Viewing novels, reading films: Stanley Kubrick and the art of adaptation as interpretation

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VIEWING NOVELS, READING FILMS:
STANLEY KUBRICK AND THE ART OF ADAPTATION AS INTERPRETATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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in

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by
Charles Bane
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Dedication

For Paulette

and

For Dolen Ansel Bane
December 26, 1914 – April 20, 1995
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Abstract

Greg Jenkins has observed that adaptation “is a presence that is woven into the very fabric of film culture.” Although this statement is true, no definitive theory of adaptation exists. Critics and scholars ponder adaptation, yet cannot seem to agree on what makes an adaptation a success or a failure. The problem of adaptation stems from many sources. What, if anything, does a film owe the novel on which it is based? How, if possible, does a film remain faithful to its source? Is a film a version of a story or its own autonomous work of art? Who is the author of this work? What is an Author? Which text is given primacy: the novel or the film? What is a Text?

These questions, and many others, are at the heart of adaptation studies. This project does not pretend to address them all, nor does it claim to be the final answer to the question of adaptation. It does, however, provide a possible solution that is both theoretical and practical. It is theoretical in that it asks viewers to consider what a particular adaptation is doing with a film; practical in that it attempts to bring method to the madness by applying the theory to a sample case study: Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick is not an arbitrary choice as he encompasses the major questions of adaptation. Although all of Kubrick’s major films were based on works of fiction, he fits into that highest echelon of filmmakers, the auteur. He is the unquestioned “author” of his canon. The range of Kubrick’s films also proves useful for this study: most of Kubrick’s adaptations are successful, a few are not; many of his films have surpassed their literary ancestors,
others have elevated them to new heights; some stay rather faithful to the source text, others deviate greatly. This discussion will consider the films of Kubrick’s canon that center on two of his recurring themes, love and war, by considering each novel’s thematic appeal for Kubrick followed by an analysis of the film in terms of what it is doing with the text.
Introduction

Text – Image – Sound:
A (Brief) History of Film (Adaptation)

It was brief. It was brilliant. It was sensational. Lasting a mere twenty seconds, William Heise’s *The Kiss* thrilled, awed, and enraged its audience when it was projected onto a makeshift screen in Ottawa, Canada on July 21, 1896. It was blasted by the clergy as a “lyric of the stockyards,” while several newspapers gave disapproving reviews. However, in 1999 Heise and producer Thomas Edison finally received their long overdue reward when the Library of Congress deemed the short film “culturally significant” and selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry. The film is significant on many levels. It was the first on-screen kiss and as a result ignited the first censorship debate regarding film. It was the first use of stars; both May Irwin and John C. Rice were well-known stage actors who spent most of their time on Broadway. But most importantly, it was the first time that film was used for narrative rather than documentary purposes. Most early films were “actualities,” or non-fictional and generally unedited views of ordinary slices of life: street scenes, firemen, passing trains, and parades. In March of 1895, the founding fathers of modern film, Louis and Auguste Lumiere projected the first film for a public viewing: *La Sortie des Ouvriers de L’Usine Lumiere a Lyon* (Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory). It, like other films of its time, actually showed what the title stated: workers leaving a factory for home. So, when Edison and Heise made the decision to tell a story, they were creating new horizons for
film by opening the door for the narrative films of the next century. But rather than write a story, Edison and Heise decided to adapt one. They hired Irwin and Rice and had them re-enact the final scene of John McNally’s stage production *The Widow Jones* so that a broader audience might be able to experience a Broadway show (Fig. 1.1). With a single twenty second clip, Edison and Heise gave life to both narrative film and film adaptation.

![Fig 1.1. May Irwin and John C. Rice in *The Widow Jones* (1896)](image)

In 1903, one of Edison’s former cameramen, Edwin S. Porter, directed the first narrative film of significant length, *The Great Train Robbery*. This ten minute one-reeler had fourteen scenes based on an 1896 short story by Scott Marble. The film became the most popular and commercially successful film of the pre-nickelodeon era, establishing film as a commercially viable medium. According to William Horne, as film began to develop as a popular form of entertainment, production companies acquired an “insatiable” appetite for narrative materials and quickly turned to works of literature (31). In fact, in a 1928 article, Leda Bauer outlined the responsibilities of the typical Hollywood “scenario editor,” pointing out that he (almost exclusively he) was responsible for “finding the thrillers in the classics” and having “a thorough knowledge of the
contents of every novel published within the past fifteen years, here or abroad” (288). It was the scenario editor’s utmost responsibility to claim this material before any other editor at any other rival company, “all of whom are his enemies, spying on his methods, alert to rush in and grab what he has missed” (288). One of the earliest instances of taking a popular literary character and transplanting him from the page to the screen is Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective Sherlock Holmes who first appeared on the screen in the 30-second short *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900). Over the next ten years, Holmes would appear in over twenty films screened for a worldwide audience (Horne 31).

As the popularity of cinema grew, so did the lengths of the films produced. Once producers realized that an audience would sit in the theater for more than an hour and that they could save money—and therefore make more money—by shooting longer films on standing sets rather than constantly building new sets, production companies began creating the first feature films. In Europe, the first was Michel Carre’s *L’Enfant prodigue* in 1907. The US studios quickly followed suit by producing a four-reel version of *Les Miserables* (1909), releasing each reel separately. Two years later, the Italian-produced *L’Inferno* [*Dante’s Inferno*] was released in its entirety. Not to be outdone, H.A. Spanuth produced and released *Oliver Twist* (1912), the first US feature film to be shown in its entirety. Two years later, D.W. Griffith released the first epic motion picture, the 175-minute *The Birth of a Nation*. Although the film is often condemned for its blatantly racist outlook, it is in many ways the most influential film ever made in that it first used
techniques that have now become industry standards. Interestingly enough, all of these major milestones in cinema history are adaptations. By the mid-30s, adaptations were so popular and widespread that Maxine Block attempted to catalogue all films based on works of fiction or drama. After researching a scant three-month period, she found at least 39 films that were drawn from literary sources and published her findings as an article entitled simply “Films Adapted from Published Works” (394).

Harry Geduld claimed that by the mid-60s, 40 percent of all films produced were based on books (qtd. in Ross 1). In 1979, Morris Beja estimated that roughly 30 percent or more of all films produced each year were based on novels and that sixteen of the twenty highest-grossing films ever were adaptations drawn from novels (78).¹ Five years later, Dudley Andrew claimed, “Well over half of all commercial films have come from literary originals” (98). The most recent edition of Enser’s Filmed Books and Plays includes 8,000 entries listing films released from 1928 through 2001 that were based on novels or plays. If we use Hollywood’s own standard of excellence, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences annual Oscar Awards, as a gauge of the predominance of adaptation, the numbers are quite telling. Of the 240 Best Picture Nominees since 1957, 153 have been adaptations.² Of the 48 actual Best Picture Winners,

---

¹ Beja’s claim was based on the 1977 list of highest-grossing films, and therefore does not take into account the Lucas/Spielberg era. However, the most recent list includes ten adaptations in the top twenty with six of those films falling into the top ten. These lists are not adjusted for inflation. When they are, Gone with the Wind (1939), an adaptation, remains the all-time box office champ.

² 1957 was the first year the Academy made a definitive decision that only five films would be nominated in each major category. It was also the year that the Screenwriting category was officially separated into
33 have been adaptations. In fact in the entire 77-year history of the Academy Awards, 70% (54 films) of the winning films have been adapted from literary sources.

As we can see, adaptation is as old as the cinema itself and shows no signs of weakening. Greg Jenkins has observed that adaptation “is a presence that is woven into the very fabric of film culture” (8). Although this statement is true, no definitive theory of adaptation exists. Critics and scholars ponder adaptation, yet cannot seem to agree on what makes an adaptation good or bad, a success or a failure. Again, I quote Jenkins:

[Adaptation] represents such a dark and enigmatic thread that it has elicited disparate and sometimes diametric opinions. Even among those who champion faithful adaptations, there is no clear formula concerning how generally to implement the procedure, or afterwards how to evaluate the procedure’s success or failure. (8)

The problem of adaptation stems from many sources. What, if anything, does a film owe the novel or play on which it is based? How, if possible, does a film remain faithful to its source? Is a film a version of a story or its own autonomous work of art? Who is the author of this work? What is an Author? Which text is given primacy: the novel or the film? What is a Text?

These questions, and many others, are at the heart of adaptation studies. This project does not pretend to address them all, nor does it claim to be the final answer to the question of adaptation. It does, however, provide a possible answer, a solution that

two areas: Original and Adapted. Although the Adaptation category covers works adapted from any previous source including newspaper or magazine articles—e.g. Sidney Lumet’s Dog Day Afternoon (1975)—the overwhelming majority of Adapted screenplays are based on novels or plays.
is both theoretical and practical. The core of this project rises not out of the problems adaptation creates, but out of the opportunities it affords. Because it raises so many questions, because it creates interpretive problems, because it is so elusive, adaptation can become the perfect tool for promoting our own critical engagement with a particular work of literature and literature as a whole by “reading” texts in a different medium. From a pedagogical perspective, asking students to respond to literary texts through their filmic counterparts enhances students’ awareness of their own interpretive and reading strategies, and thereby promotes active engagement with the literary originals on multiple levels of textuality.

A major criticism with the approach I am proposing could be that it still holds the novel as primary and the film as secondary. This is not necessarily the case. If we take primary to mean simply occurring first in time or sequence, then obviously the novel on which the film is based is the primary text. However, if we take primary to mean highest in rank, quality, or importance, then I will argue that many adaptations rise above their source texts while others raise their source texts to new levels of awareness or importance. Any medium that is able to do either of these cannot be considered secondary.
Medium/Message/Form/Content: (Re)Presenting the Text

Any complete discussion of adaptation must begin with an analysis of medium or form. The audience—whether students in a classroom, peers at a conference, or readers of an article—must understand that films and novels are different. This may seem like an obvious point, but it is not. Often, after viewing an adaptation, we hear the phrase, “It wasn’t as good as the book.” An adaptation simply cannot be as good as or better than a book. They are completely different forms. Saying that a film is not as good as a book is like saying that a poem is not as good as a painting, or in George Bluestone’s terms, a particular building is not as good as a particular ballet. They are simply different forms. A painting is not a poem.

Consider Icarus. In the original Greek myth, most likely passed down orally, Icarus and his father, Daedalus, were imprisoned on the isle of Crete by King Minos. In order to escape the labyrinth, Daedalus fashioned wings of feathers and wax. Before taking off, Daedalus warns Icarus that if he flies too high, the sun will melt the wax, but if he flies too low, the waves of the sea will drench the feathers. Icarus ignored his father’s warnings and, thrilled with the power of flight, flew too close to the sun and fell into the sea. Daedalus flew to safety and later erected a monument to his son. The most famous version of the tale is the one recorded by Ovid in his Metamorphoses. In Ovid’s version, the main character of the narrative is Daedalus who is praised for his ingenuity as an inventor. In fact, Icarus is not even mentioned by name until the end of the story.
when his father calls out to him as he crashes into the sea. In Ovid, the climax of the
story comes as Icarus fails to heed his father’s warning:

\[
\text{cum puer audaci coepit gaudere volatu} \\
\text{deseruitque ducem caelique cupidine tractus} \\
\text{altius egit iter rapidi vicinia solis} \\
mollit odoratas, pennarum vincula, ceras; \\
tabuerant cerae: nudos quatit ille lacertos, \\
remigioque carens non ullas percipit auras, \\
oraque caerulea patrium clamantia nomen \\
excipiuntur aqua, quae nomen traxit ab illo. (8.223-230)
\]

A close literal translation of the line “cum puer audaci coepit gaudere volatu
deseruitque ducem caelique cupidine tractus / altius egit iter” reads “when the boy
boldly began to rejoice in his speed (or wings), he forsook his leader as ambition drew
him higher in the skies.” But since Ovid’s time, various translations have appeared.

Arthur Golding rendered the line,

\[
\text{when the Boy a frolicke courage caught} \\
\text{To flie at randon. Whereupon forsaking quight his guide,} \\
\text{Of fond desire to flie to Heaven, above his boundes he stide.”}
\]

When Golding made his translation, the word “frolicke” meant something like “merry”
when used as an adjective. So, Golding focuses on Icarus’ “merry courage,” while

George Sandys focuses on the boy’s delight in his new wings:

\[
\text{When the boy, much tooke} \\
\text{With pleasure of his wings, his Guide forsooke:} \\
\text{And rauisht with desire of heauen, aloft Ascends.}
\]

Sir Samuel Garth, with the aid of Dryden, Pope and others, placed the focus on Icarus’
childish aspirations:
When now the boy, whose childish thoughts aspire
To loftier aims, and make him ramble high’r,
Grown wild, and wanton, more embolden’d flies
Far from his guide, and soars among the skies…

Finally, Brookes More brought Icarus into the twentieth century and emphasized his pride and vanity:

Proud of his success,
the foolish Icarus forsook his guide,
and, bold in vanity, began to soar,
rising upon his wings to touch the skies.³

In Ovid’s account, Icarus’ fearless ambition draws him toward the sun. However, most translations center the story on Icarus’ “childish folly” and point out that the folly of youth always leads to destruction. Even More’s modern translation refers to Icarus as “foolish.” The art of the past often reinscribes this reading by either placing Daedalus at the focal point as in Solis’ woodcuts or ridiculing Icarus as an unimportant detail in a rather ordinary day as in Brueghel’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (Figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

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³ The four translations cover 350 years and were published in 1567, 1632, 1717, and 1922 respectively.
The story has remained popular throughout the years as each new generation re-interprets it for its own time. In the later twentieth century, Icarus has more often than not become a symbol of the human need to stretch the limits of imagination. A.S. Kline’s translation of the climactic line reads, “When the boy began to delight in his daring flight, and abandoning his guide, drawn by desire for the heavens, soared higher.” In this translation, Icarus is not foolish but “daring.” The word in question is audaci from audax meaning “bold, proud, or fearless.” One’s interpretation of what it means to be bold or proud or fearless determines how one reads the text. One could interpret this word to mean childishly or foolishly proud, but one could also take it to mean fearless, a fact that explains why audax is often used to describe the courage of ancient heroes such as Hektor, Achilles and Aeneas.4

Not only have translators of Ovid questioned past translations, but poets and artists have begun to as well.5 For instance, in “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph” (1962), Anne Sexton asks the reader to “Feel the fire at [Icarus’] neck” (10). She also asks, “Who cares that he fell back to the sea?” (12). For although his “sensible daddy” survives to live on and make other inventions “in town,” Icarus “acclaim[s] the sun” (13-14). Sexton is implying that only by feeling the fire of desire and the need to explore will we ever truly achieve greatness. Twentieth-century artwork further

4 In Robert Fitzgerald’s translation of The Aeneid, the adverbial form, “audacter” is translated “boldly” throughout except in two instances where it is translated “fiercely.”
5 Poets question not only the translations of Ovid, but also the art inspired by Ovid. See for example Williams Carlos Williams’ “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” and W.H. Auden’s “Musee des Beaux Arts.”
emphasizes this attitude towards Icarus by representing him not as a weak-minded youth, but as a tragic hero of epic proportions both physically and metaphorically (Figs. 1.4-1.6).

![Fig. 1.4-1.6. Artist Unknown, Icarus](image1)
![Steve Stone, Icarus (1999)](image2)
![Damon A.H. Denys, Icarus (2005)](image3)

This image of Icarus as daring hero has even entered the world of popular culture through the lyrics of rock bands such as Iron Maiden (“Fly, on your way, like an eagle, / Fly and touch the sun”), Rush (“If we burn our wings / Flying too close to the sun...We will pay the price / But we will not count the cost”), and Thrice (“I hear the voice of reason screaming after me / ‘You’ve flown far too high boy now you’re too close to the sun / Soon your makeshift wings will come undone’ / But how will I know limits from lies if I never try?”) who see Icarus as a symbol of the undying spirit of man.6

The fall of Icarus is one story, but it can be interpreted many different ways. On one level, a translation is itself an interpretation, but once the story is put into another form, i.e. a painting or song, new levels of interpretation present themselves. By moving

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Icarus to the focal point or by removing Daedalus from the picture altogether, the artist is making an interpretive statement by asking the viewer to focus on different aspects of the story. Though, generally speaking, audiences and critics seem to recognize the differences between the forms of poetry and painting, they seem resistant to see the differences between novels and films. John Orr gives one possible reason for this by pointing out that although novels and films “possess different signifying codes,” they have two things in common: narrative form and a referential nature:

Both produce stories which work through temporal succession. Both refer to, or connote, pre-existent materials. Fiction works through a pre-existent language, film through the raw data of the physical world which its cameras record. In both cases, words and images give off associations which go beyond the immediacy of their physical objects. (2)

Dudley Andrew puts forth the same argument by stating that since “narrative codes...always function at the level of implication or connotation,” they “are potentially comparable in a novel and a film” and that “adaptation analysis ultimately leads to an investigation of film styles and periods in relation to literary styles of different periods” (14 emphasis mine). In short, since both films and novels tell stories and film adaptations are, on the surface, telling the same stories as their source texts, there is the potential for comparison. Films can be viewed as a means of telling the story in a different way or translating the story to a different language.
However, Jean Mitry argues that different forms of expression by their very nature “express different things—not the same things in different ways” (1). Adaptation is not a translation from one language to another but a “passing from one form to another, a matter of transposition, of reconstruction” (1). When adapting a novel, a filmmaker can either attempt strict fidelity by following “the novelist step-by-step so that the chains of circumstance are exactly the same,” or the filmmaker can be faithful to the “spirit” of the novel by making changes in the course of events but still arriving at the same conclusions (4). Mitry argues that ultimately both attempts will fail because the first is unimaginative and regardless of the intentions of the filmmaker, the source will still be distorted, and that the second “betray[s] the letter” of the source and therefore “betray[s] the spirit” for the two cannot be separated (4). I agree wholeheartedly with Mitry’s claim that adaptations are transpositions rather than translations, but I disagree that all adaptations are ultimately failures. By stating that all adaptations ultimately betray their sources, Mitry is implying that there is a single correct reading of a novel and that a film simply cannot capture that reading. But films are not novels. Films are different forms that “express different things.”

As Robert B. Ray has noted, film grew out of the realist fiction of the nineteenth century.7 It is an extension of the fiction form in that film, like fiction, deals with

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character, conflict, narrative, point of view, etc. But film also brings with it a new vocabulary used to discuss its form. Point of view is no longer a means of discussing who is telling the story and how, but how the viewer is “seeing” the story. Style is no longer about the author’s use or choice of language, but about the director’s choice of shot, angle, lighting and diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Film is a tool that can be used to open up texts to new interpretations, yet film also stands alone as an art form on its own merits.

Part One of this project, “Notes Toward a Supreme Theory of Film Adaptation,” will begin with a review of adaptation theory from the beginning to the present before moving its focus to the most often discussed and debated issue in adaptation studies: fidelity. Part Two, “Stanley Kubrick’s Fears and Desires,” will bring method to the madness by practically applying the theory to a sample case study: Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick is not an arbitrary choice as he, more than most filmmakers, encompasses the major questions of adaptation. First of all, with the exception of Fear and Desire (1953) and Killer’s Kiss (1955), all of Kubrick’s feature films were based on works of fiction. Secondly, Kubrick fits into that highest echelon of filmmakers, the auteur. He is considered by most critics to be the unquestioned author of his canon, a claim exhibited by the fact that the vast majority of Kubrick scholarship deals only with his films and not the source materials. These first two points present an interesting dilemma and bring up the question of authorship. Finally, the range of Kubrick’s films proves useful
for this study. Although most of Kubrick’s adaptations are successful, a few are not. While many of his films have surpassed their literary ancestors, others have elevated them to new heights. Some stay rather faithful to the source text, while others deviate greatly. Some are based on canonical authors and texts, while others are based on popular pulp. For these reasons, Kubrick and his canon seem to me to be the most logical choice for a case study.

But before turning to Kubrick, an overview of the major criticism in the field of adaptation studies is necessary. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list of contributors to the field, but many of the critics, scholars, and journalists mentioned are often overlooked in other reviews of adaptation criticism.
PART ONE

NOTES TOWARD A SUPREME THEORY OF FILM ADAPTATION
Chapter One

“That’s not in the book!”: Criticizing the Adaptation

[Film] adaptation looms as an issue that may and ought to be addressed, probed, weighed, and considered. But, thoroughgoing problem that it is, it can never be fully resolved.

—Greg Jenkins,
Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation

This overview of adaptation criticism begins with two accepted pillars of the field, George Bluestone and André Bazin, before moving into the broader range of opinions that not only stem from these two critics but also predate them. Although the largest segment of adaptation studies, fidelity criticism, will be mentioned in this overview, a lengthier discussion of it will be presented in the next section.

Written within a few years of each other, André Bazin’s “In Defense of Mixed Media” (1950) and George Bluestone’s Novels into Film (1957) are widely accepted as the first two texts in the canon of film adaptation criticism. In his A Viewer’s Guide to Film Theory and Criticism (1979), Robert T. Eberwein called Bazin the single “most significant” film scholar and critic of the post-World War II era (71), while both Donald W. McCaffrey and Richard A. Huselberg, among other critics, have deemed Bluestone’s text “seminal” in the development of film adaptation studies (12, 57). Bazin considered the novel to be a “more highly developed” art than the film for the simple reason that since it is the older of the two forms, the novel could more subtly control the artistic techniques of montage, chronological reversal, and objectivity (65). Furthermore, Bazin...
argued that there was a common and persistent trend among filmmakers to treat source texts with “an unconscionable laxity” as they simply borrowed “characters and adventures” from Dumas and Hugo and treated them as “independent of their literary framework” (53). For Bazin, the very translation from the page to the screen “disturbs [the original’s] equilibrium” (68). He argued, however, that if the “creative” filmmaker could find a way to “reconstruct [the original] on a new equilibrium,” he would create a new work that was not “identical with, but [was at least] the equivalent of, the old one” (68). The future of cinema rested with those filmmakers who would “honestly attempt” to produce good adaptations that would restore “the letter and the spirit” of the original texts (67).

By contrast, Bluestone’s book is both theoretical observation and practical criticism. The book is divided into two sections, one covering “The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film,” while the other is an analysis of six adaptations—The Informer (1925), Wuthering Heights (1939), Pride and Prejudice (1940), The Grapes of Wrath (1940), The Ox-Bow Incident (1943), and Madame Bovary (1949). In his introductory essay, Bluestone argues that there are too many crucial differences between the two media for perfect correlations between novels and their adaptations to be possible. In fact, the two media are so fundamentally different it would be impossible to even begin to compare the two:

The film becomes a different thing in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the
historical event which it illustrates. It is as fruitless to say that Film A is better or worse than Novel B as it is to pronounce Wright’s Johnson’s Wax Building better or worse than Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake. In the last analysis, each is autonomous, and each is characterized by unique and specific properties. (5-6)

Since a perfect correlation is not possible, film adaptations can only hope to provide a “kind of paraphrase” in which characters and incidents have “somehow detached themselves from language and, like the heroes of folk legends, have achieved a mythic life of their own” (62). As a result, the filmmaker does not translate the novel for the screen; rather, he or she becomes the author of a new work. Although Bluestone returns again and again to the idea of novels and films as completely autonomous works of art, he slips into issues of fidelity throughout his study, an inconsistency I will explore further in the next section.

Although Bazin and Bluestone are often celebrated—alternately and together—as the fathers of adaptation studies, the issue was first raised thirty years earlier in The Forum by filmmaker Allan Dwan’s article “Filming Great Fiction: Can Literature Be Preserved in Motion Pictures?” (1919). One of Hollywood’s most prolific screenwriters and directors, Dwan scripted two early adaptations, Robinson Crusoe and Uncle Tom’s Cabin, both released in 1913. In his article, Dwan claimed an attempt to be as faithful to his source as possible, emphasizing the characters, setting, and tone of the text. He rarely used stars for fear that their “capricious” natures might overshadow a story’s
“original charm” (299). He attempted to be sensitive to the visual details of the novel by incorporating the “accuracy of costume and of locale” (301). He admittedly favored novels with “clean and decent [characters]…clean, courageous, bold, adventurous men and plucky, charming women” (303). His overall purpose in adapting famous works of literature was to

- take the theme, swing of the story, situations and characters from the author’s pages and transfer them to the screen so that you, remembering the story, would be pleased, and so that you, never having chanced to read it, would be pleased—briefly, holding old friends and making new friends for the tale. (299)

It is interesting to note that Dwan’s article was written in the silent era of filmmaking, which means—at the very least—that with the exception of a few title cards, none of the adapted novel’s language ever made it to the screen. In addition, the novel’s plot and themes had to be compressed for the sake of time. In the case of Dwan’s own two early adaptations, this meant taking novels of well over 300 pages and condensing them to 30 minutes of screen time.

Almost a decade later, Leda Bauer took up the question of adaptation in “The Movies Tackle Literature” (1928). Unlike Dwan, she did not explore adaptations of “classic” literature but focused on Hollywood’s then—and persisting—tendency to tackle “all the material in existence” that was suitable for a big screen treatment (288). Constantly competing with each other for the audience’s money, producers read
through popular novels often before they were even published searching for “fifth-rate” stories that could be purchased, rewritten, and produced as quickly and cheaply as possible (293.) The result was a profit-obsessed and bureaucracy-ridden system that preyed on a built-in audience—readers of the book—by churning out “worthless adaptations” for mass consumption (294). In 1936, Gilbert Seldes took the side opposite to Bauer and argued in “The Vandals of Hollywood” that adaptations are not inherently worthless but “corrupt” (3). Furthermore, adaptations have no choice but to be corrupt, and most adaptations actually benefit from this corruption by distorting characters, twisting plots, changing endings, or carrying different messages (3). Seldes, like Bluestone after him, argues that the two media are fundamentally different forms in that the “essence of the movie” is movement while the “essential element in the originals is the word;” therefore an adaptation simply “cannot be a good reproduction” of a novel (3). Seldes compares films to songs by pointing out that the listener often does not remember the words to a favorite song, only the melody or movement of it. This is comparable to film in that “the actual words are of secondary importance. What we all remember of a film is, in nine cases out of ten, a movement and an action, sometimes supported by sound; rarely is it the spoken word or the theme. We do remember the plot, as it is expressed in action” (4). Seldes also holds the opinion that

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8 Seldes’ article appeared when silent films represented the majority of films released. “Talkies” came about with the release of The Jazz Singer (1927), but sound pictures did not dominate the industry until the late 1930s and early 1940s. Although today many “action” sequences still pervade the audience’s
the rewriting and condensation of novels is not the “profit-obsessed” action of a predatory system but the logical outcome of the inherent need to keep films at endurable lengths (13). Filmmakers have no choice but to eliminate descriptions, conflate minor episodes and characters, and minimize dialogue, relying on the visual aspect of the medium to fill in any gaps that may appear (13).

The first scholarly work on adaptation appeared in the 1949 dissertation “From Book to Film” by Lester Asheim, a study of 24 novels and their film adaptations. In this study, Asheim developed the first comprehensive comparative analysis of film adaptations and found many similarities in Hollywood’s various attempts to “simplify” literary texts for a film audience: the dialogue of the novel was tightened, the explicit took precedent over the implicit, and minor characters and episodes were either conflated or dismissed entirely. In his “Summary,” Asheim develops an overview of “adaptation technique[s] employed by the film industry when confronted with a novel of wide audience and high critical standing” that included six classifications and 39 governing principles that affect how, what, and sometimes why changes are made in adaptations (259). Although he rightly acknowledged the drawbacks of his small sampling of novels and films, Asheim nevertheless created six clearly defined principles to consider when analyzing adaptations: technology, artistry, the limitations of the audience, the star system, the pressures of society, and fidelity. Although these

memories: i.e. the “Ride of the Valkyries” helicopter sequence in Apocalypse Now or the slow motion shots in The Matrix, sharing favorite movie quotes is a common pastime among film fans.
categories may seem self-explanatory, some clarification of Asheim’s terms is necessary. For example, his section on technology is really a discussion of the change in form—verbal to visual, while “artistry” encompasses the choices made by the filmmaker that result in the plot being given more weight than textual nuance. More interesting, however, are his assertions that producers simply assume that film audiences have lower levels of comprehension than readers of literature and that characters played by “stars” become more prominent in the film regardless of the character’s importance in the text. But no matter why or what changes occur, Asheim concludes that because most adaptations preserve major characters, themes, and plots, they remain “faithful” to their source materials.

In her book *Hollywood U.S.A.* (1952), Alice Evans Field did not seem as interested as her predecessors in comparing film adaptations to their source texts. Rather she wanted to answer a single question, “Why do motion picture producers make so many changes in filming a novel?” (46). Field’s book summarizes several views at the time including those of analyst Frances Marion, who argued that generally only a third of a novel actually contained “action suitable for picturization” (46). Furthermore, since screen narratives move at faster paces than most novels, any detail—implicit or explicit—extraneous to the plot had to be omitted while on-screen events had to be either self-explanatory or clarified by information in adjoining scenes (47). After providing a summary of these views, Field then organized adaptive changes into three
main categories: condensation, incorporation, and modification. Condensation was the act of choosing or discarding plot elements, while incorporation was the act of adding scenes to fill in any gaps in the narrative that may have been caused by condensation in an attempt to “fortify the drama” (51). Modification was employed to help bring the “moral tone” of the narrative into conformance with Production Code standards (51). In the final analysis, Field’s study is more an overview of adaptation techniques rather than theory, but still proves useful for the scholar interested in the history of adaptation studies.

