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‘Lucky to Be Alive’: Clockwork Models and the Logic of the Inanimate in Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut*

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Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), adapted from Arthur Schnitzler’s phantasmagoric *Traumnovelle* (1926), chronicles a few days in the life of a perfectly wealthy, healthy and beautiful high-society couple, Alice and Bill Harford (played respectively by Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise). Transposed from Schnitzler’s early-twentieth-century Vienna to *fin-de-siècle* New York City, Kubrick’s nocturnal ‘after hours’ experience takes place in the aftermath of a Christmas party, during which a husband’s inability to contain an excessive obsession and sexual jealousy places a seemingly ideal marriage on the verge of collapse. *Eyes Wide Shut*, I will argue in this chapter, is a film saturated with statuesque and death-like performances, thus oscillating between stillness and movement to depict a critical account of a modernized civilization losing its moral values by the end of the twentieth century. High society’s empty manners, socially constructed behaviours and treatment of sex as a mechanized and passionless ritual that becomes a consumerist commodity, are all aestheticized in the film, I will show, through a continuous effort to *inanimate the animate*. Thus, *Eyes Wide Shut* emphasizes corpse-like and defunct human behaviours, and exhibits emotionally devoid facial expressions that invite further exploration of the analogy between humans and inanimate machinery in Kubrick’s films.

Kubrick always tells a similar story, about an individual being victimized and mechanized by modernity, a fable about the efforts of mankind to contain and overcome irrational and instinctual human desires. The blurry boundaries he draws between the normal (human) and abnormal (machine) often call into question the idea of being

liberally recognized as human in a modernized world. Consequently, the end of the millennium in his last film is similarly evoked in apocalyptic and dystopian terms, as a moment when individuals lose their souls and become shadowy ghosts victimized by a mechanizing society.

Kubrick's multiverse: from humanized machines to lifeless humans

In a compelling analysis of the narrative structure in Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964),[1] William G. Simon turns to the theory of warfare outlined by Manuel DeLanda in *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*.[2] DeLanda's work focuses on new computerized weapons and surveillance technology in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, marking a historic shift in the relation of human beings to machines and information. It describes an advanced paradigm that integrates human and machine components into a 'coherent "level" machine'.[3] As a cutting-edge creation of human rationalism in the age of robotic intelligence, the weaponry model outlined is a supposedly perfect system in which the accumulation of elements becomes more than the sum of its parts while the use of human instrumentality is slashed to the bare minimum. This framework provides Simon with a useful explanation for how a nuclear military machine designed to work flawlessly in *Dr. Strangelove* begins to malfunction shortly after activation. By theorizing how each component within the apparatus has restricted knowledge of the activities of the others, making the machine intrinsically self-destructive and unreliable, Simon shows that 'the very premise of the machinic paradigm as applied to warfare is demonstrated to be fallacious'.[4]

DeLanda's descriptive schema, I argue, can be extended beyond *Dr. Strangelove* and applied to other Kubrick films. Ultimately, the Kubrickian project is enmeshed in a tragic contradiction of the perfect functionality of machine-like qualities by the inevitable, though quite unexpected, fatal human mistake. This is an unavoidable collapse based on contingency and it is presupposed by the indeterministic nature of progress as a whole: when one component of an otherwise perfect system breaks down, the entire machine falls apart. The failure of one constituent part, often a human factor that goes 'astray', attests to the flawed structure of the apparatus in its entirety, and to its inability to remain stable and predictable, despite the efforts to make it so. Therefore, what is so captivating in Kubrick's films is how they all explore the nature of mankind and its irrationally violent dispositions. Human beings, Kubrick shows us again and again, are perpetually animated by the death instinct, thus making any effort

to mechanize or automate their behaviour entirely futile. Accordingly, the psychotic violence of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) cannot be contained and alleviated; the perfectly constructed space-travel machine HAL 9000 in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is still capable of making fatal mistakes; and the Marine Corps's disciplined and torturous training in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) can only animate the animalistic instincts in its human subjects.

