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Clockwork oranges: The development of the cyborg as fictional character

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The Ohio State University, 1991
CLOCKWORK ORANGES:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CYBORG AS
FICTIONAL CHARACTER

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University
By
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****
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ......................................ii  
**VITA** ...................................................iii  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  THE BODY ELECTRIC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. GERALD CRICH AND CLIFFORD CHATTERLEY: D.H. LAWRENCE’S INCIPIENT CYBORGs</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THOMAS PYNCHON: THE ENCODED POLITICS OF A NEO-LUDDITE</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. STANLEY KUBRICK’S CINEMATIC CYBORGs AND CLOCKWORK ORANGES</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** .............................................220
The fear of death, the desire for an immortality... is a tremendously strong factor in determining both people's overt and covert behavior. Such immortality, when achieved, will doubtless--like our other technological advances--provide more problems than it solves. It could provide us with the worst problem, indeed, since civilization began.

--Frank George

Still, the fervor of the scientific and philosophical debate over programs for human engineering arises from the extent to which the mechanization of humanity tends to entice those for whom the manipulation of people holds profit.

--David Porush

In the late 20th century, we are no longer merely surrounded by machines; they have invaded our bodies and brains. Since the Industrial Revolution, humans have often been reduced to cogs in the machinery of the assembly line, enduring labor as repetitious as the motion of a piston in a cylinder. But now, especially with rapid advances in prosthetics, a variety of human limbs and organs can by replaced by mechanical substitutes, and the body itself can become, to borrow a
phrase from William S. Burroughs, a "soft machine." Even the human heart, for centuries the imaginative locus of love, anguish, and courage, can now be replaced by a Jarvik-7—a steel and plastic blood pump. Since its inception in the 1940's, the science of cybernetics has proceeded on the assumption that a human being is basically a sophisticated, finite mechanism and the brain, in Marvin Minsky's words, is "a computer made of meat"; therefore, human brain patterns and language capabilities can eventually be duplicated by computers. In this uneasy conjunction between human and machine, the organic and inorganic, the animate and inanimate, the logical culmination occurs in the cyborg—the half-human, half-machine with which our culture is increasingly fascinated in both literary and visual mediums. Cyborgs are metaphors for the contemporary human condition, for they vividly dramatize the fundamental conflict between the human and inhuman, the spiritual trauma which occurs when the mechanical is imposed upon the animal.

More than a hundred years ago Hegelian and Marxist concepts of alienation established the philosophical basis of the confrontation of human and machine. Hegel's assertions about alienation strongly influenced Marx, and he subsequently grounded them right in the industrial assembly line, emphasizing the emerging gulf between the
worker and his productions. Since then the concept of alienation has become increasingly relevant to contemporary western civilization, in spite of a relative decline in the sort of assembly-line labor Marx witnessed. For instance, contemporary thinkers such as Ernest Mandel and Fritz Pappenheim argue that alienation in the consumer culture of late capitalism has increased rather than declined, because, in part, "Late Capitalism, far from representing a 'post-industrial' society, thus appears as the period in which all branches of the economy are fully industrialized for the first time" (Mandel 191). Technological advance constantly challenges existing theories of alienation with a bizarre array of contingencies. To illustrate just one such contingency, we must first look back to the Economico-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, in which Marx wrote:

The externalization of the worker into his product does not only mean that his work becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him independently, as something alien to him, as confronting him as an autonomous power. It means that the life which he has given to the object confronts him as something hostile and alien. (134)

Consumer culture has, of course, complicated Marx's schematics; for instance, the consumer's embracing of the alienating object may signal a dealienation and merging. Now, with the advent of the cyborg, new and disturbing
questions arise (apart from the obvious medical dilemmas) which further problematize the internal/external dualism discussed by Marx above. For example: What happens when the external object is an artificial organ produced in a factory, sold as a commodity to the "sick" consumer, and implanted internally in that human body—a clock inside the orange, so to speak. Alienation takes on a whole new dimension in the cyborg when the object/source of alienation is embodied within, when the human nervous system is spliced to the machine.

Underlying the various concepts of alienation is the basic idea that industrialization and technology tend to convert human beings into tools, into mere appendages of the machine, and finally into machines themselves. In Norbert Wiener's words: "What is used as an element in a machine, is an element in the machine" (Human Use, 213). Though the word "cyborg," a relatively new coinage (circa 1960), owes itself to the science of cybernetics, a range of other terms have been used to describe mechanized humans such as "android," "robot," "automaton," and "bionic man." Even casual conversation betrays this mechanizing trend when we occasionally speak of a person as being on "auto pilot," or as being "programmed." (Surely Marx was thinking along these lines when he talked about human labor being sold as a "commodity" on
the "market.")

In a recent movie review, Richard Corliss, a critic for *Time* magazine, described a new breed of film character (e.g., Martin Riggs in *Lethal Weapon 2* and James Bond in *License to Kill*) as a "heroïd": "Never really alive, a heroïd cannot die; he must be available for the next assembly-line sequel. He is the cyborg chauffeur of mechanical movies" (53). In his critique of consumer society, Jean Baudrillard discusses how objects and gadgets are replacing human contact: "As the wolf-child becomes wolf by living among them, so are we becoming functional. We are living the period of the objects: that is, we live by their rhythm, according to their incessant cycles" (29).

The phenomenon of mechanization has been of vital concern to creative artists since the rise of industrialism. A significant portion of nineteenth century American and British literature is a direct--and predominantly negative--response to the machine. The Romantic imagination grappled with its implications: In his aptly titled book, *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx describes how American writers such as Hawthorne saw the machine "as a sudden, shocking intruder upon a fantasy of idyllic satisfaction" (29). In his survey of the effect of industrialization on British literature,
Raymond Williams surmised: "(1) that a change in the conditions of production effects an essential change in the human producers; (2) that the Industrial Revolution was such a major change, and produced what was virtually a new kind of human being" (28, emphasis added). In the latter half of the century, writers in both England and America may have kept one eye focused on the implications of Darwinism, but they certainly kept the other eye on the burgeoning industrial squalor and its effect on human character. In fact, Darwinism was used to defend worker exploitation when capitalists applied a survival-of-the-fittest ideology to labor policy.

Darwinism and Industrialism are arguably the two dominant influences on writers and thinkers in the late nineteenth century; as categories they necessarily impinge upon one another, producing a nexus of conflict we have not yet come close to resolving. Nevertheless, from a historical perspective, they point in opposite directions. Darwinism projected backwards, into human evolutionary past where animal instinct predates rational thought structures and what we euphemistically call "civilization." Darwinism was, and continues to be, the decipherment of a fragmentary text covering millions of years of human development. But from the time of the first civilizations, the momentum of technology has
thrust humans relentlessly into the future, and the pace, goaded on by industrialism, has accelerated in the past two centuries. Darwinism and Industrialism serve as poles in establishing a distinction in this study between human regression (discarding the term "dehumanization" because of its more negative connotations) and technologization of human beings. I would contend that this regression involves a Darwinian reassertion of a semi-animal state where instinct, mood and emotion overwhelm logic and rationality, and our primordial history reasserts itself from within. Contrarily, technologization, the obsessive product of rationalism, involves the transformation of humans into machines both in the mental and physical realms through the cancelling out of instinctual responses and traits—and ultimately the replacement of human limbs, organs and thought patterns with artificial substitutes implanted from without. Technology's apologists often rationalize and obfuscate vast crimes such as the Holocaust by explaining them away as primitive regressions. On the contrary, Herbert Marcuse argues: "Concentration camps, mass exterminations, world wars, and atom bombs are no 'relapse into barbarism,' but the unrepressed implementation of the achievements of modern science, technology and domination" (4).
Evolution and technologization are not equivalent, though they certainly interact in significant ways. When asked about the importance of man's landing on the moon in 1969, Werner Von Braun stated, "I think it is equal in importance to that moment in evolution when aquatic life came crawling up on land." Notwithstanding the compelling metaphor, Von Braun confuses an evolutionary milestone with a technological one: for technologists like him, man's evolutionary development has become inextricably bound to the accelerating machine, just as Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins were strapped inside the Saturn V rocket -- only the astronauts had some idea where they were going. The evolutionary "moment" Von Braun refers to was not an isolated instant but rather a gradual biological development which took place over millions of years. The moon shot was planned and executed in a few decades by humans who hardly evolved in a biological sense during those same years. Scientists consistently justify their creations by linking human progress (for which they substitute the term "evolution") with technological progress.

One doesn't have to study Marx to see that changes industrialism wrought on the forces and means of production reverberated through the social structures, altering them fundamentally and permanently. In the
human march towards fusion with the machine, two developments directly anticipate the cyborg: (1) Human fascination with the machine finally developed into a kind of worship; this type of worship has produced a discernible theology replete with sacred texts, rituals and "clergy." (2) The invention of the science of cybernetics points directly toward the cyborg because its main assumption is that humans are mechanisms; the cyberneticist strives to convert human brain patterns into computer software.

As science chipped away at traditional religious belief systems, the emerging theological void has been filled by machine worship. Since the beginning of the industrial age, political influence, once controlled by popes and bishops in conjunction with divine-right monarchs, has been gradually transferred to captains of industry. And these same capitalists continue to overtly influence secular political institutions. Though traditional religious institutions persist, it is evident that political hegemony emanates more from the corporate boardroom than the pulpit. In his Education, Henry Adams crystallized the trend toward machine worship in his often-quoted passage from the chapter entitled "The Dynamo and the Virgin":

Then he showed his scholar the great hall of dynamos, and explained how little he knew
about electricity or force of any kind, even of his own special sun, which spouted heat in inconceivable volume, but which, as far as he knew, might spout less or more, at any time, for all the certainty he felt in it. To him, the dynamo itself was but an ingenious channel for conveying somewhere the heat latent in a few tons of poor coal hidden in a dirty engine-house carefully kept out of sight; but to Adams the dynamo became a symbol of infinity. As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamo as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm’s-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring--scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair's breadth further for respect of power--while it would not wake the baby lying close to its frame. Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. Among the thousand symbols of ultimate energy, the dynamo was not so human as some, but it was the most expressive. (380)

Though Adams’s tone here seems to indicate a passive acceptance of the dynamo’s ascendancy as an object of worship, he views this new “religion” with consternation. What is sinister in the dynamo’s power is its stealth, the way it betrays with a mere hum its “warning” to stand back--while the baby sleeps near its frame, oblivious to an implicit threat. Also, Adams suggests that the worshipping impulse originates in the atavistic "inherited instinct"--one can hear echoes of Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor’s identifying “the universal and everlasting craving of humanity
individually and together—to find someone to worship" (Karamazov, 234). Dostoevsky did not foresee that the Inquisitor would be replaced by the machine.

Arthur C. Clarke’s maxim that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," suggests that the mystery at the center of the machine is as beguiling as that of an invisible deity—except that the efficacy of the machine is a visible fact. Even though we blandly remark that "the age of miracles is past" we nevertheless constantly describe new technologies as "miracles." The scientist has replaced the shaman; the "magic" he practices and the sacred texts he interprets remain inscrutable to the laity. Our major media, itself a product of technology, maintain and promote a reverential attitude toward our science/clergy and frequently absolve them of their "sins." Nature itself seems less impressive beside our technologies—mostly because our technologies have thoroughly conquered and marginalized nature. Just as Melville invested his white whale with God-like power and mystery, a hundred years later Norman Mailer would do the same thing with the Saturn V rocket, the "Sainted Leviathan," in Of a Fire on the Moon. With a nod to Melville and Adams, Mailer describes the launch with a resonant cluster of images:
Two mighty torches of flame like the wings of a yellow bird of fire flew over the field, covered a field with brilliant yellow bloomings of flame, and in the midst of it, white as a ghost, white as the white of Melville's Moby Dick, white as the shrine of the Madonna in half the churches of the world, this slim angelic mysterious ship of stages rose without sound out of its incarnation of flame and began to ascend slowly into the sky, slow as Melville's Leviathan might swim, slowly as we might swim upward in a dream looking for the air. (99-100)

This passage encompasses a fundamental imaginative shift involving the metaphorical transference of God-head from the natural and organic (represented in birds and whales) to technology's brain-child, the rocket. In a way, the rocket compels humankind to vault beyond the natural world into the dead vacuum of space. Mailer suggests that the power and mystery of the rocket, far more than Adam's dynamo, now transcends that of both nature and the church. He notes its Manichaean nature: rockets can carry mankind into the heavens or deliver a nuclear warhead to the other side of the world. Following Melville's investiture of phallic imagery in the sperm whale, the rocket itself is the ultimate phallic totem, an idea Thomas Pynchon explores in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Good and evil, the rocket is the dominant icon of our age; and the countdown to liftoff is the tension-filled invocation of the rocket god, willing it to defy gravity.
Mailer goes on to explore the parameters of the machine theology which forms the metaphorical basis of his book, claiming the machines themselves have both a personality and a psychology: "It could be said that the psychology of machines begins where humans are more machinelike in their actions than the machines they employ" (129). A related development is the human impulse to anthropomorphize machines with all the vigor we used to expend on investing animals with human attributes (i.e., the Disney empire); a computer engineer in Tracy Kidder's The Soul of a New Machine states: "You tend to have to anthropomorphize the computer. It presents a face, a person to me—a person in a thousand different ways" (90). In his descriptions of NASA technicians and the astronauts themselves, Mailer dwells on the dead technologese of their language, their lack of emotion, indicating that these men have indeed become more machine-like than the machines themselves; hence we plunge into a future where humans and machines may become indistinguishable.

Jesco von Puttkamer, NASA director, goes so far as to identify the spacewalking astronaut specifically as a cyborg. Puttkamer, featured in Peter Krieg’s excellent documentary, Machine Dreams, explains that the astronaut’s human body and the sophisticated space suit
he wears exist in a symbiotic relationship which fuses human and machine into something beyond either—"a new stage in human evolution." Elsewhere in the documentary, Marvin Minsky, who directs the study of artificial intelligence at M.I.T., sees space as the ultimate realm of the cyborg—and I will discuss this later in my chapter on Stanley Kubrick (ref. 2001: A Space Odyssey). Minsky reasons that the enormous distances involved in interstellar travel will require the development of some receptacle for human consciousness possessing longevity beyond that of the organic body, so consciousness, no longer dependent on the organic brain, can survive the hundreds of years required for a deep space voyage. "The components of human personality will be reproducible and transferable to machines," Minsky claims.

Finally, the idea of machine worship brings up an important point: If the pursuit of godliness as an ideal informed traditional religious aspirations (i.e., the Christian who aspires to Christ-like behavior), it follows that humans who idealize the machine could well aspire to attain its efficiency and power—to become "godly" through bioengineering and prosthesis. Many of us have fantasized about having a brain with computer-like memory capacity and calculation speed, or an arm with machine-like power and durability. If such
capabilities became available, could we resist the temptation to "improve" ourselves? Can we avoid embracing the dubious biomechanical immortality of a body periodically renewed with synthetic parts? Again, I would warn: for everything technology has given us, it has taken something away. Just on the basis of overpopulation, wouldn't an implemented machine immortality quickly overburden the planet with a species which refused to die?

In just fifty years, cybernetics has had a tremendous impact on scientific research and development, but it has also had fundamental effect on how human beings view themselves. In The Soft Machine, David Porush states, "Whatever its status as truth...the proposition that we are machines is so deeply embedded in our modern mythology that our everyday lives have achieved an undeniably cybernetic quality" (8). Whether we accept or reject that we are machines, the idea is a revolutionary one which has fundamentally altered the consciousness of our time. Consequently, it has strongly influenced literature: just as Naturalist writers endowed literary characters with Darwin-inspired animal attributes (recall Frank Norris's McTeague), so do 20th century writers endow their characters with machine-like qualities.
Norbert Wiener himself inadvertently hinted at the moral dilemma inherent in the science of cybernetics in the title of his book, *The Human Use of Human Beings*. In his book, *The Soft Machine*, Porush remarks how the title "retains a chilling ambiguity that characterizes the potential of the metaphors proposed by cybernetics to promote techniques of human manipulation and control" (56). Nevertheless, Wiener hardly fit the mad scientist image of a Frankenstein seeking to create synthetic monsters. The purpose of *The Human Use of Human Beings*, Wiener wrote:

is both to explain
the potentialities of the machine in fields
which up to now have been taken to be purely
human, and to warn against the dangers of a
purely selfish exploitation of these
possibilities in a world in which to human
beings, human things are all important. (2)

Later in this chapter we will see how the film *Robocop* dramatizes the "selfish exploitation" Wiener warned against.

Read today, *The Human Use of Human Beings* belies the sinister overtones of its title. The book is as much a political polemic as it is a scientific treatise. In the thick of the McCarthyist Inquisition, Wiener delivers a stinging rebuke to the Cold War paranoia he saw engulfing the country. he defends cybernetics as a new communication system:
Society can only be understood through a study of the messages and the communication facilities which belong to it; and that in the future development of these messages and communication facilities, messages between man and machines, between machine and man, and between machine and machine, are destined to play an ever-increasing part. (9)

Because Wiener saw language and communication as the essence of humanity, he denounced the current political atmosphere (circa 1950) because it stifled communication: "This demand for secrecy is scarcely more than the wish of a sick civilization not to learn the progress of its own disease" (140). Wiener expounds on the potential of cybernetics for augmenting communication on all levels, especially that between humans and machines, thus increasing efficiency and control. (Lyotard's maxim: "Any values and ideas that cannot be translated into computer language are destined to vanish" would seem to refute Wiener's optimistic view of cybernetic's effect on communication; in fact, Lyotard suggests that what is most valuable and unique to human experience is not translatable to computer language and is thus doomed.) Wiener thought cybernetics could free humans rather than enslave them--if the science were employed ethically.

For all his enthusiasm about cybernetics, Wiener seemed to know that he had let another dangerous genie out of the bottle. He also knew that scientists cannot always control how their inventions will be put to use--
as J. Robert Oppenheimer so grievously learned. Hence he delivered this warning:

Those who suffer from a power complex find the mechanization of man a simple way to realize their ambitions. I say, that this easy path to power is in fact not only a rejection of everything that I consider to be of moral worth in the human race, but also a rejection of our now very tenuous opportunities for a considerable period of human survival. (16)

Dramatizing Wiener's warnings about the misuse of cybernetics, the film Robocop, released in 1987 and directed by Paul Verhoeven, could have been subtitled The Inhuman Use of Human Beings. Set in near-future Detroit, Robocop depicts an American culture dominated by the frenzied consumerism and corporate greed of late capitalism gone mad, where a human being, recreated as a cyborg, becomes the ultimate "product." In an article entitled "Robocop: In the Detritus of Hi-technology," Stephen Best writes:

[The film] articulates the fear of a completely alienated, rationalized, mechanical world where human beings and their body parts are technologically processed, where simulation approaches perfection, where emotions are lacking, where the ego is in ruins, and where personal identity is absent. The fear conveyed by Robocop is two-fold: that human beings will be replaced by machines (automation) and the human beings are becoming machines (alienation). We may be becoming spiritually and emotionally lifeless rationalists as well as technologically processed and simulated beings. (24)
Emphasizing the satirical aspects of the film, Julie F. Codell examines how it "exposes a faltering American technology and infrastructure in a world on the brink of self-annihilation" (Jump Cut, 12). As Codell's article argues, the film is about us, here and now. In spite of the futuristic frame, one of the film's main satirical targets is Reaganism in its various social, political and economic permutations.

A number of distinct features situate the film in the Reagan 1980's. Out of frustration with rampant crime, Detroit is in the process of privatizing public services, such as police departments and penal institutions, just as Reagan urged the private sector to take over as many government services as possible. The Omni Consumer Products Corporation (OCP) is prepared to launch a morning-in-American urban renewal project called Delta City--i.e., OCP can do what HUD cannot. The anti-technology theme attacks Reagan's most cherished hi-tech delusion: The Strategic Defense Initiative. In one of the film's mock newscasts, it is reported that the now-deployed Star Wars "Peace Platform" misfired, killing 113 civilians, including "two retired presidents living in the Santa Barbara area"--a strong hint that Reagan himself was incinerated. Finally, Best sees the OCP chairman, the unnamed "old man" as a benign Reagan
figurehead, blissfully unaware of the endemic corruption around him.

The character of Murphy/Robocop will serve as paradigm for this study, for he compellingly embodies the psychological conflict which results when human and machine are fused. The film brings up interesting questions about fictional character. For instance, how do we deal with protagonists as programmed machines? Later, I will show how the reemergence of Murphy's human attributes fuels the progression of the film. Finally, from a Marxist perspective, the film provides compelling examples of alienation and exploitation--evident not only in Murphy, but also in the labor-management dispute between the police force and the Omni Consumer Products Corporation. I will argue that the film's protagonist, Alex Murphy, is so alienated that the humanity he recovers was not his own to begin with, that he was co-opted "product" before his death and resurrection.

The narrative progression of the film follows two separate but intertwining paths. The first line of progression is common crime movie fare: Bad guys commit heinous crimes and are eventually brought to justice by the good guys. Interestingly, the film splits the criminals into distinct class spheres. First we have
Clarence Boddicker's gang—your basic homicidal thugs from the street whose power emanates from a gun barrel. For them, free enterprise and crime are one and the same, as Boddicker mimics the OCP corporate maxim: "Good business is where you find it." The audience soon learns that Boddicker takes his orders from a far more insidious villain: Dick Jones, the power-hungry corporate vice-president of OCP, who longs to replace Detroit's flesh and blood police force with his law enforcement droid, the ED 209. Jones represents the corporate elite, isolated in glass and steel high-rise skyscrapers, whose power controls all segments of the society.

My study will focus on the second, and much more original, narrative line: the delineation of the Alex Murphy/Robocop character, the human-cum-cyborg. In near-future Detroit, corporate greed no longer satisfies itself with merely exploiting the labor force; OCP, with its Robocop Program hatched in the "Security Concepts" division, attempts to convert humans themselves into products—after all, the best way to avoid a labor dispute is to own and control the worker. Murphy basically has his humanity stolen from him by OCP—both before and after his "death"; the film's progression follows his attempt to recover himself—in Best's words, he is "a postmodern Frankenstein who rebels against his
technocratic creators" (22). Ultimately, I will argue that Murphy reaffirms the corporate order that threatened to destroy him, that his idealism and lack of introspection prevent him from seeing the real villain as institutional rather than personal. In his discussion of Marxism, Walter Davis writes that "knowing oneself means becoming aware of all the ways in which one's existence is not one's own" (Inwardness 180). If this is the prerequisite for the recovery of subject, Murphy most certainly fails.

In the movie's first scene in the corporate boardroom, we learn that even the most highly advanced technology is not foolproof: Dick Jones's techno-project, the ED-209, malfunctions, murdering a corporate manager during a simple demonstration. Jones describes it as "just a glitch," proving that life in the boardroom is just as valueless as it is on the street. The scene recalls a similar demonstration in Chaplin's Modern Times (1936)—a film that remains a classic cinematic study of alienation. I refer to the scene where the engineers try out their food-serving machine on Chaplin: it malfunctions, shoves steel nuts into his mouth instead of food, and generally mauls him, as the technologists tear the control panel apart in a panic. ED-209's "glitch," however, gives Bob Morton, Jones's corporate nemesis, a
chance to step in and promote the Robocop program over Jones's ED-209. He tells OCP's Chairman that they have already "placed prime candidates according to risk factor." In the following scene, having been transferred, Murphy arrives at Detroit's most dangerous precinct. Thus Murphy, studied and manipulated as a number on various charts, has been set up as a guinea pig from the beginning. When Murphy is shot to pieces and left for dead by Boddicker's gang, we know the OCP production wing is ready to put Murphy's body on the re-assembly line; they immediately remanufacture and resurrect him as a cyborg—all on the legal basis of a consent form Murphy signed when he joined the force. There is no indication Murphy knew he had signed away his body and soul (hence the bureaucratic multiplication of forms serves to obfuscate legalities for sinister ends). Though they eagerly declare him deceased (robbing him even of his own death), OCP never considered Murphy fully alive before his murder. The film's technological resurrection controverts the regenerative promise of spiritual resurrection in Christian theology; it absolutely contradicts Norman O. Brown's call for a "resurrection of the body" through "the abolition of repression" (307) as Murphy's sensual body has been replaced by steel, negating any chance for sexual mitigation of neurosis.
Murphy's synthetic transformation is foreshadowed at the very beginning of the film in the first of a series of satirized commercials. In RoboCop, television screens proliferate; mock commercials and newscasts form significant texts within the text. Media hypnotism cuts across class lines; criminals, victims, policemen, corporate managers—they all live in a symbiotic relationship with the tube. One of the first commercials is an advertisement for the "complete line" of Jarvik-7 artificial hearts—with financing available. Since the hearts are manufactured by Yamaha and Jensen, we can see how the medical establishment has linked up with the corporate world; consequently, the priority of healing must compete with profit-making. Advanced prosthesis has arrived and technological and financial imperatives assure that it will be applied ruthlessly. Indeed, even in our culture, technological innovation is often implemented before the ethical dilemmas latent in new inventions can be conceived, let alone debated. When Morton orders the doctors to "lose" Murphy's one intact arm and employ "total prosthesis," it shows the value OCP places on the organic human body. Solely out of profit motives, Murphy's torso and head are encased in and interconnected with an indestructible steel mechanism, and his memory is erased (or so they think).
OCP must vigorously deny the human element lurking within their new "product." For the sake of efficiency, organic necessities must be marginalized as much as possible. While promoting ED 209, Dick Jones describes the need for a cop who neither eats nor sleeps. Since Robocop requires these two organic necessities, they must be minimized: the food mixture they synthesize to sustain Robocop's organic functions looks like baby food at best or diarrhea at worst--especially when it is pumped out of a machine à la Brazil. Significantly, it is during Robocop's sleep shift wherein his memory reawakens via a dream. OCP has co-opted everything but his dreams, indicating that his unconscious has escaped erasure.

Unlike OCP, the police force is confused about his status. Though mired in the most dangerous precinct in the city, the police force demonstrates remarkable solidarity and egalitarianism which contrasts with the OCP executives' mutual envy and backstabbing. A black Sergeant, Reed, runs the precinct, while Lewis, one of several female cops and Murphy's partner, displays as much courage and physical prowess as the men. So where do the cops stand vis-a-vis Robocop? Is he a fellow cop or simply another functional machine like a police cruiser or computer? They observe him at the gun range
with a mixture of fear and admiration. One cop remarks, "This guy's really good." A second answers, "It's not a guy, it's a machine." Then one asks: "What are they going to do, replace us?"—an ominous question that has repeatedly haunted workers since the rise of industrialism and the ambivalent effects of automation.

At the gun range Lewis sees Robocop twirl his pistol, gunslinger style--director Verhoeven's nod to the mythic Western. The gun spin is the central gesture in the movie, and it resonates with meaning as Verhoeven "iconicizes" it (Codell 15). Lewis recalls Murphy's acting out the same gesture before he was "murdered," and she realizes that Robocop is her "deceased" partner. The gesture also signals the beginning of the emergence of Murphy from his robotic chrysalis. But the gesture is problematic: Murphy had picked up the gun spin from a television hero, T.J. Lazer, at his son's behest. So what identifies Robocop as Murphy is, ironically, a simulated gesture, implanted from without, artificial and false. Baudrillard writes of "an age of simulacra and simulations, in which there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgement to separate truth from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance" ("Similacra" 170-171). When Murphy tells
Lewis that a kid needs "role models," he doesn't realize how his own behavior is based on media models. Best discusses Murphy's adapted gestures:

Murphy's alacrity to adopt a TV simulation of cops as a model suggests that his transformation into Robocop is not as sharp a division from his former self as one might initially think. In a sense, Murphy was already "Robocop," a simulacrum following the programming of law and order. (22)

This "programming of law and order" appears when pre-Cyborg Murphy and partner Lewis first confront Boddicker's gang. Hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned, they follow them into the abandoned mill (itself a powerful image of rustbelt economic decay). Like the T. J. Lazer television hero Murphy imitates, he "bravely" walks into his own destruction--High Noon in an industrial wasteland. And in a parallel to that archetypal Western, his partner Lewis does not forsake him. Fredric Jameson observed how American idealism "reduces its subjects to the illusions of a host of fragmented subjectivities" (85). Murphy's idealism feeds his belief in an illusory bad guy/good guy dichotomy--a dichotomy finally reinforced by the film itself.

Boddicker's gang and Jones are clearly the Other that Murphy must destroy, though all these lives are ultimately reacting to the corporate imperatives of OCP.

Before the emergence of the Murphy identity, the
film lapses into an audience-pleasing interlude with Robocop as an ultimate crimefighting cartoon hero--literally the man of steel, interchangeable with the Superman of the comic books, or even the Arthurian knight-in-shining-armor he so resembles. During this sequence, Robocop is rigidly mechanical, only vaguely human. The soundtrack replaces a heartbeat with the clockwork pulsations of his motorized body; hydraulic whinings accompany his movements. Verhoeven presents three archetypal modern crimes: an armed robbery of a store, an attempted rape, and a hostage situation. Technology is in its ascendancy as Robocop captures the criminals using his bionic strength and built-in infrared visual aids and targeting graphs. In the hostage situation, Verhoeven's use of point-of-view shots from Robocop's perspective enhances the immediacy. The visual graphics overlaying the shots demonstrate how the technology is built into Robocop's visual perception, but it also puts the audience in a familiar situation: staring into/out from an electric screen, absorbing and reacting to images and data. We are implicated by these point-of-view shots as they suggest how our own perceptions are molded by video, lending credence to one of Marx's boldest assertions about how the senses themselves are historical.
At this juncture, Robocop has performed flawlessly, rigidly following his program. But the corporate brainwashing failed to invade the last stronghold of Murphy's memory; in a dream, Robocop/Murphy relives the trauma of his own "murder"--indicating that trauma itself may be the foundation on which he resurrects his own identity. While he strides out of the police station, Lewis confronts him and asks, "Murphy, is that you?", watering the buried seed of identity within the cyborg's brain. With his reconstructed memory comes new motivations; at the juncture of desire, Robocop/Murphy splits and becomes schizoid. Revenge, always a quintessentially emotional motivation, now begins to impinge on Robocop's law and order program--or, one could argue, revenge and law and order ultimately emerge from the same punishing impulse. As Robocop confronts Emile while he is robbing a gas station, he tells him, "Dead or alive, you're coming with me"--the same thing Murphy said to Emile in the mill during the first attempted arrest. Emile recognizes Murphy's voice and says, "I know you. We killed you. You're dead." As Emile tries to escape, the spectacular gasoline explosion mirrors the psychic explosion inside Robocop's mind; no person, after all, gets to confront his own murderer. When he captures Emile and repeatedly asks, "Who are you?" Robocop is
really asking the question to himself.