Filmmaker Jerry Wald argued in “Screen Adaptations” (1954) that film is a “genuine art form” and compared adapting a celebrated novel to living in purgatory before steering a perilous course between the “Scylla of the [initial] author and the Charybdis of the public” (62). He argued that those screenwriters who succeed at pulling off an adaptation are masters of craft who should be praised alongside novelists such as Thomas Mann and Somerset Maugham because the “skilled and conscientious” adapter is performing “a service to the motion picture and to literature itself” (63). Wald quoted screenwriter David Taradash, whose From Here to Eternity (1953) Wald considered to be an exemplary adaptation, as saying, “The business of adapting a novel is something like the business of being a parent. You have to be stern with the child but you have to love him constantly and be aware that your function is to cater to his needs and not vice versa” (64). For Wald, the two most significant challenges an adapter faces
are controlling the script’s length and recognizing necessary changes (64). It is the adapter’s responsibility to locate the chief characters and central theme and then transform those into dialogue that delivers “a story of sittable duration” (64). The adapter must rely on “taste, tact, and judgment” in hopes of retaining “the thrust and flavor of the original,” while knowing that the finished product will be limited to the “confines of a severe artistic economy” (66). According to Wald, “the novelist can have an army of elephants move through the Alps into Italy,” but the filmmaker “must find ways of suggesting the same incident” (66 emphasis mine).9

In 1963, screenwriter DeWitt Bodeen penned an article in which he recalls “what a writer goes through in adapting a well-known property to the screen” (349). Discussing the craft, Bodeen argued that writing original screenplays is a simple task because “one is free” to let the imagination “do as it will,” but writing adaptations calls for “selective interpretation, along with an ability to recreate and sustain an established mood” (356 emphasis mine). With The Enchanted Cottage (1945), based on the play by Arthur Wing Pinero, Bodeen discarded all but the rudiments of the dominant plot, while for I Remember Mama (1948), based on a short story collection by Kathryn Forbes, he sifted through the individual stories in an attempt to integrate them into a single narrative (350-352). The end result of the former film was a jumble of “sentimentality and clumsy dream sequences,” while the latter was a collection of fragments (350).

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9 Wald was of course writing during a period when most films were not shot on location but on studio lots.
Hoping to learn from these early experiences, Bodeen approached *Billy Budd* (1962) with caution and pondered the tale, searching for the “secret, mystical, and even obtuse meanings” that lurked in the text (356).

In his 1973 book, *The Impact of Film*, Roy Paul Madsen stated that only “superficial” similarities exist between films and novels because the two are “as different as music and sculpture” (254). Madsen then goes on to give an overview of concerns that the filmmaker must consider if an adaptation is to be successful: media disparities, suitability for adaptation, condensation, point of view, equivalence of formal devices, leading characters, natural dialogue as opposed to poetic speech, taste, and “universal” issues (254-63). In his category regarding “taste,” Madsen points out that films aimed at an American audience should conclude on an uplifting note regardless of how the source text ends. Although many audiences do want the stereotypical happy ending, in “Toward a ‘Politique des Adaptations’” (1975), Charles Eidsvik hypothesized that audiences also expect films to stay true to their source and when films deviate, they fail in the eyes of the public (255). If an original film, he argued, contains only twenty enjoyable minutes, audiences will consider the film “a treat” and will “put up with a lot during the other hour or two that the film runs” (255). However, in the case of an adaptation, the audience’s assumed familiarity with the literary text imposes expectations so high that worthwhile moments in the film will be

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10 As Greg Jenkins has noted, Madsen’s opening comments on the adaptation of novels echo Bluestone’s almost identically, though he gives his benefactor no credit.
completely unappreciated and that the audience will feel “betrayed” or “cheated” by a film that does not follow the book “word for word” (255). Eidsvik goes on to argue that audiences must become more tolerant if the art of film is to make “major advances” (255).

Screenwriter William Goldman’s 1983 book *Adventures in the Screen Trade* pares adaptive screenwriting down to two essential elements: structure and “spine” (195). The “spine” of a novel is the “absolutely crucial element” that gives a narrative its uniqueness and it is the job of the screenwriter to locate the spine and “protect it to the death” (196). Once the structure has been determined and the spine located, Goldman suggests a series of questions that a screenwriter must be able to answer before writing the adaptation: What is the story about? On a deeper, more intimate plane, what is the story really about? What must be done regarding time—the time of the story and the time in it? Who tells the story? Where does it take place? What adjustments must be made with respect to the characters? What must be preserved? (312-24). According to Goldman, if a screenwriter can correctly answer these questions, then he or she should be able to write a successful adaptation. Following Goldman’s lead, screenwriters Dwight V. and Joye Swain examine three possible ways of adapting a novel in their guidebook *Film Scriptwriting: A Practical Manual* (1988): the adapter can closely follow the structure of the book, the adapter can choose “key scenes” from the book that are indicative of the author’s concept, or the adapter can write an “original” screenplay.
inspired by the book (196). All three methods have their advantages and drawbacks. Following a text too closely is difficult since novels tend to feature more characters and episodes than a film can “gracefully accept” (196). The second option requires the screenwriter to arrange the chosen scenes into the most effective climactic order and then connect them with residual or completely new materials (197). The major disadvantage to both of these options, according to the Swains, is that “excessive fidelity” tends to produce “straggly” scripts that “never quite jell” and are “replete with loose ends, abortive scenes, jerky development, and characters who never quicken” (200). Therefore, they argue more for the third option which allows the screenwriter to retain the novel’s underlying structure, plot, and themes, but frees him or her to abandon “inconvenient details as necessity dictates and fancy allows” (197).

In Concepts in Film Theory (1984), Dudley Andrew turned to semiotics in his formation of a theory of adaptation by stating that adaptation is essentially the “matching of the cinematic sign system to prior achievement in some other system” (96). By matching the systems, one discovers that there are three types of relationships between the adapted film and its source text: “borrowing,” “intersection,” and “fidelity of transformation” (98). These three relationships are similar to the Swains’ three screenwriting options. Borrowing, the most common relationship according to Andrew, involves taking “a grain of material” from a well-known text and presenting it to an audience so that they might “enjoy basking in a certain pre-established presence and to
call up new or especially powerful aspects of a cherished work” (98). Intersection is an attempt to entirely preserve “the integrity of the original” (99), while fidelity of transformation lies somewhere between these two extremes by abstracting “something essential” from the original text and carrying that vital ingredient into a new medium while remaining faithful to the original author’s intent (100). This final category recalls Bazin’s view that equivalents of equilibrium can exist between adaptations and the novels on which they are based.

In 1985, Joy Gould Boyum attempted a “defense of adaptations” in Double Exposure: Fiction into Film. As both a college professor and professional film reviewer, Boyum presents a dual view of adaptation that is, in her own assessment, often contradictory. She accepts the notion that while literature is concerned with language, film is concerned with images and is therefore lacking in narrative possibilities. Film is in need of “a strong and substantive script” or “a writer’s touch” (xi). On this “lack” in film, she builds her argument in support of adaptations by arguing that adaptations provide film with a story and turn film into a truly collaborative art and reminds us of film’s “storytelling powers.” Boyum divides her study into three parts, one dealing with the biases and preconceptions toward adaptations, one exploring adaptations as interpretation, and one analyzing the rhetoric of adaptation through a series of case studies divided into distinct categories: point of view, style and tone, metaphor, symbol and allegory, and “interiors.” In part one, she gives an overview of the history of
adaptation and the biases towards adaptations that are prevalent primarily in academia.

Part two explores both the audience and the filmmaker as “reader.” Although she titles this section “Adaptation as Interpretation,” the title is misleading. She argues that different viewers represent a variety of “interpretations” of an adaptation depending on whether or not they have read the book and the expectations they bring to a viewing based on their opinion, or lack of opinion, regarding the book. According to Boyum, the “ideal viewer” is one “whose resymbolization of a particular novel will mesh with the resymbolized novel up there on the screen” (61). The second half of this section, “The Filmmaker as Reader,” raises the question of fidelity and will be discussed further in the next chapter. The final section of seventeen case studies focuses solely on films adapted from works of high literature, completely ignoring films taken from popular novels.

In Novel to Film (1996), Brian McFarlane attempts to provide, as his subtitle states, “an introduction to the theory of adaptation.” In his preface, McFarlane explicitly states that the purpose of his study is to “offer and test a methodology for studying the process of transposition from novel to film, with a view not to evaluating one in relation to the other but to establishing the kind of relation a film might bear to the [work] it is based on” (vii). McFarlane hopes to provide an alternative to the “subjective, impressionistic” comparisons prevalent in adaptation studies by relying on a set of strict theoretical concepts. As such, McFarlane’s book is not so much an introduction to
the theory of adaptation as an introduction to his theory of adaptation. His introduction covers various “backgrounds and issues” related to adaptation studies including a section entitled “On Being Faithful.” McFarlane argues that the “central importance” of both film and fiction is narrative and spends some time discussing narrative function and the kinds of narration and their “cinematic potential” (11, 15). He concludes his introduction with “A New Agenda”:

Nothing is likely to stop the interest of the general film-viewer in comparing films with their source novels, usually to the film’s disadvantage. The aim of the present study is to use such concepts and methods as permit the most objective and systematic appraisal of what has happened in the process of transposition from one text to another. Given the prevalence of the process, and given that interpretations and memories of the source novel are powerful determining elements in the film’s intertextuality, there is little value in merely saying that the film should stand autonomously…it is also valuable to consider the kinds of transmutation that have taken place, to distinguish what the film-maker has sought to retain from the original and the kinds of use to which he has put it. (23)

McFarlane’s “objective and systematic appraisal” is broken into two categories: transfer and adaptation proper, which are further subdivided. By “transfer,” McFarlane simply means that when evaluating an adaptation one must first consider what can be transferred from one medium to another and what cannot. For McFarlane’s purposes, narrative can be transferred, enunciation cannot (23). One should then consider various strategies involved in transfer: story/plot distinction, “distributional” versus
“integrational” functions, character functions and fields of action,\textsuperscript{11} and mythic and/or psychological patterns. After considering transfer, one then turns to the adaptation proper, which McFarlane defines—a la Barthes—as the “signifiers of narrativity” or “enunciation” (26). When evaluating the adaptation proper, one should consider several distinctions: the two signifying systems—verbal versus visual, the linearity of the novel versus the spatiality of the film, codes (language, visual, non-linguistic sound, and cultural), and stories told versus stories presented (26-29).

After developing his system, McFarlane proceeds to test it on five case studies: \textit{The Scarlet Letter} (1926), \textit{Random Harvest} (1942), \textit{Great Expectations} (1946), \textit{Daisy Miller} (1974), and \textit{Cape Fear} (1991). As is apparent from this list, McFarlane—unlike Boyum—chose to evaluate works of both popular and high literature. In his brief conclusion, McFarlane addresses the issue of fidelity, the reliance on an “impressionistic” sense in comparing the two media, and the implied sense of the supremacy of the novel versus the autonomy of the film. McFarlane then adds an appendix that includes a shot by shot segmentation of each of the five films discussed, a feature that separates his study from the many others in the area.

\textsuperscript{11} McFarlane uses these terms in light of Vladimir Propp’s notion that the single most important unifying element in any narrative is found in the role that the characters play in a plot and that these roles are limited by “spheres of action” that fit into “discernible and repeated structures” (23).
To my knowledge, the most recent study of adaptations is Kamilla Elliott’s 

*Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003).\(^\text{12}\) She begins her study by stating the “perplexing paradox” of the debate:

on one side, novels and films are diametrically opposed as “words” and “images,” at war both formally and culturally….On the other side of the paradox, novels and films are integrally related as sister arts sharing formal techniques, audiences, values, sources, archetypes, narrative strategies, and contexts. (1)

When she could not discover the beginning of this paradox in adaptation studies, Elliott began to explore earlier “word and image discourses” and found the same paradox existed in the eighteenth-century debate regarding poetry and painting (1). Elliott’s study begins in the eighteenth-century and traces the development of the debate through the illustrated novels of the nineteenth-century and finally into twentieth-century film. She argues that the adaptation of literary works puts pressure on the central paradox of the debate for adaptation itself is a theoretical impossibility if we accept the notion that words and images are separate, untranslatable systems. Halfway

\(^{12}\) Although Elliott’s study is the most recently published book on the subject, several dissertations have appeared in the past five years dealing with adaptation studies. Thus far, these studies have dealt mainly with films based on the works of a single author. Some examples include Shari Denise Hodges’ “Theoretical Approaches to Dickens on Film: The Cinematic Interpretation of Charles Dickens’ Novels” (2000), Paul Niemeyer’s “Seeing Hardy: The Critical and Cinematic Construction of Thomas Hardy and his Novels” (2000), and Cara Lane’s “Moments in the Life of Literature” (2003), a study of film versions of the novels of both Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. Another recent trend in adaptation studies is the analysis of multiple film versions of the same text. Two recent studies are Jennifer Anne Solmes’ “The Scarlet Screen: A Survey of the Tradition of The Scarlet Letter in Film and on Television, 1926-1995” (2001) and Christine M. Danelski’s “Trauma and Typology: The Last of the Mohicans and its Filmed Versions, 1909-1992” (2003).
through her study, Elliott provides an interesting and informative overview of six
“mostly unofficial concepts of adaptation that split form from content in various ways
to account for the process of adaptation” (134). Elliott’s “concepts” are “gleaned from
critical theory and rhetoric, from filmmaker accounts of their work, and from
interpretations of adaptations themselves” (135). In this overview, Elliott covers most
major adaptation critics including Bluestone, McFarlane, and Seymour Chatman and
exemplifies each concept by providing a reading of William Wyler’s 1939 adaptation of
Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. These multiple readings illustrate the numerous
variables that have plagued adaptations studies throughout the years. Elliott ends this
debate by calling for a new approach to adaptation studies, which she terms “The
Looking Glass Analogy.” This approach is tied to recent studies in cognitive linguistics
and, according to Elliott, “offers the best available solution” to the novel and film
debate (185).

Elliott names her new approach for Lewis Carroll’s classic children’s novel and
uses both Carroll’s *Alice* novels and Disney’s 1951 adaptation of those novels as her
example throughout this section. She begins with Alice’s proposal upon waking from
her dream in *Through the Looking Glass*, “Let’s consider who it was that dreamed it
all…it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—
but then I was part of his dream too!” (Carroll 346). Elliott then posits that “if Alice is in
the Red King’s dream and he is hers, their reciprocal dreaming functions like two facing
looking glasses, in which each is contained by the other, constructing a mutual containment that refracts into countless reflected containments” (209). In other words, Alice is dreaming about the Red King dreaming about her dreaming about him and so on. For Elliott, this is the way adaptation works. Adaptations are looking glasses of the novels on which they are based, just as novels are looking glasses of their adaptations. They maintain their “oppositions…[and] integrate these oppositions as… secondary identities” (212). Novels and their adaptations “contain and invert” each other’s “otherness,” making difference “as much a part of identity as resemblance” (212). One form is not better than the other. They are simply different. Furthermore, they are different “in exactly the same way” (212).

So, as one can see, criticism of adaptations is as old as the process of adaptation itself. Though there seems to be no definitive theory regarding adaptation, there are certain common aspects regarding the formal differences between the two media and what an adaptation owes its source material in terms of faithfulness. I have already discussed issues of form, so now I turn to the question of fidelity.
Chapter Two  

Author, Auteur: Questioning Fidelity

It is indisputable that the...motion picture could not exist without the inspiration provided by the play or the novel; but once this [fact] is assumed and accepted, the ensuing film should be criticized strictly within its own frame of reference.

—William Fadiman, “But Compared to the Original”

As stated in the previous section, fidelity criticism constitutes the largest segment of scholarship in adaptation studies—so extensive that any attempt to provide a complete overview of criticism to date would be futile. Therefore, I will instead discuss the collective theory of fidelity criticism and the problems that arise in its application by examining two of Bluestone’s analyses.

Critics who adhere to the question of fidelity judge a film and measure its value against the novel on which it is based in hopes of determining the degree of “faithfulness” to the source text and, therefore, the success of the film in question. Brian McFarlane provides the most complete definition to date:

Fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct ‘meaning’ which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with. There will often be a distinction between being faithful to the ‘letter’, an approach which the more sophisticated writer may suggest is no way to ensure a ‘successful’ adaptation, and to the ‘spirit’ or ‘essence’ of the work. The latter is of course very much more difficult to determine… (8)
One inherent problem with this approach to adaptation studies is that it gives primary importance to the novel and treats the film as if it were an inferior work. In fact, filmmaker Alain Resnais claims that since the novelist has already “completely expressed himself,” filming an adaptation is like “re-heating a meal” or serving leftovers (Beja 79). Alluding to Resnais’ comment that adaptations are “warmed-over meals,” Eidsvik is only slightly less critical of adaptations by allowing that “second-hand is not the same thing as second-rate” (30). Because second-hand items have to be judged by the value of the item in question—i.e., a “second-hand Rolls Royce” and a “second-hand sandwich” are not the same thing—Eidsvik is allowing that adaptations are not inherently inferior, simply second-hand (30). Another problem inherent in fidelity criticism is the attempt to compare on an equal basis two drastically different media. While the novel is tied to language, the film is visual, or as John Orr notes, the novel “works through a pre-existent language, film through the raw data of the physical world which its camera’s record” (2). These two problems have given fidelity criticism a mixed reputation in adaptation studies, even among those critics who adhere to it. Still, it remains the most commonly employed method of discussing the relationship of novels to their adaptations.

Throughout the first half of his study, Bluestone repeatedly calls for critics to “remain aware of the crucial differences between the media” (63). In fact, he claims that only in the script phase—a medium of words—does a film resemble a novel:
Like two intersecting lines, novel and film meet at a point, then diverge. At the intersection, the book and shooting-script are almost indistinguishable. But where the lines diverge, they...lose all resemblance to each other. At the farthest remove, novel and film, like all exemplary art, have, within the conventions that make them comprehensible to a given audience, made maximum use of their materials. At this remove, what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. (63)

Because of statements like these, Bluestone has, in recent years, become the champion of those who want to move completely away from fidelity criticism. In fact, Elliott dedicates her book to Bluestone, “with respect and gratitude,” calling Bluestone her “forerunner and mentor” (v). This is an accurate dedication since Bluestone is the forerunner for anyone interested in studying adaptations without focusing on fidelity. Throughout his study, Bluestone questions fidelity critics, claiming that they are inconsistent in their criticism. In general, he argues that fidelity critics only complain if they do not like the film in question. If a film is well received and “succeeds on its own merits,” then the “question of ‘faithfulness’ is given hardly any thought” and the film “ceases to be problematic” (114). Audiences, according to Bluestone, will likewise accept films that deviate from their source as long as the film is enjoyable. So if a film is successful—either financially, critically, or both—questions of fidelity disappear on “the assumption that [the film-makers] have mysteriously captured the ‘spirit’ of the book” (114). Bluestone criticizes the equating of “faithful” and “unfaithful” with “successful”
and “unsuccessful” by calling it a “stubbornly casual, persistently uncritical approach” to the study of film adaptation (114). But even Bluestone, who argued for the autonomy of novels and films and claimed that any comparison is “fruitless” since in “the last analysis each...is characterized by unique and specific properties,” was not immune to questions of fidelity (6). An examination of Bluestone’s readings of *Wuthering Heights* (1939) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1940) will be sufficient to prove this point.

In his analysis, Bluestone notes that William Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights* (1939) contained many “omissions, additions, and alterations” from Brontë’s novel (92). The major deletion includes “a substantial number of scenes from the novel, primarily those devoted to the suffering and redemption of the third generation,” and from this “central deletion” arise a number of deviations from the source text, including “the total working out of Heathcliff’s revenge” (92). The second half of the novel is entirely omitted, resulting in several additions and “minor adjustments” that had to be made in order to “sharpen the contours of the plot” (92). The final result is a shift in the “meaning and emphasis of the novel” (92). In fact, he quotes Asheim’s estimate that thirty scenes were added or exaggerated to “retain cohesion in the plot” (Bluestone 95). Although Asheim regards many of these alterations to be justified, Bluestone argues that such “alterations, additions, and deletions point up the surgical tendencies of the
Hollywood Aristotelians. The story conference becomes a kind of autopsy designed to uncover the skeletal outlines of the plot” (106). Again he emphasizes that the result is a serious shift in “the meaning of Emily Brontë’s book” (103). But, according to Bluestone, this serious shift does not matter because the film is a good film. Bluestone is following the same pattern as the “stubbornly casual” critics he condemns. He concludes his analysis by stating, “I have tried to show how the film Wuthering Heights stands up qua film, where [it] fails and where it succeeds, and how the cinema version alters, without obliterating, the book’s final meaning” (111 emphasis mine). Bluestone is claiming that though the film varies greatly from the novel, it is still a “good” film that manages to capture the “spirit” of the book and is therefore a successful and faithful adaptation. For all of his criticism of fidelity, Bluestone’s reading of Wuthering Heights is the perfect example to accompany McFarlane’s definition of fidelity criticism.

An even more successful adaptation for Bluestone is Robert Z. Leonard’s Pride and Prejudice (1940). This film is more successful because like Wuthering Heights it stands up qua film, but unlike Wuthering Heights it does not deviate greatly from its source text. Bluestone attributes the success of the film to the fact that Jane Austen’s novel “possesses the essential ingredients of a movie script” by meeting the requirements of “Hollywood’s stock conventions” (117). The novel follows the “shopworn formula of

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13 According to Bluestone, Hollywood Aristotelianism is an always operative, but rarely articulated principle in which all elements of the film—spectacle, diction, character, and certainly thought—must be subordinated to plot.
boy meets girl; boy loses girl; boy gets girl” (144). In addition, it provides an “individual solution to general problems” and, above all, “the story has a happy ending” (144).

Furthermore, as detailed as Austen is in developing the “psychological timbre of her characters,” the “absence of minute physical detail” in her style allowed Leonard to make his own decisions regarding the physical appearance of the characters and setting (118). In fact, Bluestone further attributes Leonard’s ability to bring *Pride and Prejudice* to the screen to Austen’s “lack of particularity, absence of metaphorical language, omniscient point of view, [and] dependency of dialogue to reveal character” (118). In Austen’s defense, her novels are not as shallow as the above descriptions would make them appear. Her great talent lies in the theme of irony that pervades all of her works, and Bluestone makes this fact clear: “the impulse to range one set of principles against another…the polarities…the interpenetration of opposites…the poles attracting each other toward a more or less agreeable center” (117). The very titles of Austen’s novels bear this statement out: *Persuasion*, *Sense and Sensibility* and, of course, *Pride and Prejudice*. The reason that *Pride and Prejudice* is successful as a film is because it plays out this theme on screen. Bluestone describes the plot of the novel in terms of a great dance:

The lovers proceed through a series of misunderstandings and revelations which culminate in the two central climaxes of the book—Elizabeth’s rejection of Darcy, completing the initial movement of the lovers away from each other; and Elizabeth’s acceptance of Darcy, completing the final movement of the lovers toward each other…To anyone thinking of the book in cinematic terms, the word “movement” is inevitably arresting. For the converging and
diverging lines perceived by Miss Lascelles correspond exactly to the movements and rhythms of a dance, movements and rhythms which, I suggest, have been caught by the film. (124, 126)

To prove his point, Bluestone focuses on the film’s dance sequence at the Assembly Ball in which “all the dramatic relationships are enunciated in terms of dance relationships” (127). I will not go into the detailed shot by shot analysis of the sequence that Bluestone provides, but I agree that the sequence does capture the “movements and rhythms” of the characters throughout the novel as the dancers move “toward and away from each other, exchanging partners…in a kind of party prattle [none] takes very seriously” (127). One reason this sequence is successful is because it is an example of what film can do that the novel cannot: provide simultaneous action. Novelists must alternate dialogue with narrative description, but film can dispense with narrative description since the images being described in the book are visually realized. Furthermore, since the sequence stands for the book as a whole, dialogue and incidents can be moved from various parts of the novel and incorporated into a single scene in order to establish continuity. As Bluestone points out, the film’s Assembly Ball scene draws on material from Chapters III, X, XV, and XVI of the novel. The effect of “combining snippets” from four of the first sixteen chapters creates “unity of place” and “compresses the chief plot points” so that the viewer becomes an “omniscient observer…roving from couple to couple, seeing them now from one point of view, now from another” (131). In the end,
all of the “dramatic and psychological relationship[s]...in the novel’s opening events” are realized in the dance sequence in which “choreography becomes an exact analogue of the social game” (132).

The film does have a few additions to the novel, but Bluestone defends these additions by arguing that they are not “mere appendages” but “credible...probabilities of Jane Austen’s world” (137). He points to the film’s opening Meryton sequence to prove his point. Though this long sequence does not appear in the book, it is “a transposition of incidents” from various places in the novel (137). In fact, much of the dialogue in the opening sequence is lifted from dialogue that appears throughout Austen’s novel. The carriage race that ends the opening sequence has, for Bluestone, “more than a merely capricious function...[since] the visual competition becomes the exact forecast of what is to come” (137). The carriage race is a visual metaphor for the social contest between the Bennets and the Lucases (Figs. 2.1-2.2). When Charlotte marries Collins, it appears that the Lucases have the upper hand; when Jane and Elizabeth agree to marry Bingley and Darcy, the Bennets emerge as the social victors.14 Bluestone argues that this scene, as well as the other additions, deletions, transpositions, and alterations of the filmmakers are minor and only help to advance the primary story line of the novel by allowing the audience “to ‘see’ what is not [in the novel]” and that,

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14 Interestingly, Joe Wright’s 2005 film of Deborah Moggach’s (and an uncredited Emma Thompson’s) screenplay completely ignores the “social contest” between the Lucases and the Bennets. Mr. Collins, as played by Tom Hollander, is used for comic relief, while Charlotte Lucas, as played by Claudie Blakley, is a minor character.
in the final analysis, the film’s changes have “a rightness which seems wholly appropriate to Jane Austen’s intentions” (138, 139).

Perhaps it is this ability to “see” what is not in the novel and the attempt to adhere to Austen’s intentions that have made *Pride and Prejudice* one of the most popular films among fidelity critics. In fact, this adaptation is turned to again and again as an example of a successful, faithful adaptation. However, although the film is successful and—for the most part—faithful does not necessarily mean that it is successful *because* it is faithful. Why, for instance, do fidelity critics never use Jack Clayton’s *The Great Gatsby* (1974), starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow? The film is, in the words of critic Roger Ebert, “‘faithful’ to the novel with a vengeance.” The characters, episodes, and dialogue of Fitzgerald’s great novel have been seemingly lifted from the page to the silver screen completely intact. This is due in great part to
Francis Ford Coppola’s literal and literary screenplay. However, seen through Clayton’s lens, the film apparently fails to capture—in Bluestone’s terms—the spirit of the book, resulting in fidelity critics leaving the film to the scrutiny of popular movie critics like Ebert, who criticizes the film for keeping Fitzgerald’s symbols but failing to communicate what those symbols may mean, claiming that they are “memorials to a novel in which they had meaning.” Ebert questions how a film that “plunder[s] Fitzgerald’s novel so literally” can miss the “message of the novel” as he reads it. Other critics tend to agree: one states that “the movie treats Fitzgerald’s flawless novel as little more than a Jazz-age costume drama, and it goes heavy on the costumes, light on the drama.” Another claims, “Gatsby the book has ideas and pathos that transcend its era. Gatsby the movie focuses on the surfaces at the expense of depth, and the result is a movie that looks great but means little.” Still another argues that “under the reproachful eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, The Great Gatsby becomes ineffectual and rudderless.” To use Seymour Chatman’s term, the film is ultimately “empty” (163). I can only assume that it is the film’s emptiness that prevents fidelity critics from using it as an example, preferring still to use Pride and Prejudice over fifty years after its initial release.

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15 Coppola as either writer, producer, or director has been responsible for several adaptations for both the big screen—The Godfather (1972), Apocalypse Now (1979), Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992), Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1994), Sleepy Hollow (1999)—and television—The Odyssey (1997), Moby Dick (1998), Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1999).

16 Roger Ebert remains one of the more literary of today’s film critics in that he actually seems to have read as many books as he has seen films. See for instance his reviews on Shakespearean adaptations.

17 See Don Willmott, Kurt Dahlke, and Jesse Hassenger.
Of these three films—*Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), and *The Great Gatsby* (1974)—the first radically shifts the “emphasis of the novel” without “obliterating the book’s final meaning,” the second makes minor additions that are “wholly appropriate” to the author’s intentions, and the third remains faithful “with a vengeance” but is “ineffectual and rudderless.” The first two are championed as successes, while the third is an abysmal failure. Using this admittedly small sampling, it is apparent that success and fidelity may have absolutely nothing to do with each other, and that Bluestone is correct in his assertion that fidelity criticism is a “stubbornly casual, persistently uncritical approach,” even if he had a tendency toward this approach himself.

