October 2013

Patterns that Oscillate Forever: Knotted Symmetries and Still Life in Arthur C. Clarke’s and Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey

Andrew C. Wenaus

The University of Western Ontario, awenaus@uwo.ca

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Media ecologies, like natural ecologies, are remarkable entities both in their fecundity and in their complexity. And our relationships to such environments are equally intricate in their delicacy. “The environment is that which we experience and we, in turn, are that in which the environment is experienced,” writes Vilém Flusser. He continues:

Reality is a web of concrete relations. The entities of the environment are nothing but knots in this web, and we ourselves are knots of the same sort. We are linked to these entities; they are there for us. And the entities are linked to us; we are there for them. Both the environment and the organism are abstract extrapolations from the actuality of their entwined relations. An organism mirrors its environment; an environment mirrors its organisms; and if the arena of their relations is altered in some way, neither the environment nor the organism will be left unchanged. (Flusser and Bec 31)

And so, in consideration of media ecology, we may add that the reader mirrors its texts, and the texts its reader; we are linked to text because the text is there for us. The two levels adapt to one another and, as a result, transform and mutate one another. Furthermore, the entwined relation that establishes this procedure itself becomes a third diegetic space. That is, the processes that constitute the mutative plasticity of such interpretive environments become an inter-diegetic entity, a third text. This third text is imaginary, the lived experience of reading, the experience of the in-between of primordial texts in relation to one another. It is, in other words, the third extrapolation from the actuality of entwined relations. Such experience discloses
itself as finite, a kind of mutation that, when discussing his computerized cellular automata Game of Life, mathematician John Conway calls a “still life,” a mutation that “cannot change or patterns that oscillate forever. Patterns with no initial symmetry tend to become symmetrical. Once this happens the symmetry cannot be lost, although it may increase in richness” (Gardner 120). Think of this process as the infinite spiral that manifests as a mirror reflects itself in another mirror. When discussing such procedures in the context of cross-media adaptation, the novel and film versions of 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) by Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick, respectively, are certainly unique: that is, the works are both adaptations and collaborations. We may consider collaboration a kind of adaptation in real-time. Or, Clarke’s novel, Kubrick’s film, and the experience of the relation between the two, operate as entities in an environment and are nothing but knots in this web. The symmetries of the tangled knots are non-linear and dynamic; however, they also constitute adaptation as a process of illusory fecundity, of text and experience galvanized, an ecology of ambient feedback and ubiquitous mutation. In short, the collaboration process that constitutes 2001 suggests inter-diegetic cyclical interaction when, instead, it is a demonstration of imaginary mutation by the disclosure of an imaginary third text: a diegetic still life.

Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky, develops what he calls “rhythm science” as a means of considering complex, non-linear modes of remix, adaptation, and, in the case at hand, primordial collaboration. Miller’s definition: “Rhythm science . . . Think of it as a mirror held up to a culture . . . that has released itself from the constraints of the ground to drift through dataspace, continuously morphing its form in response to diverse streams of information” (5). Cultural material is there for Miller’s mirror; the procedure through which the mirror comes to reflect itself so as to spiral, mutate, and drift away from the constraints of materiality is itself the third extrapolation from the actuality of tangled relations. Simultaneously freeing and mutative yet inward and diminutive, the strange directionality of these relations ultimately orients itself in an abstract nowhere: dataspace, the diverse streams of information, the imagination of a reader. The collaborative process between Clarke and Kubrick on the two works is rather convoluted yet discloses itself to itself in a way similar to Miller’s speculation. George Edgar Slusser in The Space Odysseys of Arthur C. Clarke (1978) suggests that “in more ways than one the novel betrays its composite nature—a work of earlier bits and pieces, put together after the fact to explain a film” (57).

There are source texts for 2001 from which the novel and film are adapted—Clarke’s short story “The Sentinel” and the 1965 screenplay by Clarke and Kubrick, for example. Clarke himself once noted that any record of the collaborative process is, at best, simply an “approximation to the complicated truth” (Rabkin 36). And, yet, this complexity is the essence of the procedure itself, the continuously morphing and mutative drifting of texts in relation to one
another both during the process of conception and, later, during their lives as interpretive artefacts. Ultimately, studying the inter-diegetic relationship between Clarke’s novel and Kubrick’s film discloses an interpretive clearing whereby the knotted relations manifest themselves as a kind of conceptual paradox.

