track' along the length of the squad (photographed by Kubrick's crew with a Steadicam), who joke about starring in 'Vietnam: The Movie', a Hollywood Western in which the 'gooks' play Indians. Next we're given a scene reminiscent of the psychological allegory in *Fear and Desire*: looking up from the subjective point of view of two US corpses on the ground, the camera pans around to individual members of the squad, who address the movie audience as if speaking to their fallen comrades. ('Goin' home now', 'Semper fi', 'Mean Marines', 'Go easy, bros', 'Better you than me', etc.) Then we return to activities of the TV crew: each member of the squad looks into Kubrick's camera, which stands in for the news camera, and responds to unheard questions from an interviewer. ('In Hue City, it's . . . you know, like what I thought a war was supposed to be; there's the enemy - kill 'em.' 'I don't think there's any question about it, I mean we're the best . . . When the shit really hits the fan, who do they call?' 'Do I think America belongs in Vietnam? I know I belong in Vietnam.' 'Personally I think they don't want to be involved in this war . . . They'd rather be alive than free, I guess. Poor dumb bastards.') Finally, as the squad enters Hue, we shift back into a more realistic mode and then into vivid expressionism when the sniper is discovered.

One consequence of the anti-classical narrative is that Joker seems less like the film's central consciousness than like a marginal observer who sometimes steps forward to take part in events. The character's somewhat recessive quality may also have to do with the casting of Matthew Modine, who lacks the movie-star charisma of Ryan O'Neal and Jack Nicholson. Kubrick said that Modine reminded him of a cross between Gary Cooper and Henry Fonda but, even if the intelligent young actor had brought a well-established star persona to the film, he would have found it difficult to assert himself. Joker is given few point-of-view shots and his sparse narration, which has been pruned down considerably from the original shooting script, doesn't begin until after the long opening sequence. We're given no psychological 'back-story' or personal information about him, or indeed about

any of the other characters, most of whom, as in Hasford's novel, are known simply by their nicknames.

In part one Joker plays second-fiddle to the conflict between Hartman and Pyle, and in part two he seems feckless. He tells us that the Marines want 'killers, not robots', but he tends to move in unison with a group. His personality becomes interesting only in retrospect. As his name implies, he's a wild card with a shifting identity. 'Is that you, John Wayne?' he repeatedly asks himself. 'Is this me?' He both takes part in the Marine community and stands back to view it cynically. When the recruits sneak up on Pyle and attack him with bars of soap wrapped in towels, Joker strikes the last blow but then covers his eyes with shame. In Vietnam, he wears a peace symbol and yet has 'Born to Kill' written on his helmet (a detail taken from Herr's *Dispatches*). In his cynical interview with the American TV crew, he claims that he joined the Marines because 'I wanted to see exotic Vietnam, the jewel of Southeast Asia. I wanted to meet stimulating people of an ancient culture and kill them. I wanted to be the first kid on my block to get a confirmed kill.'

In this last regard, notice that Joker's adventures in part two have a certain affinity with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which was the source of *Apocalypse Now*. Like Conrad's romantic but ineffectual Marlow, Joker narrates the story of his trip to an exotic country and his subsequent journey inward – geographically, psychologically and politically – during which he witnesses a series of imperialist barbarisms: he meets prostitutes and pimps; he is instructed to write fake stories about how the US is killing the enemy and winning hearts and minds; he takes a helicopter trip with a trigger-happy psychopath who fires cheerfully at peasants and, when asked how he can shoot down women and children, cracks one of the film's sickest jokes ('Easy – you just don't lead 'em so much!'); he sees a mass grave of Vietnamese villagers covered in lime and is informed by a smirking lieutenant that they were killed by the enemy; and he's lectured by a pompous US colonel who tells him, 'inside every gook there is an American trying to get out'. When the colonel asks him to explain the contradiction between the peace sign and the motto on the helmet, Joker replies, 'The duality of man. The Jungian thing, Sir.' At the end, he has an intimate experience of Jung's 'shadow' and Conrad's 'horror'. He comes face to face with the enemy and gets his confirmed kill – but it isn't the sort of thing he can joke about.

