

***FULL METAL JACKET;  
HOW KUBRICK STAGED FUNDAMENTAL FANTASY,  
JOUISSANCE AND GAZE***

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**Summary:** This article analyzes Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) in the light of Lacan's concepts of the (fundamental) fantasy, *jouissance* and the gaze. We criticize McGowan's (2007) thesis that Kubrick's staging of the gaze and fantasy confronts spectators with a blind spot for the obscene underside of authority. Firstly, we refer to McGowan's statement that Kubrick's cinema reflects fantasy's quality of structure. Where McGowan does not indicate what kind of fantasy structure these films stage, we argue that *Full Metal Jacket* is underpinned by the concrete scenario of the fundamental fantasy: "C observes: A overpowers B". Secondly, we criticize McGowan's tendency to univocally link Kubrick's depiction of derailed father figures with the real-life functioning of authority. By referring to Freud's early theory on the etiology of hysteria and Lacan's interpretation of Freud's (1919e) article "A Child is Being Beaten", we argue that the film's staging of its main authority figure – the drill instructor – also illustrates how the fantasy of the abusive father can function as a mediator for the fantasizing subject's own *jouissance*. Finally, we question McGowan's remark that, despite Kubrick's staging of the gaze, the director's cinema ultimately leaves spectators "unscathed". Building upon other academic analyses and press reviews of the film, we argue that *Full Metal Jacket* does not leave spectators unharmed. On the contrary, we hypothesize that the gaze appears when the viewer loses his distance from the film's depictions of violence, by momentarily coinciding with a vanishing point of *jouissance* himself.

**Key words:** Stanley Kubrick, Full Metal Jacket, Fundamental Fantasy, *Jouissance*, Gaze.

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*"[I]t's never [...] by another person's  
excesses that one turns out, in appearance  
at last, to be overwhelmed. It is always  
because their excesses happen to coincide  
with your own."  
(Lacan, 2007 [1969-1970]: 12)*

*Introduction*

In this study on *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), hereafter referred to as *FMJ*, we discuss Todd McGowan's (2007) analysis of Kubrick's cinema in the light of Lacan's theory of the fundamental fantasy, *jouissance* and the gaze.<sup>1</sup> Invoking Lacan's (1986 [1964]) concept of the gaze, or the blind spot that marks the subjective implication in the act of seeing, McGowan (2007) states that Kubrick's films tend to confront their spectators with the dimension of blindness involved in their everyday tendency to perceive authority as a mere neutral instance. Indeed, Žižek (2008 [1997]) refers to *FMJ*'s boot camp section to illustrate his thesis that the exercise of power is never neutral, but always implies a transgression of its public function.<sup>2</sup> For Žižek, the functioning of power is inherently marked by "a kind of obscene supplement" (*Ibid.*: 35). However, as McGowan (2007) indicates, this obscene underside of power usually remains hidden in real life. For McGowan, Kubrick's cinema radically counters that illusion of a neutral authority by staging all its representatives of power as *explicitly* deriving "obscene enjoyment", or *jouissance*, from their function (McGowan, 2007: 47). As an example, McGowan refers to the derailments displayed by *FMJ*'s drill instructor, Hartman, the film's representative of authority par excellence.

In a first comment on McGowan's analysis, we remark that, although the author argues that Kubrick's cinema reflects the (fundamental) fantasy's inherent quality of structure, he does not isolate *what* specific structure, or *scenario* of the (fundamental) fantasy is at stake in the director's films (*Ibid.*: 44). Focusing on *FMJ*, this study argues that both the film's narrative and the position that it assigns to its spectators are buttressed by the specific scenario: "C observes: A overpowers B". As indicated in a previous study, this scenario also underpins Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) (Matthys, in press). Below we outline the way in which the specific scenario staged in *FMJ* depicts a variation on the (Oedipal) set-up of

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1. All reference made to Kubrick's films are based on viewings of "The Stanley Kubrick Collection", a DVD set of ten of Kubrick's films released by Warner Bros in 2001.

2. Žižek (2008 [1997]: 35) states that the "military drill depicted in the first part of [*FMJ*] is not a secondary eroticization of the disciplinary procedure which creates military subjects, but the constitutive supplement of this procedure which renders it operative".

the *beating fantasy*, as discussed by Freud (1919e) and Lacan (1994 [1956-1957]; 1998 [1957-1958]).

Secondly, we discuss the link McGowan (2007: 47) marks between Kubrick's staging of derailed father figures and the fundamental fantasy's function as a mediator for *jouissance*. In this context, we argue that the *jouissance* displayed by *FMJ*'s drill instructor circulates around four instances of the Lacanian object *a*. Moreover, we question McGowan's (2007) univocal interpretation of Kubrick's abusive fathers as markers of the obscene underside of *real-life* authority figures. With reference to the evolution in Freud's (1985c [1887-1904]) early theory on the etiology of hysteria, we argue that *FMJ*'s abusive father figure, Hartman, instead represents an instance of the (Oedipal) *fantasy*. Elaborating on Lacan's (2007 [1969-1970]) interpretation of the beating fantasy, we hypothesize that in its method of staging the fantasy of the abusive father figure, *FMJ* tends to mobilize its viewers *own jouissance*.

Finally, this leads us to question McGowan's (2007: 25, our emphasis) thesis that despite a tendency to confront the viewer with a derailment of authority, Kubrick's films ultimately "leave the spectator *unscathed*". Instead, and with reference to other academic analyses and press reviews of *FMJ*, we suggest an alternative interpretation concerning the way in which the film confronts its spectators with the object of the gaze.

