Travelling philosophy: from literature to film

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Travelling Philosophy
From Literature to Film

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2006
TRAVELLING PHILOSOPHY:
FROM LITERATURE TO FILM
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**Introduction**

Longing to Know the Self and Other Through Narrative

In *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (1988), Canadian philosopher G.B. Madison claims that what makes humans human is:

...an overriding concern for their being and an insatiable desire to know who they are, to be themselves, truly, understandingly. This is why, ever since humans have been humans, they have sat around the fire telling and listening to stories about themselves and other selves—many of which were fictional selves, gods, demons, demigods, heroes, and other deified humans. It is only natural, therefore, that philosophy, that supremely human undertaking, should from its inception have concerned itself with the question of what constitutes the humanness of human beings (155).

In a similar vein, at the beginning of *Metaphysics* (1998), Aristotle addressed this “supremely human undertaking” when he wrote: “By nature, all men long to know” (4). French philosopher Michael Foucault envisions philosophy as a way of “interrogating ourselves” in order to “become other than one is” (1984: 329). In *The Self and the Dramas of History* (1955), American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr sees this intrinsic yearning as the metaphysical endeavor to discern the “mystery and meaning” above and beyond our rational faculties (61).

This epistemologically-charged yearning to know the answers to metaphysical questions informs my central objective, which is to critically examine how narratives philosophize through juxtaposing the ontological categories of “self” and “other.” In light of this principal aim, I view these categories through the lens of moderate realism in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense. As the union of body and soul, moderate realism

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1. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 26. Lewis sees these categories as prerequisites for “self-consciousness.” He writes: “There is no reason to suppose that self-consciousness, the recognition of a creature by itself as a ‘self,’ can exist except in contrast with an ‘other,’ a something which is not the self.”

2. Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11: “Again, even scholars entirely friendly to Aquinas and impressed with his achievements as a philosopher have sometimes presented him as simply the consummate Aristotelian, adopting the term ‘Aristotelian-Thomistic’ as the best short characterization of Aquinas’ philosophical positions.” With this point in mind, for the purposes of this study, I employ the philosophy of moderate realism in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense. Thomas Aquinas, *Questions On The Soul*, translated by James Robb (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1984). “Aquinas - clearly Aristotelian - generally argued that all knowledge originates in sensation, but sensory information can only be made comprehensible by the mind, which elevates thought toward a preliminary apprehension of such immaterial realities as God and the soul. However, revelation is required to reach an understanding of the highest truths. While in opposition to Platonic extreme realism (conceptualism, nominalism), which holds that universals exist independently of both particular things and human minds, Aristotelian moderate realism holds that universals only exist as they are instantiated by particulars. Like Aristotle, Aquinas saw a foundation for transcendent universals in immanent things. Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 75. Aquinas is echoed by American theologian Gage who wrote: “As an observer of nature man discerns the metaphysical by the means of the physical, the transcendent by the immanent.” New American
places the self in an intermediate position between the purely spiritual and the wholly material. As for the "other," it may also be a human blend of the spiritual with the material, mere substance like the "impenetrable" jungle in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1960: 39) or entirely celestial like the Holy Spirit that fell on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:2 as a "violent rushing wind" (NASB 1999: 1037).

Whatever physical form the other—a particular, immanent incarnation of a universal abstract concept—may take, what is of true consequence is how the self cognitively processes its physical interaction with the other. To put it differently, a story merely records how the self has mentally processed its material interaction with some particular form of other. In *Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other* (1999), South African philosopher Derek Attridge sees this material interaction premised on a kind of "relation" with the other that leads to an "encounter":

> Another virtue of the phrase *the other*—which it shares with *the new*—is that it is premised on a *relation*. To be other is necessarily to be other to. What is the same to me is other to someone else and vice versa. Moreover, it is other only in the circumstance within which the encounter takes place (22).

What is more, the self's encounter with another's uniqueness is, at the same time, an affirmation of other as other. Attridge writes that this affirmation is not essentially unlike the experience of the other as one attempts to produce an "original work of art" (24).

Theologian Anthony Thiselton sees the relationship this way: "Interaction with 'others' provides material for 'telling our story'" (1995: x). These relations with others result in a cognitive interface between the abstract concepts of self and other that is reproduced—with varying degrees of accuracy—in any number of narrative media. Niebuhr sees the cognitive interaction as an internal dialogue and writes that the self:

> ...could not carry on this dialogue without using its 'reason'; for the dialogue means that the self in one of its aspects is making the self, in another of its aspects, its object of thought. It uses conceptual images for this procedure (1955: 6).

In one sense, a narrative is a record of this internal dialogue and may possess a philosophical component as the self seeks a deeper understanding of both itself and the other. In these cases, a story may inspire the viewing subject to enter into a similar internal dialogue that directs it toward metaphysical questions that humans, according to Aristotle, are naturally disposed to ask. In this way, a narrative can help us better understand the meaning and mystery beyond our senses as we attempt to sharpen and clarify, or "make" what we see as the universal, transcendent concepts of self and other come alive within our imaginations.

*Standard Bible* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1999), 1071. Expressing this same idea in Romans 1: 20, the apostle Paul argued that: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (NASB 1999: 1071).

3 Desiré Joseph Mercier, *Critériologie* (Louvain: Philosophical Series, 1906), 343. Mercier describes the situation this way: "The latter (incarnations of other) are particular, but we have the power to represent them to ourselves abstractly."

4 Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 9. I align the concept of "object" used in this study with Bal's view that objects should not be seen as isolated jewels, but as things always-already engaged, as interlocutors, within the larger culture from which they emerged. The analysis of these objects looks to issues of cultural relevance and aims to articulate how the objects contribute to cultural debates; hence, the emphasis on the object's existence in the present.
With this philosophically creative potential in view, the preponderance of the work in my study is devoted to a sequence of close textual analyses and descriptions of six objects of culture in the present, which are all narrative texts. A narrative text is a text in which an agent relates ("tells") a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof (Bal 1997: 5). I present these six narrative texts, which are all postmodern cultural artifacts, in three dual-medium pairs; each pair consists of a novel and a Hollywood adaptation of that novel. I analyze Anthony Burgess’ A Clockwork Orange (1962) and Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange (1971); Chuck Palahniuk’s Fight Club (1997) and David Fincher’s Fight Club (1999); Stanislaw Lem’s Solaris (1961) and Steven Soderbergh’s Solaris (2002). Coupling the texts in this way resonates with a method of analysis that employs an interdisciplinary approach in order to develop a concept-based methodology that has the potential to unity such (relatively) diverse fields of interest as literature and film. Thus, this study is rooted in the practice of a cultural analysis that prioritizes cultural processes over objects, intersubjectivity over objectivity, and concepts over theories.

Using narratology as a heuristic tool, I construct descriptions of the novels and their filmic counterparts in order to expose what I consider to be the philosophy that radiates from the binary tension inherent in the dialectic between self and other. After the philosophies have emerged through narratological description, I reveal the consistencies and variations between the texts that constitute the dual-medium pair in order to determine the measure in which the philosophy of the novel travelled into film. Simply stated, in a philosophical sense, I want to know how watching the film is “like” reading the book.

While any film will almost certainly exhibit at least a small degree of philosophical variation from its literary antecedent, I argue that any deviation invariably stems from the film’s distinct treatment of an oppositional relationship that remains unchanged as it moves from novel to film. For example, while Kubrick’s film may treat the nature of the self’s relationship to the state differently from the novel by emphasizing aspects the book did not or, conversely, underemphasizing aspects the book valued, the self ultimately remains in an oppositional relationship with the state. This larger consistency allowed me to arrange the pairings in a manner that demonstrates a kind of progression in the way this central antinomy is treated through narrative expression. In other words, the arrangement exhibits the self’s movement from its grappling with the external, political question: "What is the self’s place in society?" to the more internal phenomenological

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5 It may be useful to distinguish a new term, “dual-medium,” from an existing one, “intertextual,” because of the connective implications of intertextuality. This is important because the term dual-medium implies a “distinction within” the connective pairing that contains two texts (literary and filmic). However, I also, at times, employ the term intertextual which implies, for instance, a “connection between” the two texts within the pairing. In addition, from time to time I refer to a particular pairing with regard to the title shared by the two texts; for example, the “Clockwork pairing.”

6 Bal, Travelling Concepts (2002), 23: “If explicit, clear, and defined, concepts can help to articulate an understanding, convey an interpretation, check an imagination-run-wild, or enable a discussion on the basis of common terms and in the awareness of absences and exclusions.”

7 Bal, Travelling Concepts (2002), 44: “Theory can only be meaningful when it is deployed in close interaction with the objects of study to which it pertains. Concepts tested in close, detailed analysis can establish a much-needed intersubjectivity, not only between the analyst and the audience, but also between the analyst and the ‘object.’”

8 Anthony Thiselton, Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995). ix. Thiselton notes that this idea can also be seen in the work of such thinkers as French philosopher Paul Ricoeur and German theologian Jürgen Moltmann who both envision the self as drawing its full personhood from a dialectic between a self and its relation to an other.
question: “What is the self?” to the even more deeply personal existential question: “Who am I?”

More concretely, in the Clockwork pairing, the self (Alex DeLarge) rarely enters into any meaningful self-examination. Rather, Alex’s struggle to find his place in opposition to an authoritarian state generally remains on an external level. The Fight Club pairing demonstrates the self’s (Jack / Joe) transition from an external effort to realize his place in an emasculating consumer culture, to a more internal conflict as he attempts, albeit unconsciously, to gain a deeper level of self-awareness than the protagonist of Clockwork exhibited. Finally, the Solaris pairing presents the self’s (Kris Kelvin) most profound effort to answer phenomenological and existential questions as Kelvin’s conflict – a profound grappling with his own finiteness – exists on an almost exclusively internal level. Thus, not only will I examine the measure in which the philosophy of the novel travels to film, but also how these three pairings exhibit an evolution in the way the self must ultimately deal with limits of its own subjectivity. When taken as a set, the three pairings argue that humans, as body-mind composites, must cognitively contend with both their empirical and transcendental qualities, and subjectivity is inescapable because we will never really be free from one to deal objectively with the other that will always remain within us.

Prior to the chapters devoted to each pairing, a brief prelude frames the general philosophical considerations from which the novels’ more specific dialectics originate. For example, preceding the Clockwork chapters, I have included a discussion of political philosophy as it relates to the concepts of free will and original sin, which are framed theologically by the adversative arguments of Augustine and Pelagius. These chapters supply a broad philosophical context for the more specific philosophies that emerge from the self and other dialectics knitted into the objects. Bal sees philosophical activity as consisting primarily of creating, arguing, and modifying concepts (2002: 316). Based on this view, I argue that a fundamental objective of a novelist is to transform the fruits of this original philosophical activity into a literary narrative – a form of philosophizing in its own right.

Lastly, in the concluding chapter, I further trace the movement of the literary dialectic and the measure it manifests in its narrative filmic counterpart. The initial analysis in the body chapters lays the groundwork for a larger discussion of the degree the films did or did not “filmatize” the philosophy presented in the novels, which indicates the measure the literary dialectic is made readily available to more mainstream Hollywood audiences.

Cultural Analysis and the Cave of Postmodernity

The relevance of the work I propose in this study manifests itself in light of the critical practice of cultural analysis as well as Socrates’ cave analogy found in Book VII of Plato’s Republic. Dutch literary and cultural theorist Mieke Bal defines cultural analysis as a practice different from what is commonly understood as “history” and sees it as:

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9 G.B. Madison, The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 159: “Subjectivity is a fact, as indubitable as the fact that I exist, ego sum.”

10 Allan Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” in Plato’s Symposium (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 57. Addressing the classical quarrel between poetry and philosophy, Bloom states: “And the situation depicted by Aristophanes, where philosophy is practiced by unerotic, unpoetic atomists, is not unlike the one faced by Rousseau, who undertook to reintroduce eroticism in the context of Enlightenment materialism. Plato’s Socrates performs the role that Rousseau himself played in response to this condition. Not only is Socrates the most erotic of philosophers, his spokesman, Plato, is the most poetic of the philosophers. Plato’s depictions of Socrates establish on a new basis the link between Eros and poetry.”
...based on a keen awareness of the critic’s situatedness in the present, the social and cultural present from which we look and look back, at the objects that are always already of the past, objects that we take to define our present culture. Thus, it can be summarized by the phrase “cultural memory in the present” (1999: 1).

Cultural analysis centers on the thoughtful consideration of cultural artifacts as part of the present. Referring to the material availability of these artifacts, Bal asserts that they are communal and that the event of showing involves articulating in the public domain the most deeply held views and beliefs of a subject. In other words, an “exposition is always an argument” (1999: 5). American social theorist Allan Bloom contends that the exposed objects are not natural, but produced to serve the special interests of the artist (1968: 404). It is this artistic opinion, or the philosophical statement conveyed through narrative that this study seeks to expose and then measure as it migrates from one medium to another. The close textual examinations aim to achieve a measure of the epistemic authority that forms the basis for my statements of what these gestures of showing have to say as discursive acts. This study, then, is a form of cultural analysis that employs narratology to uncover the travelling philosophy of narrative texts and how it might inform present culture.

While providing a methodological structure for expository discourse, narratology also provides an integrated account of the discursive strategies of the writers and filmmakers, and, on the other hand, the process of meaning-making that these strategies suggest to the analyst. However, the texts are silenced by the discursive situation that moves back and forth between the first person exposers and the second person analyst. While mute, the text remains the central element, the only thing visible in the discourse and it is this visibility that, paradoxically, makes it possible to make statements about the object that do not apply to it. In The Practice of Cultural Analysis (1999), Bal sees this as the discrepancy between object and sign, which, in the case of exposition, is blatant and empathic, because it is the presence of a thing that recedes into invisibility as its sign status takes precedence to make the statement (1999: 8).

It is precisely this notion of the sign status of an object (narrative text) and its ability to make a statement that brings me to Socrates’ ingenious cave analogy. In the following passage, Socrates invites the reader to envision the cave:

They are in it from childhood with their legs and necks in bonds so that they are fixed, seeing only in front of them, unable because of the bond to turn their heads all the way around. Their light is from a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a road above, along which see a wall built like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets. (...) Then also see along this wall human beings carrying all sorts of artifacts, which project above the wall, and statues of

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11 Bal, Travelling Concepts (2002), 18. The close textual examinations, or “close readings,” I perform in this study spring from the type of close reading Bal advocates. It is different from the old close reading where the text is alleged to speak for itself, and it is also different from cultural studies where critique is more important than the object; rather, this newer close reading is informed by both.

12 Bal, Travelling Concepts (2002), 10: “Narrative is a mode, not a genre. It is alive and active as a cultural force, not just a kind of literature. It constitutes a major reservoir of cultural baggage that enables us to make meaning out of the present world and it can also be used to manipulate. In short, it is a cultural force to be reckoned with.”
men and other animals wrought from stone, wood, and every kind material...
(Bloom, trans. 1968: 193).

Here, almost predicting the inevitability of film, Socrates tells his interlocutor, Glaucon, of a prisoner who is bound in the darkness of a cave and forced to look at signs of signs, images of replicas cast as shadows on the wall. According to Socrates, the prisoner uses an unreliable imagination to apprehend the distorted images that exist on the lowest level of reality. The prisoner believes that the reflected images (shadows) actually are what their source only signifies, and thus the faculty of imagination apprehends a sign of a sign to be reality. In his interpretive essay of Plato's text, Bloom considers the key question implied in Socrates' analogy:

But who regularly believes that images are real things; who mistakes reflections for what is reflected? Why does Socrates insist that our situation is that of men who mistake images for realities? (...) How can it be said that we are bound to the lowest level of the line? The answer seems to be that the cave is the city and that our attachment to the city binds us to certain authoritative opinions about things. We do not see men as they are but as they are represented to us by legislators and poets (1968: 404).

Bloom asserts that the city, which I also broaden to mean culture, we inhabit is circumscribed by objects and images of objects that are created by artists such as novelists and filmmakers. In World Spectators (2000), theorist Kaja Silverman notes that the parable of the cave sustains other dreams than that of Socrates. Silverman employs it to dream in an anticipatory way about what she calls "world spectatorship," or a kind of: "looking which takes place in the world, and for the world - a kind of looking which not only stubbornly adheres to phenomenal forms, but also augments and enriches them" (2000: 2). She argues that:

...to be a world spectator is not to content oneself with seeming to exclusion of Being, but rather to commit oneself to remaining within the only domain where Being can emerge, the domain of appearance - the locus within which Being unfolds, rather than its binary opposite (2).

Here, Silverman takes up Aristotle's contention with Plato's suggestion that the metaphysical Forms exist apart from their objects. In Metaphysics (1998), while Aristotle agrees with Plato in that the Forms are objectively real and not just abstractions in our minds, he does not see the Forms as self-existing substances separate from matter. Silverman appears to comply with both Plato and Aristotle who affirm the existence of a metaphysical reality. However, she, like Aristotle, is anti-Platonic in her stance that the

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13 Allan Bloom, "Interpretive Essay of The Republic" (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 402. In describing Socrates' divided line, Bloom writes: "On the basis of what we know of the visible world with its sun, we can conjecture about the intelligible world with its idea of the good. This Socrates does by drawing the divided line which described the being of things and the faculties which apprehend them. " The following pairs of faculties and beings of things are listed lowest to highest: imagination apprehends images, faith apprehends objects, reason apprehends math, and understanding apprehends the Forms.

14 Although Bloom also mentions legislators as image-makers in this passage, the focus of this study is on the artists as image-makers and, in particular, novelists and filmmakers.

Forms are not separate from physical objects, but rather emerge in the domain of appearance. I also take this to mean that while appearance forms the locus for the unfolding of Being, they are not necessarily the same thing.

In the following passage, Silverman specifically addresses the metaphysical question raised by Socrates:

What is concealed is not Being, but rather the world itself. This is not to say, however, that Being has no part to play in this drama. On the contrary, Being is precisely what the world loses when it is eclipsed in this way. Darkness precipitates the loss of Being because it is only insofar as creatures and things appear that they can Be (2000: 7).

Here, Silverman contends that the central drama of Book VII is concealment, rather than revelation. Silverman claims the transcendental character of Being when she writes that phenomenal forms shine with a “more-than-reality” quality when they are allowed to appear (7). Thus, Silverman seems to advance an Aristotelian-Thomistic moderate realism, a view Gage articulated as the practice of discerning the metaphysical by the means of the physical, the transcendent by the immanent (1984: 75). While I agree with Silverman, I must qualify her claim with regard to darkness and the loss of Being in that the transcendental quality of an immanent form is only temporarily lost when the form is eclipsed from our vision. This qualification stresses the paradoxical nature of the metaphysical, which is both conceptually beyond the physical and also bound to it in the realm of phenomenal forms. In other words, it is through the body that the soul is allowed to become on a kind of phenomenal, rather than metaphysical level. This point brings us back to Socrates who claimed that it is the soul that moves from the “realm of becoming to the real of what is” (521). In order to make such a claim, I argue that one must have already transcended the realm of images. For how would one be able to see the “more-than-reality” quality of a phenomenal form if one did not know it existed?

So, while I will apply Silverman’s notion of the world spectator whose vision is informed by the importance and beauty of phenomenal forms, I want to keep in mind the transcendental quality of Being that can be known through appearance, but it only provisionally lost when eclipsed from vision. In other words, the great value of a phenomenal form’s appearance is that it does not necessarily conceal, but rather invites the viewing subject to see its transcendental character of Being once one has been educated in how to look. The prisoner is unable to bring into Being, or see the more-than-reality quality of phenomenal forms Silverman suggests by merely opening its eyes, for world spectatorship is not an innate capacity. So, for the prisoner, world spectatorship is impossible until s/he has transcended the realm of images and can juxtapose a higher reality of Being with the lower level that once formed the limits of its perception.

On a phenomenal level, the corporeal reality of these objects and their images is not to be diminished as appearance allows their transcendental character to fashion culture and form the horizons of the individual minds that dwell within it. The prisoner cannot see the objects directly and only learns of them through the partisan lenses of the artists. Applied to my corpus, Socrates’ allegory suggests that narrative texts exist as subjective reflections of reality and contain philosophies that spring from an agenda the artists may or may not be fully cognizant of themselves. It is precisely the operation of these philosophies – wrapped within the narrative structure of the texts that center on the dialectic between self and other – this study endeavors to reveal. As artifacts of culture, the texts represent philosophical concepts folded dialectically into literary and filmic narratives that have the capacity to shape the cognitive horizons of those exposed to (and potentially interacting with) them. The reactionary furor over such films as
Clockwork or, more recently, Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) is indicative of the power films have to carve the tunnels of our vision.\(^{10}\)

The cave analogy demonstrates the relevance of cultural analysis as a critical practice based on an awareness of the critic’s situatedness in the social and cultural present from which we look, and look back at objects that we take to define our present culture. Holding to this brand of analysis, the epistemic authority of the expository agent presupposes that s/he has moved out of the cave and beyond the level of imagination. Only the keen awareness that an image is an image makes it possible to judge its character, and in order to achieve that awareness imagination must be aided by trust. Bloom writes that trust: “resists doubt of the existence of what it apprehends” (1968: 404). Imagination alone does not lead to knowledge because it cannot distinguish between shadow and object. In other words, it would be impossible for the analyst to expose the object if s/he still believed that only its images were real and was unmindful of the object itself. The creation of the objects examined in this study – here considered as narrative concretizations of philosophical concepts – also presupposes that the artist has transcended the realm of images. Framed in Socratic terms, novelists and filmmakers are object and image-makers. In this capacity, thanks to the philosophical dynamic between the narrative media, they have the capacity to transform the present cultural situation.

In light of this dynamic, I have constructed an updated version of Socrates’ cave analogy. In this modernized adaptation, the cave is signified by the typical cinema where Hollywood films are screened and the prisoner is represented by the demos, or the film-going citizenry that generally exists in the realm of images. Due to the global ascendancy of Hollywood, the demo is viewed in an international context. While Hollywood is originally an American cultural form, German film theorist Thomas Elsaesser writes:

> Hollywood cinema is a world industry, just as much as it is a world language, a powerful, stable, perfected system of visual communication. As such it represents real power, not just in and through the cinema: the coding of images of TV, the imaging of politics, advertising, lifestyle, etc. goes via the encoding of messages and meaning in and through images, and the image-word combination (2002: 4).

Behind this “real” power, Elsaesser argues, is a massive economic engine that has enabled Hollywood to shape not only American culture, but also to colonize other parts of the world through the messages encoded in its images. The light behind these global prisoners emanates from the film projector (the fire), and the physical source of the projected shadows is the narrative text, which is a celluloid strip of film that passes through the light to produce the images seen on the cave wall, or film screen. Behind the camera are the image-makers, the Hollywood filmmakers who attempt to translate the literary narrative into the visible, audible, and more accessible medium of film.

Although there are obviously exceptions to this process, I argue that films commonly work with philosophical concepts – devised to apprehend the nature of ultimate reality – that circulate within cultures. The metaphysical claims of philosophy are inexorably intermingled with art as cultural artifacts. Although his writing concerns both science and art, Polish mathematician and poet Jacob Bronowski notes that:

\(^{10}\) Roger Ebert, “A Clockwork Orange,” Chicago Sun Times, 11 February 1972, sec. 1e, p. 2: “Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* is an ideological mess, a paranoid right-wing fantasy masquerading as an Orwellian warning. It pretends to oppose the police state and forced mind control, but all it really does is celebrate the nastiness of its hero, Alex.” Lou Lumenick, “Moore is Less,” New York Post, 22 June 2004, sec 5e, p. 1: “Michael Moore’s much-hyped and very heavy-handed polemic against George W. Bush, is basically a two-hour argument for regime change that isn’t half as incendiary or persuasive as its maker would have you believe.”
There exists a single creative activity, which is displayed alike in the arts and in the sciences. It is wrong to think of science as a mechanical record of facts, and it is wrong to think of the arts as remote and private fancies. What makes each human, what makes them universal, is the stamp of the creative mind (1965: 27).

As creative agents, novelists weave philosophy into narratives by structuring them into a dialectical form that invariably pits a self against some other. Hollywood filmmakers adapt many of these novels in an attempt to filmatize, or “Hollywoodize,” the literary narratives and project them to audiences in the theater. Considering this transformation, this study aims to qualitatively assess the measure mainstream audiences are exposed to a literary philosophy in order to better understand the way these adapted films inform the present cultural situation. This situation is known as “postmodernity.”

Employed temporally, postmodernity is the term I use to describe the cultural situation, or awareness of the current postmodern age. Postmodernity, then, is a term of periodization, a rhetorical formation that constructs a present in relation to a past, or the cultural situation known as “modernity” that preceded. While one cannot neatly divide the two periods aesthetically, philosophically, or temporally, I limit myself to the latter principle of division. As a consequence, I chose to foreground the status of the narrative texts as postmodern cultural artifacts simply because they were either published (novels) or released (films) between 1960 and the early twenty-first century, or the commonly accepted time frame of postmodernity. By framing this discussion temporally, I avoid an extensive and potentially problematic argument to justify calling these texts exclusively postmodern in either aesthetic or philosophic terms.

The cultural bearing of this study is made apparent in the way we, in postmodernity, relate to the past and how it informs the present. British essayist Lloyd Spencer notes that in postmodernity, every aspect of the past is made “accessible, available.” What is more, the past is not only made more readily available, but it is “mediated, packaged, presented, and represented.” Spencer further asserts that postmodernity is marked by cultural activity dominated by media industries defined by new technologies that feature unlimited reproducibility of objects and images (2001: 158). French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1983b) contends that the result is a “hyperreal” society where the distinction between the real and the unreal is eradicated and drowned in an endless flood of signs and simulations. Baudrillard’s notion of a hyperreal society appears to portray a postmodern cultural situation where the unlimited reproducibility of fabricated objects and images functions similarly to Socrates’ description of the cave. In other words, the “hyper-reality” that characterizes postmodernity functions to keep the prisoner confined to the lowest level of reality — perpetually in the realm of becoming. Thus, this study is undertaken in light of the international influence of Hollywood, the increasingly significant role of film in postmodernity, and its ability to make literary dialectics more available to mainstream audiences. It is the enormous accessibility of these communal artifacts that lends itself

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17 Barry Lewis, “Postmodernism and Literature,” in The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 2001) 122. While the dates that frame postmodernity are far from absolute, it is generally accepted that it began around 1960 and continues through at least the end of the twentieth-century, although there are some who feel that the postmodern era has ended. Malcolm Bradbury, Richard Ruland, From Puritanism to Postmodernism (New York: Viking Press, 1991), 33. For example, Bradbury and Ruland believe that: “Postmodernism now looks like a stylistic phase that ran from the 1960’s to the 1980’s. Therefore, a large portion of writing published after 1990, which is dubbed postmodernist, is really ‘post-postmodernist,’ or ‘post-pomo’ for short.”
to, indeed, invites the critical practice of cultural analysis that seeks to understand how these texts might inform postmodern culture.

From Literary High Art to Mainstream Hollywood

While the distinction between "high" (literature) and "low" (film) art is a key feature of modernity, a central characteristic of postmodernity is the attempt to eliminate this division. American philosopher Frederic Jameson (1988) and German literary scholar Andreas Huyssen (1993) both see the refusal to set high art above pop culture as a defining feature of postmodernity. In What Was Literature? (1982), Leslie Fielder's tagline "cross the border, close the gap" expressed the postmodern venture to place all forms of art back into the mainstream (17). This postmodernist attempt to cross the border is diametrically opposed to the binary distinctions seen in British literary critic F.R. Leavis' work For Continuity (1933). In a modernist fashion, Leavis suggested that a select group of English, American, and European writers represent the "finest consciousness of the age" and argued that it is the charge of critics like himself to endorse their works of high literary art. In Leavis' view, the minority culture must continually protect itself against the proliferation of Hollywood and other "Americanized" expressions of the popular culture. Likewise, for sociologist Daniel Bell, the postmodernist intent to blur the lines combined with the advent of the mass media threatened to destabilize the entire social fabric of advanced societies. Bell writes: "What was once the property of an aristocracy of the spirit is now turned into the democratic property of the mass" (1978: 52). He contends that it is this democratization of libertinism that constitutes the primary significance and danger of postmodernism as it forms the basis for a widespread cultural movement that undermines the values and motivational patterns of "ordinary" middle-class behavior (52).

Positioned antithetically to the modernist posture of Leavis and Bell, American cultural critic Susan Sontag imagines a "new sensibility" that values the common ground that blurs the seemingly clear boundaries between high and low art. Sontag claims: "One important consequence of the new sensibility has already been alluded to—namely, that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture seems less and less meaningful" (1986: 302). Sontag derives this conclusion from, among other things, the prominent role of the mass media (including film) in postmodernity when she writes:

"This new sensibility is rooted, as it must be, in our experience, experiences which are new in the history of humanity— in extreme social and physical mobility; in the crowdedness of the human scene; in the availability of new sensations such as speed (physical speed, as in airplane travel; speed of images, as in cinema); and in the pan-cultural perspective on the arts that is possible though the mass reproduction of art objects (296)."

Here, Sontag envisions a sensibility derived from the escalating availability of "new sensations" such as cinema that result in the eradication of the old divide between high art and the mass-produced objects more characteristic of postmodernity. In particular, Sontag challenges the modernist notion that the works of popular culture, such as films,

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18 Glenn Ward, Postmodernism (London: Hobber Headline Ltd., 1997), 28: "Many versions of modernism present high and low culture as two very distinct spheres; and while there might be degrees of influence from one to the other, they are essentially worlds apart." Stanley Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 25. Grenz argues that modernism in art follows "the univalence" impulse and one of the great virtues of modernist artists, then, is stylistic integrity. In contrast, postmodernist art embraces stylistic diversity, or "multivalence," and chooses impurity rather than the purity of modernism.
"were seen as having little value because they were manufactured objects" (297). While this notion was fashionable among many cultural critics and literary scholars who viewed film as a lesser medium, the modernist divide between high and low art has also breached the film world itself. In Vanity Fair magazine, director of The Exorcist (1973) William Friedkin stated: "What happened with Star Wars was like when McDonald's got a foothold, the taste for good food just disappeared." (2005: 116). In line with Friedkin's modernist view, film critic Pauline Kael argues that (George) Lucas "infantilized" public taste, and fellow critic David Thomson believes that discerning film fans lose their ability to enjoy their "Saturday-night rental of Ingmar Bergman's Wild Strawberries after having enjoyed The Empire Strikes Back the night before" (116).

In response, George Lucas, the American director of the Star Wars (1977-2005) films, expresses a more postmodern position when he asserts that many viewers of his popular films may have overlooked the deeper levels of meaning typically associated with high art:

The interesting thing about Star Wars – and I didn’t ever really push this very far, because it’s not really that important – but there’s a lot going on there that most people haven’t come to grips with yet. But when they do, they will find it’s a much more intricately made clock than most people would like to imagine (116).

In Subjectivity in the New Hollywood Cinema: Father, Sons, and Other Ghosts (2001), Lucas’ belief in the deeper levels of his films is confirmed by film and cultural theorist Sasha Vojkovic who wrote that Lucas has:

"...clearly spelled out his personal motivation and his conscious employment of cinematic means to transform the future, the outer space, into a mythic universe. According to Lucas, in the case of America, the hero’s wanderings across the vast universe emerged as a necessity, after all the "mythical spaces" in the country itself were already settled (166).

It appears that Lucas expresses Sontag’s new sensibility, which echoes Huysen’s (1986) refusal of the divide that insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture. Jameson demonstrates this notion by pointing to the fact that contemporary artists draw on achievements in advertising, television, Las Vegas strip architecture, grade-B Hollywood films, and airport paperbacks for inspiration in the same way that they consult modernist masters (1984: 112). For modernists like Leavis and Bell, infusing both high and low art in order to form new artistic creations such as Hollywood films would be a particularly problematic aspect of postmodernity.

If this assertion is correct, then the modernist dilemma is especially acute in light of the worldwide popularity of Hollywood films with condensed narratives able to expose an individual to the literary dialectic in a much narrower time frame that the literary text itself can do. In general, it takes an individual a considerably shorter amount of time to watch a film than it does to read a novel. The viewing of a film is most often completed within the span of a few hours while a novel is typically read over the course of a period of days, weeks, or even months.
maintenance of contemporary social order as economic or political processes. Hence, a fundamental question of my study concerns the extent a vast film-going audience is confronted with the philosophical gist of a novel it would have taken many more hours as well as a rarified occupational attitude to read. This travel from one medium to another thus also entails a demographic shift.

While the shift in audience demographics is one rationale for pairing the texts, I am not arguing that understanding a film is necessarily easier than grasping a literary text. However, since it takes significantly less time to watch a film than it does to read a novel, it stands to reason that in the frantic pace imposed upon members of the late capitalist market economies of Western society, the demos is generally more disposed to watch the film rather than to read the book. This is not to say that films are always more popular than the novels they were adapted from or received in the same fashion. For example, in literary critic Barry Lewis' essay *Postmodernism and Literature* (2001), the author notes that one of the benchmarks for literary postmodernism is William Burrough's *Naked Lunch* (1959), a novel that— in what has become generally accepted postmodern fashion—"challenged every norm of narrative unity and decorum" (121). Lewis goes on to mention that the Boston Superior Court created a sensation when it concluded that the novel's depiction of the hallucinations of a drug addict was "nasty and brutish." Despite its lurid depiction of talking anuses, the 1992 release of Canadian director David Cronenberg's filmic adaptation of Burroughs' novel was greeted with "apathy and not apoplexy" (122). By and large, however, because of film's ability to captivate a larger audience (at least in the case of my corpus) it is the film that sparks more public debate and controversy than does its literary predecessor. *Fight Club* is representative of the manner the broad appeal of a film can bring more attention to socially and politically charged issues originally conceived in the novel. It was Fincher's film, released only two years after Palahniuk's novel was first published, that was the center of significantly more media interest and public discourse on the subjects of consumerism and violence than the novel had aroused.

Of course, not every novel becomes a film nor is every film adapted from a novel; however, there is an undeniably familiar, if sometimes cloudy relation between the media. Sontag writes: "The fifty years of the cinema present us with a scrambled recapitulation of the more than two hundred year history of the novel" (1996: 242). Placing this recapitulation in general terms, she notes that films voiced many of the same moral conceptions as their literary predecessors. I undertake this study in light of the juxtaposition between Sontag's observation and film historian John Tibbet's assertion that the ultimate failure of American motion pictures is commercial and the economic bottom-line has nothing to do with the fidelity to art (1999: xviii). To put it another way, I endeavor to critically investigate whether or not films philosophically misrepresent and corrupt literary art for the entertainment of mass audiences.

Regardless of economic and artistic considerations, Sontag claims that there are valuable technical analogies to be drawn between the cinema and the novel. For example, like the novel, the cinema (unlike theatre) presents us with a view of action that is absolutely under the control of the director at every moment (1996: 242). It is also worthy to note that the modern novel anticipated the temporal, causal, and spatial disjunctions typically regarded as cinematic. Russian filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein claimed that Charles Dickens wrote with a kind of “camera-eye,” realizing his scenes with ultra-sharp focus and clarity achieving the literary equivalents of close-ups, long-shots, and soft-focus (Tibbet 1999: xv). It is this type of technical correlation that provides a point of departure for a deeper understanding of the shared narratological features of the media and how those features may function to express differing views.

While there is certainly debate among theorists as to the extent of the association between the media, there is little disagreement that a relationship exists, and one that is
based on a transformation process where a novel in some way "becomes" a film. Although it does not always happen in identical fashion, this conversion process classically occurs along similar lines. Specifically, a screenwriter attempts to condense and translate, or adapt the novel into a screenplay (the narrative skeleton), which the filmmakers then translate into film; however, adaptation is not an exact science. As Bal asserts, the translation of a novel into film is not a one-to-one transposition of story elements into images, but a visual working-through of the novel’s most important aspects and their meanings (1997: 164). In this artistic alteration, the assessment of precisely what is most important is a highly subjective enterprise. In addition, film’s operative differences from literature, including its limited length, further dictate what will be translated into film. While not every thing is translated, the notion that some things are informs a central objective in this study, which is to examine the degree the filmic philosophy is consistent with its literary counterpart.

A brilliant example of an adaptation philosophically faithful to its source resulted in New Zealand director Peter Jackson’s three films that comprise The Lord of the Rings (2001-2003).20 The attempt to adapt one of the most popular novels of the twentieth century is no small task in light of the fact that it took British novelist J.R.R. Tolkien fifteen years to write his thousand-page work that encompasses a host of geographies, cultures, and races of beings.21 Despite the epic scope of Tolkien’s vision, Jackson, and screenwriters Fran Walsh (Jackson’s wife) and Philippa Boyens (2004 Academy Award Winners for “Best Adapted Screenplay”) attempted to translate Tolkien’s novel into a screenplay. Of course, no novel, especially one of this magnitude, can be adapted literally. So, the screenwriters must decide what material needs to be included to drive the narrative and remain loyal to the thematic thrust of the novel – if that is the intention of the film.22 A corollary of this process can be seen in the ten-minute prologue that opens the first film and captures the expositional material scattered throughout the novel. Although no such prologue is seen in the book, it is essential to ground the viewer in the faster and more concentrated narrative world of the film. Not only was a prologue added, but the chronological sequence of the literary narrative was altered as well. In the novel, events that take place in the second book actually occur simultaneously with events that occur in the third book. In the film, Jackson ironed-out the concurrently operating timelines and brought all the action together by including events from the second book in the film adaptation of the third. Here, I allege Jackson’s films to demonstrate that it is possible for filmmakers – with a deep familiarity and a driving passion for the narrative – to attempt to stay true to the spirit of the novel and allow the mythology to take a life separate from its author.

It is this adaptation process, of which the majority of Hollywood films – arguably the most commercially successful artistic medium of postmodernity – are a product, that motivates the analysis of three dual-medium pairs of postmodern artifacts. This study is

20 J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin Publishers, 1954). Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings (1954) was actually written as one work. However, disconcerted by the tremendous length of Tolkien’s novel, his publishers decided to break it into three separate books: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return of the King. Jackson’s films were subsequently adapted from each of the three books.
21 Peter Jackson, “The Return of the King – Supplemental Material” (Los Angeles: New Line Home Entertainment, 2004). Discussing Tolkien’s novel, Jackson states: “In fact, Tolkien himself said that his novel was ‘highly unsuitable for the process of dramatization’ and let the film rights go for next to nothing.” Most likely, Tolkien could not envision the advances in technology and filmmaking that would some day allow his ambitious novel to be adapted for the screen.
22 Peter Jackson, “The Fellowship of the Ring – Supplemental Material” (Los Angeles: New Line Home Entertainment, 2001). Discussing the process of adaptation, Jackson states: “although we did all the things we had to do to adapt a book, we wanted to be as true as possible to Tolkien’s thematic material.”
informe by Baudrillard's key argument that it is the production of images and information, not material goods, that characterizes postmodernity (1983b: 22). Hence, a critical examination of how the works in each medium philosophize, and how the nature of their interrelation helps to understand how postmodern culture "thinks."

Tempering Between Structuralism and Poststructuralism

Narratology – the theory of the narrative – is a field of text semiotics. My particular brand of textual analysis is inspired by Bal’s narratological theory as it is laid out in the second edition of Narratology (1997) in which she writes: “Narratology is the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story.’ Such a theory helps to understand, analyze, and evaluate narratives” (3).

I employ Bal’s theory as a heuristic instrument that allows me to describe the way each narrative text – the concretization of a narrative system – is constructed to posit a particular philosophy generated by the oppositional tension between self and other. However, the textual description obtained through narratology can by no means be regarded as the only adequate description because another analyst may apply the same concepts differently, emphasize other aspects of the text, and, as a consequence, produce an entirely different textual description (4). Although the descriptive vocabulary seen in Bal’s theory is generally derived from more literary traditions, such as the distinction between “fabula” and “suzet” first used by the Russian Formalists, its efficacy is not restricted to this medium. It can also be used to describe the narrative constructions found in other mediums – such as film. Here, I briefly contextualize and discuss several of the principal terms that connect narratology and film theory.

Structuralism is commonly defined as a mode of analysis of cultural artifacts that originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics (Barthes 1967: 897). In general, the development of narrative semiotics was fueled by the structuralist adaptation of the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who argued that linguistics provided the “master-pattern for all branches of semiology” (1966: 68). Saussure’s principal interest was in language as a system and a social phenomenon and he separated the linguistic language system, or langue, from the individual act of speech, or parole. Likewise, I also distinguish between a narrative text (parole) as a kind of individual “speech act,” or concretization, and the abstract narrative system (langue) from which it springs.

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23 Tzvetan Todorov, Grammaire du Decameron narratologie (Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1969). The term narratology is a translation of the French term “narratologie,” and was first introduced by Todorov. As a theory, narratology historically belongs to the traditions of Russian Formalism and French Structuralism. It exemplifies the structuralist tendency to consider texts as rule-governed in the ways humans refashion their universe. Pier Luigi Cerisola, La Critica Semiotico-structuralistica (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1980), 149. Cerisola believes that in the field of textual studies, scholars such as Roland Barthes have seen no rupture in the development from structuralism to text semiotics. An indicator of the continuity in this transition is the gradual replacement of the term “structural” by “semiotic” in this field, which appears in designations such as “semiotico-structuralist” criticism. It has also been referred to as “structuralist-semiotic” criticism by Angelo Marchese (1981: 149). Francois Wahl, Qu’est ce que le structuralisme? (Paris: Seuil, 1968), 10. Wahl states: “Structuralism is the name under which the sciences of the sign and of sign systems are classified.”

24 Donald E. Hall, Literary and Cultural Theory, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 18. “Individual disciplines contain their own standards and methodological demands. Just as a sociologist may be required to conduct fieldwork and amass statistical data, so, too, is the analysis of literary (and filmic) texts discipline-specific, deploying a vocabulary suited to the ‘nuances’ and ‘idiosyncrasies’ of the particular subject matter.”

25 Jonathan Culler, Ferdinand de Saussure. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 40. American literary theorist Culler renders Saussure’s view when he states that “langue” is the system of a
describe the structure of each speech act in order to disclose the text’s philosophical thrust as it is expressed through the narrative’s particular oppositional arrangement. The primary function of this description is to reveal the deeper semantic system of cultural associations and relationships that are shaped in the narrative form.

As a brand of semiotic inquiry, then, narratology provides the tools and methodology to unveil the philosophy centered on the dialectic between self and other that lies beneath the surface of literary and filmic narrative artifacts. It is through the heuristic value of narratology that the abstract philosophies of the narrative texts can be (partially) articulated and then didactically juxtaposed. This juxtaposition will inform me to what degree the dialectic of the novel was kept intact as it was transferred from a literary medium to a filmic one. Although I believe that a more structural methodology centered on the meaning derived from differences best suits the objectives outlined in this study, I wish to address a chief concern of poststructuralism, which is the rigidity of the structuralist tendency to focus on the fixity of relations at the expense of temporality, or the text’s diachronic dimension. Any methodology centered on narratology has a tendency to be rather inflexible in its application. However, my approach attempts to loosen its inherent rigidity by keeping in mind some poststructural considerations that may benefit my narratological analysis and make it more functional in the manner Prague structuralism is functionalistic, or its preference of dialectic over reductionism.

Poststructuralism is a generic term used to refer to all those theories that came to take issue with the principles of structuralism, and included in this is Derrida’s theory of deconstruction. The root or (at least) the point of departure of Derrida’s philosophy is a critical engagement with structuralism and Saussure’s theory of the sign. Deconstruction develops one of Saussure’s insights that language consists of a system of relations among

language, the language as a system of forms, and “parole” is actual speech, the speech acts that are made possible by the language.

26 Robert Burgoyne, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Robert Stam, New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Beyond (London: Routledge 1992), 76: “The influences of formalism and structuralism led to two different schools of narrative inquiry: ‘syntactical’ – the study of syntagmatic ordering of plot events as a kind of armature of narrative progress and development, and ‘semantic’ – which deals with the relation of the signs and messages produced by narrative to the larger cultural system which gives it meaning.”

27 Culler, Ferdinand de Saussure (1986), 45. Culler defines the two studies of language as “synchronic,” the study of the linguistic system in a particular state, and “diachronic,” the study of its evolution in time. While Culler concedes that Saussure has been attacked for privileging the synchronic by distinguishing it from diachronic, Culler argues that it was because Saussure recognized the radical historicity of language that he asserted the importance of distinguishing between the two.

28 Stuart Sim, ed. The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism (New York: Routledge, 2001), 341-342. “For poststructuralists, structuralism was at once too neat and too oppressive, since it seemed to allow little room for human agency or the workings of chance.”

29 Josef Vachek, ed., A Prague School Reader in Linguistics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 469. “As opposed to the ‘pure’ structuralists such as Saussure, the Prague school refused to consider language as an isolated synchronic system of pure form.” The Prague school reconciled Saussure’s opposition of synchrony and diachrony, or the linguistic system in a particular state and its evolution over time. Roman Jakobson, Krystyna Pomorska, Dialogues, trans. by Christian Hubert (Boston: MIT Press, 1983), 58. Discussing the departure from Saussure, Jakobson wrote that: “Saussure attempted to suppress the tie between the system of a language and its modifications by considering the system as the exclusive domain of synchrony and assigning modifications to the sphere of diachrony alone. In actuality, as indicated in the different social sciences, the concepts of a system and its change are not only compatible but indissolubly tied.”

30 Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 10-18. Derrida’s theory rejects the “objectivist” idea of a structure inherent in the text and also the assumption of textual universals or codes of interpretation. Derrida notes that the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.
arbitrary signs whose meanings are defined by the differences that set them apart from one another. It is this structuralist foundation that induces some philosophers to discuss Derrida as a neostructuralist, or even a superstructuralist (Graden, Kreiswirth, eds. 1994).

Poststructuralism in general and deconstruction in particular appear to be paradoxically both related to and disconnected from structuralism through the revision and reversal of it. Culler sees deconstruction as Derrida's term for a critique that demonstrates how the hierarchal oppositions of Western thought are "undone, subverted, or 'deconstructed,' exposed as constructions or ideological impositions..." (1986: 139). Deconstructionism, then, is a method for revealing the radical contextually of all systems of thought. One typical procedure of deconstruction is its critique of binary oppositions and a central deconstructive argument holds that, in all classic dualities of Western thought, one term is privileged over the other such as speech over writing and order over disorder. Since modernity is essentially about order and rationality, modern society is characterized by the pursuit of an increasing level of order and it is constantly on guard against everything labeled "disorder." Thus, modern societies rely on doggedly establishing a binary opposition between order and disorder, the latter of which, in Western culture, is commonly branded as the "other." While deconstruction (theoretically) upends certain binary oppositions and, in this way, provides a useful tool for questioning the hidden motivations behind oppositional privileging, Derrida's deconstructive view is not a denial of the oppositions themselves as he uses their reality as a kind of springboard for his theory.

In The Gift of Death (1995), Derrida coins the motto "Tout autre est tout autre," or "every other is completely other" (68). This single opposition is absolute in the sense that human beings as individual selves are unable to transcend the time and space that constructs their finiteness. In an engaging description, Derrida addresses the absolute limit of human nature that is reflected by our desperate attempts to surpass it:

...one word's move to cross over to the other, to the other side of the mirror. Of the desperate and unhappy speech to move beyond the specularity that it constitutes itself and of the possibility of stating the other or speaking to the other, this moment is most difficult and a kind of death when the breaking of the mirror is most necessary and also the most difficult. The most difficult because everything we say or do or cry, however outstretched toward the other we may be remains within us... (...) ...let us weep no longer over ourselves alas when we must no longer be concerned with the other in ourselves, we can no longer be concerned with anyone except the other in ourselves (1987: 203).

Despite our awareness of an external other, we are powerless to transcend the borders of our finiteness and can only attend to the concept of the other within ourselves – a notion provocatively examined in the Solaris pairing. Thus, the self is not arbitrarily favored, but (paradoxically) motivated by necessity since there is no way to absolutely

31 Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, translated by Wake Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 69. Saussure specified that the term "arbitrary" means "unmotivated." In an arbitrary sign, the signifier "actually has no connection with the signified." Culler adds that there are exceptions to this principle and gives two examples: onomatopoeia and secondary motivation (1986: 29).

32 Culler, Ferdinand de Saussure (1986), 145. This view is in line with Culler's interpretation of Derrida's argument with regard to the hidden motivation of apparently arbitrary linguistic signs. Culler wonders with Derrida: "...whether the language one speaks or writes is not always exposed to the contamination of arbitrary signs by suggestions of imitative motivation, whether effects of motivation are not inseparable for the workings of language." Along these lines, Culler suggests that: "arbitrary signs of the linguistic system may be part of larger discursive system in which effects of motivation, demotivation, and remotivations are always occurring" (146).
comprehend or "cross over" into the other. Attridge supports Derrida's view when he writes that he sees: "...the others person's subjectivity as impenetrable to mine" (1999: 24).

The privileging of this particular opposition cannot be inverted the way other ones can because it includes all other antinomies, which are derivatives that find their origin in this opposition, which can therefore be considered a kind of "meta-opposition." The self and the other are defined by the sum total of their arrangement on one side or the other in a pattern of smaller "micro" oppositions such as female and male, black and white, rich and poor. While one may deconstruct these oppositions and extract a transsexual, a person of observable mixed descent, or the bourgeois, these deconstructions leave intact the self that is positioned against the other. In other words, while the self can concurrently be female, white, and poor, it can never simultaneously be self and other except in the kind of experiential, encountering surrogate Attridge suggests. In the Saussurean view of the self, its most precise characteristic is that it is what others are not (1969: 162). Considering both Saussure and Derrida, I argue that all narratives spring from the meta-opposition and center on various types of conflict that invariably pits a self (a human or an agent personified) against some other that may be human or an abstract entity. One example would be the consumer culture depicted in Fight Club.

Narratives, then, can all be ultimately distilled down to a single ontological opposition where the subjectivity of the self is not accidental, but the logical result of the human inability to transcend the realities of its position in time and space. Paradoxically, it is through fiction that a human can intellectually probe, or encounter the prospect of transcendence and speculate about the other that exists beyond finite physical and intellectual borders. It is for this reason that, as Madison, Aristotle, Foucault and Niebuhr all previously noted, narratives exhibit a mental grappling with transcendence. It is this grappling that is of primary interest here, for it is the cognitive blaze that gives life to the philosophies shaped in narrative texts. Accordingly, my endeavor to reveal the narrative's philosophy through the analysis and interpretation of this antinomy adheres to the idea of a structure that, for the sake of analysis, I assume to be inherent in the text. On the other hand, I also acknowledge that this opposition conveys a meaning that can only be partially determined because the analyst (self) is unable to fully transcend the boundaries of the text (other), and this leaves an inexorable gray area between A and B. This gray area, a consequence of the analyst's own intellectual finiteness, can only be partially resolved through a functional structuralism that relies on dialectic rather than reductive means. The hazy middle ground also serves as the primary connection between my brand of functional structuralism and the poststructural emphasis on the fragile link between signifier and signified.

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33 Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987), 203. In *Psyche*, Derrida implies that the "mirror" is representative of human finiteness when he asks: "Or is it what I imagine of the other who is still held in my psyche, my soul or the self of a mirror?"

34 Derek Attridge, "Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other," in *PMLA* 114 (New York: MLA Press, 1999), 24: "It is in the acknowledgement of the other human being's uniqueness and therefore of the impossibility of finding general rules of schemata to account fully for him or her that one can be said to encounter the other. At the same time as it is an affirmation of the other as other, therefore, the experience is an encounter with the limits of one' powers to think and to judge, a challenge to one's capacities as a rational agent."

35 Sim ed., *Postmodernism* (2001), 201. The gray area that exists between binary oppositions is a primary reason why it is the aspect of structuralist methodology that is most vigorously attacked by poststructuralist critics.

36 Derrida, Of *Grammatology* (1997), 13. Derrida emphasized the fragility of the conventional link between signifier and signified, thus rendering "meaning" a more elusive than the structuralists had supposed.
The poststructural notion of fragility challenges the relative stability of language and the production of meaning based on unmotivated, conventional signs. This destabilizing concept is also demonstrated in Derrida’s “undecidables,” which disrupt oppositional logic and slip across both sides of an opposition while not fitting in either. Derrida refers to undecidables as:

...unities of simulacrum, “false” verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (1981: 42-43).

Deconstruction challenges the explanatory value of oppositions, reveals the asymmetry in the opposition and suggests an implied hierarchy, reverses the hierarchy, and then displaces one of the terms in the opposition in the form of a new and expanded definition. While this exercise encourages the analyst to reconsider meaning and hierarchy, Derrida’s classification of the undecidable, while not necessarily constituting a third term within the original opposition, does represent a new term in another opposition and is thus not freed from remaining in an oppositional state, but merely realigns itself against that which is decidable.

This is also the view of British cultural theorist Terry Eagleton. In *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996), he writes:

...for all its talk of difference, plurality, heterogeneity, postmodern theory often operates with quite rigid binary oppositions, with “difference,” “plurality,” and allied terms lined up bravely on one side of the theoretical fence as unequivocally positive, and whatever their antithesis might be (unity, totality, universality) ranged banefully on the other (1996: 25).

Here, Eagleton describes the inability of postmodern theory to eliminate the objects of its deconstruction because it cannot help but set up new oppositions. As a consequence, he sees the contradictory nature intrinsic in some postmodernist claims. Eagleton addresses the rather “absolute” rejection of the privileging of self-identity over otherness and difference:

...postmodernism tends to be dogmatically monistic about pluralism, which is of course very often good, but by no means always. One would have expected that the pragmatically-minded might have been a touch more contextual about their claims. A great deal of postmodern politics is based on an opposition between identity and otherness: what is to be fundamentally rejected, “absolutely” one might be tempted to say, is the dominion of self-identity over otherness and difference (127).

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37 Donald E. Hall, *Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 165. Structuralists noted that signs often attempt to convey meaning through simplistic oppositions. However, poststructuralism not only isolates and describes those oppositions, it also seeks to probe their fragile, hierarchical nature and thereby challenge them. The poststructuralist critique demonstrates that such binary oppositions are only fragile social constructs, neither real nor fixed, that can be dismantled and discredited as foundational components of our philosophical, social, and cultural systems.

38 Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure* (1986), 144. This view is supported by Culler’s interpretation of Derrida’s argument in regard to the provisional nature of the signified. Specifically, Culler interprets Derrida to mean that any signified may be seen as a signifier in turn.
It appears that the undecidable can serve as a kind of caveat with regard to an unquestioning acceptance of the meaning and hierarchy implied within the original binary opposition. Eagleton underscores this notion when he states that postmodern theory has "lent a voice to the humiliated and reviled, and in doing so has threatened to shake the imperious self-identity to the core" (24), which he claims is its most "precious achievement" (121). Against Eagleton's stark interpretation, I contend that the undecidable does not destroy, nor even temporarily suspend the network of oppositions, but merely creates another link in the chain of oppositions that underpins all systems of meaning. Thus, the poststructuralist undecidable is merely the logical result of a fractional awareness, a microcosmic and incomplete insight as to the totality of an absolute, infinite system of meaning – the Other.

Although the general theory of arbitrariness is still subject to discussion, there is a degree of arbitrariness as a semiotic principle in the linguistic as well as the filmic sign. The perceived fragility of the link between signer and signified is intimately related to its degree of arbitrariness. Thus, Derrida's warning against the structuralist tendency to privilege the singular and definitive over the multiple and indeterminate appears to be a rational conclusion. However, the poststructuralist concern about the perceived existence of a text's deep structure should not be taken to mean that there is not a core of meaning in a text, but that an inherently limited insight should prohibit the analyst from making overly-definitive, totalizing statements as to what the meaning is. With this caveat in mind, I follow Derrida in his claim that the attempt to investigate structure implies the ability to stand outside and apart from it. I also endorse Derrida's notion of the analyst's inescapable subjectivity because s/he exists within culture. However, I contend that the analyst is not totally subsumed by culture. For, the analyst possesses a kind of paradoxical duality of an existence both "within" and "other" to culture. Although existing within culture, it is simultaneously the analyst's "otherness" to a cultural artifact that grants a degree of epistemic authority and permits a cultural analysis that seeks to disclose the philosophical relationship between novels and films.

Finally, I endeavor to circumvent the sense of nihilism commonly associated with poststructuralism, but rather apply its notion of the possible multiplicity of meanings to loosen and balance an inherently rigid and universalizing structuralist methodology. While one may infer that structuralist, narratological models are reductive, such an inference fails to take into consideration the fact that narratology endeavors to account for narratives only to the extent that they are narrative. Narratologists such as Gerald Prince (1997) have often made it clear that there are many elements other than narrative ones in a narrative text such as pathos, psychological insight, and philosophical force. Nevertheless, it is precisely through a narratological description that a "non-narrative" element, such as the text's abstract philosophy, can become manifest. This emergence permits an examination of the measure a specific dialectic is able to travel from literature to film, which allows me to trace the ways these various forms of philosophy legitimate themselves through literary and filmic narratives that center on the interaction between self and other.

39 Presently, the "arbitrariness" of the sign, while accepted as a general principle, is still widely debated with regard to its more specific characteristics and applications in both literature and film. Pier Paolo Pasolini, "La langue écrite de la réalité," in L'expérience hérétique: langue et cinéma (Paris: Payot, 1976), 171. Like Barthes, Pasolini considers the elementary filmic sign to belong to the level of represented reality. Jean Mitry, "D'un langage sans signes," in Revue d'esthétique NS 2-3, (1967) 143. In contradistinction to Barthes and Pasolini, Mitry describes the image as the primary filmic sign. Metz, Christian Metz, Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). 62. Metz supports this view and defines the filmic signifier as the image and its signified as "what the image represents."
The Predicament of the Postmodern Self

The meta-ontological tension between the ontological categories of self and other has greatly interested me for many years, and it is also at the forefront of poststructural theory in a number of ways. First, postructural theory sought to deconstruct this antinomy in response to the common ethic of modernism - the enhancement of the self - which was rooted in the fundamental concept of Western civilization since the sixteenth century that the individual, not the group, is the basic unit of society (Bell 1978: 16). Bell believes that the bourgeois entrepreneur and the independent artist together represent the embodiment of the Western ideal of the autonomous individual who attained freedom through self-determination.40

The dual development of the entrepreneur and the artist as autonomous agents, however, soon produced what Bell refers to as an "extraordinary paradox" whereby each came to fear the other and seek its destruction. As a result, the bourgeois, radical in the economic realm, became conservative in the moral and cultural realms. In contrast, the independent artists began to explore precisely those aspects of life set off-limits by the bourgeois and this gave rise to the changing view concerning the nature of consciousness about the self (17). Santag sees this as a kind of seeking the self in the other; the other is experienced as a harsh purification of the self, but at the same time the self is busily colonizing all strange domains of experience (1996: 69). As a consequence, she envisions a modern sensibility that: "moves between two seemingly contradictory but actually related impulses: surrender to the exotic, the strange, the other; and the domestication of the exotic, chiefly through science" (70). Bell implies that this apparent contradiction results in an attack on rationality, a suspension of social and religious morality, and a preoccupation with limitless ends; additionally, with religiously proscribed boundaries erased, a bourgeois social structure was now based on a mass-consumption economy (1978: 22). As a result, in the 1960's a postmodern culture arose that Bell describes as the logical culmination of modernism and manifested itself in the "porno-pop" celebrations of the counterculture (51). In this view, postmodernism is the extension of modernist adversary culture into everyday life through the powerful mechanism of the mass media, which includes literature and especially film.

In postmodern culture, the self is not necessarily freed from its modernist angst, but is now bombarded in shotgun fashion with, among other things, the cultural consequences of capitalism. Bell implies that the adversarial forms of modern and postmodern culture have undermined bourgeois morality and that hedonistic lifestyles are promoted by the marketing system of contemporary capitalism. Thus, the postmodern individual now finds itself in a culture of waning affect best understood as the outcome of the fragmentation of subjectivity. The modernist problem of alienation and anxiety may no longer be at the vanguard of the postmodern world. However, Jameson asserts that a new one replaces it:

As for expression and feeling or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older anomic of the centered subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling (1984: 64)

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40 Thiselton, Postmodern Self (1995), 11: "Whether or not we agree with Jürgen Habermas (1988) in doubting if postmodernity brings the end of modernity, it is generally agreed that the postmodern self has lost the innocence which characterized the self of modernity which possessed a basic optimism about the capacities of human reason, social strategies, and scientific achievement. However, such optimism omits too many factors to provide hope for the postmodern self."
Jameson does not imply that contemporary cultural products are completely devoid of feeling, but rather that these feelings or intensities are now "free-floating and impersonal, and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria" (64). These intensities lead to a kind of "hysterical sublime" that, for Jameson, indicates a concealment of nature in postmodern culture where the other of Western societies is no longer nature but technology. It is this technology that drives the mass media and creates a kind of hyper-reality within which the postmodern self feels misplaced.

In line with Jameson’s notion of hyper-reality, Baudrillard claims that postmodern culture distinguishes neither between reality or unreality, nor between true or false representation. Rather, it becomes a weightless simulation that "envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum" (1983b: 11). Postmodern culture is no longer conditioned by anything external to itself as it has broken with representation and is (supposedly) free to construct a purely imaginary universe (Dickens, Fontana, ed. 1994: 54). Taken to the extreme, Baudrillard contends that the media has so pervaded our everyday life with the ideological myths of late capitalism that reality itself does not exist and we are all trapped in a hyper-reality defined as a universe of images. While this may be too strong a claim, there is a theoretical truth to the appearance of a hyper-reality that seems to have replaced material reality. Technology creates a powerful illusion that makes it difficult for the postmodern self to find its bearings in a world where the boundaries of hyper-reality and reality are poorly defined. To frame this discussion in Socratic terms, the postmodern self is a prisoner whose field of vision is inundated with dazzling technological images that effectively serve to keep them bound to an existence on the lowest level of the divided line in the realm of images – the hyper-real.

As a corollary of this ontological uncertainty, the notion of the prisoner’s emancipation is an integral part of postmodern theory. Postmodern emancipation has largely been considered a kind of freedom from an oppressive universal conception of self and other imposed by Western white males who assume that their own "idiosyncratic version of humanity should apply to everyone else" (Eagleton 1996:116). In his essay "White Mythology" (1971), Derrida calls this metaphysical tendency "white mythology," which reflects the culture of the West where the "white man takes his own mythology for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason" (213). I argue that this particular perception is to some degree imposed through the image-factory that is Hollywood. Consequently, the postmodern prisoner's emancipation does not spring from the elimination of the meta-opposition. Rather, emancipation results from the postmodern self’s greater awareness of itself in relation to an other that has become more transparent. The prisoner must transcend the realm of images in order to juxtapose the hyper-real with the reality it only signifies. Thiselton sees the postmodern self as the victim of competing groups’ vested interest for power whose manipulation of mass advertising has contributed to the collapse of confidence in claims to truth (1995: 12). In Images of Postmodern Society (1991), American sociologist Norman K. Denzin argues that the postmodern self has lost confidence in its ability to control its own destiny because of a loss of trust in social planning and in universal criteria of rationality (vii). Such notions are profoundly expressed through narratives such as Fight Club that convey the grappling of the postmodern self to find identity in a world where a hyper-reality is imposed on him by the mass media through an inundation of images.

Although not in overtly narrative form, much of Derrida’s work concerns the notion of emancipation and the nature of the meta-opposition between self and other. In Psyche: Inventions of the Other (1987), he wrestles with this ontological dilemma by means of a thought-provoking play on the word “psyche,” from the Greek word for soul, but also, in French, an old-fashioned term for a kind of mirror set on a pivot. Derrida wonders if we can ever break the mirror and emancipate ourselves from ourselves in order to transcend into the realm of the other that may always remain “within us” (203).
In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida aims to make inscrutable what we think we understand by the words "proximity," "immediacy," "presence," or the words we use to designate what is closest to us. He addresses phonocentrism and the privileging of speech because it was always thought by Western philosophers to be closer to psychic interiority than writing. In Derrida's expository texts, it appears that a philosophy is set forth through grappling with the meta-opposition similar to the one I found in the narrative texts analyzed in this study.

