Chapter 1

Identifying the Meaning: In Search of the Concepts of Kubrick’s Films

The perfect novel from which to make a movie is, I think, not the novel of action but, on the contrary, the novel which is mainly concerned with the inner life of its characters.

—Stanley Kubrick

If it is our goal to demonstrate how the situational meanings of Kubrick’s films are communicated visually to the viewer, then, we first have to identify the concepts that constitute those meanings. Before pursuing this task, we will first provide the reader with some insight into the question as to how spectators construct the situational meanings of films. Since an understanding of this question falls together with the way people make sense of stories, the first part of this chapter will be devoted to a clarification of the concept of narrative. Knowing more or less how narrative comprehension is achieved, we will be able to move on to the second part of this chapter which is centred around the question as to where to find the concepts that constitute the situational meanings of Kubrick’s films. This question will be explored through a consideration of four distinctive sources of conceptual description: the novel, the screenplay, the film, and the descriptions as formulated by the film viewer. Each level of description will be discussed with respect to Kubrick’s unique method of adapting stories into films. Once we know where to find these concepts, we can actually present some conceptual descriptions. This will be done in the third part of this chapter in which we shall provide the reader with thirteen scene descriptions, one for each feature film that Kubrick directed. From these descriptions, we will then extract, in the fourth part, a literal conceptual scheme or skeletal blueprint that will be argued to underlie all of the thirteen narratives. In the fifth and last section, we introduce the challenge of the subsequent chapter by arguing how this conceptual structure poses us with a theoretical problem that necessitates us to consider the significant role of embodiment.
1. What is narrative?

What is narrative? To address this question is to engage in a large and rich body of literature that demands deeper and more detailed study than this chapter can offer. For our purpose, it is sufficient to offer a general understanding of the concept of narrative. As always, the best way to get an idea of something is by comparison with what it is not. Take, for example, the following random string of events:

(1) A general goes mad. A radio is destroyed. A telephone call takes place. A nuclear bomb is dropped.

As Bordwell and Thompson have argued, it is hard to perceive such a list of actions as a narrative. In order for it to be conceived as such, there has to be something holding the individual events together. Consider now the same events, but this time described anew:

(2) A US general goes mad and orders his bomber wing to drop their nuclear bombs on Soviet targets. The Americans are able to successfully recall all of the bombers except but one whose radio equipment has been destroyed by the Soviets. Refusing to become a mass murderer, the American president telephones the Soviet premier to warn him of the impending attack and to help him neutralizing it. This plan, however, fails and the plain succeeds in dropping the bomb after all.

We now have a narrative that many of you will recognize as a very general outline of the plot summary of Dr. Strangelove. We are able to grasp it as such because, in contrast to our earlier description, we are able to connect the events. Firstly, we are able to situate the events spatially: we infer that the general gave his orders from an air force base somewhere in the United States, that the bombers are heading toward the USSR, that both presidents are probably operating from inside their War Rooms. Secondly, we are able to link the events causally: the general has launched an attack because he has gone mad. The Americans are not able to recall all of the planes because the Soviets have destroyed the radio equipment of one of the bombers, which, in turn, necessitates the president’s telephone call. Lastly, we can understand that the three events are temporally related to each other: the order of the attack occurs before the telephone call, which in turn occurs before the dropping of the bomb; all of the action probably taking place in a couple of hours.

A narrative thus arises, as a final product, from an ongoing process of construction: from the events conveyed by the representation (whatever the medium), the perceiver actively construes “a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space.” Narrative thus is, to cite Edward Branigan, a perceptual (and therefore mental) activity that organizes data (i.e., spatial and temporal data) into a special pattern (i.e., a cause-effect chain with a beginning, middle, and end) which represents and explains experience.

This conception has an important consequence: it implies that any description of a narrative should avoid a strictly formal and logical definition, but should take into account the mental or cognitive processes active in a perceiver during his or her comprehension of a narrative in an actual situation.
Perhaps the most comprehending theoretical model that has been proposed so far in the literature to account for the cognitive dimension of narrative comprehension is the theory of situation models or mental models. Central to this theory is the idea that narrative comprehension involves more than what is explicitly described in a text. It involves the construction and retrieval of a mental representation of the verbally described situation or state of affairs, rather than the construction and retrieval of a mental representation of the text itself. To see what is meant by this theoretical claim, let us consider an experiment that was already conducted a decade prior to the coinage of the concept of a mental model. In their study on sentence memory, Bransford, Barclay, and Franks have demonstrated empirically that the reader's mental representation of the situation described by the text can have a significant effect on the reader's memory. Assume, for example, that participants are hearing input sentences (1) and (2):

1. Three turtles rested on a floating log, and a fish swam beneath them.
2. Three turtles rested beside a floating log, and a fish swam beneath them.

Then, afterward, during the recognition test, the same participants are additionally confronted with the same sentences, albeit with the final pronoun them changed to it:

3. Three turtles rested on a floating log, and a fish swam beneath it.
4. Three turtles rested beside a floating log, and a fish swam beneath it.

Participants who had heard input sentence (1) frequently confused it with recognition sentence (3), whereas people who had heard input sentence (2) rarely confused it with recognition sentence (4). These findings indicate that the discrepancy cannot be explained by merely differential changes at the textual and formal level. Indeed, sentences (1) and (3) and sentences (2) and (4) only differ with respect to the pronoun (them or it). How, then, can we account for this difference? As the authors argue, the explanation has to be found in the spatial layout described by the sentences. Sentence (2) offers a description that includes information about a fish swimming beneath the turtles. The description in sentence (1) also contains this information, but it includes something additional as well. As they write: “Since the turtles were on the log and the fish swam beneath them, it follows that the fish swam beneath the log as well.” The inferential spatial logic, however, that the fish swam beneath the log, was not included in the input sentences. “It had to come from one's general cognitive knowledge of the world (in this case, knowledge of spatial relations).” Or as Zwaan and Radvansky put it: sentences (1) and (3) are being confused, “because they describe the same situation.” By contrast, sentences (2) and (4) “are less likely to be confused because they describe different situations.”

The spatial layout of the described events is but one of many aspects of situation models. The event-indexing model (henceforth, EI model) proposed by Zwaan, Langston, and Graesser has been introduced to account for the multidimensional set-up of situation models. More specifically, the EI model asserts that perceivers, when construing mental models, monitor connections between events (incoming events with prior events stored in working memory) along various dimensions or indexes including, among others, space, time and causality.
with regard to these aspects, then, is what constitutes a coherent situation model. Table 1.1 enlists the conceptualizations of temporal, spatial, and causal continuity, as provided by Zwaan, Magliano and Graesser.\(^\text{17}\)

| Table 1.1 Situational continuity along the dimensions of time, space and causality (after Zwaan, Magliano and Graesser). |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Temporal continuity**                                      | Occurs when an incoming event in a story describes an event, state, or action that occurs within the same time interval as the previous sentence. A sentence is temporally discontinuous with the prior context if there is a time shift. |
| **Spatial continuity**                                       | Occurs when the text describes events, states, and actions that take place in the same spatial setting. A spatial setting is a room, scenario, or region that has distinctive features that are discriminable from alternative spatial settings. |
| **Causal continuity**                                       | Occurs when there is a direct causal link between the current sentence and prior story information. In the absence of causal continuity, the reader attempts to infer a causal link and this requires extra processing time. |

As this table already suggests, analyses of narrative texts typically use a clause or sentence as the narrative unit of analysis with each clause representing an event. These clauses then can be indexed spatially, temporally and so on. Being a visual medium, film, however, lacks this clear-cut segmentation into clauses. This, in turn, raises the question as to which unit of film can be seen as serving the same function as a clause. To overcome this problem, Magliano, Miller and Zwaan have proposed to use the shot as the equivalent unit for the analysis of narrative films.\(^\text{18}\) This, however, does not mean that a shot is identical to a clause, far from it. The authors are keen to stress that, where a clause typically conveys only one or two states, events, goals or actions, this is not necessarily true for a shot. Nevertheless, the choice for the shot seems logical and well-motivated from the point of view of continuity editing.\(^\text{19}\) This system of cutting creates the illusion that a series of shots conveys events that are temporally, spatially, and causally contiguous with each other. In other words, although the shot is not a clause, it does allow us to identify whether or not an incoming shot conveys events or actions that are contiguous or not with the immediately prior shot along the various dimensions of narrative comprehension. This, in turn, has led the authors to define continuity in film along the two most basic dimensions of events, namely: time and space.\(^\text{20}\) The authors assumed a shot to be temporally continuous with the previous one “if it depicts events or actions which immediately follow or are concurrent with those of the previous shot.” Spatial continuity, in turn, was defined along two aspects: “spatial regions of interactions” and “spatial movement of characters.” Continuity in the first aspect “was assumed to occur when a shot depicts a location that is within the same spatial region as the previous shot.” Discontinuity takes place “when a shot depicts (1) a new spatial region that has not been shown in any previous shot or (2) a location in a spatial region that has been shown before, but was not the same spatial region depicted in the previous shot.” Continuity in the second aspect “was assumed to occur when all the salient characters depicted
in a shot were located in the same region as the shot in which they were last seen.” Diagrammatically, the EI model in film understanding may be represented as in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Indexing events in film understanding.

We construe a narrative, then, by identifying its events and linking them along various dimensions. As to the nature of these events, Bordwell and Thompson have further pointed out that they can take two forms: either they are presumed and inferred by the viewer or they are explicitly presented in the film.21 For instance, at the start of Eyes Wide Shut, in between credit cards (figures 1.2A and 1.2C), we see a beautiful woman with her back to the camera letting an elegant black dress dropping to the floor (figure 1.2B). She will be later revealed as Alice (Nicole Kidman). After the appearance of the film title, we watch the exterior of an apartment block (figure 1.2D). It is night. The traffic with yellow cabs signals us that we are probably in New York. Then we see a handsome man in evening dress looking for something (figure 1.2E). The shot is spatially and temporally continuous with figure 1.2B. He walks into a bedroom, goes to a small table, picks up keys and a mobile phone and walks to a chest of drawers (figure 1.2F). This is Bill Harford (Tom Cruise). He now opens a drawer and takes out a handkerchief (figure 1.2G). He utters the words: “Honey, have you seen my wallet?” Off-screen we hear a female voice replying: “Ah . . . isn’t it on the bedside table?” Bill walks across to the bedside table and finds his wallet (figure 1.2H). He goes around the bed, saying, “Now listen, you know we’re running a little late?” and into the en-suite bathroom where Alice is sitting on the loo wearing an evening dress (figure 1.2I). On the basis of these cues, we can already draw several conclusions. We assume that Bill and Alice are a married couple who are dressing themselves up for a party, that Alice tried on a dress, but rejected it. We also assume that, before we saw Bill, he also changed clothes. From the
look of the interior of the apartment we also infer that they are well-off and that they probably lead a busy professional and social life. In other words, we infer causes, a temporal sequence, even though none of this information has been directly presented. The sum total of both types of events is what constitutes the *story*, that is, “all the events that we see and hear, plus all those that we infer or assume to have occurred, arranged in their presumed causal relations, chronological order, duration, frequency, and spatial locations.”

Figure 1.2 The opening scene of *Eyes Wide Shut*.

As viewers, we can only construct a mental model of the situation as conveyed by the film on the basis of what is explicitly and directly presented by the filmmaker. This is called the *plot* which refers to “everything visibly and audibly present in the film before us.” This does not only include the events that are directly depicted, but also the elements that are brought in from outside the story, that is, the non-diegetic elements that the characters cannot read or hear such as the film’s credits or the soundtrack. For instance, while the opening images of *Eyes Wide Shut* are presented to us, we also hear the *Suite for Jazz Orchestra No. 2* by Dmitri Shostakovich. Initially, the viewer is held to believe that this music is non-diegetic. Later in the scene this perceptive state changes, however, as we watch how Bill turns off the on-screen stereo, thus revealing the surprise that the music was diegetic all along. As such the film announces, to quote McQuiston, “its request to the audience to see and hear the world only as Bill does.”