The two works, as distinct modes of media, give rise to a single work ever enmeshed with itself and its sources. This is perhaps more palatable if one accepts that there are actually three works involved in this discussion. The first is Clarke’s novel—excessively detailed at the denotative level with very little connotative mystery. Second is Kubrick’s film, also excessive in its detail; however, the film’s excessive specificity operates in quite a different way than it does in Clarke’s novel. Kubrick’s excessive detail gestures almost exclusively toward connotative mystery by eschewing denotative explication. Whether through visual signification or spoken dialogue, the meaning of Kubrick’s narrative is seldom, if ever, explicit. The third work introduces the paradox. Its existence is not one of priority, but of posterity. That is, the paradoxical third version of 2001 may only exist after experiencing the novel and the film, each, simultaneously, operating as source text and as adaptation.

This aberration is an example of a feedback phenomenon, a kind of reflexivity Douglas Hofstadter calls a strange loop. Hofstadter writes in Gödel, Escher, Bach (1979) that the phenomenon of a strange loop “occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves back where we started” (Hofstadter 10). A strange loop is not a physical circuit but an abstract loop in which, in the series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another, which feels like an upwards movement in a hierarchy, and yet somehow the successive “upward” shifts turn out to give rise to a closed cycle. That is, despite one’s sense of departing ever further from one’s origin, one
winds up, to one’s shock, exactly where one had started out. (Hofstadter, *I am a Strange Loop* 101-02)

The abstract quality of the strange loop is perhaps more easily understood by examining the visual realization by Dutch artist M. C. Escher. Escher’s 1961 lithograph, *Waterfall*, is an excellent visualization of a strange loop. Indeed, Hofstadter writes that “the most beautiful and powerful visual realizations of this notion of Strange Loops exists” in the work of Escher (*Gödel, Escher, Bach* 10). “Mathematicians were among the first admirers of Escher’s drawings,” Hofstadter explains, and this is “understandable because they often are based on mathematical principles of symmetry or pattern” (11). However, he continues, “there is much more to a typical Escher drawing than just symmetry or pattern; there is often an underlying idea, realized in artistic form. And in particular, the Strange Loop is one of the most recurrent themes in Escher’s work” (11). Hofstadter asks the reader to examine the flow of water and its simultaneous “endlessly falling loop” with its “endlessly rising loop” (11); *Waterfall* seems to mock the recycling that characterizes the patterns of a natural ecology. Mischievously named because their cycles are closed, the strange loop itself is in fact an oscillation: its beginning and end are the same point. The knotted and tangled configurations that constitute strange loops resist the beginnings and ends, directionality, cycling and recycling, and linearity of adaptation. Indeed, like Miller’s mimesis representing mimesis, continuously morphing its form in response to diverse streams of information, and Flusser’s mirrors reflecting mirrors, strange loops shimmer in complex symmetries, oscillating and mutating, contributing to mathematics of chaos where the sum of collaboration seems vastly to exceed its constitutive parts. That is, strange loops are indeed the shimmering symmetries of Conway’s “still life”: those entities that increase in richness and complexity and yet, paradoxically, do not change or have an effect on the media ecology in which they are manifest.

Extending this phenomenon to *2001*, one finds that the third version of *2001* is indeed autonomously departing further from the original novel and film while it surprisingly loops back or paradoxically crosses the levels between the different versions of *2001*, and thus both digress from, and inform, the diegesis of its sources yet has no effect on their materiality. Therefore, of the three versions of *2001*, two are concrete—the novel and the film—and the third is an abstract oscillation: spiralling, mutating, resisting directionality, mocking the progressive logic of cycles. On the one hand, this third version can only exist after one has experienced both the film and the novel. Yet once it does exist, it is no longer bound by the logic of posterity. Rather, this imaginary oscillating version of *2001* exists in paradoxical relation to the novel and film versions of *2001*; it is always moving away from the novel and the film, and is concurrently looping back, embedding itself invisibly within them.

