

**OBJECTS IN STANLEY KUBRICK'S *THE SHINING*: AN
OBJECT-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE**



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**OBJECTS IN STANLEY KUBRICK'S *THE SHINING*: AN
OBJECT-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTS IN STANLEY KUBRICK'S *THE SHINING*: AN OBJECT-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE

Türkan, Mustafa

Film and Television Master's Degree Program

Prof Dr Kaya Özkaracalar

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This thesis will aim to give an overview of Graham Harman's notion of real and sensual objects in terms of object-oriented ontology and will indicate how central that conception is—to analyse Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* trajectory in the horror genre—throughout the Overlook Hotel that extends to a significant time span in its history. In other words, a strong bond can be established between Graham Harman's ideas of speculative realism, real and sensual objects, rejection of anthropocentrism, critique of correlationism and preservation of finitude, withdrawal of objects and Stanley Kubrick's making of a horror film. As film critics further investigate Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, the centrality of object-oriented tendency becomes increasingly apparent. The *mise en scène* in *The Shining* achieves its theatrical performance only when the real object that has been pulled back in the *mise en scène* is filled by another real object, the audience. The sensual qualities attributed to the real object produce the third object with the audience's participation. This thesis argues that since each frame has a *mise en scène*, all film reviews are open to the use of the quadruple object structure of the object-oriented ontology.

Keywords: The Shining, Horror Cinema, Object-Oriented Ontology

ÖZ

STANLEY KUBRICK'İN *THE SHINING*'İNDE NESNELER: NESNE YÖNELİMLİ BİR BAKIŞ AÇISI

Türkan, Mustafa

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Bu tez, Graham Harman'ın gerçek ve duygusal nesnelere kavramlarına nesne yönelimli ontoloji açısından genel bir bakış sunacak, bu kavramların, önemli bir zaman dilimine yayılan Overlook Oteli geneli ve *The Shining* filmi çevresinde analiz ederek ne kadar merkezi bir konumda olduğunu gösterecektir. Başka bir deyişle, Graham Harman'ın spekülasyon, gerçekçilik, gerçek ve duygusal nesnelere, insan merkeziliğin reddi, korelasyonizm ve sonluluğun muhafazası eleştirisi ve nesnelere geri çekilmesine ilişkin fikirleriyle Stanley Kubrick'in korku sineması arasında güçlü bir bağ kurulabilir. Film eleştirmenleri Stanley Kubrick'in *The Shining*'ini daha fazla araştırdıkça nesne yönelimli eğilimin merkeziliği daha belirgin hale gelmektedir. *The Shining*'teki mizansen ancak mizansende geriye çekilmiş olan gerçek nesnenin başka bir gerçek nesne olan seyirci tarafından doldurulmasıyla teatral performansını gerçekleştirmiş olur. Gerçek nesneye atfedilen duygusal nitelikler, seyircinin katılımıyla üçüncü bir nesne üretir. Bu tez, her kare bir mizansene sahip olduğu için tüm film okumalarının, nesne yönelimli ontolojinin dörtlü nesne yapısının kullanımına açık olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: The Shining, Korku Sineması, Nesne Yönelimli Ontoloji



To H. P. Lovecraft...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the beginning of my higher education, my world had a large empty space in it that cannot be filled. My life conformed less and less to the architecture of my imagined personality, both the one I possessed and the one I sought to cultivate. I was constantly immersed in a Kafkaesque atmosphere and I was very deeply enmeshed. In other words, I had no Pauline road-to-Damascus experience. I have done many shape-shiftings and found my place in film studies. Every choice is complex, and after a point, we have to accept that we cannot control the chaos of events. So, I made a decision by listening to both myself and the people whose opinions I valued. It was like catching smoke by hand. I was always a fan of Stephen King, but Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and his passion for filmmaking brought me a new vision. It was like a reversal of tectonic drift, my isolated land masses of taste was reforming as a supercontinent. The integration of a distinctly composed sensibility into an open-ended, communally evolving output was perhaps Kubrick's signal achievement. Then I met with two terms, *speculative realism* and *object-oriented ontology*. If there is a basis of speculative realism as a philosophical movement, the only shared influence among them was H. P. Lovecraft. They all had their own interpretations of Lovecraft as I had. They also had a shared frustration with some of the dominant trends in continental philosophy, such as anti-realism and correlationism, which is the idea that all of philosophy is simply about the human-world interplay. I also liked that they continued their in-field discussions on the more 'democratic' media, such as blogs. That is why I want to thank some philosophers who have inspired and continue to inspire me with their discussions in these mediums, especially Graham Harman, along with Bruno Latour, Levi R. Byrant, Ian Bogost, Timothy Morton, and Quentin Meillassoux. If it were not for their inspiration, I would not have dared to engage in a speculative discussion about a film reading that puts human beings off the centre of everything. I will continue to support their alternative to the rigid academic hierarchy—that is to say, towards a culture of discussion and conversation maintained on blogs, which are more democratic and creative means of intellectual expression.

I have been deeply honoured to have had an immensely supportive supervisor, Kaya Özkaracalar. He was the most 'well-matched' faculty member with me in terms of his

research interests, his passion for horror cinema and the works he published. I cannot thank him enough for always being there to discuss. I benefited greatly from his valuable insight, counsel, and guidance. Without Özkaracalar's mentorship, I would not have had the courage to touch a world that remained in the background in film studies for many years. He has always been a good friend to his students. I cannot thank him enough for his kind demeanour. I think such virtues are not valued as much as they used to be. At least, this is what I experienced. It will be a bit long, but I would like to share a short anecdote about Ahmed Rasim, one of the old Turkish "popular" historians. Ahmet Rasim was claimed to be one of the quietest people in the world. He has never been seen yelling or getting angry. He was friendly with everyone, even the paving stones. One day, a friend complained that his shoes were getting old quickly. Rasim Bey said, "I wear a shoe for five years." His friend asked, "Oh, tell us the secret of this." "There is no such thing as a secret," replied Rasim. "I treat paving stones as friendly. I step on them like a caress; you walk as if your feet are fighting with the paving stones! The whole point is that you, too, give up enmity." We need people who treat even their shoes like this. I would also like to thank Eda Özgül and Kağan Tahan, who kindly accepted to take part in my thesis committee. I can never repay and express my gratitude enough for their great comments and insights on my thesis.

I owed Utku Can Akin a great debt of gratitude for his support and encouragement while I was writing the thesis. Whenever I felt lost involuntarily, he was with me. He knew there was a place in the world for cognitive enterprises that are not taking the form of knowledge. He had not shared present-day trends throughout many fields that tend to be anti-object oriented. His thesis on the role of scientific and technological input in the late Ottoman economy approximately between 1840 and 1870 through cotton cultivation, predominantly oriented towards the Near and Far East during the American Civil War somehow shared an object-oriented approach. In his journey, he had to learn what collective existences turned into at the hands of the actors, what methods they used to fit it together, and what explanations would best describe the new partnerships they had to forge. It is a skill that I envy to be able to use theoretical and practical knowledge so lucidly and, at the same time, touch the heart of the matter. His approach to history was inspirational for my work.

Over the years, a number of other great teachers and close friends have generously shared their time and knowledge with me. I was the only student in the English Language Teaching undergraduate programme interested in specialising in film studies. I had in effect a faculty member, Övgü Tüzün, a sharp and gracious academic in whose office I could be found on most afternoons camping out and discussing film theory. I am grateful for her support. Without her unflinching support and encouragement, I would not have had the courage for many shape-shiftings. I would also like to thank Gönül Bakay, Aysun Gülaç, Cahide Kудay, Fatma Deniz Yalçın, Pınar Su, and Hülya Akın for their continued support over the years.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“What is the meaning of this ‘Kantian catastrophe’, of which contemporary correlationism is merely an exacerbated consequence?” (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 124).

Film readings, like philosophy, have for a long time and more and more drifted away from the idea of reality and have withdrawn the object into a space where it would be completely silent. It has been caught in the perception that human beings and everything around them were born and existed in a language-history-culture bubble created by humankind. According to this new understanding, the outside of the circle cannot be talked about, or it is meaningless even if it is mentioned; therefore, all our efforts to know and make sense cannot go beyond being ordinary human discourses. Naturally, a process has begun that leaves ontology or pushes it into the background in some approaches. Thus, film studies fell into two dogmas of contemporary philosophy like other art criticisms. The first dogma is the belief that all reality is socially constructed and infinitely manipulable. Secondly, truth is a useless, ambiguous, and even meaningless concept.¹ As the Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris argues, it was first said that truth is nothing but an old metaphor: a kind of myth and a manifestation of the will to power.² Knowledge does not have the emancipatory value as in the Age of Enlightenment. Instead, it turned out to be an instrument of domination or deception. Moreover, there is no such thing as truth, only the field of powers and wars. Then, with the disappearance of the difference between myth and logos, or between the real world and the visible world, the contemporary

¹ Lee Braver says continental philosophy up till now has been an anti-realist tradition, and he celebrates it in his book, *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism*. This anti-realist approach insists that humans cannot reach the things in themselves, the things as they really are. Humans experience everything in terms of space and time that we cannot really know if there are space and time outside of our minds. All we know is that all human experience takes place in space and time. From the point of view of anti-realism, the distinction drawn between the contents of language, perception and knowledge and its “external” subject (object) is completely unfounded. So, it is still basically transcendental philosophy. On the other hand, anti-realism is not usually seen on the side of analytical philosophy. Realism has always been an option among analytical philosophers.

² Maurizio Ferraris’s main fields of study are hermeneutics, aesthetics and social ontology.

philosophers adopted the new mythology project, which has always been the legacy of the right, by the left. With a radicalised Kantian thought, they began to argue that the world could only be accessed through the mediation of conceptual schemes and representations (Balanuye, 2020, pp. 7-8). Thus, in the dogmatic image of thought, first the “I” and then the “world” is fixed. Two words become permeable to each other (Balanuye, 2020, p. 31). Arda Denkel (2021) summarizes this approach as follows:

“A) Existence can only exist to the extent that we can know it and within the framework of its knowledge.

B1) There cannot be an existence in itself (a reality independent of the moment) that is beyond and therefore outside the information content.

B1) It cannot be known even if the existence in itself (external reality) is in question.

C) The known, that is, the subject of knowledge, cannot be the entity in itself (external reality).”

Attitudes, such as contemplating objective reality, searching for it, trying to find it, or trying to grasp it in a less and less misunderstood fashion, have been entirely discredited in philosophy and have been deemed to be totalitarian enlightenment enthusiasm in science (Balanuye, 2017, p. 290). Interpretations had been esteemed superior to facts, and the myth of the so-called objectivity had been transcended—the freedom of thinking of thought and being as separate entities had been damaged. Contemporary philosophy can be classified as a business of taxonomy. There are two kinds of things: “human beings and everything else” (Graham Harman, 2019, p. 141). The first central axis of the thesis will be built with the idea that, contrary to these understandings, the external world is an independent reality that goes beyond conceptual schemes. In the words of the ancients, human is the measure of all things. For object-oriented ontology³, the starting point, although arguably, should be this: the

³ Graham Harman borrowed the term from object-oriented programming, but these two terms, ‘object-oriented ontology’ and ‘object-oriented programming’, are not related. Object-oriented ontology is abbreviated ‘OOO’ and pronounced ‘triple O’, but I will not use any abbreviation in the thesis.

world has its own laws, and the world imposes them. In other words, whether it is observed with our sense organs or not, there is something out there, on their own.

How does this imposition take place? Maurizio Ferraris, one of Jacques Derrida's former students, says, for example, that while it is clear that we need language, diagrams, and some categories to know that water is H₂O, the fact that water is H₂O is completely independent of our knowledge of any kind. So much so that water was H₂O before chemistry, and it will continue to be so even if we all disappear from the face of the earth. This is what Ferraris call “unamendability”, the highlight of reality (Ferraris, 2014, p. 19). To give another example, there is a difference between knowing your sexual orientation and being married. Neither is subject to the founding principle of epistemology: “On the one hand, we should stick to the fact that there is an unamendable core of being and experience that gives itself in complete independence from conceptual schemes and knowledge. On the other hand, we must leave open the possibility of constructing, upon this layer, knowledge as a conceptual, linguistic, deliberate, and above all emancipative activity.” (Ferraris, 2014, p. 58). In other words, every study that does not focus on an ontological approach has stopped dealing with objects and reality itself and focused on objects and reality’s relationship with humans and their properties.