In view of the pervasiveness of this antimony that is woven into the narrative structure of postmodern artifacts, my focus is on the struggle of a postmodern self that exists in a world of relentless commodification accelerated by the expanding influence of Hollywood. Moreover, such an examination bears upon a postmodernist notion that the demise of community standards and their replacement with commodified images manufactured by mass media industries inhibits the construction of stable social identities, as suggested by their proclamation announcing "the disappearance of man" (Dickens, Fontana, ed. 1994: 11). In his work, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern identity* (1992), Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor puts the postmodern crisis of the self this way: "To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space which questions arise about what is good and what is bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (28). Often imprisoned in a hyper-reality generated by the mass media that tends to confuse and invert our perceptions, it appears that the postmodern individual may lack a meaningful level of self-awareness because s/he is no longer oriented in moral space, which is to say that their position in relation to an other, an external material reality, has become confused. Employing a vocabulary of literary narratology and film theory, I perform analyses and interpretations of cultural artifacts that fictionalize and problematize popular notions of the predicament of this postmodern self.

**Vocabulary of Analysis**

For the purposes of performing the textual analyses of both the novels and the films, I employ the following terms chiefly borrowed from Bal (1997:5): a narrative text is a text in which an agent relates (tells) a story in a particular medium. For example, the *Clockwork* pairing represents both literary and filmic narrative texts according to which the protagonist, Alex DeLarge, narrates the violent story of himself as a young man. Story is defined as a fabula presented in a certain manner. Traits that are specific to a particular story will be referred to as aspects. For example, an aspect of the film version of *Solaris* that differs from its literary predecessor is the film's frequent use of flashbacks or, more specifically, retroversions that inform the viewer of the protagonist's past. Fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by the actors. The distinction between fabula and story is based upon the difference between the sequence of events and the way in which these events are presented. For example, while the events are presented differently in the film, the revelation that Jack and Tyler in Fincher's film are the same person can invoke a similar reaction in the viewer despite having previously read Palahniuk's novel. To act is defined as to cause or to experience an event, which is the transition from one state to another state. In both *Clockwork* texts, Alex experientially acts as he is transitioned from his pre-conditioned state to his post-conditioned state through the event of the conditioning designed to make him experience a death-like paralysis when confronted with sex and violence.  

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41 Mieke Bal, *Narratology, 2nd ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 84. Throughout the textual analyses, I employ Bal's more precise terms "retroversion" and "anticipation," and avoid the more common terms: "flash-back" and "flash-forward" because of their vagueness and psychological connotations.
Actors are agents that perform actions and are not necessarily human. For example, in the film version of Solaris it appears that the planet (Solaris) is an actor that performs several actions integral to the unfolding of the fabula. However, it is arguable whether or not Solaris sufficiently undergoes the process of characterization to become a character—an actor provided with distinctive human characteristics that exists on the story level. Events, actors, time and location together constitute the elements of the fabula.\textsuperscript{42}

These definitions suggest that Bal’s three-layer distinction - text, story, and fabula - is a sensible basis for a further study of narrative texts. This does not mean these layers exist separately of one another; rather, they serve as “heuristic entrances into an analytical approach to narratives” (1997: 6). My analyses are grounded on Bal’s affirmation that a narrative text is one in which a story is related, which implies that a text is not identical to that story.\textsuperscript{43} In addition, no chronological series of events, no matter how interesting, constitutes a story unless it is made to do so by a double process involving both coding and decoding, or writing and reading.\textsuperscript{44} Therefore, subjectivity plays a tangible role in the textual analyses as I am intuitively selecting to describe certain aspects and elements I believe to be relevant to the discussion in order to form a description of textual construction and attribute meaning to the text. Furthermore, any interpretation of any narrative text is subjective, and any interpreter is relying on what they know, or think they know (which is not limited to the text itself) to form their proposal.\textsuperscript{45} What a reader knows, or thinks s/he knows, of the actual setting or author for example, influences their attempt at interpretation and subsequent proposal. For example, I openly incorporate Burgess’ theological convictions as they pertain to his own explication of Clockwork not because they represent the “truth” of the text, but because his insights can assist my own interpretation and subsequent proposal of meaning.

Similar to the chapters dedicated to the novels, I examine film as a multifaceted medium with its own medium-specific properties. A film is a multimedia narrative form based on a physical record of sounds and moving pictures and is a performed genre primarily designed for viewing in public. Whereas a dramatic play is realized as a live performance by actors on a stage, a film shown in a cinema is not a live event and theoretically can be repeated infinitely without any change.\textsuperscript{46} Although a film is represented through sight and sound and a novel is not, both media are based on analogous narrative structures.\textsuperscript{47} As mentioned previously, films are audiovisual

\textsuperscript{42} Bal, Narratology (1997), 5. Although I define other literary and filmic terms, these specific narratological terms form the basis for the textual analysis.

\textsuperscript{43} Bal, Narratology (1997), 6: “Only the text layer, embodied in the sign system of language, visual images, or any other, is directly accessible.”

\textsuperscript{44} Patrick O’Neill, Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 3: “Telling” is a two-sided affair: the teller tells what happened so that the audience can also tell what happened.

\textsuperscript{45} Bal, Narratology (1997), 11: “If a proposal is to be accepted, it must be well founded (‘I think on the basis of the data shown that the text means this’). If a proposal is based upon a precise description it can then be discussed, even if, in practice, the intuitive interpretation preceded even the first step of the analysis. The use of theory presented here is an instrument for making descriptions, and hence interpretations, discussable. That, not objectivity or certainty, ‘being right’ or ‘proving wrong,’ is the issue.”

\textsuperscript{46} Manfred Jahn, Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres. (Germany: University of Cologne, 2001), (text online) accessed 30 September 2002, http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm, F1.2. Citations from this document (which can be accessed in its entirety on-line) will use the paragraph reference, rather than the page number. Moreover, to facilitate global indexing from this website, all paragraphs cited from Part IV are labeled “F” for “Film.”

\textsuperscript{47} Jakob Lothe, Narrative in Fiction and Film (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8: “The narrative aspect in not clear in all films (nor, incidentally, in all prose texts), but often the narrative aspect is absolutely crucial both for the way the film functions and for its affect on the audience.”
manifestations of written adaptations of texts such as *Clockwork, Fight Club*, and *Solaris*. These adaptations (screenplays) can be understood as the transposing of literature to film and involve neither the staging nor illustration of literature, but rather a translation to film language that consists primarily of a film’s skeletal narrative and dialogue.48

The brand of analysis presented in this study is similar to the film theorist’s “challenge” which seeks to move beyond the commonsensical comprehension of Hollywood film as more than mere entertainment, but also as an ideological discourse that is integral to a deeper understanding of postmodernity (Buckland, Elsaesser 2002: 2). Parallel to the chapters that directly precede them, the film analyses maintain a structuralist, object-focused approach and regard films as texts to be examined beyond my experience of them alone.49 The analyses do not merely intend to arrive at some new or startling interpretation of a film or a sequence of a film. Rather, I incorporate a structuralist methodology into close readings of the filmic texts in order to articulate the functioning of the film as a system of relations and interdependencies “complex in its means, obvious in its effects” (Buckland, Elsaesser 2002: 16). Since the films are narrative, I interweave narratological analysis and an engagement with film as a visual medium. The film analyses center on the premise that films, grounded in screenplays, are intimately related to the narrative textual form of the novel and can be analyzed similarly. However, the point of comparisons between literature and film is not to make aesthetic assessments of faithfulness to the source. Rather, taking the novel and film as equally embedded in the culture in which they function, the comparison can help to articulate what each, through their own narratological make-ups, “say” to their audiences. For instance, if a novel addresses political issues in a specifically powerful way, the film through totally different means and without following the visual indications in the novel, may still address the same issues with comparable power (Bal 1997: 164).

To produce a film, a team of individuals is led by the director who directs the use of a specialized camera and translates the screenplay’s written narrative into a filmic one. In this way, a film is a collaborative product, and on this basis it is apparent that sources other than the director contribute to the many parts of a film’s overall information. Rather than refer to the host of individuals who produced the film, I refer to the collective agency as the filmic subject. The filmic subject is a theoretical agent behind a film’s organization and arrangement and assumed to be guided by the maxims of giving adequate and relevant information. Based on this principle, the filmic subject selects what it needs from various sources and organizes, edits, and composes this information for telling a filmic narrative. A film shows us what the filmic subject has arranged for us to see, and, consequently, all filmic information is ultimately a corollary of its mediation, choice, organization, and arrangement. Although I employ the term filmic subject, there are a number of terms employed in film theory that have similar, but not identical meanings; for example: “filmic composition device” (Jahn 2001), “grand image-maker” (Metz 1974), “shower-narrator” (Chatman 1990), and an “implied director” (Kozloff 1988).

Filmic subject resonates with Jean-Pierre Oudart’s (1969) concept of the “Absent One” in a practical, rather than ideological sense. The filmic subject is the collective...
agency that functions as the "speaking subject" of the narrative, cinematic text. In The Subject of Semiotics (1983), American film theorist Kaja Silverman maintains that the speaking subject, its fictional correlative located in an ideal paternal representation, finds its locus in a cluster of technological apparatus and possesses everything that the viewer, suddenly cognizant of the limitations on its vision, understands itself to be lacking (204). This sense of lack inspires in the object the desire for "something else," a desire to see more. However, Oudart insists that the classic film text must at all costs conceal from the viewer the passivity of their position, and this necessitates denying the fact that there is any reality outside of the fiction (204). To state this differently, the filmic subject’s manipulation must be veiled in order to maintain the suspension of disbelief, an achievement vital to the viewer’s cognitive immersion into the narrative world of images.

The absence of the filmic subject is effectively hidden by the hypothetical existence of the filmic narrator, a photographic narrative device (camera) that employs shot relationships, and the shot / reverse shot (SRS) in particular, to convey the impression that the gaze which directs our look appears to belong to a fictional character. The SRS formation is a cinematic device in which the second shot shows the field from which the first shot is assumed to have been taken. Through a particular transition of shots, the filmic subject is thus able to create the hypothetical existence of the filmic narrator and manipulate it in order to suture the viewer’s gaze to the filmic narrator or that of a fictional character. Silverman sees suture as a particular effect of shot relationships where the level of enunciation remains veiled from the viewer’s scrutiny, which is entirely absorbed within the level of the fiction (202). For example, at times, the gaze that directs our look seems to belong to a character rather than the camera in the point of view shot (POV).

According to this approach, the viewer’s gaze can be hypothetically sutured to a fictional character residing internally or to the filmic narrator that resides externally. Either way, the contrived internal gaze (or internal focalization) or external gaze (external focalization) within fiction serves to conceal the controlling existence of the filmic subject. Thus, the filmic subject interjects a “benign” other (filmic narrator) to obscure its presence as a “coercive” other embodied by the camera. Theorists of cinematic suture agree that films are articulated and the viewing subject spoken by means of interlocking shots. Shot relationships are seen as the equivalent of syntactic ones in linguistic discourse, and the junctures whereby meaning emerges and a subject position is constructed for the viewer. However, some theorists conceptualize those relationships differently from others. Nevertheless, as Silverman asserts, it is imperative that the camera deny its own existence in order to foster the illusion that what is shown has an

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50 Stephen Heath, Questions of Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 83. For Heath, the Absent One it is the ‘mother’ in the mirror phase where the subject’s desire is first constructed in her discourse. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kristen Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985), 421. For Bordwell, it is narration which is always already absent from the frame: “I have treated the ‘Absent One’ entailed by the image as the narration, not another character in the fiction” (421).

51 Kaja Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 76. Just as the filmic subject possesses ideally paternal qualities, Silverman further argues that these qualities often manifest themselves in the form of a disembodied (male) voice-over.

52 Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 201: “Whereas Oudart (1969) finds the SRS formation to be virtually synonymous with the operations of suture, Stephen Heath (1978) suggests that it is only one element in a much larger system, and emphasizes features of the editing process, which are common to all shot transitions.” Silverman’s notion of suture appears to associate more with Heath’s concept, and so does the one presented in this study.
independent existence, free from any technological interference, or any coercive gaze that would self-reflexively shatter the viewer’s “suspension of disbelief” (1983: 201).

In a narrative text, an agent relates (tells) a story in a particular medium, which includes not only literature, but film as well, and it is the material strip of film that constitutes the narrative text, or medium. Like a blank page or an empty canvas, in film, the narrative text is the strip of celluloid as the physical record of sounds and moving pictures. The visual and auditory components of film distinguish its narrative text from that of a written novel (or script) and these filmic components possess features. For example, lighting is a feature of the visual component and the musical score is a feature of the auditory component. I refer to the particular results of the filmic subject’s arrangement that comprise the film’s visual component as mise-en-scène and editing. Specifically, mise-en-scène is the observable expression of the filmic subject’s exploitation of space within the frame: the placement of the actors and props, the relationship of the camera to the space in front of it, camera movement, the use of color or black and white, lighting, the size of the frame itself. Editing addresses time and space by building the temporal structure of a film and breaking apart and reordering its spatial construction. Although editing possesses a temporal aspect, the viewer sees (rather than hears) the results of editing, which makes it a feature of a film’s visual component.

The result of the filmic subject’s arrangement that comprises the film’s auditory component is the soundtrack. The soundtrack is either an optical or magnetic band along the side of the celluloid strip that contains the recorded sound for the film. The soundtrack features include dialogue, special sound effects, and the musical score; moreover, each of these features falls into one of two basic categories – diegetic and nondiegetic. Diegetic sound is noise, speech, or music that originates from an

53 Bal, Travelling Concepts (2002), 26: “There are, for example, many reasons for referring to images or films as ‘texts.’ Such references entail various assumptions, including the idea that images have, or produce, meaning, and that they promote such analytical activities as reading.”

54 I have viewed the filmic texts covered in this study in DVD format to facilitate the textual analyses. A DVD original film images are transformed into analogue electromagnetic waves. These waves are recorded onto tape or digitized and burned into the grooves of a DVD (digital video disc), which are then read and reconverted into electrons. These electrons bombard the red, green, and blue phosphors of a television screen (Kolker 2002: 26). The rationale for this decision is twofold. First, although there is not a one to one correlation, a DVD is similar to a novel in that it is divided into chapters and can be referenced accordingly. Secondly, with the push of a button, the individual images (or “frames”) of a DVD can be fast-forwarded, reversed, or played frame-by-frame: furthermore, any frame can be frozen with nearly zero visual distortion and, in some cases (depending on the DVD), a particular segment of the frozen image can even be enlarged. When viewing a film in a theatre, the analyst’s comprehension is bound to the movement of the text as it unrelentingly passes through the projector. Conversely, the temporal authority permitted by the DVD format grants the analyst a kind of “equivalent” to the close reading of a novel where the reader can pause in order to contemplate a difficult passage or idea. Bai writes: “Neither texts nor images yield their meanings immediately. They are not transparent, so that images, like texts, require the labor of reading” (2002: 26). Incorporated into the close readings, I synchronize narratology with film theory and terminology to better articulate the filmic dialectics that contain the visual and auditory components that the novels lack.

55 Robert Kolker, Film, Form, and Culture (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1999), 34: “The formal expression of editing is the cut, a literal severing of the shot. If a shot is an actual or apparent unbroken light of film, editing is what breaks it. But editing joins together as well as cuts apart. Through editing, filmmakers build the structure of a movie by arranging its shots. At its simplest, editing is what is done to a shot. Editing is cutting: but an edit usually refers to the joining together of two shots.”

56 Jahn, Prose (2001), F3.1. Although the visual channel contains a film’s essential source of information, this must not be taken to mean that sound (especially in the form of music and speech) is in any way less important than the visual signs.
identifiable source in the current scene. For example, the viewer hears a news report and sees that it originates from a television that has just been turned on. Conversely, nondiegetic sound is noise, speech, or music that does not emanate from an identifiable source in the scene. For example, in Kubrick’s epic 2001: A Space Odyssey, the viewer sees a ship moving through space and, concurrently, hears a full orchestra version of Johann Strauss’ The Blue Danube (1867). One can undoubtedly enjoy a film despite the absence of sound; however, the soundtrack (which, for example, can be used as an auditory form of anticipation) has become an integral part of how one views the fabula and interprets the story.57

The human longing to decipher metaphysical questions drives my critical examination of how narratives philosophize through juxtaposing the ontological categories of “self” and “other.” For it is the binary tension between self and other that provides the raw material for narrative discourse. With this antinomy at the center of my study, I perform a sequence of close textual analyses and descriptions of six postmodern narrative texts. It is the adaptive interaction between literature and film that motivates the analysis these artifacts in three dual-medium pairs. Using a functional narratology heuristically, I construct descriptions of the novels and their filmic counterparts in order to expose their philosophy, or, more specifically, the textual dialectic that radiates from the meta-oppositional friction. After the philosophies of have emerged through narratological description, I reveal the consistencies and differences between the texts in order to determine the measure in which the philosophy of the novel traveled into film.

In view of the pervasiveness of this antinomy that is woven into the narrative structure of the texts, my focus is on the struggle of a postmodern self that exists in a world of relentless commodification hastened by the expanding influence of the technological mass media. Such an examination bears upon a postmodernist notion that the collapse of community standards and their replacement with commodified images manufactured by mass media industries inhibits the construction of stable social identities. Thus, this study is undertaken in light of the international influence of Hollywood, the increasingly significant role of film in postmodernity, and its ability to make literary philosophies more available to mainstream audiences. It is the enormous accessibility of these filmic artifacts that lends itself to the critical practice of cultural analysis that seeks to understand how the travelling dialectics of these texts might inform present culture.

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57 Buckland, Elsaesser, American Film (2002). 14: “The most basic functions (of sound) are to serve as spatial markers, either synchronous, to indicate co-presence of sound source and presentation or in counterpoint to indicate off-screen space. As a temporal marker, synchronicity signifies simultaneity, but sound can often structure the future of the narrative (anticipating events through musical motifs, for instance), or it can act as narrative memory (an echo or reminder).
Part I. A Clockwork Orange

I. Self and State: The Political Philosophy of A Clockwork Orange

In a speech delivered at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1954, Jewish German-American philosopher Leo Strauss stated that:

...political philosophy deals with political matters in a manner that is meant to be relevant for political life; therefore its subject must be identical with the goal, the ultimate goal of political action. The theme of political philosophy is mankind’s great objective, freedom and government or empire-objectives which are capable of lifting all men beyond their poor selves.  

Here, Strauss identifies the subject of political philosophy with the end of political action, which he later defines as either preservation or change: “When desiring to preserve, we wish to prevent change to the worse; when desiring to change, we wish to bring about something better” (10).

Classically defined, Strauss argues that political action has a “directedness” towards knowledge of the good, and if people make it their explicit aim to obtain knowledge of the good life and the good society, then political philosophy surfaces. In other words, classical political philosophy is guided by the question of the best regime, or state, and the practical notion of the best regime is problematized when one considers the imprecision of the term “good citizen.” Strauss attempts to clarify this ambiguity when he refers to Aristotle’s definition (Constitution of Athens) of the good citizen as a patriotic man who serves his country without any regard to the change of regimes (34-35). In Politics (1984), Aristotle further argues that the good citizen is defined relative to the regime, whereas a good man is not (86-88). Only in the best regime does the good regime parallel the good man.

While virtue is the pivot upon which classical political philosophy turns, modern political philosophy endeavors to take a more realistic approach in light of its bleaker view of man who is inherently depraved. Generally considered the founder of modern political philosophy, Italian writer Niccolo Machiavelli rejected the classical endeavor of seeking the improbable, utopian actualization of the best regime based on virtue.

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59 Johannes Althusius, Politica, translated by Frederick S. Caney (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Incorporated, 1995), 12. German political thinker Althusius defines the State as the “consociatio universalis,” or the commonwealth, which is an association inclusive of all other associations (families, collegia, cities, and provinces) within a determinate large area, and recognizing no superior to itself. While I agree that it recognizes no superior, I define “state” as distinct from the commonwealth. It is merely the regime, or administration that governs, in one way or another, the families, collegia, cities, and provinces within its sphere of influence.

60 Leo Strauss, The City and Man (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 45: “It appears that ‘citizen’ is relative to ‘regime,’ to the political order; a man who would be a citizen in a democracy would not necessarily be a citizen in an oligarchy, and so on. (...) What is true of the citizen is true of the good citizen, since the activity or the work of the citizen belongs to the same genus as that of the good citizen; ‘good citizen,’ in contradistinction to ‘good man,’ too is relative to ‘regime’; obviously a good Communist cannot but be a bad citizen in a liberal democracy and vice versa.”

61 Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1979), 127: “...for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation; for a man who wishes to
Rather, in *The Prince* (1513), Machiavelli aims to realize the opulence, constancy, and freedom from foreign ascendancy that is sought by all societies. Machiavellian virtue is the sum of procedures necessary to achieve more practical ends, and it is precisely these ends that make our actions virtuous. Thus, the end justifies every means. Strauss sees Machiavelli’s political philosophy as:

...guided exclusively by considerations of expediency, which uses all means, fair or foul, iron or poison, for achieving its ends – its end being the aggrandizement of one’s country or fatherland – but also using the fatherland in the service of the self-aggrandizement of the politician or statesmen or one’s party (1987: 297).

For Machiavelli, virtue is civic virtue, and patriotism is devotion to “collective selfishness” (1955: 42). Since man is inherently selfish and not naturally patriotic, devotion to the fatherland hinges on education, which often takes the form of compulsion. What is more, an egocentric desire for glory makes man malleable, which permits patriotism through a kind of forced education. Thus, it is selfish ambition that drives transformation from social badness to social goodness, which is to say from the bad to the good citizen. Framed by both classical and modern political philosophy, Burgess filters his narrative through a philosophical lens that focuses on the tension between the will of the individual and that of the collective. Burgess believes that the denial of original sin leads to an unnatural distinction between those who are criminal and those who are not. In an interview published in the *Transatlantic Review* (1972), Burgess stated:

It was the sense of this division between the well us and sick them that led me to write, in 1960, a short novel called *A Clockwork Orange*. It is not, in my view, a very good novel... but it sincerely presented my abhorrence of the view that some people were criminal and others not. A denial of the universal inheritance of sin is characteristic of Pelagian societies like that of Britain, and it was in Britain, about 1960, that respectable people began to murmur about the growth of juvenile delinquency and suggest (that the young criminals) were a somehow inhuman breed and required inhuman treatment (Dix: 183).

This notion harks back to an old division, perhaps best represented by the antithetical theological poles embodied by Pelagius (350-420) and Augustine (354-430). Pelagianism, named after the British heretic Pelagius (Morgan), denied that God had predestined, or pre-ordained human existence. The effect of this is that salvation is

make a vacation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.” Calvin E. Beisner, “The Foundations of Liberty Reader” (FL Lauderdale: Knox Seminary Press, 2005), 5: “Machiavelli, son of a Florentine lawyer, was elected in 1498 as the second chancellor of the republic. (...) He achieved the establishment of a Florentine militia in the contado in 1506 and became secretary of the Nove della Milizia. His close association, from 1502, with Piero Soderini cost him his post when the Medici returned in 1512. Arrested on suspicion of conspiracy in 1513, he was released when Giovanni de Medici became pope. (...) He died shortly after the republican restoration in 1527. His works, besides *Il Principe*, the *Discorsi*, and the *Istorie Florentine*, include the *Arte della guerra* and Italian poetry and plays, notably the *Mandragola*."

S.E. Frost Jr., *Teachings of the Great Philosophers* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 276: “Aurelius Augustine was born at Tagaste in Africa. He became Bishop of Hippo and wrote with great force against all he deemed as heretics.”

functionally within human power, which inevitably leads to a rejection of original sin. Repudiation of this view eventually came from Augustine who ardently upheld the doctrine of original sin and defended the orthodox concept of predestination; by virtue of the Fall, humankind lost its autonomy and every generation after Adam is bound to sin as the result of evil dwelling in every human heart. Thus, it is God alone who makes the selection of who will be saved. Furthermore, that choice is not coerced by any accomplishment measured on a scale of human self-righteousness, but rather determined only by what God justly desires.

In his interview, Burgess implied that he advocated the Augustinian concept of universal inheritance of sin. This preference manifests itself in his “abhorrence” of the (Pelagian) perception that some humans were criminal while others were not. In response to the Augustinian notion of universal inherited sin on the one hand, and the Pelagian espousal of free will on the other, Burgess also stated that he believed in “a kind of residual Christianity that oscillates between Augustine and Pelagius” (Dix 1972: 184). This sentiment is echoed in the introduction to Clockwork in which Burgess discloses both his endorsement of Augustinian and Pelagian views: “It is as inhuman to be totally good as it is to be totally evil. The important thing is moral choice. Evil has to exist along with good, in order that moral choice may operate” (Burgess 1986: ix). Burgess, then, loosely defines humanity by the ability to use our Pelagian free will to make moral choices despite the universality of Augustinian original sin.

It appears that Burgess not only oscillates between Augustine and Pelagius, but also between classical and modern political philosophy. For both Augustine and Machiavelli promote the universal depravity of man and, as a result, find classical philosophy based on virtue overly idealistic. Confirming this position, Strauss wrote: “Augustine’s critique of the classical tradition resembles in many ways that of the early modern political thinkers, beginning with Machiavelli, who likewise took issue with that tradition on the grounds of its ineffectualness and impracticality” (1987: 182). However, in contrast to Machiavelli, Augustine does not aim to develop the practical value of his teaching by lowering the standards of human activity. Strauss concurs with Augustine’s contention that classical political philosophy failed not because it did not take into account the evil character of man’s behavior, or that it made unreasonable demands on human nature, but because: “it did not know and hence could not apply the proper

not state explicitly that we could be saved by our own efforts, he did insist that we ‘freely’ choose the saving grace of God.”

Augustine, “On the Gift of Perseverance,” in The Fathers of the Church Vol. 86: St. Augustine – Four Anti-Pelagian Writings, translated by John Moulant and William Collinge (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1992) 324: “This is the predestination of the saints, nothing else: plainly the foreknowledge and preparation of God’s benefits, by means of which whoever is to be liberated is most certainly liberated.” James Wetzel, “Predestination, Pelagianism, and Foreknowledge,” in The Cambridge Companion to Augustine, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 53. In his essay, Wetzel elaborates on the Augustinian view of election in light of God’s selection of Jacob over Esau. If God favored Jacob over Esau, one of two brothers formed in the same womb, then God has decided to make Jacob into the brother worth choosing. In other words, God both foreknows and predetermines Jacob’s redemption (53). Additionally, Frost (1989) wrote: “In Augustinianism, God makes the choice among those of whom He will save and those of whom He will permit to be destroyed because of (original) sin. This choice is not influenced by any act of an individual, but is determined only by what God wants. The concept of God’s choosing an individual for salvation is commonly referred to as ‘election’” (136).

64 Strauss, The City and Man (1964), 41. In describing the (classical) Aristotelian view of man’s relation to the City, Strauss wrote: “One may describe this view of the relation of man to the whole as ‘optimism’ in the original sense of the term: the world is the best possible world…” Althusius, Politica (1995), xxvii. Like Machiavelli and Augustine, Althusius also saw the impracticality of the classical view and advocated a political philosophy that was more in harmony with the principal forces of nature.
remedy to man's congenital weakness" (182). In other words, while both Augustine and Machiavelli believed that the classical view of the best regime based on virtue to be an unrealistic vision, Machiavelli failed to understand how the concept of love, as the "proper remedy," could figure into the political equation.

This idea is developed by Niebuhr who argued that the self, in its dialogue with others, confronts certain invariable conditions of self-fulfillment and self-giving (1955: 31). Niebuhr sees this dialogue as a three-fold enumeration: related to my corpus, the self completes the other though mutual love (Clockwork), the self uses the other as a completion for its incompleteness (Fight Club), and the self sees the other as a mystery that can never be fully penetrated (Solaris). For each dual-medium pair, I apply the relevant dialogue to better understand my analysis and interpretation. In his discussion of mutual love, Niebuhr wrote:

The most obvious solution to the self's dependence upon others is a relation of mutual dependence which satisfies each self without making one the mere instrument of the other. Even an ideal relation of mutual helpfulness cannot satisfy one condition in such a dialogue. The self cannot be truly fulfilled if it is not drawn out of itself into the life of the other. Mutual love seems to be a satisfactory solution of this problem, but insofar as mutual love may involve only cool calculations of reciprocal advantage of the kind Aristotle describes in his analysis of Philia, it is always in danger of degenerating into a relation of mere calculation (31).

Niebuhr's description of mutual love appears the kind of remedy that Augustine implicitly advocates, as opposed to the more Machiavellian degenerative form of "mere calculation" based on selfish ambition. Clockwork demonstrates how this manipulative relationship between self and other inexorably leads to selfish oppression, or the self's the attempt to make an instrument of the other to achieve its ends. In light of these ideas, Burgess' work explores how such a relationship affects the self's free will when there is no mutual love, but rather a relationship of mere calculation. Finally, Clockwork juxtaposes this Machiavellian oppression with the notion of how a nobler, altruistic love can be a means to foster the transformation of unredeemable criminals into not only good citizens, but also good men.

Augustine, The City of God, (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1958), 443. Similar to Aristotle in Politics (1984), Augustine claims that to rule is nothing other than to altruistically serve and care for the utility of others in the manner parents are expected to rule their children. Althusius, Politica (1995), 199. However, Althusius notes that parents can also become tyrants, and a parent who abuses power can be rightfully deprived of it.
II. The Novel

Anthony Burgess

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

Anthony Burgess

(1917-1993)
Introduction

John Anthony Burgess Wilson was born in Manchester, England into a middle-class Catholic family. Exhibiting the influence of James Joyce, his first novel, *A Vision of Battlement* (1949), was loosely based on the *Aeneid*. In 1954, Burgess became an education officer in Malaya and Brunei and during this time wrote his trilogy *Time for a Tiger* (1956), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958), and *Beds in the East* (1959). In 1960, *A Clockwork Orange* was just one of a quartet of novels Burgess penned during his self-proclaimed “pseudo-terminal year” when he was erroneously diagnosed with a brain tumor and given only a year to live (Jennings 1974: 69).

Essayist, composer, critic, translator, and novelist, Burgess published over fifty works before he died in 1993. Yet, despite his impressive output of fiction, Burgess wished for the public to view him as a musician first and a novelist second. In fact, Burgess turned his novel into a musical titled *A Clockwork Orange: A Play with Music* (1987). Interestingly, the play concludes with:

...a character dressed like Stanley Kubrick coming out onto the stage with a trumpet, playing “Singin’ in the Rain” until he is kicked off the stage. A few years later, Burgess brought out yet another musical version, *A Clockwork Orange 2004*, this one produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London at the Barbican Theatre and featuring the music of Bono and the Edge (from the Irish rock band U2) (McDougal 2003: 2).

Burgess believed that music was a more “pure” form of art because it had no direct connection with human events and existed beyond the field of moral judgment. In contrast to the morally benign nature of his music, his most commercially successful novel was also the novel he liked the least. To this day, *Clockwork* maintains a polarizing affect on its readers and is still often celebrated for its profound examination of violence and innovative diction or condemned for its lack of moral judgment.

The inspiration for *Clockwork* seems to have been drawn not only from the growth of teenage gangs and the universal application of American psychologist B.F. Skinner’s behavior theories, but also one of his most deeply personal experiences. In an interview published in *Playboy Magazine* (1974), Burgess revealed:

We’re all inclined to love the pornography of violence, but for me that work (*Clockwork*) was a kind of personal testament made out of love and sorrow, as well as of ideas and theology. My first wife had a traumatic experience during the war, when she was working at the Ministry of War Transport on ships for the D-Day landings. She was working very late one night and was very severely mauled by four GI deserters (Jennings: 70).

In the interview, Burgess goes on to disclose that his wife, who was pregnant at the time of the assault, lost her baby through the gynecological complications that ensued and later committed suicide as a consequence. It appears that this intensely traumatic incident was the impetus for Burgess’ particular brand of political philosophy that explores how the state should treat those violent individuals who are neither good citizens nor good men. What makes such *Clockwork* a compelling novel is that, in light of Burgess’ devastating past, it critically examines not just the violent individual, but also the selfish ambitions and resulting oppression of the individual by the state.
Machiavellian Ambition and Augustinian Redeeming Love

The Machiavellian view of innate selfish ambition carries with it two corollaries relevant to this discussion of Clockwork. First, the desire for glory often leads to the oppression of others. Second, this craving leads to a kind of malleability and, as a result, humans can be made into good citizens through compulsion. Clockwork develops and makes a commentary on both of these ideas. The fabula demonstrates the notion of oppression by taking a three-sided approach: it pits the selfish ambitions of the individual against the citizenry, the state against the individual, and the citizenry against the individual.

In the first third of the novel, the protagonist (Alex DeLarge) viciously employs others as the means to achieve his sadistic ends of self-gratification. Alex’s acts are exemplified in the following passage, as his dreams expose the true character of his heart:

...I knew such lovely pictures. There were vecks and ptitsas, both young and starry, lying on the ground screaming for mercy, and I was smeeckin all over my rot and grinding my boot in their litos. And there were devotchkas ripped and creeching against wall and I plungin like a shleg into them, and indeed when the music, which was one movement only, rose to the top of its big heist tower, then, lying the on my bed with glazizies tight shut and rookers behind my Gulliver, I broke and spattere d and cried aaaaaaah with the bliss of it.67

The embodiment of the Platonic tyrant, Alex turns his nightmarish dreams into reality as he acts out his subconscious desires in his waking life.68 This notion is evidenced as Alex describes his rape of two ten-year-old girls this way:

...I leapt upon these two young ptitsas. This time they thought nothing fun and stopped creeching with high mirth, and had to submit to the strange and weird desires of Alexander the Large which, what with the Ninth and the hypo jab, were chooodessny and zammechat and very demanding. O my brothers. But they were both very very drunken and could hardly feel much (46).

Thus, the tyrannical Alex has made what was a mere subconscious fantasy in the first passage into a waking reality in the second.

In the middle third of the novel, however, Alex is arrested and the fabula makes a rather striking tonal shift. The state, supposedly enacting justice on behalf of the citizenry, exploits Alex to meet its selfish ambitions of preservation, or re-election. It is in this portion of the fabula that the Machiavellian malleability of man begins to surface as the state attempts to forcibly turn the “bad into good” (93). Through an education of Pavlovian conditioning, the state tries to transform Alex into both a good citizen and a good man. However, the end is not virtue, but rather political self-preservation as is made evident by the newspaper (gazetta) headlines after Alex is released from prison and presumably “cured” of his violent tendencies:

This gazetta I had seemed to be like a Government gazetta, for the only news that was on the front page was about the need for every veck to make sure he put the Government back in again on the next General Election which seemed

67 Anthony Burgess, A Clockwork Orange (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1966) 33. Subsequent citations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.
to be about two or three weeks off. There were very boastful slovos about what the Government had done, brothers, in the last year or so... (...) But what the Government was really most boastful about was the way in which they reckoned the streets had been made safer for all peace-loving night-walking lewdies... (...) And on the second page of the gazette there was a blurry like photograph of somebody who looked very familiar, and it turned out to be none other than me me me (131-132).

In the final third of the novel, although Alex has been released as a free man back into society, he has been stripped of his ability to act violently and is unable to defend himself against the attacks of his former victims who now seek revenge:

"Don't let him go. We'll teach him all about punishment, the murderous young pig. Get him." And, believe it, brothers, or do the other veshch, two or three starry dodderers, about ninety years old a piece, grabbed me with their trembly old rookers, and I was like made sick by the von of old age and disease which came from these near-dead moodges (144).

Thus, the fabula comes full circle as Alex's attackers assail him, which effectively forces the reader into a critical examination of the Pelagian division between the well us and the sick them. The oppressive actions of all parties involved problematizes the natural attempt to distance ourselves from such acts, and by highlighting the universal depravity of man the fabula mirrors our own veiled agendas.

In light of this Machiavellian-Augustinian view of man, the prison chaplain interjects the concept of a redeeming love as a solution to the vicious cycle of oppression. As the state tests Alex's conditioning with taunts of sex and violence, the chaplain reacts by quoting 1 John 4:18: "Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear" (127). It is this perfect love that is contrasted with the fear and punishment enacted by not only the state, but also by every principal character in the story. Considering these ideas, in the following analysis of Clockwork, I aim to better understand how Burgess' story articulates a fabula that conceptualizes his particular brand of political philosophy, which is influenced by the dialogue between Athens and Jerusalem.

**Alex: Triple Narrative Agency**

Alex DeLarge represents Clockwork's protagonist anti-hero and character-bound narrator (cn) as 'I' is identified with a character (Alex) in the fabula he narrates, autobiographically recounting the "facts" as he remembers them. Alex also functions as an internal, character-bound focalizer (cf), the subject of focalization, serving as a point from which the elements in the fabula are viewed. More precisely, cn Alex is narrating a story that is focalized by cf Alex who "colors" the events in the fabula, or in other words, "Alex says what Alex saw and did". This is accomplished through narrative

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69 NASB (1999), 1174. 1 John 4:18 reads: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

70 Bal, Narratology (1997), 22. Bal asserts that if the "I" is to be identified with a character in the fabula it itself narrates, we speak of a character-bound narrator, a "cn."

71 Bal, Narratology (1997), 146: "When focalization lies with one character who participates as an actor in the fabula, we could refer to internal focalization. We can then indicate by means of the term external focalization that an anonymous agent, situated outside the fabula, is functioning as focalizer."

72 Bal, Narratology (1997), 146: "Focalization is the relationship between the "vision," the agent that sees, and that which is seen. This relationship is a component of the story part, the content of the
distance, or the temporal and psychological distance between the narrating "I" and the
experiencing "I."⁷³ An older and wiser Alex is narrating the story of a younger, more
foolish Alex who focalizes the events. It is this older Alex who says:

Then I got it open, and who should be on the doorstep but old Dim, me just being
able to viddy the other two of my so-called droogs belting off. "Away," I
creeched to Dim. "The rozzes are coming," Dim said: "You stay and meet them
huh huh" and then I viddied that he had his oozy out, and then he upped with it
and snaked whishhhhh and he chained me gentle and artistic like on the glazlids,
me just closing them up in time (64).

The above passage relays the event caused by the actor Dim, its perception by the
focalizer "I" (cf Alex) and the narrative act by the narrator "I" (cn Alex). Cn Alex relays
the entire passage to the reader as he autobiographically recounts what happened in
order to explain the events caused by the actor Dim. The event is perceived by the
focalizer "I," which is also Alex, who "viddied that he had his oozy out." Thus, we have
the following narrative situation: cn (Alex) (cf (Alex) - Dim). Two of the three agents have
the same name and the same identity.⁷⁴

Furthermore, Alex not only effectively functions as cf and cn, but also serves as an
actor propelling events in the fabula. This is clear, for example, in these two passages:

"You deserve to be taught a lesson, brother," I said, "that you do." The crystal
book I had was very tough bound and hard to razrez to bits, being real starry and
made in days when things were made to last like, but I managed to rip the pages
up and chuck them in handfuls of like snowflakes, though big, all over this
creeching old veck, and then the others did the same thing with theirs, old Dim
just dancing about like the clown he was (6).

"Bastard. Filthy drooling mannerless bastard." Then I leaned across
Georgie, who was between me and horrible Dim, and fist Dim skorry on the rot
(28).

The preceding passages all provide insight into Alex's threefold function in the fabula as
cn, cf, and actor driving events. As an actor in the first passage, Alex rips up the books,
and in the second he hits Dim on the mouth. While both passages exhibit Alex as an
actor in the fabula, they also give insight into Alex as a character in the story who detests
both books and poor manners. Alex provides an elucidating interchange between
fabula and story because it is largely through his behavior as an actor that Alex the
character is fleshed out for the reader. Such an interchange, revealing Alex the
character, is essential to a thematic thrust of the narrative concerning society's response
to such a reprobate individual.

While focalization does shift to other actors in the fabula, Alex's threefold function
as cn, cf, and actor remains rather consistent throughout the narrative. Alex's "triple

⁷³ Jahn, Poems, Plays, and Prose (2001), N3.11. To facilitate global indexing from this website, all
paragraphs cited from Part III are labeled "N" for "Narrative."

⁷⁴ Bal, Narratology (1997), 27. Filtered through Bal's narratological view, this narrative situation
relates the event caused by the actor Dim, its perception by the focalizer "I," and the narrative act
by the narrator "I": both of those "I's are called Alex.
capacity" supplies the narrative with its distinctive, personal feel in that the story is told by a narrator who autobiographically recounts events he once caused and experienced. In this way, the reader is forced to view the copiously violent events perpetrated by the younger "experiencing" Alex through the older "experienced" Alex, and the result is somewhat unnatural. Through this brand of focalization, Burgess creates within the reader a sense of compassion for the character Alex despite the ghastly events caused by the actor Alex. This paradoxical conflict of emotion generated within the reader is largely achieved through Burgess' employment of Alex as a visible figure of the perceptible narrator who, in most narratives, typically refers to her/himself as "I." While this is also true in *Clockwork*, Burgess takes this device one step further. Specifically, on several occasions Alex explicitly refers to himself as the "Narrator":

> Then all the lights went out and then there came on two like spotlights shining from the projection-squares, and one of them was full on Your Humble and Suffering Narrator (124).

> And all they gave me, brothers, was a crappy starry mirror to look into, and indeed I was not your handsome young Narrator any longer but a real stack of a sight, my rot swollen and my glazzies all red and my nose bumped a bit also (68).

In the first passage, the younger, focalizing Alex is referred to as your "Humble" and "Suffering" narrator as he would eventually grow into the older, narrating Alex. In the second passage, he refers to the readers affectionately as his "brothers." Seen after cf Art Alex had directly induced nine violent events including two rapes, both passages represent illustrations of a recurrent, endearing motif that emotively personalizes cn and cf Alex.

The device of a personal, perceptible narrator is employed throughout the narrative and the general effect is that the readers find themselves, although at times begrudgingly, caring for a rather likable character in the story despite his rather odious counterpart in the fabula. While Alex does function as cn and cf, it is Alex the actor who conveys the most valuable insight into Alex as the protagonist. Therefore, I now consider Alex's characterization as it is implied by his behavior as an actor causing events and explicitly by his own narration including the alter-characterization of others in the story.

**Characterizing Alex**

Analysis of characterization investigates the means of creating the personality traits of fictional characters by focusing on three basic parameters: narratorial vs. figural characterization (identity of the characterizing subject: narrator / character); explicit vs. implicit characterization (personality traits attributed in words / implied by appearance

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75 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 146: "If the focalizer coincides with a character, that character will have an advantage over the other characters. The reader watches with the character's eyes and will, in principle, be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character." The reader is shown the violent events through the limited vision of younger Alex who only gradually realizes the consequences of his actions. But the reader is not a fourteen year-old boy. S/he does more with the information s/he receives than Alex does, s/he interprets it differently. The difference between the childish vision of the events and the interpretation that the adult gives them determines the novel's special effect.
or behavior); auto vs. alter characterization (characterizing subject characterizes him or herself / somebody else).  

I first consider the character of Alex DeLarge. If, indeed, Clockwork presents Burgess’ Augustinian “abhorrence of the view that some people were criminal and others not” and condemns the attempt (of Pelagian societies) to “cure” evil by eliminating the ability to make moral choices, such an attempt can only be truthfully authenticated by creating a character that would be seen as undoubtedly evil by even the most tolerant of audiences. Thus, through cn Alex, Burgess confronts the reader with a cf Alex that hyperbolically embodies the malevolent half of the Augustinian schizophrenia inborn in every human being. What is more, it is through cn Alex’s narratorial characterization that cf Alex is transformed from a terribly loathsome actor in the fabula, into an oftentimes irresistibly likeable character in the story.

As noted earlier, the focalization of cf Alex and the narration of cn Alex are made functional through narrative distance. The older, more mature Alex who has experienced the events of the fabula narrates a story of his blithe youth. The reader is, therefore, presented with a narrator whose intention is to relate the events of his own life in a story, in which he will explain its eventual outcome. The corollary is that the preponderance of Alex’s characterization is effectively narratorial with the age and circumstances of cn Alex remaining largely ambiguous while he relays the personality traits of his younger self to the reader. Accordingly, we can also classify cn Alex as an unreliable narrator. His presentation and or analysis of events can be called into question due to the perceived lack of objectivity of a character who is recounting his own personal involvement as an actor in the fabula. Cn Alex is the key component of the narrative’s discourse. As a consequence, the older cn Alex also serves as focalizer filtering the story through his consciousness. The majority of what we learn of the younger cf Alex as a character in the story and an actor in the fabula is given to us through a grown-up cn Alex looking back and recounting events as he chooses to remember them. The narratorial characterization given by the older Alex is exceedingly emotive in a blatant attempt to garner empathy from the reader for his younger self despite the

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76 Jahn, Poems, Plays, and Prose (2001), N7.1: “Characterization analysis investigates the ways and means of creating the personality traits of fictional characters. The basic analytical question is: who (subject) characterizes whom (object) as being what (as having general properties).”

77 Carol Dix, “Anthony Burgess About A Clockwork Orange,” in Transatlantic Review, no. 42 (1972). In Dix’s interview, Burgess stated that he wrote Clockwork in abhorrence of Pelagian societies’ (like that of Britain) notion of “inhuman” treatment for “inhuman” criminals. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that he wrote Clockwork to “shock” those individuals who would tolerate such an idea.

78 Bal, Narratology (1997), 26. This can also be interpreted as: (I narrate: (I state autobiographically in order to explain)).

79 Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 158. First introducing the term, Booth discusses the term “unreliable narrator”: “For practical criticism probably the most important of these kinds of distance is that between the fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator. If the reason for discussing point of view is to find how it relates to literary effects, then surely the moral and intellectual qualities of the narrator are more important to our judgment than whether he is referred to as ‘I’ or ‘he,’ or whether he is privileged or limited. If he is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays to us is transformed. Our terminology for this kind of distance in narrators is almost hopelessly inadequate. For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not.” Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 100. Building upon Booth’s discussion, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines an “unreliable narrator” as: “A narrator whose rendering of the story and / or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect. The main sources of unreliability are the character’s limited knowledge, her / his personal involvement, and her / his value-scheme.”
over cruelty and viciousness with which he had lived his life in Part I of the novel (chapters 1-7).

Alex serves as cn and the narratorial characterization of cf Alex is necessarily auto-characterization as he is fleshed out both explicitly and implicitly. We also learn about the younger Alex in an “alter” fashion through his description of other characters in the story. However, the majority of what can be gleaned about the younger Alex can be learned tactly through his behavior in Part I of the novel. Therefore, an implicit auto-characterization analysis of younger Alex as narratorially recounted by the older Alex is to be expected. In line with this expectation, I review instances of cn Alex recounting his own actions, or episodes he was involved in as an actor giving mention to explicit auto and implicit alter-characterization as it assists in imaging the younger Alex. It is chiefly through these episodes, or series of events, that cf Alex materializes as a character in the story. For the purposes of this discussion, it should be understood that Alex’s droogs are also directly involved in the proceeding episodes; however, it is Alex who serves as domino and inciter of events. The preponderance of the episodic analysis will come after they have all been described.

In Episode 1 (chapter 1), Alex and his droogs abuse an elderly “prof type” leaving a public library with an armful of books. Alex, as he typically does, begins a conversation with his potential victim on amicable terms. He does not speak in Burgess’ fictional slang “nadsat” (which might frighten the victim), but rather in more proper English, which serves him more pragmatically in the adult world. Seen in Episode 1, the following two quotes serve primarily to reveal both Alex’s cunning nature:

“I see you have books under your arm, brother. It is indeed a rare pleasure these days to come across somebody that still reads, brother” (5).

The fact that Alex calls his potential victim “brother” begins to call into question his sincerity towards the readers whom he also refers to as his “brothers.” Alex then snatches the man’s books (The Miracle of the Snowflake and The Rhombohedral System) and thumbs through them finding several “F” and “C” words. Upon discovering these words, he exclaims: “You’re nothing but a filthy-minded old skitebird” (6). After inventing his fictional justification, Alex then proceeds to rip up the books and ruthlessly beat the man. We can therefore assume that since Alex sees the need to somehow justify his actions, he is in some way aware that they are wrong.

Episode 2 (chapter 1) reveals the violent actions of Alex and his droogs who rob and beat a shopkeeper and his wife. In addition to his violence, it is this episode that initially divulges Alex’s taste for blood and his distaste for the appearance of filth:

I’d got my rooker round her rot to stop her belting out death and destruction to the four winds of heaven, but this lady doggie gave me a large foul big bite on it and it was me that did the creeching, and then she opened up beautiful with a flip yell for the millicents. Well, then she had to be tolchocked proper with one of the weights for the scales, and then a fair tap with a crowbar they had for opening cases, and that brought the red out like an old friend (10).

As they finish robbing the shop, Alex notices Dim’s disorderly appearance and states:

I didn’t like the look of Dim; he looked dirty and untidy, like a veck who’d been in a fight, which he had been, of course, but you should never look as though you have been.

In Episode 3 (chapter 2), Alex breaks into a writer and his wife’s home, savagely attacks the man and forces him to observe the rape of his wife. The following two passages reaffirm Alex’s slyness, his brutality, in addition to revealing him as a sexual predator:

...then it was only a matter of me putting in the old rooker and undoing the chain, me having softened up this devotchka with my gent’s goloss, so that she hadn’t shut the door like she should have done, us being strangers of the night.

So he (Dim) did the strong-man on the devotchka, who was still creech creech creeching away in very horrorshow four-in-a-bar, locking her rookers from the back, while I ripped away at this and that and the other, the others going haw haw haw still, and real good horrorshow goodies they were that then exhibited their pink glazzies, O my brothers, while I untrussed and got ready for the plunge. Plunging, I could slooshy cries of agony and this writer bleeding veck that Georgie and Pete held on to nearly got loose howling bezoomoomy with the filthiest of slovos that I already knew and others he was making up.

In Episode 4, (chapter 4), Alex skips school (as he frequently does) and heads to the local record store, since he is very keen on music. There, he meets two young girls whom we learn to be around ten years of age. This episode confirms Alex’s deceitfulness and emotionally callous sexual deviancy, and introduces his ironically aggressive reactions to classical music – particularly Beethoven:

Then an idea hit me and made me near fall over with the anguish and ecstasy of it, O my brothers, so I could not breathe for near ten seconds. I recovered and made with my new-clean zoobies and said: “What you got back home, little sisters, to play your fuzzy warbles on?” Because I could viddy the discs they were buying were these teeny pop veshches. “I bet you got little save tiny portable like picnic spinners.” And they sort of pushed their lower lips out at that. “Come with uncle,” I said, “and hear all proper. Hear angel trumpets and devil trombones. You are invited.” And I like bowed.

At this point, the unwittingly girls accept his invitation and go with Alex back to his parent’s empty apartment where, to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, he intoxicates and rapes them:

Then I pulled out the lovely Ninth out of its sleeve, so that Ludwig van was now nagay too, and I set the needle hissing on to the last movement, which was all bliss. There it was then, the bass strings like govoreeting away form under my bed at the rest of the orchestra, and then the male human goloss coming in and telling them all to be joyful, and the lovely blissful tune all about Joy being a glorious spark like of heaven, and then I felt the old tigers leap in me and then I leapt on these two young pitysas.

Then they were going down the stairs and I dropped off to sleep, still with the old Joy Joy Joy Joy Joy crashing and howling away.
The preceding four episodes impart a great deal concerning the younger Alex at age fifteen as they are recounted by the older, narrating version whose age is unknown. Most of what can be gleaned about of Alex is implied in his behavior as an actor causing many of the episodic events. On Alex is also implicitly fleshed-out as he characterizes the younger version of himself. In Episode 1, his interaction with the prototype characterizes Alex as a clever manipulator of persons cognizant enough to speak in a manner that befits the situation. Alex's speech is both proper (which would appeal more to a learned individual) and ingratiating as he refers to his potential victim as "brother." This pattern is recurrent throughout the narrative and can be seen in episode 4 when Alex refers to himself as "uncle," stylizing his language to gain the girls' trust. Likewise, we see Alex "soften-up" the writer's wife by speaking to her in a "gent's gloss." In this way, Alex resourcefully employs language to manipulate both individuals and situations to his advantage.

Not only is he shrewdly calculating, Alex is also depicted as overtly violent. For example, in episode 2, Alex strikes a woman with a crowbar that brings out the "red" like an "old friend," which reveals his unique and somewhat disturbing relationship to blood – a product of violence. More than just violent, Alex begins to demonstrate his psychology in his peculiar kinship to blood. A psychopathic personality has a disorder of behavior toward other individuals or society in which physical reality is clearly perceived except for an individual's social and moral obligations. While frequently exhibiting a lack of remorse, an individual often seeks immediate personal gratification in criminal acts, drug addiction, or sexual perversion (Heritage 2002: 1125). While all four episodes inventory his criminal acts, this notion of a "psychopathic Alex" is reinforced in episode 4, which exposes his sexual perversion while, concurrently, characterizing Alex as an individual who seems to lack a conscience. Just after raping the two girls, Alex is entirely without remorse as he falls asleep with "Joy Joy Joy Joy" echoing through his head.

Finally, episode 4 discloses Alex's particular relationship to music, on which several points can be made. First, Alex not only enjoys classical music, but also has a reasonable comprehension and an avid appreciation of it. This becomes clear when he is mindful of specific movements and exhibits a base knowledge of their meaning. Second, the music affects him in a way that is antithetical to conventional human reactions. For Alex, classical music inspires "Joy," which in itself is not odd, but this "Joy" manifests itself in the form of violence, which is. In other words, the hearing of classical music provokes Alex to act out aggressively as he leaps like a "tiger" onto his prey.

While Alex is predominantly characterized implicitly through his behavior, there are several explicit examples worth noting. In chapter 4, Alex's post-corrective advisor (parole officer) P.R. Deltoide (the "muscle" of the state) warns him that if he is caught, he will be sent to prison rather than juvenile detention. In a rare example of explicit figural auto-characterization, Alex responds with the following:

But, brothers, this biting of their toe-nails over what is the cause of badness is what runs me into a fine laughing malchick. They don’t go into what is the cause of goodness, so why of the other shop? If lewdies are good that’s because they like it, and I wouldn’t ever interfere with their pleasures, and so of the other shop. And I was patronizing the other shop. More, badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies, and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty. But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenkys selves fighting these big machines? I am serious with you, brothers, over this. But what I do I do because I like to do (40).
The preceding passage is multifaceted in its imaging of the younger Alex making particular, elucidating admissions about himself. Viewed in terms Augustine and Pelagius, Alex is aware that both good and evil actions emanate from the Augustinian self marked by the conflicting desires inherently contained within it. He is also cognizant that the “not-self” (the state) cannot have the bad because they cannot allow the Pelagian self noted by the ability to make free moral choices of someone like Alex who chooses evil because he enjoys it.

Alex as an actor in the fabula is fleshed out into a character in the story as one of eminently complex and singular paradoxical dimensions. The younger, cf Alex is an adroit manipulator of persons and situations wielding language as a means to achieve his self-serving, diabolical ends. Alex’s reasonable awareness and keen appreciation of classical music could be viewed as “typical” of the Western notion of someone who is— at least in part— “cultured.” Nevertheless, despite a certain level of personal and social enlightenment one associates with a cultured individual, Alex is peculiarly spurred to violence upon hearing classical music. Furthermore, Alex also exhibits psychopathic characteristics in his unique relationship to not only music, but also to blood which he views as his “old friend.” However, Alex’s psychopathic personality is best demonstrated by a complete lack of remorse after committing heinous acts of rape and brutality even though he is aware that his behavior is in some way wrong.

Burgess’ characterization of Alex as one of eminently paradoxical dimensions appears to be consistent with his particular notion of Christianity that “oscillates” between the antithetical poles of Pelagianism free will and Augustinian determinism. Burgess has, in Alex, created an intensely violent character-bound focalizer and personal, perceptible character-bound narrator to articulate a story that considers the primary topic of the constitutive endowment of inherently sinful humans to make moral choices. Through cn Alex, Burgess is able to confront the reader with a cf Alex that hyperbolically embodies the evil half of the Augustinian schizophrenia inborn in every human being. The effect of this narrative strategy is that the personal narration of cn Alex endears the reader to cf Alex in spite of his deeds. This sense of affection lends (potential) potency to Burgess’ indictment of the attempt to cure evil in civilized society by eliminating an individual’s ability to make moral choices. Therefore, Alex’s purpose is not merely to convey the evil of violence and its ruinous effects, but to reveal that eliminating one’s Pelagian moral freedom is, in a sense, a “greater” evil (even when it is being applied to an evil person).

Alex perpetrates evil knowingly because he ecstatically desires it; he is a physical manifestation of Burgess’ sentiment that: “there is so much original sin in us all that we find evil rather attractive. To devastate is easier and more spectacular than to create.” Burgess’ view appears to contradict Alex’s notion that: “If lewdies are good that’s because they like it...” (40). In contrast, doing “good” seems to resonate with a Christian notion of selfless altruism. In other words, choosing the good is not what we would selfishly elect to do if, naturally, inherently sinful humans prefer devastation. Indeed, the

81 American Heritage College Dictionary (2002), 346: “‘Cultured’: educated, polished, and refined.” In Western cultures, classical music is largely considered an “enlightening” aesthetic experience. Therefore, one who is familiar with classical music could reasonably be considered—at least in part—“cultured.”

82 Dix, “Anthony Burgess” (1972), 183. Dix’s interview implies Burgess’ indictment of the attempt to cure evil in civilized, Pelagian societies (Britain).

83 Anthony Burgess, “A Clockwork Orange Resucked,” in A Clockwork Orange (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986), ix. The notion implied here is that the existence of original sin in all humans gives us an innate proclivity toward evil and destruction over good and creation.
intrinsic extension of the Augustinian notion of original sin is manifested effectively in Alex and his actions of devastation.

In *Clockwork*, it appears that the existence of Augustinian inborn evil is as natural as the good. Moreover, that inherent “necessary” evil is fundamental to defining an individual. Burgess has circumscribed humans by their abilities to make moral choices, and in order to make moral choices there must be at least two options from which to choose. Alex chooses evil because, as he states: “I do what I do because I like to do” (40). Alex’s actions, while evil in their own right, only provide Burgess an opportunity to reveal the greater evil presented in the narrative, which is the selfish elimination of individual moral choice by the state.

**Characterizing the State**

When viewed allegorically, *Clockwork* functions to reveal the nature of the naturally antagonistic relationship between the designs of the collective (state) versus the aims of the free individual (Alex). In *Clockwork*, the actors that comprise the state include members of law enforcement, doctors, and politicians; each group externalizes the “not-self” and position themselves antithetically to Alex. This opposition manifests in the state’s efforts to stifle the Pelagian self, which includes the prospect of moral choice.

The capacity to make moral choices (free will) inexorably contains within it the potentiality that the free will of the individual can be, and often is, in direct opposition to the will of the state. Historically speaking, the stability of any state depends on the compliance of its citizens. Therefore, it is in the state’s best interest to minimize the amount those citizens either “want to,” or have the “ability to” (if they indeed want to) make choices in opposition to the will of the state. Consequently, the contract between the state and the “free” individuals it seeks to govern is inherently one of ascendency and control. In other words, the more the Machiavellian state can command the free will of its citizens, the longer it will tend to survive. With these ideas in view, this section is devoted to the characterization of *Clockwork’s* state and circumscribes the nature of its relationship to Alex, which will ultimately function on a more thematic level.

The state is characterized explicitly through Alex’s words and implicitly by the conduct of its own members. Such behavior, as will be made evident, largely concerns the endeavor to control the will of the individual through the attempt to induce self-denial by imposing morality upon its citizens. The following passages exemplify aspects of Machiavellian political philosophy and are grouped according to the subjects of focalization (or focalizers), which include members of law enforcement, the Governor, and Dr. Brodsky (director of a state-run conditioning program) respectively:

“If you have no concern for your horrible self you at least might have some for me, who have sweated over you. A big black mark, I tell you in confidence, for every one we don’t reclaim, a confession of failure for every one of you that ends up in the stripy hole” (38).

“If you’d like to give him a bash in the chops, sir,” said the top millicent

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84 Karl Beckson, Arthur Ganz, *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 8. “‘Allegory’: an extended narrative that carries a second meaning along with the surface story.” The continuity of the meaning involves an analogous structure of ideas or events. It is reasonable to assume that *Clockwork’s* narrative level “entertains” while its allegorical level “instructs” the reader concerning the historically antithetical relationship between the individual (Alex) and the collective (the state).
(policeman), "don’t mind us. We’ll hold him down. He must be another great
disappointment to you" (71).

"And," said the warder, "It’s going to get worse, not better. A right dirty
criminal world you lot are trying to build" (85).

In the first passage, Deltoid, Alex’s parole officer, exemplifies the state’s intrinsic
egocentrism in that he is more concerned with his professional record than with Alex’s
rehabilitation. The second passage illustrates the violent, retributive nature of the state,
which is typically and most obviously manifested by the members of law enforcement
who abuse Alex after they have arrested him. The third passage implies the state’s
Pelagian distinction between those who are inherently criminals and those who are not.
While not as overtly violent, the Governor serves to reinforce the notions of
retribution and the Pelagian distinction first mentioned by the prison warden:

"An eye for an eye, I say. If someone hits you you hit back, do you not? Why
then should not the State, very severely hit by you brutal hooligans, not hit back
also? But the new view is to say no. The new view is that we turn the bad into
good” (93).

Here, the Governor reasserts both the “eye for an eye” (lex taliones) sentiment of
retaliation and the Pelagian distinction between the “bad” and the “good” as if they are
both separate entities, not contained within the same Augustinian individual. The
Governor also introduces the Machiavellian “new view,” which is to turn the bad man
into a good man, or a good citizen in the eyes of the state. Dr. Brodsk y attempts to
realize this transformation through a procedure known as Ludovico’s Technique, or an
experimental aversion therapy (being tested on Alex) that consists of forcing a patient to
view films of ghastly acts of sex, torture, and violence while incorporating drugs to
produce nausea. This process, in effect, restricts free will by permanently conditioning
the patient to react with intense physical illness even after s/he has reentered “free”
society. In the following passages, Brodsky expresses the state’s view of this procedure
and its consequences:

"These are subtleties,” like smiled Dr. Brodsky. “We are not concerned with
motive, with the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime”
(126).

"He will be your true Christian,” Dr. Brodsky was creeching out, “ready to turn the
other cheek, ready to be crucified rather than to crucify, sick to the very heart at
the thought of even killing a fly” (129).

In the first passage, Brodsky’s comments convey the state’s failure to understand the
deeper ethical concerns in regard to the Technique’s power to limit one’s ability to make
moral choices. Rather, Brodsky feels that Alex’s resultant lack of the ability to make moral
choices will render him a “true Christian” ready to turn the other cheek. However, any
future “act” of Christianity would be merely to eliminate the sickness Alex would
experience as a result of his conditioning and not the consequence of moral choice
based on any internal virtue.

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foot.” The footnote for this verse assert that “Eye for an eye,” or “lex taliones,” was a principle
applied in the Old Testament to prevent extreme brutality in exacting retribution.
The state’s ignorance in regard to any unforeseen consequences of the conditioning is evidenced in the following interchange between Brodsky and his assistant—Dr. Branom:

“Music,” said Dr. Brodsky, like musing. “So you’re keen on music. I know nothing about it myself. It’s a useful emotional heightener, that’s all I know. Well, well. What do you think about that, eh, Branom?” “It can’t be helped,” said Dr. Branom. “Each man kills the thing he loves, as the poet-prisoner said. Here’s the punishment element perhaps. The governor ought to be pleased” (113).

This passage reveals the Technique’s inadvertent eradication of Alex’s ability to enjoy classical music—specifically Beethoven’s Ninth. It was not the design of Brodsky and Branom to induce this response. Rather, it was entirely by accident that Alex was conditioned to involuntarily react to Beethoven as he would to violence.