A new approach to adaptation studies must arise to take the place of fidelity criticism. This new approach must be practical and applicable to all adaptations, successful or not, and must also take into account the formal differences in the media. Is such an approach possible? The short answer to this question is “yes,” but to answer the question fully, I must borrow a term from an essay by Carl Freedman (which is in turn borrowed from M.H. Abrams): “How to Do Things with Milton: A Study in the Politics of Literary Criticism” (1995).18 *Pride in Prejudice* is successful not because it is faithful to the text, but because it *does* something with the text. Likewise, *The Great Gatsby* is unsuccessful because the film does *not do* anything with the text. It simply attempts to

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take the novel and place it on the screen so that it ‘reads’ like a book. But this is an
impossible task given the differences between the forms. Critics of literature often talk
about reading texts “through a lens.” When discussing film, we are dealing with a
literal lens, the camera eye. To borrow a technique from the formalists, I must ask the
question, “What is a lens, both its definition and function?” It is an object that refracts
light in such a way that the rays converge or diverge to form an image (Fig. 2.3). It
bends light. It highlights some objects while omitting others. When a director films an
adaptation, he or she chooses which parts of the text to highlight and which to omit.

![Convex and Concave lenses.](image)

This is an interpretive process that results in an autonomous work of art that not only
comments upon the work on which it is based but also can be judged by its own merits,
or *qua* film. When viewed this way, the study of film adaptations is not limited to
questions of whether or not the film lives up to the intentions of the author. Rather, the
study of film adaptations is opened up to questions of authorship and authorial
intentions, considerations of intertextuality, and studies in interpretation. Bluestone’s
work opened the door for this type of study, but unfortunately the focus shifted to the
primacy of the novel and unquestionable authority of the novelist, while questions of interpretation were minimized. In his analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*, Bluestone argues that in “rendering the quality of Jane Austen’s intentions, in finding cinematic equivalents for what Jane Austen, by choice, merely implied, the film-makers successfully rethink the material in terms of their own medium. The screen writers, reading closely…divine the meaning of Jane Austen’s aristocratic dance” (136).

Adaptation critics should focus on the concept of filmmakers’ “rethinking” the material in “their own medium,” but have chosen instead to focus on what they consider to be the filmmaker’s attempt to “divine the meaning” of a text by adhering to the author’s intentions. By choosing to focus on authorial intention, fidelity critics—including Bluestone—are in direct violation of Wimsatt and Beardsley’s intentional fallacy.19 Adaptations are not and cannot be filmic representations of the novelist’s intentions. Such a feat would be impossible because it implies a personal relationship with a possibly dead author. As Seymour Chatman notes in *Coming to Terms* (1990), far too much “ink has been spilled” on the question of fidelity to the literary original “as if the

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19 Although some may argue that Bluestone is not in violation of this fallacy since his book appeared only three years after the publication of *The Verbal Icon*—and therefore, he may not have been aware of it—Wimsatt and Beardsley’s article originally appeared in *The Sewanee Review* in 1946. In addition, Wimsatt and Beardsley’s article opens with this assertion: “The claim of the author’s “intention” upon the critic’s judgment has been challenged in a number of recent discussions, notably in the debate entitled *The Personal Heresy*, between Professors Lewis and Tillyard.” Given the fact that authorial intention had been the topic of “a number of recent discussions” and that *The Personal Heresy* first appeared in 1939, there is no reason to assume that Bluestone was unaware of this debate.
source novel were some sacrosanct object whose letter as well as spirit the film had to follow” (163). It is time for a new approach to the study of adaptations.

The idea of viewing adaptations as interpretations is not a new concept, but neither has it been adequately developed. In Filming Literature (1986), Neil Sinyard includes one chapter entitled “Adaptation as Criticism: Four Films” in which he argues that the art of adapting literature to film concerns “interpretation more than reproduction” and, in the end, adaptations are “best approached as an activity of literary criticism, not a pictorialisation of the complete novel, but a critical essay [of the original literary text] which stresses what it sees as the main theme” (117 emphasis mine). André Bazin—the other father of adaptation studies—argues that a cinematic adaptation is by definition a transformative process that should make no attempt to reproduce the original text’s formal features. It is the duty of the filmmaker to “have enough visual imagination to create the cinematic equivalent of the style of the original…faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise, is illusory: what matters is the equivalence in meaning of the forms” (42). The job of the filmmaker is not to reproduce “faithful” but empty adaptations of literary texts. Rather, the job of the filmmaker is to adapt literary materials to his or her own approach by selecting some episodes, excluding others, and offering alternatives. Great adaptations bring novels to “visual and dramatic life” without being afraid to “kick the novels around” by taking liberties with character and structure and offering more convincing readings of the original
(Sinyard 117). By emphasizing some features and disregarding others, film adaptations attempt “intensity of illumination” rather than “a shapeless inclusiveness” and, like the best criticism, they cast “new light on the original” (117).

Sinyard’s approach toward adaptation is shared by Seymour Chatman and, to an extent, Brian McFarlane. Some time must be spent on Chatman as I build my own theory on his foundation. Chatman first explored the relationship between fiction and film in his study of narrative structure, *Story and Discourse* (1978), in which he attempts to answer the question, “what are the necessary components of a narrative?” (19). For his answer, Chatman refers to the beginning of literary theory, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and Aristotle’s division of praxis (imitation of actions), logos (argument), and mythos (plot). Chatman then goes on to work from structuralism’s theory that every narrative has two parts: histoire (story) and discours (discourse). Histoire is the content (chain of events) and its existents (characters, settings, etc.), while discours is the expression of the histoire, the way in which the story is communicated. In Chatman’s terms, the story is the “what” and the discourse the “how” (19).

![Diagram of narrative text](image)

**Fig. 2.4.** From Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Cornell UP, 1978), p. 19
Fig. 2.4 illustrates the division between the two separate parts of a narrative.

Though this diagram is an accurate representation of the nature of narrative, the expression of a given narrative is just as complex as its content. If narrative structure is semiotic, then it must contain both a form and a substance in both content and expression (23). Chatman offers an additional diagram that develops the discourse of a narrative as fully as the above diagram develops the story and considers the form and the substance of each (Fig. 2.5). John R. May has developed this diagram even further by pointing out that a given film’s narrative structure—its form of expression—has to do with elements of tone and viewpoint, while the substance of expression can be broken down into the two extremes of narrative film style, realism and expressionism (Fig. 2.6).

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 2.5.** From Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Cornell UP, 1978). p. 26.
In *Coming to Terms* (1990), Chatman put his theory regarding the “how” of transforming a novel to film into practice with his examination of Karel Reisz’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1981), based on John Fowles’ 1969 novel. As Chatman points out, one fundamental problem that the filmmaker faces is how to “transform narrative features that come easily to language” to a visual medium that operates in “real time” (162). Film cannot reproduce the act of reading a novel, but it can produce an experience of equal value or, as Bazin noted, a new work not “identical with,” but “the equivalent of, the old one” (68). Chatman, like Bazin, is concerned “not with fidelity but with the different solutions that novels and films prefer for common narrative problems” (163). Chatman continues:

There are many ways for a filmmaker to adapt a novel, and it is useful to study them all. But I limit my discussion to only one question, though in many ways the most challenging one. How do intelligent film adaptations grapple with the overtly prominent narrator, the expositer, describer, investigator of characters’ states of mind, commentator, philosophizer? It is easier to base a film on a novel that is already covertly narrated, totally or
predominantly “shown” by a camera eye. The greater challenge is presented by novels with talkative, expatiating narrators; by the same token, these offer opportunities for more creative cinema. (163-164)

As Chatman notes, in order to “preserve the ‘sound’ of a prominent narrator’s ‘voice,’ ” filmmakers often make it “literally audible” by using voice-over (164). Other filmmakers ignore the novel’s narrator and rely on “purely visual ways of conveying the mental experiences of characters” (164). Since both of these styles have been “studied in considerable detail,” Chatman focuses on The French Lieutenant’s Woman’s “innovative solution to the problem of communicating the overt narration of a novel” (164). Chatman stresses that though the film’s particular technique is not the only solution to the “problems of narrative transference,” it is a particularly clever one and, as such, it is the kind of film “that has a serious practical impact on film history, since it has educated the audience to new possibilities of narrative innovation” (165).

The novel is an antiquarian novel, a rare variation of the historical novel that either exploits or utilizes the diction and style of the period it is chronicling.20 Fowles’ novel is written in the style of a Victorian novel but is related by an intrusive post-modern narrator:

This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters’ minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I

assumed some of the vocabulary and “voice of”) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word. (95)

It is a novel that is conscious of the fact that it is a novel. This is not the same thing as saying it is “a novel within a novel,” as Boyum asserts in her reading of the adaptation; therefore it could not have simply been filmed as “a movie within a movie” (105). The novel is, as Chatman notes, “a narrative framed by the commentary of the narrator” (166). The commentary is not another narrative but a “descriptive and expository-argumentative” account of the narrator’s attitude toward the novel and its characters; the one exception being Chapter 61 in which the narrator actually participates in the action of the Victorian narrative (166). The narrative involves the love affair between Charles Smithson, a young Victorian gentleman who is experiencing an existential crisis due to the “smugness and insularity” of his age, and Sarah Woodruff, a woman who is “ahead of her time” (166). Set in 1867, the novel takes place in the year that would see the publication of Marx’s *Capital Vol.1*, the passing of the Second Reform Bill, and the beginning of John Stuart Mill’s campaign for the emancipation of women. The narrator is very aware of this fact, as he is obsessed with history and comments on every aspect of Victorian life imaginable. Furthermore, every chapter begins with an epigraph from either a famous Victorian writer or other Victorian publication, including the *Report*
from the Mining Districts, the City Medical Report, and a letter to the editor of the Times.

The commentary is so obtrusive that, at times, it seems as though the love story between Charles and Sarah is simply a pretext for the commentary. In fact, the narrator himself tells the reader, “Perhaps I am trying to pass off a concealed book of essays on you” (80). How does the novel end? It doesn’t. Rather, it has two endings, one in which Charles is reunited with the estranged Sarah who has borne his child and the two live happily ever after, the other in which Charles is enraged at Sarah’s suggestion that they remain friends and lives the remainder of his life in despair. Either ending is possible and, given the reality of Darwinian chance mutation, both are probable.

How can one possibly film such a complex novel? One option would be to have an overbearing narrator provide a voice-over. However, though on the page this technique is intriguing and, at times, even humorous, on the screen it could be ponderous and irritating. Another option would be to make a movie about making a movie in which the movie being made takes on an importance equal to that of the movie being watched a la François Truffaut’s *La Nuit américaine* [Day for Night] (1973), in which the audience watches both Truffaut’s film and Ferrard’s—played by Truffaut—film, *Je vous présente Pamela* [May I Introduce Pamela]. Though watching Truffaut’s stand
alone film about a film is interesting, the added issue of novel adaptation could become far too complicated and confusing for an audience.\(^{21}\)

Reisz’s film does neither of these options. The result, as Chatman notes, is a film that “has had a serious practical impact on film history, since it has educated the audience to new possibilities of narrative innovation” (165). While the film makes no attempt to capture the narrator’s voice through voice-over, it does address “the question of its own narrative processes…just as the self-conscious literary narrator may comment on his own narrative technique, the self-conscious cinematic narrator may show not only the movie being made but the process of making that movie” (165). Reisz does not approach his film the same way that Truffaut approaches his. Whereas Truffaut’s focus is on the director and his crew in their attempt to make a masterpiece out of a trivial story, Reisz’s focus is on the actors and the characters they play and the consequences of an actor falling in love “not with the actress but with the character the actress is playing” (165). Though the novel attempts to “recover the reality” of the Victorian period that has become lost in clichés, the film represents “modern life as the less comprehensible” (170). In the novel Sarah is complicated, but in the film it is Anna, the actress. The differences between the two are many, but as always, they are differences of form. Films do what novels cannot and vice versa. Borges’ narrator can

\(^{21}\) Spike Jonze’s *Adaptation* (2002) deals with this very issue and was nominated for best screenplay. However, Jonze’s film is set completely in the modern world and does not have to travel back and forth in time.
assert that there were two Don Quixotes but can only demonstrate that assertion verbally.\textsuperscript{22} Film can have real actors, Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep, play fictional actors, Mike and Anna, who are playing fictional characters, Charles and Sarah. Since the film cannot recreate the novel’s self-consciousness, it becomes self-conscious in a way that a novel cannot. It has found a mode of adaptation that is not “identical with,” but “the equivalent of” the novel.

Another area in which the film creates an equivalent is in its attempt to capture the state of Charles’s mind visually. The narrator of the novel spends much of his time commenting on Charles’s perception of events. Sarah is an enigma to him and captures him with her stories. When Sarah is telling Charles of her affair with the French Lieutenant, the reader is given not only Sarah’s account of the affair, but Charles’s inward reaction to it as well. As Chatman notes, the narrator moves “constantly into and out of Charles’s mind, interpreting and explaining feelings that Charles could hardly articulate, let alone confess to” (171). The film lifts the dialogue directly from the novel and Streep delivers the lines as they appear. There is no voice-over explaining how Charles is reacting to them. Rather, Reisz sets the scene in a grove of trees with “long lateral boughs” that intersect the couple and suggest “the threads of a spider’s web” (173). As the camera encircles the characters, Charles and Sarah appear to move closer to each other as he becomes entranced and entrapped by her story (Figs. 2.7-2.10).

At the same time, Mike, the actor playing Charles, is becoming entrapped by Sarah, the character being played by Anna. The modern frame story of the actors who are supposedly making the film visually dramatizes the commentary of the narrator who is supposedly writing the novel.

Elliott does a similar kind of reading of Roman Polanski’s *Tess* (1979), focusing on the “how” of rendering Hardy’s prose to a visual image. In “Thomas Hardy as Cinematic Novelist,” David Lodge discusses the difficulty of any “film adaptation to do justice to Hardy’s novels precisely” because Hardy uses “verbal description as a film director uses the lens of his camera—to select, highlight, distort and enhance” (80-81). What makes Hardy’s prose so intriguing are techniques that, while peculiar to fiction, are commonplace in film. Jonathan Miller argues that *Tess* is ultimately a failure on the
basis that the film cannot capture the figurative simile in Hardy’s description of Tess’s mouth: “She was a fine, handsome girl—not handsomer than some others, certainly—but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to color and shape” (Hardy 20). Miller argues that “only in language” can one state “an explicit comparison between one thing and another—between lips and peonies…there are no communicative resources within the pictorial format for making such implications explicit” (226). Elliott disputes this claim, stating that Polanski does create “a highly effective adaptation of Tess’s ‘peony lips’ ” with a filmic metaphor drawn from the scene in which D’Urberville offers her a strawberry:

As Tess opens her mouth to receive a strawberry from Alec, lips and strawberry are similarly colored and shaped, so that the strawberry visibly enhances and modifies Tess’s lips just as the word “peony” enhances and modifies the word “lips” in the novel…Tess’s open mouth creates a strawberry-shaped space into which the fruit is set briefly before she closes her lips over it and swallows it, just as the figurative verbal peony fades, while the literal lips remain in the novel’s scene. (235) (Figs. 2.11-2.13)

Figs. 2.11-2.13. Tess “parted her [peony] lips and took it in” (Hardy 45).

It is not that an “explicit comparison between one thing and another” cannot be made in film; it is simply that the comparison must be communicated in a visual rather than a verbal mode.
Elliott is correct in her assertion that a new approach to adaptation studies is necessary. Viewing adaptations as “looking glasses” of their novels and noting the differences and similarities being captured in the looking glass is a start. However, we must ask what parts of the novel are being reflected in that looking glass. What, as Sinyard would ask, is being highlighted? We must focus on what Chatman terms “the how,” but we must understand that “the how” is an interpretive process. When a filmmaker chooses to adapt a novel and begins to consider how to do it, he or she is deciding what to “do” with the text. The filmmaker is not deciding on the “correct” approach to the novel, simply the approach he or she will take.

McFarlane too hints at the concept of interpretation by following his definition of fidelity criticism with the problem inherent in adapting a novel to film: “it involves not merely a parallelism between novel and film but between two or more readings of a novel, since any given film version is able only to aim at reproducing the film-maker’s reading of the original and to hope that it will coincide with that of many other readers/viewers” (9). Very often, the “film-maker’s reading” does not coincide with the readings of other viewers. As Boyum notes in regards to Sophie’s Choice (1982),
given that every reader creates his own individualized novel, and that every viewer brings into being his own particular film, what can the notion of “fidelity” actually mean? Faithful to whose Sophie? To Sophie the tragic heroine? To Sophie the anti-Semitic Polish bitch? To Sophie the masochist? To Sophie the towering romantic figure? And faithful to what aspects of any given literary work anyway? (67)
Chatman makes this same point in his critique of Wolfgang Iser’s view of adaptation:

The sentence “the reader of *Tom Jones* is able to visualize the hero virtually for himself, and so his imagination senses the vast number of possibilities” constitutes something of a non sequitur: visualizing from words does not necessarily lead to a large number of possible visualizations. It is just as easy to interpret “That’s not how I imagine him” as meaning that a given reader is so attached to a certain image of Tom that he or she refuses any other (“he can’t possibly look like Albert Finney”).

It is precisely this “vast number of possible visualizations” that makes viewing adaptations as interpretations so vital. It allows us—as readers, teachers, and critics—and our students to compare our readings with other readings that have been made public. The film has become, as Sinyard stated, a critical essay.

*If Pride and Prejudice* is a critical essay, what does it say about or do with the text?

Bluestone points out that although the film is faithful, there are “several significant changes” that even the most “casual reader of Jane Austen’s novel will observe” (130). But again, Bluestone defends these changes because they do not “alter any of the essential meanings in the original” (130). Altered or additional dialogue in the film “bears an unusual ring of probability...[and] represents the kind of thing which Jane Austen might have said” (130). This is an interesting stance to take considering that one of the altered lines carried a powerful political punch in an important time in film history. In the novel, the Bennet sisters meet Bingley and Darcy at the Meryton Ball. When Darcy, “the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world,” refuses to dance with
any of the young ladies, Bingley attempts to persuade him to dance with Elizabeth (58). Darcy replies that though she is “tolerable,” she is not “handsome enough” to tempt him, and furthermore he is “in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (59). In the film, this scene remains intact except that Darcy’s line as delivered by Laurence Olivier is “Yes, she looks tolerable enough, but I am in no humor tonight to give consequence to the middle classes at play.” This alteration is anything but slight. Although Bluestone acknowledges this alteration, he states that this line, along with others, has been altered “to make [it] more pertinent” (130). More pertinent to what? There is a great chance that more was going on in this alteration than Bluestone is willing to admit and that the line is not simply a “reasonable equivalent” (131). *Pride and Prejudice* was released just seven years before the arrest of the Hollywood Ten and the blacklisting of more than 300 Hollywood professionals. Were the creators of the film part of the “subversives” that Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee were trying to silence? Bluestone questions the reputation of the film by pointing out that though the film’s stars went on to have successful careers, the talent behind the script and the camera were not so fortunate. Bluestone states that director Robert Z. Leonard did “little serious work” after *Pride and Prejudice* (145). In Leonard’s defense, the 51-year-old filmmaker had directed an astonishing 135 films when he began work on *Pride and Prejudice*. As for screenwriter Jane Murfin, it is true that she was “rarely heard from” again (145). Whether or not she
was on the Hollywood Blacklist is uncertain, but she did write screenplays under the pseudonym “Alan Langdon Martin.” Writing under pseudonyms was a common practice for writers who had been blacklisted. Unfortunately, the majority of the records of the proceedings were ordered sealed until 2026. In 2001, this ruling was overturned and the public was allowed access to the documents, but access is governed by Rule VII of the House of Representatives, which establishes the eligibility criteria for viewing non-current, permanent records of the House (Office of the Clerk). Regardless of the actual history of the film, one could argue that the film version of Austen’s novel is not the simple “boy meets girl story” that Bluestone claims the novel is. One could argue that the film is a story of haves and have nots, of distinct social classes who—depending on which class they are—try either to raise themselves to a higher class or to keep the lower classes out. Darcy, whom Austen describes as being “proud” and “above his company” and having “a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance,” could very well represent the bourgeoisie (58). After all, he does make “ten thousand a year” (58). By the same token, the competition between the Bennets and Lucases to be the first to marry off their daughters could represent the attempts of the proletariat to achieve political power, an attempt that “is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves” (Marx 26). Whether or not a Marxist reading of Austen is what Leonard and Murfin intended in their adaptation is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the filmmakers have done something with the text that allows the
viewer to raise questions about the text. They have created not the intended reading that Bluestone seems to think is there, but a possible reading. The same can be said of Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights*. When Bluestone states that the film “shift[s] the meaning and emphasis of the novel,” he is implying that there is a single absolute meaning of the novel, a claim that the vast amount of criticism on the novel disproves (92).\(^{23}\)

Reading adaptations as interpretations of novels opens up new possibilities for both forms. Adaptations, to return to Sinyard, cast “new light on the original” by providing “intensity of illumination” by using one form to comment upon and dialogue with another. Through this commentary, new readings of old texts are possible. In the best adaptations, new meanings present themselves as filmmakers highlight certain aspects of the texts and raise new questions. This is the job of the filmmaker: to put the novel into a new form that allows the reader or viewer to see the novel from a new perspective. Using film as an interpretive device can open up a text to new possibilities. This is especially true when the film in question is a masterpiece in its own right. The films of Stanley Kubrick are such masterpieces. The remainder of this project will focus on some of the possibilities that the films of Stanley Kubrick open up in the texts he has adapted.

PART TWO

STANLEY KUBRICK’S FEARS AND DESIRES
Chapter Three

The Triumph of the Spirit:
Kubrick vs. Hollywood

If it can be written, or thought, it can be filmed.
— Stanley Kubrick

The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle.
— Stanley Kubrick

Although there are numerous volumes written about Kubrick, the vast majority of them are simply biographies or stylistic analyses of his films. The only two works that deal seriously with the source texts as well as the films are Judy Lee Kinney’s dissertation “Text and Pretext: Stanley Kubrick’s Adaptations” (1982) and Greg Jenkins’ dissertation “A Rhetorical Approach to Adaptation: Three Films by Stanley Kubrick” (1994), later published as Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation: Three Novels, Three Films (1997).24 Kinney’s structuralist work examines the relationship between Kubrick’s films and their “pretexts” in order to reveal Kubrick’s “consistent strategy of deviation and restructuration.” Kinney considers cinematic narrative to be a “system of signification rather than a recording of...a ‘realistic’ visual perception.” Jenkins takes a “formalist, rhetorical approach influenced by the schools of New Criticism and neoformalism” by providing close readings of three of Kubrick’s films: Lolita, The Shining, and Full Metal Jacket. Jenkins divides each film into several short sequences,

24 All quotations in this paragraph are from the authors’ abstracts.
which he then compares to their corresponding literary passages, focusing on
“alterations in the characters and in the narrative structure.” Rather than providing
formalistic readings of Kubrick’s films in order to explain how he “restructures,”
“alters,” or “deviates” from his source texts, my discussion will focus on how Kubrick’s
films are critical commentaries on or dialogues with the literary texts on which they are
based. In many ways, these next chapters will be my interpretations of Kubrick’s
interpretations. However, I will make every attempt to focus on the form of the film in
an attempt to understand what these films are doing with the texts. In my examinations
of the films, I will refer to the three major critical studies of Kubrick’s films to date,
Norman Kagan’s The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick (1972), Mario Falsetto’s Stanley Kubrick: A
Narrative and Stylistic Analysis (1994), and Thomas Allen Nelson’s Kubrick: Inside a Film

This discussion will consider the films of Kubrick’s canon that center on two of
his recurring themes: love and war. Rather than moving chronologically through
Kubrick’s career, or through the publication dates of the source texts, I have grouped
the films and texts together by genre. Each chapter will follow the same basic pattern: a
discussion of the novel and its thematic appeal to Kubrick followed by an analysis of
the film in terms of what it is doing with the text. Whenever relevant, some discussion
of the actual production of the film will also be included. Chapter Four, “War (Huh!)
Good God Y’all,” will define the “war novel” and Kubrick’s interpretation of it. In

But before turning to classic Kubrick, an examination of Kubrick’s career as a photojournalist and documentary filmmaker is necessary in order to understand how he developed as a filmmaker. Therefore, I will briefly consider his days at *Look* magazine, his three documentaries—*Day of the Fight* (1951), *Flying Padre* (1951), *The Seafarers* (1953)—and his first major feature, *Killer’s Kiss* (1955), as well as Kubrick’s first adaptation, *The Killing* (1956). Adapted from the 1955 novel *Clean Break* by Lionel White, *The Killing* is the film that simultaneously marks the culmination of Kubrick’s early career and the beginning of his classic period.

Before he was a film director, Kubrick was a photographer. He developed an interest at an early age and was encouraged by his father who purchased a camera for the young Kubrick and also installed a studio and darkroom in the family’s New York
apartment (Fig. 3.1). Kubrick became quite adept at photography and, at the age of 16, sold his first photograph to *Look* magazine. The photograph showed a pensive newsstand salesman next to a headline that read “F.D.R. Dead” (Fig. 3.2). This early photograph demonstrated various aspects of Kubrick’s future genius. His eye for lighting and composition are apparent as well as his penchant for capturing images that convey the message of the words they represent.

*Figs. 3.1-3.2*. An avid photographer, Stanley Kubrick, aged 16, sold this photo of a mournful newsvendor to *Look*. The photo on the left was taken by his father in their home studio.

The sale of this photograph led to a freelance job with *Look*. Kubrick went all over the city capturing images to accompany the magazine’s articles. Most of these articles were “slices of life” pieces about visiting the dentist or living and working in the city (Figs. 3.3-3.5), but a few were more intriguing stories about jazz bands, fashion models, and trapeze artists. These stories allowed Kubrick to express his creativity in his style and composition (Figs. 3.6-3.8). An article on boxer Walter Cartier, and the accompanying photographs, led Kubrick to believe that he could make a documentary on the prizefighter (Figs. 3.9-3.11).
As Nelson has noted, Kubrick set the standard for the "'personal' and truly authorial approach to filmmaking" favored by the filmmakers of the French New Wave, especially François Truffaut and Alain Resnais (21). Like Kubrick, Truffaut and Resnais began their careers by "watching, discussing, and reading about films" (20).
Furthermore, they also began with the documentary “before turning to the greater technical and conceptual challenges offered by feature films” (20). Though Truffaut’s and Resnais’s work, especially *Les Quatre cents coups* [*The 400 Blows*] (1959) and *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959), is often seen as the beginning of auteurism, Kubrick had already proven himself by releasing not only three documentaries, but also four feature films including *Paths of Glory*, which predated the French New Wave by two years.

Released in 1953, Kubrick’s first attempt at filmmaking, *Day of the Fight*, is a gritty sixteen minute portrayal of Cartier. When he began work on the film, Kubrick knew very little about the process. He learned how to use the camera from the rental agent and then acted as director, cinematographer, soundman, and editor for the film. The film focuses on a day in the life of Cartier as he prepares for a boxing match. The opening of the film is an introduction to the sport of boxing and uses a montage of both fighters and their fans. The voice-over narration echoes the theme of violence that Kubrick would continue to explore throughout his career, “Toe to toe body contact, physical violence, the triumph of force over force, the primitive, the curious visceral thrill of seeing one animal overcome another. Touch of claret, call it blood if you will.”

The film then shifts its focus to Cartier. This section opens with a shot of a flyer on a lamppost before cutting to some impressive rooftop shots of the city. Both of these scenes recur in *Killer’s Kiss*. We then see Cartier and his manager brother, Vincent, getting ready for the fight. The fight itself makes up the final third of the film. It is in
this section that Kubrick shows his talent as an editor, cutting back and forth between the actual match and the fans all over the city listening to the fight on the radio. Impressed by the final product, RKO purchased the film for its *This Is America* series. The film’s short run at the Paramount Theatre in New York netted Kubrick a modest profit, allowing him to quit *Look* to focus on filmmaking full time.

The success of *Day of the Fight* prompted RKO to advance Kubrick money for a short for their *Pathe Screenliner* series. The result was *Flying Padre* (1951), a nine-minute film about Father Fred Stadmueller, a priest who flies a Piper Cub plane around his 400-mile New Mexico parish. This second film is not as visually intriguing as *Day of the Fight* because it adheres more closely to the newsreel standards of the day. Bob Hite narrates over scenes of Father Fred flying to a funeral, settling arguments between children and, in a staged scene, taking a mother and her sick child to the hospital. Though not as good as *Day of the Fight*, the editing is again impressive. *Flying Padre* also marks Kubrick’s first extensive use of low angled shots, a trademark of his later films (Figs. 3.12-3.14).

*Figs. 3.12-3.14.* Though not as impressive as *Day of the Fight*, *Flying Padre* shows Kubrick’s development as a filmmaker as he begins to favor low angle shots.
Though Kubrick dismissed the film as “a silly thing about a priest in the Southwest,” it was a modest success and gave him the confidence to attempt a feature film. This first feature, *Fear and Desire*, will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter.

During production of *Fear and Desire*, Kubrick, low on funds, accepted a project commissioned by the Atlantic and Gulf Coast District of the Seafarers International Union. The project was to direct a 30-minute industrial documentary entitled *The Seafarers*. Released in 1953, this documentary is the most standard and least original of Kubrick’s early work (Fig. 3.15-3.17). However, it is notable for two reasons: one, Kubrick uses a long tracking shot in one scene—the tracking shot, like the low angles of *Flying Padre*, would go on to become a trademark of Kubrick’s film; two, the film is Kubrick’s first color film, a medium he would not return to until *Spartacus* (1960) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), choosing to film both *Lolita* (1962) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) in black and white.

