KUBRICK'S CINEMA ODYSSEY

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Chapter Five
Towards the Absolute Film

Commutation

Let us revisit the first two appearances of the monolith. The final images of these two scenes, with the sound that accompanies them (in 'The Dawn of Man', a high chord of the Ligeti music, and in the scene on the moon, a very high strident tone), show us the object from a low angle, so that it cuts into the sky; both scenes end abruptly, even brutally, with simultaneous cuts on image and music. The monolith thus becomes associated with the idea of interruption, of immediate obliteration – of *commutation*.[1]

Commutation essentially means that where there was nothing, suddenly there is something, but this something can itself disappear in an instant. This has been the case for a century with lighting by electric bulbs, unlike the lights that came before – candles, oil or gas.

It is a similar story for sound. With the tube amplifier, the sound gradually increased in intensity; with transistor amps beginning in the 50s, sound comes instantaneously, so that when you turn on the dial or press the button, you get music at once.

The ever-increasing speed of modern computers is having the effect of making us insatiable, accustoming us to demand things *right now*. But for more than a century there has existed an art founded on instant commutation, and Kubrick in *2001* is exploiting it as such. This art is the cinema.

Film editing can be seen not only as a way of constructing or stitching together, but also as a series of commutations that make a visual state disappear instantaneously (and also an audio state, as soon as that became possible with the invention of optical sound) to replace it with another that means the complete erasure of the first.

In Kubrick's hands, editing characteristically gives us the feeling that there is no build-up of the information supplied in the shots, no memory of each shot in the one that comes after. In many ways, *2001* is a film about

amnesia, or something resembling it, which is quite ironic for a speculative sci-fi film set in the future (and therefore implicitly commenting on 'the past'/our present). The various episodes can appear amnesic with respect to one another and the only way they hook into one another is by visual or auditory 'rhymes', which we have to locate on our own, perhaps even fabricate.

For example, among humans there is no anamnesis of the humanoid apes who were their ancestors. The human of the year 2000 is shown, *like* an ape, living in families and in groups, sleeping, having children, eating and defecating – in other words, in his pure and simple functioning as a living species, with no reference to culture.

Similarly, though curiously for a movie that has this title, the fact of going into the third millennium and thus of taking part in a collective symbolic history hardly seems to preoccupy the characters. This is especially true of the two Discovery astronauts: constantly occupied with immediate tasks, in fact occupied with maintaining their minds (the 'nice renderings' of Dave's drawing, Poole's chess game) or their physical bodies (Frank Poole's jogging and his tanning session) in good working order, the two men live in a sort of continual present or in any case a short-term one, never raising the issue of where they have come from or where they are going. Only Hal mentions – and in such abstract terms! – a 'mission' to carry out, but finally he himself dies, regressing and activating the memory of his very first vocal message ('Good afternoon, gentlemen') – so we would seem to have an anamnesis, which literally means loss of forgetting – but in fact, since he forgets what made him Hal, this is literally a memory that is emptying itself, and does so without trace.

A strange and unique masterpiece, this film: it proposes to be a perpetual here and now, and a purge of memory – leaving room for the future – even as its action spreads out over millions of years and millions of millions of miles in space.

So it is up to us to construct this memory, to fill in these holes, to make a work out of this void and to place an inscription, if we wish, on the nameless stone slab.

The 'Before' and 'After' of a Wordless Non-event

Aboard the Discovery, Hal the computer questions Dave about his confi-

dence in their enigmatic mission. Dave neutrally replies that everything is fine; then he asks Hal: 'You're working up your crew psychology report?' Hal answers in the affirmative and excuses himself. Then, after a repetition coloured with haste and a slight quaver (he who usually speaks unhesitatingly), the computer announces (falsely, as we shall find out later) that a crucial antenna part is about to stop working. Something has come undone in Hal, a threshold has been crossed, with no audio or visual sign to mark it. It happened in a period of silence, without memory. There is a 'before' of the moment of Hal's slipping, and an 'after'. What happened to the moment itself?

The playing of chess accustoms us to dissociate the mental strategising from the physical move itself. The first, the mental work, is invisible and is normally represented in comics by wheels or gears turning inside the player's head. The act is symbolically irremediable and on the visual level negligible, a mere detail, which consists in playing one move among others contemplated. In chess, you have made ten moves in your head before choosing the move you do make, and there is a sort of gulf between the important stuff that happens – the invisible, unsituable and traceless moment of the choice – and the symbolically significant and irrevocable gesture that is the actual move. For this move has been mentally played ten times before being 'realised'; its realisation encounters no resistance in reality. In fact, you can play chess just announcing the moves verbally, as Poole does in the film, since it comes down to the same thing.

It seems to me that Kubrick's shots are shaped by the idea of an invisible mental process that leaves no traces, which is actualised by jumps in successive edits. And, just as the chess move that is played cancels and rejects the other possible choices, the edit chooses one solution and annihilates the others.

In chess the move itself is both an act and a non-act, in the sense that the time you spend doing it is not what counts. All it does is symbolise a mental decision. But the decision is impossible to situate by going back in time, as you notice if you try to pinpoint it. What happens is the creation of a before and an after, with 'holes', interruptions, that could contain the moment of the decision or a gap – impossible to pin down.

Later, in the Discovery, the murder of the three hibernating cosmonauts

(who did not have the time to become characters for us, and the filmgoer cannot remember their names, even as they are written on their coffins, so briefly did they appear) takes place as a series of beeps and light patterns – the graphs of physical and brain activity gradually flatlining – but in any case, it takes place as a succession of shots marking the before and after of an event with no words.

The sequence is treated symmetrically: a shot of the eye of Hal, several shots of the coffins, then the succession of video messages and physical graphs, then other shots of the coffins, *ever motionless*, then a shot of the eye of Hal as at the beginning.

The two shots of the eye that frame the scene are static and identical – the eye before and the eye after are the same. And Kubrick has intentionally not shown the slowed breathing of the frozen bodies; their life is shown only by the abstract means of biological indices. Death is inflicted like an act outside time. Nothing has changed.

Here, it is we who again must create the cause–effect relations between the eye of Hal and the flashing messages, and project meaning on to these images and their progression. For this reason I do not follow Dumont and Monod when they write that Hal's 'inert eye' 'watches' the hibernating men 'before provoking [alarm signal] their transformation into cadavers'.[2] For 'watches' is already a logical interpretation. Strictly speaking, we do not know if he is watching. We see it, that is all.

The fact that later neither Dave nor Hal utter a word about Frank and the three other victims contributes to the sequence's mystery. The murder is shown indirectly, but is never corroborated by words, and this transforms our relationship to it.

Of course, the message 'Life functions terminated' says what it means, but one observes that already on its terms it is an understatement. And what is shown here is entirely metaphorical. We never see the dead body as such, nor shall we see the remains of the astronauts.

Or later, once the song of the dying Hal has definitively, grotesquely plummeted in pitch, Kubrick leaves no time to allow our emotions to kick in. As insensitively as a TV channel that cuts off the end credits of a movie – or, if it lets them roll, leaves not a second of blackness or silence – Kubrick immediately rolls Floyd's prerecorded video briefing, as if nothing

were amiss. Floyd's message was produced eighteen months beforehand, with the understanding that it would not be unveiled until the end of the mission. Since the message itself is unaware of the drama that has occurred, it makes Floyd look like an amnesiac from the past where he addresses Bowman.

Then begins, without the slightest reflection or recapitulation, the trip episode of 'Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite'. The death of Hal has thus also been a commutation, a death with no trace, no body, no eulogy or requiem, purely an effect of editing: the images and sounds that follow do not bother to think about what they are covering or erasing and over what they are written.

Here the movie screen shows itself for what it is: a surface on which none of what lives and pulsates upon it becomes imprinted.

In this sense, the monolith is a participant. It is at once a screen and the opposite of a screen, since its black surface only absorbs, and sends nothing out.

Is there not some connection here with the 'indifferent universe' that Kubrick says is more terrifying than anything else, and which leads us, in order to make it all hold together and make sense, to project ourselves, our emotions, our will to live?

On the other hand, the brutal commutation seems to meet up with what would seem to be its absolute opposite – the long, continuous tracking shots, the very slow progressions (quite possibly the reason the director chose the Ligeti music characterised by gradual metamorphoses, with no rhythmic or melodic centre). It could be thought that these commutations (visual, auditory and psychological) simply work to bring out the long sections in which a phenomenon appears or disappears through a stretched-out gradation rather than all of a sudden: the spaceships' arrival at the space station, the gradual death of Hal, the psychedelic sequence at the end. But the opposite way of looking at this is equally important: the more progressive the gradation, and the more continuity masks any cuts and gaps, the more dramatically a subsequent rupture is highlighted as the product of an enigmatic edit (for example, the enigma of the time between the shots of younger and older Daves in the bedroom scene). The transition from one shot to the next in cases such as this produces an effect of

arbitrariness, it appears as a mysterious choice, not clearly justified. This is the very effect of the signifier, because the signifier, defined as arbitrary by Saussure, is here a series of cuts, ruptures, uncrossable barriers.

Discontinuity and commutation refer back to what is for humans the sharpest experience of discreteness: that which institutes the acquisition of language, which – obviously in accordance with its reconstruction *a posteriori* – cuts for ever into the vocal and auditory continuum of the baby's existence. Language is what separates phonemes from sound, but does not manage to rid the sound from the envelope of 'non-pertinent' sound characteristics as from the shell of a chrysalis, and which will always tag along with it as superfluous sound.[3] The shots of *2001* are edited together like the elements of a language or an alphabet, their articulations visible. The film comes across like a text reduced to its hieroglyphic materiality.

And it is in the edit of all edits, that which unites the 'Dawn of Man' passage with the discovery of the future, that this effect is felt the most strongly.

The Edit: Where There Was ... Now There Is ... Or There No Longer Is

Justly famous, the transition between the bone in the heavens and the heavens of the future takes one's breath away by its simplicity, its grandeur and the overwhelming power of what it signifies. If cinema is an art of the spatiotemporal ellipse, here is one fine example.