#### *From FMJ to the beating fantasy*

Stanley Kubrick's *FMJ* was released in New York on June 26<sup>th</sup> 1987 (Lobrutto, 2008). As an adaptation of Vietnam war veteran Gustav Hasford's (1983) novel *The Short Timers*, the film firstly sets the scene of American army recruits going through boot camp training and then focuses on their Vietnam combat action. Thus, although *FMJ* both chronologically and thematically fits into the 1980s second wave of "Vietnam war films", in academic literature it is largely considered to be atypical for the genre. The first possible reason for this is indicated by the scenery in which its battlefield action is staged. As Pursell (1988: 221) points out, *FMJ* lacks the "richly photographed jungle" that characterizes its predecessors, such as Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Stone's *Platoon* (1986). Indeed, Kubrick's film focuses on *urban* warfare, as it revolves around the assault on Central Vietnam's city of Hue (Lobrutto, 1997). As the director mentioned in a 1987 interview with Cahill, he created the film set by

reconstructing an abandoned London industrial site, principally by using explosives and a "wrecking ball" (Cahill, 2001: 195). Indeed, Falsetto (2001: 71, our emphasis) remarks that despite Kubrick's "attention to accurate details of presentation", the film offers "a somewhat *abstracted* view on war". For Willoquet-Maricondi (1994: 7) Kubrick's battleground represents "Hue as well as any other city in dereliction, Vietnam as well as any other war".

A second feature that distinguishes it from the above-mentioned genre concerns the clear contrast between the in-depth character explorations of films like *Platoon* and Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978) on one hand, and the schematic, minimalistic characters staged in *FMJ* (Gruben, 2005). Focusing on the film's boot camp section, Doherty (1988: 28) marks *FMJ*'s difference from the classic Hollywood "Marine corps indoctrination film" and its emphasis on the melodramatic revelation of "the warm human core beneath the officer corps". Kubrick rejected the tendency of films like Hackford's *An Officer and A Gentleman* (1982) to reveal the drill instructor's "heart of gold", depicting them as mere sentimental attempts to "ingratiate [...] with the audience" (Cahill, 2001: 198). Moreover, *FMJ* reveals equally little about the personal background and emotions of its recruits as it does about its drill instructor; it is described as having a "cold" and "detached" tone (Smith, 1988: 227), which does not evoke empathy, as such, but the experience of a "critical space" between its spectators and the characters it depicts on screen (Reaves, 1988: 233). In Gruben's (2005: 272, our emphasis) interpretation, it seems that Kubrick's purpose was not to create "a classic psychodrama" but "a more *abstract* meditation on violence and its representation". Indeed, *FMJ*'s abstracted, anti-humanistic approach to the theme of war was a topic of controversy in the initial press response to the film's release (Phillips & Hill, 2002: 129).<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, Janet Maslin (1987) of *The New York Times* praised the film for its "abstract" style and refusal to provide "easy catharsis". On the other, Pauline Kael's (1989: 328) review in *The New Yorker* was far more negative, indicating that the film was probably Kubrick's "worst movie". She was specifically

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3. As usual with Kubrick's films, the press response to *FMJ* was "mixed, to say the least" (Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 1998: 126). The negative press response however was less dominant than "the near disastrous reception of [Kubrick's previous film] *The Shining* (1980)" (Lobrutto, 1997: 488). Phillips and Hill (2002: 130) add that "[r]eassessments of the movie over the years have proved more positive", which is not unusual for a Kubrick film.

perturbed by Kubrick's distanced approach to his subject, stating that "you can't get an emotional reading" of the film (*Ibid.*: 326).

As indicated by Kolker (2000; 2010), these stylistic qualities of "abstraction" and "structure" and the related tone of "coldness" and "inhumanity" can be associated with Kubrick's work in general. This observation brings McGowan (2007) to link the director's cinema with Lacan's conceptualization of the (fundamental) fantasy. The author argues that in contrast to the common tendency to associate fantasy with "emotional response" it is in fact "a *structure* that operates with the same mechanical coldness that we see in Kubrick's films" (McGowan, 2007: 43-44, our emphasis). In his interpretation, emotions fulfill a secondary role as they only "provide a way of relating to fantasy, of making it palatable" (*Ibid.*: 44). From our point of view, this mechanism is illustrated by Kael's (1989) "emotionally charged" rejection of *FMJ*, specifically for its refusal to facilitate responses of empathy in its spectators. Yet, as McGowan emphasizes, beyond (or perhaps also at the base of) the fundamental fantasy's indirect link with emotion is its crucial function as a mold for the experience of *jouissance* (McGowan, 2007: 43; Declercq, 2004). The author emphasizes that *jouissance* is a "cold" bodily experience, which itself is located far beyond the domain of affectivity (McGowan, 2007: 43). In this study we discuss how *FMJ* on the one hand marks the fundamental fantasy's dimension of structure and, on the other, how it functions as a mediator for *jouissance*. Focusing on the first of these two dimensions, whereas McGowan marks the link with the stylistic qualities of Kubrick's cinema, he does not indicate the *kind* of structure to which the fundamental fantasy is related.

To clarify this concept, whereas Lacan referred to "fantasy" as such, post-Lacanian commonly deploy the term "*fundamental fantasy*" to mark a conceptual distinction with related notions, such as the daydream.<sup>4</sup> In essence, the fundamental fantasy is "a *generating structure* at the base of all symptoms including the daydream" (Verhaeghe, 1997: 259, our emphasis). Lacan (1986 [1964]: 185, our emphasis) specifically states that (the fundamental) fantasy is a "*scenario*" or basic script that functions as the "support of desire". The focus is not so much on the "subject's own" desire, as on its inherent

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4. Lacan thus rarely used the notion of the "fundamental fantasy" himself. As an isolated example, we refer to his 1958 text *The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Power* (Lacan, 2006 [1958]: 513). Generally Lacan uses the French word "le fantasme", of which the literal English translation is "fantasy".

relation to the desire of the Other (Žižek, 2008 [1997]: 9). Indeed, as Lacan (2004 [1962-1963]: 14) remarks, the unconscious question that grounds subjectivity is "Che Vuoi?" what do you want from me? Ultimately, the (fundamental) fantasy marks the object that the subject unconsciously *is* in the desire of the Other (Lacan, 2006 [1960b]: 691; 2004 [1962-1963]: 122).