In 'Clockwork Violence', Kenneth Moskowitz compares *2001*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and argues that all three films constitute a coherent, imaginative vision that supersedes their *prima facie* diversity of setting, characters and ideas. What is striking, he argues, is that 'all of these movies contrast a disordered human energy, which is violence, with social forces that build a structural organization upon this slippery foundation and seek to deny, disguise or repress the violence by formalizing or rationalizing it in some way'.[5] By focusing on society's attempts to contain the violent act and its failure to comprehend the importance of the instinctual and the unconscious, Kubrick is looking to undermine and problematize any attempt to mechanize the human. Can the irrational and destructive human instinct be contained and restrained by the façade of social manners in the enlightened period of *Barry Lyndon*? How absurd are the consequences of mentally conditioning an irrational violent criminal in *A Clockwork Orange*? In addition, is it not ironic that even though man can build spaceships and travel to the moon, such progress is still nullified time and again by violence in *2001*?

With the imaginary apparatus of space and time travel in *2001*, Kubrick returns to his interest in creating devices that mimic and enhance human intelligence, as he had previously explored in *Dr. Strangelove*. HAL 9000, a seemingly indispensable machine that self-consciously takes pride in its inability to make mistakes, becomes the only entity in the spaceship with genuine, visible emotions. Ironically, the fatal error that HAL 9000 makes (and that leads to his disconnection) occurs because of his humanness, and stems from a psychological malfunction that he experiences. HAL 9000 suffers a nervous breakdown of sorts, and so becomes arguably more human than the impassive astronauts on the spaceship. Similarly, both HAL 9000 (the humanized machine) and Clockwork Alex (the mechanized human) are polar opposite examples of failure, typical of a Kubrickian world characterized by human hubris and emotional blindness.

Kubrick's last film *Eyes Wide Shut* can be seen in this larger, 'machinic' context as well. Bill, struck by his wife's confession of an old sexual fantasy that was never put into action, leaves the domestic safety and

marital cosiness behind for a night of surreal sexual adventures. From that point on, the film oscillates between reality and dream, life and death, and depicts a critical picture of the nuclear family. Kubrick continues to explore the conflictual and turbulent sphere of the family, as he previously had in *Lolita* (1962) and *The Shining* (1980), here functioning as a system that is incapable of containing and restraining the libido and jealousy of one individual, trapped within the social rituals of modernized civilization by the end of the twentieth century.[6]

Characters in Kubrick's films often act in a mechanized and non-human manner. Faulty explanations that critics usually provide for this focus on bad directing skills, failure to work with actors, or even just sheer misanthropy. As Kent Jones notes, many critics have found all kinds of reasons to dislike Kubrick by equating his private profile with misanthropy, linking it to 'the tone of monumental remove in his last six films'. But is the remove really his, or is he merely dramatizing the remove he feels between people and the beyond? 'People are alone in very different ways in movies,' observes Jones, 'but they are scarily alone in Kubrick, bouncing around an echo chamber of uncertainty.'[7] Tom Cruise, according to this line of criticism, delivers an expressionless performance in *Eyes Wide Shut*; Kidman's character exists for merely exhibitionistic reasons; and the film, surprisingly and unexpectedly, is just not erotic enough.[8]

What these accounts fail to address, though, is not merely the intentionally grotesque and alienating quality that any typical Kubrickian performance usually offers, but also the inseparable synthesis between theme and aesthetics towards which these performances strive. Kubrick's films, and particularly *Eyes Wide Shut*, I argue, explore the destructive effects of modern culture on individuals in their various guises, thus inviting a certain statuesque or death-like performance. In a world where individuals lose their identity and become lifeless ghosts victimized by the norms and rules of behaviour of modern society, an insentient appearance becomes the appropriate form of representation. Take, for example, Bill's stoic expression in the four reverse-shot close-ups, showing him listening to Alice's confession about the naval officer. Those, as James Naremore notes, are 'underrated reactions' that expose Bill mostly from the outside without ever revealing what is really going on in his head, thus contributing to 'the feeling that Bill is being carried away impassively, rather like someone in a dream'.[9] Once Alice's story is interrupted by a phone call, and Bill goes out into the night for adventure, his facial expression remains static and frozen even in the taxi. It reveals nothing of his inner self to us and is therefore supplemented by a mental image of Alice's sexual fantasy.[10] Such a unique filmic strategy, unprecedented in Kubrick's

oeuvre, attests to how Bill suddenly becomes alienated from his wife and illustrates how she becomes abruptly unfamiliar to him.