Figs. 3.15-3.17. Though not as impressive as either *Day of the Fight* or *Flying Padre*, *The Seafarers* showed that Kubrick could work in color. The film also allowed him to complete *Fear and Desire*.

Kubrick followed up *Fear and Desire* with *Killer’s Kiss* (1955). Based on his own screenplay, *Killer’s Kiss* is the story of a love triangle between a small-time mobster,
Vincent “Vinnie” Rapallo, one of his dancers, Gloria, and a welterweight prizefighter, Davey Gordon. The narrative is told in flashback and covers three days in the life of Gordon, as he meets, falls in love, and rescues Gloria from Rapallo. The film was not received warmly by the critics who saw it as melodramatic and unoriginal. Later criticism has not been much kinder. Kagan rates the film as a “weak, naturalistic thriller” that “shows Kubrick’s early errors as a dramatist” in that it “lacks the obsessional drive and energy of later films” (21). Kagan, like most critics of the film, attack the film’s storyline. Though in this respect, the film is the weakest of Kubrick’s major films, it is visually interesting. He borrows heavily from Day of the Fight and does create “an ambiance of lower-class New York life, realistic touches and urban types” (21). It is impressively edited and contains several beautiful shots taken from unusual angles. The climactic scene in the mannequin factory is disturbing as only a Kubrick film can be in that the men battle to the death as they are surrounded by lifeless, humanlike figures (Fig. 3.18). The scene suggests that we are only alive when we are our most base and violent primitive selves. Visually, the mannequins foreshadow the sculptures of the Korova Milk Bar in A Clockwork Orange (1971). (Fig. 3.19)

Figs. 3.18-3.19. Killer’s Kiss’s climatic mannequin factory fight foreshadows A Clockwork Orange’s Korova Milk Bar—violent men surrounded by lifeless females.
Possibly due to the criticism of his writing Kubrick made the decision, at this early point in his career, to begin adapting stories for the screen rather than writing original screenplays. His first attempt was the crime thriller *The Killing* based on Lionel White’s *Clean Break*. According to Nelson, the film is important for “the part it played in Kubrick’s development as a writer—as well as director—of film adaptations” (31). Written in a tight hard-boiled style, the novel chronicles an attempted racetrack robbery. Johnny Clay, an ex-con, devises a foolproof plan and recruits several inside players—a gambler, a bartender, a cashier, and a cop—to help him carry out his plan. Each of these men has been carefully chosen because of his lack of criminal record and the fact that he is in need of money. Unfortunately, the cashier George’s wife, Sherry, is having an affair and tells her boyfriend, Val, of the planned heist. Though the heist is successful, Val arrives and kills everyone but George in a gunfight. Johnny arrives late, sees the police investigating, and flees to the airport, where George, believing he has been double-crossed, confronts and kills Johnny. The police arrive and find a blood-soaked newspaper under Johnny’s body that reads, “RACE TRACK BANDIT MAKES CLEAN BREAK WITH TWO MILLION.”

Though Kubrick’s film follows the novel’s plot with exacting detail, Kubrick elevates the role of chance and circumstance and manipulates the story’s temporality. The film opens with a series of vignettes in which each player is introduced, non-sequentially, through Art Gilmore’s narration. The narration not only provides the
audience with information about the character, but also focuses the audience on money and the importance of time in the film:

At exactly 3:45 on that Saturday afternoon in the last week of September, Marvin Unger was...totally disinterested in horse racing.... Nevertheless, he had a $5 win bet on every horse in the fifth race. He knew, of course, that this rather unique system of betting would more than likely result in a loss, but he didn't care. For after all, he thought, what would the loss of twenty or thirty dollars mean in comparison to the vast sum of money ultimately at stake?

Throughout the film, the narration provides the audience the exact time and how much behind schedule Johnny and his crew are. The effect is one of Fortuna working against Johnny as he tries to beat the odds. Throughout the film, Johnny, played by Sterling Hayden, is often shot through bars or cages, representing the fact that he is trapped from the onset (Figs. 3.20-3.21).

Figs. 3.20-3.21. Kubrick uses various framing techniques to show that Johnny Clay (Sterling Hayden) is a man trapped by fate.

To further emphasize the role of chance, Kubrick changes the ending of the film. Rather than having George kill Johnny in jealous rage, Johnny actually makes it to the
airport with the money. While he and his girlfriend, Fay, are waiting for the luggage to be loaded, a small poodle escapes from his owner and rushes out onto the tarmac, causing the luggage carrier to swerve. Johnny’s suitcase, a cheap one purchased earlier from a pawn shop, falls and the faulty latch opens spilling the money, which becomes caught in the gusts from the plane’s propeller (Fig. 3.22). Johnny attempts to escape but is caught by two plainclothes police officers. When Fay tells him he’s got to run, Johnny ends the film with the line, “Eh, what’s the difference,” finally accepting his fate in life (Fig. 3.23).

Figs. 3.22-3.23. As his money blows away, Johnny watches his dream disappear and accepts his fate.

Each of these early films shows Kubrick’s development as an auteur. Each contains elements that Kubrick would continue to use throughout his career, as each contains “several stylistic and thematic preoccupations that would be more fully realized in his later work” (Nelson 21). The Killing, with its tight direction and unconventional temporal manipulation, brought Kubrick the critical reputation he deserved. With its success, Kubrick found himself in demand by Hollywood, a situation
he would use to his advantage in his later career, including his next project, *Paths of Glory*, discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

War (HUH!) Good God Y’all:
Stanley Kubrick and the Art of War Films

War is neither magnificent nor squalid; it is simply life, and an expression of life can always evade us. We can never tell life, one to another, although sometimes we think we can.

— Stephen Crane,
“War Memories”

Every war is different; every war is the same.

— Anthony Swofford,
Jarhead

Though trends in cinema come and go and often come again, the war film is a genre that consistently remains popular among filmmakers, critics, and audiences. Every generation, it seems, has its war, and every war has its film or films. Though filmmakers vary the formula of the genre, sometimes focusing on military life during war (*M*A*S*H* [1970]), sometimes on combat during war (*Platoon* [1986]), and sometimes on a particular battle in a particular war (*The Longest Day* [1962]), the intent tends to be the same: to capture realistically the life of the soldier. Stephen Crane admitted the difficulty of attempting “to get to the real thing” in his “War Memories” and ultimately regards it as an impossible task (222). According to Michael Schaefer, the most famous statement regarding this problem is Whitman’s claim that “the real war will never get in the books” (xi). In *Acts of War*, Richard Holmes argues that the problem with representing war artistically is that “the battlefield [is] given colour and texture by the rich palette of artists, writers, and film-makers,” when in reality the battlefield is
“empty and drab to many of those who live upon it. In fact, it is sometimes so unspectacular that it may not even be identifiable as a battlefield” (150). Based on Holmes’ assertion, the Technicolor carnage of Pearl Harbor (2001) is probably a less accurate description of war than the empty sand dunes of Jarhead (2005). Interestingly enough, while Pearl Harbor is based on a real battle in a real war, the narrative that frames the battle is a fictional account of a love triangle between two childhood friends and the woman that comes between them. By contrast, Jarhead is a first person account of the first Gulf War based on the memoirs of Anthony Swofford, a Marine scout-sniper who served in the Gulf. Perhaps the fact that the basis for the movie was penned by a “real soldier” lends to the accuracy of the film’s battlefield.

Whatever the difficulties in accurately portraying the soldier’s life, the war film remains a popular genre—so popular that many filmmakers return to the war film again and again throughout their careers. Stanley Kubrick is one such filmmaker. Kubrick began his feature film career with a war film, Fear and Desire (1953), and returned to the genre three more times with Paths of Glory (1957), Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964), and Full Metal Jacket (1987).25 In this chapter, I will explore why war was such an intriguing topic for Kubrick and examine his war films alongside the novels on which they were based.

In a 1958 interview, Kubrick explained his interest in soldiers and their lives:

25 War and war scenes also play a significant role in Spartacus (1960) and Barry Lyndon (1975), both of which accurately represent the battlefields and war techniques of the time period in which they are set.
The soldier is absorbing because all the circumstances surrounding him have a kind of charged hysteria. For all its horror, war is pure drama, probably because it is one of the few remaining situations where men stand up for and speak up for what they believe to be their principles....The soldier at least [has] the virtue of being against something or for something in a world where many people have learned to accept a kind of grey nothingness, to strike an unreal series of poses in order to be considered normal. (Stang)

_Fear and Desire_, Kubrick’s first attempt to capture the “charged hysteria” and “pure drama” of war, was written for the screen by Kubrick and Howard Sackler, who went on to win the 1969 Pulitzer for his play _The Great White Hope_. Though in the public domain, the film is difficult to find due mainly to the fact that Kubrick himself dismissed the film as “a very inept and pretentious effort” (Brustein 136). Believing the film to be an amateurish “student film,” Kubrick personally oversaw the destruction of the original negative and several prints and spent much of his life tracking down other prints of the film so that he could purchase and destroy them as well (Hughes).

According to his wife, Christiane, Kubrick “disowned [Fear and Desire] and would have happily gathered together every print and neg[ative] and consigned them all to an incinerator had it been possible” (44).

The contemporary reviewers of the film were much kinder and more forgiving than Kubrick. While admitting that the film was obviously made on a “shoestring
Variety noted that Fear and Desire’s “blend of violence and philosophy, some of it half-baked, and some of it powerfully moving” was in the end a “literate, unhackneyed war drama, outstanding for its fresh camera treatment and poetic dialog.” The New York Times likewise called the film “uneven,” “experimental,” and “more intellectual than explosive,” but ultimately declared the film a “thoughtful, often expressive and engrossing view of men who have ‘traveled far from their private boundaries.’” Many reviewers praised the film for its technical achievements on such a low budget, citing particularly the film’s cinematography and often comparing Kubrick’s eye for chiaroscuro to Kurosawa’s in Rashômon (1950) (Fig. 4.1-4.3).

![Fig. 4.1-4.3. Kubrick was responsible for all cinematography in his first feature and showed a considerable talent for capturing and controlling light to achieve sharp contrasts of light and shadow, a trademark of his later films.](image)

Fortunately, Kubrick was not successful in eradicating the film from existence, and it has recently become available on DVD.27 Unfortunately, the DVD is a transfer

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26 Estimates vary greatly on the production cost of the film. What is known is that Kubrick borrowed an initial $10,000 from his father and a wealthy uncle, Martin Perveler. His uncle later loaned Kubrick an additional $5,000. Though this investment allowed Kubrick to shoot the film, he still had to record and synchronize the sound, edit the film, and add titles. In order to raise the money, he worked on “miscellaneous television and State Department trivia” including The Seafarers (1953), his third documentary and first film in color. In the end, Fear and Desire was produced for approximately $50,000.

27 Actual film prints still exist as well and are occasionally shown in film forums. One such print is in the archives at the George Eastman House in New York. The Eastman House exhibited the film shortly after Kubrick’s death.
from a VHS recording of a television broadcast that appears to have been through several generations of copies. This is unfortunate for two reasons: one, the quality of the DVD does not accurately represent the film and two, because the film is surfacing 50 years after its release, viewers are watching it through the lens of Kubrick’s later canon and are expecting to see a masterpiece by Stanley Kubrick, not the first film by the young filmmaker who would become Stanley Kubrick. Reviews of the DVD bear this expectation out. According to Phil Hall, the film “is perhaps the single worst debut feature helmed by an internationally acclaimed filmmaker….Fear and Desire is a clumsy and unintentionally funny work which bears none of the trademarks of the Kubrick style. Had it not been a Kubrick production, no one would give a damn about it today.” Hall goes on to criticize Kubrick’s camera work, referring to it as “shabby shenanigans” that litter the film with an unnecessary surplus of “intense” and “surreal” images. Hall ultimately concludes that the “film is silly...[and] so earnest in trying to be intellectual that you inevitably feel sorry for Kubrick and his colleagues for mucking up.” Although Hall states that he would like to see a fully restored version of the film, he is concerned that having Fear and Desire “easily available would clearly tear away at the reputation” of Kubrick as a filmmaker. Shane Burridge is not much kinder with his declaration that the “only reason this low-budget indie film is still being hunted down” is because Kubrick directed it (emphasis mine). He goes on to call the film a “slightly odd,” yet “technically efficient” B film. Burridge’s conclusion is that Fear and Desire is “less a film
than a diversion [that] never rises above its limitations....No wonder [Kubrick] didn’t want us to see it.” Other reviews call the film “laughably bad,” or “not quite ‘Ed Wood’ bad, but close” and refer to it as “weak and tedious” and, at 68 minutes, seemingly longer than *Barry Lyndon*.

The truth of the film is that it is not nearly as bad as recent reviewers claim. It is not a great film and it does, at times, border on tedious, but it is still a fair representation of Kubrick, the genius, in his early stages. It is, as most contemporary reviews pointed out, beautifully shot. For Kubrick, a young photographer with little film experience working with no budget and shooting on location, to have his first feature compared to Kurosawa was a monumental compliment. Kubrick’s eye as a photographer turned cinematographer added new depth and dimensions to a film industry that was still tied to the “big Hollywood production” that used contract stars and shot virtually everything on a controlled soundstage. 1953 was the year of *The Robe, From Here to Eternity, Shane, Moulin Rouge, Julius Caesar, and Roman Holiday*. Movie audiences were bombarded with images of Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Deborah Kerr, Donna Reed, Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, Greer Garson, Gregory Peck, and Audrey Hepburn. 1953 also saw the introduction of new film technology. Anamorphic lenses developed by the French astronomer Henri Chrétien led to the invention of CinemaScope, a new process that allowed films to be projected at a 2.66:1 aspect ratio, twice the size of the conventional format (Fig. 4.4). The process became popular in
Hollywood as film companies began to compete with television as well as other innovations within the film industry. 1953 was also the year that a 3-D film, *House of Wax*, first broke the box office top ten.

*Fig. 4.4.* This shot from *The Robe* shows the difference in the aspect ratio from the fully projected CinemaScope print and the industry standard of the time. *The Robe* was released in both formats.

In contrast to Hollywood’s big production, Kubrick’s *Fear and Desire* was a small, quiet film that didn’t rely on gimmicks and new innovations to reach its audience. Although that audience was small, the film still resonated enough for Kubrick to be given a second chance with another film and a bigger budget. The reason for this resonance could be attributed to the aforementioned talent that Kubrick showed in framing shots in interesting ways. It could also be attributed to the motifs that occur in the film, motifs that Kubrick would return to throughout his career: the inability to communicate as the two sides only exchange two words which are either not understood or ignored; the dehumanization of man as the “innocent” Sidney rapes and
kills a young village girl; and the duality of man as represented by the double casting of Kenneth Harp and Steve Coit as both Lt. Corby and Pvt. Fletcher and as the enemy soldiers they kill.

Kubrick would return to the war film three more times during his career. His other ventures differed from Fear and Desire, however, in that they were not original screenplays, but were adapted from war novels. In addition, all three of these novels were written by “real soldiers.” Humphrey Cobb served as an infantryman in the Canadian Army during World War I, Peter George was a pilot for the Royal Air Force and a British Intelligence agent during World War II, and Gustav Hasford was a soldier and war correspondent during Vietnam (Phillips and Hill 65, 134, 150). All three men brought exacting detail to their narratives in an attempt to “get to the real thing” in their books. Perhaps it is this exacting detail that so appealed to Kubrick when he chose to film these novels.

In the NOTE at the end of Paths of Glory, Humphrey Cobb states that if “the reader asks, ‘Did such things really happen?’ the author answers ‘Yes’” (265). Cobb then goes on to refer the reader to several sources including a dispatch published in the July 2, 1934 edition of The New York Times entitled, “French Acquit 5 Shot for Mutiny in 1915;

28 The rape scene bears striking similarities to Brian De Palma’s Casualties of War (1989), a fact that might indicate the film’s influence on a later generation of filmmakers despite Kubrick’s attempts to bury it.
The novel was critically acclaimed and regarded as an antiwar masterpiece. However, it was not a great popular success even though it was a Book of the Month Club selection (Phillips and Hill 286). Perhaps the novel did not find an audience because of Cobb’s brutally realistic portrayal of life in the trenches, what one reviewer referred to as “the slaughter and stink of the ‘field of honor’” (Berendsohn 10):

“Flesh, bodies, nerves, legs, testicles, brains, arms, intestines, eyes…” [Dax] could feel the mass of it, the weight of it, pushing forward, piling up on his defenceless shoulders, overwhelming him with an hallucination of fantastic butchery. A point of something formed in his stomach, then began to spread and rise slowly…he recognized it for what it was: the nausea induced by intense fear. (Cobb 31-32)

The novel not only illustrated the cruel violence of war and Cobb’s hatred of it, but also the incompetence of the officers who conducted the war and the suffering of the soldiers who dutifully obeyed these officers. The book vividly depicts “the rotten, ruthless system of militarism that robs men of their most primitive rights” by allowing the reader to connect with brave soldiers who are tried for cowardice and condemned to death by officers who are more concerned with personal advancement than the lives of the soldiers they command (Berendsohn 10).

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29 The other sources mentioned by Cobb are R.G. Réau’s *Les crimes des conseils de guerre*, J. Galtier-Boissière and Daniel de Ferdon’s *Les fusillés pour l'exemple*, Paul Allard’s *Les dessous de la guerre révélés par les comités secrets* and *Images secrètes de la guerre*, and Blanche Maupas’ *Lefusillé*. Maupas was a widow of one of the executed men. She obtained exoneration of her husband’s memory and was awarded damages of one franc. The title itself is taken from Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751): “The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”
Structurally, Cobb’s novel is divided into three parts. It opens with two soldiers, Langlois and Duval, meeting each other on their search to find their regiment, the 181st French Regiment serving under Colonel Dax. Langlois is a seasoned soldier who is returning from leave, while Duval is an idealistic younger soldier who admires Langlois’ medals and hopes to win his own. Langlois points out that he won his in a lottery, but this revelation does not deter Duval who later in the novel becomes “intoxicated almost to the point of hysteria by the vibration of the gunfire, oblivious of all danger” of the war (75). The two men finally catch up to their regiment, which is long overdue for rest after several days in the trenches. But rather than being allowed any recreation, the regiment is ordered to attack and capture a well-fortified position in No-Man’s Land known as “the Pimple.” General Assolant delivers the news to Colonel Dax who argues that his regiment has recently suffered heavy losses and that his new recruits are untrained and unprepared for such an attack. Assolant is unconcerned and relentless:

It was quite clear to [Dax], depressingly so, that the hour or more he had spent at his headquarters pointing out the difficulties of the attack and the exhaustion of his troops to the general had been wasted. The discussion, moreover, had ended on a note...which had only served to wound Assolant’s vanity and to solidify his stubborn refusal to consider the attack in any way a questionable one... “Please confine yourself to obeying the orders of your superiors, Colonel Dax, not to criticizing them.” (102-103)
For Assolant, a man who rarely goes into the trenches to mingle with his men, “it was all a question of percentages. Men had to be killed, of course, sometimes lots of them. They absorbed bullets and shrapnel and by so doing made it possible for others to get through” (99). Troops are expendable as long as the mission is accomplished. Dax reluctantly accepts his orders.

Part II of the novel focuses on the attack itself, which is an abysmal failure. Dax was correct in his assessment that his men were unprepared and that the Pimple was too heavily fortified. His men advance as far as they can, only to be driven back. Furious, Assolant orders the artillery to fire on the infantry. When the battle is over, Assolant demands justice for the cowardice of his men. Initially, he wants a section from each of the regiment’s four companies, about 200 men, tried for cowardice. Eventually, General de Guerville convinces him to compromise and settle for one man from each company. Dax offers to take full responsibility and be the “example” that the generals so dearly want, but his offer is refused. Dax then sends out a memo to each company leader requesting that they arrest one man each and send him to the guard-room at the Château “to appear before a court martial on charges of cowardice in the face of the enemy” (156). Everyone involved knows that the men who are chosen will stand no chance of acquittal and will be condemned to death. Since the soldiers did not act cowardly, each company commander is ordered to select a representative scapegoat.
Part III focuses on the court-martial and execution of the men. One company leader, Captain Renouart, refuses to follow orders and writes a lengthy reply to Colonel Dax. He then writes two shorter drafts before writing a final simple memo stating that he is “unable to comply with your instructions because there is no member of my company against whom charges of cowardice in the face of the enemy can either be made or found tenable” (166). Believing that Renouart is related to a high-ranking politician, the generals accept his memo and try only one man from each of the three other companies: Férol, Didier, and Langlois. Férol is selected for being “incorrigible.” Didier is the only witness to the murder of Lejeune by his commanding officer, Roget, on a reconnaissance mission. Langlois is chosen, ironically, by lot. The men are allowed a representative during the court-martial, Captain Etienne of the 7th Company, but he will not be allowed to call any witnesses nor refer to any of the men’s former valor in action. He eloquently defends the men, but the decision had been made before the court even convened. The men are given their last meal and are allowed to see a priest. Langlois writes one final letter to his wife asking her to hire a lawyer to investigate the case. Didier is injured trying to escape and suffers major head trauma that will keep him unconscious for the remainder of the novel. He is carried to his execution on a stretcher. The following morning, a firing squad of thirty-five soldiers—including Duval—is selected. The accused men are led to and tied to posts where they are shot. The book closes with a Sergeant Major, Boulanger, shooting
each man in the head to deliver a *coup de grâce*. Cobb ends his terrifying vision of war where he began, with Langlois, the soldier who won both honor and death by the luck of the draw:

> It must be said of Boulanger that he had some instinct for the decency of things, for, when he came to Langlois, his first thought and act was to free him from the shocking and abject pose he was in before putting an end to any life that might still be clinging to him. His first shot was, therefore, one that deftly cut the rope and let the body fall away from the post to the ground. The next shot went into a brain which was already dead. (263)

As Thomas Allen Nelson has pointed out, Cobb’s *Paths of Glory* was “an ideal source for the filmmaker of *Fear and Desire, Killer’s Kiss,* and *The Killing.* Its style and narration develop an ironic contrast between public and private worlds, the fictions of officialese and the fluctuations of an indeterminate truth” (39). Nelson goes on to say that the novel’s passages of “hallucinatory intensity” that depict both the “actual and imagined horrors of war” and the “empty and formal masking of that truth” would have an “obvious appeal to Kubrick’s demonstrated interests” (39). In the “Afterword” to the 1987 edition of the novel, Stephen E. Tabachnick states that Cobb’s “eminently cinematic” style made the novel “relatively easy” to transform into a film (275). Earlier, Tabachnick discusses the failed attempt by playwright Sidney Howard to bring the novel to the stage. Howard’s play closed after only twenty-three performances because of “technical difficulties” (268). In Eleanor Flexner’s assessment, *Paths of Glory*’s attempt
to create the “audible and visual illusion of...a heavily-shelled...front-line trench
during a major attack” simply “asked too much of the theater” (qtd. by Tabachnick 268).
But film was a medium that could create the illusion of war, and Kubrick does so with
horrifying precision. In an essay on films about World War I, Tom Wicker argues that
*Paths of Glory* is the best film ever made about World War I in that Kubrick captures
“another true story of individual lives ruthlessly sacrificed to a commander’s or a
nation’s vanity and indifference to justice and humanity” (186).

But how exactly does Kubrick approach the text? At one point in Cobb’s novel,
Dax says that the soldier rarely “see[s] with naked eyes. He is nearly always looking
through lenses” (103). Through what lens does Kubrick look at Cobb’s novel? Although
*Paths of Glory* has had “the least attention in terms of comparing the film to the source
novel,”30 Kagan, Falsetto, and Nelson all make reference to Kubrick’s treatment of
Cobb’s novel.

Kagan points out that the major difference between the novel and the film is that
the focus of the novel is on the soldiers who are to be executed by introducing the
“three doomed soldiers” at the beginning of the narrative and ending the novel with
“the bullets of the firing squad” (63). The film, however, moves the soldiers to the
background and gives them a “passive” role so that the audience will identify with the
character of Colonel Dax (played by Kirk Douglas) and his battle with the “treacherous

and scheming staff officers” Mireau and Broulard [Assolant and de Guerville in the novel] (63). To further place the focus on Dax, Kubrick allows him, rather than Etienne, to defend the men at the court-martial. These changes center the story on “Dax’s struggle to save the three and learn with whom he is fighting and why” (Kagan 63). Falsetto echoes Kagan’s analysis by pointing out that Kubrick’s “one crucial decision in translating the novel” was to amplify “the role of Colonel Dax…from the marginal character depicted in the book to the central character” of the film (176).

Nelson gives the fullest consideration of the transformation from novel to film by stating that though the film follows “the novel’s three-part organization (before the attack; the attack and after; the court-martial and execution), Kubrick did not choose to work out its ironic patterns of fate” (40). Like Kagan, Nelson notes that the novel begins and ends with the doomed soldiers but goes on further to point out that the novel’s beginning and ending focus specifically on the two soldiers Langlois and Duval. Langlois, the veteran who won his medals in a lottery, is now condemned to die as “the result of another lottery” (40). Duval, a young recruit “who dreams of glory and especially admires Langlois,” is chosen as a member of the firing squad (40). Langlois becomes Corporal Paris in the film, a conflation of Langlois and Didier, while Duval’s character is dropped completely. Nelson’s strongest assertion is that ultimately the film “duplicates neither the nightmare landscapes of the novel nor those found in
[Kubrick’s] earlier films” (40). Whereas Cobb’s novel is manipulative and expressionistic, Kubrick’s film is objective and realistic (40). For Nelson, this claim is not a negative criticism but an “impressive” example of Kubrick coming into his own as a director.

Though all three of these critics are correct in their assessments of the changes Kubrick made when adapting the novel to film, none of them seems to consider why those changes were made. What was Kubrick doing with the novel? Both Kagan and Falsetto claim that Dax is a “marginal” character in the novel, but is this a true claim? Dax does appear in the novel less than the doomed soldiers, but he is the novel’s most well-developed character. All of Cobb’s other characters are stereotypes designed to strike a chord with the reader, or as Barthes would call them, “sèmes.”

Langlois is the soldier with a wife back home to whom he is constantly writing letters. Ferol is the soldier with a past who is using the military as a means of escaping that past. Didier is the good soldier who witnesses an atrocity and keeps his silence but is still betrayed. Duval is the young, idealistic soldier who is ready for war. The generals are the political chess masters who manipulate their pawns for their own personal advancement. Dax, on the other hand, is a contemplative and brooding figure whose main concern is the

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well-being of his men. He is the prototype for George C. Scott’s Patton. He is Faulkner’s “human heart in conflict with itself.”

Throughout the novel, Cobb gives the reader insight into Dax’s mind through long passages of thought. When we are first introduced to Dax, he is considering why his subordinate, Major Vignon, cannot understand that though Dax wants his company as they walk, he is not in the mood for conversation:

> It’s too bad…that you can’t ask a man to walk with you without his jumping to the conclusion that you want him to talk to you too. Why can’t I say to a man, ‘Look here, I’m getting into a blue funk, as I always do at this point, and I really need your companionship. But it must be your silent companionship’… [Vignon] just hasn’t the faculty for knowing what I’m going through now. If he suspected the crisis I’m getting near, he’d consider it his duty, probably, to pull his pistol and put a bullet through my head. (31)

Elsewhere in the novel, the reader witnesses events through Dax’s present perspective, i.e., when he leads Assolant through the trenches, or through flashbacks in Dax’s mind, i.e., when he recalls the argument with Assolant over whether or not the troops where prepared to take the Pimple. Therefore, Kubrick is not really making a marginal

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32 For more connections between Cobb and Faulkner, see Julian Smith’s “A Source for Faulkner’s A Fable” in *American Literature* 40 November 1968. 394-397. The article considers similarities of plot, characters, and minor details between Cobb’s novel and Faulkner’s A Fable (1954). For example, “both novels take place in France during World War I and start with the same basic incident, the failure of a French regiment to attack an impregnable German position…The remainder of each novel is concerned with the aftermath of this failure. (In Cobb’s novel, three scapegoats are executed; in Faulkner’s, the corporal responsible for the passive rebellion is executed between two criminals [395]).” For those who question whether Faulkner had read Cobb’s novel, see Joseph Blotner. *William Faulkner’s Library: A Catalogue*. U of Virginia P: Charlottesville, 1963. 93.
character the focal point so much as he is highlighting the character of Dax as the focal point.

