

## Acting out of the World: The Distancing and Underplaying of the Main Actors in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Eyes Wide Shut*

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### Abstract

This article focuses on Performance Studies in an effort to integrate acting – this little-studied aspect of Kubrick’s filmography – within a broader aesthetic analysis. By comparing the main actors and actresses of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, I suggest those two films can shed light on the way Kubrick collaborated with performers in order to confront various acting styles, thus creating a specific aesthetics of distancing. I connect those two works through the exploration of underplayed main roles and a loss of the characters’ physical relation to the world which may be breached in the endings. Drawing both on Stanislavkian principles and archival material, I argue that such distancing may not easily be labelled as Brechtian and instead gives birth to a unique performing style that evades neat categorization, and may eventually help defining the director’s unique collaboration with actors throughout the second half of his career.

**Keywords:** Kubrick; 2001: A Space Odyssey; Eyes Wide Shut

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Vincent Jaunas graduated as an English teacher in 2015 and has been writing a PhD at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne ever since. His thesis focuses on subjectivity in the work of Stanley Kubrick. Vincent has published articles on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Shining* and *Eyes Wide Shut*. He co-organised the International Conference *Stanley Kubrick: Nouveaux Horizons*, which took place in Bordeaux on May 2017.

In *On Kubrick*, James Naremore, whose book *Acting in the Cinema* established him as a leading specialist of the subject, emphasises the importance of actors' performances in Kubrick's *oeuvre*. He evokes the fact that "Kubrick often recommended three writers to fledging movie directors: Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sigmund Freud, and Constantin Stanislavsky" (2007: 5). It is tempting to read this as a key to define Kubrick's aesthetic priorities. The mention of Pudovkin and Freud will not come as a surprise since the importance of montage and psychoanalysis to Kubrick has been widely analysed.<sup>1</sup> The presence of Stanislavsky, on the other hand, may be more unexpected. The mention of the most influential acting teacher of the twentieth-century reveals the crucial importance Kubrick accorded to acting, a fact that often tends to be overlooked due to the powerful persona of the director himself, and his striking audio-visual compositions. Kubrick's reputation, forged by such influential critics as Pauline Kael, as a cold director who was uninterested in human beings is such that one might expect his opinion of actors to have resembled Alfred Hitchcock's, according to whom "all actors should be treated like cattle".

As Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke argue in *Reframing Screen Performance*, "performance details are best understood as integral components of cinematic montage" (2010: 113). Studying actors' performances in Kubrick's films may indeed highlight some of the director's main artistic concerns. Therefore, by focusing on the performances of the main actors of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), I should like to suggest that their underplayed performances stress their characters' isolation from others, from themselves and ultimately from reality itself. By "underplaying", I certainly do not mean that the actors gave poor performances in their respective films or that they failed to display a wide range of emotions. On the contrary, I think their underplaying deserves to be praised, as their performances become an integral part of Kubrick's aesthetics and help give life to the unique vision of the human condition he ceaselessly portrayed in his *oeuvre*. Further analysis of underplaying in Kubrick's films might prove fruitful, notably in *Barry Lyndon* (1975) or *Lolita* (1962). For the purpose of this article, I have decided to narrow my reflection on the two films that arguably envision a happy ending – one that, as we shall see, entails a newfound relation of men to their bodies and to others.