On several instances throughout his seminar, Lacan discusses his theory on the (fundamental) fantasy with reference to Freud's 1919 article "A Child is Being Beaten".<sup>5</sup> In that essay, Freud argues that the masturbatory fantasies of several of his obsessive and hysteric patients were organized around the scene of a child that is being beaten (Freud, 1919*e*). A central aspect to Lacan's formal approach to Freud's text is that the fantasy is, in essence, characterized by variations of a basic "sentence", or a minimal grammatical scenario (Lacan, 1966-1967: lesson of January 11, 1967). The exact content of the scenario varied both in accordance with the sex of Freud's patients and with the beating fantasy's chronologically-phased development. In his female patients, the scenario's configuration varied over three chronological stages: "Father beats the child (whom I hate)" (phase 1), "I am being beaten by my father" (phase 2) and "A child (/a number of children) is being beaten (by a representative of the father)" (phase 3) (Freud, 1919*e*: 185). With regard to his male patients (two out of six cases), Freud detected only two stages: "I am being beaten by my father" and "I am being beaten by my mother" (*Ibid.*: 198). Both Freud (1919*e*) and Lacan (1994 [1956-1957]; 1998 [1957-1958]) linked the staged development of the beating fantasy, specifically its female variant, with the subject's working through of the Oedipus complex. As Lacan (1994 [1956-1957]: 115-116) points out, the fantasy's first phase "Father beats the child (whom I hate)" already stages an Oedipal constellation. Although the fantasy does not represent the mother during that stage, her place in the Oedipal triangle is taken up by a sibling, with whom the child that produces the fantasy rivals for the father's love. In Freud's (1919*e*: 185) analysis, the second stage of the female variant "I am being beaten by my father" was to be considered the "most important" of all. Remarkably so, since he also emphasized that the second stage was "never remembered" by his patients and is

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5. Lacan comments on Freud's article in his fourth (1994 [1956-1957]: 111-129), fifth (1998 [1957-1958]: 233-248), sixth (1958-1959: lesson of January 7, 1959), tenth (2004 [1962-1963]: 204), fourteenth (1966-1967: lessons of January 11, June 14 and June 21, 1967) and seventeenth (2008 [1969-1970]: 65-66) seminar.

thus essentially a "construction of analysis" (*Ibid.*). Yet, it is precisely the second stage's quality of being a *construction* that, according to Miller (1982-1983: lesson 7 of December 15, 1982; 2010), marks the distinction between the fundamental fantasy and other formations of the unconscious, such as symptoms. Žižek (1997: 148) further elucidates that where symptoms lend themselves to interpretation and the according effects of "self-recognition", the fundamental fantasy is a form of unconscious knowledge that is essentially "acephalic": it can only be assumed along the path of "subjective destitution". Lacan (1994 [1956-1957]: 117) adds that although he considers the second stage of the beating fantasy to imply a regression towards a dual mode of functioning, it must also be regarded as a crucial Oedipal step, as it prepares the child's transition to the third, post-Oedipal stage of the fantasy (Lacan, 1998 [1957-1958]: 238). For Lacan this last stage "A child (/a number of children) is being beaten (by a representative of the father)" corresponds with the subject's assumption that there is a "law of the beating" to which *all* subjects are submitted (*Ibid.*: 243, our translation).

*"C observes: A overpowers B"*

From our point of view, both *FMJ*'s narrative of military violence and its approach to its spectators is propped up by the scenario of the fundamental fantasy "C observes: A overpowers B". For now we will focus only on the film's depictions of the sub-scenario "A overpowers B", which can be considered the grammatical form that underpins the various versions of the beating fantasy. Indeed, the beating fantasy, and specifically its Oedipal content, is particularly evoked by the fact that in the majority of the *boot camp* sections, the violence involves characters being overpowered by a figure of authority/a representative of the father. As the drill instructor insistently humiliates and beats up his recruits, he embodies the "terrifying and paternal figure Kubrick is so fond of representing" (scenes 2-13) (Ciment, 2001: 234).<sup>6</sup> While Hartman takes up the role of aggressor (A), it is primarily the recruit (re)named Gomer Pyle that is in the position of his victim (B) (scenes

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6. Nelson (2000: 242) also explicitly links Hartman with the "paternal" role, depicting the figure as "a sadistic father surrogate (bent on shaping his offspring into his own "hard" and mechanical likeliness)."

2-8, see Image 1).<sup>7</sup> By the end of the sequence, the staging of the sub-scenario "A overpowers B" is explicitly marked by an instance of passive-active reversal, involving the characters' symmetrical shift in positions of aggressor (A) and victim (B), and Pyle's eventual shooting down of his drill instructor, whereby he becomes an "Oedipal murderer" (scene 15) (*Ibid.*).<sup>8</sup> The second part of the film, which focuses on Vietnam combat action, stages further instances of the scenario "A overpowers B", which are also explicitly intertwined with instances of passive-active reversal (scenes 16-38). Here we see that all three of the sequence's quasi-symmetrical subsections stage American Marines that shift from the passive position of victims (B) to the active position of aggressors (A) when confronting the North Vietnamese army (scenes 16-38). For example, in a third subsection, the shooting down of three members of a platoon by a female Vietcong sniper is followed by the Marines' revenge on her (scenes 32-38).<sup>9</sup> This example introduces a certain nuance to McGowan's (2007: 47) univocal focus on Kubrick's staging of the derailments of *male* representatives of *authority*.<sup>10</sup> Firstly, it shows that in *FMJ* a *female* can equally take up the position of the aggressor (A). Secondly, similar to Pyle's Oedipal revenge on Hartman, *FMJ*'s depiction of the sniper being a foot soldier shows that in *FMJ* it is *not only* instances of *authority* that take up the position of the aggressor (A). Indeed, whereas Freud (1919e: 189, 194) considered the phased constitution of the beating fantasy to involve an active-to-passive reversal of the drive for mastery (but not of the passive-to-active movement), *FMJ*'s staging of the sub-scenario "A overpowers B" explicitly marks both modes (passive-to-active *and* active-to-passive) by which the drive's aim can turn into its opposite.<sup>11</sup>

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7. A reference to a character Jim Nabor's, impersonated during a 1960s television parody on Vietnam Boot Camp Training "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C."