Knowing more or less how spectators come to understand the situational meanings of a film, let us now turn to the question as to where to find the proper conceptual description of those meanings. Finding an answer to this question is crucial for it can be assumed that these descriptions provide us with the concepts that are rendered
non-verbally by the films of Kubrick. Indeed, if it is our goal to identify the concepts that constitute the referential 
or situational meanings of Kubrick’s work and these meanings, in turn, are construed by the viewer on the basis of 
the explicitly presented events of the plot, then it follows that we should provide conceptual (i.e., verbal) descript-
tions of those meanings in order for us to obtain the concepts.

2. Locating the situational meanings of Kubrick’s films

The task of locating the situational meanings of Kubrick’s work amounts to considering and comparing various 
conceptual sources of description. In what follows, we will discuss four of them, as they each can be mapped on the 
timeline of the filmmaking and film viewing process. They include in successive order: (1) the novels upon which 
the films are based, (2) the screenplays adopted from these novels, (3) the films themselves, and (4) the spectator’s 
verbal accounts of the films’ situational meanings. As figure 1.3 suggests, these sources are not to be treated as 
independent of each other. Rather, they are interconnected with each later location on the timeline modifying and 
adapting the situational meanings of the prior location: the spectator tells in verbal terms what the film is about; 
the film conveys in cinematic terms what is written in the screenplay; and the screenplay modifies what is written 
in the novel. In what follows, we will discuss each location, in turn, with respect to Kubrick’s unique method of 
adapting novels into films, and with the hope of pinpointing the proper descriptive locations from which, subse-
quently, to draw some of the concepts that constitute the situational meanings of Kubrick’s films.

The novels

A first initiative way would be to search for the situational meanings in the novels upon which most of the films 
of Kubrick are based. As can be seen in table 1.2, Kubrick was a prominent adapter of literature. With the excep-
tion of his first two films and 2001, for which only a short story served as a starting point, all his films were based 
on pre-existing pieces of writing including such famous works as Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita, Anthony Burgess’ 
A Clockwork Orange and Stephen King’s The Shining. His choice of novels was random and depended purely on
whether or not he had a “falling-in-love reaction” to the story.\textsuperscript{25} As he once told \textit{Rolling Stone} magazine: “I read. I order books from the States. I literally go into bookstores, close my eyes and take things off the shelf. If I don’t like the book after a bit, I don’t finish it. But I like to be surprised.”\textsuperscript{26} Nevertheless, despite this absence of an outspoken preference, one may sense a genuine interest for the psychological novel over the novel of action. A clear written statement that backs this claim can be found in the Winter 1960/61 issue of \textit{Sight and Sound} in which the director, in an article of his own, has declared that the former type of novel is “the perfect novel from which to make a movie” for it gives “the adaptor an absolute compass bearing, as it were, on what a character is thinking or feeling at any given moment of the story. And from this he can invent action which will be an objective correlative of the book’s psychological content.”\textsuperscript{27}

| Year | Film              | Novel                                              |
|------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1953 | \textit{Fear and Desire} | —                                                  |
| 1955 | \textit{Killer’s Kiss} | —                                                  |
| 1956 | \textit{The Killing} | \textit{Clean Break} (Lionel White, 1955)         |
| 1957 | \textit{Paths of Glory} | \textit{Paths of Glory} (Humphrey Cobb, 1935)    |
| 1960 | \textit{Spartacus} | \textit{Spartacus} (Howard Fast, 1951)            |
| 1962 | \textit{Lolita} | \textit{Lolita} (Vladimir Nabokov, 1955)          |
| 1964 | \textit{Dr. Strangelove} | \textit{Red Alert} aka \textit{Two Hours to Doom} (Peter Bryant aka Peter George, 1958) |
| 1968 | \textit{2001: A Space Odyssey} | \textit{The Sentinel} (Arthur C. Clarke, 1951) |
| 1971 | \textit{A Clockwork Orange} | \textit{A Clockwork Orange} (Anthony Burgess, 1962) |
| 1975 | \textit{Barry Lyndon} | \textit{The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon} aka \textit{The Luck of Barry Lyndon} (William Makepeace Thackeray, 1844) |
| 1980 | \textit{The Shining} | \textit{The Shining} (Stephen King, 1977)         |
| 1987 | \textit{Full Metal Jacket} | \textit{The Short-Timers} (Gustav Hasford, 1979) |
| 1999 | \textit{Eyes Wide Shut} | \textit{Traumnovelle} (trans. \textit{Rhapsody–A Dream Novel}) (Arthur Schnitzler, 1926) |

As adaptations, his films unavoidably raise the question as to what degree the depicted events refer back (and thus stay faithful) to the events described in the novels. It is in addressing this question that many Kubrick scholars have pointed toward the various idiosyncratic ways in which his work deviates from the written source material upon which it is based.\textsuperscript{28} As Welsh observes: “Kubrick had two ‘literary’ talents besides his genius for creating visual spectacles: one was for satire, and the other was for transformative adaptation.”\textsuperscript{29} As to the origin of this distance between the written work and the cinematic work, we may follow Pezzotta and point toward Kubrick’s unique and creative method of adapting novels into films.\textsuperscript{30} This method roughly consists of two stages: firstly, to break down the written work into a bare and skeletal structure or blueprint that captures the underlying conceptual and
emotional essence of the book (rather than the factual, action events) and secondly, to flesh out this structural “compass” by means of the techniques of filmmaking (rather than the techniques of novel writing). Diane Johnson, co-author of the screenplay to *The Shining*, sees precisely in the first stage an important reason why Kubrick favoured adapting existing books rather than working from original scripts, as it allowed him “to gauge the effect, examine the structure, and think about the subject of a book more easily than a script.” In further clarifying this structure, we can make the comparison, as Pezzotta did, to the concept of *canovaccio* (canvas or scenario), which in the *commedia dell’arte* was a vague plot outline in which “dialogue was summarized in indirect speech and left to the actors’ improvisation.” Similarly, one can see a strong resemblance here with what the famous Russian stage director Konstantin Stanislavski labelled the psychological and inner “scheme of the play.” The following definition is taken from Gorchakov’s *Stanislavsky Directs*, of which Kubrick himself has claimed to be inspired by it:

The scheme is the bone outline; it is the skeleton which holds together the inner and outer actions of the play. Rehearse along the lines of its inner and outer action, but don’t dress it in the mise en scène and effective forms of expression. Keep the characters on the level of the skeleton outline only; don’t cover them with the meat and fat of the juicy actors’ images. This will come later. Define the characters only in their basic aspirations and rehearse the play only through its main accents. In this way it is possible to play the entire role of Molière in fifteen minutes and the whole play in forty-five minutes, not counting intermissions. When the author sees this living, acting skeleton—the outline of the main situations—he may see his play’s omissions.

As Stanislavski, at the early stage of acting, did not want the skeleton to be spoiled by the actor’s imagery, so Kubrick, at the early stage of adapting the novel, did not want the skeleton to be corrupted too much by the author’s imagery. The “meat and fat” of the conceptual scheme should come from the director, not from the writer. And as Kubrick has repeatedly stressed in interviews, this implies foremost the substitution of the verbal medium of the author by the cinematic and non-verbal medium of the filmmaker, the visual and aural spectacle over the play of words.

Unavoidably, putting such a method into practise sooner or later ends up in creative differences with the writers who now see their own written works (novels and screenplays) to be reduced to mere blueprints. It should be no surprise, then, that the history of Kubrick adaptations reads as a series of polemics between Kubrick, the filmmaker and the creative agency called writership. Telling in this regard is the reaction of Frederic Raphael to the director’s own treatment of the script for *Eyes Wide Shut*, which he recalls as follows: “The text is jejune and without literary grace. It is almost gauche in its unpretentiousness. Occasionally it is embarrassing.” Several writers have also expressed their disappointment in the way in which the filmmaker modified their original scripts. In the published version of his own film script of *Lolita*, Nabokov commented on this as follows:

The modifications, the garbling of my best little finds, the omission of entire scenes, the addition of new ones, and all sorts of other changes may not have been sufficient to erase my name from the credit titles but they certainly made the picture as unfaithful to the original script as an American poet’s translation from Rimbaud or Pasternak.

This, however, did not seem to affect the writer’s positive attitude toward the film as he also adds that “Kubrick was a great director” and that “Lolita was a first rate film with magnificent actors.” Others, however, reacted with more
resentment. It is well-known that King was not pleased with Kubrick’s decision to shift the focus of *The Shining* from the superficial evil of the Overlook Hotel to the psychological evil inside the character of Jack Torrance. Along similar lines, Burgess has expressed his bitterness over Kubrick’s choice to exclude the last chapter of his novel (“a vindication of free will”), which would have possibly weakened the sex and violence of the previous parts, and as a result, also the public controversy that followed.\(^{39}\)

In view of all this, *2001* forms an interesting contrast in that it is the only film of which the novel was conceived after the conceptual blueprint of the film was already established. As Kubrick recalls:

> The novel came about after we did a 130-page prose treatment of the film at the very outset. This initial treatment was subsequently changed in the screenplay, and the screenplay in turn was altered during the making of the film. But Arthur took all the existing material, plus an impression of some of the rushes, and wrote the novel. As a result, there’s a difference between the novel and the film. ... In both cases, of course, the treatment must accommodate to the necessities of the medium. I think that the divergencies between the two works are interesting. Actually, it was an unprecedented situation for someone to do an essentially original literary work based on glimpses and segments of a film he had not yet seen in its entirety.\(^{40}\)

In sum, then, we might conclude that the novel is probably not the best place to look for the concepts that Kubrick’s films convey cinematically. Even if the director would have stayed true to the events of the novels, the use of novels would have been controversial since the process of elision, the omission of events, is inherent to any process of adapting novels into films. It is as an issue, as Jenkins has pointed out, “that may and ought to be addressed, probed, weighed, and considered. But, thoroughgoing problem that it is, it can never be fully resolved.”\(^{41}\) Hence, if novels are unfitting, where then do we have to look for the descriptions? Probably the best way is to find them outside the novels and within their corresponding adaptations. This unavoidably brings us to the written work of the screenplay.

**The screenplays**

A quick look at table 1.3 tells us that from the thirteen feature films that the filmmaker directed, *Spartacus* is the only screenplay he did not take credit for (whether it be partially or completely). He wrote three of them in collaboration with the person who also wrote the original novel (*Lolita, 2001, Full Metal Jacket*), and two of them entirely on his own (*A Clockwork Orange and Barry Lyndon*).\(^{42}\)

**Table 1.3 The screenplay credits of Kubrick’s films.**

| Year | Film           | Screenplay credit                                               |
|------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1953 | *Fear and Desire* | Stanley Kubrick, Howard Sackler                                 |
| 1955 | *Killer’s Kiss*   | Stanley Kubrick, Howard Sackler                                 |
| 1956 | *The Killing*     | Stanley Kubrick, Jim Thompson (dialogues)                       |
| 1957 | *Paths of Glory*  | Stanley Kubrick, Calder Willingham, Jim Thompson                |
| 1960 | *Spartacus*       | Dalton Trumbo                                                   |
| 1962 | *Lolita*          | Vladimir Nabokov, Stanley Kubrick (uncredited)                  |

Continued
Although the screenplay stands much closer to the actual film, occupying a unique place between the existing piece of writing and the cinematic outcome, it nevertheless suffers from a serious limitation that at first sight seems to compromise its capability of serving as a suitable source location for the conceptual descriptions of the films’ narrative events. This limitation entails that screenplays, as they are traditionally conceived, do not so much offer descriptions of what is happening as they provide descriptions of what the actors have to say and what they have to do. That is, they consist essentially of dialogue and stage directions rather than of descriptions of events. In other words, screenplays, in their turn, lack precisely that feature that made novels such an appropriate candidate for our descriptive search. This aspect was also of great concern to Kubrick who, according to Johnson, shared the opinion that “novelists were apt to be better writers than screenwriters.”