Where there was (a horse-drawn omnibus), now there is (a hearse): the legend goes that because he stopped his camera for a few moments, creating this substitution, Georges Méliès discovered special effects. Several of the most striking effects in *2001* are based on the same idea, achieved by simple editing. In the place where there was a bone (that is, in the same place *on the screen*), there is a space shuttle or satellite; later, where there was old and dying Dave Bowman (in the bed), now a foetus is shining forth.

And where there was nothing, now you have – or now you don't – a monolith. (The monolith is identified with the edit itself, with the invocatory power that makes it appear and disappear.)[4]

A snip of the scissors, a splice, and you have crossed over four million

years. The object triumphantly thrown upwards by the apeman, who has just discovered the weapon and the tool, is commuted, through a single edit, into an interplanetary vehicle; and from the dawn of humanity we topple over into the space age. In terms of sound, too, everything leads to this single transition, possibly the most famous one in the history of film, certainly one of the most sublime. On the slow-motion image of the bone turning over in the sky, the ape-king's triumphant cry fades down in an airy wind, and once the nocturnal 'future' image of the spaceship travelling through space comes to replace instantaneously the earthly, diurnal, palaeontological one, what do we hear? The film does not just crudely strike up the symphonic 'Blue Danube' Waltz theme, but to begin, there is just the thin tremolo of string instruments, on the threshold of the audible, to introduce the waltz – something like a birth.

However, even if it occurs gently, a commutation has indeed taken place and something important has no less fallen through the trapdoor of the ellipse: all the life on earth in between. Not a single image of the planet inhabited by human beings in 2000, before they took off into space, can be seen in the whole film. The various messages (both live and recorded) received by the humans in space reveal nothing of terrestrial life.[5] Once these messages have been sent from earth, they seem to leave no trace on those who have watched them; no one we see comments on them, let alone expresses any feeling of nostalgia for the life they apparently represent.

The moment of the shot transition itself puts two flying objects in relation with each other. But the movement it conveys began further back and continues on beyond. What we have is a symmetrical trajectory of three objects: a bone is thrown into space by the ape who had held it, it starts to fall; the rocket-object that replaces it on the screen does not fall down, it is a spaceship and it stays up by itself in the air. Finally, we see a pen – same oblong and phallic shape – that floats inside the spaceship, and is returned to its sleeping owner by the stewardess. To the erect and propulsive arm of 'Moonwatcher' answers the floating arm of Floyd who is sleeping like a baby, and in his unconsciousness has let go of his fountain pen. You can see what interpretations could be made of this sequence (of the type: progress softens men), if we were to insist on that kind of reading.

Another aspect of the sequence that deserves mention is the rack-focus

that shows the pen floating against an unfocused background; a refocusing then seems to react to the stewardess entering the cabin, and immediately shows her in sharp focus. This is the only shot in *2001* to use a rack-focus, which acts like a direct sexual allusion (the camera appearing to be connected to the woman), in a work from which sexuality is otherwise evacuated.[6]

The floating pen is also an immediate illustration of the world of zero gravity. Finally, it is an image of *infinite regression*, it is like a tiny spacecraft that floats inside a spacecraft which itself floats in the solar system ...

The shot transition has thus led from an object that falls to an object that does not fall: it is the triumph of Icarus. The victory over gravity, shown in this way, produces the giddiness that characterises the experience of the little human who stands for the first time and walks.

Gravity, left behind subsequently in the two interplanetary episodes, returns at the end of the film. Although the film did not follow through on the bone thrown upwards by the apeman to the end of its fall, the glass that Dave knocks over in the room where he ages falls to the floor and breaks. A trajectory is thus completed, and the magical edit has not conjured away the cycle of decline.

However, because of the edit, for a while a part of what was cast upwards did not come down. The ellipse created by the edit is not just that of millions of years of evolution, but also that of the very small event of the bone's inevitable fall to earth: it eternalises, beyond man, a triumph.

The Said and the Shown

Images and Captions in Kubrick

In Vincent LoBrutto's biography of Kubrick, we read that one day in July 1946, during his career as a photojournalist for *Look* magazine, young Stanley saw three of his black-and-white pictures in print, at the end of a humour article. This photographic minisequence depicted the confrontation between a chimpanzee and human visitors in a zoo. The first photo showed the ape alone, and the other two showed what the animal was presumably seeing: humans behind the bars of his cage. This makes you think of *2001*, where some invisible barrier seems for ever to separate the watcher from the watched. Who knows, could the black monolith be a bar in a fence?

LoBrutto adds that the meaning of the first of the three photos (the picture of the ape) was channelled or justified by a caption imposed by the *Look* editor: 'a female monkey looks at men'.

There was a time in magazine pictures when the caption functioned as a link between the particular character of what is shown and the general character of some meaning being imposed. The caption also functioned to 'dignify' the photographed image, while obliging the image to take on (or pretend to take on) a certain imposed meaning (here, the indecipherable look of the animal, and the idea of a reflection on the distinction between man and animal, the power that man arrogates to himself to put creatures in cages, and so on). In a word, the caption made the image 'think', just as man projects his thoughts and feelings on animals.

Today, too, magazine photos are never printed without a supporting text to 'introduce' them. The difference now is that many more journalistic photos are supposedly snapshots of an event, the trace of an emotion, rather than the emblem of a situation-type or a moral. Besides, we find inside the magazine pages of today a proliferation of all manner of headings, intertitles, scraps of sentences taken from the text and placed in larger type as epigraphs; and all this obscures the basic role that was once held by the caption. The text itself is manipulated, laid out, framed, mounted, considered as an object to zoom in on (the use of larger type in a modern page layout is no longer the equivalent of a strong statement, a headline being shouted, but a swelling of words), it becomes almost an image among other images. For these and other reasons, the function of the caption has become diluted in the overall page make-up. The dialogue between the written and the seen is less 'out in the open', more tortuous, more difficult to locate.

Kubrick produced many photos in the 40s that, unlike today's pictures that are so quickly gobbled up, were meant to represent something more general than the moment they were shot. He would photograph a monkey, and the magazine made a picture of the simian condition out of it. It was no longer Kubrick's photo that people would see, but rather what the picture was deployed to 'illustrate'.

In the history of western painting up to recent times, the title or its idea has often pre-existed the painting whose subject it treats. The artist then can decentre the subject if he wants in the midst of a vast landscape or a

single architectural space (as in the flagellation of Christ as depicted by Piero della Francesca). Inspired from the painting title, the photo caption, on the other hand, has long claimed to give *after the fact* a general, exemplary, even edifying or symbolic connotation to fragments of life, a connotation that often had nothing to do with it, stealing their own particular meaning and import.

It seems to me that Kubrick's long professional experience of the paradoxical situation whereby the thing that sold and promoted his pictures, what framed and authorised them – that is, the caption – was at the same time the thing that corrupted and limited their meaning, gave him a particular sensitivity to the arbitrariness of this forced meaning by words. He no doubt felt the power and the trickery, and at the same time the fascination, of the mismatch between an image and a title. Even as a title claims to 'bring out' something in the image, it does not open up the image and does not remove its share of opaqueness.

When Kubrick became a film-maker, he seems to have adopted a certain way of using text, whether text to be heard (voice-overs) or to be read (intertitles and subtitles): as if he were sometimes imposing photo captions. Even certain selections of theme music (whose most famous example is the *Zarathustra* excerpt in *2001*) retain this sense of exteriority; they are shown as showing, rather than fusing with what they encaption.[7]

For this it is necessary for what is shown – especially visually shown – to give off a sort of aura, a capacity to imprint itself on the eye; it has to be non-recuperable by the spoken word. Kubrick's perfectionism involves the magnificent and moving quest – most often crowned with success – for images with strong presence, rendering them (at least in part) irreducible to verbal and narrative exploitation and interpretation.

Let us examine examples from two other Kubrick films, *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*.

Functions of the Intertitle and Voice-over in *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*

Barry Lyndon is also a film based less on the *contradiction* between image and text than on a certain *parallelism* with no hope of a meeting between the said and the shown.

In the image, Barry Lyndon is a specific being, opaque and hardly loqua-

cious, whose singular fate is retraced by the film, while a narrative voice and title cards in silent-film style try to make this fate illustrate a general lesson. Image and text never truly come together. On the one hand this is because of several contradictions demonstrated by Philippe Pilard in his excellent book on the film,[8] but on the other because they belong to different levels and the image was conceived, in my opinion, to close in on itself. By this I mean that Kubrick's image has the capacity to be a place of mystery, not necessarily trying to 'communicate' with other images that precede or follow.

Towards the beginning of the film, Redmond Barry is playing cards with his cousin Nora, and the slightly sententious voice-over narrator comments: 'First love!' then holds forth on love among the young. Listen carefully to this 'First love', and watch the smooth face of Ryan O'Neal;[9] see if this statement works on the image in a Kuleshov effect. I am really not sure. I cannot say yes, but neither can I say that the Kuleshov effect is inoperative. Just as the specific ape became the whole species in the context created in *2001*, here the specific character – as trapped from the outset as the zoo animal photographed by Kubrick – if he serves the narrator to 'illustrate' the emotions of youth, remains as impossible to see into as an animal. But nothing more. For Kubrick the image 'lends itself' to commentary; it does not refuse, but it does not give itself over either. The image is the place of a singularly passive resistance. And do not think that the image's power of passive resistance is easy to obtain.

The 'cage' for Redmond Barry here is just as much the image as the bosom of his cousin Nora whose décolletage she invites him to explore in order to find the ribbon she hid there. We have already seen in *A Clockwork Orange* this image of a man paralysed before a female body that towers above him, when Alex has undergone the brainwashing of the Ludovico treatment, and when he is exhibited to the public as powerless and sexually impotent.