One of the most important representatives of object-oriented ontology, Graham Harman (2017), expresses this idea of Maurizio Ferraris more poetically: “Reality is the rock against which our various ships always founder, and as such it must be acknowledged and revered, however elusive it may be.” (p. 6). However, in contemporary philosophy, what we see is tied to what we know.⁴ It is assumed that the mediation of conceptual schemes is everywhere active, and finally, it is argued that we never relate to *things-in-themselves*, but always and only to phenomena. As such, it is impossible to think otherwise. Those who think otherwise and bring objects to the

⁴ I will not refer to it as a concept to the best of my ability simply because I do not scapegoat postmodernism and characterise it as a problematic conceptualisation. But I must say that I agree with the following criticism of modernism and postmodernism by Markus Gabriel (2015): “The world is neither exclusively the world without spectators nor the world of spectators. This is new realism. Old realism – that is, metaphysics – was only interested in the world without spectators, while constructivism quite narcissistically grounded the world and everything that is the case in our fantasies. Both theories lead to nothing.” (p. 7).

agenda of contemporary philosophy are accused of dealing with a “pseudo-problem.” (Young, 2020, 42). For example, according to Michel Henry, who has come to the forefront among scholars working on phenomenology, subjectivity manifests in such a fundamental way that this manifestation is also the condition of the manifestation of objects and the world. Based on this approach, the external world remains a *noumenal field*, a field of indeterminacy that does not even have an object unless it is known to a subject (Shaviro, 2014, p. 70). The object has no status without a knowing subject. No substance or excess is left behind at the scene. It is so natural to think in this way because people have some kind of immediate access to human thoughts that we do not have access to everything else. It is all about the human relations of the world and nobody can speculate beyond that. It draws us to veering towards an idealist position where everything is equivalent to its givenness. Philosophy gets the soft stuff that is left over such as human perception. How do human viewpoints influence the way people see object-object interactions? Philosophy is left with the thought-world relation of the human-world relation, whereas the object-object relations are left to natural sciences as their monopoly. This idea naturally dominates our approach to films, and along with the trends in cultural studies, film reading has become an action that excludes objects, is objectless, and is closed to the world of the subject. It is as if it has been forgotten that there are many things, entities, or objects out there, which have an autonomous existence on their own, whether they are observed with our sense organs or not. Moreover, this is not just a sudden trend in contemporary philosophy.

Graham Harman traces this trend back to Ancient Greek philosophy, claiming that one of the agenda items of the philosophers of this period, especially in the pre-Socratics period, was to destroy objects. So, what does it mean to destroy objects? For pre-Socratic thinkers, objects were always reduced to smaller physical elements. Some philosophers have argued instead that reality is, or should be, a giant, indeterminate lump, the *Apeiron*, from which all particular objects are derived. For example, Parmenides said that the *Apeiron*, which he calls “being,” already exists, and only our delusional senses and ideas make us think that many different objects exist. There have also been philosophers who believe that the mysterious entity called the *Apeiron* existed in the past and later disintegrated and scattered around. Mainstream scientific materialists still conclude that all objects could be reduced to their physical (or sometimes mathematical) microcomponents. Today, a substantial number of

philosophers and scientists describe themselves as *physicalists*. Whereas, without autonomous objects, if we are talking about being determined only by the existing sociolinguistic context and existing relations to all other entities, then there is no reason for any object to change or develop in any way. There will be no reason for anything to be different from what it is now unless there is some excess or redundancy in objects that are not currently expressed in the world. The world will be deployed in all its forms at any moment, nothing will be hidden from anything, and nothing will be able to create any change.

However, without some fundamental epistemic beliefs, philosophising, even thinking, has no meaning. Therefore, in this thesis, the following prerequisites are put forward as basic epistemic beliefs: (i) This world exists independently of our minds. (ii) There are other minds. (iii) There are true propositions. The first and second claims cannot be asserted without the third fundamental epistemic belief. Without the second, philosophising makes no sense. It is also crucial to open a parenthesis for the first point. Some people may think that a mind-independent reality is not in dispute—although this is not true—if so, what makes reality so problematic? The emphasis on extra-mind reality is not to take the mind as the starting point when it comes to reality. If you say that realism needs a reality outside the mind, that means you accept the mind as the starting point. Accordingly, you start with the mind first and then continue with other things. Thus, it becomes almost impossible for the objects and the reality that resides outside the mind to find a place for itself. Language, perception and knowledge relate to and describe an independent reality, because the representations produced by the human mind, that is, their contents, should not be confused with what is their subject and cause. The main point of realism for new realism and object-oriented ontology is that objects have realities outside of each other. When objects interact with each other, they are not interacting with their whole selves; they actually interact with each other's sensory caricatures. That is, there is something more in objects that cannot be consumed in their interaction with each other. Thus, the necessity of highlighting the object itself or a kind of mental structure can be eliminated. So, it is not about human-world interaction. The real issue is world-world or object-object interaction, as suggested by object-oriented ontologists.

In other words, although man is not more than half of the ontology, s/he acts as if s/he is the whole. At this point, I am not declaring the human subjects as the

source of the problem. Human is perhaps one of the most interesting objects. But just because human is one of the most interesting objects does not mean that people have to be at the centre or occupy half of the ontological field. In this respect, films and objects are alike. Films exhibit a distinctive existence. They are enlivened by our reception activities. They reveal their own meanings to us and convey their messages. Films can be classified as objects that somehow guide our ideas. This approach becomes even more meaningful within the framework of Alphonso Lingis's thought that even inanimate objects demand that they be treated in a unique and appropriate way (Harman, 2017, p. 67). That being the case, it has become a necessity to talk about the possibilities of a film reading project that does not reduce cinema to episteme and is not exclusively composed of people. Therefore, it is crucial to get rid of the approaches of modern philosophy that define reality through what people have achieved.

For this reason, my aim is to take a complicated structure of things and break them down into five or six basic structures and repeat those same structures over and over again. In this journey, speculative realism⁵, more specifically object-oriented ontology⁶ that, simplifies the whole of philosophy down to one problem, which is objects will guide the process.⁷ According to object-oriented ontology, man can no

⁵ There are several subcategories of speculative realism, such as agential realism (Karen Barad), critical realism (Roy Bhaskar), internal realism (Hilary Putnam), new realism (Maurizio Ferraris and Markus Gabriel), quasi-realism (Simon Blackburn) and naive realism. Other big names in the field are Graham Harman, Rosi Braidotti, Manuel De Landa, Jane Bennett, Timothy Morton, Tristan Garcia and Donna Haraway. Undoubtedly, there are several figures, such as Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, notably Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whom these names were inspired, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly referred to. In a wider term, speculative realism is the idea that people should be able to talk about the world the way it is. The differences between these names should not be forgotten. The thesis will focus on Harman's realism, which does not allow physical contact between things and direct relations of any kind. He calls it "weird realism" (Sparrow, 2008, 229). *The Rise of Realism* (2017), edited and published by Graham Harman and Manuel DeLanda, is a crucial source for understanding the contemporary realism debate, especially centred on continental philosophy.

⁶ As Elsaesser and Hagener (2015) indicate, a return to things: "Inspired by [Martin] Heidegger and staunchly anti-Kantian in its thrust, these schools of thought try to take seriously the objects, the matter, the entities that surround us in their diversity." (p. 210).

⁷ Object-oriented ontology is thriving mostly in departments that are not philosophy departments because of its focus on material and fictional objects. We usually do not see object-oriented ontology

longer be considered at the centre of the universe, and the anthropomorphic philosophy up to now must be set aside. Things in general, or objects that can exist without a constitutive subject, must be restored to their reality and autonomy. The gist of this approach, as Graham Harman (2011) points out in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, is that: “The world is not the world as manifest to humans; to think a reality beyond our thinking is not nonsense, but obligatory.” (p. 26). This understanding argues that objects interact with each other in their own realities, independent of human consciousness. In other words, a piece always has to speak beyond language, at least beyond propositional language. Propositional language is the kind of language that assigns qualities to things accurately. The kind of language that art uses, however, tries to allude to a thing’s reality deeper than any of its qualities. It claims that the history of philosophy is the history of man’s domination of objects. It takes a stand against the Cartesian dichotomies of modern thought, especially nature-culture, subject-object, agency-structure distinctions, reductionism, the reign of the “thinking-knowing subject” that arose with the Enlightenment, and the privileged position of the Kantian “constitutive subject” which radicalises thought and brings it to the borderline.⁸ Its central argument is that the object is an entity that is entirely independent of the subject, without necessarily standing in front of the subject, *Gegenstand*, but with the capacity and attainment of relating to itself and other objects. It can also be seen as an effort to make objects autonomous in this respect.⁹ Thinking in this field means, first of all, that everything that exists, from cats to galaxies, from subatomic particles to films, from those who read this master’s thesis to Jack Torrance (portrayed by Jack Nicholson), who is only a fictional character, all exist in one and the same sense, with their own power of influencing and being affected. It means to think that there is an active agent in the fabric of reality.

in film studies because film studies always move slowly compared to fields like architecture or other fine arts. In fact, film studies should have been nimble to whatever is contemporary at any given moment.

⁸ So, the thesis claims that people need to get rid of that dualism that was taken for granted for centuries.

⁹ At this point, I should acknowledge that Graham Harman’s philosophy should not be labelled as a form of materialism. Because everything that exists, according to Harman, “does not have to be physical.” Not everything that exists “needs to be real” as well. More significantly, nor does everything exist have to be accurately expressible in denotative propositional language.

In this thesis, I will give an overview of Graham Harman's notion of real and sensual objects in terms of object-oriented ontology and will indicate how central that conception is—to analyse Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* trajectory in the horror genre—throughout the Overlook Hotel that extends to a significant time span in its history. Graham Harman's ideas of speculative realism, real and sensual objects, rejection of anthropocentrism, critique of correlationism and preservation of finitude, withdrawal of objects will be introduced to film studies. Film critics will see if they further investigate Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, the centrality of object-oriented tendency is apparent. Then how objects act in object-oriented film studies will be studied. The meaning of metaphor in cinema and the act of mise en scène will be investigated in order to how all is related to the theatricality of objects. The main argument of the thesis is that the mise en scène in *The Shining* achieves its theatrical performance only when the real object that has been pulled back in the mise en scène is filled by another real object, the audience. The sensual qualities attributed to the real object produce the third object with the audience's participation. This thesis argues that since each frame has a mise en scène, all film readings are open to the use of the quadruple object structure of the object-oriented ontology.

CHAPTER 2

OBJECTS AND MISE EN SCENE

2.1 What Is an Object?

Graham Harman once again brought the following questions to the agenda of modern philosophy: “What is an object? What defines an object?” These questions are crucial because objects were and are quite out of fashion in philosophy, especially in continental philosophy since the time of Immanuel Kant just like realism has been out of. What has been more in fashion for the past several centuries the idea that the human access to the objects constitutes the objects and there is nothing outside of the human access. Kant calls this philosophy a ‘Copernican Revolution’ tries to turn philosophy on its head and say that philosophy is no longer about the things, it is about our access to them (Harman, 2012, p. 188). It is about the conditions of possible human perception of the things. According to Kant, these conditions in which a person experiences his environment were pure and universal conditions (pure vision of space and time and pure concepts); that is, they were not empirical and were necessary conditions common to all human beings. Thanks to this partnership, even if the reality in itself could not be known, universal sciences on which all people could agree would be possible, and therefore a common reality could be built. In other words, Kant not only separated the “noumenal” world from the “phenomenal” world, but also accepted that human knowledge of the former would not be possible, so knowledge would only be limited to the latter (Harman, 2017, p. 68). In other words, Kant recognized that the human subject was finite and in being finite, it was unable to attain any knowledge of the external world that was not already mediated by its subjectivity. His transcendental idealism analyzed the structure of subjectivity seeking to determine the way in which it functioned which led him to the creation of the categories of the understanding. Kant considered these categories to be the basis for any possible cognition, and space and time to be the forms of intuition through which experience occurs. The crucial point, however, is that Kant did not consider the categories in the forms of intuition to apply to the real world as they were simply the essential elements of human understanding. The nature of the real world for Kant remains fundamentally unknowable. A universal feature of *German idealism* post-Kant involved the rejection of his distinction between

the numeral and the phenomenal or the in itself in the appearance. It draws us to veering towards an idealist position where everything is equivalent to its givenness.