8. From the start of the boot camp section the passive-active reversal is anticipated on several instances. For example, the discrepancy between Hartman's position as Pyle's superior and the fact that actor Lee Erney is much smaller than Vincent d'Onofrio (who impersonates the role of Pyle) (see Image 1).

9. The first sub-section depicts the passive-active reversal of the U.S. army when we encounter the Vietcong's launch of the 1968 Tet Offensive at Da Nang (scenes 16-19). The second subsection stages a sequence of attacks and counter-attacks between the U.S. army and the Vietcong upon the former's arrival at the city of Hue (scenes 20-31).

10. Referring to Kubrick's depiction of the derailment of authority, McGowan (2007: 47, our emphasis) states that in "Kubrick's films, *he – always he – inevitably finds an obscene enjoyment in his role*".

11. For Freud (1919e) all versions of the beating fantasy, apart from the first stage for his female cases (which concerned the punishment of a rival), are of a passive/masochistic nature.



Given Freud's observation that the beating fantasy's final stage "A child is being beaten" did not represent his (female) patients themselves, he insistently inquired about their own position towards the scene of overpowering, to which they reluctantly replied: "I am probably looking on" (*Ibid.*: 186). Lacan (1966-1967: lesson of June 21, 1967) also briefly refers to these subjects' identification with the "look" that casts over the scene of beating. Yet, although neither Freud nor Lacan further elaborated on the position of the observer (C), it is an essential part of the complete scenario of the fundamental fantasy that structures *FMJ*: "C observes: A overpowers B". Indeed, the film's staging of recruit Pyle not only shows that each time he takes up the positions of either victim (B) or aggressor (A) there are observers (C) present, but on several occasions the character actually shifts to the position of the spectator himself. Firstly, each time Pyle is positioned as the victim (B) of Hartman's aggression, his fellow recruits are structurally present as spectators (C) of the violence (scenes 2-8). The film's depiction of a pugil fight shows us that, while Pyle is staged as his fellow recruit's victim (B), the rest of the platoon present as a circle of observers (C) (scene 3, see Image 2). Secondly, when Pyle shifts to the role of the aggressor (A) by killing Hartman, his fellow recruit "Joker" takes up the position of the spectator (C) (scene 15). Finally, we see Pyle repeatedly staged as an observer (C) himself, for example when he witnesses Hartman aggressing other squad members during the film's opening sequence (scene 2).

The functioning of the other characters in *FMJ* can also be seen to take up one (or more) of the positions of aggressor (A), victim (B) and observer (C). For example, similar to Pyle, the depiction of his fellow recruit (and later Marine) "Joker" involves a rotation over all three positions of the fundamental fantasy (scenes 2-37).<sup>12</sup>

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Accordingly, his text points to two modes by which active-to-passive reversal is involved in the constitution of the beating fantasy. Firstly, Freud points to his female patients' shift from the first sadistic/active stage towards the passive variant marked by the second stage. Secondly, in 1919 Freud still adhered the idea that all instances of the masochistic drive (and thus of its according expressions in the beating fantasy) concerned active-to-passive reversals of both aim and object of a pre-existing, active instance of the drive for mastery (Freud, 1915c; 1919e).

12. The opening sequence implies that Joker takes up the position of the victim (B) when he, like Pyle, is personally humiliated and beaten up by Hartman (scene 2). Joker's subsequent shift to the position of the spectator (C) manifests firstly when he visually witnesses Pyle's revenge on Hartman and subsequently when he explicitly takes up the function of observer as a U.S. army war correspondent (scenes 15-31). When Joker kills the sniper at the end of the film, his shift to the position of aggressor (A) is established (scene 37).



*Top left, Image 1: Pyle gets barked at by Hartman (scene 3)*

*Top right, Image 2: The other recruits observe Pyle being beaten to the ground (scene 3)*

*Bottom left, Image 3: The film camera aligns with Joker's perspective on Hartman (scene 2)*

*Bottom right, Image 4: A photo lens is pointed at the film's spectator (scene 24)*

Moreover, *FMJ*'s staging of its observers (C) indicates that the overall set-up of the scenario "C observes: A overpowers B" is not restricted to the film's narrative: the scenario also stretches across to its (cinema) *audience*. Indeed, whenever the film stages instances of "A overpowers B", the film's spectator is structurally positioned as an observer (C) of screen violence. Furthermore, the cinematographic framework of *FMJ* also ensures that it is not only the position of the observer (C), but also the roles of aggressor (A) and victim (B) that assume the visual perspective of violence. Indeed, the point-of-view shots that permeate *FMJ*, thus correlative to the film's spectator, repeatedly rotate across all of three perspectives of violence. For example, when Hartman overpowers individual recruits on their first encounter at the "Paris Island" barracks (scene 2) and when he overpowers recruit "Joker", the camera not only assumes the observer's (C) point of view, but also that of Hartman and of Joker in their respective positions of aggressor (A) and victim (B) (scene 2, see

Image 3). Moreover, and as Donatelli and Castle (1998: 24) point out, on several instances the film explicitly reminds its spectators of their own involvement in "the moviegoing experience". For example, during its Vietnam section, *FMJ* stages a television crew explicitly *filming* a squad of Marines (scene 27), where one of the soldiers allusively remarks: "This is Vietnam, the Movie!". Indeed, in two instances the film spectator is even more directly addressed, as the camera is explicitly pointed to its audience, once by a television crew (scene 27) and again in an earlier scene by a combat photographer (scene 24, see Image 4).