In addition to a kind of consequential ignorance, the state seems equally oblivious to its own moral accountability as it pertains to the creation of the Technique. Specifically, it is only Alex who understands the state’s culpability in creating the violent films it uses to condition him:

This was very real, very real, though if you thought about it properly you couldn’t imagine lewdies actually agreeing to having all this done to them in a film, and if these films are made by the Good or the State you couldn’t imagine them being allowed to take these films without like interfering with what was going on (103).

Here, Alex points out the “realness” of the films and implies that either the state directly sanctioned the violent acts or filmed the acts in progress without interfering. In both cases, the state is left morally accountable. However, being in power, the state is not answerable for its actions and is in a position to impose its collective will on that of the individual. With his own will being infringed upon, Alex notes that the individual often fights back:

But the not-self cannot have the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave selves fighting these big machines? (40).

Alex explicitly describes the state’s (the “not-self”) denial of the self, which is a categorical stifling of the human capacity to make moral choices. The state cannot allow the self, or the bad citizen because s/he has the potential to be a direct threat to those in power. Therefore, it is in the state’s best interest—in the name of “crime reduction”—to manipulate an individual’s capacity to make choices. Conversely, not restricting individual choice would be politically hazardous because the state could easily be expunged through the choice presented in open elections or outright insurgency. Thus, by denying the self, freedom of choice is limited, therefore (potentially) increasing the state’s capacity to maintain its Machiavellian constancy.

In an effort to control the will of the individual, the state not only sanctions violence, but performs it as well. What is more, the state is egocentrically incognizant of the greater ethical ramifications of their actions and unaware of the significance of moral choice and its inherent interplay with moral responsibility. This obtuseness is evidenced by Brodsky’s reference to the “motive” and “higher ethics” behind crime as “subtleties” when viewed in light of the “true Christian” he espouses. Thus, Clockwork’s state—implicitly characterized by both its own members and Alex—begins to materialize. The state endeavors, oftentimes violently, to exercise control over Alex’s will. While such
efforts are occasionally done in the name of altruism (Alex’s parole officer), they appear to resonate more with the notion of self-preservation— a notion evidenced when Brodsky claims that “cutting down crime” is his only concern. A government that can significantly reduce crime is generally one that will remain in power, and Clockwork’s state has succeeded in effectively limiting Alex’s ability to act in a way that may threaten to its long-term stability.

However, Ludovico’s Technique has also added an unforeseen punishment element in the eradication of Beethoven as a source of joy for Alex. With this point in mind, Burgess stated:

The gates of heaven are closed to the boy (Alex), since music is a figure of celestial bliss. The State has committed a double sin: it has destroyed a human being, since humanity is defined by freedom of moral choice; it has also destroyed an angel.”

Burgess’ comment implies that the state may have overstepped the bounds of lex taliones in their elimination of Alex’s love for music, or have committed a “double sin.” Hence, the state exemplifies Clockwork’s “double” or “greater” evil by forcing one to do socially acceptable acts of goodness not out of moral conviction, but simply from a state-run programming. Such a collective imposition of will is spiritually damning relegating the individual to a sub-human, robotic condition (a clockwork orange). In other words, the balance of the contract is weighted in favor of the state, rather than the individual. In such a case, the state becomes the annihilator of an individual’s authenticity and innate sense of autonomy and self-expression in order to ensure its own survival. In Clockwork, imaged through the relationship between Alex and the state, Burgess contends that authentic, selfless goodness is not coerced goodness. Therefore, good accomplished through free choice is infinitely better than the forced good of one who is oppressed into a kind of pseudo-morality. In other words, freely chosen evil is, in a sense, paradoxically good in that the act was freely chosen.

**Characterizing the Prison Charlie**

The prison charlie (or chaplain) is vital to the reader’s understanding of Clockwork’s presentation of political philosophy and, in particular, the Pelagian-Augustinian contention. The charlie, while certainly not portrayed as the paradigm of moral perfection, presents the reader with an intermediary viewpoint in response to Alex’s openly vicious use of his free will and the state’s more clandestinely sadistic use of the Ludovico’s Technique as a “cure.” While explicitly characterized by Alex, it is largely through his participation as an actor in the fabula that the charlie is implicitly revealed as a character in the story who presents the reader with perhaps the only even-handed insight into the moral implications of the Technique.

Contrasted with the state, the charlie assumes the role of conscientious spokesperson in regard to the deeper moral considerations that the Technique provokes:

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86 Carol Dix, “Anthony Burgess” (1972), 185. This passage further reinforces the tremendous importance Burgess placed on the inviolability of moral choice in Dix’s interview. This importance is signified by the term “double sin” as it refers to the state’s elimination of Alex’s ability to make moral choices.

87 Burgess, “Resucked” (1986), ix. Burgess defines a “clockwork orange” as someone who can only (robotically) perform good or evil. Frank Northen Magill, ed., *Magill’s Survey of Long Fiction* (Salem: Salem Press Inc., 1991), 370. In contradistinction to this, Burgess reinforces the idea that: “No matter how awful one’s actions become, s/he should be allowed to choose them.”
"The question is whether such a technique can really make a man good.
Goodness comes from within, 6655321. Goodness is something chosen. When a
man cannot choose he ceases to be a man." (83).

"It may not be nice to be good, little 6655321. It may be horrible to be good.
What does God want? Does God want goodness or the choice of goodness? Is
a man who chooses the bad in some way better than a man who has the good
imposed upon him?" (95).

"Choice," rumbled a rich deep gloss. I vidid it belonged to the prison
charlie. "He has no real choice, has he? Self-interest, fear of physical pain drove
him to that grotesque act of self-abasement. Its insincerity was clearly to be
seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable
of moral choice" (126).

The preceding passages reveal the charlie's reactions to the weighty moral implications
of the aversion therapy being tested on Alex who has been further dehumanized by
simply being referred to as "6655321." In the last passage, echoing Burgess' own
sentiments noted earlier, the charlie also defines humanity by our ability to make moral
choices and the notion of that ability as a "greater good" even when it is used to do
evil. What is more, the elimination of moral choice results in the eradication of moral
responsibility, which may be a necessary component of a more Pelagian "moral
transformation." 88

While the prison charlie may be the only character that seriously considers Alex's
well-being as a human and an individual, he cannot escape either his own selfish
concerns of his career in the face an ambitious regime or his own frailty that frequently
manifests in drunkenness:

And all the time he had this rich manny von of Scotch on him, and then he went
off to this little cantora to peet some more (79).

"Were it expedient, I would protest about it, but it is not expedient. There is the
question of my own career, there is the question of the weakness of my own
voice when set against the shout of certain more powerful elements in the polity"
(94).

However, despite his weaknesses, it is the charlie's understanding of the importance of
choice that ultimately affects on Alex's awareness of its significance:

"What's it going to be then, eh?" said the prison charlie for the third raz. "Is it
gong to be in and out of institutions like this, though more in than out for most of
you, or are you going to attend to the Divine Word and realize the punishments
that await the unrepentant sinner in the next world, as well as this?" (77).

88 Burgess, "Clockwork Resucked" (1986), ix: "Evil has to exist along with good, in order that moral
choice may operate."
own "moral transformation" based on the doctrine of free will and strength of mind counters the
Augustinian notion of predestined "salvation" based on the doctrine God's electing individuals
unto salvation through grace.
Here, the initial question posed by the charlie implies the human capacity of (Pelagian) free will to make moral decisions between good and evil. The relationship between Alex's and the charlie's cognizance of the weight of choice is manifested in an Alex's repetition of the charlie's question ("What's it going to be then, eh?") four times in the first four pages of the novel. This "question-motif," which was gleaned by cf Alex from the charlie, is addressed to the reader by the older, wiser, cf Alex who, looking back, realizes the value of moral choice and emphasizes it to the reader in the form of a motif.

In the entire narrative, it is only the charlie who realizes the inherent moral uncertainty in regard to the Technique. He recognizes that this procedure merely dehumanizes Alex by restricting his capacity to make decisions, and while it may make him a good citizen, it cannot make him good man. The Technique strips Alex of moral responsibility and forces him to choose the good to avoid the painful consequences of his conditioning, which leaves him as something less than human. It is only the charlie who grasps the moral ramifications included in the state's creation of this "sub-human," which can only perform a relative good. This new being is referred to by Burgess as a clockwork orange: "meaning that he (Alex) has the appearance of an organism lovely with colour and juice but is in fact only a clockwork toy to be wound up by God or the Devil or (since this is increasingly replacing both) the State" ("Resucked" 1986: ix). Both as an actor in the fabula and a character in the story, it is the prison charlie who most clearly presents Clockwork's thematic thrust with respect to the gravity of moral choice.

**Implicit Characterization and the Retributive Nature of Violence**

While cf Alex is blatantly destructive, the reader is confronted with numerous acts of violence committed by other actors in the fabula. Although Alex's acts are certainly heinous, the vicious exploits of the other actors must also be examined to fully form the complete picture of Clockwork's violence. The passages in this section confront the reader with acts of retribution performed by members of disparate strata of society. The first passage reveals the retributive violence of the police:

> I will not go into what they did, but it was all like panting and thudding against this like background of whirring farm engines and the twittwittwittering in the bare or nagoy branches (150).

Here, Alex describes how these particular policemen (former gang-members the state has recruited whom Alex had previously beaten in Part I) execute their revenge, although he has left out the more graphic details.

The second and third passages exemplify the retributive violence of the "traditional" police and Deltoid (parole officer) respectively:

> "A real pleasure this is," I heard another millicent goloss say as I was tolchocked very rough and skory into the auto (65).

> He came a bit nearer and he spat. He spat. He spat full in my litso and then wiped his wet spitty rot with the back of his rooker (71).

In both instances, members of the state seek reprisal for the wrongs they believe Alex has committed against them. Specifically, they intend to make Alex pay for the violent and cleverly elusive behavior that has been their source of recurrent humiliation.

The fourth passage discloses the retributive violence of the old "prof type" (and his companions) whom Alex had also previously beaten:
"Kill him, stamp on him, murder him, kick his teeth in," and all that cal, and I could evidently what it was clear enough. It was old age having a go at youth, that's what it was (144).

Here, we can clearly see the cyclical nature of revenge as "old age having a go at youth" reverses the young (Alex and his droogs) "having a go at old age" seen earlier in the fabula on page 14.

In the fifth passage, F. Alexander – a writer and political dissident – takes revenge for the prior assault and rape of his wife. F. Alexander and his associates lock Alex in a room and play Beethoven's Ninth fully aware that it was a part of his conditioning:

And all the time the music got more and more gromky, like it was all a deliberate torture. O my brothers (167).

Calculatingly, F. Alexander uses the music to torture Alex and force him to jump out of a window, which is his only escape. He ultimately intends to use Alex's death as a propaganda weapon against the state.

In each case presented above, violent revenge is taken upon Alex for the vicious acts he had previously committed upon those same actors. Using these actions as a form of implicit characterization, it appears that Burgess has constructed a fabula that impels the reader to consider the retributive nature of violence. Although Alex's violence was dispensed for his mere indulgence and the resulting retribution tends to be viewed as "justified" (lex taliones), one could also argue that the violence perpetrated against Alex was also born out of kind of selfish indulgence. While it is the case that retributive actions tend to correlate neatly with our innate sense of equity, the examples seen in *Clockwork* are motivated by not only revenge, but also by an underlying layer of professional arrogance, generational vanity, and political expediency. To state it differently, although their revenge is warranted, each revenging actor appears to be motivated less by Alex's prior act and more by deeper selfish ends. What is more, no revenging actor exhibits the slightest measure of the charlie's Augustinian notion of altruistic love as a response to how they have been individually wronged by Alex. Thus, all acts of violence work in fixed interdependence with one another to effectively force the reader into larger considerations in regard to the selfish motivations of those who desire the power to consummate their egoistic intents.

**Redeeming Love and Chapter Twenty-one**

The last chapter – twenty-one – was originally edited out for American audiences by Burgess' New York publisher, whereas European readers had access to the full text Burgess originally produced. In 1986, chapter twenty-one was finally restored for American audiences.

For the first twenty chapters of the narrative, Alex desired to commit only evil. However, twenty-one presents the reader with a new chapter beginning to Alex's story and exposes a dramatic tonal shift that unveils the "possibility of moral transformation," which Burgess believed should be fundamental to the creation of any novel.90 In twenty-

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90 Burgess, "*Clockwork Resucked*" (1986), viii: "There is, in fact, not much point in writing a novel unless you can show the possibility of moral transformation, or an increase in wisdom, operating in your chief character or characters."
one, Alex has turned eighteen and both numbers (21 and 18) are symbolic ages of human maturity in many Western cultures. While twenty-one sheds new light upon Alex, it is also representative of an age not only of maturity, but also of adulthood. Accordingly, he “outgrows” the incorrigible ways of his youth as he states: “Yes yes yes, there it was. Youth must go, ah yes” (190). However, he goes on to assert that:

Youth is only being in a way like it might be an animal. No, it is not just like being an animal so much as being like one of these malenky toys you viddy being sold in the streets, like little chellovecks made out of tin and with a spring inside and then a winding handle on the outside and you wind it up grrr grrr grrr grrr and off it itties like walking, O my brothers. But it itties in a straight line and bangs straight into things bang bang and it cannot help what it is doing. Being young is like being like one of these malenky machines (190).

Here, Alex likens being young to being a wind-up toy banging into things because it is devoid of autonomy and self-control.

In the following passage, Alex reveals his concern for the well-being of a future son because he knows that like the windup toy he will be powerless to prevent his son from mechanically committing many of the same atrocities:

My son, my son. When I had my son I would explain all that to him when he was starry enough to like understand. But then I knew he would not understand or would not want to understand at all and would do all the veshches I had done, yes perhaps even killing some poor starry forellya surrounded with mewing kots and koshkas, and I would not be able to really stop him (191).

Both passages divulge the robotic and animalistic nature of youth, which presents a potential dilemma when viewed in light of the tremendous importance Burgess places on moral choice. Cn Alex’s connection between the young and a mechanical toy that continually and impotently errs is problematized in light of the thematic significance of moral choice. For contained within moral choice is its inherent significance in association with moral responsibility, which plays a requisite role for one to ultimately make a Pelagian “moral transformation.”

Alex is aware that what he had been doing was in some way wrong as he frets about his own son following in his path. However, Alex only came to this insight after naturally shedding youth and sensing some level of maturated moral responsibility. Like the windup toy that cannot control itself, the actions of youthful Alex were beyond his command and he is thus freed from all moral responsibility, which undermines the value of moral choice. The mechanistic actions of the youthful Alex expose a precarious relationship with the tremendous weight Clockwork places upon moral choice and, conversely, the great evil of taking it away. This awkward relationship between action and choice may be easily reconciled as an authorial oversight or simply by the unreliability of Alex’s narration. Cn Alex displays the common propensity for those who have finally matured to offhandedly dismiss their former misgivings to being “young,” as opposed to taking complete ownership. However, such an inconsistency can also be attributed to the characteristic outflow of Burgess’ oscillating, residual Christianity, which
precariously attempts to straddle the theoretical opposites of Pelagian free will and the universal inheritance of sin and the resulting determinism of Augustinianism. 91

Literary Space and Implied Temporal Derivatives

Literary space is an inclusive term that refers to the environment, or the surroundings that situate objects and characters. The relevance of the following explication of Clockwork’s literary space rests on this aspect’s capacity to influence the reader’s conception of the fabula elements and resulting interpretation of the story. While much of this section focuses on language, such a discussion functions as a temporary device exclusively for the explication of these particular aspects as they assist the overall textual analysis.

In chapter three, the Alex reveals that he lives in “Municipal Flatblock 18a between Kingsley Avenue and Wilsonway” (31). From his disclosure, several things can be gleaned. First, judging preliminarily from the street names and the word “municipal,” Alex presumably inhabits a relatively modern Western, English-speaking city, which is divided into municipalities and has addresses designated by numbers and letters (18a). Most Western readers recognize such typical street names as Kingsley Avenue and Wilsonway and are acquainted with a municipality, but may be slightly vexed by the term “flatblock.” This term, for what we assume is a sort of apartment building, presents the “unfamiliar” (fabricated) within the “familiar” (existent), which creates a slightly futuristic flavor, or the special effect contrived by Burgess.

This modern Western, rather ambiguous city and its bordering suburbs circumscribe Clockwork’s first, or largest degree of literary space. Burgess moves the reader from the city to the suburbs in one of the narrative’s more explicit depictions of space:

We filled round what was called the backtown for a bit, scaring old vecks and cheenas that were crossing the road and zigzagging after cats and that. Then we took the road west. There wasn’t much traffic about, so I kept pushing the old noga through the floorboards new, and the Durango 95 ate up the road like spaghetti. Soon it was winter trees and dark, my brothers, with a country dark...(19).

Extracted from the city, the reader is transported into the less crowded suburbs that are left dark from the scarcity of the city lights and abundance of trees. The lesser degrees of space in Clockwork, whether it is Alex’s home in the city, or another character’s home in the surrounding country, are left virtually undescribed, which leaves Clockwork’s conveyance of literary space rather amorphous. It encompasses all things that can be conceived of as spatially located objects and persons (Jahn 2001: No.2). Viewed in this way, a place is an abstract concept, while space is concrete and describable. In other words, Alex’s apartment or the city he lives in can only become “real,” in a sense, through the description of literary space. Thus, Clockwork’s amorphous conveyance of literary space adds the narrative’s special disorienting and futuristic effect.

Although a particular event within the fabula occurs at a specific locale or place, the event is provided context through the degrees of space it is embedded within. For example, Frank Herbert’s epic science-fiction classic Dune (1965) incorporates the largest

91 Rees, The Letters of Pelagius (1989), 20: “Pelagius taught that redemption in Christ enables man to co-operate with God in the ascetical struggle toward deification. The English Monk and scholar St. Bede stated that Pelagius’ theology contains: ‘...much excellent moral instruction but is marred by the author’s failure to emphasize the need to rely on divine grace rather than free will and strength of mind.’”
conceivable degree of literary space, as the entire known universe is accessible to its inhabitants. The characters of Dune are able to “fold space,” or “travel without moving” to any part of the universe instantaneously. Embedded within this largest possible space, or frame, specific events of the fabula occur. For example, a particular event early in Dune’s fabula consists of the birth of its protagonist - Muad’Dib:

A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct. This every sister of the Bene Gesserit knows. To begin your study of the life of Muad’Dib, then, take care that you first place him in his time: born in the 57th year of the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV. And take the most special care that you locate Muad’Dib in his place: the planet Arrakis. Do not be deceived by the fact that he was born on Caladan and lived his first fifteen years there. Arrakis, the planet known as Dune, is forever his place (1990: 1).

Muad’Dib’s birth is far-reaching in that it influences all other events in the fabula. His birth marks the beginning of a jihad that will cleanse the universe and every degree of space that lies embedded within it. Therefore, it is imperative that the reader gets a sense of the vastness of Dune’s first degree of literary space in order to place the embedded birth event in its proper context. For Muad’Dib will ultimately transform the entire universe.

Space can be perceptually represented through sight, hearing, and touch; and to what extent the writer chooses to describe each is the proportion of “feel” given to the reader. Literary space can also be depicted implicitly as the reader makes connections between the information provided and the most logical space for it to operate in. For example, if a character is riding a motorcycle, then the reader naturally infers that the character is outside on a road. Moreover, literary space can also serve to imply literary time. Literary time is also a comprehensive term that refers to the time the story “impresses” upon its readers in the most general sense, rather than the way time specifically frames a particular event in the fabula. For example, if a human being is walking around without a breathing apparatus on a lush and green Mars, the reader would likely infer that the character is some time in the distant future since the planet’s landscape has been dramatically transformed and a human is able to exist without oxygen supplied artificially. Literary space, then, is material to the story as the author is able to intimate a sense of literary time and give the reader multiple degrees of descriptive context in which the fabula can operate. Most substantially, that context can, in varying degrees, influence how the reader views the elements of the fabula and, in turn, how s/he interprets the story. This also holds true for Clockwork.

In the following passage, Alex and his droogs drive a stolen car into the suburbs where they have their ill-fated encounter with F. Alexander and his wife:

The luna was well up now, and we could viddy this cottage fine and clear as I eased up and put the brake on, the other three giggling like bezoomy, and we could viddy the name on the gate of this cottage veshch was HOME, a gloopy sort of name (19).

Earlier in chapters one and two, the reader was confronted with several violent events in the city where they are typically more prevalent. However, perhaps the most brutal violence perpetrated by Alex and his droogs takes place in the outlying suburbs where oftentimes people go to escape the turmoil of urban life. What is more, the event takes place in the victim’s “HOME” where we often tend to feel most secure from the evils of

92 Bal, Narratology (1997), 140: “...space is always implicitly necessary for every activity performed by a character.”
the outside world. With this example in view, we can see how an event's significance, as it relates to the reader's interpretation of the story, is affected by the degree of literary space in which it occurs.

Similar to Terry Gilliam's futuristic, yet anachronistic realm envisioned in his film *Brazil* (1985), *Clockwork* conveys a world set in the near future by juxtaposing the familiar and the unfamiliar within a rather commonplace, ambiguous sense of literary space. While the novel does, at times, present space explicitly through description, *Clockwork* implies literary time through a fusion of existing and fabricated language, customs, and objects. A literary time set in a bizarre fictional past or present is immediately dismissed in the first chapter when Alex and his "droogs" (gang) rob a man of his letters that date "back to 1960" (7). As *Clockwork* was first published in 1962, Alex's disclosure of the letters dating "back to" 1960 as something noteworthy lends credence to the early assumption of *Clockwork* being set in the future. According to the description of Alex's address and the mention of the stolen letter's date, the reader should begin envisioning a world set in the future rather than the past or the present. As a result, s/he must then determine if they are reading a story set in the near or distant future.

In addressing the reader's present dilemma, Burgess utilizes several devices that are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar as clues; it is this paradoxical interplay that gives the reader the sense of the near, rather than distant future. For example, people drive cars such as the "Durango 95" and watch movies in the "Filmodrome." The reader is assuredly familiar with cars and movie theaters, but unfamiliar with their more futuristic fictitious counterparts in *Clockwork*. It is through this paradoxical interaction of coexistent familiarity and unfamiliarity that Burgess is able to create a sense of the near future just beyond the immediate experience of the reader. In further illustration, George Orwell first published *1984* in 1948 and set it in the late twentieth century, or the near future for a 1948 audience. Conversely, for a present-day audience, a story set in the late twentieth-century would be the past. However, while the year 1984 has come and gone, the story is still able to impress a sense of the near future upon its readers through its particular union of the familiar with the unfamiliar. Similar to 1984, it is *Clockwork*'s paradoxical sense of literary time that is able to convey a continual sense of the near future.

While deftly utilizing the realm of fictitious objects, *Clockwork* makes a related use of language, imagery, and custom, much to the same effect. The most cogent device he used to these ends is his use of language. Similar to, although not as extensive as, J.R.R. Tolkien's use of imagined languages in his *Lord of the Rings* (1944) trilogy, Burgess, both as a writer and an established linguist, employs his novel as a repository for a developed exploration of languages. Nadsat stems from the Russian word "nadsat" (a

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93 As evidenced on page 19 of the text, Burgess refers to the writer F. Alexander's place of residence as "HOME." Even though it is not the only residence presented in story, using all capital letter clearly emphasizes the importance of this particular location. There are two likely possibilities for such an emphasis: one, it connects the fictional incidents in F. Alexander's "HOME" to the actual incidents in Burgess' life; two, it emphasizes the irony of the violence which occurs within the typically protected environment of one's home.

94 Terry Gilliam, *Brazil* (Los Angeles: Universal Pictures, 1985). Although set in the future, the actors in *Brazil* use antiquated typewriters, drive old cars, watch old televisions, and dress in a Western 1950's style. This confronts the viewer with fictional futuristic devices as well as overtly anachronistic ones. The effect is, generally, that the film conveys a sense of the "near" future.

95 George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Penguin Group, 1977). Orwell's novel *1984* (1948) is widely recognized for its ability to continually impress upon its readers a sense of the near future. This capacity allows it to serve as a perpetual caveat in regard to the state's oppressive tendencies.

suffix for the teenage numbers 11 through 19) and is made up mainly of Russian, child speak, and Cockney, while also incorporating German, Malay, French, Arabic, and Romany. It is incorporated in *Clockwork* as a type of slang used only between Alex and his droogs. A postmodern pastiche of language, nadsat is (in *Clockwork*) the language of youth. Alex uses a more standard version of English when he is speaking to any other actor besides his droogs and often bounces back and forth quite rapidly between the two. The reader is, therefore, concurrently unfamiliar with Alex’s use of fictional nadsat and familiar with his use of Standard English.

Bizarre imagery and customs are also utilized shrewdly along these same lines. Early in the fabula, Alex describes the appearance of cf Alex and his droogs:

The four of us were dressed in the height of fashion, which in those days was a pair of black very tight tights with the old jelly mould, as we called it, fitting on the crutch underneath the tights, this being to protect and also a sort of a design you could viddly clear enough in a certain sort of light, so that I had one in the shape of a spider... Then we wore waisty jackets without lapels but with these very big built-up shoulders (pitches we called them) which were a kind of a mockery having real shoulders like that. Then, my brothers, we had these off-white cravats which looked like whipped-up kartoffel or spud with a sort of a design made on it with a fork (2).

The reader is likely to be acquainted with the types of clothing, but unaccustomed with the manner in which it is being worn. On the same page, teenage girls, or “sharps,” are described as wearing “purple and green and orange wigs” with make-up painted in a rainbow around their eyes. These same sharps also demonstrate the extrinsic custom of wearing silver badges on the front of their clothing near their breasts with the names of those they had slept with before they reached the age of fourteen. In addition, it is not remarkable that Alex and his droogs use drugs, but it is peculiar that they drink milk laced with the fictitious hallucinogenic drugs “vellocet or synthemesc or drencrom” (1). As a result, the reader is simultaneously acquainted with the functions of clothes, make-up, fashion, and drugs, and unfamiliar with the way in which they are being displayed or applied.

Burgess’ uncommon use of language interwoven with bizarre character appearance, invented customs, and objects gives the reader a sense of the unfamiliar within the somewhat familiar surroundings of a modern Western city that serves as a point of disorientation and — having ruled out a bizarre fictional past or present — the reader is therefore inclined toward the future. While the world of *Clockwork* exists as a foreign place of the Durango 95 and the Filmodrome, it is concurrently a recognizable world where people watch television, read printed newspapers, and rot in cramped prison cells behind iron bars. It is precisely this paradoxical juxtaposition within the context of a modern Western city that enables Burgess to create a perpetual sense of the near future as literary space and time. The impression of the near future allows *Clockwork* to continually impress upon its readers its allegorical representation of the antithetical relationship between the collective and the individual.

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97 McDougal, *Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange* (2003), 3: “For his novel, Burgess created a new language — which he calls ‘nadsat’ from the Russian suffix for ‘teen’ — comprised of a mixture of slang, baby talk, Romany, and Russian derivatives to express a reality that is at once near and distant.”

98 Beckson, Ganz, *Literary Terms* (1999), 31: “Placed among the various forms of artistic imitation, pastiche is a work made by pasting together scraps from different parts of works from other artists.”
Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to ascertain if Clockwork’s particular political philosophy conceptualized a Christianity that oscillated between Pelagianism and Augustinianism through the narrative’s treatment of self and other. I did this through a close textual reading that incorporated an articulation of the story through character analysis and an examination of the fabula elements.

In Clockwork, the conception of universal original sin is elucidated as virtually every actor in the fabula chooses to act, oftentimes violently, out of innate selfish desire. This desire, according to Burgess, is “easier and more spectacular” than selfless goodness. The novel reinforces the importance of Pelagian moral choice by diminishing the magnitude of the evil committed by Alex against society. Thus, he is able to accomplish the moderation of Alex’s evil by juxtaposing it with the “greater” or “double” evil ingrained in the abolition of moral choice best evidenced by the state-run Ludovico’s Technique. This distinction is magnified exponentially when placed in light of Burgess’ own devastating personal experience when his wife died as the indirect result of an attack by four GI desiers during WWII.

Through a device known as “mise en abyme” (a typical feature of postmodern narrative), it appears as though Burgess has implicitly linked himself to a character in the narrative (F. Alexander) that is writing a book called A Clockwork Orange. Like Burgess, F. Alexander’s wife also died as an indirect result of a viscous attack by strangers (Alex and his three droogs). Such a correlation begs the question: why would Burgess place such a heavy emphasis on the sanctity of moral choice in light of Alex’s actions committed against F. Alexander and metaphorically himself? The extraordinary import of moral choice must find its being within the realm of moral responsibility and moral transformation, which form a Pelagian interdependent alliance. As noted earlier, Burgess stated that: “there is not much point in writing a novel unless you can show the possibility of moral transformation” (“Resucked” 1986: viii).

Alex was ultimately transformed from a creature who only desired to commit evil acts to one who was beginning to see beyond his own selfish desires. Alex’s concern for the well-being of a hypothetical future son in chapter twenty-one provides evidence of his rudimentary conversion from “selfishness” to “selflessness.” He was not “conditioned” into this transformation by the Machiavellian efforts of the state, but came to a comprehension of his own evil from the sense of moral responsibility he gleaned from the destructive consequences of his choices. In short, Alex grew up.

Clockwork, therefore, demonstrates Burgess’ oscillating Christianity since evil moves through the story as the repercussion of universally sinful humans who act on their ability to make moral choices. It would appear, according to the narrative, that Pelagian moral choice and the potential of learned moral responsibility might be the only corridor to a positive moral transformation for inherently sinful Augustinian individuals. The narrative demonstrates Burgess’ willingness to accept our innate evil and its

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99 Burgess, “Resucked” 1986). ix. Burgess argued that because of our inherent original sin, “selfishness” comes more naturally than “selflessness.”

100 Robert Jennings, “Candid Conversation with Anthony Burgess,” in Playboy Magazine, no. 9 (September 1974), 70. In his interview, Burgess stated that the result of the attack was a gynecological disease that: “began its own psychological aura.” The result of this was that she resigned herself to the idea of wanting to die and drank herself to death.

101 Sim, ed., Postmodernism (2001), 318: “Mise-en-abyme”: originally a heraldic term denoting an escutcheon bearing in its center a miniature replica of itself, mise-en-abyme was used by André Gide to describe the same technique in literary narratives. In contemporary criticism, it has been used since the 1950’s in a more general sense to describe self-reflexivity or self-consciousness in fiction.”
destructive potential of choices that may result in aimless violence, pain, and despair, because without it moral choice would cease to exist. Burgess stated: "I don't want comfort. I want God. I want poetry. I want real danger. I want freedom. I want goodness. I want sin." In other words, without moral freedom, one could not learn moral responsibility and, ultimately, experience a positive moral transformation that, according to Burgess, is only valid if it is chosen. The actuality of moral freedom equals the plausibility of moral responsibility that can, perhaps, lead to a positive moral transformation, which is not coerced.

In *Clockwork*, the principal characters' good and evil actions are the direct result of the desires found in their inherent Augustinian "schizophrenia." While the violent actions driven by selfish desire for power were portrayed as evil, they were not as evil as the state's restriction of moral choice (a "double sin"). The greater good is founded upon Pelagian moral choice, which, in turn, is instituted upon the constitution of the Augustinian individual that is simultaneously good and evil. To put it differently, it is only through the dual nature of humanity inherent in Augustinianism that the Pelagian individual is able to make moral choices, which necessarily entails at least two options to choose from. Hence, Burgess' oscillating Christianity as evidenced in *Clockwork*, simply stated, intimates that despite being inherently sinful, Alex can effectively "save himself" and experience a moral transformation as he learns from the consequences of his choices. However, such a proposition, while apparently workable in the fictional narrative of *Clockwork*, remains fundamentally paradoxical.

The nature of *Clockwork*'s incongruity materializes as the deeper implications of the antithetical theological poles of Augustinianism and Pelagianism play out. Humans, according to Augustine, are innately sinful – totally depraved – which leaves the Augustinian individual (Alex) utterly incapable of saving himself. In light of this view, redemption is left in the pre-destined election of God. Conversely, Pelagian denial of original, universal sin and God's pre-ordination of our lives converts God's salvation into a free individual's ability to make a positive moral transformation on their own as a result of the moral responsibility learned from the consequences of moral choices. Therefore, while Burgess' oscillating Christianity seemingly works in a narrative that images the "greater good" of moral choice and the "greater evil" of its eradication, a further examination confirms its paradoxical disposition in relation to the central tenets of Augustinianism and Pelagianism.

Lastly, this theological discussion must ultimately be placed back into the context of political philosophy. For it was the oppositional tension between the self and the state that generated *Clockwork*'s dialectic. Niebuhr's description of mutual love appears to be the kind of Augustinian remedy that the Charlie advocates, as opposed to the more Machiavellian degenerative form of "mere calculation" based on selfish ambition. *Clockwork* demonstrates how this manipulative relationship between self and other inexorably leads to selfish oppression, or the self's the attempt to make an instrument of the other to achieve its ends. While, Burgess' work condemns such actions, it is shown to be the lesser evil in comparison to the state's systematic elimination of an individual's capacity to make moral choices. *Clockwork* denounces this kind of Machiavellian oppression in favor of a nobler, altruistic love as a means to foster the transformation of unredeemable criminals into not only good citizens, but also good men.

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102 Dix, "Anthony Burgess" (1972), 185. Burgess stated that he viewed man as the "Savage" in *Brave New World*, which implies that he is willing to accept man's savagery because without it, man's beauty and freedom would cease to exist.
III. The Film

Stanley Kubrick

(1928-1999)
Introduction

Born in The Bronx, New York, American director Stanley Kubrick's films are largely characterized by satirical wit, technical virtuosity, and imaginative cinematic storytelling. Among his best known works are the Cold War lampoon *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), his seminal science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and the highly controversial *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Kubrick’s filmic adaptation of Burgess’ novel originally received an X-rating for explicit violence and nudity. However, under pressure from studio executives, some of the more “objectionable” content was begrudgingly edited out and the R-rated version is the film that was widely released in 1971.103

Soon after the film hit theatres, it was attacked as an “unmediated celebration of the violent young self” and a “provocation to youthful viewers to imitate what they saw on the screen” (Kolker 2003: 19). A British judge – prophesying American Senator Bob Dole’s similar rhetoric some twenty-five years later – said the film was “an evil in itself” (19). In *The New Yorker* (1972), American film critic Pauline Kael wrote:

> Literal-minded in its sex and brutality, Teutonic in its humor, Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* might be the work of a strict and exacting German professor who set out to make a porno-violent sci-fi comedy. Is there anything sadder - and ultimately more repellent - than a clean-minded pornographer? How can people go on talking about the dazzling brilliance of movies and not notice that the directors are sucking up to the thugs in the audience? (50).104

In a similar vein, Andrew Sarris of *The Village Voice* described Kubrick’s film as: “a painless, bloodless, and ultimately pointless futuristic fantasy” (1971: 49). In *Women and Film* (1972) – an early feminist film journal – Beverly Walker charged the film with misogyny and wrote that *Clockwork* possessed:

> …an attitude that is ugly, lewd, and brutal toward the female human being: all of the women are portrayed as caricatures; the violence committed upon them is treated comically; the most startling aspects of the decor relate to the female form (4).

What is more, Kubrick’s film was initially disowned by Burgess who felt that it lacked the redeeming quality of moral transformation. Burgess’ reaction is largely attributed to the fact that the film was an adaptation of the American version of the novel, which did not include the last chapter of the original text released in Europe. As we have seen, it is in this chapter that the anti-hero protagonist matures and begins to emerge from his violent ways. In light of this omission, Burgess felt that the film conveyed a portrait of a human

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103 McDougal, ed. *Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange* (2003). 3. “Although the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) had rejected an earlier version of the script written by Terry Southern and Michael Cooper, they approved Kubrick’s film and gave it an X rating on the grounds that the controversial materials were justified by the story. Some scenes had already been approved by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) prior to its New York premiere on December 20, 1971. (...) In October, Kubrick declared that he had replaced thirty seconds of film with less explicit material...”

being that was unregenerate and incapable of moral progress – a notion he claims the novel centered on.\textsuperscript{105}

Although it lacked the events seen in the last chapter of the novel, Kubrick’s film went on to collect numerous honors, which included the New York Film Critics award for Best Picture and four Academy Award nominations.\textsuperscript{106} Despite the film’s wide critical acclaim, the explicit violence and complex subject matter resulted in only mild box office success.\textsuperscript{107} Nevertheless, Kubrick’s intriguing work has managed to create a devoted following and it is still screened in theaters to this day.

**Machiavellian Selfish Oppression and the Absence of Moral Transformation**

Like the novel, the film conveys the triangulated relationships between Alex and his fellow citizens, Alex and the state, or regime, and the citizens and the state as ones of mere calculation. To emphasize this point, the following passage presents an exchange that involves two of the narrative’s principal characters: Alexander (F. Alexander in the novel), a political writer who lustily desires to overthrow the government and Alex – the film’s anti-hero protagonist. Alexander – unaware that it was Alex who had beaten him and raped his wife earlier in the fabula – speaks to a fellow conspirator over the phone about Alex who has somehow stumbled upon his house after being sadistically beaten by two policemen (former members of Alex’s gang) in the woods nearby. Shot from a low, semi-close camera position, Alexander eagerly, almost maniacally delivers the following monologue:

\begin{quote}
He can be the most potent weapon imaginable to ensure that the government is not returned in the forthcoming election. The government’s big boast, sir, is the way they have dealt with crime during the last few months. Recruiting brutal young roughs into the police, proposing debilitating will-sapping techniques of conditioning. We’ve seen it before in other countries. The thin end of the wedge. Before we know where we are, we’ll have the full apparatus of totalitarianism. This young boy is a living witness to these diabolical proposals. The people, the common people, must know, must see. There are traditions of liberty to defend. The tradition of liberty is all. The common people will let it go, oh yes. They will sell liberty for a quieter life. That is why they must be led, sir. Driven, pushed.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

Here, the visual aspect of film allows the viewer to envision Alexander’s power-status through the juxtaposition of the camera position with the content and delivery of his

\textsuperscript{105} Burgess, "Clockwork Resucked," (1986), vii: “Now when Stanley Kubrick made his film – though he made it in England – he followed the American version and, so it seemed to his audiences outside America, end the story somewhat prematurely. (...) What happens in the twenty-first chapter? (...) Briefly, my young thuggish protagonist grows up. He grows bored with violence and recognizes that human energy is better expended on creation than destruction.”

\textsuperscript{106} McDougal, ed., Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange (2003), 3. Clockwork received awards for Best Foreign Film at the Venice Film Festival, Best Film and Best Director by New York Film Critics, and nominations for Best Film, Direction, Writing, and Editing at the Academy Awards.

\textsuperscript{107} "A Clockwork Orange Box Office Numbers," in Box Office Mojo (statistics online) accessed 24 July 2005, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=clockworkorange.htm. More precisely, the domestic gross was $26,589,355. There are no figures for the overseas gross for this film.

\textsuperscript{108} Stanley Kubrick, dir., A Clockwork Orange (Burbank: Warner Brothers Home Video, 1999), 30. The dialogue, while audible, can also be seen on the screen via the subtitle feature for a more accurate transcription. The DVD is divided up into 35 chapters and will be referenced accordingly. Subsequent citations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically. In addition, when chapters are referenced within the text of the filmic analyses, they will refer to the filmic (rather than literary) chapters, unless otherwise noted.
speech. In this case, the tight, upward shot signifies Alexander’s current position of
dominance, while the content and delivery of his speech anticipates his willingness to
use it to selfishly oppress others in his attempt to overthrow the government.109

Similar to its literary antecedent, the preceding speech reveals Alexander’s desire
to use Alex in his endeavor to depose a government he views as tyrannical. However, it
is the filmic version that — even more so than the novel — underscores the notion of selfish
oppression. What is more, Alexander’s comments exemplify a model that starts from a
teleological relation between the elements of the fabula: the actors have an intention:
they aspire towards an aim. In this model, the teleology organizes the division of actors
into groups or classes (Bal 1997: 196). The classes of actors are called actants. An actant
is a class of actors that shares a certain characteristic or quality, and that shared
characteristic is related to the teleology of the fabula as a whole. An actant is therefore
a class of actors whose members have an identical relation to the aspect of telos, which
constitutes the principle of the fabula. That relation is called the function.110

The primary and most significant function is that between the actor who follows
an aim and the aim itself. That function may be compared to that between subject and
direct object in a sentence. The first two classes of actors to be distinguished, therefore,
are subject and object: actor x aspires towards goal y. x is a subject-actant (sa), and y is
an object-actant (oa). In the opening passage, it is Alexander (sa) who aims to
overthrow (function) a government he views as tyrannical (oa). However, the intention
of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object. There are always powers that
either allow it to reach its aim or prevent it from doing so. This relation might be seen as a
form of communication, and we can, consequently, distinguish a class of actors —
consisting of those who support the subject in the realization of its intention, supply the
object, or allow it to be supplied or given — whom Bal calls the power. The person whom
the object is given is the receiver.111 On the basis of analysis, one gains insight into the
relations between the powers that form the basis of the unreversed, conventional
version. Specifically, in theory, the ethical shortsightedness of the government’s doctors
and their conditioning Technique (power) would make it possible (function) for
Alexander (receiver) to overthrow it. Alexander is not truly concerned so much with
Alex’s physical condition and protection, rather, he sees Alex as a helper, or a practical
tool that can be used to assist Alexander realize his ultimate end.112

The film’s fabula is sated with principal characters obsessed with achieving the
objects of their desire and it is reasonable to assume that each views the attainment of
this desire as, in some way, constructively good. Along these lines, Alexander’s
monologue makes apparent his belief that the eradication of the “diabolical proposals”
of the “will-sapping techniques of conditioning” utilized by a government he endeavors

109 Bal, Narratology (1997), 20. Bal provides an example of the “power status” typically associated
with the “top-down” gaze in Western culture when the Nazi officer Amon Goeth oversees the
prison camp from his villa balcony in the film Schindler’s List (1993). Bal asserts that the scene:
“emphasizes the seeing from the top down, which is usually in the visual discourse of Western
culture — a mastering, colonizing gaze.”

110 Bal, Narratology (1997), 197: “This is a typically structuralist model: it is conceived in terms of
fixed relations between classes of phenomena, which is a standard definition of structure.”

111 Bal, Narratology (1997), 198: “The French terms used by Greimas are ‘destinateur’ and
‘destinataire,’ and ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ are their most literal translation. However, ‘sender’
suggests an active intervention or an active participation, and this does not always apply; that is
why ‘power’ is perhaps a better term.”

112 Bal, Narratology (1997), 201. Bal argues that in a fabula, an actor / actant-subject wants
(desires) something and either gets it or not, and the process is usually not simple. The aim is
difficult to achieve. The subject meets with resistance on the way and receives help. Those
characters that assist the subject reach its desire are known as “helpers” and those characters that
impede the subject are known as “opponents.”
to depose would assuredly be a positive modification. In a similar fashion, as a representative of the state, the Minister of the Interior (MOI) (sa) desires (function) less violence in society (oa). Despite their appearances, the film problematizes the motivations that lurk behind a character’s seemingly estimable ends, or object-actants. With this notion in mind, in the following analysis of not only Kubrick’s film, but Fincher’s and Soderbergh’s works as well, I engage film as a visible and audible medium through a narratological analysis of the text structured by the interdependent features of the filmic components. In other words, my analyses connect Bol’s narratology with the close reading of filmic texts advocated in film theorists Warren Buckland’s and Thomas Elsaesser’s work *Studying Contemporary American Film* (1997).13 In my analysis and interpretation of *Clockwork*, I concretize a story which articulates a fabula that conceptualizes the notion of a kind of Machiavellian selfish oppression in the absence of a moral transformation that stems from a kind of Augustinian familial love.

**Alex: Triple Narrative Agency**

In the film, it is Alex who represents the anti-hero protagonist, character-bound narrator, character-bound focalizer, and an actor in the fabula. Alex’s capacities as cn, cf, and actor are largely revealed through the auditory and visual features of dialogue and camera placement respectively. Chapter two (one being the opening credits) begins with a close-up of Alex’s face, which projects a rather deranged and sinister expression. As the camera slowly pulls back, cn Alex’s voiceover narration is audible:

> There was me, that is, Alex, and my three droogs, that is, Pete, Georgie, and Dim. And we sat in the Korova Milkbar trying to make up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening.

Alex’s first level, nondiegetic speech makes clear his role as cn who begins to recount events he experienced as the younger version of himself, or cf Alex. The following passage represents his literary counterpart:

> “What’s it going to be then, eh?” There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim. Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening, a flip dark chill wild bastard though dry (Burgess 1986: 1).

Although both present the first instance of speech in each text, the second passage displays two levels of speech, while the first passage only displays one. In the novel, cf Alex’s second level speech is marked with quotes, while cn Alex’s first level speech is not. Additionally, the literary cn Alex’s monologue closely resembles the audible, nondiegetic first level speech of his filmic counterpart who narrates the events as he remembers them.

The following passage demonstrates how the film, like the novel, also conveys the dual roles first demonstrated by the literary cn and cf Alex:

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13 Buckland, Elsaesser, *American Film* (2002), 16: “Whether intentional or not, text and analysis refer us to the study of literature, and it is a reminder that what we do in Film Studies is actually historically and methodologically related to the study of literature, and in particular to that tendency within literature which used to be called ‘practical criticism’ or ‘close reading’: it regards novels, plays, and poems as free-standing, self-contained works, as objects.”
Cn Alex (voiceover): Because I knew what she sang. It was a bit from the glorious 9th, by Ludwig van. (Dim makes a vulgar noise and Alex hits him) Dim: What did you do that for? Cf Alex: For being a bastard with no manners (7).

Here, cn Alex's first level, non-diegetic speech is made audible through voiceover narration, while cf Alex's second level, diegetic speech appears to be uttered from the cf Alex the audience sees on the screen. Since there is no practical use for quotes in the telling of a filmic narrative, first level speech (voiceover narration) is distinguished by two perceptible characteristics, or attributive signs that indicate a shift in focalization. First, voiceover narration is generally recorded in a sound booth with little ambient noise, which lends it a typically clean, clear sound. Conversely, the second level dialogue of cf Alex was most likely recorded on the set during principal photography through the use of a boom microphone, or a microphone that is attached to a long pole and held above the actors' heads to record their speech (Kolker 2002: 37). However, the most apparent distinction is seen when cf Alex's mouth remains motionless while the voiceover narration of cn Alex can be heard. In the film, the audible difference in the sound of cn and cf Alex's voice and the fact that cf Alex's mouth does not move when we hear the voiceover narration of cn Alex (in place of quotation marks) are the attributive signs that distinguish first from second level speech. In this way, the speech in both the film and the novel helps the viewer determine Alex's dual function as cn and cf. While both texts are connected through speech, the visual nature of film appends cn Alex to the problematic concept of "filmic narrator."

Although the novel and the film both constitute narrative texts, the filmic narrator is not as clearly defined as its literary predecessor. Film theorists David Bordwell and Seymour Chatman both addressed the ambiguous status of the filmic narrator. Bordwell argued that film has narration, but no narrator.114 In contrast, Chatman does grant status to an agent, or a filmic narrator.115 As for the former, it is hard to conceive of a narrative film that is not narrated or "sent." Rather, it seems more plausible, as Chatman asserted, to say that the film's narrative is "reconstructed" by the viewer.116 Since film exhibits a visual component that literature lacks, the general effect of mise-en-scene leads the viewer to believe that the filmic narrator is the sole external focalizer of fabula events, when s/he is only a theoretical device deliberately manipulated by the filmic subject. In Clockwork, the dynamic of this relationship is impressed upon the viewer through cn Alex's apparent ignorance of the filmic subject's higher position in the narratorial hierarchy, which is constant. The viewer's instinctive desire to conflate the filmic narrator with the filmic subject is intimately related to the reader's innate tendency to conflate the narrator with the historical author.

In the event that there is no perceptible narration made evident in the film, the viewer, positioned in an imaginary relation to the image just as the cn would

114 David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 62. Bordwell asserts that in watching films, we are seldom aware of being told something by an entity resembling as human being. (...) Therefore film narration is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. This presupposes a perceiver, but not any sender, of a message.

115 Seymour Chatman, Coming to Term: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 126. Chatman contends that it is a little unclear how this process (interaction of syuzhet and style) occurs, whether it is internal to the viewer- in which case style and syuzhet "interact" only within her perception and cognition - or whether there is some kind of interchange between the screen and the viewer. If the latter, the "narration" at least partly inhabits the film - in which case, we can legitimately ask why it should not be granted some status as an agent.

116 Lothe, Fiction and Film (2001), 29. Lothe remarks that this does not mean that all viewers reconstruct alike, but it indicates that film narration both lays a foundation for reconstruction and governs it - somewhat in the same way that narration in verbal prose governs the reading process.
hypothetically be, still enjoys a sense of mastery since s/he enjoys being an all-perceiving eye. In the case of *Clockwork*, however, the cn is made evident by voiceover narration and the viewer's gaze is "sutured" to that of an invisible filmic narrator, or cn Alex.\(^{117}\) Within cinematic suture, shot relationships, and the shot / reverse shot (SRS) in particular, are seen as the equivalent of syntactic ones in linguistic discourse, as the agency whereby meaning emerges and a subject-position is constructed for the viewer. In light of this construction, it is imperative that the camera denies its own existence as much as possible, which fosters the illusion that what is shown has an autonomous existence, independent of any technological interference or any coercive gaze.

However, the viewer, unable to sustain a belief in the autonomy of the cinematic image, demands to know whose gaze controls what s/he sees. Thus, the SRS, intimately related to focalization, answers the viewer's question and keeps the cinematic illusion intact.\(^{118}\) For example, a shot / reverse shot relationship built on POV shots of characters seen within the screen frame sutures the viewer's gaze to a temporary, hypothetical internal focalization. On the other hand, if the viewer does not see the basic SRS relationship, but rather a series of establishing shots, for example, the viewer's gaze is sutured to the external focalization of the filmic narrator. In other words, all features seen within the frame appear to be externally focalized on the first level (F1) by the filmic narrator that can, at times (through the POV – SRS relationship), delegate focalization to an internal focalizer, the focalizer on the second level (F2). In principle, there are more levels possible.\(^{119}\) Additionally, a filmic narrator can be perceptible (voiceover narration) and character-bound, or simply an external focalizer that can be either perceptible or non-perceptible.

Similar to the novel, the filmic cn Alex is an endearing, perceptible narrator who explicitly refers to himself as such. The following passage, uttered on the first level by cn Alex, is heard in chapter twenty-three when cn Alex's conditioning is tested before an audience of reporters and members of the state:

*And, O my brothers, would you believe your faithful friend and long-suffering narrator pushed out his red yahzick a mile and a half to lick the grahznii vonnyy boots.*

Here, cn Alex recalls his actions as cn Alex who, to avoid the sickness spurred by violence, licks the bottom of a man's boot who has just attacked him.

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\(^{117}\) Buckland, Elsaesser, *American Film* (2002), 202: "'Suture' designates a process whereby the spectator is continually positioned and repositioned in an 'imaginary,' as opposed to 'symbolic,' relation to the image. Moreover, suture is the way the act of looking represented in a film can "stitch" the plot into the seamless narration of a self-consistent, realist 'world' (230).

\(^{118}\) Silverman, *Semiotics* (1983), 201. On the subject of "suture," Silverman further states the fact that the "shot / reverse shot" is careful not to violate the 180 degree rule of the same circular field, which implies that shot 1 of the sequence was seen through the eyes of a figure in the cinematic narrative (this paradigm may also be reversed). Thus, the gaze that directs our look seems to belong to a fictional character in the narrative.

\(^{119}\) Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 158: "The external focalizer (F1) can delegate focalization to an internal focalizer on the second level (F2). Markers in shift in level are called "attributive signs." These are signs which indicate the shift form one level to another. These signs can remain implicit."
This passage is one of several examples scattered throughout the film where Alex makes himself overtly known to the viewer as the cn ("long-suffering narrator"), while he simultaneously attempts to endear himself to the viewer ("your faithful friend"). Alex's exaggeratedly obvious effort to befriend the viewer makes the subjective and decidedly unreliable condition of his narration rather apparent.

While Alex's status as cf was established through dialogue, it is also established visually through camera placement, and the point of view (POV) shot in particular. In chapter twenty-two, cf Alex (and the viewer) is forced to watch films replete with war, torture, and sexual violence as a part of his conditioning process known as the Ludovico Technique (Ludovico's Technique in the novel). In this particular sequence, the shots are edited to shift back and forth between a semi-close shot of Alex strapped into a chair with his eyes held open by metal clips, to a POV shot that internally focalizes the film screen of Alex observes.

Similarly, after he is released from prison in chapter twenty-eight, Alex is attacked by a mob of old homeless men (one of whom Alex had beaten earlier in chapter three). Again, a similar editing technique is employed to transfer the viewer back and forth between the old men who beat Alex and the POV shot that duplicates the vision of the internally focalizing cf Alex. In both cases, the viewer is forced to see what cf Alex sees and the effect is a predictably sympathetic attachment to cf Alex, in spite of his viciousness earlier in the tabula.
Characterizing Alex

The simultaneously vicious and sympathetic cf Alex is primarily characterized through the interplay between the soundtrack features of dialogue and the musical score, the visual component of editing, and the mise-en-scene features of costume design, camera placement, and actor expression. In chapter two, as mentioned previously, the film opens with a close-shot of Alex’s face which is tilted slightly down as he gazes unswervingly into the camera with an ill-omened expression.

Alex also sports a black bolo hat and large, fake eyelashes on one eye while, concurrently, the rather bizarre nondiegetic sounds of Purcell’s Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary (1696) is heard on the soundtrack. The juxtaposition of Alex’s disturbed expression with his peculiar costume and the uncanny musical score immediately informs the viewer that Alex is slightly, if not considerably off-center. This is the first of several instances placed throughout the fabula where the interplay of the visual and auditory features characterizes cf Alex as eccentric and unbalanced.

As a feature of mise-en-scene, much of what we discover of Alex is gleaned implicitly through his conduct. In other words, Alex’s actions convey insight into both his role as subject-actant and his static function, which is evidenced by his incessant desire to commit acts of sex and violence. For the purpose of this discussion, I examine Alex’s violent behavior in three stages of the fabula: before, during, and after his conditioning.120

Cn Alex narrates episode 1, which occurs prior to his conditioning in chapter three when Alex and his droogs attack an old, apparently homeless man:

Cn Alex (voiceover): One thing I could never stand was to see a filthy dirty old drunkie howling away at the songs of his fathers and going “blerp blerp” in between as it might be a filthy, old orchestra in his stinking, rotten guts. I could never stand to see anyone like that, whatever his age might be. But more especially when he was real old like this one was.

In this auditory example of explicit auto-characterization, we learn that Alex has an extreme distaste for filth and old age. After a close-up of Alex, head cocked with a now

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120 By "conditioning," I mean the Ludovico Technique. First seen roughly halfway through the film, the Ludovico Technique is a form of State-run aversion therapy and quite similar to its literary counterpart. Specifically, a patient (Alex) is strapped into a chair and made physically ill while forced to watch overtly violent and sexual films.
familiar sinister expression, he proceeds (with his droogs) to savagely assault his first in a string of unfortunate victims.

Episode 2, also prior to his conditioning, occurs at the residence of a political writer, Alexander, and his wife who is unnamed. In the novel, this residence is referred to simply as "HOME." In the film, the residence is seen as HOME when Alex and his droogs pull up to the house and a small, illuminated sign in the front yard reveals it as such. Alex and his gang then manage to break into the house and assault Alexander and rape his wife; concomitantly, we hear the second-level, diegetic music from Alex who playfully croons "Singin' in the Rain" (1940). Here, the intertextual dialogue effectively characterizes Alex as one who can nonchalantly perform extreme acts of sex and violence while singing the title song from a rather lighthearted Hollywood musical. What is more, toward the conclusion of the sequence, Alex leans down in front of Alexander—bound and gagged and forced to watch the subsequent rape of his wife—and tells him to "viddy well," or to watch closely. In this case, Alex's face is shot from a close, low-angle, while Alexander is shot from a close, high-angle, which highlights the power status linked with seeing from the top down.

Later in the fabula, Alex's gaze will be reversed signifying a shift in the power hierarchy that results from his capture. However, here, it is Alex who maintains power, which he summarily abuses time and time again in the first third of the film. In this instance, however, it is the interplay between Alex's appalling violence we see on the screen and the cavalier way he goes about it that characterizes him as either a callous practitioner of cruelty or simply ignorant as to the eventual consequences of his actions.

Episode 3 takes place during Alex's conditioning against sex and violence in chapter twenty-three. At this point, Alex is seen standing on a stage as a man walks out

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121 Gene Kelly, "Singin' in the Rain" (Burbank: Warner Brothers Home Video, 1999). Originally released in 1940, Kelly performed the title song from the hugely popular Hollywood musical.
and proceeds to insult and slap him, which effectively and intentionally taunts Alex to violence. In reaction, Alex raises his arm to strike the instigator, but he cannot; the sickness of the conditioning prevents him from doing so. The instigator then exits the stage and a half-naked woman takes his place. She proceeds to stand directly in front of Alex and, mechanically, he attempts to grab her breasts and discloses (through Alex's voiceover narration) that he desired to rape her, but his conditioning prevented him from doing so:

Cf Alex (voiceover): She came towards me, with the light like it was like the light of heavenly grace. And the first thing that flashed in me gulliver was that I'd like to have her right down there on the floor with the old in-out. Real savage.

Both tempting agents reveal that Alex's natural inclinations had not been altered, rather, only his ability to act upon them was negated by the effects of the Ludovico Technique conceived by the state's doctors.

Episode 4 occurs in chapter thirty-three after the doctors somehow surgically removed the conditioning from Alex's brain. This ambiguous procedure was performed in response to Alex's effort to avoid the debilitating effects of his conditioning by committing suicide. Alex's failed attempt was a widely publicized act that reflected poorly on the state's efforts to reduce crime and ultimately maintain power. In the following episode, a psychologist tries to ascertain whether or not the surgery was successful. She shows Alex a series of slides and asks him to reveal the first thing that enters his mind in a type of picture association. In the slides, there are drawings of human figures adjacent to written dialogue, which the psychologist reads. The following passages are examples from this exchange:

Psychologist: A woman says to two men: The boy you always quarreled with is seriously ill. Cf Alex: My mind is a blank, and I'll smash your face for you yarblockos.

Psychologist: A woman says to a man: What do you want? Cf Alex: No time for the old in and out love. I've just come to read the meter.

Psychologist: A woman says to a man: You sold me a crummy watch, I want my money back. Cf Alex: You know what you can do with that watch? Stick it up your ass!

Psychologist: A woman shows a man some eggs and says: You can do whatever you like with these. Cf Alex: Eggiewegs, I would like to smash 'em, and pick 'em up, and pick 'em all up and throw 'em.

From the preceding passages, cf Alex's speech and the excited manner with which he delivered his responses reveal that the surgical procedure was successful, and that the adverse effects of the conditioning no longer inhibit his natural responses to sex and violence. The examples seen before, during, and after his conditioning effectively characterize cf Alex as static in his violently aggressive behavior throughout the course of the fabula. The fixed nature of Alex's character is due, in large part, to the film's omission of the last chapter of the novel where Alex begins to mature and shed the violent ways of his youth. In the film, Alex is truly unchanged. In effect, he is robotic, or a mechanical clockwork orange in his involuntary predisposition toward violence.

Alex's automatic, inherently aggressive nature is further imaged through the visualization of his thoughts, in what I will refer to as a thought montage. A montage is a
number of shots edited quickly together in order to form meaning, to create an impression. A thought montage serves as a visual entrance inside the head of a character and reveals what they are thinking at a particular moment in the fabula. The first example of a thought montage is seen in Alex's bedroom after he had returned home from an evening of what he refers to as "ultra-violence." Alex is first seen relaxing to Beethoven's 9th Symphony. We then hear on Alex's voiceover narration that describes what we see of Alex imagining shortly thereafter:

Cn Alex (voiceover): Oh, bliss! Bliss and heaven! Oh, it was gorgeousness and gorgeously made flesh. It was like a bird of rarest spun heaven metal. Or like silvery wine flowing in a spaceship, gravity all nonsense now. As I slooshied, I knew such lovely pictures (cut to montage).

The thought montage seen in chapter eight takes the viewer through a series of shots that include: a woman in a wedding dress as she falls through the trap door of the gallows, a rapid (one frame) shot of Alex's face with a grin and bloody vampire teeth, a bomb explosion, vampire Alex, another explosion, vampire Alex, rocks falling on cavemen in an old movie, vampire Alex, and fire burning in reverse.

Here, Alex's speech, which seems to describe something beautiful, is contrasted with the quick, quasi-subliminal one-frame images of the vampire Alex and other assorted violent images. At the beginning of the sequence, on Alex effectively articulates his love for classical music and the unique manner in which it affects him. Alex is not elevated in the traditionally ethereal sense, but rather he reflexively conjures visions of violence and blood.

The second thought montage occurs towards the middle of the film in chapter eighteen. Here, reading from a rather large Bible, of Alex closes his eyes in contemplation, and the viewer is projected into his thoughts while on Alex describes them:

I read all about the scourging and the crowning with thorns. And I could viddy myself helping in and even taking charge of the tolchocking and the nailing in. Being dressed in the height of Roman fashion. I didn't so much like the latter part of the Book, which is more like all preachy talking than fighting and the old in-out. I like the parts where these old yahoodies tolchock each other and then drink their Hebrew vino and getting onto the bed with their wives' handmaidens.

Alex's voiceover narration leads the viewer through the sequence in which Alex imagines himself as a character in another narrative - the Bible. The progression is as follows: a
semi-close shot of Christ as he carries the cross; camera pans left to reveal Alex as a Roman soldier who excitedly whips Christ; Alex as a Roman soldier slits a man’s throat in battle; a semi-close shot of Alex (now a member of Roman aristocracy) being fed grapes by half-naked handmaidens.

Like the first montage, this example depicts Alex’s visions of sex and violence after his exposure to what is traditionally considered an uplifting work of art. In both montages, the dichotomy between the traditional human response to classical music and the Bible and Alex’s reactions effectively characterize him as decidedly abnormal.

The third thought montage occurs in chapter thirty-five after Alex’s conditioning had been removed. In an effort to reclaim public opinion from the rather negative press he and his administration received from Alex’s attempted suicide, the Minister of the Interior (MOI) poses for a photo opportunity after assuring Alex that he would enjoy a comfortable future provided that he “cooperates.” As the two gaily pose together, the camera begins to slowly zoom in on Alex, his head slowly tilts, and his face changes until he exhibits a deranged expression eerily similar to the one seen at the beginning of the film. This time, however, the non-diegetic musical score is the triumphant climax to Beethoven’s 9th and we are again thrust into Alex’s consciousness. Here, the filmic subject cuts to a shot of Alex and a woman who (while lying in what appears to be snow) engage in sexual intercourse before a crowd of clapping aristocrats, and on Alex utters his final bit of voiceover monologue: “I was cured alright.”
In this sequence, the viewer is confronted with contrasting channels of information: audibly, there is the sound of classical music and the sarcastic voiceover while, at the same time, the viewer sees of Alex’s thoughts where he is being applauded for engaging in a sex act. With these points in view, the final montage not only characterizes Alex as abnormal, but also reinforces the fixed, static function of his character.

The preceding examples taken from both the film’s mise-en-scene and soundtrack components make apparent the text’s characterization of Alex as an insensately violent and impenitent individual. Alex’s function as subject-actant remains static, it is only the object-actant, or the object of his violence, that changes. In other words, his innate tendencies remain unaffected by any actions taken as a result of the will of the state (the Ludovic O Technique). In effect, we are presented with a rather rare example of a complex, multi-faceted protagonist who, nonetheless, remains static throughout the course of the fabula.