But what about the doomed soldiers that are so central to Cobb’s narrative? They are still central. If Cobb’s novel is an indictment about the horrors of war and the treatment of the soldiers who give their lives, sometimes to enemy bullets and sometimes to “friendly fire,” in war, how can Kubrick present the same indictment if he makes the doomed characters passive and places them in the background? It is a question of form. If a novelist wants the reader to sympathize with certain characters, then those characters must be foregrounded. The characters must stand out from the crowd. They cannot be faceless entities. Cobb achieves this sympathy through the use of compelling, if stereotyped, characters. If the reader is to care that these men are wrongfully executed, the reader must care about the men as individuals. However, in war films it is generally unnecessary to coax the audience to develop such an attachment to the characters since the audience is pre-disposed to care about the soldiers. The audience does not have to visualize the atrocities of war; the atrocities are visualized for them. The audience feels sympathy when a soldier, any soldier, is cut down. In fact, too much attention to one soldier can actually cause an audience to question what is so special about that particular soldier, unless of course the story is being told through the soldier in question’s perspective, i.e. Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986) or Sam Mendes’ *Jarhead* (2005) and, to some extent, Kubrick’s own *Full Metal Jacket*
(1987), which all contain first-person narration. During a major battle scene in almost any war film, whenever an anonymous soldier is cut down by enemy fire, struck by shrapnel, or decapitated by an explosion, an audience will wince and audibly gasp at the horror of the carnage they are witnessing. A novelist, however, must give the reader a reason to care about a particular soldier. Consider the following passage from Cobb:

Charpentier climbed onto the smoking parapet, shouting and waving his men to follow. He stood there...an heroic-looking figure, fit for any recruiting poster....[He] turned to lead the way. The next instant his decapitated body fell into his own trench.... Four other bodies followed right after his, knocking over some of the men who were trying to get out. (129-130)

The impact of this passage is not the same as a ten second celluloid clip that depicts the same incident (Figs. 4.5-4.6). Even though Cobb gives this faceless soldier a name, the character is only introduced a few pages before his death. The reader has not been given a chance to develop an attachment to the character. The reader has not been following Charpentier from the beginning of the novel, so his death may not resonate for the reader the way that it would if Duval were killed at this moment. To compel his reader to further sympathize with this “heroic-looking figure,” Cobb conjures up images of recruiting posters in the hope that the reader will develop the necessary attachment to the character to actually care that he has died a terrible, unnecessary death.

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33 This idea of focusing on one soldier and raising him to a level of importance above his peers is a theme explored by Steven Spielberg in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), a film whose battle scenes have been compared to *Paths of Glory*. Spielberg himself has acknowledged the influence of both *Paths of Glory* and *Dr. Strangelove*, particularly the recapturing of Burpleson Air Force Base, on his own film (9).
Knowing that his audience would already be pre-disposed to “care” about the soldiers, Kubrick is able to dispense with any unnecessary character development. Rather, he focuses immediately on the generals and their politically-charged reasons for taking the Ant Hill (Kubrick gives the target a more interesting and believable name than Cobb’s “Pimple”). Mireau greets Broulard at the chateau where the court-martial will take place later in the film. Throughout the film, Mireau and Broulard will spend most of their time at this location, dining and hosting balls, far from the trenches where their men are dying. Shooting on location in Munich, Kubrick used an existing eighteenth-century chateau and had the interior redecorated to match the description in Cobb’s novel. When the generals are the only ones present, Kubrick uses level medium shots to frame them, representing the fact that they are “at home” in the chateau. However, when the condemned men are brought out of the real world of the soldier’s battlefield into the artificial world of the chateau, Kubrick switches to long shots—often

**Fig. 4.5-4.6.** Novelists must use narrative description to cause a reader to react, but film can dispense with narrative description since the images being described in the book are visually realized for the audience.
shot from slightly high angles—to dwarf the men in their surroundings. Dax, however, is almost always shot in either slightly low angled medium shots or close-ups, showing that he is not out of place no matter what his surroundings. The slightly low angle also gives his character a sense of command even when he is answering to the orders of others (Figs. 4.7-4.14).

**Figs. 4.7-4.9.** “The salon of the château was a spacious, high-ceilinged room which faced the west and a view of lawn that seemed to have been spread there like a carpet for the declining rays of the setting sun...its polished hardwood floors and courtyard flagstones again resounded to clinking spurs, and mirrors reflected glittering uniforms.” (203-204)

**Figs. 4.10-4.14.** The condemned soldiers Ferol (Timothy Carey), Paris (Ralph Meeker), and Arnaud (Joseph Turkel) are dwarfed by the surroundings of the chateau. They are more trapped here than in the trenches of the battlefield, whereas Dax is always literally centered on the screen and in control, whether deliberating in the chateau, stalking the trenches, or contemplating away from the war.
By beginning with the generals and their politics, Kubrick is able to move quickly to the real conflict in Cobb’s novel, the distance between officers and their soldiers. Kubrick brings the social structure of Cobb’s characters to the forefront in the film. As Gavin Lambert has noted, the world of Paths of Glory is “cruelly divided into the leaders and the led. The officers conduct their foxy intrigues in the elegant rooms of a great chateau…. The men go to the trenches and into battle” (10). The class structure of this society is cruel and dehumanizing—a common Kubrickian theme. The lives of the citizens, or soldiers, are short and expendable as they are used solely for production, or advancement of the cause. Advancement in class or stature is achieved only through aggression and dominance, as portrayed by General Mireau. Hard work results only in the receiving of meaningless accolades, i.e., the winning of medals in a lottery. In this society, there is no justice, only treachery and vain ambition. Of course, the powers that be must maintain good public relations by occasionally visiting the trenches and prosecuting and punishing the guilty. Above all, in this uncivilized world, they must remain civilized, as evidenced by life in the chateau. Kubrick reinforces the fact that no one can escape his place in this society, that all decisions have already been made by the powers that be, through the brilliant use of tracking shots. As Dax moves through the trenches, his path is already laid out. He has no choice but to play the role that has been given him by Mireau.
Nelson claims that by opening with the generals rather than the soldiers, Kubrick is choosing not “to work out [the novel’s] ironic patterns of fate” (40). This is simply not true. The film is full of ironies as evidenced by Kubrick’s juxtaposition of scenes. Throughout the film, Kubrick cuts from the beautiful chateau to the blood-filled trenches. The doomed soldiers die at the hands of their comrades because, according to Mireau, “if those sweethearts won’t face German bullets, they’ll take French ones!” After the court-martial judge announces, “The hearing is closed,” Kubrick cuts to the firing squad receiving their orders. While the generals host a ball following the decision, Dax broods alone in his quarters. Immediately following the execution, the audience is treated to Mireau and Broulard eating an elegant meal. Both Mireau and Dax walk the trenches: Mireau, “pompously and hypocritically,” Dax, “quietly and sincerely” (Kagan 64). To further reinforce the ironies of the film, Mireau stops three times and addresses three different soldiers who just happen to be the three men he will later condemn as cowards. Finally, rather than being executed, the one true cowardly soldier in the film, Roget, is put in charge of the firing squad. All of these ironies help to capture what George Bluestone and André Bazin refer to as the “spirit” of Cobb’s book.

Kubrick further captures the book’s spirit through the film’s soundtrack and final scene, a scene that does not appear in Cobb’s book. Early in the novel, the young idealistic Duval, upset that he has not yet seen combat, “console[s] himself with the sound of distant gunfire. At last, he reflected, he had heard the noise of war—The
Orchestration of the Western Front” (7). The reader is told that Duval had seen the phrase “The Orchestration of the Western Front” in a newspaper headline. It is repeated throughout the novel, usually by Duval, and represents the seeming wall of sound that is the noise of war. The closer to the battlelines the men get, the more the noise increases until the noise becomes “a din, the din an uproar, a crescendo of sound so deafening that you had to shout in a man’s ear to make yourself heard. ‘The Orchestration of the Western Front.’ The phrase again came into Duval’s head. ‘And I’ve got a front-row seat’” (75). Kubrick captures this orchestration through the film’s score, which, according to composer Gerald Fried, “was the first all-percussion score” ever used in a film (Hughes 58). Fried, an acquaintance of Kubrick’s from the Bronx, had previously worked with him on the documentary Day of the Fight as well as his first three feature films. The two collaborated well together; however, by the time production commenced on Paths of Glory, Kubrick was, in Fried’s words, “already ‘Stanley Kubrick,’ and then it was a struggle—I had to rationalize every note” (58). The percussive soundtrack, occasionally interrupted by machine-gun fire and distant explosions, drives the film forward. Kubrick emphasized the soundtrack in the promotional materials, including the posters and tagline, which stated: “BOMBSHELL! the roll of the drums…the click of the rifle-bolts…the last cigarette…and then…the shattering impact of this story…perhaps the most explosive motion picture in 25 years!” (Figs. 4.15-4.16). Since the film was not a huge box office draw, there was never a demand for the film’s soundtrack to be released. However, in
1999, Gerald Fried oversaw production of a compilation of music from Kubrick’s films and included one track, “The Patrol,” which captures the intensity of the film’s score.34

Throughout production, the filmmakers wrestled with how to end the film, a problem that caused several delays and arguments. United Artists, the film’s distributor, wanted an upbeat ending in which the soldiers are given a last minute reprieve. According to various sources, several different endings were written including one in which Dax and Mireau sit down to have a drink together after the men are sentenced to thirty days in the guardhouse. Some sources mistakenly claim that the various endings were actually shot, but according to the film’s producer, James B. Harris, and others who worked on the film, Kirk Douglas refused to shoot any ending.

Figs. 4.15-4.16. “BOMBSHELL! the roll of the drums… the click of the rifle-bolts…the last cigarette…and then…the shattering impact of this story…perhaps the most explosive motion picture in 25 years!”

that betrayed the message of the novel (Hughes 54). However, there seemed to be
disagreement on what exactly the final message was. Though the novel ends with the
execution of the men, there is the implication that even in the direst of circumstances,
human decency survives as illustrated by Boulanger firing a shot “to free [Langlois]
from the shocking and abject pose” in which the bullets from the firing squad had left
him (262). This implication of human decency would be all but impossible to capture on
film. The novelist has the power to give the reader the thoughts in a character’s head.
The filmmaker can achieve the same result through voice-over, but the voice-over of a
minor character would have been out of place in a film in which voice-over had not
been previously used, save for the opening narration by the unseen Peter Capell.
Furthermore, it would have seemed contrived.

While filming in Munich, Kubrick settled the dilemma by opting to script and
shoot a scene that did not appear in the book.35 It involved the regiment relaxing in a
tavern and becoming increasingly belligerent until the tavern owner offers them
entertainment in the form of a young German girl who has been captured by the
French. The girl, portrayed by Kubrick’s future wife Christiane, is forced to sing a folk
song, “Der Treue Husar” (The Faithful Soldier). Harris argued that the scene did not
belong in the film and was only an excuse for Kubrick to cast his new girlfriend in the

35 In September 1957, co-screenwriter Calder Willingham claimed credit for the scene and “99 percent” of
the total screenplay. He took his case to the Writer’s Guild of America, who decided in Willingham’s
favor and demanded that he receive co-credit with both Kubrick and Jim Thompson. However, all others
associated with the production of the film, including producer James Harris and Christiane Kubrick,
claim that the scene was completely Kubrick’s idea.
film, but Kubrick, becoming more and more sure of himself as a director, insisted and
the scene, fortunately, was shot (Hughes 55). While the young girl is dragged onto the
stage, the soldiers jeer her with humiliating catcalls, driving the girl to tears. When she
first begins to sing, the men are so loud that her song cannot even be heard. However,
as the girl continues singing, the men are moved to silence, then to tears, and finally
begin humming with her. Unknown to the men, Dax is outside the tavern listening.

Having just left Broulard and Mireau, Dax is disillusioned with humanity. He hears the
commotion in the tavern and goes to investigate. As evidenced by his grimace, he is at
first disgusted that the men in his squadron are as heartless as the generals. However,
as the men begin to quiet down and eventually sing with the young girl, the grimace
becomes a slight smile (Figs. 4.17-4.27). When informed that it is time for the regiment
to return to the frontlines, Dax pauses before uttering the last line in the film, “Give the
men a few minutes more, Sergeant.” Dax’s faith in humanity has been restored.

Figs. 4.17-4.19. In a scene that is both reminiscent and a reversal of the rape scene in
Fear in Desire...
The scene is important on multiple levels. One, without seeming sentimental or contrived, it conveys the idea that human decency can survive in the worst of times. Secondly, though original to the film, the scene does not seem out of place. Kubrick has adapted a novel but placed his own authorial stamp on the film. Finally, the scene allows Kubrick to work out issues that he raised in *Fear and Desire*. The emotional raping of this young girl is comparable to the literal raping of the young girl in *Fear and
Desire. The difference is that in the first film, Kubrick allowed the inhumanity in his characters to take over, resulting in the death of the girl. However, in *Paths of Glory*, the girl is not only spared, she wins over her aggressors and connects with them on a level that breaks through the barriers of their nationalities. She is not the enemy. The men are their own enemies. In Private Joker’s words, the film is “trying to suggest something about the duality of man...The Jungian thing.”

The stark realism of *Paths of Glory* was replaced by biting satire in Kubrick’s next war film, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964).

“I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.” This phrase, taken from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, was reportedly spoken by Robert Oppenheimer in the moments before he and his team detonated the world’s first atomic bomb.36 He went on to say, “We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent.” The detonation of Trinity on July 16, 1945 ushered in a new era of military technology. The brief, two-second flash that was “brighter than a thousand suns” contained the power to completely destroy civilization, a fact that prompted Oppenheimer to begin conducting a series of lectures on the dangers of atomic energy. The military, however, saw the new bomb as a means to end the war with Japan. Three

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36 From an interview about the Trinity explosion, broadcast as part of the television documentary *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*. Fred Freed, producer. NBC White Paper, 1965.
weeks after the successful test at Los Alamos, the US military killed over 70,000 people in Hiroshima. Three days later, the death toll in Nagasaki was even higher.

Following these incidents, the fear of all-out nuclear war began to rise as more countries began to develop nuclear technology. Eventually, America and the Soviet Union rose as the two super-powers of the world. The Cold War had begun. Americans invested in bomb shelters as the government began to oust members of the Communist Party. Oppenheimer himself was targeted for his outspoken views against the bomb. Paranoia was at an all-time high and Hollywood began looking for a profitable way to exploit the situation.

Though science fiction writers had written exhaustively about nuclear holocausts and post-apocalyptic worlds, the subject had not been directly dealt with by mainstream Hollywood which remained unsure of the “entertainment value” of films about nuclear war (90).37 Rather than take on the subject directly, Hollywood chose to create thriller and horror films that focused on the effects of nuclear radiation. During the 1950s, film audiences were treated to such “creature features” as The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953), Godzilla (1954), and Behemoth, the Sea Monster (1959). The success of the mutated-ant film Them! (1954) created the possibility for a seemingly endless string of mutation films as production companies “pressed into service almost every genus of insect and backyard pest (with the possible exception of the tumblebug)”


While the majority of films centered on the catastrophic effects of nuclear testing, a few “uplifting” films were made that focused on the attempt to rebuild society following a nuclear holocaust. Films such as *Five* (1951), *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959), and *On The Beach* (1960) followed a basic Adam and Eve plot line as a small group of survivors attempted to rebuild society after an unseen holocaust. In *Five*, one of the survivors is a young pregnant woman (Susan Douglas) who names her child Virginia Dare after the legendary first child born in the New World. *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* stars Harry Belafonte as a miner who, digging himself out of a collapsed mine, finds that the world has been completely destroyed. He later finds a young woman (Inger Stevens) and attempts to rebuild the world. By casting Belafonte opposite Stevens, the film was able to comment not only on nuclear tensions of the time, but race relations as well.

The most popular of these Genesis variations was Stanley Kramer’s *On The Beach* (1960). Based on Nevil Shute’s 1957 bestseller, the film was tagged “The Biggest Story of Our Time!” and boasted an all-star cast including Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, and Anthony Perkins. In *Nuclear Holocausets: Atomic War in Fiction, 1895-1984*, Paul Brians attributes the runaway success of the novel to its “slickly written” style that
focuses on the “relentless, inescapable advance of the zone of radioactivity, removing all trace of human life” (20). He argues that though the novel’s plot is unconvincing, the characters stereotyped, and the love story “mawkish,” Shute’s novel remains “one of the most compelling accounts of nuclear war ever written in its almost unique insistence that everyone—without exception—is going to die” (20). In a rare occurrence, United Artists did not give the film a typical Hollywood ending. Though the film does focus on the love story between Peck and Gardner, the idea that they will repopulate the earth seems unlikely as a deadly, radioactive cloud relentlessly follows them to Australia (Figs. 4.28-4.30).

Figs. 4.28-4.30. United Artists used a variety of marketing techniques to fill movie houses for “The Biggest Story of Our Time.”

The underlying message of all of these films seemed to be that “if the worst came to the worst, the good would still survive” (Howard 90). Interestingly enough, none of the films dealt with the circumstances that led to the triggering of the bomb, only the aftermath. In On the Beach, John Osborne (Fred Astaire) comments that “somebody pushed a button,” the only reference to the war that caused the obliteration of earth. There was no
attempt to explain how or why the nuclear holocaust had occurred. But, as Howard has pointed out, this lack of explanation could have come from “the sane viewpoint of a screenwriter. After all, what possible explanation could there be?” (91).

The success of *On the Beach*, both the novel and the film, inspired countless imitations. However, several of these novels moved the focus from the rebuilding of society to the actual detonation of the bomb in an attempt to explore how it could actually happen. In the majority of these novels, including Peter Bryant’s *Two Hours to Doom* (1958), Helen Clarkson’s *The Last Day* (1958), Mervyn Jones’s *On the Last Day* (1958), and Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler’s *Fail-Safe* (1962), the detonation is accidental. Novelists simply could not conceive of any rational reason why war would escalate to the point of mass destruction. The idea was simply too ludicrous.

Like many Americans, Kubrick was both intrigued and terrified by the possibility of nuclear war. His fascination with nuclear war echoed the paranoia of the generation, as people lived in fear of global destruction at the hands of “power-crazy political leaders in whom there was failing confidence” (Howard 90). Kubrick began collecting newspaper and magazine articles and claimed to have read over seventy books on the subject (Howard 91). He also subscribed to *Aviation Week* and *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and read several articles about many close-calls including a report of an American serviceman who shot a thermonuclear bomb in an attempt to set it off and an American aircraft crew who dropped a bomb when their plane was experiencing technical
difficulties (Kagan 111). The serviceman was under psychiatric care at the time, but “his job was so secret that the psychiatrist never knew his patient had access to the bomb” (Howard 91). The aircraft crew defended their actions by stating that the bomb “probably contained safety devices” (91). Although they were correct, only one of the safety devices actually engaged. The others failed. In Kubrick’s mind, if such figures remained in charge of the nuclear arsenal, the possibility of accidental mass destruction was inevitable.

In order to stay up on current developments in the field, Kubrick began corresponding with experts, including Alistair Buchan, director of the Institute for Strategic Studies in London (91). It was Buchan who suggested that Kubrick read Two Hours to Doom, which had been re-released under the title Red Alert. Buchan told Kubrick that the novel was “the only feasible, factually accurate fictionalization of the way in which an H-bomb war could start without any sane cause or prompting” (Howard 91).

Written by Peter George, under the pseudonym Peter Bryant, Red Alert was advertised as a “wartime adventure story” whose plot centered on an accidental nuclear war (Phillips and Hill 298). The story takes place “the day after tomorrow” and opens with an ominous “Forward” that recalls the tone of the trailers of the decade’s mutation films:

This is the story of a battle...It is a chaotic story, because battles usually are chaotic. It is a pitiless, cruel story, because pitilessness and cruelty are inherent qualities of battle, and especially a battle fought out with modern nuclear weapons...Most important of all, it is a story which could happen. It may even be happening as you read these words. And then it really will be two hours to doom. (4)
From the beginning, George’s tone is manipulative as he guides his readers through an improbable but possible situation. The novel opens with Brigadier General Quinten, the CO of Sonora Air Force Base, receiving word that he is being relieved of his duties and reassigned to the Pentagon. The reassignment is a reward for his years of service, and the move will mean “a second star on his shoulder” (12). But for Quinten, “the knowledge was joyless” (12). Quinten, unbeknownst to the Air Force, is terminally ill. Worse than the physical illness is the sense that Quinten is losing his mind: “[He] had been expecting the letter for some time. He had already heard unofficially that he was to be relieved. He knew it was right, that every day he was pushing himself a little closer to the edge of complete breakdown” (12). In the next few paragraphs, the breakdown comes as Quinten issues orders, seemingly from SAC, that America is under attack, initiates “Plan R” and deploys the 843rd Fleet. He also shuts down all communications to and from Sonora, convincing his men that the Russians can imitate any voice. Quinten’s men, with no reason to doubt him, obey his orders fully. Quinten’s plan is to start World War III. He dispatches an entire fleet of B-52 bombers to “nuke” Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Stalingrad, and “fourteen of the biggest bomber bases, the really important ones. Their one operational I.C.B.M. launching site, and the three they’ve almost completed” (16). The simplest solution would be for someone with authority to issue a return call. However, only Quinten knows the return codes. He
believes that once Washington realizes the futility of calling the planes back, they will commit to a full-scale attack.

Quinten is a sick man, physically and mentally, but his sincere belief in the Red Menace does have a rational basis in fact, in the novel at least. He persuasively counters the objections of his thoughtful and humane executive officer, Major Howard. The rest of the novel plays out in three main settings: the Air Force Base, the Pentagon, and the B-52 Bomber Alabama Angel, as a competent and forceful president attempts to rectify the situation. The President has “incontestable proof [that] the Russians have buried at least twenty, maybe more, [bombs jacketed in cobalt buried] in the Urals. It is my belief, based on a lifetime’s study of the Russian character in particular, and also the behaviour of dictators facing defeat in general, that if they see they are beaten they will not hesitate to fire those devices” (64). As the President negotiates with the Russian Premier, he sends troops to capture Quinten and force him to recall the bombers. A small war between American troops ensues and Quinten, in order to protect the codes, kills himself. Howard eventually figures out the code and recalls the fleet, but the Alabama Angel has reached the point of no return. The President agrees to sacrifice a comparable US city if the Angel completes its mission. In a nail-biting finale, the Angel drops its nuclear warhead seconds before it is shot down by Russian planes. Fortunately, the bomb had been disabled in the fire-fight and does not detonate. The
novel ends with a détente and the possibility of long term peace between the two megapowers.

As Nelson has noted, *Red Alert* is written in “an explicit prose style reminiscent of the dramatic and thematic clarity of White’s *Clean Break* and Cobb’s *Paths of Glory*. Its tight, economical structure recalls White’s manipulation of time, and although it is organized in a more straightforward manner than White’s book, the course of its development is equally relentless” (84). This “relentless” nature comes from the novel’s sense of urgency and lack of unnecessary flourishes. George’s third-person omniscient voice comes across as an impartial reporter delivering the facts of the situation. The novel reads almost like an historical account of a real event. In fact, the only overly descriptive sections of the novel are in the technical details of the military network. George, a former pilot and intelligence agent, seemed actually to understand the inner-workings of the military. His experience as a pilot also brought a believability to the *Alabama Angel* chapters in the novel. All of these elements combine to instill in the reader the very real possibility of nuclear war in the near future.

When Kubrick and Harris initially optioned George’s novel, they envisioned the film adaptation as a “straightforward melodrama” (Southern 72). Kubrick began working on the screenplay with “every intention of making the film a serious treatment of the problem of accidental nuclear war” (Gelmis 97). Peter George was even brought on board as a co-writer to help insure that the film version remained “a serious piece”
(Howard 91). Harris recalled that during the script meetings that often turned into laugh-fests, especially “late at night when [they] were giggly,” he and Kubrick talked about the “humor in the situation: you know, what if everybody in the war room got hungry and had to call down to the deli and we had a guy with an apron come in and take orders, and all these other what-ifs” (Howard 91). Soon after scripting began, Harris left the partnership—with Kubrick’s encouragement—in order to pursue a directing career. Kubrick continued to wrestle with the script and continued to have difficulty rendering a serious version of the story as he tried “to imagine the way in which things would really happen” (Gelmis 97). He would discard many ideas as so ludicrous that “people would laugh” (97). However, he soon realized that the scenes he was cutting were the best scenes in the script because though humorous, they were truthful:

After a month or so I began to realize that all the things I was throwing out were the things which were the most truthful. After all, what could be more absurd than the very idea of two mega-powers willing to wipe out all human life because of an accident, spiced up by political differences that will seem as meaningless to people in a hundred years from now as the theological conflicts of the Middle Ages appear to us today? (Gelmis 97)

Kubrick now knew that best way to approach the story was as a “black comedy” or, more precisely, as a “nightmare comedy,” a comedy in which “the things you laugh at most are really” the things you fear the most—in this case, the possibility of all out nuclear war (Gelmis 97). Kubrick immediately called Harris and told him that after
thoughtful consideration, the only way to get the message across was through satire and the resulting film would be a “nightmare comedy” (Howard 91). Harris thought it was a bad idea, but since he had left the partnership, he no longer had any control over the film. Kubrick was free to shoot the film anyway he chose.

During the filming of Lolita, Peter Sellers had given Kubrick a copy of The Magic Christian by novelist Terry Southern (Phillips and Hill 339). Kubrick felt that Southern’s “wild imagination” and “irreverent black humor” were perfect for the film and offered Southern the chance to add “some comic touches” to the screenplay (339). Southern accepted the job and joined Kubrick in London. With the script coming together, Kubrick called his friend Peter Sellers and asked him if he would again be willing to play multiple roles in a film. Originally, Kubrick wanted Sellers to play four different characters: Dr. Strangelove, President Muffley, Captain Mandrake, and Major Kong. Sellers signed on for the first three roles, stating that the Texan accent was too difficult for him to master:

Dear Stanley:
I am so very sorry to tell you that I am having serious difficulty with the various roles. Now hear this: there is no way, repeat, no way, I can play the Texas pilot, ‘Major King-Kong.’ I have a complete block against that accent. Letter from Okin [his agent] follows. Please forgive.
Peter S.

At first Kubrick was adamant but he eventually complied. Over the years, Kubrick gave various reasons for wanting Sellers to play so many different roles. When asked if it
were simply a gimmick, Kubrick replied, “each of the parts requires the same kind of talent, the same kind of performance. If there is only one man who has that kind of talent, then he must play all four parts” (Howard 92). Another time Kubrick stated that he wanted Sellers to play these four roles because then “almost everywhere the viewer looks, there is some version of Peter Sellers holding the fate of the world in his hands” (Phillips and Hill 319). Regardless of the reason for the multiple casting, the performances are a testament to Sellers versatility as an actor (Figs. 4.31-4.33).

Kubrick quickly re-cast the role of Kong with Slim Pickens. Pickens, who had never been out of the United States, accepted the role over the phone, obtained a passport, flew to London, and arrived at the studio, “sporting a 10-gallon hat, a cowboy shirt, blue jeans, and boots” (Phillips and Hill 289). Kubrick showed Pickens no footage. He simply gave him his script and told him to play his role “straight” and deliver his lines “deadpan” (289). Pickens complied and played true to form right up until he rides the bomb like a bronco and sets off Armageddon. Many critics have pointed out that it

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**Figs. 4.31-4.33.** The many faces of Peter Sellers: Group Captain Lionel Mandrake, President Merkin Muffley, and Dr. Strangelove. Initially, Sellers was also contracted to play the role of Major “King” Kong.

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was fortunate that Sellers declined the role of Kong. It is hard to imagine, as talented as
Sellers is, that he could have given a better, more realistic performance than Pickens.

For the role of General Jack D. Ripper, Kubrick used another veteran of his films,
Sterling Hayden. Hayden, a former marine, had served as an undercover agent for the
Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA. On assignment in Yugoslavia, he
became sympathetic to their cause and joined the Communist Party for a six-month
stint in 1946, an act that led to him being questioned by the House Un-American
Activities Committee (Phillips and Hill 151). He began a promising career in Hollywood
with the lead role in John Huston’s *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), but once the word spread
about his Communist connections, he found it difficult to find work. In order to
“remove the cloud over [his] name,” he informed on other Communist sympathizers,
but never became a major star, resigning himself to minor roles in low budget westerns
(151). When Kubrick offered him the role of Johnny Clay in *The Killing*, he quickly
accepted. Although the film and Hayden’s performance received good critical reviews,
Hayden’s career did not recover and he left the film industry in 1958, returning only
when Kubrick called to offer him another job. Kubrick’s choice of Hayden was inspired.
His background as a former soldier, secret agent, and informer was perfect for the
pokerfaced, paranoid Ripper. The fact that he was a former member of the Communist
Party added an underlying element of humor to his solemn diatribe against

“Communist infiltration, Communist indoctrination, Communist subversion and the
international Communist conspiracy.” According to Paul Boyer, Ripper was based on the 1950s head of the Strategic Air Command, Curtis LeMay. LeMay “never met a bombing plan he didn’t like” and was an easily recognizable, cigar-chewing prototype for Ripper (267). LeMay was once quoted as saying that if a Soviet attack ever seemed likely, he would “knock the shit out of them before they ever got off the ground” (267). When told by Congress that a preemptive strike was not official policy, he replied, “No, it’s not official policy, but it’s my policy” (267).

LeMay was also the basis for the character of General Turgidson, a scene-stealing role that went to the then up and coming George C. Scott. Scott had made several television appearances and had noticeable roles in both Otto Preminger’s Anatomy of Murder (1959) and Robert Rossen’s The Hustler (1961). But it was his stage portrayal of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice in Central Park that caught Kubrick’s attention. Scott had already developed a reputation as a temperamental actor, but his intensity brought a level of realism to the war room situation as he advocates for an all-out nuclear attack:

Mr. President, we are rapidly approaching a moment of truth both for ourselves as human beings and for the life of our nation. Now, truth is not always a pleasant thing. But it is necessary now to make a choice, to choose between two admittedly regrettable, but nevertheless distinguishable, postwar environments: one where you got twenty million people killed, and the other where you got a hundred and fifty million people killed.

This speech could easily appear in a serious war film, but when Scott replaces LeMay’s cigar with chewing gum, the scene takes on an element of comedy. Scott and Hayden
are essentially playing the same character, one young and virile, the other dying and impotent (Figs. 4.34-4.36).