Through its generalising about youthful love, the third-person masculine voice of *Barry Lyndon* hence 'captions' the image in a way that is neither entirely provable nor irrefutable. Let us remember that the novel by Thackeray is told in the first person; this is underscored ironically in the English title *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, 'by himself'. Remember also that the mem-

oirs are presented as both collected and annotated by a certain Fitzboodle, who at times gives his own opinions. The very chapter titles curiously alternate between first person ('I Pay Court to My Lady Lyndon') and third person ('Barry Leads a Garrison Life'). Thus the novel plays a complex game on several levels, even if this embedding of narrative levels is less prominent than in many other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. It seems that Kubrick, using very simple and unostentatious means, re-creates this ambiguity. But doing so entailed a bitter struggle with cinema and with the overly easy and obedient image, to become a way of illustrating a pre-established verbal meaning.

We should note that Thackeray was also an illustrator, who illustrated his own *Vanity Fair*. I do not know if the role of illustrations in literature of preceding centuries has been studied as much as it deserves, but it seems to me that this is a highly important subject: the dialogue between image and text dates from much further back than the cinema.

The intertitles at the beginning of *The Shining* also have an ambiguous function. The first title, 'The Interview', just after the credits, seems like the name for a painting, and in fact it introduces the meeting between Jack Torrance and the manager of the hotel, played by Barry Nelson. But in fact this scene is cut up, haunted, by a parallel scene that acts almost like radio interference, a scene at Torrance's house between his wife and his son.

The next title, soon after the first one, reads 'Closing Day'. This one is also presented on a title card, not superimposed on a shot as in *2001*. The sequence that follows begins with Torrance's car driving his family to the hotel they will look after for the winter. In comparison with the first, this title hovers ambiguously between functions of temporal indication and 'genre painting'. The third title, 'A Month Later' (before the famous scene of Danny driving his little car through the hotel corridor), definitively tips over into temporal designation. This is like *2001*, whose intertitle 'Jupiter Mission: 18 Months Later' oscillates between the idea of a painting title and the function of identifying the temporal setting.

None of this is irrelevant, not even the presence or absence of an article. 'The Interview', like the film's title, has the definite article; 'Closing Day' has none; and 'A Month Later' uses the indefinite article. Between *the* and

a lie differences that count. In the Kubrick filmography it is amusing to note two films with *the* – *The Killing*, *The Shining* – and two titles with *a* – *A Space Odyssey* and *A Clockwork Orange*, often not translated literally into foreign languages for distribution abroad. In general, the indefinite article respects the specific character of the image, while the definite article generalises it.

The Title and the Film

The resonance of a film's title is not usually a crucial issue. Why does it become so with a very few directors, such as Fellini and Kubrick? Fellini justifiably made a fuss because an unfortunate French subtitling job allowed a clapper-boy to say the title *Intervista* at the end of the film where the director had intended us to hear something arcane and incomprehensible. For Fellini the title is a magical invocation, a cryptogram, a sacred name, like the phrase 'Asa nisi masa' in *8½*. With Kubrick, on the other hand, the title is like a caption for a painting: it brings out the lustre of the image, beats the drum for it. We sometimes read in his titles words that could apply to images: shining, full, wide, space, whereas *A Clockwork Orange*, even though taken from the Burgess novel, is really a painting title, for a film in which the paintings of Christiane Kubrick play a considerable role.

In Kubrick the shock comes from the particular way the image solicits or asks for a caption, to accept the tribute of a caption, but then to decline it. I have insisted on the care Kubrick brought to his camerawork, and would like to insist again on this obvious point. For Kubrick the primacy of the visual is never to be taken for granted as a 'given' by the very definition of this art. You have to defend the image, each time anew, you have to magnify it, place it at the centre, make it shine. The symmetrical framings dear to the director (especially in *A Clockwork Orange*) and which he emphasises through *mise en scène* as well as through the wide-angle lens that accentuates the receding perspective lines, do not merely frame the image in a closed composition, they centre us on to the image. And they become the centre of the filmic totality, they invite the film's other elements to gather around the image, but not to enter.

In Kubrick, the image, well aware that it could get swallowed up by a

predetermined meaning, seeks on the contrary to swallow our attention, like the open vagina of the erotic sculptures in the bar in *A Clockwork Orange*. Those provocative sculptures of nude women with thighs spread, leaning on arms and legs, or offering their nipples which gush forth enriched milk, bring out the devouring symmetry of the female body. This seems to me a very apt metaphor of Kubrick's imagery: from the Overlook Hotel to the corridors of the Discovery and the trenches of *Paths of Glory*, and of course to the space of the psychedelic trip of *2001* that splendidly 'offers itself' to us, these are all just containers that devour or spit out characters.

In Kubrick the image is also a feminine phallic body, an armoured nudity. Armed also with its scintillating nudity, it cannot allow itself to be manipulated so easily by sound.[10]

Let us now see how this play of the said and the shown works in *2001*.

A Story without Words?

The prologue of *2001* (as Kubrick completed it, having abandoned the idea of a voice-over) makes a show of telling a story 'without words'. In the guise of a succession of tableaux, not unlike giant dioramas from a wax museum, 'The Dawn of Man' meticulously lays out its concise history of evolution. The image of ape skeletons abandoned on the ground 'tells' us that this species did not yet practise burial (burial would suggest that we are already in the era of human culture). The presence of tapirs peacefully coexisting with the apemen foraging for food places the two species on the same side of evolution for a while, and 'tells' us that the apes are herbivores. The tiger that attacks an ape tells us that this species has a predator, forcing them to live in fear with the imperative to protect themselves. Note the magnificent shot of the tiger standing near a zebra carcass and watching them: its luminous eyes foreshadow the twin lights of space vehicles watching in the interstellar night.

The scene of the horde tells us how important it was to congregate around a watering hole, and suggests an embryonic stage of social organisation. The little pond is also the focus of a territorial rivalry between clans (our first fights are with our brothers, suggests Kubrick), which announces the centrality of war in future human history.

The group at night, listening in the darkness to the noises and growls of beasts, tells us about a universe of fear. A mother and her offspring tell us of the embryonic family; a crescent moon evokes outer space to which later the descendants of these 'animals' will catapult themselves.

And so it goes. Apart from the fact that it is a title (that is to say, words), 'The Dawn of Man', like that of a painting, invites us to see in this sequence a history and not the repetition of a series of specific moments. For there is only history in the dimension of the symbolic, thus of language.

The Mental Image

2001 also poses the question of the mental image expressed without words; the only shots in the film that we can attribute to the *thoughts* of a character are from the perspective of an ape.[11] Dumont and Monod identify two shots, close together: the one of the monolith inserted between two images of the ape considering – or rather momentarily *stopping from considering* – the tapir bones, and the shot of a live tapir falling down.

Significantly, it is when the animal is no longer specifically looking at anything that we take it to be 'thinking'. But to 'see someone thinking' is a phrase that underscores a paradox of cinema.[12]

Film can move right up to a face or head, but cannot go inside. It seems as close to subjectivity as could be, but it can only present subjectivity through objective means. It retains an unavoidable opaqueness, and heightens the impenetrability of what it claims to reveal. Film mimics interiority, and denounces it as a deception at the same time.

In this very example, what presents thought as visual (and why not?) is not the conscious representation of the ape character, but its unconscious. It is not the monolith, but an image of the monolith seen from a certain point placing it on the axis of the sun – and even more than the image of the monolith it is the *shot* of the image of the monolith, with its particular framing. Kubrick is taking on the impossible task of bringing to life Eisenstein's dream of conveying abstract thought on the screen through purely visual means.[13]

In the same scene we also see, twice, a deliberately stylised slow-motion shot of a tapir collapsing. The shots act as both a memory and a flash-forward; they are both a mental image, conventionally attributed to a char-

acter's perspective, and objective reality, showing what happened (the monolith now gone) and what is going to happen (the live tapir that is going to be killed). Third, the shots indicate the ambiguous intent of the film, which deliberately neglects to clarify their narrative status. Is it the narrator speaking (to tell us, 'this ape has seen the monolith and will kill tapirs'), or the character thinking in images?

Out of these first ambiguous mental images is born abstract thinking, and subsequently the power to send objects into space.

The tool is a mental projection. Similarly, the spaceship, the future and the sky also appear to be mental projections, both possible and realised.

These mental shots become relayed still further into the future by 'virtual' images, graphic productions based on antennas and radar, seen on control monitors when a spaceship approaches its destination, and is preparing to land or take off.

To translate the role of the monolith into visual imagery, Kubrick initially planned to superimpose on to an image of this object some hypnotically suggestive shots showing carnivorous apemen instructing the apes. Deciding against the use of superimpositions – which were common in the silent cinema – as well as verbal explanation via a voice-over commentary, gives still more importance to cutting, with all the ambiguity that this technique brings.[14]

It was certainly necessary to get rid of text in order to explore the capacity for abstraction in the image and editing.

However, there are still forty minutes of dialogue in the film, and forty minutes is a lot. Where do these dialogues occur, and what are they about?

2001, Decentred Cinema

'Eighteen months ago, the first evidence of intelligent life off the earth was discovered. It was buried forty feet below the lunar surface, near the crater Tycho. Except for a single, very powerful radio emission aimed at Jupiter, the four-million-year-old black monolith has remained completely inert, its origin and purpose still a total mystery.' Thus goes the end of Floyd's prerecorded video briefing that plays once Hal has been disconnected. I quote it because these are the last words spoken in the film, before the film launches wholeheartedly into the non-verbal audiovisual

trip (aside from the title 'Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite'). Floyd's words are the most explicit thing we hear about the mystery around which the film swirls incessantly, and the enigmas it constructs. 'I don't like to talk about *2001* much,' Kubrick remarked when the film came out, 'because it's essentially a non-verbal experience. ... It attempts to communicate more to the subconscious and to the feelings than it does to the intellect.'[15]

As we have already noted, only the central sections – the Floyd mission and the Discovery episode – include dialogue scenes, but many of the things said therein are said in order to conceal (for diegetic reasons already examined). The dialogues where the characters have no reason to hide anything, such as personal telephone conversations, appear conventional and uninteresting. This owes less to their actual content, which is sincere and without pretence, than to the way they are shown: from a distance (the voices as well as the faces), and always from a single perspective – the viewpoint of someone who is getting the message but is, in a way, already elsewhere.