The effect the strange loop version has on our experience of the novel and the film versions is quite striking. Reexamining the descriptions of Clarke’s novel and Kubrick’s film,
the significance of this strange loop version may be more apparent. John Hollow, in Against the Night, the Stars: The Science Fiction of Arthur C. Clarke (1983), documents the unfortunate critical nature of the relationship between the novel and the film: “[c]omments on 2001 tended to concentrate on the film, using the novel only as a sort of aid to explication, especially of the ending; which has prompted more than one critic to complain that a film ending that needs a novel to explain it is not a success” (148). This kind of critical misunderstanding is rooted in the unwillingness of critics to treat the relationship between the works as a paradox. The two works are successful insomuch as they are considered as two autonomous parts of the same work of art. The writing in Clarke’s novel can be described as an endlessly rising flow of explicatory information—that often reads like popular science nonfiction—countered by an endlessly falling sense of mystery. Kubrick’s film, on the other hand, provides an endlessly rising impression of awe and mystery counteracted by an endlessly falling sense of explanation as to what the beautiful sequence of images may mean. There are, therefore, two media levels at play here: written explanation, exemplified by Clarke, and visual sublimity, mastered by Kubrick. The imaginary third version of 2001, however, is characterized by loops and level-crossing; therefore, the strange loopy version plays unpredictable games between the levels of explanation and mystery in Clarke and Kubrick, respectively. The mutative quality of this strange feedback version accounts for the otherwise simple reason why, once one has read both Clarke’s novel and watched Kubrick’s film, one cannot help but visualize Kubrick’s imagery when rereading Clarke’s version and, alternatively, one cannot help but fill in the explanatory absences with Clarke’s clarifications when re-watching Kubrick’s version.

Chapters 13 and 14 in Clarke’s novel—“The Slow Dawn” and “The Listeners,” respectively—are of particular interest. Chapter 13 describes the scientists’ encounter with the monolith TMA-1, Heywood Floyd’s musing on the significance of extraterrestrial life, and the photoshoot that is interrupted by a “piercing electronic shriek,” the “hideously overloaded and distorted time signal” (Clarke 99). The setting is a “dusty moonscape,” “glimmering in the earthlight” (96). What is evident in Chapter 13, “The Slow Dawn,” however, is Clarke’s tendency toward explanatory digression, what Rabkin describes as the “suspenseful unfolding of scientific detail” (37). As Floyd follows Michaels through the lock “[w]ith a cautious, waddling movement” (96), Clarke avoids the primacy of metaphor—we may expect the waddling to be equated with the infantile status of professionals in such a strange environment. Rather, Clarke seizes the opportunity to celebrate the naturalness of human success of adjusting to an alien environment: “It was not hard to walk; indeed, in a paradoxical way the suit made him feel more at home than at any time since reaching the Moon. Its extra weight, and the slight resistance it imposed on his motion, gave some of the illusion of the lost terrestrial gravity” (96). The passage is exemplary of Clarke’s prosaic terseness. Rabkin suggests that 2001 “is
Clarke’s mature amalgamation of his compelling interest in scientific detail and his spiritual commitment to a homocentric and optimistic vision” (36); the confidence in the success of science and language, continually highlighted throughout the novel, expresses Clarke’s fascination with the explanatory and pedagogical possibilities of narrative. As the setting changes and the dusty glittering moonscape “burst[s] into flames” as it catches “the first rays of the hidden sun” (97), a potent metaphor remains in the shade. This, Clarke assures us, is the stuff of scientific phenomenon:

Though the stars, and the half-earth, were still as bright as ever, the fourteen day lunar night had almost ended. The glow of the corona was like a false moonrise along the eastern sky . . . A thin bow of unbearable incandescence had thrust itself above the eastern horizon. Though it would take more than an hour for the sun to clear the edge of the slowly turning moon, the stars were already banished. (97)

To extrapolate on Clarke often yields the sense of redundancy; what Clarke does achieve, however, is a homeostatic balance between the curiosity that galvanizes inquiry with the sense of assurance that this impulse, a unique trait of rational animals, will triumph.

On the level of character, we are given little. We learn that Floyd, as he walked, in “reverie,” “slowly down the ramp toward the black rectangle . . . felt a sense not only of awe but of helplessness. Here, at the very portals of Earth, man was already face to face with a mystery that might never be solved” (97). Indeed, the reaction the characters exhibit toward this event of such magnitude is tempered. Floyd’s reflections are almost exclusively scientific: he is curious about the manner in which the monolith seems to “absorb every particle of light as if it had never been” (97); the temperature inside the monolith that “must be rapidly cooking” (97); and the reason why alien intelligence would be “crazy enough to bury a sunpowered device twenty feet underground” (99). Clarke will not permit his characters to experience elation or anxiety as this would disrupt the systematic narrative exploration of the scene. Thus, “Floyd turned his full attention to the ebon slab—walking slowly around it, examining it from every angle, trying to imprint its strangeness upon his mind” (98). That is, here, there can be no self-reflection, only methodological inquiry toward alterior phenomena.