To achieve the odd shape of the film, Kubrick followed his usual procedure of making significant changes to the script during shooting and post-production. Lee Ermey's improvised obscenities were added, and a good deal of Joker's narration, much of it taken straight from the novel, was cut or shortened. By comparison with the film, the shooting script, written in a discursive style somewhere between a novel and a movie, is in some ways much more raw and disturbing. After Gunnery Sergeant Gerheim (Hartman in the film) punches, chokes and slaps a couple of his recruits, Joker's voice tells us, 'Beatings, we learn, are a routine element of life on Parris Island. And not that I'm-only-rough-on-'um-because-I-love-'um crap in Mr John Wayne's *The Sands of Iwo Jima*.'⁵ During the Parris Island

section, one of the recruits tries to commit suicide by cutting his wrist with a bayonet and Gerheim orders him to clean up the mess he has made. Pyle suffers truly sadistic humiliations: at one point Gerheim forces all the men in the barracks to pee in a toilet and then pushes Pyle's face into it; in another scene, Gerheim fits a Trojan condom with a hole in it over the mouth of a canteen and orders Pyle to suck milk through it at mealtimes – cut to the mess hall, where the other drill instructors make 'crude and derisory remarks' as Pyle nurses from the canteen. The most brutal moment of all, however, comes near the end of the script, just after Joker administers a *coup de grâce* by shooting a wounded female sniper at his feet:

Sutton says, 'Joker, that's well done. You're hard.'

Animal Mother spits. He takes a step, kneels, zips out his machete. With one powerful blow he chops off her head.

He picks the head up by its long black hair and holds it high. He laughs and says, 'Rest in pieces, bitch.'

Animal Mother laughs again. He walks around and sticks the bloody ball of gore into all their faces. 'Hard? Now who's hard? Now who's hard, motherfuckers?'

Animal Mother pauses, spits, throws the head into a ditch.

He picks up his M-60 machine gun, lays it across his shoulders, struts over to Joker.

'Nobody shits on the Animal, motherfucker, nobody' (pp. 111–12).

In his diary of the production, Matthew Modine tells us that Kubrick spent gruelling hours shooting and re-shooting this particular scene, requiring Adam Baldwin, who plays Animal Mother, to throw a rubber head off screen to a crew member who caught it and saved it for the next take. 'The circle of actors around [Baldwin] agonizes with him,' Modine wrote. 'The mystery of the repetition is lost to us . . . We're glad it's Adam and not us.'⁶ When the scene was completed, however, Kubrick cut it from the film without informing Baldwin. He also cut a nude scene that he and Modine had invented: a Vietnamese prostitute (Papillon Soo Soo), was shown in post-coital conversation with Joker in the bedroom of a French Colonial house: 'Oh! Me want more boom boom,' the prostitute says. 'Me love you long time, G.I. Me so hooornny!' Joker lights two cigarettes and delivers a variation on Bette Davis's famous line in *Now, Voyager* (1942): 'My darling, we have the moon. Don't let's ask for the stars.'

In the shooting script, Joker has a much more active and potentially sympathetic role to play. (The same could be said of Joker in Hasford's novel.) During his helicopter ride to Hue, for example, he becomes so outraged at an Arvin captain and sergeant who are murdering prisoners that he machine-guns both of them. And at the end, he dies in almost heroic fashion while running through a hail of gunfire. His voice-over narration, italicised in the script, would have been accompanied by rapid cross-cutting between images of him as a man and as a boy:

JOKER, THE MARINE, RUNNING.

JOKER, 8 YEARS-OLD, ARMED WITH A PLASTIC RIFLE, RUNNING IN A FIELD.

'Keep moving, keep moving, keep moving!!!'

People tell you what to do. Keep moving, keep moving, keep moving. If you stop moving, if you hesitate, your heart will stop beating. Your legs are machines winding you up like a mechanical toy.

JOKER, THE MARINE, RUNNING, FIRING HIS RIFLE.

JOKER, THE 8 YEAR-OLD, FIRING HIS TOY RIFLE.

You feel like you could run around the world. Now the asphalt is a trampoline and you are fast and graceful, a green jungle cat.

JOKER, THE MARINE, RUNNING.

JOKER, THE 8 YEAR-OLD, RUNNING.

Your feet take you up . . . up . . . over the rubble up . . . up . . . you're loving it . . . you're not human, you're an animal, you feel like a god . . . you scream: 'DIE! DIE! DIE, YOU MOTHERFUCKERS! DIE! DIE!'