Social critique in *Eyes Wide Shut* is continuously embedded with surface-like appearances, lifeless characters with stoic expressions, inanimate human beings. Kubrick, of course, is also known for attributing human qualities to non-human objects, thereby achieving the opposite effect, *animating the inanimate*. In *2001* spaceships waltz together to the sounds of Strauss and HAL 9000 takes on certain mannerisms that are characteristic of individuals, while in *The Shining* the Overlook Hotel becomes a living organism with nerves and blood vessels. Michel Ciment observes that 'puppets, robots, dolls and statues [in Kubrick's films] connote a world in which man has become no more than a docile machine, a toy in the society of empty forms, a servile being in the universe of semblances', and he highlights, as examples, the quasi-mechanical gestures of both Lloyd the barman and Grady the caretaker in *The Shining*.[11] Respectively, I argue, further exploration of Kubrick's powerful evocation of a supernatural world could better explain the essence of representing the macabre and the (almost) living dead in his films, and particularly in *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Unlike *The Shining*, in which supernatural elements are hermetically contained within the logic of a fantasy, there is never quite a clear distinction between reality and fantasy in *Eyes Wide Shut*. It opens with a decadent, high-society, New York soirée that rhymes quite suggestively with Jack's creepy *déjà vu* of a classy 1920s ball in *The Shining*. While the latter is *literally* a ghost show, it is the similar décor and frame composition, the statuesque photographic quality, and the ironic remark made by Bill about not knowing a 'soul' in the party, that become suggestive of how the contemporary bourgeoisie at Ziegler's party are also participating in a phantom-like theatre of death.[12] Following Steven Spielberg's observation that 'some of his [Kubrick's] movies are like stylized theatre – as ritualized as kabuki', it is interesting how Kubrick wishes to stage here, right from the outset, the metaphorical space of a bourgeois society that is already dying.[13]

'Life goes on. It always does, until it doesn't': death, sex and the uncanny

A little later in the party, when two beautiful women approach Bill and offer to take him 'where the rainbow ends', he is suddenly instructed to go meet Victor Ziegler (Sydney Pollack) upstairs. To his surprise, he finds Victor in the bathroom with a prostitute named Mandy lying naked on

the couch, unconscious after a drug overdose. Mandy's body, not unlike the bodies of the other women in the film, is immaculately shaped and appears like a mannequin. She is reduced in this scene to nothing but a sex object that has somehow stopped functioning.[14] Bill, who is constantly being 'looked at' by women trying to captivate him sexually and seduce him during his nocturnal journey, uses his own, active, male gaze here to revitalize a completely passive female object. As Mandy returns his gaze, she gradually becomes reanimated and is brought back to life. *Eyes Wide Shut*, we soon realize, is a film that meditates on what it means to look at something or someone, and asks a question that is central to both its characters and viewers: what is it really that we see when we are watching?[15] It is, as Lehmann observes, a film about 'the meaning and implications of "the act of seeing" in the psychological reality of the human being'.[16]

Coinciding with Bill's paranoid explanation for the events he experiences during the night, the film offers us a narrative proposition that supposedly solves the mystery: Mandy (the woman in Ziegler's bathroom), the nameless statuesque woman offering to 'redeem' Bill during the orgy and Amanda Curran, the beauty queen who is found dead in a hotel room, are all in fact the same woman. It is unclear whether this is true or not (the film remains vague on this point),[17] but all three appear lifeless or dehumanized, and two of them lack sight. When Mandy opens her eyes for the first time, we see only two black holes instead of eyes; the woman who offers to redeem Bill in the party is wearing a mask; and Amanda Curran, lying dead in the morgue, has her eyes wide open but without the ability to see any more (perhaps suggesting a possible meaning for the film's title).[18] When Bill pays a visit to the morgue to check on the body of Amanda Curran, we find him gazing sexually again at a flawless, passive body, this time even leaning down to almost kiss her. This could only be a gesture of gratitude to the woman who saved his life during the orgy trial, but it also rhymes with the slow-paced body language with which Bill reaches out to kiss the prostitute Domino shortly before his phone rings. Ironically, the latter would be as close as Bill would ever get to having sex that night.