The examination of the monolith is largely dispassionate and professional. Floyd’s perambulating is slow and calculated: analysis of the monolith is priority. However, he is confident that his cursory analysis will not yield any novel data; he has the utmost confidence in the ability of his colleagues: “He did not expect to find anything, for he knew that every square inch had already been gone over with microscopic care” (98). Again, the affective dimensionality to Floyd’s philosophical musings is almost exclusively absent. Floyd is in reverie as he first approaches the monolith—a curious state of mind for such a poignant event. Later Clarke suggests that “the political and
social implications were immense; every person of real intelligence—everyone who looked an inch beyond his nose—would find his life, his values, his philosophy, subtly changed” (99); subtle, indeed. And this is when Floyd's wool-gathering is interrupted with a loud electronic shriek. Nevertheless, the possible disorientation associated with this event is again avoided in Clarke's narrative; though Floyd fumbles involuntarily (99), Clarke retains his detachment and narrative composure. “All around the crater, figures were standing in attitudes of paralyzed astonishment. So it's nothing wrong with my gear, Floyd told himself;” Clarke explains, “everyone heard those piercing electronic screams” (99-100). Again, Clarke's poised diegetic style reclaims the potential commotion of the episode. That is, at the moment Clarke introduces an event of disorder, its semantic ambiguity is promptly absolved. Indeed, Clarke ultimately explains the electronic noise: “After three million years of darkness, TMA-1 had greeted the lunar dawn” (100).

And yet, as if Clarke's initial elucidation of the nature of the electronic interference is insufficient or too indirect, the following chapter, “The Listeners,” explains this electric distortion with precision, ensuring the noise is, both within and without the diegesis, indeed a signal. As in the previous chapter, Clarke digresses into technological descriptions of a satellite, Deep Space Monitor 79:

A hundred million miles beyond Mars . . . Deep Space Monitor 79 drifted slowly among the tangled orbits of the asteroids. For three years it had fulfilled its mission flawlessly . . . A delicate spiderweb of antennas sampled the passing waves of radio noise . . . Radiation detectors noted and analyzed incoming cosmic rays from the galaxy and points beyond; neutron and X-ray telescopes kept watch on strange stars that no human eye would ever see; magnetometers observed the gusts and hurricanes of the solar winds, as the Sun breathed million-mile-an-hour blasts of tenuous plasma into the faces of its circling children. All these things, and many others, were patiently noted by Deep Space Monitor 79, and recorded in its crystalline memory. (101)

Description in this chapter is narratologically obtrusive in its industrialism and is exemplary of the novel as a whole. Indeed, Clarke extends the technique in describing Deep Space Monitor 79 and the manner through which the information it examines is relayed back to Earth recording machines that “would amplify and record the signal, and add it to the thousands of miles of magnetic tape now stored in the vaults of the World Space Centers at Washington, Moscow, and Canberra” (102). So, the fifty years that the satellites have been in orbit, “trillions and quadrillions of pulses of information had been pouring down from space, to be stored against the day when they might contribute to the advance of knowledge” (102). The dramatic narrative is ultimately subjected to digressions into what appears to be Clarke's principal

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literary concern, precise descriptions of plausible technologies rather than a digression as a more sophisticated mode of aesthetic.