Kubrick’s scepticism toward the screenplay can also be clearly felt through the following quote:

“The screenplay is the most uncommunicative form of writing ever devised. It’s hard to convey mood and it’s hard to convey imagery. You can convey dialogue, but if you stick to the conventions of a screenplay, the description has to be very brief and telegraphic. You can’t create a mood or anything like that.”

Kubrick, however, would not have established his unique reputation as a self-regulating filmmaker, if he would not compensate for this lack of descriptions by challenging the conventions of the classic screenplay format. And indeed, if one looks at some of the formats of the Kubrick screenplays, as available in The Stanley Kubrick Archive, one may find a genuine interest in descriptions over dialogue. For instance, it is the convention of the classic screenplay format to present dialogues in a centered column and the description straight across the page. LoBrutto has noticed, however, that Kubrick, for his screen adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*, adopted the opposite method, “centering the description so it reads like a poem and running the dialogue from the left margin so the imagery captured the reader’s eye.” The same observation has also been made by Pezzotta with regard to the screenplay of *Eyes Wide Shut*. At The Stanley Kubrick Archive she analysed a draft script by Raphael, dated “January 26, 1996” that makes use of the same format. Insightful is also the signed message of Raphael preceding the document saying “I am working on at the second half of the script. I hope that I am right in thinking that this is the way you want it to look. It can, of course, easily be ‘translated’ into the usual script format which you, understandable, are not crazy about.” Descriptive evidence can also be found in a typewritten script supplement to an undefined “A” script for
2001: A Space Odyssey, which contains, among others, a basic descriptive outline of the events of each scene that together constitute the wordless “Dawn of Man” sequence.47

Another important strategy that Kubrick adopted in order to compensate for the screenplay’s lack of descriptions is the inclusion of what is now regarded by many to be one of the director’s trademarks, namely the use of the first-person or third-person voice-over.48 As can be seen in table 1.4, Kubrick made considerable use of this narrative device throughout his oeuvre.49

| Year | Film            | Narrator                          |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1953 | Fear and Desire | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1955 | Killer’s Kiss   | First-person (Davey/Gloria)       |
| 1956 | The Killing     | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1957 | Paths of Glory  | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1960 | Spartacus       | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1962 | Lolita          | First-person (Humbert Humbert)    |
| 1964 | Dr. Strangelove | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1968 | 2001: A Space Odyssey | —                |
| 1971 | A Clockwork Orange | First-person (Alex)               |
| 1975 | Barry Lyndon    | Third-person (anonymous)          |
| 1980 | The Shining     | —                                 |
| 1987 | Full Metal Jacket | First-person (Joker)             |
| 1999 | Eyes Wide Shut  | —                                 |

Of the thirteen films he made, only three films do not contain explicitly some sort of voice-over narration, whether it be used only briefly such as in Fear and Desire, Paths of Glory, Spartacus and Dr. Strangelove or more outspokenly such as in Lolita, A Clockwork Orange, Barry Lyndon and Full Metal Jacket.50 This number would even amount to two if we would include the initial use of a third-person narrator in the early draft scripts of 2001.51 Although 2001 and The Shining have no voice-overs, they do provide titles which can be seen to serve a similar function.52 Voice-over commentary distinguishes itself from the dialogue spoken by the characters in that it is overtly more descriptive and informative about the characters’ motivation and plot. Notably in this regard is Barry Lyndon in which a third-person, omniscient narrator describes, in only a few moments of screen time, what the main character is thinking and feeling. A good illustration of this can be found in the disembodied voice-over that is used over the visuals of Barry seeing Lady Lyndon for the first time:

Five years in the Army, and considerable experience of the world had dispelled any romantic notions regarding love with which Barry commenced life. And he had it in mind, as many gentlemen had done before him to marry a woman of
fortune and condition. And, as such things so often happen these thoughts coincided with his setting sight upon a lady who will play a considerable part in the drama of his life: the Countess of Lyndon, Viscountess Bullingdon of England, Baroness Castle Lyndon of Ireland. A woman of vast wealth and great beauty. She was the wife of Sir Charles Lyndon, Knight of the Bath, Minister to George III at several of the Courts of Europe. A cripple, wheeled about in a chair worn out by gout and a myriad of diseases. Her Ladyship’s Chaplain, Mr. Runt acted as tutor to her son, the little Viscount Bullingdon, a melancholy little boy, much attached to his mother.\(^{53}\)

However valuable the screenplays of Kubrick may be from a descriptive and conceptual perspective, their descriptions are only useful insofar they are also manifested in the finished film (whether in verbal or non-verbal form). It is here, in this confirmation of the screenplay’s conceptual content by the film’s audio-visual content that also lies its limitation as it is rarely the case that one can find, in the screenplay, a corresponding conceptual description for each of the events conveyed by the film. As such we are necessitated to search for an additional descriptive location, one that can account for the descriptions that are missing from the screenplays. Given that the latter limitation results from the inescapable gap between the unfilmed and the filmed, one would be inclined to locate those missing descriptions within the films themselves.

**The films**

Films, however, yield two other difficulties which were absent so far and which prevent any further lengthy discussion. First, there is the danger of circular reasoning. If our goal is to reveal the process by virtue of which the films of Kubrick are able to convey concepts, but take the films as the starting point for locating the concepts, then we run the risk of jumping ahead in our argument by examining already what is meant to be analysed at a later stage, namely the films themselves. In other words, a discussion of the formal level should follow the discussion of the conceptual level and not the other way around.

Second and most importantly, however, is the fact that films, in contrast to novels and screenplays do not provide descriptions of their own depicted events unless those descriptions are explicitly given by the films themselves through the use of such devices as a narrating voice-over, as discussed above, or the intersection of intertitles. This again touches upon the ontological difference between language and film. As we have already noted in the introduction, language by nature is conceptual and abstract whereas films, due to their iconic nature, essentially are not. However, if it is our goal to locate the films’ communicated concepts within the descriptions of the narrated events then we need conceptual descriptions of those events in order to obtain the concepts. A possible way out to this dilemma, then, would be to locate these verbalizations outside the films, and within the experiential domain of the film viewer.

**The film viewer**

Taking into consideration the descriptive significance of the film viewer would enable us to overcome at least two of the shortcomings mentioned so far. Firstly, since the descriptions offered by the film viewer would be based on the perception of the actual films, we would be able to reduce the gap between the unfilmed and the filmed which antagonized the screenplay. Secondly, because these descriptions are linguistic and conceptual, we would be able to overcome the limitation posed by the medium film. This, however, does not mean that the descriptions of the
spectator are free from risks. Aside of the practical difficulty of putting the events, as seen and heard in the film, into words, there lurks the possible danger of interpretation. As we already saw in the theoretical introduction to this book, interpretation distinguishes itself from comprehension in that it is mainly concerned with “implicit” and “symptomatic” meanings rather than “referential” and “explicit” meanings, which are at the centre of this book. As stated, referential meanings are close to the bare-plot summaries of the films, and are therefore most suitable to serve as complementary descriptive sources to the screenplays of Kubrick’s films.

In providing the missing descriptions of the films’ literal events ourselves (and thus adopting the role of a screenwriter somehow), we will not elaborate on the cinematic techniques and non-diegetic material that helped communicating those events to the viewer. To give you an example, when Moon-Watcher in 2001 discovers that he can use a bone as a weapon, this moment of epiphany is rendered non-verbally through such means as gestural behavior and music. These tools are clearly used with the purpose of cueing the inner event of a cognitive leap forward. Therefore, whenever we have to rely on our own descriptions, we will keep the references to film style to their limit. We will not mention camera movement, editing nor any other stylistic device that helps signalling the event to the viewer, but we will simply restrict ourselves to a bare-plot description of the elicited event. In other words, the focus of the descriptions will be on what is communicated, not on how it is communicated. A study of the latter question will be reserved for chapters 3 and 4 of this book. In this way, by filtering out the references to film style, we will be able to overcome the risk of circular reasoning, as mentioned earlier.

3. Thirteen films, thirteen narrative descriptions

Having addressed the question of location, we are now in a position to actually offer some of the descriptions of the narrative events of Kubrick’s work. To facilitate this provision somehow, we have selected from each of the thirteen films that Kubrick made, a significant scene. A scene can be defined as a segment in a narrative film that is continuous along the dimensions of time and space or that uses crosscutting to show two or more simultaneous actions. We will first situate and contextualize each scene within the general narrative framework of the film, after which we will provide a description of its events. The origin(s) of each description (e.g., screenplay, voice-over, author description) will be specified in the text or the corresponding footnote. Each description will be taken to convey a narrative on its own, that is, a smaller one within the surface story level of the film. The descriptions will pertain to both non-verbal scenes (scenes without dialogue) as well as to verbal ones (scenes with dialogue). Depending on the nature of the scene, some descriptions will appear to be slightly longer or shorter. For each narrative description it should be possible to discuss its events along the various dimensions of situational continuity (time, space, causality), but this will not be the central aim here. The key objective here is to carefully describe the referential and situational meanings of the scenes, as these descriptions, a total sum of thirteen, will provide us with the concepts that are presumably communicated visually by Kubrick’s films.
**Fear and Desire** (1953)

Notably refuted and self-criticized by the director himself, who wrote it off, rather harshly, as nothing more than a “bumbling, amateur film exercise,” Kubrick’s first feature film only recently re-emerged for general audiences after being unavailable for nearly forty years. \(^5^5\) Set up as an allegory, *Fear and Desire* tells the story of a group of soldiers, lieutenant Corby (Kenneth Harp) and his three men Mac (Frank Silvera), Fletcher (Stephen Coit) and Sidney (Paul Mazursky), who are stuck in a forest behind enemy lines. From the early start of the film we come to know that the war depicted is a fictitious and unspecified one, “not a war that has been fought, nor one that will be, but any war,” as the voice-over informs us. Making their way through the woods, they surprise two enemy soldiers whom they attack and slaughter with their bayonets, despite the fact that these men were just harmlessly eating their supper. Soon after this massacre they stumble upon one of the local girls (Virginia Leith). Afraid that she might betray them, they take her prisoner by tying her to a tree. As the other soldiers return to the raft that should take them back to safe territory, Sidney, the youngest and least experienced of the group, is left with the task to guard her. In their absence, however, a situation unfolds, let this to be our first narrative of the series of thirteen, of which its events are quite detailed described in the screenplay as follows:

(1) Sidney comes up from behind her with his hands cupped and filled with water. He is hurrying and water is dripping. He comes around the tree and raises his cupped hands to her face. She lowers her head to his hands and drinks. She pauses and looks up into his eyes. She starts to lower her head and drink again. She continues drinking from his hand. The gulps are clearly heard. Sidney has a very strange expression. He is still holding his hands cupped and she simply looks at him. The girl looks at him and smiles sweetly but as if she has some secret motive. He smiles back insanely. He giggles. The girl lowers her head and licks out the last few drops from Sidney’s hand. Sidney sort of moans and sighs. Sidney looks as though he has received a low voltage shock. The girl looks up slowly from his cupped hands. Separating his hands he caresses her face. Her cheeks become streaked with dirt from his hands. The girl badly pretends that she is enjoying it. Her fists are clenched. Sidney grabs her by the arms and presses his face into her hair. Her face reveals her plan is working. Sidney is frantically making love to the girl who is still bond to the tree. Sidney’s murmurings are heard. Sidney still making love. His arms are around the girl and the tree. His hands are caressing the tree just above the spot the buckle is. As the hands move around they feel the buckle. Girl looks pleased. Sidney moves away and looks into her eyes. His manner is one of hysterical glee. He walks around behind her. Her smile shows great self-satisfaction that her animal cunning is about to triumph. Sidney’s hands undoing the buckle. Sidney has come half way around the tree and is kissing her shoulder as he pulls on the buckle to release her. As the buckle is undone the belt suddenly flies out as the girl tries to break away. Sidney grabs her about two steps from the tree and they struggle. They lose their balance. The girl’s face as she looks down at the ground rushing at her. They hit the ground and continue the struggle. Sidney has her pinned to the
ground. The girl presses her new advantage and struggles her harder. Their feet trashing around. With a sudden burst of strength the girl manages to twist free. Sidney lunges after her leg and gets a fleeting grip on it. The girl just does get away from his sprawling grasp. She stumbles to her feet and starts to run. He pulls his revolver out of his pocket. The girl is running. Sidney aims the gun and fires five times rapidly. The girl lying face down in the grass. Her eyes are open. Sidney is sitting dazed in the same spot. He looks quite mad. Scratches on face. The girl's hand lying in the grass. Sidney is sitting on the ground about thirty feet from the dead girl. Sidney falls down and begins crying. His face is pressed into the ground and sobbing.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Killer’s Kiss (1955)}

For his second feature film Kubrick turned to the genre of film noir. \textit{Killer’s Kiss} tells the story of a welterweight prize-fighter Davey Gordon (Jamie Smith) who falls in love with a young woman, Gloria Price (Irene Kane), who lives in the apartment opposite of his. The night after his big fight against “Kid” Rodriguez, Davey is awakened by her scream as she is being attacked by her tyrannizing boss Vincent “Vinnie” Rapallo (Frank Silvera) who runs the dance hall where she works as a taxi dancer. Running to her room to rescue her, Davey chases after Vincent, who escapes him, and goes back to comfort Gloria. The next morning, they kiss each other and they decide to both collect their pays, he from his manager Albert, she from Rapallo, before taking the train together to Seattle. Vincent, however, is destined to prevent Gloria from leaving him. With the support of two of his hoodlums, he manages to hold the girl captive. Davey hurries to rescue her, but instead is getting captured and beaten up himself. This is followed by a series of actions, let this to be our second narrative under conceptual consideration, of which its bare plot outline may be rendered as follows:

(2) Davey lies beaten up on the floor of the loft where Vincent and two of his thugs are holding Gloria. He has just been beaten up. Gloria, in a bid to save Davey (or her own future?), gives herself to Vincent. She pleads for her life telling him that she will do everything to please him. They kiss each other. Vinnie, however, reluctant to be taken for a “fourteen karat sucker,” becomes mad and starts to shout at Gloria. This distraction gives Davey some time to figure out a way to escape his perilous situation. A solution comes to his mind when he sees the window of the loft which gives entrance to the outside. He looks at the other two hoodlums who are now both distracted by the quarrel between Vinnie and the girl. One of them is standing at his feet, the other is sitting. He manages to master the former one by placing his feet between his legs. As his opponent loses balance and falls, he throws himself through the window. He lands safely on the ground and starts to run away through abandoned city streets and across rooftops, eventually ending up in an abandoned mannequin warehouse where he kills Rapallo in a violent fight.\textsuperscript{57}
Identifying the Meaning: In Search of the Concepts of Kubrick’s Films • CHAPTER 1

The Killing (1956)
Also for his next film Kubrick stayed within the genre of crime films by making the hard-boiled heist film *The Killing*, his first of three successful collaborations with producer James B. Harris (the other films being *Paths of Glory* and *Lolita*) and the first of his films to be adapted from a novel. Based on Lionel White’s *Clean Break*, *The Killing* recalls the story of Johnny Clay (Sterling Hayden), an ex-convict who gathers a group of men to execute his seemingly fool proof caper to rob a racetrack of $2 million during a race. Although the overall execution of the heist goes smoothly and Johnny succeeds in robbing the cashier’s office, the plan ultimately goes wrong in the meeting place where Clay’s men are supposed to await the arrival of Johnny and the money. Prior to the robbery, one of Clay’s team, racetrack cashier George Peatty (Elisha Cook, Jr.), has told his wife, Sherry (Marie Windsor), about the heist. She in turn has told her boyfriend, Val Cannon (Vince Edwards), who decides to rob Clay’s team after the robbery. Our third narrative, then, occurs right after Val and a friend crash in the meeting place. George has started a gunfight during which everyone gets killed except for George himself, who leaves his friend Marvin Unger’s apartment badly wounded. The events that follow can be retold as follows:

(3) Johnny arrives at the meeting place at 7.29, still 15 minutes late. As he stops his car, he sees George walking out of the building. Covered with blood he heads toward his own car. On his way he bumps into Johnny’s car, yet without noticing the familiar face behind the wheel. Johnny assumes that something has gone wrong. It had been prearranged and agreed to by all that in the event of an emergency before the split, the money was to be saved by whoever had possession of it at that time without any consideration of the fate of the others, the money to be divided in safety at a later date. After what he had seen, not knowing the cause or the circumstances of the others, Johnny had no choice but to save himself and the money. Sticking to the arrangement he does not hesitate and decides to drive on through. Because of what he has seen, he is now forced to buy the largest suitcase he can find.58

Paths of Glory (1957)
Kubrick’s second collaboration with producer James B. Harris is an anti-war film based on the novel of the same name by Humphrey Cobb. Set in the trenches during World War I, the film tells the story of Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) who is faced with the impossible task of capturing a well-defended German key position called the “Ant Hill.” The attack, however, leads to a foreseeable failure as none of his men are able to reach the German trenches. In order to avoid blame, Mireau (George Macready), the general overseeing the attack, accuses the regiment of cowardice in the face of the enemy and orders three of its men to be court martialed. In an attempt to save the lives of his men from execution, Dax volunteers to defend them. The trial proves to be a farce and the three soldiers are executed by a firing squad drawn from their own regiment. With this summary in mind, let us now take a closer look at the scene that initiated the attack and all of its subsequent events, namely the cat and mouse game between General Mireau and General Broulard (Adolphe Menjou) that occurs at the beginning of the film and whose explicit events may be rendered as follows:
France, 1916. General George Broulard arrives at a gracious eighteenth-century chateau which has been converted into military headquarters. Inside, he is greeted by General Paul Mireau who was awaiting him. The welcome is warm and friendly. They call each other by their first names. Broulard wanders about the room admiringly complementing Paul about the interior decoration. Mireau invites him to sit down. Then the subject of the conversation changes as Broulard has come to see him about something “big.” He wants Mireau to take the Ant Hill. Mireau smiles patronizingly calling such an act “close to being ridiculous” and “out of the question.” Disappointed by his reaction, Broulard gets out of his chair, circles around and now mentions a potential promotion while he holds the arm of Mireau who is walking next to him. They move to a small bar where Mireau pours himself a cognac. He looks at Broulard with an idle expression that seems to say, “All right, let’s suppose I’m interested, what’s the next move?” Knowing that Mireau is hooked, he returns to his chair. For a moment Mireau is still reluctant as he starts to talk about the responsibility toward his men, but when Broulard for a second time leaves his chair, Mireau is soon there to safeguard his promotion. He prevents Broulard from exiting by drawing him back into the room and when Broulard reacts favourably to his request for artillery support and possible replacements, he convinces himself he “might do the job.”

Spartacus (1960)
After Paths of Glory, thirty-year-old Kubrick was originally planned to direct One-Eyed Jacks for Marlon Brando. Disagreements over the script and casting decisions, however, forced them to part ways. Ultimately, Brando directed the film himself and Kubrick instead was hired to replace Anthony Mann on Spartacus. Many (including Kubrick himself) have pointed to this film as the exception in his oeuvre, labelling it as the only film over which he did not had “absolute control.” Although he had no part in writing the screenplay and despite his dissatisfaction with his experience while making it, Spartacus is a well-thought-out, if somewhat conventional epic and was both critically and commercially a success. The film tells the story of Spartacus (Kirk Douglas), a Thracian slave who, after being treated as an animal in a school for gladiators run by Lentulus Batiatus (Peter Ustinov), breaks free to become the leader of an army of slaves against Rome. Together with his love Varinia (Jean Simmons) he plans to leave Italy by hiring ships at Brundisium from Cilician pirates who could then take them and their fellow slaves home. Meanwhile, in Rome there is a struggle of power going on between Marcus Licinius Crassus (Laurence Olivier) and his populist opponent Gracchus (Charles Laughton). Gracchus knows that his rival will try to seize control of the Roman army under the pretext of the slave crisis. In an attempt to prevent this from happening, Gracchus grants as much military power as possible to his own protégé, a young senator by the name of Julius Caesar (John Gavin). Although Caesar does not share Crassus’s disdain for the lower classes of Rome, he is nevertheless taken in by the man’s charm and nobility of character. Thus, when Gracchus tells him that he has arranged for Spartacus to leave Italy by making a deal with the Cilician pirates, Caesar regards such tactics as not worthy of a Roman and he decides to change his loyalty to that of his opponent Crassus. Let us take the scene that anticipates this change to be our fifth narrative:
The interior of a Roman public tepidarium. Caesar is having a talk with Metallius and Laelirus about their recent loss against Spartacus. Crassus enters the tepidarium and asks if he can have a few moments of the commander’s time. He assumes the affirmations they instantly give and moves off with Caesar to conduct their own private conversation. The relation is warm and friendly. Crassus has difficulties of understanding why Caesar has left him for Gracchus and his mob. He begs him to go back to his own kind, the patrician party, and to stay loyal to Rome, not the mob. Crassus, however, is his friend and he abandons the idea of betraying him. He stands up and walks away at which point Crassus halts him and puts him before a moral dilemma: “which is worse—to betray Gracchus or to betray Rome?” As Crassus leaves, he is called in by Gracchus who lies on his back on a low bench, his middle-parts covered with a snowy white sheet. Crassus seats himself while Caesar is standing silent between the two rivals. They are negotiating the terms under which Crassus will take up command against Spartacus. After hearing those terms, Gracchus casts a keen glance at Caesar, then peers across to Crassus and chuckles “dictatorship.” Crassus, however, calls it “order” whereupon he leaves by asking Caesar to convey his respects to his wife. Now Caesar, starts to talk with Gracchus saying that Crassus is “right.” To prevent Crassus from saving Rome from the slave army and thereby assuming dictatorship, Gracchus reveals to Caesar that he has arranged for Spartacus to escape Italy by making a deal with the Cilician pirates. Caesar stares at him in shocked silence and responds with involuntary revulsion: “So now we begin to deal with pirates. We bargain with criminals.”