In his seminal book *The Uncanny*, Sigmund Freud forms the ambivalent idea of something latent and repressed coming back to life, the familiarly 'homey' (*Heimlich*) joining together with the weirdly unfamiliar (*unheimlich*). He writes: 'for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression.'[19] The uncanny is very much present in *Eyes Wide Shut* and defines its main narrative structure. After listening to his wife's sexual confession, Bill begins an

uncanny adventure into the night. While his wife remains both homey and strangely unfamiliar to him after revealing her fantasy, the events that unfold retain this ambivalence as well giving Bill the unchaining experience of a *déjà vu*, a journey that is both unearthly, peculiar and vaguely familiar. The dreamlike voyage becomes in many ways a response to an unconscious wish, a repressed sexual fantasy, and weirdly rhymes with earlier events that Bill experienced (the prostitute and her reappearance in the party, the masked ball and its resemblance to Ziegler's soirée, and meeting the devilish pianist Nick again).[20] In fact, the same experience of *déjà vu* would further characterize Bill's process of 'running errands' the day after returning to the Somerton location to receive the warning letter, revisiting Milich's shop to return the costume, and coming back to Domino's apartment to hear from her friend that she had been infected with HIV.

Kubrick has always been fond of mirror-structured narratives that create an uncanny feeling. Everything that Jack Torrance sees or dreams about in *The Shining* produces for him a sensation of *déjà vu*, a vague recollection that he had been the caretaker of the Overlook Hotel in the past ('you have always been the caretaker', he is told by Grady, presumably the ghost of the previous caretaker). Another example would be the second half of *A Clockwork Orange*, in which the 'rehabilitated' Alex meets his vengeful victims again, only to be victimized by them as a punishment. Freud's theory of the uncanny, written during the nineteenth century in an age of enlightenment, not only criticizes religious ideas but also challenges a conception of reality based solely on material and rational means with its emphasis on the double. Kubrick was so fascinated by this essay that it actually served as the basis for the screenwriting process he adopted, along with Diane Johnson, for *The Shining*.[21] The essay, I believe, provides the theoretical backdrop for Kubrick's social critique of seemingly perfect apparatuses and his emphasis on the shortcomings of rationalism and modernity.

Like Freud, Kubrick does not situate the uncanny exclusively within the realm of the supernatural, but rather oscillates between the fantastic, the imaginary and concrete reality. Michel Ciment, while analysing *The Shining* and *2001* (with explanations taken from Tsvetan Todorov), suggests that in both films the spectator, when confronted with a supernatural event, lacks the rational reasoning needed to make sense of her experience.[22] The fantastic, he explains, can only originate from a background of strongly defined 'realism', where 'the framework of reality must be scrupulously respected'. Such an aesthetic tradition, embraced by authors 'from Hoffmann to Gogol, from Balzac to Maupassant', treats

the fantastic in a realistic or even naturalistic manner.[23] In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Kubrick consistently aligns with this literary tradition and with the development of science, to portray ghosts (or implied apparitions) more tangibly, never privileging non-realistic depictions of the fantastic. As the uncanny in the film becomes more associated with death, corpses and ghosts, it materializes aesthetically with a corporeal quality. Kubrick makes his ghost characters appear real, refusing to bend to any convention of the fantastic in cinema (such as using a hazy background to make the figure half-invisible or framing it with an auratic glow.)

The orgy in the Somerton mansion involves unnaturally flawless women, who cannot be distinguished from each other. These women are represented as masked, empty-eyed, dehumanized figures who are sent to sexually serve the men at the party. 'The perfect nudes remain disenchanted commodities', suggests Jayamanne, 'plastic bodies molded to the desire of late twentieth-century mediatized beauty'.[24] As the party heats up, couples gather and copulate in a mechanized rhythm. The sexual act becomes aesthetically de-eroticized, shot from a typical Kubrickian, disembodied, God-like vantage point. Keeping their movements and dialogue to a minimum, the women are reduced to soulless objects, and their surreal masks, as Tim Kreider suggests, become 'harbingers of death'.[25] The fetishization of body parts in these immaculately composed human dolls is reminiscent of the brutal fight sequence at the end of *Killer's Kiss* (1955), in which dismembered limbs of female mannequins are used as weapons.

Death and sex are constantly intertwined in *Eyes Wide Shut*, from the very moment that Victor's infidelity in the bathroom almost turns to a tragic death. Shortly after Alice confesses to Bill an unfulfilled sexual fantasy she had about a complete stranger a year earlier (a potentially fatal moment in their marriage), Bill learns of the death of Lou Nathanson. As soon as he arrives at Lou's house to pay his condolences, Marion, Lou's daughter, passionately declares her love for him in the presence of her dead father. Shortly thereafter, the HIV-positive Domino almost seduces Bill to have sex with her. Lastly, Bill's involvement in the orgy, which has already put his own life at risk, ends in the killing of Amanda Curran, a prostitute attending the event. This sex/death analogy is laced with implicit criticism of contemporary society's failure to refine its decadent moral values. Nonetheless, Kubrick's exploration of the erotic as a celebration of death does not refer simply to the exploitation of women,[26] but also to what he intentionally does not wish to show us, and to his continuous reluctance to represent the sexual act.