Characterizing the State

Similar to the allegorical thrust of literary text, the film reveals the disposition of the intrinsically antagonistic relationship between the desires of the collective (state) and the aims of the individual (Alex). Specifically, the individual and the collective can be viewed in terms of doubling. A fabula may have different subjects who are in opposition: a subject and an anti-subject. An anti-subject is not an opponent. An opponent opposes the subject at certain moments in pursuit of his or her aim. An anti-subject pursues his or her own object, and this pursuit is, at various times, at cross-purposes with that of the first subject. When an actant has his or her own program, his or her own aims, and acts to achieve this aim, s/he is an autonomous subject.122

As noted previously, this relationship can also be viewed in terms the teleological relation between the elements of the fabula, that is, the actors have an intention and aspire towards an aim. For example, Alex (sa) desired to commit (function) acts of sex and violence (oa); however, the members of the state (sa) desired to prevent (function) Alex from committing acts of rape and violence (oa). Viewed in this way, the doubling, antithetical relationship between the individual and the collective becomes clearer and, to better understand this relationship, I examine how the latter is characterized. Furthermore, I do not consider the relationship in terms of opposing ideologies, but the opposition of selfish desires and those moments in which they intersect.

122 Bal, Narratology (1997), 203. Bal makes a distinction between the incidental position of an opponent and the autonomous nature of the anti-subject as it relates to the concept of doubling.
The filmic state is implicitly characterized by the visual features of mise-en-scene such as camera placement, lighting, and actor expression, and explicitly characterized by the auditory feature of dialogue. The following passage conveys dialogue between Alex and Deltoid (Alex’s parole officer). Deltoid, although he is unable prove it, is keenly aware of Alex’s criminal acts committed the night before:

Deltoid: Because next time it’s not going to be the corrective school. Next time it’ll be the Barrey place, and all my work ruined. If you’ve no respect for your horrible self, you at least might have some for me, who sweated over you. A big, black mark, I tell you, for every one we don’t reclaim. A confession of failure for every one of you who ends up in the stripy hole. Alex: I’ve been doing nothing I shouldn’t, sir. The millicents have nothing on me, brother. Sir, I mean. (…)

Deltoid: I’m warning you little Alex, being a good friend to you as always, the one man in this sick and sore community who wants to save you from yourself!

(Deltoid forcefully grabs Alex’s testicles) (7).

The sequence begins with a medium shot when we first see Deltoid and Alex (in his underwear) who sit next to each other on a bed. Midway through his monologue, Deltoid abruptly leans back on the bed and takes Alex with him – forcefully pinning Alex down. Deltoid then mentions the hard work he has performed Alex’s behalf, and he also issues a caveat in regard to the future consequences of Alex’s criminal ways. At the conclusion of the sequence, Deltoid grabs Alex’s testicles while concurrently, professing a desire to save Alex “from himself.” Here, Deltoid’s status as subject-actant is figuratively imaged when we see him vehemently seize Alex’s testicles while also declaring his intent is to save Alex from himself. Deltoid — imaged in a position of power as he vigorously holds Alex down — confesses his will to save Alex by force.

Thus, the juxtaposition of Deltoid’s speech with his action conveys the notion that his particular brand of “saving” is also an act of “castration.” In other words, his version of salvation has nothing to do with Alex becoming a good man, but rather it simply attempts to make Alex into a good citizen by castrating that part of him that stands antithetically to the will of the state that Deltoid signifies. On the surface, Deltoid’s desire to save Alex from himself appears to be a rather nobler ambition. However, a deeper investigation of the passage reveals the primary motivation behind his function, which is a selfish desire to prevent Alex from marring his professional record. Deltoid’s function presents us with an instance of doubling where (if Alex is the subject) he becomes an anti-subject with his own agenda, and acts to achieve his particular aims. Thus, when viewed in light of his comments in regard to a “black mark” and “confession of failure,” Deltoid’s action reinforces his genuine impetus, which is his desire to control Alex’s violent impulses, not for Alex’s good, but rather to safeguard his professional record.

In chapter fifteen, the state is implicitly characterized by the behavior of both Deltoid and the police who have arrested Alex. The sequence begins with Deltoid’s arrival at the police station, and he stands just outside the room where Alex is being interrogated and beaten. During his examination, in defiance of the abusive power signified by the police officer who stands over him, Alex responds insolently as he grabs the officer’s testicles, which mirrors Deltoid’s previous act. In this case, Alex’s action provides an instance of visible doubling and signifies the antithetical relationship — based on the opposing desires of power and control — between the collective and the individual.

The following passage, through features of both mise-en-scene and soundtrack, implicitly characterizes the representatives of the state as both desensitized to violence and ignorant of their own sadistic natures:
Sergeant: Would you like some tea, sir? Deltoid: No thank you Sergeant, we’ll have it later. May I have some paper towels please? Sergeant: We’re interrogating the prisoner now. (Deltoid enters the interrogation room. In a point of view shot, cf Alex focalizes the paper towels being thrown at him and the men who stand over him.) Deltoid: This boy does look a mess, doesn’t he? Just look at the state of him. Sergeant: Loves young nightmare-like. Policeman: Violence makes violence. He resisted his lawful arresters. (…) (Deltoid leans into cf Alex’s focalization.) You are now a murderer little Alex. A murder. Alex: Not true, sir. It was only a slight tolchock. She was breathing, I swear it. Deltoid: I’ve just come from the hospital. Your victim has died. You try to frighten me. Admit so, sir. This is some new form of torture. Say it, brother sir. Deltoid: It will be your won torture. I hope to God it’ll torture you to madness. Policeman: If you’d care to give him a bash in the chops, don’t mind us. We’ll hold him down. He must be a great disappointment to you, sir (Deltoid spits into Alex’s face) (15).

The beginning of the passage—when Deltoid is offered tea and asks for paper towels—discloses two important points. First, the sergeant’s desensitized nature is revealed as he nonchalantly offers tea while a prisoner is beaten in the next room. Second, we know that Deltoid is also aware of the violence when he asks for paper towels (presumably for blood) before he even enters the room where Alex is being interrogated. We also learn of the officers’ consequential ignorance in regard to their own brutality when one says: “Violence makes violence,” as he offers to hold Alex down so he can be more easily beaten. Finally, Deltoid’s maliciousness is revealed when he declares that he hopes Alex will be tortured to madness before spitting in his face. Furthermore, as he does this, Deltoid is filmed through a close, low-angle shot, while Alex is seen through a close, high-angle shot inverting the power status of the mastering, colonizing gaze associated with Alex in the first third of the film prior to his capture. Thus, both Alex and the state (police) are shown to ignorantly and violently misuse their power.

Like the police, the state’s doctors also exhibit a naive abuse of power. The next passage presents dialogue between Alex and Dr. Branom (one of the state’s doctors in charge of the Ludovic Technique) who attempts to explain the conditioning effects:

Branom: We have to be hard on you, you have to be cured. Alex: It was horrible. Branom: Of course it was horrible. Violence is a very horrible thing. That’s what you’re learning now, your body’s learning it. I just don’t understand about feeling sick the way I did. I never used to feel sick. I used to feel the very opposite. Doing it or watching it, I used to feel real horrorshow. Branom: You felt ill this afternoon because you’re getting better. When we’re healthy, we respond to the hateful with fear and nausea. You’re becoming healthy that’s all (21).

In this scene, the dialogue is edited back and forth between semi-close shots of Alex in bed and Dr. Branom who is shot closely from below, which reinforces the state’s superior position in the power hierarchy at this point in the fabula. Emphasizing this advantage, Brodsky is backlit with a monochromatic, bright white lighting as she delivers the dialogue in a stern, coarse voice and, although never shown to act aggressively, she approves of the latent violent Technique. Such an endorsement implicitly divulges her ignorance of the psychological root causes of his aggression, which is reinforced when she asserts that he will be cured only when his body reacts negatively to sex and violence.

As the head of the state, the MOI represents the mentality behind the rather unsavory practices carried out by both the police and the doctors. The following passage conveys the MOI’s selection of Alex for the Technique:
MOI: Soon we may need all our prison space for political offenders. Common criminals like these are best dealt with on a purely curative basis. Kill the criminal reflex that's all. (...) What crime did you commit? Alex: The accidental killing of a person, sir. Warden: He brutally murdered a woman, sir, in furtherance of theft. Fourteen years, sir. MOI: Excellent. He's enterprising, aggressive, outgoing, young, bold, vicious. He'll do. (...) This vicious, young hoodlum will be transformed out of all recognition (19).

Here, the MOI discloses the political reasons behind his selection of Alex as the initial test subject for the Technique. This can be initially written as: the MOI (sa) desires to condition (function) Alex against sex and violence (oa). However, we later learn of the deeper political motivations to condition Alex (and others like him). So, it can be more accurately stated that the MOI (sa) desires to use (function) Alex to get reelected and maintain power (oa). Thus, similar to Deltoid, the MOI represents an anti-subject to Alex's subject, and those moments in which their antithetical, selfish agendas intersect supplies the fabula with conflict, which tends to force the viewer into a deeper consideration of the nature of power and violence.

In the following passage, in order to diminish the storm of bad press, the MOI pays a visit to Alex who is hospital-bound after he attempted to commit suicide to evade the adverse effects of the conditioning:

MOI: We tried to help you. We followed recommendations that turned out to be wrong. An inquiry will place the responsibility where it belongs. (...) You see, we are looking after your interests. (...) You must have an interesting job at a salary you'd regard as adequate. Not only for the job you're going to do and in compensation for what you believe you have suffered, but also because you are helping us. Alex: Helping you, sir? MOI: We always help our friends, don't we? (Alex opens his mouth again) (...) As I was saying Alex, you can be instrumental in changing the public's verdict. Do you understand Alex? Do I make myself clear? (34).

Here, similar to the interests of Deltoid, the MOI has his own professional designs in mind, which is re-election in this case. With this end in mind, the MOI must first publicly ingratiate himself back into Alex's good graces and to accomplish this he attempts to bribe Alex. As he explains his offer, the MOI hand-feeds Alex because he is in a body cast due to his attempted suicide. In this sequence, both actors are filmed from roughly the same angle, and the viewer's gaze is edited between the two. During this scene, Alex exaggeratedly opens his mouth so the MOI can insert a spoon into it in a kind of pseudo-sexual interaction.
Visually and metaphorically, the MOI (collective) and Alex (individual) now stand on equal footing and thus viewer’s gaze, like the power structure, is now level. The MOI needs Alex to get re-elected, as he did before, but now Alex has the power to deny him, a power he previously lacked. The two each have something the other desires and—much like sex—they exchange those wants for mutual gain, or pleasure. Alex can now be viewed as a helper that gives incidental aid to the MOI in his effort to get re-elected. In light of this, the doubling relationship can be inverted as Alex’s own selfishness (power) makes it possible (function) for the MOI to continually use him (receiver) and vice-versa. Hence, the antithetical doubling originally presented is reversed in that the two actants—who at one time opposed each other—now assist each other to meet their selfish desires.

The state, as revealed by its filmic representatives, presents the viewer with characters who (just as Alex) act, often violently, according to selfish designs. While they display a superficial desire to reform Alex, the true impetus behind their seemingly altruistic intents is born out of ignorance and self-preservation. In their attempts to “cure” Alex of violence, they exploit violence themselves and thus are characterized as ignorant of their own brutality as a means to achieve selfish ends.

**Characterizing the Prison Chaplain**

The prison chaplain, the filmic counterpart to the literary prison charlie, is characterized predominantly through the soundtrack feature of dialogue and such visual features of mise-en-scene as camera placement and actor expression. The following passages present dialogical exchanges between cf Alex and the chaplain and cf Alex and the charlie respectively:

Alex: How about putting me in for this new treatment, Father? Chaplain: I take it you are referring to the Ludovico Technique. Alex: I don’t know what it’s called, Father. All I know is that it gets you out quickly and makes sure you never get back again. Chaplain: That is not proven, 655321. (...) Alex: I don’t care about the dangers, Father. I just want to be good. I want for the rest of my life to be one act of goodness. Chaplain: The question is whether or not this technique really makes a man good. Goodness comes from within. Goodness is chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man (23).

“I take it you’re referring to Ludovico’s Technique.” He was still very wary. “I don’t know what it’s called, sir,” I said. “All I know is that it gets you out quickly and makes sure you don’t get in again.” (...) “The question is whether such a

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123 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 201: “In the fabula, the subject, in the effort to achieve a desired aim, usually meets with resistance and receives help. A ‘helper’ is not the same as the ‘power.’ While the power typically has power over the whole enterprise, is often abstract, and remains in the background, a helper typically gives only incidental aid, is mostly concrete, and often comes to the fore.”

124 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 198: “The intention of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object. There are always powers who either allow it to reach its aim or prevent it from doing so. This relation might be seen as a form of communication, and we can, consequently, distinguish a class of actors consisting of those who support the subject in the realization of its intention, supply the object, or allow it to be supplied or given—whom I shall call the power. The person to whom the object is ‘given’ is the receiver.”

125 To clarify, I refer to filmic chaplain simply as “Chaplain,” as opposed to the literary chaplain, whom I refer to as “charlie.” When I refer to the same character in both texts, I use the common noun—“chaplain.”
technique can really make a man good. Goodness comes from within, Burgess 1986: 83).

In both instances, the most informative section of dialogue is presented in the chaplain’s closing remarks when he unambiguously defines goodness as “something chosen.” From there, he proceeds to delineate humanity in terms of our capacity to make moral choices, thereby implicitly asserting the Pelagian contention that human beings are, by definition, endowed with free will. Along these lines, the filmic dialogue is consistent with the Pelagian thrust of its literary counterpart.

Later in the film, Alex is publicly subjected to sex and violence in a politically motivated endeavor to demonstrate the effectiveness of the aversion therapy. In the following passages taken from both texts, the chaplain voices obvious ethical considerations in regard to the conditioning of a human being he believes to possess free will:

Choice. The boy has no real choice, has he? Self-interest. The fear of physical pain drove him to that grotesque act of self-abasement. Its insincerity was clearly to be seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice (27).

“Choice,” rumbled a rich deep gloss. (...) “He has no real choice has he? Self-interest, fear of physical pain drove him to that grotesque act of self-abasement. Its insincerity was clearly to be seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice” (Burgess 1986: 126)

Except for the vocal description seen in the second passage, the two are nearly identical in structure and content. However, the description presented in the novel is indicative of a subtle, albeit essential distinction between how the same actor is characterized in both texts. In the novel, such descriptive words “rich” and “deep” convey a sense of trust, and lend a certain veracity to his character and speech. In the film, the chaplain’s voice is neither rich nor deep. Moreover, the career risk the chaplain takes in voicing his concerns about the Technique is not as evident as it is in the novel: “There is the question of my own career, there is the question of my own voice when set against the shout of certain more powerful elements in the polity” (95). In the film, the viewer is unaware of the sacrifice he may be making and, therefore, the filmic character is not presented as sympathetically as his literary antecedent, which potentially makes the ethical assertions heard in his dialogue ring a bit more hollow.

Yet, like the novel, the chaplain is the only character who exhibits genuine concern for Alex, and he presents the only farsighted, rational trepidation in regard to the ethical complexities of the Technique. In spite of this, he is not characterized in an entirely positive light. The following passages are taken from the same event (the chaplain’s sermon) in the film and the novel respectively:

What’s it going to be, eh? (...) I have been informed in visions that there is a place darker than any prison, hotter than any flame of human fire where souls of unrepentant criminal sinners like yourselves... (an inmate belches) Don’t you laugh damn you, don’t you laugh. I say, like yourselves scream in endless and unendurable agony. Their skin rotting and peeling. A fireball spinning in their screaming guts! (21).
"I know, I know, my friends, I have been informed in visions that there is a place, darker than any prison, hotter than any flame of human fire, where souls of unrepentant criminal sinners like yourselves – and don’t you leer at me, damn you, don’t laugh – like yourselves, I say, scream in endless and intolerable agony, their noses choked with the smell of filth, their mouths crammed with burning ordure, their skin peeling and rotting, a fireball spinning in their screaming guts" (Burgess 1986: 78).

In the case of the latter, it is only his figural, rather explicit description of hell that serves to implicitly characterize the charlie as perhaps a callous, pharisical man who has forgotten Christ’s message of love and forgiveness. In the film, it is the particular imaging and delivery of this same dialogue that portrays the chaplain in a likewise manner. This negative filmic characterization is accomplished through the interplay of the chaplain’s fire and brimstone speech with the manner in which the speech is delivered and filmed. Specifically, viewed in a semi-close shot from underneath, the chaplain speaks in an enraged, agitated manner as spittle flies from his mouth and he furiously pounds his fist on the podium. Focalized from below, the viewer’s upward gaze conjures images of an angry dictator who, by force of might, intends to make his subjects succumb to his absolute will. As a result, while he espouses the merits of choice, the chaplain is seen in an attempt to coerce these inmates, through threat of fear, into choosing the good. Ironically, this is precisely the concept that he so eloquently waxes against when he speaks of the state-run Ludovico Technique later the fabula.

Similar to his literary predecessor, the chaplain is conscious of the ethical dangers the Technique presents and – through his emotive dialogue in regard to the value of Pelagian free will – is imaged as a genuinely concerned, slightly altruistic character. However, unlike the novel, the film does not supply the viewer with any information as it relates to the future security of the chaplain’s career as a result of voicing his apprehensions on Alex’s behalf. And – despite his levelheaded approach to the ethical concerns raised by the Technique – he also is shown to be rather shortsighted in his power-driven attempt to frighten the inmates into choosing salvation. This behavior stands in opposition to a more logical presentation of his case, which would allow the inmates to choose as the extension of their free will, a notion he ardently expresses in defense of Alex.

Filmi cc Space and Implie d Temporal Derivatives

Analogous to its literary counterpart, filmic space is an aspect of the story and is not fixed, but fluid. It is an inclusive, concrete term that refers to the describable environment in which characters move and live. It is the particular composition of filmic space that tends to manipulate the viewer’s conception of the fabula elements and resultant interpretation of the story. For example, in chapter two, we first see Alex who sits inertly with a glass of milk gripped in his hand. There is a specific place in the fabula – the Korova Milkbarn – where Alex is able to (because the milk is laced with drugs) “sharpen-up” for the acts of extreme violence he will engage in later that evening. The Milkbarn is made real, or fleshed-out through spatial description. It is this describable filmic space, revealed by such features of mise-en-scene as camera position, set and costume design, and the soundtrack feature of dialogue, that is the subject of the discussion presented here.

Camera position – the feature of mise-en-scene primarily responsible for the measure of visual entrance into the filmic world – is potentially the most significant device the filmic subject possesses in regard to the conveyance of filmic space. In Clockwork, although there are a variety of shots employed, I focus on the copious number of semi-
close shots in particular. A semi-close shot results when the camera is placed relatively close to what is being filmed (actors and sets). Generally, unlike medium and long shots, close and semi-close shots offer the viewer a narrower, more restricted perspective of filmic space. In light of this visual constraint, the amount of filmic information conveyed to the viewer tends to be directly proportional to where the camera is placed. In Clockwork, the high frequency of close and semi-close shots creates the film's special effect, which is generally a sense of restriction, claustrophobia.

Conversely, there is a noticeable dearth of long, establishing shots that classically show wide, revealing images of literary space such as landscapes and the exteriors of buildings in which events occur. To illustrate, in the only instance of an establishing shot, there is a helicopter shot of the large state-run prison (or "Staja") where Alex has been recently incarcerated for murder. From this particular angle, the viewer is able to glean that the prison is located in the country and, in this case, the establishing shot's primary effect is that it provides context, or a visual frame of reference for the subsequent shot of Alex in a prison cell. Typically, however, the viewer thrust into the interior sets with no external perspective and the effect is generally one of disorientation. So the film, like the novel, by the mere absence of information, conveys a rather ambiguous sense of filmic space, which makes it difficult for the viewer to affix the fabula events to any recognizable, existent location.

Besides the actors, there are primarily two things that comprise filmic space: existent and fabricated locations. In Clockwork, as was previously mentioned, the camera is frequently positioned near the actors inside rather small sets, and the most obvious examples of this practice are seen when the space is primarily linked to Alex. For example, smallish sets filmed with a preponderance of close and semi-close shots are seen in his home in chapter nine, the interrogation room in chapter fifteen, his prison cell in chapter nineteen, his hospital room in chapter twenty-one, and the bedroom in which he is musically-tortured in chapter thirty-one. Although the sense of claustrophobia created through the use of semi-close shots and small, cramped interiors can be seen throughout the film, there is a higher frequency of such shots when filming the spaces chiefly linked to Alex. In this way, the use of tight camera placement and small set design in the conveyance of filmic space becomes a metaphor for Alex's confined existence due to his lack of moral freedom before, during, and after his conditioning.

While the dimensions of the set and the manner with which it is filmed may influence a viewer's interpretation of the events that take place within it, I also examine how set and costume design can imply a sense of filmic time, or a comprehensive term that refers to the time the story impresses upon its readers in the most general sense. In other words, the way filmic space appears can signify the general sense of filmic time during which the story occurs. Much like its literary counterpart, film is able to, by juxtaposing the familiar (existent) with the unfamiliar (fabricated), create a sense of the near future just beyond the immediate experience of the viewer. For example, the film begins with a close shot that slowly pulls back to reveal Alex and his droogs who sit in the Korova Milkbar. While viewers would certainly be familiar with a bar, they would likely be unfamiliar with a bar that serves milk. In addition, the Korova Milkbar set is unusually constructed from black walls with strange writing written across them and coffee tables constructed from naked female manikins made visible by low-key lighting contrasted by rows of rather intense lights arranged on six three-foot pedestals.126

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126 The strange writing on the wall seen in chapter two (e.g. "Moloko Pius" and "Moloko Synthemesc") is written in Burgess' fabricated language – nadsat.
The rather eccentric design of the sets is repeated throughout the film. For example, in chapter six, Alexander’s home contains futuristic-looking spherical furniture and is constructed with a unique, tri-level design. In chapter ten, Alex strolls through the cramped hallway of a shopping center built with reflective gold and silver metallic walls and ceilings. Throughout the film, the viewer is confronted with interior sets of locations that would likely be somewhat familiar (bar, home, shopping center), but they are designed, decorated, and dressed in a way that makes them appear rather unfamiliar which gives the film another one of its special effects — the conveyance of the near future.

Just as the sets were fashioned with an understanding of the near future, so were the costumes. As Alex and his droogs sit in the Milkbar, we see that they are dressed in tight white shirts and pants with suspenders, black bolo hats, black boots, and bulky codpieces.

In the novel, cn Alex describes their peculiar fashion this way:

The four of us were dressed in the height of fashion, which in those days was a pair of black very tight tights with the old jelly mould, as we called it, fitting on the crutch underneath the tights, this being to protect and also a sort of a design you could viddly clear enough in a certain sort of light, so that I had one in the shape of a spider... Then we wore waisty jackets without lapels but with these very big built-up shoulders (petchoes we called them) which were a kind of a mockery having real shoulders like that. Then, my brothers, we had these off-white cravats which looked like whipped-up kartoffel or spud with a sort of a design make on it with a fork (Burgess 1986: 2).
In both cases, we are likely to be familiar with types clothes, but unfamiliar with the particular manner they are being worn. Although the film, in this case, is absent of an Alex’s (voiceover) narration and conveys less descriptive information than the novel, both texts are able to suggest the familiar within the unfamiliar and generate a sense of the near future. And though the novel is more explanatory in this instance, such is not always the case. For example, in the film, we see Alex’s mother, who appears to be in her early fifties, outfitted in a short, black leather dress, black shoes with yellow socks, and a blue wig. On the other hand, her literary counterpart is merely an actor in the fabula and is never characterized through the description of her appearance. While, in the case of Alex and his droogs, the literary text possesses a more thorough description, the visual nature of film often allows for greater access to the actors’ appearance without them ever becoming characters in the story. In literature, it would be inefficient to describe the appearance of every actor in the fabula. However, in film, we see (to greater or lesser degrees) every actor and are thus, potentially, granted deeper access into the narrative.

Conclusion

In an effort to conceptualize the notion of selfish oppression, I explored the mise-en-scene and soundtrack features in order to expose the triangulated relationships between Alex and his fellow citizens, Alex and the state, and the citizens and the state as ones of mere calculation.

In the film, Alex functions quite similarly to his counterpart in the novel as an anti-hero protagonist, cn, cf, and actor in the fabula. As the filmic narrator, cn Alex, through audible motifs, makes himself perceptibly and endearingly known to the viewer through such first-level, non-diegetic dialogue as “long-suffering narrator” and “your faithful friend.” As cf, Alex’s internal focalization (POV shot) serves to create empathy for him despite his detestable actions, and it is also a form of auto-characterization that reveals him as being both an “abuser of” and “abused by” power. It is through the feature of camera placement (high and low-angle shots) that our gaze is saturated with cf Alex who tends to either look down at those he abuses or peer up at those who abuse him. In this way, the filmic subject employs camera placement, and the point of view shot in particular, to confer power status onto particular actors in the fabula, which then becomes a mechanism of characterization on the story level. In Alex’s case, although his position in the film’s power hierarchy fluctuates, his role as subject-actant and his function in relation to the object-actant remains static; it is only the object-actant that changes. Alex’s desire to act violently remains fixed throughout the course of the fabula despite the ill-treatment he receives at the hands of the state, which reinforces the literary text’s notion that “goodness” cannot be forced upon an individual, no matter how detestable their actions.

At one point or another, power is visibly conferred to not only Alex, but also to the other principal characters in the narrative, which each summarily abuses in their own way. What is more, the misuse of power always comes at the expense of another actor in the fabula and can thus be seen as a form of selfish oppression in its own right. This notion is best demonstrated by the actantial function, or the relationship between the actor who follows an aim and the aim itself. It was shown that each principal character acted, in varying degrees, out of a selfish desire to achieve specific ends that were met by the oppression of the other through the abuse of power. In this manner, the film forces the critical observer to sincerely consider the egotistic motivations that lurk behind the characters’ ostensibly creditable ends.

The fabula repetitively reveals the nature of the intrinsically antagonistic relationship between the desires of the collective (state) and the aims of the individual
(Alex), which was viewed in terms of doubling between the intersecting self-seeking wants between subject and anti-subject. For example, the actantial relationship between Deltoid and Alex can be written as: Deltoid (sa) wants to prevent (function) Alex from going to prison (oa). However, Deltoid is not only a subject-actant, but also an anti-subject with his own program, his own aims, and takes action to achieve them. This can be written as: Deltoid (sa) wants to keep (function) his professional record clean (oa). It is this particular aim that is at cross-purposes with Alex’s, which can be written as: Alex (sa) wants to commit (function) acts of violence (oa). The state’s other principal character, the MOI, also demonstrates the doubling of Alex by Deltoid. The only principal character that is exempted from effectively opposing Alex is the chaplain.

Such an exception is sensible since he is the only one who exhibits the least bit of Augustinian-familial concern for Alex, although he is not totally emancipated from the exploitation of power in his own way.

So, then, we are presented with a story set in a slightly futuristic Western city set in which every principal character (with the chaplain as the only possible exception) abuses what power s/he possesses by oppressing other to meet their selfish ends. As the chaplain’s words of familial love go unheeded and Alex is never shown to mature beyond his mechanical urges, Kubrick’s Clockwork does, through the filmic subject’s handling of the mise-en-scene and soundtrack features, articulate a fabula that conceptualizes a conquering notion of Machiavellian power. It is this pervasive ideal that is shown to supersede the notion of an Augustinian familial love and its resultant moral transformation that, unlike his literary predecessor, Alex never undergoes.
Part II. Fight Club

I. Self and Consumer Culture: The Phenomenological Philosophy of *Fight Club*

In my endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of *Fight Club’s* philosophical dialectic, I was drawn by the inescapable pull of the dense and often puzzling black hole known as phenomenology. While German philosopher Georg W.F. Hegel is generally known as the forerunner of phenomenological thought, it was Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl who officially announced modern phenomenology in his work *Logical Investigations* (1900). Characterized by a number of prominent themes, phenomenology is generally considered a radical, unconventional style of philosophizing that has never really developed a set of dogmas or sedimented into a system (Moran 2002: 4). Primarily, in its quest for the truth of appearances, phenomenology attempts to steer clear of prior obligations (cultural, religious, scientific) placed on the experiencing subject, and it aims to describe material and mental “phenomena” (appearances) as they manifest to the subject’s consciousness.

It is this unconventional philosophy, and a particular aspect of Hegel’s brand, that best contextualizes the actions of *Fight Club’s* protagonist who – in reaction to the emotionally barren landscape of American consumer society – seeks a higher level of self-consciousness. In his labyrinthine *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807), Hegel traces the development of self-consciousness and imagines the thinking subject as “Geist,” a noumenal spirit, or a posited object as it appears in itself independent of the senses. In this way, the traditional philosophical problem of the consciousness of objects and others is reconceived as the spirit’s relation to itself. Hegel envisions this self-determining activity as a kind of: “self-moving selfsameness, or a reflection into self, the moment of the ‘I, ’ for itself, pure negativity, or, simple becoming” (19). University of Chicago professor Robert B. Pippin sees this activity – directed toward the final understanding of the “Absolute” (Geist) – as the “I’s” self-reflection and self-determination:

Since, Hegel tries to show, any possible cognitive relation to objects must involve the “I’s” taking up the world “for itself,” and so some sort of self-relation, or apperception, understanding theoretically how a subject could come to know itself in its relation to all otherness (and understanding this finally and without skeptical doubt) is how Hegel wants to understand ‘the Absolute as Spirit’ and how he wants to be understood when he claims that ‘the Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit...’” (1993: 59).

For Hegel, the significance of the sensuous world – comprised of material phenomenon (both passive objects and active individuals) – is found only in the manner the experiencing subject renders it intelligible. Consciously experiencing the world is not merely directly attending to some “other than consciousness,” but, as lest indirectly or implicitly to itself, its own mode of comportment, a mode at least relatively empirically independent. The experiencing subject is only relatively independent because it is

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127 Moran Dermot, *Phenomenology* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2002), 1: “Phenomenology, as the movement inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), is now a century old. It was one of several strong currents in philosophy prominent at the outset of the twentieth century, alongside, for example, Neo-Kantianism in its various schools.”

128 Robert B. Pippin, “You Can’t Get There from Here: Transition Problems in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, edited by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 62-63: “(Hegel) maintains explicitly in the compressed opening passages of Chapter Four, that the ‘knowing of an other’ has been ‘preserved’ in the expanded
driven to the world by biological desires such as reproduction and hunger. Furthermore, these natural urges force the subject into the experience with other that is required to achieve self-consciousness, or self-relation in relation to other.

The subject’s comprehension of its association with the world is always based on a self-conception, which centers on self-reflection. However, the self cannot be an internal object of self-examination. Rather, the self must project itself into the world in order to achieve self-consciousness via a negative relation. Hegel does not believe that the self’s negative relation to passive objects, or its independence of such objects, is sufficient to establish itself as self-determining and self-conscious. He resolves this by suggesting that unifying “satisfaction” can only occur by means of an experience with another free, self-determining being: “...self-consciousness finds its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (1967:108). Hegel’s language implies that the opposition offered by another self-consciousness to the realization of my natural desires is empirically different than that posed by passive objects. It is the interaction between two active, willful subjects that results in the rendering of each other as an object. This enables each subject’s negative independence and provides an occasion for confirming its own subjectivity.

It is in light of this negative establishment of subjectivity that Hegel claims: “there is a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness” (108). A completed self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness; self-consciousness “is” only in being recognized, which Hegel refers to as a kind of “duplicated” self-consciousness.

In other words, a realized self-consciousness lives outside itself in another self-consciousness. However, prior to this realization, a self-consciousness aims to eradicate this alien other, but, in being so set, it is both set to eliminate the other in order to achieve its own self-certainty, and also itself in the process, since it is itself that other (Findlay 1977:520). Thus, to avoid a kind of self-destruction and attain self-certainty, one must recognize oneself in the other. In this way, Hegel argues, each uses the other as a means to a self-realizing end. The recognition of self in its other is initially presented in a one-sided form in which only the one does the recognizing and the other is merely recognized. This simple “being-for-self” is attached to an immediate individuality and excludes all others from itself. Elaborating on this point, Boston University professor J.N. Findlay writes:

Self at first confronts self, not as an infinite negation of the negation making all its own, but as a simple case of natural being facing another such case, both

account of knowledge as self-conscious knowledge.” Georg W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of the Mind, translated by J.B. Baillie. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967). 104: “...for any self-consciousness the entire ‘expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time, only as related to the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself.’”

129 Pippin, “You Can’t Get There From Here” (1993). 68. Pippin writes that such an oppositional situation: “provides the opportunity for a kind of confirmation of my subjectivity in the possibility of a genuinely ‘mutual recognition’ of such subjectivity.”

130 Georg W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of the Spirit, translated by A.V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). 111: “Self-consciousness is faced with another self-consciousness: it has come out of itself. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superceded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other it sees its own self.”

deeply absorbed in the business of living. Each conscious only of its own being, and so has no true certainty of itself, since the being of the self is essentially a socially recognized being (1977: 521).

In Findlay’s view, genuine self-consciousness must express itself as the negation of all mere objectivity and particularity, which initially takes the form of desiring death of the other at the risk of its own life. Hegel argues that the oppositional consciousnesses must:

...engage this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being for themselves to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained” (1977: 114).

Authentic self-consciousness springs from the willingness to sacrifice everything and, as a result, a life and death struggle arises between the two rival self-consciousnesses in which one is inevitably made dependent by its demotion.

Likening this new relationship to that between a lord and a bondsman, Hegel writes (189): “The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman” (1977: 115). Considering Hegel’s view, Findlay argues:

The self-consciousness of the lord is essentially related to the being of the mere things he uses and uses up, and these he enjoys through the bondsman’s self-consciousness. The bondsman prepares and arranges things for the enjoyment of the lord. (...) It is the lord who reaps the enjoyment from the bondsman’s labors (1977: 521).

In this disproportionate relationship, the bondsman altogether gives his being-for-self in favor of the lord, which means the lord cannot get the reciprocal recognition that his self-consciousness demands from a consciousness so degraded. What the lord sees in the bondsman, or what the bondsman sees in the lord, is not what either sees in himself (522). In light of Findlay’s point, the lord’s “lordship” depends on the bondsman’s self-consciousness and, therefore, the validity of independent self-consciousness is found in the bondsman’s self-consciousness rather than in the lord’s. It is, ultimately, the bondsman’s admiration for the lord that removes the narrow self-identifications and self-interest and enables him to attain absolute negativity – true self-consciousness. Within this admiration, the bondsman has the real advantage in that working in and on the world he preserves his labor and makes the outward thing his own, whereas the lord’s dealings with the object merely results in fading pleasures (522). Hegel puts it this way:

Through work and labor, however, this consciousness of the bondsman comes to itself. In the moment which corresponds to desire in the case of the master’s consciousness, the aspect of the non-essential relation to the things seemed to fall to the lot of the servant, since the thing there retained its independence. Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby unalloyed feeling of the self. This satisfaction, however, just for that reason is itself only a state of evanescence, for it lacks objectivity or subsistence (1977: 118).

Thus, it is the bondsman who overcomes the otherness more completely than the lord and, in doing so, achieves a more genuine self-consciousness. 132 The bondsman

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132 Findlay, “Phenomenology: An Analysis” (1977), 522: “The bondsman overcomes the otherness and mere existence of material “thinghood” more thoroughly than the lord, and so achieves a more genuine self-consciousness.”
transcends the fear which was his initial response to the otherness as embodied in the lord.\footnote{John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (London: The Penguin Publishing Group, 1987), 40. Although couched in a Christian theology, the task of Bunyan’s protagonist “Christian,” who must also transcend his fear and sinful servitude by traveling to the Celestial City, is not so different that Hegel’s bondsman. Christian states: “I am sure to be in safety there. I must venture: to go back is nothing but death, to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it. I will yet go forward.”}

As a result — while the bondsman achieved a kind of self-consciousness by discovering himself in opposition to otherness — a higher version is obtained “in” the otherness. In other words, it is not mastery of the other, but recognizing it and yielding to it, consciously subjecting oneself to it that accomplishes this. Along these lines, Findlay suggests that a period of subjection to others is essential to the highest rationality, and not to have undergone such discipline results in a trivialization of self-consciousness, which never rises above petty finite interests (1977: 522).

It is Hegel’s dialectic of the lord and the bondsman and its implications on the establishment of self-consciousness that provides a philosophical context for the *Fight Club* narrative texts. In the novel and the film, the protagonist reflexively projects his subconscious desires into the sensual world in order to establish his subjectivity by a negation from another self-consciousness, which is paradoxically himself, or the character known as Tyler Durden. Viewed in this way, the novel presents a variation on this Hegelian theme in that the protagonist’s primary negative relation is not with other individuals, but rather with a mental projection of what he desires to be. What is more, the protagonist’s need to be someone who owns “Swedish furniture” and “clever art” is conditioned by the sensual world, namely through the advertised images essential to the economic vitality of the consumer culture he inhabits.

As a consequence of his conditioned desires, the protagonist finds himself trapped in Hegel’s notion of a “desiring” consciousness, or the primitive stage that precedes either “servant” or “mastery” consciousness. While Tyler initially appears to be the bohemian revolutionary, or the kind of “lacerated” consciousness the protagonist longs to be, he is actually the mastery consciousness that permits the protagonist to see himself as the unifying principle, which is characteristic of an “understanding” consciousness.\footnote{Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1977), 104-138. Hegel generally outlines the evolution of self-consciousness, and there are several stages in particular that help us understand the protagonist and his alter-ego — Tyler. “Desiring” consciousness began with primitive humans whose identity was bound up with fulfilling their needs and others were merely obstacles that stood in the way. As a result of this, fights erupted and people banded in larger groups. Thus, the “lord” and “bondsman” consciousnesses evolved. The latter is able to evolve, whereas the former is not. Paul Trejo, “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind” (1993), (text online) accessed 26 April 2005, http://eserver.org/philosophy/hegel-summary.html: “Those who are neither average nor part of the cultural elite develop their own realm, the ‘lacerated’ consciousness.”} As the lord-like other, Tyler provides a Hegelian negative relation that the protagonist must “fight” so that he can ultimately realize the true nature his subjectivity and achieve a genuine level of self-understanding. Considering these concepts, I examine the novel’s and then the film’s presentation of the intimately human effort to achieve a higher plane of self-consciousness by attempting to answer the question: What is the self?
II. The Novel

Chuck Palahniuk

(1961 – Present)
Introduction

See a major voice of a nihilistic generation, American novelist Charles ("Chuck") Palahniuk was born in Pasco, Washington, and is most celebrated for the dark satire in his first published work – *Fight Club* (1996). It is this work that has led many to draw comparisons between Palahniuk and such contemporaries as Douglas Coupland (Generation X, 1991) and Bret Easton Ellis (American Psycho, 1991).

Palahniuk’s first book, *Insomnia: If you Lived Here, You’d Be Home Already*, was never published due to his displeasure with the narrative, though a small portion of it would be used in *Fight Club*. Publishers rejected Palahniuk’s next novel, *Invisible Monsters*, for being too disturbing, which led him to work on *Fight Club* – his infamous “revenge novel.” *Fight Club* was initially published as a short story in the compilation *Pursuit of Happiness* (1995), which would later become chapter 6 in the novel. While the original hardcover edition enjoyed only a brief shelf-life, it generally received positive reviews. In *Publisher’s Weekly*, literary critic Sybil S. Steinberg wrote that:

Palahniuk is a risky writer who takes chances galore, especially with a particularly bizarre plot twist he throws in late in the book. Caustic, outrageous, bleakly funny, violent, and always unsettling, Palahniuk’s utterly original creation will make even the most jaded reader sit up and take notice” (1996: 60).

Addressing wider themes, Los Angeles Times film critic David Ulin notes that the novel deals with “history’s apparent shackling of men” (1996: 1-1). Building on this notion, in the *Journal of Men’s Studies*, Kevin Boon writes that there are few “final frontiers” left, and that men have been forced to replace conquest with consumerism, which is apparently a vitally important change in manhood. He explains that: “The object of Tyler Durden’s aggression is contemporary American culture, which has caged men within bars of denial and shame” (2003: 267). Elaborating on this point, Ellis said that *Fight Club*’s:

...audacious, strenuously trendy exterior is part of its point because at heart this is really a horror movie about consumerist discontent. It’s about what happens when a world defines you by a nothing job, when advertising turns you into a slave bowing at a mountain of things that make you uneasy about your lack of physical perfection and how much money you don’t have and how famous you aren’t. It’s about what happens when you’re hit by the fact that your life lacks uniqueness; a uniqueness that we’re constantly told we have (by parents, by school, by the media). ‘Fight Club’ rages against the hypocrisy of a society that continually promises us the impossible: fame, beauty, wealth, immortality, life without pain (Webster 2003: 1).

It is precisely these themes of consumerism and masculinity that have created a loyal cult following out of the 18-35 year old male demographic (of which I am a member). As a result, Palahniuk boasts one of the largest fan bases of any author in the Internet.

Largely due to the increased exposure his work received from American director David Fincher’s filmic adaptation released in 1999, Palahniuk’s novel has recently been scrutinized more intensely. As a result, some members of the media have labeled him a “shock writer” and a sexist because of the violence, abnormal situations, and the perceived objectification of women in his stories.135 These are the same charges that

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were leveled against Burgess primarily after the success of Kubrick's film. While one can draw many parallels between the two overtly violent novels, my discussion focuses on Fight Club's nameless protagonist who—like Alex—possesses violent impulses that position him antithetically to a society he believes has failed him.

**Salvation Through Destruction**

The following passage presents a verbal exchange between the protagonist, Joe, and another character (known simply as "the mechanic") that echoes the paradoxical philosophy of Tyler Durden—Joe's mental projection. The mechanic says, "If you're male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model for God. And if you never know your father, if your father bails out or dies or is never at home, what do you believe about God?" (…) "What you end up doing," the mechanic says, "is you spend your whole life searching for a father and God." "What you have to consider," he says, "is the possibility that God doesn't like you." (…) How Tyler saw it was that getting God's attention for being bad was better than getting no attention at all. Maybe because God's hate is better than His indifference. (…) We are God's middle children, according to Tyler Durden, with no special place in history and no special attention. Unless we get God's attention, we have no hope of damnation or redemption. (…) Only if we're caught and punished can we be saved. "Burn the Louvre," the mechanic says, "and wipe you ass with the Mona Lisa. This way at least, God would know our names."

In the exchange, the mechanic partially reveals the source of Joe's angst, or the impetus behind the destructive behavior he had been exhibiting up to that point in the fabula. For some undisclosed reason, Joe has grown up without a father present. Consequently, Joe has spent his life searching for a missing father in both a corporeal and (more likely) metaphorical sense. Since he has been unable to find either, the mechanic suggests that Joe consider the possibility that God hates him. Nevertheless, God's hate may be better than his indifference. The mechanic further suggests that God's indifference has resulted in the perception that they are members of a generation known as "God's middle children" with no distinct place in history. In light of this notion, the mechanic believes that they must attain God's attention, because without it there is no hope of either damnation or redemption.

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Cacophony Society is a randomly gathered network of "free spirits" united in the anarchic pursuit of experiences beyond the pale of mainstream society." Palahniuk's participation in these events likely inspired some of the events seen in Fight Club.

136 Although he does take on several pseudonyms, the real name of Fight Club's protagonist is never overtly revealed anywhere in the text. However, in chapter seven, the protagonist discovers numerous stacks of old Reader's Digests in which there are a series of articles where organs in the human body refer to themselves in the first person. For example, "I am Jane's Uterus" and "I am Joe's Prostate" (58). The protagonist adopts this practice and refers to the functions of his own body parts throughout the narrative. For example, when referring to himself, he states: "I am Joe's Shitking Gnome" (170). Therefore, to make the discussion of the protagonist easier and more personal, I refer to him simply as "Joe."


138 The implied assumption here is that it is better to be noticed than to remain anonymous, even if it is through means of destructive violence. Individuals such as Joe feel "lost" not necessarily in sin,
In order to gain God’s interest, Joe travels down the path of destructive behavior that may eventually, as the mechanic suggests, lead to such extreme acts as burning the Louvre or wiping himself with the Mona Lisa. “Only if we’re caught and punished can we be saved,” the mechanic claims. The mechanic’s assertion underscores Tyler’s seemingly incongruous notion that God’s attention and the potential for salvation from anonymity can only be found through acts of rebellion and devastation. The mechanic reinforces this claim when he states: “The lower you fall, the higher you’ll fly. The farther you run, the more God wants you back.” The buried assumptions behind the mechanic’s declaration are twofold. First, it is through failure that one can obtain success, or, in other words, it is through a negative that one may obtain a positive. Second, distancing one’s self from God will cause Him to long for your return. The second postulation is really a reinforcement of the first in the form of a specific example. In essence, “falling” deliberately through failure and disappointment provides a path to some future success and a means to acquire God’s attention.

Tyler’s notion of salvation through destruction will ultimately be imaged in light of Hegel’s understanding self-consciousness. While it initially takes the form of desiring death of the other at the risk of its own life, authentic self-consciousness springs from the willingness to sacrifice everything material and, as a result, a life and death struggle arises between the two rival self-consciousnesses, which results in the lord – bondsman relationship embodied by Tyler and Joe respectively. With this philosophical context in view, in the following analysis of Fight Club, I examine the narrative text in an effort to concretize a story which articulates a fabula that instantiates the notion of salvation through destruction.

**Sequential Ordering**

In this section, I explore the relations between the order of events in the story and their chronological sequence in the fabula. This section precedes the others due the narrative’s particular sequential ordering and its illumination of other story aspects and elements of the fabula that I examine in the sections that follow.

In the case of Fight Club, we are presented with an embedded fabula that explains the primary fabula. I define an embedded fabula as a fabula that exists in the narrative “then” and is, in effect, “bookended” by the primary fabula in the narrative “now.” The primary fabula is merely an occasion for a perceptible, character-bound but rather in the sense that they have no real place in society; they desire to be “saved” from obscurity.

139 American Heritage College Dictionary (2002), 1227: “Salvation: perseverance or deliverance from difficulty or evil.” The first passage seen in this chapter juxtaposes the notion of salvation as it relates to the acquisition of God’s attention. This implies that it is the responsibility of individuals to work to acquire God’s attention and its potential of salvation. Although the usage in passage implies a more religious liberation from personal sin, “salvation” (as it is demonstrated in the narrative) concerns perseverance or deliverance from the ‘numbing’ effect of a modern consumer society, rather than that of individual corruption.

140 Bai, Narratology (1997), 80. The chronological sequence of the fabula is a theoretical construction, which we can make on the basis of the laws of everyday logic that govern common reality. “According to that logic one cannot arrive in a place before one has set out to go there. In a story that is possible, however.”

141 Fight Club is divided into two distinct fabulas. The primary fabula is (roughly) comprised of ch’s 1, 29, and 30, while the embedded fabula covers chapters 2 through 28. In effect, Fight Club contains two separate narratives where one explains the other.
narrate a story. Thus, the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, and we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative until we return to the narrative “now” toward the end of the novel (Bal 1997: 52). The following two passages, seen in the narrative now, illustrate the “bookending” relationship between the fabulas:

Up on top of the Parker-Morris Building with Tyler’s gun in my mouth. While desks and filing cabinets and computers meteor down on the crowd around the building and smoke funnels up from the broken windows and three blocks down the street the demolition team watches the clock, I know all of this: the gun, the anarchy, the explosion is really about Marla Singer. Six minutes. (...) Five minutes. (...) Four minutes. I tongue the barrel into my cheek and say, you want to be a legend, Tyler, man, I’ll make you a legend. I’ve been here from the beginning. I remember everything. Three minutes (14-15).

So Tyler and I are up on top of the Parker-Morris Building with the gun stuck in my mouth. We’re down to our last ten minutes. The Parker-Morris Building won’t be here in ten minutes. I know this because Tyler knows this. The barrel of the gun pressed against the back of my throat, Tyler says, ‘We won’t really die.’ I tongue the gun barrel into my surviving cheek and say, Tyler, you’re thinking of vampires. We’re down to our last eight minutes. (...) Seven minutes. (...) Four minutes. Tyler and me at the edge of the roof, the gun in my mouth, I’m wondering how clean that gun is. Three minutes. Then somebody yells (203-204).

For the sequential ordering of these two passages to be made more readily apparent, it should be known that the narrative begins on page 12 (chapter 1) and ends on page 208 (chapter 29). Although there is a gap of 188 pages between the first and second passages (the embedded fabula), there are several obvious parallels between the passages, which include the similarity in the actors’ behavior and the location of the events. In both passages, Joe and Tyler are on the top floor of the Parker-Morris building where Tyler has a gun jammed in Joe’s mouth. Furthermore, in the first passage, we read that office equipment plummets on to the crowd below around the building, smoke escapes from the broken windows, and a demolition team “watches the clock.” In the second passage, we learn that the Parker-Morris Building is going to be demolished in “ten minutes.” Both passages relay the same event, which is the impending destruction of the Parker-Morris building. However, perhaps the most telling connection between the passages is the similarity in present tense. Both passages see Joe “tongue” the gun while Tyler and Joe “are” up on top of the Parker-Morris building. From these textual parallels, it appears evident that both passages find themselves in the narrative now, or the primary fabula, which is minimal in Fight Club, only taking up a little more than two chapters (1, half of 29, and 30) in a thirty-chapter novel.

At the start of the embedded fabula, in chapter 2, Joe claims that “Big Bob’s arms were closed around to hold me inside,” and “I was squeezed in the dark between Bob’s new sweating tits that hang enormous, the way we think of God’s as big” (16). In the second passage that describes Joe and Tyler on top of the Parker-Morris building (located in the primary fabula), we see the present tense “are” as compared to the past tense “were” in chapter 2. Although the use of both past and present tense is seen between chapters 2 and the first half of 29, this can be attributed to the narrative now focalization of Joe as cf and the narrative then narration of Joe as cn.

142 Bal, Narratology (1997), 54. The embedded text takes up the larger part of the book. The primary fabula is minimal because the number of events is small. The relationship between the fabulas is explanatory.
This concept can be further elucidated in terms of the various levels of narration. The narration of the older, on Joe is the first level of narration, which I indicate as cn1. At times, in the embedded fabula, Joe’s narration on the first level is temporarily yielded to cf Joe who becomes the speaker at the second level, which I indicate as cn2. In other words, both fabula’s are narrated in past tense, first level speech by the older Joe. Yet, in addition, the embedded fabula contains the present tense, second level speech of Joe the younger Joe who focalizes the events. The fact that both present and past tense are seen in the embedded fabula can be attributed to the chronological disparities between the narrative now first level speech of cn1 Joe, and the narrative then second level speech of cn2 Joe. The consistency of the present tense, narrative now first level speech of the older, narrating Joe (in chapters 1, half of 29, and all of 30) is the most obvious chronological distinction between the primary and the embedded fabulas.

It appears that the simplest explanation to this chronological deviation is that chapter 2 presents the reader with the beginning of an anachrony, which is a difference between the arrangement in the story and the chronology of the fabula. There are two types of anachronies: retroversions and anticipations. Retroversions convey events in the past, whereas anticipations convey events in the future (Bal 1997: 83). However, the anachrony that is presented here cannot be presented in a line or even a paragraph of the text. This particular anachrony begins on page 16 of chapter 2 and encompasses a rather significant portion of the text. Therefore, the embedded fabula is an anachrony that takes the form of an extended retroversion. An extended retroversion occurs when an anachrony intervenes in the primary fabula and the events presented in the anachrony lie in the past. Moreover, the anachrony takes up a considerable amount of text, rather than just a line or a single paragraph, and may include anachronies of its own.

It looks as if, in chapter one, Palahniuk has employed a rather conventional construction of the novel by beginning it in medias res. In this case, he has immersed the reader somewhere in the middle of the primary fabula. Chapter 2, however, marks the beginning of an extended retroversion that continues through chapter 29 (halfway through page 203). Through the use of anachrony, the reader is referred back into Joe’s recent past until the last two chapters where the reader picks up with him and Tyler on top of the Parker-Morris building. So, Joe’s claim (the last line of text in chapter 1) that he “remembers everything,” signals to the reader that a retroversion is about to occur. It is this extended retroversion that includes the preponderance of the narrative and presents an embedded fabula that does not determine the primary fabula, but rather merely explains it. Joe’s situation presented in the first chapter is unchangeable, and the fact that he tells his story in the form of an embedded fabula in the narrative then is of no influence on the outcome of the primary fabula. However, this mechanism – one that presents the reader with an embedded fabula in the form of an extended reversion – provides a great deal of insight into Joe, the novel’s anti-hero protagonist.

**Multiple Personality Disorder: Joe and Tyler**

Before exploring the more specific narratological functions of our anti-hero protagonist, I must first examine Joe in relation to his intriguing alter ego, Tyler. Tyler is a part of Joe in that he represents a manifestation that springs from the mind of Joe who most likely suffers from a rare form of schizophrenia known as multiple personality disorder (MPD).  

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143 Schizophrenia Digest (glossary online) accessed 1 July 2005. http://www.schizophreniadigest.com/index.php/SC-what: “Schizophrenia: a form of psychotic disorder or psychosis, meaning it is a disorder that causes people to have difficulty interpreting reality. Individuals develop a marked change in their thinking, perceptions, and behavior as evidenced by
Even though Tyler and Joe are presented as different characters in the story, they are two sides of the same person. I have selected Joe, and not Tyler, as the source of this MPD because Joe is the narrative’s anti-hero protagonist and character-bound narrator. The following passage subtly anticipates the eventual revelation that Joe and Tyler are, indeed, two different personalities located within the same mind:

I already know which bars are the fight club bars. I ask, have they seen a guy named Tyler Durden. It’s stupid to ask if they know about fight club. The first rule of fight club is you don’t talk about fight club. But have they seen Tyler Durden? They say, never heard of him, sir. But you might find him in Chicago, sir. I must be the hole in my cheek, everyone calls me sir. And they wink. You wake up at O’Hare and take the shuttle into Chicago. Set your watch ahead an hour. If you can wake up in a different place. If you can wake up in a different time. Why can’t you wake up a different person? (157).

Everywhere Joe goes it appears that Tyler has already traveled that ground. When he inquires if these men have seen Tyler Durden, they claim to have never heard of him and suggest that he look for Tyler in specific places like Chicago while they wink and call him “sir.”

At this point in the embedded fabula (chapter 21), Joe is searching for a missing Tyler in all the fight clubs of the cities that, coincidentally, happen to be the same cities he travels to for his job as a recall campaign coordinator. The following passage informs us that the man who Joe addresses thinks it is some kind of test of secrecy, which is a prerequisite for membership in a fight club:

The bar is empty, and the bartender says, “Welcome back, sir.” I’ve never been to this bar, ever, ever before. I ask if he knows the name Tyler Durden. The bartender grins with his chin stuck out above the top of the white neck brace and asks, “Is this a test?” Yeah, I say, it’s a test. Has he ever met with Tyler Durden? “You stopped in last week, Mr. Durden,” he says. “Don’t you remember?” Tyler was here. “You were here, sir.” I’ve never been here before tonight. “If you say so, sir,” the bartender says, “but Thursday night, you came in to ask how soon the police were planning to shut us down.” Last Thursday night, I was awake all night with the insomnia, wondering was I awake, was I sleeping. I woke up late Friday morning, bone tired and feeling I hadn’t ever had my eyes closed (158).

While feigning ignorance to pass the test, they subtly let him know that they are aware he “is” Tyler Durden. The anticipatory capacity of the first passage is best indicated by the more overt revelation found in the last three sentences of the second passage, which presents the concept of waking up as a different person. The latter passage presents the reader with the first time Joe is referred to directly as Tyler Durden: “You

the presence of a combination of the following symptoms: hallucinations, delusions, disorganized speech and behavior, apathy, and social withdrawal.” Medical Library. (glossary online) accessed 1 July 2005. http://www.chclibrary.org/micromed/00057200.html: "Multiple personality disorder": or MPD, is a mental disturbance classified as one of the dissociative disorders in the DSM-IV. It is defined as a condition in which “two or more distinct identities or personality states” alternate in controlling the patient’s consciousness and behavior.”

144 Palahniuk, Fight Club (1999), 49. Tyler (Joe) created fight clubs as underground arenas for men to engage in fights. These fights took place in a semi-controlled environment governed by a loose set of rules. For example, the third rule of fight club dictates that when someone yells stop, or goes limp, the fight must cease.
stopped in last week, Mr. Durden." In this case, the antecedent of the pronoun "you" is Joe, although the bartender believes he is speaking to "Mr. Durden."

This disclosure begins to more clearly reveal what had been anticipated several times throughout the preceding chapters, and that is that Joe is Tyler. What is more, the last two sentences of this particular passage reveal the practical dynamic of Joe's multiple personality disorder. It appears that while Joe believes he is struggling with insomnia (which he is), he is really becoming Tyler. Joe is tired the next day not only because he has been awake all night, but also because he has been acting as Tyler.

"Every time you fall asleep," Tyler says, "I run off and do something wild, something crazy, something completely out of my mind" (163).

The revelation that Joe and Tyler are one and the same person is further evidenced in the following two examples:


I ask what did Tyler do about it. "What did we do about it," Tyler says. We called an Assault Committee meeting. "There isn't a me and a you anymore." Tyler says, and he pinches the end of my nose. "I think you’ve figured that out." We both use the same body, but at different times (164).

In both passages, the antecedent of the pronoun "you" is Tyler, or Mr. Durden. In the second passage, the antecedent of the pronoun "we" is Joe and Tyler and it is Tyler who is speaking. It is this manipulation of language that offers the most glaring textual clue that, although they are constructed as two separate characters in the narrative, the other characters see only one person.

In addition, the stylistic use of both direct and indirect discourse also serves to indicate the conjoining of two characters within the corporeal presence of one actor. Whenever direct discourse occurs in the text, it is as if the narrator temporarily transfers the function of "spokesperson" to an actor in the fabula (Bal 1997: 8). Moreover, the attributive signs of quotation marks indicate this transference. Indirect discourse is when the narrator represents the words of the actor as it is supposed to have uttered them (Bal 1997: 48). For example, seen in the second passage above, at some points Tyler speaks in direct discourse ("What did we do about it") as an actor in the fabula. At other times Joe, as narrator, speaks for Tyler ("We use the same body, but at different times") through indirect discourse, which is further indicative of the fact that Joe is able to speak for Tyler because he "is" Tyler. With this in mind, on Joe’s comment: "The first fight club was just Tyler and I punching each other," takes on its true meaning in retrospect.

Joe: Triple Narrative Agency

As we have seen, although Joe and Tyler are the same (corporeal) person, they are developed as separate characters in the story. However, it is Joe, like *Clockwork's* Alex, who functions as *Fight Club*'s protagonist anti-hero, character-bound focalizer, and character-bound narrator as "I" is identified with a character in the fabulas he narrates. It is Joe who retains status as character-bound narrator both in the primary fabula told in the narrative now and the embedded fabula relayed in the narrative then.

Joe's function as focalizer is two-fold. Joe serves as internal focalizer in the embedded fabula and as an external focalizer (as character-bound narrator) in both the primary and embedded fabulas. As an internal and external focalizer (subject of
focalization), he serves as the point from which the elements in both fabulas are viewed. Although at times the external focalization of cn Joe is yielded to other characters in the embedded fabula, it is Joe who provides the preponderance of focalization. As a result, the reader is given the general impression of an objective narration, since events are rarely presented from the other characters’ point of view. Joe’s bias as both internal and external focalizor is not absent, but remains implicit since there is no such thing as absolute “objectivity.”

As noted earlier, Fight Club comprises both a primary and an embedded fabula. In this case, the embedded fabula explains the primary one. It is the nature of Joe’s function as it relates to these two fabulas that is the key concern here. With this in mind, I first examine Joe’s function in the primary fabula, which is told in the narrative now and exhibits a minimal narrative distance between the narrating “I” and the experiencing “I” (both called Joe):

I tongue the barrel into my cheek and say, you want to be a legend, Tyler, man, I’ll make you a legend. I’ve been here from the beginning (15).

Can’t I see how we’re all manifestations of God’s love? I look at God behind his desk, taking notes on a pad, but God’s got this all wrong (207).

Both passages – taken from opposite ends of the primary fabula – display Joe’s function as cf, cn, and actor. Although it is yielded at times, it is Joe who provides the lion’s share of the focalization in the narrative. However, another type of focalization presents itself when Joe’s internal focalization is “shared” with Tyler. In this case, shared focalization is not necessarily double focalization, which occurs when the external focalizor looks over the shoulder of the internal character-bound focalizor (Bal 1997: 159). Rather, shared focalization is when one internal focalizor is really two characters in the story simultaneously, as the following passage demonstrates:

Tyler and me at the edge of the roof, the gun in my mouth, I’m wondering how clean the gun is. We just totally forget about Tyler’s whole murder-suicide thing while we watch another file cabinet slip out the side of the building and the drawers roll open midair, reams of white paper caught in the updraft and carried off on the wind (13).

Although Joe’s MPD has yet to be revealed in the embedded fabula, this example of shared focalization is an early textual clue that Joe and Tyler are two sides of the same person. The fact that Joe and Tyler are the antecedents for the pronoun “we” takes on special significance when we finally learn that Joe and Tyler share the same body, which makes their shared focalization plausible as they watch a file cabinet slip off the edge of the building.

In the embedded fabula, cn Joe continues to function as an external focalizor of events. However, as a cn who relays events in the narrative then, Joe’s function as focalizor takes on a more overtly external dimension. Narrating events in the embedded fabula in the form of an extended retroversion, the narrative distance has increased and the autobiographical nature of cn Joe’s narration becomes more apparent. Due to this increased narrative distance, in the embedded fabula it is more apparent when cn Joe yields the first level of focalization to various internal focalizors on the second level, which include himself as cf “I”:

145 Bal, Narratology (1997), 158. Bal assumes that there is: “a first level of focalization (F1) at which the focalizor is external. This external focalizor delegates focalization to an internal focalizor, the focalizor on the second level (F2). In principle, there are more levels possible.”
I pick up the phone, and it's Tyler, and he says, "Go outside, there's some guys waiting for you in the parking lot." I ask, who are they? "They're all waiting," Tyler says. I smell gasoline on my hands. Marla would go to bars and hear the bartender calling her name, and when she took the call the line was dead. At the time, she thought this was hitting bottom. "When you're twenty-four," Marla says, "you have no idea how far you can really fall, but I was a fast learner" (109).

His eyes go side to side across the paper, and he giggles. "The second rule of fight club is you don't talk about fight club." I hear Tyler's words come out of my boss, Mister Boss with his midlife spread and family photo on his desk and his dreams about early retirement and winters spent at a trailer-park hookup in some Arizona desert (96).

Seen in the embedded fabula, the preceding passages provide examples of internal, character-bound focalization as the external focalization of cn Joe yields to the internal focalization of ct Joe, Marla, and Mister Boss. In the first two passages, the verbs "smell," "hear," and "thought" function as explicit attributive signs that signal the transference of focalization from the first to the second level. In the third passage, the shift in focalization from cn Joe to Mister Boss is merely implied by our entrance into his dreams. It is important to note the frequency of such shifts because there is a correlation between their frequency and the reader's perception of the narrative. In other words, the greater regularity of such shifts tends to call into question the narrative's appearance of objectivity.

Types of Destruction

In order to concretize a story that articulates a fabula(s) which conceptualizes the notion of salvation through destruction in the context of the lord - bondsman relationship and Hegel's concept of an understanding self-consciousness, the depths of Fight Club's destructive violence must be fully plumbed. Implied denotatively, violence often manifests itself in some type of physical destruction. Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, I use violence and destruction interchangeably in a textual investigation that ultimately assists in the attempt to flesh-out the notion of salvation through destruction.

In this section, I image the three different types of destructive behavior displayed in Fight Club. There are two types of violence directed at the human body, while a third kind is aimed at the physical structure of society itself. The first, rather unique type of violence is directed at one's own body and is seen when Joe performs violence against himself: "The first fight club was just Tyler and I pounding each other" (49). Here, it is not really Tyler who punches Joe, but Joe (as Tyler) who punches himself. This type of self-inflicted violence is also demonstrated in the following passage when Joe (as Tyler) burns himself:

Tyler's saliva did two jobs. The wet kiss on the back of my hand held the flakes of lye while they burned. That was the first job. The second was lye only burns when you combine it with water. Or saliva. "This is a chemical burn," Tyler said, "and it will hurt more than you've ever been burned" (74).