Finally, the intentional discrepancy between the futurism of the situations on the one hand – the immensity of the cosmic setting for the characters – and, on the other, the very ordinariness of the dialogues, gives the latter a shade of insignificance. The rarity and apparent secondary status of the dialogue do not allow us, however, to consider *2001* as being like a silent film.

In the silent era, with very few exceptions, not only did films have dialogue, indicated in intertitles (when they were not conveyed by moving lips in the images), but there was also a narrative text, conveyed by the same means. Narrating title cards did not just present the characters and the setting; they could also indicate what was going on inside the head of a character, pass judgments, state the moral of the story ... all the while pretending to let the images 'speak for themselves'. Here we have an early form of this duplicity upon which the cinema is constructed, saying and telling while seemingly only showing.[16]

But what Kubrick tried to do in some scenes of *2001* – present dialogues that are decentred from what occupies the spectator's mind – could not have been done outside the context of sound cinema. Try to transpose into

silent film a couple of scenes where a character asks someone, 'Did you have a good trip?' (when Floyd arrives) or 'A little coffee?' (in the shuttle going to the crater). Instead of being heard, these lines would appear on title cards, and thus would necessarily become the centre of the images they appear with. The fact that in the universe of the sound film they are *superimposed* on other sounds and on to images that draw our attention towards other things gives them different weight and meaning. Kubrick's cinema here employs what I call *decentred dialogue*, where we feel that the world 'is not reduced to the function of embodying dialogue'.[17]

Furthermore, in certain scenes of *2001*, speech seems to make the action stop and the camera freeze. During his presidency it was said that it was hard for Gerald Ford to walk and chew gum at the same time. This remark reverberates in the heroes of *2001*: they do not do anything when they speak, and do not speak while walking or doing something. Which is normally not considered too good a way to construct a scene.

Just as in *2001* there is no interweaving of speech and action[18] – the very interweaving that the classical cinema deploys constantly to tie together the various elements – so dialogue lines themselves rarely overlap. Whether in a banal conversation or a crucial dialogue scene such as the one pitting Hal and Dave against each other, each character says strictly what he has to say, and only when it is his turn. It is as if each line uttered is punctuated by an 'over' before another character replies. This formal ping-ponging of speech is underscored by a sort of passive impassibility on the part of the camera; it seems to formally note each thing said. We find the same tendency in the briefing and interview scenes in *The Shining* (the beginning) and *Full Metal Jacket*.

By refusing the interweaving, by removing from his film the play of echoes and reciprocal punctuation that makes image and dialogue (and more generally the shown and the said) support and guarantee one another, Kubrick strips the sound film bare, decentres it.

The closer the cinema moves in the direction of such stripping or reduction, but retains the usual ingredients of speech, action and editing, the more acutely it encounters the contradictions. Why is a particular section of dialogue not dramatised? Why not use images exclusively? And what does a certain shot transition signify?

The strength of Kubrick's film lies in having kept alive all the contradictions of his project, retaining dialogue, character and narrative form, while still making an experimental work. We might also say that in fact he had no choice, and that the conditions of production, as well as the commercial success he sought, all prevented him from moving towards abstract film. Little matter – for we can just as well say that his choice to remain in the vein of popular cinema while reinvigorating it is also an auteur's choice, not a limitation or constraint; and that he chose contradiction.

It is a misunderstanding to see the cinema as entirely an art of the image. Film is also an art of movement, an art of space, an art of editing, an art of recorded speech and acting, an audiovisual art, and these elements can enter into contradiction with one another. There is really no reason why seeing should come to the aid of what we hear, nor why listening should help what we see, nor why movement should not disrupt compositional lines,[19] in that these elements influence each other, combine with each other and are even at odds with each other.

In *2001*, speeches are interrupted as if to help us see, and action is frozen as if to help us hear. In combination with the film's many ellipses and scarcity of dialogue, this dissociation of elements had unexpected effects on the film's first audiences. One example of the effect of dissociating word and image: on hearing Floyd tell the Russians that he is going 'to Clavius', many spectators thought that he was going to a planet named Clavius. 'Why they think there's a planet Clavius I'll never know,' commented Kubrick. 'But they hear him being asked, "Where are you going?" and he says, "I'm going to Clavius." With many people – boom – that one word registers in their heads and they don't look at fifteen shots of the moon, they don't see he's going to the moon.'[20]

It is true that the word 'moon' is pronounced only once in the dialogue, when Floyd has to state his identity and destination for the voiceprint security system before boarding his flight. Quite naturally, the Russians and Floyd just refer to their respective stations by name: Chalinko, Clavius. Seeing the moon and hearing the word 'moon' are very different things, and since in the film the word and the image are dissociated in time, a sort of schizophrenia results, which goes far beyond the question of any laziness or ignorance on the part of the audience.

Words Give Voice to the World's Emptiness or Fullness[21]

Many people apprehended *2001* as the most cinematic of films, in that it borrows from no external code or genre and speaks a pure language of cinema. It 'signifies itself' as music seemingly does, according to a frequently invoked claim.[22]

This seems to me too beautiful to be true. It is easy to say that since the characters never utter such fateful words as *extraterrestrial*, since they do not articulate what is happening and no one exclaims 'Good God, a monolith', then the film is avoiding recourse to this 'extrinsic' element that is speech (according to conceptions that continue to prevail). For at the same time, the film imposes subtitles pregnant with meaning, and stamps them on to what we see and hear. These are as radical a forcing of meaning as any dialogue. In what is literally only the story of a band of apes in prehistoric times, for example, the subtitle 'The Dawn of Man' urges the spectator to read much more.

As for the justly admired sequence of Hal's murder of the three hibernating astronauts, a sequence Mario Falsetto analyses as an example of pure cinema on the basis of its absence of dialogue and the way it uses editing as its sole means of signification, you still have to admit that it would be incomprehensible were it not for the use of text – the series of messages flashing on the control monitors. Text means recourse to the verbal, and in a sense these messages on the screen could just as well be replaced (as they are in later science-fiction films like *The Andromeda Strain* and *Alien*) by prerecorded spoken warnings: instead of reading 'Computer malfunction' and then 'Life functions critical' and finally 'Life functions terminated', we would hear it, spoken perhaps by a female voice. So here we definitely have the audiovisual with language, the only difference being that this text is read rather than heard. Kubrick's audacity lies not in economising on the verbal, but in using text as a discontinuous and partial element in a system of discontinuities. What happens, happens between the shots and between the monitors, but also, crucially, between the texts conveyed on the monitors: between, for example, 'Life functions critical' and 'Life functions terminated'. The before and after of different shots, but also the before and after of two instances of text.

In passing, let us appreciate in these messages on the monitor two kinds of prophetic humour. There is the humour that consists in using an apparent euphemism so as not to say 'death'. But medical progress has given us good reason to use euphemisms: cardiac death no longer sufficing to define the state of cessation of life, what criterion is viable that will not be revised in its turn some day? The other joke is the use of one word, *function*, to designate (and thus place on the same level) both the activity of the computer and the normal processes of human life reduced to the physiological. In terms of narrative logic, we realise that the builders of the Discovery must have had a good sense of black humour and also plenty of cynicism, since they already planned for, made and installed the warning message 'Life functions terminated', designed to flash calmly like other messages. Nor did they take the trouble to personalise it; the same message suffices for all three cosmonauts, who die collectively and anonymously, as if the idea of an incident affecting a single one of the three in hibernation was thrown out in advance.

Let us imagine that the name of each of them (a modest label on each coffin, as for a package, but rendered hardly readable for the spectator) were to be highlighted on the monitor. This would yield an altogether different scene, and we would be witnessing three individualised deaths. The way in which it is stated – here, the way it is written, omitting the identity of the victims – remains crucial. This is a far cry from a cinema of 'pure' images and sounds, despite what a narrow interpretation – the frequent characterisation of *2001* as a non-verbal experience – would have us think. The non-verbal is itself actually a category of the verbal (negation itself is a symbolic, linguistic act – think of its role in mathematics – and the possibility of negating is a condition of language and thus its confirmation). It is thus not in Kubrick – who had been a creator of photos that were to resonate together with captions in magazines, and who then became skilled in his films in using the voice-over, another linguistic effect – that we shall encounter the naïve idealism that consists in believing that the non-verbal, as absolute, is achieved in cinema solely through the suppression of words.[23]

The dialogues in *2001* rarely concern what everyone is thinking about, that is, the existence of another life form in the universe; the lines are deliv-

ered by the actors without drama; and they are superficial in their politeness and bureaucratic neutrality. But these factors do not make the dialogue unimportant. This would be like saying that in a dissonant chord, the most significantly dissonant note does not count.[24]

What the film opposes to the smooth and impenetrable surface (the monolith) are these words whose banality rebounds from it. If there were not these words to 'ring' off it, we would not experience its diamond-hard resistance.

The film inhabits this very divergence between the said and the shown. But the said is here something quite different from the way to highlight the shown. It remains – above and beyond its content – the only way to give voice to the emptiness or the fullness of the world.

We can describe the cinema as an art where the confrontation of the said and the shown manifests itself in a completely new way.[25]

I call *said* all that passes through the medium of language (in the strict sense of the word), whether by the auditory channel (dialogue, spoken narration, song lyrics when they occur), or by the visual channel (subtitles, intertitles, written/printed text within the image); the *shown* is what we are given to perceive as a visible or auditory thing. The shown should not be confused with the visible, and can be auditory as well as visual. Sound effects or noises, the timbre of actors' voices, independent of the content of what they say, are examples of 'shown' sound elements.

2001 is exemplary for its dialectical play between the said and the shown. Much of the film consists of the shown, but it manages to inscribe the shown within the not-said – and how can you create a shown and a not-said if not through a said?

But also, it is through an open confrontation of the said with the image and with the *face* that we can truly measure and affirm the power of lies.[26]

The Power of Lies

When Hal declares he knows that someone is trying to disconnect him and Dave answers, 'I don't know what you're talking about, Hal,' we feel strangely ashamed. Dave has good reason not to tell the truth to a dangerous enemy, of course. But he does it in front of us, and at that moment the reflections of control panel lights that flash rhythmically on his face

bring out his features and his eyes, and seem to make a display of the fact that he is lying.