When the new and 'healthy' Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* is shown publicly to the government members, a typically perfect 'Kubrickian'

woman, seemingly taken from the orgy scene in *Eyes Wide Shut*, approaches him. Suddenly, as Alex is reaching out to her, a terrible sickness takes hold of him, a side effect of the mechanizing treatment he has been undergoing, and he becomes immobile, incapable of fulfilling his sexual desire. Since Alex, Kubrick's agent for scopophilia, has been paralysed, the spectator is consequently deprived of his erotic pleasure immediately. This coincides not only with how something always stands in Bill's way throughout the night in his desperate efforts to get laid (a phone call, a service call upstairs, or simply being busted for not having a password), but also with how eroticism is visually blocked from the viewer during the orgy scene in *Eyes Wide Shut* (in the censored version sexual acts are concealed by extra naked bodies). This is reminiscent of the bathroom scene in *The Shining*, where both Jack and the spectator are punished for their perverse voyeurism by encountering a young, naked woman transformed into a horrific corpse, a scene designed to play with our physiological responses to the erotic. Kubrick's camera is generally incapable of revealing events, so instead of allowing vision, it denies it. When the sexual turns deadly, the event becomes unrepresentable.

Film as a grave of motion: between movement and stasis in *Eyes Wide Shut*

Eyes Wide Shut creates a dialogue with other art forms, including photography and painting. Thus, death and stillness are associated in it not only with sex, but also with artificiality, repetition and simulacra. The meeting between film and painting in *Eyes Wide Shut* (not unlike *Barry Lyndon*, for that matter) intentionally slows down the narrative flow in order to create a pictorial effect and draw attention to the visuality of the image. According to Jayamanne, the Symbolist movement in painting is evident in the film through a 'self-conscious aesthetic awareness of the simulacral commodity form of the cinematic image'.[27] The film is set in a simulated setting of New York City, has a married couple playing Bill and Alice (thereby blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction) and includes an orgy scene in which 12 identical prostitute models are similarly masked to overcome any sense of identity. The Kubrickian aesthetics of repetition and simulation correspond to the process of reification, where duplicable human beings function as merely things that move, objects that are animated. In more Freudian terms, this repetition implies an unexpressed desire for death and attests to society's drive towards self-destruction (thus building on Freud's two fundamental drives, Eros[28] and Thanatos).[29]

Kubrick's focus on the static, painterly image is counterpart to his fascination with cinematic movement. In *The Shining*, suggests Brigitte Peucker, 'the static image as photograph does much to evoke the uncanny and the supernatural'; photographs in the film become 'material', and function as the imaginary, 'as a return of the repressed'. Jack and Danny, she points out, have a 'visionary' capacity that helps them animate photographs from the past (the twin sisters, the bartender or the caretaker), an ability to 'animate them [the photographs] narratively in the manner of cinema'.[30] In the final sequence of the film, when the camera zooms in on a group picture of the hotel's guests in 1921, Jack becomes a still image on the wall. 'Now himself a ghost,' Peucker writes, 'Jack has been exorcised into the space of photography.'[31] What she does not indicate about this peculiar sequence, though, is the striking incompatibility formed between the balanced camera movement in it, zooming in to centralize on a photograph of death, and the photographic stillness in the preceding shot, where a flesh-and-blood human body is depicted frozen. Kubrick is exploring here the photographic and painterly qualities of the cinematic image to represent death, the same variation of medium that will be present in his final film.