Naremore remarked that some of Kubrick's actors tend to "depart from cinematic realism", notably "through a slow, sometimes absurdist playing of dialogues" (as in *2001* and *Eyes Wide Shut*) (2007: 25). One could say the same of their bodily movements, so that their whole performances are underplayed. Naremore argues that this departure from realism "slightly alienated the audience" (2007: 25). In other words, as in the plays of Bertolt Brecht, such a style of acting encourages spectators to view the films with a critical distance. Brecht's theory of acting was based on distancing effects, such as artificial gestures or tones of voice, which attract the audience's attention to the nature of play as representation. In *2001* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, the actors' performances are not Brechtian in the sense that their performances do not threaten the suspension of disbelief, but rather their underplaying is narratively justified. In *2001*, the acting in the scenes aboard the Discovery are determined by the repetitiveness of a routine established for months. As Gary Lockwood has said, defending his underplayed performance as Frank Poole, against attacks "from the critics for being that sort of benign type character": "If you're the type of person to go for two years to Jupiter you're not gonna be Jim Carrey [...] I thought our subtle portrayals was right on the money" (Lockwood 2014). As to *Eyes Wide Shut*, Bill's passive quality is justified by the oneiric ambiguity of the film, through which the audience may suspect that the whole work is "filtered through Bill's consciousness or, at least, a poetic rendering of his interiority" (Falsetto 2001: 133). It is indeed one of the main characteristics of dreams that the dreamer sees himself as a passive spectator of the events. Non-Brechtian as they may be, those performances distort some of Stanislavsky's key acting principles in order to draw attention to the acted dimension of the characters' identities, as well as to the gap drawn between them and more expressively portrayed roles. Stanislavsky's school of acting is particularly attentive to the influence of mind over body, or how to translate mental states through bodily expressions (Stanislavsky 2007: 28). Through underplaying, Kubrick's actors distort this Stanislavskian principle – although their overall performance remains faithful to the Stanislavskian school – by severing the link between a character's possible state of mind and his lack of bodily expression in an effort to show how the mind can stifle the body and thereby distance men from reality. Other characters in the films, whose entire bodies translate an inner state, underline such a split and shed further light on the specificities of underplayed characters, i.e. their incapacity to translate inner states outward through physical means of expression.

<sup>1</sup> Among others, we may think of Diane Johnson's account of her work as co-writer of *The Shining* which gives a first-hand testimony of Kubrick's interest in psychoanalysis (2006). As for montage, Kubrick discusses Pudovkin's influence (Gelmis 1970).

Yet not all of Kubrick's actors underplay their role, which leads to a great disparity of acting styles within a single film. This disparity is particularly evident in the performances of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman in Alice's crucial revelation scene in *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Until this point, the acting of both Cruise and Kidman is naturalistic, if slightly robotic. Routine and good manners motivate their actions, as in the opening sequence in which they get ready for the party in a highly mechanical way. The scene's choreographed quality is enhanced by the fluid camera movements and Shostakovich's Waltz No. 2 from *Suite for Variety Stage Orchestra*. The pressure of manners on the characters' behaviours is reflected in their slightly fake smiles and by the flatness of their dialogue, until alcohol and the excitement of flirting lead to more relaxed performances. The bedroom scene, on the other hand, progressively accentuates the discrepancy between the acting styles of the two actors. Bill seems to shut himself down following his wife's revelation. Even though he is the central focaliser of the movie, his inner life becomes inaccessible to the audience. He becomes stone-faced, and remains so throughout his wanderings of New York. As Alice reveals her fantasy, he barely moves a muscle until the phone rings. But even the way he answers the phone is extremely mechanical: each movement of the neck and of the arm seems to require an intense level of concentration. Bill acts like an automaton, disconnected from reality due to the aggressive intrusion of the imagined fantasy of his wife – or rather, this intrusion proved how disconnected Bill already was. Cruise's bland fixed stare throughout the entire scene enhances this feeling of disconnection. Cruise has commented that "Stanley and I worked long in finding the behaviour of Dr Bill, how he would retreat back into himself, into the security of his own authority" (Cruise 1999a). Cruise added that his performance as Dr Bill was marked by "frustration", since "you had to have this calm exterior and yet underneath you had to keep this fire stoked" (Cruise 1999b). The highly physical star of *Mission Impossible* (Brian De Palma, 1996) thus acknowledged the – fruitful – frustration of playing a character whose emotions and inner drives were bottled up to the point that they did not manifest physically.