French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux describes Immanuel Kant's approach as *correlationism*. Correlationism is a philosophy that one cannot have humans without the world or the world without humans (Young, 2020, 43). The two of them are necessarily correlated, and they have a rapport with one another if we define the relationship in a witty fashion. He says that correlationist approaches all share the same tendency that "there are no objects, no events, now laws, no beings which are not always already correlated with a point of view, with a subjective access" (Meillassoux, 2008, pp. 9-10).¹⁰ The central argument levelled against the Kantian distinction was the following: If we cannot have any knowledge of the thing in itself, how can we speak of it as existing in the first place? Today, one would be hard-pressed to find a philosopher who completely accepts the Kantian distinction between the thing in itself and the appearance. In fact, the question is often just ignored as many people consider the question of the existence of reality outside of human experience to be completely nonsensical. There is however, at least one philosopher who not only embraces the thing in itself but takes the concept even further. That philosopher is Graham Harman, one of the most crucial figures in the speculative realist movement.¹¹ Before Harman, in this ontological discussion, there was no specific theory of how to approach objects by recognizing their autonomy.¹²

Graham Harman claims that there is a difference between objects and the way of knowing them. First of all, there are only two kinds of knowledge if somebody asks, "What something is?" There are two kinds of answers one can give. One of them is

¹⁰ Yet, it is not correct to say that Quentin Meillassoux presents a pure critique of correlationism. What does Meillassoux try to prove? He tries to prove that even though there is a correlational circle, we cannot talk about a thing in itself because we are already talking about it, and it is already part of our thoughts. We have to go through indirect routes, and through them, we find out that there are things in themselves outside human thought. What does he mean by this? He implies the things in themselves outlive people. We cannot get to the reality, the *noumenon* behind the thing here and now. He means that the thing in itself existed. It could have existed a billion years ago, and it could exist a billion years after all humans are extinct. Yet, that is not really getting at the heart of what makes the thing itself.

¹¹ Shaviro (2014) also says that the main thing is to get out of this correlationist cycle (p. 68).

¹² Object-oriented ontology which is the kind of philosophy he has been developing since his doctoral thesis in the late 1990s.

one can say what it is made of. The other is one can say what it does. So, if somebody asks what water is, one can tell that it is made of hydrogen and oxygen, or say that it is that is working downward or I can work upward and say that it is used to quench thirst, it is used to put out fires. Those are the two different kinds of reductions one can do it: downward one and upward one. Harman calls them as “undermining” and “overmining.” Undermining means denying that objects have reality or autonomy in their own right, and it claims that objects are manifestations of deeper underlying substance. Overmining is when we say that objects are too deep to be real. It is opposite of the undermining (Harman, 2017, p. 50). If we overmine the world, we cannot explain change because if a thing is nothing more than what it is currently doing or if a thing is nothing more than its actions, we cannot explain the fact that it is engaged in other actions in the future.¹³ So, Harman’s definition of the object should refer to anything that is ontologically irreducible (Harman, 2017, p. 43). Harman (2017) talks about Megarians in order to put his ideas more explicitly. In his example, Megarians say people are only housebuilders if they are building houses right now. This is what led Aristotle in a counter-movement to coin his famous *concept of potentiality* because there is a sense in which we are not building a house right now and a master house builder sitting here is also not building a house. There is a difference in status between a real housebuilder and me. A housebuilder is able to build a house anytime. So, there is *potentiality* or *surplus* in the thing (pp. 50-52). The thing is not what it is doing right now. The thing has something in reserve. One may say there is a surplus, but it comes from the side of the subject. Yet, one cannot get any kind of change unless there is something in the things. It is able to act differently than it is now.

The problem is that both of those manoeuvres lose something. For instance, if you try to explain a thing by saying what it is made of, it can be seen as useful information, but we lose what we call *emergence*. We lose the fact that water has properties that hydrogen and oxygen do not have. In other words, the point is that water itself has certain properties that are not found in either hydrogen or oxygen until they are combined in the right formula. We cannot simply decompose a thing into its elements. The other example is human reputation. It is also an emergent property. No individual person in isolation has a reputation. When we get a society of a large enough

¹³ One may do both of them. It is called “duomining” (Harman, 2017, p. 50).

size, we are going to start talking up people who break their promises. You need a certain number of people for this to happen. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) says that the house is not the house viewed from nowhere but the house viewed from everywhere, as if a house were simply the sum of all the possible views one could have on it (p. 79). Of course, that gets things backwards because the house has to exist in order for there to be viewed on it and not vice versa. So, there is a sense in which there is a certain genocide in the things that is not reducible to all the possible interactions we can have with them. In other words, if something emerges beyond its parts then it exists regardless of any changes in those parts.

As mentioned, Graham Harman (2017) defines an object is that which cannot be entirely reduced either to the components of which it is made or to the effects that it has on other things (p. 43). This definition implies that for every object, there remains an inaccessible x that cannot be located amongst its elements or its relations. In other words, objects hide from human awareness and from each other. This x is the Kantian the *thing in itself*. Yet, it does not mean that Graham Harman is a Kantian philosopher because Harman claims that Immanuel Kant remains stuck within what Harman calls the modern *onto-taxonomy*. This taxonomy distinguishes between two spheres of *Being*, the subject and the object or the human and the rest of the universe (Young, 2021, p. 28). For Kant, the human subject cannot access the thing in itself because it is finite and confined to its transcendental horizon. Harman agrees with Kant's standpoint, but he takes issue with the implication that humans are the only things that are finite. The issue with Kant is not that the thing in itself is only inaccessible for humans but that he does not universalize this inaccessibility to apply to the relations between all objects. Harman refers to this universalization of Kantian infinitude as global finitude. The finitude of objects is not ontologically distinct from the finitude of human. To quote Harman: "I don't grasp human finitude simply because I happen to be human, but because I can deduce the finitude of human experience, and for the very same reason can deduce the finitude of horses, cats, trains, flowers, and atoms." (Harman, 2020b, p. 136) Despite the fact that Harman affirms that objects in themselves can never be grasped either by the human mind or any other object, he remains a realist because human mind is not the only thing with an outside. Every object in the universe has an outside realism. Real objects exist with the implication that they exist outside of one another:

“Nonetheless, to formulate realism as upholding the existence of something outside the mind concedes too much to the modern standpoint by assuming that where we stand is ‘the mind.’ with the implication that the human mind is the only thing that really has an exterior. The problem is that raindrops also have an outside, as do sunflowers, black holes, and Moby-Dick. Rather than realism pointing ‘outside the mind,’ where it should point is the outside of any relation at all” (Harman, 2020b, pp. 136-137).

Graham Harman’s approach rejects the arbitrary and anthropocentric division between man and the rest of the world. He says, “the rejection of onto-taxonomy is the only exit from modern philosophy” (Harman, 2020b, p. 133) and creates a crucial question: How can there be any interaction between objects at all? Instead of what Immanuel Kant presents, Harman wants to take object-object relations on the same footing as human-object relations. According to him, human-object relations cannot be at the centre of philosophy anymore. He presents an interesting example that when the fire burns cotton, fire is not making contact with the colour or smell of the cotton, which is in some sense they are only making contact with the flammability of the cotton and it means that object-object relations are just as haunted by finitude as human-object relations (Harman, 2017, p. 164).¹⁴ He calls this situation “vicarious causation” (Harman, 2012b, p. 188). In other words, causation can never occur

¹⁴ It is a kind of occasionalism. It is a movement that thinks the causality between events is an illusion. According to the French philosopher Malebranche, once God is involved (that is if he exists), he must be involved in everything. All interaction or relation is mediated. Occasionalism was the centrepiece of everything in the Middle Ages, and it had a fairly long life in the Islamic world for many centuries before it came to Europe and the Cartesian where it was a matter of using God to communicate between mind and body and in the case of Malebranche, between body and body as well (Harman, 2017, p. 150). This approach died after Berkeley but it can be argued that it lives on in the works of David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Because for Hume and Kant, causation is also not directly experienced. The human mind is the mediated causation, not God but the human mind. So for Hume, causation is simply a habit, a customary conjunction between one appearance and another. In the case of Kant, causation is explicitly a category of the understanding that does not necessarily use in the outside world. In other words, Hume and Kant have merely secularized the occasionalist concept by shifting it from God to humans’ perspective. It really is still at the heart of Western philosophy (Harman, 2017, p. 165).

directly.¹⁵ Any two real objects have to be mediated by what Harman calls a central theme (Young, 2021b, p. 34). There are two kinds of objects; the real is mediated by the central and the central is mediated by the real. According to object-oriented ontology, all relation is indirect. It involves the mediation of what Harman calls *sensual objects*. A sensual object is opposed to a real object as the latter exists outside of its relations while the former only exists as the product of a relation or correlation between two objects (Harman, 2017, p. 9). It is similar to Kantian appearance, which is a mere image of the thing in itself. That is created through the correlation between the subject and the real object: “In this respect, all of the objects we experience are merely fictions: simplified models of the far more complex objects that continue to exist when I turn my head away from them, not to mention when I sleep or die.” (Harman, 2017, p. 9).

What does it mean? Harman’s point is that even though people experience every object as fiction, this limitation is not the product of their own nature but is the universal feature of every relation. Every real object only interacts with another real object through the mediation of a sensual object. Thus, there is no form of direct causation in object-oriented ontology. If we understand causation as a real object directly touching and impacting another real object, every real object can only directly interact with a sensual object. This direct interaction that results in secondary or vicarious effects on the other real object: “And the by the same token, it is also the case that two real objects only meet through a sensual one. Although this entails a rather bizarre-sounding theory of causation, it is one to which OOO enthusiastically adheres: for according to this theory, two real objects in the world make contact not through direct impact, but only by way of the fictional images they present to each other. One real rock strikes the sensual version of another in such a way that there are retroactive effects on the real.” (Harman, 2017, p. 163).

Then, for Harman, one cannot define objects in terms of their relations or their effects. Then, what defines an object? A lot of people touch on philosophy, fine arts or film studies, already having prejudices about what objects mean. They think it

¹⁵ So, what object-oriented ontology is really about is the strange relation that objects have with their own qualities. It is the fact that objects both have certain qualities but they can also lose some of them while remaining themselves. It has big implications both for aesthetics and our conception of what knowledge is.

means a solid, physical thing that can be moved around with alteration. They often think it means something durable, something inanimate. Harman rejects most of the definitions of objects they are given. There are several aspects that define an object, and it is gone under many different names in the history of philosophy. One thing, of course, is an object has to be a unit. It has to be one thing. It is a monism in the sense that it recognizes only one kind of entity, namely objects but it is also pluralism in the sense that there are different kinds of objects. Then objects should be something independent of their qualities (or properties) so that the qualities can change over time and they remain the same object. Yet it should be mentioned that some philosophers have denied that such a thing is possible, and in fact, whenever the qualities of a thing change, it becomes a new thing. Finally, an object should be independent of iterations, and you should be able to shift it around between different relations at different times. It should be able to have different relations to other different objects simultaneously while still remaining the same thing. In other words, object-oriented ontology defends the integrity the autonomy of objects from all qualities, relations and possible uses that can be made of them. They have to be deeper than their accidents (such the colour of jacket). They have to be deeper than their qualities. They also have to be deeper than all relations. The last one is a bit tricky. For this reason, let's imagine yourself as a teacher in a classroom. If you were to pace back and forth in front of your students, your spatial relations with all of them would change but this would not affect who you are or if you discover that your husband or wife is a serial killer or secret agent, this would not affect you. You are still the same person physically. Your relations with them may change or affect some aspects of your life in major or traumatic ways but you stay as you are. Nevertheless, one may claim that the atoms in the body change about every seven years and we are not really the same people every seven years, or we are not really even the same people over shorter spans of time. Of course, one may not mean that we have entirely new identities, but may claim that we are not identical in many ways. Often there are changes in our physical appearance, state of health, what we know, and so on. Even if I look at my hands, they are quite different than they were seven years ago.