As part of an ambitious scholarly effort to re-evaluate the assumption that photographs are synonymous with death, Garrett Stewart uses literary modernism to explore cinema's fixation with photography. 'Whereas photography engraves the death it resembles,' he writes, 'cinema defers the death whose escape it simulates. The isolated photo or photogram is the still work of death; cinema is death always still at work.'[32] As the camera tracks in on a dead subject in *The Shining*'s final sequence, penetrating with superimposition and close-ups through the time–space coordinates of the photograph, it shows us, according to Stewart, how its fluid movement is only an illusion: '[o]nce again photography comes forward as the grave of motion, film (through editing as well as through the rudiments of projection) as the never better than artificial resuscitation of any such movement, any change whatever over time'.[33]

Kubrick, who had initially worked as a photographer for *Look* magazine, and carries a definitive photographic quality in his cinematic style,[34] treats the medium of film as also a 'grave of motion' in *Eyes Wide Shut*. During the orgy scene, for example, characters are lifelessly posing as frozen statues in an impeccably constructed composition. Differently decorated erotic positions and South Indian vocal music break the sequence into seemingly separable images reminiscent of pages taken from a copy of the *Kama Sutra*. Both here and in the final shot of *The Shining*, Kubrick's camera adopts a God-like point of view, perpetually gliding into

or hovering above insentient characters, and delivering deadly cinematic movement to already anaesthetized images. Cinema and photography join forces as two artistically similar media that can meditate notions of mortality.

Kubrick depicts women in *Eyes Wide Shut* in a deadly and inanimate manner that inevitably evokes the analogy between women in modern society and figures of robots and automatons. In several classic works of nineteenth-century literature, women are depicted and imagined as sex workers or automatic love dolls meant to serve men.[35] While numerous films, especially within the science fiction genre, deal with the perfection of a woman's body through technology and directly address such literary origins in their diegesis, Kubrick has never voiced explicit references to these science fiction tales.[36] Nonetheless, the border between the normal (human) and the abnormal (machine) in his *Eyes Wide Shut* calls into question what is liberally recognized as human in a modernized society. Kubrick's attraction to both inanimate objects and representations of deadpan human beings reaffirms that for him it becomes dangerous to be a subject within the vital order of the simulacra.[37] One of those inanimate objects that is infused with unexplained kinetic quality is Bill's mask from the orgy. The reason for the sudden reappearance of the mask in the marital bedroom remains unclear in the film. Was it magically animated to move on its own, or did someone else place it there to scare Bill?

Capitalism dictates the power structures of prostitution and social hierarchy throughout the film. Respectively, it is very symbolic that *Eyes Wide Shut* is bookended by two references to money and exchange value. The film begins with Bill asking Alice whether she has seen his wallet and ends with a stroll through a toy shop. Coinciding with the absurd logic of sexual exploitation within the Somerton orgy palace or the artificial New York City set, the F.A.O. Schwarz toy shop becomes, as Jayamanne notes, another perfectly controlled environment of late capitalism in which all things and the relations between them are under the reign of standardized exchange of commodities as signs.[38] Thirty years after Floyd's little daughter in *2001* had asked for a bushbaby for her birthday, Helena expresses her desire for a Christmas gift; she wants a teddy bear or a Barbie doll, perhaps. As Michel Chion accurately observes, 'we will not find out whether she has received the object of her desire'.[39] 'You're gonna have to wait and see', Alice tells Helena in reply to her request, an answer that rhymes perfectly with Floyd's response to his own daughter's wish: 'a bushbaby? Well, we'll have to see about that.' The fact that human 'puppets' in the film, whether model prostitutes or even Mr Milich's

daughter, an underwear-clad teenage doll, are much more available to play with than real dolls becomes terribly ironic.

Conclusion

In his discussion of Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Tomorrow's Eve* and E.T.A. Hoffman's 'Automata' and 'The Sandman', Tom Gunning points to the dialectical moment in these tales, when 'the technological simulacrum of life … ultimately produces animated corpses, rather than a living human being'.[40] Modernity, he observes, deprives the industrial worker of her soul so that 'she becomes nothing but the tool of the machine and the factory system'.[41] Kubrick, I argue, always tells a similar story, of an individual being victimized and mechanized by modernity, a telling fable about the efforts of mankind to contain and overcome irrational and instinctual human desires. The voyages through which Kubrick takes us become impossible quests to locate the reasons behind irrational terrors, trips to the unconscious that leave us with more puzzling questions than absolute certainties. From the mannequins in *Killer's Kiss*, through the deranged machine-like *Dr. Strangelove*, the human-like HAL 9000 computer in *2001* and finally the clockwork models in *Eyes Wide Shut*, the threatening hybridity between technology and the organic, along with the anxiety of uncertainty it produces, become a theme not fully explored yet in Kubrick's *oeuvre*, an important topic that calls for much further research.