#### *The fantasy of the father's jouissance*

To further analyze how *FMJ*'s staging of the scenario "C observes: A overpowers B" might involve its spectators, one must take into account that beyond its formal dimension, the fundamental fantasy also essentially functions as a mediator for *jouissance*. From our point of view, a literal translation of Lacan's concept of *jouissance* into "enjoyment" is inadequate. Firstly, unlike the English word "enjoyment", the French word *jouissance* has an explicitly sexual connotation, as it is most commonly used to refer to the experience of a sexual orgasm (Evans, 2006). Secondly, while the term "enjoyment" has a connotation of mere pleasure, *jouissance* refers to a *transgression* of the pleasure principle (Vanheule, 2011). As Fink (1995: xii, our emphasis) points out, *jouissance* "is a pleasure that is *excessive*, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed or disgusted, yet simultaneously providing a source of fascination". As such, *jouissance* involves a paradoxical association between the experiences of "pleasure *and* pain" (Lacan, 1992 [1959-1960]: 189; emphasis in the original).<sup>13</sup> With regard to its dimension of excessivity, Lacan also suggests that *jouissance* is inherently linked with the *transgression* of Oedipal/legal prohibitions (*Ibid.*: 240). This leads back to McGowan's (2007: 44) thesis that Kubrick's cinema reveals the *jouissance* that stains the everyday functioning of power, by staging its figures of authority as explicitly abusing their position for various modes of *excess*. As indicated above, one way Kubrick reveals that excess, is by deriving "over-the-top performances" from the actors that impersonate the according roles (*Ibid.*: 47). Michael Bates' impersonation of a chief

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13. Swales (2012: xiii) also emphasizes that "[j]ouissance is not pure pleasure, but a combination of pleasure and pain".

prison guard in *A Clockwork Orange* is a typical example of this, where the actor exaggeratedly shouts at a juvenile delinquent (Alex) upon the latter's arrival in jail. For McGowan, the prison guard's excess of *jouissance* is specifically revealed by "the tone and volume" of Bates' voice (*Ibid.*), virtually identical to Lee Ermey's impersonation of *FMJ's* drill instructor Hartman.

With respect to the latter example, we propose that Hartman's *jouissance* is marked through association with four out of five instances of the Lacanian object *a*: the voice, the gaze, excrement and the phallus.<sup>14</sup> Lacan (2004 [1962-1963]) defined the object *a* as the corporeal element which is paradoxically both constituted and lost once the human being enters the domain of language (/the symbolic order).<sup>15</sup> In this context, *FMJ's* staging of the objects of voice and gaze is to be primarily located *beyond* the level of the linguistic/signifying dimension of the film's dialogue. Firstly, for most of *FMJ's* boot camp sequence, Hartman (Lee Ermey) excessively *screams* at his recruits (co-actors) (scenes 2-15). Parallel to McGowan's analysis of Michael Bates' impersonation of *A Clockwork Orange's* prison guard, the first dimension of Hartman's *jouissance* is situated at the level of Ermey's *use of his voice* (McGowan, 2007)). *FMJ's* staging of the voice "qua instance of the object *a*" is thus not so much indicated by *what* Hartman says, but rather by the specific way in which Ermey uses his vocal instrument.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Lee Ermey's medical condition at the time that the boot camp sequence was filmed is a possible indication of the connection between the dimension of excess marked by *jouissance* and the development of bodily symptoms. On January 7<sup>th</sup> of 1986 a doctor confirmed that the actor, whose medical condition of "laryngitis" had already prevented him from acting (and thus shout) for six days, again had to leave the set for having "strained his vocal

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14. One aspect of Lacan's (2004 [1962-1963]) theory on the object *a* is the addition of gaze and voice to the three objects of the drive discussed by Freud (1905*d*): breast, excrement and phallus. We add that, besides the four registers of *jouissance* involved in Hartman's appearance, *FMJ* most prominently refers to the fifth object of the breast through its staging of Pyle's oral fixation. As an indication of the dimension of "excess" involved, we refer to the observation that the "normally physically fit" actor Vincent d'Onofrio gained "more than 70 pounds" to impersonate the according role (Phillips & Hill, 2002: 81). For a further elaboration of Lacan's theory on the object *a*, we refer to Miller (2006).

15. As Verhaeghe (1997: 145) points out, the "[o]bject *a* lies beyond the signifier, it is the last term in desire which can never be expressed in signifiers". In his seventeenth seminar, Lacan (2007 [1969-1970]: 91, emphasis in the original) emphasizes the status of the object *a* as marker of the subject's "surplus [of] *jouissance*".

16. This corresponds with Vanheule's (2011: 135) remark that "[t]he voice qua object *a* points to [the] immanence of the living being in speech".

chords".<sup>17</sup> The sequence also reminds us of Dolar's (1996: 27, emphasis in the original) remark that one mode by which the voice, as instance of the object *a*, manifests itself is at the logical point where the (fatherly) enunciation of the Law lapses into its beyond of "unbounded *jouissance* and decay".<sup>18</sup> Moreover, for Lacan (2006 [1960a]: 572-573), the psychic instance of the superego tends to manifest itself as "a *voice* first and foremost, [...] without any authority other than being that of a loud voice". Here we can see the link between Žižek's (2008 [1997]: 27) remark that *FMJ*'s boot camp sequence stages "the superego machine of Power at its purest" and the *jouissance* inherent in the use Ermey/Hartman makes of his vocal instrument. Secondly, the drill instructor's *jouissance* is marked by its relation to the *gaze*, or the instance of the object *a* that Lacan (1986 [1964]) associates with the scopic register. Lacan states that the gaze, as an intangible locus of *jouissance*, is essentially marked by its *absence* in the visual field (*Ibid.*). Although the "invisible" gaze cannot thus be directly depicted, one way the film's boot camp sequence points to its influence is by Hartman's/Ermey's excessive *peering* at each recruit/actor that he personally addresses (scene 2, see also Image 1). The drill instructor's "scopic" mode of *jouissance* is thus pointed to by Hartman's/Ermey's looming and prolonged stare into his subordinates/co-actors' faces. We will return to *FMJ*'s staging of the gaze in the section below. For now, we argue that while the film's staging of Hartman's invocatory and scopic *jouissance* is marked by the *non-verbal* dimensions of Ermey's performance, the film evokes the anal and phallic instances of the (extra-linguistic) object *a* most prominently by the content of which his speech is made up. Indeed, Miller (1999: 18) indicates that a discourse can function, not only as a barrier to *jouissance*, but also as its *carrier*.<sup>19</sup> Like in Hasford's (1983: 4) novel, the drill instructor from the start degrades