Object simply means something that is not fully reduceable in either downwards to its basis or upwards to its effects. In other words, objects are autonomous from their wider contexts and also from their own pieces. An object has

a certain reality that resists in both directions, its composition and its effect. Objects are deeper than both practice and theory. So, all kinds of things can count as objects, including imaginary things such as Peter Pan, a unicorn, Sherlock Holmes, The Overlook Hotel, and the Soviet Union. There is often a misunderstanding that object-oriented ontology only wants to deal with solid things such as medals, doorknobs and that object-oriented philosophers are not interested in multiplicities that are inside of a thing but that is not the case. There is no final level of objects to them. All kinds of composite entities can be objects and that includes, for example, the unification of the individual with our associative microbial community. Why did Graham Harman define the object this way? I think the justification for such a definition is that it avoids falling into correlationism per se. Although human, who is also an object, has to interact with object from time to time, humans do not define the object in Harman's justification. It separates the objectivity of the object from its connection with human subjectivity. Harman's approach also represents a return to the previous metaphysics that Immanuel Kant treated and packaged as *traditional metaphysics*. In fact, Harman states that object-oriented ontology is a continuation of the substance theories of philosophers such as Aristotle and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and that it is the last theory of the same origin. So, object-oriented ontology is one of the substance theories. Substance theories, in contrast to sheaf theories, argue that what exists is not a sum of qualities but that there is something on which these qualities are based, namely, substance; sheaf theories, on the other hand, argue that what exists is a collection of qualities.¹⁶

Graham Harman's remarkable short article *The Third Table* (2012) can enlighten the issue more. Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington is the physicist, if I simply his story and career in a vulgar fashion, who verified Albert Einstein's general relativity with his eclipse observations. Eddington went to give the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, in which he talked about two tables. There are two tables here, he said; one there is the scientific table which is mostly empty space, and it is just particles swimming around. It is not really a solid thing at all and it is multiple. Then there is the practical table which is the table that people use and put stuff on in

¹⁶ Harman presents David Hume as one of the representatives of sheaf theory supporters. For detailed discussion, please see Harman, *Object Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*, p. 76.

terms of practical reasons. Harman's claim, in this essay, was that neither of those is real table. According to him, the real table is the third table in between those two extremes. He says that one cannot or should not reduce the table to the physical particles of which it is made because the table can endure even if the particles change. One also cannot or should not reduce the second table for practical reasons because it can also change. It is the same table taking into account all of these. So, one has to get to the third table and cannot get at the third table by direct means because the only direct means for describing the table or to talk about what it is made of or to talk about what it does and neither of those gets it, what the table is because the table is more than what it is made of and the table is less than what it does. This is what the arts are dealing with. For example, my perceptions are in a sense contained all the things I see in my perception are in a sense contained within my perception. My entire conscious experience right now is in a certain sense an object because I can talk about it, I can reflect on it, and none of my talk or my reflections totally exhaust what it is. My experience at this moment is a kind of object and yet it contains other objects. It contains all of you as intentional objects not real ones. It contains you as units that support certain qualities, but they are contained inside of my experience as a real object. What happens is somehow real objects which are always hidden become converted into intentional objects on the interior of a third one, and this is where they interact.

If objects are hidden from each other, how do they affect each other? It is a significant question to ask because Graham Harman's theory of objects may sound to some, who are not familiar with object-oriented ontology, it is in a danger of becoming a kind of mysticism. The nature of an object is not something essential or invisible (such as soul or geist), neither is it a composite of perceivable qualities (colour, taste, smell, etc.). It is something in between. Also, objects are not hidden in some other world, they are in this world. Yet, we cannot have complete knowledge of an object because our relationship to that object inherently distorts its true representation. Harman extends this idea by saying even objects in relation to each other distort one another, e.g., two rocks next to each other create a relational distortion.¹⁷ Objects are

¹⁷ Two rocks create a 'relational distortion' because they can only relate sensuously, and the sensuous objects 'seen' by each rock, therefore, are a 'caricature' of the real objects, i.e., where certain

not only independent of people and other objects but even from their own manifesting qualities. Harman tries to find a third way, as mentioned before, by giving objects their own special ontology, independent of human minds (including his mind). Immanuel Kant's tradition thought our world flows into our minds which are designed to translate and interpret the external world like an innate and subjective constructor. The external world flows in and our perception and experience flow out but before the external reached our minds, it was something we can never really know. Anything independent of this understanding is called the *noumenon*, which exists outside the subject-object relation and is beyond intellectual acquisition. Yet, somehow Kant knows it is there. One should figure out whether that is two objects interacting in our mind or two objects interacting in the world. Harman thinks the key is to study the way in which an object splits from its qualities because an object does have certain qualities. The next step is to see how the things put some of its qualities and the term he gives to that as a lure and he thinks that it happens in two places: aesthetics in the realm of human perception and causation.

Peter Heft sums up Graham Harman's intent well in these words: "If Kant, continuing our metaphor from before, is philosophy's Joker, then Graham Harman is Batman. Where Kant wanted to reduce the world to its relationship with human thought, Harman wants to imagine a world of object-object interactions that can be completely independent of human thought, where Kant can be read as endorsing transcendental idealism, Harman wants to make realism a metaphysically viable position, and where Kant wants to say the noumenal is unknowable, Harman wants to make the noumenal the Real." (Heft, 2016, p. 24). According to Peter Gratton, Harman, in the program he shaped over the last ten years, especially between *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002) and *Quadruple Object* (2011), on the one hand, took advantage of the Husserlian distinction of 'objects and qualities' to show that the latter cannot be consumed by the former. On the other hand,

characteristics are exaggerated while others are muted. For instance, if people are discussing pebbles, then pebbles cannot relate to their softness as it might be appreciated by a human or a pebbles' capacity for ricocheting as it might be possible with water. It is an crucial point for object oriented philosophy because if we ask, "Does it allow us to say anything about the interaction of two non-human objects when no humans are monitoring it?" and a philosopher answers to question as follows: "No!" Then that philosopher has an idealist position in philosophy (Sparrow, 2008, p. 222).

he aimed to develop the determination that reality, at the level of things, will always be a process of opening and withdrawing itself to the access of consciousness by making use of Heideggerian ontology (Balanuye, 2017, p. 295). As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (2012) indicates that object-oriented ontology “is a non-anthropocentric philosophy in which things possess agency, autonomy, and ultimate mystery.” (p. 407). It is a criticism of post-Kantian philosophy because as it is mentioned before, according to contemporary philosophy, Immanuel Kant should not have had these things-in-themselves because people are talking about these things and it is up to mind. It means they are not actually at outside of the mind. They are actually inside the circle of thoughts. For an idealist philosophy, it cannot be said that there are things independent of the human mind. It means the human mind or thought has the monopoly on casual power.

In short, (i) equal attention should be given to all objects, whether they are human, natural or cultural, real or fictional. (ii) Objects are not identical with their properties, they have a tense relationship with them, and precisely this tension is responsible for all the change that takes place in the world. (iii) There are two kinds of objects: *real objects* exist regardless of whether they act on other things at the time, while *sensual objects* exist only by being in contact with other real objects. (iv) The properties of objects are also divided into two: real properties and sensual properties. (v) These two types of objects and these two types of properties result in four basic permutations. Object-oriented ontology recognises these as the basis of time and space, as well as two close concepts are known as essence and *eidos* (form), and these four basic permutations will be explained in upcoming chapters in detail. (vi) Aesthetics of objects is more about philosophy than mathematics and natural sciences (Harman, 2017, p. 9). A new object definition cannot be made without supporting these approaches in film criticism. Because human-oriented approaches are still quite strong. In the next section, these articles will be examined in Chapter 3 with examples from *The Shining*. But first, the relationship between real and sensual object will be mentioned. It must be repeated that, like the "paradoxical effect" of a drug, the bare truth must be sought in the most astonishing rumor about it.

2.2 Objects and Properties

Object-oriented ontology focuses on the quadruple object. According to Graham Harman (2017), there is a deep separation and tension between the object and its qualities, and this tension is one of the main pillars of object-oriented ontology (p. 9). Harman discovered this tension thanks to Edmund Husserl and José Ortega y Gasset. As stated by Gasset, the self is not a person unlike other people; it is everything that has an inner character (or *interiority*). That is, what is meant by the self is the interiority of things. Thus, Gasset calls the noumenal aspects of phenomena their interiority/inwardness and, therefore, the self. In other words, everything has a self in terms of its interiority (Harman, 2017, p. 71). But for Gasset, this self is not consciousness, according to Harman. It is just pure interiority. In line with Gasset, since the noumenal field is unknown, selves cannot be known either. In other words, every relationship is indirect, and there is no direct relationship to the object. For instance, Harman says fire never burns cotton, it only makes contact with a certain limited range of properties of the cotton (Harman, 2017, p. 167). A relation always fails to exhaust its terms. He does not think the fire is conscious but it does not matter. That is not what makes it a thing in itself. It is a thing in itself because it is what it is apart from any relation, not just the relation to human thoughts. Assume that we have a hardcover book in itself presumably not just because we are looking at it but because this touches the table. The book and the table do not make contact with the full range of each other's qualities. They oversimplify each other just like people oversimplify the book. In another example, a hammer may break and the hammer becomes present. Yet, it is not exactly because what happens is that certain qualities of the hammer become present but the hammer still remains mysterious to human access. People cannot grasp the object that withdraws.

But Gasset talks about a language of art that will expose thing in itself. As maintained by Gasset, aesthetic experience does not make us experience the interiority of things but seems to open them to us. Gasset, on the other hand, says that this art language is a metaphor (Harman, 2017, p. 68). For Harman, Husserl draws a distinction between sensual objects and sensual qualities; Gasset, on the other hand, distinguishes between real objects and sensual qualities. On the other hand, Harman accepts both the sensual object and the sensual quality distinction as well as the real

object and the real quality distinction. Thus, there are two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities, and both have sensual and real states. Real objects and qualities exist independently, while sensual objects and qualities exist only as a conjugate of the real object. In other words, he uses the term sensual objects for existing objects by being paired with experience. Thus, the rift between this quadruple structure provides different access to reality.

So, the first split is what is hidden and what is visible. The second split is the difference between objects and their qualities. Now, we have two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities. For this reason, the relation between objects and their qualities is very loose. Objects and their qualities have a partial relation but it is not a total relation. Besides, objects can exchange their qualities. In this thesis, I will focus on the tension between real objects and their sensual qualities because that is the one relevant. It is the one that art deals with primarily.

It has long been known by literary critics and philosophers, we cannot paraphrase a metaphor, or we cannot replace a metaphor with a prose statement. In order to explain this slit and how metaphor works, Harman shares Homer's wine-dark sea metaphor in the *Odyssey*. According to him, if we start looking at what makes that different from a little statement, we can see Homer is not just saying "Hey, have you ever noticed the Mediterranean, it is the same wavelength of light as wine?" It means that the Aegean Sea is just as dark as wine. It means a little more than that. Also, when we call the sea wine-dark, we are not just talking about the colour, we are also implying that the sea has some of the other qualities of wine like drunkenness, danger, or oblivion. We are transferring a lot of these qualities of the wine onto the sea and we can never quite explain what is going on there. This is why there is never a final interpretation of a metaphor or of a scene because there is no way to translate a metaphor into literal terms. Besides, metaphors are not reversible the way that all statements are so. When we say wine-dark sea, that is not the same as saying sea-dark wine. That is a different metaphor. If I say wine-dark sea, the sea is the subject getting wine qualities. If I say sea-dark wine, the sea is the subject and getting sea qualities. So, something interesting is going on there. The metaphor is aware that an object can be split down the middle between the subject and its qualities. We are transferring the qualities of one object to another and not the other way around. So, we have a wine-dark sea. So, what happens next? We have the wine qualities there. The wine qualities

are what we would call sensual. They are phenomenal (Harman, 2017, p. 84). We have some sense of what the wine qualities are in our minds but what is this sea that is wine like? We have no experience of this metaphor. It is mysterious. It withdraws in the Heideggerian sense. Subject term in the metaphor withdraws to someplace where we cannot paraphrase. The wine-dark qualities, however, are somewhat on the surface for us. We have some sense of what they are now for object-oriented ontology. There are no objects without qualities and no qualities of that objects. The two always come as a pair.