In contrast, Nicole Kidman describes her acting performance as one of liberty: "Kubrick allowed me such freedom as an actor" (Kidman 1999). Her acting underlines Bill's isolation, for she gives a very corporeal and expressive performance. Her physical presence dominates the room (she seems to interact with the wall and the floor and makes broad gestures to suggest her intoxication to marijuana). Her acting is extremely organic – her body seems driven by the character's inner state – to the point that her physical presence seems to have dictated the placing of the camera: she is shot in a frame within a frame so as to be the central focus of the image, and at one point the camera violently pans down to follow her own movements during her laughing fit. The power of Kidman's fit, emphasised by the camera movements, underlines the intensity of Alice's emotion. In the bedroom, with the help of marijuana, Alice frees herself from the social mask she had worn in Ziegler's party and – we are led to understand – for a long time before that: the mask of the perfect housewife as well as the mask of the perfect object of desire. Through the physical exultation with which she admits her own fantasy, Kidman reaffirms Alice's existence not as an object but as a subject with specific wants and drives. The poignant and almost frightening intensity of her laugh comes from its freeing power. Henri Bergson famously theorised how the presence of the "mechanical in the liveliness creates the comical" (2013: 66), so that Alice's laugh may also be interpreted as a reaction against the mechanical weight of her life as well as Bill's. Thanks to the spectacular nature of her performance (this scene was often quoted as the best performance in the film [Chion 2005: 465]), Kidman contrasts with and accentuates Cruise's stillness, while her laugh gives a very serious intensity to the scene: Bill's mechanical behaviour is, for her, no light matter.

For this scene, Kidman stressed how Kubrick pushed her to go beyond a sense of control, narratively justified through the smoking of pot which made the character "irrational": "that's what I love about the argument, it's completely irrational at times" (Kidman 1999). The actress also defined her laugh as an "out-of-control laugh" (Kidman 1999). Thus, Kidman's highly corporeal and emotional acting stresses the release of the character's rationality, which, like Bill, controlled Alice's every move in the opening sequence. According to Kidman, Alice provokes Bill even though she loves him because she wants "something more" from their marriage (Kidman 1999). Kidman's performance stresses the passivity of her character's husband so that the revelation of her fantasy may be seen as a wake-up call, an attempt for Alice to breach the growing distance with Bill. Having the marijuana hidden within the medicine chest humorously underlines the therapeutic quality of Alice's release. Cruise's deliberately mechanical acting thus enables Kubrick to depict a character whose mind restricts his body, his emotions and the depth of his inner life, in an effort to act in control of himself. The more Bill is faced

with the depths of the irrational drives that compose the self, the more his rational mind tries to take control of the situation. The resulting split triggers Bill's passivity. From this point onward, Cruise's underplaying of Bill is part of what gives the film its dream-like aspect: Bill seems to be sleepwalking through the narrative.

The abrupt cut to the next scene enhances the fact that, from now on, Bill is disconnected from his body: his black coat entirely hides him from the neck down, so that he seems to be only a floating head. Bill now wears thick black gloves that prevent him from having any direct contact with the outside world. His disconnection from the world is first of all a disconnection from his own body and from any sensual relation to the world. This highlights the gap that has just been created between Bill and his wife, as he pictures her in bed with the naval officer she was attracted to, in a series of strikingly sensual fantasy images of Alice and the officer. The rest of the film may therefore be seen as an attempt by Bill to reconnect with his body, an endeavour constantly frustrated by potential sexual relations being cut short. In attempting to reconnect with this part of himself, Bill also needs to reconnect with the world, with other human beings and, of course, particularly with his wife, whose secret inner thoughts and desire he had never suspected before her revelation. Finding a new sensual relation to the world is also about being able to live in the world, rather than living inside his brain, cut away from reality. If, as Deleuze famously wrote, Kubrick's is "a cinema of the brain" (1985: 267), one might add that Bill's journey is an attempt to get out of his brain and to find a new corporeal and spiritual relation to the world – although this attempt may be doomed, with the ending remaining ambiguous.