Once the wall blocking his memory is breached, Robocop's inner conflict grows, and he begins to shuttle back and forth from machine mode to human mode. When he taps into the computerized police files, Robocop gets a complete rundown on the Boddicker gang, but he also must confront his own human visage with the words "Deceased" stamped over it. As Robocop visits his former house, now empty and for sale, an electronic real estate agent makes her pitch from a television screen, accentuating how the droning mechanism has replaced his family. With point-of-view shots from Robocop's perspective, he goes from room to room, as images from his past impinge: his wife and son appear in misty, implicitly utopian visions of his former hearth and home. The transitions between past and present appear on the screen as static wipes--suggesting that his neurons are spliced to electric circuits. Interestingly, it is the image of his wife, in a pink bathrobe, saying "I love you" with erotic promise, which stirs the now emasculated cyborg into a rage--it may be at this point that Murphy realizes he will never have sex again. Perhaps Murphy lived so much for and through his family that their loss to him is equivalent to the loss of his own identity. (OCP has "replaced" Murphy's lost phallus with a dagger/information key
forelimb which flicks out of his fist like a switchblade; he thrusts it into the computer womb, jealously guarded by the bureaucrats, tapping into their secret files.) He has lost love and his sexuality—as well as his ability to regain it. As a parting gesture, symbolic of his revulsion with the mechanistic, he destroys the video real estate agent.

In the next scene, a violent shoot out in a drug factory, Robocop nearly kills Clarence Boddicker; his lust for vengeance momentarily overcomes his arrest mode imperative to "uphold the law"—and not murder captured suspects. Clarence saves himself by yelling, "You're a cop!", causing the arrest mode to kick in. Again, human emotion and computer program battle it out in Robocop's psyche. Here, Robocop is patently metaphoric, as normal policemen must battle through the same welter of conflicting emotions when making an arrest. This is precisely the reason cops are removed from cases in which they are personally involved.

Although the Arrest Mode sometimes fails to control Robocop's emotions, he is helpless to overcome Jones's "little contribution" to his psychological profile, Prime Directive Four, which prevents Robocop from attacking a senior officer of OCP. As Robocop attempts to arrest Jones, the directive is activated, and Robocop writhes in
agony, the very picture of psychic upheaval. Jones
smugly lectures the prostrated cyborg: "What did you
think? That you were an ordinary police officer? You're
our product. And we can't very well have our products
turning against us." Of course, Jones specified only
senior officers of OCP for protection, implying that the
cyborg could be used to attack anybody else--perhaps even
his fellow cops.

In the ensuing battle between Robocop and ED 209,
Robocop returns to the most basic animal instinct:
survival. When his face mask is torn open, Murphy's eye,
fraught with fear, stares out, humanizing him.
Contrarily, ED209 is the embodiment of corporate power,
implacable and irrevocably mechanical. In fleeing it,
Robocop/Murphy obeys his deeply embedded genetic program:
he runs to save himself. The ultimate betrayal follows:
Dick Jones has ordered the cops to destroy Robocop. When
the police confront him, again the ambivalence about
Robocop's status surfaces. The orders to shoot are met
with dismay. A policeman cries out, "He's a cop, for
God's sake!"

Their decision to open fire is understandable, but
not justifiable. In police forces, as in all quasi-
military institutions, the fundamental imperative is to
follow orders unquestioningly. In so many organizational
heirarchies, the chain of command is basically a fear ladder where insubordination is dealt with ruthlessly—a central theme in Stanley Kubrick's cinema. Management is fully aware that obedience must overcome solidarity or power inevitably shifts to labor (hence capital's vested interest in maintaining racism and sexism in order to divide and conquer). Since Dick Jones runs OCP, and OCP runs the cops, he must be obeyed. Also, some of the cops look upon the cyborg as a potential job competitor with enormous advantages over themselves; subsequently they obey the Luddite impulse. Why not destroy it? In a labor dispute (and the cops do finally strike) they know Robocop could become the ultimate scab.

Only Ann Lewis maintains solidarity with her partner, and she saves him from the murderous police barrage and whisks him off to the Old Mill. There, where Murphy lost his humanity, he takes tentative steps toward regaining it. In the most moving scene in the film, Murphy unscrews the steel mask from his head. His face, hairless and almost infantile in appearance, emerges from behind the automaton facade. Lewis holds up a makeshift mirror, and Murphy gazes into his own distorted visage. She says, "It's good to see you again, Murphy." But, significantly, he refers to himself in the third person: "Murphy had a wife and son. What happened to them?"
Lewis answers: "She thought you were dead. She started over again." In the most emotional voice yet heard from the cyborg, Murphy says, "I can feel them, but I can't remember them." Because of his monstrous physical transformation, Murphy must know that any attempted reunion would result in an hysterical rejection. Though he is portrayed as a hero by the Detroit media, Murphy knows himself to be a sexless monster, and the only womb he can now enter is a computer terminal.

Emerging from his mechanistic cocoon, Murphy has at this stage reached just beyond the infantile. His sense of identity is rudimentary, and his hairless, babyish face reinforces his child-like stage of development. But like his wife, Murphy resolves to start over. He stacks the jars, with printed baby faces on them, and uses them as target practice. With Lewis's motherly assistance, Murphy corrects his errant aiming apparatus, and shatters the baby face labelled jars--a symbolic break with his family. From now on his movements become steadily more human--visually contradicting the steel sarcophagus in which he is encased. Blood stains his armor, reminding us of the organic body within. He has come to another crucial juncture, but he continues with the law and order program as though he were on rails. With the justice/revenge motivation duality fully operational,
Murphy, along with the ever faithful Lewis, once again stalks the Boddicker gang. Along with Murphy, Director Verhoeven also follows the dictates of the traditional Western/Police drama: the Gunfight at the OK Corral reappears in the middle of decaying industrial squalor. This drama comments upon the absurdist drama of the Reagan eighties: worn out myths being played out in a blighted landscape where toxic waste teams up with sophisticated military hardware to produce deadly effects.

Murphy's final hand to hand combat with Boddicker emphasizes his own return to animal basics, and his statement, "I'm not arresting you anymore," indicates Murphy has jettisoned his arrest mode program. He kills Boddicker, then Jones, but he accomplishes this in full compliance with Prime Directive Four: The chairman must fire Jones before Murphy can execute him. Never once does Murphy question OCP as institution. In fact, the movie suggests that corporate corruption is personal rather than institutional, and Murphy reinforces the corporate structure by cleansing it of the corruption of Jones. At the end the chairman (who approved the Robocop program and is thus ultimately responsible for Murphy's plight) gives him a paternal compliment, "Nice shooting, son." In a seemingly human gesture, he asks OCP's
"product" its name. For the first time in the film, the cyborg verbally acknowledges who he is: "Murphy." But Murphy is/was much more that the cyborg can ever reclaim. At the end, Murphy's sense of alienation must be only temporarily assuaged by the chairman's paternalism because, in a very real sense, Murphy cannot enjoy the "product" of his own labor: safe streets. His wife and child have moved away, he owns no property beyond the cumbersome apparatus of his body, and criminals cannot threaten him. He can only protect and serve the corporate body which is an extension of himself.

The film's ending poses more questions than it answers. Indeed, what is Murphy going to do after exiting the boardroom? Where will he go? Is he going to "pacify" the riots caused by the police strike (becoming, in the process, a state-of-the-art union-buster)? Will he cleanse the municipal body of Detroit of its "cancer" of crime just as he cleansed OCP? Also, can we assume the grievously wounded Lewis may be converted into a cyborg? Given Hollywood's current greed, the script was probably left open-ended to set up the inevitable sequel; such is Hollywood's peculiar sequelmania disease where profit lust overrules impulses toward narrative closure, and characters must be available products for recycling. For reasons of profit, the Robocop character, as
unequivocated crimefighter shorn of the Murphy identity (and thus of all humanity), is much more convenient to display at malls and car shows without the disturbing ambiguities. Even since the film’s box-office success, Orion Pictures has vigorously marketed Robocop as a new superhero.

Paul Verhoeven is a remarkably skilled director, but he is caught in a contradiction. With Robocop, he creates a sophisticated film critique of the dehumanizing tendencies of technology, while fully exploiting cinematic technology to achieve his goals. Verhoeven attacks capitalist greed and corporate exploitation of workers with a shrewd satire, but he wraps that satire in a hyperviolent (and in many ways predictable and conventional) action film which became a huge box office hit and earned Orion Pictures millions of dollars in profits. His delineation of the Murphy character has considerable psychological depth, but often Verhoeven lets him degenerate into just another superhero, hardly different from those in cartoons and comic books. The contradictions in Robocop would come a cropper in Verhoeven’s next film, Total Recall: in this 1990 summer blockbuster, Verhoeven tries to overlay what is basically an Arnold Schwarzenegger action/adventure film with a Robocop-style capitalist critique (even bringing Ronny
Cox along to play the corporate villain). Verhoeven may well have been trying to trick his gap-toothed, muscle-bound star into deconstructing the capitalist credo Arnold so vigorously expounds; whatever the director’s intentions, Total Recall is a bloody, compelling, highly profitable mess.

Despite its shortcomings in terms of gratuitous violence and narrative closure, and despite the wretched sequel it has spawned, Robocop remains an important film, certainly one of the most daring satires to emerge from Hollywood in years. Ironically, the film can dramatize human alienation in such a unique way precisely because of cinematic technology and advanced special effects. As a fictional character, "Robocop is the perfect metaphor of our postmodern condition and postmodern bodies" (Best 23). The film’s implicit point is that we are becoming Robohumans. The film, like the cyborg, may be futuristic, but we should be warned, to borrow one of the technologists’ favorite phrases, that the future is now.
"All the lot. Their spunk is gone dead. Motor cars and cinemas suck the last bit out of them. I tell you, every generation breeds a more rabbity generation, with india rubber for guts and tin legs and tin faces. Tin people!"
--Oliver Mellors
Lady Chatterley's Lover

The old is dying and the new cannot be born. In the interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.
--Antonio Gramsci
The Prison Notebooks

D.H. Lawrence’s heroic battles with the censors are legendary, yet the delay in the publication and dissemination of his entire body of work (especially Lady Chatterley’s Lover) has allowed his seminal messages to incubate and gather impact. A prophet can only be judged in retrospect, and from the perspective of the 1990’s Lawrence now emerges as among the most historically engaged and prescient novelists of his generation. In 1953, Mark Shorer, attempting to resurrect Lawrence’s reputation from three decades of largely negative
criticism, wrote: "No novelist speaks more directly to us than Lawrence, and if we can't hear him, we are, I quite believe, lost" (60). Shorer could say the same thing today—perhaps adding that we didn't listen and we are lost. The smokescreen of Lawrence's reputation as a mere panderer of obscenity no longer eclipses the importance of his work, and since 1959 (the year of the Grove Press publication of Lady Chatterley's Lover) his works have been widely available in unexpurgated form. At the end of the century upon which Lawrence looked with grave forebodings, his work has found new immediacy as human civilization is realizing precisely what Lawrence warned against: industrialism is destroying the natural world while technology, developed too often under the sole imperative of profit-making, is transforming human beings, psychologically and physically, into machines. In his characterizations of Gerald Crich in Women in Love and Clifford Chatterley in Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence was the first major author to fictionally embody and establish the physical and psychological attributes of the cyborg; the moral thrust of his work is his powerful depiction of the dehumanizing consequences of the approaching triumph of their mechanical wills.

Lawrence's mechanical men, unlike those of many science fiction writers, are not extrapolations inhabiting
some distopian future world; rather, they are grounded in the historical milieu of the Nottinghamshire village in which he was born and raised and to which he constantly turned for fictional settings. In D.H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction, Graham Holderness describes the village's enduring hold on Lawrence's consciousness:

Lawrence's native society—a small mining town of the English Midlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—is both a fundamentally determining context and perpetually recurring subject in the novels and short stories. That society (or a series of social images based on it) continues to assert its presence with a compulsiveness which indicates unmistakeably the central and radical quality of the writer's social experience. An upbringing within the working class of that society offered Lawrence direct access to some of the most significant historical experience of his age, and he composed from the raw material of that society an image of industrial bourgeois society in general which plays a major artistic role in his fictions and in the ideological structures to which his fictions assimilate. (1)

Critics have discussed at length (and often oversimplified) Lawrence's position in the historical epoch, emphasizing how the organic, "natural" and unified community of his boyhood was gradually encroached upon and finally destroyed by industrial capitalism. Holderness attacks the myth of the "organic" community of Lawrence's youth, arguing that it was "a divided society which contained within its structure the class conflict that was to break into the open in 1912 and 1916" (4) in a series
of violent coal miner strikes. However, he notes that the people "belonged not to the industrialized mechanized and commercial future, but to the rural, pre-industrial, 'human' community of the past" (33). The point is that Lawrence lived on the cusp of fundamental changes in the structure of society; Lawrence—and his fictions—inhabit the historical interregnum to which Gramsci refers above. (In his survey of British culture, Raymond Williams situates Lawrence in another "interregnum," running from 1880 to 1914, which is discussed at length in his Culture and Society: 1780-1950.) Lawrence's characters, struggling in the midst of the conflicts and contradictions inherent in a society undergoing such terrific convulsions, frequently exhibit the "morbid symptoms" resulting from the clash between the old and the new. Many of his works, especially Women in Love and Lady Chatterley's Lover, dramatize the primary symptom of the disease of industrial capitalism: the gradual process of human mechanization, described by marxist critics as one of the most insidious forms of alienation.

In the famous passage from Lady Chatterley, Lawrence summed up the sweeping historical changes he had witnessed in a flat, bitter statement: "One England blots out another." The "one" and the "another" are contradictory poles, a past and future fundamentally antagonistic.
These poles can be roughly defined as the organic versus the mechanical, the human versus the anti-human. Looking back at his native mining village in "Nottinghamshire and the Mining Countryside," Lawrence wrote: "To me, as a child and a young man, it was still the old England of the forest and agricultural past; there were no motor-cars, the mines were, in a sense, an accident in the landscape, and Robin Hood and his merry men were not very far away" (133). On the basis of character, Tom Brangwen of The Rainbow can be seen as a Lawrence's representative man from the lost organic past (the last vestiges of which Lawrence experienced in his youth), a peasant farmer whose life rhythms were tied to the soil and the seasons. As The Rainbow opens, the family's way of life, which had gone unchanged for generations, begins to be fatefuly altered in 1840 with the coming of the canal "connecting the newly-opened collieries of the Erewash valleys" (11). Thus, the first vestige of industrial development confronts the Brangwens:

The building of a canal across their land made them strangers in their own place, this raw bank of earth shutting them off disconcerted them. As they worked in the fields, from behind the now familiar embankment came the rhythmic run of the winding engines, startling at first, but afterwards a narcotic to the brain. Then the shrill whistle of trains reechoed through the heart, with fearsome pleasure, announcing the far-off come near and imminent. (Rainbow 12-13)
As the novel unfolds, it turns out to be Ursula Brangwen, two generations removed from Tom, who most vigorously struggles to come to terms with the industrial blight only hinted at by the canal. (Interestingly, George Eliot would set her great novel, Middlemarch, in the same time-frame as the beginning of The Rainbow—circa 1840; Eliot depicts the same historical convulsions and violence which occur with the coming of the railroad agents to the Middlemarch community; Middlemarch, like the early chapters of The Rainbow, is a farewell to an extinct culture.)

At the other extreme, in Clifford Chatterley, Lawrence embodies the mechanical, anti-human tendencies of a future which had successfully blotted out the pre-industrial life exemplified by Tom Brangwen. Trapped in his wheelchair, isolated in Wragby Hall, Clifford is the antithesis of the yeoman farmer (and, as we will see, his one excursion into the forest is a disaster). Meanwhile, Gerald Crich forms an ideological fulcrum between them, a man whose mechanical will and scientific management techniques belong to the future, but whose blood and nerves instinctively yet futilely run back to the amputated limb of the organic past. As I will argue later, Lawrence invests considerable sympathy in the character of Gerald (and his death is not without tragic
dimensions), while Clifford is almost wholly pathetic (consigned, as he is at the end of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, to Mrs. Bolton's perverted maternal embrace).

Lawrence's forty-four year lifespan and the historical space of his novels span two key watersheds: The technological change which engendered the break between two great capitalistic epochs, and the great hemorrhage of World War I. In *Late Capitalism*, Ernest Mandel explains how the epoch between 1847-1890 was dominated by machine-made steam engines, whereas the years 1890-1940 saw the adoption of electric and combustion engines. These are broad divisions, and none of this happened overnight, but it is important to remember that the coal mining industry was undergoing a technical transformation that corresponds with Mandel's time scheme—electric machines were beginning to replace horses as underground transport vehicles; the band saw was introduced to cut and loosen the coal seam. College-trained engineers, hired by mine owners like Gerald, were revamping the mining process from top to bottom. Lawrence grounds the father-son conflict between Thomas Crich and Gerald Crich precisely on the ideological and physical transformation latent in the larger material transformation Mandel explains.

Gerald Crich and Clifford Chatterley inhabit the two
sides of the watershed of World War I: Gerald embodies many of the destructive tendencies that are leading toward the cataclysm; his *Gotterdammerung* in the Bavarian Alps is an ironic parallel to the general English massacre in the muddy trenches of Flanders and Passchendaele. According to Jeffrey Meyers, "Lawrence perceived the war as the pure suicide of humanity, a collective desire for death" (157). Clifford is post-war aftermath and result—the organic past lives on now only in margins as isolated as the small forest on the Chatterley estate, where even game animals are raised like livestock, later to be slaughtered. Finally, Lawrence comes full circle in his creation of Oliver Mellors, an embattled throwback to Tom Brangwen, who is painfully aware of his own anachronism. (In his travels, Lawrence himself compulsively sought out pre-industrial, pagan culture such as that which persisted in Mexico; Mellors, a man who comprehends the need to revitalize the lost yeoman culture, is assailed from all sides by the degenerate English culture of his day.)

Even though the life in the pits goes on underground unseen, the coal mining industry forms the economic base of both Lawrence’s fictional and historical communities. As Marx emphasised again and again, the economic base is the main determining factor of a society, and the great subterranean industry can neither be suppressed or ignored
in Lawrence’s consciousness. At the beginning of *Women in Love*, Gudrun states:

"It is like a country in an underworld. The colliers bring it above-ground with them, shovel it up.... Everything is a ghoulish replica of the real world, a replica, a ghoul, all soiled, everything sordid." (5)

Although Lawrence’s father was a collier, Lawrence himself luckily escaped a life in the pits, and this might explain his reluctance to describe the actual workings below ground. Nevertheless, as Raymond Williams wrote, "his social responses were those, not of a man observing the processes of industrialism, but of one caught in them, at an exposed point, and destined, in the normal course, to be enlisted in their regiments" (202). Despite far-flung exile, the coal industry and its above-ground manifestations haunted Lawrence.

Coal was (and still is) a fundamental necessity to the entire structure of industry as both energy source and raw material for steelmaking—hence, Lawrence grew up in the midst of the industry which was the cornerstone of the modern civilization he detested. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a compelling analysis of the coal miners’ lives in 1930’s England, George Orwell wrote:

Our civilization, *pace* Chesterton, *is* founded on coal, more completely than one realizes until one stops to think about it. The machines that keep us alive, and the machines that make the machines, are all directly or indirectly dependent upon coal. In the
metabolism of the Western world the coal-miner is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil. (21)

In his recent biography of Lawrence, Jeffrey Meyers sees coal mining as a symbol of Lawrence's fictional strategy: "Lawrence, the first writer to use Freudian ideas in the English novel, used mining for coal--the elemental substance extracted from the dark subterranean regions--to symbolize his search for essential, instinctual unconscious" (4).

As Lawrence well knew, any convulsions in the pits reverberated throughout industry and society--just as they reverberated through the household of Lawrence's family. Consequently, the actions of Gerald Crich and Clifford Chatterley are amplified in importance because of their positions as owners and operators of the collieries. Their decisions to treat the colliers as so many tools, emphasizing their functional rather than their human aspects, crystallizes one of the predominant trends of a new stage of capitalism: a monstrous drive for clocklike efficiency from workers. And neither Gerald nor Clifford escape the dehumanizing effects of their own industrial policies. One of the few places where bourgeois and proletariat share common ground is in terms of a pervasive alienation which transcends class boundaries. They cannot compartmentalize and ignore their roles as exploiters.
While Lawrence physically escaped the collieries and the fate of soldiering in World War I, the crucially important coal industry and a cataclysmic war held sway over his imagination and form the silent subtext of *Women in Love* (written during the war) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Lawrence's distillation of the War's effects). In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson writes:

> History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis, which its "ruses" turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intention. But this History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force. This is indeed the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranscendable horizon needs no particular theoretical justification: we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them. (102)

Though physically separated from the pits and the Great War, and though he tried to marginalize them in his fictions, Lawrence vicariously experiences the collier's dehumanizing toil and the soldiers' betrayal. He apprehends the "effects" of History Jameson refers to; the collieries and the War form what Lawrence, despite his long exile, eventually found to be the "untranscendable horizon" of his life.

In this attempt to situate Lawrence historically, I have tried to emphasize the importance of the cultural
materials from which he derived his nascent concepts of the cyborg. Before proceeding to a more thorough discussion of Gerald Crich and Clifford Chatterley, I want to sketch some of their shared traits which characterize them as alienated, mechanistic men. They directly correspond to Mandel's description of the two main characteristics of the alienated human:

(1) He is estranged from his own body which must be maintained as a physical subject, not because it is part of himself, but so that it can function as an element of the productive process. (2) He is estranged from nature since natural objects with all their variety function, not as a means for his satisfaction or cultural fulfillment, but merely as a material means for profitable production. (62)

Both men are what we would call in contemporary slang "control freaks"—in Gerald's case, a prime example of this can be seen when, just before his sister drowns he drains the lake, he says, "I'm responsible for the water." (154). Though Clifford's interest in his industries fluctuates, at one period in the novel he is obsessively concerned with the most minute functions of his mines (and has his crippled body lowered into the mines for a first-hand inspection). Both Clifford and Gerald possess a marked antagonism toward a natural world which does not follow the mechanical rhythms to which they adhere. At turns, each man expresses a personal hostility toward nature that is exhibited in their personal actions as well
as in their industrial policies. For Lawrence, human beings were absolutely part and parcel of nature despite the vigorous attempts of aspects of the cultural superstructure to suppress and deny it. Ironically, Gerald's and Clifford's attacks on nature are an attack on their own humanity. There is a terrible breach between their minds and their bodies; both men's rational minds, cut off from the dark knowledge of the "blood," pursue a destructive agenda.

Physically, Gerald Crich has not yet entered the realm of the cyborg. In Lawrence's physical descriptions of him an almost homoerotic obeisance infuses the prose as he celebrates Gerald's body (in its fine lines and Teutonic whiteness it resembles a marble sculpture in motion). The other characters, namely Rupert Birkin and Gudrun Brangwen, mediate this Lawrentian obeisance to the body. The physical descriptions sharpen the reader's sense of the tragic bifurcation between Gerald's animal body and his Deus Ex Machina ideology. Tragically, Gerald becomes a "high priest" of the machine religion outlined in the first chapter of this study, and his devotion to the machine leads to his doom.

By the time Lawrence creates Clifford Chatterley, his own notions of the cyborg have coalesced to the point that the mechanistic ideology of Gerald does not suffice to
dramatize his thematic point. Lawrence needs a concrete physical symbol; hence, he places Clifford in a wheelchair which de facto serves as his "legs." This is no ordinary wheelchair, and certainly not the cheap symbol some critics see it to be. Lawrence shrewdly develops the image as a prescient symbol of the coming mechanization, through prosthetic limbs, of the human body. (Surely prosthetic limbs and wheelchairs were common in Lawrence's day, but a mechanized chair must have been a novelty.) In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence wrote, "Forty years had made a difference, an appalling difference in manhood. The iron and the coal had eaten deep into the bodies and souls of men" (213). The changes wrought in this forty year transformation are embodied in Gerald and Clifford. The forty-year trajectory also encompasses Lawrence's conscious life and the ideological development of his art.

I

The key chapter in *Women in Love* rightly occupies the structural center of the book; I refer of course to Chapter XVII, "The Industrial Magnate." Though up to this point Gerald has received considerable treatment in the novel, he is nonetheless only one among the four main characters, the others being Rupert Birkin, and Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen. Arguably, more attention is focused on
Rupert than on Gerald early in the novel, as Rupert makes his fateful choice between Hermione and Ursula (though we do get a significant glimpse of Gerald in his excursion amongst the bohemian artists). In fact, we tend to see Gerald more from the outside as he is watched and discussed by the other characters. It is no accident that the climax of the novel is largely his: Rupert and Ursula head south to Italy while Gerald and Gudrun's battle of wills builds to a violent showdown. *Women in Love* becomes mainly his story at the end because he carries most of Lawrence's ideological freight.

Lawrence carefully prepares the ground for "The Industrial Magnate" chapter by first dramatizing Gerald's compulsion for control and power along with his hostility toward the organic. Both aspects are brilliantly dramatized in the famous scene in which Gerald torments his terrified horse (significantly, a mare) before the train. The scene is Lawrence at his best: stark, elemental images, and fierce emotional conflict along with a charged sexual undercurrent are combined to drive home a thematic message:

*The locomotive chuffed slowly between the banks, hidden. The mare did not like it. She began to wince away, as if hurt by the unknown noise. But Gerald pulled her back and held her head to the gate. The sharp blasts of the chuffing engine broke with more and more force on her. The repeated sharp blows of unknown, terrifying noise struck her through until she*
was rocking with terror. She recoiled like a spring let go. But a glistening, half-smiling look came into Gerald’s face. He brought her back again, inevitably.

The noise was released, the little locomotive with her clanking steel connecting-rod emerged on the highroad, clanking sharply. The mare rebounded like a drop of water from hot iron. Ursula and Gudrun pressed back into the hedge, in fear. But Gerald was heavy on the mare, and forced her back. It seemed as if he sank into her magnetically, and could thrust her back against herself.

"The fool!" cried Ursula loudly. "Why doesn’t he ride away till it’s gone by?"

Gudrun was looking at him with black-dilated, spellbound eyes. (102-103)

With considerable foreboding, many 19th century writers recognized the railroad as one of the primary heralds of the mechanized future. Frank Norris’s The Octopus, wherein he describes the locomotive as an evil cyclops plowing through a pastoral herd of sheep, typifies the response. Trains provided the first motorized transportation for heavy goods which was not dependent on water; therefore, the railroad penetrated rural areas heretofore untouched by modern industry. It was a major catalyst for a burgeoning industrialism, giving special impetus to a growing steel industry. In "The Industrial Magnate" chapter, we learn that the Crichs have an interest in the railroad; the cars bear the Crich initial, making a great impression on Gerald: "So many wagons, bearing his initial, running all over the country. He saw them as he entered London in the train, saw them at Dover."
So far his power ramified" (214). Gerald implicitly knows that the Crich coal mines and the railroad are mutually dependent, existing in a symbiotic relationship: coal provides both the raw material for the steel tracks, locomotives and cars as well as the fuel for the engines. Lawrence suggests that Gerald has much more in common with the railroad than the horse.

Unfortunately, the mare upon which Gerald sits does not obey the same laws as the "iron horse" it faces. The train is absolutely subject to human control and the laws of physics; the mare has a mind of its own, hence Gerald cannot tolerate its animal recalcitrance. As a herald of the future, the train creates the metallic roar so endemic to industrial civilization that we are numb to it. Gerald glories in the train's proximity because he is kin to it. However, the horse panics and the battle begins, with the Brangwen sisters as witness. Lawrence posits a not so subtle rape dynamic into the scene, with Gerald "heavy on the mare" in a drama of dominance and submission. Throughout *Women in Love* Lawrence's descriptions of Gerald are replete with mechanical imagery (sometimes giving way to images of whiteness which form the base of the racial dynamic at work in the novel). His steel spurs, acting as metaphorical extensions of his body, penetrate the mare until she bleeds. As the assault intensifies, Gerald
becomes a de facto steel phallus:

A sharpened look came on Gerald's face. He bit himself down on the mare like a keen edge biting home, and forced her round. She roared as she breathed, her nostrils were two wide, hot holes, her mouth was apart, her eyes frenzied. It was a repulsive sight. But he held on her unrelaxed, with an almost mechanical relentlessness, keen as a sword pressing into her. Both man and horse were sweating with violence. (104)

With shrewd economy, Lawrence also uses the scene to draw a keen distinction between Ursula and Gudrun by vividly contrasting their reactions to Gerald's cruelty. Marvin Mudrick has remarked how "at the end of The Rainbow, Ursula is the single god-bearing person left in the world" (49) but that Lawrence saved "her consummation for Women in Love." A reader of The Rainbow ventures into the sequel with a clear idea of Ursula's character, while Gudrun only slowly coalesces. The sisters, so closely linked as "outsiders" in the community, are a fairly undifferentiated pair until this scene (that is, we are apt to take it for granted that Gudrun shares Ursula's characteristically negative opinions of the community and the modern world).