So, how does this metaphor work if the sea is disappearing from us in the metaphor but the wine qualities are here? In other words, when we make artwork, we create something that, by definition, is impenetrable to any kind of discursive presentation (Harman, 2017, p. 84). How is it that possible there has to be an object that supports the wine qualities? What is that object? It has to be a real object and that object has withdrawn. There is one real object still there and that is us. We ourselves, as the beholder, perform the sea that has wine-dark qualities. It might sound odd but what this means is that theatre is at the roots of every art. Art requires the theatrical performance of the observer or the beholder. In other words, art is inherently theatrical because we ourselves have to replace the object that is missing. In this sense, Graham Harman (2017) even thinks that the first artwork is a mask because of the necessity for theatrical involvement (p. 84).¹⁸ In this thesis, I will apply this metaphor game to *mise-en-scène* in order to present an object-oriented film reading and because it is hard to grasp the idea, I will repeat the metaphor example several times.

2.3 *Mise en scène* as Aesthetic Object

Graham Harman, the father of object-oriented ontology, says aesthetics is literally the first philosophy because it is how we understand the relationship between us and everything else (Harman, 2017, p. 58). As the thesis mentioned before, it is concerned with the world from a perspective that does not privilege human

¹⁸ It is fruitful to think Harman's approach with Mayersberg's words: "To take *The Shining* at its face value is a mistake. It has no face, only masks, and it has no value, only implications." (Lovisato, 2017, p. 135). *The Overlook* has many masks and these masks allow the audience to experience aesthetic objects.

subjectivity. It is concerned with the nature of the *Being*. It is an attempt to understand the being of objects without imposing the subjectivity of human perception. It allows materials (or fictional materials) to establish their own order or materials to lead the artists. Considering how this happens in the film, besides metaphor, what comes to mind is *mise en scène*. Because it is one of the rare subjects where it is possible to talk about objects because it is about the placement of actors and scenery on a frame. In other words, it is the process of deciding what to include in the scene and where it should go on the frame. Filmmaking has two basic approaches and they are *mise en scène* and *montage*. *Mise en scène* allows to translate. It is a field of study where the task is given to the audience. What is the duty of the audience? To translate. The audience creates artful objects from objects on the screen. It is done with translation. Thus, the reality that is not directly accessible is manifested in artful objects. The process also is a natural part of translation because *mise en scène* filmmakers concentrate on storytelling in a single image. For this reason, the audience also concentrates on a single image to translate the reality of objects. *Mise en scène* is a math problem that tries to equalize all parts of it, such as set design, lighting, frame rate, lenses, blocking, props, colour, costumes, makeup, sound and music to one shot.

In this context, the problem is that at every point film critics come face to face with subjects; the objects are “decors”, their qualities and actions have no length, and their agency is not yet. In a way, they all stuck in the interval of waiting between acts of subject. A subject-oriented tendency is the interval of waiting for objects to enter into realm of reality. If we do not have objects on the scene, then the present moment never truly “is”, it literally possesses less than being because it is outside of reality. Therefore, it is necessary to make the inaccessible accessible.

According to Graham Harman (2017), any literal definition, perception, or literal causal interaction with anything gives us only a translation of it, not the thing directly (p. 40). The thing in itself remains somehow unknown or mysterious. Film readings and criticism have always been more tolerant in this regard because *mise en scène*, like metaphor, belongs to an imprecise way of knowing. The difference between the joy someone tells us and the joy we see is like the difference between the blood we see pouring out of the elevators of the Overlook Hotel and it being red. Films, as a language of art, expose the self-performing of the thing in itself to us. This act is an ‘unjustified true belief’ (Harman, 2017, p. 181). The state of being an aesthetic object

is the state of being a thing in itself. It must be said that the exposure in question is the self-thing pretending to reveal its own reality. It pushes literalism out of the question. Every *mise-en-scène* in films pretends to reveal its reality to us. In other words, it offers that strange pleasure we call aesthetics. This is a pleasure that is closed to translation. The lack of translation can best be understood by referring to Daniel Dennett's mockery of wine tasting. According to him, the work of wine tasters can be done by a machine. The wine sample given to the machine is examined within a few minutes or hours, and the machine gives us a chemical analysis of the wine. It may also convey the comments of wine tasters (Dennett, 1988, pp. 46-47). According to object-oriented ontology, this is literalism. Chemical analysis of wine does not do justice to the human experience of wine tasting, and it is incomplete even in describing the chemical-physical structure of the wine. The reality of things is not directly accessible but rather always withdrawn or veiled; Therefore, it is inevitable that attempts to grasp this reality in a literal and direct language will miss the target. Harman criticizes formalisms for becoming wholisms, and argues that reality can't be reduced to a description, either of elements or of effects. Harman singles out Daniel Dennett's ridicule of the jargon of wine-tasting as misguided. Wine-tasting and other aesthetic judging and art-making discourses do not produce knowledge. They neither reduce objects to their elements or describe their effects. Instead, they approach their objects necessarily indirectly, and the language must be understood as such. According to Harman, this also brings to mind Aristotle's ancient claim in *Metaphysics*: Individual things cannot be defined because things are always concrete, whereas definitions are made from universals (Harman 2017, p. 37-38). I am also appalled by Dennett's suggestion that wine-tasting as we know it might be replaced by a machine that would replace the wine taster's verdict with a set of chemical formulae. Obviously, something would be lost here, just as magic tricks are ruined if the secret is divulged, threats are ruined if made too specific, the same for erotic suggestions, and finally also for jokes (an extremely important topic little treated by philosophers). Then, theories that fail to explain change are deficient.

There is an endless debate between those who wish to reduce the human mind to the complex physical entities that underlie the personal and those who consider the mind to be part of a larger holistic web of interactions. I do not want to compare them and come to a compromise; instead, I want to say that both are equally wrong. A person

is not just neurons, because even if you replace or eliminate some neurons, you will still have the same person. Besides, a virtual life is almost at our door, and it also changes our definitions of life, person, etc. Nor is the person a holistic set of interactions with his environment, because there are always real aspects of the person that are braided or suppressed by any environment. Also, not all environmental things that happen to us leave a significant trace. Just as we can remove many neurons and have the same person, in the same way (in principle, if not in practice) we can remove many events from someone's life, but the person remains the same person: "All its shifting qualities are inessential, and merely pass from one moment to the next in a kaleidoscopic manner." (Harman, 2019, p. 21). The person is not a narrative: not because narratives are arbitrary constructs that create fictional stories about who we are, but because the person is deeper than the story. The person is the key ingredient in a story, not the outcome of the story. In a classical sense, we are neither our physical constituents, nor what happened in our life, nor the stories we tell about ourselves. Instead, we are "substantial forms," that is, each of us is a particular construct that can be touched upon or converged, but never fully defined or expressed. On this metaphysical level, most of us are terrified somehow because the topic we speak sounds like 'spirit'. Human subjects have "souls" in this sense, but cats, cornstalks, airports, and all of Japan or Turkey can also have souls.

There is nothing wrong with treating the *mise en scène* as an aesthetic object since the real elements of something do not always have to be its smallest components. In fact, the aesthetic object and the *mise-en-scène* are one. *Mise en scène* is the most basic aesthetic object in cinema, that is, the description of aesthetics. To understand this better, it is necessary to return to the blood river in the *Overlook*. By its very nature, the bloodshed in the *mise en scène* is not a scene of violence in everyday experience, but bloodshed in its performer's inwardness. As a metaphor, whether it refers to the violent history of the United States or the violent history of the hotel, it is the blood river in itself. It is inaccessible through literalism. This blood river in itself cannot exist in metaphor, just as it cannot exist in thought or perception. No metaphor can fully describe what it wants to refer to. One of the reasons Harman talks about is a metaphor because it works only when the comparison is not entirely convincing. In order for the metaphor to work we need to have a kind of difficulty in combining the object with the qualities that are ascribed to it. So, when one says, "Your eyes are like

a flame”, it is hard to put those together. However, since objects and properties are always together according to object-oriented ontology, the properties of the history of violence (simply blood river) must somehow fuse with another object in order for the *mise-en-scène* and its metaphor to work. If the river of blood does not exist in thought and perception, nor in metaphor, there remains only one real object that is always present in our experience of art: we, the audience. It is the cinema audience that fills the void and brings the required properties to the *mise en scène*. In short, the audience is not just a passive participant. The metaphor in the *mise en scène* puts us in the place of the history of non-existent violence as the real object that adopts the properties of a blood river. It also creates an advantage that makes this movie successful. Because at the end of the day, Stanley Kubrick points out who is responsible for the violence in the hotel or in the United States. It is the audience that he points with his finger, and the audience is not just a passive participant, as object-oriented ontology claims.

Graham Harman sees a similar approach in Konstantin Stanislavski’s acting method. He says that in that method, an actor or actress tries to become what s/he envisions. According to Harman (2017), it is the person himself who gives himself completely to these experiences (p. 83). Moreover, a person gives himself not only with his shadow, but with his inwardness. In all encounters with sensual objects, the audience becomes the only real object in the whole of one’s experience. *Mise en scène* allows the audience to become a real object in all these encounters. It is the magic of films. To put it more clearly, in order to capture the dose of reality and existence in cinema and film reviews, the audience must put themselves in the place of each object in the *mise en scène* and fuse with its metaphorical properties of it. It is not the changing roles that make it different from the reality of the subject. The *mise en scène* gives things independently of other things to which those things are related. The participant, who is replaced by a real object hidden in its own depth, becomes a direct product of the mystery of the work of art with his/her participation in the work of art. After this stage, the audience is in a way an object of flat ontology.¹⁹

¹⁹ Flat ontology means that one can consider all things on an equal level without taking one as primary. It is a discourse of realism that claims that all object, even imaginary ones, have the same degree of existence as any other object. No object is more subject than any other. All subjects are just objects.

Do film critics want to see what the world looks like in frames or *mise en scène*? The answer to this question stays obscure because, for sure, they focus on people, events, and social conditions related to the world but they do not focus capturing the things. The substances that are never fully expressed are always problematic because they do not give enough room to film critics for commentaries. Critics usually did not want to see beyond people, events, and social conditions. Process stole the spotlight. However, it was possible to capture what was beyond the actors, scene or pilot. Ian Bogost (2011) praises object-oriented ontology with this aim: “Object-oriented ontology is a first principles philosophy, one that adds a focus on individual entities to the rejection of the human-world correlate. The orientation in Triple-O normally modifies ontology, which is oriented toward things of all types and scales. That’s the abstract part of the metaphysics, and we need it. But we also need the concrete part, the metaphysicians practice. Object-oriented ontology is thus not only the name for an ontology oriented toward objects, but a practice of learning how to orient toward objects ourselves.” By this approaching, Ian Bogost who is an object-oriented ontologist, counts light, perception, and contrast as “things” or “objects”.