Tom Cruise said that he played Bill Harford as a man cut out from a set of repressed emotions and drives: "This guy was holding everything [underneath] this façade of being Dr Bill" (Cruise 1999c). By underplaying Bill, Cruise stresses Bill's own play-acting: the character's identity is projected through self-discipline, in an effort to hide and tame outbursts of emotions going on underneath. Bill's identity thus becomes a mask, a performance of stability and mastery over oneself. In fact, however, the more drives and emotions are repressed, and the more they surge back up and take a hold over one's self, once the appearance of stability crumbles up. Cruise describes Bill as a man "driven by his emotions [and] driven by what his wife had said to him" (Cruise and Kidman 1999). Bill's outward appearance of control is a refusal to acknowledge the power of his emotions over his rational will. Even though the cause for such a split between one's corporeal self and one's rational self in Kubrick's films is never explained with words, in *Eyes Wide Shut* it is symptomatic of a post-Freudian modern man who does not acknowledge the power of instinctive and corporeal drives over the self.

Cruise's fully covered body in the taxi scene following Kidman's revelation is highly symbolic of Bill's lack of touch with the world. The taxi itself becomes a mechanical substitute for Bill's body, a capsule which enables him to move through the world without being a part of it. In this scene in *Eyes Wide Shut*, and more overtly in *2001*, mechanics, science, and machines are correlated with the increased distance between the main male characters and reality.

In the opening sequence of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the hominids are a fully integrated part of their world. Dan Richter, who played the role of Moonwatcher and choreographed the beginning of the "Dawn of Man" episode, was a professional mime and created a particularly physical interpretation of the man-apes. His performance was based on the behaviour of chimpanzees in order to be as naturalistic as possible (Richter 2013). The man-apes are first seen sitting on the ground, eating with their bare hands. They are framed in between the sky and the foreground so that their bodies appear fully grounded on Earth. Throughout the beginning of the "Dawn of Man", the ground nearly always occupies more than half the frame, with the man-apes inhabiting caves or clustering at the bottom of cliffs. Things change, however, with the first appearance of the monolith; it is first seen from a slightly low angle, which announces its connection to the sky. This move away from the Earth and towards the sky is repeatedly emphasised in the remainder of the "Dawn of Man".

Moonwatcher's use of the bone as a weapon is shown in an extreme low angle shot in which he is now more erect than the other man-apes, which suggests that progress moves men towards the skies – as is made explicit in the jump cut linking the bone in the air and the spaceship orbiting Earth – but disconnects them from the world in the process. Using a tool as an extension of the arm prevents the man-apes from directly touching the world around them, as they now use a weapon to interact with both their prey and enemies. If progress increases mankind's potential mastery over their environment, it also creates a barrier between the body and the world, a barrier that, as the underplaying of actors suggests in the following sequences, has increased dramatically in the modern world. Humans on Earth are never seen except through a television screen, whilst the

first human we see is Heywood Floyd (William Sylvester) who is sleeping with his arm floating harmoniously with the pen in zero gravity. Science, which has propelled humans into the skies, has also driven them away from the gravitational zone of influence of their home planet. Floyd is fastened to the chair of the spaceship, which announces the theme of human enslavement to technology (later explored through the astronauts' realisation that their lives depend on HAL's proper functioning) and that humans' dependency on machines has disconnected them from their bodies and from the organic aspect of life. When gravity and weight become irrelevant, how can humans still relate to their bodies? The soft light and the smooth movements of Sylvester's arm moving rhythmically with Johann Strauss's *The Blue Danube* imply that progress and technology have lulled humanity into a comfortable, mind-numbing sense of lethargy. Truth, Kubrick often declared, is "multi-faceted" (Kubrick 1987). If the awe-inspiring ballet of spaceships is an outright celebration of man's achievements, then acting reveals the darker side of this achievement: an excessive reliance on technology has distanced humans from bodily realities and in doing so has devitalised them.

This drowsy atmosphere is continued throughout the Moon Base and Discovery One scenes. The frequent absence of music, the minimal dialogue, and the general underplaying of the actors suggest that, as in *Eyes Wide Shut*, the characters are almost sleepwalking through the film. Indeed, in the Discovery One scenes, three out of the five astronauts are exclusively seen locked in sarcophagus shaped capsules in a state of cryogenic hibernation. Modernity becomes a state of pre-death, a state in which all bodily functions are reduced to a minimum. Until HAL decides otherwise, machines maintain their bodies in a state of numb passivity in which they lack for nothing but experience nothing either. The presence of these three unconscious bodies, which parallels the performances of Gary Lockwood and Keir Dullea (Dave Bowman), suggests the Discovery One sequences display an increased divide between the characters and their bodies, while in the scenes towards and on the Moon the split is still moderate.