However, as they watch Gerald, Ursula becomes "frantic with opposition and hatred of Gerald. She alone understood him perfectly, in pure opposition" (104, emphasis added). Meanwhile Gudrun passes into a swoon, "looking at him with black-dilated, spellbound eyes"
(103). Afterwards, she recovers and becomes "hard and cold and indifferent"—matching Gerald's characteristic attitude and demeanor. In this fateful scene, Gudrun adopts a significant portion of Gerald's own mechanistic ideology, and this is amply demonstrated during the sisters' subsequent walk through Beldover. Lawrence focuses attention on Gudrun's reveries on the colliery district about which she remarks, "It has a foul kind of beauty, this place" (107). With a mixture of attraction and repulsion, she gazes at the "half-automatised colliers" who awaken a "fatal desire, and a fatal callousness" within her (108).

As a kind of prelude to her relationship with Gerald, Gudrun dates one of his electricians, a man named Palmer, whom Lawrence describes as having "the fineness of an elegant piece of machinery" (110). Unlike Ursula, who stands in defiance to the ugly, dehumanized community, Gudrun links herself with it in a surge of nostalgia:

The same secret seemed to be working in the souls of all alike, Gudrun, Palmer, the rakish young bloods, the gaunt, middle-aged men. All had a secret sense of power, and of inexpressible destructiveness, and of fatal half-heartedness, a sort of rottenness of will. (110)

In a counterpart to the scene with the mare, Lawrence depicts Gerald subduing a rabbit that has clawed Gudrun's arms and escaped her; here Gerald has been able to watch
Gudrun's reaction: "He saw, with subtle recognition, her sullen passion for cruelty" (232). The same dominating gleam comes into his eyes when he subdues the rabbit as when he tormented the mare. But now Gerald and Gudrun are locked in "mutual hellish recognition" (234), and the battle is truly on.

Later, Lawrence puts a significant coda on Gerald's assault on the mare when Ursula later asks him, "But why inflict unnecessary torture?" Gerald characteristically replies, "But I have to use her" (130). For Gerald, all things, organic and inorganic, have worth only inasmuch as they have function; when his father dies, Gerald will treat his workers in the same manner as he treated the mare. As far as personal transportation goes, Gerald's true affinities lie with the automobile; as he drives his motor-car through the market-place in Beldover, crowded with his employees, they obediently make way for "the God of the machine" (215).

*Women in Love*'s key chapter, "The Industrial Magnate," begins with an episode seemingly unrelated to the Crich mines as Ursula and Gudrun visit Mrs. Kirk, whom Gudrun immediately dislikes. This dislike is intensified when Mrs. Kirk reveals that she had been nursemaid to Gerald Crich; she describes the infant Gerald as "a proper
demon" and "wilful, masterful" (204). When Mrs. Kirk boasts that she "pinched his little bottom" to discipline Gerald, Gudrun becomes infuriated to the point where "she wanted to have the woman taken out at once and strangled" (205). Gudrun is furious because Mrs. Kirk has laid bare to Gudrun her own latent wishes; Gudrun wants to bring Gerald to heel, to manipulate, control and finally destroy him. Later, in the Bavarian Alps, she will employ methods to accomplish her mastery over Gerald which are far more devastating than Mrs. Kirk's pinch.

Lawrence shrewdly uses the scene with Mrs. Kirk to lead into the marital conflict between Mr. and Mrs. Crich which is the overriding source of the recurrent woe and tragedy of the Crich family. Like other great writers, Lawrence understood how the destructive emanations of marital conflict are never confined to husband and wife, but always affect their children in profound and permanent ways. Moreover, Lawrence understood this from the beginning of his writing career, for if nothing else remains in one's mind years after reading Son and Lovers, it is the bitter conflict between Gertrude and Walter Morel, and how their children, especially Paul, become pawns on a vicious marital battleground. It is not surprising that Lawrence would once again posit the immemorial domestic triangle of the father/mother/son
psychic drama at the center of *Women in Love*.

Mrs. Kirk provides a rough sketch of the struggle.

Referring to the parenting of the Crich children, Mrs. Kirk derisively recollects:

"But she wouldn’t have them corrected—no-o, wouldn’t hear of it. I can remember the rows she had with Mr. Crich, my word. When he’d got worked up, properly worked up till he couldn’t stand it no more, he’d lock the study door and whip them. But she paced up and down all the while like a tiger outside, like a tiger, with very murder on her face. She had a face that could look death. And when the door was opened, she’d go in with her hands lifted—‘What have you done to my children, you coward.’ She was like one out of her mind. I believe he was frightened of her..." (204)

Eventually, Mrs. Crich’s maneuvers turn Gerald against his father; the two men will fight out the same ideological battle rehearsed by the husband and wife, and the point of contention is Christian charity and its application to industrial policy as practised by Thomas Crich.

Capitalism and Christianity, the dominant economic and religious systems (and hence dominant modes of consciousness) of the West, live in an intricate relationship of manifold complexity; depending upon the situation and application, the modes are, at turns, complementary and antagonistic towards one another. The relationship becomes even more formidably complex when one considers that Christianity antedates the rise of Capitalism by nearly two millennia—-they live no simple
base/superstructure connection. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber demonstrates how the Protestant ethic of hard work and delayed gratification adapts itself readily to the realities of modern industrial labor. Nietzsche reiterated how Christianity's nascent development took place amongst a Roman slave class; and modern Christianity still bears the ethical stamp of slave mentality. Hence a rigorous indoctrination of Christian ethics produces a docile population of wage slaves, or, as Gore Vidal puts it, "If one had set out deliberately to invent a religion that would effectively enslave a population, one could not have done much better than Judaeo-Christianity" ("Sex is Politics" 344). It is no mere coincidence that Christian missionaries follow close on the heels of the imperialist, eager to convert populations of "savages."

When applied to the proletariat, Christian ethics serve admirably the ends of the capitalists by pacifying the exploited classes (who will humbly suffer the torments of the sweat shop and assembly line to earn a slot in the heavenly hereafter); but when practiced by the capitalists themselves, a nest of contradictions immediately spring up. Lawrence brilliantly dramatizes these contradictions in his portrayal of Thomas Cricht, and his policies governing the colliery. In a larger sense, Gerald appears
to be waving farewell to the whole Christian order: "The whole unifying idea of mankind seemed to be dying with his father, the centralizing force that had held the whole together seemed to collapse with his father, the parts were ready to go asunder in terrible disintegration" (213). A distinct echo of Henry Adams's *Education* can be heard in these lines. As I pointed out in the first chapter, Adams pinpointed the epochal shift between the passing of the unifying force from the Virgin to the Dynamo. Roughly speaking, Lawrence posits the same shift between father and son. As Colin Milton writes, "The relationship between father and son has more than just personal significance; they represent two whole successive phases in the history of our culture" (204-205). Also, in these lines Lawrence anticipates one of William Butler Yeats's key poems, "The Second Coming," wherein Yeats warns "the falcon cannot hear the falconer./Things fall apart, the center cannot hold./Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." In his day, Lawrence knew the Christian center could not hold against the machine; the machine's ascendancy would produce a new chaos.

In the passing away of Thomas Crich and Gerald's rise to power, a large historical transformation takes place in microcosm. By running his industry on Christian principles, Thomas Crich is playing a losing game when the
economic rules adhere more to the jungle rules of social Darwinism than principles of charity and equality:

He had been so constant to his lights, so constant to charity and to his love for his neighbour. Perhaps he had loved his neighbour even better than himself—which is going one further than the commandment. Always, this flame had burned in his heart, sustaining him through everything, the welfare of the people. He was a large employer of labour, he was a great mine-owner. And he had never lost this from his heart, that in Christ he was one with his workmen. Nay, he had felt inferior to them, as if they through poverty and labour were nearer to God than he....To move nearer to God, he must move towards his miners, his life must gravitate towards theirs. They were, unconsciously, his idol, his God made manifest. In them he worshipped the highest, the great, sympathetic, mindless Godhead of humanity.

(207)

As the corporate lackey might say, this is no way to run a business. And Mrs. Crich knows it: "All the while, his wife had opposed him like one of the great demons of hell" (207). Her vicious attitudes toward the workers will be directly transferred to Gerald, only he will eventually have the power to implement them as policy.

The strike reveals the absurdity of Thomas Crich's policies, while ushering in a new, more hostile, era of labor/management relations. Significantly, the big strike occurs during Gerald's boyhood, when he is at his most impressionable, and it fills him "with the wildest excitement" and awakens fascistic impulses within him: "[Gerald] longed to go with the soldiers and shoot the
men" (218). Meanwhile, Thomas Crich bestows upon the strikers "hundreds of pounds in charity. Everywhere there was free food, a surfeit of free food" (218). Unlike his fellow capitalists, Thomas Crich will not wield one of his most powerful weapons against the strikers: he will not starve them into submission—as Gerald most certainly would under similar circumstances.

As the new machine worship displaces Christianity, Thomas Crich lapses into a long painful decline. In the changing industrial order, Crich's "humane" capitalism, tinged as it is with remnants of a paternal feudalism (and the feudal system, as we know, coincided with the great Medieval Christian hegemony), collapses upon itself. Gerald steps in and proceeds with a ruthless overhaul of his father's business:

Terrible and inhuman were his examinations into every detail; there was no privacy he would spare, no old sentiment but he would turn it over. The old grey managers, the old grey clerks, the doddering old pensioners, he looked at them, and removed them as so much lumber....He had no emotional qualms. (221)

However, it should be emphasized that Gerald worships power and machinery, not profit and personal consumption. His goals are efficiency and functionality: "It was this inhuman principle in the mechanism he wanted to construct that inspired Gerald with an almost religious exaltation" (220).
All of Gerald's policies directly reflect the new principles of scientific management, which were being rapidly developed at the turn of the century. In "The Efficient Society" Jeremy Rifkin traces the origins of modern management to the ideas of Frederick W. Taylor, about whom Rifkin makes a sweeping claim, "He has probably had a greater effect on the private and public lives of the men and women of the twentieth century than any other single individual" (335). Rifkin explains how Taylor employed his primary tool, the stopwatch:

Taylor divided each worker's task into the smallest, visibly identifiable operational components, then timed each to ascertain the best time attainable under optimal performance conditions. His time studies calibrated worker performance to fractions of a second. By studying the mean times and best times achieved in each component of the worker's job, Taylor could make recommendations on how to change the most minute aspects of worker performance in order to save precious seconds, and even milliseconds, of time. (335)

As anyone one who has worked a modern assembly line knows, the clock looms obsessively, like a relentless inhuman tyrant. In Taylor's ruthless drive for efficiency and precision measurements, the worker's actions were reduced to numbers and statistical averages that could be computed and analyzed to better predict future performance and to gain greater control over the work process itself....Taylor believed that the best way to optimize the efficiency of each worker was to assert complete control over all six temporal dimensions: sequence, duration, schedule, rhythm, synchronization, and time perspective.
No aspect of the worker's time was to be left to chance or to worker discretion; from now on, the worker's time would fall under the absolute control of management. The most efficient state, said Taylor, was the most autocratic. Taylor's principles of scientific management represented the ultimate politicization of the new industrial time. (336)

Taylor's principles were formulated in 1895, roughly corresponding to Gerald's seizing control of the mines. The new managers he hires to run the mines directly employ Taylor's principles in fact if not in name, and the result is predictable:

Everything was run on the most accurate and delicate scientific method, educated and expert men were in control everywhere, the miners were reduced to mere mechanical instruments. They had to work hard, much harder than before, the work was terrible and heart-breaking in its mechanicalness. (223)

In his discussion of the implications of Taylorism for industrial workers, Gramsci predicted "the creation of a psycho-physical nexus of a new type, both different from its predecessors and undoubtedly superior. A forced selection will ineluctably take place; a part of the old working class will be pitilessly eliminated from the world of labour, and perhaps from the world tout court" (Prison Notebooks, 302-303).

Gerald succeeds in his purge and the workers accept him as "their high priest, he represented the religion they really felt" (223). Holderness writes that Lawrence glosses over the worker's actual reactions to the new
industrial order; the resistance to the changes were a considerable source of the violent strikes of the 1920's. But in the long run, and certainly from the perspective of the 1990's, the dehumanizing effects of scientific management principles have prevailed. The machine is sovereign, and its ubiquitous presence in our lives has increased dramatically since Lawrence's death.

Though he probably did not understand the word in its specifically Marxist sense, Lawrence's "Industrial Magnate" chapter is a virtual case study in alienation--and not just on the part of the workers. Gerald himself does not escape the dehumanizing effects of his own ideology. In his hour of triumph, Gerald's victory is distinctly hollow:

But now he had succeeded--he had finally succeeded. And once or twice lately, when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do, he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was. And he went to the mirror and looked long and closely at his own face, at his own eyes, seeking for something. He was afraid, in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of. He looked at his own face. There it was, shapely and healthy and the same as ever, yet somehow, it was not real, it was a mask.

At bottom, Gerald is cut off--cut off absolutely from his workers, cut off from his family (the Crich family is largely uncommunicative among themselves), and, ultimately, Gerald cannot understand his own needs and compulsions. Also, when it counts most, Gerald is unable
to communicate his feelings to Gudrun. As Mandel surmises, "The alienation of the capacity to communicate is the ultimate and most tragic form of alienation" ("The Causes of Alienation," 26). After "The Industrial Magnate" chapter, Gerald completely turns his back on his industry. In the subsequent chapters, he appears as a free agent like Birkin, not the head of a sprawling business. Joyce Carol Oates has commented that "as Gudrun's frenzied lover, as Birkin's elusive beloved, he seems a substantially different person from the Gerald Crich who is a ruthless god of the machine" (93). Is he pursuing Gudrun, or running from the monstrosity of an industry he has created? In embracing Gudrun, is he consciously seeking his own doom? Gerald is not completely dead inside because he at least knows something is wrong with him. In quiet desperation, he reaches out first to Birkin.

In some ways, Birkin is the ideological counterpart to Gerald (whereas Ursula is in complete opposition to everything Gerald stands for). Although "he felt that he, Gerald, had harder and more durable truths than any other man knew" (51), Gerald enjoys hearing Birkin hold forth with his cynical sermons. Birkin is remarkable, perhaps, for having an even lower opinion of modern humanity than Gerald; misanthropy can be a shared basis for friendship.
For Gerald, at least, humans have worth as long as they produce something. Birkin dismisses humanity as a "dead letter," yet he maintains hope in his odd insistence on rather rarefied forms of love which he attempts to establish with Gerald and Ursula; neither person submits to Birkin on his own terms.

Ultimately, the death principle underlying Gerald's machine worship cuts him off from Birkin and leads to his undoing. The two men's establishment of the homoerotic Bludbruderschaft, in the "Gladatorial" chapter is a brief, life-affirming respite before Gerald and Gudrun engage in their fight to the death. Despite Birkin's misanthropy, there is enough life in his soul for him and Ursula to overcome bitter antagonisms and form a positive relationship--giving them a chance to fulfill the promise of The Rainbow. In contrast, death haunts Gerald, from the "accidental" killing of his brother in his youth, to the drowning of Diana Crich in "The Water-Party" chapter, to the death of his father (observed in excruciating detail by Gerald), to his own cold fate. Whereas, the battle of wills between Birkin and Ursula results in a positive, if tenuous, compromise, the only outcome in the relationship of Gerald and Gudrun can be the death of one of them or both.
Early in the novel, Gerald is repulsed by the sculpture of a savage woman in labor; in contrast, Birkin expresses his simple admiration of it: "It is art" (71). Interestingly, the raw depiction of a woman in labor producing life itself is precisely what Gerald cannot deal with. If Gerald has no sympathy for Christianity, he has much less for paganism because it is even further removed from his own mechanistic affinities. Lawrence himself was deeply fascinated by pagan culture; he even thought that the revival of certain aspects of it might save humankind. Near the end of the novel, Gerald will have a considerably different reaction to the industrial sculpture produced by Loerke.

The character of Loerke, appearing as he does almost at the end of the novel, acts as an ideological sifting agent; we can gauge where each of the four main characters stands by his or her reactions to Loerke and his "art." Loerke is in fact an extension of Gerald's machine ideology into the realm of art, a new superstructure developed in response to a shifting economic base. Loerke states: "Art should interpret industry as art once interpreted religion" (415). In an ironic parallel to the past where artists were commissioned by bishops, Loerke has been commissioned by a capitalist to create a granite frieze for a factory in Cologne. Gudrun is impressed by
Loerke's description of the project and becomes more and more drawn to him, indicating how debased her own aesthetic principles have become.

Gerald and Rupert have an ambiguous reaction to Loerke. Much of the repulsion they feel for him is simply physical: Lawrence draws him as a physical monstrosity—a boyish gnome—and it is hard to deny the anti-Semitic undertones in the characterization. Also, despite the implicit homosexuality of the wrestling match between Gerald and Birkin in "Gladatorial" (which Lawrence appears to condone) the gay relationship between Loerke and Leitner has degenerated into the most negative kind of petulant faggotry. Birkin uses Ursula's and Gudrun's attraction to Loerke as the basis of one of his occasional diatribes against women in general: "He is the perfectly subjected being, existing almost like a criminal. And the women rush towards that, like a current of air toward a vacuum" (418). Gerald is alternately repulsed, fascinated and confused by Loerke, whom he tries to ignore. But he can't because, as Joyce Carol Oates argues, "[Loerke's] very being excites Gerald to disgusted fury because he is finally all that Gerald has imagined for himself—the subordination of all spontaneity, the triumph of 'harmony' in industrial organization" (105).
At the end it is Ursula who puts Loerke in his place—and again Ursula, as in *The Rainbow*, emerges as the moral center of the novel. The point of contention is Loerke's statuette of the naked girl on the horse. Gazing at it, "Gudrun went pale, and a darkness came over her eyes, like shame, she looked up with a certain supplication, almost slavelike" (420). As we observed earlier, Gudrun has a similar reaction to Gerald's mistreatment of the horse. Ursula immediately questions why the horse is "stiff as a block"; apparently, Loerke's industrial affinities even creep into his representations of animals. Meanwhile Gudrun sides with Loerke, insisting that art must be set off in a separate realm from the natural and human world: "My art stands in another world; I am this world" (421). But Ursula makes the connection and denounces Loerke:

"The horse is a picture of your own stock, stupid brutality, and the girl was a girl you loved and tortured and then ignored....As for your world of art and your world of reality, you have to separate the two, because you can't bear to know what you are. You can't bear to realize what a stock, stiff, hide-bound brutality you are really...the world of art is only the truth about the real world, that's all--but you are too far gone to see it" (422).

At this point, Ursula is addressing Loerke, but Gudrun and Gerald are also present, and she is could be addressing them too because they are on Loerke's side. Soon after this scene, Ursula and Birkin flee south, away from the snowy deadness of the landscape--and the cold
deadness of Loerke, Gudrun and Gerald, who regress into a sterile, sexless triangle.

The sexless quality of the "eternal triangle" can be attributed to the childlike regression of the three players. Despite their sophisticated conversation, one gets the impression that Gudrun and Loerke are acting like children trying to run away from an unwanted playmate, Gerald. Throughout the final section, Gudrun plays games, frolicking in the snow, riding toboggans--and manipulating Gerald. After his death and the return of Ursula and Rupert, Gudrun affects a childlike muteness (and denial of culpability). She allows the authorities to blame Gerald's demise on a supposed "affair" between her and Loerke; meanwhile, she knows Loerke was a mere "contingency," another weapon she could use against Gerald. While Gerald lies dead, Gudrun withdraws and has almost no conversation with her sister, with whom she had been closely allied. While they are in Germany, Lawrence quite explicitly makes Gudrun the victimizer and Gerald the victim. At the end of *Women in Love*, Gudrun is nearly as cold and dead as Gerald.

"My God! this was a barren tragedy, barren, barren" (467). Gudrun thinks. For Gerald, the escape to Germany became a trap because he could not flee what he his own obsessions had made him. The cold, barren landscape of
the wintry mountains only mirrored the emptiness of his machine soul. Geographically, Italy’s therapeutic warmth might have offered an escape for Ursula and Rupert, but Gerald was doomed to die on the high pass, unable to get south and thaw the frozen blood of his own buried humanity. His tragedy lies in his unrealized potential, the great love he might have been capable of had he maintained his embrace of Birkin—or found a loving female companion, instead of a pitiless antagonist like Gudrun. Gerald’s tragedy lies in Birkin’s profound sense of loss and knowledge of what could have been.

Gerald has destroyed his father by destroying the structure of his industry; after killing off Thomas Crich and the old order he embodied, Gerald’s triumph turns out to be hollow, because the only thing left is a ruthlessly efficient industry, bled of its humanity. His goal achieved, Gerald can only contemplate the void of his soul and the emptiness of the machine ideology he personally has elevated to Godhead. In desperation, he has walked from his father’s grave to Gudrun’s bedroom, craving the loving human intimacy he has heretofore been unable to grasp. But the machine still clings to his soul, even as the clay of his dead father’s grave clings to the shoes on his feet.
In the intervening years between his writing of *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence's social vision radicalized. Jeffrey Meyers attributes the change to Lawrence's reaction to the war: "His anger became more violent, his ideas more extreme. He became a preacher, a prophet, a denouncer of evil, and had to give vent to his fury or be destroyed by it" (155). In the latter novel, the last one he published, the irony is more bitter, the class antagonisms more pronounced, the sex more explicit, and the style of the novel, especially in the first chapter, resembles the bold, broad strokes of his parable-like short story, "The Rocking-Horse Winner." At the beginning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence writes, "The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes....We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen" (37). The cataclysm is, of course, World War I (and it takes some imaginative effort for Americans to appreciate what a watershed the Great War proved to be in England and on the continent: a generation of men wiped out, and many of the old beliefs shattered).

In *Lady Chatterley*, Lawrence is asking the question Eliot posed in *The Waste Land*: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?" The
Great War produced new opportunities fraught with peril. Lawrence wondered: would European civilization cling to corrupt institutions and ideologies (and blunder into yet another war)? Or could it (Lawrence hoped) make a new beginning and revitalize the best of the humanity’s preindustrial past? At a party on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, Lawrence predicted: "I suppose you think the war is over and that we shall go back to the kind of world you lived in before it. But the war isn’t over. The hate and evil is greater now than ever. Very soon war will break out again and overwhelm you" (Meyers, 230). Lawrence had ample reason to be cynical (and his prophecy would be realized in World War II), but he would not surrender totally to despair in his fiction. Though it does it ambiguously and with plenty of qualification, Lady Chatterley’s Lover is life-affirming; it offers hope—an extraordinary accomplishment in itself, coming from an exiled, persecuted, reviled author, dying of tuberculosis in the midst of foreboding political upheavals.

Unfortunately, World War I gave new impetus to industrialism and technological research; the world’s first taste of a truly technologized war (including chemical gas, and new sophisticated weapons that turned calvary charges like that of Tennyson’s famous Light Brigade into futile carnage) only further propelled the
technological spiral—and the arms race has continued unabated ever since. (And whatever its apologists say, the primary evil of technology is that such a large portion of it is dedicated to finding new and more efficient ways to kill people.) Lawrence knew that war, rather than making humans more virtuous, often energized their worst tendencies. In writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence sifted through the ruins of the old civilization, and he realized that humanity was at a crucial crossroads: humans could either revitalize themselves by recapturing the ancient pastoral way of life sought by Oliver Mellors, or yield to a spiralling industrialism which would eventually result in mechanized humans like Clifford Chatterley, the incipient cyborg.

In Clifford Chatterley, Lawrence embodies many of the dehumanizing tendencies he perceived in the post-war aftermath. Clifford anticipates the following trends: (1) Like Gerald Crich, he looks upon his workers as functional tools and advocates industrial policies which exacerbate an already ascendant worker alienation; his attitudes harden class divisions and antagonisms. (2) Clifford's paralyzed legs and wheelchair anticipate how mechanisms will increasingly substitute for or replace human limbs with prosthetic devices. (3) As the novel progresses, Clifford replaces natural and human environment with
similacrum and simulations. (4) Clifford regresses from sexlessness to sexual perversion by ending up in the corrupting maternal embrace of Mrs. Bolton, who extracts a devious revenge upon the representative of the class whom she holds responsible for her husband's death.

Even more than Gerald Crich in Women in Love, Clifford Chatterley carries a large portion of the ideological freight in the novel--perhaps too much. In his analysis of Lady Chatterley, Kingsley Widmer calls Clifford "an extreme version of the cold cerebral side of Lawrence's recurrent erotic triangle. Though often perceptive, the portrayal of Clifford carries a heavy, multi-satiric burden since he represents not only class snobbery and antisensual idealism but also the Bloomsbury sort of clever writer and the willful, rationalizing, and modernizing industrialist" (146). Because Lawrence gives Clifford a huge thematic burden, some critics, such as Julian Moynihan, tend to dismiss him as "a monstrous caricature" (80). Arguably, the characterization has less depth and complexity than that of Gerald Crich; however, whereas Gerald's thematic aspects are sometimes ambiguous, Clifford's are generally clear. Moynihan, in denigrating the characterization, nevertheless acknowledges Clifford's prophetic aspect: "I think it would be more appropriate to see him as a kind of imagined limit toward which
certain tendencies in modern life might be moving" (80, emphasis added).

As Graham Hough has observed, "It is an essential part of Lawrence's creed that the social pattern is a reflection of the private sexual pattern" (99). While the war wound renders Clifford paralyzed and sexually impotent, it merely confirms what had implicitly been his condition before. (Recall in my first chapter how Murphy was a de facto Robocop before his having been murdered and remanufactured as a cyborg.) In the first chapter of Lady Chatterley we learn that "he had been a virgin when he married: and the sex part did not mean much to him....sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct, one of the curious, obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary" (46). The one thing that pervades his entire social and domestic outlook is functionalism. He looks at Connie as though she has the label WIFE pasted on her; for him, she has duties, not needs. He expects her to perform the following functions: act as mistress of Wragby Hall (to simply be there, like a fireplace or a chair); to assume a nominal nurse/mother role, tending Clifford's dead body; and, perhaps most importantly, to produce an heir. So strong is Clifford's class-based sense of tradition, the dynastic need for an heir, that in his impotence he gives
tacit consent for Connie to find a substitute breeder, precursor of the services provided by a modern sperm bank.

Clifford's acquiescence to the idea of a substitute breeder is merely one aspect of a dominant trend: the proliferation of substitutes and similacrums, technologically based, which come to surround him. Early in the novel, Connie mirrors Clifford's acceptance of substitute reality. Before she meets Mellors, Connie's life at Wragby becomes "like the similacrum of reality....Sufficient unto the moment is the appearance of reality" (53). In an extention of this, Michealis, her first adulterous lover, functions as a sort of dildo, giving her "an almost mechanical confidence in her own powers" (66). Meanwhile Clifford, his passion for sex atrophied, substitutes sex for a pursuit of the "bitch goddess" of success which "somehow...got his pecker up" (153). Soon after he takes a renewed interest in the mines, he substitutes the vapid chatter of his cronies with a radio: "And he would sit alone for hours listening to the loudspeaker bellowing forth" (156). Here Lawrence is making two points. First, in substituting the radio for his friends, Clifford is neither losing nor gaining much in terms of human contact, suggesting his male companions are nearly equivalent to their mechanical substitute. Lawrence provides several significant
examples of the typical conversation among Clifford's friends; they are marked by passionless banter which Lawrence sarcastically refers to as "the immensely important speculations of these highly-mental gentlemen" (72). Second, Clifford anticipates the contemporary impulse to replace natural environment with audio/visual gadgets which provide substitutes and simulacrums of reality. In this respect Clifford anticipates one of Jean Baudrillard's trenchant points:

Strictly speaking, men of wealth are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by objects. Their daily exchange is no longer with their fellows, but rather...with the acquisition and manipulation of goods and messages.... ("Consumer Society," 29)

Though Clifford is not quite a Howard Hughes figure, he certainly resembles that pathetic recluse--isolated with so much money and power, yet desperately manipulative.

In Clifford, the most vivid contrast between Women in Love and Lady Chatterley's Lover comes to the fore: the class antagonisms in the latter novel are definitely more pronounced. Though the Criches know they are wealthy bourgeois, they are not aristocrats, and Thomas Crich's Christian obeisance to the poor throws a dubious bridge across the class gulf (a bridge buttressed by charity that, at the same time, mitigates and sharpens the class divisions). Gerald, of course, insists upon the absolute
division between bourgeois and proletariat, but he is not motivated by money grubbing and class snobbery; the different classes simply have different functions. In exiling himself to the continent, Gerald seems to be following Lawrence's own urge to be declassed and deracinated by leaving England behind.

In contrast, Clifford is preeminently an aristocrat. As Lawrence puts it, "Not the big sort, but still it" (43). Unlike Gerald, he refuses to travel, not only because of his wheelchair, but because he derives his class identity from Wragby Hall and the power he wields there. After World War I, Clifford and his ilk are insecure about their class superiority; the proletarian rumbles, emanating from the epicenter in Moscow, began to be heard in earnest in post-war England, leading to the great strike of 1926 (which was ruthlessly crushed by the capitalists). In the second chapter, Lawrence discusses the dehumanizing effects of the class gulf:

There was no communication between Wragby Hall and Tevershall village, none. No caps were touched, no curtsey's bobbed. The colliers merely stared; the tradesmen lifted their caps to Connie as to an acquaintance, and nodded awkwardly to Clifford; that was all. Gulf impassible, and a quiet sort of resentment on either side. At first Connie suffered from the steady drizzle of resentment that came from the village. Then she hardened herself to it, and it became a sort of tonic, something to live up to. It was not that she and Clifford were unpopular, they merely belonged to another species altogether from the colliers. Gulf
impassible, breach indescribable, such as is perhaps non-existent south of the Trent. But in the midlands and the industrial North gulf impassible, across which no communication could take place. You stick to your side, I'll stick to mine! A strange denial of the common pulse of humanity. (48)

As we will see, the class gulf will be breached—and by both Connie and Clifford. Both will form powerful bonds with members of the lower class. Connie will, of course, take Mellors, the son of a collier, as a lover (and the class division plays a major role in their developing relationship). Meanwhile Clifford, in one of the most fascinating relationships in the novel, will eventually accept the servant Ivy Bolton as wife-like confidante and perverse lover.

