Problems with Kubrick: Reframing Stanley Kubrick Through Archival Research

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Abstract: Through three archival case studies, this article explores problematic aspects of Stanley Kubrick's relations of production and the power underlying his role as a film producer by the 1960s and 1970s. The case studies explore Kubrick's practices in the casting of women, his attitude toward trade union regulation and labor relations, and his relationship with politicians in the UK in the 1970s and his attempts to lobby for more favorable tax conditions. It makes a critical intervention in Kubrick studies to argue that the use of the Stanley Kubrick Archive is vital in future research to reframe scholarly understanding of Kubrick. The filmmaker instigated a 'myth' about himself that continues to dominate, a self-promotional strategy that has obscured the relations of production on his films. Empirical evidence is required to reveal new perspectives on his attitudes and professional behavior. The article concludes that wider comparative research is required in Kubrick studies to ascertain the level of Kubrick's uniqueness or otherwise in these relations of production, or whether they are indicative of wider systemic behaviors across the American and British film industries in the twentieth century.

Keywords: Kubrick, archives, sex, politics, labor relations, feminism, power

The field of Kubrick studies is an informal international network of scholars concerned with the study of the life and work of filmmaker Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999).[1] Over the past decade, this network of scholars has contributed to an increase in the number of books, articles, and edited collections released about Kubrick, with many attempting to offer "new perspectives".[2] The latter phrase, taken from the title of one such recent edited collection, *Stanley Kubrick: New Perspectives* (Ljujić, Krämer, Daniels 2015), has come to dominate discussions in the field following the donation of the Stanley Kubrick Archive (SKA) in 2007 to the University of the Arts London. The new perspectives approach, part of the "new" Kubrick studies, attempts to move beyond the mythic image of Kubrick—the tyrannical, all-powerful director and the obsessive genius—by utilizing empirical methods, such as archive research and interviews. Whereas traditional or "old" Kubrick studies uses textual analysis to provide interpretations on what Kubrick's films mean, the "new" Kubrick studies uses the archive to understand how the films were produced (Fenwick 2018, 7-11).

But despite the new perspectives approach, the seemingly constant outpouring of new scholarly work, and the archival riches offered up by the SKA, there remains much that we do not know about Kubrick and for academics in the field to explore. Specifically, I am thinking of the problematic issues that relate to the Kubrick myth and troubling aspects of the filmmaker's apparent behavior and interactions in his professional life. In the process of conducting my own research at the SKA, I have come across production documents that provide insights into Kubrick's conduct toward the casting of women in his films; on his relationship with creative labor and trade unions; and on the way he used his influence to lobby politicians for more favorable personal tax laws. Each of these problematic professional behaviors is explored in three discrete case studies below.

Archival evidence of these kinds of problematic issues provide an insight into the power dynamics and production cultures not only of Kubrick's films, but of the broader American and British film industries between the 1960s and 1990s. This article makes a critical intervention by arguing that these types of problematic issues, and the archival evidence available, require further attention by academics in the field of Kubrick studies, as well as by those academics involved in similar fields of study dedicated to the life of an individual (typically "canonical") filmmaker. The focus on these issues will reframe scholarly understanding of Kubrick and allow him to serve as a case study on the extent to which he was part of wider systemic problematic behaviors and attitudes in the American and British film industries toward gender, labor, and power. And it can allow for the identification of patterns of behavior across the industry by indicating pathways for similar research in other fields (Godard studies, Hitchcock studies et al.). Such an approach indicates the potentialities for Kubrick studies to progress as a field of inquiry, and how the methods and approaches taken by scholars working in the field can be applied to the wider film and media studies community. Rather than Kubrick becoming an insular case study, or a framing device for the latest critical apparatus, the examination of the material conditions of production and relations of production allows for Kubrick studies to impact on the wider knowledge and study of the American and British film industries.

I have previously considered the material conditions of production—the institutional necessities for making a film, including production financing, distribution networks, exhibition, technology etc.—in my work on Kubrick's role as a producer. In *Stanley Kubrick Produces* (2021), I was concerned with understanding the ways in which industrial contexts impacted creatives processes. However, with this article I am extending this framework to also consider the relations of production on Kubrick's

films. Annette Kuhn has described relations of production as being, "the ways in which filmmakers work with each other and with their subjects to produce films" (1994, 175). Kuhn's analysis of the relations of production considers the structural patriarchal forces within the film industry and how the, "divisions of labour and hierarchies of power and authority" shape the roles and relationships between creative laborers (179). She uses this analysis not only to think through the way relations of production can influence how films produce meaning, but also to question the problematic structural forces at work within the film industry. This article considers Kubrick's own power as a producer, his awareness of that power, and the ways in which he yielded it in relation to those who worked for him, but also in relation to powerful stakeholders he wanted to influence.

Kubrick is the ideal case study to explore the relations of production, for he is a filmmaker with a long-standing mythic image in popular discourse. Prevalent in journalistic and critical debate is Kubrick as the paranoid and reclusive director who did not like to be driven above thirty miles per hour, who did not leave his house in St. Albans, and who was a despotic director on set (Cahill 1987). Alongside this is the mythic image of the artist as victim, of the director suffering for his art, struggling to realize his vision against the commercial forces of Hollywood and to maintain his independence.[3] Both mythic images can be traced back to Kubrick himself, as he originated these myths as part of a strategy of self-promotion that he commenced in the early 1950s in order to build himself a powerbase within the film industry (Fenwick 2021, 30; Ulivieri 2018). With this article, I argue that the dominance of this myth needs to be overcome through factual archival research. The myth of Kubrick, his methods of working, and his professional relationships can all be reframed through the SKA (and other archives). By using archival evidence, it is possible to ascertain the

way Kubrick used his power to produce his films, in contrast to how he wanted to be perceived to have produced his films.