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17. We have retrieved this information in the film's "progress reports", which make part of box "GB 3184 SK-16-3-6" consulted in August of 2013 at the Kubrick Archive, University of the Arts London. Moreover, in his *Full Metal Jacket Diary*, actor Matthew Modine also confirms the January 7<sup>th</sup> 1986 breakdown of Ermey's voice: "By lunchtime, Lee's voice was finished" (Modine, 2012).

18. Dolar (1996: 27, emphasis in the original) remarks: "Is the *jouissance* that the Law persecutes as its radical alterity other than the aspect of *jouissance* pertaining to the Law itself? [...] Does the voice of the persecutor differ from the persecuted voice?"

19. In his twentieth seminar, Lacan (1999 [1972-1973]: 24, emphasis in the original) also remarked that "[t]he signifier [itself] is situated at the level of enjoying substance (substance *jouissante*)". Miller (1999: 18), however, introduced the notion of "discursive *jouissance*" by interpreting Lacan's (2007 [1969-1970]) discussion of the link between *knowledge* and *jouissance* in terms of the latter's relation to the order of the *signifier*.

all his inmates to "pieces of amphibian shit", thereby most prominently focusing on the recruit that he nicknames "(Gomer) Pyle" (scene 2).<sup>20</sup> Given the multiple references to scatology (and anal sexuality) associated with Hartman's introduction of the signifier "Pyle", the recruit's "parricide" and subsequent suicide at the boot camp's *latrines* suggest that the latter ultimately realizes the position of "excrement" he is assigned in the former's desire (scenes 2, 15).<sup>21</sup> Finally, Hartman's discourse implies references to the phallic instance of the object *a*, which on several instances explicitly implies a disavowal of sexual difference. The drill instructor, indeed, not only repeatedly addresses his all-male recruits as "ladies", but more confusingly teaches them to associate their phallic shaped rifles both with the male *and* female sexual organ (scenes 2-15; scene 4).<sup>22</sup> By explicitly threatening to emasculate his recruits, he exaggerates "his position as an all-powerful castrating father" (Webster, 2011: 123).

As all four modes by which Hartman derives *jouissance* from his position could be considered transgressions of the "normal sexual aim [of] copulation", his appearance in Freudian terms is of a polymorphously "perverse" kind (Freud, 1905*d*: 149).<sup>23</sup> Given that the drill instructor insistently uses his (younger) subordinates as a tool for *jouissance*, his appearance reminds us of the perverse (seducing) father figures that Freud (1985*c* [1887-1904]) had attributed a crucial role to in his early theory on the etiology of (hysterical) neurosis.<sup>24</sup> As

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20. Besides the direct influences from Hasford's (1983) novel, Kubrick also derived his inspiration for Hartman's dialogue from *Maledicta*, "a journal of scatological invective and insult" (Herr, 2000: 45). According to Kubrick, a third major source of inspiration for that dialogue, "specifically the insult stuff", concerned his improvisational sessions with Lee Ermey (Phillips & Hill, 2002: 197). We add that, as such, for Rice (2008: 156, emphasis in the original) Hartman embodies "the ultimate caricature of Freud's *anal character*".

21. As Doherty (1988: 27) points out, Pyle is the recruit that is "plunged deepest into [Hartman's] cesspool". With regard to *FMJ*'s staging of the link between the name "Pyle" and the scatological register we firstly remark that the instant before Hartman addresses him, the latter compares another recruit with "stacked shit", thus: with a "pile" of feces (scene 2). Secondly, as Cocks (2004: 135) points out, the word "pyle" is also the Middle English term for "hemorrhoids". Thirdly, the recruit's nickname marks a reference to the actor Jim Nabors, who not only took up the role of "Gomer Pyle" in a 1960s boot camp parody but, as Willoquet-Maricondi (1994: 8) points out, was also an "alleged homosexual".

22. Once he has verbally equated the recruits' rifles with the female genital ("pussy") the drill instructor also teaches his subordinates a song that involves an association between their rifles and their male genitals (scene 4).

23. We thus refer to the definition of perversion that Freud (1905*d*: 149) used in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

24. Nevertheless, Freud's texts provide only a few explicit examples of these perverse fathers. In the context of his *Studies on Hysteria*, only his case of Katharina includes the illustrative