The characters at this point are diegetically *connected by voice*, but in filmic space they are *connected through vision*, via editing. The shot–reverse shot exists only on the screen and through the mediation of our gaze, since nothing establishes that Dave sees Hal's eye at that moment, nor Hal the face of Dave. Both are looking at us, and look at each other only through us. We are witnesses as much as we are relays for this lie.

Do not forget that Hal has also lied by saying nothing of what he knows about the mission's goal; the scene in which he interrogates Dave consists of dissembling, and retroactively turns us into witnesses of a lie of omission. But we cannot spot the slightest trace of this lie on the teller's non-existent face.

It should be clear that *2001* implicates us inextricably in the guilt of the gaze addressed to the camera. It is the gaze of the triumphant lie.

All the human characters of *2001* have a good reason not to give themselves away. Heywood Floyd has to keep the secret of the monolith discovery from the crew at first, during what is supposed to be a routine trip, and again in the interrogation to which the Soviet representative suavely subjects him. Then Bowman and Poole are constantly under the eye and ear of Hal, whom they are watching in turn.

The smoothness and polish Kubrick gives to the film, wherein the opaque monolith and the equally opaque actors square off, bears comparison to a chess or poker game (Kubrick was an avid poker player) – and also to lying.

The impenetrable quality of the image and the film is akin to the child's discovery of the power of lying when it realises that Pinocchio's nose belongs to the world of fiction; in other words, a well-told lie *cannot* be seen.

The child has an overwhelming and sacred experience when for the first time he is brought to lie to someone's face. Anyone who has never done it would not be completely human. How else could we feel the nobility and the stakes of language, how else could we know the price of truth?

It is thus in the very experience where it seems to profane and betray language that we consecrate it; and *2001* magnifies the shameful exaltation of this experience.

Interpretations of a Monolith

How easy it would be to sidestep the task of understanding *2001*, to live in bliss refusing any effort to find meaning in it beyond what we see and hear at each moment. If this were all there were to it, the work in all its beauty would be little other than a machine to turn on, so to speak, to stimulate the desire for meaning even as it bypasses the law of the signifier.

It is not by accident that I have written 'in bliss', as the film devotes itself largely to the satisfaction of needs, in the way we imagine a newborn baby who has just had its fill. Like Floyd, who sleeps calmly on his flight towards the lunar station while a stewardess sees to his comfort; like Bowman, who finds himself at the end of the film in a four-star hotel suite where he is fed and housed to the end of his days, we can let ourselves be carried away at particular moments (the 'Blue Danube' sequences, for example) by turning and spinning shapes and by music that does anything but disturb; we have only to yield.

At the same time, the most famous shot transition of the film and perhaps in all of cinema, the cut from the bone to the heavens full of flying vehicles, requires an effort of *interpretation* on the part of the laziest spectator in order to make any narrative sense. It requires that we establish a relationship of some kind between these two shots and their content, via abstract thinking that can perceive the form shared by each object. Beyond that, each person is free not to see a causal relationship between the flying bone and the spaceships. But the spectator will have nevertheless made a minimal logical connection consisting (even in negative form) in perceiving the resemblance between the bone and the vehicle, and to draw a connection, a relation not only of analogy, but also of cause and effect, a 'rhyme'. S/he will make the same leap of abstraction that the apeman makes in inventing the tool.

This edit is the very act of abstraction, since it constitutes a definitive, irrevocable leap into language, into the symbolic.

Because of the edit, but without the edit stating it explicitly or completely, we decide that this object is a tool, a weapon, the beginning of everything man will invent, much in the same way that we decide in chess that one parallelepedic form is a rook, and another smaller one is a pawn.

People Stop Talking

2001 highlights the problem of interpretation, if for no other reason than because the characters encounter this problem in the monolith they discover. But if the monolith has the quality of a closed book, *2001* itself is both a closed book, since it dissembles its explicit meaning, and an open book since it makes a display of its literal content, even its gaps and ellipses and the 'symbolic' (and irreducible) edits it contains.

Kubrick's film, through brilliant ellipses as well as arbitrary superimpositions of music and image, is a veritable interpretory labyrinth, a machine to set spectators' interpretation glands salivating.

We could be happy just contemplating the forms, but that is impossible. We must understand, hence we project. The film holds up a mirror to our perpetual temptation to project. In this mirror, we see ourselves madly constructing intentions and meaning – and being unable to support the idea that things are not what they are.

Besides, what is it that an image 'is'? Presented a face in close-up, can we consider it as it is, in other words, not expressing anything in particular if that happens to be the case?

In reality we are unable to allow images their opacity; we are compelled to judge.

For example, Dave and Frank seem cold or lacklustre to us, but we forget they exist in a situation of constant surveillance, and that if Heywood Floyd is politely reserved, it is in a world of opposing superpowers where everybody has to be wary of everyone else.

We also have no reason to doubt Floyd's sincere affection for his family, especially his daughter. Nor Frank's love for his parents when he sees them wish him happy birthday in the recorded message; if he has an inscrutable look, it is because he has dark glasses on, and since he is alone and his parents are not seeing him, he has no particular reason to smile.

Coldness is therefore yet another interpretation that the film allows us to project on to what we see. *2001* highlights the cinema as an art of 'allowing'; based on given textual elements, viewers are left to project interpretations on to concretely irreducible things. When the computer itself says to Dave, 'Perhaps I'm projecting my own concern about it,' it is alluding to this process.

The film has two emblematic shots shots that face off, in a way. One shows the monolith among the apes; the other, the space pod in the period bedroom. It is impossible to only see them literally. Each presents an incongruous object, from another era and an other space than where it appears, and which cries out for interpretation. This is a plea that the characters could never answer, and for good reason: they are pre-human apes in one case and an astronaut stricken with mutism in the other.

In the film, *people stop talking in the presence of the monolith*. Even the astronauts of Clavius fall silent just as they discover it and snap photos in front of it. It is doubtless for this reason that outside the film, and in books or essays like this, we make up for it with so many words.

Interpretations: from Numerology to Alchemy

Beginning even with its title, *2001* lends itself to all manner of *numerological* speculations, like those that Carolyn Geduld advanced regarding the number '4'. As soon as you state that the film is divided into four movements (we have already said that this is certainly not the only possible way of seeing it), and that the monolith appears four times, and that the title has four digits and a film screen has four sides, you start to see fours everywhere. Of course, you can take any number and apply it to a film or literary work and, with enough intellectual gymnastics, you will always come up with something. In *War and Peace* Tolstoy demonstrates with gusto the indiscriminate character of such speculations. The character Pierre Bezukhov convinces himself through numerologic calculations not only that Napoleon is the Beast of the Apocalypse, whose number is 666, but that he himself is the man chosen to destroy him.

The *alchemical* interpretive framework has also been developed, particularly in an article by Jean-Marc Elsholz.[27] The symbolic and chemical forms in *2001* certainly lend themselves to this approach, and Bowman (the archer) who is reborn out of himself, in a bed of 'matrimonial proportions', may call the androgyne Rebis to mind. Equally tempting is *formal symbolism*: the sphere (of the stars, and the pods) and the parallelepiped (of the monolith, and associated with the rectangle enclosing Hal's eye) are the most prominent forms. Claude-Alexis Gras invites us to note that the triangle is absent, even though suggested.[28]

I have nothing against such interpretations in principle, but what sometimes bothers me is the way they are often carried out, when they reduce the work to what they set out to demonstrate in the first place. Other studies seem aware of the arbitrary, contingent and contradictory aspects of all works of nature or of human endeavour, and do not try to reduce them. These are the ones that interest me, shedding light on the work and bringing out its contours, rather than merely treating it as an encrypted message that will become transparent once 'decoded'.

To interpret *2001* as some sort of hidden message to be read along a single axis is to distort the fact that the film is directly about interpretation itself. This is true not simply on the level of content, but in its cinematic language – shot transitions, editing, framing.

The Head of the Camera

A large part of *2001* imperturbably connects its narrative parts together in the spirit of Tolstoy: static shots are linked with other static shots, achieving a sort of flattening of objects and events. Characters in these shots are often looking at screens; or we see them from the back and their facial expression is not visible; or we see them frontally and their face shows nothing.

We also find many close-ups of Dave (but almost not a single one of Floyd). The close-up, when associated with a complementary cue that may be auditory or visual, is often used to designate that something is happening in the character's head. Here, inside Dave, it seems to say that nothing is there . . .

It is with this nothing that we need to begin again.

An effect of a specifically cinematic nature arises from the confrontation between the *insistence of the camera's gaze* brought to an object, conveyed by a close-up of the object or by the camera's prolonged immobility, and the *'indifference' of this object of the gaze* to this interest shown, to this insistence. If a film shows me object or character X and lingers on it for a long time, X must be important, but it remains unreadable and immobile. The narration designates X to me, but what is X thinking and seeing, this X that is thus designated and also the designating authority?

The insistence-on-showing in the cinema (this sense, hypersignified in

Kubrick, may be created by different means – slowness of rhythm, sharpness and brightness of the image, clarity of framing) creates a paradoxical effect. It seems to show things as they are and invite us to accept them thus; and at the same time it designates itself as a finger insistently pointing at things. The object of the camera's look is thus doubled and split – and our relation to it altered – by the insistence on showing it and making it occupy a certain duration in the film.

By its nature (in contrast to, say, painting) the cinema does double duty, since it utilises duration, a duration it itself imposes, as a means subtly to do something other than which it claims to be doing. If a camera remains fixed on a setting once the actors have left the frame – a technique Losey uses several times in *Accident*, for example – it is impossible for us not to see an intention, even as we sense that this empty setting does not care in the least. The opaqueness of the setting is redoubled by a second opaqueness that we might put this way: what is happening right now *in the head of the camera*?

Alignments[29]

Let us imagine three objects – for example, three pebbles in a landscape – aligned by chance, 'chance' being an inextricable intersection of causes along several axes of time. Immediately we would seek an intentionality that would explain the pattern. Similarly, man created constellations by associating some stars with others, stars that have no inherent connection but are lined in a row when seen from the earth.