JOKER, THE MARINE, IS RIDDLED WITH A BURST OF AUTOMATIC FIRE.

JOKER, THE 8 YEAR-OLD, CLUTCHES HIS CHEST IN MOCK AGONY AND STARTS TO CRUMPLE TO THE GROUND. HIS IMAGE WILL SLOW DOWN UNTIL WE HOLD ON A FROZEN FRAME, IN A POSE SOMETHING LIKE CAPA'S FAMOUS SPANISH CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPH OF A MAN WHO HAS JUST BEEN FATALLY SHOT BUT WHO IS FOREVER SUSPENDED IN MID-FALL BY THE CAMERA.

BUT THIS PICTURE IS OF AN 8 YEAR-OLD BOY. (pp. 115-16)

In the script this sequence is followed by a brief scene at a military cemetery where Joker's father reads an A. E. Housman poem at his son's graveside. Michael Herr says that it was Kubrick's idea to conclude in this way and that, when Herr argued against it, Kubrick defended the idea passionately if somewhat jokingly: 'It's the death of the Hero. It'll be so powerful, so *moving* . . . We've seen it in *Homer, Michael*' (Herr, p. 40). But during the filming Kubrick worried that Joker's death was sentimental. He repeatedly asked Matthew Modine what he thought, and was unresponsive when Modine said that he loved the way the script ended. Kubrick then asked several of the other actors to offer alternative endings and, when Modine derided their suggestions, Kubrick treated him coldly. Eventually, in frustration, Modine told Kubrick, 'You want to know what should happen? [Joker] should live. He should have to spend the rest of his life thinking about Pyle blowing his brains out.' According to Modine, Kubrick pondered a moment and said, 'That's the ending' (Modine, n.p.).

The ending Kubrick devised is vaguely similar to Hasford's novel, in which Joker and his decimated platoon simply 'hump back down the trail' after a bloody encounter with the enemy.⁷ The last images of the film show Joker and a number of other Marines marching through a blasted nocturnal landscape, silhouetted against the burning city of Hue. Kubrick

breaks the 180-degree rule, causing Joker's column to move first screen right and then screen left. 'We have nailed our names to the pages of history enough for today,' Joker's voice-over says. 'We hump down to the Perfume River to settle in for the night.' As they trudge along, the band of soldiers begins singing the marching song from Walt Disney's 'Mickey Mouse Club', occasionally imitating the voices of children. (In the shooting script, the song appears at a much earlier point.) Joker smiles as he sings, and again we hear his narration: 'My thoughts drift back to erect-nipple wet dreams about Mary Jane Rottencrotch and the great Homecoming Fuck Fantasy. I am so happy that I am alive . . . I'm in a world of shit, yes, but I'm alive. And I am not afraid.'

These last moments have been described by one writer as conveying a feeling of 'muted optimism'.⁸ To me they seem intended to ironically convey Joker's relief and exhilaration at having survived combat, but they also have a good deal in common with the closing of *Dr. Strangelove*, in which a pop tune is sung over strangely beautiful images of apocalyptic destruction. Joker's smile is troubling, especially on the heels of his mercy killing of the female Vietnamese sniper. He may have survived a baptism of fire, but at some level he remains a child, speaking the catchphrases of the 'phony-tough and crazy-brave'. The ending also returns us to several of the film's more disturbing motifs. The Mickey Mouse Club song is the culminating instance of many ironic references to US pop culture, transforming the devastated Vietnamese landscape into a grotesque Disneyland. As Paula Willoquet-Maricondi has pointed out, the song's lyrics express a colonising impulse: 'Who is marching coast to coast and far across the sea? . . . Come along and sing this song and join our family.'⁹ (Mickey Mouse is referenced in two earlier scenes: at the end of part one, Hartman storms into the latrine and shouts, 'What is this Mickey Mouse shit?' During the editorial conference for the Marine newspaper at the beginning of part two, a Mickey Mouse doll sits on the windowsill behind Joker.) Notice as well that we are once again in a 'world of shit', this time lit by glowing flames – an interesting comparison and contrast with the expressionistically designed, blue-lit toilet at the end of part one. Joker seems ambivalent about this world, wanting to be in it and yet recognising its threat to the protective 'full metal jacket' of hardened masculinity. It has something in common with Sergeant Hartman's earlier evocation of 'Mary Jane Rottencrotch', who is both desirable and foul.