The *mise en scène* treatment of film criticism inspired by object-oriented ontology can be summarized as follows: I) The *mise-en-scène* does not try to form an idea or perception about an object, it only gives the appearance of the thing in question. If the opposite was possible, the *mise-en-scène* should always be successful. II) The *mise-en-scène* is asymmetrical, so the metaphor never remains a simile because the properties alone cannot replace the object when the real object is withdrawn. III) The real object that is withdrawn must be replaced by an object that ensures the operation of the process. Nothing can happen if the audience do not appear as an intervening object. This explains why sometimes the *mise en scene* does not work. The *mise en scène* may be wrong, it may be weak, it may not have sufficient qualifications, or the audience that will replace the real object may not be able to fulfill this task. Even a little distraction in the audience can cause the *mise en scène* to not work. IV) *Mise en scène* is an act of combining. This invalidates the criticism that the real object is replaced by the subject. Investigating the object-object relationship is therefore a call for understanding and resisting the conditions that have been the pillars of human-centered oppression for hundreds of years. The real object is a new reality, an entity that is formed by the fusion of the *mise-en-scène* and the properties of it. This entity

appears when the differences between objects and properties are unfolded. Aesthetic experience is crucial to object-oriented ontology as a form of non-literal access to the object. Aesthetic experience takes place when the sensual properties no longer belong to their usual sensual object and are instead transferred to a real object which is necessarily withdrawn from all access. The real object that has disappeared is replaced by the aesthetic audience as a new real object that supports sensual properties. Some may call it “negative theology” or “mystical hand” but that is not the case. What we are left with is indirect contact with reality. It is simply German realism that never happened 200 years later. In the following section, how oriented ontology’s approach applies to metaphor and mise en scène will be explained with examples from Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining*.



CHAPTER 3

REAL AND SENSUAL OBJECTS OF OVERLOOK HOTEL

3.1 Appetisement of Overlook Hotel

Stanley Kubrick's *Overlook Hotel* is still a fresh image in our minds. It has been visited by countless popular culture products (including myths and conspiracy theories). All graphic elements of *The Shining* such as the sets, iconic scenes get stuck with the audience. However, the reputation of the film has not always been so positive. The film received mixed reviews when it was first released. While some critics praised it, some critics rebuked the film. Pauline Kael, who frequently voiced Stanley Kubrick's discomfort with "technical virtuosity" that drags the audience away from human stories and into mechanical narratives, defined the film with the words "a gothic story told without shadows or passionate emotion".²⁰ Moreover, "We're not frightened," she said and exagitated, "because Kubrick's absorption in film technology distances us." (Luckhurst, 2013, 7). Yet, he passed the most important test, the test of time. As ridiculous as Kael's claim may seem these days, her criticism is not unfounded. *The Shining* is not one of the usual horror films. Everything from the movements of the camera navigating the corridors of the Overlook Hotel to the camera itself creates a strange experience of distance. The camera itself follows a highly geometric cycle with shifts forward, horizontally, and backwards, fostering a sense of implacable and almost mathematical continuity. The use of the camera is not the only factor that creates this effect.

What the music used in the film and the soundtrack share is a sensibility, a metaphysical orientation rather than sound. The sound is drenched in a suffocating melancholy, reacting to technology's tendency to erase memory. The most potent weapon of this reaction is the use of rustling, the sound of needles emanating from vinyl. Thus, not only do we realise that the sounds we hear are actually pre-recorded, but we also become conscious of the playback systems we use to access these

²⁰ In fact, Kubrick's answer to this criticism is quite clear: "... in order to make people believe the story it's very important to place it in something that looks totally real, and to light it as if it were virtually a documentary film, with natural light coming from the light sources, rather than dramatic, phony lighting, which one normally sees in a horror film..." (Mather, 2013, p. 129).

recordings.²¹ The soundtrack of the film, which includes Ligeti's *Lontano*, Bartók's music for strings, percussion, and celesta, and the dance hall music Jack hears for the first time from afar, alludes to the "other world" from which it originates. Similarly, the shapes of this music flow across the picture like a skeleton that underpins and animates the film's fundamental ideas, even when the music is not audible. The music lingers even when it is not audible—especially when it fades out or quits before it appears to be over—due to the music's inherent temporality and the film's overall emphasis on the quality of pause, for example, in the acting (McQuiston, 2013, p. 72). Steadicam, wide angle shots, *mise-en-scène*, montage and soundtrack are related to each other with the uncanny agency of the Overlook Hotel in order to help to the audience in creation of artful objects that shine (Warner, 2019, p. 129). It is hard to imagine Stanley Kubrick making a film that does not provoke controversy and disagreement, so it is not at all surprising to see the reception of *The Shining*, his adaptation of Stephen King's novel about a winter of horror in a secluded Colorado mountain resort. For this reason, I have no intention to go into particulars about the reception that *The Shining* got from critics and the audience. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that from critics' several backlashes, *The Shining* grew better with age. First, it deserved a second look, then got more. One may define Kubrick's films as slow-burn films. Even Kubrick says in an interview, "I've never achieved spectacular success with a film. My reputation has grown slowly. ("Shining Example By Kubrick", 1980). "In some eerie fashion," *The New York Times* noted in 1993, "it gets better every year." (Lockhurst, 2013, 8).²²

How would a film critic make a human-centred reading of *The Shining*? It is possible for subjects, such as the characters' psychology, historical analysis, and uncanniness, to be at the centre of a human-centred film reading. It is challenging to separate human-centred film readings from a novel analysis in this respect. The

²¹ For more detailed discussion, please see McQuiston, *We'll Meet Again*, p. 36-37 and Chapter 3. For *The Shining*, 1930s popular ballroom dance songs (which is also called strict tempo dance music) such as *Midnight, the Stars, and You* and *It's All Forgotten Now* added to the soundtrack (Gengaro, 2019, p. 42).

²² All in all, madness – adorned with imagination – has always attracted the attention of cineastes. Madness continues "to tease and to puzzle us, to frighten and to fascinate, to challenge us to probe its ambiguities and its depredations" (Scull, 2015, p. 15).

situation that creates this sense of uncanny, the brutality experienced in the hotel, perhaps even long before the hotel, on the ground where the hotel rises, is made felt to the audience from the very first scenes of the film (viz. Danny's foresight and the presentation of the road to the hotel with eerie aerial shots right at the beginning of the film). So much so that Danny (portrayed by Danny Lloyd) has difficulty expressing himself and explaining this preternatural environment he encounters, the strange fear and horror he feels to his family. Exposed to feelings and visions that should not be there, Danny senses that terrible events took place in the Overlook Hotel without wandering through the haunted corridors of the Overlook Hotel. He has knowledge of things that will happen in the future, as well as of the events that have occurred in the past. Mark Fisher explains the primary source of the uncanny the audience feels: "The eerie concerns the most fundamental metaphysical questions one could pose, questions to do with existence and non-existence: Why is there something here when there should be nothing? Why is there nothing here when there should be something?" (Fisher, 2016, p. 12). The womb of the feeling of uncanny is the obscurity. Stanley Kubrick never strays from this path when adapting Stephen King's novel into a film. He places the Overlook Hotel as a witness of the past at the centre of the narrative and includes it in the "age of victims" (Traverso, 2017, 16).

The first human character we meet is Jack Torrance, a former teacher who has a problem with alcohol addiction and wants to become a famous novelist. Due to this alcohol addiction, he used violence against his son and wife, as we will learn later on—people also speculate that this violence had reached the level of sexual abuse because of some scenes in the film. He looks for a job where he can devote time to writing, and for Jack Torrance, guarding the Overlook Hotel during its offseason seems like an opportunity not to be missed. Despite being warned at the beginning of the film about the emotional burden of spending the winter there, he dismisses the warning lightly. Once a haven for celebrities, politicians and royalty, the hotel has a checkered past. A previous caretaker went stir crazy a few winters back, butchered his children and wife with an axe and committed suicide. "You do not have to worry about anything like that with me," Jack tells the hotel manager. He gets the job, which he hopes will provide him with the perfect opportunity to get his life and his writing career straightened out. Five months of peace is just what the family needs, but the return of what is suppressed or ignored is inevitable. Forgetting the past, he wants to leave

behind, namely domestic violence and alcohol abuse, will soon catch up with him again. It is possible to apprehend this from his exaggerated facial expressions in his first scenes and the attitude that he does not hesitate to make decisions not only for himself but also for them.

After Jack Torrance is hired, he and his family come to the hotel. During that period when the hotel's regular staff is preparing to close down for the season, the Torrances meet Mr Hallorann (portrayed by Scatman Crothers), the head chef and a likeable senior citizen about to pack his bags and head south to Florida for his winter break. However, it takes Hallorann only a short time to discover that he has something in common with Danny. They both *shine*. They both have a kind of extrasensory perception that allows them to see things others cannot see and anticipate impending dangers. It is possible to encounter this phenomenon in other works of Stephen King such as *Doctor Sleep*, *IT*, *Dreamcatcher*, *Insomnia*, *Pet Semetary*, *Rose Red*, *The Stand*, *The Dark Tower* series, *Carrie*, *Firestarter*, *The Institute*.

Jack Torrance is increasingly withdrawn from the present he shares with his wife Wendy (portrayed by Shelley Duvall) and son Danny into a dimension where various historical moments are intertwined. While he hopes for a workplace where he can write his novel in his ivory tower, far away from all the buzz of the world, he finds himself in the corridors of a hotel overflowing with “hungry memories.”²³ Like every human being, he is a part of personal, social, cultural, and even national ties. He cannot escape from his memories or the problems he inherited from his family but cannot face them; instead, he enters the path of denial. Breuer believed that “such monotonous and uninteresting occupations were a torture” for some people, especially social ones (Showalter, 1985, p. 158). Perhaps there was similar denialism underlying the fact that the film was not liked by some people and critics at the time it was first released. Because as expressed more clearly in Stephen King’s novel, the land of the hotel is an Indian cemetery. In fact, the indigenous people who attacked during the hotel’s construction were “repulsed,” in the manager’s words. In addition, the brutal history of the hotel and the events that took place in the hotel were not sufficiently reflected

²³ Some critics see Jack Torrance as a “perfect image of the failing artist in postmodernity” (Abrams, 2007, 216). In a human and history-centered evaluation, this interpretation is also valid. Nostalgia sometimes creates monsters. In this perspective, the hotel is the reflection of an ideology that has always been in the past and that constantly produces nostalgia for its guests.

in the press; in other words, they remained hidden in a way. From this perspective, both Stephen King's novel and Stanley Kubrick's adaptation remind the American audience that evil is out there, just above and below the ground. The colossal hotel is actually a monument to shame, the expression of violence that constitutes the basic principle of a country itself. It is difficult to face an evil that cannot be forgiven. Therefore, it is conceivable to enquire into *The Shining* not only as a masterpiece that affected the mechanics of horror cinema but also as a work that questioned history and gave a sound similar to the voice of "a hive of angry bees" to some silent memories.