> The idea of a magical alignment of the sun, the earth, and the moon, or of Jupiter and its moons, was used throughout the film to represent something magical and important about to happen. I suppose the idea had something to do with the strange sensation one has when the alignment of the sun takes place at Stonehenge.[30]

Kubrick thus uses this trope to awaken in us the idea of intentionality, but also of imminence. Alignment in astrology is a crossroads of trajectories recurring at well-determined intervals (like the alignment of a clock's hands at midnight). In much the same way, the director presents to us successions of shots on the linear axis of time as alignments with obvious

intentionality, but also impenetrable, to a greater or lesser extent, and marked by the idea of before and after.

In Kubrick, at least in *2001*, the image is very often before the important and decisive event, and sometimes after, but it is rarely during.[31]

Are there few shots of 'during'?

Ambivalence Embodied: Rhymes

Let us call rhymes the typically cinematic echoes among situations, repeated elements given to us without always being explicitly designated as such, resonating between themselves and leaving us the choice of whether to group them together. Though rarely satisfying our thirst or immediate comprehension, *2001* invites us to find rhymes everywhere because of its mysteriousness and aspects of its structure.

I am not limiting rhymes to repetitions of situations, such as the repetition of a birthday scene, or meals (apes, Floyd, cosmonauts, Dave and Frank in the Discovery, Dave eating alone at the end), or sleep (apes 'sleeping badly', Floyd sleeping like a baby, Hunter, Kimball and Kaminsky in hibernation, Frank and Dave sleeping in shifts, Dave dying and being reborn in a bed). A rhyme can also be a concrete element, directly cinematic, that concerns the slightest thing. Its use is not specific to Kubrick by any means, but the very conception of *2001* and its subject give it a central place.

The rhyming return of a silent gesture – the hesitant drawing of a hand towards a smooth wall – when we see an ape do it or a cosmonaut four million years later, is an overwhelming and almost sacred 'non-verbal experience' as only the cinema can offer. To be meaningful, a rhyme requires that the cosmonaut had never seen or imagined the ape's gesture. Amnesia, or non-consciousness, is a condition for rhyme.

Other prominent rhymes in *2001* are:

- The edited graphic match as rhyme: a bone, an elongated space vehicle;
- Alignments of objects in space, in the beginning and at the end;
- Shots involving an incongruously inserted object: the monolith among the apes, the pod in the period bedroom suite.

We can also find rhymes made from oppositions: the ape brandishes his

weapon in triumph, while the future-man's arm floats as it abandons his pen in space.

The craziest rhymes are possible: the Rodin-like thinking pose, the hand near the mouth: we see Floyd this way as he plays chess, and then Poole as he encounters the byzantine instructions for the toilet in weightless space.

The tapir skull crushed by the ape and Dave's glass that is crushed by gravity from its fall: should we consider this a rhyme? Or only a distant echo?

And finally here is a rhyme I find myself especially drawn to, but which like many others is impossible to document without rerunning the film: I see internal rhymes whenever something turns around on its axis. What could be more cinematic than an image of someone turning her head, turning his eyes or entirely turning around, as in the 'eternalised' shot in *Titanic*?[32]

This is what the pod that turns against Poole does, and this moment has been carefully prepared to surprise us – since up to that point the sphere turned only under Dave's vocal command.

And what another pod later does too, this time a pod piloted by Dave who, having had to leave Poole's body out in space, goes back to the Discovery to confront Hal with pincers extended, with a very theatrical look – 'draw!' like Sergio Leone's Westerns (which influenced 60s cinema, in my opinion).

We even have, here, rhyming scenes: Frank's sortie is almost identical to Dave's and seems to repeat the same shots: the same sounds of breathing (possibly a bit faster) and the same parallel editing. Only Frank's spacesuit is yellow, in contrast to Dave's red one.

The pod that kills Frank under Hal's remote command, and the pod that Dave manoeuvres to grasp the body of Frank, taking it in its arms like a futuristic Pietà, have an identical appearance. The gesture for killing and the gesture of embracing are the same. This idea is taken up again in Ridley Scott's *Alien*, where the monster stretches out its arms to those it is about to kill.

Rhyme in this sense is ambivalence embodied in a gesture or an object.

The pod Dave manoeuvres turns twice. Once landed in the period room, Dave turns twice towards an other who each time is himself – first an astronaut with his helmet, turning toward, a noise that draws him; second, an old man in a robe, turning toward, someone who is ... the camera. Like the mother of Norman Bates at the end of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, but very slowly.

Finally, the Star Child of the final image turns slowly towards us, as if asymptotically, since a fade-out prevents us from seeing it look directly at us.

Remember that *A Clockwork Orange* takes up where *2001* leaves off, via the frank look into the camera, in this case Malcolm McDowell's, full of defiance.

The Monolith as Discontinuity

But the principal object of rhyming (ultimately reduced to just that) is the monolith itself. This monolith, in the wild adventure of *2001*, 'worked' well, if by worked we mean solicited all possible interpretations and exceeded them. The monolith cries out for interpretation; we might say that that is what it is there for, it is built into the filmic system.

1. The monolith is an anthropological symbol. It refers to many ancient monuments erected in stone – Stonehenge, for example – monuments located in several parts of the world, and whose function scientists continue to puzzle about, especially when it is claimed that they are related to astronomical alignments. Even if we do not view them as the proof of God or extraterrestrial beings (as innumerable occultist speculations do), they captivate the imagination with the stubborn muteness of their presence.

   In *2001* the monolith always appears as a single object. But since it returns at different times with similar traits (the sun hitting it, a brutally abrupt interruption following it), it is as if it forms an *alignment with itself* through time.
2. In its form and its verticality, it is a totem, a phallic symbol of energy, an object of adoration. It is the symbolic phallus in the psychoanalytical sense, that is, the symbol of the 'sovereign good'.[33]

3. The monolith is a symbol of burial: one of the rare things we find out about the one found on the moon is that it was 'deliberately buried'. It is exhumed as if it were some sort of pharaonic sarcophagus. This refers back to funerary symbolism, which has a strong presence in the film.

One of the first signs shown to us in the beginning is the blanched skeleton of an anthropoid ape, left where it died; this tells us, essentially, that we are in an era before man. Much later, when the three astronauts in deep freeze move directly from hibernation to death in their containers, they do so with absolutely no ceremony paid them. The sole survivor, Dave Bowman, in order to stay alive himself, is forced to send the body of the dead Frank into the interstellar void without even a ritual word, although it had been his natural, pious, human impulse to recover the body. (The theme of what the burial rite might become in space and in the future hovers over much modern science fiction; see, for example, the *Alien* series.)[34]

Finally, what embodies the authority of memory and of the monument at the same time, is the monolith. But curiously this monolith is virgin, this Tablet of the Law without commandments, this stele with no inscriptions, rigorously identical across millions of years – we could even say it is an anti-monument, an apparent negator of history that, on the other hand, its presence seems to have set in motion.

4. It is a signifier of abstraction itself. It appears as 'the same' in different instances and in different scales, horizontal or vertical.

It is also symbolic of the *movement* of abstraction. In its unassimilable nature, indissoluble in the forms that surround it, the monolith can very well be seen as a mathematical symbol of relation unifying disparate objects of the world, and inviting us to consider them from an abstract point of view. It is the letter or the number.

When seen by characters (it is seen and not-seen, present and no-longer-there), the monolith is always vertical. When not necessarily seen by a character, at the end of the film, it is horizontal.

In its status as a geometrical object immediately prone to be abstracted, repeated, echoed through the course of time, the monolith-object itself accedes from the outset to the status of a mental image.

5. Because of its muteness, the monolith is also an analyst, a 'subject assumed to know'![35] While Hal speaks (to the point of taking himself for a subject), the monolith remains silent.

   The monolith is actually the opposite of Hal, the computer whose auditory and visual embodiment is limited for us to one eye (always the same, wherever it is) and one voice. In short, he is a very present character, but we still cannot cross-check things he says with what is in his eyes (for the eye is without a look) or his gestures or his facial expressions. The film never even shows us Hal's circuits functioning. If he exists for us, it is because he speaks, and says things like, 'My mind is going. I can feel it. There is no question about it.'

   Hal and the monolith: an invisible protagonist that speaks and a visible protagonist that does not. The two figures do not cross paths in the film, this talking computer and this mute extraterrestrial artefact; this is what the two have in common, they are the counter-rhymes (rhyme by contrast) of each other.[36]
6. The monolith also exists in time as being there, then 'no longer there', and the discontinuity of its presence refers to what Lacan calls the child's 'games of occultation', first discussed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[37] These games consist of playing on appearances and disappearances mastered by the voice, such as 'peekaboo', and are the foundation of the symbolic, of language as 'murder of the thing'.

   Similarly, the monolith in the film is characterised by being there and then not there, then there again. Its first two appearances are marked by a brutal interruption/commutation on both visual and audio tracks. The monolith slices into time – it cuts time, as it cuts space (by its form and verticality), and in this sense it is the letter itself, beyond interpretation.

   While Hal is on the side of the maternal and continuous, the monolith is thus the Father, as discontinuity.[38]

Epilogue: a Room too Large

We must finally return to childhood – which is where *2001* ends, and also which is that cradle of comfort and trust where we first see Floyd, at the beginning of the human story.

Just as the Orion is too large for the sleeping Floyd when he is its sole

passenger, so at the end, the room and the bed are too big for Dave alone.

Dumont and Monod are right to speak of the 'astral foetus', and let us not forget that the foetus presupposes (at least in symbolic terms) a placenta and maternal bosom to contain and nurture it. The presence of the foetus 'mamma-ises' the universe, associates it with maternal security (to borrow a formulation from Françoise Dolto), and suggests that the interplanetary void can be an environment that is protective rather than hostile.[39]

The spirit of childhood has long been part of Kubrick's universe, even with the character of Lolita, who is by no means reduced to the role of a sex object. The unfocused, unfinished aspect of the face of Ryan O'Neal in *Barry Lyndon* is another example, as is the way Kubrick brought out the infantile side of George C. Scott in *Dr Strangelove* as a nervous muncher of peanuts.