When Floyd arrives at the space station, he walks at a fast pace, smiles expressively and shakes hands with his Russian colleagues, apparently warm-heartedly. He makes use of a prop, his notepad, which shows he still has some interactions with his environment. Props, James Naremore argues, can be used by actors to express their feelings or emotional states (1988: 100), which is to say there is still some level of expressivity in Sylvester's performance, self-conscious and unspontaneous as this expressivity may be – after all, Floyd has to put on a show in front of his Cold War rivals. In the Discovery One scenes, Keir Dullea's performance is more drastically underplayed. Dullea's body is hidden from view – covered by a grey suit – and its stiffness is accentuated. The first scene aboard the Discovery spaceship displays more of Lockwood's body, as Poole is seen jogging like a hamster in a cage. He is then shown in his underwear, but his body is nevertheless laying still and he does not initiate any movement as it is HAL who moves his chair at his request. Lockwood's corporeal presence on screen is thus paradoxical, both visually emphasized and yet at odds in such a technological environment. It is eventually Poole, the one character to display some kind of physicality, who dies as he is ejected into outer space by HAL. Science has brought humans so far that their bodies cannot survive in these new territories without being trapped within machines. Documents from the Stanley Kubrick Archive reveal that Gary Lockwood was then known and advertised as a physical actor. In his biography sent to an advertising agency prior to the release of *2001*, he is described as "a rugged six-footer, former football player and film stunt man". It is also highlighted that his career "stems from a fist-fight which resulted in his being suspended from UCLA for a year."<sup>2</sup> Lockwood's physicality was therefore taken into account in Kubrick's decision to cast him for the part of Frank Poole.

Poole's death leaves Bowman alone on Discovery. Keir Dullea's underplaying is emphasised by the various close-ups on his inexpressive face – his skin is made-up and lighted so as to give it the appearance of wax, and his hair is rigidly slicked on his head – which create an uncanny mask-like effect. Bowman also behaves like an automaton totally disconnected from his body, which becomes a mere tool for him to accomplish his duties rather than a gateway to experience the universe. This is reinforced later in the sequence, as Bowman wears a spacesuit but no helmet. Like Tom Cruise in his taxi, Keir Dullea appears as just a floating head as he is piloting the space pod.

As the natural, organic environment in which humanity was born is being replaced by the artificiality of life-sustaining machines, the corporeality of the actors is reduced to a minimum. The characters lose touch with

<sup>2</sup> Anon. (1966). *Gary Lockwood's Biography*. SKA, SK/12/5/14.

their organic, animal selves, as suggested through the humorous bathroom instructions Floyd reads as he travels to the moon, as well as by the unidentified tasteless food the astronauts eat. The most basic bodily functions – eating, urinating etc. – can only be achieved with the help of machines. When the two astronauts are seen eating aboard *Discovery*, a series of interspersed still shots introduce the three hibernating astronauts and end with a close-up of their life-function charts. The parallel editing highlights the fact that both the astronauts who are awake and those still asleep are equally artificially sustained. Vivian Sobchack, whose book *Carnal Thoughts* explores the phenomenology of the body in cinema, argues that:

Embodiment is a radically material condition of human being that necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an *irreducible ensemble*. Thus we matter and we mean through processes and logics of sense-making that owe as much to our carnal existence as they do to our conscious thought. (2004: 4)