Figs. 4.34-4.36. Sterling Hayden, General Curtis LeMay, and George C. Scott. Hayden and Scott turned in two completely different performances inspired by the same man.

With his comedic script and cast in place, Kubrick began filming what was to become his first masterpiece. The title was first changed from Red Alert to The Edge of Doom, then to The Delicate Balance of Terror, before finally becoming Dr. Strangelove. Later, the film acquired its subtitle, “or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb” (Howard 91). Though Phillips and Hill make the claim that Paths of Glory has had “the least attention [of any of Kubrick’s films] in terms of comparing the film to the source novel,” virtually no criticism of Dr. Strangelove in relation to Red Alert has been written. Even the three major critical studies of Kubrick by Kagan, Falsetto, and Nelson gloss over the film’s source text. Both Kagan and Falsetto simply mention that the film is adapted from a novel by Peter Bryant, not even pointing out that “Peter Bryant” is a pseudonym. Nelson does provide a short summary of the novel and speculates why the novel may have appealed to Kubrick. George’s style, according to Nelson, is “reminiscent of the dramatic and thematic clarity” of both Lionel White’s Clean Break
and Humphrey Cobb’s *Paths of Glory* (84). The novel’s “tight, economical structure
recalls White’s manipulation of time” and the three parallel, isolated settings—the
bomber, the air force base, and the War Room—are “structurally comparable to Cobb’s
development of the conflicts between the intimate world of the trenches and a more
distant military hierarchy” (84). However, Nelson makes no further comment regarding
Kubrick’s choices when adapting the novel to film, other than pointing out that the
novel is a serious examination of “the very real possibility of nuclear war by accident
rather than design,” while Kubrick’s adaptation is “a highly satiric and exaggerated
treatment of a madness that far too many people accept as ‘normal’” (84, 87).

Though I have previously given Kubrick’s reasons for the move from the serious
to the satiric, I have not discussed the results. Again, what is Kubrick doing with the
text? By filming a “nightmare comedy” about the things we fear most, Kubrick takes
George’s straightforward morality tale of flat, uninteresting characters and expands its
thematic and dramatic possibilities. The film only deviates from the novel’s plot on one
major point—the detonation of the bomb. While this is a major deviation, the events
leading up to it are relatively unchanged. The difference comes in the framing of the
story and the delivery of the lines. In the novel, Quinten asks Manelli if he recognizes
his voice. When the Second Lieutenant affirms, Quinten issues a “Warning Red” and
orders the base to be sealed, including “incoming calls, as well as outgoing. We may
have to deal with saboteurs pretending to be anyone from the President down. No calls
from inside go out. No calls from outside are even answered, let alone put through. No calls. You understand?” (14). When Manelli replies that no calls will be allowed “in or out without [the general’s] personal say so,” Quinten calmly remarks, “No calls at all, with or without my personal say so…. My voice can be imitated too, Lieutenant” (14). The young Manelli swallows nervously, realizing that “this was really it” (14). Kubrick highlights the ludicrous nature of this situation through Ripper and Mandrake’s exchange:

    Ripper: You recognize my voice, Mandrake?
    Mandrake: I do sir, why do you ask?
    Ripper: Why do you think I asked?
    Mandrake: Well I don’t know, sir. We spoke just a few moments ago on the phone, didn’t we?
    Ripper: You don’t think I’d ask if you recognized my voice unless it was pretty damned important do you, Mandrake?
    Mandrake: No, I don’t, sir. No.
    Ripper: Alright, let’s see if we stay on the ball. Has the wing confirmed holding at their failsafe points?
    Mandrake: Yes, sir. The confirmations have all just come in.
    Ripper: Very well, now, listen to me carefully. The base is being put on condition red. I want this flashed to all sections immediately.
    Mandrake: Condition red, sir. Yes. Jolly good idea, keeps the men on their toes.

This first exchange in the film plays Hayden’s Ripper as an ominous, expressionless straight man to Sellers laid-back, nasal-voiced Mandrake. Although the exact same exchange could be taken seriously, its placement in the film makes it difficult not to laugh. After all, the scene has been framed by the film’s opening
sequence, in which an ominous voiceover alerts the audience to rumors “cirulating among high-level Western leaders” about the Soviet Union’s “ultimate weapon: a doomsday device” located in the “perpetually fog-shrouded wasteland below the Arctic peaks of the Zhokhov Islands,” before cutting to a series of phallic and sexually indicative shots of a plane refueling to the soundtrack of “Try a Little Tenderness” (Figs. 4.37-4.39).

Figs. 4.37-4.39. The opening images of Dr. Strangelove let the audience know that in this film, anything is possible.

Though this opening sequence is intended to be humorous, Kubrick is commenting on the ludicrousness of the system. If it is true that Quinten’s “voice can be imitated,” then how does Manelli know that he is speaking to the General? Another minor change of Kubrick’s that elevated the humor of the film but still commented on the system was changing the bomber’s name. The U.S. Military is notorious for giving passive, serene names to its harbingers of destruction. Names of actual B-52 bombers include Liberator, Peacemaker, and Strawberry Blonde. George was following suit when he named the bringer of Armageddon after a heavenly creature. However, Kubrick was much more to the point when he changed the name from Alabama Angel to The Leper Colony. This subtle change criticizes the government’s use of euphemisms to cover up
their atrocities. Throughout the film, the humor emphasizes the “truth” that Kubrick was trying to achieve. As Nelson has pointed out, in order to be “truthful,” “the filmic expression” of a given requires “an aesthetic and philosophical detachment” (85). The humor provides this detachment by allowing the audience to laugh at the absurdity of the situation that we, as human beings, have created: the possibility of destroying ourselves.

The film’s humor operates on other levels as well. As I stated earlier, Red Alert is a morality tale of flat, uninteresting characters. The morality plays of the 15th and 16th centuries were allegorical tales in which the characters were personifications of various attributes. The attribute represented is explicit in the names of the characters, e.g., Everyman, Knowledge, Good-Deeds, Death. Kubrick builds on this tradition by renaming all of the characters in the film, giving them names that allude to their natures. F. Anthony Macklin was the first to note the “sexual allegory” present in the film in his essay “Sex and Dr. Strangelove.” From the opening fueling sequence to the climactic explosion at the end, the film is full of subtle—though sometimes overt—sexual innuendo. General Jack D. Ripper is appropriately named for the notorious sex killer, Jack the Ripper, a man who took out his frustrations on prostitutes. Like his historical counterpart, General Ripper is concerned about his sexuality and he fears women. He explains to Mandrake that he first became aware of the Communist plot to steal Americans’ “precious bodily fluids” during “the physical act of love” when he
noticed “a profound sense of fatigue, a feeling of emptiness,” and correctly interpreted his feelings as a “loss of essence.” He assures Mandrake that has not recurred by telling him that “women sense my power, and they seek the life essence. I do not avoid women, Mandrake, but I do deny them my essence.”

The other names in the film are just as telling. Mandrake is named for the mandrake root, a plant that resembles a penis and, as such, has legendary aphrodisiacal powers. Mandrake is the one character in the film with the power to stop the attack if he can decipher the recall codes. General “Buck” Turgidson is the most aggressive character in the film and is the only one to actually appear in a scene with a woman. The woman in question is his secretary, Miss Scott, who also happens to be the Playboy Playmate of the Month.38 The one scene in which they appear together implies that they have had sex (Fig. 4.40-4.41). A “buck” is technically a male animal, but the term is often used in slang to represent a sexually, potent male or “stud.” Turgid means “swollen,” so the general is a “swollen stud.” He takes great interest in Dr. Strangelove’s plan for a ten-to-one female to male ratio in the post-nuclear war, asking if the situation would “necessitate the abandonment of the so-called monogamous sexual relationship...as far as men were concerned.” President Merkin Muffley has a name that suggests female genitalia. Muffley is often seen as being an effeminate, ineffectual president, but this is

38 It is often wrongly stated that Tracy Reed, the actress in the role of Miss Scott, was an actual Playboy Playmate. Though the issue that Major Kong is looking at is the actual June 1962 issue of Playboy, the centerfold was a fake created solely for the film.
simply not the case. Throughout the film, the president attempts to coax—sometimes through baby talk—the various men involved into finding a non-violent way to settle the disaster. He is not ineffectual; in fact, he is quite the opposite. He knows exactly how to control the men in his life.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Fig. 4.40-4.41.** General Turgidson has what the other men in the film desire: power and women.

Other names in the film include Premiere Kissov (“Kiss-OFF”), Russian Ambassador Alexi de Sadesky (Marquis de Sade), Colonel “Bat” Guano (“Bat Shit” or, considering his character, “Shit for Brains”), and of course, Dr. Strangelove. Since Macklin’s essay has appeared, many critics have referenced it and offered various reasons for the sexually explicit names. Macklin himself seemed to read the film as solely sexual allegory without attaching any additional meaning to it. Kagan refers to the Macklin’s interpretation as “only one interesting way of looking at the film” (137). Kubrick personally responded to Macklin with a letter stating, “I would not think of quarreling with your interpretation nor offering any other, as I have found it always the
best policy to allow the film to speak for itself” (137). The film does speak to the link between warfare and the male libido. Males of a species tend to be the aggressors who will stop at nothing to dominate their perceived territory, even if it means destroying that territory and themselves in the process. All of the men in the film seem to function on the level of masturbation. While Major Kong and his crew thumb through Playboy magazine, Mandrake unsuccessfully attempts to coax the recall code from Ripper, Muffley tries to negotiate a satisfactory compromise, and Dr. Strangelove—in a deleted scene—literally masturbates with his renegade hand (Starr 100). In addition to the rampant sexual references, there are a number of scenes in which food plays a prominent role. James Earl Jones (Lt. Zogg) noted, “Every time he cut to us, we’d be eating a Twinkie—just constantly stuffing our faces” (Hughes 117). The War Room has a fully stocked and catered buffet, and Dr. Strangelove’s post-war strategy includes plans for greenhouses and breeding places for animals. Kubrick’s film argues that for all of his technological achievement, man is still a primitive beast governed by his base desires: food and sex. Even in the face of death, the crew of The Leper Colony is provided with prophylactics, lipstick and stockings. As Major Kong says, “a fella could have a pretty good weekend in Vegas with all that stuff.”39

For all its humor, Dr. Strangelove raises serious questions about the nature of man and the possible breakdown in the system of communication. By casting Sellers in

39 Originally “Dallas.” In order not to offend audiences, the studio had Kubrick dub in “Vegas” due to the recent assassination of President Kennedy.
multiple roles, Kubrick is suggesting that every man has the power to save or destroy. As Sellers tries to negotiate a peace, Sellers also tries to recall the planes, Sellers tries to plan for a post-nuclear Utopia and, if he had played the role of Kong, Sellers tries to destroy the world. The film also questions the validity of a fail-safe system that can be so easily overridden. When Mandrake finally deciphers the code, he does not have enough change to use the pay phone. Guano refuses to destroy “private property,” but finally agrees after warning Mandrake that he will “have to answer to the Coca-Cola Company.” Though this scenario seems ridiculous, this scene was shown at a session of Congress, who after the viewing stated that the scene “raised legitimate questions about whether crucial information could find its way to the right people during a nuclear crisis” (“Stop Worrying”). Even though the U.S. government ultimately dismissed Kubrick’s film as a farcical fiction, his was the only film they deemed necessary to include the following disclaimer:

It is the stated position of the U.S. Air Force that their safeguards would prevent the occurrence of such events as are depicted in this film. Furthermore, it should be noted that none of the characters portrayed in this film are meant to represent any real persons living or dead.

The government did not impose such a disclaimer on any previously released nuclear war films, nor did it impose this same disclaimer on Sidney Lumet’s *Fail-Safe*, which
Columbia Pictures—Dr. Strangelove’s distributor—released later the same year.\footnote{Columbia Pictures stepped in and agreed to finance and distribute both pictures after Kubrick attempted to gain an injunction to prevent \textit{Fail-Safe} from being produced. His claim argued that \textit{Fail-Safe}, the novel, was directly plagiarized from \textit{Red Alert}. Though the court ruled against him, his deal with Columbia guaranteed that \textit{Dr. Strangelove} would be released ten months ahead of \textit{Fail-Safe}. See Bogdanovich, Howard, and Phillips and Hill.} \textit{Fail-Safe}, adapted from a novel by Eugene Burdick, presents the exact same situation in a humorless, direct approach. Without the humor, the message apparently fails to resonate. While \textit{Fail-Safe}, originally praised as a “gripping narrative realistically and almost frighteningly told,” has passed into obscurity, \textit{Dr. Strangelove} has achieved the rank of “classic.” The American Film Institute named it number three of the 100 Funniest American Movies and number 26 of the 100 Greatest Movies regardless of genre.

But the film is important to more than simple film buffs. According to Bosley Crowther, “there should be an Act of Congress or an Amendment to the Constitution to compel that [the film] be shown annually to the President, the members of his Cabinet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and all high-ranking government officials who inhabit the Pentagon” (203). “Strangelovian” has, like “Kafkaesque,” become part of our vocabulary. In a 2004 editorial on the “interrogation methods” used at Guantánamo Bay, Andrew Rosenthal referred to “the Strangelovian logic that lay behind Mr. Rumsfeld’s order.” To further emphasize the correlation between Strangelove and Rumsfeld, a photograph has recently begun circulating on the internet showing Rumsfeld’s resemblance to the good doctor (Fig. 4.42).
As David Halberstam has pointed out, Dr. Strangelove “was an important benchmark” because rather than attacking “the other side,” it attacked the very “mindlessness of nuclear war” itself and portrayed how the “irrational had become the rational” (518). In Halberstam’s final assessment, Strangelove is “black humor at its best, and it touched some very sensitive nerve ends” (518). But that is the nature of black humor. It is designed to uncover the naked truth, however painful that flaying may be.41

For his final venture into war, Kubrick chose Vietnam. Again his source was penned by a “real soldier.” Gustav Hasford served as a war correspondent with the First Marine Division in Vietnam, and he used this experience as the basis for his first novel, The Short-Timers (1979). Though a few critics condemned the novel, namely New

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41 See Wendy Doniger, “Terror and Gallows Humor: After September 11?” This enlightening lecture discusses the use of humor following tragedy and contains several quotes from Kubrick’s co-writer, Terry Southern. The lecture was delivered on December 14, 2001, at the University of Leiden. A transcript is available on-line at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/News/911doniger.html.
York Times’ book reviewer Roger Sale, who claimed that the book’s economic prose style “reek[ed] of Creative Writing 201,” most critics lauded the novel, deeming it “powerful and electrifying,” “brilliant,” “arresting” and “extraordinary”42 (19). Walter Clemons regarded the book as “the best work of fiction about the Vietnam War,” while the Kirkus Reviews called it “a terse spitball of a book, fine and real and terrifying, that marks a real advance in Vietnam War literature” (60, 1209). “Terse” is a worthwhile description of the novel. At only 180 pages, The Short-Timers is tight, its dialogue, spare and unsentimental. Two critics, J. Michael Straczynski and Richard Lacayo, argued that it was the very brevity of the novel that Kubrick would have found compelling, for the book reads more like a Hollywood treatment than a novel (Straczynski 160). With Hasford’s novel, Kubrick didn’t simply find a story, Lacayo argues, he

found a Kubrick movie, and one that could be made without boiling off half of the book…to arrive at his perennial obsessions. [The] novel had arrived at those already: death and technological fetishism, of course, but above all scorn for the phantom of liberty, for the false presumption that we’re masters of our fate. (11)

The popularity of the novel led to a little seen phenomenon in Kubrick criticism. Several reviews of Full Metal Jacket actually commented on the relation of the film to the novel. However, as Greg Jenkins has noted, “one observer’s comments seldom aligned precisely with anyone else’s” (110).

42 From Colin Wilson, the Chicago Tribune Book World, Atlantic Monthly, and the Philadelphia Inquirer respectively.
Several reviewers sided with Richard Corliss’ assessment that the film “closely followed” the novel, though there was disagreement as to whether or not this was a good quality (66). Corliss himself complained about the film’s “Hollywood Ending” (66). Both Lacayo and Tom O’Brien criticized Kubrick for remaining too faithful to his source, arguing that Kubrick should have allowed Sergeant Gerheim (Gunnery Sergeant Hartman in the film) to live (14, 458). Gerri Reaves noted Kubrick’s tendency to “preserve” the novel’s details, though he relocates them in the film (233). Regardless of whether they gave the film an overall good review, critics tended to agree that the major problem with the film was the transition from the basic training sequence to the Vietnam sequence. As Jenkins has noted, many critics view the film as “two technically joined, but essentially separate, entities,” with the first part held in higher regard (109). Pauline Kael speaks for the majority of these critics when she states, “After the first part reaches climax, the movie becomes dispersed, as if it had no story. It never regains its forward drive; the second part is almost a different picture” (75). John Simon argues that the second half of the film lacks “a human center,” while David Denby added that no one in his [or her] right mind would ever “mistake Kubrick for a humanist” (52, 54). Interestingly enough, it is in the second half of the film that critics claim Kubrick deviates the most from his source material.

For all of the references to the novel in the early critical reviews, comparisons of the novel to the film are again absent from later critical studies. In fact, only Greg
Jenkins supplies a lengthy analysis of the two. Falsetto does not even reference the novel and only mentions Hasford one time, as Kubrick’s co-screenwriter. Nelson gives a fuller treatment, following his pattern of giving a short synopsis of the novel before turning entirely to his analysis of the film. In his review of the novel, he compares Hasford’s work, thematically, to Cobb’s Paths of Glory, noting the novel deals with the ironic gaps that exist between the disparate worlds inhabited by the men who fight wars and those who manage them. Only in Hasford, the “managers” are not generals living in remote chateaus—they are sadistic drill instructors living in the men’s faces; they are public relations “poges” from the Information Services Office, “who stare at the grunts as though [they] were Hell’s Angels at the ballet”; and they are the news manipulators from Stars and Stripes who sloganize that Winning the War also requires Winning the Hearts and Minds of the very people whose country they are helping to destroy. (232)

Nelson also notes that Hasford’s writing mixes “objective reportage” with “nightmarishly surreal descriptions” to create a “satiric, understated style” (231). This “objective satire” comes through in the voice of the novel’s first person narrator, Private Joker. Incorporated into Joker’s narrative is “the suggestion that certain popularized myths of an invidious mass culture had as much to do with the psychological and spiritual damage inflicted by this war as any outmoded Cold War policy” (233). With its ironic gaps, nightmare satire, and considerations of popular myths and Cold War politics, The Short-timers was the perfect source for the director of Paths of Glory and Dr. Strangelove.
As stated earlier, Greg Jenkins has provided the fullest consideration of Kubrick’s film in relation to Hasford’s novel in his *Stanley Kubrick and the Art of Adaptation*. In his 40-page analysis, Jenkins uses the film, rather than the novel, as his guide by dividing his analysis into two parts, “Parris Island” and “Vietnam.” Each of these parts is further divided into sections that consider “Pyle as Albatross,” “Pyle, Born Again,” “Hue, Cowboy, and the Lusthog Squad,” and “The Sniper.” Jenkins considers the film side by side with the novel and gives a formalist, rhetorical reading of each. He breaks down the film sequence by sequence and then compares each sequence to its counterpart in the novel, considering “changes in the characters and in the narrative structure” (1). Though he notes what the changes are and whether he believes that the changes strengthen or weaken the film, he never leaves his formalist trappings to consider the larger implications of Kubrick’s changes. What Kubrick was doing with the text and why are not his concerns. This is not to suggest that Jenkins’ study is not worthwhile. It is extremely useful in that it is the first study to consider, in any detail, Kubrick’s adaptive process.

What is Kubrick doing with the text? He is using Hasford’s novel to re-write the myth of war in general and the myth of Vietnam in particular. For a discussion of the second half of the film as a re-telling of Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*, see Stevenson, James A. “Beyond Stephen Crane: *Full Metal Jacket*.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 16.4 (1988): 238-43.
ideals about war as typically personified by John Wayne. Kubrick brings these
references into focus but rearranges and exploits them in a way that distances the
viewer from the war and the soldiers who fight it. As Gerri Reaves has noted, with Full
Metal Jacket, Kubrick “inserts a critical space between us and the dehumanizing process
chronicled in the war” (232). The space not only provides the viewer “an objective
position” to examine connections between violence, sex, and survival, but also a way in
which to “examine our own reaction to these connections” (232). Hasford’s The Short-
Timers is a re-telling of Cobb’s Paths of Glory. Both novels fulfill narrative expectations
by giving the reader semi-characters that drive forward a story about the injustices of
war. Whereas Cobb’s novel gives the reader a hero to applaud in Colonel Dax, a soldier
who will not sell out his principles and, therefore, remains morally superior to his
commanding officers, Hasford’s re-telling gives the reader a nihilistic hero in Joker, an
everyman who tries “very hard not to think about anything important” (180). Kubrick’s
Paths of Glory fleshes out Dax even further and gives the viewer a leader to follow into
battle, a “real-life” John Wayne. But with Full Metal Jacket, Kubrick offers the viewer no
hero with which to sympathize. Kubrick’s film is not about war; it is about the concept
of war, or as Reaves states, Full Metal Jacket is “a recorded and thus fictionalized version
of the war; our personal memories of it; our addiction to typical narrative conventions;
and…our need to synthesize these components into a humanistic message” (236).
Kubrick’s adaptation of Hasford’s novel is an amalgamation of the Vietnam myth that
borrows imagery from our collective consciousness and then forces us to react when that imagery is undercut by opposing ideologies in the film.

The reader’s introduction to the major characters in Hasford’s novel involves multiple references to pop culture iconography. At Parris Island, “an eight-week college for the phony-tough and the crazy-brave,” new recruit Leonard Pratt is dubbed “Gomer Pyle” by Gunnery Sergeant Gerheim (3). Though the other new recruits think the sergeant is “trying to be funny,” nobody laughs at the joke (3). However, “Cowboy” and the soon to be named “Joker” can keep their composure only so long:

A wiry little Texan in horn-rimmed glasses the guys are already calling “Cowboy” says, “Is that you, John Wayne? Is this me?” Cowboy takes off his pearl-gray Stetson and fans his sweaty face.

I laugh. Years of high school drama classes have made me a mimic. I sound exactly like John Wayne as I say: “I think I’m going to hate this movie.” (4)

In this opening scene, the reader is led comfortably into the horrors of war. With the familiar opening line, “The Marines are looking for a few good men,” the first person narration, the interjected humor—even the drill instructor laughs—and the references to *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* (1964) and John Wayne, the reader is eased into this “world of shit.” In the film, Kubrick immediately undercuts the ease by opening with two quick title cards proclaiming, “A Stanley Kubrick Film” and “Full Metal Jacket” in white letters on a black background with Johnny Wright’s haunting “Hello, Vietnam” playing in the background. The viewer is then shown the new recruits being stripped, or shorn,
of their identities by having their hair cut off completely so that these recruits bear no resemblance to Gomer Pyle or John Wayne (Figs. 4.43-4.45).

Figs. 4.43-4.45. A few good men: Jim Nabors in Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C., John Wayne in The Longest Day (1962), and Matthew Modine in Full Metal Jacket.

Kubrick further complicates the novel by not allowing Joker to speak at the opening of the film. Though Kubrick keeps Joker as a first person narrator, the narration is sporadic and does not appear until seven minutes and forty seconds into the film. Instead, the first dialogue in the film is Hartman welcoming his new recruits:

I am Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, your senior drill instructor! From now on, you will speak only when spoken to, and the first and last words out of your filthy sewers will be “Sir!” Do you maggots understand that?...If you ladies leave my island, if you survive recruit training, you will be a weapon, you will be a minister of death, praying for war! But until that day you are pukes! You are the lowest form of life on Earth! You are not even human-fucking-beings! You are nothing but unorganized grabasstic pieces of amphibian shit.

Hartman goes on to inform his “pukes” that there is no racial bigotry in the Corps, as they are “all equally worthless.”
Just as Hasford maintains an element of realism with his “objective reporting,” Kubrick brought realism to the Parris Island sequence with his inspired casting of R. Lee Ermey as Sergeant Hartman. Kubrick wanted to hire a real US Marine Drill Instructor as a consultant for the film and ran ads asking for videotape auditions to be sent in. Ermey’s audition tape showcased the former drill instructor yelling obscene insults and abuse for fifteen minutes without stopping, repeating himself, or flinching even though he was being pelted with tennis balls and oranges. Kubrick was so impressed that he hired Ermey as his consultant, and Ermey personally supervised the construction of the Parris Island set. When filming commenced, the actor cast as Hartman, Tim Colceri, was not—in Ermey’s opinion—performing adequately. Ermey went to Kubrick and asked for the part. Kubrick declined, stating that with limited acting experience, Ermey could not pull off the role of the “sadistic, brutal, and hard but fair” drill instructor (Hughes 226). Ermey replied by barking at Kubrick to stand up when he was spoken to. Kubrick instinctively obeyed. It was the first time since Spartacus that Kubrick had let someone tell him what to do on his set. The following day, Colceri was demoted to the role of the door gunner in a single scene, while Ermey took over the role for which he would forever be remembered (Figs. 4.46-4.47).

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45 The door gunner scene appears halfway through the film as Joker and Rafterman are being airlifted to Phu Bai. The sadistic gunner is cutting down rice farmers while screaming, “Get some!” The scene does not appear in The Short-Timers but in Herr’s book, Dispatches (1978, re-issued by Vintage International in 1991).
According to both Kubrick and co-writer Michael Herr, Ermey deserved co-
screenwriting credit as the majority of his lines were improvised.

Figs. 4.46-4.47. A former drill instructor, R. Lee Ermey brought a realism to his
performance that is, at times, terrifying.

By opening the film with Hartman’s voice rather than Joker’s, Kubrick denies his
viewer any central character with which to identify. Hasford’s novel explores the horror
of war and its dehumanizing effect on those who wage war, but throughout the
nightmare he allows his reader a guide in the form of Joker. Though Joker is the most
often recurring character in the film and the one who provides the voice-over, he is not
a guide for the viewer. Rather, he simply represents one possible point of view. As
stated earlier, Joker’s voice-over does not begin until nearly eight minutes into the film.
The only time he speaks prior to this is when addressing Hartman by screaming, “Sir,
yes, sir!” or by mimicking John Wayne. The audience, unless they are fans of actor
Matthew Modine, does not even know what Joker’s real voice sounds like. The
audience is not sure which grunt is speaking to them. It could be Joker, Cowboy,
Snowball, Pyle, or any of the other recruits who have had their identities stripped from them.

Kubrick further confuses identity by giving Cowboy’s line to Joker. In the exchange from the novel mentioned above, Cowboy is the first to mimic John Wayne, “Is that you, John Wayne? Is this me?” while Joker replies, “I think I’m going to hate this movie.” In the film, Joker simply says, “Is that you, John Wayne? Is this me?” While in the novel the exchange draws laughter from the platoon and even the drill instructor, in the film no one laughs and Hartman launches into a tirade of threats and insults that ends with him punching Joker in the gut. In the novel Joker is an individual, but in the film Joker’s—and the other recruits’—identity is morphed into the group as the group is consumed by the war machine. The stripping of identity is the purpose of boot camp, especially wartime boot camp. However, most war films do want the audience to identify with a certain character. Kubrick’s film simply will not allow this identification to happen.

In the Vietnam section of the film, Kubrick continues to distance the viewer from the characters by making the characters less and less likeable. Joker continues to joke even when inappropriate. When Lieutenant Lockhart tells his staff that the Viet Cong has taken advantage of a ceasefire to launch an attack that has successfully cut the country in half, that the U.S. embassy has been overrun, and that even “Cronkite is going to say that the war is now unwinnable,” Joker’s only response is “Sir, does this
mean that Ann-Margaret’s not coming?” Joker’s humorous antics are completely out of place in the war zone. The Lieutenant’s response is to send Joker to Phu Bai to put him “in the shit.” Kubrick is dismantling America’s image of the marine as Gomer Pyle. The recruit given the moniker “Pyle” (Vincent D’Onofrio) was not cut out for the marines and takes his own life. Joker, the representation of the “Pyle” who does make it through basic training, is out of place. War is no joke.

Kubrick also dismantles the marine as John Wayne. In the second half of the film, the character who most resembles a John Wayne character is Animal Mother played by Adam Baldwin. In the climactic sequence, Joker is reunited with Cowboy and his Lusthog Squad. The squad is ordered to march to Hue City. On the way, a series of traps and attacks leaves Cowboy in command of the squad. During this sequence, Joker and the viewer are introduced to Animal Mother, who does not care for Joker because Joker can only “talk the talk.” Because Joker has not seen any action in the war, he is not a true marine. When Lieutenant Touchdown and Hand Job are killed, the rest of the squad stand around the bodies and comment as they wait for the bodies to be airlifted out. While the rest of the squadron offer the expected send off’s of “You’re going home now,” “Semper Fi,” and “We’re mean marines, sir,” Animal Mother tells his fallen comrades, “Better you than me.” When Rafterman says that “at least they died for a good cause,” Animal Mother sarcastically asks, “What cause is that?” Rafterman tells him, “Freedom.” Animal Mother sneers and tells the “new guy” to “flush out [his]
headgear.” For Animal Mother, the army is wasting “gooks for freedom.” The war is slaughter and if he’s “going to get [his] balls blown off for a word,” that word is “poontang.” In the next scene, the squad negotiates with a pimp over the price of a hooker. After the price has been determined, Animal Mother takes the girl into an abandoned movie theater and tells everyone else that he’ll “skip the foreplay.” Animal Mother is, as the first part of his name suggests, animalistic. He survives on instinct and cares only for fulfilling his base desires for violence and sex. On his helmet, Animal Mother has written, “I am become death.” When Robert Oppenheimer spoke these words, taken from the Bhagavad-Gita, his tone was regretful. For Animal Mother, however, they seem to be a mantra. Animal Mother has no redeeming qualities as a human being.