In Kubrick's work the child is often single and solitary. Heywood's daughter is an only child whom he affectionately calls Squirt and who appears spoiled. Lolita is an only child, as is Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, and little Danny in *The Shining* as well.

This solitariness of the child lends a closeness and pathos to the mother–son couple, in Lady Lyndon and her son in *Barry Lyndon*, and Wendy and Danny in the labyrinth of *The Shining*.

In Kubrick's hands, between Hal and the monolith, we are really not that far removed from mummy and daddy. Like *A Clockwork Orange*'s Alex, who is an ultraviolent psychopath but drinks milk and lives at home, the environment where Dave is ultimately 'housed' is a nurturing one, taking up where the one maintained by Hal left off.

Food in the infantile, elementary sense plays an important role, as we see in many of Kubrick's films, where it refers to the relieving of anxiety. We have only to look at the insistence on this idea in *The Shining* and its abundance of food reserves, and the description of the Overlook Hotel as a vast pantry. There is the comic scene in *Dr Strangelove* about the American military survival kit, and the pie-throwing battle (eventually cut from the film). And let us not forget the first shot in *A Clockwork Orange* with Alex drinking his enriched milk, nor that the first part of *Full Metal Jacket* is predicated on the bulimia of one of the soldiers, nor that the first shot of Danny in *The Shining* shows him eating.

Finally, the scene of Poole's birthday focuses on a virtual cake, a transmitted image; his parents show it to him but of course Poole cannot eat it. This scene is more heart-rending than derisory. The parents are real and sincere in their simplicity – it is the context that makes them look touchingly small with the cake. But you cannot eat an image.

2001 claims to be descended from the *Odyssey*, which itself has more to do with food than is normally thought.

2001 and Universal Myths

A 'space odyssey', says the original title. Does the film's relationship to the epic poem attributed to Homer and long considered the model of travel and adventure stories rise above cliché?

In Homer, all Odysseus wants is to return to the fold of his little kingdom of Ithaca, which he evokes in moving terms. Michel Serres has persuasively argued that Odysseus is the anti-adventurer, not at all interested in the customs and natural wonders his adventures lead him to discover. Odysseus's voyage is a *nostos* – a Greek word meaning return and the root of 'nostalgia', and a word intimately connected to the entire branch of mythology that recounts the exploits of the Greek heroes returning after the Trojan War.

In the opposing camp, it seems, Dave Bowman is a man without attachments, the least rooted of all the film's characters, since, as Michel Ciment pointed out, we see neither his daughter (as we see Floyd's) nor his parents (as we see Poole's). But at the film's end, Kubrick lands him in a sort of artificial Ithaca (unless perhaps it is a grotto of Calypso) where there is never a care about food and drink: the period bedroom. In this sense, *2001* harks to the Homeric tradition, which does not hesitate to devote as many lines to the pleasures of the good life as it does to the exploits. This is one thing that lends credibility to the revolutionary hypothesis that the *Odyssey* was the work of a woman.

Homer's Odysseus is buffeted from shore to shore by the winds of fate, but also often taken in and pampered by various protectors, including the goddess Athena. Bowman goes from the initially protective hands of Hal – to whom the first version of the screenplay gave the name of the Greek goddess – to those of invisible entities who are benevolent, if not indifferent.

It is quite evident that the *Odyssey* was an inspiration for the story, but an inspiration only. Certainly, Dave finds himself alone, just as Odysseus loses all his companions, but while in Homer the gods Athena and Poseidon embody rival protective and persecuting forces, for Dave the two are blended into the single figure of Hal.[40]

Nevertheless, the relation to time in the first part of the film evokes in an unsettling way a family of tales like the *Odyssey* that circulate in various forms around the world, and in which a simple human (Rip van Winkle, Urashima Taro) is plucked out of time by a divinity who shares with him the delights of the life of the immortals. This type of story has found an extraordinary kind of validation in theories of relativity and on the connection between space and time. Theoretically, a man who travelled through space at phenomenal speed and then returned to earth would age less quickly than the people he would return to.

In the traditional Japanese tale, the fisherman Urashima Taro lives in a realm of pleasure with a goddess (like Odysseus and Calypso); but he wishes to go back to visit his parents, after which he promises to return. This causes the goddess great sadness; she gives him a pouch with a strict warning not to open it. When the fisherman gets to his village, it is completely transformed, and he realises that he has been gone for several centuries. He breaks his pledge and opens the pouch, from which there escapes a sort of wind. All at once the spell that kept him outside ordinary time is broken, and his body grows old and disintegrates.

The plot of *2001* removes a good number of men from the course of normal time. There are the astronauts Kaminsky, Hunter and Kimball; and they die in a few seconds. And through the magic spell of editing, Kubrick takes Dave Bowman through several decades in three minutes. The three minutes and three edits suggest two contradictory things: both a vast span of diegetic time, and, through editing, the materialisation of accelerated ageing in film time. To top it all, the historical discrepancy between the period decor and the astronaut costume elicits a veritable temporal vertigo.

Ageing through the discovery of one's image in the mirror.

Through which we once again return to head-on confrontation and aggression.

The Beast that Cannot Be Denied

In *2001*, the first jubilation is also destruction. This jubilation seems to surpass the 'utilitarian' character of discovering a new way to obtain food. Needlessly destroying a skull seems to be an end in itself.

We cannot avoid imagining that Kubrick's work inspires questionable passions if we see it as singing the praises of an amoral desire for power. Kubrick shows the joy of smashing things to pieces, of desecration, domination and winning – but he does so in order to tell us something about our species.

The theme of aggression 'in the mirror' in *2001* is established quickly at the outset by showing war between the same-species ape clans. Your worst enemies are those like you, the film seems to say; note that we never see combat between the apemen and their predators, nor any apemen hunting their own prey. The society of 2001, for its part, seems to have temporarily suspended warfare in favour of mutual surveillance. This society also relies on the sublimation of sports: there is a judo match on a TV screen on the shuttle to the moon, Poole shadow-boxes and we see games such as Hal and Frank's chess game.

2001 is a film about a world where all aggressive behaviour is everywhere suppressed, policed and erased, and where it coldly comes back to haunt us through Hal's madness.

The shot of the Discovery where the computer temporarily rules, and of the small spherical pod with Dave within, briefly makes visible this face-to-face confrontation that was previously impossible. Now we notice that the space vessels have eyes that stare, claws to grip with and mouths to crush with.

The smooth and insipid politeness that reigns in the world of the future needs only the slightest disturbance to crack and allow the howling beast to reappear, even if the howling is silent. Thus in humans, who aspired to the state of angels, the beast cannot be denied.

Rebirth

Nevertheless *2001* is, in spite of itself, an optimistic film. It is like a missile that was launched to be the most pessimistic film of Kubrick's career, even bleaker than the previous one, and which a strange fate then diverted from its target.

The spacecraft we see in the first image from the year 2001 were originally intended to be satellites crammed with nuclear weapons, weapons that the Star Child at the end was supposed to detonate. But as we know, the idea to make warheads of these objects was dropped, and the scene of a confrontation between the Star Child and the earth was also eliminated.

Perhaps we owe these last-minute changes to nothing more than Kubrick's concern not to repeat the horrible irony of *Dr Strangelove* – and, in a way, to a sort of gentility consisting of declining to pass us the same dish again at the dinner table.

At the same time, it seems to me that the very act of making *Dr Strangelove*, a film about nuclear destruction that could be useful and instructive as satire, was an act of fantastic optimism.

At any rate, after a film that ends with the end of the world, *2001* takes up at the start of the next century, and thus logically presents itself as a rebirth.

Dave, as I have said, has already experienced a rebirth when he makes his way back into the Discovery through the airlock. This moment of 'apnoea', where Dave musters all his forces and concentrates to hold his breath and go through a narrow passageway, strongly suggests childbirth, especially when we see the dramatic shot of the cosmonaut bathed in a red light. The shot begins in total silence, and then we hear a sort of liberating thunder when air surges in.

Then the 'child' is released into space, and discovers that the universe is for him a room too large. 'The most terrifying thing about the universe', said Kubrick, 'is not that it is hostile but that it is indifferent.'[41]

Kubrick confronts the frightening indifference of this large room that is the interstellar void, and he renders it in a deeply disturbing way (Poole's spacesuited body abandoned in space, until it is a speck that disappears in total darkness). But he attempts to transcend this terror and to bet on life.

2001 could be understood as a spiritualist film, but this would be to force its meaning: the film does not conclude anything. The extraterrestrials do not strike up contact; they bring no message of peace; they say nothing; they do not send Bowman back, reincarnated or otherwise, with a message that might be summarised in one word like love. (In this respect the sequel, *2010*, sentimentalised and limited the message of Kubrick's film.)

And yet, the Star Child is the promise that blossoms anew.

What is *2001* about? Well, it is about just what it seems to be about: life, the destiny of humanity, the human being as he experiences himself before the mystery of his existence, and the awareness of his ever-smaller place in the universe. Very simply, *2001* fills us with wonder because, in the face of the stars, it sings of the mystery of our life as humans.

Animals who know they will die, beings lost on earth, forever caught between two species, not animal enough, not cerebral enough.

Driven to discover the world, but seeing its boundaries retreat and its meaning diluted as we advance, like Dave we are brought back to the restricted space of the familiar.

Linguistic beings, but aware too that language engenders lies and betrays itself in the very gesture of its affirmation.

We are exalted at the idea that science makes us able to 'understand' the world and explain its laws, and to leave the bounds of our planet; but in the same movement we discover that by our nature we *project*, we cannot quite resign ourselves to the fact that language and meaning exist only in us, and are merely a kind of paint we use to colour the world.

