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The Stanley Kubrick Archive: A Dossier of New Research

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Introduction

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Ten years ago those immersed in researching the life and work of Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) were gifted a unique opportunity for fresh insights into his films and production methods. In March 2007 the Kubrick Estate – supervised by his executive producer and brother-in-law, Jan Harlan – donated the director's vast archive to the University of Arts London and instigated a new wave of scholarly study into the director. The Stanley Kubrick Archive comprises the accumulated material at Childwickbury, the Kubrick family home near St Albans, from which he largely worked and where he maintained a comprehensive record of his films' production and marketing, collated and stored in boxes. The catalogue introduction online testifies to the sheer size of the Archive, which is stored on over 800 linear metres of shelving:[1]

> The Archive includes draft and completed scripts, research materials such as books, magazines and location photographs. It also holds set plans and production documents such as call sheets, shooting schedules, continuity reports and continuity Polaroids. Props, costumes, poster designs, sound tapes and records also feature, alongside publicity press cuttings.[2]

As well as records of Kubrick's thirteen feature films, the Archive encompasses his career as a photographer at *Look* magazine in the 1950s and for the first time enables access to documents relating to his unmade films, such as *Napoleon*, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* and *The Aryan Papers*. These discarded projects often absorbed him for long periods and even got as far as screenplays, location scouting, and casting.

Overseen by archivist Richard Daniels, the Archive is open to both academics and members of the public and allows items to be loaned for exhibition purposes. In this, the Archive's tenth anniversary year, we can reflect on how the Archive has dramatically re-orientated scholarship on the director with a previously inaccessible wealth of detail about his day to day practice as a creative artist and self-aware industry player.

This special dossier emerges from a three-day international conference, *Stanley Kubrick: A Retrospective*, held at De Montfort University, Leicester in May 2016. The conference brought together leading Kubrick scholars to discuss, reflect upon and consider how to move forward in their research given what had been found so far in the Stanley Kubrick Archive. Since the opening of this extraordinary source of new primary material, Kubrick Studies has taken a sharply empirical turn away from textual analysis and towards understanding his films in their industrial and production contexts. This belated turn to empirical inquiry has seen Kubrick Studies align itself firmly with the 'New Film History', a term first coined in 1985 by Thomas Elsaesser and summed up by James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper as film scholarship that identifies 'how film style and aesthetics were influenced, even determined, by economic, industrial and technological factors'.[3] Three lavish Taschen books, aimed at Kubrick's considerable popular following as well as narrowly academic audiences, showcase the Archive's resources, like Alison Castle's *The Stanley Kubrick Archives* (2016) and *Stanley Kubrick's Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made* (2011), and Piers Bizony's *The Making of Stanley Kubrick's* 2001: A Space Odyssey (2015). The first key academic texts to emerge were by Peter Krämer, with books on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (2010), *A Clockwork Orange* (2011) and *Dr. Strangelove* (2014).[4] Other academic texts have since been published, using the Archive as a way of

exploring 1970s historical cinema (Maria Pramaggiore's *Making Time in Stanley Kubrick's Barry Lyndon: Art, History, and Empire* (2015), nuclear and Cold War politics (Mick Broderick's *Reconstructing Strangelove. Inside Stanley Kubrick's 'Nightmare Comedy'* (2017)), genre (Laura Mee's *The Shining* (2017), his early career as a photographer (Philippe Mather's *Stanley Kubrick at Look Magazine: Authorship and Genre in Photojournalism and Film* (2013), and the film's production, cultural, and industrial contexts (*Stanley Kubrick: New Perspectives* (2015).[5] Other fields have utilized the Archive to complement their textual analysis, such as the special issue of *Adaptation* journal on 'Kubrick and Adaptation' and the dossier in *Screening the Past* entitled 'Post Kubrick'.[6] The latter includes articles examining film exhibition curation and the way in which items from the Stanley Kubrick Archive are presented to the public. Such practice was recently seen at De Montfort University in 2016, with a pop up exhibition, *Stanley Kubrick: Cult Auteur*, presenting objects loaned from the Stanley Kubrick Archive and the Joy Cuff Collection around the theme of Kubrick as a director of cult films.