The article is also a reflection on the state of Kubrick studies to date, given its rapid growth in the past decade, and a recommendation of one way it could progress in order to reframe its primary object of study: Stanley Kubrick. The Kubrick studies community is at a crossroads and is presented with a distinctive research opportunity given the size of the SKA and the kind of material it contains. But the community should consider whether Kubrick studies risks becoming commodified, as Sidney Gottlieb (2002) warned was the danger for the similar field of so-called Hitchcock studies. Gottlieb sensed that the scale of academic and critical attention that Alfred Hitchcock reaped by the end of the twentieth century, while on one level signaling a "worthwhile endeavor" had been legitimated, was also "potentially worrisome": Hitchcock studies in the early 2000s was on the verge of becoming "Hitchcock Inc.", "complete with a Hitchcock journal, research center, websites, university courses, popular and academic books, conferences, museum exhibitions and extensive centennial events […] as well as an endowed chair of Hitchcock studies at a distinguished university and the serious talk of a Hitchcock society" (Gottlieb 2002, 14-15). The same could be said of Kubrick studies now: the community has regular anniversary conferences and symposia, publishes books and special journal issues dedicated to individual films, through to collections that examine Kubrick's influence and legacy, dedicates university courses to the study of his work, and even arranges academic exhibitions centered around archival artefacts (*Stanley Kubrick: Cult Auteur*, De Montfort University, 2016).[4] The question facing Kubrick studies now is what the point of Kubrick studies is going forward.

I think it is necessary to reflect on Gottlieb's argument for a moment and to consider how the problems Hitchcock studies faced are applicable to Kubrick studies. Gottlieb argued that with the growth and maturation of Hitchcock studies came four substantive and problematic effects. First, valorization, which is the implicit deification of the figure of study, one brought about by the lingering attachment to auteurism (2002, 15). Like Hitchcock studies, Kubrick studies is attempting to decenter Kubrick, focusing more on his collaborations and the historical contexts of his productions (see Broderick 2017; Krämer 2011, 2012; Fenwick 2021; McAvoy 2015; Perko 2019, among others). But despite this decentering process, anniversary symposia and associated edited collections bring with them what Gottlieb calls an "aura conferring" effect (2002, 15). The legacy of auteur theory, particularly in its links to the artist myth of Kubrick, will be difficult to overcome, but the SKA presents Kubrick studies the unique opportunity to attempt to do so. One other point to make about the SKA is its importance as an historical collection not just about Stanley Kubrick, but about the wider film industry in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as an important collection in relation to research on, for example, the Holocaust, or the life of Napoleon. Gottlieb's second point was institutionalization, a process that partially leads to academic output becoming a publishing industry (a conveyor belt of publications), but also in the way that the study of Kubrick can be influenced, even regulated, by a "conceptual critical orthodoxy" (2002, 15). Third, commodification, in which directors like Hitchcock and Kubrick remain highly marketable figures beyond academia. Kubrick has an established fanbase and broad audience appeal, with continual reissues of his films on the latest technological format, or revamped with yet more new features and commentaries. But Gottlieb warned of the lure of similar commodification for academics in Hitchcock studies and how it can make the

discussion of certain aspects of an individual filmmaker's life and work, "more attractive than others, and can sometimes uniquely complicate, if not compromise" the field of study (15-16). The "problem" issues that this article will focus on—gender, labor, and power—are a case in point. And finally, proliferation, which is when the volume of scholarly work becomes overwhelming and leads to subtraction. The quantity of research can overlap in interesting ways and lead to new insights. But for Hitchcock studies, the amount of research risked the field becoming chaotic. as is now the case for Kubrick studies. As Gottlieb argued, "our productivity and creativity […] can become not only unwieldy and overwhelming, but also distracting and entropic" (16).

Gottlieb was not the only academic to make a critical intervention into the field of Hitchcock studies. Others did too, most notably John Belton and Robin Wood. Between them, Belton and Wood reframed the same question repeatedly between 1965 and 2003: "why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" (Wood 1989, 5). The question was refashioned by Wood as, "can Hitchcock be saved for feminism?", and later by Belton (2003) as, "Can Hitchcock be saved from Hitchcock studies?" The question(s) emphasized the significance of the study of Hitchcock, as well as the critical desire of academics like Belton, Wood, and Gottlieb to disassociate Hitchcock studies from the worst tendencies of auteur theory and to avoid the institutionalization of Hitchcock studies. The study of the director risked being reduced to the "trendiest critical method *du jour*" (Belton 2003, 21), with corresponding research outputs: Hitchcock and gender, Hitchcock and feminism, Hitchcock and masculinity, Hitchcock, and psychoanalysis etc. Substitute here Hitchcock for Kubrick.

This, somewhat inevitably, leads me to echo the above questions here. Why should we take Kubrick so seriously? And how can we save Kubrick from Kubrick studies? In addition, a further question can be added to the above: to what extent was Kubrick unique? This is crucial in consideration of the Kubrick myth and the problem of valorization. Claims by, for example (and by no means the only example, just the most recent), Jeremi Szaniawski (2019) that, "Kubrick's influence spans multiple areas of filmmaking as is plain to see," can have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the hegemonic, auteur aspects of the Kubrick myth, as Szaniawski himself—albeit briefly—moves to recognize. Instead, we can reframe the questions being asked: just *how* unique, or not, was Kubrick in his influence on contemporary filmmakers? *How* unique was Kubrick in terms of his power and control? And *how* unique was Kubrick in the production cultures he managed on and off set?

These are questions that need to be measured and understood within grounded, empirical methods. Kubrick studies needs to turn fully to the SKA (and other archival institutions) to uncover factual evidence. The risk, if not, is that the Kubrick myth will perpetuate and Kubrick studies' implicit link to auteurism will continue.[5] However, new archival evidence can allow for the reframing of Kubrick and bring to the fore the material conditions and relations of production. With this article, I present three case studies that use the SKA to explore Kubrick's professional working behavior in a bid to move beyond the prevailing myth. The first case study is of Kubrick's behavior and approach to the casting of women for *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), contrasting his casting notes on female actors with those he made on male actors. The second case study focuses on Kubrick's attitudes toward trade union regulations and his interactions with creative labor on and off-set, with a focus on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). And the third case study explores how Kubrick viewed his power and influence

as a filmmaker in relation to the British economy by the 1970s and his attempts to lobby UK politicians for more favorable tax conditions. These case studies are not presented as a means of sensationalizing the study of Kubrick. Instead, they are presented as a means of confronting the conditions of production, of the way Kubrick produced his films, and as a means of reframing Kubrick within the industrial and cultural realities of the American and British film industries. The aim is to understand the power structures of the film industry more broadly and to question the extent to which the behaviors Kubrick exhibited toward women, labor, and power were prevalent throughout the industry, or whether he was a unique case. But before presenting the three archival case studies, I first want to consider the Kubrick myth in a little more detail to emphasize the necessity to uncover empirical facts which can counteract it.