In the major interview he did for *Playboy* in 1968, Kubrick spoke of his own 'awesome awareness of mortality' that prevented him from flying in aeroplanes (even though he had a pilot's licence). But he also described simply and beautifully the meaning life can have in a period that has proclaimed the death of God and, on the other hand, has yielded precise scientific data illustrating how small we are in relation to the grandeur of the universe. He recalled the spontaneous *joie de vivre* one sees in the existence of children. 'Children ... begin life with an untarnished sense of wonder, a capacity to experience total joy at something as simple as the greenness of a leaf.' A second stage brings the consciousness of death, decline and evil. But in a third stage, if the human being 'is reasonably strong – and lucky – he can emerge from this twilight of the soul into a rebirth of life's *élan*'. Though he can never again find 'the same pure sense of wonder' of his early years, 'he can shape something far more enduring and sustaining'.[42]

This is why Dave in the end is nothing more than an eye. No longer an eye for surveillance, since that was Hal's eye, nor an eye for sustaining lies,

but rather an eye for contemplation, for being reborn out of the sense of wonder.

It seems to me, then, that far from any mythology of the superman (Dave's death and rebirth has nothing heroic about it), the end of *2001* can express the possibility of this rebirth anew, without limiting its meaning. Even though Kubrick as a director was quick to give expression to so many facets of scepticism and even pessimism, and could express so vividly the terror of death, such as in a moving sequence of *Paths of Glory*, he also tried to keep alive, to convey in a universal language with a vocabulary of marvellous imagery, a small leaf on a tree trembling in a holy wind, this 'pure sense of wonder' in which he recognised a sign of our human condition.

So there we are. I have no further arguments about *2001*. Each time I see it, this movie blows me away in every direction. We are like those apes facing the heavens, surrounded by the noises of the falling night.

Notes

1 [As explained in the previous chapter, Chion uses the word *commutation* idiosyncratically, to designate not only a substitution (its usual sense), but a switch, with the 'off-on' instantaneity of the light switch. *Commutateur* is the French word for an electric switch (as for a light). – Translator.]

2 Dumont and Monod, *Le Foetus astral*, p. 108.

3 In linguistics, these consist of the auditory traits that can vary in pronunciation of a word without the comprehension and identity of the word changing. In various regions and generations, there are several pronunciations of the letter 'a' in a word like 'man' that are not pertinent, in the sense that the word 'man' continues to be identified and understood as such. These are non-pertinent variations.

4 A transition often appears as an image that is 'called', invoked, magically, either by the aid of a character's line or a voice-over, or by the director's fiat.

5 The movie scene in front of which Floyd is sleeping aboard the Orion, showing a couple in a futuristic car, is all that *2001* shows us of earth at the time, which is to say, nothing.

6 Dumont and Monod discuss this with relevance and humour in their *Foetus astral* (pp. 53 ff). They even see in this phallic pen, 'put back in its place' by the stewardess, whom this 'divagation' is all about – a way of

signifying that the characters will do without women – the preparation of Bowman's final 'auto-fecundation' (ibid., p. 80).

Often a rack-focus that puts the background into focus suggests sexual penetration or voyeurism. The stewardess is the sole image of a (possibly) unmarried adult woman. She is alone in the spaceship cabin with Floyd. The movie on the screen in front of Floyd shows a love story.

7 A Chinese proverb states that when someone points to the moon, the idiot looks at the finger. I think Kubrick wants us to look at both the moon and the finger, and he insists on the finger.

8 Philippe Pilard, *Barry Lyndon* (Paris: Nathan, Collection Synopsis, 1994).

9 Fellini describes the face as *'flou'* – blurred, soft, fuzzy, vague; Fellini was a great admirer of the film.

10 The history of art has represented nudity as a suit of armour, as a symbol connected with war (see, for example, Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*). My idea here is that an image magnified or foregrounded as such by its lighting, or its clarity, is less manipulable by other factors, such as sound.

11 Those of Hal are attributed to his *look*, those of the ape are attributable (with reservations) to his mind.

12 Dumont and Monod point out a poignant parallel: in the final sequence, 'the way the old man looks at the glass he has broken is reminiscent of the ape's look as he considers the bone before acquiring the intelligence to break it. They are both sitting; the sole difference is that the man has broken the glass by accident, while the ape looks at bones he will be breaking deliberately.' *Le Foetus astral*, p. 183.

13 In terms of the production history of the film, this insert shot is what it is – an exact duplicate of a shot viewed previously – solely because Kubrick apparently put it in at the last minute, and thus had no other choice but to use an existing shot. If he had had the opportunity to film the shot he wanted, perhaps he would have taken it from a different angle so as to avoid the repetition. However, nothing changes in terms of what this shot represents in Kubrick's *2001* as it exists.

14 The cut constantly erases itself in the meaning it creates. Its instantaneous moment has disappeared at the very moment its function has been fulfilled.

15 Quoted in Agel, p. 7.

16 See the work of Tom Gunning, André Gaudreault and Noël Burch on the 'primitive' narrative cinema and the dialectic between 'monstration' and 'narration'.

17 Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen,* pp. 182–3.

18 I use the term 'action' in a broad sense, including camera movements and zooms. The one exception to what is said above occurs in the conversation in the moon bus.

19 'Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes' ('I hate movement which disturbs lines'), says Baudelaire in the sonnet 'La Beauté' ('Beauty').

20 Comments quoted by Jerome Agel, p. 102. Kubrick at least made sure his t's were crossed and his i's were dotted for the French dub of the film, where Floyd says, 'I'm going to Clavius, *our lunar station*.'

21 [This heading is Chion's poetic formulation. He explains that speech in a film is experienced as either resonating or not with the world in the film. On one level the French phrase he uses means that a sound such as tapping against a surface can indicate the spaces and volumes of a depicted world. But in further wordplay, Chion means that speech can indicate the presence or absence of resonance of *meaning* between the said and the shown. The world is 'full' where speech and world are in communication; man is not alone. It rings empty where there is no communication. – Translator.]

22 On this myth, see my book *La Musique au cinéma*, pp. 287ff.

23 In this connection, each of the deaths is presented in a different way. Frank's death is narrated through *mise en scène* (the body struggles, then floats in space) and through editing, but nothing and no one speaks about it. The death of the three astronauts is signified visually (the indicators of physiological activity on screen flatline) but also in writing, on the instrument panel. Hal's death is suggested visually (the red eye going out), but above all it is recounted orally ('My mind is going. I can feel it') by the voice of the party in question, with a coefficient of unreality and doubt. Finally, Dave's death occurs without written or spoken words, and opens on to what resembles a rebirth and a resurrection. None of the deaths is both shown and recounted.

24 For example, we might be tempted to say that in the scene in the

Orbiter Hilton, when the earth can be seen out of the window and yet characters exchange verbal banalities, the dialogue is unimportant. But what counts here is not the image in itself or the dialogue in itself, but the relationship, the distance, between the two: the dissonant interval.

25 On this subject see the chapter on Tarkovsky, 'Le Langage et le monde', in my book *La Toile trouée* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1988), pp. 169–74.

26 See the insightful remarks of Eric Rohmer, written in 1948, on lies in the cinema, reprinted on pages 32–3 of his collection entitled *The Taste for Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 trans. Carol Volk).

27 Jean-Marc Elsholz, '*2001: L'Odyssée de l'espace*, Le grand oeuvre', *Positif*, no. 439, September 1997.

28 Claude-Alexis Gras, in *Tausend Augen*, no. 10, August 1997.

29 [In addition to its cognate meanings, *alignement* in French commonly refers to alignments or ordered rows of prehistoric stones as monuments, for example the menhirs at Carnac. – Translator.]

30 Kubrick, in Agel, p. 80.

31 A few examples among many follow. The monolith's arrival among the apes: it is already there when we see it. Similarly, it is already there at the moon site when Floyd's group sees it. The launching of spaceships: the film does not show the Discovery's departure from earth.

32 This trope of turning towards (Leonardo di Caprio towards Kate Winslet under the clock), or seeing someone turn towards you, holds a considerable place in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where the trope is very often associated with mystical and amorous ecstasy.

33 According to Françoise Dolto, the phallus is the symbol of the object the possession of which would be most satisfying. Recall that in the Lacanian psychoanalytical dialectic, a man does not 'possess' the phallus any more than does a woman.

34 This theme gives all its force, especially, to the future world of *Soylent Green* (1973), a post-*2001* film that suffers from a mediocre screenplay predicated entirely on the revelation at the end about what becomes of the corpses (they serve to feed an overpopulated humanity), but which gives this question an answer that is both monstrous and logical.

35 Lacan sees the psychoanalyst as the 'sujet-supposé-savoir', the person

supposed to have the knowledge, in the eyes of the patient who is the one who really does the work. The analyst does not have the knowledge of the patient and his/her unconscious, but the patient attributes this knowledge to the analyst.

36 Hal is identified by a red eye and a voice, the monolith by a mute and opaque shape. Critics have seen in the monolith 'a pure effect of cinematic *écriture*, [representing] the fade to black' (see Ghezzi, *Stanley Kubrick*, p. 90), referring to the death of Dave, during which the camera moves towards the object whose darkness takes over the screen.

37 Lacan, *Ecrits* (London: Routledge, 1980), pp. 187, 318–19.

38 According to Françoise Dolto, we carry in ourselves two parents: the 'continuous parent', which is the maternal role associated with continuity and security, and the 'discontinuous parent', the one who comes and goes, is not always present, who embodies and permits the process of symbolisation, who holds the role of the symbolic Father (whether a man or woman fills the role).

39 Dolto's neologism *mammaïser* means 'associate (through speech) with the reassuring figure of Mama'. If the little child fears a noise, for example the noise of a coffee grinder, and if the mother calms the child's fear with an explanation, s/he associates it with the security represented by the maternal universe. See Dolto, *Lorsque l'enfant paraît* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, vol. 3, 1979, p. 53).

40 The confrontation with Hal shows a clear resemblance to the episode of the Cyclops Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*. But there are clear differences, too. In Homer, Polyphemus is blinded, not killed; he only kills some of Odysseus's companions; he is on his turf and holds Odysseus prisoner; Odysseus must use trickery not to enter but to leave. Finally, I have already pointed out the archery reference in the name Bowman; and in Homer Odysseus is famous for the bow he alone can shoot, and with which he kills the rivals for his wife Penelope. But the parallels remain spotty and vague.

41 '*Playboy* Interview: Stanley Kubrick' (1968), reprinted in Schwam, p. 298.

42 Ibid., loc. cit.