In both *2001* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, the apparent disembodiment of the characters stresses not only the emotional loss, but also the cognitive loss it entails. In *2001*, humankind's disconnection with their organic selves is thus linked with the invading presence of technology, to the point that the audience identifies with HAL more than with the humans. For example, the most emotional scene of the movie is the death of the computer, which acquires a physical truth as Bowman disconnects him manually – whereas a human's death is only signalled by a computer screen and has no visual physical consequences at all. Throughout the scenes on *Discovery*, it is HAL and his Earth twin that act as leaders of the journey. In one of the film's screenplays preserved in the Stanley Kubrick Archive, Kubrick hand wrote a revealing comment in the margin, stating that "Poole and Bowman: they are caretakers."<sup>3</sup> The growing distance between men and their bodies combined with the absence of creative thinking – decision-making – has turned them into machines which, ironically, can never achieve a level of analytical thinking equal to that of HAL. Their sole function is to accomplish the repetitive day-to-day maintenance tasks so that their overwhelmingly scientific mind, disconnected from feelings and creative thinking, turns them into highly qualified technicians and machine-men subordinated to robots.

When interviewed by the *New York Times* after the release of *2001*, Kubrick developed his view about the splitting of body and mind that, according to him, seems a logical output of a species' evolution. "Nobody particularly thinks that biological life-forms would endure very long", Kubrick said, continuing that,

immortality – reversing the chemical process that causes the cells to forget what they are doing – seems likely even for man within a couple of hundred years. It's generally thought that after a highly-developed science gets you past the mortality stage, you become part-animal, part-machine, then all machine. Eventually, perhaps, pure energy. We cannot imagine what a million-year jump in science will produce in life-forms. Pure spirit may be the ultimate form that intelligence would seek. (Kubrick 1968)

The becoming-machine of actors, which emphasises the devitalisation of their characters, highlights the anguish associated with the potential waning of an otherwise optimistic prospect of immortality. If becoming immortal devitalises humanity, how could one still be considered alive?

*Eyes Wide Shut* may not look forward in time but it acknowledges that modernity already entails disembodiment. As it has been widely commented, and often criticised,<sup>4</sup> the actors behave mechanically in the orgy scene. Movements are slow and ritualistic and no character seems moved by desire or passion. Rather, both men and women seem to perform their tasks emotionlessly and automatically. The characters' faces are concealed behind Venetian masks, which hide the emotional energy usually associated with sex scenes. The scene has a striking uncanny quality. As Freud theorised, one of the main sources of the uncanny arises from the tension between animate and inanimate bodies (2003: 138). The orgy scene then acts as a nightmarish exteriorisation of Bill's repressed sexuality. In this respect, one may add that Freud considered the uncanny to be the only emotion more deeply felt in fiction than in reality. Unable to listen to his body, Bill's fantasy seems a copy of a copy, the projection of what a male fantasy should look like, a cold and frightful exploration of

<sup>3</sup> Kubrick, Stanley (1965-1967). "Kubrick's Screenplay Notes". SKA, SK/12/1/2/6.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Scholes and Richard Martin notably quote David Denby according to whom Kubrick "has staged the most pompous orgy in the history of movies" (2015: 345).



the male libido imagined from a disembodied viewpoint. In this scene, both the master of ceremony (Leon Vitali) and the masked prostitute (Abigail Good) act in a highly Brechtian fashion. They recite their lines and move artificially, so that the whole ceremony seems, as Ziegler later claims, a staged ritual and a charade. Lucy Scholes and Richard Martin explain that,

given the controlling male framework of the event, it is designed to be further evidence of the paucity of male fantasy and the narrow notions of desire attached to it. The orgy, like so much of Bill's fantasy, is devoid of any real erotic charge. It neither tantalizes nor teases, but this absence is entirely intentional. (2015: 353)

According to Linda Williams, pornography is one of the "body genres", in that it triggers a physical rather than intellectual reaction (1991). By filming an orgy disconnected from any physical reaction of arousal or excitement, Kubrick astutely underlines the disconnection between Bill and his body, so that Cruise's underplaying combines with the Brechtian rendition of an orgy to create the uncanny feeling that the orgy is the exploration of one's inner drives by a subjectivity unable to be in touch with actual bodily emotions. While Bill's drives brought him to this place, Cruise's acting portrays his difficulty in integrating those drives.