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146 Bal, Narratology (1997), 158: "...markers in shifts in level we call 'attributive signs.' These are signs which indicate the shift from one level to another. These signs can remain implicit."

147 American Heritage College Dictionary (2002), 1531: "'Violence': physical force exerted for the purposes of violating, damaging, or abusing: the act or an instance of violent action or behavior."
Although slightly different, the next passage also presents violence aimed at oneself. In this case, on Joe describes how one might incite some anonymous individual to assault the provoker:

The idea is to take some Joe on the street who’s never been in a fight and recruit him. Let him experience winning for the first time in his life. Get him to explode. Give him permission to beat the crap out of you (120).

Here, the material instrument of self-destruction becomes a person other than oneself. In this case, a stranger roused to violent behavior by one who intends to receive it.

In order to provide a kind of organized arena for self-destruction, Joe and Tyler create underground fight clubs that sanction and govern the second type of violent destruction, which is also aimed at the human body, but is directed outwardly at another human being:

You saw the kid who works in the copy center, a month ago you saw this kid who can’t remember to three-hole-punch an order or put colored slip sheets between the copy packets, but this kid was a god for ten minutes when you saw him kick the air out of an account representative twice his size then land on the man and pound him limp until the kid had to stop, or goes limp, even if he’s just taking it, the fight is over (48).

I held the face of mister angel like a baby or a football in the crook of my arm and bashed him with my knuckles, bashed him until his teeth broke through his lips. Bashed him with my elbow after that until he fell through my arms into a heap at my feet. Until the skin was pounded thin across his cheekbones and turned black (124).

The first passage relates an example of two anonymous members of fight club, and the second depicts Joe’s savage beating of “angel” who also a member. While the violence is directed outwardly in both cases, it maintains the same function, which is to achieve a kind of freedom from the numbing effects of the consumer culture through the “real” experience of pain. This real pain stands in contrast to its commodified, substandard duplicate, which is epitomized in such events as a televised football game. The “realness” of the fight club violence helps inject these men — who have been anesthetized by consumerism — with a sensation of life. Every time they fight, they are further removed from the sedation of modern society and positioned closer to an elevated degree of enlightenment by risking one’s life. They use each other as oppositions to achieve a higher level of self-consciousness.

The last type of violence involves “Project Mayhem.” Project Mayhem (Tyler’s creation) is carried out by fight club members who are divided up into committees such as Arson, Mischief, and Assault (119). Project Mayhem was designed to create widespread chaos within mainstream society in order to overthrow it: “This was the goal of Project Mayhem, Tyler said, the complete and right-away destruction of civilization” (125). In order to reach this goal, each committee was responsible for particular types of destructive acts aimed at emblematic societal structures. Although the following passages provide only a small cross-section of the Project’s activities, a wide range of destruction is exhibited. For example, members of the particular

148 Palahniuk, Fight Club (1996), 50: “Fight club is not football on television. You aren’t watching a bunch of men you don’t know halfway around the world beating on each other live by satellite with a two-minute delay, commercials pitching beer every ten minutes, and a pause now for station identification.”
committees might be involved in the trivial, somewhat humorous act of tipping over a portable toilet or throwing gelatin or the much more serious attempt to raze a skyscraper.

The following passage demonstrates the former, more humorous type of destruction aimed at calling attention to consumerism as it is represented in mainstream culture:

If you draw a proposal, then you have to go to the import beer festival this weekend and push over a guy in a chemical toilet. You'll get extra favor if you get beat up for doing this. Or you have to attend the fashion show at the shopping center atrium and throw strawberry gelatin from the mezzanine (120).

However, as the fabula progresses, the activities of Project Mayhem ramp up as they grow more ambitious and more violent:

Who painted the blazing demon mask on the Hein Tower? The night of the Hein Tower assignment, you can picture a team of law clerks and bookkeepers or messengers sneaking into offices where they sat, every day. Maybe they were a little drunk even if it's against the rules in Project Mayhem, and they used passkeys where they could and used spray canisters of Freon to shatter lock cylinders so they could dangle, rapping against the tower's brick faced, dropping, trusting each other to hold ropes, swinging, risking death in offices where every day they felt their lives end one hour at a time (121).

Here, unnamed fight club members illegally enter a skyscraper in order to deface the outside of it with a massive "demon mask." Intending to gain publicity for their cause, the act, while unlawful, was still rather innocent compared to the culmination of Project Mayhem. Seen at the conclusion of the embedded fabula, they attempt to not merely deface a skyscraper, but rather annihilate it completely:

The building we're standing on won't be here in ten minutes. You take a 98-percent concentration of fuming nitric acid and add the acid to three times that amount of sulfuric acid. Do this in an ice bath. Then add glycerin drop-by-drop with an eyedropper. You have nitroglycerin. (...) The Parker-Morris Building will go over, all one hundred and ninety-one floors, slow as a tree falling the forest. Timber. You can topple anything. It's weird to think the place where we're standing will only be a point in the sky (12-13).

Although there is no such corporate entity named "Parker-Morris," the name closely resembles "Phillip-Morris," which is a multi-national corporation based in the U.S. With this point in view, Tyler's desire to destroy the Parker-Morris headquarters is a likely metaphor for the demolition of the corporate power structure that exists behind American consumerism. Although Fight Club was published two years prior, Project Mayhem's attempt to depose a consumer society - imaged metaphorically through the destruction of its symbols - conjures pictures of the "9-11" attacks on New York City's World Trade Center. This ironic association may tend to accentuate the gravity of Fight Club's third and most destructive type of violence in the minds of readers familiar with the 9-11 images.

**Functions of Destruction**

The previous section introduced three types of destructive violence: violence directed at oneself, violence aimed at others, and the violent destruction of property as emblems of
a consumer society. In this section, the function, or purpose, of these types will be further illuminated as they relate to the concept of self-destruction. The function of the first and most obvious type, self-inflicted violence, is demonstrated in the following two passages:

The first fight club was just Tyler and I pounding each other. It used to be when I came home angry and knowing my life wasn’t toeing my five-year plan, I could clean my condominium or detail my car. Someday I’d be dead without a scar and there would be a really nice condo and car. Really, really, nice until the dust settled or the next owner. Nothing is static. Even the Mona Lisa is falling apart. Since fight club, I can wiggle half the teeth in my jaw. Maybe self-improvement isn’t the answer. Tyler never knew his father. Maybe self-destruction is the answer (49).

I didn’t want to, but Tyler explained it all, about not wanting to die without any scars, about being tired of watching only professionals fight, and wanting to know more about myself. About self-destruction. At the time, my life just seemed too complete, and maybe we have to break everything to make something better out of ourselves (52).

In the first passage, we learn that Joe is physically “pounding” himself (as Tyler) because he is discontented with the material returns of modern life. Since self-improvement in the form of material possessions and professional success has proven unsatisfying, the second passage conveys Joe’s willingness to heed his alter-ego’s suggestion of self-destruction in an attempt to “make something better” out of himself. In order to accomplish this, Tyler believes Joe should not only run from money, property, and knowledge, but also intentionally seek disaster. In other words, Tyler wants Joe to “hit bottom”:

Tyler says I’m nowhere near hitting bottom, yet. And if I don’t fall all the way, I can’t be saved. Jesus did it with his crucifixion thing. I shouldn’t just abandon money and property and knowledge. This isn’t just a weekend retreat. I should run from self-improvement, and I should be running toward disaster. I can’t just play it safe anymore. This isn’t a seminar. “If you’ve lost your nerve before you hit bottom,” Tyler says, “you’ll never really succeed.” Only after disaster can we be resurrected. “It’s only after you’ve lost everything,” Tyler says, “that you’re free to do anything” (69-70).

Tyler’s assertion that it is “It’s only after you’ve lost everything” that we are “free to do anything” echoes Hegel’s argument that it is “solely by risking life that freedom is obtained” (1977: 114). Tyler analogizes the idea of salvation through destruction in his comparison between hitting bottom and Jesus’ crucifixion. Tyler further emphasizes the gravity of this exercise when he notes that it is not just abandoning our possessions and assumptions, but also seeking out private disaster. In other words, it is only through our personal crucifixion that we can be resurrected as a kind of Hegelian understanding self-consciousness. In the next passage, Tyler demonstrates exactly how he is going to assist Joe in this process:

“Open your eyes,” Tyler says, and his face is shining with tears. “Congratulations,” Tyler says. “You’re a step closer to hitting bottom.” “You have to see,” Tyler says, “how the first soap was made of heroes.” Think about the animals used in product testing. Think about the monkeys shot into space. “Without their death, their pain, their sacrifice,” Tyler says, “we would have nothing” (78).
Here, Tyler kisses Joe's hand so that a small quantity of saliva is left on it. He then pours lye onto the saliva and the mixture induces an excruciating chemical burn. It is during this painful, self-induced experience that Tyler explains to Joe how the first soap was produced. Soap—a most practical innovation—was discovered by accident through actual human sacrifice. In this same way, as the lye burns through his skin, Tyler wants Joe to "give up," to surrender and metaphorically lay his old life on that same altar of human sacrifice so that something positive may ultimately result: Like the animals sacrificed to make products safer or to explore space, Tyler wants Joe to sacrifice his attachment to the comforts of modern life and hit bottom because, as Hegel argued, authentic self-consciousness stems from the readiness to forfeit everything, which includes one's life.149

Although it is directed towards others, the second type of violence is similar to the function of the first in its attempt to initiate a chain of events that would cause someone to hit bottom. The connection between the two types of violence is demonstrated in the following passage:

Fight club isn't about winning or losing fights. Fight club isn't about words. You see a guy come to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see this same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood. This guy trusts himself to handle anything. There's grunting and noises a fight club like at the gym, but fight club isn't about looking good. There's hysterical shouting in tongues like at church, and when you wake up Sunday afternoon you feel saved (51).

Here, Joe equates fight club to a church where one goes to get "saved," which reinforces the notion of violence as a way to shed the numbing effects of consumer culture. By beating each other up, the members of fight club assist each other in self-destruction and, in doing so, they enable one another to hit bottom so that they may, paradoxically, achieve a kind of salvation. The next passage displays an instance of this ironic assistance, or what Tyler refers to as a "human sacrifice":

I have your license. I know who you are. I know where you live. I'm keeping your license, and I'm going to check on you, mister Raymond K. Hessel. In three months, and then in six months, and then in a year, and if you aren't back in school on your way to being a veterinarian, you will be dead (154).

Each member of fight club is responsible for carrying out a dozen of these pseudo-altruistic, quasi-violent acts. The life that each one of these individuals symbolically sacrifices at gunpoint is the life they have, for whatever reason, "settled for." In other words, they have surrendered their true ambitions. In light of this forfeiture, with a gun pressed against their head, they are instructed to pursue the life they have always desired, but for some reason have been unable to acquire. Tyler believes that only when the old, settled for life is sacrificed, can true happiness be achieved. Joe supports Tyler's view when he states: "Raymond K.K. Hessel, your dinner is going to taste better than any meal you've ever eaten, and tomorrow will be the most beautiful day of your entire life" (155).

However, such pseudo-altruistic assistance eventually goes too far and morphs into a form of self-seeking catharsis. In the following passage, Joe savagely beats an

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149 Hegel, *Phenomenology* (1977), 114: "The individual who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."
attractive young member of fight club referred to as “angel,” who signifies “everything beautiful” Joe would never have:

That Saturday night, a young guy with an angel’s face came to his first fight club, and I tagged him for a fight. That’s the rule. If it’s your first night in fight club, you have to fight. I knew that so I tagged him because insomnia was on again, and I was in a mood to destroy something beautiful. (…) Tyler asked what I was really fighting. What Tyler says about being the crap and the slaves of history, that’s how I felt. I wanted to destroy everything beautiful I’d never have. (…) I wanted the whole world to hit bottom. Pounding that kid, I really wanted to put a bullet between the eyes of every endangered panda that wouldn’t screw to save its species and every whale or dolphin that gave up and ran itself aground. Don’t think of this as extinction. Think of this as downsizing. For thousands of years, human beings had screwed up and crapped on this planet, and now history expected me to clean up after everyone (123-124).

Instead of consciously trying to help angel hit bottom, Joe merely used him to vent the frustrations that have resulted from his personal emptiness and dissatisfaction with the “way of the world.” It was also in this same moment that Joe felt most unsatisfied and the escape that fight club had previously provided him was left wanting:

I said I felt like crap and not relaxed at all. I didn’t get any kind of a buzz. Maybe I’d developed a jones. You can build up a tolerance to fighting, and maybe I needed to move on to something bigger. It was that morning, Tyler invented Project Mayhem” (123).

Angel not only represented everything beautiful Joe would never have, but also modern society, which promises a life of ease and happiness. However, in Joe’s case, it could not deliver the contentment and satisfaction it had pledged. As a result of fight club’s failure to sustain personal catharsis, Project Mayhem – aimed at the demolition of the consumer society – is born.

While Project Mayhem concerns destruction on a grand scale, it was anticipated by Joe’s destruction of his own property. The following passage provides insight into Joe’s sense of confinement, which eventually causes him to turn against his belongings:

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple of years you’re satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you’ve got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you’re trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you (44).

Instead of feeling satisfied, Joe felt trapped by the possessions that were promised (by a consumer culture) to make him complete; however, Joe could not escape his material prison on his own. Joe required Tyler’s assistance, which is anticipated in the next passage when Joe first expresses his desire for Tyler to “deliver” him from such material trappings as Swedish furniture and clever art:

The doorman raises an eyebrow and says how some people will go on a long trip and leave a candle, a long, long candle burning in a big puddle of gasoline. People with financial difficulties do this stuff. People who want out from under. I asked to use the lobby phone. “A lot of young people try to impress the world and buy too many things,” the doorman said. I called Tyler. The phone rang in
Tyler's rented house on Paper Street. Oh, Tyler, please deliver me. And the phone rang. "Young people, they think they want the whole world." Deliver me from Swedish furniture. Deliver me from clever art. And the phone rang and Tyler answered. "If you don't know what you want," the doorman said, "you end up with a lot you don't." May I never be complete. May I never be content (45-46).

Here, the doorman indicates to the reader why Joe destroyed his own condominium when he states that some who do this type of thing are young people who "try to impress the world and buy too many things" and who "want out from under." In Joe's case, he endeavored to escape his prison by physically destroying it.

However, because he could not do this on his own, Joe subconsciously invented Tyler, or his lacerated consciousness, to do it for him:

"Disaster is a natural part of my evolution," Tyler whispered, "toward tragedy and dissolution." I told the detective that it was the refrigerator that blew up my condo. "I'm breaking my attachment to physical power and possessions," Tyler whispered. "because only through destroying myself can I discover the greater power of my spirit." (...) "The liberator who destroys my property," Tyler said, "is fighting to save my spirit. The teacher who clears all possessions from my path will set me free" (110).

It is Tyler who is able to articulate the Hegelian impetus behind the explosion when he whispers: "I'm breaking my attachment to physical power and possessions" because "only through destroying myself can I discover the great power of my spirit." 150 Like the first two types of violence, the destruction of property is intended to liberate Joe so that his spirit may be saved. In other words, the above passage links the destruction of property to the destruction of the self and the destruction of the self to its salvation.

Project Mayhem - while certainly the destruction of property - is more concerned with a macrocosmic liberation of the masses from an oppressive consumer society than with a more microcosmic liberation of an individual member of fight club. At first, Project Mayhem aims to terrorize the snobbish aristocracy:

Tyler and me, we've turned into the guerilla terrorists of the service industry. Dinner party saboteurs. The hotel caters dinner parties, and when somebody wants the food they get the food and the wine and the china and the glassware and the waiters. They get the works, all on one bill. And because they know they can't threaten you with the tip, to them you're just a cockroach (81).

At this stage, Project Mayhem merely endeavors to disrupt the lives of those who best signify the consumer society they sought to escape. 151 The following passage reinforces the notion of Project Mayhem as a form of class warfare when Tyler and the other members of fight club issue a rather stern warning to the chief of police not to shut any fight clubs down:

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150 Palahniuk, Fight Club (1996), 149: "Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need."

151 Palahniuk, Fight Club (1996), 79-85. Tyler, who works for a ritzy banquet service company, often defiles the food he is about to serve. For example, he urinates in the soup and passes gas on the meringue. In addition, he urinates into one of the many perfume bottles of the rich owner of one of the homes entertaining one of the banquets he attends. Since the lady does not know which one, he has effectively ruined them all.
“Remember this,” Tyler said. “The people you’re trying to step on, we’re everyone you depend on. We’re the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you’re asleep. We drive the ambulances. We direct your call. We are cooks and taxi drivers and we know everything about you. We process your insurance claims and credit card charges. We control every part of your life. We are the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we’ll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars, but we won’t. And we’re just learning this fact,” Tyler said. “So don’t fuck with us” (166).

By establishing the binary opposition of the “we” and the “you,” this passage conveys Tyler’s rather fervent sense of class division. To put this separation in Hegelian terms, without the bondsman, there would be no lord.

With this connection in view, we learn that Project Mayhem is most sardonically funded by the fat stolen from plastic surgery clinics. “Fat,” the mechanic says is: “...liposuctioned fat sucked out of the richest thighs in America. The richest, fattest thighs in the world” (150). Used to make soap, the stolen fat is rendered, mixed with lye and rosemary, and sold back to the people who paid to have it sucked out at twenty dollars a bar. The mocking tone of this passage develops Palahniuk’s thematic condemnation of those who best represent the vain, materialistic consumer culture in which the narrative is set. In order to abolish this rampant materialism, the following passage reveals Project Mayhem’s evolution from terrorizing those who signify consumer society to that society’s ultimate annihilation:

This was the goal of Project Mayhem, Tyler said, the complete and right-away destruction of civilization. (...) Like fight club does with clerks and box boys, Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world (125).

Here, Tyler applies his “only after you’ve lost everything” that we are “free to do anything” theory to the larger civilization. To put it differently, for the collective community of bondsmen to be free, the opposing lord-like other of consumer society must be eliminated so civilization itself could only be resurrected and achieve a kind of collective understanding consciousness.

This objective culminates with the destruction of massive skyscrapers like the Parker-Morris Building, which symbolize the corporate structure that supports consumer, capitalistic societies such as the United States. The implication is that such societies cannot be merely “fixed,” but must be fully removed so that another, supposedly better one, may form in its stead. However, Tyler fails to recognize that only the bondsman can transcend the fear, or the initial response to the otherness as embodied in the lord. While a kind of self-consciousness is initially achieved in opposition to otherness, a higher version is obtained “in” the otherness.152 Hegel argues that it is not the mastery of the other, but identifying it and yielding to it. In other words, it is consciously subjecting oneself to the other that results in an understanding consciousness, which Joe (bondsman) finally achieves in his subjection to Tyler (lord) at the end of the primary fabula on top of the Parker-Morris building when he does not shoot Tyler, but rather himself (196).

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152 Hegel, *Phenomenology* (1977), 118: “In the master, the bondsman feels self-existence to be something external, and objective fact: in fear self-existence is present within himself; in fashioning the thing, self-existence comes to be felt explicitly as his own proper being, and he attains the consciousness that he himself exits in its own right and on its own account.”
Literary Space and Implied Temporal Derivatives

All of the fabula events – whether they are in soaring skyscrapers or dingy basement fight clubs – occur within degrees of describable literary space, which maintain the capacity to manipulate the reader’s understanding of the fabula elements and resulting interpretation of the story. In chapter three, the reader accompanies Joe as he commutes to and from the airports that serve the cities he visits as a function of his job as recall campaign coordinator for an anonymous major car manufacturer:

You wake up at Air Harbor International. (...) This is how I met Tyler Durden. You wake up at O’Hare. You wake up at LaGuardia. (...) You wake up at Sea-Tac. (...) You wake up at LAX. (...) You wake up at Cleveland Hopkins. (...) (25-31).

From the number of various airports Joe names it is readily apparent that Fight Club’s first degree, or largest degree of literary space is the United States: all of the airports Joe travels to serve such American cities as Chicago, New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Cleveland. The second degree of literary space, the specific city in which Joe resides, is left a bit more ambiguous. This unnamed metropolis is home to Joe’s high-rise apartment building and (although it is non-existent) the Parker-Morris building, which Joe describes as the “world’s tallest” (12). For that reason, Fight Club’s second degree of literary space is most likely one of the major American cities Joe flies to on business such as Chicago or New York.

The smaller, second degree of literary space generally consists of the different rooms the principal characters work and live in. Palahniuk takes special care to describe the homes of the Joe, Tyler, and Marla in detail. In Fight Club this second, more thoroughly described degree of literary space is used as a form of implicit narratorial characterization.153 It becomes evident over the course of the narrative that places of residence do, indeed, say something about the characters that inhabit them. For example, the following passage describes Joe’s high-rise condominium building:

Home was a condominium on the fifteenth floor of a high-rise, a sort of filing cabinet for widows and young professionals. The marketing brochure promised a foot of concrete floor, ceiling, and wall between me and any adjacent stereo or turned-up television. A foot of concrete and air conditioning, you couldn’t open the windows so even with maple flooring and dimmer switches, all seventeen hundred airtight feet would smell like the last meal you cooked or your last trip to the bathroom (41).

Here, such a description images Joe’s residence as an architecturally sterile, presumably lonely place mostly inhabited by young, white-collar singles and widows. The sterility and seclusion of his residence is merely a physical manifestation of the isolation that marks Joe’s consumer lifestyle.

Along with his condo, we are also supplied with added textual details in regard to his place of employment. Similar to his condo, the department of Compliance and Liability is described with a touch of sterility:

That’s my department. Compliance and Liability. (...) It’s not like I have a window at work. All the outside walls are floor to ceiling glass. Everything where I work is floor to ceiling glass. Everything is vertical blinds. Everything is industrial

153 Jahn, Poems, Plays, and Prose (2001), N7.5: “Characters are implicitly characterized by their clothing, their physical appearance, and their chosen environment (e.g., their rooms, their dogs, their cars).”
low-pile gray carpet spotted with little tombstone monuments where the PCs plug into the network. Everything is a maze of cubicles boxed in with fences of upholstered plywood. A vacuum cleaner hums somewhere.

Analogous to the “filing cabinet” high-rise, Joe’s office is “a maze of cubicles.” In both cases, the details give the impression of a mentally stifling, claustrophobic space in spite of their physical size.

Tyler’s house, on the other hand, is a picture of thorough decrepitude as the dwelling, like Tyler, is in a complete state of disrepair:

The house that Tyler rents, it has three stories and a basement. We carry around candles. It has pantries and screened sleeping porches and stained glass windows on the stairway landing. There are bay windows with window seats in the parlor. The baseboard moldings are carved and varnished and eighteen inches high. The rain trickles down through the house, and everything wooden swells and shrinks, and the nails in everything wooden, the floors and baseboards and window casings, the nails inch out and rust. Everywhere there are rusted nails to step on or snag your elbow on... (57).

From on Joe’s description, it appears that it was, at one time, a fine home constructed with stained glass and a parlor. Whatever it once was, the house is now not only appallingly allapidated, but quite dangerous as well. Just like Joe’s sterile apartment, the condition of Tyler’s house gives us a glimpse into the anarchical and dangerous character we later discover him to be.

The next two passages circumscribe the residence of the third principal character, Maria Singer, whom Joe meets at a support group meeting for people with brain parasites (34). Despite being physically healthy, the attention and affection Joe receives at these meetings works to eliminate an insomnia that stems from Joe’s tedious, unfulfilling consumer lifestyle – until Maria Singer enters the picture. Joe’s knowledge that there is another “faker” in the room holds up a mirror to his own lie and his provisional solution is ruined and his insomnia returns.\[154\] Maria’s hotel residence is presented as a kind of amalgamation of the two previous dwellings:

Maria lives at the Regent Hotel, which is nothing but brown bricks held together with sleaze, where all the mattresses are sealed inside slippery plastic covers, so many people go there to die (58).

Maria’s room in the seedy Regent Hotel effectively assimilates the oppressive emptiness of Joe’s condo with the gross disrepair of Tyler’s house. Joe not only wanted to escape from his empty lifestyle, but he wanted to be with someone like Maria: “Tyler loved Maria. From the first night I met her, Tyler or some part of me needed a way to be with Maria” (198). Both Maria and her residence supply a kind of balancing middle ground between the polar extremes of Joe and Tyler.

It is through these kinds of descriptive passages that the reader is allowed a sense-based entrance into these characters’ lives. Practically, Palahniuk employs these passages as a form of descriptive anticipation. For example, Joe’s claustrophobic, mundane surroundings provide impetus for a psychological disorder that, in a sense, frees him from the consumer culture that has imprisoned him. Unable to effectively assist... 

\[154\] Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (1996), 23: “To Maria I’m a fake. Since the second night I saw her I can’t sleep. (...) Maria’s lie reflects my lie.” Seeing another “faker” like himself at the support group meeting reminds Joe of the lie he is living, and that his attendance at the meetings is only a superficial solution to a deeper problem.
himself, Joe subconsciously invents his anarchist alter ego whose dilapidated environment is positioned antithetically to Joe’s sterile condominium.

A byproduct inherent in the delineation of literary space is the inference of literary time. Although literary time is not stated explicitly within the text (similar to characterization) it can be implicitly gleaned through the textual description of literary space. In order to circumscribe Fight Club’s presentation of literary time, I refer back to the preceding passages, which inform us that the narrative takes place in a world of modern airports, high-rise condominiums, and skyscraper office buildings filled with cubicles and personal computers. From these details, it is apparent that Fight Club is set sometime in the late twentieth century. Specifically, the widespread use of personal computers in an office replete with cubicles further confirms a sense of literary time circa the novel’s publication – 1996. The previous decade (also known as the “me” generation) is marked historically by the capitalist economic inequality of “Reaganomics.”

It is during the 1980’s that the American economy, fueled by consumerism, allowed the affluent to accumulate even greater sums of wealth, which only widened the financial disparity between the classes. Accordingly, it was in the 1990’s that the darker side of this same American consumer culture begins to materialize in the form of widespread third world deprivation and corporate scandal. Through description, the particular sense of literary space and time provides an appropriate arena for Fight Club’s thematic treatment of American consumerism.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, in this chapter I analyze the narrative text in an effort to concretize a story, which articulates a fabula that conceptualizes the notion of salvation through destruction in view of Hegelian phenomenology. In particular, it is the dialectic of the lord and the bondsman and its implications on the evolution of self-consciousness that provides a philosophical context for Palahniuk’s novel.

In Fight Club, Joe reflexively projects his subconscious desires into the sensual world in order to establish his subjectivity by a negation from another self-consciousness, which is paradoxically himself (Tyler). Viewed in this way, the novel presents a variation on this Hegelian theme in that Joe’s primary negative relation is not with other individuals, but rather with a mental projection of what he desires to be. What is more, Joe’s need to be someone who owns “Swedish furniture” and “clever art” is conditioned by the sensual world, namely through the advertised images essential to the economic vitality of the consumer culture he inhabits. As a consequence of his conditioned desires, Joe finds that the consumer culture has trapped him in Hegel’s notion of a primitive desiring consciousness, which eventually separates into a mastery or a servant consciousness.

Although Joe has performed his obligations in a kind of capitalist “social contract” – vis-à-vis attending college and procuring a white-collar job – the consumer culture only meets his material needs and the promise of personal fulfillment as a result of


156 Hegel, The Phenomenology of the Spirit (1977) 114-138. The goal is ultimately to reach the level of the “understanding” consciousness when the self sees itself as the great unifying principle.
his actions has gone unmet. In reaction to this deep dissatisfaction, Joe subconsciously conceives Tyler who exhibits a lacerated consciousness. Tyler is a kind of bohemian who – by employing the tools of culture in opposition to culture – advocates a kind of salvation through self-destruction that evolves into a revolution that requires the obliteration of all major credit card company buildings. He believes that erasing the debt record will equalize the aristocracy with the demos and permit the basic goodness of humans to emerge so that a new utopia may arise. In this way, Tyler sees himself as a “liberator” who fights to “save the human spirit” (1996: 110). However, much like the Reign of Terror that succeeded the French Revolution, the razing of these financial institutions ultimately fails to bring about the idealistic change that Tyler envisions.

Joe, as the bondsman, creates Tyler because he subconsciously wants to be the lord-like figure he signifies, or the revolutionary who can free him from his present consciousness. Joe’s desire is so intense that it manifests in a kind of latent homoeroticism towards Tyler who embodies all the promises of the consumer culture. Echoing Hegel, in The Self (1955), Niebuhr sheds some light on this sexual metaphor of the self in its dialogue with others: “The self sees the other as an instrument for its purposes and as a completion for its incompleteness. The sexual relation is the most vivid form of one self-seeking completion in another self” (31). Niebuhr’s description is made manifest when Joe first imagines meeting Tyler:

How I met Tyler was I went to a nude beach. This was the very end of summer, and I was asleep. Tyler was naked and sweating, gritty with sand, his hair wet and stringy, hanging in his face. Tyler had been around a long time before we met (1996: 32).

This subconscious event anticipates Tyler’s eventual appearance as a character in the story and is indicative of Joe’s intense longing to transcend his present state of consciousness, which he will risk his life to achieve. Joe’s implicit sexual desire for Tyler is predicated upon the failure of another kind of longing, which is his need for the contentment promised by a consumer culture. Evidenced later in the fabula, this aspiration also takes on sexual overtones as Joe’s language implies that he has masturbated to the IKEA furniture catalogue (43). At the root of these sexual desires is a deeper yearning for personal fulfillment that can only be found by stripping away the layers of culturally imposed self-conceptions. However, Joe is unable to break free from his professional consciousness and requires Tyler – the lacerated consciousness – to help him achieve a higher level of understanding consciousness as he finally realizes that he “is” Tyler. As the lord-like other, Tyler provides a Hegelian negative relation that Joe must

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157 While contract theory can be found in classical political philosophy, the term “social contract” is most closely linked with the modern political philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, edited by C.B. Macpherson (New York: The Penguin Publishing Group, 1985). For Hobbes, the social contract was an agreement between society and its government. Hobbes contended that people in a state of nature ceded their individual rights to a strong sovereign in return for his protection. John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). In Locke’s formulation, the social contract is between individuals in an orderly state of nature, possessing “natural law,” a moral force limiting contractors as to what they can promise. The area of trust or discretion allowed to those in power is limited by the intentions of those entering society such as the preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates through the establishment of known, binding, and universally applicable laws. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (New York: The Penguin Publishing Group, 1968). Unlike Hobbes, for Rousseau, the social contract an agreement between individuals to create a society and a government. Like Locke, Rousseau believed that a government should come from the consent of the governed.
"fight" so that he can ultimately realize the true nature his subjectivity and achieve a genuine level of self-realization.

While Joe attains an understanding consciousness through his opposition to Tyler, he never reaches Hegel's pinnacle of "absolute" consciousness, which does not negate the world, but rather assimilates it and peacefully coexists with it. Furthermore, it brings to its members the social responsibility that comes with wisdom and helps them along to their next stage of consciousness. Tyler is not the end of Joe's conscious evolution, but rather, as Joe's lacerated conscious, a means that allows Joe to see himself through the advertised images that have come to define him. While this is useful - at the conclusion of the fabula as he lies in his hospital bed - Joe seems to have relegated himself to a kind of existential resignation in that there is no other stage higher than he is:

Why did I cause so much pain? Didn't I realize that each of us is a scared, unique snowflake of special unique specialness? Can't I see how we're all manifestations of God's love? I look at God behind his desk, taking notes on a pad, but God's got this all wrong. We are not special. We are not trash, either. We just are. We just are, and what happens just happens (207).

The conclusion, therefore, does not present us with the hope of any further evolution of consciousness: rather, we are left with a kind of static view of the world. This notion is evidenced as Joe further describes his ethereally out-of-body experience:

People write me in heaven and tell me I'm remembered. That I'm their hero. I'll get better. (...) Or somebody with a broken nose pushes a mop past me and whispers: everything's going according to the plan. (...) We're going to break up civilization and make something better of the world (207-208).

Obviously still in the hospital, we get the sense that Joe's new level of self-awareness has not penetrated into the other members of fight club and the conclusion gives no indication that he is going to try and change things when he leaves the hospital.

Thus, it seems doubtful that Joe's understanding consciousness will ever lead to a more absolute consciousness that operates in love for the world and brings others along to their next stage. With this in mind, we must answer the central question: Was Joe saved through destruction? If saved means transcending his servant consciousness and achieving an understanding consciousness by risking his life in the context of the lord-bondsmen relationship, then yes. If saved means reaching an absolute consciousness marked by love for others, then no. It is this precisely this idea that I will track into the Fincher film.

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158 Trejo, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind" (1993), 13: "With absolute consciousness one may approach heaven. Love, harmony, wisdom, social responsibility, experience, all converge one consciousness, where one can glimpse the end of time, or the dimension beyond mere appearances, the dimension beyond phenomena. The goal of phenomenology is reached, then, in the transcendence of phenomena and the attainment of Noumena, Geist, Spirit, the Absolute." Absolute consciousness is exhibited by a love for the phenomenal world and to help each person one meets to their next stage of consciousness.
III. The Film

David Fincher

(1962 – Present)
**Introduction**

In the fall of 1999, 20th Century Fox released the filmic adaptation of Palahniuk's novel published just two years prior. Unlike Kubrick and Burgess who did not collaborate on the film, David Fincher - director of *Seven* (1995) and *The Game* (1997) - and screenwriter Jim Uhls worked closely with Palahniuk throughout pre-production to try and make sure that the film captured the novel's essential themes of anti-consumerism and a kind of salvation through personal destruction. Much like its literary forerunner, the sardonically dark and overtly violent film polarized the audience and critics alike with its scathing examination of American consumerism. With a production budget of 63 million dollars, the film earned a rather disappointing 37 million dollars in the United States despite featuring three of Hollywood’s biggest stars - Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, and Helena Bonham Carter. Although the film quickly developed a zealous cult following, it appears that mainstream audiences had difficulty digesting the film’s graphic violence. *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan described *Fight Club* as: “a witless mishmash of whiny infantile philosophizing and bone-crunching violence” (Swallow 2003: 138). The film’s tepid reception at the box office is also largely attributed to the film’s unfortunate release date, which coincided with the highly publicized school shootings in Columbine, Colorado. After the Columbine massacre, *Fight Club* was released at a time when many U.S. politicians targeted on-screen violence as the cause for "real" violence in a way recalled reactions to Kubrick’s *Clockwork*. British film and cultural theorist James Swallow notes that the arguments lined up against *Clockwork* "were called out of retirement and re-applied" to *Fight Club* (2003: 139).

Similar to the manner Kubrick merged graphic violence with biting satire to articulate a social commentary, Fincher also employs his own unique brand of satirical violence to convey a social message with regard to postmodern American consumer culture. In fact, some critics considered *Fight Club* the nineties version of *Clockwork* and dubbed it the “Best Movie of 1999 That No One Saw.” Janet Maslin, film critic for the *New York Times*, wrote that Fincher: “...finds subject matter audacious enough to suit his lighting fast visual sophistication, and put that style to stunningly effective use” (139).

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159 Geoffrey Kleinman, “Interview with Chuck Palahniuk,” in DVD Talk (text online) accessed 29 April 2004, http://www.dvdtalk.com/interviews/002227.html. In the interview, Palahniuk is asked about his experience working with Fincher and Uhls: "The first time I saw the dailies of the movie was when I went down to the film's location and David Fincher would drag me off the set to his trailer to show me the dailies. He would be watching me for my reaction, and I had little or no idea where these scenes fit together. (...) Now that I see the movie, especially when I sat down with Jim Uhls and record a commentary track for the DVD, I was sort of embarrassed of the book, because the movie had streamlined the plot and made it so much more effective and made connections that I had never thought to make."

160 James Swallow, *Dark Eye: The Films of David Fincher* (London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd., 2003), 138: "The film’s mediocre opening weekend was blamed by many on a marketing campaign that Art Linson called ‘ill-conceived’ and ‘one-dimensional,’ that ‘only sold the titillation of young guys beating the shit out of each other without letting the audience know of the much smarter and wittier ironic purpose to the whole journey.’” “*Fight Club* Box Office Numbers,” in Box Office Mojo (statistics online) accessed 13 July 2005, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fightclub.htm. More precisely, the domestic gross was $37,030,102, and the overseas gross was $63,823,651 for a worldwide gross of $100,853,753.

161 Swallow. *Dark Eye* (2003), 138. In response to the Columbine “connections,” Fincher stated: “To say that because we have Columbine then we have to be very careful about the ideas we put out there is inane, ludicrous. I think we have to be responsible for the ideas that we present in a prurient or a glamorized way, but I don't think that the violence in this movie is portrayed in a glamorous way. I think the anarchic elements of it are properly dealt with and put in their moral place.”
Much like *Clockwork* and Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killer’s* (1994), *Fight Club* was not originally seen as an intelligent and socially relevant work, but rather generally misunderstood as a mindless glorification of violence. Fincher responded to this common line of attack by saying:

People misread a lot of what happened in *Fight Club* as some sort of anarchist recruiting film, and really, I don’t think the movie really promotes any specific answers, it just says, “This is a frustration and it’s part of the maturation of the male creature” (141).

In the film, Tyler offers a source of the frustration that Fincher refers to when he recognizes that he, and others like him, are white-collared slaves who work jobs they hate so they can buy “shit we don’t need.” These men are a kind of capitalist proletariat who sell their productive labor for wages that have not effectively enabled them to consume their way into the advertised ideal. It is precisely the film’s treatment of consumerism with regard to the frustrated “male creature” that this chapter seeks to expose in light of Hegelian phenomenology and the lord – bondsman relationship in particular.

**Emasculation Through Consumerism**

The following passage presents a verbal exchange between the protagonist “Jack” and the visible manifestation of his subconscious desires – Tyler Durden. The dialogue takes place in a strip club shortly after Jack returned from a business trip and found his condominium destroyed by a rather mysterious explosion:

Tyler: You know, man, it could be worse. A woman could cut off your penis while you’re sleeping and toss it out the window of a moving car. Jack: There’s always that. I don’t know, it’s just when you buy furniture, you tell yourself that’s it. That’s the last sofa I’m gonna need. Whatever else happens, I’ve got that sofa problem handled. I had it all. I had a stereo that was very decent, a wardrobe that was getting very respectable. I was close to being complete. (…) Tyler: Why do guys like you and I know what a duvet is? Is this essential in the hunter-gatherer sense of the word? No. What are we then? Jack: We’re, uh, you know, consumers. Tyler: Right, we’re consumers. We are by-products of a lifestyle obsession. Murder, crime, poverty, these things don’t concern me. What concerns me is celebrity magazines, television with 500 channels, some guy’s name on my underwear. Rogaine, Viagra, Olestra. Jack: Martha Stewart. Tyler: Fuck Martha Stewart. Martha’s polishing the brass on the Titanic. It’s all going down, man. So fuck off with your sofa units and Strinne green stripe patterns. I say never be complete. (…) The things you own, end up owning you (Fincher 1999: 11)

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102 David Fincher, dir., *Fight Club*. (Beverly Hills: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2000). 15. The dialogue, while audible, can also be seen on the screen via the subtitle feature for a more accurate transcription. The film (on the DVD) is divided up into 36 chapters and will be referenced accordingly. Subsequent citations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically. 103 While he does use several false identities throughout the film, like the novel, the real name of the film’s protagonist is never explicitly revealed. However, toward the middle of the film, the protagonist discovers stacks of old magazines in which there are a series of articles where organs in the human body refer to themselves in the first person: “I am Jack’s medulla oblongata” and “I am Jack’s colon.” The protagonist adopts this practice and refers to the functions of his own body in a similar fashion. For example, when jealous of Tyler’s affection for another character he states: “I am Jack’s inflamed sense of rejection.” In order to facilitate a simpler and more personal discussion of the protagonist, he will be referred to simply as “Jack.”
This passage presents the first noteworthy exchange between Jack and Tyler with regard to the potentially problematic influence of consumerism in Jack’s life. Jack’s dialogue exposes his reliance on material possessions to provide personal contentment, which is evidenced by the connection between his possessions (sofa, stereo, wardrobe) and his idea of being “complete.” This notion signifies Jack’s existence as a by-product of a consumer “lifestyle obsession,” as Tyler puts it. To state it differently, these objects have become the armor that is Jack’s identity because—largely through the manipulation of advertising—he has been conditioned to believe that the acquisition of material possessions would result in a sense of contentment and increased self-worth. He is tied slavishly to his possessions because they have come to represent his identity and thus Jack, in a sense, is “owned” by them.164

Although both narrative texts consider it, it is the film that devotes more energy to a specific consequence of Jack’s material identity dependence, which is emasculation. As merely a consumer, Jack’s role as a man—in the “hunter-gatherer” sense—has been transformed to a collector of things, which are not essential to his survival.165 Although hunter-gatherer societies still remain in a few remote parts of the world, they have been largely replaced by industrialized, consumer-based societies. In the film, Jack exemplifies young men in postmodern American culture who have no need to cultivate their primitive survival instincts because they have no real immediate fear of death or hunger. Having their basic needs perpetually met, individuals like Jack are enabled to redirect their attention toward consumption and overly concern themselves with such trivial items as celebrity magazines, designer underwear, and drugs for hair loss and sexual dysfunction, and late night cable television.

In other words, Jack (and others like him) has become someone who knows what a duvet is. Taken to the furthest extremes, the emasculating effects of a consumer lifestyle could result in the metaphorical removal of one’s manhood (genitalia), which may be summarily thrown out of the “window of a moving car.”166

Through its visual and auditory components, the film presents the emasculating effects of the consumer culture that surrounds the narrative’s principal characters. For

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165 “Anthromophemics,” in UCSB Glossary, (glossary online) accessed 16 October 2002. http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/glossary/new_index2.html; “‘Hunter-gatherer’: a collective term for the members of primitive small-scale mobile or semi-sedentary societies, whose subsistence is mainly focused on hunting game and gathering wild plants and fruits.”

166 Tyler’s metaphor references the well-publicized trial of Lorena Bobbit, a Venezuelan immigrant to the United States who removed her physically abusive husband’s penis while he was sleeping and tossed it out the window of her car as she sped away. Although she became a folk hero of sorts, she was ultimately deported.
example, the first and most visibly apparent example of emasculation is seen in the “Remaining Men Together” support group for men with testicular cancer. In chapter two, we see Jack’s face resting between a pair of rather large breasts, which happen to belong to a man named Robert Paulson, or “Big Bob.”

In addition to Bob’s “bitch-tits,” a rather obvious example of emasculation, we see several other male pairs in a rather close, intimate embrace as they cry and share their sad stories with one another. While it is not abnormal for a man to cry, it is (in American culture) largely considered a more feminine characteristic to embrace another, cry, and share one’s feelings. Although the film does echo the novel’s notion of salvation through destruction, the primary thrust of the filmic text concerns the emasculating effects of consumerism. Therefore, keeping in mind the notion of salvation through destruction and the Hegelian lord-bondsman relationship, in the following interpretation and analysis of Fincher’s filmic adaptation, I examine the visual and auditory components of the narrative text in an effort to concretize a story which articulates a fabula that instantiates the notion of emasculation through consumerism.

Multiple Personality Disorder: Jack and Tyler

Before exploring Jack’s more specific narratological functions, I first examine him in relation to his other self-consciousness – Tyler. Similar to the novel, in the film, Jack suffers from multiple personality disorder (MPD), or a psychological condition in which a person exhibits two or more disassociated personalities that function as distinct entities. To best facilitate the filmic imaging of this disorder, I begin with the explicit revelation of Tyler and then reveal how his existence was anticipated. In addition, like the novel, I consider Jack (and not Tyler) as the source of the disorder because it is Jack who represents the narrative’s anti-hero protagonist and character-bound narrator. In an effort to clarify the

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167 Fincher dir., Fight Club (1999), 2. Jack explains the existence of Bob’s breasts: “Bob had bitch-tits. (...) Eight months ago, Bob’s testicles were removed. Then hormone therapy. He developed bitch-tits because his testosterone was too high, and his body upped the estrogen.”
nature of this disorder and its bearing on the dynamic between Jack and Tyler. I examine the visual component of editing and the soundtrack feature of dialogue.168

In the film, Jack flies from city to city in search of Tyler who had previously disappeared. In one of these American cities, Jack has a conversation with a bartender who, because of his badly bruised face, appears to be a member of a fight club franchise.169 Their dialogue presents the first unequivocal revelation that Jack "is" Tyler:

Bartender: Is this a test sir? Jack: No, this is not a test. You were in here last Thursday. Jack: Thursday? Bartender: You were standing exactly where you are now asking exactly how good security is. It's tight as a drum, sir. Jack: Who do you think I am? Bartender: Are you sure this isn't a test? Jack: No, this is not a test. Bartender: You're Mr. Durden (30).

Like the novel, the implication gleaned from this exchange is that the bartender believes he is looking at Tyler Durden. It is obvious that the actor who plays Jack (Edward Norton) looks quite different than the actor who plays Tyler (Brad Pitt). There are two possibilities: one, the bartender is simply mistaken or two, he is, in fact, speaking to Tyler.

At this point, like the audience, Jack is uncertain which option is accurate. In order to eliminate his lingering uncertainty, Jack immediately calls Marla:


With his doubts removed by Marla's confirmation, Jack hangs up the phone and Tyler appears in the hotel room. It is the following exchange between Jack and Tyler that explicitly reveals the true dynamic of their relationship:

Jack: Now answer me, why do people think that I'm you? Tyler: I think you know. Jack: No, I don't. Tyler: Yes, you do. Tyler: Why would anyone possibly confuse you with me? Jack: Uh... I... I don't know. Tyler: You got it. Jack: No. Tyler: Say it. Jack: Because... Tyler: Say it. Jack: Because we're the same person. Tyler: That's right. Jack: Tyler, I don't understand this. Jack: You were looking for a way to change your life. You could not do this on your own. All the ways you wish you could be, that's me. I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you are not (31).

168 Robert Kolker, *Film, Form, and Culture*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2002), 236: "'Editing': The process of cutting film footage and assembling the pieces together into an expressive, narrative structure."

169 *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2002), 550: "'Franchise': the right or license granted to an individual or group to market a company's goods or services in a particular territory." During his business trips, Jack (as Tyler) planted fight clubs all over the United States; in a sense, he has set up fight club franchises. This is a practice typical of the corporate world he has come to loathe.
This exchange clearly lays out the nature of Tyler’s existence and the impetus behind his conception in Jack’s subconscious mind. To free himself from the consumer life he felt imprisoned by, Jack created Tyler, or the embodiment of Jack’s repressed aggression, which is the result of an unfulfilled, consumer lifestyle. In other words, Jack’s repression was so acute that it became a mental disorder that visibly manifested itself into his alter ego – Tyler Durden.

From the vantage point of this confrontation, a number of hints that precede it became understandable. The first three-quarters of the film contain several covertly clever anticipations that Tyler does not truly exist outside of Jack’s mind. Of course, these understated anticipations become much more apparent in retrospect, and clearly obvious after multiple viewings. The second chapter presents two types of anticipation that Jack is Tyler. This chapter (chapter one being the opening credits) presents the beginning of the narrative, but the last event in the fabula. Thus, at this point, Jack is aware (although the audience is not) that he and Tyler are the same person. The film then presents several anticipations that Tyler is merely a figment of Jack’s imagination.

The first type of anticipation comes in the form of a thought montage that gives the viewer visual entrance into Jack’s head. Although the viewer would likely assume that the montages merely display Jack’s thoughts, the images project what he could only know as Tyler. Since, ultimately, they are the same person and share the same brain, Jack has access to certain details that only Tyler could be privy to. In chapter two, the first of five thought montages takes the viewer through underground parking garages and reveals a large amount of explosives rigged to support columns of the skyscrapers built on top of them.170 After this first montage on Jack (in voiceover narration) states: "I know this, because Tyler knows this." In retrospect, once we become aware that Jack and Tyler are the same person, his words take on new meaning. Seeing the film for the first time, the viewer, ignorant of Jack’s disorder, would most likely presume that Jack had acquired the information from Tyler through the normal channels such as a conversation, written correspondence, or otherwise. However, Jack “knows this” because, as Tyler, he formulated the plans for Project Mayhem, which includes the destruction of the skyscrapers.

The fifth montage, in chapter thirty-one, occurs when Tyler appears in Jack’s hotel room after he had called Maria for confirmation. This montage is no longer anticipatory, but rather more expositional in purpose as Jack consciously remembers, for the first time, all the things he did as Tyler. Montage five shows scenes shown earlier in the film, however, Jack is now placed where Tyler previously stood, or Jack is in the scene and Tyler is missing altogether. In other words, the audience now sees Jack acting as Tyler or instead of Jack engaging in a fight with Tyler, Jack fights himself in the parking lot of Lou’s Tavern. We are granted explicit visual access into the effects of Jack’s multiple personality disorder that have spanned the embedded fabula. What is more, this particular montage was edited with a flutter-cutting technique. Flutter-cutting is a type of editing that makes use of a rapid progression of small jump cuts and the effect is a quick, jerky movement of the screen images (Kolker 2002: 238). Therefore, in the case of this particular montage, the use of flutter-cutting gives it an agitated, eccentric quality.

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170 Fincher dir., Fight Club (1999). Although there are five thought montages in total, the first and the fifth stand out with regard to the anticipation that Tyler is Jack. The second montage, in chapter ten, reveals precisely how Jack’s condominium was destroyed. The third, in chapter twelve, reveals Tyler’s night jobs as a projectionist who splices single frames of pornography into family films and a waiter at an upscale hotel who urinates in soup. The fourth, in chapter seventeen, reveals Jack and Maria having sex, although his face is blurred because neither he (cf Jack) nor the audience should be aware that Jack is Tyler at that point in the narrative.
which reveals it to be a visual metaphor for Jack’s distorted recollection of his existence as Tyler.

In addition to the anticipatory quality of the thought montage, chapter three exposes the first instance of four subliminal Tylers revealed before he fully manifests in chapter nine. By subliminal Tyler, I mean that an image of Tyler has been inserted into a single frame of film to create these subliminal images, which appear for only 1/24 of a second.\(^{171}\) An example of this technique can be seen below when Jack pays a visit to the hospital with the expectation that the doctor will prescribe him sleeping medication to ease his insomnia.

![Image of Jack and Tyler in a hospital setting](image)

While these images are not thematically connected to the diegetic events, they further elucidate Jack’s multiple personality disorder and anticipate the eventual and complete manifestation of Tyler as a character in the story. Internal to the narrative itself, they function as a self-reflexive homage to the subliminal pornography Tyler splices into family films during his work as a projectionist.

In addition to these stylistic anticipatory devices, there are other, more traditional visual and auditory anticipations. For example, after their initial conversation in chapter nine, Jack mentions: “We have the exact same briefcase.” Following this announcement, the camera tilts down to reveal that his observation is, indeed, accurate. Lastly, in chapter eleven, a medium, half-torso shot of Jack and Tyler, who stand facing one another, reveals them to be roughly the same size, hair color, and build.

\(^{171}\) David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction and Film Viewers Guide*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 2003) 39: “A frame is a single image on the strip of film. When a series of frames are projected onto a screen in quick succession (currently 24 frames per second), an illusion of movement is created.” On DVD, the individual frames can be advanced one at a time, which allows for a clear image of the frames in which the “subliminal Tyler” appears in chapters three, four, five, and seven.
Principally through the skillful manipulation of editing and dialogue, the dynamic of Jack and Tyler’s distinctive union is made overtly manifest. Hence, it becomes possible to realize that—although they are constructed as separate characters in the narrative—Jack and Tyler are the same person.

**Characterizing Jack and Tyler**

Due, in large part, to the visual composition of film, it is primarily through the visual component that Jack and Tyler are implicitly characterized as distinct characters in the story. With this in mind, I examine how these two characters are implicitly characterized through such features of mise-en-scene as costume, makeup, and lighting.

Arguably, *Fight Club* relies most heavily on the traditional features of costume and makeup to tell us about the principal characters as they develop throughout the course of the film. For example, we first see “consumer” Jack in a rather conservative business suit as he sits in his office where he is employed as recall coordinator for a major car manufacturer. In chapter three, Jack, dressed neatly in a shirt and tie, sits inertly at his desk with a pale, washed-out appearance.

The result of this particular visual presentation initially characterizes Jack as a weary, rather lifeless individual drained by the monotony of his daily routine. This initial instance of Jack’s implicit characterization, imaged through costume and make-up, is reinforced through the filmic subject’s manipulation of lighting. The most noteworthy dimension of lighting is its key, the intensity of lighting within the screen frame that fills the spaces where each scene is shot. Specifically, there are two types of key lighting: high and
low. In *Fight Club*, high-key lighting saturates the interior spaces of Jack's office, his condominium, and the airports he flies to on business. Each of these locations (particularly his office) signify the consumer lifestyle that has wearied Jack. In other words, the high-key lighting creates a visual link between a location like Jack's office and his inadequate, sterile consumer existence. In addition, the high-key lighting possesses a light-blue tint, which adds a pallid, sterile appearance. Thus, bathed in high-key lighting, the consumer Jack is implicitly characterized as a kind of orderly, but sickly and emotionally barren individual.

In contrast to the high key spaces associated with consumer Jack, low-key lighting saturates the space in the interior shots of the fight club and Tyler's house on Paper Street.

Just as his office and condominium represent his recently relinquished corporate, consumer lifestyle, the basement fight clubs and his house on Paper Street signify his new anti-consumer existence as Tyler Durden. Particularly in the basement shots of the fight club, intense overhead spot lighting is used to highlight specific actors in the scene.

172 Kolker, *Film, Form, and Culture* (2002), 187: "'Key light': the main overhead light that lights the set. High-key is bright, intense light. American comedies tend to be shot in high key. Low-key is diffuse and shadowy light. Film noir tends to be shot in low-key."

The contrast of low-key with the focused overhead spotlighting adds a dramatic effect and, consequently, the intense look of these spaces emphasizes the meaning of the violent, character-transforming events that occur within them. The alteration of consumer Jack’s appearance reflects his transformation from the sterile, commodified world of corporate consumerism to the darker, anarchical world of his life outside of mainstream society. As he progressively becomes Tyler, his deteriorating appearance gradually begins to stand out in contrast to the orderliness of his surroundings.

Tyler exists as a hyper-stylish projection of what Jack desires to look like if he could ever completely free himself of the conservative image he must preserve to effectively operate in the corporate world. Tyler’s costumes are eccentric and modish in contrast to Jack’s plain, conventional look.

Jack’s eventual release from his consumer lifestyle – neatly correlated in his appearance – is a measured process that is seen the next time he is at work (chapter fourteen) when his clothes are considerably less neat and his face is scratched. Later in the same chapter, Jack’s face appears even more beat-up as he dabs blood from his eye. Finally, completing the transformation in chapter nineteen, Jack no longer wears a tie, his shirt is undone, his hair is unkempt, a smoke hangs from his lip, and his face is noticeably beaten.

A visual metaphor for his internal transformation, Jack’s tousled appearance, which works in his new, anti-consumer world of the fight club, now stands in stark contrast to the corporate world in which he can no longer function as he plunges deeper into his neurosis.
Jack: Triple Narrative Agency

As was evidenced, although Jack and Tyler are the same (corporeal) person in the fabula, they are developed as separate characters in the story. In Fight Club, the protagonist's capacities as narrator, focalizer, and actor are revealed through the interplay of speech and editing. Filmic dialogue is the audible manifestation of speech, whether diegetic or non-diegetic. Fight Club begins in medias res, in the primary fabula as Tyler holds a gun in Jack's mouth on what appears to be the top floor of a downtown skyscraper:

Tyler: This is it, ground zero. Would you like to say a few words to mark the occasion? Jack (muffled): I can't think of anything. Jack (voiceover): With a gun barrel between your teeth, you speak only in vowels (2).

This passage marks two levels of Jack's speech. Cn Jack's first level (nondiegetic) speech, noted cn1, is heard: "With a gun barrel between your teeth, you speak only in vowels." Cf Jack's second level (diegetic) speech, noted cn2, occurs when he (as internal focalizer) directly addresses Tyler and states: "I can't think of anything." The first level speech in the primary and embedded fabulas represents the nondiegetic speech of an off-screen narrator made audible through voiceover narration.\textsuperscript{174}

Although the viewer is led to believe that cn Jack externally focalizes the events of the fabula, he functions only as a hypothetical narrator, a device manipulated by the filmic subject to unravel the narrative. At all times, the filmic subject is responsible for the organization and composition of the narrative that flows through the hypothetical narrator, which is in this case Jack. What is more, the unseen cn Jack is not conscious of the filmic subject's authority over his capacity to relay events. In the film, cn Jack (whose age is undisclosed) is never visible and is only an aspect of the narrative through the soundtrack feature of voiceover narration. On the other hand, cf Jack is a construct of the visible features of mise-en-scene and since cf Jack is visible, it is easier to express the specifics of his characterization. Judging from such perceptible cues as appearance, behavior, and occupation, it appears that cf Jack (for roughly the first third of the film) is a relatively conservative, upper middle class white-collar worker in his early thirties. However, there are actually multiple cf Jacks because Fight Club contains both primary and embedded fabulas. In other words, through a retroversion to the near past, cf Jack in the embedded fabula is slightly younger than cf Jack in the primary one.

In the following passage - at the support group Remaining Men Together - Jack and another man embrace and exchange sad stories as they attempt to comfort each other. However, Jack does not attend because he has testicular cancer, but rather because he seeks the unmodified experience of genuine emotions:

Jack (voiceover): The big moosey slobbering all over me, that was Bob. Bob: We're still men. Jack: Yes, we're men. Men is what we are. Jack (voiceover): Eight months ago Bob's testicles were removed. Then hormone therapy. He developed bitch-tits because his testosterone was too high and his body upped the estrogen. And that was where I fit in (2).

\textsuperscript{174} Jahn, Poems, Plays, and Prose (2001) F4.2.1: "Filmic narrators come in two kinds depending on whether they are visible on-screen or not. Both are speaking roles, but only the on-screen narrator has an acting, as well as a speaking role. Voiceover narration is the result of an off-screen narrator's first level, non-diegetic speech."
Exemplifying two levels of speech, the above passage operates similarly to the one that preceded it. Once more, we see the first level, non-diegetic speech of our Jack who states: "The big moosey slobbering all over me, that was Bob." The antecedent to "me," or of Jack in the embedded fabula, responds to Bob in second level, diegetic speech when he says: "Yes, we're men." If this were seen in written text, of Jack's words would be offset by quotation marks. Conversely, of Jack's speech, in this case his voiceover narration, would be absent of quotation marks.

The difference in levels of dialogue is further exemplified in chapter four when Jack visits a doctor for his insomnia. In this case, I juxtapose passages from the novel and the film respectively in order to elucidate how filmic dialogue conveys Jack's capacities as narrator and focalizer:


In chapter two of the novel, the second level speech of the doctor (like of Jack) is set-off with quotes and differentiated from the first level speech of our Joe, which is not. The following passage marks the filmic version of the literary one seen above:


In the film, the fact that there is an audible difference in the sound of Jack's voice and that of Jack's mouth does not move are the attributive signs, or what distinguish first from second level filmic speech in place of quotation marks. Like the novel, speech in the film helps the audience determine Jack's function as narrator and focalizer. However, unlike the novel, dialogue is delivered with the added visual and auditory components of lip movement (or lack thereof) and sound.

Sequential Ordering

Like the novel, the film presents us with an embedded fabula that explains the primary one, which is merely an occasion for a perceptible, character-bound narrator (cf Jack) to narrate a story. However, in the film, the embedding of the fabulas travels one level deeper. In other words, there is another fabula embedded within the embedded fabula.

The larger, first level embedded fabula I note as ef1, and the smaller, second level embedded fabula I note as ef2. Specifically, ef1, which takes up the largest portion of the film, is an anachrony in the form of an extended retroversion, which has anachronies of its own (ef2). After the first retroversion (in chapter two) takes us to the start of ef1, there is another retroversion, which takes us to the second level embedded fabula shortly thereafter. The ef2 moves forward for several scenes until it catches up again with ef1 in the gymnasium where Remaining Men Together meets. This particular brand of sequential ordering is revealed in Fight Club largely through the manipulation of
speech and parallel temporal editing. Just as editing can be used to move the narrative forward, it can also be used to move it backward. The following passage takes place just as the primary fabula yields to ef1:

Jack: And suddenly, I realize that all of this; the gun, the bombs, the revolution has got something to do with a girl named Mari Singer (2).

In the following shot we see cf Jack’s head being thrust between Bob’s breasts. The first retroversion has transported us back to the ef1 where the younger cf Jack exists. From there, the chronological time of the fabula progresses until, shortly thereafter, another retroversion occurs. This retroversion, like the first, is signaled by Jack’s monologue when he states: “No, wait. Back up. Let me start earlier” (2). From there, the ef2 moves forward until it reunites with ef1 where we again see Jack’s head between Bob’s breasts. At this point, ef1 moves forward until it catches back up with the primary fabula where Tyler holds a gun in Jack’s mouth on the top floor of a skyscraper.

This reconnection is explicitly signaled by cn Jack who states: “I think this is about where we came in” (35). Jack’s declaration refers us back to the beginning of the film, where the audience originally was injected (medias res) into the middle of the primary fabula. In chapter two, when Tyler asked him if he had anything to say, Jack replied: “I can’t think of anything.” In chapter thirty-five, when Tyler repeats the identical question he replies: “I still can’t think of anything,” to which Tyler replies, “Ah, flashback humor.” This dialogical exchange presents the viewer with a rare, self-reflexive glimpse into the sequential ordering of the story.

Through speech and parallel temporal editing, the film presents an analogous, but slightly more complex example of the narrative’s sequential ordering than its literary forerunner. Specifically, the filmic narrative comprises two embedded fabulas (in the form of extended retroversions), which explain the primary fabula. Thus, the increased intricacy of the film’s narratorial structure is found in its multiple degrees of fabula embedding, which the novel lacks.

175 Kolker, Film, Form, and Culture (2002), 39: “‘Parallel editing’: inter-cutting or cross-cutting two different sequences. Parallel editing is of two kinds: parallels in space and parallels in time. Parallel spatial editing includes crosscuts between two temporally simultaneous events happening in different spaces. Parallel temporal editing cuts two separate events which occurred at different times.”
Filmic Space and Implied Temporal Derivatives

Similar to the function of literary space in the novel, the depiction of *Fight Club'*s filmic space serves as a characterizing aspect of the story. Externally focalized by the filmic subject, the filmic space is described through such features as camera position, set and costume design, and speech.

The position of the camera in relation to the space it photographs is a feature of the component of mise-en-scene and a consequence of the contributions of the director and cameraman. In regard to the conveyance of *Fight Club'*s filmic space, there are a variety of shots employed and, most notably, a number of semi-long shots that allow the viewer to gain a broad perspective of filmic space. Moreover, such a perspective creates a sense of openness and autonomy for the actors. For example, chapter five begins with an establishing, semi-long shot inside the gymnasium where *Remainning Men Together* meets. In this case, the camera is positioned at a semi-long distance from the actors, which effectively permits the viewer to gain greater visual access to the gym’s space. This type of camera placement – repeated several times throughout the film – fleshes-out *Fight Club'*s filmic space because it grants a wide visual entrance. This technique is also seen in chapter eleven, which begins with an establishing, crane shot of Lou’s tavern. With the camera positioned at a distance across the street and elevated on a crane, the viewer is permitted to see not only the entire building, but also the modern industrial, urban space within which it is embedded.

Conversely, when the camera is placed close to the actors and the set, our access to filmic space is limited. In one of the few outdoor scenes, in chapter thirty-two, Jack tries to persuade Marla to leave the city because her life may be in danger. In this case, there is no establishing shot and the camera is placed rather close to the actors. Thus, the viewer’s access to the visual details that create a sense of filmic space is restricted. We can see that they are in a modern city, but the proximity of the camera makes it difficult for the viewer to determine precisely what city.

In this case, the consequence of such a narrow perspective restricts the viewer from attaching the event to a particular city, which can grant the narrative a more universal application. To put it another way, if the preponderance of the events took place in St.