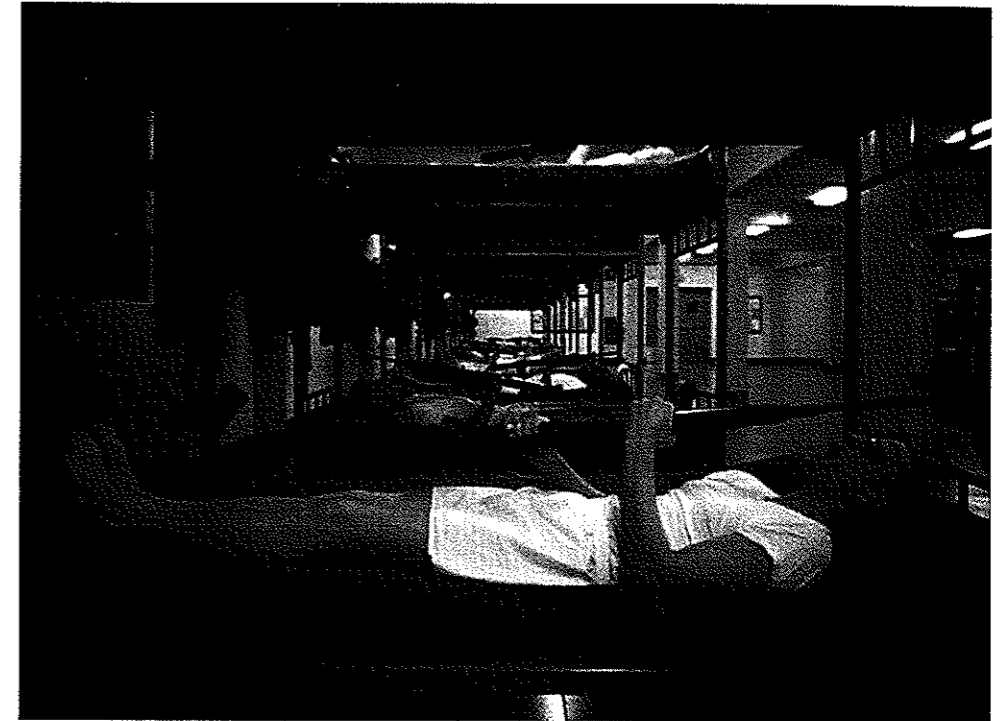
The equation of war with shit isn't unusual. In *Rambo*, for instance, Sylvester Stallone immerses himself in a sewer so that he can evade the enemy. But, as I've already pointed out, Kubrick's film goes further in this direction. Its language is pervaded with excremental imagery, which is linked to women, queers and communists and set off against everything we see at Parris Island: the clean surfaces of the military barracks; the shaved young recruits; the obsessively polished toilet; and the well-oiled rifles that become sexy machines and substitutes for Mary Jane. (As Pyle goes slowly mad, he speaks to his rifle in loving tones: 'It's been swabbed and wiped. Everything is clean. Beautiful. So that it slides perfectly. Nice. Everything cleaned. Oiled. So that your action is beautiful. Smooth, Charlene.') I've also mentioned in passing that similar imagery features in Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies*, an

analysis of the fantasy life of proto-fascist soldiers in the German *Freikorps* of the 1920s. In making the connection I don't mean to suggest that Kubrick was influenced by Theweleit, whose work was published in German in 1977 and in English in 1987. My point is simply that Kubrick and Herr have an intuitive and critical grasp of a familiar warrior-male psychology, and that Theweleit can help us understand its workings.