It is therefore not surprising that Bill's humiliation, once he has been discovered as an intruder in the mansion, is to be unmasked and stripped of his clothes. Bill's punishment is to expose his face and his body, which have become so problematic to him. The original screenplay by Frederic Raphael crafted a much more reactive Bill Harford, capable of expressing anger and willpower in the face of danger:

An adrenalin rush gives him the strength to throw off the two 'S.S' men and stand alone, menacing and menaced [...] Bill: So now what? Have you got guns, have you got knives? What've you got?<sup>5</sup>

In the film, the absence of any reaction by Bill emphasises his disconnection from his senses and his passive acceptance of the situation. Out of touch with his senses, he is no longer capable to express the emotional states needed to comprehend the world and act in it.

The increased affiliation of the body with death becomes apparent later in the morgue, when Bill leans towards the corpse of the woman with an obvious attraction. This underlines Bill's wish to be rid of his own body, a becoming-only-mind that also haunts Dave Bowman. An analysis of the characters' performances in the last scenes of *Eyes Wide Shut* suggests at least a hopeful filling of the gap between Bill and his inner corporeal self. As Thomas Allen Nelson argues, the morgue scene represents a turning point in Bill's psyche: "Bill now gazes on a naked female body and sees both the truth of his own desires and the fear that lurks behind those desires. Bill now shows the kind of tender regard for Mandy that was missing in his earlier examination in Victor's upstairs bathroom" (2000: 291). Cruise's acting is, once again, particularly effective in conveying the subtle ambivalence of the scene. The way Bill closes his eyes has an emotional poignancy that has been entirely absent from the film so far. By displaying a deep heart-felt sympathy for another being, Cruise departs from his previous machine-like characterisation of Bill and gives the character an expressive emotional substance. The ambivalence of this scene seems to mark the first step towards Bill's opening up to others and to his own inner complexity.

The second Ziegler scene also envisions a reunion of Bill with his inner self. At first, Bill appears to be wearing his social mask as he and Ziegler exchange the typical civilities associated with male bonding and drink scotch over a game of pool. But this mask quickly crumbles and when Ziegler tries to convince Bill to accept his version of events, Cruise once again displays a wide range of emotion, starting from shame – at having been recognised and having been unmasked – and ending with anger, as Bill does not buy Ziegler's "official" version of the events. Bill's subsequent outburst of emotion displays an unprecedented level of expressivity when he returns home and faces the possibility of a reunion with Alice. He cries hysterically as he tells Alice everything. Cruise twists his features to express sorrow in an emotional acting feat that equals Kidman's in expressivity. For the first time since the beginning of the film, Bill seems to hold nothing back.

During the final scene in the toy store, Bill's open coat, red jersey and white shirt with an open collar give him the appearance of being more open to the outside environment. He and Alice walk at the same pace, stop

<sup>5</sup> Raphael, Frederic (1995). "Raphael First Draft". SKA UAL, SK/17/1/1, p. 89.

simultaneously when their daughter requires their attention, and display the same amount of facial expressions. In other words, both actors now seem to perform at the same emotional level and are equally expressive. As Bill tells Alice he wants to remain with her “forever”, he risks being under the same illusions of certainty and tranquillity that the couple were trapped in at the beginning of the film. However, one may at least assume that from now on Bill’s eyes will be more open: he has – at least for now – managed to reconnect with reality and with his inner self through unfiltered emotional outbursts.