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176 Jahn, *Poems, Plays, and Prose* (2001), F2.2: “A ‘long shot’ places the camera at a distance from the objects of the shot. This shot is often used to establish setting (“establishing shot”). The term “semi-long” shot is sometimes used to indicate a slightly closer view.”
Louis, for example, the viewer would be likely to attach those events to that particular city, rather than allow for the possibility that they could occur in “any” U.S. city.

In addition to fleshing-out or restricting space, camera placement can also generate an emotional atmosphere. For example, in Jack’s office the camera is always placed quite close to the set and actors, which creates the feeling of stifling, of claustrophobia.

![Image of Jack in office](image1)

However, in Tyler’s house the camera is generally not placed as close, which conveys the feeling of freedom and openness.

![Image of Tyler and Jack in Tyler’s house](image2)

Thus, the correlation between the placement of the camera and the objects it seeks to film can achieve specific effects and permit the viewer to obtain, to greater or lesser degrees, visual clues in relation to the world of filmic space that encompasses the narrative. In turn, such a perception of filmic space can influence how we interpret fabula events.

In Fight Club, the vast majority of scenes are shot in soundstages, which are enormous warehouses that provide the filmic subject more control over such factors as weather and temperature. Jack’s office, his house on Paper Street, and the fight club are arguably the three most prominent soundstage sets in the film. Revealed through establishing shots, both the house and the fight club (in the basement of Lou’s Tavern) are in an urban, industrial part of some nonspecific city. To give the house an abandoned look, it is sparsely decorated with old furniture and appliances and dressed with peeling paint, broken stairs, and rusty pipes. Although not quite as dramatic, the fight club is similarly decorated and dressed to give it the appearance of age and dereliction. Like the novel, space is used as a metaphor for the protagonist’s transition from his sterile, safe life to his more dilapidated, dangerous existence as Tyler.

While the look of the sets and actors provide visual clues into space, character, and time, the feature of first level dialogue can, at times, grant a kind of audible entrance into filmic space. As recall coordinator for a major car manufacturer, Jack flies
to crash sites to determine if a recall is financially viable for the corporation that employs him to make such decisions. To reach these sites, Jack must fly through various airports: "You wake up at Sea-Tac... S.F.O... L.A.X. You wake up at O'Hare... Dallas Ft. Worth... B.W.I." (8). Here, the airport he names serves such American cities as Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, and Baltimore. When we see an interior shot of an airport, we assume that it is embedded within the larger space of one of the U.S. cities he names.

In Fight Club, the most profitable entrance into filmic space is conveyed via the manipulation of camera placement. Depending on the position of the camera in relation to the actors and locations, we are given varying degrees of access to space, which is distinguished by the costumes of the characters and the design and dressing of the sets. It is from these visual cues that the viewer makes determinations about the characters, the nature of filmic space and, by implication, filmic time. Just as in the novel, the delineation of the second degree of space is used both as a form of implicit narratorial characterization and also to imply a sense of filmic time. Jack's office is a cubicle with an outside window and is rather generically decorated. He has a personal computer, folders, and the occasional Starbucks's coffee cup, all of which indicate a relatively recent sense of filmic time. From these visual cues, like its literary forebear, it appears that the film is set in the urban, modern (latter twentieth, or early twenty-first century) United States.

The Presentation and Treatment of Violence

Up to this point, this chapter has been primarily dedicated to the exploration and delineation of Fight Club's narratological arrangement. This section, however, is devoted to the narrative's presentation and thematic treatment of violence. One of Fight Club's principal subjects, violence is largely circumscribed through speech, sound effects, camera position, and actor expression. Similar to the novel, there are three types of violence: violence directed at oneself, violence directed at others, and violence directed at the structure of society. After Marla — another "faker" who reflected his own brand of self-deception — invaded Jack's support group, he could no longer exploit the group for his temporary fix of uncommodified experience. As a result, Jack turned to actual, physical pain.

In chapter thirteen, the viewer is confronted with the first instance of violence between individuals when Jack, at Tyler's request, strikes his alter ego:

Tyler: I've never been in a fight. Have you? Jack: No, but that's a good thing. Tyler: No, it is not. How much can you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight? I don't wanna die without any scars. So, come on, hit me before I lose my nerve. Jack: God, this is crazy. Tyler: So go crazy. Let 'er rip. Jack: Hey, I don't know about this. Tyler: I don't either, but who gives a shit? No one's watching. What do you care? Jack: Wait, this is crazy. You want me to hit you? Tyler: That's right. Jack: What, like in the face? Tyler: Surprise me.

After Jack "surprises" Tyler with a punch to the ear, Tyler hits Jack (Jack hits himself) for the first time in the chest. Subsequent to Tyler's unanticipated action, the sound of a heartbeat can be heard while Tyler attempts to help Jack up. In response to Tyler's action, he says: "Nah, it's all right. That really hurts. Hit me again" (13). In this instance, because camera placement can affect how the viewer interprets the events, the use of a semi-long shot tends to distance the viewer from the actor's violent actions. The idea that Jack wants Tyler to hit him again (in addition to the nondiegetic sound of a heartbeat) begins to fuse violence with the sensation of life. In the film, men like Jack are
only exposed to violence vicariously through television and film. This postmodern disconnect converts violence into an abstract, commodified experience. This problematizes Jack's inherent requirement for violent conflict with others in order to achieve a higher level of self-consciousness that is established through the Hegelian notion of negative relation. Lacking this opposition, Jack subconsciously invents a conscious other he can fight against, which enables him to experience real, "uncommodified" violence for the first time.

Evidenced in chapter twenty-four, this principle of a renewed sensation of life through violence is applied to other characters in the narrative such as Raymond K. Hessel (a convenience store clerk). Although it is the protagonist Joe in the novel, in the film Tyler holds a gun to Raymond's head and looks through his wallet while Jack observes:


In the film, the fact that Jack merely observes the events tends to distance him from his actions as Tyler. In contrast to the novel, Joe is held more accountable for similar actions he commits as himself and not as Tyler. Although the violence presented here is less intensely physical, it functions in the same way as Jack's first fight with Tyler. Here, under the threat of death with a gun held to his head, Tyler intends for Raymond to shed the life he had settled for as a convenience store clerk and pursue his new life as a veterinarian. Tyler believes that this violent experience will jar Raymond from his metaphorical slumber. While camera placement somewhat distanced the viewer from Jack's violence against himself in the parking lot of Lou's Tavern, the camera is positioned much closer to the actors in the Raymond K. Hessel sequence. This type placement conveys a sense of intimacy because (through Tyler's dialogue) the viewer is granted rareentrée into the altruistic, albeit twisted inner motivations that lie behind Tyler's violent behavior.

In addition to camera placement – as previously alluded to in regard to the heartbeat sounds heard in Jack's first fight with Tyler - sound effects also governs the viewer's interpretation of violence. In the Lou's Tavern sequence, sound effects of the actual fight (punches, grunts) do not play a prominent role. However, as the fight club grows and moves into the basement of the tavern, the fight sounds grow louder and the position of the camera moves closer to the action that has grown more intensely violent. In chapter fifteen, we see the first shot of two men fighting in the basement and, for the first time, a fight is filmed using close shots with sound effects of punches and grunts. Here, as revealed through close-ups, the animated participation of the men as they observe the fight implicitly exposes the intensity of the fight itself. Conversely, (rather explicitly) in the following passage, Jack describes the sounds of the fights, which reinforces the notion of violence as a liberator from the deadening effects of consumer society:

Jack (voiceover): This kid from work, Ricky, couldn't remember whether you ordered pens with blue ink or black. But Ricky was a god for 10 minutes when he
trounced the maître d' of a local food court. Sometimes, all you could hear were the flat, hard packing sounds over the yelling, or the wet choke when someone caught their breath and sprayed. You weren’t alive anywhere like you were there (15).

As the film progresses, the intensity of the fights builds until it reaches a climax in chapter twenty-six where Jack fights a character known as “Angel.” In the novel, this event is externally focalized by cn Jack. However, in the film, the focalization of this same event shifts back and forth from the external focalization of cn Jack to the internal focalization of both of Jack and Angel. Through Angel’s focalization, the scene begins with a slow motion, close shot of Jack who exhibits a rather malevolent, deranged expression. The diegetic sounds of the men’s shouts in the background are also heard in slow motion, which gives the sequence a rather uncanny, train wreck quality. Then, as Jack proceeds to viciously beat Angel, the background noise of the men’s voices is muted and only the gruesome sounds of flesh being pounded and a sinister, high-pitched, non-diegetic sound effect that floats above them remain. In the novel, this event is described in explicit detail by cn Joe:

I held the face of mister angel like a baby or a football in the crook of my arm and bashed him with my knuckles, bashed him until his teeth broke through his lips. Bashed him with my elbow after that until he fell through my arms into a heap at my feet. Until the skin was pounded thin across his cheekbones and turned black (Palahniuk 1999:123).

Despite the intensity of Joe’s description, the filmic version carries more pathos because the beating is seen partly through Angel’s internal focalization as he peers up at Jack (Angel’s blood spattered on his face) who beats him nearly to the point of death. The sheer brutality of this event is implicitly revealed by the close shots of the men’s reactions as they observe Jack’s savage catharsis of a frustrated life:

Jack (voiceover): I felt like putting a bullet between the eyes of every panda that wouldn’t screw to save its species. I wanted to open the dump valves on oil tankers and smother all those French beaches I’d never see. I wanted to breathe smoke. Tyler: Where’d you go, psycho boy? Jack: I felt like destroying something beautiful (26).

The personal nature of Angel’s focalization, the diegetic sounds of flesh being pounded, the slow motion photography, and the eerie non-diegetic sound effects are what distinguish this particular fight from the others seen in the film. It appears that fight club is no longer about simply feeling alive, but an occasion for Jack to vent his disenchanted rage over an unfulfilled existence. It begins to appear that – while the fight club had effectively granted these men an escape from the monotony of their ordinary lives – violence may not be a long-term solution to their problems. This recognition is reinforced by the close shots of the men’s faces as they seem to simultaneously comprehend the ultimate ineffectualness of their aggression. They are beginning to see their acts through a kind of Hegelian lens in that it may not be the violent mastery over the other, but rather a willful submission to it that allows the bondsman to supersede the consciousness of the lord.

177 Pisters, The Matrix of Visual Culture (2003), 97: “Of course, the violence of the fights is a literal attack on the beauty and glamour of consumption culture. Tyler and Jack look with contempt at Calvin Klein underwear ads and cherish their self-mutilations as a resistant act against capitalism and its (surplus) values.”
Project Mayhem, the third type of violence, demonstrates hostility directed at the structure of consumer society. Conceived by Tyler, it was originally a form of relatively harmless urban vandalism meant to call attention to the societal attachment to consumerism. By means of the montage, Project Mayhem's urban terrorism is revealed in chapter twenty-three through such (often humorous) acts as: the destruction of satellite dishes, the deployment of luxury car airbags with baseball bats, the mocking alteration of billboards, and the demagnetization of rental videos with bulk degousers. However, acts that merely intend to call attention to the problem of consumerism prove insufficient for Tyler. Consequently, the scope of Project Mayhem is widened to encompass the elimination of the corporate infrastructure that supports consumerism, which he aims to accomplish through the destruction of the headquarters of major credit card corporations. At the conclusion of the film, Jack and Marla observe the destructive climax that seeks to accomplish Project Mayhem's long-term objective, which is to erase the debt record so that everyone may "go back to zero" and society can begin anew.

Although the violence of Project Mayhem is not directed at individuals, Big Bob (a fight club member) dies in chapter twenty-nine during a bold attempt to simultaneously destroy a piece of corporate art and a franchise coffee shop. Responding to Bob's death, Tyler states: "If you wanna make an omelet, you gotta crack some eggs." Attempting to avoid bloodshed, Project Mayhem's destruction often occurred at night after the buildings had been emptied of their occupants. However, Tyler's reaction to Bob's death implies that he is willing to sacrifice human life for the greater cause of the revolution. What prevents Tyler (lord) from achieving the understanding self-consciousness that Jack (bondsman) finally obtains, is his willingness to sacrifice others for his cause, rather than himself.

While all three types of violence offer these men a temporary respite from the emasculating, numbing effects of life in a consumer culture, the escalating nature of violence is portrayed as a destructive and countervailing force in regard to their evolution of consciousness. However, Jack (as Tyler) employs the destructive violence of

178 Pisters, The Matrix of Visual Culture (2003), 97. Pisters describes the process behind this aim: "To do this, they take the ultimate residual elements of glamour culture as the basic material for their products: they go to a liposuction clinic and steal liposuction fat. From the body fat, they skim the glycerin from which they make both glycerin soap and nitroglycerin bombs. The soaps they sell to department stores ("It was beautiful, we sold rich ladies their own fat asses."). The explosives are used to explode credit card company buildings and other symbols of capitalism. In a powerful and concrete way, we see here an immanent system of capitalism at work: the residual (fat) is turned into a consumption good (soap, which in itself produces beauty and glamour) and into the ultimate destructive weapon against the whole system, nitroglycerin bombs."
Project Mayhem to rid himself of the consumer society that has prevented him from obtaining self-realization, or a kind of Hegelian understanding of self-consciousness. One can assume that - like the violence presented in the fight clubs - the broader devastation of Project Mayhem would not ultimately produce a utopia and end the oppression of the individual by the collective. Although the fight clubs do provisionally allow the individual to experience real, uncommodified life, the look horrified looks on the men's faces during Angel's beating implicitly unveil the true character of violence, which is further revealed in the film's conclusion.

In both texts, it is paradoxically the violent act of shooting himself in the face that frees the protagonist from his lord-like other. This act coincides with Hegel's argument that it is not the mastery of the other, but identifying it and yielding to it that fosters the evolution of self-consciousness. In other words, it is consciously subjecting oneself to the other that results in an understanding consciousness, which Joe and Jack finally obtain at the end of the primary fabula on top of the Parker-Morris building when they let go of everything (including their life) and "hit bottom." Both protagonists' freedom from their real master, the consumer society, is achieved by shooting themselves, rather than Tyler. In this way, they consciously subject themselves to Tyler and obtain their freedom from the consumer culture by letting go of everything.

Conclusion

Although the film does certainly reiterate the novel's notion of salvation through destruction, the primary thrust of the filmic text concerns the emasculating effects of consumerism. I examined the narrative text in order to concretize a story which articulates a fabula that instantiates emasculation through consumerism in light of the notion of salvation through destruction and the Hegelian lord-bondsman relationship.

Similar to his literary counterpart, Jack, the film's anti-hero protagonist and character-bound narrator, relays a story set in a modern Western, capitalistic society underpinned by a centrality of consumerism. The United States, Fight Club's largest degree of space, affords the "haves" the ability to enjoy all the material possessions they would need to live a life of relative ease and comfort. While American consumer society grants viable access to many material luxuries, such entrance may also carry with it potentially destructive byproducts, which are initially revealed in the novel through the mechanic:

You have a class of young strong men and women and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they really don't need. We don't have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of the spirit. We have a great revolution against the culture. The great depression is our lives. We have a spiritual depression (Palahniuk 1999:149).

These same byproducts are also mentioned in chapter twenty of the film, although it is now Tyler who speaks:

Man, I see in fight club the strongest and smartest men who've ever lived. I see all this potential. And I see squandering. God damn it. An entire generation pumping gas, waiting tables, slaves with white collars. Advertising has its taste in cars and clothes working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need. We're the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place. We have no Great War, no Great Depression. Our Great War's a spiritual war. Our Great Depression.
is our lives. We’ve all been raised on television to believe that one day we’d all be millionaires and movie gods and rock stars. But we won’t. We’re slowly learning that fact. And we’re very, very pissed off.

From these passages, we learn that the literary Joe and the filmic Jack (and others like them) are not faced with any traditional oppositions such as war or an economic depression. Rather, they suffer from a kind spiritual depression, which results from a lack of the self-realization that can only come from the oppositions presented by real life experience. These individuals, both in the novel and the film, represent the first post-Vietnam War generation and have never really known war or economic depression, but only the empty promises of the consumer culture that has produced them. As a result, many men of Jack’s generation (who know what a “duvet” is) have been emasculated through a kind of metaphorical, consumer castration. While both texts strongly emphasize the anaesthetizing effect of consumerism, the film, more so than the novel, highlights the additional consequence of emasculation. This effect appears to affect men in their late twenties to mid-forties who represent the “middle children of history,” as Tyler refers to them (20).

The notion of emasculation is overtly embodied in Big Bob in both the novel and the film. However, it is through the visual and auditory components of film that the subject of emasculation is truly accentuated. For example, in the film, not only can we see the immensel y overstated size of Bob’s breasts, but we can also hear his high-pitched voice – a point absent from the novel. Also missing from the novel, the film presents several close shots of Remaining Men Together members in a tight embrace as they sob and share their pitiful stories. In addition, we see men in the fight club either standing in rather feminine poses or tightly hugging after a fight. Although one might interpret such instances as gratuitously homoerotic, the philosophical context of the film demonstrates that these men have been emasculated by a consumer society that has detached them from the real, oppositional experience typically provided by their more traditional hunter-gatherer roles. Numbed by his consumer existence, Jack is disconnected from the role of hunter-gatherer and relegated to a collector of aesthetic identity markers (clothes, furniture, magazines), rather than items that are essential to his survival. Void of real experience, Jack becomes a collector of commodified, neatly packaged emotional experiences found at the support groups like Remaining Men Together, which he employs as a surrogate for the real life experience he has been deprived of by society.

After his support group experience is ruined by the presence of another “faker” (Marla), Jack subconsciously invents Tyler because, as Tyler says: “you (Jack) could not do this on your own” (34). Tyler embodies both the aesthetic ideals of consumerism and the stereotypical (primitive) male. In other words, Tyler is the manifestation of both the hunter-gatherer male and the unattainable “male model” imposed by advertising. Thus, Jack’s fights with Tyler signify the bondsman’s attempt to free himself from the culturally imposed lord-like ideal. The film, more so than the novel, is able to drive this point home because movie star Brad Pitt – an icon of American popular culture – plays Tyler. Pitt, generally considered a “manly” man, in many ways represents a kind of aesthetic ideal for the Western male. Tyler, while quite fashionable, also exemplifies a kind of “hyper-male,” or an “ultra-stereotypical” embodiment of the characteristics often attributed to manly men. He is muscular, handsome, aggressive, sexually promiscuous, and violent. In a modern consumer society such as the United States, these have become superfluous, commodified qualities that have little to do with physical or economic survival. For example, men exercise in gyms in an effort to acquire a muscular physique that tends to function aesthetically, rather than for survival.
It is his intrinsic need for a real oppositional experience – the counterfeit life experience of the support groups having proved ineffectual – which causes Jack to subconsciously invent Tyler. Jack requires Tyler, his lacerated consciousness, to induce the sensation of real experience that can only be found through physical pain. In likewise fashion, the men of fight club help each other achieve the same unmodified experience that Tyler created for Jack. The fight club has become microcosmic metaphor for a real, more macrocosmic war these middle children of history have never experienced. Viewed in this way, the fight club demonstrates that these men may inherently require a type of real, possibly life-threatening hardship to attain self-realization.

It appears, from the events in the fabula, that when no real war or real economic depression is present, these men will seek out a surrogate for such experiences. In other words, if there is no war, then they will create one. When the substitute experiences of the support groups proved inadequate, only actual, physical pain could serve as a replacement. However, it was also shown that violence – while a form of temporary relief – proves insufficient as a long-term solution. Along these lines, Project Mayhem, which took place outside of the fight club, was intended to destroy the society that had metaphorically castrated these men through the anaesthetizing effects of consumerism. Dead within confines of a consumer culture, Tyler believed these bondsmen could only find freedom is its utter annihilation. However, the true freedom of an understanding self-consciousness does not appear to lie is mastery over the lord-like other of consumer society. The manner in which the fight club turns into a type of consumer-based, corporate style franchise with locations spread throughout the United State neatly demonstrates how easily the seed of a revolution (fight clubs) can turn into the very thing it was intended to depose. To put it another way, in every revolution lies the seed for its own destruction.

In order to prevent the emasculating effects of consumerism, the film, like the novel, presents a destructive solution. In both texts, it is Tyler who introduces the freeing potential of self-destruction, which is especially evidenced by the filmic Tyler who not only allows, but also encourages a mobster to savagely beat him. However, as examples of Hegelian lord-like others, both literary and filmic Tylers fail to realize an understanding self-consciousness because they never move beyond Project Mayhem’s basic goal of mastery over the other. In the film, like Joe, it is only Jack who achieves a higher level of self-realization when he finally lets go and yields to Tyler on top of the Parker-Morris building. Like his literary predecessor who risks his life in the context of the lord – bondsman dynamic, Jack is saved because he transcends both his desiring and servant consciousness and achieves an understanding consciousness in opposition to Tyler.

Pisters, The Matrix of Visual Culture (2003), 97. Pisters sees this paradox in terms of “territorialization,” “deteriorialization,” and “reterritorialization” when she writes that: “Looking at the kind of territorializations (consumption culture) and deterriorializations (the fight clubs. Tyler’s rebellious actions) in Fight Club, we also have to add that reterritorializing forces are in play as well. By the end of the film, the fight clubs have turned into a sort of terrorist organization. Project Mayhem. All members wear the same black shirts, they give up their name, except in death, when they ritually start singing ‘His name is Robert Paulsen,’ and they blindly follow Tyler’s orders.”

Findlay, “Phenomenology: An Analysis” (1977), 520: “However, prior to this realization, a self-consciousness aims to eradicate this alien other, but, in being so set, it is both set to eliminate the other in order to achieve its own self-certainty, and also itself in the process, since it is itself that other.

Hegel, Phenomenology (1977), 112: “...and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. The recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another.” Findlay, “Phenomenology: An Analysis” (1977), 521: “Separate consciousnesses re-enact at a higher lever the action of mutually
Similar to Kubrick's *Clockwork*, Fincher's *Fight Club* is missing the last chapter of Palahniuk's novel, which reveals Joe's cyclical, existential resignation that there is no higher stage of consciousness. However, unlike Joe, Jack does exhibit signs of an absolute consciousness that is marked by love for others. Although he is unsuccessful, it is Jack, not Joe, who makes a conscious effort to prevent Tyler from destroying the credit card buildings. What is more, at the end of the fabula, it is Jack who holds Maria's hand and utters the rather appropriate and sardonic line: "You met me at a very strange time in my life" (35).

Unlike the novel, we get the sense that the anti-hero protagonist can now peacefully coexist with the world and help bring its members to their next stage of consciousness with the wisdom he has gained from his experience. To be clear, I am not arguing that Jack has achieved absolute consciousness, but only that, unlike Joe, he shows signs of attaining it.
Part III. Solaris

I. Self and Alien Other: The Existential Philosophy of Solaris

Bringing together strands of Hegelian phenomenology, Machiavellian political philosophy, and Augustinian theology, the projection and alienation elements of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential thought best suits my critical probe into the particular philosophy of the Solaris texts.

Generally speaking, existentialists see a fundamental problem in Western philosophical traditions, which is the rather Pelagian belief that humans are generally good, self-sacrificing creatures. Although some may disguise it better than others, the Machiavellian, Augustinian belief in natural human egocentrism links a Hegelian dependence on the sensual world with Sartre’s existential view of a resistant world that compels the self to make choices. However, human selfishness problematizes socialization in a world of conflicting desires. In Existentialism and Human Emotions (1957), Sartre wrote that: “all human existence is passion, the famous self-interest being only one way freely chosen among others to realize this passion” (92). Sartre’s acknowledgement of egocentrism rests on the human predisposition to want more, even when it is more of less. In his work Existentialism (1962), American professor Robert G. Olson wrote that the existentialists generally:

...mock the notion of a complete and fully satisfying life. The life of every man, whether he explicitly recognizes it or not, is marked by irreparable losses. Man cannot help aspiring toward the serene detachment from the things of this world which the traditional philosopher sought; but it is not within his power to achieve either of these ambitions, or having achieved them, to find therein the satisfaction he had anticipated (14).

With perfection an impossibility, existentialists commonly assert that our struggle with the world challenges us to improve through the choices we make. Sartre wrote:

Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism (1957: 15).

In other words, we first exist and then spend the rest of our lives defining ourselves through the choices we make – existence precedes essence. In Sartre’s view, existentialism is fundamentally about living, as we are defined through the act of living.

Similar to German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world,” Sartre sees the self as a free “being-for-self,” or a self-making agent, and it is through its projects – or its mental projections of consciousness in order to establish new relations with external entities – that the world is revealed and made meaningful. To put it another way, because my projects are who I am in the mode of engaged agency, the world

182 Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (New York: The Citadel Press, 1957), 23. Sartre places a great responsibility on the self’s ability to choose: “That is the idea I shall try to convey when I say the man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.”

183 Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1956), 3, 629: “The concrete is man within the world in that specific union of man with the world which Heidegger, for example, calls “being-in-the-world.” “Being-for-itself is theihilation of Being-in-itself: consciousness conceived as a lack of Being, a desire for Being, a relation to Being.”
Consequently, the world (and those within it) retains its otherness and thus can be perceived as utterly alien. In Being and Nothingness (1956), Sartre develops his notion of alienation through his analysis of the "look":

In the first place, he is the being toward whom I do not turn my attention. He is the one who looks at me and at whom I am not yet looking, the one who delivers me to myself as unrevealed but without revealing himself, the one who is present to me as directing at me but never as the object of my direction; he is the concrete pole (though out of reach) of my flight, of the alienation of my possibles, and of the flow of the world toward another world which is the same world and yet lack all communication with it. But he cannot be distinct from this same alienation and flow; he is the meaning and the direction of them (269).

Sartre argues that as long as we are engaged unreflectively in a certain practice, we are nothing but a first-person perspective. We are absorbed in the world and do not experience ourselves as having an "outside," that is we do not understand our actions through a kind of third-person description. However, when we become aware of "being-seen-by-another," we become conscious of having a nature of being. In this way, we see ourselves as voyeurs who could not originally experience ourselves as such, but it is the other who gives rise to this mode of being, a mode that we acknowledges as ours and not merely the belief of another. The existence of others allows us to gain a third-person perspective of ourselves, although this also reveals the extent to which we are alienated from a dimension of our being. Hence, while the self is more deeply revealed through the look of the other, our alienation stems from the fact that we can never know what the other truly believes.

It is Sartre's notion of alienation that is of particular interest to the philosophy of both Solaris texts. At the outset of the fabula, the "being-for-itself" protagonist (Kelvin) is engaged unreflectively in the world and, in a sense, does not experience himself as having an outside. However, it is paradoxically through his inside that he is aware of being observed when his subjectivity is invaded by the subjectivity of Rheya, or the physical manifestation of the memories of his dead wife. Kelvin, through the reflected look of Rheya (a kind of Hegelian other self-consciousness) is a voyeur into himself and, thus, Kelvin is ultimately provided with a kind of didactic third person perspective. In spite of the fact that his own subjectivity is more deeply established through her, Rheya is also the source of Kelvin's alienation. Since Rheya is an extension of Kelvin's mind (a project), his alienation – once recognized – offers the potential to choose a more unified, Hegelian understanding self-consciousness. On the other hand, alienation can also result in a kind of existential anxiety when we choose not to understand or are simply unable to see ourselves through the other. In this case, the self feels isolated and threatened because anxiety draws the self out of its projects and there is a collapse of a practical

F.H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 173: "There is a limit to our understanding of other persons. In their inner life they all remain, to a certain degree, foreign to us. (...) From this it follows that alienation cannot be completely eliminated, it can only be reduced to reasonable terms. All we can do is to remove it from the foreground to the background and deprive it of its central position and of its emotional power, but we have to acquiesce in the fact that alienation somehow belongs to our heritage."

Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 256-257: "It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject. For just as the Other is a probable object for me-as-subject, so I can discover myself in the process of becoming a probable object for only a certain subject. (...) This is the relation which I call 'being-seen-by-another'..."
immersion into the world. As a result, there is a loss of the basic self-identity that is provided by our projects. Robbed of self-identification, anxiety teaches the self that it does not coincide with any concrete indication that it factually is (Crowell 2005).

In The Self (1955), Niebuhr suggests a potential source for anxiety, which is a kind of empty dialogue seen when: "The self faces the other self as a mystery which can never be fully penetrated" (30). As a result of this impenetrability, the self lacks an authentic self-consciousness because - alienated and unaware of its own outside - it is never exposed to a meaningful third-person description. Thus, Kelvin, attempting to cope with the resulting anxiety, anthropomorphizes the impenetrable other. Expounding this notion, Niebuhr argues that the self can merely: "surmise about the internal life of the other self by way of analogy with its own internal dialogue" (30). Niebuhr points out a problem with this kind of anthropomorphic tendency: "The self makes many errors by relying too much on analogy" (30). Merely anthropomorphically projecting one's self onto an impenetrable other only reflects back what you already know. This happens when Sartorius, speaking to this idea, tells the literary Kelvin:

"We don't want to conquer the cosmos, we simply want to extend the boundaries of Earth to the frontiers of the cosmos. For us, such and such a planet is an arid as the Sahara, another as frozen as the North Pole, yet another as lush as the Amazon basin. (...) We think of ourselves as the Knights of the Holy Contact. This is another lie. We are only seeking Man. We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors (72)."

The self can only transcend to an understanding consciousness through the other, not by merely bouncing its own reflection off of it. In the novel, this notion of anthropomorphically projecting one’s self onto the alien other keeps Kelvin in a fixed cycle of existence, or a perpetual state of alienation and anxiety because he fails to understand himself through Rheya. In other words, his existence is fixed because he does not choose to improve his existence through the other. This idea is evidenced in the last page of the novel when Kelvin wonders if we must be:

"...resigned to being a clock that measures the passage of time, now out of order, now repaired, and whose mechanism generates despair and love as soon as its maker sets it going? Are we to grow used to the idea the every man relives ancient torments, which are all the more profound because they grow comic with repetition? That human existence should repeat itself, well and good, but that it should repeat itself like a hackneyed tune, or a record a drunkard keeps paying as he feeds coins into the jukebox... (204)."

Although, shortly thereafter, Kelvin’s remarks imply that he does cling to the hope of a future transcendence, he ultimately remains in a static state of despair as he meditates on the vanity of a cyclical, fixed existence. Kelvin sees himself as subject to external

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186 Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (1957), 23. Sartre argues that we try to avoid anxiety by denying our freedom and responsibility, but this only amounts to ignoring reality and we only betray ourselves. Sartre condemns this self-deception and argues that we must accept responsibility for our behavior. If we are to live authentically, then we must become aware of the human situation and accept it.

187 Stanislaw Lem, Solaris (New York: Walker and Company, 1970), 204. Subsequent citations are from this edition and I will cite them parenthetically.

188 Lem, Solaris (1970), 197. In the novel, Dr. Snow further develops our anthropomorphic nature. He notes that we see God’s attributes as “amplified human ones” (197). See also Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (1957), 92. Similarly, Sartre wrote that: “Man makes himself in order to be God, and selfness considered from this point of view can appear to be an egoism...”
forces and does not believe that his essence can be positively modified by his choices – at least not yet.

While we may never completely evade the type of innate anthropomorphic tendencies that lead to Kelvin’s condition, these propensities issue a warning against the practice of moral anthropocentrism. I define moral anthropocentrism as the belief that morality only applies to those objects we deem as human. In the following passage, Kelvin begins to recognize the duality of his own anthropomorphic tendencies:

Any attempt to understand the motivations of these occurrences (Rheya) is blocked by our own anthropomorphism. Before we can proceed with our research, either our own thoughts or their materialized forms must be destroyed. It is not within our power to destroy our thoughts. As for destroying their material forms, that could be like committing murder (134).

Kelvin realizes how his own anthropomorphism can block his understanding of Rheya and thereby himself. On the other hand, projecting humanity onto Rheya may allow him to see Rheya’s death as a situation that is not “beyond morality,” as Dr. Gordon claims (152). In other words, although such anthropomorphic tendencies may obstruct Kelvin’s deeper understanding of himself, they also allow Kelvin to see Rheya as something more than an impenetrable other, but rather as a moral agent. However, the literary Kelvin fails to truly see himself through the manifestation of his own memories (Rheya) and ultimately resigns himself to seeing life as a series of empty gestures (196). Unlike the metaphysical transcendence the filmic Kelvin exhibits, the literary protagonist’s resignation implies a failure to transform his essence through existential choice. With these concepts in mind, I examine the literary and filmic texts to gain a deeper understanding of the existential question: Who am I?
II. The Novel

Stanislaw Lem

(1921 – Present)
Introduction

Born in Lvov, Poland, Stanislaw Lem has become one of the most critically acclaimed science-fiction novelists of the twentieth-century. While his work was initially published in little known periodicals that specialized in the genre, Lem has gone on to earn worldwide recognition largely due to his innovative storytelling and his seemingly encyclopedic knowledge (Esmaeil 2005: 1). Translated into over thirty languages, Lem’s most recognized novels have sold over twenty-seven million copies worldwide and include such works as His Master’s Voice (1974), The Futurological Congress (1983), and The Cyberiad (1985).

Solaris (1961), Lem’s most popular work, is celebrated for its inventiveness and thematic profundity, which is a reason why many consider it to be a work of “metascience fiction.” However, Solaris is often branded as being a bit unsympathetic towards its readers because of several lengthy passages of “hard science” that do not seem relevant to fabula events. To make matters even more difficult for English-speaking readers, the novel is a double-translation from its original Polish to French and then to English. For some unidentified reason, the publishing house (Faber and Faber) that owns the license to the original text has failed to authorize a direct translation of Solaris from Polish to English.

While the assertion that Lem neglects the process of characterization may be an overstatement, Lem’s stories typically do not center on the characters as much as on the ideas they are forced to confront. In Solaris, the principal characters grapple with the possibility that humans may never be able to truly understand the “alien,” or as Lem refers to it, the truly “Other.” Humanity’s inability to grasp the other is an idea that seems to permeate his work in general. Solaris is science fiction in a pure sense, that is, fiction “about” science and its relationship to moral dilemmas. Lem’s work depends on masterful storytelling and compelling characters to frame philosophical questions, which, in turn, illuminate the stories from their depths, challenging the reader to see as far into them as possible (Powers 1999: 1).

Lem once said that: “Knowing is the hero of my books” (1), which is rather paradoxical when viewed in light of Solaris, which is, in many ways, a novel about the failure of knowing. However, despite the protagonist’s ultimate inability to know the alien other presented to him in the novel, it is the broader philosophical concept of “knowing” itself that is the deeper epistemological current of Solaris. In other words, by unyieldingly problematizing the Solaris Ocean (alien other), Lem transfers the narrative emphasis from the object to the process of inquiry. In his article “Filling the Void: Verne, Wells, and Lem” (1981), American literary theorist Mark Rose writes:

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189 Peter Swirski, “Reflections on Literature, Philosophy, and Science,” in A Stanislaw Lem Reader (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 66. Ironically, in his interview with Swirski, Lem states: “Reading should never be a matter of struggling through a jungle of words and concepts, with difficulty and discomfort, in order to grasp what should come naturally.”

190 Swirski, “Reflections on Literature, Philosophy, and Science” (1997), 60. Lem states: “Solaris is about love, and the mysterious ocean, and that is what is important about it.”


192 Paul Newall, “Soderbergh’s Solaris,” in The Galilean Library, 2002 (article online) http://www.galilean-library.org/solaris.html: “We assume that our reason is sufficient to comprehend what motivates God or an entity like Solaris but this presumption remains, for Lem, a barrier to any genuine understanding. Some have argued that we simply have no alternative but to judge the actions of gods or "higher forms of intelligence" by our own standards, but it seems...
In Lem’s hands, cosmology, or the traditional concern of science fiction in the space category, yields to epistemology, an exploration of the limitations inherent in any human frame of reference (122).

Speaking with regard to His Master’s Voice, in a published interview, Lem reinforces Rose’s sentiment when he declares that human beings sometimes face “phenomena the essence of which we are unable to understand” even when “equipped with the most modern scientific apparatus and knowledge” (Esmaeili 2005: 1). Lem further asserts that Solaris is a “vision of a human encounter with something that certainly exists, in a mighty manner perhaps, but cannot be reduced to human concepts, ideas, or images” (1). Lem goes on to state that in Solaris he has attempted to “cut all threads” that lead to personification. Lem endeavors to keep his sign of the non-human as empty, as nonreferential, as possible, and thus he prevents the metaphorical dimensions of his alien from freely developing (Rose 1981: 135). Nevertheless, Rose writes:

... because he must employ some sign, (Lem) must portray the non-human as “this” rather than “that,” not even Lem can entirely avoid metaphor. In selecting the sea as a sign, Lem employs a familiar image of the non-human, one already invested by ancient usage from Homer and Shakespeare to Melville and Verne with the idea of the infinite (135).

In Solaris, it is Lem’s attempt to diminish personification and maintain the Ocean’s nonreferential status that I examine in light of the novel’s abundance of “anthropomorphic theorizing.”

The Fixed Cycle of Human Existence

In this section, I first point out the ideas that manifest the fixed cycle of human existence, or simply “the cycle” around which the fabula wraps itself. I initially examine the cause of the cycle, and then I consider the full course of the cycle as it moves inexorably between its point of origin and completion. In the following passage, Dr. Kris Kelvin, the novel’s anti-hero protagonist, expresses the central problem presented in the narrative, which is the intrinsically human failure to achieve a kind of Hegelian understanding self-consciousness. In light of this notion, Kelvin believes that humans are utterly unable to comprehend the more “alien,” external world as he (the narrator) says in a succinct, almost programmatic fashion:

Man has gone out to explore other worlds and other civilizations without having explored his own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers, and without finding what lies behind doorways that he himself has sealed (157).

While there is a truth to his assertion, Kelvin will ultimately discover that this external exploration really is an unconscious attempt to explore our “own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers.” However, until Kelvin realizes that internal understanding lies in the other, he will be caught in a fixed cycle of existence. In spite of this, as Kelvin notes, he and the other characters proceed with their “grand enterprise” without an appreciation of the external world’s implications on their ability to

Lem is making the further suggestion that it is our viewing life as a mystery to be solved that is the deeper problem (an idea found in Wittgenstein, most famously).
achieve a meaningful kind of self-realization, or a deeper understanding of the universe situated internally.\(^{193}\)

However, it appears that such an understanding is restricted by an inherently human limitation, which is a finite capacity to reason. In the following passage, Kelvin speaks with regard to the futility of an experiment he has begrudgingly agreed to test on himself. Specifically, Kelvin will undergo an encephalogram, or an imprint of his brainwaves. What is more, this "impression" is beamed into a massive fluidic substance, or the "Ocean" that covers virtually the entire surface of the planet known as Solaris:

Really, one of us ought to have the courage to call the experiment off and shoulder the responsibility for the decision, but the majority reckons that that kind of courage would be a sign of cowardice, and the first step in a retreat. They think it would mean an undignified surrender for mankind - as if there was any dignity in floundering and drowning in what we don't understand and never will (158).

Here, Kelvin speaks to Dr. Sartorius who, along with Dr. Snow, is one of only two men that remain on "Solaris Station" because of a strange phenomenon apparently caused by the Ocean. Through this experiment, both Sartorius and Snow hope to communicate with the Ocean they believe to be a sort of massive living organism. However, Kelvin subordinates "drowning" in the futility of such an exercise to the more prudent recognition of the indissoluble limits imposed by their finite capacity to reason and understand. Furthermore, it appears that this limited capacity is not self-contained, but sets a process in motion that leads to the second stage in the cycle, which is a kind of profound ignorance.

While the next passage reinforces this notion of ignorance, it also asserts that this condition results in an overcompensation, which is the attempt to understand the other through an innate propensity to anthropomorphize the non-human, external world. Here, Kelvin conveys his thoughts concerning a pamphlet written by Grastrom, who was a rather eccentric author of Solarist literature:

I had read the pamphlet, which was dictated by the urge to understand what lies beyond the grasp of mankind, and aimed in particular against the individual, man, and the human species. (...) ...Grastrom set out to demonstrate that the most abstract achievements of science, the most advanced theories and victories of mathematics represented nothing more than a stumbling, one or two-step progression from our rude, prehistoric, anthropomorphic understanding of the universe around us (170).

Anthropomorphism, or the human tendency to interpret what is not human in terms of human or personal attributes, is the third stage in the cycle and is best demonstrated by Kelvin's predecessors who fell victim to a "latent anthropomorphism" that included: "many schools of thought which saw various other oceanic formations as 'sensory organs,' even as 'limbs'..." (116).

On page 174, Kelvin informs us that Dr. Gibarian - an "expert" on Solaris and Kelvin's mentor who committed suicide on the Station just prior to Kelvin's arrival - was greatly opposed to "anthropomorphizing interpretations" and mystifications of the psychoanalytic, psychiatric, and neuropsychological schools, which attempted to

\(^{193}\) Lem, *Solaris* (1970), 198. At the end of the fabula, cf Kelvin, considering the utility of the other for the purposes of self-realization, states: "If there was a single human being in existence, he would apparently be able to attempt the experiment of creating his own goals in complete freedom - apparently, because a man not brought up among other human beings cannot be a man."
endow the ocean with the symptoms of human illnesses. Expounding on this point, Gibarian (in a recorded message) asserts that: "Any attempt to understand the motivation of these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism. Where there are no men, there cannot be motives accessible to men" (134). Gibarian's second level dialogue demonstrates the fabula's skeptical treatment of anthropomorphism as an operative means to comprehend the other, which is in this case the Ocean. Gibarian's points reinforce a previously established notion, which is the futility associated with the human endeavor to understand the motivations behind the alien's actions. It seems, then, that the encephalogram experiment would be more beneficial to the development of the characters' self-consciousnesses if it were somehow designed to achieve self-realization through the other, rather than just an understanding of the other, which is something Kelvin sees as entirely futile.

The failure to see themselves through the other leads to the fourth stage of the cycle, which resonates with a kind of existential humanism. I define humanism as a doctrine, attitude, or a way of life centered on human interests or values, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their lives. Furthermore, it is a philosophy that typically rejects supernaturalism and stresses an individual's dignity, worth, and capacity for self-realization through reason. In Solaris, if the human actors have an inherently limited reasoning capacity, then their potential for a meaningful self-realization appears finite as well, which, at specific points in the fabula, results in a rather humanistic rejection of the supernatural. What is more, this particular rejection appears to flow from the actors' anthropomorphic tendencies that blind them not from a comprehension of the unknowable other, but really themselves.

In the following passage, Kelvin describes his notion of an imperfect god, which, as Snow points out, essentially reflects humanity:

"I'm not thinking of a god whose imperfection arises out of the candor of his human creators, but one whose imperfection represents his essential characteristic: a god limited in his omniscience and power, fallible, incapable of foreseeing the consequences of his acts, and creating things that lead to horror. He is a sick god whose ambitions exceed his powers and who does not realize it at first. A god who has created clocks, but not the time they measure." (...) "This god has no existence outside of matter. He would like to free himself from matter, but he cannot..." (...) "If I understand you, and I'm afraid I do, what you have in mind is an evolving god, who develops in the course of time, grows, and keeps increasing in power while remaining aware of his powerlessness. For your god, the divine condition is a situation without a goal. And understanding that, he despairs. But isn't this despairing god of yours mankind, Kelvin?" (197).

Here, it appears that the finite human actors do not create "God" in an infinite, omnipotent sense, rather, they resort to anthropomorphically creating a more limited, ineffective "god" that reflects their own image. In other words, they tend to anthropomorphically envision god as themselves, which results in a kind of humanistic rejection of supernaturalism. This notion is reinforced in the following exchange between Kelvin and Snow towards the end of the fabula:

"What gave you this idea of an imperfect god?" "I don't know. It seems quite feasible to me. That is the only god I could imagine believing in, a god whose passion is not redemption, who saves nothing, fulfills no purpose - a god who

104 Paul Kurtz, In Defense of Secular Humanism (New York: Prometheus Books, 1983), 5. The high emphasis existentialists place on freedom is reinforced by Kurtz who wrote: "Basically, humanists believe in freedom and pluralistic democracy as virtually our first principle..."

Here, the apparent dismissal of the supernatural is demonstrated by Kelvin’s and Snow’s conclusion that god is a very old “mimoid.” A mimoid is a structure the Ocean produces that “mimics,” or re-creates things (objects and memories) external to it. This act of recreation gains meaning in view of the anthropomorphic tendencies of humans who innately desire to see themselves mimicked by the external, rather than to truly understand it.

It would appear, then, that the characters’ inherently limited and anthropomorphic nature results in a failure to achieve a meaningful self-realization, which is the beginning and ending of the fixed cycle of human existence. This cycle is no more escapable than it would be to “destroy our own thoughts,” which Gibarian further asserts is an act “not within our power” (134). However, at the conclusion of the fabula, it appears that Kelvin does attain a kind of understanding self-realization, which is the recognition of oneself within the fixed cycle. Kelvin’s comprehension is best demonstrated in his monologue seen at the conclusion of the fabula (204). The tenor of this speech likens itself to the rather deterministic passages seen at the conclusions of the literary texts of *Clockwork* and *Fight Club* respectively:

> And so it would itty on to like the end of the world, round and round and round, like some bolshy gigantic like chelloveck, like old Bog himself (by courtesy of the Korova Milkbar) turning and turning and turning a vonny grahznny orange in his gigantic rookers (191).

> I look at God behind his desk, taking notes on a pad, but God’s got this all wrong. We are not special. We are not crap or trash, either. We just are. We just are, and what happens just happens (207).

The cyclically deterministic tone of *Fight Club’s* conclusion is further developed when it is implied that despite his apparent freedom from Tyler, Project Mayhem will continue. For example, Joe’s followers, who are also hospital employees, continue to refer to him as “Mr. Durden” and one of them whispers: “Everything’s going according to the plan. We’re going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world. We look forward to getting you back” (208). Similarly, Kelvin—who likens humanity to a clock, or a record caught in an endless cycle and at the mercy of some “indifferent” and “unknowable” external force—conveys an existential tenor as he resigns himself to a limited awareness of the fixed, cyclical nature of human existence. With this point in mind, in the following analysis of *Solaris*, I examine the deep structure of the narrative text in order to concretize a story, which articulates a fabula that further conceptualizes this cycle and the manner it bears upon the central existential question.

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195 Robert G. Olson, *Existentialism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 14. This passage demonstrates Olson’s belief that existentialists generally scoff at the notion of a “complete and fully satisfying life. The life of every man, whether he explicitly recognizes it or not, is marked by irreparable losses. Man cannot help aspiring toward the serene detachment from the things of this world which the traditional philosopher sought; but it is not within his power to achieve either of these ambitions, or having achieved them, to find therein the satisfaction he had anticipated."
Kelvin: Triple Narrative Agency

Analogous to his literary counterparts in both *Clockwork* and *Fight Club*, Kelvin represents *Solaris'* anti-hero protagonist who functions as cn, cf, and actor in the fabula. Kelvin’s triple-narrative agency is initially established on page 1 of the text when cn Kelvin states:

At 19:00 hours, ship’s time, I made my way to the launching bay. The men around the shaft stood aside to let me pass, and I climbed down into the capsule. Inside the narrow cockpit, there was scarcely room to move. I attached the hose to the valve on my space suit and it inflated rapidly. From then on, I was incapable of making the smallest movement. There I stood, or rather hung suspended, enveloped in my pneumatic suit and yoke to the metal hull. I looked up; through the transparent canopy I could see a smooth, polished wall and, far above, Moddard’s head leaning over the top of the shaft.

Here, cn Kelvin’s first level speech autobiographically recounts the actions of the “experiencing” cf Kelvin who prepares to depart from the Prometheus (a large ship in orbit above Solaris) for Solaris Station, which is on the planet itself. Although it cannot be definitively determined, there appears to be a relatively small temporal narrative distance between the “experienced” cn and the younger version of himself. However, the exceedingly thorough recitation of fabula time and events indicates that they are rather fresh in cn Kelvin’s memory, which typically signifies a shorter, rather than longer gap between the experienced cn and the experiencing cf.

However, although the temporal distance appears to be nominal, the psychological distance appears much greater and finds itself in a direct correlation with the reliability of cn Kelvin as the narrator of events. This becomes even more explicit when - just after Kelvin arrives on the Station (approximately halfway through the primary fabula) - Kelvin wakes up to see his “visitor,” the re-creation of his dead wife, or the “real” Rheya who exists as a human in the embedded fabula in the narrative then. Shortly thereafter, Kelvin tricks Rheya into a shuttle and ejects her into space, which we assume will eventually destroy her. However, despite his actions, another “visitor” Rheya appears the following morning and it is at this point in the fabula that Kelvin’s consciousness begins to transform:

I dropped off several times after that, and each time an anguished start jolted me awake. Panting, exhausted, I pressed myself closer to her; my heart gradually growing calmer. She touched me cautiously on the cheeks and forehead with the tips of her fingers, to see whether or not I was feverish. It was Rheya, the real Rheya, the one and only Rheya (93).

From the information provided in the passage above, it is quite reasonable to begin questioning the reliability of Kelvin as cn, which is chiefly due to the motivational ambiguity behind his newfound acceptance of another visitor Rheya.

As the following passage demonstrates, however, the uncertainty of the situation becomes clearer when Snow explains how Kelvin’s reasoning capacity has yielded to his emotion. As a result of his past experience with his own visitor, Snow’s observations of cf Kelvin’s experience with visitor Rheya demonstrates that Snow’s second level dialogue serves as a “voice of reason”:

“Who are you trying to please? Who do you want to save? Yourself? Her? And which version of her? This one or that one? Haven’t you got the guts to face them both? Surely you realize that you haven’t thought it through.” (...) I’m
Here, the passage effectively reveals the precariousness of cf Kelvin’s emotional state as it observed by Snow who was able to draw from his own experience and who was in a unique position to point out the obviousness of a man blinded by his emotions.

Although Kelvin does begin to regain control of his passions towards the end of the fabula, there is still a part of his emotional faculty that appears permanently attached to visitor Rheya, which is indicated when he states: “True, I was not absolutely certain, but leaving would mean giving up a chance, perhaps an infinitesimal one, perhaps only imaginary…” (204). At the conclusion, Kelvin decides to remain on the Station and exist in the irrational belief that visitor Rheya – who at her own request has been destroyed by Snow – would somehow reappear. Thus, Kelvin’s seemingly irrational decision to stay on the Station, rather than return to Earth, should cause the reader to question the trustworthiness of his narration as a whole. If the reasoning capacity of cf Kelvin (who becomes cn Kelvin) is still impaired by emotion at the end of the fabula, then the reader must question the accuracy of his narration from not only the point at which Kelvin begins to believe that the visitor Rheya is real, but also the whole of his external narration.

While the reliability of cn Kelvin’s narration is tenuous at best, his functions cf and actor are easier to circumscribe by comparison. With the absence of any embedded fabulas that Kelvin is involved in as an actor, the narrative situation exists in a more stable relationship between cn Kelvin’s external focalization “of” the narrative now and cf Kelvin’s internal focalization “in” the narrative now. In other words, the reader quickly becomes acquainted with the narrative situation, which is never really broken by the distracting nature of the cn’s involvement in the embedded fabulas presented in the narrative then, which is a technique used extensively in both Fight Club texts and the filmic adaptation of Solaris.

Similar to the character-bound narration seen in its literary counterparts, Kelvin’s threefold capacity creates a subjective feel in that the narrator tells a story about himself which, in conjunction with his often tenuous emotional state, reinforces the perceived unreliability of his narration. Although the consistency of cn Kelvin’s autobiographical account of the fabula events is in question, his implicit narratorial characterization remains a primary source of information through which cf Kelvin is transformed from an actor in the fabula to a character in the story.

**Characterizing Kelvin**

In Solaris, while he is primarily characterized implicitly though narratorial characterization, the initial examples of explicit narratorial auto-characterization and explicit figural alter-characterization assist to flesh out cf Kelvin early in the fabula. Cf Kelvin is initially imaged as a rather conventional, professional type when cn Kelvin states that: “By nature, I had always been scrupulous about keeping engagements, whether important or trivial” (14). Additionally, in an instance of alter-characterization, Snow informs us that cf Kelvin is a psychologist and an expert on Solaris, which was indicated at the outset of the fabula when we learned that he was a rather meticulous man of science.

With this information in mind, it is through the wealth of implicit narratorial characterization that the dynamic nature of his character is revealed as the man of
science is confronted by something that lies exclusively "beyond science" - external to his finite understanding. The following passage demonstrates cf Kelvin's reliance on his reasoning capacity as the key to understanding reality. After his first confrontation with Gibarian's visitor (the "Negress") who mysteriously wanders the Station, Kelvin devises an experiment in logic, which he believes will assess his sanity:

If I could only think up some experiment in logic - a key experiment - which would reveal whether I had really gone mad and was a helpless prey to the figments of my imagination, or whether, in spite of their ludicrous improbability, I had been experiencing real events (49).

At this point in the fabula, Gibarian is dead as a consequence of his suicide on the Station. Although it is never overtly revealed, from the effect a similar experience has on Kelvin, it is safe to assume that Gibarian committed suicide as a result of the continuous reappearance of his visitor - the "Negress." The Negress is a large, half-naked woman who appears, wanders the corridors of the Station, and then mysteriously disappears; her function is never overtly revealed.

After Kelvin's experiment has determined that he is sane, his reliance on logic will soon be truly put to the test when he is forced to confront his own visitor - Rheya. It is Rheya's appearance that marks the beginning of Kelvin's transformation from one who is "being-seen-by-another" to one who sees the truth in himself by "Being-seen-by-the-Other." The first time she appears in the fabula, cf Kelvin has already determined that he is indeed sane, and thus he reasonably concludes she is not real. As a result, Kelvin is able to rather calmly deceive visitor Rheya into a shuttle where he launches her into space, which cf Kelvin describes in the following passage:

I judged that the easiest thing to do would be to place it in a stationary orbit around Solaris and then cut the engines. I verified from the table that the required altitude was 725 miles. It was no guarantee, of course, but I could see no other way out (65).

However, after visitor Rheya miraculously appears once again, Kelvin reacts quite differently at the thought of her possible destruction, or an act he had little difficulty performing just a short time before.

Here, cf Kelvin and Snow discuss what to do about their visitors after several unsuccessful attempts had been made to contact the Ocean in an effort to get to the bottom of the phenomena:

"Okay," he went on. "There is a second plan - to construct a Roche apparatus." "An annihilator?" (...) "And its effect?" Simple. It will be a negative neutrino field. Ordinary matter will not be affected at all. Only the... neutrino structures will be destroyed. You see?" (...) "We abandon the first plan then, the 'Brainwave' plan? Sartorius is working on the other one right now. We'll call it 'Project Liberation.'" "I had to make a quick decision. Snow was no physicist, and Sartorius' videophone was disconnected or smashed. I took the chance: 'I'd rather call the second idea 'Operation Slaughterhouse.'" (128).

Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 257: "In a word, my apprehension of the Other in the world as probably being a man refers to my permanent possibility of being-seen-by-him: that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. 'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the truth of 'seeing-the-Other.'"
This passage contrasts c.f. Kelvin’s behavior concerning the idea of destroying the visitors. Specifically, Kelvin’s reaction to the first visitor Rheya is consistent with someone who is more logically detached from the dramatic nature of the situation. However, the second passage is in harmony with the behavior of someone who has become more emotionally engaged with the situation, a point implicitly gleaned from his “Operation Slaughterhouse” remark.

Recalling Jack’s reaction to the destructively liberating goals of Project Mayhem seen in Fincher’s Fight Club, the dynamic disposition of Kelvin’s character begins to take shape in response to the similar consequences and ends of Project Liberation. Considering this idea, the next passage further reveals a character whose emotions have taken a more primary position in his decision-making capabilities. Here, c.f. Kelvin and visitor Rheya discuss their future together:

“Let’s decide to stay together. What do you say?” “Listen Kris, there’s something else I must ask you... am I... do I look very like her?” “You did at first. Now I don’t know.” “I don’t understand.” “Now all I see is you.” “You’re sure?” “Yes. If you really were her, I might not be able to love you.” “Why?” “Because of what I did” (146).

This rather striking change in c.f. Kelvin is implied in the way he now acts toward the control stimulus—visitor Rheya. Instead of attempting to send her away, he now tries to stay with her indefinitely on the Station, which is a decision obviously guided more by passion than reason. In addition, the reader should begin to recognize the impetus behind his psychological transformation, which is c.f. Kelvin’s belief that he caused the real Rheya’s suicide. This information now causes us to interpret his actions as an attempt to atone for his perceived mistakes.

Towards the end of the fabula, c.f. Kelvin’s psychological transformation appears complete. In the following dialogue between Kelvin and Snow, we see Kelvin’s reaction after learning that Snow had disintegrated visitor Rheya (at her own request) because she had resigned herself to the fact that she would never be the real Rheya:

Kelvin: “Tell me how.” Snow: “Disintegration.” (...) Kelvin: “She will come back.” Snow: “No.” Kelvin: “What do you know about it?” “You remember the wings of foam? Since that day, they do not come back.” Kelvin: “You killed her,” I whispered. “Yes... in my place what else would you have done?” (...) Kelvin: “The planet will no longer be subject to the four-power convention. We’ll be authorized to use any means at our disposal. We can send for anti-matter generators. Nothing can stand up against them, nothing...” I was shouting now, and blinded with tears. Snow: “You want to destroy it? Why?” (191).

Here, the second visitor Rheya’s destruction signals the eradication of the possibility that c.f. Kelvin could set himself free from his remorse by “making things right.” As a result of this loss, the narrative presents the transformation of a character who had spent a great deal of his life studying the Ocean in an attempt to understand it, to one who now seeks to destroy it in a fit of blind rage. In other words, the more coldly calculating c.f. Kelvin who sent the first visitor Rheya away has become the more irrational c.f. Kelvin who would seek to annihilate the Ocean. Since the “wings of foam” event when the planet was said to have shed its skin, the visitors do not return after they are destroyed, which means that there is no hope that Kelvin could atone for his perceived mistakes.

Finally, at the conclusion of the fabula, the reader is confronted with a c.f. Kelvin who has been irrevocably altered through his experience on the Station— a character more disillusioned as he ponders a return to Earth: “I shall find new interests and
occupations; and I shall not give myself completely to them, as I shall never give myself completely to anything or anybody" (196). Thus, cf Kelvin ultimately becomes a permutation of sorts between the man of science we saw in the beginning of the fabula and the more irrational one we see in the middle. Along these lines, after the second visitor Rheya had been destroyed, cn Kelvin describes cf Kelvin's state of mind after he chose to remain on the Station rather than return to Earth:

Must I go on living here then, among the objects we both had touched, in the air she had breathed? In the name of what? In the hope of her return? I hoped for nothing. And yet I lived in expectation. Since she had gone, that was all that remained. I did not know what achievements, what mockery, even what tortures still awaited me. I knew nothing, and I persisted in the faith that the time of cruel miracles was not past (204).

Although Kelvin exhibit s a kind of existential "serene detachment" from the things of this world and resigns himself to being a “clock that measures the passage of time” just prior to this passage, Kelvin rather illogically chooses to stay on the Station and “persist in the faith” that he would one day see a visitor Rheya again. Thus, he is simultaneously cognizant of the futility of his decision and driven by a kind of transcendent, intuitive hope that there is something “beyond logic.” Despite his resignation, Kelvin clings to a fading belief that the limitations of his finite consciousness may allow room for the unexplained - the miraculous. Thus, it is this seemingly illogical, foolish hope that appears to, at least in some small way, sustain cf Kelvin at the conclusion of the fabula.

Characterizing Rheya

In the novel, Rheya the actor is, in fact, developed into two distinct characters in the story. Therefore, I investigate the characterization of both the real Rheya (whose suicide occurred prior to the primary fabula) and the visitor Rheya, or the Ocean’s creation via cf Kelvin’s memories. Sartorius explains this creative act: “The origin of the materialization lies in the most durable imprints of memory, those which are especially well-defined...” (102). The characterization of the real Rheya exists in a unique reciprocating dynamic with that of visitor Rheya. To put it another way, it is through the characterization of visitor Rheya that the human one manifests itself. The source of this dynamic exists in the fact that visitor Rheya is a precise re-creation of the real Rheya, as Sartorius explains: “The Phi-creatures (visitors) reappear exactly as they were, down to the last detail... (103).

In light of this reality, however, the reader must consider the potential fallibility of cn Kelvin’s narration when examples of narratorial characterization are provided. This caveat is made more evident in the film when cn Kelvin recognizes the fact that he (as cf) may have “remembered her wrong.” Since cn and cf Kelvin transcend time and space through memory, if the younger one remembered her wrong, then the narration of that memory by the older one may be inaccurate as well. Nevertheless, while the memory of both Kelvins may be unreliable, they are the only sources from which visitor Rheya flows. Since there is no other character besides Kelvin that knew the real Rheya in the narrative past, the reader must accept, perhaps grudgingly, both cn Kelvin’s narratorial and cf Kelvin’s figural characterization of the visitor Rheya and its bearing upon her human antecedent.

In an example of explicit narratorial alter-characterization, cn Kelvin describes what he saw (as cf) the first time visitor Rheya appeared on the Station:

It was Rheya. She was wearing a white beach dress, the material stretched tightly over her breasts. She sat with her legs crossed; her feet were bare.
Motionless, leaning on her sun-tanned arms, she gazed at me from beneath her black lashes: Rheya, with her dark hair brushed back. For a long time, I lay there peacefully gazing back at her. (…) Her lips were pouting slightly – a habit of hers – as though she were about to whistle; but her expression was serious. I thought of my recent speculations on the subject of dreams. She had not changed since the day I had seen her for the last time; she was then nineteen. Today she would be twenty-nine (52).

Here, since visitor Rheya is a re-creation, her description may provide insight into the appearance of the human Rheya as well. Although the real Rheya would have been twenty-nine at this point in the fabula if she were still alive, visitor Rheya could not have aged past the point when the human one died (age 19) because it was the last time cf Kelvin would have had any recollection of her. Similar to the passage above, the following passage exhibits this reciprocating characterization dynamic:

It was her voice, that familiar, low-pitched, slightly faraway voice, and that air of not caring much about what she was saying, of already being preoccupied with something else. People used to think of her off-hand, even rude, because the expression on her face rarely changed from one of vague astonishment (54).

Here, cn Kelvin – after cf listened to visitor Rheya speak – is reminded of what the real Rheya was like. Specifically, it was the familiar resonance in visitor Rheya’s voice that further stimulated Kelvin’s memories of the real Rheya. In this way, the preliminary information the reader ascertains about the real Rheya is later juxtaposed with visitor Rheya, which elucidates the dynamic development of the latter into something more than merely the physical manifestation of cf Kelvin’s memories.

While the initial examples provide lucid connections between the two Rheyas, conversely, the preponderance of the examples seen in the latter half of the text distinguish one from the other. In other words, visitor Rheya is not characterized in relation to the human qualities she shares with her human counterpart, but as a separate entity that unveils her more “alien” composition:

“Let’s call them Phi-creatures,” Snow interjected. (…) “Everything looks normal, but it’s a camouflage. A cover. In a way, it’s a super-copy, a reproduction which is superior to the original. I’ll explain what I mean: there exists, in man, an absolute limit – a term to structural divisibility – whereas here, the frontiers have been pushed back. We are dealing with a sub-atomic structure.” (…) “Consequently, the albumen, the cell, and the nucleus of the cell are nothing but camouflage. The real structure, which determines the functions of the visitor, remains concealed” (100-102).

Here, the corporeal differences between the two Rheyas are explicitly revealed and the once apparent humanness of the visitor version begins to fade. In the following two passages, it is not her composition, but rather her actions that distinguish the alternate existence of visitor Rheya from the human version. In the first passage below, cn Kelvin explicitly notes that she was not the real Rheya. This observation manifests in the disconnection between visitor Rheya’s actions and those of the real one he remembered:

197 Lem, Solaris (1970), 70. It is revealed that the real Rheya committed suicide by lethal injection after an argument she had with Kelvin. Although it is safe to assume that she acted in a “fit of despair,” or a moment of “temporary insanity,” the motivation behind her action is never overtly revealed.
She had changed. This was not Rheya at all; the real Rheya never imposed herself, would have never forced her presence on me. (...) Suddenly she jerked her elbows together, and there followed a powerful recoil. I resisted for barely a second. Thrown backwards and almost lifted off my feet, even had I been an athlete I could have freed myself (59).