A brief description of the first volume of *Male Fantasies* will help to clarify the point. Subtitled *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, it provides an extensive analysis of popular literature, memoirs, diaries and propaganda by and about the men of the *Freikorps*, a volunteer private army of World War I veterans who engaged in domestic repression of organised labour and communism in the 1920s and early 1930s. In the course of his analysis, Theweleit generates what amounts to a full-scale psychological picture of a warrior caste. Throughout, he emphasises that the imaginative life of the *Freikorps* is filled with images of blood and shit, which are strongly associated with the 'Red flood' of communism. Consider Rudolf Herzog, a *Freikorps* novelist who equates the Rhineland separatist movements of the period with a 'wave of excrement' that 'rolled over the glorious cities of the Rhine, and when it paused and bubbled up, it was red with the blood of brothers' (p. 397). For Herzog and the other writers in question, the morass of slime and pulp carried along by the Red tide always has a female quality and needs to be combated with 'erections', which are represented by stalwart men and strong, hard weapons (p. 402). In fact, as Barbara Ehrenreich observes in her introduction to the US translation of *Male Fantasies*, the soldiers of the *Freikorps* are motivated less by how they feel about the Fatherland, communists, or Jews than about how they feel about women's bodies: '[The *Freikorps*]' hatred – or dread – of women cannot be explained with Freud's all-purpose Oedipal triangulation . . . It is a dread, ultimately, of dissolution – of being swallowed, engulfed, annihilated. Women's bodies are the holes, swamps, pits of muck that can engulf' (p. xiii).

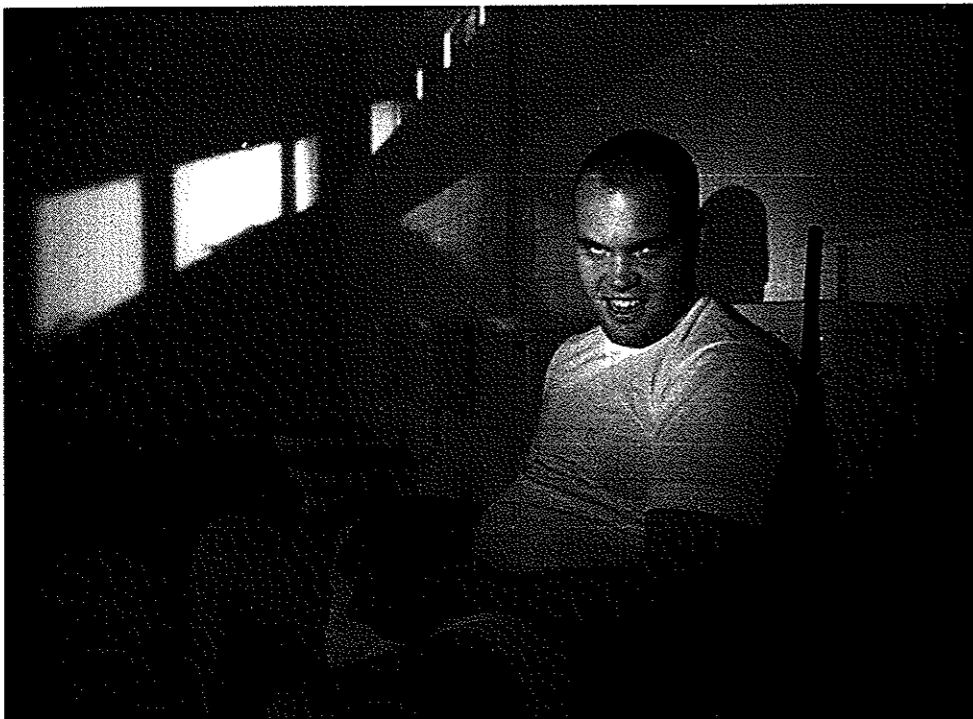
The women encountered by the *Freikorps* range from the relatively safe to the extremely dangerous: mothers and girls who are left behind when soldiers go to the front; 'white nurses' who serve on the battlefield; prostitutes who carry disease and can't be trusted; and – most threatening – 'Red women' who are armed with rifles and who face the soldiers in angry mobs or single combat. In one of the recurring scenes at the heart of *Freikorps* literature, a manly German soldier meets and kills a Red woman – a working-class communist who carries a rifle under her skirts like a penis substitute. Her death has sexual implications. Ehrenreich describes it as a 'brief moment of penetration – with bullet or knife', in which the soldier comes thrillingly close to the woman and the 'horror of dissolution', but then survives; he remains 'erect (and, we must imagine, clean and dry)', while she is a bloody mass. 'With her absent, the world becomes "safe" and male again' (p. xiv).