Notes

1 William G. Simon, '*Dr. Strangelove*, or: The Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare' in Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (eds), *Camera Obscura Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), pp. 215–229.
2 Manuel DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).
3 DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, p. 4.
4 Simon, '*Dr. Strangelove*', p. 222.
5 Kenneth Moskowitz, 'Clockwork Violence', *Sight and Sound* 46.1 (1976), p. 22.
6 'Throughout his films', observe Kolker and Abrams, 'the family is a nightmare of bad choices and violent ends, of unbearable mistakes and

deplorable decisions.' *Eyes Wide Shut*, thus, becomes 'a *summa* of Kubrick's concern with domesticity and its discontents …' See Robert P. Kolker and Nathan Abrams, *Eyes Wide Shut: Stanley Kubrick and the Making of His Final Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 8, 10.

7 Kent Jones, 'David Thomson & Cinephilia', *Film Comment* (Jan/Feb 2003), p. 36.

8 Several critics have found Kidman's performance much more convincing than Cruise's, despite her relatively short screen time. J. Hoberman, for example, sarcastically points out that 'the actress [Kidman] is not only a more assured performer than her husband, but an incomparably greater showboat, almost absurdly comfortable acting without clothes (a year spent shooting and reshooting this material must have propelled her into *The Blue Room*).' See J. Hoberman, *The Magic Hour: Film at Fin de Siècle* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003), p. 69. Laleen Jayamanne even equates Kidman's ornamented performance and the way she is framed in the film with Kubrick's affinity for the Symbolist movement in painting: see Laleen Jayamanne, 'The Ornamentation of Nicole Kidman (*Eyes Wide Shut*) and Mita Vashisht (*Kasba*)', *Senses of Cinema* 23 (2002), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/the-female-actor/ornament/. Accessed 18 October 2021.

9 James Naremore, *On Kubrick* (London: BFI, 2007), p. 237.

10 Lehmann brilliantly observes that the 'Blue Movie' we watch from Bill's perspective is in fact a mental image of Alice's fantasy. It creates an interesting embodiment through which we oddly watch her own desire through Bill's eyes. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, 'Film/Theatre: Masks/Identities in *Eyes Wide Shut*', *Kinematograph* 20 (2004), p. 238.

11 Michel Ciment, *Kubrick: The Definitive Edition* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2001), p. 136.

12 The masked ball during the Somerton orgy rhymes again with Ziegler's party and the Golden Room ball in *The Shining*. The naked and masked dancers grant the implied connection between sex and death a peculiarly perverse aspect.

13 Quoted in Lehmann, 'Film/Theatre: Masks/Identities', p. 236.

14 A woman Bill is treating in his clinic has the same flawless figure as Mandy's, as do the 12 prostitutes featured in the orgy sequence. This, of course, is also reminiscent of the unattainable and impeccable woman who stands above the poor mechanized Alex during his rehabilitation show in *A Clockwork Orange*.

15 When Alice asks Bill 'is my hair OK?' before they go to Ziegler's party, he immediately replies 'it's great', to which she rightly answers 'you're not even looking'. Kubrick, I argue, addresses the viewers here by giving them advance notice of how crucial it is to carefully observe every part of the *mise-en-scène* in the film.