Here, visitor Rheya acts quite differently than the human Rheya he remembers. This tends to mute the relevance of the reliability of cf Kelvin's memories as visitor Rheya begins to take on a life of her own despite what he remembered of the real one.

This growing disconnection is further evidenced in the following passage that reveals her "super-human" ability to drink scalding hot liquid with no ill effects:

"Are you angry with me?" she asked, in a low voice. "No. Drink this."
Unconsciously, I had known all along that she would obey me. She took the glass without a word and drank the scalding mixture in one gulp (60).

Soon thereafter, visitor Rheya becomes conscious of the fact that she is not the real Rheya. In accordance with phenomenological and existential thought, visitor Rheya senses that her identity is not an internal conception, but rather being somehow externally projected onto her when she states: 108

"I have dreams... I don't know whether they really are dreams. Perhaps I'm ill. I lie there and think, and..." "What?" "I have strange thoughts. I don't know where they come from." It took all my self-control to steady my voice and tell her to go on, and I found myself tensing for her answer as if for a blow in the face. "They are thoughts..." She shook her head helplessly. "...all around me." "I don't understand." "I get a feeling as if they were not from inside myself, but somewhere further away. I can't explain it, can't put words to it..." (108).

In this exchange between cf Kelvin and visitor Rheya, the reader is exposed to a "budding awareness" of the nature of her non-human existence. In particular, the lack of connection between the behavior and abilities of the two Rheyas appears to stem from a deeper "disconnection of consciousness" (191) between her own autonomous consciousness and that of cf Kelvin's. This burgeoning awareness further matures in the following passage:

"I had been telling myself that the... unknown force might be concealed somewhere inside me, and that it might not occupy very much space. But I did not know whereabouts it was. I think now that I was evading the real issue because I didn't have the nerve to make a decision. I was afraid, and I looked for a way out. But Kris, if my blood is like yours... if I really... no, it's impossible. I would already be dead, wouldn't I? That means there really is something different - but where? In the mind? Yet it seems to me that I think as any human

108 Hegel, Phenomenology of the Spirit (1977), 111: "Self-consciousness is faced with another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other it sees its own self." Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 256-257: "It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject. For just as the Other is a probable object for me-as-subject, so I can discover myself in the process of becoming a probable object for only a certain subject. (...) This is the relation which I call 'being-seen-by-another'..."
being does… and I know nothing! If that alien thing was thinking in my head, I would know everything” (144).

Visitor Rheya conveys her separation from simply being a product of Kelvin’s memories to something more, or a non-human sentient being established via a negative relation of what she is not; she is neither human nor an “alien thing.” Furthermore, the two preceding passages above convey instances of visitor Rheya’s direct speech in a personal language situation at the second level. With regard to her status as a self-conscious being, this is important to note because both second level passages show signs of emotive function where the actor (visitor Rheya) refers to herself. If in a statement the feelings of the speaker are expressed, the statement is about the speaker, and signs of emotive functioning are, therefore, also signs of self-reference (Bal 1997: 47).

Apparently the result of independent reasoning capabilities, visitor Rheya has attained a level of self-realization that exists distinct from Kelvin’s memories, although such an achievement does not carry with it positive results. In other words, she suffers and kind of alienated anxiety after being disillusioned by the recognition that she is not human like she originally believed:

"It’s not possible.” Her clenched fist struck her chest. “What else could I think, except that I was Rheya! Maybe you believe this is all an act? It isn’t, I swear it isn’t.” Something snapped in my mind, and I went to put my arms round her, but she fought free: ‘Don’t touch me! Leave me alone! I disgust you, I know I do. Keep away! I’m not Rheya…” (141).

Accordingly, while this realization does seem to, at least in part, free her from a slavish connection to Kelvin’s memories, it also creates within her suicidal tendencies. Although the real Rheya died by suicide, the visitor Rheya’s circumstances are decidedly different. While she does not exhibit the same serene detachment as Kelvin, visitor Rheya reacts with a powerless resignation after beginning to comprehend what she believes to be the deterministic nature of her existence. Her perceived inability to either change or accept her real identity leads to an alienated acquiescence revealed in her suicide note to Kelvin where she crosses out her signed name – “Rheya.”

Characterizing Solaris – the Ocean

As stated in the general introduction, an actor is an agent that performs actions and is not necessarily human and such is the case for the Ocean that covers the face of Solaris. Yet, in some fabulas there are actors who have no functional part in the structure of that fabula because they do not cause or undergo functional events. Functional events

199 Hazel Barnes, “Sartre’s Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being,” in The Cambridge Companion to Sartre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15. Barnes argues that being-for-itself is distinguished from being-in-itself by the presence of in itself of the active negating activity we experience as consciousness. She loosely defines being-for-itself as conscious being and being-in-itself as non-conscious being. Thus, being-for-itself is equated to a human being.

200 Bal, Narratology (1997), 48: “When the signals of the personal language situation refer to the language situation of the narrator, we are dealing with a perceptible narrator (n1(p)). When the signals refer to the language situation of the actors, and a clear change of level has been indicated by means of a declarative verb, a colon, quotation marks, etc., we speak of a personal language situation at the second level (cn2). This situation can be called dramatic: just as on the stage, the actors communicate through speech in a personal language situation.”

201 Bal, Narratology (1997), 195. The analysis presented in this section is based on Bal’s assertion that actors will be regarded in their relation to the sequences of events which – as follows from our definition – they cause or undergo. Actors who do not cause or undergo functional events may be
open up a choice between two possibilities, realize this choice, or reveal the results of such a choice, and once a choice is made, it determines the subsequent course of events in the developments of the fabula (Bal 1997:184).

It appears, then, that the Ocean is a functional actor that, for instance, acts to create Rheya and the other visitors on the Station. These actions greatly influence the subsequent course of events in the developments of the fabula. Our problem lies in the truth-value of the Ocean, or its reality as an actant within the actantial structure. “Truth” exists in the coincidence of existence and appearance, of the identity and qualities of an actor on the one hand and the impression s/he makes, his or her claims, on the other. When an actor is what s/he appears, s/he is true. When s/he does not put up an appearance, or, in other words hides who s/he is, this identity is secret (Bal 1997: 206).

While this is certainly helpful, the Ocean is neither a she nor a he, but rather an “it”: a non-human freed from the teleological presupposition that human thinking and action are directed towards an aim. Along these lines, although the network of events in the fabula gives the impression that the Ocean is a functional actor, the nature of its function as subject-actant is indecipherable because its motivations are never revealed. In other words, although the Ocean acts to create Rheya, we cannot say the Ocean (sa) wants to torture (function) Kelvin (oa). Nevertheless, the Ocean’s secret identity within the actantial structure does not prevent either the reader or the characters in the story from the tendency to anthropomorphize the Ocean and, in a way, artificially force it through the process of characterization. Hence, in this section, I examine how the fabula addresses the existence of a non-human, functional actor whose secret identity is never revealed. This relates to a central problem presented in Lem’s work, which is the characters’ failure to understand themselves because of their propensity to understand the other through anthropomorphic means.

Actor is a broad term for anything that acts, while character is a more specific term for the anthropomorphic figures the narrator tells us about202. The analysis of the fabula’s third principal actor problematizes the process of characterization. In the case of Solaris, the fabula articulates a not-so-subtle admonition with regard to the innate tendency to anthropomorphize that which is not human, a notion expressed by Kelvin when he states: “Even when on their guard, human beings inevitably theorize” (111). Along these lines, it is the Ocean that provides a “sounding board” for the fabula’s attempt to tackle the notion of anthropomorphism.

I previously addressed anthropomorphism as it generally functioned within the fixed cycle of human existence. Here, I examine the Ocean and its function, which is to reveal the specific anthropomorphic tendencies of the characters who are forced to interact with the manifestations of its actions. The idea that human beings have an innate tendency to anthropomorphize, first established by Gibarian’s dialogue, is further reinforced when Snow states: “You yourself instinctively treat it like a human being, now more than ever” (192). In both cases, the context of surrounding events generally characterizes the speaking subjects’ (Gibarian and Snow) statements as objective and reliable. The perceived reliability of these statements is imperative if the reader is to accept a more universal notion of anthropomorphism that is not limited to specific actors, but rather a characteristic that exists in the whole of humanity. After the fabula overtly establishes the intrinsically anthropomorphic tendency of humans, it then treats that tendency as something that must be first recognized and then resisted. The novel goes to great lengths to describe and summarize various anthropomorphic tendencies

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202 Bal, Narratology (1997), 114. Bal further specifies the distinction between the two terms: an “actor” provided with distinctive characteristics creates the effect of a “character.”
and theories (past and present) in an attempt to understand the Ocean. Kelvin's own doctoral thesis is devoted to such a pursuit:

It was based on the discoveries of Bergmann and Reynolds, who had succeeded in isolating and "filtering" the elements of the most powerful emotions – despair, grief, and pleasure – out of the mass of general mental processes. (...) The journalists pounced on my thesis, and in some newspapers my name was coupled with grotesque headlines – "The Despairing Jelly," "The Planet in Orgasm" (175).

Despite the negative reaction his thesis receives in this instance, it does not necessarily mean that such anthropomorphic pursuits are treated negatively by the fabula in its totality. Rather, a stronger argument for a larger thematic thrust in this direction is made by the fact that despite his own research (and his knowledge of similar pursuits), neither Kelvin nor his predecessors understand the Ocean. For it resists all such endeavors and is described as defeating "all attempts at analysis" (21) and "indifferent to the point of obstinately ignoring all their advances" (168). Hence, it appears that their epistemological failures eventually lead to more practical ethical concerns that they relate to Kelvin's interaction with visitor Rheya. For, because he cannot understand the function of the creator Ocean, Kelvin is unsure how to treat its creation – visitor Rheya.

Despite devoting large blocks of text (roughly five sections of 5-10 pages) to the delineation of Solaristic analysis and theory, or the hard science of "Solaristics," there are no theories in particular that Kelvin endorses or believes to be definitively truer than others. In this drier portion of the text, the reader learns that the Ocean has (for a century) been the center of scientific research and philosophy and a source of great interest to the general public. As a result, massive amounts of written material (scientific and otherwise) fills the world's data banks and libraries. Despite the tremendous amount of research that has been performed, the failure to understand the Ocean results in a "dying out" of Solaristics not only from academic circles, but from the public's consciousness as well:

The quest for this key, the philosopher's stone of Solaristic studies, had absorbed the time and energy of all kinds of people with little or no scientific training. During the fourth decade of Solaristics the craze spread like an epidemic, and provided a fertile ground for the psychologists. An unknown number of cranks and ignorant fanatics toiled at their flummery researches with a greater enthusiasm than any which had animated the old prophets of perpetual motions, or the squaring of the circle. The craze fizzled out in only few years, and by the time I was ready to leave for Solaris it had vanished from the headlines and from conversation, and the ocean itself was practically forgotten by the public (169).

Solaristics was considered a lost cause and began to fade from the radar screen of human inquiry because – although it was widely agreed that the Ocean was a living organism – it could not be effectively understood through any known means. Since the Ocean had successfully resisted analysis and could not be anthropomorphically comprehended, not only was research neglected by a lack of funding, but also the totality of its formal inquiry became viewed as a "body of incommunicable knowledge" (172). It is seen this way because the transposing of such knowledge into "human language" loses "all substance" because it cannot be "brought intact through the barrier." To state it differently, due to the Ocean's apparent refusal to be understood anthropomorphically, there is a barrier that cannot be crossed by humans who are
intrinsically limited to a rather narrow comprehension of only those things they can relate to in human terms.

Although the Ocean resists being understood anthropomorphically, it is still an actor in the fabula. I even contend that it is not completely free from the process of characterization in the story. As an actor, the Ocean creates huge structures called "extensors," "mimoids," "symmetriads," and "asymmetriads" with functions, although widely studied, that remain ambiguous.\(^{203}\) Besides forming these structures that exist in the Ocean itself, it also acts to re-create the extremely complex visitors that materialize on the Station. For this reason, I consider it an actor.

With the Ocean's status as an actor thus established, the following passage addresses its rather tenuous status as a character in the story:

Yet it had infiltrated my mind without my knowledge, surveyed my memory, and laid bare my most vulnerable point. That was undeniable. Without any assistance or radiation transmission, it had found its way through the armored shell of the Station, located me, and come away with its spoils... (156).

Although he agrees with Gibarian's and Snow's earlier warnings against the anthropomorphic nature of his observations, Kelvin proceeds to describe the Ocean's actions anthropomorphically, an act that most likely stems from his emotional involvement with visitor Rheya. Snow's speech displays a similar anthropomorphic quality:

It spies out desires in our brains, and only two percent of mental processes are conscious. That means it knows us better than we know ourselves. We've got to reach an understanding with it (183).

Here, despite his warning to Kelvin, Snow falls into a similar pattern of anthropomorphic description. It is reasonable to assume, much like the characters in the story, that the reader also begins to interpret the Ocean's actions anthropomorphically. In other words, the reader tends to identify with the focalizer and, therefore, is inclined to accept the vision presented by that character (Bal 1997: 146). Through such phrases and words as "come away with spoils," "infiltrated," "vulnerable," and "spies," it stands to reason that the reader will also anthropomorphize the Ocean as having the intent to steal.

Although such descriptions function to provisionally characterize the Ocean, the process is concurrently stunted as those who made the statements also refute the latent anthropomorphic presuppositions behind them. In the next passage, Kelvin explains (to Snow) the intent of the Ocean's actions. However, he does so in anthropomorphic terms:

"It has performed a series of... experiments on us. Psychic vivisection. It has used knowledge which it stole from our minds without consent." "Those are not facts, Kelvin. They are not even propositions. They are theories. You could say that it has taken account of our desires locked into secret recesses or our brains. Perhaps it was sending us... presents" (192).

In response, Snow correctly points out the theoretical nature of his assumptions, but in offering an alternative he cannot help but address the Ocean in a similar anthropomorphic fashion. Thus, it seems that the Ocean presents a particularly thorny

\(^{203}\) Lem, Solaris (1970), 110-124. Although these structures are described in detail in the text, their appearance is not relevant to this discussion: rather, it is more important to note that despite their complexity and grandeur, no one is aware of their particular functions.
problem as it relates to the process of characterization. The text clearly points out the ineffectuality of the attempt to understand something non-human, a notion best summarized by Gibarian who states: "Where there are no men, there can be no motives accessible to men" (134).

Thus, taken as a basis the teleological presupposition that human thinking and action are directed toward an aim, this particular dialogue underscores the basic crux of their problem. The fact that the Ocean is not human makes it impossible to comprehend its function and therefore its actions can never be clearly interpreted. So, although the Ocean appears to be a functional actor in the fabula, its status as a non-human helps to maintain its secret identity that -- in conjunction with the characters' limited reasoning capacities and anthropomorphic tendencies -- makes any attempt to understand the Ocean an exercise in futility. Despite its actions that appear to have logical meaning, it seems that the Ocean provides a truly unknowable other, an epistemological barrier the characters are unable to cross because of their own shortsighted anthropomorphism.

**Sequential Ordering**

The sequential ordering of fabula events in Lem's novel is the most linear of the three literary texts examined thus far. The fabula begins in medias res as Kelvin makes his way to the launching bay en route to the Station. From this point, the narrative now moves forward as Kelvin arrives at the Station where, with the exception of a short trip to Solaris, he remains for the rest of the primary fabula. While the larger part of the text is devoted to the narration of the primary fabula, there are several anachronies in the form of both anticipations and retroversions.

There are a number of passages that anticipate the Ocean's unexplained creative acts. These particular anachronies are internal anticipations, or internal analepses, which occur within the time span of the primary fabula and tend to function as announcements.204 In an announcement, attention is explicitly drawn to the fact that the reader is now concerned with something that will only take place later on.205 An example of an internal anticipation that functions as an announcement is seen in chapter one when Snow first tries to warn Kelvin that he may see someone he does not expect:

"He's (Sartorius) up there, in the laboratory, and I doubt if he'll come down before dark, but... In any case, you'll recognize him. If you should see anyone else -- someone who isn't me or Sartorius, you understand, then..." "Then what? (...) Who could I see?" I flared up. "A ghost?" "You think I'm mad, of course. No, no, I'm not mad. I can't say anything more for the moment. Perhaps... who knows?... Nothing will happen. But don't forget I warned you" (10).

Shortly thereafter, the internal status of the anticipation is revealed as Kelvin sees Gibarian's visitor -- the Negress. Later in the primary fabula, the reader again sees this same type of internal anticipation that explicitly announces an event that occurs only a short time later when Snow -- who has already experienced a visitor of his own -- again serves as a conduit through which the anachrony is revealed:

204 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 90: "If the retroversion occurs within the time span of the primary fabula, the we refer to an internal analepsis, an internal retroversion." "Anticipations, too can be grouped as internal or external, even though it is not always possible to establish the dividing line" (95).

205 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 97. In an announcement, adverbs such as "later" and verbs such as "expect" or "promise" are used in the text or may be logically added to it. Conversely, hints are implicit. A hint is simply a germ, of which the germinating force can only be seen later.
"Hello Kelvin!" he croaked. "Well, did you discover anything?" "Yes... he's not alone." Snow grinned sourly. "Oh, really? Well, that's something. Has he got visitors?" "I can't understand why you won't tell me what's going on," I retorted impulsively. "Since I have to remain here, I'm bound to find out the truth sooner or later. Why the mystery?" "When you've received some visitors yourself, you'll understand" (46).

Once more, this passage functions as an internal anticipation that announces a forthcoming event, which is the appearance of Kelvin's visitor – Rheya. While these passages convey insight into Snow as a character who appears to experimentally "know things," the reader also gets a sense that Solaris allies itself with the mystery or detective genres. However, in contrast to these genres, Solaris tends to use announcements, rather than hints. Yet, the "great mystery" (the function of the Ocean) of the narrative is never revealed. Thus, it would appear that the use of explicit announcements is a stylistic device to create an "unsolvable mystery," which supports the notion that there are some things cannot be understood by the human mind.

Conversely, while anticipations are used to create suspense and add thematic weight, retroversions in the form of embedded fabulas provide indications about the antecedents, the past of the actors concerned, in so far as the past can be relevant for the interpretation of events (Bal 1997: 91). In particular, the external retroversions, or external analepses, which take place completely outside the time span of the primary fabula occur when Kelvin peruses texts he finds in the Station's library. In these cases, Kelvin reads narrative accounts of past Solaris explorations that provide background information about the Ocean. In the following passage, Kelvin reads from a book he found in Gibarian's room titled Historia Solaris:

I rested the thick, solidly bound volume on my knees and began leafing through the pages. The discovery of Solaris dated from about 100 years before I was born. The planet orbits two suns: a red sun and a blue sun. For 45 years after its discovery, no spacecraft had visited Solaris. (...) A few decades later, however, observations seemed to suggest that the planet's orbit was in no way subject to the expected variations: it was stable, as stable as the orbit of the planets in our own solar system. (...) During the following ten years, Solaris became the center of attraction for all observatories concerned with the study of this region of space, for the planet had in the meantime shown the astonishing faculty of maintaining an orbit which ought, with any shadow of doubt, to have been unstable (16-17).

The external retroversion, in the form of an embedded fabula, moves the reader chronologically forward toward the more contemporary scientific thought of those in the narrative now. Although roughly ten pages of text are devoted to the exposition found in this particular retroversion, even the modern thinkers presented in the primary fabula are still at a loss as to the purpose, or function of the Ocean.

Another example of an external retroversion in the form of an embedded fabula that provides expositional material with regard to the Ocean is found in chapter six. In the following passage, Kelvin examines another textbook ("The Little Apocrypha") Gibarian directed him to read before he committed suicide earlier in the fabula:206

206 Edgar J. Goodspeed, trans., The Apocrypha (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 1: "The Apocrypha consists of the books that are found in the Greek version of the Jewish Bible – the Septuagint, the earliest complete version of the Bible we possess – but that were not included in the final, canonical version of the Hebrew Bible. For this reason, they were called 'Apocrypha,' the hidden or secret books, and while they formed part of the original King James version of 1611, they
BERTON: When I reached 100 feet it became very difficult to maintain altitude because of the violent gusts of wind inside the cone. I had to hang on to the controls and for a short period - about ten or fifteen minutes - I did not look outside. (...) I had to maneuver against the wind, and when I was able to look down again, I saw something which looked like a garden. Yes, a garden. (...) QUESTION: Did the trees and plants you saw have leaves on them? BERTON: No, the shapes were only approximate, like a model garden (78-79).

Here - in an embedded fabula that exists externally to the time span of the primary one - Berton (a Solarist) recounts his unique experience with the Ocean before the “Commission of Enquiry.” Similar to the first one, this embedded fabula takes up about ten pages of text and exposes Solaris in so far as that past can be relevant for the interpretation of events in the primary fabula. While this is typically the function of such a device, Solaris presents the reader with a rather unique version. Specifically, these embedded fabulas - while replete with information about the Ocean - do not help the reader interpret events in the primary fabula because s/he relies on the teleological presuppositions that do not apply to the Ocean.

Thus, the Ocean, while a functional actor, is not human. Despite the “enlightening nature” of the information provided in the embedded fabulas, this disclosure still does not facilitate the reader’s understanding of the Ocean’s function when it acts similarly in the primary fabula. To take a different approach - just like the great number of scientists that precede the existence of primary fabula - the reader is not able to effectively interpret the information because s/he cannot understand the motivations of something non-human. This notion is further evidenced later in Berton’s report as he describes seeing the re-creation of a monstrous child in the Ocean:

BERTON: It was more like a doll in a museum, only a living doll. It opened and closed its mouth, it made various gestures, horrible gestures. (...) QUESTION: Try to be more explicit. BERTON: It’s difficult. I’m talking of an impression more of an intuition. I didn’t analyze it, but I knew that those gestures weren’t natural.

QUESTION: Do you mean, for example, that the hands didn’t move as human hands would move, because the joints were not sufficiently supple? BERTON: No, not at all. But... these movements had no meaning. Each of our movements means something, more or less, serves some purpose... (82).

Here, although Berton does provide the reader with descriptive information about the Ocean, he (like the reader) is unable to interpret the signs he observed - even though they were produced from what appeared to be a human child.

Although these external retroversions are quite extensive and provide a wealth of information, they are unique in that they are not relevant for the interpretation of events in the primary fabula. Rather, the abundance of Ocean-related information these devices supply can be juxtaposed with the continuous ignorance of both those in the narrative then and those in the narrative now. Such a juxtaposition reinforces the fabula’s contention that this information is rings hollow unless it can be interpreted and understood. However, since the Ocean is a non-human and we are denied access to its function, the reader cannot successfully interpret and, therefore, understand the events are no longer included in modern Bibles.” Lem, Solaris (1970), 85. “The Little Apocrypha” contains an account of an explorer (Berton) that was kept out of the permanent record because it was deemed “symptomatic of hallucinations caused by atmospheric poisoning, consequent upon inflammation of the associative zone of the cerebral cortex, and Berton’s account bears no, or at any rate no appreciable, relation to reality.” In other words, Berton was considered “temporarily insane” due to his exposure to the atmosphere.
caused and experienced by the Ocean which, in turn, confirms its secret identity as an actor in the fabula.

**Literary Space and Implied Temporal Derivatives**

*Solaris.* Even the title conjures up images of a narrative set some time in the future and—similar to both *Clockwork* and *Fight Club*—it is through the stylized delineation of literary space that the time of the story, in the most general sense, is implied. The following passage depicts the narrative's first, or largest degree of literary space:

A wide slit opened at eye-level, and I could see the stars. The *Prometheus* was orbiting in the region of Alpha in Aquarius and I tried in vain to orient myself; a glittering dust filled my porthole. I could not recognize a single constellation; in this region of the galaxy the sky was unfamiliar to me. I waited for the moment when I would pass near the first distinct star, but I was unable to isolate any one of them. Their brightness was fading; they receded merging into a vague, purplish glimmer, the sole indication of the distance I had already traveled (2).

While Kelvin's first level dialogue indicates the second degree of space (the ship he is on), this passage gives the reader an initial taste of the story's first degree of space, which is the "region of Alpha" in the "Aquarius" galaxy. This example offers one of the relatively few insights into the delineation of literary space in the novel. Accordingly, in *Solaris*, literary space is merely a frame, a place of action. Used in this limited capacity, a less detailed presentation of space typically leads to a less concrete picture of that space and thus the space tends to remain in the background.

Besides Kelvin's commute on the "Prometheus" (which only takes up a few pages), the vast majority of fabula events occur on another second degree of space, the Station, which on Kelvin describes below:

I found myself inside a vast, silver funnel, as high as a cathedral nave. A cluster of colored pipes ran down the sloping walls and disappeared into rounded orifices. I turned round. The ventilation shafts were roaring, sucking in the poisonous gases from the planet's atmosphere which had infiltrated when my capsule had landed inside the Station. (...) I went down a small stairway. The metal floor below had been coated with a heavy-duty plastic. In places, the wheels of trolleys carrying rockets had worn through the plastic covering to expose the bare steel beneath. (...) The moving walkway set me down at the far end of the gallery; on the threshold of a dome. Here there was a greater disorder. A pool of oily liquid spread out form beneath a pile of oil-drums; a nauseating smell hung in the air (5).

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207 Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 136. In opposition to a "less detailed" presentation of space that remains "in the background," Bal argues that in many cases space came become "thematized." In other words, space becomes an object of presentation itself, for its own sake (although this is not true in the case of *Solaris*). Space thus becomes an "acting place" rather than the "place of action." It influences the fabula, and the fabula becomes subordinate to the presentation of space. The fact that "this is happening here" is just as important as "the way it is here," which allows these events to happen.

Here, similar to the scarcity of first degree description, even though the majority of fabula events occur within the second degree space of the Station, this passage is one of only a handful of descriptive passages. The scarcity of such descriptions in light of the tremendous quantity of events that occur on the Station further reinforces the Solaris' literary space as merely a place of action rather than an acting place. Kelvin's description also conveys a certain kind of disorder, a point that parallels the general sense of disorientation implied by Kelvin in the first passage in which describes of Kelvin's inability to locate his bearings because he was unable to identify the unfamiliar resident stars as he merged into a "vague, purplish glimmer" (2).

The concepts of disorientation and disorder are further reinforced in the following passage that describes Gibarian's room, which was abandoned after he committed suicide:

The room was larger than mine. (...) Both shelves were piled into heaps, amongst the furniture. At my feet, blocking the way, were two overturned trolleys buried beneath a heap of periodicals spilling out of bulging brief cases which had burst open. Books with their pages spayed out fanwise were stained with colored liquids which had split form broken retorts and bottles with corroded stoppers, receptacles made of such thick glass that a single fall, even from a considerable height, could not have shattered them is such a way. Beneath the window lay an overturned desk, an anglepoise lamp crumpled underneath it; two legs of an upturned stool were stuck in the half-opened drawers. A flood of papers of every conceivable size swamped the floor (26-27).

As I demonstrated, the general sense of disorientation that depicted outer space became a more specific sense of confusion when Kelvin first sees the Station. This increase in disorder as the degree of space decreases becomes even more explicit as Kelvin describes the space of Gibarian's room, which anticipates the disorienting and chaotic events that will ensue once visitor Rheya appears. Thus, the presentation of space as a place of action is made readily apparent. The space is not of primary importance, but rather the events that occur within it. In this way, the depiction of space tends to function as an anticipatory reflection of the principal characters' disoriented, disordered state of mind. In other words, the correlation between the chaotic condition of Gibarian's his suicide signifies Gibarian's past state of mental confusion while, concurrently, it anticipates the similarly profound uncertainty that Kelvin will endure as he confronts his own visitor.

Lastly, there is rather large amount of text devoted to the description of the Ocean, which could be interpreted as the presentation of yet another second degree of literary space in which events take place. However, I contend that the "events" that occur on (or in) the Ocean are better understood as the actions of an actor in the fabula, rather than events that occur on a place in the fabula. For example, in chapter eight, roughly fourteen pages of text are devoted to the Ocean's description. Here, Kelvin learns an account of the discoveries and observations of Dr. Giese (a Solarist) who discusses unique formations that exist on (or in) the Ocean:

For the rest of his life, he studied and described them and brought all his ingenuity to bear on defining their nature. The name he gave them indicated their most astonishing characteristic, the imitation of objects, near or far, external to the Ocean itself. Concealed below the Ocean surface, a large flattened disc appears, ragged, with a tar-like coating. After a few hours, it begins to separate into flat sheets which rise slowly (113).
While this appears to be an illustrative presentation of space, I contend that it is really a descriptive account of the Ocean's actions, which occurred prior to the beginning of the primary fabula. Referred to as "mimoids" by Giese, the Oceanic formations mimic objects that are foreign to it. While anticipating its more functional actions in the primary fabula when it mimics Kelvin's memories in the form of visitor Rheya, this account (and others like it) also describes the actions of an actor in the fabula and, consequently, theoretically functions more as a form of implicit characterization rather than the delineation of literary space. As a consequence, the reader, like the characters, tends to anthropomorphize the Ocean by attributing intent to its functional actions despite the absence of any other textual clues that would help substantiate such a position. The Ocean invites both the characters and the reader into making unsubstantiated conjectures as to the aims of its actions and, in this way, the Ocean becomes a device through which the blinding nature of anthropomorphism can be thematically treated.

Besides characterizing actors and anticipating future events, the delineation of space in Solaris also operates in coordination with its presentation of literary time. Similar to the technique utilized in both Clockwork and Fight Club, the juxtaposition of the familiar with the unfamiliar implies a general sense of literary time. For example, as seen in the preceding passages, Kelvin finds himself on a space ship in the "region of Alpha" in the Aquarius galaxy and then inside a "vast, silver funnel," which is a large space station with moving walkways and clusters of colored pipes that "ran down the sloping walls and disappeared into rounded orifices" (5). While the reader is familiar with space ships, s/he is likely unfamiliar with those that can transport passengers to the region of Alpha in the Aquarius galaxy. Similarly, while the reader is familiar with space stations, s/he is unfamiliar with those located on distant planets covered by a massive living organism. Juxtaposing familiarity with a mild unfamiliarity, Solaris' particular depiction of literary space generally implies a sense of the near future.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I provided several textual examples that revealed the fixed cycle of human existence as it presented throughout the course of the fabula. This cycle is kept fixed by the central problem presented in the narrative, which is the intrinsically human failure to achieve a kind of Hegelian understanding self-consciousness (much less a more transcendent absolute consciousness) in which the self understands itself through the other.

While the experienced on Kelvin ultimately recognizes that we must explore our "own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers" before we can hope to comprehend the external universe, the narrative demonstrates that it is only when one explores the other with the intent to better understand themselves that a higher level of self-consciousness is possible. In light of this, it is not until Kelvin realizes that internal understanding lies in the other that he begins to free himself from the cycle. In other words, Kelvin's burgeoning appreciation of the second visitor Rheya is what leads to a more meaningful kind of self-realization at the conclusion of the primary fabula.

However, it appears that such a realization is restricted by an inherently human limitation, which is a finite capacity to reason. What is more, this restricted faculty is not self-contained, but sets a process in motion that leads to the second stage in the cycle.

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209 Lem, Solaris (1970), 157. Kelvin states: "Men has gone out to explore other worlds and other civilizations without having explored his own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers, and without finding what lies behind doorways that he himself has sealed."

210 Lem, Solaris (1970), 158. Addressing the "encephalogram experiment," Kelvin states: "They think it would mean an undignified surrender for mankind - as if there was any dignity in floundering and drowning in what we don't understand and never will."
which is a kind of profound ignorance. This condition results in an overcompensation that further compounds the problem, namely the endeavor to understand the other through anthropomorphic theorizing – the cycle’s third stage. Kelvin’s understanding consciousness is accomplished by beginning to see himself through the other, as opposed to anthropomorphizing the other. His ultimate failure to fully understand the other, and therefore himself, leads to a kind of existential humanism, which rejects supernaturalism and stresses freedom and a capacity for self-realization through reason.

In the novel, Kelvin hopes to achieve self-realization, not through a kind of contact that may provide new insight into the “meta-function” of the external, but through his own reasoning capabilities. Ironically, in spite of his freedom, the limitations of human reason prevents Kelvin from a deeper self-realization and he is left with a profoundly “unknowable Other,” which inexorably inhibits the transcendence of self-consciousness. It seems, then, that Kelvin’s understanding self-consciousness is the recognition of his place in the cycle. In Solaris, although the characters have the existential freedom to give meaning to their lives, the humanistic capacity for self-realization through reason is limited by the very boundaries of human intellect. Kelvin’s denial of the supernatural and his existential responsibility based on limited reason would seem to deny him transcendence from an understanding to a more absolute self-consciousness. It is this denial that, at the end of the primary fabula, motivates Kelvin’s rather existentially humanistic resignation with regard to an incomplete life marked by irreparable losses. Kelvin’s particular brand of acquiescence appears to be the natural extension of his awareness of his existence within a deterministically repetitive cycle not predetermined by an Infinite Other, but rather driven by the intrinsic finiteness of his own humanity.

Like his literary counterparts, Kelvin functioned as cn, cf, and actor in the fabula. The perception of Kelvin as an unreliable narrator is due, in large part, to the mechanism that drives the psychological distance between cn and cf Kelvin, which is his interaction with the Ocean. Driving a large number of functional events, the Ocean is perhaps the most important functional actor in the fabula through its creation of the visitors, or Phi-beings. In spite of this fact, the particular function of its actions remains unclear because it is a non-human freed from the typical teleological pre-suppositions. Such an actor provides the perfect vehicle through which Kelvin’s anthropomorphic tendencies can be negatively expressed. The Ocean supplies the stimulus that forces Kelvin, as a being-for-self, to confront the unknowable, which appears to be the alien, external world, but ultimately turns out to be himself. Visitor Rheya – the manifestation of his memories of the real Rheya – provides the other, the negative relation that establishes his own subjectivity by the awareness of being-seen-by-another.

The interaction between Kelvin and visitor Rheya (a mental projection) exists as a metaphor for the notion that our interaction with the other is not about understanding the other, which is a futile pursuit, but rather ourselves as we see beyond our own reflection. However, because Kelvin and the other characters cannot completely see the other, or fully comprehend even that which springs from their own mind, they

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211 Lem, Solaris (1970), 170. Cn Kelvin notes that: “...Grastom set out to demonstrate that the most abstract achievements of science, the most advanced theories and victories of mathematics represented nothing more than a stumbling, one or two-step progression from our rude, prehistoric, anthropomorphic understanding of the universe around us.”

212 Lem, Solaris (1970), 134. With this point in mind, Gibarian states: “Any attempt to understand the motivation of these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism. Where there are no men, there cannot be motives accessible to men.”

213 Sartre. Being and Nothingness (1956), 4: “But each type of human conduct, being the conduct of man, the world, and the relation which unites them, only on condition that we envisage these forms of conduct as realities objectively apprehensible and not as subjective affects which disclose themselves only in reflection.”
experience a kind of alienation from themselves, which leads to suicide in Gibarian’s case and anxiety in Kelvin’s. Kelvin’s anxiety results in his feeling of isolation and the collapse of his meaningful immersion in the world. This anxiety is evidenced when — after his experience with visitor Rheya — he declares: “I shall never again give myself completely to anything or anybody” (196).

Although she is not human, the visitor Rheya also experiences a kind of alienated anxiety. As a product of cf Kelvin’s memories, she experiences a “disconnection of consciousness” from those memories as a result of her own autonomous reasoning capabilities. However, these capabilities appear similarly limited in the fact that she cannot come to terms with the nature of this disconnection. Consequently, the visitor Rheya’s burgeoning awareness results in an existential alienation she feels powerless to either change or overcome, which, like Gibarian, leads her down the path of self-destruction facilitated by Snow.

The temporal and spatial aspects of the story further assist in the articulation of the fabula that conceptualizes the cycle central to the thematic treatment of anthropomorphism. There are several occasions in particular when internal anticipations announce events that occur later in the fabula. Although specific events are announced by these anachronies, their revelation does not assist us to ultimately solve the “great mystery” of the novel, which is the hidden function of the Ocean. The fact that these explicit announcements have no real bearing on this most pressing question exposes their status as stylistic devices used to create an unsolvable mystery. Similar to the dead-end informational nature of announcements, the external retroversions in Solaris — while replete with information about the Ocean’s history — do not help us interpret events in the primary fabula because we are unable to rely on the conventional presuppositions in regard to the teleological nature of human thinking and action. In this way, the seemingly enlightening abundance of information is juxtaposed with the continuous ignorance of those in both the primary and embedded fabulas. Thus, this particular juxtaposition reinforces the fabula’s contention that such information is useless unless it can be interpreted and understood, which it cannot.

The aspect of literary space and its implied derivative of literary time reveals that the narrative is set in a space station above an ocean-covered planet in a distant region of space. However, descriptive examples of this place are relatively sparse, which renders Solaris’ literary space a place of action. Although the literary space is subordinate to the events that occur within it, the limited description does reveal a certain kind of disorientation and disorder that functions as a reflection of the characters disoriented, chaotic state of mind. The description also functions temporally through its anticipation of future chaotic events as a result of the Ocean’s actions.

While there is a rather large amount of descriptive text devoted to the Ocean, it is not spatial description, but rather it describes an actor’s actions. In line with this view, such description is more a form of implicit characterization rather than the delineation of literary space. As a result, like the readers, the reader is inclined to anthropomorphize the Ocean by attributing intent to its functional actions despite the want of any other textual clues that would help corroborate such a position. In this way, the Ocean deceives both the characters and the reader into making unsubstantiated conjectures as its purposes. To put it another way, the Ocean is a mechanism through which the stunting nature of anthropomorphism can be treated thematically which, through the description of space, tends to exhibit the timeless quality of a narrative set in a perpetually near future.

The story articulated a fabula that conceptualized the cycle and the particular manner it bore upon the question: Who am I? It is not until cf Kelvin realizes that internal

214 Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 257: “...the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. ‘Being-seen-by-the-Other’ is the truth of ‘seeing-the-Other.’ ”
understanding lies in the other, or visitor Rheya, that he begins to free himself from the cycle. However, this critical realization is restricted by a finite capacity to reason, which leads to a kind of profound ignorance that results in an anthropomorphically overcompensation. In contrast, Kelvin’s understanding consciousness is accomplished by beginning to see himself through the other. However, his failure to fully understand the other, and thus himself, leads to a kind of existential humanism.215 The unresolved tension between Kelvin’s humanistic denial of the supernatural and his existential responsibility based on limited reason is what prevents Kelvin from achieving a Hegelian absolute consciousness. Although Kelvin ultimately defines himself to being a clock that measures time, he does cling to a measure of a more transcendent hope that the “time of cruel miracles was not past” (204). I trace this desperate hope in the following chapter in order to discover whether or not it can ultimately permit the filmic Kelvin to transcend some of the limitations that haunted his literary predecessor. In addition to the concepts of the cycle, alienation, and anxiety, I also examine how the principal characters confront their own moral anthropocentrism.

215 Swirski, “Lem in a Nutshell” (1997), 66. In light of Kelvin’s existential humanism, it is interesting to note that Lem has argued that under the pressure from future empirical evidence, there are philosophies like phenomenology or existentialism which would clearly undergo a shift in the direction of religious faiths, especially godless ones, like Buddhism.
III. The Film

Steven Soderbergh

(1963 – Present)
Introduction

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, American director Steven Soderbergh is probably best known for such critically and commercially successful films as Sex, Lies, and Videotape (1997), Traffic (2000), and Ocean’s Twelve (2004). With several box office successes under his belt, Soderbergh decided to take a risk of sorts and direct the second filmic adaptation of Lem’s Solaris. Film critic Kenneth Turan wrote:

Far from a typical studio film in its determination to be elliptical and elusive, the film is an example of sophisticated and challenging filmmaking that stands – despite its noticeable lack of emotional heft – in welcome contrast to the indulgent dead-end experimentation of the director’s previous Full Frontal (2002: 1-1).

However, in the United States, moviegoers thought differently when the film was first released. For Americans, whose cinema is in a state of stagnation where any film that chooses intellect, love or humanity as its subject and therefore bypassing glorified violence, thoughtless sex and gratuitous exposition is generally rejected. Solaris was “dreary” (Stoeckel 2002). Although still challenging and complex, Soderbergh’s film (released in the U.S. in the fall of 2002) is a tighter, more focused adaptation than renowned Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1972 version.

In addition to being roughly an hour shorter, Soderbergh’s version is a bit more accessible to mainstream audiences than Tarkovsky’s more conceptual translation. However, despite being somewhat more comprehensible, Soderbergh’s film only grossed 15 million dollars in the U.S., a total far below its production budget of 47 million dollars.216 The rather obstinate resistance of mainstream audiences can be partly attributed to a complex narrative and its engagement with powerful and complicated questions about the nature of existence that harkens back to Kubrick’s science-fiction masterpiece 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). In addition to the film’s thematic parallels, the backward tracking shots and the ethereal ballet of space travel in Soderbergh’s version function as visual homage to its more celebrated predecessor.

Besides its rather intricate and theoretical composition, I also attribute a large portion of the tepid box office reception to the manner the film was grossly misrepresented by its own marketing campaign. To explain, although the film does include a romantic dimension, it is not merely the simple love story that it was portrayed to be by its own trailers.218 In light of this perversion, it is safe to assume that a considerable percentage of the audience showed up expecting to see a love story set in space only to be disenchanted by what is a more philosophical film that happens to have a romantic dimension. Despite this rather unfortunate distortion (typically a

216 “Solaris Box Office Numbers,” in Box Office Mojo (statistics online) accessed 24 July 2005. http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=solaris.htm. More precisely, the domestic gross was $14,973,382, and the overseas gross was $15,029,376 for a worldwide total of $30,002,758.
217 Phil Villarreal, “Solaris,” in Arizona Daily Star (12 November 2002). 12E: “Soderbergh, the writer/director who got his start with the offbeat “Sex, Lies and Videotape” in 1989, has proven himself one of Hollywood’s most daring and visionary directors. He’s long drawn comparisons to Stanley Kubrick, and “Solaris” - Soderbergh’s first venture into sci-fi - bolsters the comparison.”
218 This romantic “misrepresentation” is further evidenced by the image on the cover of the newly translated version of Lem’s novel (1970), which can be seen on the novel title page in this study. The novel’s back cover informs us of the front cover’s “Solaris film artwork,” which is a copyrighted (2002 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation) picture of Kelvin (George Clooney) and Rheya (Natascha McElhone) in a rather romantic embrace. As is often the case, a new edition of a novel from which a film has been adapted is issued around the time a film is released. However, the only thing that is “new” is typically the cover art that serves to promote the film.
consequence of studio pressure), the film did enjoy a good deal of critical success based largely on its magnificently crafted mise-en-scene, ethereal soundtrack, and expressive acting, which all center on a rather profound thematic core.

Moral Anthropocentrism and the Place Beyond Morality

The following passages reflect a progression of ideas that leads to the concept of moral anthropocentrism. As the film demonstrates, it is generally the combination of egocentrism and a finite reasoning capacity that influences the principal characters to, at one time or another, act in a morally anthropocentric fashion and disproportionately value human over alien life. This value disparity forms the film’s thematic core and drives the narrative’s articulation of a fabula that confronts the limited, anthropocentric nature of humans and the manner such qualities pertain to the moral complexities involved with the ethical treatment of those life forms presented as alien. Forcing the self into a kind of existential struggle, this confrontation with the alien other challenges the self to improve through the mechanism of choice—existence precedes essence.

This section primarily concentrates on the auditory component of speech, which I use to establish the weight of moral anthropocentrism in the film. In later sections, I address the manner in which both the auditory and visual filmic components flesh out the other relevant aspects of the story and the elements of the fabula that convey a deeper understanding of the film’s treatment of this concept. Taken chronologically as they occurred in the fabula, the following passages begin to display the film’s evolution of morally anthropocentric ideas. The first passage occurs at the beginning of an embedded fabula—presented as an external retroversion of a conversation that occurred outside the scope of the primary fabula—and conveys an exchange at a dinner party between three of the film’s principal characters: Dr. Chris Kelvin, Rheya, and Dr. Gibarian:

Kelvin: The whole, the whole idea of God was dreamed up by man. Gibarian: Silly little animal with a small brain. Even, even the limits that we put on it are human limits. It designs, it creates. It can do this. It can do that. Rheya: No, I am talking about a higher form of intelligence. Gibarian: Uh, no, no, now, hold it. No, you’re talking about something else. You’re talking about the man in a white beard again. You are ascribing human characteristics to something that isn’t human. Now, we are all looking for causes and patterns. Kelvin: Rheya, given all the elements of the known universe, and enough time, our existence is inevitable. It’s no more mysterious than trees or sharks. We’re a mathematical probability and that’s all. Rheya: How do you explain that of all the billions of creatures on this planet we are the only ones who are conscious of our own mortality? Kelvin: You can’t explain that, that doesn’t mean that there’s a God.219

Kelvin flatly asserts his belief that life is a “mathematical probability,” the result of evolutionary processes driven by the arrangement of causality and chance. Kelvin and Gibarian agree that God is merely an abstract idea, or the antecedent for the impersonal pronoun “it.” Gibarian sees the endeavor to personify “it” as a rather juvenile, anthropomorphic attempt to ascribe human characteristics to an abstract idea. In this particular instance, Gibarian’s speech echoes his literary counterpart with regard

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219 Steven Soderbergh, Solaris (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003), 13. The dialogue, while audible, can also be seen using the subtitle feature for a more accurate transcription. The DVD is divided up into 25 chapters and will be referenced accordingly. Subsequent citations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically.
to his caveat against the innately human attempt to understand the alien through anthropomorphic means.

While both texts issue anthropomorphic warnings, the film divides anthropomorphism into two categories. The first category is modeled after the literary warnings against oversimplifying abstractions and unknowns by ascribing human characteristics to them. The second category directs its thematic vigor towards a more positive aspect of anthropomorphism. We typically do not objectify the alien other if we see it as human and, as a result, we tend to apply our moral standards to it. In the conversation, Rhey appears at odds with both Kelvin and Gibarian in her belief that God is not an abstraction we trivialize anthropomorphically, but rather a more personal higher form of intelligence. To maintain the possibility that human beings may not simply be the empirical results of mathematical probabilities, she asks Kelvin to explain why a human, as a being-for-itself, appears to be the only creature conscious of its own mortality, which he cannot. Here, her question problematizes the origin of self-consciousness in light of Kelvin’s relegation of existence to mere statistics. While none of the three deny human existence, it is Rhey who asks the more difficult question as it relates to the nature of human essence. As the film demonstrates, our essence can be positively modified through anthropomorphic means if, in ascribing humanity to the other, we gain a deeper understanding of our own.

The second passage presents Gibarian who is dead at this point in the fabula. In this scene, Gibarian speaks to Kelvin through a video diary entry that Kelvin watches shortly after he arrives on the film’s primary set, which is a space station (or the Station) designed for scientific research that hovers in the outer atmosphere above the mysterious and ethereally beautiful planet known as Solaris:

> We take off into the cosmos ready for anything: solitude, hardship, exhaustion, death. We’re proud of ourselves. But when you think about it our enthusiasm’s a sham. We don’t want other worlds. We want mirrors (8).

Here, Gibarian reinforces his original assertion (seen in the dinner conversation) with regard to the anthropomorphic tendencies of humans that can oversimplify the other. To put it differently, humans do not truly desire to discover the external universe, but rather to force our interpretation of external reality through human values and experience. Hence, we see “mirror reflections” of ourselves. As this idea relates to the first passage, Gibarian’s assertion can be interpreted to mean that humans do not aspire to understand an alien concept such as God, but rather to see God as we see ourselves, or to egocentrically make God in our image. Rhey does not deny this endeavor. Rather, her argument implies that we do this because our consciousness is a kind of Sartrean “no-thing,” and since God may also be a kind of no-thing, as in Spirit, our limited

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220 Lem, Solaris (1970), 134. Gibarian states that: “Any attempt to understand the motivation of these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism.”

221 Barnes, “Sartre’s Ontology” (1992), 16: “Being-for-Itself is a self-conscious being. If in the introduction to Being and Nothingness one occasionally feels that a disembodied mind is at work, this illusion is quickly dispelled. The for-Itself carries a lack of being at its heart due the presence of the nihilating (=nothing making) consciousness that is inseparable form it. A corpse is no longer a for-itself but an in-Itself. Frequently, by a sort of metonymy. Sartre uses the two terms, ‘consciousness’ and ‘being-for-itself,’ interchangeably...”

222 It is never overtly revealed exactly how long Gibarian had been on the station in the (external) embedded fabula when Kelvin hears his recorded message in the primary fabula; however, judging from the age of his son in the embedded fabula, and contrasting it to the age of his son who appears as a “visitor” in the primary fabula, it is safe to assume that he had been there anywhere from a couple of months to a couple of years.
reason and anthropomorphic tendencies cause us to see God in the same human terms as our consciousness sees our bodies.223

The third passage presents an exchange between Kelvin and Dr. Gordon (Dr. Sartorius in the novel), who has also been on the Station for an undisclosed, but apparently extended period of time. During her stay, it is implied from her speech that Dr. Gordon has had extensive first-hand experience with the extraordinary phenomena, or the visitors, which she believes are generated by Solaris.224 In the exchange, the two discuss what to do with the visitors, or the walking, talking memory manifestations of the people they once knew back on Earth. In Kelvin’s case, like the novel, his visitor is a recreation of his dead wife Rheya who commits suicide in the embedded fabula, or the narrative then. In the following passage, visitor Rheya represents the antecedent for the pronouns “she” and “her”:

Gordon: Kelvin. It is a mistake to become emotionally engaged with one of them. You’re being manipulated. If she were ugly, you wouldn’t want her around. That’s why she’s not ugly. She’s a mirror that reflects part of your mind. You provide the formula. Kelvin: She’s alive. Gordon: She is not human. Try to understand that if you can understand anything. Kelvin: What about your visitor? The one that you’re so ready to destroy without hesitation. Who is it? What is it? Does it feel? Can it touch? Does it speak? Gordon: We are in a situation that is beyond morality. Hmm? Your wife is dead. Kelvin: How do you know that? How can you be so definitive about a construct that you do not understand! (16).

Gordon’s speech affirms Gibarian’s mirror contention as it pertains to the mysterious appearance of visitor Rheya on board the Station. Gordon argues that Rheya is simply a reflection of Kelvin’s own subconscious mind and, therefore, not a “real” human.

By the time Kelvin utters the speech heard in the third passage, he appears to have somewhat softened his stance heard earlier in the primary fabula. Here, Kelvin echoes the real Rheya’s argument. Rheya contends that our attempts to anthropomorphize God do not negate God’s essential existence, but rather that such attempts are better understood in light of the fact that there are some constructs the human mind may not be able to entirely comprehend. And, as the fabula demonstrates, it is this inherent limitation that should prevent the characters from moral anthropocentrism. Ironically, it is Kelvin’s anthropomorphic tendencies, which cause him to see Rheya as more human, that now position him antithetically to Gordon’s morally anthropocentric assertion that visitor Rheya’s destruction would be an act “beyond morality” simply because she refuses to view Rheya anthropomorphically.

The preceding discussion aimed to establish a progression seen throughout the course of the fabula as it relates to the notion of human egocentrism, its practical manifestation of anthropomorphism, and the manner it problematizes the concept of moral anthropocentrism. In the following analysis of Solaris, I examine the visual and auditory components of the narrative text to better understand a fabula that confronts the practice of moral anthropocentrism within the context of the larger question: Who am I?

223 Barnes, “Sartre’s Ontology” (1992), 13: “Consciousness and nothingness are dependent on being, but they are not being. Sartre’s ontology is a phenomenological description of the relation of this no-thing, which is consciousness, to the being on which it depends. ‘Being, in Sartre’s view, if we describe it abstractly, is the condition of all revelation.’

224 The character of Dr. Gordon is a black female in the film and the character of Dr. Sartorius is (most likely) a white male in the novel. However, the similarity in the content of their speech (sometimes a verbatim match) and the function of their actions makes them, for all intents and purposes, the same actor.
Kelvin: Triple Narrative Agency

In both literary and filmic texts, Kelvin represents the anti-hero protagonist, character-bound narrator, character-bound focalizer, and actor in the fabula. However, the filmic Kelvin’s capacities as cn, cf, and actor are principally revealed through the auditory and visual features of speech and camera placement respectively.

Similar to his literary counterparts in *Clockwork* and *Fight Club*, the literary Kelvin functions as cn. From the beginning of the primary fabula, Kelvin’s capacity as cn is established when he states: “At 19:00 hours, ship’s time, I made my way to the launching bay” (1). In the film, cn Kelvin’s voiceover narration is not a device used as consistently throughout the course of *Solaris* as it is in both the filmic versions of *Clockwork* and *Fight Club*. Rather, while utilized dissimilarly in both cases, voiceover narration is used only once at the beginning and once at the end of the primary fabula. At the beginning, voiceover narration is audible in the form of cf Kelvin’s non-diegetic interior monologue as an act of memory when he recalls the sound of Rheya’s voice and we hear her say: “Chris, what is it? I love you so much. Don’t you love me anymore?” (1). In this instance, it appears that Rheya’s non-diegetic speech is an attributive sign of cf Kelvin’s internal focalization, or a temporary relegation from the external focalization of some anonymous agent that focalizes the primary fabula. Towards the end of the film, the viewer hears the first-level, non-diegetic speech of cn Kelvin who relays the memories of cf Kelvin’s (supposed) return to Earth after his mission to Solaris:

> Earth. Even the word sounded strange to me now. Unfamiliar. How long had I been gone? How long had I been back? Did it matter? I tried to find the rhythm of the world where I used to live. I followed the current. I was silent, attentive. I made a conscious effort to smile, nod, stand, and perform the millions of gestures that constitute life on Earth. I studied these gestures until they became reflexes again. But I was haunted by the idea that I remembered her wrong, that somehow I was wrong about everything (24).

This second instance of voiceover narration definitively discloses that it is not some anonymous agent, but rather cn Kelvin who externally focalizes the events.

Although Kelvin’s function as cn is not made as recurrently evident as his counterpart in the novel, this example establishes his cn status in the same capacity as his filmic counterparts in both *Clockwork* and *Fight Club*. The end of the passage, however, calls into question cn Kelvin’s reliability. This is a significant point because it forces the viewer to consider the veracity of the events seen previously in the fabula, which have all been filtered through Kelvin’s memory, which may or may not be accurate. Unlike the novel, cn Kelvin exhibits a certain awareness of the subjective nature of memory, which paradoxically allows the viewer to grant him a level of objectivity his literary counterpart was denied.

Just as speech in both the novel and film authenticates Kelvin’s function as cn, it also establishes his role as cf. For example, on page 1 of the novel, Kelvin’s position as cf is denoted by the visible, attributive signs of quotation marks:

> As my eyes grew accustomed to the dark, I could see the luminous circle of the solitary dial. A voice echoed in my headphones: “Ready Kelvin?” “Ready, Maddard.” I answered.

In the film, the viewer is able to see that the internally focalizing cf Kelvin’s mouth remains motionless while s/he hears the first-level, non-diegetic speech of cn Kelvin. Conversely, the viewer can hear the second-level, diegetic speech of cf Kelvin whose mouth moves
in coordination with his speech. In addition, camera placement - and the POV shot in particular - functions as an attributive sign that indicates a temporary, hypothetical relegation from cn Kelvin's external focalization to cf Kelvin's internal focalization. For example, in chapter eight, cn Kelvin externally focalizes himself (cf Kelvin in the narrative now) wake up from his dream. We then see a POV shot of a blurred figure the internally focalizing cf Kelvin sees standing over him. Here, the attributive signs are indicated by both the subordinate position of the camera in relation to visitor Rheya and her out of focus image like the distorted vision of someone who has just awoken from a dream.\footnote{Similar to her literary counterpart, visitor Rheya is the re-creation of cf Kelvin's memories. However, unlike the novel, it is not the Ocean of Solaris that appears to be responsible, but rather the planet itself. In fact, there is no evidence that an ocean exists on the planet at all.}

While camera placement functions as an attributive sign in the narrative now, it functions similarly in the narrative then, which is an external retroversion (the beginning of an embedded fabula) shown as a dream sequence. Quite ingeniously, this sequence makes perceptible the hypothetical existence of a "second" externally focalizing Kelvin, whom I will refer to as cn2, in the narrative then. In other words, a cn2 is really a cf in the narrative now who temporarily assumes the role of cn in the narrative then. In this retroversion, the viewer sees the unconscious thoughts of cf Kelvin in the narrative now who temporarily assumes the role of cn in the ensuing dream, or narrative then, when he remembers the first time he met his future wife - Rheya. In this sequence, the experiencing cf Kelvin appears to be externally focalized by the older, experienced version of himself who lies asleep on the Station in the narrative now. The manner in which portions of this sequence are filmed makes the appearance of the externally focalizing cn2 Kelvin's act of remembering (while asleep in the narrative now) more overt.

This is accomplished through the use of a shaky, hand-held camera technique that mimics the actions of cn2 Kelvin as if he were in the room. For example, when cf Kelvin enters the restaurant where he meets Rheya, he is shot from behind as if someone is following him. Then, as cf Kelvin walks up to where Rheya sits, the externally focalizing gaze of cn2 Kelvin peers down at her while she peers up, not into the camera, but above the camera at cf Kelvin's head. Then, the camera, which mimics the unsteady turn of cn2 Kelvin's head, pans to reveal Gibarian across the restaurant holding his young son (whom the viewer sees later in the primary fabula), and then pans unsteadily back to Rheya who continues to peer above the camera's gaze into cf Kelvin's face. Thus, at certain moments within the retroversion, both the camera's movement and its position in relation to the actors makes the appearance of cn2 Kelvin's external focalization of events within the anachrony rather apparent.

However, this practice is not wholly consistent throughout the course of the dream sequence. There are shots within the retroversion where the shaky camera movement I previously attributed to the external focalization of cn2 Kelvin in the narrative now coincides with the POV shot ascribed to cf Kelvin in the narrative then. In these instances, the viewer sees examples of double focalization, when the external focalizer looks over the shoulder of the internal cf (Bal 1997: 27). For example, when the filmic subject first cuts to the dream, the viewer sees a POV shot of Rheya who sits opposite cf Kelvin on a train. This part of the sequence, also filmed in a shaky, hand-held fashion to emphasize a particular POV aspect, is slightly different. Here, in an example of the POV / SRS formation, Rheya looks directly into the camera in the first shot, and the reverse shot is that of cf Kelvin who also stares directly into the camera. In this way, the POV / SRS formation hypothetically sutures the viewer's gaze with the couple's gaze, which denotes a sense of focalization that resides internally (Silverman 1983: 202). However, also in this sequence, the POV / SRS formation is intermixed with shaky hand-held
movement that hypothetically sutures the viewer’s gaze to the external focalization of cn2 Kelvin in the narrative now.

It is the combination of both the SRS / POV formation and the shaky hand-held shots within this sequence that simultaneously sutures the viewer’s gaze internally and externally and creates a sense of double focalization. In this case, the editing, camera position, and hand-held filming technique conveys the impression that cn2 Kelvin, at times, peers over the shoulder of the internally focalizing cn Kelvin. This permits the viewer to glean a sense of both the separation between cn Kelvin in the embedded fabula and cn Kelvin in the primary one and their implicit connection through memory. The separation is necessary to present the events that happened “then” to a younger Kelvin in the embedded fabula, while the connection is essential to reveal the relevance of past events on both cn Kelvin’s psyche and events in the primary fabula that are happening in the narrative “now.”

Characterizing the Principals (A Threefold Analysis)

The filmic characterization of the three principal actors who were at some point human in either the embedded or primary fabulas (or both), while unique and highly complex, is accomplished largely through the soundtrack features of speech and special sound effects, and the mise-en-scene features of actor expression, camera placement, and lighting. The fleshing out of each actor entails more than just a single model of dynamic characterization, but three distinct processes, some of which exhibit their own dynamic qualities. With these processes in mind, this section is primarily dedicated to a threefold, detailed characterization analysis of each principal actor. While such a threefold distinction is a hypothetical division, it is materially anchored to a single, visible actor who provides a common conduit through which the characters’ shared experience flows.

As mentioned previously, the characterization of each actor takes on three divergent dimensions. In Kelvin’s case, I refer to these dimensions as “post-suicide,” “pre-suicide,” and “Solaris” Kelvin. With regard to the first two Kelvins, the shared element is the human, or real Rheya’s suicide shown in the retroversion seen in chapter twenty. At the beginning of the primary fabula in the narrative now, Rheya has already killed herself. Hence, the viewer sees the post-suicide Kelvin before s/he is introduced to the pre-suicide Kelvin. As the film opens, in a close shot of Kelvin’s bedroom window, the viewer sees and hears that it is raining outside a minimally decorated, yet rather stylish apartment. Then, in a series of semi-close shots, we see post-suicide Kelvin who sits hunched over on his bed and exhibits a solemn, disconsolate expression.
The consistent sound of falling rain is also prominent throughout the sequence, which adds a rather portentous feel to the film’s opening and audibly supplements post-suicide Kelvin’s initial characterization as being one who is depressed.

The subsequent series of shots further develops his sense of isolation when the viewer sees a speechless post-suicide Kelvin walk by himself in a crowded street, and sit alone on a crowded train to get to his office where he works as a psychologist. Then, in a rather vacuous conference room lit in high-key, Kelvin leads a group of five people who appear to have suffered a traumatic experience, though the ambiguous content of their dialogue leaves the actual incidents quite vague. In this scene, Kelvin is shot from behind as he faces the five people who sit at a distance in a row directly across from him. Here, the placement of the camera, which is behind Kelvin but in front of the other actors, does not allow the viewer access to Kelvin’s face. Instead, it conveys Kelvin’s detachment and isolation from both his patients and the viewer. A similar arrangement of mise-en-scene can also be observed in Kelvin’s office where he is again shot predominantly from behind. Given limited access to his face, the viewer is once more distanced from the protagonist, a visual device that reasserts his loneliness and separation. On those occasions when the viewer is given access to his face, post-suicide Kelvin’s sense of isolation is maintained by his consistently disconsolate expressions, which are further reinforced by the ambiguous nature of his limited speech delivered in a rather monotone, robotic fashion.

On the other hand, pre-suicide Kelvin is positioned antithetically to his post-suicide counterpart. Revealed through post-suicide Kelvin’s dreams as external retroversions that provide glimpses into the world of the embedded fabula, the first time we see pre-suicide Kelvin is in chapter eight when he sits opposite Rheya on a train full of people. In this first close shot of pre-suicide Kelvin’s face, the viewer sees him smile, if only slightly, which he does several more times not only in this particular retroversion, but also in subsequent dream sequences that convey insight into his life with Rheya. In addition, the delivery of his speech is more animated and of a more personal, intimate nature when (in an attempt to impress Rheya) Kelvin quotes Dylan Thomas’ poem “And death shall have no dominion,” which serves as a subtle, intertextual insight into the film’s transcendent undertones that bubble to the surface in the final third of the film.226

Besides the differences in camera placement, expression, and dialogue delivery, there is also a distinction in lighting. The first retroversion alternates between the post-suicide Kelvin in the primary fabula and the pre-suicide Kelvin in the embedded fabula. Indicating this temporal alternation, the lighting seen in the narrative now is low-key, bluish, and cold, whereas the sets of the narrative then are lit with softer, warmer earth tones.

226 Dylan Thomas, “And death shall have no dominion” (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2003), 49. The title and refrain of Dylan’s poem implies the transcendent quality of love: “Though lovers be lost love shall not; And death shall have no dominion.”
This vacillation between cool and warm tones is used consistently throughout the rest of the film in coordination with the movement between the narrative now associated with post-suicide Kelvin and the narrative then associated with the pre-suicide Kelvin. Through the stylistic use of the features of mise-en-scene, the characterization of the pre-suicide Kelvin carries a warmer, more intimate quality, while cool lighting adds to the disconnectedness of his post-suicide counterpart.