The Kubrick Myth

The mythic image of Kubrick—mythic in the sense that it is an image not grounded in empirical truth, but rather based on rumor, tabloid sensationalism, and even his own self-promotion strategies—that broadly continues to perpetuate is one of a visionary genius and artist. It is an image that is largely undisputed across a body of critical and journalistic work from the past five decades.[6] Take Martin Scorsese's opening statement in the catalogue to the official travelling Stanley Kubrick exhibition, in which he argues that, "All you have to do is hear the name, or read it on a page, and a whole world opens up before your eyes […] Kubrick was an artist of real vision, in every sense of that overused word" (Scorsese 2014, 5). Scorsese's sentiments are oft echoed at each stop that the official exhibition makes around the world. The stint at

London's Design Museum in 2019 was no different, with critics similarly in awe of Kubrick's visionary prowess. "A true insight into the mind of a film genius," said David Sexton of *The Evening Standard* (2019); an exhibition that showcases "the director's creative genius," said Edwin Heathcote of the *Financial Times* (2019, 17); and a revelation of "the obsessive level of genius the great director showed," said Oliver Wainwright of *The Guardian* (2019). Wainwright's review even suggests that Kubrick's vision could only be realized through brutal means: "Kubrick's uncompromising fastidiousness drove many of his collaborators mad, but most agreed that it was usually worth it for the quality of the final product". Wainwright seems to be suggesting that the compromise made by those that worked for Kubrick was one in which personal wellbeing was sacrificed in the name of art.

The above reviews reinforce the mythic image of Kubrick as an all-controlling, secret, demanding, even cruel genius. The myth appears to imply that all these qualities were necessary to bring to realization a film of real vision in a system—Hollywood— that was geared toward profit. This leads to a second component of the Kubrick myth: the figure of the artist struggling against a corporate machine that favored mass art over personal vision. It is not an uncommon image more generally across the canonical directors of Hollywood. Hitchcock, Welles, Chaplin, each have their own mythic image as dictatorial directors, maverick geniuses working *against* the system, bullying tyrants exhibiting disreputable, even abusive behavior, especially toward women.[7] And such reputations have cut through to public discourse (Siddiquee 2017; McGill 2019, 26). But the question is, how reliable are these stories without empirical research? This is not to suggest that elements of these mythic images are not true. Far from it, given what we now know about directors like Hitchcock and his abusive and exploitative behavior toward women, most notably Tippi Hedren (Moral 2002, 120-124). Rather, it

is to suggest that there is a scholarly gap in fully resolving the factual basis of these mythic images, particularly given that the filmmakers themselves were often complicit in the construction of these myths. Within Kubrick studies, Robert Simpson (2008) has previously speculated as to the level of Kubrick's involvement in the creation of the Kubrick myth, but his work was written prior to the opening of the SKA and so written without access to empirical evidence.

One of the key sources of the Kubrick myth (but by no means the only source) is the behind the scenes documentary *Making the Shining* (1980). It is a documentary that has often been cited as evidence of Kubrick's own problematic professional behavior. The short film was directed by Kubrick's daughter, Vivian, for BBC Arena. The documentary shows Kubrick at work on the set of *The Shining* (1980), with a focus on his working relationship with Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall, the two main actors in the film. Journalist Imran Siddiquee, in his 2017 article on abusive film directors that was written at the height of the Me Too movement, argues that *Making the Shining* is, "clear evidence of verbal and emotional abuse" by Kubrick toward Duvall. Siddiquee is just one of many journalists to frame the documentary in this way (Greene 2016; Harris 2019; Saunders 2020).

Throughout the documentary, Kubrick appears increasingly exasperated with Duvall, leading to the development of an antagonistic working relationship between the two. Kate Egan has called the tension between Duvall and Kubrick the documentary's "central narrative arc" (2015, 73). During the documentary, Duvall talks of how she is jealous of the working relationship that Jack Nicholson has with the rest of the cast and crew, describing it as sycophantic. And while she does not explicitly name Kubrick, she does hint at the way she feels excluded and even

potentially ignored by the filmmaker. She says that the situation leads to feelings of

jealousy because of the lack of attention she has received. This is immediately

followed by footage of Duvall having collapsed onto the floor of the set of the

Overlook Hotel, apparently exhausted from the conditions of her role and finally

receiving the attention that she craves. The documentary is edited to make it appear

that Duvall was feigning her condition in a bid to receive the affections of the cast and

crew, not that she was genuinely suffering from exhaustion. Later, Duvall talks of how

she has been suffering from ill health for many months because of the stress of

working on *The Shining*, only to have a visibly frustrated Kubrick urging the crew not

to sympathize with her. And toward the climax of the documentary, Kubrick chides

Duvall for missing a cue and, as a result, messing up a take. "We're fucking killing

ourselves out here," he tells her.

If, as Siddiquee (2017) and others argue, *Making the Shining* is a damning

indictment of Kubrick's abusive on-set behavior, one is forced to ask why footage of

this behavior could feature in the documentary. *Making the Shining* is one of the only

times Kubrick allowed such a film to be made. He had exerted control over his own

self-promotion since the start of his career and even made annotated corrections to the

interviews he gave to print journalists.[8] His public image was carefully crafted and

supervised by himself and, later, through collaboration with the publicists he hired to

work for his company Polaris Productions (Fenwick 2021, 119-130). Indeed, the auteur

image of Kubrick was a promotional strategy instigated by publicists at Polaris (150-

151). Kubrick had incorporated the company in 1962 to promote the "Kubrick brand"

at a time when independent producers were vying for ever greater control over areas of

publicity from the Hollywood studios (138-142). And so, if Kubrick were such an all

controlling self-publicist, how could he have allowed the antagonism between himself

and Duvall to become the central narrative of the documentary? Unless, of course, he was manipulating the public image of himself as an all-controlling, tyrannical director and as the suffering artist, playing up to the Hollywood stereotype. Again, this is not to suggest that there aren't genuine questions to be asked of Kubrick's behavior toward Duvall, but rather that *Making the Shining* needs to be treated cautiously, particularly in its reliability as evidence of Kubrick's excessive behavior and traits as a filmmaker. *Making the Shining* is part of Kubrick's own self-created myth and therefore highly unreliable.