indicated in his February 11, 1897 letter to Fliess, at the time Freud even accused his own father of perversion (*Ibid.*: 230-231). Yet, in the subsequent letter of September 21 of the same year, Freud started to question both the "widespread extent of perversity towards children" pointed to by his patients' associations and the accusation that his own father was a sexual pervert (*Ibid.*: 264). The letter also indicates how the focus of Freud's investigation shifted away from the *real-life* perversions on the side of these father figures to the function that his patients' own (parent-related) *fantasies* took up within their neurosis.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the subsequent recognition of his own Oedipus complex in the letter of October 15 1897 can be considered a confirmation that at least the idea that *his own* father being a perverse abuser functioned as an (Oedipally motivated) fantasy for Freud himself (Geerardyn, 2002; Freud, 1985c [1887-1904]).<sup>26</sup> In other words, the fantasy of his father's perversion both legitimized *and* camouflaged Freud's own archaic death wish towards the latter. Nevertheless, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud (1912-1913a: 140-146) reconsidered the idea of a *real-life* instance of the abusive father figure at the base of (collective) neurosis. Thereby, he hypothesized that it was the assembled sons' murder of their tribal horde's leader, the "violent primal father", which was at the base of the (Oedipal) laws of primitive society (*Ibid.*: 140-146).<sup>27</sup> One effect of the murder would be an idealization of the dead father, expressed in a worship of his representative: the clan's "totem" (*Ibid.*). Lacan (2006 [1948]: 95; 2006 [1957]: 432), however, emphasizes that Freud's text on the primal horde, like the latter's theory on the Oedipus complex, takes up the function of a *myth* in neurosis. In that line of reasoning, it is not only the idealized image of the (dead) father but also the image of its counterpart, the "obscene, ferocious figure of the primordial father", that can be regarded as a classical figure of the neurotic's fantasy (*Ibid.*: 432).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, for Žižek (2008 [1997]: 43) the image of the primordial father concerns a

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remark that: "[t]he girl fell ill [...] as a result of sexual attempts on the part of her own father" (Freud & Breuer, 1895d: 134).

25. In Verhaeghe's (1997: 190) words: Freud started to consider the "seduction scenes and traumas [as] fantasmatically elaborated neurotic constructions".

26. In his letter of October 15, 1897, Freud (1985c [1887-1904]: 272) remarks: "I have found, in my case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father".

27. According to Freud (1912-1913a: 143) the two laws of primitive society, the prohibition to kill the totem (as substitute for their father) and the prohibition of incest, "corresponded with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex".

28. For Žižek (2008 [1992]: 143) the primordial or "anal father" has to be considered the *fantasmatic* reverse of the "Name-of-the-Father qua [neutral] bearer of the Symbolic Law".

paradigmatic example of how "fantasy constructs the scene" by which we, as neurotic subjects, tend to locate "[t]he *jouissance* we are deprived of in the Other". This corresponds with Lacan's (2007 [1969-1970]: 65-66) remark on the beating fantasy's second stage: "I am being beaten by the father". For Lacan, it is clear that on one hand that fantasy stages a scene in which the father figure derives *jouissance* from beating the subject, but on the other hand the fantasy in essence "represents [the subject of the fantasy's] *own* *jouissance* in the form of the Other's *jouissance*" (*Ibid.*: 65; emphasis added). Freud's (1909d) famous case of Dr. Lorenz, or the "Rat man" provides an illustration of the way that the fantasy of the cruel (representative of the) father can mediate the subject's own *jouissance*. During his analysis, Lorenz mentioned his on-going ruminations about the cruelty of a "captain with a Czech name", a superior he encountered during military service (Freud, 1909d: 166). Freud specifically focused on the Rat man's painful reciting of a "horrible punishment used in the East" (*Ibid.*). Although it was only casually mentioned by the captain, the image of the torture had come to take up a central place in his patient's fantasy (*Ibid.*). While the Rat man emphasized that he dreaded his superior for the latter's fondness of cruelty, Freud remarked that a "strange, composite expression" appeared on the patient's face when reciting the anal-sadistical details of the torture (*Ibid.*). For Freud, the Rat man's facial expression could only mark a "*horror at pleasure of his own*" (*Ibid.*, emphasis in the original). This combination between "horror" and "pleasure" evokes Lacan's (1992 [1959-1960]) definition of *jouissance* as a paradoxical mix of pleasure and pain.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the fantasy of his army superior's cruelty functioned as a mediator for the Rat man's own *jouissance*.

Remarkably, the Rat man's facial expression closely resembles the ambiguous "grin" that *FMJ*'s recruit Pyle displays the first time his superior, drill instructor Hartman, personally offends him (scene 2). For Naremore (2006: 13), Pyle's "grin" expresses a "bewildered mingling of amusement, fear, and disgust". Naremore's reference to the involvement of a paradoxical mix of "amusement" with both "fear" and "disgust" indeed suggests that Pyle, like the Rat man, goes through the experience of *jouissance*. We add that a variation on Pyle's "grinning look" is staged during the sequences that lead to his murder of Hartman (scenes 12-15, see Image 5). Where that "grin", as

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29. For Declercq (2004: 240), the Rat man's facial expression indicates that he was "terrorized by the sadistic *jouissance* [living] inside him".



such, also introduces Pyle's subsequent suicide, it evokes Lacan's (2007 [1969-1970]: 18) statement that it is on "the path towards death" that the subject typically encounters "jouissance". Extending his analysis beyond the scope of the film's narrative, Naremore (2006: 13, emphasis added) remarks that Pyle's response to Hartman's vulgarities "resembles the reaction that *most viewers are likely to have*" when watching the boot camp sequence. In other words, his interpretation suggests that the sequence also tends to evoke a *jouissance*-related experience from the film's viewers. This brings us to an analysis of the viewers' response to Hartman's appearance in the conclusive part of this study.



*Image 5: Pyle's facial expression of jouissance (scene 15)*

*Conclusion: towards the spectator's gaze*

Here we can return to McGowan's (2007) thesis that Kubrick stages the gaze by pointing to the dimension of blindness involved in the spectator's tendency to perceive everyday instances of authority as neutral servants of the public interest. According to McGowan, the director highlights the obscene underside of power by deploying cinema's fantasmatic quality to stage his filmic figures of authority as overtly deriving surplus *jouissance* from their roles (McGowan: 2007).