Mrs. Bolton, certainly the most vivid minor character in the novel, plays a crucial role vis-a-vis Clifford. Kingsley Widmer argues, "This middle-aged and shrewdly manipulative working-class widow is probably the finest characterization in the book" (146). Though she herself does not fully realize it, Mrs. Bolton, in her relationship with Clifford, is motivated by class resentments. Lawrence locates the source of her resentment in her husband's death:

Ted Bolton was twenty-eight when he was killed in an explosion down th' pit. The butty in front shouted to them all to lie down quick; there were four of them. And they all lay down in time, only Ted, and it killed him. Then at the enquiry, on the masters' side they said Ted
had been frightened, and trying to run away, and not obeying orders, so it was like his fault really. So the compensation was only three hundred pounds, and they made out as if it was more of a gift than legal compensation, because it was really the man's own fault. And they wouldn't let her have the money down; she wanted to have a little shop. But they said she'd no doubt squander it, perhaps in drink! So she had to draw it thirty shillings a week. Yes, she had to go every Monday morning down to the offices, and stand there a couple hours waiting her turn; yes, for almost four years she went every Monday. (122-123)

This passage is interesting for several reasons. The prose has an almost oral quality to it, the ambiance of a storyteller delivering a tale. It also reveals how in a compensation scandal, the "masters" held all the cards: they deny culpability, blame the victim, arbitrarily settle on the amount of compensatory payment; then, with almost gratuitous cruelty, they insist that the money is a "gift" and force the bereaved widow to stand in line hours every week for four years to collect her thirty shilling installment. Herein the corruption underlying charity is hinted at; it is an inter-class gift rife with condescension, breeding resentment in both giver and receiver. And it is the masters who insist on the extra-legal, charitable nature of what should be legally compulsory compensation.

Ivy Bolton reacts to all this in a dynamic way. Her reaction to her inferior class position is to climb. She uses the education ladder to become a nurse, and suddenly
"she felt very superior to [the colliers]. She felt almost upper class; and at the same time a resentment against the ruling class smoldered in her" (123). Finally Mrs. Bolton gets to enter one of the exalted halls of the aristocracy, Wragby, as a lowly servant. And, as Connie withdraws from Clifford, Mrs. Bolton seizes the opportunity to replace her "for she knew how to have him in her powers" (125). As Mrs. Bolton assumes more of the duties of the mistress of Wragby, Connie is consequently freed to find what Mrs. Bolton lost with Ted's death. Lawrence clearly indicates how the Bolton marriage was indeed a vital, loving one. In a roundabout way, Mrs. Bolton helps Connie achieve the vital sexual relationship that she once had with Ted.

In the meantime, Mrs. Bolton will not squander her opportunity to play aristocrat by controlling Clifford, and having a hand in his decision-making: "Gradually, with infinite softness, almost with love, she was getting him by the throat, and he was yielding to her" (143). She plays many roles that ultimately add up to the wife role Connie has discarded: nurse, secretary, gossiping confidante, chess adversary, student of his occasional French phrases. She mimics the ambitious wife, encouraging Clifford's renewed interest in his mines. (In encouraging Clifford's automation of pit labor, does she
think she will help save collier lives?) By the end of the book, the relationship is frankly sexual, though with a perverted, mother/son twist: "He said: 'Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me!' And when she sponged his great blond body, he would say the same: 'Do kiss me!' and she would lightly kiss his body, anywhere, half in mockery" (362).

From her humble origins as a collier's wife, the shrewdly-named Ivy clings and climbs; Mrs. Bolton attains a position almost superior to the aristocracy because she now controls an aristocrat.

There is no chapter in Lady Chatterley's Lover which corresponds to "The Industrial Magnate" in Women in Love in terms of the focused industrial critique and description of alienation the earlier novel offers. However, at a specific point in both novels, Gerald and Clifford suddenly seize control of their respective mining industries, and the policies they implement are relentlessly technologized. It is not certain how much his views are nostalgic sentimentality, but Lawrence believed that in his father's age coal mining was once a dignified, life-affirming form of labor:

And the pit did not mechanize men. On the contrary. Under the butty system, the miners worked underground as a sort of intimate community, they knew each other practically naked, and with curious close intimacy, and the darkness and the underground remoteness of the pit "stall," and the continual presence of danger, made the physical, instinctive and
intuitional contact between men very highly developed, a contact almost as close as touch, very real and very powerful. ("Nottingham and the Mining Countryside," 135-136)

In contrast, Lawrence felt the colliers of his day were betrayed and beaten, disheartened by ugliness, alienated from each other and from nature. The source of this, he felt, was the ascendancy of the machine. Mellors, who basically functions as the author's mouthpiece, sums up Lawrence's attitude:

The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. (167)

Clifford insists on conformity, and his workers (and nature itself) must conform to his iron will. Like Gerald, he is radically divided within himself; both men are ruthlessly efficient in their technical revampings of the pits. They submerge all human emotion. Yet, away from the pits, their need for love and affection has an almost child-like desperation. The irony is especially sharp in Clifford: he denigrates the colliers as "feeble boys," but he regresses to near infancy in Mrs. Bolton's arms. When industrial imperatives force Gerald and Clifford to lock their humanity in a box, their vital, loving, instinctual selves shrink and mutate.
Lady Chatterley’s Lover is a novel of vivid contrasts. Perhaps no where else is the contrast between the industrial wasteland (represented by the Tevershall village) and the pastoral world (the forest on the Chatterley estate) more pronounced. The contrast is accentuated in the diametrically opposed characterizations of Clifford Chatterley and Oliver Mellors. Unlike his characterization of Clifford, Lawrence draws upon pagan myth to create Mellors. Lawrence definitely uses his favorite pagan god, Pan (whom he thought the Christians had deviously transformed into the devil). To some extent, he attempts to rehabilitate Pan in Mellors. But there are hints that Mellors could be something more. If Prometheus is the prototype of the modern scientist, then perhaps Robin Hood is the prototype of the socialist revolutionary. Mellors is Pan who could be a modern-day Robin Hood.

In his study of the three manuscript versions of Lady Chatterley’s Lover, Micheal Squires discusses how, in the revisions, Lawrence was “consciously polarizing the novel’s themes and the characters into 'elect' and 'damned' catagories, and it was natural, I think, to extend this polarizing process to the gamekeeper” (237). Squires also notes how Lawrence “gradually transfers the
gamekeeper's energy from physical to intellectual" (235). In the intervening years between the writing of *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence's radical vision of society sharpened, and this can be seen in the contrast between the intensity of the critiques his characters offer. In *Women in Love* both Birkin and Ursula condemn modern industrial society, but their critiques are, at times, nebulous and confused. Birkin's is often reactionary and priggish. But both Birkin and Ursula know instinctively that something is amiss. Perhaps their inability to pinpoint precisely what is wrong indicates that Lawrence had not fully thought it through to his own satisfaction.

The years between *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley* are also marked by the publication of what are generally conceded to be Lawrence's worst novels. I refer to *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo*, and *The Plumed Serpent*, novels which most critics characterize as politically reactionary at best and proto-fascist at worst. These novels can be looked at most generously as purgations. I would argue that Lawrence only succeeded as a political novelist when he did not explicitly try to write a political novel. It is in the political unconscious (to borrow a title from Jameson) of two of his best novels (*Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley*) where Lawrence's most trenchant and prescient
crítiques of modern industrial society lie. Since Mellors is generally seen by critics to be Lawrence's mouthpiece, we can deduce that Lawrence himself was flirting with revolutionary consciousness which encompassed collective action. Despite his professed dislike of socialism (and almost all "-isms"), Lawrence gives Mellors a powerful sense of the class antagonisms inherent between Wragby and Tevershall. In several passages, Mellors condemns "the Mammon of mechanized greed" (167), and he hints that he could involve himself in collective action: "Oh, if only there were other men to be with, to fight that sparkling electric Thing outside there, to preserve the tenderness of life, the tenderness of women, and the natural riches of desire. If only there were men to fight side by side with!" (168).

Because Lawrence cannot bring himself, at this point in his career, to depict the collective action Mellors longs for, he grounds revolutionary consciousness in the relationship between man and woman. The relationship between Connie and Mellors is a drama of the overcoming of class divisions; as their affair is gradually revealed the whole weight of the class-divided society falls upon them—and from both sides. The members of Connie's class are appalled, not by her taking of proletarian lover, but by her refusal to abandon him when she becomes pregnant. (Of
course, the legal apparatus aids both Clifford and Mellors' estranged wife, Bertha, in persecuting the lovers by making a divorce nearly impossible to get.) Bertha probably would not have returned to persecute Mellors with a vengeance had she not learned he was bedding down with a "Lady." While Connie’s class want to pull her back up, Mellors' class want to pull him back down.

Wragby and Tevershall are the geographical locus of the respective classes, and their relative material conditions are reflected in the contrasting architecture—the grand mansion, stocked with abundant material goods contrasts the tiny, squalid miners' cottages. In between lies the forest, a thin, vital piece of the old England, "a remnant of the great forest where Robin Hood hunted" (79). Only here can Connie and Mellors breach the class gulf and find sanctuary from the encroaching industrial wasteland. But the wooded sanctuary is not a fortress against invasion, and Mellors knows that "the seclusion of the wood is illusory" (166). Many oaks had been cut for trench supports during The Great War. The industrial noises impinge. And Mellors himself is "managing" the forest, running off the poachers (who are themselves hungry, jobless proletarians of his same class), and raising game animals so Clifford and his cronies can shoot them. Mellors is not without his own contradictions.
Chapter Thirteen is arguably the finest chapter in the novel because it brings the three main characters together in a dramatic conflict while it drives home the book's main thematic points. Significantly, the chapter is set in the forest as Clifford intrudes upon its pastoral stillness. Clifford's wheelchair becomes almost a fourth character—or, more precisely, Lawrence accentuates how it has become part of Clifford and, in fact, expresses his psychological and physical condition. I have mentioned before that this is no normal wheelchair; it is an ugly, noisy, greasy mechanical monstrosity. Technology carries Clifford where his body cannot go—and then abruptly strands him.

This chapter also echoes the chapter in *Women in Love*, "Coal Dust," where Gerald tortures the horse in front of the train. Now the horse has been replaced by a machine and Clifford states, "I ride upon the achievements of the mind of man, and that beats a horse" (235). As Clifford rolls through the forest, Lawrence goes into great detail in describing the chair's malevolent effect upon the flowers in the woods:

The chair puffed slowly on, slowly surging through the forget-me-nots....Connie, walking behind, had watched the wheels jolt over the woodruff and the bugle, and squash the little yellow cups of the creeping-jenny. Now they made a wake through the forget-me-nots. (240)

Up to this point, Clifford and Connie have been engaged in
an argument which reveals how large the ideological gulf is between them. In Chapter Eleven, Connie has toured the Tevershall village, and it has given her a vivid glimpse of the grim life of the collier. She asks Clifford, "Why is Tevershall so ugly, so hideous? Why are their lives so hopeless?" Clifford replies with stock class condescension and denial of responsibility. He says, matter-of-factly: "They build their own Tevershall. That's part of their display of freedom." He sums up his view by saying, "The masses have been ruled since time began, and, till time ends, ruled they will be" (239).

Then, ironically, Clifford admits the role social environment plays on human development:

"Place any child among the ruling classes, and he will grow up, to his own extent, a ruler. Put king’s and duke’s children among the masses, and they’ll be little plebians, mass products. It is the overwhelming pressure of environment." (239)

Though he admits the powerful role of environment, Clifford will do nothing to raise the living standards of the colliers and ameliorate the industrial and domestic squalor which crushes them.

Eventually, Clifford motors off by himself, and Connie runs into the gamekeeper. Rather than call out with his voice, Clifford interrupts them by tooting the chair’s horn to summon Connie. Before mounting a steep
hill, Clifford talks to the chair as if to the live horse it has replaced: "'Now, old girl!' said Clifford, putting the chair to it" (243). And when the chair inevitably gets stuck, he tells Connie, "We'll let her breathe" as though the chair is alive. One can draw an interesting contrast here with the passages in which Mellors' talks to his penis, as though it is a separate entity, yet so very much a part of him.

It is devastating for Clifford when the chair fails him, because he has put so much faith in the technical prowess of man's machines. (And don't we, who live surrounded by machines, feel a similar dismay and helplessness when the machines we depend on fail us?) When Mellors arrives to help, he of course knows nothing about machines. At first, Clifford refuses Mellors' help, maintaining his belief in his chair's power. When it finally fails him, Connie views Clifford with great contempt as she mentally repeats the arrogant sentiments he had expressed about the superiority of the ruling classes. Symbolically, the scene can be read as follows: When the machines, upon which the ruling classes derive much of their power and which they own, fail, the burden will once again fall upon the proletariat. And Mellors strains himself terribly, pushing the double burden of Clifford and his chair.
By the end of Chapter Thirteen, Connie's allegiance has fatefuly shifted. Her contempt for Clifford (and for the class Clifford represents) has turned into active hatred, and she has forever detached herself emotionally from life at Wragby. The focus of the novel itself now centers on the relationship between Connie and Mellors. I would argue that Lawrence has exhausted Clifford's thematic potential in Chapter Thirteen. Thereafter the thematic attack on industrialism is carried on, much less effectively, in Mellors' speeches. And it is one of the recurring weaknesses of Lawrence's fiction: his tendency to let his mouthpiece characters preach without any fictional mediation and counterbalance. In *Women in Love*, I think he avoids this by bringing Birkin and Ursula together for some intense arguments where the dialectic give-and-take mediates the ideologic extremes of the characters' respective viewpoints. The exchanges between Birkin and Gerald act in the same way. After Clifford withdraws, Mellors' makes speeches and Connie nods her head in agreement. Whereas *Women in Love* builds to a dramatic climax, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* ends in a kind of suspended animation and epistolary stasis.

I don't know if Lawrence could have found a better ending. The uncertainty over how things would turn out in itself expresses his thematic point, because Lawrence felt
humankind was at a crossroads. Would Connie and Mellors be able to make a life together, symbolically healing the tremendous class rift? Two years after Lady Chatterley's Lover was published, Antonio Gramsci would write:

The problem is the following: can a rift between the popular masses and ruling ideologies as serious as that which emerged after the war be "cured" by the simple exercise of force, preventing the new ideologies from imposing themselves? Will the interregnum, the crisis whose historically normal solution is blocked in this way, necessarily be resolved in favour of a restoration of the old? (276)

Looking back we can see the worst tendencies won out, and the ruling powers, resorting to brute force, would be at war again less than a decade after Lawrence's death. After World War I Lawrence had hoped humanity could yet begin anew, but one wonders if he could have conjured any similar optimism given our situation in the late 20th century. Norman Mailer, commenting on Lawrence in 1969, wrote, "The world has been technologized and technologized twice again in the forty years since his death, the citizens are technologized as well....What he had been asking for had been too hard for him, it is more than hard for us" (77). In the twenty years since Mailer wrote those words we can assume our world has been technologized twice yet again. So, with humanity actively developing the cyborg latent in Clifford Chatterley, the challenge of Lawrence's fiction confronts us with greater and greater
urgency: Do we acquiesce to the machine, or find
salvation in the loving touch of human flesh? The
Lawrencean Phoenix yet rises in his best books, warning us
of the consequences of endemic alienation and the coming
ascendancy of the cyborg.
CHAPTER III

THOMAS PYNCHON: THE ENCODED POLITICS OF A NEO-LUDDITE

To de-animalize human mentality, to purge it of obsolete evolutionary characteristics, in particular of death, which foreknowledge terrorizes the contents of skulls with, is the fundamental project of technology; however, *pseudologica fantastica*’s mechanisms require: to establish deathlessness it is necessary to eliminate those who die....

--Galway Kinnell
"The Fundamental Project of Technology"

For twenty-five years now critics have been busily mapping Thomas Pynchon’s fictional Kingdom of Death even though they seem aware that the author mocks their best attempts to "Stencilize" and appropriate his texts. The rapid canonization of Pynchon as a "major author" has been due, at least in part, to the obvious "literary" qualities of his books, their sophisticated styles and structures. The narrative complexity of *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity’s Rainbow* begs for critical exegesis, and the academy has responded by producing a shelf of critical books and articles. The typical critical accolades follow a hyperbolic pattern: Pynchon, it has been said, displays
the inventiveness and encyclopedic erudition of Melville; in his learned allusiveness, structural intricacy and sheer intellectual breadth, he is the peer of James Joyce. The publication of V., his first novel, elicited comparisons with Joyce and Faulkner, while Gravity’s Rainbow was placed, by several critics, on the exalted shelf between Moby Dick and Ulysses.

Without denying either Pynchon’s talents for emulating his literary predecessors or the artistic achievement of his novels, I will argue that Pynchon ultimately sees the complicated literary apparatus of his fiction as an ingenuity—and in some ways disingenuous—subterfuge. Few contemporary writers distrust language as much as Pynchon; for him, literary art (especially its Modernist and Postmodernist forms) is a dubious medium through which to seek "truth." In V., the author expresses his pessimism in this flat statement: "It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th century. To lie" (326). While his mode of communication is language, Pynchon nevertheless seeks to confront "whatever it is the word is there, buffering, to protect us from" (Lot 49, 129). George Levine writes, "The full significance of Pynchon's fiction is in its styles, in its languages; since the language is called upon to sustain the uncertainty it is structured to deny, to imply what cannot be articulated in language"
Because he is a Paranoid, because he is frightened by the implications of his own political convictions, Pynchon uses fiction as a carpet in which he weaves the figure of a bitter political dissidence. In Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power, John Dugdale suggests that Pynchon's "texts contain political messages which he is unwilling to communicate directly" (3). The purpose of this chapter is to liberate the political subtext of V, and to a lesser extent, Gravity's Rainbow: Pynchon's books contain a recoverable political stance, from which he craftily diverts attention with formidable literary pyrotechnics and plots which undermine various characters' attempts to construct plots. Despite the fantastic settings of his entropic zones, Pynchon is arguably the central post-World War II American writer, situated firmly in the political milieu of the Cold War, international power politics, and a global, corporation-dominated economy.

I will pursue three interrelated arguments: First I want to discuss Pynchon as a fictional historian in the tradition of Hawthorne and Faulkner, two writers who constructed mythic histories from the factual fragments of the past. The key difference lies in Pynchon's historical perspective and accompanying fictional settings, which are global, supranational and inherently fantastic; unlike
Hawthorne's provincial New England and Faulkner's insular South, Pynchon must deal with the foreign entanglements of his country in the middle of what has been described, for better or worse, as "The American Century." Second, I want to explore how _V._ and _Gravity's Rainbow_ function as covert denunciations of American imperialism, the latter day extension of the European imperialism the author delineates in several historically-based episodes.

Published in 1963 (a watershed year in many respects), _V._ anticipates America's disastrous imperialistic thrust into southeast Asia, while the Vietnam War itself provides the historical subtext of _Gravity's Rainbow_, which was written during the war years. Finally, I want to explore what is probably Pynchon's main fictional theme: an attack on the dehumanizing--and genocidal--effects of technology. Like Galway Kinnell, Pynchon fully grasps a terrible irony: the fundamental project of technology is "to establish deathlessness" by eliminating "those who die" (meaning us), and both _V._ and _Gravity's Rainbow_ dramatize the historical, psychological, and scientific imperatives involved in the twentieth century's deification and increasing acceleration of technological "progress." Pynchon undermines our blind faith in science and technology by radically questioning the assumptions on which they are based. No living author has more
brilliantly exposed the symbiotic relationship between technology and war. Pynchaon's description of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* could be applied to his own fiction: that it is "well worth reading" for "its Luddite value: that is, for its attempt, through literary means which are nocturnal and deal in disguise, to deny the machine" ("Is it O.K. to Be a Luddite?" 40).

Late in the novel *V.*, Pynchon writes, "Victoria [Meroving] was being gradually replaced by V., something entirely different, for which the young century had as yet no name" (410). In *A Hand to Turn the Time*, Theodore Kharpertian argues that V. represents fascism, or at least, in her various incarnations, she is interconnected with an emergent fascist ideology. While agreeing, in part, with Kharpertian's thesis, I would suggest that V. is indeed a *cyborg* (a word not coined until the 1950's); technology's different intrusions into and replacements of the human body all afflict the female characters in the novel, from Esther Harvitz's plastic surgery, to V.'s extensive prosthesis. Following Henry Adams, Pynchon suggests that V. has degenerated from the mythical fertility goddess Venus (in V. an attempt is made to steal Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*) to the Virgin Mary (for Adams, "the greatest force the Western World had ever felt" (The Education, 388)) to the 20th century's
incarnation of V. (as connected to Adams's dynamo; the abandonment of fertility for sterility and raw mechanical power). The converging lines of V. are the locus of the melding of human and machine, the new nativity of the cyborg.

I

The contrapuntal structure of V. provides a radical contrast: the historical chapters range chronologically from 1898 to 1943 with various exotic European and African settings. The Whole Sick Crew chapters are much more chronologically and geographically unified, covering 1955-56, and they take place mainly in Norfolk, Virginia, and New York City. I agree with the general critical concensus: the historical chapters are more intense and imaginative. Though they lack the continuity of the Whole Sick Crew chapters, they contain an important unifying agent: V. appears almost exclusively in the historical chapters. Pynchon further complicates matters (and plays an obligatory postmodern narrative game) by presenting the historical chapters as filtered through Herbert Stencil's consciousness (hence, their being "Stencilized") from his contemporary perspective as he loiters on the fringes of the Whole Sick Crew. So the critical temptation is to deconstruct what Stencil attempts to reconstruct in his
obsessive pursuit of V.. If for no other reason, V. is a must read for the Pynchon scholar because it contains many of the character prototypes and structural techniques of his later fiction: Stencil obviously anticipates Oedipa Mass (the Tristero being her nebulous object of pursuit) while Tyrone Slothrop combines salient features of Stencil and Benny Profane: the horny schlemiel cum paranoid obsessive. For a first novel, V. is a remarkably mature work; only a confident author would risk such a chaotic narrative in his first published book.

V.'s contrapuntal structure generates, through juxtaposition, an understanding of how the past, no matter how far removed in time and space, impinges on the present. History makes its own connections, produces its own continuities and trajectories, even if we choose to ignore them. In this juxtaposition of narratives, Pynchon follows the fictional strategy of Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!*: Quentin Compson obsessively reconstructs the Sutpen tragedy from a welter of contradictory narratives in an attempt to explain a current cultural malaise he feels but cannot clearly articulate; in V. Herbert Stencil also sifts through contradictory narratives and arcane clues in his pursuit of V. (who may be his mother). Pynchon locates the symptoms for the contemporary diseases which afflict the Whole Sick Crew (alienation, decadence,
sterility, sexual perversion) back in the imperial past of Great Britain and Germany as their respective lust for empire leads to global warfare; in the aftermath of two World Wars, the United States takes upon itself the imperial burden shed by the declining European powers—the thankless task of being the world's policeman. Malta, the island where V.'s two plot lines converge, provides a long-running historical paradigm of imperial conquest, an island and a people treated like "a coin changing hands in the marketplace of power politics" (Stark, 100).

Pynchon never deals with the history writ large in school textbooks, where the acts of a few individuals appear to dominate entire epochs—a common example of what Georg Lukacs describes as one of the main shortcomings of bourgeois thought, the tendency to judge "social phenomena consciously or unconsciously, naively or subtly, consistently from the standpoint of the individual" (28). For example, Gravity's Rainbow, set in World War II, barely mentions the men we perceive to be the main players in the conflict: Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, et al. For Pynchon, his distrust of language carries over into written history, which he believes is tainted by its addiction to cause and effect, slavish dependence on linear chronology, as well as the covert ideological motivations of its authors; in Gravity's Rainbow he
describes history as "at best a conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud" (164).

Consequently, the history Pynchon chooses to fictionally reconstruct is necessarily eclectic and obscure; this way he can fashion original and flexible paradigms, satirically barbed, for the structures and institutions he chooses to attack. Pynchon's books have their origins in library research: the author is a preeminent bibliophile, ransacking libraries for historical minutiae. A dusty tome, relating some forgotten historical incident, stimulates Pynchon's imagination much the same way the discovery of the scarlet letter (described in "The Custom House") inspired Hawthorne to write his most famous novel--assuming, of course, that "The Custom House" is not itself a fiction. A prime example of Pynchon's technique can be found in Chapter Nine of \textit{V.}, "Mondaugen's Story." The chapter reconstructs the failed German colonization of South-West Africa. As a youthful, idealistic engineer, Kurt Mondaugen arrives in 1922, when the colony has degenerated into a remote outpost called Foppl's farm--"a tiny European Conclave or League of Nations, assembled here while political chaos howled outside" (235). Significantly, this colonial hothouse is under siege from a native uprising of the remnants of Bondelswaartz and
Herero tribes, who have been systematically slaughtered by the German colonists. The siege is eerily reminiscent of attacks on the foreign embassies of Americans and Europeans by oppressed third-world populations, rallying to the cries of anti-imperialism—a scene all too dismally familiar in the 20th century.

In Mondaugen we have a character type—the scientist/engineer—which fascinates Pynchon and continually reappears in his books. In V, we first see him as yet another faceless engineer at Yoyodyne, the evil conglomerate, where Benny Profane temporarily finds work. During World War II Mondaugen had worked at Peenemunde, the huge German factory where the V-1 and V-2 rockets were manufactured. Later, the author will resurrect Mondaugen in Gravity’s Rainbow, yet another example of the intertextuality which is rampant in Pynchon’s oeuvre. By placing Mondaugen at Yoyodyne, Pynchon draws attention to an ominous fact: numerous Nazi scientists and engineers were absorbed into American industries after World War II for purposes of technological research and development—the most famous being Werner Von Braun, the father of the ballistic missile, and one of the main subjects of Norman Mailer’s Of a Fire on the Moon, whom Mailer calls “the deus ex machina of the big boosters” (64). The employment of ex-Nazi’s in America’s military-industrial complex is
one aspect of a suspicion found throughout Pynchon's work (and Mailer's also): that America has become a seedbed for fascism. The transfusion of Nazi talent to our shores is fact; it would be naive to believe these men had their ideological slates wiped clean by virtue of repudiating Der Fuhrer and becoming American citizens.

For Pynchon, engineers and scientists are fascinating characters, mainly because of the moral dilemmas they confront (or, more precisely, fail to confront) in the 20th century. Part of the fascination we have for a person like Von Braun is his ability to put conventional morality in abeyance while pursuing amoral scientific purity and the God-like ability to create new techniques and mechanisms. Critics have remarked how the Pokler story in Gravity's Rainbow is one of the most moving sections in the novel: with his daughter basically kidnapped by the Nazi hierarchy, Pokler proceeds with his deadly development of the rocket as a kind of ransom--only later, confronting a pile of Jewish corpses, does Pokler realize the evil dimensions of the machine he has been serving. On the American side, the latent model for these characters could well be J. Robert Oppenheimer, a man who, because of his scientific genius, was appropriated as a key player in the Manhattan Project. Later Oppenheimer would see the atomic genie he let out of the bottle being
transformed into a hydrogen monster by Edward Teller, a Strangelovian character indeed; for his belated twinges of conscience in denouncing the hydrogen bomb, Oppenheimer was accused of being a communist, stripped of his security clearance and disgraced by the government he had so faithfully served. Of course, the fictional precursor of scientists like Oppenheimer is Victor Frankenstein, who discovered, to his chagrin, that he could not control his own creation.

Between V. and Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon's understanding of imperialism developed and expanded—as did his anger over his own country's imperialistic adventures. During the 1950's and early '60's, the years Pynchon came of age, the CIA's coup incubator was most active, and political skullduggery and military adventurism, sponsored by the United States and Russia, afflicted governments all over the globe. Whereas V.'s authorial voice maintains a cool detachment, following the text's own advice to "keep cool, but care" (366), Pynchon's tone in Gravity's Rainbow radically oscillates, as it rides an emotional roller-coaster, where passages of comic-book juvenalia run headlong into apocalypse. Emboldened by tragic developments in Vietnam, Pynchon intersperses Gravity's Rainbow with unequivocal and vehement denunciations of war, while lamenting the failure
of a politically impotent Counterforce. V. provides a psycho-sexual and racial explanation of imperial exploitation. While still exploring the psycho-sexual aspects of imperialism, Gravity’s Rainbow also takes into account the economic factors which Lenin emphasizes in his analysis of imperialism—the economic role of the international cartels. By predicting the advent of "inter-imperialist alliances" and the "international unification of finance capital" (Imperialism, 99) Lenin foresaw the rise of the international conglomerates which are among the predominant features of contemporary capitalism. As his career develops, Pynchon lends more credence to economic hegemony as a major determinant in history: "It may yet turn out that racial differences are not as basic as questions of money and power, but have served a useful purpose, often in the interests of those who deplore them most, in keeping us divided and so relatively poor and powerless" (Slow Learner, 12). Pynchon is at his best describing the amoral machinations of corporations like IG Farben, General Electric, Shell Oil, and the fictional Yoyodyne, corporations for whom technology supplies a renewable profit lifeblood while war itself is viewed as a lucrative business opportunity.