Lolita (1962)
After Spartacus Kubrick moved to England where he would remain the rest of his life to make all of his subsequent films, the first one being Lolita, an adaptation of Nabokov’s celebrated, yet controversial novel about a middle-aged man infatuated with a young girl. Although Nabokov was engaged to write the screenplay, which he also delivered, most of his script, however, was eventually not used by Kubrick. The film tells the story of Humbert Humbert (James Mason), a professor of literature who becomes so obsessed with his landlady’s 15–16 year old daughter Dolores Haze (Sue Lyon) that he marries the mother just to be near the girl. When Charlotte Haze (Shelley Winters) is killed in a road accident, he travels with Lolita across the US until Quilty (Peter Sellers), a depraved playwright in pursuit of them, ends up depriving Humbert of Lolita. Let the scene where Humbert meets Lolita for the first time to be our sixth narrative description:

(6) Day—the interior of the Haze house. Humbert arrives in West Ramsdale, looking for lodgings for the Summer. Charlotte Haze shows Humbert around her house. Humbert, however, is obviously not interested in her or the house. In an attempt to hasten his exit, he asks her telephone number. Charlotte, however, insists, and in a final attempt to lure him, she shows him the garden in the
backyard. Now comes the shock of dazzling enchantment. From a mat in a pool of sun, half-naked, kneeling, turning about on her knees, Lolita peers at Humbert over dark glasses. Humbert is hooked. He changes his mind and quickly reconsiders Charlotte’s offer to rent a room. Curious about what clinched the deal for him to move into the house, Charlotte asks: “What was the decisive factor? Uh, my garden?” Dodging the truth, Humbert replies, “I think it was your cherry pies.”

*Dr. Strangelove* (1964)

Kubrick’s next film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* is a black comedy about the Cold War fears of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. Loosely based on Peter George’s thriller novel *Red Alert* (1958), the film starts off when a deranged general by the name of Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) tells Group Captain Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers) that the Soviets have attacked Washington and that they are to go to transmit “Wing Attack Plan R,” which authorizes a lower-echelon commander to issue an attack after an enemy’s first strike has disconnected the US government. To prevent sabotage, Mandrake is ordered to impound all private radios on the base, but when he notices that all the civilian stations are still operating, he assumes that no bombs have been dropped and that the bombers therefore can be called back. However, when he wants to report this news back to Ripper, a cat and mouse game unfolds between the two men. This scene, our seventh narrative so far, is described quite lengthily in the screenplay as follows:

(7) The interior of Burpelson Air Force Base. Group Captain Mandrake rounds a corner and hurries down a corridor to the open door of General Ripper’s office. He enters and crosses directly to the desk, where Ripper sits opposite a large aerial photomural of the base. Ripper leans back in his chair as Mandrake approaches and listens impassively as he speaks. Mandrake switches on the transistor radio he carries in one hand, and its thin, rattling music begins, continuing under the conversation with Ripper. Ripper is still silent and impassive, but he taps very lightly on the edge of his desk with a pencil. Ripper leans forward gravely. Mandrake has fully recovered his breath and his aplomb. He murmurs his words negligently, pleased to be able to report his discovery, but as if it would be bad for him to act as if there were anything more serious involved than some small sporting contretemps. As Mandrake speaks, Ripper rises from his desk and walks across to the door of the office, Mandrake follows. Ripper locks the office door, pockets the key, and returns to the desk. Mandrake switches off the radio but remains standing. He glances at his wristwatch. Ripper lights his cigar. Mandrake is puzzled. He tosses the now-silent transistor radio negligently from one hand to the other and shifts his weight into a rather indolent stance. He speaks with excruciating nonchalance. Now, at last, the staggering significance of what is happening finally hits Mandrake. He may not yet understand the
Why of it, but the What is clearly out on the table between the two men. Mandrake is silent for a long, long moment. Then he speaks . . . very softly. Ripper, puffing leisurely, advises Mandrake to just take it easy. Again, Mandrake is silent. Thoughtfully, he places the transistor radio on the desk, gives a slow, exceedingly smart, British Military salute, and assumes a very R.A.F. stance to speak his piece, clearly and firmly. Mandrake crosses briskly to the door. Ripper watches impassively as Mandrake tries the door momentarily forgetting it is locked. Mandrake now crosses from the door back to Ripper's desk. The negligent murmur, the nonchalant manner can survive the situation no longer; Mandrake’s voice breaks unnaturally. Ripper’s face is like stone, like something carved high on Mt. Rushmore. His long cigar juts out like a weapon. Casually, he moves a file folder from his desk, revealing a .45 automatic. Ripper’s great stone face speaks . . . and speaks with the voice of rock mountains—heavy, inexorable, crushing. Mandrake’s expression is even, yet with a hint of desperation, as he steals a quick glance at the gun on Ripper’s desk. Twin pinpoints of light appear in Ripper’s eyes. A tiny tremor of pent-up intensity quivers his voice.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
After the success of Dr. Strangelove Stanley Kubrick embarked on a highly ambitious project that would become a landmark, science fiction classic and one of the greatest achievements in the history of cinema: 2001: A Space Odyssey. To help him writing the story, Kubrick called upon the expertise of British novelist Arthur C. Clarke, who was then one of the leading figures in the genre of science-fiction. The two men agreed to co-write a film story entitled Journey Beyond the Stars, which was then adapted into 2001. Both film and book consist of four episodes, three of which are announced on-screen by an intertitle. The first part, “The Dawn of Man,” offers a recount of the events that gave birth to men’s intellectual leap forward: a primeval ape man, in the story revealed as Moon-Watcher, comes in contact with a mysterious black monolith after which he becomes endowed with intelligence. In the second “part,” which is left untitled in the film, we follow Dr. Heywood Floyd (William Sylvester) as he travels to the lunar surface where millions of years later an identical monolith is discovered. In the third part, “Jupiter Mission,” a team of five astronauts including Bowman (Keir Dullea), Pool (Gary Lockwood) and three hibernating crew members, are headed toward Jupiter to trace down the origin of the signal transmitted by the monolith. During their journey, however, they fall in conflict with HAL 9000, the computer on board of the ship the Discovery, a struggle that eventually will lead to Poole’s death and the shutdown of HAL. In the fourth and last part, “Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite,” we follow Bowman, now the only survivor, as he undergoes a mystical and undefinable journey through space and time. There are many memorable scenes to choose from, but let us pick out the scene where Moon-Watcher becomes gifted with intelligence, together with his encounter with the monolith which precedes it, as our eight narrative:
(8) As Moon-Watcher sleeps at night with his cave-mates (woman + child?) he is awakened by a strange sound that has never been heard before (the transparent cube). On the way to the stream next morning the tribe comes upon the cube (15 foot square, transparent). Moon-Watcher examines it (sniffs, touches, tastes). It is not food so he rejects it and the tribe walks on. As Moon-Watcher’s tribe is leaving, the cube all at once begins to give off a pulsating light and sound which seem to have an hypnotic effect on the man-apes, who slowly turn and move around the cube and freeze in their places as they watch it. (As they turn toward the cube and come to their positions of watching, their bodies reflect the pulsating light and sound of the cube.) Soon the sound and light stop and the tribe rises and goes on its way as though they have no recollection of what they have seen. (We do not see what the cube is giving off but the narrator tells us what it is teaching them a lesson but does not tell us what the lesson is.). Once again Moon-Watcher and his tribe are walking toward the stream in the morning. Moon-Watcher is passing through an elephant skeleton that they usually pass when he is caught by a strange feeling (it is almost like a magical spell). He is trying to remember something. He picks up one of the elephant bones and begins to swing it about slowly (not violently) almost in a dance-like fashion. As Moon-Watcher moves about he sees a tapir passing. He stops and still as if in a spell brings the bone down on the tapir’s head. He is killed instantly.

A Clockwork Orange (1971)
After the critical and commercial success of 2001, Kubrick was destined to follow up his science fiction epic with a historical and biographical epic about the life of Napoleon. Extensive preparations and logistic arrangements were already far advanced. However, in the time it took Kubrick to finish all the pre-production work and the screenplay, other competing Napoleon projects were already in the pipeline with Dino De Laurentiis’ production of Waterloo (1970) being the most ambitious one. The film proved to be a box office failure and MGM, cautious of repeating this financial loss, abandoned the project thus turning Napoleon into one of the greatest films never made. Disheartened, Kubrick left the studio for Warner Brothers, where he made A Clockwork Orange instead. Adapted from the novel of Anthony Burgess, the film tells the story of Alex (Malcolm McDowell) who is the gang leader of a group of juvenile delinquents which he refers to as his “Droogs.” Sharpened up by the consummation of drug-laced milk, “moloko plus,” they indulge themselves in acts of “ultra-violence.” After getting betrayed by his fellow gang members, Alex eventually ends up in jail where he volunteers to take part in a program that will accelerate his release: the fictional Ludovico Technique, a new type of intense aversion therapy that reprograms people’s brains to be physically repulsed by thoughts of lustful sexuality and violence. Let us take the scene where Alex undergoes the treatment to be our ninth narrative. The events are retold over the visual presentation by the film’s protagonist himself who assumes the role of a narrative guide:
(9) Where I was taken to, brothers, was like no cine I’d been in before. I was bound up in a straight-jacket and my guliver was strapped to a headrest with like wires running away from it. Then they clamped like lidlocks on my eyes so I could not shut them no matter how hard I tried. It seemed a bit crazy to me, but I let them get on with what they wanted to get on with. If I was to be a free young malchick in a fortnight’s time, I would put with much in the meantime, my brothers. . . . The sounds were real horroshow. You could sloshy the screams and moans very realistic and you could even get the heavy breathing and panting of the tolchocking malchicks at the same time. And then, what do you know, soon our dear old friend, the red, red vino on tap. The same in all places like it’s put out by the same big firm, began to flow. It was beautiful. It’s funny how the colors of the real world only seem really real when you viddy them on a screen. . . . Now all the time I was watching this, I was beginning to get very aware of like not feeling all that well, but I tried to forget this, concentrating on a young devotchka, who was being given the old in-out, in-out, first by one malchick, then another, then another. . . . When it came to the sixth or seventh malchick, leering and smecking and then going into it, I began to feel really sick. But I could not shut my glazzies and even if I tried to move my glazballs about I still not get out of the line of fire of this picture.68

*Barry Lyndon* (1975)

*A Clockwork Orange* was followed by *Barry Lyndon*, a screen adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray’s 1844 novel *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*. The film is divided into two acts. The first act contains an account of the events leading up to Barry’s (Ryan O’Neil) engagement with the beautiful Countess of Lyndon (Marisa Berenson) through whom he will finally acquire the style and title of Barry Lyndon. The second act, by contrast, contains an account of the misfortunes and disasters which befell Barry Lyndon. We first follow the title character as he is forced to leave his Irish home town for the city of Dublin after allegedly shooting the British captain John Quin (Leonard Rossiter) in a set-up duel. This duel was caused by his cousin, the fickle Nora Brady (Gay Hamilton), who had earlier on seduced Barry, but has now left him for the more prosperous British officer. On his way to Dublin he becomes the victim of a robbery which forces him to join the British army. Engaged in a military conflict with the Kingdom of France (i.e., the Seven Years’ War), Barry’s regiment is sent to fight in Germany whereupon the futility of warfare and the death of his good friend, Captain Grogan (Godfrey Quigley), encourages him to desert the army to seek fortune and stature elsewhere. He seizes the opportunity by stealing the horse and identification papers of a British officer. En route, however, he is exposed by the Prussian Captain Potzdorf (Hardy Krüger) who threatens to turn him over again to the British side (where he faces execution for desertion) unless he joins the Prussian army (an ally of the British). During a skirmish he rescues the life of Potzdorf from a burning building. As a token of gratitude for his loyalty and his service to the regiment he is discharged from the army and put into the secret service of the Minister of Police where he is entrusted with the assignment to watch upon the actions of an Irish gentleman who calls himself the Chevalier du Balibari (Patrick Magee), a noted gambler and libertine whose allegiance is in
question. However, when Barry meets the Chevalier the events take a different turn. Let us take this meeting to be our tenth narrative. As with *A Clockwork Orange* the events, as visually presented, are narrated through a voice-over, albeit this time in third-person mode:

It was very imprudent of him, but when Barry saw the splendour of the Chevalier’s appearance, the nobleness of his manner, he felt it impossible to keep disguise with him. Those who have never been out of their country know little what it is to hear a friendly voice in captivity and as many a man who would not understand the cause of the burst of feeling which was now about to take place. With tears in his eyes, he confesses to the Chevalier that he is an Irishman named Redmond Barry who was put into his service to serve as a watch upon his actions. Having confessed, Barry starts to cry louder. The Chevalier now stands up from his chair, he walks to Barry and embraces him in a comforting way. The Chevalier was as much as affected as Barry at thus finding one of his countrymen. For he too was an exile from home. And a friendly voice, a look, brought the old country back to his memory again.