We firstly argued that, although McGowan (2007) observes that Kubrick's films reflect the (fundamental) fantasy's dimension of structure, he does not indicate what specific *scenario* of the fundamental fantasy is at stake. We argued that the basic scenario that buttresses both *FMJ*'s narrative and the film's approach to its

spectators is "C observes: A overpowers B". We added that the film's drill instructor, cast as a specific instance of aggressor (A), reminds us of the Oedipal content that characterizes the beating fantasy (Freud, 1919*e*; Lacan, 1994 [1956-1957]; Lacan, 1998 [1957-1958]). We also proposed that, over and beyond the beating fantasy, *FMJ*'s staging of its scenario of the fundamental fantasy is marked by the involvement of both passive-active reversal and of the third party of an observer (C).

With regard to *FMJ*'s staging of the fundamental fantasy's function as mediator for *jouissance*, we focused our analysis on the film's depiction of its drill instructor. Where McGowan (2007: 47) linked Hartman's obscenity with Lee Ermey's over-the-top impersonation of his role, we added that the drill instructor's *jouissance* circulates around four instances of the Lacanian object *a*. Moreover, we questioned McGowan's tendency to univocally link Kubrick's staging of the derailment of power with the obscene underside of *real-life* instances of authority. For example, by evoking the evolution Freud (1985*c* [1887-1904]) made in his 1890s theory on the abusive father's role in the etiology of (hysterical) neurosis, we suggested that the figure of *FMJ*'s drill instructor can also be interpreted as representing a figure of the neurotic *fantasy*. Moreover, with reference to Lacan's (2007 [1969-1970]) interpretation of the beating fantasy, we illustrated how the fantasy-image of the derailed father tends to function as a mediator for a subject's *own jouissance*. We marked a parallel between the *jouissance* Freud's (1909*d*) patient, the Rat man, derived from fantasizing about his army superior's derailment and the response that Naremore (2006) expects spectators to display when confronted with the image of *FMJ*'s obscene drill instructor.

This leads us to a discussion of McGowan's (2007: 25) remarkable statement that the effect of Kubrick's staging of the derailment of power is that spectators will "see the absence of neutrality in authority but not in themselves" (*Ibid.*: 25). As such, the author concludes that ultimately Kubrick's films "tend to leave the spectator *unscathed*" (*Ibid.*, emphasis added). As a first comment to this observation, we raise the question as to what effect McGowan expects Kubrick's films to have on spectators who function as an instance of authority in daily life *themselves*? Secondly, it is noteworthy that McGowan's conclusion not only contrasts with Naremore's (2006) interpretation of the viewer's response to *FMJ*, but also with other academic and press reactions to the film. For example, rather than expecting the film to leave spectators unscathed, both Rita Kempley's (1987) review for the

*Washington Post* and the academic analysis of Phillips and Hill (2002: 128) point to the "disturbing" effect *FMJ* can have on its viewers. Suggesting a complicity between the recruits' initial position as victims (B) of Hartman's *jouissance* and the position taken up by the film's spectators, *New York Times*' critic Janet Maslin (1987) expected *FMJ*'s boot camp section to be "as overwhelming for the audience as it must be for the recruits". Similarly, Donatelli and Castle (1998: 25) consider the film to be an "unprecedented *moviegoer* boot camp". In their interpretation *FMJ*'s staging of Hartman does not leave spectators "unscathed", but rather implies an "invasion of viewer territory" (*Ibid.*: 26). Moreover, in line with Naremore's (2006) analysis, *New York Times*' critic Vincent Canby (1987) provides an interpretation that supports our hypothesis that *FMJ*'s staging of its drill instructor ultimately evokes a *jouissance*-related experience from its viewers. In Canby's words, Hartman's appearance is so outrageous that we tend to watch him "in hilarity that, boomerang-like, suddenly returns [to us] as shock and sorrow" (*Ibid.*). As such, like Naremore's (2006) commentary, Canby's interpretation suggests that the viewers' response to Hartman involves the paradoxical association between pleasure ("hilarity") and suffering ("shock and sorrow") that Lacan (1992 [1959-1960]) defined as *jouissance*. This brings us to our interpretation of the way *FMJ*'s staging of the gaze tends to involve the film's spectator. To illustrate the mechanism at stake here, we provide two examples from the film.

Firstly, the set-up of the shot in which a combat photographer points his camera directly at the film's audience (scene 24, see Image 4) reflects Lacan's (1986 [1964]: 109) thesis that the gaze manifests itself as *outside* the subject, and thus corresponds with the spectator's experience "that things are looking at [him]". Although, for Lacan, the gaze is essentially *absent* in the visual field, he shows us how visual images, like paintings, have the ability to suggest that it is located somewhere behind their pictorial surface. Paintings, for example, can suggest that the gaze is veiled by the "pupil" of a figure's eye (*Ibid.*: 108). In our interpretation, the filmic shot from *FMJ* similarly suggests the presence of the gaze behind the (cinema) screen, through its depiction of the black circular spot that represents the photo-camera's lens.

Secondly, we noted above that one mode by which *FMJ*'s drill instructor uses his recruits as a tool for *jouissance* is by intrusively "peering" at them, and argued that Hartman's *jouissance* encircles the object of the gaze. However, this manifestation of the gaze also

involves the film's spectator: if we return to the boot camp section, where we are given the point-of-view shot of recruit Joker as he is being overpowered by Hartman (scene 2, see Image 3), in this instance the drill instructor also intrusively peers at *us*, the film's spectators. Thus, similar to the combat photographer's camera lens, the image of the drill instructor's facial expression suggests the presence of the gaze, as the hidden point from which the film looks back at us.

For Lacan, the ultimate effect of a confrontation with the gaze is that, as "the subject tries to adapt himself to it, [he] *becomes* that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being" himself (*Ibid.*: 83). In this respect, and contrary to McGowan's (2007) thesis, we do not accept that *FMJ* leaves viewers "unscathed". Rather, we believe that the film's ultimate effect is to be reached when spectators undergo the experience of being "*called into the picture*" themselves (Lacan, 1986 [1964]: 92; emphasis added). In other words, they momentarily stop being distant observers of the film's depictions of violence by turning into the vanishing point of *jouissance* that Lacan defined as the gaze.

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