In "Mondaugen’s Story" the bunker atmosphere of Foppl’s Farm gives rise to various sexual perversions, and
Pynchon follows D.H. Lawrence in the shared thesis: the morally corrupt and sexually corrupt go hand and hand. Lawrence and Pynchon repeatedly dramatize human sexuality because it is such an accurate moral barometer (and, let us admit, both authors can be intensely erotic). However, the disgust for loveless perversion, so pronounced in Lawrence, has given way in Pynchon to the voyeur's compulsion to stare—we watch as Mondaugen watches (the situation fictionally parallels the audience's position in Hitchcock's Psycho as we surreptitiously assume Norman Bates's peephole view of Janet Leigh as she undresses) and we are thus both distanced and involved. Herein lies much of the appeal of being an imperial soldier far from home: the jettisoning of sexual repression; the availability of helpless concubines; the obligation to demonstrate sexual prowess as a male bonding ritual among the occupying troops. Amidst the rarefied air of the colonial hothouse, ostensibly civilized men become atavistic marauders. Within the walled confines of FoPpl's Farm, Bondel natives are casually raped, tortured and executed. In describing the colonial brutality, Pynchon's tone is, by turns, flippant and bitter:

Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall upon his slender prey roaring as loud as he feels like, and guzzle her blood with open joy....and let himself go in a
softness, a receptive darkness of limbs, of hair as wooly as the hair on his own forbidden genitals. Out and down in the colonies, life can be indulged, life and sensuality in all its forms, with no harm done to the Metropolis, nothing to soil those cathedrals, white marble statues, noble thoughts....No word ever gets back. (GR, 317)

There's a lot to be said about an unfettered id, and sometimes I think Pynchon means to say it all. Few critics mention Pynchon's historical position in literature's long war against censorship. He is the inheritor of victorious battles fought in the 1950's, where writers like Nabokov, Ginsberg, and Burroughs challenged the censorial status quo and broadened the parameters of the "dirt for dirt's sake" criteria established by the Woolsey Decision in 1933 which exonerated Ulysses. To William S. Burroughs and his Naked Lunch, special credit is due, for after its publication and successful defense against obscenity prosecution, American writers knew they could publish without legal reprisal their explorations of the newly opened frontiers of taboo. Consequently, Pynchon has grasped the opportunity to fictionally explore human sexuality in all its forbidden permutations; though he is not quite a postmodern Marquis de Sade, both writers dramatize surcharged libidos indulging themselves in chaotic zones where moral parameters have been abolished, and the powerful command pleasure on their own terms.
With the destruction of the German colony imminent in 1922, Foppl waxes nostalgic for the glory days of the German domination, crystallized in the brutal subjugation of the Herero uprising in 1904; thus appears the flashback within Mondaugen’s flashback (presented through Stencil’s filtered reconstruction). General Lother von Trotha, the man who masterminds the suppression of the native rebellion, provides a charismatic Hitler-prototype. Foppl reminisces fondly of von Trotha:

"I loved the man. He taught us not to fear. It’s impossible to describe the sudden release; the comfort, the luxury; when you knew you could safely forget all the rote-lessons you’d had to learn about the value and dignity of human life. I had the same feeling once in the Realgymnasium when they told us we wouldn’t be responsible in the examination for all the historical dates we’d spent weeks memorizing....

"Till we’ve done it, we’re taught that it’s evil. Having done it, then’s the struggle: to admit to yourself that it’s not really evil at all. That like forbidden sex it’s enjoyable." (253)

The story of the 1904 uprising is replete with all the colonial horrors: rape, executions, beatings, forced marches of chained prisoners. The primary tool in imposing order is the sjambok, a weapon which is a sort of cross between a whip and club, covered with rhinoceros hide. (Only in the late 1980’s did the South African government outlaw the sjambok’s use by its security forces, as it had become the all-too recognizable symbol
of the continued white racist oppression there.) Pynchon displays his trademark technical detachment in relating horrific incidents of sado-masochism, rape and torture throughout the chapter. In relating the 1904 flashback, Pynchon intentionally obscures the source of the narration, though we assume either Foppl or Weissmann is telling it, or that Mondaugen is dreaming it. The treatment of the Herero child, Sarah, provides a typical example. The posited narrator/protagonist (the distinction is not clear) feels for the child something not unlike love; but it is trampled by the imperatives of dominance and submission inherent in the colonial situation where women are communal chattel:

Soon enough his neighbor the pederast had discovered her and become enchanted. He requested Sarah; this was answered by the lie that she'd come from the pool and the pederast could wait his turn. But it could only get them a reprieve. The neighbor visited his house during the day, found her manacled and helpless, took her his own way and then decided, like a thoughtful sergeant, to share this good fortune with his platoon. Between noon and suppertime, as the fog's glare shifted in the sky, they took out an abnormal distribution of sexual preferences on her, poor Sarah, "his" Sarah only in a way that poisonous strand could never support. (272)

Soon after this gang rape, Sarah drowns herself in the ocean, and we are casually told, "Jackals had eaten her breasts" (273). There is no easy way to deal with the glacial detachment Pynchon displays in relating these
episodes. One could quote similar passages, and many of the most painful to read occur in *Gravity's Rainbow* (can one recall, without a shudder, the coprophilic encounter between Brigadier Pudding and Katje, or Major Marvy's castration?). George Levine cites the prose in these passages as one of Pynchon's "most disorienting and testing" qualities, and he remarks on "its almost sullen resistance to judge the various horrors it coldly narrates. It is almost impossible to locate the narrator, who refuses to protect us with his own disgust, or with ironies that don't cancel each other out" (118). Several of V.'s characters (Mondaugen and Schoenmaker among them) are loosely patterned on Conrad's Colonel Kurtz, the idealist who makes a friend of horror. In describing these horrors, removed even further from his posited narrators than Conrad is from Marlow, Pynchon has attained the "mind of winter" of Stevens's Snow Man, the ability to confront a moral abyss without blinking—an ability shared only, perhaps, with one contemporary, Samuel Beckett. If we accept the genre argument, advanced by Theodore Kharpertian, classifying Pynchon's books as Mennipean Satires, then we can perhaps locate in such passages a satiric comment on the sterile bureaucratic language which attempts to drain horror of emotional impact—in other words, Pynchon bleeds the passages bone white by
withdrawing a conventional narrator’s obligatory moral outrage, then he stands the bureaucratise on its head by refusing to swaddle content in the buffering gauze of euphemism. Thus Pynchon achieves a unique shocking effect through the violent incongruency of tone and diction.

Finally, amidst the rampant corruption of Foppl’s Farm, Mondaugen starts to feel “those first tentative glandular pressures that one day develop into moral outrage” (277)—a rather muted response considering the horrors he witnesses. Before Mondaugen leaves, he witnesses an ominous event:

Now the planes could be heard: a snarling, intermittent sound. They swooped clumsy in a dive toward the Bondelswaartz position: the sun caught suddenly three canisters dropped from each, turned them into six drops of orange fire. They seemed to take a century to fall. But soon, two bracketing the rocks, two among the Bondels and two in the area where the corpses lay, there bloomed at least six explosions, sending earth, stone and flesh cascading toward the nearly black sky with its scarlet overlay of cloud. Seconds later the loud, coughing blasts, overlapping, reached the roof. How the watchers cheered. (276)

Here we see rehearsed in 1922 the recurrent nightmare exclusive to the 20th century, aerial bombardment, a phenomenon which haunts Pynchon’s imagination in Gravity’s Rainbow. In particular, this bombardment falls upon a third world population, as technology visits death upon them from on high, where, God-like in its distance and
power, it cannot be resisted. Many critics of V. have argued how the German colonial atrocities in Southwest Africa anticipate the genocidal policies of the Third Reich. But in one of Pynchon's rare published letters, written to Thomas Hirsch in 1969 and published in David Seed's *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*, he connects the German atrocities explicitly to the United States:

> I feel personally that the number done on the Herero head by the Germans is the same number done on the American Indian head by our own colonists and what is now being done on the Buddhist head in Vietnam by the Christian minority in Saigon and their advisors: the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration....I don't like to use the word but I think what went on back in Sudwest is archetypal of every clash between the west and the non-west, clashes that are still going on right now in South East Asia. (241-242)

Although biographical information on Pynchon is notoriously scarce, we do know he interrupted his college years at Cornell to serve in the United States Navy, circa 1956-58. From his perspective as a sailor, Pynchon received a first-hand view of the overseas military commitments of his country. Elsewhere Pynchon writes how the military is a microcosm of class antagonisms: "the peacetime service...can provide an excellent introduction to the structure of society at large. It becomes evident even to a young mind that often unacknowledged divisions
in civilian life find clear and immediate expression in the military distinction between 'officers' and 'men'" (Slow Learner, 6). In the history of imperialism, a powerful navy is arguably the most important component in establishing an overseas beachhead and keeping it supplied, with an air force becoming increasingly important as the 20th century progressed. (Of course, in the aircraft carrier, the two forces, air and sea, are effectively combined; hence, the enormous American investment in these ships.) Herein lies one of the cornerstones of imperialist ideology: imperialist powers always exploit technological advantages in weaponry.

I think it is safe to assume Pynchon's knowledge of the major political developments of the late fifties and early sixties, the years of his composition of V. These years are arguably the hottest of the Cold War, where a number of third world countries acted out the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union by proxy. During this time the English and French continued to lose colonies, while American hegemony expanded—in the middle east, in southeast Asia. Pynchon was probably aware (if not at the time, then later) of the widely publicized French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954; in fact, the U.S. Navy helped evacuate approximately one million refugees, most of them Catholic, from North Vietnam (Karnow, 207).
During Pynchon's writing of *V.* the American commitment to the Republic of South Vietnam steadily mounted as we filled the military void left by the French. So in the early sixties all the factors were coalescing for the massive American involvement in Vietnam, with the Korean stalemate and the French disaster at Dien Bien Phu providing unheeded warnings of a pending disaster. Indeed, the siege of Foppl's Farm anticipates, in important ways, a siege like that at Khe Sahn, especially the aerial bombardments of Viet Cong positions by American planes. In *V.*, Pynchon sets an important episode in Malta during World War II, and he describes the horrific aerial bombardments of the island by the Germans: "For a year and a half Malta averaged ten raids per day" (310). During the Vietnam War, Saigon would become a Euro-American enclave not unlike Foppl's Farm, rife with corruption, increasingly under siege from the indigenous population, depending on aerial bombings of the surrounding countryside to keep the insurgents at bay. In the dynamic of imperial history, Malta, Vietnam and Sudwest Africa all have been similarly crushed by foreign juggernauts, and in *V.* Pynchon, the paranoid historian, reveals the implicit connections between the grim fates of those respective lands—and the mantle of imperial conquest taken up by the United States.
In the years since the publication of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, it has become clear that the United States has retained its imperial ideology and continued its projection of military power, especially in Latin America (Grenada, Nicaragua and Panama being the most blatant examples). The collapse of Soviet counterresistance has seemingly given impetus to new American military adventurism abroad, and it has shown how American Imperialism has outlived its Cold War rationale: the halting of Communist-backed insurgencies. In a 1990 article, "Whatever Happened to Imperialism?" Prabhat Patnaik, lamenting the "deafening silence about imperialism in the current Marxist discourse" (5), argues: "Imperialism, viewed as a fundamental set of economic relations characterizing the world, is also stronger today than ever before, at least in the post-war period" (3). American hegemony in the Middle East, and fomenting Arab resentment toward the West. Nasser’s power gambit in 1956, where he attempted to wrest control of the Suez Canal from the British and French, has found its parallel in Saddam Hussein’s military takeover of Kuwait in August, 1990. In a gruesome ironic twist, the United States
answered Saddam Hussein's imperial thrust with one of its own. In January 1991, when 450,000 American troops assembled in the Saudi Arabian desert, and the United States Air Force and Navy poised themselves to bomb the nation of Iraq, Edward Said denounced the so-called Operation Desert Shield in the following terms:

The United States still believes in its right to project its power where it pleases, for its own ends, wrapped in its own "higher" morality and principles....This is imperialist ideology....Who has given the U.S. the right to project its power while simultaneously proclaiming its higher purpose and superior wisdom? The U.S. is in fact repeating the practices employed by the British and the French in the 19th century. The big differences are that Washington today is capable of much greater destruction, and it refuses to admit that it is engaged in the business of empire. (A17)

In the early months of 1991, as the United States conducted a massive aerial bombardment of Iraq (with British and French armies being given an opportunity to reexperience their respective imperial pasts), the nightmare of Gravity's Rainbow was revisited on a massive scale: high-tech rockets, cruise missiles and bombs screamed across the desert sky. As Pynchon's novels have shown, technology has assumed tremendous momentum (and the Persian Gulf War was marked by a tragic sense of inevitability); at times these weapons seem independent of human control; commentators dubbed this conflict "Nintendo War," for the number of sanitized videos of bombing runs
the Pentagon proudly displayed, via television screens, to press pools ostensibly "covering" the war. Operation Desert Storm effectively combined imperialist ideology with high-tech weaponry, giving birth to another destructive war--and quite probably another long-term overseas commitment of American troops. At this writing, American companies are signing contracts to rebuild the Kuwaiti infrastructure our bombs destroyed. It's business as usual.

II

Alienation and commodity-fetishism are central concepts in Marxist discourse; amidst the frenzied consumerism which characterizes our current stage of late capitalism, both phenomena are rampant and interactive. Recently, a stand-up comedian remarked, "I like Europe. It's a lot like Epcot Center." Thus we live in the culture of the similacrum where simulations are accepted as more real than the objects they recreate. As human community fragments and we become isolated monads hypnotized by video images, humans are increasingly viewed as things, often as commodities manipulated by market forces. One of V.'s main themes involves the degeneration of human beings into inanimate "things." Pynchon's use of the term "inanimate" doesn't adequately capture the
phenomenon his novel describes; he is in fact describing the features of the cyborg, something that is surely animate enough, in that it moves and retains organic functions. Within his first three novels, Pynchon has posited a grand dialectic, which he fictionally mediates, between the two cultures, literary/humanist and technoscientific. In his famous lecture, "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution," C.P. Snow decried the gap, fully aware of the dearth of minds like his own capable of finding any unifying totality in the opposing cultural formations. Frederick Karl writes:

With his background in engineering physics and the humanities, [Pynchon] was uniquely equipped. The rhythms that underlie his work, the sense of opposites, the tensions and conspiratorial silences, derive from meetings between technology and humanism. (305)

Whereas Snow, ever the rationalist, tends to affirm the machine, Pynchon, the neo-Luddite, seeks to deny it.

Technology has blurred our categories of life and death as seen in the court battles over comatose patients kept alive by machines (e.g., Karen Ann Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan). A cyborg is neither fully alive or dead in the conventional sense; it is both alive and dead. As Kinnell has written, the fundamental project of technology is to establish "deathlessness." Such is the operative condition of the cyborg. Human imagination has visited the ambiguous realm between life and death before, and the
result has been a mixture of bliss and horror. Just as an angel, the ethereal Christian construct, occupies a sort of middle ground, so does the vampire, the undead. Arguably, the vampire's continuing hold on our imagination owes something to his pronounced eroticism and mythic resonance as a compulsive sex-criminal ("I can't help myself!" cries the anguished vampire Barnabas Collins of the resurrected television series, *Dark Shadows*). By the 1960's Hollywood had pretty well worn out its gallery of undead characters, including the Mummy, Frankenstein's monster, and the Zombie, who were the staples of 1950's supernatural narratives. At this historical moment, the cyborg is the new character who fulfills our imaginative compulsion to construct narratives exploring the realm of the undead. As science has displaced supernaturalism, technology now reanimates the corpse. In the continuing evolution of the synthetic human, polymer chemistry has played a crucial role. Robotic scientists work most often with synthetics and plastics in their attempts to construct a functional simulacrum of the human body. Contemporary roboticists are combining organic tissue with polymers to produce new substances:

By combining particles of chlorophyll with molecules of soft plastic, researchers at M.I.T. have made a rubbery gel that shrinks and swells in response to an electric charge. The substance could conceivably be used to make artificial muscles. (McCarroll, 94-96)
In Pynchon's novels, plastic is an evil substance, the result of unnatural synthesis, culminating in the sinister Imipolex G which plays an important role in *Gravity's Rainbow*: "Plasticity's central canon: that chemists were no longer to be at the mercy of nature" (GR, 249). The advent of plastic is one of the chief technological innovations of the last hundred years. One need only glance around a modern office or kitchen to appreciate its ubiquitous presence in our lives. The sciences of cosmetic surgery and prosthetics owe much of their technological development to polymer chemistry. In *V.*, Pynchon traces the rapid progress of these sciences to war; he traces the technical foundations of the cyborg back to plastic surgery, the remolding of the human physique.

Obviously, Pynchon knows that plastic surgery in and of itself has been a great benefit to humans who were born with deformities or had their physiognomies mangled in accidents or by war wounds. What he objects to is the agencies which mangle the human body, namely the machine and its utilization in war. Also, even in the absence of accidental disfigurement, humans now frivolously use plastic surgery to attain some cultural ideal of beauty. Using three characters--Schoenmaker, the plastic surgeon; Evan Godolphin, a war casualty, and Esther Harvitz,
Shoenmaker's patient/victim--Pynchon provides a capsule history of the development (and corruption) of plastic surgery science in the 20th century. As Pynchon indicates, plastic surgery developed rapidly as a result of World War I, not always with positive results:

Now luckily for some a law of supply and demand had been at work in the field of plastic surgery....During the war new techniques were developed by necessity and were practised by GP's, eye-ear-nose-and-throat men, even a hastily recruited gynecologist or two. The techniques that worked were adopted and passed on quickly to other medics. Those that failed produced a generation of freaks and pariahs who along with those who'd received no restorative surgery at all became a secret and horrible postwar fraternity. No good at all in any of the usual rungs of society, where did they go? (99)

The medical experimenters commit their worst errors when they attempt "the introduction of inert substances into the living face" (99). Indeed, humanity has long lamented the sad fact: the flesh is weak, it inevitably decays. So we dream of replacing our ephemeral flesh with more indestructable substitutes. Modern medical technology actively subverts nature: transplanting and implanting procedures must circumvent the human body's natural biological response--the rejection of implanted foreign substances. Unfortunately, when Godolphin receives "a nose bridge of ivory, a cheekbone of silver and a paraffin and celluloid chin" (100) the facial reconstruction fails, and he joins the "postwar fraternity" of the deformed;
periodically in V, Godolphin rears his mangled visage as he searches for the lost talisman which will give him passage to Vheissu, a mysterious land that may or may not exist. His life shattered by war, Godolphin can only wallow in dreams of Vheissu, a modern Atlantis combining elements of nostalgia and utopia.

Schoenmaker is one of several bridge characters in V, who appear in the historical chapters (often experiencing some life-altering trauma) then reappear in the "contemporary" 1955-56 time frame. On the fringes of the Whole Sick Crew, Schoenmaker administers a thriving plastic surgery practice in New York. Through Esther Harvitz, a paradigm for the new alteration candidate, Pynchon shows how plastic surgery had by mid-century changed its medical aims from those of healing to alteration, the science of "cosmetic" surgery. Capitalizing on Esther's own slippery sense of identity and her wish to attain "an ideal of nasal beauty established by movies, advertisements, magazine illustrations" (103), Schoenmaker cynically remolds Esther then seduces his re-creation. Describing the nose operation, Pynchon again utilizes his trademark clinical precision and detachment, resulting in one of the most painful passages in V. The passage works on a number of levels: Pynchon transforms Tench, the surgical assistant,
into a Freudian parody for whom the anesthetic injections become phallic as he chants, "Stick it in...pull it out...stick it in...oooh that was good...." Meanwhile Esther confuses her descent into the inanimate with Nirvana: "Later she would say, 'It was almost a mystic experience: What religion is it--one of the Eastern ones--where the highest condition we can attain is that of an object--a rock.'" (106). Her passivity increases as she experiences a "delicious loss of Estherhood." Returning later to have her stitches removed, "garbed underneath as lacily and with as many fetishes as she could afford" (109), Esther surrenders herself to Schoenmaker's seduction--something he had fully anticipated. Out of this sterile coupling a child is conceived: we last see Esther Harvitz boarding a plane to Cuba in order to have the child aborted--yet another of those pre-Roe v. Wade "vacations."

Schoenmaker's character resembles that of Mondaugen where technical prowess overshadows ethical considerations. In V. and Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon decries the human tendency to accept war and human mutilation as business as usual. War accepts and promotes laws of supply and demand: "Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling....The true war is a celebration of markets" (GR, 105). As C. Wright
Mills shows in *The Power Elite*, the United States developed a "permanent war economy" (276) by the mid-twentieth century, and millions of Americans continue, knowingly and unknowingly, to fill a slot in the machine. As indicated in the following passage, Shoenmaker represents the larger medical establishment, which, for the best of reasons, has tried to ameliorate the effects of war while abdicating responsibility for the causes.

If alignment with the inanimate is the mark of a Bad Guy, Schoenmaker at least made a sympathetic beginning. But at some point along his way there occurred a shift in outlook...Having heard his vocation on the embattled wind, Schoenmaker's dedication was toward repairing the havoc wrought by agencies outside his sphere of responsibility. Others--politicians and machines--carried on wars....others--on the highways, in the factories--undid the work of nature with automobiles, milling machines, other instruments of civilian disfigurement. What could he do towards eliminating the causes? They existed, formed a body of things-as-they-are....(101)

Compartmentalization and specialization have the effect of morally fragmenting humanity; the unifying, mediating consciousness is endangered if not already extinct. Accepting war as an inevitable status quo, agencies and institutions which should be fundamentally antagonistic to war and violence, such as doctors and clergy, are appropriated and form part of the supporting apparatus of the war machine, from the army chaplain, who through theological contortions, psychologically prepares men to
kill, to the surgeon who heals the soldier so that he may be redeployed to the front-line carnage. Pynchon’s novels reveal how, in the 20th century, the distinction between "military" and "civilian" has been negated: economic forces, tied to war, are all-inclusive. Fundamentally amoral rockets care not where they land.

V’s development of the cyborg is gender-specific: the novel’s female characters are the primary victims of the dehumanizing march toward the inanimate, as we saw earlier with Esther Harvitz. Sentimental though it may be, Pynchon sees the feminine principle, the progenitive womb, as an organic counterbalance to the machine--and as one of humankind’s remaining hopes. This is the reason why female betrayals, a recurrent motif in Pynchon’s work, are so devastating for the male characters. Even the plot of Pynchon’s latest novel, Vineland, (1989) turns on Frenesi Gates’s betrayal of Zoyd Wheeler, suggesting to what extent the motif still weighs on the author's imagination. Though diametrically opposed to the machine, the female is nonetheless particularly vulnerable to its insidious sterility. Fetishism and the culture of the similacrum feed upon each other. Rachel Owlglass’s use of her sports car as a substitute lover demonstrates a new dimension of fetishism--and makes a satiric comment on America’s so-called "love affair" with the automobile.
Benny Profane discovers Rachel washing her MG in the middle of the night, and, in effect, seducing it:

"You beautiful stud," he heard her say, "I love to touch you....Do you know what I feel when we're out on the road? Alone, just us?" She was running the sponge caressingly over its front bumper. "Your funny responses, darling, that I know so well. The way your brakes pull a little to the left, the way you start to shudder around 5000 rpm when you're excited...." She had climbed in the car and now lay back in the driver's seat, her throat open to the summer constellations. He was about to approach her when he saw her hand snake out all pale to fondle the gearshift. (28-29)

Pynchon's books document the proliferation of sexual similacrum in the 20th century, with modern technology building on the ancient categories of fetishist and voyeur; in both phenomena the visual preempts the tactile, thus giving rise to a masturbatory video culture. It is not clear whether Pynchon considers behavior like Rachel's as a betrayal of the male, or a deserved response to declining male potency--D.H. Lawrence's recurring nightmare. Even Tyrone Slothrop's role as a phallic Counterforce is diluted when he discovers that while he was an infant his penis was (probably) appropriated by Laslo Jamf and injected with Imipolex G, resulting in "The Penis He Thought Was His Own" (GR, 216). Imipolex G, with its "erectile" qualities, threatens to replace the male totally. In one hallucinatory passage, Katje recalls an orgy based on plastics fetish, where she is dressed "in an
exotic costume of some black polymer." She is informed by Drohne, one of Blicero's aptly-named lackeys, that it is Imipolex G, and she reacts, "Nothing I ever wore, before or since, aroused me quite as much as Imipolex" (488). A corrupted fertility goddess surrounded by male attendants, Katje describes a scene not unlike a fertility ritual one might find in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, except that plastic has replaced the male phallus with Imipolex G dildoes; in its hallucinatory indices, Katje's revery connects ancient Aztec sacrificial rituals with Gottfried's sacrifice in the Rocket (where he, too, is surrounded by Imipolex G). At the end of the chapter, the silence Katje hears is the silence of ritual death, wherein the victims collaborate, tranquilized in polymer wombs.

Typically, Pynchon finds the origins of proliferating sexual similacrum in the past, and he sets what is perhaps *V.*'s kinkiest chapter in 1913 Paris, on the eve of World War I. Subtitled "V. in love," Chapter Fourteen dramatizes Melanie l'Heuremaudit's theatrical debut as the star of an original stage production, "The Rape of the Chinese Virgins." With the stage name "Mlle. Jarretiere" (the garter), the fifteen-year-old Melanie is a mechanized compendium of fetish, automaton, cyborg. Consequently,
the mysterious V., whose presence is more palpable in this chapter than any other, lusts for Melanie, telling her:

"Do you know what a fetish is? Something of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket...une jarretiere. You are the same, not real but an object of pleasure."

(404)

Monsieur Itague, Melanie's "guardian," establishes the chapter's theme when he states, "A decadence is a falling-away from what is human, and the further we fall the less human we become. Because we are less human, we foist off the humanity we have lost on inanimate objects and abstract theories" (405). Itague's statement neatly sums up the Whole Sick Crew; historically, it characterizes the moral condition of Europe just before the "sudden establishment here of a colony of the Kingdom of Death" which "is served by fetish-constructions like V.'s" (411). The chapter's atmosphere is marked by a strong sense of foreboding; miasmal rain clouds loom over Paris, strongly suggesting the looming death of the Great War, a rain of blood.

Within this chapter, Pynchon comes closer to characterizing V. as a cyborg than anywhere else in the novel. Jarretiere serves as a backdrop and mirror for V.'s accelerating transformation from animate to inanimate as V. recognizes "the fetish of Melanie and the fetish of herself to be one. As all inanimate objects, to one
victimized by them, are alike" (410). The relationship between Melanie and V. develops the doppleganger motif so prominent in the novels of Pynchon's Cornell professor, Vladimir Nabokov. Stencil intrudes occasionally; time is fluid and Pynchon shuttles between 1913 and 1956 as though we are in one of Stephen Hawking's theorized time continuums, cosmic wormholes. Looking back at V.'s 1913 condition, Stencil extrapolates in the tradition of the science fictionist and envisions the 1956 incarnation of V. which he hopes to confront:

Stencil even departed from his usual ploddings to daydream a vision of her now, at age seventy-six: skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic, both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be. Solenoid relays would be her ganglia, servo-actuators move her flawless nylon limbs, hydraulic fluid be sent by her platinum heart-pump though butyrate veins and arteries. Perhaps...even a complex system of pressure transducers located in a marvelous vagina of polyethylene; the variable arms of their Wheatstone bridges all leading to a single silver cable which fed pleasure-voltages direct to the correct register of the digital machine in her skull. (411-412)

All the components listed here are 20th century creations of technology; from a technical standpoint, Pynchon does not carelessly toss off sloppy lists. Many of the listed components are theoretically sound and have indeed been incorporated into prototype cyborgs in films and in
laboratories.

Chapter Fourteen culminates in the performance of "The Rape of the Chinese Virgins"; the climax is the sacrifice of the virgin Su Feng, played by Melanie, who dies defending her virginity against the invading Mongolian hordes. Utilizing the Shakespearean tactic of the play-within-the-play, Pynchon catalogs the cultural malaise of pre-war Europe. The men responsible for the production are only dimly outlined by Pynchon, but they strongly resemble the manipulator-technicians (i.e., Inverarity, Pointsman) found elsewhere in his work—amoral men whose power allows them to enact and vicariously enjoy their corrupt fantasies. The three men, Satin, Itague and Porcepic, are determined to shock the already jaded tastes of their Parisian audience using the powerful stimuli of drama, music, and choreography; they form part of a "circle inclined toward sadism, sacrilege, endogamy and homosexuality" (407) so the relationship of V. and Melanie is casually accepted by them as status quo.

Contrary to their assumptions, the sex between V. and Melanie is not lesbian, for as Pynchon indicates, "certain fetishes never have to be touched or handled at all; only seen, for there to be complete fulfillment" (408). V. and Melanie's sexual relationship occurs only on a visual level. Human touch has withered away, and the visual is
ascendant. Providing Melanie with dozens of mirrors, V. enjoys Melanie's autoeroticism as performance art. Melanie, the pubescent exhibitionist requires V. as audience/voyeur, and vice versa. On an expanded level, Pynchon equates their visual relationship with the tourist culture of Karl Baedeker which he sees as a kind of standardization and commercial exploitation of the meetings between people of different cultures. No real human interaction takes place in Baedeker land; tourist and natives merely form inanimate poles of a commercial transaction.

Similar to the other historical chapters in V., Chapter Fourteen is controlled chaos; the shifting points of view serve to obscure Pynchon's omniscient control. Out of its abrupt shifts and quirks, its brief glimpses of various characters, its thematic digressions, Chapter Fourteen finally arrives at the night of the performance at the Theatre Vincent Castor. Su Feng's handmaids, in a remarkable technical innovation, are played by automata designed by a German engineer. Their signature dance is the Tango, a new dance in 1913, "a dance for automata." (In the 1972 movie, Last Tango in Paris, Marlon Brando's character pointedly disrupts the clockwork, mechanical quality of this dance with a drunken bump and grind; the movie is his attempt to overturn the mechanical deadness
of modern life exemplified by the rigidified Tango dancers.) The final portion, The Sacrifice of the Virgin, becomes precisely that, as the boundary between theatre and reality is crossed and Melanie dies on stage in a shocking manner:

Two of the male dancers, whom Itague had never left off calling Mongolized fairies, produced a long pole, pointed wickedly at one end....While two of the other Mongolians held her, struggling and head shaven, Su Feng was impaled at the crotch on the point of the pole and slowly raised by the entire male part of the company, while the females lamented below....La Jarretiere's movements became more spastic, agonized: the expression on the normally dead face was one which would disturb for years the dreams of those in the front rows....as blood ran down the pole, the impaled girl went limp....Melanie was supposed to have worn a protective metal device, a species of chastity belt, into which the point of the pole fit. She had left it off....the doctor knelt over the girl and pronounced her dead." (413-414)

Besides its powerful shocking effect, the scene is consistent with images and themes found elsewhere in V. and Gravity's Rainbow: the explicit linking of sex and death, a shocking reality piercing the theatrical facade, the violation and destruction of the progenitive womb as Melanie is crucified without the promise of redemption for the witnesses.