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, the estrangement from reality may therefore possibly be overcome. Similarly, acting in *2001* suggests another positive ending. The film imagines a way out of the characters’ estrangement from reality, albeit a way triggered by a fictitious new step in humankind’s evolution. Ruled by cold logic, science and efficiency, *2001*’s modernity seems to have no room for human beings’ corporality, organic needs or bodily functions. It is therefore not surprising that, according to the supercomputer HAL, human life itself may hinder the mission since, as he says, it is likely that any error in calculation is a human error. The killing of HAL is thus the turning point after which a newly found connection between Dave Bowman and his body is gradually envisioned. In killing HAL, Bowman asserts his own will for the first time and does not obey machines as a mere caretaker. “Only after HAL reasserts the primitive’s instinct for survival by killing Poole and the three hibernators does Bowman begin to show indications of an internal ‘awakening’”, Nelson writes (2000: 111). Dave’s symbolic rebirth as he is ejected from the uterine space pod marks the beginning of his real odyssey, an odyssey which leads him away from the paralysing forces of modernity – he wakes up in an eighteenth century room – towards a rediscovery of his own subjectivity that entails a new sensual relation to the world. The Star Gate sequence is the first to feature point of view shots from Bowman’s perspective, and the subjectivity of his vision is emphasised by several close-ups of his eyes. Various still shots of Bowman grimacing severely contrast with his previous inexpressive underplaying, much as Bill’s grimaces of sorrow in the confession scene with Alice contrast with his own earlier passivity. When Dullea’s face is grotesquely misshapen by pain, it is the first time any character in the film displays some degree of spontaneous emotion since the man-apes in the “Dawn of Man”.

The final sequence, featuring Bowman in an eighteenth century room, corroborates the link between this new evolutionary step of humanity and a reunion with its organic nature. This time, the sequence suggests, evolution will not discard human corporeality. A series of improbable cuts show Dave Bowman ageing but simultaneously rediscovering his body. He steps out of the space pod and visits an elegant bathroom (which contrasts with the inhospitable space toilets). He then becomes an older version of himself with no spacesuit and eating real vegetables rather than the packaged food he had eaten previously. The final, dying version of himself eventually gives birth to the Star Child, who is entirely naked. The spherical aura surrounding him suggests an unbelievably complex technology that enables the child to evolve in space, but it also creates a perfect formal harmony with the Earth. This new humanity now becomes part of the sublime alignment of round objects that Kubrick has associated with the wonders of the universe in the opening shots of the film. Body and mind, nature and technology, humanity and reality are finally in tune for the first time since humans had started to move out of their animal condition. Modernity, and the loss of contact with reality that it creates, may only be a first, imperfect step in the evolution of man. Such an awakening has only been made possible by Bowman’s gradual rediscovery of his own corporeality: as a man – not a machine – Bowman’s organic nature is subject to ageing and, eventually, dying. Rather than hiding this truth away through becoming machine and hibernating in an in-between stasis, facing it paves the way for an evolution. Even though Kubrick acknowledged that in order to achieve immortality humanity must discard its corporeal state, the Star Child’s corporeality seems to envision a human-machine blend that takes into account the need for humankind to be embodied in the world, albeit with technological enhancement.

A comparative study of actors’ performances in both films sheds light on some of Kubrick’s main thematic concerns. In *2001* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, the underplaying of the main actors and the confrontation between their acting styles and other characters’, highlights Kubrick’s appeal for a rediscovery of oneself as a subject. Such rediscovery can only be achieved once the characters move away from the distancing stasis men tend to fall into – appealing as it may be. A possible way out of this entrapment is suggested through the alteration of Cruise’s and Dullea’s acting styles by the end of each film. In *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky asserts that there are three poles which an actor must use in order to be true to life: feelings, intelligence and will (2007: 218). Only by drawing from these three strengths may an actor achieve a naturalistic greatness. My analysis leads



me to conclude that Kubrick and the main actors from *2001* and *Eyes Wide Shut* developed an acting style that stresses a lack of balance between those poles. Dullea and Cruise play their characters through an excess of intellect that thwarts will and feelings, and which contrasts with balanced performances by Nicole Kidman or Dan Richter. As a result, Dave Bowman becomes an analytical mind disconnected from his emotional self and mechanically obeying a predetermined mission, while Bill Harford becomes an analytical mind blinding himself to his own emotions as well as his wife's. Only by reconnecting with will and feelings can these characters become reacquainted with reality, as Cruise's and Dullea's final expressive performances suggest. By pushing his actors to break the natural unity of Stanislavkian acting, the director articulates anaesthetics of disconnection, brought forth by the paradoxical dehumanising of our age of reason. Dullea and Cruise's final expressivity reads as an appeal for a fuller, embodied humanity.

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