Kubrick's strategy of self-promotion was initially used as a means of furthering his precarious position within the film industry in the 1950s, but later as a means of obtaining ever greater control from the studios that financed his productions:

> To obtain the control he needed to make films—in fact, to even be able to enter the Hollywood mainstream—Kubrick had to construct the illusion of a powerful, maverick auteur. […] From the earliest days of his career, producing and directing *Fear and Desire* (1953), Kubrick would be in close contact with journalists at newspapers like the *New York Times*, providing copy and undergoing interviews that positioned him as a controlling producer. (Fenwick 2021, 2)

But the problem that Kubrick's self-promotion strategy now presents is the extent to which it has been successful. I mean this in the sense that it has led to the dominance of the Kubrick myth within popular discourse. Robert Simpson has argued, "The myth

and legend loom so large after so many years that any new information might in some way be new disinformation" (2008, 244).

Even the Kubrick family are working to overthrow an image that Kubrick instigated, seemingly unaware of the level of input he had in constructing this myth in the first place (Ulivieri 2018). The Kubrick family's attempts to combat the Kubrick myth—a project initiated in the immediate wake of his death by his wife, Christiane— is largely through the official Stanley Kubrick travelling exhibition. But their attempts are ultimately self-defeating. For in the end, the family are merely reinforcing the mythic image of Kubrick as the suffering artist and as the all-controlling auteur. Jan Harlan, Kubrick's brother-in-law and executive producer, has time and again returned to this typical narrative framing in interviews, such as in the following: "Obsessive is right. He wanted to get it right. He didn't want to make any compromise" (Tewksbury 2012). Harlan, in the foreword to the catalogue for the official travelling exhibition, writes of Kubrick's "mystery" artistic talent and of his films reflecting a "carefully calculated perfection" (2014, 7). And while the Kubrick family are keen to emphasize the suffering artist aspect of the Kubrick myth—which returns us to an aspect played up in *Making the Shining*, as Kubrick struggles against the antagonistic force that is Shelley Duvall—they are incredibly keen to downplay the perceived artist as tyrant image, denying Kubrick's excessive, problematic behavior, even though it is on display in that very same documentary (James and Grainger 1999; Fenwick 2017). They rebuff the most negative elements of the Kubrick myth on the one hand, while on the other hand insinuating that he was an obsessive, all controlling genius struggling against the system, therefore validating his behavior. Note Harlan's words above: "obsessive is right". But the logic of the family's argument is circular: the myth is both valid and invalid and so we become trapped, like Jack Torrance in the Overlook

Hotel's labyrinthine maze, inside the web of Kubrick's self-created myth, unable to escape. There is only route out of this mythic web, and it is through material evidence located within the SKA.[9]

The SKA is both a site of artistic pilgrimage and heritage and an historical record of the industrial processes of Hollywood. But it should also be recognized as the contested location over the preservation of the Kubrick myth. The scale of the SKA is overwhelming. Estimates suggest there are over 800 linear metres of archival shelving and over 1000 archival boxes (Mahurter 2007; Daniels 2017). There are potentially hundreds of thousands of individual documents, including correspondence, budgets, business reports, notes, faxes, telegrams, emails, scripts and much more. I have spent a decade working through this material, trying to make sense of what at times is a chaotic jumble of paperwork. My aim has always been to focus on the industrial, administrative, and managerial processes of making a film in Hollywood: the material conditions of production, if you will. Through the study of contracts, business reports, budgets, and other production documents, the day-to-day logistics and practical realities of putting together a film can be understood. This article pushes the study of the material conditions of production further though, moving toward the relations of production. As such, the following case studies are concerned with Kubrick's professional behavior and the way he interacted with creative labor on and off-set, utilizing archival evidence to understand the factual basis behind the Kubrick myth.

The Problem with Gender and Casting

Women are typically a marginalized presence in all of Kubrick's films. And when women are featured, there is an emphasis on the objectification of the female body. But

the issue here is not about the narrative presence of women, but the sexual politics in Kubrick's approach to the casting of women. By the time of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), Kubrick had developed what Robert Kolker and Nathan Abrams call the, "Kubrick body type" (2019, 70-71), described by the film's choreographer, Yolande Snaith, as being, "Barbie dolls […] they were a stereotype, a cliché, and it says a lot about that world, its misogynistic attitude, high society treating women as objects" (Kolker and Abrams 2019, 70). And while the "world" Snaith is referring to is that of the orgy scene in *Eyes Wide Shut*, we need to consider the Kubrick body type more broadly across his films and his approach to casting women. When we do so, using *A Clockwork Orange* and the casting that Kubrick undertook for that film as a case study, we can detect Kubrick himself treating women as sexualized objects in a professional setting.

Between August 17 and 28, 1970, Kubrick viewed close to 200 male and female actors to be cast in a variety of roles in *A Clockwork Orange*. He was viewing casting videos, photographs, and at times in person auditions. He recorded his reactions and impressions of each of the actors, focusing on aspects of their personality or appearance. It becomes apparent when reading the notes that Kubrick was discriminating the actors, unconsciously or not, based on gender. Of the male actors, Kubrick made fewer notes and typically focused on his reaction to their acting abilities and voice. In contrast, Kubrick made much lengthier notes about the female actors, typically focusing on their figure, specifically their breasts and / or legs. The women were not all necessarily auditioning for roles that even required them to be naked or for their bodies to be presented on screen: roles ranged from Nurse Feeley (eventually played by Carol Drinkwater) and other nurses featured in the film, to the handmaidens in Alex's bible fantasy (eventually played by Jan Adair, Vivienne Chandler and Prudence Drage). Many of the female actors were not being auditioned for any specific

role. Instead, the choice to heavily focus on the body was a choice made by Kubrick, in a professional setting, with no obvious creative imperative. In short, there was no apparent reason to be judging the women on their body image, nor for Kubrick to be making notes about his own reaction, whether favorable or not, to their bodies. His overall approach to the casting process was, in other words, problematic.