However, Melanie's "crucifixion" can be linked to V.'s conversion to a dark religion, for she reemerges, sacrilegiously disguised, in Malta during World War II,
and she becomes known among the children of Valetta as the "Bad Priest." Stencil's earlier extrapolation, wherein he envisioned V. as a cyborg, is basically confirmed when we witness V.'s dismantling. As we might expect, the death of the Bad Priest occurs in Chapter Eleven, before the chapter containing Melanie's apotheosis and V.'s last pathetic attempt at human love. Of course, the chapter is subtitled "The Confessions of Fausto Maijstral"; so, once again, Pynchon disguises his own authorial omniscience by presenting V.'s narrative from differing points of view, making it difficult if not impossible to establish the text's objective "facts." Fausto undermines the credibility of his own memoir:

Now memory is a traitor: gilding, altering. The word is, in sad fact, meaningless, based as it is on the false assumption that identity is single, soul continuous. A man has no more right to set forth self-memory as truth.... (307)

To make things even more confusing, there are three generations of Faustos, all bearing the same name, creating much the same disorienting effect as Faulkner does in *The Sound and the Fury* with his Quentins and Caddys. Nevertheless, one of the Faustos tells the disturbing story of the death of the Bad Priest. Throughout the chapter, as the aerial bombardments increase in frequency and deadliness, Fausto discourses on humanity's accelerated descent into the inanimate: "I
know of machines that are more complex than people....To have humanism we must first be convinced of our humanity. As we move further into decadence this becomes more difficult" (322). Stalking this death zone, the Bad Priest counsels sterility: "The girls he advised to become nuns, avoid the sensual extremes--pleasure of intercourse, pain of childbirth. The boys he told to find strength in--and be like--the rock of their island" (340). The children instinctively reject this advice; despite the bombing, they cling to the promise of life inherent in their youth. Then in the aftermath of yet another bombing raid, they extract their revenge on the Bad Priest.

As Fausto looks on, the children find the Bad Priest wedged under a fallen beam in the exposed cellar of a destroyed house. As they begin to tug at the "priest's" rainment they suddenly discover "It's a lady." From then on the disguise comes apart and we get a catalogue of V.'s prosthesis and body simulacrum: a white wig, artificial feet, a star sapphire for a navel, a set of false teeth, and finally a glass eye with the iris in the shape of a clock. As the sirens begin to wail and the children disperse with their prosthetic contraband, Fausto speculates that the body probably was made up of even more artificial parts:

Surely her arms and breasts could be detached; the skin of her legs be peeled away to reveal
some intricate understructure of silver openwork. Perhaps the trunk itself contained other wonders: intestines of parti-colored silk, gay balloon lungs, a rococo heart. (343)

As the Bad Priest succumbs, Fausto administers the sacrament of Extreme Unction and hears the incomprehensible sounds of a toothless confession "so unlike human or even animal sound that they might have been only the wind blowing past any dead reed" (344). Lacking sacramental oil, Fausto anoints the Bad Priest's lips with her own blood and he feels a coldness beyond that of human death, from which his fingers recoil—it is the coldness of the machine.

As V. traces the trajectory of cyborg development, we see relatively crude prothesis giving way to ever more sophisticated versions of human simulacrum. Benny Profane confronts the 1956 standard of the cyborg while working as a night watchman at Anthroresearch Associates, a subsidiary of the Yoyodyne Corporation. Pynchon explains the company's activities:

It did research for the government on the effects of high-altitude and space flight; for the National Safety Council on automobile accidents; and for Civil Defense on radiation absorption, which was where SHROUD came in. In the eighteenth century it was often convenient to regard man as a clockwork automaton. In the nineteenth century, with Newtonian physics pretty well assimilated and a lot of work in thermodynamics going on, man was looked on more as a heat-engine, about 40 percent efficient. Now in the twentieth century, with nuclear and subatomic physics a going thing, man had become
something which absorbs X-rays, gamma rays and neutrons. (284)

In this passage Pynchon indicates how the conception of man has been influenced, if not largely determined, by developments in science and physics; rather than setting the agenda on how we conceive ourselves, the humanities, especially philosophy and literature, have been on the defensive, trying to maintain a spiritual bulwark against a calculated, mechanistic definition of man. Arguably, one of the cues for the intellectual life of the 20th century was given when Einstein published his Theory of Relativity at the outset of the century. For all its cosmic implications, its main force was felt in our own conception of humanity, especially in its moral and theological dimensions. We still wrestle with the dilemmas of moral relativity, randomness and entropy, the notion of a God "who plays dice with the universe" in Einstein's own words.

Employed by Anthroresearch Associates as a night watchman, Benny Profane confronts the company's "Frankenstein's monster-like" test mannequins, which are given interesting acronyms: "SHROUD: synthetic human, radiation output determined" and "SHOCK--synthetic human object, casualty kinematics" (284-285). Again Pynchon displays his technical prowess in enunciating the engineering basis for these sophisticated cyborgs;
significantly, the SHROUD mannequin has human parts:

Its skin was cellulose acetate butyrate, a plastic not only transparent to light but also to X-rays, gamma rays and neutrons. Its skeleton had once been that of a living human; now the bones were decontaminated and the long ones and spinal column hollowed inside to receive radiation dosimeters. SHROUD was five feet nine inches tall—the fiftieth percentile of Air Force standards. The lungs, sex organs, kidneys, thyroid, liver, spleen and other internal organs were hollow and made of the same clear plastic as the body shell. These could be filled with aqueous solutions which absorbed the same amount of radiation as the tissue they represented. (284)

What happens inside Anthroresearch's "chamber of horrors" has its parallels and potential parallels in the world outside where real humans are mutilated in car accidents, and nuclear radiation still threatens to turn humans into legions of SHROUDs. But as Pynchon indicates, the real threat to our humanity lies elsewhere: in the very activity of constructing these cyborgs, of making them more like us, we meet them midway, and become more like them. Making his rounds as nightwatchman, Benny Profane engages SHROUD in a cryptic conversation, and it is worth quoting at length:

"What's it like," he said. Better than you have it. "Wha."

Wha yourself. Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday. (The skull seemed to be grinning at Profane.) "There are other ways besides fallout and road accidents."

But those are most likely. If somebody doesn't do it to you, you'll do it to
"You don't even have a soul. How can you talk."
Since when did you ever have one? What are you doing, getting religion? All I am is a dry run....
....After a while he got up and went over to SHROUD. "What do you mean, we'll be like you and SHOCK someday? You mean dead?
Am I dead? If I am then that's what I mean.
"If you aren't then what are you?"
Nearly what you are. None of you have very far to go.
"I don't understand."
So I see. But you're not alone. That's a comfort, isn't it? (286-287)

SHROUD's dialogue lacks quotation marks and speech tags, indicating the rarefied status of the speaker: Is it man or machine? SHROUD speaks from the juncture of two realms, dead and undead. In this passage, I think Pynchon is telling us that both men and women have now appropriated V.'s trajectory toward the inanimate, and that trajectory ends with the cyborg. Consequently, our fates may well be those of the test manikens. As we become less human, the agencies of human destruction and mutilation will be emboldened to treat us as they do the SHROUD and SHOCK dummies.

Unfortunately, the forces which Pynchon posits as counterforces to the descent into the inanimate have been badly debased and appropriated. Earlier I indicated how the feminine principle acted as a counterforce but had degenerated. As Stencil charts V.'s metamorphosis into a
cyborg, Benny Profane must deal with the female members of the Whole Sick Crew, who have all (with the possible exception of Paola Maijstral) become mechanistic. The novel's other counterforce to the inanimate, Benny Profane, the schleimeil, opposes the machine almost by default; he lacks Slothrop's animating paranoia, which Stencil possesses in abundance. Pynchon is very much a writer of his time in that his "heroes" are really 50's and 60's antiheroes. Benny Profane and Tyrone Slothrop are characters in the tradition of Joseph Heller's Yossarian and Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim--characters more acted upon than acting, schleimeils, losers, wanderers, victims, all abused by forces so vast as to be beyond their ken. The four characters cited above are all military men who have become radically alienated from their roles in the vast Pentagon apparatus. Betrayed, confused and alone, these characters live on society's fringes connected neither to the army or civilian community; collective praxis and revolutionary struggle aren't even a dream, let alone a possibility. Despite their relatively pathetic stature, it is in characters like Benny Profane and Tyrone Slothrop where Pynchon's sympathies lie. As John Dugdale argues, "There is an unmistakable partisan alignment on the side of the profane (V.), the Preterite (Gravity's Rainbow), those whom Oedipa
calls the Tristero (*Lot 49*): bums, colonial subjects, ethnic minorities, seditionaries, exiles, inner emigres, outsiders, rejects, social waste" (122).

As character types, these men and women can be traced back to the great archetypal picaro, Don Quixote; they duplicate several of his satiric/comic functions. However, in the twentieth century, the stakes are higher and governmental intrusions into and appropriations of private life have gone beyond anything Cervantes could have foreseen. Unlike Quixote and his windmills, Slothrop pursues evanescent conspiracies which may turn out to be mere imaginative constructs; and Quixote does not live with Slothrop’s terrible suspicion that "Something was done to him....all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to’ve been under some Control, all the time, same as a fixed roulette wheel" (209). If there is any heroism in Profane and Slothrop, it is in their refusal to capitulate to mechanistic determinism and control, however ineffectual their resistance may be in terms of any revolutionary praxis. Though hope in *Gravity’s Rainbow* thins and scatters along with Slothrop’s body, it nevertheless persists, for "his perennial escape from the crunching thrust of fixation seems to argue that in the fight over control or nonregulation, in the struggle of necessity versus freedom, the latter may well
hold the upper hand for good" (Friedman and Puetz, 79).

Whereas Slothrop has energy and trajectory, Benny Profane rather fizzles out at the end of V. His final lament, "I haven't learned a goddamn thing" (454), may be the key to weakness of The Whole Sick Crew chapters, and V. as a whole. The Whole Sick Crew chapters are important and essential in that they provide closure for themes and characters developed in the historical chapters. However, they often read like one long decadent wallow, and there is only so much comic mileage in party-till-you-puke exploits. Pynchon handles aimless decadence with much more economy in The Crying of Lot 49, and, unlike Benny Profane, Oedipa Mass has learned something in the course of the narrative—-even if she has learned that she may know nothing, that the Tristero may be a figment of her paranoid imagination. Looking at Pynchon's career as a whole, I believe he had to prove he could write a compact, polished gem like Lot 49, wherein V. 's imaginative sprawl is transformed into compressed menace. Lot 49 provides a logical bridge between V. and Gravity's Rainbow; Pynchon posits so much latent evil in the Southern California landscape that we feel, as Oedipa awaits the Crying of Lot 49, that the door to hell is about to be opened. The continuity between Lot 49 and Gravity's Rainbow lies in shared senses of foreboding, the feeling that, in Douglas
Fowler's words, it is "the last moment before the last moment" (7).

The dialectics posited in Pynchon's first two novels between humanism and technology, animate and inanimate, paranoia and antiparanoia, are all profoundly expanded in Gravity's Rainbow. In the years since its publication, admiring critics have been trying to convince the novel's detractors that Pynchon knew what he was doing when he wrote the book, that there is method in the mad narrative. Instead of defending the novel on these terms (terms which I believe are still being dictated by the hermetic methodologies of the New Criticism and Formalism latent in the academy), I think we should accept the book's plurality and disorder as virtues--or a least as part of the author's intentions rather than as mere technical sloppiness. By historical accident, the literary theory of the critic who, I think, best explains what Pynchon is doing in Gravity's Rainbow, was posthumously translated and made available in English in the decade following the 1973 publication of Pynchon's masterpiece. I refer to the work of M.M. Bakhtin, the Russian critic who has attracted considerable attention only in the last ten years.

Bakhtin's theory of the novel defines this elastic, mercurial genre as a devouring and all-inclusive "supergenre":
The novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others). In principle, any genre could be included in the construction of the novel, and in fact it is difficult to find any genres that have not at some point been incorporated into a novel by someone. (The Dialogic Imagination, 320-321)

Looked at from this standpoint, Gravity's Rainbow incorporates all the genres Bakhtin lists, plus many more, including, most significantly, the language of science and technology. Pynchon exemplifies Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" and "many-voicedness" and expands it even further into the heteroglossia of technology, a new language so many-faceted and complex that few contemporary novelists attempt to deal with it. "Gravity's Encyclopedia," as Edward Mendelson refers to the novel, is packed with technological arcana: calculus and chemistry, rocket engineering and physics, various symbols and formulae, Maxwell's Demon and the Heisenburg Principle, entropy and Pavlovian conditioning. Just as new philosophies generate new languages (the cognitive following on the heels of the intuitive) so now new technologies constantly generate new words and concepts; a glance at the Addenda of Webster's Third International will show how technology is presently the agency most active in language production, as scientists attempt to symbolize and conceptualize objects and methods profoundly
new to human experience. The humanities cannot compete because they are not directly connected to the profit engine which drives technological research (hence the proportional decline in size and influence of the liberal arts sectors of our universities). Because human language capacity is finite, techno-language, wedded to the computer, will come to increasingly dominate discourse; the West’s cultural imperialism will proceed along these lines—via satellite transmission, no doubt.

Here, finally, is where George Orwell was both right and wrong: he correctly assumed that statist totalitarian triumph depended upon language control. But whereas Orwell believed the state would accomplish this through the destruction of language (exemplified by Newspeak), the modern technological state is gaining control through language proliferation and mystification. Except for the rare mediating and unifying intelligence we find in Thomas Pynchon, humans are rapidly become increasingly specialized—and isolated. As Pynchon himself has written, "There are now so many more than two cultures [science and humanism] that the problem has really become how to find the time to read anything outside one's own specialty" ("Luddite" 1).

Bakhtin's examination of the "socio-ideological" nature of language finds its expression in Pynchon's
rendering of the speech of scientists like Pointsman, his mechanical dedication to cause and effect; while Roger Mexico, the anti-Pointsman denounces the sterility of his adversary's aspirations:

[Pointsman] glances sharply at this young anarchist in his red scarf: "Pavlov believed that the ideal, the end we all struggle toward in science, is the true mechanical explanation...his hope was for a long chain of better and better approximations. His faith ultimately lay in a pure psychological basis for the life of the psyche. No effect without cause, and a clear train of linkages."

"It's not my forte, of course," Mexico honestly wishing not to offend the man, but really, "but there's a feeling about that cause-and-effect may have been taken as far as it will go. That for science to carry on at all it must look for a less narrow, less...sterile set of assumptions. The next great breakthrough may come when we have the courage to junk cause-and-effect entirely, and strike off at some other angle." (89)

While Pointsman--consummate scientist/bureacrat--remains comfortably within the ruling structure, Mexico becomes radically alienated--and relatively powerless. While Pointsman can order Slothrop's castration (forced by mistaken identity upon Major Marvy), Mexico can only fight the power with a vulgar gesture--urinating on the executives of the power elite. When Pointsman tells Mexico, "We both have Slothrop," he places the novel's protagonist in the middle of one of the novel's grand dialectics, that between randomness (Mexico) and strict cause and effect (Pointsman). By disappearing, Slothrop
frustrates the ideological victory of Pointsman, but the rocket nevertheless continues upon its physics-determined arc.

Bakhtin's theory holds that language and novelistic discourse reflect a continuing tension between centrifugal forces (verbal heteroglot and plurality), and centripetal forces (historic processes of linguistic unification and centralization). In *Gravity's Rainbow*, the centrifugal forces of language are stronger than the centripetal forces, which accounts for some of the difficulty in reading the novel, with its chaotic many-voicedness. The processes of fragmentation and specialization are expressed in the bewildering proliferation of language and information. As much as he tries, Slothrop cannot finally sort through all this information, partial clues, glimpses of conspiracy. These centrifugal forces finally pull Slothrop apart—-and almost pull the novel apart.

However, the centripetal forces of technological heteroglossia coalesce in the rocket, and its trajectory unifies the novel's narrative parabola. "Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but scatterbrained Mother Nature" (324). As an author, Pynchon has found himself caught in a maddening paradox. In exercising his novelistic craft, he must at
least partially submit to the controlling aspects of language and form which his best novel seeks to radically undermine.

From a historical standpoint, Pynchon's choice of World War II as the setting for *Gravity's Rainbow* was both an imaginative feat and a displacement of the angst he felt at the convulsions of the 1960's. Arguably, World War II was the great cataclysm of the century, and its waning days revealed to the world two great disorienting shocks: the Holocaust and Hiroshima. Both phenomena can be linked to the rocket. Though the Enola Gay dropped the atomic bomb in the same manner as conventional ordnance, the warhead would soon be combined with the V-2 rocket technology to create a bastard child, the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile. Of course, the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombs resulted in the kind of coldly-rational genocide visited upon civilians that was gradually administered in the Holocaust.

In the climax of the novel, when the narrative suddenly leaps into contemporary Los Angeles, Pynchon briefly revisits V.'s fictional strategy--shuttling from the past to a contemporary framework, thus revealing the continuities between epochs. The shift also takes into account the historic reality of the rocket: militarily, the V-2 was a deadly but not dominant feature of World War
II, and it did not determine the war's outcome.
Contrarily, the 1960's and early 1970's were dominated by
the rocket, both as imaginative icon and military chess
piece (moreover, during these years, the ruling elites of
both superpowers were dominated by World War II veterans
whose ideologies were forged by military definitions of
reality). During the years Pynchon conceived and wrote
Gravity's Rainbow, the United States and the Soviet Union
both stockpiled ICBM rockets, manufacturing and deploying
thousands of them. An international crisis developed out
of Russia's installation of rockets in Cuba, and the world
hovered on the brink of nuclear holocaust. The rocket
competition spilled over into the space race;
consequently, images of rocket launches dominated world
media, culminating in a moon-landing. The rocket's
trajectory, its powerful hold on the human imagination,
initiated in World War II, definitely continued and
expanded through the 1960's. Pynchon brings it home with
a climax which radically implicates us, placing us in
history's parabola even as we passively sit in the Orpheus
Theatre. The rocket haunts us because it gathers us all
into Pynchon's nightmare Zone, ultimately trapped by a
determinant Gravity his novel so bravely attempts to
transcend.
Regarding Pynchon, the man, it is an ironic comment on our predatory media that this most reclusive author generates publicity by his very refusal to seek it. Some have even suggested that Pynchon's invisibility is, in itself, a publicity ploy. And the surge of attention given to his most recent fiction, *Vineland*, would tend to bear this out; almost every reviewer felt obligated to comment on Pynchon's reclusiveness. The hunger for the visual prompts editors to dig up and publish the only available picture of the author--from his high school yearbook. America used to treat its best authors with scorn, poverty and neglect; now it smothers them with celebrity.

All this ignores some very plausible reasons for Pynchon's internal exile. First, it is not simply paranoia to suggest possible governmental hostility toward the kind of political dissent Pynchon expresses. We now know that the FBI kept extensive dossiers on prominent American writers such as William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway himself, whose fiction hardly threatens to undermine the U.S. government, was haunted in his final paranoid years by the fear that the FBI was out to get him for his fleeting relationship with
the Cuban revolutionary government; quite possibly this was one of the contributing factors to his suicide. The literature of none of the writers above mentioned offers the kind of radical critique of the United States government found in Pynchon's fiction. It would be naive to think that the FBI has ceased to keep tabs on domestic dissenters, and Pynchon's tacit identification with 60's radicalism would make him an even more prominent target for investigation and surveillance.

In addition to this, the plight of Salman Rushdie should give us all cause to reconsider our taking for granted the personal safety of prominent writers—something we assume all too easily in the West. The Rushdie debacle was a reminder: we still live in a world where a government leader can put a price on the head of a writer living in another country. Pynchon broke his customary silence to write a letter in The New York Review of Books in support of Rushdie, suggesting a certain sympathetic identification with his plight, while reaffirming their shared "solemn duty as apostates."

I would argue that, far from being a game, Pynchon's reclusiveness arises from legitimate fears and remains consistent with the messages of his books. Government intrusions into our lives, vastly aided by technology's surveillance machines, are proliferating; Pynchon is
hyperaware of these intrusions because they are among his chief fictional themes. In the single personal memoir we have of Pynchon, Jules Siegel recalls confronting Pynchon about his reclusiveness and silence:

"What are you always afraid of?" I asked him. "Don't you understand that what you have written will get you out of almost anything you might get yourself into?"

There was no answer, but looking into his face, I could see his thought as plainly as if he had spoken it out loud.

"You think that it is what you have written that they will want to get you for," I said. (173-174)

To shore up Stephen Dedalus's strategems for protecting his personal and artistic freedom—"silence, exile, cunning"—Pynchon has added new defenses: paranoia and invisibility. From his position of internal exile underground, Pynchon can continue his cunning political challenge to what he has termed "that succession of the criminally insane who have enjoyed power since 1945" (Slow Learner, 18).
CHAPTER IV

STANLEY KUBRICK'S CINEMATIC CYBORGS
AND CLOCKWORK ORANGES

Among the novelist Thomas Pynchon’s contemporaries in the kindred medium of cinema, only Stanley Kubrick shares so much common thematic ground and rivals Pynchon in terms of intelligence and creative audacity. Both men have expanded the technical parameters of their respective mediums, and their masterpieces, Gravity's Rainbow and 2001: A Space Odyssey, rank as definitive landmarks in the postmodern consciousness. Despite their different mediums, the parallels between both artists' careers are manifold: from their childhoods on Long Island, New York, (Kubrick grew up in the Bronx; Pynchon in Glen Cove) to their present day exiles (Kubrick lives semi-reclusively in the English countryside; Pynchon’s whereabouts are unknown), the two men have methodically produced a complex body of work while achieving considerable popular success. Particularly in their delineation of character, Kubrick and Pynchon have registered the impact of cybernetics,
expressing similar views of alienated humans increasingly at the mercy of, and victimized by, their own technology. Going beyond older methods of behavioral conditioning, we now possess the technology to "engineer" humans genetically and physically, through drugs, surgery, prosthesis and DNA manipulation. As the mechanarachy ascends, machines mimic humans, and humans mimic machines—a central feature in Kubrick's and Pynchon's imagined worlds. Because we create machines in our own image and project upon them our deepest unconscious wishes and fears, these machines are becoming increasingly indistinguishable from humans themselves. Kubrick's films and Pynchon's novels mediate this grand dialectic between humanity and technology, which is crystallized in the cyborg, rendering the old dualistic concepts and categories of human and machine obsolete.

The relationship between fictional narratives and cinema has been studied at length, and Kubrick and Pynchon could provide textbook examples of the symbiotic relationship between the two mediums. When discussing Kubrick the problematic questions of film "authorship" are simplified. Wallace Coyle defines Kubrick as the consummate auteur: "From the start of his career as an amateur film maker, Kubrick has been very much the ideal of the auteur director, insisting on control over script
selection, film editing, set design, cinematography, production and direction" (11). Except for *Spartacus* (which he has disowned), Kubrick's films are distinctly his own creations and bear his indelible stylistic trademarks. Nevertheless, Kubrick has nearly always depended on novelists for the narrative raw material of his films (though Kubrick seeks to transcend the verbal aspects of narrative). At the same time, Pynchon's novels often aspire to the nonverbal, subliminal impact of film. For instance, many critics have pointed out the pervasive influence of film on *Gravity's Rainbow*. Considering the novel's extensive use of dreams (primarily a visual phenomenon), it would be easy to imagine Pynchon's envy of the film medium's almost casual ability to evoke dream states and dream imagery, via what some critics call "mindscreen." Orson Welles's statement: "Cinema is a ribbon of dream," succinctly sums up film's natural affinity with the oneiric. Also, *Gravity's Rainbow* owes a considerable debt to cinema as a cultural referent, namely, Pynchon's allusions to the German expressionistic cinema of the 1920's in his detailed evocation of Weimar culture, as well as his positing of a movie like *King Kong* as a collective fear/fantasy of black sexual prowess and miscegenation--and the expression of atavistic Luddite rage wrought upon New York City.
Critics have frequently derided both Kubrick and Pynchon for producing a coldly "dehumanized" art; these critics tend to focus on both mens' methods of character development, often claiming that their preoccupation with themes, ideas and technical concerns distances them from humanity. Pauline Kael has typified this attack on Kubrick's films in a string of negative reviews which insinuate that Kubrick has become as dehumanized as the characters in his movies, an attitude she expresses in her review of *Full Metal Jacket*:

> It's very likely that Kubrick has become so wrapped up in his "craft"--which is often called his "genius"--that he doesn't recognize he's cut off not only from America and the effects the [Vietnam] war had on it but from any sort of connection to people. (The only memorable character in his films of the past twenty years is Hal the computer.)...Like a star child Kubrick floats above the characters of *Full Metal Jacket*, the story, the audience. Moviemaking carried to a technical extreme--to reach for supreme control of his material--seems to have turned Kubrick into a machine. (*Hooked*, 328-329)

Meanwhile Pynchon has been faulted for shallow characterizations, especially the evanescent Tyrone Slothrop, the "central" character in *Gravity's Rainbow*. I think these critics fail to take into account the function and demands of satire in the work of Kubrick and Pynchon. Because satire emphasizes the thematic aspects of character over the mimetic, the satirist will often sacrifice "nuance" of characterization to caricature (as,
let us admit, Dickens was apt to do) for thematic ends. Thomas Allen Nelson writes, "Beginning with *Killer's Kiss*, Kubrick's films show signs of a satiric distance that, in part, opposes the humanity of their characters" (83). Neither Kubrick nor Pynchon is afraid to engage ideas; autodidacts both, they bring an enormous amount of research and background knowledge to their respective projects, and thematic concerns consequently occupy a privileged position. To go further, their respective views of alienated humans, who are rigidly conditioned and reduced often to automatons, would be artistically consistent with the "dehumanized" characterizations certain critics denigrate. Finally, because of the relationship between satire and comedy, Kubrick and Pynchon often use their characters for humorous ends, sometimes reducing them to cartoon status in the process. Characters like Major Marvy and P.R. Deltoid may lack psychological depth, but they do not lack comedic and satiric bite.

On the thematic level, both artists do not hesitate to engage the most formidable subject haunting the contemporary mind: nuclear war. Both men have produced profound critiques of the mentalities and ideologies which could give rise to a nuclear holocaust--and they have couched these critiques in narratives that are often
painfully funny (i.e., *Dr. Strangelove* and *Gravity's Rainbow*). Neither Pynchon nor Kubrick is afraid to stare at the nuclear Medusa—or attempt to slay it with a comedic/satiric rapier. With either Major Kong riding on top or Gottfried locked inside, the rocket/bomb looms as Kubrick and Pynchon bring us in contact with the *bête noir* of the postmodern consciousness. By forcing the bomb upon the public consciousness, and exposing the criminal absurdity of those who construct and horde it, they attempt to force us to confront the aberrations in the human psyche and in political structures which procreate and suckle the bomb amidst the frozen silence of collective terror.

As a point of departure, I would point out that Kubrick does not share Pynchon's Luddite fears of the machine per se (though it is said that Kubrick refuses to fly in an airplane or permit his chauffeur to drive faster than 40 m.p.h.). As *2001* suggests (and the limp sequel, *2010*, attempts to confirm), HAL's villainy results from human frailties programmed into him, not from anything inherent in the computer itself. Herein the fundamental difference between literature and film does count, for film is technology's child, dependent upon sophisticated machines for both its creation and the experiencing of it via projector and screen (or, as is so often the case
today, VCR and television). Because of the nature of his craft and his own personal approach to it, Kubrick is necessarily a technophile. Micheal Ciment comments on this aspect of Kubrick's art:

Kubrick, more than any other contemporary filmmaker, has immersed himself in the problems of art technology. Like the medium's pioneers (Griffith, Murnau), and with a zeal comparable to theirs, he recognized that the intensification of realism on the screen was dependent on the development of technological artifice. His experiments with transparencies, models and other special effects for 2001, with direct sound recording on lightweight microphones for A Clockwork Orange, and with lighting for Barry Lyndon have all engendered technological improvements and accentuated the impression of reality. (75)

Though Kubrick and Pynchon share a radical pessimism toward the modern political state, Pynchon retains a more optimistic view of pre-political, pre-technological humanity. Certainly he doesn't subscribe to Rousseau's naive view of the noble savage, but he nevertheless has described primitive human community as inherently life-affirming and sustaining, whereas his fictional modern cities are profoundly sterile. Pynchon locates the evil in Western white civilization and its attendant ideologies (notably Calvinist, imperial/colonial and technophile). For Pynchon, the Hereros of Southwest Africa developed a durable communal structure before the Germans swept down from the north and forcefully secured "the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture
that valued unity and integration" (Pynchon letter quoted in Seed, 241). For Kubrick our destiny--and hope for salvation--lies in the machine:

First of all, I'm not hostile toward machines at all; just the opposite, in fact. There's no doubt that we're entering a mechanarchy, however, and that our already complex relationship with our machinery will become even more complex as our machines become more and more intelligent. Eventually, we will have to share this planet with machines whose intelligence and abilities far surpass our own. But the interrelationship--if intelligently managed by man--could have an immeasurably enriching effect on society. (Playboy interview, 195)

Of course, in the phrase "if intelligently managed" lies the rub; later in the same interview Kubrick admits "there may be no sound way to eliminate the threat of self-extinction without changing human nature" (195). And Kubrick's expressed view of human nature controverts Rousseau: "Man isn't a noble savage. He is irrational, brutal, weak, unable to be objective about anything where his own interests are involved" (Interview in Ciment, 122). Just as in Pynchon's novels, the grand dialectic in Kubrick's films lies in the interrelationship of humans and machine technology, and I will argue that Kubrick reaches many of the same pessimistic conclusions as Pynchon, despite his statements to the contrary.