At the conclusion of the film, post-suicide Kelvin freely chooses to remain on the Station as it is being enveloped by the expanding planet and, consequently, the viewer is confronted with a third character – Solaris Kelvin. The characterization of Solaris Kelvin – a part of the planet itself – is slightly distinct from the two previously discussed. Toward the end of the film, the viewer is confronted with a sequence nearly identical to the one the filmed opened with: a shot of the window, it is again raining, and then shot of Kelvin who appears dejected, his head down, sitting alone on his bed. At this point the viewer is lead to believe post-suicide Kelvin is back on Earth, and that the greater part of the film may have been delivered as a retroversion in the form of an embedded fabula.

However, I argue that this is not the case. Although Kelvin is in the primary fabula, he is in fact not back on Earth, but rather has become a part of Solaris. Here, on Kelvin's first level, nondiegetic voiceover speech anticipates the view that he was not on the "real" Earth when he states that his home planet has become unfamiliar to him. Since the viewer should be aware (from previous events) that Solaris is able to construct a reality as an artifact of one's memories, the viewer should also be aware that s/he is seeing the reality of Earth as post-suicide Kelvin remembered it. In other words, Solaris somehow uses post-suicide Kelvin's memories to assemble the reality that Solaris Kelvin exists within at the conclusion of the primary fabula. Consequently, the mise-en-scene is "nearly" identical to that seen in the beginning of the film until cf Kelvin returns to his apartment after work as he did earlier in the primary fabula. Although the mise-en-scene appears identical in this scene, he is actually shot from the opposite direction in a subtle form of visual anticipation that things are now slightly different.

Shortly thereafter, there are two more overt visual anticipations that the filmic space in which Solaris Kelvin finds himself in chapter twenty-four is a re-creation of its forerunner seen in chapter one. The mise-en-scene appears in exactly the same manner.

227 Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 481. While Sartre believes that human beings consist of a "freedom which chooses," he recognizes that: "The decisive argument which is employed by common sense against freedom consists in reminding us of our impotence. Far from being able to modify our situation at our whim, we seem to be unable to change our selves." Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 19. It is this notion of impotence that Kelvin struggles to defeat. Kelvin states: "I don't believe we're predetermined to relive our past, I believe we can choose to do it differently."
in the two bookending chapters except for the photograph of Rheya that now hangs on Kelvin’s cabinet door. Furthermore, similar to the scene shown in the beginning of the film, Kelvin again cuts his finger on the seventh stroke while slicing a cucumber, only this time it quickly heals. This seemingly miraculous healing is given meaningful context when, earlier in the film, we saw visitor Rheya (also a creation of the planet) quickly heal from a rather grotesque wound. In light of this prior event, Kelvin’s healing explicitly anticipates the subsequent revelation that he, too, is now a product of Solaris.

From these visual clues, it appears that Solaris Kelvin is a permutation of both the post and pre-suicide Kelvins seen earlier in the film. Besides his miraculous healing ability, the most distinguishable signification of this third Kelvin’s characterization is seen when Kelvin – in a subtle, yet contextually powerful display of emotion – begins to cry as he embraces Rheya and smiles. In effect, the viewer is provided with overt visual entrance into his transformation from the somber, depressed post-suicide Kelvin to the warmer, more animated pre-suicide Kelvin in the form of our third version – Solaris Kelvin. Here, because post-suicide Kelvin freely chose to become part of Solaris when it enveloped the Station (by reaching out and taking the hand of the re-creation of Gibarian’s son), Solaris Kelvin is able to enjoy freedom from the haunting memories of Rheya’s suicide (an act he blamed himself for) because he now remembers things “right.”

Yet, it is unclear whether remembering things right means that Solaris Kelvin (because he is part of it) now has greater access to the truth of past events and has in some way corrected the possibility that he was “wrong about everything,” or that Solaris simply “makes things better” by somehow allowing Solaris Kelvin to forgive himself, a notion Solaris Rheya implies when she states: “Everything we’ve ever done is forgiven” (24).

Although slightly different than that of Kelvin, Rheya’s characterization also takes on three dimensions: “memory” Rheya in the embedded fabula as a product of Kelvin’s memories, “visitor” Rheya on the Station in the primary fabula as a creation of Solaris through its unexplained access of Kelvin’s memories, and “Solaris” Rheya seen briefly at
the end of the film, who exists in the primary fabula as a part of Solaris. In the narrative then, we are introduced to the dynamic memory Rheya who is initially quite lively and seductive when Kelvin first meets her, but then becomes more subdued and forlorn as the embedded fabula progresses and she drifts into an inexplicable depression. For example, when the viewer first sees memory Rheya sitting on the train, she is filmed with a frontal, semi-close shot as she stares into the camera, smiling slightly as she holds a doorknob in her hand. Although left quite ambiguous, the most reasonable interpretation of this shot is that it symbolizes her existence as a sort of "doorway" Kelvin must not only confront, but walk through if he is to free himself from a haunting past.

In the train scene, her direct gaze and the rather intimate camera placement conveys a sense of familiarity, which is simultaneously contrasted with mysterious doorknob. With this juxtaposition in mind, it is important to remember that the source of memory Rheya’s existence lies asleep in the primary fabula. In other words, as an extension of Kelvin’s dream, memory Rheya is merely the physical manifestation of how he remembers her as both familiar and strange, a notion further reinforced in the dream sequence itself. The viewer’s initial sense of familiarity is confirmed when (on subsequent occasions) she is shown smiling and dressed in warm, reddish tones.

As the filmic subject moves the viewer further along in the embedded fabula, dressed in cooler blue tones, memory Rheya mysteriously slips into depression and becomes suicidal.

The dynamic movement of her character is further visually reinforced through the use of both slow and regular motion photography when filming her in the embedded fabula. In addition, in an example of explicit alter-characterization, Gibarian says of her: “She’s a bit tricky, but, um, I guess she’s worthwhile” (9). This bit of speech serves to audibly highlight the dynamic nature of memory Rheya’s characterization in the narrative then as initially vibrant and seductive, but ultimately more aloof, complicated, and suicidal.

Similar to memory Rheya, visitor Rheya is also a product of of Kelvin’s memories. Like the novel, in Soderbergh’s film – through Solaris’ unexplained access of Kelvin’s
memories— the viewer sees two re-creations of memory Rheya in the primary fabula.228 Shortly after she appears in his room, post-suicide Kelvin jettisons the first visitor Rheya into space because he has convinced himself that she is not human.

However, in similar fashion, she re-appears the following morning and it is at this point that Kelvin begins to accept her. This acceptance begins to establish Kelvin as a being-for-self, or a self-making agent, and is through his negative relations with his external mental projection of consciousness (visitor Rheya) that the world is revealed and made meaningful.229

While both visitor and memory Rheya exhibit a dynamic character and look identical (both played by Natasha McElhone), visitor Rheya is a creation of Solaris. Her dramatic appearance on the Station is ingeniously anticipated when we see her make love with Kelvin in the narrative now, which is intercut with images from the sequence when memory Rheya makes love with Kelvin in the narrative then. Although Kelvin believes both sequences are part of his dream, the sequence from the narrative now is, in fact, actually happening as a functional event in the primary fabula, which is overtly revealed when he wakes to see visitor Rheya (who had just seduced him) still "existing" in the in the narrative now.

228 Although we see two visitor Rheyas in the primary fabula, the characterization of the second is really just the extension of the characterization of the first and not a separate example of characterization altogether. Considering this point, I treat the characterization of the two visitor Rheyas as the characterization of one actor in the primary fabula.

229 Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 629: "By bringing Nothingness (or ‘no-thingness’) into the world, the For-itself can stand out from Being and judge other beings by knowing what it is not. Each for itself is the nihilation of a particular being."
The notion that Solaris has somehow fashioned her from the residue of post-suicide Kelvin’s memories is reinforced when she delivers the same monologue he remembers her saying in voiceover at the beginning of the film: “I love you so much. Don’t you love me anymore?” (10).

Here, she is shown in a series of semi-close shots, smiling, and wearing a red dress. The content and delivery of visitor Rheya’s dialogue, her clothes, her expressions, and the way she is shot in the primary fabula all parallel to the way memory Rheya is initially characterized in the beginning of the embedded fabula. Similar to memory Rheya, visitor Rheya’s expressions, the delivery of her dialogue, and the manner in which she is filmed conveys the dynamic modification in her personality from a vivacious, seductive woman to one noticeably more depressed.

In both cases, it is worthy to note that Rheya is really a product of Kelvin’s memory; only in the narrative now Solaris is somehow accessing his memories to re-create the human version previously seen in the embedded fabula.

Towards the end of the film, Kelvin becomes a part of Solaris and the planet is somehow able to produce a third actor – Solaris Rheya. While still a creation of Solaris through Kelvin’s memories, she is possibly a more precisely crafted doppelganger now that Solaris has better access to those memories because Kelvin has chosen to join the strange planet. In chapter twenty-three, akin to memory Rheya’s introduction, Solaris Rheya is again shot from straight-on, close-up, and smiling. Although she now wears a blue dress, her appearance is not dramatically different in any way from the initially pleasing Rheya we saw in the previous two versions. Rather, it is the content and delivery of her speech that conveys she is now different, more complete, and seems to possess a kind of “Dylanesque,” transcendent insight the other two did not.

For example, in utter disbelief of her reappearance, Solaris Kelvin asks her if he is alive or dead and she replies: “We don’t have to think like that anymore. We’re together now. Everything we’ve done is forgiven. Everything” (24). Delivered steadily and confidently, this is an insight she never possessed either as a human in the narrative then, or as a creation of Solaris in the narrative now. Although initially a bit unclear, Solaris Rheya’s enlightened state makes more sense when the viewer learns – through an internal retroversion back into the primary fabula – that post-suicide Kelvin decided to become part of the planet. Thus, it stands to reason that at this point in the primary fabula, Solaris now has greater access to Kelvin’s subconscious mind and can utilize Solaris Rheya to communicate what he desires to hear – either to comfort or manipulate him for reasons that are never disclosed.
Gibarian’s characterization, similar to the others, is also imaged in a threefold division: “video” Gibarian who exists in the primary fabula before Kelvin leaves for Solaris in the form of a tape-recorded message, “memory” Gibarian in the embedded fabula who exists as a product of Kelvin’s memories, and “Solaris” Gibarian in the primary fabula who (although still a product of memory) exists as a creation of Solaris on the Station. The first time the viewer sees video Gibarian is early in the film in the primary fabula when he mysteriously urges Kelvin, because of his personal “experience,” to come to Solaris and assist with something that has gone awry.

At this point in the primary fabula, video Gibarian has been on the Station for an unspecified period of time and has obviously experienced some traumatic event or series of events. Although the content of his speech is left ambiguous from the absence of meaningful context gained from exposure to subsequent events in the primary fabula, the viewer should still sense that something traumatic has occurred. This is visibly reinforced by Gibarian’s disheveled appearance and his slightly erratic behavior, which is typical of someone who is both physically and emotionally drained. Video Gibarian appears tired, his hair is messed-up, and he is filmed with an intense overhead light that gives him a rather washed-out, weary appearance. What is more, the delivery of his speech is slow and labored as he stutters through his monologue. However, since this is the first time he appears in the film, the viewer may simply assume that, regardless of the circumstances, he always looks and acts this way.

The second version, or memory Gibarian, first appears in the narrative then in the form of an external retroversion. It is during the retroversion that the viewer sees memory Gibarian smiling, laughing, and holding his young son. Furthermore, his delivery is stronger, his appearance is neater, and the lighting is softer, which images him in a more comfortable, intimate manner. In view of this contrast, the viewer’s suspicions are confirmed that the traumatic experiences aboard the Station must have adversely affected the seemingly composed, well-spoken memory Gibarian and somehow altered his appearance and personality to create the more disheveled, stuttering video Gibarian seen earlier in the fabula.

Similar to Solaris Rheya’s first appearance on the Station, the third version of Gibarian appears as a blurred, out-of-focus image shot in extreme low-key with a dimmed spotlight above him that eerily illuminates the contours of his face, which notifies us that whoever he is, at least he looks somewhat like the two Gibarians seen previously. Here, the delivery and content of his speech is different from the preceding two versions. Specifically, he speaks more slowly and special sound effects give his voice a deeper, almost eerie quality. Like Solaris Rheya at the end of the film, the content of his speech lets the viewer know that Solaris Gibarian possesses an insight his predecessors did not:

Gibarian: Leave the light off. You think you’re dreaming me. Kelvin: You’re not Gibarian. Gibarian: No? Who am I then? Kelvin: A puppet. Gibarian: And you’re not? Or maybe you’re my puppet? But like all puppets you think you’re actually human. It’s the puppets dream... being human. Kelvin: Why did you kill yourself? Gibarian: It seemed like a good idea at the time. Now I think I made a mistake. Kelvin: What about your son? Gibarian: That’s not my son. My son is on Earth. And that’s not your wife. They are part of Solaris. Remember that. Kelvin: What does Solaris want from us? Why do you think it has to want something? This is why you have to leave. If you keep thinking there’s a solution, you’ll die here. Kelvin:

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[230] Soderbergh, Solaris (2003). 2. Although the viewer is unaware at this point in the fabula, it is later revealed that the “experience” Gibarian refers to is twofold: Kelvin’s “experience” with Rheya’s suicide and that fact that he has “experience” as a psychologist.
can’t leave her. I’ll figure it out. Gibarian: Do you understand what I’m trying to tell you? There are no answers, only choices (17).

In a clearly existentialist support of human freedom of choice, Solaris Gibarian’s dialogue echoes the insight of his literary forerunner who believed that: “Where there are no men, there can be no motives accessible to men” (134). Just like the novel’s Ocean, Solaris’ status as a non-human helps to maintain its secret identity that – in conjunction with the characters’ limited reasoning capacities and anthropomorphic tendencies – makes any attempt to understand the planet an exercise in futility. Thus, in Sartrean terms, Kelvin is “condemned to freedom” (1956: 485). At this point in the primary fabula, video Gibarian has committed suicide and the assumption is that because he performed the act on the Station just above Solaris, that he has somehow become a part of Solaris. As a result, like Solaris Rheya, it appears that Solaris Gibarian is also an instrument through which Solaris can either communicate with or manipulate cf Kelvin.

Although the third version resembles the previous Gibarians, his veiled appearance and altered voice creates the eerily stylized effect that gives him a rather alien-like quality. He is, however, more than just an alien that appears to be Gibarian. His speech reinforces this notion in that – although Solaris Gibarian utters the words – video Gibarian logically exists as the antecedent for the pronoun “you” in cf Kelvin’s question: “Why did you kill yourself?” Along these lines, he refers to “my” son who is on Earth, and not the re-creation on the Station seen earlier in the film whom we assume drove video Gibarian to kill himself. It is uncertain as to exactly what or who this Solaris Gibarian is, but what is certain is that (through the filmic features) he is imaged distinctly from the two seen earlier.

In each case, the actor’s distinctive threefold characterization brings to the forefront the importance of memory as the link between now and then – present and past. Since it is Kelvin’s memory through which Rheya and Gibarian emerge, it appears their particular characterization confronts him with his own past. It is through his external confrontation (driven by Solaris) with his internal memories that Kelvin is forced to deal with his past so that he may gain a deeper understanding of who he is now. Solaris externalizes Kelvin’s consciousness by physically manifesting his memories in a way that compels him to choose either to do things differently and positively modify his essence or reject the painful memories and suffer the anxiety that results from choosing not to confront his guilty past. In view of these points, when video Gibarian says “we want mirrors” (8), the mirrors he refers to reflect only those things we find best in ourselves. However, and this is the film’s philosophical rub, these reflections can never lead to a higher level of self-consciousness because we cannot transcend that which hinders us if we are never forced to confront it.

Characterizing Solaris

In both literature and film, oftentimes overtly non-human actors undergo the process of characterization (or personification as it often becomes), and this appears to be the case with Solaris. Like the novel, the film cautions against the anthropomorphic attempt to ascribe human characteristics to something that is not human so that it may be anthropocentrically understood. However, my purpose here is not to try and understand Solaris, but rather to demonstrate how the filmic subject itself ascribes human characteristics to the planet despite the film’s tenor of trepidation as it pertains to such pursuits. In light of this focus, the characterization of the film’s one visibly non-human actor, the planet Solaris, is implicitly accomplished largely through editing and the mise-en-scene features of special digital effects, and the soundtrack features of musical score and speech.
When Solaris is first seen at the end of chapter three, it is an effervescent shade of blue with what appear to be bluish-white electrical currents that either move gently over its surface or flare out high above it.\footnote{231}

In the foreground of this particular sequence, the viewer sees a methodically moving ship (the "Athena") during the last stages of its commute to the Station from Earth.\footnote{232} Here, through both medium and establishing shots, the viewer is able to gain wide visual access to the striking arrangement of ship's motion and the planet's vivid color. Concurrently, while the diegetic sounds of the ship are inaudible, the viewer hears the ethereal, non-diegetic musical score (the "Solaris" music composed by Cliff Martinez) that audibly reflects Solaris' cool, sleepy-blue color and the slow, fluid movement of the Athena.\footnote{233} Although no camera was used to give life to the computer-generated images (CGI) that comprise Solaris, the mise-en-scene is presented as if there is a camera being maneuvered in relation to that which it films, when in fact there is no camera. Since the effect is the same, I will continue to refer to camera placement as a feature of mise-en-scene with regard to the discussion of the film's CGI work.

\footnote{231} See also Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 3. Although Solaris is believed to be a planet and not a star, the "flares" of Solaris are reminiscent of the solar flares that extend tremendous distances from the surface of the Earth's sun.

\footnote{232} Kelvin is in the "Athena," which is a smaller vessel of its mother ship - the "Prometheus." Both Athena (the goddess of wisdom) and Prometheus (the Titan chained and tortured by Zeus for stealing and giving fire to humans) hail from Greek mythology. Robert Graves, \textit{The Greek Myths}, Vol. I (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), 44-45. Graves notes that Athena (Athena) was the patroness of Athens, which was a major wellspring of Western philosophical thought. This is relevant here because Athena's weakness was that she, much like the post-suicide Kelvin, is ruled by reason and she is not typically emotional or compassionate. Kerenyi, \textit{Prometheus} (1991), 3: "Among all the Gods of Greece, it is Prometheus who stands in the most remarkable relation to mankind. He presents a striking resemblance and a striking contrast to the Christian Savior. More than any other Greek god, he intercedes for mankind, makes common cause with men." The significance of these mythological characters subtly adds to the film's larger concept with regard to the "illusive" and sometimes "dangerous" nature of wisdom.

\footnote{233} Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 3. This particular sequence (the final stages of Kelvin's voyage from Earth to Solaris) is a rather obvious homage to Kubrick's 2001. This sequence alludes to the methodical, visibly stunning motion of a ship (making a commute from Earth to the Moon) that floats silently through the vacuum of space with only the non-diegetic sounds of classical music audible toward the beginning of 2001. This is the first of several intertextual references to 2001 occurring throughout Solaris.
The next time the planet is seen in chapter eight, the sequence consists of shots that are intercut between Solaris and post-suicide Kelvin who has fallen asleep. As the filmic subject edits back and forth, the camera repositions itself in relation to each actor. In this way, Solaris’ status as an actor in the primary fabula is established as the filmic subject moves the viewer from longer, wider shots of both Solaris and Kelvin to closer, tighter shots of each actor. This inward progression visually signifies the action of Solaris as it advances deeper and deeper into Kelvin’s subconscious. This action is further signified both visibly and audibly when we see the planet’s electrical activity increase and its color transform as a deep shade of purple begins to weave its way into the once homogenous blue.

As the viewer moves further along in the primary fabula, the filmic subject continues to present establishing shots of Solaris, which has maintained its more purplish hue. In chapter fourteen, the filmic subject employs the same intercutting technique used in chapter eight, except the shots now alternate between Solaris and visitor Rheya (instead of Solaris and cf Kelvin). Here, as she stares out the window at the increasingly purplish planet, it appears that Solaris acts to transmit post-suicide Kelvin’s memories of the time (presented in an embedded fabula) he learned of memory Rheya’s abortion. In both instances, the increased electrical activity, the color change, and the editing between subject-actant (Solaris) and the object of its action (Kelvin and Rheya), are visual metaphors for the action itself, which is the act of accessing Kelvin’s memory and the act of transmitting some of those memories to its creation – visitor Rheya.

Although it maintains its secret identity, Solaris’ actantial relationships help the viewer recognize Solaris as an actor in the fabula while its changing appearances help to reveal it as a dynamic character in the story. The visual connection made through the stylized editing between Solaris, Kelvin, and Rheya helps form the complex actantial relationships. While maintaining its status as an actant, the planet’s functional ambiguity reinforces its mysteriousness as a character because of its secret identity. In other words, like the novel, Solaris’ secret identity as an actant is due to its status as a non-human, which problematizes the viewer’s attempt to interpret both the visual and audible forms
of characterization because s/he lacks insight into Solaris’ motivation, which is one of the central problems addressed in the film.

An example of this consideration is expressed in chapter seventeen when Kelvin inquires: “What does Solaris want from us?” In response, Solaris Gibarian asks: “Why do you think it has to want something?” In this case, the dialogue highlights the ambiguous nature of Solaris’ function in the actantial relationship. Solaris is a non-human actor and perhaps not directed by any discernable aim. Accordingly, similar to its literary counterpart, the truth-value of Solaris as an actant is rather difficult to discern. Solaris’ status as a non-human actant frees it from teleological presuppositions that its thinking and action is oriented toward an aim.

Although the process of characterization is rather difficult to interpret in this case, there are instances when the process seems clearer because Solaris acts in ways that the viewer will logically construe as human. Character is the effect that occurs when an actor is endowed with distinctive human characteristics. However, Solaris is not a human being, but the character – and those who view Solaris through their internal focalization – see it as one. Solaris has no real psyche, personality, ideology, or competence to act, but it does possess characteristics that make psychological and ideological descriptions possible. Character is intuitively the most crucial category of narrative, and also the one most subject to projection and fallacies. The first problem that arises when the viewer attempts to account for the character-effect is that of drawing a clear dividing line between human person and character (Bal 1997: 115).

In chapter twenty-two, it appears that Solaris is reacting to the destruction of its creations. This reaction is made visible in the form of a drastic change in color (from bluish-purple to reddish-orange) and a dramatic expansion in mass. This notion is expressed when “Solaris” Snow states:

Well, uh, you know, ever since we used the famous Higgs device Solaris started taking on mass exponentially. Um, you might have noticed how we’re a lot closer to it. Uh, that would be because everything within its gravitational field...
It’s pulling it in.

From Snow’s comments, the viewer logically assumes that Solaris is “taking on mass exponentially” in reaction to Gordon using the Higgs device to eliminate the visitors who can also be seen as the planet’s “children.” After learning this, the Station is enveloped by a new reddish-orange Solaris with more intense and violent electrical currents that flare even higher from its surface. Here, from Solaris Snow’s dialogue and the subsequent shot of the planet itself, the viewer assumes that Solaris is angry and that its color and expansion are indicative of human emotions.

However, there is still an inadequate amount of filmic information to sufficiently describe its function in this case. For example, there is not enough evidence to support the statement that Solaris (subject-actant) desires to (function) destroy the Station (object-actant) because its children were destroyed. Hence, the special effect of the secret actantial structure is magnified by the sequence at the end of the film that begins with a close shot of the reddish-orange Solaris (with its peaking flares) dissolve into a medium shot, then dissolve into a long shot, and then fade to black. Due to Solaris’ secret identity as an actor, and its mysteriousness as a character, the viewer is left asking

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234 Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 23. “Solaris” Snow is the re-creation of the “real” Snow’s twin brother. Just prior to this passage, Solaris Snow’s “false,” or “lying” identity was revealed when he informed Kelvin and Gordon that when he appeared, the real Snow tried to kill him. So, in defense, Solaris Snow killed the real Snow. Similar to both Solaris Rheya and Gibarian, Solaris Snow seems to possess knowledge of events that their other versions could not. Bal, Narratology (1997), 206: “When an actor appears to be what s/he is not, this identity is a lie.”
two questions: What is Solaris? What does Solaris want? The elusiveness of the answers to these questions does not point solely to the film’s failure to present adequate evidence. It also points toward the film’s philosophical effect, which, like the novel, is to demonstrate the profound ambiguity that results from attributing human qualities to the other in an attempt to interpret its actions anthropocentrically.

**Sequential Ordering**

In Solaris, the non-linear sequential ordering of the fabula events revolves around several chronological deviations, or anachronies. The film’s embedded fabula is revealed through post-suicide Kelvin’s dreams, which are shown as external retroversions of past events he experienced with memory Rheya on Earth. The story’s general rhythm is established by the consistent alternation back and forth between the primary fabula (narrative now) and the embedded fabula (narrative then). In the film, there is roughly a 4 to 1 ratio of time spent in the primary and embedded fabulas respectively. I only mention this to indicate that the general rhythm established through the use of consistent anachrony signifies the relative importance of events revealed in the embedded fabula as they relate to those seen in the narrative now.\(^\text{235}\)

While the consistent retroversions establish rhythm, they also provide insight into not only post-suicide Kelvin’s, but also visitor Rheya’s broken sense of self in a modulation that makes the viewer experience it with them on an emotional level.\(^\text{236}\) With this point in mind, I explore how editing and the mise-en-scene feature of lighting and the soundtrack features of diegetic speech and background noise signify the particular ordering of events. I also examine the soundtrack, which functions as a stylistic convention that both visually and audibly separates the fabulas while, at times, audibly linking them through both non-diegetic (musical score) and diegetic (speech and background noise) sound.

The film begins rather uneventfully in the primary fabula in chapter one as Kelvin sits dejectedly on his bed. Events progress chronologically until chapter eight where, several hours after Kelvin arrives on the Station, he falls asleep in Gibarian’s bed. At this point, the viewer begins to hear the ethereal, non-diegetic Solaris music begin to fade in and see several shots that alternate between Kelvin and Solaris. The non-diegetic music anticipates the fact that Solaris is about to interact with Kelvin’s subconscious, which is visibly signified by the alternating SRS formation. In this way, the beginning of the first retroversion and its movement into the embedded ‘fabula is also Solaris’ act of entering Kelvin’s subconscious, which is revealed through the inclusion of shots that now alternate not only between Kelvin and Solaris, but also between Kelvin in the narrative now and events in the narrative then when he first met Rheya. As the filmic subject continues to edit back and forth, the music builds to increase suspense, a point visibly reinforced by the slow-motion photography used to film the beginning episodes seen in the embedded fabula. So, it appears that the viewer is presented with a first glimpse into the

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\(^{235}\) Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 101. Bal indicates that, in literature, it is possible to determine the amount of pages devoted to a particular episode. There is a filmic equivalent to such a proposal, which is the amount of shots devoted to a particular episode. Both serve to indicate the amount of time covered in the fabula, and such exercises find their relevance in the notion that the amount of time spent covering episodes in the embedded fabula is direct reflection on their importance in the text.

\(^{236}\) Bal, *Narratology* (1997), 83: “The movement back and forth from present to past to present is the story’s basic rhythm. These delicate alternations contribute to the story in a very meaningful way.”
narrative then through the use of external analepses that occur outside the time span of the primary fabula.

The primary and embedded fabulas are paradoxically separated and linked through both features of mise-en-scene and soundtrack. In particular, the mise-en-scene features of set design and lighting visually mark the separation between the primary and embedded fabulas. For example, the set of the narrative now (Gibarian’s bedroom on the Station) is constructed mostly with chrome and stainless steel and lit with a cool blue light.

Conversely, the sets of the narrative then (a restaurant, a train car, and Kelvin’s apartment) are built with less angular, earth-toned material and are generally lit in a warm, reddish-gold lighting.

Acoustically, the diegetic hum of the Station’s air conditioning / filtration system in the narrative now is quite distinct from the diegetic noise of dialogue and background conversation in the narrative then.

While the aforementioned features separate the two fabulas, there are times when narrative now is audibly linked with narrative then. Not only does the musical score anticipate the act of Solaris “tapping” into Kelvin’s subconscious, but it also audibly links the two fabulas. Specifically, the non-diegetic Solaris music begins in the narrative now, but extends into the events seen in the narrative then and continues through the beginning of the retroversion as shots alternate between the two fabulas. In fact, the non-diegetic music is the only sound that can be heard as the filmic subject edits back
and forth between narrative now and narrative then at the commencement of the retroversion. It is only after the alternating shots have ceased - and the viewer is firmly entrenched into Kelvin’s subconscious dream in the narrative then - that the nondiegetic sounds of the music fades and the diegetic sounds of the narrative then (dialogue and prominent background noise of the other restaurant patrons) fades. So, while editing, lighting, diegetic dialogue and background noise provide the visual and auditory signifiers that distinguish narrative now from narrative then, the nondiegetic musical score audibly signifies the connection between the two worlds. Solaris’ actions are made possible through Kelvin’s subjective subconscious as an act of involuntary memory - a dream.

The middle of the sequence, however, begins to move back toward the narrative now and the filmic subject effectively reverses the viewer’s entrance into the world of the embedded fabula. The filmic subject quickly cuts back to a close shot of Kelvin who continues to lie asleep in the primary fabula while, concurrently, the viewer continues to hear the diegetic sounds of his conversation with Rheya and the conversational background noise of the restaurant grounded in the embedded fabula. Furthermore, briefly back in the primary fabula, the non-diegetic Solaris music subtly begins to fade-in over the continuing diegetic sounds of the narrative then. This portion of the sequence effectively begins to remove the viewer from the embedded fabula as the diegetic sounds of the narrative then overlap with the non-diegetic sounds of the narrative now. As the non-diegetic music continues to build, the viewer again sees shots that alternate from Kelvin and memory Rheya’s first sexual encounter in the narrative then, and Kelvin who opens his eyes in the narrative now only to see the blurred image of a person we assume Solaris has created. The overt revelation of this miraculous creation is audibly anticipated by the intensifying music that climaxes when a powerful chorus of violins is heard at the same time we see visitor Rheya’s face come into focus in the narrative now.

At this point, the filmic subject continues to employ the features of the soundtrack component to gradually move the viewer back toward a more complete existence in the world of the primary fabula. The diegetic sounds of the narrative then fade out until the viewer, once again, only hears the ethereal, non-diegetic musical score as the filmic subject cuts back and forth between pre-suicide Kelvin and memory Rheya’s first sexual encounter in the narrative then, and post-suicide Kelvin and visitor Rheya’s first sexual encounter in the narrative now. Soon thereafter, as the viewer lands firmly back into the primary fabula, the filmic subject ceases to alternate shots between the two fabulas and the non-diegetic music fades out and, finally, the viewer is returned to a sleeping Kelvin with only the diegetic hum of the Station heard in the background. Here, because only the non-diegetic music was audible in both sexual encounters, the effect is to trick the viewer into a belief that post suicide Kelvin dreamed them both. Consequently, when visitor Rheya reaches over and touches his face in the primary fabula, the effect is typically one of shock for both the viewer and Kelvin who leaps from his bed at the discovery that she physically exists with him in the narrative now.

While the dream sequence seen in chapter eight is the viewer’s first glimpse into the narrative then, it is certainly not the last. In chapter thirteen, the filmic subject again alternates between fabulas. This time, however, it appears that the viewer has entered visitor Rheya’s subconscious (as opposed to Kelvin’s). As she sits and peers out the window at Solaris, the shots alternate between her and the still purplish-blue planet. Yet – unlike the retroversion presented in chapter eight – the viewer does not hear the non-diegetic Solaris music, but only the diegetic hum of the Station. Since she is a creation of Solaris, I speculate that the non-diegetic music that previously signified Solaris’ actions, is absent because the planet is not forced to tap into the mind of a human, but simply transmits memories it had already captured to its creation – visitor Rheya. In this case, rather than the non-diegetic music of Solaris, it is the diegetic hum of the Station.
that serves as an audible link between narrative now and the events in the narrative then. There, the viewer learns that memory Rheya is pregnant. The filmic subject then cuts to a semi-close shot of her face in the primary fabula as she reacts to the dramatic events in the embedded one. Here, her reacting facial expressions in the narrative now and the diegetic sounds of the narrative then – which become nondiegetic sounds in the narrative now – both visually and audibly link the two fabulas in a procedure that continues throughout this particular anachrony. As opposed to the retroversion seen in chapter eight when the viewer was immersed in a dream, Solaris has already tapped into Kelvin’s memories and is able simply to transmit them to Rheya. Therefore, unlike before when the nondiegetic music was fully replaced by the diegetic sounds of the narrative then, here, the diegetic sounds of the Station in the narrative now are never fully replaced, but coexist with the diegetic sounds of the narrative then in a kind of limited anachrony where the viewer “never really leaves” the narrative now. I define a limited anachrony as a chronological deviation that never fully removes the viewer from the primary fabula. In this instance, the consistent diegetic sounds audibly trap the viewer on the Station, while editing visually transfers the viewer back and forth between narrative now and narrative then.

The events revealed in the embedded fabula appear to be something only memory Rheya could know. This problematizes the assertion that Solaris simply transmits Kelvin’s memories to her. However, at the end of the film, on Kelvin states: “I was haunted by the idea that I remembered her wrong, that somehow I was wrong about everything” (23). By his own admission, the subjective nature of his memory is explicitly revealed and, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Solaris is simply transmitting Kelvin’s inaccurate memories to visitor Rheya. Because post-suicide Kelvin was not physically present to see her actions when she found out she was pregnant, it is likely that his memories are a collection of assumptions in an effort to “fill in the gaps” when the reality of the situation may have been quite different. This theory does explain the disconnection visitor Rheya’s feels as a result of her experience as a sentient being in the primary fabula and Kelvin’s memories of her in the embedded fabula. After the retroversion seen in chapter thirteen, Visitor Rheya states:

Rheya: Chris, I’ve got to talk to you. Kelvin: What’s wrong? Rheya: I don’t understand what’s happening. And if I do understand what’s happening then I don’t think I can handle it. Kelvin: What do you mean? Rheya: I mean I’m not the person I remember. Or at least, I’m not sure I am. I mean, I do remember things but, I don’t remember being there. I don’t remember experiencing those things.

Post-suicide Kelvin’s memories tell visitor Rheya that the fact she is the memory Rheya she partly remembers is a result of Solaris’ transmission of Kelvin’s memories. However, the reality of her existence in the narrative now seems antithetical to this notion. Although she is obviously confused, her statements begin to make sense in light of the fact that visitor Rheya in the narrative now did not experience the events in the embedded fabula. Rather, she only receives what Solaris transmits to her through Kelvin’s memories, which are subjective and likely somewhat erroneous because he has most likely filled in the gaps of what he believed to have happened. In the film, more so than the novel, it is the use of external and, in some cases, limited anachronies that reveal events of the past. In this way, these anachronies serve as entrances into the lives of the characters in the embedded fabula, which assist the viewer’s interpretation of events in the primary one.

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237 Bai, Narratology (1997). 90. External retroversions often provide indications about the antecedents, the past of the actors concerned, in so far as that past can be relevant for the interpretation of events.
Filmi cc  Spac e  an d  Implie d  Tempora l Derivative s

The composition of filmic story space in Soderbergh's Solaris is conveyed through the mise-en-scene features of camera position, camera movement, set design, and special visual effects. As I will show, it is through the conveyance of filmic space that the general sense of time is made known.

In Solaris, camera position, the feature of mise-en-scene chiefly responsible for the measure of visual entrance into the world of filmic space, is used in three distinct situations: scenes filmed outdoors at existent locations that tend to be filmed with close and semi-close shots; scenes filmed in interior sets that tend to be filmed with medium shots; scenes that exist as special visual effects constructed from CGI's that combine close, medium, and longer establishing shots. In order to better understand these distinctions, it would be helpful to briefly examine the film's particular brand of set design.

Shot in widescreen, Solaris is filmed primarily within specially built interior sets designed to express a sense of the near future. Due to the rather revealing aspect ratio of widescreen, camera placement becomes an even more vital feature because of its capacity to reveal a large amount of visual information. Because the aspect ratio allows for greater visual entrance, a feature such as set design takes on added importance. On Earth, in both fabulas, we see minimalist, yet stylishly decorated sets that appear familiar, as if they could exist in the present (early twenty-first century). While these interior sets appear familiar, they also contain pieces of technology that appear unfamiliar, or more advanced than present-day machinery. For example, while the design and decoration of post-suicide Kelvin's apartment appears rather familiar, his television is a thin sheet of clear material with multiple luminescent images that can be viewed from both the front and the back. Although contemporary technology has certainly made great strides in home entertainment (i.e. high definition and plasma televisions), no television yet exists quite like the one seen in chapter two. Since the film's special effect of the near future is conveyed largely through interior set design and visual effects, it makes sense for the filmic subject to grant greater visual access to these sets through the medium (as opposed to close or semi-close) shots largely atypical of interior sequences in most films.

In contrast to the wider, medium shots used to film interior sets, the filmic subject employs close and semi-close shots to film the outdoor, existent locations on Earth. This technique is first seen at the beginning of the film when Kelvin walks a crowded city street on his way to work. Here, in a semi-close shot, we see Kelvin in the foreground with the bottom three floors of a building and the heads of the other commuters in the background. While the medium shot takes moderate advantage of the wide aspect ratio in relation to the indoor sets, conversely, the close shots employed by the filmic subject are utilized to block visual access to outdoor, existent locations that are not as easily manipulated. In this way, the viewer is granted considerably less visual access to the scene and is more easily manipulated into believing an intended sense of time through the creation and exploitation of a subtler clue such as a sleekly futuristic costume design.

Not only do special visual effects contribute to the look of the interior sets, but they are also responsible for the composition of entire exterior establishing shots. For example, we are confronted by an entire CGI world when we first see the Athena. This sequence begins with a close shot of Solaris, and then the hypothetical camera slowly

238 Kolker, Film, Form, and Culture (1999), 78-79. Cinemascop e and other anamorphic processes turned aspect ratio into "widescreen," or a 1:2.35 aspect ratio. This means that for every 1 inch along the vertical axis, there are 2.35 inches across the horizontal axis of the image. In theaters, Solaris was shown in widescreen.
pulls back to an establishing shot that reveals Athena in the foreground, the station in the mid-ground, and a fuller view of Solaris in the background.

In this case, however, although it is an exterior shot, it is unlike the ones seen on Earth in that it is a CGI and therefore more easily manipulated and controlled. As a result, the filmic subject is at liberty to reveal more space, rather than confine it in order to maintain the viewer's assumption that s/he is seeing a film set in the near future. Whether or not the sets are existent locations, specially built, or CGI's, the filmic subject – through the manipulation of the features of mise-en-scene – effectively conveys a sense of the near future.

Conclusion

To begin this chapter, I presented a series of dialogical passages that established a progression of ideas that led ultimately to moral anthropocentrism, which I defined as the notion that morality should only apply to human, rather than alien, or more non-human forms of life. At the center of this concept is Gordon's belief that visitor Rheya is a mere object, a non-human that exists in a sort of spiritual limbo beyond morality and, consequently, her destruction is justified on these grounds. This ethical decision does not stem from Gordon's denial of Rheya's existence as an object, but rather from her refusal to see her as human. Justifying his actions on similar grounds, Kelvin destroyed the first visitor Rheya. Gordon – who refuses to confront its deeper implications – seems less affected by her conduct. On the other hand, Kelvin soon realized that his actions produced within him a guilty conscience. Only Solaris Gibarian and (eventually) Kelvin realize that the visitors are not merely anthropomorphically projected reflections, but reflections of the unknown world within us that we have failed to understand.

In this way, Solaris (through the visitors) shows them that the first step to a cursory comprehension of the external world is to come to terms with the world through the realization that the external other is the great internal pedagogue. Hence, they will never be able to understand that which is truly alien until they first recognize how their finite, egocentric nature prevents them from realizing that it is the other that allows them to truly see themselves. It is only through his experience with both visitor Rheyas that Kelvin comes to this recognition. This cognitive shift is manifested by his declaration:

239 Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 16. In reference to visitor Rheya, Gordon tells Kelvin: "She is not human, try to understand that if you can understand anything."
"How can you be so definitive about a construct you do not understand!" (23). Echoing memory Rheya’s comments during the dinner conversation in the embedded fabula, Kelvin realizes that it is our inherent limitations that should prevent us from acting in a morally anthropocentric manner as it relates to the visitor he, unlike Gordon, sees anthropomorphically.

Exemplified by the revealing exchange between Gordon and Kelvin, it is precisely this ethical dilemma that forms the philosophical center around which the features of mise-en-scene and soundtrack are organized. For example, the film is constructed with a non-linear sequential ordering of fabula events that consists of several chronological deviations in the form of external analepses. The story’s general rhythm is established by the consistent alternation back and forth between the primary and the embedded fabula revealed through post-suicide Kelvin’s dreams, which are shown as external retroversions of past events he experienced with memory Rheya on Earth. The chronological transference between past and present forces the viewer, like the principal characters, to confront the nature of her or his own existence. For example, Kelvin’s dreams in the narrative then both problematize and confront the viewer with the end of human existence in the context of memory Rheya’s suicide. Conversely, his experiences in the narrative now problematize and confront the viewer with the beginning of human (and non-human) existence in the first visitor Rheya’s miraculous appearance on the Station. This event compels us to consider the possibility that there is more to existence than we may have originally imagined.

In addition to its deeper thematic function, it is within the movement between the fabulas that the actors are primarily characterized through the soundtrack feature of speech and the mise-en-scene features of actor expression, camera placement, and lighting. Each actor, characterized in three distinct ways, is grounded through their shared experience as they grapple with the nature of their own existence. For this reason, I separated each actor into three discrete characters. For example, I divided Kelvin the actor into the characters of: “post-suicide”, “pre-suicide”, and "Solaris” Kelvin. As all three, Kelvin is forced to confront his own existential definitions and assumptions. At the end of the film, Solaris Kelvin asks Solaris Rheya: “Am I alive or dead?” To which she replies: “We don’t have to think like that anymore.” The transcendent quality of Rheya’s answer implies that Solaris Kelvin has nearly achieved the next stage in the evolution of his self-consciousness. Likewise, Solaris Gibarian also appears to possess a kind of transcendent enlightenment with regard to the nature of existence that the other two versions of himself did not. Gibarian demonstrates this by his urging Kelvin to explore a completely new way of thinking because he knows that Kelvin – at that point in the primary fabula – lacks the capacity to understand the larger forces acting upon him.

It is the film’s one visibly non-human actor, Solaris, that primarily drives Kelvin's existential confrontation. Signified through editing, special visual effects, and the musical score, Solaris confronts each character with the mysterious nature of existence through the products of their own memories. Although Solaris' secret identity as an actor keeps its function hidden, it stands to reason that it challenges the characters to achieve a higher level of self-consciousness through the products of their memories. In other words, I argue that the visitors present ethical dilemmas the characters must choose to resolve.

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240 Soderbergh, Solaris (2003), 16. The revealing exchange: “Gordon: Kelvin. It is a mistake to become emotionally engaged with one of them. You're being manipulated. If she were ugly, you wouldn’t want her around. That’s why she’s not ugly. She’s a mirror that reflects part of your mind. You provide the formula. Kelvin: She’s alive. Gordon: She is not human. Try to understand that if you can understand anything. Kelvin: What about your visitor? The one that you’re so ready to destroy without hesitation. Who is it? What is it? Does it feel? Can it touch? Does it speak? Gordon: We are in a situation that is beyond morality. Hmm? Your wife is dead. Kelvin: How do you know that? How can you be so definitive about a construct that you do not understand!”
and the choices they make determine the measure of positive modification to their essence. What is more, the practical outflow of this modification is the evolution of self-consciousness. In Kelvin’s case, he does not anthropomorphically oversimplify the other, but rather chooses to see humanity in the other and tries to preserve it. Unlike Gordon who resists seeing humanity in Rheya, Kelvin resists objectification when, in answer to her question: “But am I really Rheya?” he states: “I don’t know anymore. All I see is you” (19). It is this release of his former egocentric pretenses that allows him to see the other as human and achieve a kind of understanding self-consciousness by confronting his own culpability in the real Rheya’s suicide. However, it is ultimately his choice of self-sacrifice to remain on the Station as it is being enveloped by Solaris that allows him to transcend to an absolute self-consciousness, which is implied by Solaris Rheya at the end of the film.

In the novel, Kelvin’s realization that internal understanding lies in the other, or visitor Rheya, begins to free him from the cycle of fixed existence. However, his aim to fully understand the other, and therefore himself, is misguided because his finiteness prevents him from doing so. The unresolved tension between the literary Kelvin’s humanistic denial of the supernatural and his existential responsibility based on a limited reasoning capacity is what prevents his functional transcendence. Thus, he ultimately defines himself, and humanity, to being a clock that measures time. On the other hand, the filmic Kelvin does not end up in a state of anxiety because his attempts to fully understand the other is not frustrated by anthropomorphistic theorizing. Rather, he transcends into a more absolute self-consciousness by choosing to see humanity in the other, which allows him to avoid the moral anthropocentrism Gordon exhibited. While the literary Kelvin clings to a measure of hope that “the time of cruel miracles was not past,” the film demonstrates Kelvin’s more transcendent absolute self-consciousness that exists in a place where “Everything is forgiven. Everything” (24).

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241 Sartre, Being and Nothingness (1956), 625: “Ontology itself can not formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology’s indicatives. It does, however, allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a human reality in situation.” Barnes E. Barnes, “Key to Special Terminology,” in Being and Nothingness (New York Philosophical Library, 1956), 630: “Since there is no pre-established pattern in human nature, each man makes his essence as he lives.”

242 Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions (1957), 15: “Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism.”
Conclusion

Originally, I embarked on this philosophic journey because I have had a long-standing fascination with the dynamic between literature and Hollywood film. However, buried underneath this irresistible attraction was, as Madison put it, an "overriding concern" and an "insatiable desire" to know who I was, to be myself, "truly" and "understandingly" (155). It was this search for a more profound level of self-awareness that led me to critically pose the question: "What is the self?" Framed within the context of an Aristotelian-Thomastic moderate realism, the question was directed toward a better understanding of a transcendent concept of self, which emerges from its more immanent counterpart that exists as a narrative creation. I examined this narrative self in relation to its narrative other in an effort to discern the metaphysical self, or, as Niebuhr put it, the "mystery and meaning" that constitutes the humanness of human beings. In order to more fully plumb the depths of this matter, I analyzed six postmodern entries in the long narrative tradition of selves telling stories about other selves.

Using a functional narratology as a heuristic tool, I constructed descriptions of the novels and their filmic counterparts in order to expose what I considered to be the philosophy that radiated from the binary tension inherent in the dialectic between "self" and "other." While my first objective primarily centered on the narrative descriptions, my second objective was to grasp the correlation between the literary and filmic philosophies. A deeper awareness of the philosophy that travels between these media is important in light of the mainstream accessibility and prevalent influence of film in postmodernity. With these points in mind, I utilized a postmodernized version of Socrates' cave analogy to illustrate the relevance of a cultural analysis that critically examines objects that we take to define our present culture.

Employing a vocabulary of literary narratology and film theory, I performed analyses and interpretations of cultural artifacts that fictionalized and problematized popular notions of the postmodern self's predicament in its oppositional relationship with the other. Not only did I want to discover the extent the philosophies travelled from one medium to another, but I also wanted to examine how the philosophies bore upon the notion that the postmodern self is a prisoner whose field of vision is inundated with dazzling technological images that effectively serve to keep the self bound to an existence in the realm of images - the hyper-real. Furthermore, I desired to understand how the philosophies related to the notion of a postmodern emancipation that has largely been considered a kind of freedom from an oppressive universal conception of self and other imposed by Western white males through the image factory that is Hollywood.

As stated in the introduction, the larger consistency of the oppositional relationship between self and other in both media allowed me to arrange the pairings to demonstrate a kind of progression in the way this central antinomy is treated through narrative expression. The arrangement exhibits the self's movement from its grappling with the external, political question: "What is the self's place in society?" to the more internal phenomenological question: "What is the self?" to the even more intensely personal existential question: "Who am I?" Considering these philosophical queries, I further explore not only the measure in which the literary philosophy travels into film, but also how the concept of an altruistic, saving love acts as a didactically connective thread that runs through the travelling philosophies in a way that helps us better understand the self and its emancipation.

Generated from the oppositional tension between the self and the state, the political philosophy of Burgess' Clockwork conceptualized a Christianity that oscillated between the free will of Pelagianism and the Augustinan determinism that results from original sin. In opposition to the more Machiavellian degenerative form of "mere
calculation” based on selfish ambition, Niebuhr’s description of mutual love appears to be the kind of Augustinian remedy promoted by Clockwork’s prison charlie. The novel demonstrated how the manipulative relationship between self and other inexorably leads to the practice of selfish-oppression by both parties. While Burgess’ work condemns Alex’s cruel actions, they are shown to be the lesser evil in comparison to the state’s systematic eradication of an individual’s capacity to make moral choices. Clockwork denounced this kind of Machiavellian oppression in favor of a more altruistic love as a means to foster the transformation of unredeemable criminals into not only good citizens, but also good men.

Also treating the notion of selfish oppression, Kubrick’s Clockwork emphasized the triangulated relationships between Alex and his fellow citizens, Alex and the state, and the citizens and the state as ones of Machiavellian calculation. Like the novel, we are presented with a story set in a slightly futuristic Western city in which nearly every principal character abuses what power s/he possesses by oppressing others to meet their egocentric objectives. The film, however, is missing the last chapter of the novel where Alex finally matures and exhibits an altruistic love for his son. This significant omission is arguably the primary reason why Kubrick’s Clockwork articulates a fabula that conceptualizes a conquering notion of Machiavellian power. Unlike the novel, the chaplain’s words of a saving love go unheeded and Alex is never shown to transcend his mechanical urges because he never loves another more than he loves himself. It is this pervasive ideal of Machiavellian selfishness that is shown to supersede the notion of an Augustinian altruistic love and its resultant moral transformation that, unlike his literary predecessor, Alex never undergoes.

Palahniuk’s Fight Club articulated a fabula that conceptualized the notion of salvation through destruction in view of Hegelian phenomenology’s lord – bondsman dialectic and its implications on the evolution of self-consciousness. Through my analysis, I discovered that – although he did transcend his servant consciousness – Joe’s understanding consciousness never evolved into a more absolute consciousness that operates in a love for others. Considering this point, I addressed the novel’s central question: “Was Joe saved through destruction?” I concluded that if saved means transcending his servant consciousness and achieving an understanding consciousness by risking his life in the context of the lord – bondsman relationship, then yes. However, if saved means reaching an absolute consciousness marked by love for others, then he was not.

Similar to the Kubrick film, Fincher’s Fight Club is missing the last chapter of its literary forerunner, which reveals Joe’s existential resignation that there is no higher stage of self-consciousness. In the film, however, Jack avoids this resignation and exhibits signs of an absolute consciousness marked by selfless love. Although he is unsuccessful, it is Jack, not Joe, who attempts to prevent Tyler from destroying the credit card buildings. What is more, at the end of the fabula, it is Jack who holds Marla’s hand in a visual expression of his acceptance of his suppressed love for her. Hence, unlike the novel, the viewer gets the sense that Jack can now peacefully coexist with the world and help bring its inhabitants to their next stage of self-consciousness with the insight he has gleaned from his violent experiences.

My analysis of Lem’s Solaris revealed that the cycle of human existence was kept fixed by the central problem presented in the narrative, which is the self’s cognitive finiteness and the resulting failure to see itself through the other. The story articulated a fabula that conceptualized the cycle and, most significantly, the particular manner it bore upon the question: “Who am I?” It was not until Kelvin realized that an understanding consciousness paradoxically lies in the other, or visitor Rheya, that he began to provisionally free himself from the cycle. However, the full weight of this critical realization was limited by a finite capacity to reason, which lead to a kind of profound
ignorance that produced an anthropomorphic overcompensation. This overcompensation resulted in Kelvin’s failure to fully understand the other, and thus himself, and it ultimately engendered his philosophy of existential humanism. It was the unresolved tension between Kelvin’s humanistic denial of the supernatural and his existential responsibility based on limited reason that prevented him from achieving a more absolute consciousness. Although Kelvin existentially resigned himself to being a clock that measures time, he did cling to a degree of a more transcendent hope that the “time of cruel miracles was not past” (204).

On the other hand, my analysis of Soderbergh’s filmic adaptation revolved around a progression of ideas that led ultimately to moral anthropocentrism. While the literary Kelvin concluded with an existential acceptance of the other’s impenetrability, the filmic Kelvin does not end up in a state of anxiety because his attempts to understand the other are not thwarted by anthropomorphic theorizing. His goal was not to colonize the other through his limited reasoning, but rather to love and accept visitor Rheya in the awareness that he did not truly comprehend the nature of her being. Thus, in spite of his finite awareness, Kelvin avoids the limitations imposed by anthropocentrism and transcends into a more absolute self-consciousness by choosing to see humanity in the other so that he may offer a kind of sacrificial love for Rheya. While the literary Kelvin clung to a measure of hope, this measure is given its full expression at the end of the film when “Everything is forgiven. Everything” (24). The filmic “I” transforms his essence and achieves a higher level of self-consciousness because he encounters his own forgiveness through an other he chose to love completely in spite of her impenetrability.

Considering these six texts in relation to a principal objective set forth in the introduction, it appears that a film is philosophically “like” a book primarily in the sense that one is generally being asked the same type of philosophical question by positioning the self against a consistent other. In other words, the novel’s philosophical question travels relatively unaltered into its filmic adaptation because it is generated by the same oppositional agents in both media. For example, both Clockwork texts pit the individual against the state in order to present a brand of political philosophy that attempts to understand the self in relation to the concepts of a good citizen and a good man. Both Fight Club texts position the masculine self in opposition to an emasculating consumer culture in order to present a strain of Hegelian phenomenology that seeks to comprehend the mental phenomena of the self as it manifests to the subject’s consciousness. Lastly, both Solaris texts put forth an existential philosophy that attempts to understand the nature of “I” as a free being-for-self in the mode of engaged agency with an alien other that functions to reflexively reveal to the self who it is.

Although the films were philosophically like the novels in the interrogational – oppositional sense, each film differed in its answer to the question originally posed in the literary text. To put it another way, the novel’s philosophic answer does not travel in the same unaltered fashion as the question that produced it. While the oppositional consistency fosters philosophical similarity as far as the question being asked, the concept of an altruistic, saving love was the common agent for the philosophical difference, or variation between the narrative texts. Each text posed the same philosophical question, however, it was how the protagonist interacted with the concept of love that produced a different answer. For example, while both texts consider the idea of the good citizen, Burgess’ novel reveals how a love for his future son begins to transform Alex into a good man and potentially a good citizen. Although Alex becomes a good citizen at the conclusion of the film by complying with the will of the state in return for professional favors, he is not transformed into a good man because he never applies the “proper remedy” by expressing love for anyone besides himself.

Similarly, while both Fight Club texts pose phenomenological questions –
such questions with regard to the evolution of self-consciousness and the concept of love – are answered differently. In the novel, Joe is saved from his servant consciousness and achieves an understanding consciousness by risking his life in the context of his lord–bondsmanship relationship with Tyler. However, Joe’s partial salvation ultimately fails to free him from the vanity of the cyclical nature of either the botched Project Mayhem or the consumer culture it was intended to destroy. In contrast, at the end of the film, a primary objective of Project Mayhem is achieved by the destruction of the credit card buildings. However, the imploding buildings are not the true images of Jack’s salvation because, as the film made evident, violence is insufficient to achieve the personal fulfillment he longed for. Rather, the enduring image that implies Jack’s more absolute consciousness marked by the love for others is seen when Jack finally “lets go” (as Tyler would say) and allows himself to express his love for Marla. Just after he says to her: “I’m really ok. Trust me. Everything’s going to be fine” (35), Jack tenderly grabs her hand as they observe the destructive climax of Project Mayhem.

In Solaris, while both texts consider similar existential questions, such questions – as they pertain to the nature of a free being-for-self and its self-consciousness that evolves via its choices – are answered differently. In the novel, because Kelvin cannot completely see the other, or fully comprehend even that which springs from his own mind, he experiences a kind of alienation from himself. Kelvin’s resulting anxiety fosters his feeling of isolation and the collapse of his meaningful immersion in the world, which is evidenced when – after his experience with visitor Rheya – he declares: “I shall never again give myself completely to anything or anybody” (196). On the other hand, the filmic Kelvin moves beyond his literary antecedent’s existential resignation and the impenetrability of the other because, in an “Attridgean” sense, he truly “encounters” visitor Rheya and achieves his own forgiveness of past sins through her. Explaining the self’s didactic encounter with the other, Attridge wrote that:

It is in the acknowledgement of the other human being’s uniqueness and therefore of the impossibility of finding general rules or schemata to account fully for him or her that one can be said to encounter the other. At the same time it is an affirmation of the other as other, therefore, the experience is an encounter with the limits of one’s powers to think and to judge, a challenge to one’s capacities as a rational agent (24).

The filmic Kelvin moves beyond the other’s impenetrability by resisting objectification. This notion is demonstrated when, in answer to visitor Rheya’s question: “But am I really Rheya?” Kelvin states: “I don’t know anymore. All I see is you” (19). It is this release of his former egocentric pretenses and his newfound unconditional love for visitor Rheya – in
spite of her seemingly impenetrable “otherness” – that allows him to exhibit the beginning of a more absolute consciousness the literary Kelvin never displayed.

The positive modification that love can engender on self-consciousness is made meaningful because it reveals an artistic consistency that issues forth its own philosophy. The philosophical variations demonstrated that the other functions to permit the self, through its relation to it, an occasion to experience an evolution of self-consciousness. Love appears to be the means through which the self can achieve emancipation from any externally imposed self-conceptions because, as the variations revealed, it is only within a context of love that the self can eventually come to discard its self-deceptions. For, in this context it has no longer any need for self-protection or to disguise its self-serving interests. While, as Derrida argued, “every other” may always remain “completely other” (1987: 203), it the self’s love for the other that may allow it to see itself most clearly in the mirror’s reflection. Considering this point, Thiselton stated that: “Love never ends… the partial will come to an end... Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face” (1995: 129).

Although the self may be powerless to break the boundaries of its finiteness and can only attend to the concept of the other within itself, the variations suggest that it is within the framework of a meaningful expression of altruistic love that the self is able to transcend to the highest level of human consciousness. Seen in this way, the dual-medium pairs emerge as examples of philosophical activity, or Aristotelian “supremely human” undertakings in order to interrogate ourselves in order to “become other than one is” (Foucault 1984: 329). Considering such metaphysical questions, it appears that it is ultimately selfless love that facilitates the evolution of self-consciousness as the self can, in a sense, “look beyond” the materiality it sees in the mirror and into the Platonic realm of the Forms where the metaphysical self may reside.

The juxtaposition of these poets’ philosophies seems to disclose that the self’s expression of an altruistic love does not destroy the mirror, but rather allows the self to see its reflected materiality as truly the locus from which its more transcendent Being unfolds. In an Aristotelian-Thomastic sense, this type of love enables the literary Alex, the filmic Jack, and the filmic Kelvin to discern the transcendent by the immanent and become clearer observers of themselves. Thus, it is in this way that these postmodern fictional selves may thrust aside their deceptions and begin to achieve an emancipation from the great multitude of images that have bound them to the lowest level of the divided line. In other words, their desire to express selfless love facilitates each of these individuals’ progression beyond the faculty of imagination and drives them to develop their faculties of faith, reason, and ultimately understanding. As each self begins to pour their life into an other and exhibits a measure of altruistic love, they no longer see in the mirror dimly, but rather achieve a clearer vision of their metaphysical selves, themselves to be, truly, understandingly.
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As this particular journey has not come to its end, at least not quite yet, I want to make a genuine attempt to avoid sounding like an overpaid actor about to deliver his rambling, syrupy acceptance speech while palming a little golden trophy in some vacuous Los Angeles auditorium. Ok... well... maybe I’ll just ramble just a little syrup as I give credit to whom credit is truly due...

First, in spite of myself, it is only by God’s grace that I have been able to benefit from the unmerited gift of an education. It is this education that has allowed me to enjoy a more meaningful understanding of the times that I have the privilege not only to witness, but also to help shape.

If I were to live ten more lives, I could not offer enough thanks to my devoted and encouraging parents as well as my remarkably enduring and generous grandmother who all love me unconditionally. Without their sacrifice and support, I would have had neither the time nor the luxury to pursue this most rewarding aspect of the contemplative life. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to Lea, my beautiful wife, who carries with her a love that seemingly knows no boundaries, who understands my self as best as any other can, and sees the good in me even when that light shines most dimly.

I want to thank the University of Amsterdam for welcoming this lucky kid from the U.S. into its prestigious halls, and, in particular, I would like to extend my appreciation to the committee members for their time and sacrifice in this process. I also want to acknowledge ASCA as a bastion of authentic education in a world where the universities have become more concerned with the financial bottom line and professional status than with training scholars to think critically about those things we hold most dear. My PhD work has been one of the greatest experiences of my life and I will not soon forget it.

And then there is the amazing Mieke! I know there is only one of her, but there were times that I truly believed she had secretly cloned herself into three or four of the most tireless, dedicated scholars I’ve ever had the privilege of knowing. After reading the acknowledgements of some of her previous students, it seems that she is truly a rock of consistency. I am so humbled and grateful that she – probably against her better judgment – selected me to mentor and promote. I am indebted to Mieke because she patiently stuck with me and piloted this process with her thoughtful, candid (sometimes painfully!), and selfless leadership. Truly modeling what it means to be a teacher, she never tried to imprint herself upon my work, but rather encouraged me to find my own voice.

I also want to thank Dr. Gage for helping to bring this prisoner out of the cave and shedding some light into those corners of my soul I did not know were still darkened. Dr. Gage’s extraordinary insight and honesty has helped me to understand the beauty and hope of the Comedic vision. In addition, I am grateful for Dr. Benton, Jerry Schriver, and Mike Hopkins who all provided invaluable sources of wisdom and insight into a world that had yet to be revealed. Thanks also to all those friends and family who remain unnamed, your lives have impacted me in ways that I cherish with equal measure.

Lastly, I want to thank the six creative souls behind the works that I had the privilege to not only examine, but to also enjoy. Your dedication and talent has provided insight into the human condition that has helped me to better understand my own. And maybe... because of everyone who has impacted my life in such profound ways, I can one day return the favor and enter my own creative gesture into the Great Conversation...

I thank you and love you all –

BCB
Travelling Philosophy: From Literature to Film

Travelling Philosophy is primarily devoted to a sequence of close textual analyses and descriptions of six objects of cultural memory in the present, which are all narrative texts. Using narratology as a heuristic tool, I constructed descriptions of three novels (A Clockwork Orange, Fight Club, and Solaris) and their filmic adaptations in order to expose what I considered to be the philosophy that radiated from the binary tension inherent in the dialectic between “self” and “other.” After the philosophies emerged through narratological descriptions, I revealed the consistencies and variations between the media in order to determine the measure in which the philosophy of the novel travelled into film. Simply stated, philosophically, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how watching the film is “like” reading the book.

I concluded that the films paralleled the novels primarily in the sense that one is generally being asked the same type of philosophical question by positioning the self against a consistent other. In other words, the novel’s philosophical question travels relatively unaltered into its filmic adaptation because it is generated by the same oppositional agents in both media. Positioned against this consistency, the philosophical variations between the novels and the films demonstrated that the other principally functions to permit the self (through its relation to the other) an occasion to experience an evolution of self-consciousness. Specifically, it was a kind of altruistic love that appeared to be the means through which the self could achieve emancipation from any externally imposed self-conceptions. To state this differently, it was only within a context of love that the self could discard its self-deceptions. Although the self was ultimately powerless to break the boundaries of its finiteness and could only attend to its internal concept of the other, the variations suggested that it was within the framework of a meaningful expression of an altruistic love that the self was able to transcend to a higher level of human consciousness. In short, love facilitated the evolution of self-consciousness as the self could, in a sense, “look beyond” the materiality it saw in the mirror and into the Platonic realm of the Forms where the metaphysical self may reside.