The notes are quite revealing of Kubrick's attitudes to the female body and in his approach to selecting his preferred "body type". He even used a shorthand code to describe women: VGF (very good figure), VGL (very good legs), VGB (very good body), PF (pretty face), GF (good face), PA, GA, and FFF ("Casting Notes" 1970). While the use of shorthand is presumably not uncommon, particularly when working through extensive video and in person casting, it does signal the ways in which women were being reduced to fetishized categories based on one man's own preference. After all, shorthand code was not used in a similar way for the male actors. Without revealing the names of those being auditioned, I want to briefly summarize the comments being made in order to establish how Kubrick was approaching the casting of women in a very different way to the men in this particular case study.

The first two pages of notes, from actresses viewed on August 14, 1970, serve as a template of Kubrick's approach across the entire casting sessions held that month. A total of seventeen women were auditioned that day. None were being cast for a specific role, with Kubrick at times making notes about potential characters they could play. The two pages of notes consist of the printed names of the women, with no other surrounding contextual information, and it is next to each of these names that Kubrick has written his own notes. Indeed, with a lack of details about, say, age, Kubrick at times guesses the age of the women: "30-ish,", "30 and blonde" ("Casting Notes"

1970). But his focus was primarily on aspect of body shape and breasts, the latter often being emphasized through Kubrick's use of language and underlined remarks, as is clear in the below sample of notes (the numbers are the same reference used on the notes):

1: VGF, VG figure, VG <u>bust</u>, <u>VG legs</u>, fair act

2: small to medium breasts, pretty face, good figure, 22, fair act

3: not that pretty, a fair face, ~~not good~~ ok bosom

4: pretty, well spoken, upper class, <u>good actress</u>, <u>VG</u> figure

5: Good actress, VG figure

6: Spectacular bust and good figure, VLB VGF, slightly vulgar model, figure model type, pretty face

7: pretty, VGF, good actress, very good body + face

11: F.F.F, pretty face, fair face, a bit sully, good actress

12: odd ugly breasts = large, fair actress

13: best actress yet, very nice, a good figure/fair figure – a bit soft. ("Casting Notes" 1970)

The above sample of comments written by Kubrick are representative of how he wrote about women throughout the casting process in August. Rather than focusing on the

professional qualities of the women—after all, even if the women were predominantly models (which in itself should not matter), they were being auditioned as actors and therefore should have been viewed in terms of their performing ability, not their bodies—instead, remarks about body type, breasts and figure dominate the page. Kubrick scrawls his notes in large writing when referencing breasts—"spectacular bust" is spread across the page—while his notes about acting ability— "good actress" —are often marginalized, written in smaller writing and squeezed in at the edge of the page. The one-time Kubrick emphatically emphasizes the acting ability of one of the women—number 13—he chose not to cast her in the film. Kubrick's focus therefore was on finding a type—the Kubrick body type—with this search dominating his approach to the casting of women. At one point, he even focuses on the body shape of women being actively considered for the role of the psychologist, Dr Branom (Madge Ryan), with no indication as to why this was even necessary.

The problematic nature of Kubrick's approach can be demonstrated through a comparison of his notes from the casting of male actors in the same August sessions. Looking at a sample of Kubrick's notes on men that were auditioned on August 21, 1970, the emphasis is much more on performance rather than appearance. The men were often being cast for very specific roles—doctor, Deltoid, policeman—and in only a few instances were men viewed with no specific role in mind. Kubrick's notes reflect how he was much more inclined to pick up on aspects of voice and abstract concepts such as intelligence:

1: good—ok ~~fair~~, intelligent, rugged

4: not good—barely ok if cheap

5: weak, fair, cheap

6: smart looking, ok, youngish, sensitive type

7: orderly, good for dialog [sic]

9: scientific type, good actor

10: good, quite good for intelligent bit, upper class, reads well, doctor type, sandy hair type

13: good dialog, <u>good</u>, rugged

17: good face, good voice, <u>very good voice</u>, good actor, a heavy type

18: good, intelligent, 32-ish, reads well,

29: yachting type, Vincent Price, beard, handsome, balding, well spoken, useful

30: good, believable doctor, useful, speaks well. ("Casting Notes" 1970)

In clear contrast to the notes made about the women, Kubrick was much less interested in the body types of the men. And even if this was because many of the men were being considered for the role of the doctor, one must ask why Kubrick found it necessary to comment on the body type and shape of women being considered for the role of the female psychologist, but not on the men being considered for the role of the male doctor. Even when Kubrick viewed auditions for male characters that can be argued to have required a more physical appearance—Joe the Lodger, for example—Kubrick's notes only focus on issues of height rather than build. And note how Kubrick was more interested in the voices of the men, in comparison to the lack of

notes on the voices of the women. Men are given greater respect in the auditioning process and are not merely reduced to sexual objects. They are instead being considered as professional actors, rather than as "model types".

The most problematic notes are for the casting of Cheryl Grunwald, who played the role of the rape victim of Billyboy's Gang. I feel it necessary to highlight this example given how that rape scene is one of the most controversial of the entire "ultraviolent" section of *A Clockwork Orange* (alongside the assault on Mrs. Alexander and the Cat Lady). Grunwald was auditioned on August 20, 1970, but was not being considered for any specific role. Next to her name Kubrick wrote: "fair act, <u>huge breasts</u>, tart quality, figure model type of huge breasts, handmaiden" ("Casting Notes" 1970). Note how Grunwald is not being considered at all for her acting abilities, with these being dismissed as fair. Instead, the repeated focus is on her body, specifically the breasts, which Kubrick emphasizes twice, the latter time linking it to the idea of the "model type". The most unsettling remark is that of "tart quality," a derogatory term that suggests a woman is being purposely sexually provocative. Given that Grunwald was eventually cast in the role of a rape victim, these comments, and the way she was being cast, display a level of insensitivity. Such a scene should be treated with the utmost respect, delicacy, and professional behavior. Instead, Kubrick has reduced Grunwald to a base, depraved aspect of male sexual fantasy, as someone not worthy of the profession of acting but, because of her body, deserving of the role of a rape victim.

This is but one brief case study to illustrate the means in which we can start to use the archive to understand the sexual politics of casting and Kubrick's professional behavior toward women. This evidence cannot be overlooked or excused as a historical

artefact typifying the cultural conditions of the 1970s. Instead, it should be used to question the problematic practice and behavior that it represents: the objectification of women towards satisfying the Kubrick "body type".