However, in the climactic scene, Animal Mother is the character who embodies the heroic characteristics movie audiences have come to associate with John Wayne. While the squad is pinned down by sniper fire, he bravely charges into the kill zone to rescue two fallen comrades (Figs. 4.48-4.49). He shows no fear. In any other movie, this is the scene where the viewer is supposed to be overcome with emotion and cheer for the hero who ignores orders and defies all odds. But, because the viewer does not like Animal Mother, the reaction is less than enthusiastic. In fact, the viewer does not know how to react at all. Kubrick catches the viewer off guard. As Reaves notes, this self-sacrificing act performed by the most inhumane of men catches us unaware—it is Kubrick at his most
manipulative. And at this culminating point when the squad’s true mettle is tested, we see the significance of what “types” survive. It is Animal Mother, the most competent, the most brutal and dehumanized, who is the perfect survival machine. (235)

The truth of war is not John Wayne marching across a battlefield to save the day for the good of all mankind. The truth of war is a sadistic killing machine who survives so that he can continue to kill. In war, as Joker says, “a day without blood is a like a day without sunshine.”

Figs. 4.48-4.49. As Animal Mother (Adam Baldwin) charges in to rescue his fallen comrades, he embodies the characteristics audiences have come to expect from their war heroes.

In this final climactic scene, Kubrick continues to deny the viewer a character with which to identify by literally showing us the war from the sniper’s point of view. As the squad makes its way into the burned out Hue City compound, the camera views the scene from the sniper’s location (Figs. 4.50-4.51). Neither the audience nor the squad yet knows that the sniper is a young Vietnamese woman. She baits the squad by not
killing Eightball or Doc Jay quickly. Rather, in a scene reminiscent of the gladiator
t raining scene in *Spartacus*, she delivers a slow kill (Figs. 4.52-4.54).

Figs. 4.50-4.51. Kubrick shows his viewer the war through the eyes of “the enemy.”

Figs. 4.52-4.54. The sniper’s “slow-killing” accuracy recalls the gladiator training in
*Spartacus.*

After the sniper kills Cowboy, the squad moves in to take her out. Joker is the
first to find her, but his gun jams. He is literally and figuratively impotent. Rafterman
shoots her and gets his first confirmed kill. However, the sniper does not die instantly.
The squad gathers around their fallen enemy much as they gathered around their fallen
comrades earlier. Again, they each offer their thoughts on death. It is a scene replete
with imagery as the men bond while two of their own, Rafterman and Joker, lose their
virginity symbolically raping the girl. The squad’s comments are even sexual in nature:
“No more boom-boom for this baby-san.” The scene has more in common with its counterpart in *Fear and Desire* than the “rape” scene in *Paths of Glory*. While *Paths of Glory* ends with hope for humanity, *Full Metal Jacket* offers no sympathy for men at war. When Animal Mother tells the squad to move out, Joker argues that they “can’t just leave her.” Animal Mother tells Joker that if he wants to “waste her,” he can. In the novel, the scene plays out as a mercy killing:

> I look at the sniper. She whimpers. I try to decide what I would want if I were down, half dead, hurting bad, surrounded by my enemies. I look into her eyes, trying to find the answer. She sees me. She recognizes me—I am the one who will end her life. We share a bloody intimacy. (120)

The film version is more complicated. Joker delivers the coup de grace, but is it out of mercy or is he trying to prove that he is “hard” by getting a confirmed kill? As Joker raises his pistol and fires, he slowly turns until the peace sign that has been visible on his uniform throughout the entire Vietnam segment of the film is no longer visible (Figs. 4.55-4.56). Earlier in the film, Joker attempts to explain that he wears “Born to Kill” on his helmet and a peace sign on his uniform to represent the “duality of man.” In the scene, Kubrick seems to imply that forced to make a choice, the darker nature of man will emerge. As the squad leaves the burned out city of Hue, they sing the theme to the Mickey Mouse show. Before Hartman is killed at the end of the Parris Island segment of the film, he asks, “What is this Mickey Mouse shit? What are you animals doing in my beloved head?” Apparently, this “Mickey Mouse shit” is that in this world
men are animals who must rely on their primitive natures to survive. Joker must become the very thing he despises; he must become like Animal Mother. Joker has to put aside his wit and his concern for truth and live only for the next kill and the next sexual encounter. As the squad marches on, Joker closes the film with a voice-over stating that though he is “in a world of shit,” he is alive and unafraid. Like any good, hard soldier, his “thoughts drift back to erect nipple wet dreams about Mary Jane Rottencrotch and the Great Homecoming Fuck Fantasy.” Joker, like Animal Mother, has learned to survive. Gomer Pyle will not survive in this world, only John Wayne.

All of Kubrick’s war films raise serious questions about the nature of human beings. As the generals of Paths of Glory scramble for advancement at the cost of their men, the powers that be in Dr. Strangelove debate the ratio of women to men in the post-nuclear war world and the grunts of Full Metal Jacket become death as they pay diseased hookers to “love them long time.” Kubrick seems to be suggesting that for all of our
technological advancement, we are still primitive creatures fighting for control of the watering hole. We are, as Joker’s helmet states, “Born to Kill.”
Chapter Five

Some Say Love…:
Stanley Kubrick’s Deviant Love Stories

I cannot give a precise *verbal* summary of the philosophical meaning of [a film]. It is intended to involve the audience in an experience. Films deal with the emotions and reflect the fragmentation of experience. It is thus misleading to try to sum up the meaning of a film verbally.

— Stanley Kubrick

The dream reveals the reality which conception lags behind. That is the horror of life – the terror of art.

— Franz Kafka

Along with war, one of Kubrick’s favorite themes to explore is love, or the supposed relationship between two people, or the lack of such relationships. At the heart of Kubrick’s *Killer’s Kiss* (1955) is a love story. This early film contains what is absent from Kubrick’s later love stories, a happy ending. Since the film opens with Davey waiting at the train station, during the flashback sequence the audience knows that Davey will survive his perilous adventure. The only question is whether or not Gloria will meet him. She does. Kubrick’s later protagonists are not so lucky.

Though love and relationships play a role in many of Kubrick’s films including *Spartacus* (1960), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and even *The Shining* (1980), the two films that focus primarily on the theme are *Lolita* (1962) and his final film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). What is fascinating about both of these films is that neither deals with conventional love stories. The first tells of the love relationship between a pedophile and his stepdaughter,
the second follows a jealous husband on a quest for infidelity that ends “most unfortunately.” Both films are based on controversial novels. Though Nabokov’s novel is now considered a literary masterpiece, Nabokov had difficulty finding a publisher for *Lolita*. First appearing in 1955 from the erotica press, Olympia, it would be three years before a legitimate publisher would release the book. Published in 1926, Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler’s *Traumnovelle (Dream Story)* comes from the period of *fin de siècle* Viennese Decadence. Like many works that chronicle the period, Schnitzler’s work openly discusses sex and sexuality rendered, in Schnitzler’s case, through a Freudian lens. This chapter will examine these two deviant love stories and Kubrick’s take on them. In the case of *Lolita*, since much criticism has discussed the film’s re-structuring of the novel, i.e., beginning with Humbert’s murder of Clare Quilty and flashing back to the motive, and the multi-faceted performance of Peter Sellers, this discussion will focus on Kubrick’s characterizations of Humbert, Lolita, and her mother.

The critical success of *Paths of Glory* and the critical and financial success of *Spartacus* gave Kubrick the artistic and creative control he needed to make any film he wanted. However, when he and Harris optioned Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Kubrick faced pressure from censors to adhere to codes of decency. The pressure, primarily from the Catholic Legion of Decency and the MPAA, forced Kubrick to receive script approval before the film was even made and to make many cuts in the final product. Kubrick
later stated that if he had “realized how severe the limitations were going to be, [he] probably wouldn’t have made the film” (Corliss 12). Censorship was not the only problem with which Kubrick had to contend, for with Lolita Kubrick was tackling his most difficult adaptation to date. His previous adaptations had been based on popular paperbacks. With Nabokov’s novel, Kubrick was taking on a literary masterpiece of linguistic acrobatics. Bringing Lolita from the verbal to the visual would be a difficult undertaking, one that Kubrick acknowledged. In order to convince the critics that a successful adaptation could be made, he persuaded Nabokov himself to write the screenplay. Also, he defended the idea of an adaptation in an article entitled “Words and Movies,” which appeared in the winter 1961 issue of Sight and Sound, six months before the film’s release:

People have asked me how it is possible to make a film out of Lolita when so much of the quality of the book depends on Nabokov’s prose style. But to take the prose style as any more than just a part of a great book is simply misunderstanding just what a great book is. Of course, the quality of the writing is one of the elements that make a novel great. But this quality is a result of the quality of the writer’s obsession with his subject…. Style is what an artist uses to fascinate the beholder in order to convey to him his feelings and emotions and thoughts. These are what have to be dramatised, not the style. The dramatising has to find a style of its own, as it will do if it really grasps the content. (14)

Though accepting that transforming such a great book would be difficult, Kubrick nevertheless accepted that it could be done. The key was in finding a style for the film.
Others did not agree that an adaptation could be adequately made. In a letter to Kubrick after seeing an early draft of the screenplay, a spokesman for the MPAA found the script to be unacceptable, not for issues of morality, but because the “script, in my opinion, has turned an important literary achievement into the worst sort of botched-up pastiche that could be imagined” (Hughes 103). Kubrick remained undaunted and continued to work from Nabokov’s highly abridged script.46

When the film was finally released after “lying about for six months,” audiences felt cheated by the lack of eroticism (Kagan 84). Critics condemned it as “the saddest and most important victim of the current reckless adaptation fad” or “an occasionally amusing but shapeless film…like a bee from which the stinger has been removed.”47 The review in The Observer was titled “Lolita Fiasco” and claimed that the film turned Nabokov’s novel into a story about “this poor English guy who is being given the runarounds by this sly young broad” (Hughes 99). Most of the complaints stemmed from the fact that Sue Lyon, at the age of fourteen, was too old to play Lolita, who in the novel is about twelve. By increasing her age by two years, Kubrick has transformed the story from a tale about a deranged man who enjoys sex with young girls and happens to fall in love with one to a tale about a man who wants to have sex with young girls

47 From reviews in Time and Variety respectively.
and is seduced by one who is “well-built” and “fetchingly vulgar” (Kagan 99) (Fig. 5.1-5.2). Though the film has never fully recovered from this criticism, it is viewed in a much more positive light today, especially since the release of Adrian Lyne’s 1997 version. Lyne’s version, like Jack Clayton’s *The Great Gatsby* (1974), adheres much more closely to its source in its attempt to take the novel and place it on the screen so that it ‘reads’ like a book. Much of the dialogue in the film is lifted straight from the novel, and the entire film is narrated by Jeremy Irons, who may as well be reading straight from the source text. The main difference in Lyne’s version and Kubrick’s is in the character of Lolita. Though Lyne’s film still increases Lolita’s age by two years, at times Dominique Swain comes across as much more of a nymphet than Lyon (Fig. 5.3-5.4).

![Fig. 5.1-5.4](image-url) Two visions of Lolita. Sue Lyon was 14 when played the role, Dominique Swain, 15. However, as many critics have noted, Lyon could have passed for 17 or older, while Swain came across as 12 or 13.

48 Incidentally, to coincide with the release of the film, Random House released an unabridged audio book of the novel with Jeremy Irons narrating.
Lyne’s more explicit version is due largely to the fact that censors, outside of the rating code, are non-existent today. Kubrick simply did not have the freedom that Lyne experienced. Under considerable restraint from the MPAA, Kubrick was forced to find visual metaphors for much of Nabokov’s witty verbiage. The result is a film that, though it downplays the eroticism of the novel, highlights the wit and satire of Nabokov. Though Nabokov’s roadside satire of America is lost, Kubrick plays up the social satire in the characters of Charlotte and John and Jean Farlow. Charlotte, played by Shelley Winters, is the personification of middle-class superiority and pomposity, and the inherent ignorance often associated with it. She name-drops (“Clare Quilty, the writer, TV, TV plays…gave us a talk on Dr. Schweitzer and Dr. Zhivago”), is materialistic (“There’s my little van Gogh” [pronounced “gawk”]), and insists on maintaining a spotless home (“Excuse the soiled sock”) all while smoking daintily and flourishing wildly with her cigarette holder (Fig. 5.5). The Farlows (Jerry Stovin and Diana Decker), Charlotte’s “broad-minded” friends, come across as the stereotypical suburban couple, always smiling, working hard, checking on their friends, chaperoning school dances, and hosting parties for their daughter and her friends. But they also want Humbert to know that they are “very broad-minded” and drop sexual innuendos throughout the film, as at the school dance when John asks Humbert if they “could sort of swap partners” (Fig. 5.6). When left alone with Humbert, Jean flirts heavily while commenting on the “remarkable effect” Humbert has had on Charlotte (Fig. 5.7).
The Farlows are not the only characters to drop sexual innuendos. The film is full of them. In “The Celluloid Lolita,” Brandon French points out many examples of the sexual subtext in Kubrick’s film. While showing Humbert the house, Charlotte “assures” him that he “couldn’t get more peace anywhere,” a play on “getting a piece.” She also invites him to see the “collection of reproductions” in her bedroom and comments on how she finds Clare Quilty very “stimulating.” During her last minute attempt to convince Humbert to stay, she offers him “late snacks” and “cherry pies.” These offers are made while standing in the garden, where Humbert is focused on Lolita sunbathing. When he accepts the offer to move in, Charlotte asks Humbert, “What was the decisive factor? My garden?” Humbert replies, “I think it was your cherry pies.” At the instant he speaks the line, Kubrick cuts to a close-up of Lolita, who has thus far only been shown though medium shots.

This scene in the garden is the scene where Kubrick does his best to undercut the social satire with a comment on the character of Humbert. The beauty of Nabokov’s character is his ability to charm the reader. The prose is so elegant throughout the novel.
that the reader often forgets that he is listening to the thoughts of a pedophile and a murderer, but as Humbert states, “You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style” (9). Throughout the novel there is a tendency for the reader to feel sympathetic to Humbert because he is so charming. Kubrick faced the same problem in his film. Humbert has a very appealing, amiable character. He is mild-mannered and polite. The viewer senses his discomfort in the presence of Charlotte. He does not want to rent her room, and the viewer sympathizes. This reaction is due in large part to the actor chosen to play the role, James Mason. In the 1940s, Mason was one of Britain’s major film stars. He began with stage roles, but quickly became a film star in his home country. Late in the 40s, he came to America and began playing more glamorous and heroic roles, a move which solidified his popularity. He made Lolita at the age of 51, nearly the halfway point of his career. With such a dynamic and intelligent actor, Kubrick needed a way to make the audience understand that Humbert was not to be trusted.

Kubrick’s—along with Nabokov’s—original idea was to have Humbert speak in voiceover about the nature of nymphets:

So the term is nymphet. I intend to introduce the following idea: Between the age limits of nine and fourteen there are certain maidens: they bewitch the traveler who is twice their age and reveal to him their true nature, which is not human but nymphic—in other words, demoniac—and these chosen creatures I propose to designate as nymphets. (Nabokov, Lolita: A Screenplay 17)
Mason delivered these lines over a montage of young girls including cinema usherettes, schoolgirls, and other young adolescents, some pubescent, others prepubescent. Geoffrey Shurlock, representing the MPAA, demanded that the scene be cut. He argued that the way Kubrick had chosen to film the scene, showing many of the girls in attractive and provocative poses, insinuated that Humbert’s attraction to young girls was natural and that it was only a crime if he acted on his impulses (Hughes 103). Kubrick argued that without the scene, the audience would believe that Humbert fell in love with Lolita the person at first sight, rather than being a disturbed man who was erotically obsessed with young girls and finally happened to fall in love with one (103). In the end, Kubrick was forced to cut not only the scene, but also all references to the term “nymphet.” Kubrick needed another way to clue the audience in to Humbert’s character. Unable to use verbal means, he found a beautiful visual metaphor. In the garden scene, Kubrick cuts back and forth between long and medium shots of Lolita sunbathing and Charlotte still trying to convince the enamored Humbert to accept the room (Figs. 5.8-5.9). With the line, “I think it was your cherry pies,” Kubrick cuts to a close-up of Lolita (Fig. 5.10). The next logical cut would be a close-up of Humbert, but Kubrick instead immediately cuts to a close of Frankenstein’s monster being unmasked (Fig. 5.11-5.12). The effect is jarring to the viewer and a little confusing until it is revealed that Humbert, Charlotte, and Lolita are watching a movie together. But the seed has been planted; Humbert, charming as he is, cannot be trusted.
Kubrick builds on this metaphor by having Humbert supply witty, but disturbing comebacks to Charlotte throughout the rest of the film. For example, when Humbert is teaching Charlotte to play chess, Lolita enters the room to say goodnight. At the precise moment Lolita enters the room, Charlotte says, “You’re going to take my queen?” Humbert nonchalantly replies, “That was my intention, certainly.” Lolita then kisses her mother and Humbert goodnight, lingering when she kisses Humbert (Figs. 5.13-5.14). Her sultry “Goodnight” to Humbert is a stark contrast to the one given her mother. Lolita, it would seem, is taunting and tempting Humbert, who is not her first conquest.
After Charlotte and Humbert are finally married, Humbert’s comebacks continue as he attempts to thwart Charlotte’s sexual advances: “‘Ah, you just touch me and I go as limp as a noodle.’ ‘Yes, I know the feeling.’” Humbert successfully fends off Charlotte and, following Charlotte’s death, is finally able to be alone with Lolita. Humbert retrieves her from the aptly named “Camp Climax for Girls.” Here, the viewer bears witness to Humbert visually indulging in the young, scantily clad campers (Figs. 5.15-5.16). The audience is no longer fooled by Humbert’s charm and is concerned for Lolita’s well being, until she becomes a willing accomplice and seductress in the affair.

Figs. 5.13-5.14. Under Charlotte’s careless eye, Humbert plots to take her “queen.”

Figs. 5.15-5.16. For Humbert, Lolita’s camp is a dream come true.
As stated earlier, Humbert is not Lolita’s first conquest. She also had a long-term affair with Clare Quilty, again under her mother’s careless eyes. Throughout the film, Quilty appears in various guises as he follows Humbert and Lolita across the country, a fact of which Lolita is aware. She is toying with Humbert. If she is a queen, then he is a pawn in her game. Again, Humbert’s charm and Mason’s performance win over the viewer who is ready to believe that Humbert truly did love Lolita. As the Epilogue tells the audience, Humbert dies in prison of “coronary thrombosis,” a broken heart. And what of Lolita? In Nabokov’s novel, she dies after giving birth to a stillborn child. In Kubrick’s film, no mention is made of Lolita’s fate. The viewer is left to assume that with no Clare Quilty or Humbert Humbert to pursue her, she will forever remain Mrs. Richard Schiller, trapped in a world of middle-class superiority and pomposity like her mother before her.

For his second love story, Kubrick chose not a budding relationship, but a stagnant one. His last film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, based on Arthur Schnitzler’s *Traumnovelle*, tells the story of a married couple who long ago lost the fire in their relationship.

According to Martin Swales, Arthur Schnitzler is a “pragmatic moralist” whose finest works fuse the modern and the traditional by drawing on both the “literary tradition of the Baroque and…the insights of Freudian psycho-analysis” (Swales 149). Many of Schnitzler’s early works maintain such a close relationship to psychoanalysis
that they read more like case studies than works of fiction. As he matured as a writer, Schnitzler’s works became more intellectually and stylistically richer as he “analyze[d] human experience in terms that both encompass and go beyond the scientific determinism of Freud” (Swales 149). These later works, especially *Traumnovelle* [*Dream Story*] (1925), illuminate a problem inherent in psychoanalysis, that it simultaneously recognizes the value of the insights it gives while relativizing that value in terms of a reticent, yet passionate moral intention (Swales 138).

*Traumnovelle* tells the story of two nights in the lives of a young doctor, Fridolin, and his wife, Albertine, living in Vienna at the turn of the century. The dialectic relationship between the reality of the couple’s marriage and the possibility of other realities is central to the structure of the novella. The story opens with the reality of their married life together. After putting their daughter to bed, the young couple begins reminiscing about the ball they attended the night before. They exchange stories of times in the past when they were almost unfaithful. As the recollected possible adventures become larger and more significant, Fridolin and Albertine begin to discuss the hidden possibilities of their personalities. In the middle of the debate, Fridolin is called away to visit a patient who has suffered a fatal heart attack. While Fridolin is trying to console the patient’s daughter, Marianne, she declares her love for the young doctor. They kiss briefly but are interrupted by the arrival of Marianne’s fiancé.
Fridolin leaves Marianne, but cannot return home because he feels resentful of the revelations Albertine made to him during their conversation. He encounters a prostitute, and then goes to a coffee-house where he meets a former fellow medical student, Nachtigall. Nachtigall now earns a living as a pianist at various private affairs. He tells Fridolin that he has an appointment later that evening to play at a large house where he has been three times before. Although he has to play blindfolded, each time he has managed to squint through the blindfold and has witnessed a wild orgy of masked men and women. Fridolin quickly rents a monk’s habit from a costumer and gains entrance into the orgy. The women are dressed as nuns and the men as courtiers, but when the signal is given the women appear naked and the orgy begins. Eventually Fridolin’s presence is discovered and one of the women sacrifices herself for him. Fridolin is forcibly ejected and returns home to Albertine, who has had a dream that is similar to Fridolin’s adventure.

The following day Fridolin tries to retrace the scenes and people of the night before but has little success. Nachtigall has left town, the prostitute has been taken to a hospital. Although he does find the house where the orgy took place, he is warned against making further inquiries. He reads in the paper a report of the mysterious death of a woman and goes to the morgue to view the body. He is unsure if it is the same woman who sacrificed herself the night before. Fridolin returns home to
Albertine and finds the mask he wore to the party on his pillow. He wakes his wife and makes a full confession.

The novella raises interesting questions about reality versus fantasy, leaving it up to the reader to decide which parts of the story take place in reality and which parts take place in the characters’ dreams. In the opening scene, the narrator tells us:

Innocent yet ominous questions and vague ambiguous answers passed to and fro between them; and as neither of them doubted the other’s absolute candour, both felt the need for mild revenge. They exaggerated the extent to which their masked partners had attracted them, made fun of the jealous stirrings the other revealed, and lied dismissively about their own. Yet this light banter about the trivial adventures of the previous night led to more serious discussion of those hidden, scarcely admitted desires which are apt to raise dark and perilous storms even in the purest, most transparent soul; and they talked about those secret regions for which they felt scarcely any longing, yet towards which the irrational winds of fate might one day drive them, if only in their dreams. (177)

Did Fridolin really witness a massive orgy, or did “the irrational winds of fate” drive him to an orgy in his dreams? Kubrick’s adaptation presents an interesting reading in favor of the latter. Although Kubrick moves the story to modern day New York, he makes few changes to Schnitzler’s actual narrative. Before looking at key scenes in the film, a few Freudian guidelines need to be established.

According to Freud, the content of dreams includes “disconnected fragments of visual images, speeches and even bits of unmodified thoughts” (62). These disconnected
fragments can be traced “back to an impression of the past few days” and, to our waking selves, these impressions are often “so trivial, insignificant and unmemorable, that it is only with difficulty that we ourselves can recall” them (54-55). The very purpose of the dream is to show the dreamer that these trivialities are not insignificant, for “dreams are never concerned with things with which we should not think it worth while to be concerned during the day” (56). Dreams are where the dreamer finds answers to questions and the fulfillment of wishes. The more questions and wishes the dreamer has, the longer the dream cycle and the stronger control it has over the dreamer. This control is Freud’s explanation of the incorporation of external stimuli into a dream. Someone is sleeping and dreaming that they are in the jungle surrounded by monkeys. The alarm clock goes off, but the dreamer does not hear it. Instead, he hears the monkeys chanting in a strange, monotonous tone. The dream has become “the guardian of sleep” (102). In order to avoid waking, the dreamer alters his dream “in order to get rid of the external stimulus” by either making it incompatible with the dream world or by incorporating it (103). Granted, chanting monkeys is an extreme example, but door knocks, phones, and statements made by those around the sleeper are common incorporations. Finally, it is in the dream world where the dreamer can exist in an idealized form. The qualities that the dreamer perceives as negative disappear, while the positive qualities are intensified. Using Freud’s dream framework,
Eyes Wide Shut gives us a psychoanalytic reading of Schnitzler’s novel as dream.

Sprinkled throughout the film are various clues to what is going on.

First of all, there is the character of Bill/Fridolin. Bill appears to be a well-respected doctor in New York who lives comfortably with his wife Alice/Albertine, an unemployed art gallery manager, and their daughter Helena. Bill and Alice’s apartment is roomy and elegant, but simple compared to Ziegler’s palatial home (Figs. 5.17-5.20).

Figs. 5.17-5.20. Though Bill and Alice’s home is spacious, it is “quaint” compared to Ziegler’s palatial abode.

Furthermore, the couple seems to be out of place at the party and appears to have only received an invitation as a gesture of generosity from a wealthy patient:
Alice: Do you know anyone here?
Bill: Not a soul.
Alice: Why do you think Ziegler invites us to these things every year?
Bill: This is what you get for making house calls.

Although Bill is a doctor with an apparently wealthy clientele, he and his wife are still middle-class citizens. Bill shares his office with another doctor, while Alice checks the price tags of possible Christmas presents for Helena (Fig. 5.21). They have no live-in nanny, but must hire a babysitter each time they go out for the evening. This is not the Bill we see throughout most of the film. Rather, we see Bill’s idealized dream form. The dream Bill has access to information and closed businesses simply because he carries a New York State Medical Board Card. In addition, he has a seemingly endless supply of cash that falls out of his wallet in fifties and hundreds. We never see him take money out of an ATM, and furthermore the amount of cash he is spending seems to be of no concern to him. In fact, he can cancel appointments with patients at will. After all, he doesn’t need the money (Fig. 5.22).

Figs. 5.21-5.22. Alice (Nicole Kidman) checks the price while Bill (Tom Cruise) looks on, yet earlier in the film, money is of no concern to Bill.
Inside his dream, Bill attempts to exact revenge on Alice for her confessed *almost* indiscretion. But even in his dreams, Bill cannot escape Alice. She either interrupts him by phoning him during attempted encounters with prostitutes named Domino or actually appearing in various condensed forms (Figs. 5.23-5.25). Bill’s encounter with Marion directly corresponds to Alice’s confession about the naval officer. Alice tells Bill that if the naval officer had approached her, she would have given up everything to be with him. Marion makes Bill the same offer. She wants to leave her fiancé, Carl, just so she can be near Bill forever. Later, Domino’s roommate, Sally, interrupts a possible sexual encounter with Bill to tell him that Domino is HIV positive. Marion and Sally both resemble Alice. All three have reddish-blond hair pulled back so that a few curls fall down around their faces. All three interrupt sexual encounters or have sexual encounters interrupted.

Figs. 5.23-5.25. Bill’s condensation of Alice in the forms of Marion and Sally.