For anyone who has seen *Full Metal Jacket*, the relevance of the material discussed by Theweleit should be obvious. The action of the film is set in a metaphoric and sometimes literal world of blood and shit, and it climaxes with the killing of a 'Red woman'. (The shooting script, unlike the film, gives us all four types of women imagined by the *Freikorps*: in



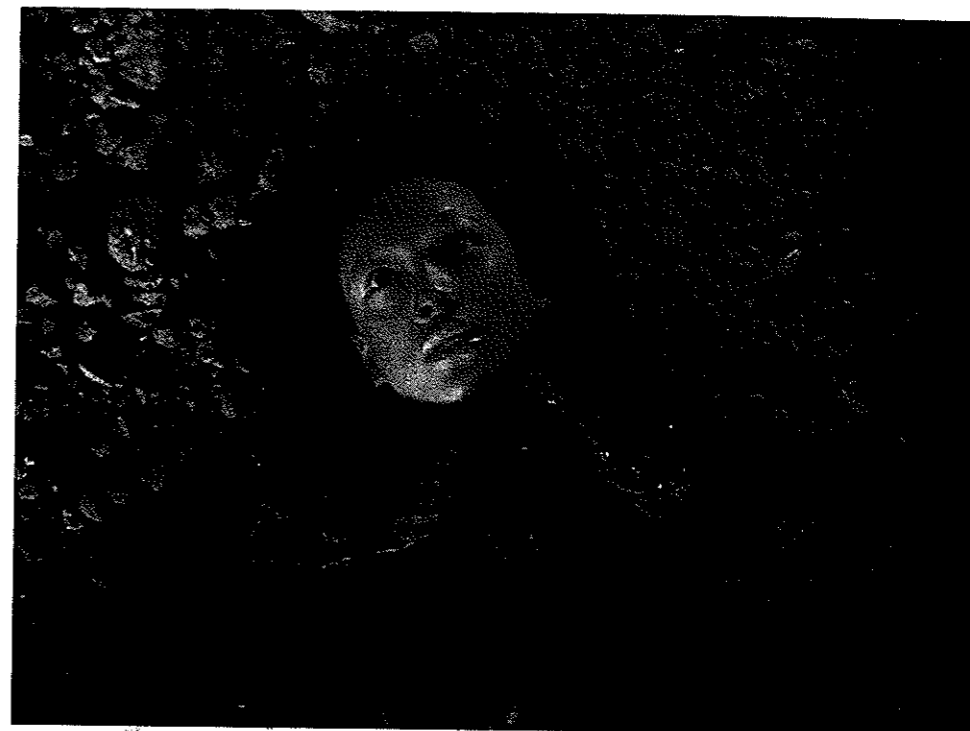
addition to 'Mary Jane Rottencrotch', two prostitutes and an armed communist, we have a brief sequence involving a couple of battlefield nurses.) The killing scene is especially significant because, during the first part of the film, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman orders the recruits to 'marry' their weapons of 'iron and wood', which have been given girls' names. Hartman explains that only the 'hard heart' kills, and he repeatedly inculcates physical hardness and steely determination as defences against softness, femininity and excrement. He also indoctrinates the troops to think of his 'beloved Corps' as the natural home of superb riflemen; in one of the most disconcertingly funny scenes, he boasts that two of history's most infamous snipers, Charles Whitman and Lee Harvey Oswald, 'showed what one motivated Marine and his rifle can do!' His training backfires, however, when the softest and flabbiest of his recruits becomes a talented shot and gets his revenge in a toilet. In a similar reversal, Joker and Cowboy face their greatest challenge when a talented young female sniper – a version of what the *Freikorps* called a *Flintenweiber* or 'rifle woman' – gets them in her gun sight.