The Problem with Trade Unions and Labor Relations

Jon Ronson's *Stanley Kubrick's Boxes* (2008)—a documentary in which the writer explores the Kubrick archive in its original form when it was still housed at the Kubrick home—features footage from the unreleased *Making Full Metal Jacket*, Vivian Kubrick's behind-the-scenes sequel to *Making the Shining*. One clip features a frustrated Kubrick in discussion with his crew about the number of tea breaks to which they are entitled on the set of *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Kubrick exhorts that, "we've fucked around for an hour and a half," to which the crew attempt to justify the breaks they have taken.

Actor Matthew Modine (Private "Joker" Davis) has talked of how Beckton Gas Works, the on-set location in London used for the filming of the majority of the final half of *Full Metal Jacket*, was a hazardous environment that made work difficult. In an interview in 2017, he said that the site was, "besides Ground Zero during 9/11, the most toxic place I've ever had the displeasure of being" (Greig 2017). The crew desire to take regular breaks must be seen in this context, with the site filled with toxic dust that they were breathing in. Modine goes onto say:

> We all knew we were crawling around in asbestos and we understood
> the dangers of that. […] When we got home and took our baths, the

tubs would turn a cobalt blue from the dirt that was in our hair and on

our bodies. (Greig 2017)

Despite these challenging working conditions, Kubrick, perhaps playing up to the camera in a further extension of the Kubrick myth, ridicules the amount of tea breaks taken by his crew. But there is a clear underlying tension between the crew and Kubrick about the entitlement to take regular breaks, breaks that in the context of a hazardous production environment were potentially vital to the welfare and health of those on set. The narrative is once more of the artist struggling against wider forces to realize his vision. But again, through using the archive, it is possible to uncover evidence of Kubrick's attitudes towards creative labor and trade union regulations. The evidence shows that Kubrick viewed trade unions and labor relations as a barrier to film production and to the excessive work pattern he himself undertook, a pattern that he likely expected others to adopt.

Before considering the archival evidence, I want to pick up on the latter point of excessive work. It is a point reflected upon by Emilio D'Alessandro in his memoir *Stanley Kubrick and Me* (2016). D'Alessandro was Kubrick's long serving assistant and chauffeur, starting in the 1970s. He reveals the toll that working for Kubrick took on his marriage, with Kubrick expecting him to devote his life to his job at the neglect of his family. Throughout the memoir, D'Alessandro returns to the question of unionized labor and Kubrick's attitudes towards trade unions:

He [Kubrick] asked me if I belonged to a union. There was a tone of

hope in his voice. […] He didn't wait for me to answer and explained

that he needed an assistant who wasn't bound by the English

workweek. "It's a waste of time to stop work at six. There's still half

a day to make use of […] I need you to be there when I need you".

(D'Alessandro and Ulivieri 2016, 14-15)

This meant that Kubrick expected D'Alessandro to work as many hours as needed and to be on call all the time. Such working conditions eventually impacted on D'Alessandro's marriage and led to a divorce. But Kubrick seemed to believe that loyalty to him was what mattered, with D'Alessandro even going so far as to defend Kubrick, saying, "They [unions] wanted to safeguard workers—but I didn't feel the need for it for me. Stanley had told me that he would take care of all the people who believed in him" (2016, 51). D'Alessandro's memoir, unintentional or not, exposes a privileged and powerful individual abusing his position. More than once, Kubrick encouraged staff employed by his Hawk Films production company to remain non-union members (51). And while the likes of D'Alessandro may try to defend Kubrick's actions, Kubrick would have no other reason to ask his workers to remain non-unionized other than to exploit their working hours and conditions. He was, as a manager, looking to obtain ever greater levels of working hours out of his staff in disregard of union regulations.

One brief case study to illustrate Kubrick's approach to labor relations is *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Archived correspondence reveals a distrust of, and attempts to even evade, union rules on the set of *2001*. It was a film that was grossly over budget and

over schedule due to a variety of factors, not least Kubrick's mismanagement in his role as producer, leading to a severe impact on the annual finances of the studio funding the production, MGM. But rather than taking personal responsibility for the budget and scheduling, Kubrick looked to place the blame with trade unions. In a letter to the president of MGM, Robert O'Brien, in January 1966—just several months into the production—Kubrick set out several reasons for being overbudget by $549,296 (a figure that would further increase over the coming months), some of which he argued were directly the fault of his crew being trade union members. This included a new union agreement about the maximum number of daily working hours and the breaks to which workers were entitled. Kubrick believed that this agreement had increased costs by 25 percent. But it is Kubrick's use of language that reveals his disregard for workers' rights: "The plasterer shop very often has so little time remaining in the day, after their tea break, that certain types of work cannot be restarted, since they must be completed without interruption. This means very often a man's time might be largely wasted from the end of the tea break to the end of the day" (Kubrick 1966). Kubrick is implying that workers under his management should go without a break and work extreme hours.

The SKA reveals Kubrick as a manager and producer looking to exploit the working hours of his staff, rather than mythologizing him as the struggling artist. Kubrick's use of language in his correspondence with O'Brien suggests that the working conditions of his crew were far from being utmost in his mind. D'Alessandro, in his memoir, may defend Kubrick as looking out for those who worked for him, but archival evidence, such as the letters to O'Brien, show Kubrick was prepared to use his position to take advantage of workers' rights. This latter point is further emphasized in the O'Brien correspondence by Kubrick's reference to an additional union agreement in which creative laborers and technicians were entitled to increased overtime rates and a

further reduction in legal daily working hours. Kubrick found the new agreement unacceptable, arguing that, "This reduction costs several hours of work the following day, if you are one take away from getting a scene perfect. The actors will invariably require time the next morning to reach the point that they were just about to hit the night before" (Kubrick 1966). Again, rather than considering the welfare of his crew, Kubrick was concerned about his ability to achieve perfection. He was in effect suggesting that his artistic vision had greater worth than the rights of creative labor. He should have sought ways to ensure that the rights of his crew were compatible with the production of his film. Instead, he ended his letter to O'Brien by musing that if the union agreement "wasn't in effect" the film would be under budget and under schedule (Kubrick 1966). Kubrick was implicitly inviting O'Brien to sanction the potential bypassing of trade union agreements to serve his own interests as a manager. The suggestion indicates that Kubrick was prepared to use his position as a producer and manager to extract ever greater levels of work from his staff to the detriment of labor relations.