“*Alice*” is not the only condensation in the film. At Ziegler’s party, Bill flirts with two young women, one of whom, Gayle, reminds Bill of a time that he “helped her.” She was doing a photo shoot and got something in her eye. Bill offered her his handkerchief. Bill’s response to the story is “Well, that is the kind of hero I can
be...sometimes.” Before Bill can follow the girls to “the end of the rainbow,” he is called away at Ziegler’s request. Mandy, a young girl with whom Ziegler is having an affair, has overdosed on a combination of heroin and cocaine. Bill, again in the role of the hero, helps bring her out of it and advises her to stop taking drugs. Throughout his dream, Bill attempts to be a hero to many young women in distress including the prostitute Domino and Milich’s daughter. Both of these “dream girls” resemble Mandy and Gayle (Figs. 5.26-5.29). Unlike Alice and her dream condensations, Mandy, Gayle and their dream counterparts have straight hair. They are all “headed down the wrong path” into prostitution; drugs will not be far behind. However, just as the dream Bill cannot consummate a relationship with any women in his dream, neither can he save them. He is the “kind of hero” that can offer a handkerchief, not the kind that can truly rescue a women in distress. Domino tests positive for HIV, Milich’s daughter is bought and sold by her father, and ultimately Mandy dies from her drug addiction. Milich is himself another condensation of Sandor Szavost, the charming European man that Alice met and danced with at Ziegler’s party (Figs. 5.30-5.31). Though Szavost is wealthy, charming, and articulate, his dream condensation is shifty, balding, and incoherent. Szavost’s presence at the party and confidence with Alice indicate that he is a man of means, while Milich lives in a small apartment above his costume rental shop. Milich represents the type of man Bill wants to believe Alice would end up with if she ever left.
The main condensation in the dream is the party itself, which transforms into the orgy of beautiful anonymous women and men. At Ziegler’s party, Gayle and her friend, Nuala, ask Bill if he wants to go “where the rainbow ends.” Before he gets the chance, Bill is interrupted by Ziegler’s messenger. In his dream, Bill decides to find out exactly where the rainbow ends. After being told by his friend, Nick, about a strange party where Nick plays blindfolded, Bill decides he has to witness the event for himself. He begins his journey at Milich’s costume shop, appropriately named “Rainbow.” After renting a costume, Bill makes his way to the party, which takes the form of a masquerade. According to Terry Castle in *Masquerade and Civilization* (1986), “classic” masquerades were “scenes of unbounded license, lacking…any restrictions” (27). By the
eighteenth century, participation depended “on the purchase of a ticket,” with the ticket “giving access to a now-privileged inner realm, a private carnival hidden behind walls” (27). Prostitutes were common attendees, sometimes by invitation, sometimes by infiltration. The inclusion of prostitutes permitted women, “including those of respectable position…to attend the masquerade unescorted” (32). Masks and disguises provided anonymity to the “promiscuous Multitude” and “protected the reputations” of those in attendance (33). The masquerade allowed those of the upper ranks of society to fulfill their every sexual desire by “remov[ing] social restraints—including sexual ones” (33). The mask is

an example of…the “involvement shield”—a portable bodily accessory that, by obscuring visual contact, promotes an unusual sense of freedom in the person wearing or using it. Anything that partially hides the face…may act as a shield “behind which individuals safely do the kind of things that ordinarily result in negative sanctions.” The mask signified a certain physical detachment from the situation, and by implication a moral detachment also. (39)

The masqueraders may have found freedom in the “liberties of the night” because the anonymity provided by the mask not only allowed for promiscuity, it might have prompted it as well (41). The mask allowed the opportunity for promiscuity not only with anonymous women, but also with homosexuals, as the “masked assembly

functioned as a paradoxical safe zone, a locale in which impulses suppressed or veiled in everyday life could be acted on, and illicit sexual contacts made” (41) (Figs. 5.32-5.33).

The masquerade that Bill attends is in keeping with the traditions of the eighteenth-century masquerade. Everyone is dressed anonymously in black cloaks and masks. A group of beautiful young women, presumably prostitutes, are ritualistically divided up among the masqueraders. Sex is open and there are no limitations. Bill tries to consummate a relationship with one of the women, but is interrupted. Eventually, he is discovered and ejected from the party in a trial conducted by the other masqueraders (Figs. 5.34-5.39). The discovery of Bill links him to the lower classes who infiltrated the masquerades of the eighteenth-century. Thieves, gamblers, and pimps often crept into the masquerades and attempted to “ply their trades under the cover of secrecy” (Castle 31). Although an attempt was made to keep these “lower orders” out, it was a near
impossible task due to the “confused mixture of different ranks and conditions” (Singleton 66). Since everyone was anonymous, determining who belonged and who did not was highly improbable. The discovery of Bill as an intruder brings an end to his adventure as he is forced to reveal himself to the masked crowd. When he attempts to return his costume, the mask is missing. It later appears on his pillow, a symbol that his identity is known. The mask rests just a few inches from Alice’s head (Figs. 5.40-5.42). If she were to wake up and see it, Bill would have to make a confession. Although she does not wake up, Bill wakes her and confesses anyway. He feels the need to purge himself in order to save their marriage. His attempt to take revenge for Alice’s near indiscretion only brought him further pain. He knows now that he must remain faithful to his wife. Ironically, the password for the orgy is “Fidelio” or fidelity.

At the end of the film, the couple must decide if they will be able to reconcile and save their marriage. Alice tells Bill, “Maybe, I think, we should be grateful…grateful that we’ve managed to survive through all of our adventures, whether they were real or only a dream…and that the reality of one night, let alone a whole lifetime, can ever be the whole truth.” Bill replies, “And no dream is ever just a dream.” The implication is that not everything that happened on screen was “real.” Some of their adventures were only dreams, but sometimes dreams reveal more about a person than their reality. Kubrick, at the end of the film, is cluing the viewer in to the fact that though we cannot believe everything we see, everything we witness, real or imagined, has import.
So what is the significance of Bill’s dream? Though Bill’s dream can be seen as him working through his fears regarding his wife, the underlying fear is about Bill’s station in society. Those with wealth and power, such as Ziegler and Szavost, are denied nothing. They are allowed to have sex whenever, wherever, and with whomever they want. Ziegler has sex with a prostitute in the bathroom while his wife is mingling with the guests at the party downstairs. Bill, on the other hand, is foiled by someone during every attempt at infidelity. When Bill encounters the prostitute Domino, he
receives a call from Alice just before he and Domino go to bed. As he takes the call, the careful viewer notices the title of the book that is visible on Domino’s bookshelf: *Introducing Sociology* (Fig. 5.43). Bill is part of a class system. Though an affluent doctor, he is a member of the middle working class. Ziegler and his friends are the upper class, while Domino and Sally are the lower class. The message that Bill’s dream is giving him seems to be “do not mingle outside your class.” Though the upper class can move freely from class to class for their encounters, the other classes are confined. When someone like Bill attempts to infiltrate the upper class, he is dealt with “most unfortunately.” However, neither is Bill allowed to turn to the lower classes for sexual favors. Even if he were not discovered or stopped by his wife, there would still be consequences. Had Bill not been interrupted with Domino, he might have contracted HIV. The message is clear: Bill will never be allowed to break his vow of marriage. Though he may be surrounded by beautiful women, he is allowed to look but not touch (Fig. 5.44). He cannot know what is at the end of the rainbow. He must remain, always, the symbol of fidelity.

**Figs. 5.43-5.44.** Bill is a victim of his social class. Though he may encounter beautiful women, the relationship must remain completely professional.
Epilogue

“What Makes a Film by Stanley Kubrick a Film by Stanley Kubrick?”
and Other Questions of Film Studies

I would not think of quarreling with your interpretation nor offering any other, as I have found it always the best policy to allow the film to speak for itself.

— Stanley Kubrick

Film: NOUN A connected cinematic narrative represented by a sequence of photographs projected onto a screen with sufficient rapidity as to create the illusion of motion and continuity.

In the introduction, I asked a serious of questions including “What is a Text?” and “What is an Author?” To that list I would like to add the title of this epilogue. What makes a film—or any other work of art—a film by a particular director? In other words, how do we attribute works of art to their creators? Film, especially adaptations, provides the perfect opportunity to raise, and attempt to answer, these questions.

Having students view novels through cinematic lenses and forcing them to “read” films actively as opposed to watching them passively presents enormous opportunities for students to engage with texts on multiple levels by asking questions such as “Who is the author of *Lolita*?” Vladimir Nabokov? Stanley Kubrick? Adrian Lyne? Heinz von Eschwege? Who is Heinz von Eschwege? Von Eschwege was a little known German writer living in Berlin in the early 20th century. As a young man, he wrote a few forgotten novels under the pseudonym Heinz von Lichberg before coming to prominence as a journalist. One of these early novels tells the story, through a first-
person narrator, of a cultivated middle-aged man who, while traveling on a holiday, takes a room as a lodger. He is seduced by the owner’s young daughter, and despite her age, becomes intimate with her. At the end of the novel, the girl dies and the narrator, devastated, remains alone. The novel, published in 1916, is named for the ill-fated girl, Lolita. Did Nabokov borrow from this book to create what Lionel Trilling called the first great contemporary love story? If so, then did Nabokov truly write Lolita? Who is the author? What is an author? What makes a film by Stanley Kubrick a film by Stanley Kubrick?

In an attempt to better reach a student population that has been raised in a stimulating audio-visual environment and is becoming increasingly alienated by traditional methods of instruction, university departments are beginning to employ a diverse range of styles and methods in their classrooms. One current trend that is raging across university campuses is the scramble by various departments to claim the area of Film Studies under their umbrellas. Although film can be defined, it is hard to categorize. Is it a visual or narrative art? Oral or aural? In many ways, film encompasses all of these art forms. It is a visual narrative that uses sound in the form of dialogue, music, and effects. The fact that film encompasses all of these forms may explain why it is so popular among various university departments since it can be incorporated into virtually any curriculum. Foreign language departments can create—and have—courses in German, Italian, or French film. Documentaries that focus on a specific time
period or culture can be used in history or anthropology classes to put “real faces” on the statistics and facts presented in texts and lectures. Literature departments lay a claim to film on the basis that films are texts. They are narratives that have their beginning in a script or screen-play, a fact that links film to the world of drama and the theatre which has long been the domain of literature departments.

This final approach offers the greatest range of options, for although showing a film in a history, anthropology, or foreign language class can be useful, teaching students how to watch a film can have longer lasting effects. In addition to becoming critical readers and writers, students can also become critical viewers and questioners, a quality that is sorely needed in our current age of media saturation. Exploring film as criticism is but one method of employing film in the classroom, but it is method that allows for various approaches. These approaches cover a range of topics and time periods—single author, cultural studies, intertextuality—and, in certain cases, show that even bad movies can be effective tools for engaging texts and generating ideas. Below I suggest just a few of the possible approaches one might take in the classroom. Although all of these approaches are primarily intended for pedagogical purposes, they might also prove useful to the literary scholar seeking fresh approaches to texts.

One possible approach is to have students consider the “countless visions and revisions” of a text by viewing different film versions released over a considerable time span. Two novels that could be discussed effectively this way are James Fenimore
Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. Both novels have been adapted numerous times, sometimes successfully, other times not. Recent studies of these two novels and their adaptations are Jennifer Anne Solmes’ “The Scarlet Screen: A Survey of the Tradition of *The Scarlet Letter* in Film and on Television, 1926-1995” (2001) and Christine M. Danelski’s “Trauma and Typology: *The Last of the Mohicans* and its Filmed Versions, 1909-1992” (2003). Having students view and analyze multiple film versions of the same text will give them insight into different ways in which a text may be read.

Another useful approach would be to consider various film adaptations of several texts by the same author. Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and Edith Wharton are Hollywood favorites with every major work by these authors having been given the big screen treatment at least once. Though, to my knowledge, no major study of Wharton’s film adaptations has been undertaken, recent studies of the adaptations of the novels of Austen, Dickens, and Hardy are Shari Denise Hodges’ “Theoretical Approaches to Dickens on Film: The Cinematic Interpretation of Charles Dickens’ Novels” (2000), Paul Niemeyer’s “Seeing Hardy: The Critical and Cinematic Construction of Thomas Hardy and his Novels” (2000), and Cara Lane’s “Moments in the Life of Literature” (2003), a study of film versions of the novels of both Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. Though this approach could be combined with the first one, if time allows for only viewing one adaptation per film, selecting adaptations from
different eras and in different styles can give students a good idea of various ways one may approach a text. Viewing a feminist adaptation of *Persuasion* (Nicholas Dear, 1995) alongside a Marxist adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995) can effectively demonstrate how different critical approaches can open up different aspects of an author’s various texts. Furthermore, post-modern renderings such as Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless* (1995), based on Austen’s *Emma*, and Alfonso Cuarón’s *Great Expectations* (1998) allow students to view the novels not only as texts but also as cultural constructs that have a life outside of the bound pages of literary history.


These are but a few of the possibilities, or opportunities, that film provides. More questions will be raised than will ever be answered, but that is the purpose of critical analysis: to ask questions. As I stated in my introduction, I am not interested in the problems adaptation creates, but the questions it raises, the opportunities it affords.
Works Consulted

General


Novels and Films


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**Stanley Kubrick**

**Books and Articles**


Hanson, Curtis Lee. “Interview with James B. Harris.” Cinema (U.S.A.), December 1965.


**Interviews**


**Individual Films**

Many of the articles in this section—especially those on the early films—are simply contemporary film reviews. However, as Kubrick gained popularity—or notoriety, more critical articles began to appear.

**Fear and Desire**


*Motion Picture Herald*, April 4, 1953.


**Killer’s Kiss**


**The Killing**


**Paths of Glory**


**Spartacus**


Lolita


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Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb
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**2001: A Space Odyssey**

“Interview with Wally Gentleman, Special Effects Supervisor.” *Take One*, May / June 1968.


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Monthly Film Bulletin, June 1968.


Shatnoff, Judith. Film Quarterly, Autumn 1968.


A Clockwork Orange


Boyers, Robert. Film Heritage, Summer 1972.


Daniels, Don. Sight and Sound, Winter 1972 / 73.


**Barry Lyndon**


Houston, Penelope. *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1976.


**The Shining**


**Full Metal Jacket**


**Eyes Wide Shut**


Johnson, Brian D. “Stanley Kubrick’s Last, Lingering Kiss: Eyes Wide Shut is not Half as Shocking as it Pretends to be, but its Images are Always Arresting and Indelible.” Maclean’s 26 July 1999: 48.


— — —. “Kubrick’s View: Stanley Kubrick’s Final Intense Days were spent Finishing the Sexy Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman Movie Eyes Wide Shut.” Newsweek 22 March 1999: 66.


Preussner, Arnold W. “Kubrick’s Eyes Wide Shut as Shakespearean Tragicomedy” Literature/Film Quarterly 29.4 (2001): 4+


Taubin, Amy. “Eyes Wide Shut” Film Comment 35.5 (1999): 24-6+


Appendix

Stanley Kubrick: A Contextual Filmography

There are many filmographies of Kubrick available both in print and online. Most simply list the films in the order that they appeared, while a few list full credits and/or provide a short synopsis. The purpose of this filmography is to provide a historical context for Kubrick’s feature films by placing them alongside other films released during the same years. It is somewhat difficult to determine the “important” films of any given year; therefore, I have decided to list the five Best Picture nominees—the winner will be designated by an asterisk (*)—and the top ten films at the box office for each year that Kubrick released a film. In order to help explain the gaps in Kubrick’s career, I have also included films he intended to make but never did. These films are situated chronologically at the point when he was actively working on them. The dates are based on treatments, screenplays, or correspondences with others involved in the project. A short synopsis is provided for each unfinished film as well as the “official” explanation as to why they were never produced. Finally, in addition to directing his films Kubrick often performed other roles. I have placed these additional roles in parentheses for each film.

Documentaries:

1951  Day of the Fight (Producer / Screenwriter / Cinematographer / Editor / Sound)

Flying Padre (Screenwriter / Cinematographer)

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50 Box office figures for a given year are difficult to determine. For many years, there has been debate on whether box office proceeds should be counted only for the year the film was released or for the actual year the proceeds were received. For example, a film released on Christmas Day—the last date of the year a film can be released and still be eligible for the Academy Awards and a major release weekend—will make most of its money the following year. Should the proceeds count towards the year of release, the following year, or each individual year that the film is in release? The debate has never been fully resolved, and as a result, box office numbers are often questionable. For example, Spartacus was released in 1960 and West Side Story in 1961, but these films were the two highest grossing films of 1962. Which film was actually the highest grossing is often disputed depending on whether or not West Side Story’s 1961 figures are counted. The debate has recently become further complicated by the re-issuing of certain films, i.e. George Lucas’ Star Wars saga. Should the re-release figures count toward the year of actual release or the year of original release? On this question, it is generally accepted to count the figures only for the year of the re-issue since the film has not been in continuous release. So, Gone With the Wind, originally released in 1939, can be the third highest grossing film of 1968, the year of its re-issue, but the new proceeds are not added to the film’s 1939 take.
1952  Untitled Project
Commissioned by the US State Department at the request of then senators Hubert H. Humphrey and Henry S. Reuss, the short documentary focused on the forerunner to John F. Kennedy’s Peace Corps, the World Assembly of Youth. Though the film was completed, no known print survives.

1953  The Seafarers (Producer / Cinematographer / Editor / Sound)

Feature Films:

1953  Fear and Desire (Producer / Screenwriter / Cinematographer / Editor)

Academy Award Nominees:  Box Office Top Ten:
From Here to Eternity*  1. The Robe
The Robe  2. From Here to Eternity
Shane  3. Shane
Julius Caesar  4. How to Marry a Millionaire
Roman Holiday  5. Peter Pan

1955  Killer’s Kiss (Screenwriter / Producer / Cinematographer / Editor)

Marty*  1. Cinerama Holiday
Mister Roberts  2. Mister Roberts
Love is a Many-Splendored Thing  3. Battle Cry
Picnic  4. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
Rose Tattoo  5. Not a Stranger

* indicates a nomination for Best Picture at the Academy Awards.
1956  *The Killing* (Screenwriter)

_Around the World in 80 Days*

*Giant*

_Friendly Persuasion*

_The Ten Commandments_

_The King and I_

1. *Guys and Dolls*

2. *The King and I*

3. *Trapeze*

4. *High Society* (tie)

5. *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (tie)

6. *Picnic*

7. *War and Peace*

8. *The Eddy Duchin Story*

9. *Moby Dick*

10. *The Conqueror* (tie)

_Rebel Without a Cause* (tie)

*The Burning Secret* (never-produced)

Kubrick and Harris purchased the rights to this novel by Stefan Zweig and planned to make the film as a follow up to *The Killing*. Calder Willingham, who would go on to co-write the *Paths of Glory* screenplay with Kubrick, was hired to adapt the novel. By the time he completed his first draft, Kubrick and Harris’ contract with MGM had expired. The project was shelved, but in 1988, one of Kubrick’s assistants on _2001_, Andrew Birkin, directed a version starring Faye Dunaway.

1957  *Paths of Glory* (Screenwriter)

_The Bridge on the River Kwai*_

_Peyton Place_

_Sayonara_

_12 Angry Men_

_Witness For the Prosecution_

1. *The Ten Commandments*

2. *Around the World in 80 Days*

3. *Giant*

4. *Pal Joey*

5. *Seven Wonders of the World*

6. _The Tea House of the August Moon_

7. _The Pride and Passion_

8. *Anastasia*

9. _Island in the Sun_

10. _Love Me Tender_
195851 *The German Lieutenant*

After seeing *Paths of Glory*, Richard Addams, a Korean War veteran, wrote this script for Kubrick and Harris. They chose not to pursue the project.

*I Stole $16,000,000*

Jim Thompson, who worked as a co-writer on *Paths of Glory*, co-wrote this screenplay with Kubrick. Based on the autobiography of safecracker Herbert Emerson Wilson, the film was to be produced by Bryna Productions. Kubrick hoped to work again with Kirk Douglas, but when Douglas passed on the project, “that was the end of it” (Ciment).

*The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones*

The only western in the Kubrick canon, Kubrick signed on to direct this film in May of 1958. After many script changes and clashes with the film’s star, Marlon Brando, Kubrick regrettfully resigned from the project in November of 1958. Brando went on to direct the film himself. It was released in 1961 as *One-Eyed Jacks*. Slim Pickens was cast to play a cowboy, but did not appear in the Brando film.

1958-1959 “Mosby’s Rangers”

This unfinished screenplay about a Southern guerrilla force in the American Civil War was based on research by Shelby Foote.

1960 *Spartacus*52

*The Apartment*  
*The Alamo*  
*Elmer Gantry*  
*Sons and Lovers*  
*The Sundowners*  

1. Ben-Hur  
2. Psycho  
3. Operation Petticoat  
4. Suddenly, Last Summer  
5. On the Beach  
6. Solomon and Sheba  
7. The Apartment  
8. From the Terrace

51 The number of projects considered and commissioned in the two year period following *Paths of Glory* shows that Kubrick was now a major player in the film industry.

52 Though not nominated for Best Picture, *Spartacus* received nominations in six categories: Best Musical Score, Best Film Editing, Best Supporting Actor (Peter Ustinov), Best Art Direction/Set Decoration, Best Costume Design, and Best Cinematography. The film won all but the score and editing categories. Though Russell Metty won for cinematography, many critics argue that Kubrick was the person most responsible for the film’s camera work.
1962  *Lolita* (Screenwriter)*53

- *Lawrence of Arabia*
- *The Music Man*
- *The Longest Day*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *Mutiny on the Bounty*

1. *Spartacus*
2. *West Side Story*
3. *Lover Come Back*
4. *That Touch of Mink*
5. *El Cid*
6. *The Music Man*
7. *King of Kings*
8. *Hatari*
9. *The Flower Drum Song*
10. *The Interns*

1964  *Childhood’s End*

Kubrick first began considering a science fiction film early in this year. He was intrigued by Arthur C. Clarke’s novel and began working on a treatment, only to find out that the novel was already under option. Kubrick dropped the idea and instead turned his attention to *Dr. Strangelove*. Four years later, Kubrick and Clarke collaborated on *2001*.

1964  *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Screenwriter / Producer)*54

- *My Fair Lady*
- *Dr. Strangelove*
- *Becket*
- *Zorba the Greek*
- *Mary Poppins*

1. *The Carpetbaggers*
2. *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*
3. *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*
4. *Charade*
5. *The Cardinal*
6. *Move Over Darling*
7. *My Fair Lady*
8. *What a Way to Go*
9. *Good Neighbor Sam*
10. *The Pink Panther*

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*53* Nominated for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium.

*54* In addition to its Best Picture nomination, the film was also nominated for Best Director, Best Actor (Peter Sellers), and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. As director, producer, and writer, this was the first year that Kubrick himself was a multiple nominee.
1968  *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Screenwriter)\textsuperscript{55}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Oliver!*</th>
<th>2. The Graduate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Funny Girl</em></td>
<td>3. Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Lion in Winter</em></td>
<td>4. Gone With the Wind (reissue)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rachel, Rachel</em></td>
<td>5. The Valley of the Dolls (tie)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Romeo and Juliet</em></td>
<td>6. Bonnie and Clyde (tie)</td>
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<td>7. The Odd Couple</td>
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<td>8. Planet of the Apes</td>
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<td>9. Rosemary’s Baby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. The Odd Couple</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1969  *Napoleon*

MGM optioned this Kubrick screenplay in 1969. Kubrick wanted to make not “a dusty historic pageant” but a film about “the basic questions of our own times, as well as Napoleon’s” (Walker). The first of many difficulties arose when Kubrick could not find the right actor to play Napoleon from his beginnings through his exile. Al Pacino, Ian Holm, and Jack Nicholson were all considered, with Nicholson showing the most interest. When Kubrick learned that another film project about Napoleon was in production, he decided to delay his film. When that project, *Waterloo*, starring Rod Steiger as Napoleon, Christopher Plummer as the Duke of Wellington, and Orson Welles as King Louis XVIII, flopped in 1970, Kubrick’s backers pulled out. The film was never produced.

1970  *Blue Movie*

Terry Southern adapted this screenplay from his own novel. The novel was inspired by a conversation between Kubrick and Southern during the filming of *Dr. Strangelove*. The novel, and screenplay, focuses on the attempts of an acclaimed director to make a big budget pornographic film with big stars. When Kubrick declined, the film was optioned by Warner Bros who hired Mike Nichols to direct and Julie Andrews to star. The deal eventually fell through, though at one point David Lean considered making the film. The novel has recently been optioned once again for release in 2007. No cast has been announced. The 1988 film of the same name with a similar plot is not based on Southern’s novel.

\textsuperscript{55} Though not nominated for Best Picture, *2001* received nominations in four categories: Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Art Direction, and Best Special Visual Effects. This final category was the film’s only win with the award going to Kubrick, his only Oscar in his 46 year career.
1971  *A Clockwork Orange* (Screenwriter / Producer)56

*The French Connection*  
*A Clockwork Orange*  
*Fiddler on the Roof*  
*The Last Picture Show*  
*Nicholas and Alexandra*

1. *Love Story*  
2. *Little Big Man*  
3. *Summer of ’42*  
4. *Ryan’s Daughter*  
5. *The Owl and the Pussycat*  
6. *The Aristocats*  
7. *Carnal Knowledge*  
8. *Willard*  
9. *The Andromeda Strain*  
10. *Big Jake*

1975  *Barry Lyndon* (Producer / Screenwriter)57

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*  
*Barry Lyndon*  
*Dog Day Afternoon*  
*Nashville*  
*Jaws*

1. *Jaws*  
2. *The Towering Inferno*  
3. *Benji*  
4. *Young Frankenstein*  
5. *The Godfather Part II*  
6. *Shampoo*  
7. *Funny Lady*  
8. *Murder on the Orient Express*  
9. *Return of the Pink Panther*  
10. *Tommy*

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56 In addition to its Best Picture nomination, the film was also nominated for Best Director, Best Film Editing, and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. As director, producer, and writer, Kubrick was again a multiple nominee.

57 In addition to its Best Picture nomination, the film was also nominated for Best Director, and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Art Direction/Set Decoration, and Best Musical Score. The film won four—cinematography, costume, art direction, and music—of the seven awards with Kubrick, the multiple nominee, coming away empty-handed.
1980

*The Shining (Screenwriter)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinary People*</th>
<th>1. Airplane!</th>
<th>The Empire Strikes Back</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal Miner’s Daughter</td>
<td>2. All That Jazz</td>
<td>9 to 5</td>
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<td>The Elephant Man</td>
<td>3. The Black Stallion</td>
<td>Stir Crazy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raging Bull</td>
<td>4. The Blue Lagoon</td>
<td>Airplane!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>5. The Blues Brothers</td>
<td>Any Which Way You Can</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Brubaker</td>
<td>Private Benjamin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Caddyshack</td>
<td>Coal Miner’s Daughter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Chapter Two</td>
<td>Smokey and the Bandit II</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Cheech and Chong’s</td>
<td>The Blue Lagoon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Next Movie</td>
<td>The Blues Brothers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Coal Miner’s Daughter</td>
<td>The Blues Brothers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1981 *Perfume*

Kubrick considered adapting this from German author Patrick Süskind’s bestselling novel of the same name. Though intrigued by the story and the eighteenth-century setting, Kubrick never actually optioned the novel. No screenplay is known to exist.

1982 *AI*

Kubrick wanted to tell a modern-day/futuristic version of Pinocchio and purchased the rights to Brian Aldiss’s short story “Super-Toys Last All Summer Long.” He spent the next ten years developing a treatment and drawing storyboards, but kept setting the project aside until special effects technology could catch up with his vision. When Spielberg released *Jurassic Park* in 1993, Kubrick decided that the time had finally arrived. He contacted Spielberg and discussed the idea of “A Stanley Kubrick Production of a Steven Spielberg film.” The two continued to discuss the possibility and Kubrick consulted with several special effects artists including Dennis Muren and Ned Gorman of Industrial Light & Magic. In 1996, Kubrick again put the project on hold so that he could begin work on *Eyes Wide Shut* and Spielberg could work on *The Lost World*, the sequel to *Jurassic Park*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. Kubrick died on March 7, 1999.

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58 In the box office debate, the most heavily disputed decade is the 1980s. During the 80s, the box office was dominated by the writing-producing-directing team of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, who released some films together and others separately. All of their films played for longer than average runs, resulting in a controversy over which year to count the proceeds for. This controversy resulted in multiple box office reports. I have provided two contrasting reports for both 1980 and 1987 to show the radical difference in the box office picture depending on what criteria is used.

59 The first Kubrick film to receive no nominations since 1960.
shortly after the completion of *Eyes Wide Shut*. Spielberg, in homage to the great filmmaker, decided to complete *AI* on his own and released it, appropriately, in 2001.

**1987 Full Metal Jacket (Screenwriter / Producer)**

- The Last Emperor*
- Fatal Attraction
- Moonstruck
- Broadcast News
- Hope and Glory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title 1</th>
<th>Title 2</th>
<th>Title 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Beverly Hills Cop III</td>
<td>Three Men and a Baby</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Dirty Dancing</td>
<td>Fatal Attraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Dragnet</td>
<td>Beverly Hills Cop III</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Fatal Attraction</td>
<td>Good Morning, Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Full Metal Jacket</td>
<td>Moonstruck</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>La Bamba</td>
<td>The Untouchables</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Lethal Weapon</td>
<td>The Secret of My Succe$s</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>The Living Daylights</td>
<td>Stakeout</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Nightmare on Elm Street</td>
<td>Lethal Weapon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Outrageous Fortune</td>
<td>The Witches of Eastwick</td>
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**1991 Aryan Papers**

After acquiring the rights to Louis Begley’s Holocaust novel *Wartime Lies*, Kubrick developed a treatment and began to scout locations. By the time he finished the script in 1993, Spielberg had released *Schindler’s List*. Not wanting to be seen as copying another director, an accusation made about Kubrick when *Full Metal Jacket* hit the theaters after the release of many other Vietnam films, Kubrick scrapped the idea.

**1999 Eyes Wide Shut (Screenwriter / Producer)**

- American Beauty*
- The Sixth Sense
- The Green Mile
- The Insider
- The Cider House Rules

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title 1</th>
<th>Title 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Star Wars, Episode I - The Phantom Menace</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Sixth Sense</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Toy Story 2</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>The Matrix</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Tarzan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Big Daddy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Mummy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Runaway Bride</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The Blair Witch Project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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* Nominated for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium.
Vita

Charles Bane was born on April 28, 1971 in Morrilton, Arkansas to Charles and Dianna Bane. He has lived in numerous places all over the country and has worked variously as a country music disc jockey, an oil refinery demolition specialist, a movie critic, and an eighth-grade English teacher. Along the way, he managed to earn an Associate of Arts in Film and Television, a Bachelor of Science in English Education, and a Master of Arts in American Literature. He entered the doctoral program in English at Louisiana State University in August 2002 and received his doctorate in English with a minor in Comparative Literature in 2006. He now lives with his wife, Paulette, and his three children, Ericka, Katherine, and Geoffrey, in Conway, Arkansas where he teaches film and literature at the University of Central Arkansas.