*The Shining* (1980)

Kubrick’s next film is a screen adaptation of Stephen King’s *The Shining*. The film tells the story of Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson), a would-be writer who takes on the job of winter caretaker at the Overlook Hotel in the Colorado Rockies which will allow him five months of piece and isolation to write his book. He is, however, not entirely alone as his wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) and five-year young son Danny (Danny Lloyd) are joining him. Together with the hotel’s cook, Dick Hallorann (Scatman Crothers), Danny shares a telepathic gift which enables him to see glimpses of the hotel’s horrifying past. During the winter of 1970, the previous winter caretaker, Charles Grady, suffered a complete mental breakdown. He killed his wife and twin girls with an axe before committing suicide. Like his predecessor, Jack gradually succumbs to cabin fever. Becoming increasingly short-tempered and violent, he ultimately degenerates into an axe-wielding maniac and a life-threatening danger to his wife and son. Let us take the scene where Wendy becomes aware of Jack’s mental insanity by accidentally finding out what Jack was typing all the time as our eleventh narrative:

Wendy enters the lounge. The room is silent and empty. She walks over to his table and stops near the manuscript which is stacked next to his typewriter. She stands there for a few seconds wondering what to do, when her eye alights upon the page in the typewriter. She leans over to look at it. It reads: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” She sees that this phrase has been typed in single lines, one on top of the other, down the entire page. She stares at it in disbelief for several seconds, and then picks up a few pages from the stack. They all say the same thing: “All work and no play makes Jack a
dull boy.” Wendy clumsily leafs through the thick stack and all the pages are exactly the same. “How do you like it?” says Jack. Wendy whirls around and sees Jack, standing, smiling at her. . . . Wendy is terrified and doesn’t know what to say. Wendy has a predicament. Considering the monstrous implications of what she’s just read, she doesn’t know how to proceed. Wendy starts backing out of the room, still holding the soft-ball bat. Jack follows her. . . . He laughs at his joke. Wendy swings the bat in a defensive arc in front of her. . . . She swings bat and hits him on head. He falls down the stairs and out cold.70

*Full Metal Jacket* (1987)

*The Shining* was followed up by the Vietnam war drama *Full Metal Jacket*. Based on Gustav Hasford’s novel *The Short-Timers* the film is divided into two parts. The first part takes place at the U.S. marine boot camp at Parris Island and shows how a group of young men are being trained and turned into a platoon of lethal human killing machines by their abusive and foul-mouthed drill instructor, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman (former drill sergeant R. Lee Ermey). Among the recruits is Private “Joker” (Matthew Modine) who does not take the army very serious, but nevertheless manages to impress the sergeant which earns him a promotion to squad leader and instructor of a tall overweight private called “Gomer Pyle” (Vincent D’Onofrio). Bullied, beaten and dehumanized, Pyle ultimately goes insane and finally commits suicide after first having shot Hartman. The film, then, moves ahead to the second part which focuses on the actual war in Vietnam. Joker is now a war correspondent and has yet to see real combat. That all changes, however, when he is sent on a mission to follow the actions of the Lusthog Squad at Phu Bai. The film ends with Joker performing a mercy-kill on a mortally wounded female sniper who had previously killed three of their men. Let us take this latter scene to be our twelfth narrative:

(12) Joker, Animal Mother, Rafter Man, Donlon and T.H.E. Rock are standing over the female sniper who is lying on the ground badly wounded. She is praying in Vietnamese. At one moment Animal Mother suggests to “get the fuck outta here.” These words, however, are met by resistance of Joker who now looks up at Animal Mother replying to him, “What about her?” Animal Mother responds back by saying that they should “let her rot.” The young girl utters a deep moan of pain, “Dau qua” (“it hurts”). “We can’t just leave her here,” Joker responds. Animal Mother becomes more aggressive calling Joker an “asshole who is fresh out of friends now that Cowboy is wasted.” He asserts his authority by saying that he is “running the squad now.” Joker responds, “I’m not trying to run the squad. I’m just saying we can’t leave her like this.” The sniper starts to groan in English: “Shoot me, shoot me ...” “If you want to waste her. Go on waste her,” says Animal Mother. Joker lifts his .45, aims it carefully and pulls the trigger. Bang! Silence.71
Eyes Wide Shut (1999)
Kubrick’s long anticipated last film is an adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler’s 1926 novella Traumnovelle (Dream Story). Relocated from early twentieth-century Vienna to 1990s New York City, Eyes Wide Shut tells the story of Dr. Bill Harford (Tom Cruise) who after his wife Alice (Nicole Kidman) has confessed to him about a momentary urge she once had to sleep with a naval officer a year earlier, is plagued by the taunting desire to actually commit what she has only imagined in her mind, namely having sex with someone else. He embarks on a nightly journey through the cold winter streets of dreamlike Manhattan, eventually ending up unlawfully in a massive masked orgy of a hidden secret society. When, at the end of the film, he returns to his wife who is asleep, and he sees the mask he had worn the night before lying next to her, he collapses emotionally from guilt. It is now Bill who has to make a confession. Let this scene to be our thirteenth and last narrative:

(13) The interior of Bill’s apartment. Night. Bill quietly enters and goes to his study to undress, as he did the night before. He enters the bedroom as quietly as possible. He hears Alice breathing softly and regularly and sees the outline of her head on the pillow. Unexpectedly, his heart is filled with a feeling of tenderness and even of security. Then he notices something dark quite near Alice’s face. It has definite outlines like the shadowy features of a human face, and it is lying on his pillow. For a moment his heart stops beating, but an instant later he sees what it is, and he looks at the mask he had worn the night before. All at once he reaches the end of his strength. He utters a loud and painful sob—quite unexpectedly—and sinks down beside her, burying his head in her arms, and cries. A minute later he feels a soft hand caressing his hair. He looks into Alice’s worried eyes. Bill says, “I will tell you everything.” Bill still crying.

4. Toward a conceptual blueprint of Kubrick’s work
What then do these thirteen descriptions tell us about the concepts conveyed by the films of Kubrick? There are two fundamental observations to be made. Firstly, the descriptions contain a lot of words that denote mental events of characters and secondly, because they are embedded in narratives, these mental events are causally related to other events (both physical and mental), that is, they pertain to a conceptual structure known as mental causation. Let us explore each observation more in detail.

Mental events
The first observation is obviously not unique to the cinema of Kubrick. As has been frequently stressed in the literature, readers and viewers understand novels and films primarily by following the “actions” of the minds of characters in the story worlds. Palmer goes even so far as to say that “in essence, narrative is the description of fictional mental functioning.” The thirteen descriptions presented here are no different in this regard. Sidney
cannot control his desire for the girl. General Mireau changes his mind about attacking the Ant Hill when he is offered a promotion. The same can be said of Humbert who decides to move into the house after seeing the landlady’s daughter. Moon-Watcher’s perceptual contact with the monolith is followed by a cognitive leap forward. Joker has an argument with Animal Mother because he cannot bear the sight of the suffering girl. Bill has an emotional breakdown after seeing the mask lying on the pillow next to his wife and so on. These events can all be situated within the fictional being’s property domain of “the mind—of the inner life and the personality—of characters.” They refer to mental categories such as cognition, perception and emotion which, following Barrett can all be labelled as “ontologically subjective” as opposed to “ontologically objective.” Both terms were introduced by Searle to refer to two different modes of existence. Something is labelled as “ontologically subjective” insofar its existence depends entirely on the experience of a human or animal subject. By contrast, something is called “ontologically objective” insofar it has an existence independent of any experience. Extending this distinction, Barrett, then, has argued that mental events are essentially ontologically subjective because the majority of the words we use to describe the psychological categories of the mind such as thoughts, cognitions, memories, emotions and beliefs are all observer-dependent. In contrast to objective entities such as mountains or molecules they do not have an existence independent of perceptual experience. As Barrett points out, “these categories have been formed and named by the human mind to represent and explain the human mind.” Take for instance the category of anger. As she writes, “I experience myself as angry or I see your face as angry or I experience the rat’s behavior as angry, but anger does not exist independent of someone’s perception of it. Without a perceiver, there are only internal sensations and a stream of physical actions.”

Characterizing a mental event as ontologically subjective is useful to contrast it with what it is not, but it does not, however, provide us much insight into its internal building blocks. By virtue of which conceptual aspects or components can we define mental events? Here we may turn to Narayanan who has argued that our structuring of all events, concrete and abstract (such as mental events are), arises from the way we structure the movements of our bodies. He provides a rough and ready structure that will serve well as a literal skeleton for our conception of a mental event. Following Narayanan’s work, Lakoff and Johnson summarize the stages of this literal skeleton as in table 1.5.

| Table 1.5 The literal skeleton for our conception of event structure (after Narayanan). |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Initial State                  | Whatever is required for the event is satisfied|
| Start                          | The starting up process for the event           |
| End of Start                   | The end of the starting up process and the beginning of the main process |
| Main Process                   | The central aspects of the event                |
| Possible Interactions          | Disruptions of the main process                 |
| Possible Continuation of Iteration | The perpetuation or repetition of the main process |
| Resultant State                | The state resulting from the main process       |
An event thus always involves a change of state from an initial state to a resulting state. It is not difficult to see, then, how this general and literal definition applies to mental events. When a human or fictional being experiences a particular mental event (e.g., perception, emotion, cognition), this experience is seen as a change of the subject’s state from an initial state which is the negation of the mental event (not feeling X, not perceiving Y, not knowing Z) to a resultant state which is its confirmation (feeling X, perceiving Y, knowing Z). For instance, when Moon-Watcher was endowed with intelligence his state has changed from a non-cognitive state (e.g., not having the idea of using the bone as a weapon) to a cognitive one (i.e., the idea of using the bone as a weapon). The same can be said of relationship events such as love or friendship. At the beginning, the relationship between General Broulard and General Mireau starts as friendly and amical. This initial state changes, however, as soon as General Broulard mentions the attack on the Ant Hill. The promotion, in turn, can be seen as yet another cause of the change of state of the relationship. Similar examples can be drawn from each of the thirteen descriptions.

Mental causation
Mental events do not operate in isolation. As part of narratives, they are engaged in causal relationships with other events or entities (either physical or mental). Sidney shoots the girl after losing his mental control. Davey throws himself out of the window after first contemplating his escape route. Bill starts to experience an intense emotional state after seeing the mask lying next to his wife. Alex becomes sick when he sees violence. Moon-Watcher starts to “see” the bone as a weapon after first having encountered the monolith. As we already have stressed in the introduction to this book, these causal relations of the mind with the world are in the field of philosophy of mind known as instances of mental causation. They are central to our conception of ourselves as agents and often taken for granted in everyday experience and in scientific practice. The suspense you experience when little Danny turns a corner to face the Grady twins causes you to cover your eyes with your hands just like Danny does. Your intention to go and see 2001 on the big screen causes you to get into your car and so on. Depending on the role of the mental event (cause or effect) and the nature of the other event (mental or physical) we may distinguish between three types of mental causation: physical-to-mental causation, mental-to-mental causation and mental-to-physical causation. Let us briefly address each one of them.