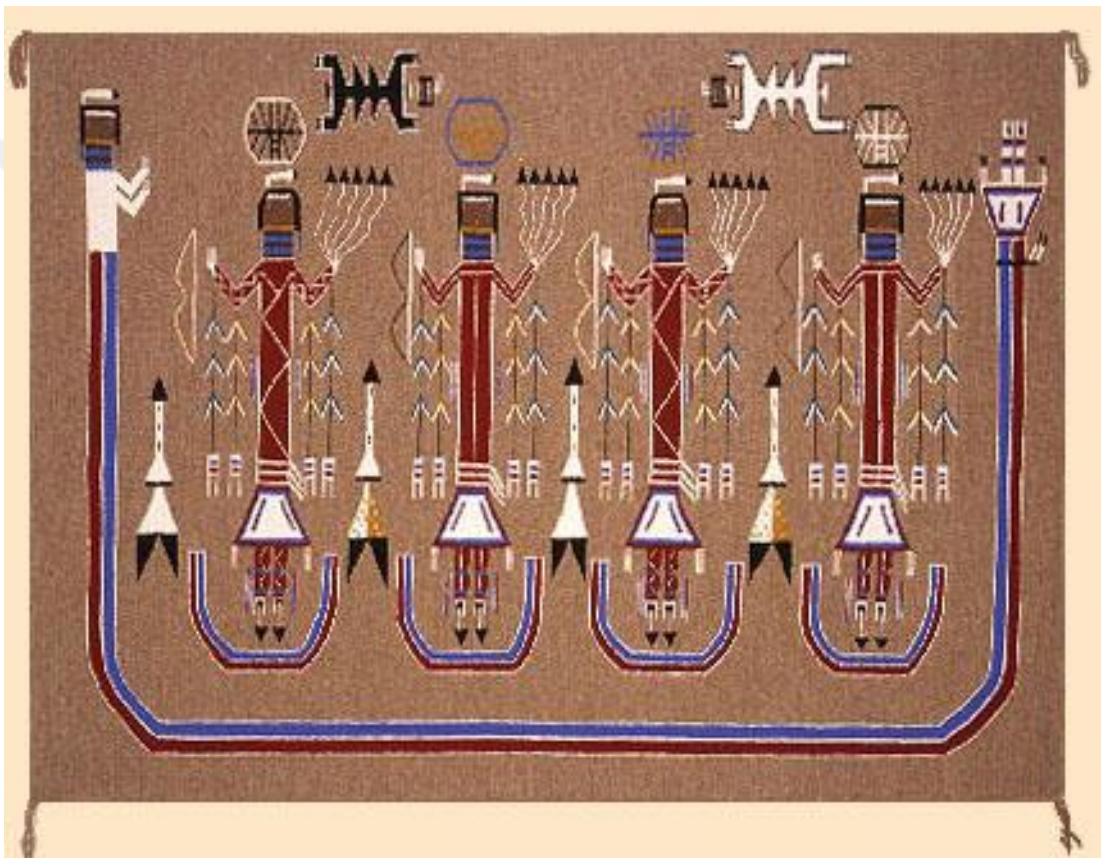


Figure 1. A tapestry in the hotel (from The Shining, 1980)

So much so that the continent's Native American history consisted of a tapestry on the wall or Indian drawings on tin cans (the tins are seen almost at the same level with Jack Torrance's head in a scene where she holds her aching head). Similar native motifs are also seen in floor carpets. In the novel, Wendy asks if the art at the hotel is authentic local produce or not. The manager says the designs are based on Navajo and Apache motifs, the hotel has a bright history and even hosted four American presidents. Even at the very beginning of the film, when Jack enters the principal's

office, a picture of an Indian is immediately encountered on the left (03:29-03:37). There are similar patterns on the curtain in the principal's room, the coffee mug and the artifacts in the background. According to Bill Blakemore (1987), *The Shining* is “explicitly about the genocide of the American Indians – every frame, word, and sound of it” (p. 58).²⁴ He specifically mentions the Indian motifs that decorate the hotel, and the way they serve as background in many of the key scenes. Yet, the Indian culture has only a mute presence in the films, much as it does in America today. Ullman says, “The site is supposed to be located on an Indian burial ground, and I believe they actually had to repel a few Indian attacks as they were building it.” Blakemore finds this dialogue significant because it does not appear in Stephen King’s novel. He sees this difference as Stanley Kubrick’s own agenda, and names it as an intentional metaphor about American history. Furthermore, he wants the audience to consider the Calumet baking-powder cans with their Indian chief logo that Kubrick placed carefully in the two food-locker scenes. Besides, he focuses on the hotel’s name, and claims that the film is also explicitly about the United States’ general inability to admit to the gravity of the genocide of the Indians or, more exactly, its ability to “overlook” that genocide.

The 1920s, when the hotel was at its heyday, was a golden age for the United States until the Great Depression of 1929. In the rooms with these motifs, the flags of the state of Colorado and the United States appear on the past as if they were writing their own stories. What is more striking is that these details do not attract attention at first glance and that they do not create a distorted or foreign feeling in the structure of the hotel. Looking eyes cannot see a cemetery here. The past has become unreadable and invisible. That is why the name of the hotel is “Overlook.” Nonetheless, a tapestry or the blood spurting from the elevator doors has a disturbing truth to tell us, a story about the destroyed and a warning to those who exist. Unfortunately, there is no rich literature on this aspect of the book and the film that centres on victims. Besides, this

²⁴ According to this approach, cultural representations, whether visual or literary, not only reflect and express a predetermined ideology, but also actively participate in the construction and transformation of it, and make sense of the world through the specific codes they use. Throughout known history, these codes have been equipped with a racist content that subordinated indigenous people because it was white men who held power, produced the discourse and determined the content of imaginary representations.

narrative can be regarded as a small detail that is difficult to notice for many viewers. However, one of the reasons why this subject matter is presented as a small detail in the book and its adaptation may be that the writer and director do not prefer to take off their own robes and wear the robes of the prosecutor. Because a victim-centred approach would possibly change the focus of our historical consciousness, and it may lead us to an error in which we would confuse historical narrative with historical fiction. It should not be forgotten that every massacre also has a discursive construction. There is a great risk of alienation from the framework of facts that existed before these discursive constructions. Cinema should not be a field of criminal law; the characters in the narratives should not be reduced to the roles of executioners, victims, and witnesses. Therefore, the narrative of the victim, which finds its place in the details, finds its place in the balance that I believe should be established both in the novel and in the film.

It is possible to catch references to the past of the United States in Jack Torrance's scene at the bar: "White man's burden, Lloyd, my man. White man's burden." "White man's burden" can be taken as a reference to Rudyard Kipling's poem of the same name. While glorifying the white man in this poem, Kipling stigmatises non-white peoples as "half devil, half child" (Kipling, 1940, p.321-322) Those who read the entire poem will see that Kipling places the responsibility of "civilising, taming" on the back of the "white man" and impertinently describes this burden as a "noble" one.²⁵ These words of Jack Torrance, originating from his family issues, also say a lot about the history of a country, perhaps a continent. Another similar example is in Jack Torrance's conversation in the bathroom with the ghost of Charles Grady, who killed his wife and two daughters with an axe at the hotel. Grady warns Jack Torrance that his son Danny is trying to get a black man (represented as a "nigger" in the film) in from the outside. On the occasion of this short conversation between Grady and Jack Torrance, the racist past of the United States is mentioned. The song heard from the ballroom during Grady and Jack's dialogue in the bathroom is also about a forgotten history. Halloran, the only African-American character in the film, is also the only character Jack Torrance has killed. It can be surmised that the murder of this

²⁵ His ideas reflecting the colonial tradition of the period are apparently seen in his poems. That is why E. D. Morel (1920) wrote "Black Man's Burden" in response to this poem.

character by Jack was a conscious choice. Because in the book, this character dies unexpectedly after saving Danny and Wendy from Jack Torrance. Kubrick, on the other hand, preferred that he be killed by Jack Torrance himself.

The first and most frequently seen of the film's very real American "ghosts" is the flooding river of blood that wells out of the elevator shaft, which presumably sinks into the Indian burial ground itself. The blood squeezes out in spite of the fact the red doors are kept firmly shut within their surrounding Indian artwork-embellished frames. We never hear this rushing blood. It is a mute nightmare. It is the blood upon which this nation, like most nations, was built, as was the Overlook Hotel. From the elevator where these motifs are located, it is as if the past, which is wanted to be forgotten and suppressed, is flowing into our world. This narrative transports us away from the area where we feel safe to a foreign, extrinsic, and disturbing realm of meaning. Thus, the uncanny gradually begins to invade the audience's world with Kubrick's preferences (parallel narrations, pre-enactments, visual and auditory echoes). It should also be noted that Kubrick created a replica of the Ahwahnee Hotel, named after a real Indian tribe.²⁶ This Indian tribe had to leave their settlements and died because of the diseases brought with them by the Europeans. The sounds used on stage also give the impression of trying to remind one of massacres that took place. That is why cinema, which has been used as one of the domination devices of the West for a long time (it is still used), does not reproduce these narratives in Stanley Kubrick's world.

Jack realizes that he is unable to have a healthy relationship with both his wife and son. According to him, no one, even his own family understands him. His approach to his own problems is not surprising because he is also stuck in depression.

²⁶ As mentioned before, the thesis will examine the Overlook Hotel as an object and claims that objects can be characters of a film as well. For this reason, the Overlook's conception and design are also key elements. In order to capture these key elements, Production designer Roy Walker sent a team (including Kubrick's daughter Katharina) around the United States to photograph hotels that seemed suitable for the story. Then Walker and Kubrick spent weeks going through the photos and making selections for the various rooms. The Colorado Lounge, with its Navajo motifs, is based heavily on the Ahwahnee Lodge in Yosemite Valley. Other particular inspirations include a Frank Lloyd Wright men's room in an Arizona hotel (the basis of the red men's room where Jack's encounter with Grady takes place) (Hill, 2021, p. 530; Naremore, 2007, 193).

According to research, the three main factors that protect the individual from depression are: (i) sufficient autonomy to resist and grapple with difficult conditions, (ii) to have financial resources in order to be able to make choices in the face of challenging events and (iii) to get support from family, friends or health personnel (Zunzunegui et al., 1998, p. 12). Jack has neither of these. Moreover, patriarchy is one of the obstacles to sharing his problems with someone. As Martin et al. (2013) point out, men are reluctant to report experiencing traditional depressive symptoms (such as sighing, feeling tired and sleepy etc.) that are at odds with societal ideals of masculinity. The masked depression framework proposed by Addis (2008) suggests that men are more likely to express their emotional and psychological distress in the form of ‘depressive equivalents’ because direct admission of sadness and emotional weakness or vulnerability in men is seen as socially unacceptable (p. 153). In the words of Martin et al. (2013): “The masculine depression framework hypothesizes that the struggle to adhere to hegemonic masculine norms places men at risk for experiencing an alternative depression variant often characterized by externalizing symptoms. Rather than appearing sad, men experiencing emotional pain are more likely to react with anger, self-destructive behavior, self-distraction, or numbing of pain with substance use, gambling, womanizing, and workaholism.” He reflects his anger mostly on his wife, Wendy. He even gaslights her. Gaslighting²⁷ is a method of psychological manipulation and harassment. It is the application of emotional pressure in order to shake the victim’s self-confidence, make her doubt herself and question her own perceptions. Gaslighting gradually becomes a term referring to behavior that aims to mess with women’s perception of reality, by way of making women believe their anxieties or emotions are not real or notable. Jack uses this method constantly to criticize the flaws of Wendy, making her doubt herself and feel worthless and ultimately leading the victim to eventually fall apart. In other words, Jack’s feeling of

²⁷ The fascinating story of the term “gaslighting” is based on a theater play, *Gaslight* (also known as *Angel Street*), that was staged in America in 1938. The play opens with a dialogue between a married couple. The man tells his wife: “I don’t mean anything. It’s you who read meanings into everything, Bella dear. I wish you weren’t such a perfect little silly. Come here and stop it” (Hamilton, 1942, p. 9). Although the woman thinks that her husband has finally started to understand her, the man tries to convince her that she is mentally unstable. The play was adapted into a movie called *Gaslight* in 1944, with Charles Lighter and Ingrid Bergman acting as the couple. This film brought popularity to the term.

being entitled to being right in every situation lies at the center of every situation between him and Wendy that has been seen so far. The audience always hears the self-assigned superiority of Jack's voice which ignores Wendy and defines what is going on at the Overlook Hotel.

Then he slowly begins to lose his identity in the corridors of the Overlook. The scenes where we see this loss of identity most clearly are the scenes where he chats with the bartender Lloyd. It is as if he had met and talked with Lloyd before. He shares with Lloyd what happened between him and his wife, as with a friend, complaining that his wife will not make him forget anything—he talks about his past, which he does not want to confront. By telling the events from his own perspective, he rewrites history in a way and establishes a new narrative. Just like constructing the official historical narrative of a country or regime...

Lloyd: No charge to you, Mr. Torrance.

Jack Torrance: No charge?

Lloyd: Your money is no good here. *Orders from the house.*

Jack Torrance: 'Orders from the house?'

Lloyd: Drink up, Mr. Torrance.

Jack: I'm the kind of man who likes to know who's buyin' their drinks, Lloyd.

Lloyd: It's not a matter that concerns you, Mr. Torrance. At least not at this point.