Consequently, Clarke is apt to divorce this technology from any Romantic or phenomenological connotations; the judgment of the human subject is secondary to the analytic advantages of technology. For Clarke, technology is the extension of the human nervous system into the material world. Humans are not linked to these entities as techne, as Flusser or other Heideggerians contend, and nature is not, for Clarke, there for us any more than we are there for it. The dramatic significance of the electronic shriek is tamed by the significance of the satellites functioning as analytic mechanisms in a larger, more pervasive scientific project. Indeed, the electronic signal is given superior significance, not according to Floyd and the affected scientists on the Moon, but as the result that “Deep Space Monitor 79 had noted something strange—a faint yet unmistakable disturbance rippling across the Solar System, and quite unlike any natural phenomenon it had ever observed in the past” (103). It is technology as an extension of the collective process of scientific inquiry that determines the dominant judgment concerning the significance of the signal; indeed, Deep Space Monitor 79 records “the direction, the time, the intensity” of the signal, and “in a few hours [the satellites] would pass the information to Earth” (103). Ultimately, Clarke confirms the nature of the signal:

it was as clear and unmistakable as a vapour trail across a cloudless sky, or a single line of footprints over a field of virgin snow. Some im-

material pattern of energy, throwing off a spray of radiation like the wake of a racing speedboat, had leaped from the face of the Moon, and was heading out toward the stars. (104)

Here we find Clarke at his most metaphorical, yet his terseness is essential to the project that his end of the collaboration upholds. But now, the reader is certain: the electronic interference is a signal sent from the monolith deep into the solar system. Of primary importance for Clarke is scientific plausibility and accurate technological description; all that is dramatic, vague, or disorderly is swiftly evaded or lightly dismissed. However, Clarke’s explanatory persistence does not necessarily diminish the novel’s artistic credibility. There certainly is a metaphor here: the slow dawn suggests that some unknown will be slowly made visible and humankind will be enlightened. Metaphor, in hard science fiction, is certainly operative; however, explanatory digressions remain at the forefront of this literature. Indeed, Clarke’s sobriety is appropriate to the epistemology his fiction upholds towards that which eludes, if only temporarily, rationalization: the unknown is distant, cold, isolated and the subject of sharp curiosity. Clarke’s apparent artlessness is more aesthetically alert than we may first acknowledge.

Kubrick’s version of this episode, on the other hand, is characterized by the absence of explicit explanation of what is occurring; there is neither dialogue nor narration to clarify any of the visual information. The cinematic and visual mastery of the film’s corresponding episode, coupled with György Ligeti’s sublime a cappella choral piece for sixteen voices, Lux aeterna
(1966), guides the diegesis with measured deliberation into a visual and aural encounter with noumenality. Indeed, if there is a sonic expression of the endlessly rising and, simultaneously, endlessly falling pitch, it is Ligeti’s Lux aeterna. Kubrick’s aesthetic project certainly differs from Clarke’s informative digressions. The episode opens with an excavation site. There are tread marks leading to the ramps which, the viewer presumes, allow researchers to descend into and ascend from the site. There are five floodlights directed at the monolith, though in vain (Kubrick is thorough enough to ensure a 360° visual rendering of this environment to assure the viewer that the monolith does not reflect, but only absorbs light). The lights merely illuminate the site while the monolith remains an unaffected symmetrical abyss: an unexplained visual phenomenon and empirical absurdity provoking both angst and wonder. The excavation site is situated in a barren, half-lit moonscape, the horizon dappled with stars and punctuated with the Earth. Indeed, this radically foreign landscape seems to function as an existentially abyssal stage onto which the scientists cautiously plod: the episode evokes both a sense of revelation and death. Ultimately, while the scientists line-up for their portrait in front of the monolith, the photoshoot is interrupted by an electronic interference. Again, anxiety and wonder crescendo as explicability recedes in its narratological importance.

One cannot ignore the significance of Ligeti’s choral piece in this episode. Richard Steinitz in György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination (2003) suggests that Kubrick’s “use of classical music in particular, became absolutely an essential part of the narrative intellectual drive of [2001]” (161). There is a potent polysemy in the meaning of the music in this episode. The Lux aeterna (Eternal Light) connotes revelation and mystical consolation. Following is the text, translated from the Latin: “may everlasting light shine upon them, O Lord, with thy saints in eternity, for thou art merciful. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may everlasting light shine upon them.” Simultaneously, however, the fact that the Lux aeterna is a movement from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass is diegetically significant. Richard Toop in György Ligeti (1999) suggests that Ligeti’s Lux aeterna is far more than a spin-off from the Requiem: it could stake strong claims to be regarded as the most exquisitely “perfect” a cappella work of the post-war era. Its “virtuosity” lies not in the external display, but in the absolutely perfect intonation—hideously difficult to achieve and maintain—that is required to project its extraordinary harmonic luminosity. (116)

The scene, accompanied by this extraordinary and sublime choral piece, is permeated with the immanence of death. Extreme in its technical requirements and mystifying in affect, Ligeti’s Lux aeterna unsettles the possible meanings of the situation. It is not an episode indicative of mercy but of the indifference of the unknown. The “them” upon whom the light shines are the dead. Though death is cosmic in Kubrick’s 2001, it is also relentless in its theological hesitancy.