Physical-to-mental causation occurs when a physical event is the determining factor (i.e., cause) for a mental event. As Davidson has pointed out, the most fundamental example of this type and at the same time the most important source of knowledge relevant to human understanding of the external world, is perception. Perception occurs when an “ontologically objective state of affairs in the world outside your head” causes an “ontologically subjective visual experience of that state of affairs entirely inside your head.” It is not difficult to see how this causality may be applied to the various descriptions. Moon-Watcher perceives the monolith because its appearance has caused him to perceive it. Bill perceives the mask, because the presence of the mask is causally responsible for Bill’s perceptual experience of the mask. Diagrammatically, the situation of physical-to-mental causation (the category to which the perceptual scene belongs) can be represented as in figure 1.4 (after Searle).
Figure 1.4 A causal theory of perception (after Searle).

*Mental-to-mental causation* occurs when a mental event is the determining factor of another mental event. As with physical-to-mental causation this type is essential to human experience. The visual sight of the girl causes Sidney to desire her. Bill experiences an intense feeling of sadness after seeing the mask. Barry’s perception of The Chevalier causes him to cry. Seeing the sniper suffering, evokes feelings of empathy in Joker and so on. Diagrammatically, the generalizing picture of mental-to-mental causation can be put as in figure 1.5. Notice that the first mental event in the examples above (i.e., perception) always presumes the presence of a physical event (i.e., the object perceived).

Figure 1.5 Mental-to-mental causation.

*Mental-to-physical causation* occurs when a mental event further triggers off a physical event. If perception constituted the most obvious example to illustrate physical-to-mental causation, then behaviors and actions are perhaps
the most obvious cases to show how causality may run from the mental to the physical. For instance, Sidney shoots
the girl out of panic of losing the girl. Mandrake crosses briskly to the door to warn the others that Ripper has gone
insane. Alex starts to feel sick when he sees the violence on-screen. Both the characters of Barry and Bill start to
cry out of sadness and so on. The two aspects of mental-to-physical causation can be represented diagrammatically
as in figure 1.6.

![Figure 1.6 Mental-to-physical causation.](image)

Notice the difference in ontological status between the physical event discussed earlier (the object seen) and the
physical event under discussion here (behavior). In the case of perception, the physical event was ontologically
objective. The entity seen has an existence independent of human experience. The same, however, does not apply
to the physical event of behavior. Because behaviors are actions (i.e., descriptions of physical movements) with a
meaning that is inferred by an observer, they can be labelled as ontologically subjective.86

A flow of mental causation then can be defined as a chain that combines at least two or more of the three types
of mental causation above. One such type of chain is known in literature as the “flow-of-emotion scenario” or the
“Western folk theory of emotion.”87 This scenario refers to a conceptualization of emotions according to which
feelings of emotions are embodied in a larger chain of causation which involves all three types of mental causation
discussed above. In the structure of English, the flow-of-emotion scenario may be expressed within the structure
of a simple sentence as in: “Bill started to cry at the sight of the mask.” Here the causality runs as follows: from the
physical (the mask) to the mental (Bill’s perception of the mask), from the mental (Bill’s perception of the mask)
to the mental (Bill’s emotional experience), and from the mental (Bill’s emotional experience) back again to the
physical (Bill’s crying). Thus, the flow-of-emotion scenario comprises all three types of mental causation of which
its visual diagram may be represented as in figure 1.7.

It is important to stress that this flow-of-emotion scenario is a folk theory of mental causation and not a
scientific theory. It involves an “intuitive causal explanatory ‘theory’ of emotion that people construct to explain,
interpret, and intervene on the world around them.”88 Therefore it should not be confused with traditional
expert theories of emotion such as behaviorist models of emotion or identity approaches to emotion.\(^8^9\) These theories seek to find the objective criteria for measuring emotions by observing distinct patterns of physical changes such as changes in behavior (e.g., facial expressions), body (e.g., variations in heart rate, blood pressure), or brain (activity in brain circuits). Barrett calls these theories appropriately “materialist theories” in the sense that they, despite their differences in the specifics of how emotions are caused and manifested, have one crucial thing in common: they assume that mental events such as emotional experiences are caused by and therefore can be redefined as nothing but these physical fingerprints.\(^9^0\)

Figure 1.7 The flow-of-mental causation.

Figure 1.8 The materialist scientific account of mental causation.
It should be emphasized that in this book we are not so much interested in scientific materialist theories of mental causation (descriptions of physical fingerprints), but in the everyday folk stories of mental causation as these are the stories that are construed by the viewer when seeing Kubrick’s films.

5. The grounding problem of mental causation

As the reader already may have inferred by now, the nature of the concepts under discussion here poses us with a fundamental theoretical problem which comes to the surface as soon as we connect the conceptual structure of mental causation to the construction of situation models in narrative comprehension, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. If narrative comprehension depends on the viewer’s capability of indexing events along various dimensions, how then can such comprehension be achieved with regard to a type of event that is neither purely physical nor spatially constrained (i.e., the abstract mental event)? Consider, for example, the two causal relations that are inherent to the folk theory of emotion, namely (1) the causal relation between a physical event O and a subject S’s perception of O and (2) the causal relation between S’s perception of O and S’s emotion. Both S’s perception of O and S’s emotional state are two non-spatial entities. They both describe two inner mental events of a subject S.

Hence, in virtue of what, then, can (1) S’s perception of O interact with the outer event O, and (2) S’s perception of O interact with S’s emotional state? Indeed, if both entities were spatially constrained like two objects, causal interaction could well be achieved by the relative spatial locations of the substances. But if both entities are non-spatial, relative spatial locations are unavailable to attain interaction. The reader may see in this dilemma a further manifestation of what in the field of philosophy of mind is more broadly known as the “pairing problem.”

The pairing problem refers to the problem of how mental events can be paired with other events given that they, as immaterial substances, lie outside physical space. Kim illustrates this problem with the following thought experiment:

It is metaphysically possible for there to be two souls, A and B, with the same intrinsic properties such that they both act in a certain way at the same time and as a result a material object, C, undergoes a change. Moreover, it is the action of A, not that of B, that is the cause of the physical change in C. What makes it the case that this is so? What pairing relation pairs the first soul, but not the second soul, with the physical object? Since souls, as immaterial substances, are outside physical space and cannot bear spatial relations to anything, it is not possible to invoke spatial relations to ground the pairing.

Consequently, in order to overcome this problem, one might assume that both mental events have to be spatially grounded. It is here that we may find a solution to this problem in the notion of embodiment. As Kim argues, “what is needed to solve the pairing problem for immaterial minds is a kind of mental coordinate system, a ‘mental space,’ in which these minds are each given a unique ‘location’ at a time.” If mental events were, like physical events, located in space, causal pairing could be achieved by the relative spatial locations of the substances. Indeed, one can only index a relation between a mental event and another event (mental or physical) as continuous along the dimension of space, if both events have a location (including the mental one). In other words, it is only when the rather impoverished literal structure of a mental event, as discussed earlier, is fleshed out by experiential knowledge, that the spatial pairing can take place, and the events can be indexed by the spectator along the dimensions of causality and time.
By making a claim for the importance of spatial and bodily knowledge in our comprehension of mental causation, we do not yet, however, provide an answer to the question of how this grounding can be realized. How can the situational meaning structure of mental causation be fleshed out by spatial knowledge? Addressing this problem of grounding is of fundamental importance to define the conditions under which viewers perceive causality among mental events in the context of film viewing. That is, viewers can only construe a situation model of mental causation, as conveyed non-verbally insofar (1) this conceptual structure is embodied and (2) this embodied conceptual structure is fleshed out by the visual resources of cinema. It is only when both conditions are satisfied that the viewer will be able to index the events of mental causation along the various dimensions that guide narrative comprehension. Diagrammatically, we might represent both conditions as in figure 1.9.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1.9 The grounding problem of mental causation, followed by its representational problem.
As this figure shows, the grounding problem arises from the relationship between conceptual structure and the external world of sensory experience. As we have seen in the introduction, exploring this relationship has been central to the advocates of the embodied cognition thesis. Hence, the crucial task then will be to show how, more specifically, the conceptual structure of mental causation is informed by bodily knowledge. This problem will be dealt with more in detail in the subsequent chapter of this book in which the thesis of embodied cognition will be clarified through a discussion of three theoretical notions derived from the field of cognitive linguistics: image schema, conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy. Once we have established that the conceptual structure of mental causation is fleshed out, in the sense that it is determined by the nature of human embodiment, we can then examine how this embodied conceptual structure can be depicted in film. This problem, let us call it for sake of simplicity, the problem of representation, concerns the nature of the relationship between embodied conceptual structure and film. As stated, this relationship lies at the heart of the paradox of cinematic meaning. The theoretical challenges that go hand-in-hand with a discussion of this relationship will be the topic of the third chapter of this book.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to identify the concepts out of which the situational meanings of the films of Kubrick are constructed. In order to locate these concepts, four levels of conceptual description were proposed: the novel, the screenplay, the film and the recollections of the film viewer. Assessing the conceptual usefulness of each level in relation to Kubrick's unique method of adapting novels into films, allowed us, subsequently, to describe thirteen scenes, one conceptual description for each film that the director made. From these verbal descriptions we were then able to extract a conceptual structure that, with the help of the field of philosophy of mind, was further defined as the general and overarching conceptual structure of mental causation. The nature of this structure, in turn, necessitated us to introduce the crucial role of embodiment, that is, in order for a viewer to construct a situation model of mental causation, two conditions have to be met: (1) the impoverished literal structure of mental causation has to be embodied and (2) this embodied conceptual structure, in turn, has to be conveyed non-verbally to the viewer. The problems to which both conditions unavoidably give rise, were referred to as the grounding problem and the problem of representation, respectively. In the subsequent chapters, we will address both problems successively, starting with the first one.