As an artist, Kubrick lives an extraordinary contradiction. A prodigious technophile, practicing an
art born of the industrial age of mechanical reproduction, he nevertheless creates films which thematically undermine machines and expose their dangers, even as he celebrates their creative possibilities as tools in the film artist's hands. When critics like Kael berate him for being an anti-humanist technophile (they even use his status as expatriate against him to suggest he is "cut off" from America), they denigrate Kubrick for his acknowledged purpose and greatest triumph: a sophisticated wedding of form and content. His cinematic style, wherein a geometric precision and control clashes with a flamboyant expressionism, comments upon his view of the contemporary human condition, as trousered apes attempt to deal with the complex control systems and machines of postmodern cyberspace. There may be a kernal of truth in the primitive fear of the camera--that in its appropriation and reproduction of the human image, it steals the soul. Kubrick's camera and directorial style are themselves part of an alienating process which absorbs humans into the machine, and through the resulting soulless characterizations Kubrick makes his trenchant point about us which traditional humanist critics (like Kael) refuse to accept. Eschewing the Luddite fears of a Pynchon, Kubrick melds his eye with the camera lens; hence he cuts a Faustian deal with the machine in order to liberate its
secret: We have created the machine, and It is Us.

In this study, I will concentrate on what are generally viewed as Kubrick's three best films: *A Clockwork Orange*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Also, I will discuss *Full Metal Jacket* at some length, because of its focus on conditioning tactics. *A Clockwork Orange* serves as a metaphor for the cyborg, and I will analyze the political and psychological implications of the conditioning which first produces Alex as a vicious thug, then reduces him to the cyborg state. I will also situate the film as a potent satire of contemporary American society, its violence and potentially fascist politics as well as an ironic commentary on a pop culture whose plasticized icons haunt the dehumanized and de-natured settings of the film.

The satiric mode, of course, dominates *Dr. Strangelove*: I will discuss Strangelove himself as cyborg, and look at the film as a paradigm for the recurring Kubrick theme of contingency versus control--another theme he shares with Pynchon. Also, I want to use *Strangelove* as an example of the anti-militarism which informs three other Kubrick films: *Paths of Glory*, *Barry Lyndon*, and *Full Metal Jacket*. In all these films, Kubrick exposes and undermines the military conditioning techniques that
transform humans into efficient killing machines, sentient components of the weapons they wield.

Finally, I will analyze *2001: A Space Odyssey* as the most profound expression of Kubrick's view of the human condition, past and future, and an encapsulation of technological ascendancy which begins when Moon-Watcher first wields his bone-weapon. In particular, I will analyze HAL as the ultimate cyborg in whom the melding of human and machine produces homocidal contradictions. Also I will argue how the *deus ex machina* of extra-terrestrial intervention in human fate reveals Kubrick's own pessimistic attitudes toward our mechanized destinies, despite the nominal optimism of a film which ends with the Star Child's nativity. Probably the most remarkable thing about Kubrick's films is their thematic consistency and technical excellence despite the immense variety of his film subjects and settings. Beginning with *The Killing* in 1956, all Kubrick's subsequent films display his cinematic talents in shot composition, editing, lighting, and sound effects; he has garnered a reputation as an "actor's director" conjuring memorable performances from a variety of actors in many unconventional roles; he has personally engendered a remarkable number of technical innovations in film art; finally, on the thematic level, he has promulgated a consistent, challenging view of the
contemporary human condition, opening up new imaginative possibilities in the relatively young art of cinema.

Though *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) follows *2001* (1968) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), it is an excellent introduction to Kubrick's film art as a whole. The film is especially crucial to understanding his views on human conditioning and the totalitarianism latent in the modern political State. It is also Kubrick's most controversial film, provoking even more heated debate and violent denunciations than the groundbreaking *2001*.

Interestingly, the controversy over *A Clockwork Orange* centered on the audience's perception—or, in many cases, misperception—of its satirical nature. Upon release of *A Clockwork Orange*, Kubrick was accused of being a pornographer and a fascist. Fred Hechinger wrote, "An alert liberal should recognize the voice of fascism." And Alexander Walker claimed, "Alex himself is the ultimate pervert and fascist, and one should certainly question the values of a movie which glorifies him....A related distasteful element in the film is its pornographic use of violence." Kubrick was disturbed enough to answer the charges in an article in *The New York Times* in which he asked, "In order to avoid fascism, does one have to view man as a *noble* savage, rather than an ignoble one? Being
a pessimist is not yet enough to qualify one to be regarded as a tyrant (I hope)" (11). Later in the article, Kubrick asserts that the film no more proves he is a fascist than "A Modest Proposal" proves Swift is a cannibal--thus emphasizing the satiric nature of A Clockwork Orange.

Of course, the problematic nature of the film revolves around the character of Alex, and the way the film lures the audience into identifying with a vicious thug, minimizing his crimes. The difficulty also necessarily involves point of view. In Burgess's novel, Alex's control as narrator is much more absolute because of the dominating verbal factor: everything is filtered through Alex's consciousness and described through Nadsat language, thus distancing Burgess as author. Burgess's readership had little trouble recognizing the satiric distance between author and first-person narrator. In the film, the "distance" is not so obvious (especially to a mass audience unaware of satiric technique). Though Kubrick did give Alex the voice-over narration, the camera nevertheless "tells" the story, and negative critics of the film identified that camera viewpoint with Kubrick and assumed he endorsed Alex's behavior by virtue of his filming it in such an exuberant fashion. In an interview, Kubrick discussed the problem of point of view:
My intention with *A Clockwork Orange* was to be faithful to the novel and to try and see the violence from Alex's point of view, to show that it was great fun for him, the happiest part of his life, and that it was like some great action ballet. It was necessary to find a way of stylizing the violence, just as Burgess does by his writing style. (Quoted in Nelson, 134)

Despite the brutality, the violent sequences of the film are as carefully choreographed as the dance numbers in the movie Kubrick mocks: *Singing in the Rain*. Unfortunately, it was this very stylization of the violence (for me, one of the film's great successes) which offended many critics, who claimed it marginalized the victims and desensitized the audience. However, the stylization is true to the book and true to Alex's point of view.

Before discussing the Ludovico treatment—the conditioning process which pacifies Alex—I want to discuss the other conditioning Alex has experienced which is implicit in the film. We first see Alex *in medias res*: a brutal product of the conditioning he has undergone before the film begins. Because of his innocence and lack of self-generating moral conscience, Alex resembles a human palimpsest, and the Ludovico treatment is only the latest behavioral text imprinted upon him. It is wrong to assume that somehow Alex is in a "natural" state—"a Star Child of the Id" as Nelson calls him—uninfluenced by his environment, acting out primeval urges. On the contrary,
Alex has grown up amidst all the traditional elements of human conditioning—parents, school, peers, physical environment—and it is in the debasement of these factors that Alex's worst tendencies are nurtured rather than repressed.

Regarding Alex's physical environment, depicted in the film's carefully crafted sets, we find an almost total absence of anything remotely natural and organic: no trees, grass, or flowers. In this futuristic society, natural environment has truly been paved over and plasticized. The only animals present beyond the Cat Lady's profusion of felines is Alex's own pet Boa Constrictor. Glass, steel, concrete and plastic, all rigidly geometric, hard-edged, and forbidding to the touch, dominate the harsh urban landscape. Even the countryside provides no relief, because some of the worst violence occurs there, contraverting any pastoral escape. Urban blight inevitably migrates to the country. The pronounced sterility of the surroundings is accentuated by what Robert Hughes calls "The Decor of Tomorrow's Hell":

Stanley Kubrick's biting and dandyish vision of subtopia is not simply a social satire but a cultural one. No movie in the last decade (perhaps in the history of film) has made such exquisitely chilling predictions about the future role of cultural artifacts—paintings, buildings, sculptures, music—in society or extrapolated them from so undeceived a view of our present culture....

This alienating decor is full of works of
The impression, a very deliberate one, is of culture objects cut loose from any power to communicate, or even to be noticed. There is no reality to which they connect. (82)

Significantly, the film opens with a pull-away shot in the Korova Milkbar. Tracking backwards from Alex's sinister glare, the camera lingers on the objects that dominate his visual landscape. His view of and attitude toward women is summed up in the furniture: fiberglass female nudes contorted into tables, emphasizing their functionality and latent sterility. Just as they serve to dispense and support his Milk-plus drink (mother's milk polluted with mescaline), the real women he meets outside the bar function merely as receptacles for a bit of the "old in-out, in-out"—Alex's revealing term for sexual intercourse, as devoid of erotica as a piston in a cylinder, procreating only explosive violence. In A Clockwork Orange the objectification of women has been taken to extremes, and Alex reacts to the imperatives of environment. Even his outfit is replete with sexual similacrums that parody male potency and fertility, from his codpiece (which contains the rubber balls he stuffs into the mouths of F. Alexander and his wife), to his phallic mask. In America, Jean Baudrillard discusses "the clash of the first level (primitive and wild) and the 'third kind' (the absolute similacrum)" (104). Alex's ultraviolence results from the clash Baudrillard
describes; it is the only "real" thing Alex feels in a 
landscape of blatant artificiality. The second level, 
missing in Baudrillard's scheme, is natural environment 
and human interaction in its best sense, familial and 
societal structures that nurture rather than pervert.

To extrapolate further, the primary conditioning 
agents in Alex's life, his parents, are depicted as 
morally bankrupt automatons, themselves plasticized and 
debased. His mother, complete with fright-colored wigs 
and purple vinyl clothes, projects all the maternal warmth 
of the Korova's plastic nudes. The father, patently 
afraid of his son, lacks any semblence of moral authority-
-or any indication that he ever possessed any. Because 
the government requires all healthy individuals to work, 
we can imagine how Alex grew up with little parental 
supervision, a situation analogous to contemporary 
America, with its "two-income" families, its day-care 
centers, its "latch-key" children. The prominent lock on 
Alex's bedroom door suggests the complete lack of 
communication and trust between Alex and his "Pee and Em"; 
again, their role in his life is functional and 
exclusively economic, providing him with food, clothing 
and shelter, negating any of the positive conditioning a 
loving family structure might have given him.
Although the Burgess novel is recognizably set in futurist England, Kubrick more thoroughly disguised the setting of his film; except for the actors' British accents, this future distopia is cut loose in time and space. I think it more readily corresponds to the contemporary United States. Derelicts, such as the one Alex and his droogs pummel under the concrete viaduct, can be found in profusion in any American urban center (asking for spare change), and they are the common victims of violence similar to that which Kubrick depicts. The general level of violence in America far outstrips that of England or any other European country. Youth gangs, frighteningly similar to Alex and his droogs, roam our cities. We now have the largest prison population in the world (in the "land of the free," alas), with over one million Americans incarcerated according to a 1991 count (NY Times, 7 Jan., 1991, A14). Our prisons, vastly overcrowded, resemble those described in A Clockwork Orange's nightmare future; these same overcrowded conditions in the United States have given rise to new expedients, some of which are primitive throwbacks and others technologically advanced. For instance, a large number of states are implementing "boot camp" incarceration which uses those same physically and psychologically brutalizing techniques the military uses
to "mold" soldiers (and I will discuss these in my analysis of Full Metal Jacket). On a technologically advanced level, authorities are resorting to home incarceration wherein the prisoner is kept track of by an electronic ankle bracelet monitored by a technician. Though the United States has yet to resort to anything quite as programmatic and intensive as the Ludovico treatment, penal authorities have long used a battery of tranquilizers like Thorazine to pacify violent prisoners. The drug Depo Provera has been administered to compulsive sex criminals. So, the chemical groundwork has been laid.

As it stands, the general population, terrorized by violence on our streets, has probably less sympathy for convicts than it has for the dogs and cats at the local animal shelter. If the prison situation continues to grow worse, we could well resort to sinister conditioning expedients to remold the violent little Alexs who haunt American streets.

With another incisive satirical stroke, A Clockwork Orange shows how the police authorities themselves, amidst an atmosphere of escalating violence, react with more physical brutality in a vicious spiral (as thugs like Dim and Georgie are recruited into the police force). For instance, in March 1991, a nationwide public uproar over police brutality erupted when Los Angeles police officers
were unknowingly filmed (by a citizen trying out his new video camera) administering a very droog-like beating to Rodney G. King, a black man, who had been stopped for a traffic violation. The beating, shown hundreds of times on nationwide television, is frighteningly reminiscent of the attack Alex and his droogs visit upon the derelict under the viaduct at the beginning of *A Clockwork Orange*: even the weapons (nightsticks) and lighting (car headlights) are eerily similar. "Violence makes violence," the police authorities tell Alex after beating him. One wonders how many King-like beatings are administered, unseen, by police and penal authorities on our streets and in our prisons.

However, one key item that situates the film in England rather than the United States is the absence of guns. Perhaps some American critics objected to the film's violence because it was delivered in the visceral form of fists, boots and clubs, rather than the ubiquitous gun battles (and innocuous wounds) which were the staple of American films, especially Westerns, up until the late sixties. Until *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Wild Bunch* (1969), gun violence in the American cinema was depicted as relatively painless and neat. The gangster or outlaw, dying of a surgically neat gunshot wound (usually in the heart; never in the jaw or groin), would whisper his last
platitudes and pieties--instead of writhing and screaming on the ground. Today, the American Alexs who roam the streets are armed with machine guns, and the slaughter escalates exponentially--while police arsenals grow in firepower in a kind of domestic arms race (which parallels the international one). In some ways, Verhoeven's Robocop can be seen as an update of A Clockwork Orange: As crime goes out of control we resort to technological expedients (in the case of Robocop, an invulnerable cyborg police officer). Clarence Boddicker's remark about "Guns! Guns! Guns!" aptly describes the current state of the game of cops and robbers, as they try to outgun each other.

Postmodern culture is a graveyard of communal structures, where the only organizing principles left are often hierarchies of power, intimidation, threats. Alex, a natural mimic, runs his gang along the principles he sees in the society around him. He rules by virtue of his ability to whip any of his "droogs" in a fight--which we see when Georgie attempts to usurp Alex and direct the gang. In the politics of the gang, Alex knows Dim is the key to control because of his fighting ability; Georgie knows this too, and his power play involves winning Dim as an ally by protecting him from Alex's abuse. The structures of the larger political State are recognizably similar to the gang structure. In the later politic
battle between right and left, Alex functions as a public relations linchpin and propaganda pawn, and both sides attempt to befriend him to manipulate public opinion in their favor. The PR scramble over Alex is a prescient forerunner of Willie Horton—the thug who was furloughed by then Governor Micheal Dukakis; while on furlough he committed murder. In 1988, the Bush presidential campaign used Horton to show how the liberal candidate Dukakis was "soft on crime." Consequently, an anonymous thug was elevated by the media, and he became a decisive issue in a national election.

Because structures organized on the basis of force and intimidation are laden with resentment, betrayal inevitably results. The plot of a *A Clockwork Orange* turns on a series of betrayals and breaches of trust as the civilization's contracts are repeatedly violated. In the matter of the "old surprise visit" the gang gains entry into the house by pleading with their imminent victims, claiming a friend is dying in the street. Indeed, the film might be described as a kind of ping-pong match between victims and victimizers as the roles so quickly reverse themselves. It is, of course, only through the treachery of his droogs that Alex gets caught.

In the entire film, the only character who shows genuine compassion for Alex is the Prison Chaplain. Many
commentators have pointed out the religious underpinnings of the story's theme, but I believe it is in the treatment of religion that the novel and film part ways. Though Burgess certainly satirizes his own religion in the novel, Kubrick thoroughly trashes it. Earlier, during Alex's masturbation scene, Kubrick cuts to the sculpture of the four Christs, genitalia intact, seemingly exulting to Beethoven's Ninth and Alex's wanking. If this wasn't blasphemous enough, Kubrick then cuts to a shot of Alex's snake coiled before the pudendum of the painting of the female nude. Kubrick intensifies the blasphemy during the prison sermon. As the chaplain earnestly preaches, Alex as altar boy sits passively enduring the leers and blown kisses of the two homosexuals in the audience, whose minds seem to be more focused on buggery than salvation. Then the prisoner audience punctuates the chaplain's homilies with a belch and a fart. I can think of no other film where a sermon has been so derisively filmed. Later, Alex's mindscreen depicts his peculiar Biblical fantasies, as he inhabits the role of Roman Centurion scourging Christ and engaging in a swordfight; then a reclining, sated Alex munches grapes fed to him by topless maidens as passive as the Korova's coffee-table nudes. Nevertheless, the Chaplain attempts to give Alex moral guidance and warns him about the implications of the Ludovico
treatment. Once again, religious authority, so thoroughly marginalized, fails to persuade Alex to avoid "the new treatment." Naturally, Alex, the eternal innocent, signs the consent forms after being ordered not to read them by the overtly mechanical guard who dominates the prison sequence.

In a chemical parallel to the Ludovico injections, Alex imbibes the chemical drugs at the Korova sharpen him up "for a bit of the old ultraviolence." So the chemical stimulant does feed his animal ferocity, but I would argue that Alex also needs his deadened feelings stimulated. We cannot assume that he depends on drugs to override his inhibitions because he shows no evidence of having any. In our society, where a large percentage of violent crimes are committed by people under the influence of drugs, the overriding of inhibition, via alcohol or pharmaceuticals, is still a considerable factor. The Ludovico treatment merely has a chemically contrary effect.

The Ludovico sequence is the crux of the film, and Kubrick films it brilliantly. First we have those creepy emissaries of the state, Brodsky and his ilk, who perform their scientific tasks for political ends, and who betray no moral qualms about their activities. The entire sequence is a biting satire on our video culture (and it could be used to deconstruct A Clockwork Orange itself),
and it is debatable whether the film-viewing sequences reinforce the film's theme—or undermine it. (I.e.: Is the audience in Alex's position of watching filmed violence without the sickness-inducing drug and thus exulting in it?)

The image of Alex strapped to his theatre chair, crowned with wires, with his eyelids pried open, corresponds to the current state of our video culture. Just as we live the illusion of consumer choice, we also live the illusion of visual choice—even though we are compelled to consume and forced to watch. As the hours spent viewing television continue to mount, our children might as well be strapped down and forced to watch for all the difference it would make. In fact, parents commonly have to force children not to watch television. With the advent of Nintendo video games, there are stories of children who actually will urinate or defecate in their pants where they sit rather than leave the television screen for a trip to the bathroom. We are also bombarded by the visual via newspapers and magazines; as the proportion of space devoted to the visual increases (in photos, illustrations, graphics) the number of words shrink and actual reading languishes. Newspapers themselves resemble magazines more and more as they mimic the multi-color splash of the ubiquitous McPaper, USA
Today—and its sidewalk vending machines are designed to look like television sets. Alex possesses a compulsively visual and aural imagination (as we have seen, he even perverts the Bible text into bizarre visual fantasies). His contempt for print culture is displayed when he overturns the book racks at the home of F. Alexander. In some ways, Alex is a throwback to a pagan, pre-Gutenburg oral culture—he may have contempt for print, but he displays great linguistic inventiveness in the Nadsat language, delivered orally. A Clockwork Orange is very much an as-told-to narrative; we cannot imagine Alex writing all this down. He requires the immediacy of performance art and direct feedback.

The principles behind the Ludovico treatment are those of basic Pavlovian conditioning involving association between stimulus and response. Critics have pointed out how all the wires and electrodes coiled around Alex's head become a kind of postmodern crown of thorns—but the real scourging and pain come from inside, via the injection of the Ludovico drug which Alex innocently assumes to be a vitamin booster. Kubrick has selected a curious range of films-within-the-film which Alex is forced to witness. The first two—the brutal beating of a man by a gang, and the multiple rape of a woman—directly address Alex's own violent predilections and are similar
to the beatings and rape perpetrated by the droog gang earlier in the film. The incongruous element involves the Nazi footage. Suddenly, the conditioning is vaulted to a political level, something toward which Alex had heretofore displayed indifference. Here the Ludovico treatment clearly goes beyond basic moral conditioning against domestic violence and addresses political violence in the form of war. Somehow the images of Hitler at the massive rallies just don't fit in with the rest of the film selections. They can only be explained from an ironic viewpoint: the Ludovico's inoculation against the mass hypnotism associated with Nazi fascism mocks the very process Alex is undergoing. In other words, he is being conditioned to resist conditioning, something that would seem to work against an incipient fascist state's political ends--revealed earlier when the Minister of the Interior remarks, "Soon we may need all our prison space for political offenders."

The theatrical display of the "cured" Alex, with the Minister of the Interior as emcee, reinforces Kubrick's critique of politics as Public Relations manipulation and photo opportunity. The debasement of Alex demonstrates what has been taken away from him--and presages his future as helpless victim. First, the abuse suffered at the hands of the young tough shows not only that Alex cannot
attack but that he cannot defend himself in any way— even when retaliation is called for. The introduction of the topless model clad only in bikini underwear indicates that the state treats women much as Alex used to—as functional, passive objects. Unlike the male aggressor, the model says nothing and displays no emotions: she merely offers her breasts to Alex. His conditioned reaction—a hideous wretching—proves Alex will never rape again, but it also proves that he has no chance of normal sex with a consenting partner. The conditioning has de facto emasculated him. The visual demonstration brings thunderous applause from the audience, broken by the Chaplain's impassioned dissent: "The boy has no choice." But the Minister controls this crowd, and the Chaplain is hautily dismissed, "Padre, these are subtleties....The point is that it works!" Of course, Alex sides with the minister, because he knows he is the one who will grant him "freedom." Apparently, Alex believes these awful conditioning effects are temporary, and that outside, his animal instincts will again prevail.

At this point, Alex becomes a "clockwork orange," a cyborg, but only in a psychological sense. His physical body is intact, but it is no longer "his." He cannot use his fists or feet to defend himself; and he is at least mentally incapable of having sex (though, given the
nauseous reaction he had to the beautiful model, we can assume he is also impotent). He is a clockwork mechanism only in this sense: his behavior is absolutely predictable given a certain stimulus. It is the organic "orange" aspects of his character that have been altered. The Ludovico treatment has not so much implanted behavior into Alex; instead, it has washed behavioral impulses out of him. Stripped of his aggressiveness, Alex's innocence, present throughout the film, is accentuated. Despite the suit and tie, he regresses in years, clinging to his paper package like an child. The regression makes his rejection at home even more pathetic; the tenant who replaces him drives him away with physical threats while his parents helplessly watch. In a series of parallels, victimizer becomes victim; the culture's violent imperatives remain consistent; the roles of the human pawns are merely interchangable.

Kubrick undercuts those who would find a political pigeonhole for the film by having Alex fall into the hands of the left who use him for a propaganda assault on the right-wing government and its Ludovico program. As usual, moral questions are subordinated by power politics; the winning of hearts and minds through the press is paramount. Perceptions, polls and votes are what matter in the modern "democratic" state. At first, F.
Alexander's motives are ambiguous when the bedraggled Alex shows up at his door. In place of his wife, we have a hulking muscleman, indicating that the erstwhile pacifist liberal himself has erected a private security state. He seems genuinely concerned for Alex--until he recognizes him as "the victim of this horrible new treatment," and realizes how he might be "used" politically because "the common people must be led, driven, pushed!" The sympathy turns to thinly disguised agression when Alex, soaking in the tub, croons "Singing in the Rain" and Alexander realizes that his little guest has been there before....

Forever the innocent, Alex gives Alexander the key to inducing his own suicidal leap--he tells them of his conditioned aversion to Beethoven's Ninth. Alex hints that he may well eventually "snuff it" even without the Ninth as stimulus. The Ludovico has made him a potential suicide. He indicates as much to them while eating his spaghetti. Nevertheless, Alexander and his cohorts definitely expedite the process by locking Alex in the upper story room and flooding it with amplified Beethoven. Driven to panic by the music he had so blissfully masturbated to early in the film, Alex leaps to his expected death. But just like the American liberals of the last twenty years, these leftists are bumbling in the realm of hardball politics, unable even to set up a
suicide correctly; the window is not high enough off the ground and Alex survives the fall.

While he is comatose, the government uses the opportunity to defuse the scandal and de-program Alex. He tells the psychiatrist, "I’ve been having this very nasty dream—doctors playing inside of me brain." He begins to display signs of the old Alex in his answers to the slide show for which he provides violence-oriented captions. As the Minister of the Interior siddles in, Kubrick presents an interesting and problematic sequence. Kubrick has the Minister dressed in a green snake-skin shirt, mainly hidden beneath the three-piece suit and tie. The image speaks volumes, for beneath the ingratiating demeanor, the political reptile lurks. However, the Minister is now wary of Alex; the media publicity requires the Minister to nurture him in order to neutralize him as propaganda liability. It is unclear whether Alex ever breaks through his innocence to realize he is being used yet again. Alex reacts to the Minister’s feeding of him in a most mocking way, chewing obnoxiously, gaping his mouth, demanding another bite of steak. There is no clear indication whether he understands the Minister’s motives. He smilingly consents to the Minister’s photo opportunity, as the psychological effect of Beethoven’s Ninth is reversed again and Alex exults in it.
Alex's final statement, "I was cured all right," might promise more than he can deliver. First, the Minister of the Interior promises him "a good job at a good salary." One cannot imagine the pre-Ludovico Alex slaving at some mundane job. And the film's final image, another of Alex's mindscreens, complicates his statement: As two rows of formally-dressed Victorian Londoners, complete with parasols and top hats, look on and applaud, Alex copulates ecstatically with a blond who is wearing only black silk stockings and gloves. This differs from earlier sex scenes because for the first time, a woman is enjoying the sex as much as Alex—and she is in the superior position, something Alex, the former rapist and aggressor, would never permit. Does the image suggest some compromise, with Alex’s primitive urges modified and finally sanctioned by the button-down enculturations of a repressive society? Is Kubrick saying that the Victorian society did finally have to accept "the creature of the Id"?—his description of Alex. Norman Kagan discusses the film's final image:

The dream image leaves the mythic meaning of the film far from clear. It may suggest that Alex’s future violence is simply sanctioned by the state—a bright ecstasy sedately applauded by gloomy elders. Recalling that Alex's other dreams were flashes of pure murder, pain and death, the final sex scene suggests his mind has been somehow gentled and transformed—his future violence will be only that of the "two-backed beast." (185-186)
One thing is certain: Alex has not reverted to his old persona of the first half of the movie. The Ludovico treatment and the subsequent de-conditioning he received in the hospital must have left psychic traces and permanently altered his behavior. As the film indicates, the relationship between the individual and society, can only be, at best, a flawed compromise; it provides a melancholy acknowledgement that violence, like the poor, will always be with us. The question remains: How do we deal with the violence that is fundamental to human nature? Kubrick’s critique of covert Utopianism implicit in the Ludovico treatment is trenchant: Any guaranteed "cure" for violence necessarily involves the alteration of basic human nature, and the onset of behavioral engineering which destroys moral choice. Perhaps the best we can hope for is a modification of the more destructive, violent urges endemic to the human animal. As social animals we must have human conditioning. The questions are: What kind? And who will administer it? For what purpose?

Kubrick’s anti-war films similarly focus on issues of conditioning and coercion; in some ways, they turn A Clockwork Orange on its head, for in Paths of Glory (1957), Dr. Strangelove (1964), and Full Metal Jacket
(1987), Kubrick explores how politicians and their military lackeys use conditioning techniques to induce violence, by turning otherwise benign men into killing machines. J. Hoberman argues, "One of the ideas in Full Metal Jacket is that killers are made, not born. It's the exact reverse of Clockwork Orange in which the naturally vicious Alex is conditioned to be "good," but it only confirms Kubrick's thesis that humans are essentially puppets to be jerked this way or that by their lofty controllers" (488). The Marine boot camp sequence in Full Metal Jacket is crucial in this respect because it shows the actual manufacturing of the soldiers themselves, the transformation from civilian to killer, while the later films show us only the bloodthirsty military products. The boot camp sequence is so compelling that many critics claim the movie never recovers from its bravura beginning; thus, the second half, set in Vietnam during Tet, pales by comparison. I would argue that the thematic trajectories set in motion in the first half are worked out in Vietnam through a series of contradictions and reversals, along with plain futility and confusion. The violent certainties of Parris Island become disastrously confused in the bloody welter and political fog of an absurdist Vietnam. The key problem: the grunts have no clear targets, and categories of "ally" and "enemy" lose
distinction because of their shared Vietnamese physical traits, leading one grunt to observe: "If you ask me, we're shooting the wrong gooks."

The boot camp conditioning techniques are a complex mix involving infantile regression, violent aggression, regimentation and mechanization. A careful balance must be maintained. First, the Corps must tap the aggressive instincts of the human animal; yet the emotions which accompany aggression must be rigidly controlled lest the recruits become ungovernable and wreak their aggression upon the wrong targets. When Sergeant Hartman demands to see Private Joker's "war face," he twists himself twice into an animal grimace, reminiscent of the apes battling for the watering hole in *2001*. Yet, the recruits and their barracks are kept meticulously, fanatically clean. In the film's opening sequence, they are shorn of the ape hair of their ancestors and deloused. Throughout the first half, their eerie, pale cleanliness, accentuated by their white T-shirts and shorts, glows on the screen.

Kubrick's precision camera work and the geometric perfection of his shot composition perfectly complement the boot camp regimentation. The barracks shots display rows of seemingly identical recruits--indistinguishable automatons, bathed in harsh light. Kubrick follows them through the endless marching drills where absolute
synchronicity is practiced until the platoon behaves in precise unison. The sheer repetition of the shots of the drills is in itself hypnotizing, while it reinforces the themes of mechanical production and uniformity--this is a human assembly line, the images tell us. Not enough credit can be given to Kubrick's editing which maintains the frenetic boot camp pace while unfolding the narrative in the lulls. Slowly, the key relationship between Joker and Pyle unfolds.

Drill Instructor Hartman, superbly portrayed by Lee Ermey, absolutely dominates the first half of the film. As a human being he maintains a feverish pitch between mechanical rigidity and animal aggression--but it's all theatre. Like Alex, his is a performance art, largely based on language. His magnificent harangues, loaded with ideological baggage, terrorize the recruits with intense psychological harassment, reinforced by physical violence. His obsessions make him a microcosm of the Western Heart of Darkness: power, violence, conformity, the cult of virginity, homosexuality, and property. He is extremely possessive, always talking about "my beloved Corp"; he screams at Pyle to get off "my fucking obstacle." He shares nothing with the recruits but killing techniques.