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The following episode does not provide the viewer with any explanation. Rather, we are presented with the mystifying image of the monolith partially eclipsing the sun, the sun partially eclipsing the Earth, and Kubrick eclipsing narrative extrapolation. The symmetrical alignment of the monolith and celestial bodies conjures connotations of astrology as opposed to Clarke’s astronomy. Kubrick’s take on this episode is characterized by anxiety, tension, and wonder. The treatment of mystical tropes in this scene—the ritual music, the existentially threatening landscape, the encounter with the unknown, the alignment of celestial bodies—is not necessarily one of sober rationality and scientific enquiry. Rather, it is an encounter with the unknowable: the episode is terrifying and exhilarating; it is mysterious, even mythic.

Therefore, *2001* exists materially as two takes on the same narrative episodes. Clarke’s version is obsessively explanatory, where aesthetic liberties seem to be secondary to scientific accuracy, and the human characters, though brilliant with curiosity, are disinterested. Kubrick’s version, on the other hand, is largely without explanation; the connotative cloudiness of the episode seems to prevail, and the human characters plod through a landscape and soundscape of terrible significance. However, something interesting happens with the *in-between* text—the oscillating strange loop, the third version, of *2001*—once one has experienced the former media versions of this work. In reading Clarke’s version a second time, or upon viewing Kubrick’s version again, one finds that indeed the scene is a scientifically plausible excavation site, yet it is also an existentially threatening stage. The glimmering of the moonscape and corona on the horizon is nothing more than a scientific phenomenon, though simultaneously a metaphor for isolation and detachment and a rising sense of exposure to that which is uncompromising. One feels as if Floyd’s disinterested “reverie” is simultaneously an expression of anxiety, angst, and exhilaration. The reassured plodding of the scientists into the excavation site is also infantile hesitation manifest in their movements. And finally, the electronic shriek is indeed a signal sent by the monolith to another location in the solar system, and also an intense burst of asemic noise infiltrating log-ic, sense, and order. Yet, the materiality of the novel and film remains unchanged, the imaginary intervention of the third version halts and glimmers as still life. The collaborative process here and the tripartite extrapolation from the actuality of the media ecology prove unlike the recycling process of adaptation not simply because it gives rise to multiple unforeseen forms. Instead, the illusory looping, cycling, and recycling of texts through and into one another is made manifest as an imaginary procedure, an illusion of directionality. This procedure is imaginatively oriented and yet it situates itself nowhere and its duration is imperfect. As an immaterial, ephemeral entity, the third text manifests itself only to disperse itself beyond the possibilities of induction and interrogation. And so by occupying a kind of abstract space and time of imagination, this third extrapolation ultimately discloses the source material as extrapolations from a tangled relation.
The third version of *2001*, uneasy and infectious, is constantly in the paradoxical process of level-crossing—from novel to movie, movie to novel, from Arthur C. Kubrick’s version, to Stanley Clarke’s version, from the confidence in scientific methodology to the anxiety and exhilaration inherent to the inability of conceptualizing or rationalizing certain experience. As one rereads the novel, one finds himself unexpectedly infusing the images and sounds of the film into the written text; and as one re-watches Kubrick’s film, one inevitably hears Clarke’s explanation. Paradoxically, the novel and the film somehow become a whirling singular work. Yet, the novel always unexpectedly loops back upon itself and we are reminded that it is itself a unique work—the same paradoxical process applies to the film. And so manifests an extra-diegetic Straussian *Also sprach Zarathustra*. And with this sonic homage to Nietzsche’s metaphor of transformation and transcendence, a third text, a mutation and transformation amongst the knotted inter-textual web of concrete relations, from collaborative urtexts, the birth of an invisible *Übertext*. Like the embryonic Starchild of Clarke and Kubrick, an imaginary text flitting about in the datasphere of experience, disguised as loops and cycles, where no text is left unchanged and, yet, nothing changes: the shimmering oscillations of still life.

University of Western Ontario
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