16 Lehman, 'Film/Theatre: Masks/Identities', p. 234.

17 In fact, in the reality outside the film's diegesis, the three women are not the same person. Mandy (and Amanda Curran) are both played by Julienne Davis while the mysterious woman is played by Abigail Good. What are we to make of this extra-diegetic piece of information? Does it further blur the boundaries between fiction and reality in the film by inviting us to pay attention to physiognomic differences and become sceptical of Victor's explanation?
18 Freud discusses the uncanny in the context of E.T.A. Hoffman's 'The Sandman' and relates the idea of being robbed of one's eyes to an uncanny anxiety and the fear of going blind. Not unrelated, Freud also addresses the fear that a lifeless body might suddenly become alive and animated. See Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).
19 Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 394.
20 The act of tracing Freudian elements in the original story, Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, is further substantiated by the famous analogy often drawn between the two authors in relation to psychoanalysis. Freud famously wrote to Schnitzler in 1922 that he had always been terrified of meeting him: 'I will make a confession and ask you to keep it to yourself, in consideration for myself, and not to share it with any friend or stranger. A question disturbs me: why, in fact, during all these years, I never frequented and conversed with you …? I think I have been avoiding you for some kind of fear of meeting my double. Not that I have the tendency of easily identifying myself with another person or that I have wished to minimize the difference of talents which separate us; but, when plunging into your splendid creations I always thought I would find – behind the poetical look – the hypothesis, the interests and the results that I knew were mine.' Sigmund Freud, 'Letter 197 to Arthur Schnitzler, Vienna IX Berggasse 19.14.15. 1922', in E.L. Freud (ed.), *Letters of Sigmund Freud: 1873–1939*, trans. T. Stern and J. Stern (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 344.
21 It is well known that Kubrick asked Johnson to read the essay before writing the screenplay for the film.
22 Ciment, *Kubrick*, p. 125.
23 Ciment, *Kubrick*, p. 125.
24 Jayamanne, 'Ornamentation', p. 4.
25 Tim Kreider, '*Eyes Wide Shut*: Review', *Film Quarterly* 53.3 (2000), p. 46.
26 Considering *Eyes Wide Shut* 'Kubrick's Marxist finale', Herbert J. Gans regards the film as a Marxist analysis of the place sex serves in Western societies. In the Kubrickian world of *Eyes Wide Shut*, explains Gans, sex is freely available but only to the ruling class and only at a carefully hidden orgy in which the lower class is only a servant. The 'professional class' (to which Bill Harford belongs) is never able to actually have sex, but is nonetheless constantly busy talking or fantasizing about it. See Herbert J. Gans, 'Kubrick's Marxist Finale', *Social Policy* 30.1 (1999), p. 61.

27 Jayamanne, 'Ornamentation', p. 4.
28 Kolker and Abrams observe that when Bill talks to Milich at the entrance to his store, the viewer can recognize a red sign with the word 'Eros' over his shoulder. See Kolker and Abrams, *Eyes Wide Shut*, p. 191.
29 In order to explain how human necessities such as love and sex can lead to a path of either destruction or self-destruction, Freud combines Eros, the life, love or sexual instinct, with Thanatos, the death instinct. While Eros is a positive force that innocently yearns for love, unity and companionship, it is constantly challenged by Thanatos, a death instinct that seeks to dissolve those units and reduce them back to their primeval, inorganic state. Thanatos indulges in pleasure, tends to repeat desirable acts and, if the ego is unable to restrain them, Thanatos can lead it to a path of destruction. See Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Fawcett Crest Books, 1973).
30 Brigitte Peucker, 'Kubrick and Kafka: The Corporeal Uncanny', *Modernism/Modernity* 8.4 (2001), p. 666.
31 Peucker, 'Kubrick and Kafka', p. 667.
32 Garrett Stewart, *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photo Synthesis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. xi.
33 Stewart, *Between Film and Screen*, p. 184.
34 On Kubrick's early photographic work see Rainer Crone, *Stanley Kubrick Drama & Shadows: Photographs 1945–1950* (London: Phaidon Press, 2005); Philippe D. Mather, *Stanley Kubrick at Look Magazine: Authorship and Genre in Photojournalism and Film* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013); and Donald Albrecht and Sean Corcoran (eds), *Through a Different Lens: Stanley Kubrick's Photographs* (Cologne: Taschen, 2021). One can trace many similarities between the early photographs and Kubrick's later preoccupations in his films, such as his inclination towards the absurd. Most importantly, though, these photographs attest to Kubrick's ongoing fascination with the tension between movement and stasis, as explored further in *Eyes Wide Shut*.
35 See, for example, August Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1982), or E.T.A. Hoffman, 'The Sandman' in E.F. Bleiler (ed.), *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, trans. J.T. Bealby (New York: Dover Publications), p. 196. Both of these works, which focus on the fabrication of an ideal female android, are also cited by Freud in his essay 'The Uncanny'.
36 The ultimate example in this sense would be *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975), a film that questions the image of the wife-as-servant-robot with close resemblance to the ideas discussed by Betty Friedan in her influential 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963).
37 *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, one of Kubrick's unrealized projects that was turned into a Steven Spielberg production in 2001, returns to similar motifs of robots and the simulacrum (though developing them much further) and addresses more thoroughly the question of what it means to be human.

38 Jayamanne, 'Ornamentation', p. 5.
39 Michel Chion, *Eyes Wide Shut* (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), p. 58.
40 Tom Gunning, 'The Ghost in the Machine: Animated Pictures at the Haunted Hotel of Early Cinema', *Living Pictures* 1.1 (2001), p. 14.
41 Gunning, 'The Ghost in the Machine', p. 16.