The Problem with Politics, Power, and Taxes

The final case study considers the way Kubrick perceived his own power as a filmmaker by the 1970s and the way he wielded it to protect his business interests. Archival correspondence shows Kubrick's interactions with the British political establishment in the 1970s—though not necessarily his political persuasions—and his attempts to influence the tax policies of the UK government. Kubrick was not the only filmmaker to undertake such lobbying attempts, but it does indicate the level to which he understood his own position in relation to the political establishment by the 1970s.

Kubrick was in correspondence with Sir John Woolf throughout 1975; Woolf was by then the Executive Director and co-founder of Anglia Television and a highly influential figure within the British film and television industry. Woolf was leading the charge against proposed new tax policies announced in the Labour Party's March 1974 budget. Denis Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had put forward ideas for what amounted to an annual wealth tax, which would impact on foreign residents who had been based in the UK for over nine years, such as Kubrick. It was a part of wider plan to introduce a social contract by Labour, one that would, "Fundamentally redistribute income and wealth" (Glennerster 2011, 3). While there had been a high top-rate of tax in the UK since the 1940s, it raised very little revenue for the exchequer. This was due to the wealthiest in the country exploiting tax loopholes and frequently taking advantage of offshore tax shelters (4). The annual wealth tax was instead developed around the capacity of someone to pay tax and would be levied across all of their receipts, including, "Wages and salaries, proceeds from the sales of assets, capital gains, bequests, gifts and repayment of loans minus long term investments and net saving over the year" (5). The tax plan required that the likes of Kubrick to pay up to the maximum tax rate of 83 percent on 75 percent of all worldwide earnings.

Kubrick sent Woolf a letter in May 1975 to argue the case against the tax plans on behalf of UK based North American producers and directors: "If the 1976 provisions are not amended or postponed I shall have to leave England, probably before the end of 1975" (Kubrick 1975). Kubrick outlined his complicated tax arrangements, including alluding to potential "tax shelters" in the USA. In doing so, he reveals the privilege of his position by the 1970s and his ability to influence government legislation. Kubrick emphasized his own worth to the British economy, and the potential $27 million in spending that he had brought into the country via his film productions since the 1960s.

Kubrick's was an argument constructed to have maximum impact at the highest levels

of government and it was a message that Woolf conveyed to both the chancellor, Denis

Healey, and shadow chancellor, Geoffrey Howe (both of whom subsequently initiated

correspondence with Kubrick). Woolf explained that, "Because of the 1974 finance act

he [Kubrick] is preparing to leave and return to the USA. His going will be a great loss

to the country both financially and culturally. […] This is no isolated case and I am sure

you will agree that it merits intervention at ministerial level" (Woolf 1975). By

September 1976, trade press journals, such as *Boxoffice* and *Variety*, were reporting that

Kubrick had allied with other directors and producers, including Norman Jewison, Carl

Foreman, Roman Polanski and Joseph Losey, to lobby the government to drop the tax

plans, arguing that the exchequer was driving them out of the country and would be,

"Losing more than it could possibly gain" ("Higher Taxes Are Decried by British Film

Industry" 1976, K3). The group of highly influential individuals were lobbying for an

exemption rule for producers, directors, and some screenwriters from the new policy.

The annual wealth tax had been designed as a means of redressing wealth

inequality in the UK and of working towards a fairer, more just society. It had been a

key tenet of the February 1974 Labour Party Manifesto:

REDISTRIBUTE INCOME AND WEALTH. We shall introduce an

annual Wealth Tax on the rich; bring in a new tax on major transfers

of personal wealth; heavily tax speculation in property—including a

new tax on property companies; and seek to eliminate tax dodging

across the whole field. ("Labour Party Manifesto" 1974)

The socialist principles of the above pledge were outlined in a Green Paper published by the government in August 1974: "The government is committed to use the taxation system to promote greater social and economic equality. This requires a redistribution of wealth as well as income" (Whiting 2004, 237). But the Labour government became increasingly concerned by threats of capital flight in response to the tax, such as by Kubrick and others in the film industry, and the policy was ultimately dropped.

This is not to suggest that Kubrick was himself responsible for a change in government policy, but rather that he was part of a wider collective of powerful Hollywood figures able to leverage their privilege and wealth to influence government thinking through threats of leaving the country. And while it is not possible to ascertain Kubrick's own political persuasions from the archival evidence (Kubrick was, after all, friends with politicians of all ideological persuasions, including Michael Foot, Labour leader from 1980-1983), it is possible to reveal how Kubrick was part of a group of individuals that operated their own production companies and were looking to protect their own business interests. This group was concerned with protecting its wealth, doing so by privately lobbying a democratically elected government that was attempting to enact its manifesto pledges in the interests of the people to promote greater economic equality. This final case study also indicates the extent to which Kubrick's behavior was representative of broader systemic behavior in the American film industry toward wealth and taxes, being one of several directors and producers to lobby the UK government.

Conclusion

The three case studies draw upon material in the SKA in a bid to explore Kubrick's relations of production and to reframe scholarly perspective of the filmmaker. But I would suggest that they raise two key aspects that require further research. The first aspect is about Kubrick's problematic behavior, aspects of which are probably not entirely surprising. There have long been unsubstantiated rumors about his professional behavior toward women and of his autocratic relationship with creative labor (Siddiquee 2017). But these rumors are part of the Kubrick myth, perpetuated by Kubrick himself to obtain and maintain power within the film industry. By turning to the SKA, however, it is possible to begin substantiating the ways in which Kubrick's behavior was at times problematic. But this is only the first step in the process of going behind the myth. More work needs to be conducted on Kubrick's problematic attitudes and behavior. And other discrete fields dedicated to canonical directors need to take up the same approach to understand wider systemic practices toward, for example, the casting of women or the treatment of creative labor within the film industry. How many directors have taken this approach to casting women and exploiting labor regulations? And what does it say about the issue of relations of production within Hollywood and of prevailing structural forces?