Until this point, as in Kubrick's previous war films, the enemy has been nearly invisible: we've seen only a few silhouetted figures breaking through the perimeter of the base at Da Nang, plus the corpse of a North Vietnamese soldier. Also as in Kubrick's other pictures about war, the close encounter with the 'other' is with a female. She's photographed in



expressionist slow motion as she spins around from her hiding place to face Joker, whose gun jams. Rafterman, the most patriotically zealous of the young Marines, whom Joker has treated condescendingly, shoots her down. From Joker's point of view, we see her face in the bloody muck, writhing in an almost sexual fashion. She begs to be released from pain. Rafterman gloats and Animal Mother wants to 'let her rot', but Joker, after an appalled hesitation, puts her out of her misery. The other Marines interpret this action as an assertion of masculinity: 'Hard core, man,' one of them says, 'fucking hard core.' Next we see Joker marching away with his Mickey Mouse Club brethren, smiling and free of fear.¹⁰

Of course, the men in *Full Metal Jacket* are in some ways different from the proto-fascist ideologues in *Male Fantasies*. Most are provincial, poor and ill educated, and few seem to be motivated by appeals to Jesus and the USA. Rafterman claims to be fighting for 'a good cause', Animal Mother is engaged in 'slaughter' for the sake of 'poontang', Eightball is carried along by a confusing war and Joker enjoys the existential testing of his courage. Their repeated challenges to one another are like school-yard taunts or testosterone-driven displays of toughness in the midst of a brutal contest for survival. Notice as well that Joker's shooting of the rifle woman is an act of mercy, not the exultant violence against women imagined by the *Freicorps*. On the other hand, the US military, as represented by Hartman and every officer we see, is ruled by white Christian males and is a place where misogyny,



racism and ultra-nationalism are rules of the day. In this environment you can always indulge in a little hate speech as long as you maintain that the Corps is fair and that the uniform makes a brotherhood of the men who wear it. 'I am hard, but I am fair,' Hartman says at the beginning, 'I do not look down on niggers, Kikes, wops or greasers. Here you are all equally worthless!' The soldiers' enemies are 'gooks', but so are their ostensible allies. Even their 'beloved Corps' is internally fraught with racial tension. Thomas Doherty has nicely described the way contradictions are managed: 'the huge white grunt Animal Mother hassles and slurs his black comrade Eightball. But when Eightball lies wounded, stranded in an open field, it is Animal Mother who disobeys orders and makes a heroic rescue charge' (pp. 313-14).

In addition to exposing a kind of fascism at the heart of warrior male sexuality (as *Dr. Strangelove* had already done), *Full Metal Jacket* also satirises the culture industry's efforts at sustaining morale for the war. A major theme of the film is what Kubrick described as the US attempt to 'fine tune reality like an advertising agency' (Ciment, p. 243). Joker's editor wants stories with a 'weenie' – reports of American soldiers who 'give half their pay to buy gooks toothbrushes and deodorants' and of 'combat action that results in a kill'. The colonel who lectures to Joker speaks in the stale metaphors of advertising and business: 'What don't you get with the program? Why don't you jump on the team and come on in for the

big win?' Lawrence Welk and Ann Margaret plan to entertain the Marines with schmaltz and sex; network TV visits the battlefield, blurring the boundary between war and show business; the action in Vietnam is played off against a background of American pop tunes (juxtaposed with an eerie score by Abigail Mead, the *nom de plume* of Vivian Kubrick); and in Da Nang even a petty thief gets into the act by imitating Bruce Lee.

The most significant cultural icon is John Wayne, the Hollywood hawk whose voice and name are evoked at several points. This motif has spectacular expression in the film's shooting script, in a scene taken from Hasford's novel: Joker and a group of Marines visit the 'Freedom PX Movie Theater' to watch Wayne's production of *The Green Berets* (1968), which Joker describes as 'a Hollywood soap opera about the love of guns'. As the film is screened, Joker comments in voice-over: 'We watch John Wayne leading the Green Beanies. John Wayne is a beautiful soldier, clean-shaven, sharply attired in tailored tiger-stripe jungle utilities, wearing boots that shine like black glass. Inspired by John Wayne, the fighting soldiers from the sky go hand-to-hand with all of the Victor Charlies in Southeast Asia' (pp. 39–40). The marines in the PX laugh uproariously at the film, especially at the Asian actor George Takei, who plays an Arvin officer in *The Green Berets* but who is most famous for playing Sulu in TV's *Star Trek*. When Takei says with great conviction, 'First kill . . . all stinking Cong . . . then go home,' one of the Marines shouts, 'You fuckin' asshole, you kill stinking Cong. I wanna go home now!'