Explicitly, he links sex and death by forcing the
recruits to give their rifles a female name and to sleep with them in their bunks. The sex urge, so powerful in men of that age, is reified into the 7.62 millimeter cartridge: the Full Metal Jacket is the recruit’s sex drive encapsulated in a bullet. Hartmen has them march, with their rifles on their shoulders, and their hands on their genitals, chanting, "This is my rifle, this is my gun." The linking of sex and death is fully worked out in Dr. Strangelove (where male potency and destructive weaponry conjoin in holocaust), but men like Hartman lay the psychological groundwork in boot camp. He trains the men to become a component of the rifle, an extension: "Your rifle is only a tool; it's your hard heart that kills." The rifle-handling sequences show the recruits forming a symbiotic relationship with their weapons, handling them with more and more mechanical precision until they become as much a part of their nature as an extra limb.

The film's muted protagonist, Private Joker, sees through it all, and throughout the film he undermines authority with verbal cunning. He punctures Hartman's opening harangue by intoning, in the Duke's signature drawl, "Is that you, John Wayne?" identifying the superstructural icon/legend who provided enormous hegemonic support to the Vietnam War (merely made obvious
in the shamelessly propagandistic movie *The Green Berets*). To a frightening extent, John Wayne provided an ideal model of American manhood to two generations of men who derived from him, by unconscious osmosis and direct mime, many of their gestures, speech rhythms, and ideological cues; Hartman embodies the Duke's bloody cult of patriotic sexless machismo. To his credit, Joker parodies John Wayne while so many of the other soldiers unconsciously mimic him. His conflict with Hartman (and all the other officers) is conducted on an ideological level; for instance, he will not accept the Holy-War-against-Godless-Communism framework Hartman attempts to stamp upon Vietnam, and he stands up to his drill instructor by refusing to believe in the Virgin Mary.

Contrary to the ironic but competent Joker, Private Pyle is a complete innocent and bumbler. Hartman humiliates Pyle mainly by reducing him to an infant, forcing him to march behind the company with his pants down, sucking his thumb. When Hartman discovers the jelly doughnut Pyle has smuggled into the barracks, he punishes the entire company with push-ups while Pyle devours the offending pastry. Though Hartman assigns Joker to help Pyle, he has already sown the seeds of resentment between Pyle and the entire company, which will have violent consequences. Trapped in an intensely competitive system,
Pyle needs help and encouragement rather than criticism and abuse. Hartman turns him into a soldier by destroying him as a man.

Joker becomes like a big brother to the regressive Pyle, teaching him how to make his bed and ties his boots. A bond of compassion forms. In a touching exchange, Pyle, in the bewildered voice of young boy, tells Joker, "Everybody hates me." Joker says, "Nobody hates you, Leonard. You just keep making mistakes and getting everybody in trouble." That night, instead of offering Pyle the brotherly support he needs, the recruits extract revenge. Amidst blue light and an eerie synthesizer sound, they hold Pyle down and beat him savagely with bars of soap wrapped in towels. Standing by, Joker hesitates, then makes a crucial decision. He beats Pyle, betraying him. The subsequent shot of Joker's conscience-stricken grimace indicates his awareness of the betrayal. The beating and betrayal is the watershed, forcing Pyle over the edge. His boyish helplessness disappears, replaced by the lunatic's stare and a machine's efficiency. Significantly, Pyle begins to improve his soldiering skills exactly when he declines into insanity. He particularly excels at the rifle range. Hartman tells him, "I might even let you become a rifleman in my beloved corps." As examples of great Marine Corps riflemen,
Hartman cites Lee Harvey Oswald and Charles Whitman, both notorious assassins. In doing this he ironically predicts his own fate (shot dead by a Marine rifleman), and inadvertently provides historic examples of what happens when men, trained as killers, start picking innocent human targets.

In the climax of the film's first half, Kubrick returns to the blue lighting and synthesizer music of the beating scene, linking the two in a kind of cause and effect. Joker, on fire-watch, discovers Pyle, sitting on a toilet with his rifle, as the worlds of shit and death unite in a bloody apotheosis. Pyle leaps to attention and mechanically executes the rifle-handling sequence, reciting the Marine rifle/prayer; then he locks and loads live ammo into the rifle. At this point, Hartman enters, all enraged bravado—until Joker informs him that Pyle has a loaded weapon. In his infant lunacy, Pyle recovers a sort of short-cut logic. The entire purpose of boot-camp is to channel murderous aggression upon an enemy abstraction. The rage and anger engendered by the humiliation imposed upon the recruits by the Drill Instructor is supposed to be airlifted to Vietnam and taken out on the communists. Pyle now has the infant's ability to zero in on his true tormenter; consequently, he fails to displace and project his anger onto the Communist
abstraction on the other side of the globe. He levels the rifle at Hartman and murders him. Then he sits on the toilet, places the muzzle into his mouth, and, with a shocking realism, blows his brains onto the antiseptic tile of the wall. Pyle has thus fulfilled the imperatives of boot camp, only he never had a chance to locate the targets legitimately allocated to him. In the film's upside/down logic, he has taken revenge.

It is no accident that the murder/suicide takes place in a bathroom, for the second half of the film occurs in what Joker describes as a "world of shit" in Vietnam. Gravity's Rainbow's triumvirate of "shit, money, and the word" very much characterizes Joker's outlook upon his Vietnam experience. Confrontation with the enemy in a war zone is "the shit" that soldiers variously seek or avoid. They haggle with Vietnamese hookers over the price for a little "suckee fuckee." Joker himself writes for the Stars and Stripes magazine, and he quickly learns how words are twisted and the truth is sacrificed for feel-good publicity. Lieutenant Lockhart sums up their journalistic principles:

"We run two basic stories: grunts who use half their pay to buy gooks toothpaste and deodorant--winning of hearts and minds--and combat activities that report a kill--winning the war."

Historically, the Vietnam half of the film centers on
Tet, the watershed of the war. Once out of boot camp, the psychological contradictions between animal aggression and emotionless mechanism all resurface in the soldiers. The may be Full Metal Jackets, but they have the impossible task of locating a mysterious, shadowy enemy, while the Hartman clones in the officer corps provide little help or support. Whether of an animal or mechanical nature, the dehumanization and atmosphere of corruption of Vietnam is convincingly evoked. Kubrick was initially faulted for filming in England instead of some oriental/tropical location. Admittedly, Full Metal Jacket lacks the claustrophobic jungle feel of Apocalypse Now and Platoon, which were filmed in the Philipines. The palm trees, flown in from Spain, look rather forlorn on the outdoor sets. However, the main battle in Full Metal Jacket, Hue, was primarily an urban fight, marked by the destruction of buildings and piles of blasted rubble. For the purpose of evoking Hue, an authentic jungle setting would have been superfluous.

In Kubrick’s films, the concept of “hero” is problematic. He would disown Spartacus, the only truly traditional hero in his films. Elsewhere, in Colonel Dax of Paths of Glory we get elements of a traditional hero, but he also serves as a point of departure for Kubrick’s “heroes” in his subsequent films, as he is ultimately
defeated by complex powers (represented by the wily
General Broulard) which overwhelm the individual. Wallace
Coyle discusses the Kubrickian hero:

Many of Kubrick's characters are "heroic" in
their alienation from society, either as
servants or victims of pressures they can only
partially control or survive. Thus, main
figures like Davy Gordon, Colonel Dax,
Spartacus, Alex, Dave Bowman, and Lionel
Mandrake become engulfed in a system that they
rebel against in order to try to insure their
own survival....While many of Kubrick's critics
dwell upon his pessimistic treatment of man,
the attractive (and often overlooked)
dimensions of his plots are the struggles of
individuals against these forces, against these
threats to human endurance and survival. (12)

Contemporary life has so marginalized any chance for
heroism that human integrity must sometimes be satisfied
with merely preserving itself. The typical Kubrick hero
finds himself beseiged by insanity and must navigate moral
minefields with little guidance. Kubrick himself has
commented upon the contemporary moral dilemma:

"Man has been turned loose from religion and
has hailed the death of his gods; the
imperative loyalties of the old nation-state
are dissolving and all the old social and
ethical values...are disappearing. Man in the
twentieth century has been cut adrift in a
rudderless boat on an uncharted sea; if he is
going to stay sane throughout his voyage, he
must have something to care about, something
that is more important than himself." (Quoted
in Kagan, 231)

Frequently, the Kubrickian hero--and I would add Private
Joker to Coyle's list--finds himself at the the mercy of
moral lunatics; in the case of Colonel Dax, he must deal with the bloodthirsty General Mireau and the officers running the Court Martial, who treat the soldier like worthless pawns on a chessboard. Likewise, Joker must navigate the Vietnamese killing field under the auspices of mechanical officers like the one who confronts him in front of a mass grave with this speech: "How about getting with the program? Why don't you jump on the team and come in for the big win? All I've asked is that my Marines obey my orders as if they were the word of God."

With such men in power, Joker—along with Dax and Mandrake—can only do what they can and maintain some semblence of moral sanity amidst blatant corruption.

For Joker, the best he can do is to euthanize the wounded Vietnamese sniper, rejecting Animal Mother's command to "let her rot." Significantly, the final combat sequence finds the company alone, without officers, so they must deal with contingency on their own. One of the film's patterns is the sequential killing of a string of authority figures as one by one the command structure is destroyed. The conditioning undergone during the first half of the movie is of dubious help: the killer impulse is fully present in the person of Animal Mother, but he kills for basic emotional reasons: to save a wounded soldier, and for revenge. Animal Mother is not deceived
by the empty rhetoric of "dying for a good cause."
The film's dualistic structure unites what Hollywood movies commonly bifurcate and sentimentalize: boot camp and combat. Full Metal Jacket is a film of collisions. Especially in his selection of music, Kubrick sets up brutal juxtapositions between the visual and aural, where bloody death is accompanied by such schlock classics as "Surfin' Bird." Commenting on the film's dualistic structure, Norman Kagan writes:

The first half, the brain-and-body washing of the recruits into fearless but flawed killers, is basically commented on in the second half, in which the resulting personalities, now tools of the high command, are forced to deal with the multifaceted nature of combat, which is not different from "ordinary life" in its complexities and paradoxes....As is soon clear, these fearless killers have adapted a very esoteric "freedom," whose social aspect is only a precarious tribal camaraderie. The final overruling of marine combat doctrine by Animal Mother suggests they've survived both boot-camp brainwashing and enemy guile, and are reunited as a crude band of brothers. (229)

If we can derive any hopeful message from this grim movie, it may be that, given the chance, the soldiers can throw off their mechanical conditioning and reclaim a human solidarity once again—if only marginally. Only through solidarity and the overruling of corrupt commands can the soldiers fight the power, even if that solidarity results in a sort of Mickey Mouse club and its mutated patriotism. Jokers ends his voice-over narration by observing, "I'm in
a world of shit, but I’m alive and I am not afraid.” With
guile and cunning, the Jokers of the Kubrickian worlds of
madness and murder can carve out small niches of sanity by
resisting systems of conditioning which would turn them
into amoral robots.

Early in World War II, the Nazis generally committed
genocide the old fashioned way: they would line up people
along a ditch and mow them down with machine-gun firing
squads. But they found out that despite the rigid
Wehrmacht conditioning German soldiers became disturbed by
directly witnessing and participating in human slaughter.
The Nazis soon learned that if you interposed a machine
between victim and victimizer, genocide became much more
palatable—hence, the birth of the death camps which
technologically expedited mass death; organized like any
other industry, and with the trademark efficiency of the
German mind, the death camps soon manufactured death on a
historically unprecedented scale—and level of amorality.
This may well be the core historical subtext of World War
II: the spiral toward mass technological death which
culminated in the Holocaust and Hiroshima. By the war’s
end, humanity had proven how one busy “factory” and one
single bomb could produce the number of corpses which
would normally have required months and years of
Perhaps the most frightening aspect of Dr. Strangelove is the terrible moral and imaginative detachment the main participants feel toward the bomb and its genocidal potential. They simply cannot grasp the dimensions of the nuclear crisis in which they find themselves. And this points to a larger problem: the nuclear age and the power of destruction it has engendered may still be beyond human conceptual grasp. Certainly it eludes the military and political leaders in the film, who still are trapped in an archaic military framework, one in which ten to twenty million civilian deaths are described by General Buck Turgidson as "getting our hair mussed." Too often, slaughter increases in scale when military tactics and language do not take technological advances in destructive power into account. This linguistic inadequacy is complicated by the Cold War (which had come perilously close to turning hot in the early 1960's) with its Mannichean conception of the geopolitics involved, reducing a complex ideological, historical, geographical, economic conflict down to the level portrayed at the beginning of 2001, where two posturing simian tribes battle over a water hole.

In fact, the "Doomsday Device," a mere construct and plot device in Dr. Strangelove, was duly created by the
Soviet Union and United States in the coming decades through sheer nuclear proliferation. Today, the threat of "Nuclear Winter" and the enormous firepower of the huge nuclear arsenals do indeed add up to a "Doomsday Device" as a nuclear conflict promises to destroy the world. The words "overkill" and "making the rubble bounce" cannot adequately describe the Strangelovian standoff between some 25,000 thermonuclear warheads.

Dr. Strangelove is Kubrick's first film in which he discovers the ideal topic for his cinematic vision: the dialectic between humans and machines. By 1964, the impact of cybernetics was reverberating through the culture; dealing as it does with computers and control systems, cybernetic principles were readily adopted by the military for the complex job of controlling a burgeoning nuclear arsenal. During the pre-production of Strangelove, Kubrick saw a terrific paradox: fail-safe machine systems which guarded against human error also prevented human intervention to correct an error once nuclear escalation was initiated. Also, during the pre-production stage, Kubrick found that the only way he could mediate this particular human/machine dialectic and the explosive control/contingency paradox was to shoot his film as a black comedy and satire--perhaps the most momentous artistic decision of his career.
The satirical mode allowed Kubrick to fully vent his bitter conception of the characters who inhabit the political/military nexus of the National Security State. The casting is fortuitous: a number of critics have lauded the performances of Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden and Slim Pickens. _Strangelove_, contains three basic types: the military louts, lewds and lunatics which include Generals Buck Turgidson and Jack Ripper along with the B-52 pilot, Major Kong. Then you have the earnest but ineffectual politician/diplomat, Sellers’s Merkin Mufley. Finally, Dr. Strangelove himself represents the new nativity of the cyborg, where man and machine fuse.

Out of the film’s three parts (taking place inside Burpleson Air Force Base, a B-52 bomber, and the War Room, respectively), the scenes shot inside the B-52 best exemplify the human/machine conflict. The B-52 is the most technically intricate set of the film. Norman Kagan writes: "The director asked no help from the U.S. Department of Defense. The entire simulated B-52 flight deck, which cost one hundred thousand dollars, was based on a single official still carelessly published in a British flying magazine" (112). Amidst all these gadgets, dials, screens and monitors, the hick Major Kong seems utterly out of place--like a chimpanzee loose in a
computer room. Nevertheless, the Air Force uniform modifies the simian, and Kong's military training has made him as one with the airplane. He is rigidly programmed to complete his mission. Through conditioning, Kong and the crew have become merely a component in a larger system. Once they are cut off from communication, they become the lone bomber which gets through, delivers its payload, and triggers the doomsday device.

The theme of communication—or a lack thereof—is present throughout Kubrick's work, but it is preeminent in his anti-military films. In *Paths of Glory* we see how militarist jargon and patriotic blather obscure the bloody human consequences of the charge on the Ant Hill and the resulting court martial. In *Dr. Strangelove* Kubrick satirizes a range of military platitudes and Cold War cliches, from the omnipresent "Peace is our Profession" slogans to the macho verbal posturing of Turgidson, to the looney paranoia of Ripper as he tells Mandrake that flouridation is a Communist plot. In the War Room, the isolation of the command structure is supported by the black, mineshaft setting. Amidst the blackness of the War Room abyss, Strangelove's plan for the post-nuclear future is not all that ridiculous, because they are already in what amounts to a mine shaft. The nuclear command structure, inhabiting as it does a vast and intricate
tunnel system, dwells in a mine-shaft world, which logically could give rise to the Hitlerian bunker mentality. All isolated elites, whether they inhabit distant political or military hierarchies, or are separated by class divisions, almost inevitably devalue the lives of those from whom they are cut off.

The two men most responsible for almost saving the world, do so by circumventing the communication breakdown. Lionel Mandrake, the film’s nominal hero, unable to wheedle the code from the deranged Ripper, cleverly deciphers his doodling to get the recall code. Of course, he must clear one more communication hurdle in the person of Major Bat Guano, played with absolute dead-pan by Keenan Wynn. Elements as tenuous as a public telephone and the change from a Coke machine enable Mandrake to contact the President and deliver the code. Mufley himself must break through the Russian Premier’s drunken fog to prevent a massive Soviet retaliation. Together, they manage to recall all the B-52s--except the one with the dead communication system, piloted by Major Kong.

Haunting the War Room, Dr. Strangelove himself is a thematic compendium: Nazi-parody, mad scientist, inhuman monster--and cyborg. Strangelove’s mechanical arm is the key, expressing both ideology and independence. When it locks into the "Heil-Hitler"salute, it reveals
Strangelove's latent political love for the fascist death-work of the Third Reich, and it suggests political similarities with the present American government Strangelove finds so congenial. At one point the black-gloved hand actually attempts to strangle him, an image suggesting how more distant machines are at that moment ready to throttle the collective neck of humankind. Few films have been able to so profoundly embody complex thematics in a character who appears so briefly. Most significantly, Strangelove's character belongs to the future, not the Nazi past. Thomas Allen Nelson discusses the dimensions of Strangelove:

Sellers's performance as Strangelove provides Kubrick with both a human form and marvellous conceit for the futuristic tool-as-primitive weapon: in his love of the Doomsday Machine's invulnerability to human interference and his perversion of scientific discourse (he refers to future survivors as a "nucleus of human specimens"), his means of locomotion (wheelchair) and mode of animation (a mechanical arm that turns against him), and in his doomsday "rebirth" as the New Man who will lead the chosen people into darkness. (98)

The cyborg as literary character is not without mythic dimensions; Nelson hints at Strangelove's becoming a cybernetic Moses, recreating Exodus as a techno-drama as the bomb serves the dual genocidal functions of Pharoah's army and plague, and the Promised Land becomes a mine shaft for nuclear refugees. One wonders what revised commandments Strangelove/Moses might bring up from some
dark pit, a moral code engendered by the new computer "God."

Ironically, the human species sometimes has more difficulty murdering one person than tens of thousands. When Arthur Koestler said, "Statistics don't bleed," he was indicating the imagination's failure to comprehend mass death. Discussing the need for capital punishment, Norman Mailer wrote:

I tell myself it is historically true, it is overpoweringly true, that wars increase in scope as we grow too civilized. It is yet to be demonstrated that nuclear warfare is not the final expression of civilization...It is frightening that we do not find it as hard to live in a world that liquidates millions as we do to confront the enormity of death when only one person is dying. That is a primitive ability. To look death in the face. Primitives do not have to surround the last hour with a hospital and its terminal machines. (11)

Kubrick would never buy Mailer's thesis that some primitive retrogression may save us from global genocide, but Mailer's argument does frame the Stangelovian conundrum: the inherent danger in the clash of primitive and technological, and the imaginative gap between comprehending one death and many. And Mailer and Kubrick would agree that our easy conception of what we call "civilization" needs deconstructed. In terms of the nuclear dilemma, Strangelove offers little choice: Do we modify the killer ape within? Or do we radically
detechnologize in a Luddite program of smashing the machines before they smash us? For Kubrick, neither is a practical possibility: we will not halt a technological spiral which he sees as human destiny. Faced with the apocalyptic outcome of Dr. Strangelove, Kubrick, in his next film, would resort to extraterrestrial intervention to broker a solution.

In 2001: A Space Odyssey, Stanley Kubrick created the greatest cinema Rorschach, and he subsequently contributed to the film's ambiguity by refusing to provide his own interpretive stamp, preferring, as he has said, "to let the film speak for itself." Arguably, no other film has invited such a wide range of interpretations. In 2001, Kubrick literally and figuratively transcends gravity, creating what Nelson calls "The Ultimate Cinematic Universe." Significantly, 2001 reveals Kubrick's characteristic disdain for contingency and chance; the deus ex machina of Greek drama becomes the deus ex monolithia of the Kubrickian universe. An extraterrestrial determinism and direction, inherently mechanical and embodied in an enigmatical black slab, replaces evolutionary accident and chance as the mainspring of human development.

The monolith actively intrudes at two key junctures.
During the ape sequence, it appears when starvation and depredation threaten to force the simian band into extinction. One might question the supposed wisdom of an extraterrestrial intelligence which would turn humans into carnivores and killers in order to save them. Yet, the film argues, this is all part of a necessary process; the initiation into tool-use is the crucial first step which would lead to space travel and finally transcendence into a higher being. The question remains: Did the monolith teach Moon-watcher only to wield the bone-tool? Or did it also instruct him to kill? At any rate, Kubrick uses what has been called the greatest match cut in cinema history to span four million years—as Moon-watcher hurls the bone into the air, Kubrick cuts to the spacecraft floating in the heavens. In striking contrast to the ape’s crudity, what Kubrick describes as a "machine ballet" ensues as spacecraft float serenely to the music of Strauss.

The Monolith next actively intervenes after Bowman has defeated HAL and reached Jupiter. Daniel De Vries discusses the second interaction:

This second extraterrestrial intervention comes, like the first, at a crucial point in man's history. Just as the man-apes had run into a dead-end, barely scraping by in the desert, so twenty-first century man has come to a dead end in 2001, losing his soul, and now control of his destiny, to his technology. (53)
beings will be mechanistic rather than spiritual (i.e., by teaching humans to be tool-users and killers without providing them with an accompanying moral code); he posits a universe of common physical laws which would require solely a technological development as a staircase to a higher being. Even in the impossible alignment of earth, moon, monolith and sun, the Kubrickian universe (and cinematic *mise en scène*) demands geometric precision. Space provides the ideal—and only—environment for Kubrick to fully work out his thesis, and definitively establish the cyborg paradigm implicit in so many of his other films. On the importance of *2001*’s space setting, Alexander Walker writes:

> Man has conquered the new environment; but the environment has controlled him, too, by compelling him to adopt other than his old erratic, instinctive, human actions. Now he must program himself—become less of a human being, more of a machine. We are already approaching territory that fascinates Kubrick—the man-machine and the machine-man. (248-249)

Because of the hostility of the space vacuum towards the human animal, space belongs to the cyborg. Hence, as characters, the astronauts Bowman and Poole are the most emotionally flat in Kubrick’s films—which is saying something. Discussing the setting of the Discovery spacecraft (and the humans inside), Walker observes:

> The effect of life cooped up in this drum is visually striking but the emotional constriction is indicated even more
disturbingly. The two men are programmed for it as thoroughly as HAL is--and, as it turns out, much more soullessly than HAL. Kubrick has intentionally created characters with almost no individual traits. The men are well-conditioned Ph.D.s, who show little human warmth and no human weakness. (253)

The sterility of the *Clockwork Orange* environment I discussed earlier is greatly intensified in *Discovery*. Kubrick accentuates the sterility with the emotionally hollow "Happy Birthday" message Poole receives from his parents. Beamed over millions of miles of space vacuum, the video's effect is one of intense detachment and alienation. Poole reacts to it as if it is just another piece of data on a screen. For all the human emotions they feel, Bowman and Poole might as well be encased in the hibernacula wherein their three companions sleep out the journey--and never wake up.

Interestingly, HAL and the monolith never directly interact, though the Discovery spaceship is nominally HAL's body serving the same purpose as the monolith: encasing and conveying an advanced intelligence through the cosmos. Again, the spaceship body mimics human parts. It resembles a bone, with its skeletal whiteness bleached out in spacelight. (It can also be seen as a gigantic sperm cell hurtling toward some galactic ovum.) As HAL's body, Discovery's complex electronic circuitry corresponds to nerves transmitting data from all the ship's
extremities to HAL's central brain. Through the ubiquitous glowing camera eyes and audio transmitters, HAL maintains visual and aural contact with the ship's human contents. His name may suggest male gender, but HAL/Discovery functions as enormous mechanical womb, with the astronauts inside dependent on "his" life-sustaining functions. Of course, men have always bestowed upon their conveyances, from the earliest ships, the female gender.

All would be "perfect" with the computer, but the human traits programmed into HAL give rise to the contradictions inherent in the cyborg. As critics were quick to point out, HAL suffers from hubris and paranoia. The mystery surrounding the mission gnaws at him. (Does he suspect the discovery of extraterrestrial life? Is he afraid the discovery of such a phenomenon might invalidate him?) Finally the mystery causes him to "malfunction" in a way a "pure" computer never could. To help the audience identify with HAL as sentient creature, Kubrick uses several shots from HAL's point-of-view. In this way, he places the audience inside HAL--and distances us emotionally from the astronauts. And it is in this mode that we witness the famous subjective shot as HAL reads Bowman's and Poole's lips--Kubrick adroitly shuttles the camera between them--as they plot HAL's possible unplugging, unaware that he is deciphering their
supposedly clandestine exchange.

What follows are for me the most chilling murders in cinema; they are chilling precisely because they are so amorally detached and drained of grief and mourning. With two original approaches to cinema murder, Kubrick provocatively captures technological death. First, HAL uses his own tool, the pod, to kill Poole (just as Moon-watcher had killed the ape four million years ago with his bone-tool). Kubrick's shooting of the scene is innovative, yet makes a bow toward the killer machines of other science fiction movies. As the pod advances on Poole, it lowers its mechanical claws menacingly, as it hisses--but we never see the actual murder, thus blunting the emotional pay-off. We only see Poole's body hurtling through space. As Bowman takes the other pod out after Poole, HAL commits a triple murder. He simply shuts off the life-support systems of the hibernacula. We monitor the death process via flashing video displays in this order: Computer Malfunction--Life Functions Critical--Life Functions Terminated. As the warning lights fade, we are left with the moral and emotional void of technological murder. We can only mourn that there is nothing to mourn.

In order to forcibly reenter Discovery and lobotomize HAL, Bowman must recover his atavistic resources: cunning, imagination, and a revenge motive. Beneath it
all lies the Ur-instinct: survival. De Vries writes that "Bowman, in battling HAL and winning, reasserts the integrity of mankind" (53). That dubious integrity is one of murder: the upshot is that we feel HAL's death with much more immediacy than that of Poole or the other three astronauts. If nothing else, the victory over HAL gives Bowman a ticket on a cosmic carnival ride: the LSD "trip" which both dates and historically situates the film circa 1968 psychedelia.

In the Discovery sequence--for me, the best part of the movie--Kubrick has illustrated how we are becoming the tools of our tools. Nelson discusses this paradox then advances it as a critique of Reason:

Bowman and Poole are HAL's tools, servants to his omniscience, and inevitably, like Moon-Watcher's bone, nothing more than artifacts to be contemplated or objects to be tossed aside once their functions have been fulfilled. HAL climaxes the film's thesis that machines are physical and psychological extensions that merely sublimate rather than transcend Moon-Watcher's instincts....HAL's distorted vision, which envelops everything inside but understands nothing outside, indicates that Reason, some four million years after its escape from primeval barbarity, has evolved into another defunct tool blinded by its own arrogance and mechanical certainty. (121)

The final transformation, that of Bowman into Star Child, suggests a problematic recoiling from the machine as he is reborn in an anthropoid body rather than a rectangular slab. The ambiguous potentialities of this
fetal space traveler hardly mitigate the film's underlying pessimism.

Kubrick's escape into space (a prominent theme in American literature) brings us to the central contradiction of his work: Kubrick's film art simultaneously celebrates and undermines the machine. His own affirmation of the "space exploration as man's destiny" ideology does not overshadow his artist's vision of the old earth-bound problems rearing their atavistic heads once again in space. Currently, the United States (and, subsequently, a score of other countries) is militarizing space; the Pentagon has de facto co-opted NASA. For instance, how many space shuttle flights are classified military missions with press coverage blackouts? Moreover, the federal government is currently funding research into a space-based anti-missile "defense" system (Strangelove meets HAL!) to the tune of billions of dollars annually. Unfortunately, the space-as-destiny hope of humankind too often serves as ideological camouflage for those Strangeloves who would convert the heavens into a battleground.

Kubrick understands these ugly trends probably better than any contemporary filmmaker, and in his art he refuses to submit to them. Satirically, in Dr. Strangelove, A Clockwork Orange and Full Metal Jacket he savagely attacks
the political/military/technoscientific nexus, its ideologies and irrationalities, which appropriate the machine for destructive ends. Imaginatively, he seeks to reclaim the machine, to expand its artistic function in cinema, and to explore its possibilities as a vehicle for human immortality rather than an agent of our destruction. Kubrick has said:

"If you try to remove yourself from an earthly perspective and look at this tragic paradox with the detachment of an extraterrestrial, the whole thing is totally irrational. What an irony that the discovery of nuclear power, with its potential for annihilation, also constitutes the first tottering step into the universe that must be taken by all intelligent worlds...the sign of our extinction would be no more than a match flaring for a second in the heavens; and if that match does blaze in the darkness, there will be none to mourn a race that used a power that could have lit a beacon in the stars to light its funeral pyre. The choice is ours." (Playboy interview, 195)

The tragic paradox Kubrick refers to is the technological human, and the cyborg paradigm he explores in his films expresses this paradox in all its tensions and contradictions. Stanley Kubrick's greatness as an artist lies in his attempt to transcend the earth-bound perspectives and death-mongering ideologies of his time. By attempting to escape the verbal straight-jacket of language that has too often become the mind's jailor rather than its liberator, Kubrick uses the cinema language of image and sound as a by-pass, a sensory
wormhole into the human consciousness. The majestic camera and lofty vision of his films insist that we expand our imaginations to accommodate them.
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