The worthwhile endeavor of such an approach is that it allows for the scholarly disassembling of mythic images that absolve such behavior in the name of the suffering artist. The mythic image of Kubrick, and other canonical directors, is about the issue of successful, powerful men who have the privileged ability to exude mythic auras while obscuring empirical truths. It serves their own ends of self-promotion. But the mythic image of directors like Kubrick conceals the industrial and cultural reality of modern Hollywood and of the structures of inequality and power that have for far too long allowed (typically) men to subvert and undermine precarious, low-paid, or powerless

creative labor. The above case studies therefore represent an example of how we can approach the archive from a new perspective and how Kubrick studies can branch out into new areas, with the microhistories having applicability beyond our own discrete field of study.

The second aspect for further study relates to the necessity of the Kubrick myth, particularly from the 1970s onward. Just what were Kubrick's intentions with films like *Making the Shining* and the aborted behind the scenes documentary about *Full Metal Jacket*? Why did he feel the need to project the image of control in *Making the Shining* at a point in his career when he was a successful and powerful producer? What truths was he trying to obscure and what image was he trying to project? It could well be that he felt vulnerable in terms of his power by the 1980s, at a moment when his first three-picture contract with Warner Bros. was at an end and he faced a potential existential crisis in his future plans as a producer (Fenwick 2021, 178). Was *Making the Shining* an attempt to convince Warner Bros. of his power and thereby influence negotiations for contract renewal? Or was it merely a promotional stunt for the wider publicity campaign for *The Shining*?

There have been some advances already in Kubrick studies toward the study of the material conditions and relations of production. But the field can go further and become an exemplar of empirical research. There is still more evidence available in the SKA and other archival repositories that will allow us to continually add new fragments of information and open up our understanding of these problematic aspects that are core tenets of the Kubrick myth. This information will reveal the extent to which they are mythic, or the extent to which they have an empirical basis evidenced through archival objects. As Peter Krämer has previously argued, "Our growing awareness that so much

is unknown about the man [Kubrick] and his work should be an inspiration for a whole new phase in Kubrick Studies" (2017, 389). I would agree. But this new phase needs to be systematic, coordinated, and archive based in its approach to avoid the entropic, institutionalized trap warned of by Gottlieb. I would suggest that Kubrick studies has a much greater venture to undertake here, one that could fundamentally reframe our understanding of who Stanley Kubrick was and why he should be taken so seriously.

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Notes

[1] The field of Kubrick studies gained momentum following the three-day conference, *Stanley Kubrick: A Retrospective*, held at De Montfort University in May 2016. In July

2019, a five-day scientific workshop, *Life and Legacy: Studying the Work of Stanley Kubrick*, was convened at the University of Leiden, at which it was agreed that a Kubrick Studies Network would be established going forward.

[2] This wave of new work on Kubrick, much of which has utilized the Stanley Kubrick Archive (among other archives), was initiated by the publication of Peter Krämer's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (2010). Other scholars were subsequently influenced by the work of Krämer, including Mick Broderick, Nathan Abrams, I. Q. Hunter, Filippo Ulivieri, Simone Odino, James Fenwick, Catriona McAvoy, and Manca Perko (among others).

[3] Kubrick persistently talked of the struggle to remain 'independent' in order to avoid studio interference. See, for example, his interview in Gelmis (1974 [1970]): 382, 392-393, or the interview with Colin Young in Phillips (2001): 4-5, 8.

[4] Mick Broderick (2019: 1-3) provides an overview of the recent activities within Kubrick studies in order to evidence the filmmaker's enduring public and academic legacy.

[5] The traditional auteur approaches to writing about Kubrick have reinforced the notion that he should be at the center of everything to do with the films with which he is associated. Even when there has been a turn to discussing collaboration, Kubrick remains a central focus (Perko 2019; McAvoy 2015). As was indicated in a dossier on the archival turn within Kubrick studies, "This embarrassment of archival riches has modified—but not undermined—the established view of Kubrick" (Fenwick, Hunter, Pezzotta 2017, 368). This leads to another key question for the Kubrick studies community (myself included) to consider: does Kubrick studies need saving from Kubrick? In other words, does the community need to move beyond the exclusive

focus on Kubrick, particularly when using the SKA? And in what ways can those films associated with Kubrick be studied without focusing on Kubrick? After all, the point I am trying to make is that the SKA contains evidence of the material conditions of production that involved a range of creative, technical, and administrative laborers beyond Kubrick. As I've previously argued, 'it is perhaps time we recognized that the Stanley Kubrick Archive can serve as an archival source not just for the insular study of Stanley Kubrick but for research relating to the wider American and British film industries from the 1940s to the 2000s. In short, the Stanley Kubrick Archive, indeed Kubrick studies as a whole, doesn't have to be just about Stanley' (Fenwick 2021, 5).

[6] This is not to suggest that Kubrick was not without his critics. Far from it, with the likes of Pauline Kael persistently attacking Kubrick and Kubrick's work as cold and misanthropic.

[7] For more on the way that these directors were complicit in developing their own mythic image, see, for Hitchcock, Kapsis (1992) and Gamaker (2018); for Chaplin, see Lieberman (1994): and for Welles, see Simon Callow's three volume biography, commencing with *Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu* (1995). Callow points out the problems typified by this canonical mythmaking. He says that Welles's life is surrounded in confusion, but that "the source of confusion is, almost without exception, Welles himself" (xii).

[8] Kubrick himself is linked to the origins of Kubrick studies. His self-promotion strategy involved working closely with some of the earliest critical studies on himself by the likes of Alexander Walker, with Walker providing Kubrick typescripts of *Stanley Kubrick Directs* (1972) for him to correct (see "Letter to Stanley Kubrick from Alexander Walker" [1971] January 21, SKA, SK/1/2/4/1/47). Walker's *Stanley Kubrick*

Directs was one of the first comprehensive studies of Kubrick's work. But the reliability of the book, and Kubrick's level of involvement in coordinating *how* he and his work are discussed, is called into question via archival evidence.

[9] Conversely, the Kubrick family made Kubrick's personal archive available both as a means of inspiring future generations of artist but also to demystify his process of producing films. This, however, presents the unique opportunity to uncover how the myth was constructed by Kubrick himself.