This embarrassment of archival riches has modified – but not undermined – the established view of Kubrick as a genuinely powerful *auteur*, and enhanced our understanding of him as a producer, artist, and 'brand' who was intimately involved in all aspects of his films' creation and marketing. The Archive reveals, however, that Kubrick was neither a surly Olympian misanthrope nor the megalomaniac director-producer portrayed in cinema history and the media, but rather an expert collaborator. Like all directors he relied on the competences of technicians, businessmen, and public relations managers to accomplish his work successfully and to the punishingly high standards he required. As Peter Krämer has suggested, Kubrick's working method was not about 'imposing his decisions', but about identifying the best possible

talent to collaborate with to 'produce results he could not have come up with on his own'.[7] Catriona McAvoy's study of *The Shining* (1980) exemplifies this new scholarly approach, breaking down the myths of Kubrick's producing and directing style to reveal how Kubrick fostered a 'collaborative process and appreciated the expert input of others'.[8] Rather than professional screenwriters Kubrick selected talented novelists, such as Diane Johnson (*The Shining* (1980)) and Frederic Raphael (*Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), to explore potential narrative ideas, while in the 1970s Kubrick worked closely with cinematographer John Alcott to create the distinctive aesthetics on *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and *The Shining.*[9]

The three articles in this Dossier, of which Abrams' and Krämer's are based on their keynote conference addresses, show how the Archive's unique resources allow fine-grained analyses of not only the films themselves but also the conditions under which they were produced. Peter Krämer lists and discusses Kubrick's unrealized projects, finding significant connections between them and the filmmaker's released films. 'The unknown Kubrick' has become a central focus of recent research, uncovering new perspectives on both his unmade and released films by exploring early draft screenplays, concept art work, and post-production reports. Tracing the day to day development of films and the reasons why some are abandoned has increasingly become an important way of understanding the historical contexts of their production. After all, it is by understanding the constraints of producing a film that, as Andrew Spicer suggests, 'reveals something about the parameters as to what was possible, acceptable or viable'.[10] As Krämer shows, Kubrick's unmade projects influenced and intersected with his released films. The majority of both his unrealized and realized projects were adaptations of recent novels by male authors originally published in English or German, and adapted by the

director himself with the aid of male writes who were not trained scriptwriters. The stories tended to focus on male protagonists, although some of his unrealized scripts and stories presented female or young protagonists. And the themes Kubrick preferred revolved around war, especially World War II and the Holocaust; pre-Twentieth century history, in particular the actions and failures of fictional and real political rulers; science-fiction; and dysfunctional heterosexual relationships. Kubrick strived throughout his career to bring to the screen the themes that were closest to him, and if a project could not be realized, he proceeded enthusiastically with another one, remaining faithful to his main concerns.

Krämer adopts an inductive method; first he researches the director's unrealized project and then he finds the relations between them and the realized ones. On the other hand, Michele Pavan Deana and Nathan Abrams use a deductive method and start from an idea grounded in their knowledge of Kubrick's oeuvre. Deana argues that the different narrative structure of the three main parts that constitute *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) attest not a lack of cohesion, but, as the director himself claimed, to his intention to 'explode the narrative structure of movies'.[11] Deana shows that Kubrick was influenced by numerous literary sources during the early stage of the film production, including the approximately two-hundred books about Vietnam War in his personal library and now available at the Archive. Drawing on several drafts of the screenplay and a large amount of handwritten notes, Deana demonstrates that in adapting Gustav Hasford's *The Short Timers* (1979) Kubrick sought to remain as faithful as possible to descriptions of the surreal experience of the Vietnam War not only in the novel but also in Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1977). Kubrick retained the novel's classical three-act structure, but changed its purpose in order to negate its cathartic resolution. *Full Metal Jacket* depicts a war that audiences did not expect to

watch, so that their disorientation and contradictory emotions mirror those of soldiers in the Vietnam War itself.

Nathan Abrams argues that the contradictory representation of the supercomputer HAL, the brain of the ship *Discovery One* in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), enables Kubrick to encode and explore both his Jewishness and the Holocaust, a theme which Geoffrey Cocks has claimed is esoterically present in *The Shining* and other of Kubrick's films.[12] Kubrick's subversive New York Jewish sense of humor focuses on the troubling merging of Nazism and Jewishness. Abrams asks why Kubrick always denied that the name HAL was a reference to IBM, even though IBM provided technical assistance during the making of *2001*. The name of the computer evokes Nazism because IBM collaborated with Nazi Germany to create programs that identified and recorded Jews. Moreover, the silent killing of the three hibernated astronauts on board *Discovery One* recalls those of Jewish people in death chambers. At the same time, HAL evokes stereotypes of Jewishness. The computer is at once a Jewish father, thanks to its paternal authority; a Jewish mother, because it is the brain of the mother ship Discovery and takes care of the crew; and an androgynous queer Jew, with its superior intelligence and skills of mimicry and chess-playing. Point of view shots from its red eye (the colour red evokes Jewish dress in the fifteenth century), and thus from Kubrick's own eye through his camera, self-referentially identify HAL with Kubrick's own Jewishness.