Notes

1. Kubrick, “Words and Movies,” 14.
2. For good conceptual discussions of the notion of narrative in relation to film, we refer the reader to two classical studies in the field: Bordwell’s *Narration in the Fiction Film* and Branigan’s *Narrative Comprehension and Film*.
3. Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 69.
4. Ibid., 69.
5. Ibid., 69.
6. Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension*, 3.
7. Ibid, 12.
8. Two books, both published in 1983, were pivotal for the development of this perspective. They are Johnson-Laird, *Mental Models*; and Van Dijk and Kintsch, *Strategies in Discourse Comprehension*. For a good review of research on the use of situation models, see also Zwaan and Radvansky, “Situation Models.”
9. Zwaan and Radvansky, “Situation Models,” 162.
10. Bransford, Barclay and Franks, “Sentence Memory.” For a discussion, see also Zwaan and Radvansky, “Situation Models,” 162–163.
11. Ibid., 191.
12. Ibid., 195.
13. Ibid., 195.
14. Zwaan and Radvansky, “Situation Models,” 163.
15. Zwaan, Langston and Graesser, “The Construction of Situation Models.” In addition to Zwaan and Radvansky, “Situation Models,” 162–163, see also Zwaan, Magliano and Graesser, “Situation-Model Construction”; and Zwaan, “Situation Models.”
16. The concept of *working memory* is a theoretical concept central to cognitive psychology and neuroscience and can be construed as a cognitive system with a limited storage capacity that runs perceptual simulations of the things just perceived or about to be perceived (e.g., language, visual experiences). From the perspective of perceptual symbol theory, this system is inherently modal, meaning that the symbols stored in this system share the same perceptual systems that gave rise to them. For a discussion, see Barsalou, “Perceptual Symbol Systems,” 604.
17. Zwaan, Magliano and Graesser, “Situation-Model Construction,” 387.
18. Magliano, Miller and Zwaan, “Indexing Space and Time,” 535.
19. Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 310–333.
20. Magliano, Miller and Zwaan, “Indexing Space and Time,” 535.
21. Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 70.
22. Ibid., 505.
23. Ibid., 71.
24. McQuiston, *We’ll Meet Again*, 57–58. See also Gengaro, *Listening to Stanley Kubrick*, 232.
25. Cahill, “The *Rolling Stone* Interview,” 196.
26. Ibid., 195.
27. Kubrick, “Words and Movies,” 14.
28. For good discussions of Kubrick’s work from the perspective of adaptation, see, among others, Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*; Welsh, “A Kubrick Tribute”; Jenkins, *Stanley Kubrick*; and Stuckey, “Re-Writing Nabokov’s *Lolita*.” See also the special issue, Hunter, “Kubrick and Adaptation.”
29. Welsh, “A Kubrick Tribute,” 253.
30. Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*, 17–33.
31. Johnson, “Writing *The Shining*,” 56.
32. Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*, 27.
33. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, 353–359.
34. Gelmis, “The Film Director as Superstar,” 103. For other Kubrick references to Stanislavski, see also Strick and Houston, “Modern Times,” 64 and Ciment’s interview with Kubrick’s early collaborator James B. Harris in Ciment, *Kubrick*, 202.
35. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, 356.
36. For a good history of these polemics, see Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*, 15–33.
37. Raphael, *Eyes Wide Open*, 177–179.
38. Nabokov, foreword to *Lolita*, xii-xiii.
39. Burgess, *You’ve Had Your Time*, 244–245. See also Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*, 30.

40. Gelmis, “The Film Director as Superstar,” 95–96.

41. Jenkins, *Stanley Kubrick*, 8.

42. As to the question of accessibility, scholars today find themselves very fortunate as since 2007 various script versions of almost all of Kubrick’s films can be consulted at the University of Arts London (UAL). This was made possible by the Kubrick Estate who, under supervision of Jan Harlan, the director’s executive producer and brother-in-law, donated the accumulated material at the Kubrick family home “Childwickbury” near St Albans, to the university. This archive, known as *The Stanley Kubrick Archive*, is collected and stored in boxes on over 800 linear metres of shelving and includes, among others, draft and completed scripts, research materials, set plans and production documents. As to the quantity of screenplays available in the archive, the total amount of scripts is divided unequally over the thirteen feature films. Kubrick’s departure from the United States in the early 1960s thereby marks a striking breach. From the archive catalogue we can infer that the highest amount of available documents is reserved for those films that Kubrick made when he lived and worked in the UK (i.e., after *Spartacus*). To give you an idea. There is only one screenplay to be consulted for *Paths of Glory*, whereas the number of screenplays available for *2001* amounts to more than ten. One might postulate many possible reasons for this, but probably the most likely explanation is the economic one: as his status as a major director grew, he could afford more time, and hence more draft versions of the screenplay.

43. Johnson, “Writing *The Shining*,” 56.

44. Rapf, “A Talk With Stanley Kubrick,” 78–79.

45. LoBrutto, *Stanley Kubrick*, 340.

46. Pezzotta, *Stanley Kubrick*, 27.

47. See appendix, ref. no. SK/12/1/2/5.

48. For a good discussion and characterization of this device in the work of Kubrick, see Falsetto, *A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis*, 85–103.

49. In *Eyes Wide Shut*, when Bill is observing his wife Alice while she helps her daughter with her homework, we hear Alice’s voice-over like an echo of Bill’s thoughts. Because this voice-over is a repetition of dialogue that was previously uttered by Alice in the film, we do not include it here.

50. For a good discussion, see also Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, 167–171.

51. See, among others, reference numbers SK/12/1/2/3 and SK/12/1/2/4.

52. See also Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, 168.

53. It is interesting to note here that in the early versions of the screenplay (e.g., ref. no. SK/14/1/11) the narration was not written in the third-person mode, but, as in the Thackeray novel, in the first-person mode with Barry providing the autobiographical voice-over. Many of the character names were also different to those in the final film version. For instance, Barry’s character was named Roderick.

54. Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 8–9.

55. LoBrutto, *Stanley Kubrick*, 91.

56. Extract taken from “An Untitled Screenplay” by Howard Sackler and Stanley Kubrick. See appendix, ref. no. SK/5/2/3.

57. Author description. No screenplay to be consulted at *The Stanley Kubrick Archive*.

58. Author description includes the third-person voice-over which can be heard in the film. No screenplay to be consulted at *The Stanley Kubrick Archive*.

59. Author description with only some small parts adopted from the screenplay available at *The Stanley Kubrick Archive* (ref. no. SK/8/1/3).

60. Phillips and Hill, *The Encyclopaedia of Stanley Kubrick*, 33.

61. Author description with only some small parts adopted from the screenplay (ref. no. SK/9/1/2/2).

62. Nabokov published his own script in 1974 as *Lolita: A Screenplay*.

63. In the book, as opposed to the film, Lolita is portrayed as a 12-year-old girl.

64. Author description with only some small parts adopted from the screenplay (ref. no. SK/10/1/26). It is interesting to note that in the screenplay the scene continues with Lolita inviting Humbert to sit next to her on the grass and asking him “You going to live with us?”
A vivid description, not included in the film, but worth mentioning here runs as follows: “She lies back and turns her face up to the sun. Humbert's shadow falls across her. He stares as she shifts and shuttles. Finally she opens her eyes and looks at him, cat-like, deliberate. Humbert seems unable to move. She smiles at him lazily and makes a face.”

65. Description taken from the screenplay (ref. no. SK/11/1/26).
66. Description taken from the “Dawn of Man Script” (ref. no. SK/12/1/2/5), a supplement to “A” script containing proposed changes, cast, and a basic outline of action. This description does not completely conjoin with what we see and hear in the film. For instance, the description makes notice of a narrator which is excluded from the film. Nevertheless, it gives a good verbal account of the meaning that is conveyed by the scene to the film viewer.

67. From his production notes we know that he envisioned a three-hour epic, with a 150-day shooting schedule. For the many battle sequences Kubrick hoped to enlist a “large number of extras” hired from either Romania where he could get a “maximum of 30,000 troops at $2 per man” or Yugoslavia which could “provide up to the same numbers at $5 per man.” He considered using “large numbers of expensive sets” planning to shoot his palace interiors in France and Italy, where “authentic Palaces and Villas of the period” could be rented for $350–750 per day, “and in most cases are completely furnished, requiring only the most minor work on our part before shooting.” For the title role of the Emperor he considered “new faces” such as David Hemmings and Jack Nicholson. For Napoleon’s aides, staff officers and Marshals he considered a list of “great actors” including, among others, Ian Holm, Alec Guinness, and Laurence Olivier. He offered the then semi-retired actress Audrey Hepburn the role of Josephine who, in a letter, however, politely turned down the offer hoping that he will keep her in mind for future projects. In addition, Kubrick kept an enormous file cabinet, with cards detailing day by day and year by year every known fact of Napoleon’s life.

68. Description taken from the first-person voice-over as heard in the film.
69. Description taken from the third-person voice-over as heard in the film, complemented by the author’s own description of the visual action on-screen.
70. Description taken from “The Shining Screenplay” (ref. no. SK/15/1/38).
71. Mainly author description with only a few verbal references to the screenplay (ref. no. SK/16/1/22). In the script (not the film) the girl’s death is preceded by the following voice-over of Joker: “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.”

72. Description taken from an early script entitled “Eyes Wide Shut: Stanley Kubrick Project” (ref. no. SK/17/1/11). See also the description in the published version of the screenplay: Kubrick and Raphael, Eyes Wide Shut, 94–95.
73. Palmer, Fictional Minds, 12.
74. Eder, “Understanding Characters,” 24.
75. Barrett, “The Future of Psychology,” 327.
76. Searle, The Construction of Social Reality, 8.
77. Barrett, “The Future of Psychology,” 329.
78. Ibid., 328
79. Narayanan, “Embodiment in Language Understanding.”
80. Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh, 176.
81. Davidson, “Mental Events,” 207–224; Kim, Philosophy of Mind, 173–204; and Robb and Heil, “Mental Causation.”
82. Kim, Philosophy of Mind, 173.
83. Davidson, “Mental Events,” 208.
84. Searle, Seeing Things as They Are, 17.
85. In analytical philosophy, the condition according to which perception cannot take place without a causal relation between perception and the object seen is referred to as the “Causal Theory of Perception.” This view has been advocated by such scholars as Grice, “The Causal Theory of Perception,” 224–247; Pears, “The Causal Conditions of Perception,” 25–40; Searle, Seeing Things as They Are; and
Strawson, “Causation in Perception,” 73–99. Originally developed by the British philosopher Paul Grice, and further advanced by Pears, Strawson and Searle, this theory consists roughly of the claim that there must be a causal relation by which the physical object in reality causes the subject’s visual experience. As Strawson (quoted by Hyman, “The Evidence of Our Senses,” 235) puts it more formally: “It is a conceptual truth that when a subject S [perceives] an external object O, O is causally responsible for S’s [perceptual] experience.” The necessity of this condition becomes especially clear when we consider so called cases of contrivance in which a mere correspondence between what a person takes himself to see, and what is there before his eyes, does not by itself establish that he sees what he thinks he sees. For instance, suppose that: (a) I seem to see a pillar at a certain distance and direction, (b) there is actually such a pillar at that distance and direction, but (c) unknown to me, there is a mirror interposed between myself and the pillar that reflects a numerically different though similar pillar. As Grice argues, it would certainly be incorrect to say that I saw the pillar behind the mirror—because the object of the pillar is not causally responsible for my experience, I do not see it—and correct to say that the second pillar (i.e., the reflection) causes my visual experience. In other words, the difference is a causal one: your perceptual experience is caused by a reflection of the pillar, not by the pillar itself.

86. Here we follow Barrett, “The Future of Psychology,” 328.
87. Dirven, “Emotions as Cause and the Cause of Emotions,” 55–86; Heider, Landscapes of Emotion, 6; Kövecses, Metaphor and Emotion, 64; and Radden, “The Conceptualisation of Emotional Causality,” 273–294.
88. Gelman and Legare, “Concepts and Folk Theories,” 379.
89. For a discussion, see Barrett et al., “The Experience of Emotion,” 374.
90. Only recently, Barrett has criticized this prevailing traditional view of the mind arguing that it is a categorical mistake to reduce the content of an ontologically subjective event such as an emotional experience entirely to the ontologically objective descriptions of physical fingerprints. She finds support in John Searle’s philosophical framework of “biological naturalism” according to which it is wrong to confuse the evidence that we have about a subject matter for the subject matter itself. The subject matter of psychology is the human mind, and human behavior is evidence for the existence and features of the mind, but it is not itself the mind. An adequate account of the mind therefore requires more than just a description of the neurobiological events that constitute the conscious states, it also requires a description of the phenomenological content of the conscious states themselves. For a discussion, see Barrett et al., “The Experience of Emotion,” 375.
91. Kim, “Causation,” 217–236. See also Kim, Philosophy of Mind, 44–48.
92. Kim, Philosophy of Mind, 46.
93. Ibid., 46.
94. As already stated in the introduction, this relationship is of fundamental concern for cognitive semantics. For a discussion, see also Evans and Green, Cognitive Linguistics, 157.