The references to Wayne that remain in the film function as short-hand for the super-patriotic myths of cowboy masculinity and American triumphalism that were often purveyed by Hollywood in the years leading up to the US involvement in Vietnam. These same references also function to make *Full Metal Jacket* look authentic, edgy and honest in comparison with traditional combat movies. It's important to recognise, however, that despite Kubrick's sardonic portrayal of military conflict, not everyone has interpreted his film as an anti-war statement or 'used' it as a satire of proto-fascism in the US military. Samuel Fuller, no stranger to gritty war movies or indeed to war itself, angrily described *Full Metal Jacket* as a 'recruiting film' (quoted in Krohn, p. 1). An even more damaging description can be found in Anthony Swofford's memoir of combat, *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War* (2003):

Vietnam War films are all pro-war, no matter what the supposed message, what Kubrick or Coppola or Stone intended . . . The magic brutality of the films celebrates the terrible and despicable beauty of [military] fighting skills. Fight, rape, war, pillage, burn. Filmic images of death and carnage are pornography for the military man.¹¹

No one can predict all the perverse pleasures individual viewers might take from movies, and no director can ensure her or his film won't be enjoyed for reasons other than the ones intended. Even so, Swofford's observation and my own childhood experience lead me to ask whether Kubrick himself might love the masculine brutality he is satirising. This is a

question many viewers have asked about *A Clockwork Orange*, and I think the answer is a qualified yes. Even though Kubrick was a nerdy-looking intellectual, he was a highly competitive fellow who was attracted to violent sports like boxing and football, and as an artist he gave careful attention to the phallic hardware of bombing planes and spacecraft. Michael Herr remembers that, during a break in working on the script of *Full Metal Jacket*, he and Kubrick took 'a few of Stanley's guns' to a local gun club and practised firing them (p. 42). In interviews, Kubrick was fond of a remark he attributed to Robert E. Lee: 'It is fortunate that war is so terrible or we should grow very fond of it.'¹² He clearly appreciated what Swofford calls the 'magic brutality' and 'terrible and despicable beauty' of combat, and he recognised a dirty little secret about young men in the military: there's a bit of Alex in even the best trained soldiers – a desire to '[f]ight, rape, war, pillage, and burn'.

I would argue, however, that Kubrick's ambivalence towards war isn't an artistic failing. Indeed the tension between the eroticism of warfare and the horror of warfare (symbolised by the peace emblem and the 'Born to Kill' motto) is precisely what makes *Full Metal Jacket* a compelling and disturbing film. This quality is especially evident in Lee Ermey's portrayal of Hartman, who is both hateful and charismatic, and who may have prompted Samuel Fuller's 'recruiting poster' comment. A Marine veteran and former DI who had been injured in combat during the Vietnam War, Ermey played a bit part in *Apocalypse Now* and worked as an advisor on that and several other films, including *Full Metal Jacket*. He wasn't originally cast in the role of Hartman, but his Marine Corps training sessions with the other players convinced Kubrick to use him. He's in sharp contrast with the sentimental, tough-love DIs in previous movies – especially with Louis Gossett Jr in *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982), but more interestingly with Jack Webb in *The DI*, a film about a drill instructor who puts a spoiled, unwilling recruit through a kind of frat-house initiation and transforms him into a manly soldier. (Webb's *The DI* is explicitly referred to in Hasford's *The Short-Timers*.)

Ermey told reporters that his conception of the character was derived from 'the ten worst drill instructors I knew', who were combined to make 'the nastiest human being that could ever walk the earth'.¹³ But Hartman became a less nasty fellow during the shooting, when Kubrick became enamoured of Ermey's improvisations. Ermey was no Peter Sellers, but he had a similar ability to crack the director up, and he contributed a good deal of brilliant profanity to the dialogue. His weird charm and grotesque wit assert themselves despite his wooden facial expression and his one-note performance, which consists mostly of abusive yelling. He's the most authentic-looking figure in the film, completely overshadowing Modine and D'Onofrio, whose work is more shaded and technically skilled. If, in spite of his almost cartoon-like sadism and jingoism, he can be seen as a character in a 'recruiting film', that may be because he has something in common with Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and Jack in *The Shining*, who have a similarly seductive aura, and who invite us to laugh and thrill at cruelty. Ermey conveys the blend of military glamour and absurdist horror that lies at the core of the film, and this paradoxical quality seems to me an improvement over the purely monstrous drill sergeant that we find in the script. Hartman is bizarrely

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