What these articles demonstrate in their use of the Stanley Kubrick Archive is the ongoing potential for further research into the production processes of Stanley Kubrick. There is still much to be written and to excavate from the Archive, particularly with regards to Kubrick's formative years at *Look* and his early short films (*Day of the Fight* (1951), *The Flying Padre* (1951), and *The Seafarers* (1953)),

which have largely been neglected by scholars. Linguistic, semiotic and philosophical approaches continue, however, within Kubrick Studies, alongside issues of adaptation and reception. These, along with further Archive research, are showcased in a special Kubrick issue of the Italian journal, *Cinergie* (November 2017), which complements this Dossier.[13] As the empirical research into Kubrick grows, so too does our fuller understanding of him as a director and producer working within the economic, industrial and historical contexts of the British and American film industries. While demythologizing Kubrick to some extent, such scholarship has only enhanced his and his films' reputation, and the prestige (and cult status) of once underrated masterpieces such as *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining* are higher than ever.

Notes

[1] Tatjana Ljujic, Peter Krämer and Richard Daniels, introduction to *Stanley Kubrick: New Perspectives* (London: Blackdog Publishing, 2015), 14.

[2] University of Arts London (2017) 'The Stanley Kubrick Archive', http://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/library-services/collections-and-archives/archives-and-special-collections-centre/stanley-kubrick-archive/. Accessed 5 May 2017.

[3] James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, eds, introduction to *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5: 1-10.

[4] Peter Krämer, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (London: British Film Institute, 2010); *A Clockwork Orange* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (London: British Film Institute, 2014).

[5] Maria Pramaggiore, *Making Time in Stanley Kubrick's Barry Lyndon: Art, History, and Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Mick Broderick, *Reconstructing Strangelove: Insight Stanley Kubrick's 'Nightmare Comedy'* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2017); Laura Mee, *The Shining* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, forthcoming 2017); Philippe Mather, *Stanley Kubrick at Look Magazine: Authorship and Genre in Photojournalism and Film* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013); Tatjana Ljujic, Peter Krämer and Richard Daniels (eds.), *Stanley Kubrick: New Perspectives* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2015).

[6] The special Kubrick issue of *Adaptation* (8: 3, 2015) was guest edited by I.Q. Hunter. *Screening the Past*'s 'Post-Kubrick' dossier was guest edited by Mick Broderick (Summer, 2017).

[7] Peter Krämer, "'Complete Total Final Annihilating Artistic Control": Stanley Kubrick and Post-war Hollywood', in Tatjana Ljujic, Peter Krämer and Richard Daniels (eds.), *Stanley Kubrick New Perspectives* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2015), 61.

[8] Catriona McAvoy 'Creating *The Shining*: Looking Beyond the Myths', in *Stanley Kubrick New Perspectives*, (see note 2), 289.

[9] For background on Kubrick's screenwriting collaborations see Frederic Raphael, *Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick* (London: Orion, 1999); Diane Johnson, 'Writing *The Shining*', in Geoffrey Cocks, James Diedrick and Glenn Perusek (eds.), *Depth of Field: Stanley Kubrick, Film and the Uses of History* (Madison, WI: The University Press of Wisconsin, 2006), 55-61; for details of Kubrick and Alcott's collaborations, see 'Photographing Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*', *American Cinematographer*, March (1976), 268-340.

[10] Andrew Spicer, 'Creativity and Commerce: Michael Klinger and New Film

History', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 8: 3 (2010), 304.

[11] Jack Kroll, '1968: Kubrick's Vietnam Odyssey', *Newsweek*, June 29, 1987.

[12] See Geoffrey Cocks, *The Wolf at the Door: Stanley Kubrick, History, & the Holocaust* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) and 'A Quality of Obsession Considerably Further East: The Holocaust in the Cinema of Stanley Kubrick', *Shofar*, 28: 4 (2010), 72-85.

[13] A special Kubrick issue of *Cinergie* (12, November 2017)*,* guest edited by James Fenwick, I.Q. Hunter and Elisa Pezzotta, is also based on the proceedings of the *Stanley Kubrick: A Retrospective* conference.