Who or what is this "management," and what does it want? Jack does not ask any more questions. At this point, the attitude of Stanley Kubrick is not much different from the attitude of Stephen King in his novel. We do not see the administrators of the Overlook if any. The "malicious" or "aggressive" beings we think are ghosts do not share their true identity, that is, their essence. We are not even entirely sure whether it is a supernatural phenomenon or something else. Because unlike Stephen King, Stanley Kubrick is also very stingy in using supernatural events and characters. That is why some fans even claimed to the extent that the entire hotel could be a secret state project, albeit a bit coercively; they were able to think that mind-control experiments were being held at the hotel. But if we think about it in the context of Stephen King's novel, what do these entities want from the people staying at the hotel? It is widely

known by the fans of the film that there are different conspiracy theories on the Internet. The most logical inference that can be drawn is that these beings feed on human energies, especially from people who have psychic powers like Danny, “shining” in Stephen King’s words. The hotel can be seen as a psychic vampire. But this information does not remove the mystery of the hotel and its past. Thus, the concealment of the perpetrator’s identity, its expression of itself in other forms of existence rather than its essence, continues to nourish and keep alive the uncanny aspect of the work. The Overlook Hotel itself, its inevitable presence, is uncanny. Jack is even told that he has always been the hotel’s caretaker. Maybe that is why he said he felt happier and more relaxed at the Overlook than he had ever been before: “When I came up here from my interview, it was as though I had been here before. I mean, we all have moments of *déjà vu*, but this was ridiculous. It was almost as though I knew what was going to be around every corner.” In a sense, this refers to the hotel’s “eternal” or “cyclical” time, beyond linear time, into which Jack is increasingly drawn. Nevertheless, it might also be a reference to the chain of events that persuaded Jack to accept his position at the Overlook.



Figure 2. The final scene of the film ends on a close-up of a photo, depicting a smiling Jack with dozens of revellers at the Overlook’s July 4th ball of 1921, suggesting that Jack has always been there (from *The Shining*, 1980)

Contrary to the novel, Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* preserves its place in the history of cinema as the story of a country and its people that could not get rid of its ghosts and feed them. Because at the end of the film, even though the mother and son managed to get out of the hotel alive, the hotel did not burn as in the novel; it is still standing. Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria* has dared to construct a similar narrative in recent years. At the end of the film, Susie erases Doctor Klemperer's memories and takes the burden of collective guilt, mistake, and evil off his shoulders, but this is actually not a very well-intentioned approach. Because remembering, especially not forgetting an imperfect past, can be seen as salvation; so, saving the past can mean changing the present. From this point of view, a forgiving/forgetful world is not as good and pure-hearted as we think. Luca Guadagnino has embodied the nation-state narrative and its mechanics in the silhouette of a mother who forgives a child whatever he does. Perhaps as a representation (mental representative) of the German nation-state, Susie is removing the chipboard of memory (remembering and reminiscing) from the life of the German people, bringing them out of the shadow of the Shoah (Holocaust). This is also seen in the scene where Susie declares she is the "mother suspiriorum" and curses any feigned mother who intends to replace her. As Susie cuts open her chest (which can also be compared to female genitalia), we realise that the wounds of the women or of the German people Susie represents are still open and bleeding; only hidden. An honest and sincere confrontation with the past has never occurred. For this reason, what lies at the core of the evil in which the people participated was ignored and limited to a consensus and historical consciousness.

The Shining ends with an extremely long camera shot moving down a hallway in the Overlook, reaching eventually the central photo among 21 photos on the wall, each capturing previous good times in the Overlook. At the head of the party is none other than Jack we have just seen in 1980. The caption reads: "Overlook Hotel – July 4th Ball-1921." In a final stroke of brilliance, Kubrick physically melds the movie audience leaving his film with the ghostly revellers in the photography. Nolan (2011) describes the photography of *The Shining* as "palpable ghosts" (p. 181). As the credits roll, the popular English song on the soundtrack ends, and we hear the 1920s audience applaud, and then the gabble of that audience talking among themselves – the same sound the crowd of theatre audience itself is probably making as it leaves. Thus, to its

very last foot, this film is trying to break through the complacency of its audience, to tell it, “You were, are, the people at the Overlook Ball”. It is, of course, a speculative commentary on the ending but lots of critics of *The Shining* has this kind of speculation. Even Elisa Pezzotta (2013) says “Jack is possessed by history and, during the masked ball, the ghosts of a past that has disappeared meet once more in front of a contemporary spectator-voyeur.” (p. 162). My objection is that this kind of analysis reduces films to being mere texts, and we do not get the classical gothic horror film answer. This is how it ends. It remains full of ambiguity.

A film review that put people and social relationships at the center of the review would look like the narrative above. So, how to do an object-oriented film reading? The idea that the Overlook Hotel, as an object, could be treated as one of the main characters of the film was first inspired by the ontology of Çetin Balanuye. According to the power ontology, the hotel expresses enough power to exist. So, should not film critics think more about an object that can express enough power to announce that it exists?” At this point, metaphysics, whose subject is existence in terms of being, dealing with the first causes of things, questioning unchanging things, gets involved in the game (Balanuye, 2020). So, can Martin Heidegger's questioning on technique in understanding the relationship of the ring with living things give us a new perspective on the ring?

How can Martin Heidegger's inquiry into technique be addressed with the roadmap drawn by Graham Harman? In *Die Frage nach der Technik* (The Question Concerning Technology), Heidegger explains the ruling that causality prevails where the instrumental one dominates for four reasons in ancient Greek philosophy: (i) *causa materialis*, a kind of the thing in itself, e.g., the ground from which the hotel rises, matter²⁸ (ii) *causa formalis*, the form that includes matter (iii) *causa finalis*, purpose, and (iv) *effect*, i.e. the hotel in its finished state case efficiens, which in this case the

²⁸ Property carriers are called “substances.” According to *monism*, there is only one substance, the super object. Based on *dualism*, on the other hand, there are two substances: thinking matter (*substantia cogitans*) and diffuse material matter (*substantia extensa*). Dualist believe that man's substance is of a different type than the human body. However, some are of the view that thinking substance can even exist independently of the material. In contrast, others assume that there is no immortal thinking soul but only various kinds of interconnected substances. As maintained by pluralism, there are many substances.

hotel's customers and employees. According to him, what we call cause and what the Romans call *causa*, the Greeks call *aition*²⁹, which means one that makes someone/something else indebted. The four reasons are ways of borrowing that are related to each other (Heidegger, 1977, p. 6). The ground on which the hotel is built houses the Indian cemetery. This land in the form of the substance is one of the reasons that makes the hotel indebted. Heidegger will express this as, "in this sense, the hotel is grateful to the soil that underlies it, that is, it owes its existence to it." The hotel does not just owe the land. The hotel, which was indebted to the ground as a hotel, appeared not as a villa or a hospital but as a hotel. Thus, it owes to the form as well. In a Heideggerian approach, both the land into which the hotel's appearance is released and the appearance (the hotel form) in which the land appears both owe the hotel in their own way. It is the turn of *causa finalis*, or purpose. The goal is to welcome people. Therefore, purpose limits what is, posing it as what it will be. To summarise, the first three types of debt have a say and a share in the creation of the hotel, and these forms of being owe it to the guests and employees to make them appear. This human-centred reading also touches upon violence in the history of the United States (against the indigenous people). The violence in this history brought the hotel to the stage. According to Heidegger (1977), the bringing into being is the *poiesis* of something that leaves the backstage at every opportunity and moves towards incarnation (p. 27).

It is also possible to see this as a kind of creativity. So, what is this creativity? The creativity of violence in the history of the United States is disruptive and polluting creativity, or rather, revealing what is prone to corruption, which is also visible in the hotel's Golden Hall. For Frederic Jameson, the Golden Hall amusements are where the United States' truly wealthy and idle class has an aggressive and pompous presence in society, where America's authoritarian class gives the image of being class-conscious and unapologetic without juicing the privileges offered to them openly, with their top hats and champagne glasses. It is a sign of nostalgia for the last moments that other classes enjoy in the social environment right before their eyes (Jameson, 1992,

²⁹ Before I make the explanation here more specific with an example, I would like to make my first comment. Words move away from their etymological origins over the years. After a while, even the communities that are the inventors of the word do not begin to use the meaning that comes from their origins. Therefore, it makes no sense to establish a context between *causa* and *aition* today. That is why serious dictionaries like the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) do not give *aition* as the word's root.

p. 95). The will to bring into appearance, which prevails in four causes, that is, the act of making manifest, is bringing into being. Therefore, according to Martin Heidegger (1977), the technique is a form of revealing (p. 28). An object-oriented approach presumes that it has the chance to turn a new perspective on the film through the object of an illness that sometimes expresses more power than the subject, although it is not the subject.

In addition, the fact that no one notices the true nature of the Overlook, except those who shine, can be explained by Martin Heidegger's handling of the problem of existence. The Overlook, by its very nature, eludes any explanation and approach that tries to grasp it in its existing modality. It withdraws from the determinable and provable as if avoiding itself. For Heidegger, the reality of things is not directly accessible but instead always withdrawn or veiled; therefore, attempts to grasp this reality in a literal, direct language are bound to miss the mark. In this state, objects are hidden from human access and embedded in their own network of relations. At this point, his tool analysis should also be mentioned. According to this analysis, all objects work on their own while our consciousness is busy with other things. He gives the example of the hammer; we normally do not notice this tool until it fails to function and is suddenly exposed to our conscious gaze. Another prominent example from Heidegger is a covered platform. It is not just a structure made of physical materials but often becomes invisible for the sake of our unspoken desire not to get wet from the rain. That is, Heidegger thinks that the world consists of a constant shift between "tools" (everything that works without our awareness, not just tools in the everyday sense) and "broken tools" (everything that becomes clearly noticeable for some reason) (Harman, 2017, p. 153).

Something takes root where it grows and finds meaning there. All this can happen secretly, quietly, and when the time comes. In this approach, when we think about the word "existenz" that appealed to Graham Harman, in addition to the Latin meaning of "to arise, to emerge" in Latin, it also means "to stand out" or "to come forward" when translated as it is. So, the question of "does it stand out to the existing, that is, is it distinguished from other objects by its qualities?" becomes legitimate. Another question that has become legitimate is: "If the entity is coming forward, does it sometimes pull back?" This legacy, which inspired object-oriented ontology, has no harm in being an inspiration for film readings as well. Of course, there is a point that

might be detrimental in these readings. Readings become more speculative in studies that do not consist only of films. This problem of speculation can be examined through the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

What result will we encounter if we apply Martin Heidegger's four-cause analysis to the *Lord of the Rings*? The object to be dealt with in such an analysis would be the One Ring. Gold is the metal from which the ring is made, which is forged at the foot of *Mount Doom*, also known as *Orodruin* and *Amon Amarth*. Gold in this material form is one of the reasons that makes the ring indebted. Nevertheless, the One Ring that rules is not only owed to the gold and the form that embodies it. The gold ring, owed to gold as a ring, appeared as a ring, not as a necklace or brooch. Thus, it owes to the form as well. In a Heideggerian approach, both the gold into which the ring-shaped appearance is released and the appearance (the ring-form) in which the golden one appears, in their own way, make the "ruling" ring indebted. An objection is appropriate here. A Heideggerian approach offers only an interpretation. However, it can be stated as follows, rather than such an existence, there is an object that Sauron himself planned and very consciously designed with Celembimbor. There is no command or body, as Heidegger puts it, 'released', as it were, in a divine manner. The goal is to realise the will to dominate all lives. Therefore, purpose limits what is, posing it as what it will be. This reminds me of the commodity/product/resource discussions in the economic sense. We call productions that already have a purpose—which is almost always the case and get value accordingly—as 'products.' Purpose does not limit what exists; purpose limits what is created. Here, if we consider the product as something made, our whole view of the subject suddenly changes, and we stop talking about the Ring as if it were *Mount Doom*. But in the Heideggerian view, there is a need for a field of meaning in which the thing will manifest. This idea is problematic in itself. It brings an anthropomorphic limitation to the concept of being. Is it not possible to say that things do not need anything related to humans to exist?

In Heideggerian thought, however, such a stance is not problematic. Enemy of the free peoples of Middle-earth, Morgoth's servant, Annatar (Sauron), once known as the *Lord of Gifts*, brings to view the gold with the logos. Elves, humans, and dwarves have been deceived. The Dark Lord Sauron forged the ruling ring, adding all his cruelty, hatred, and will to dominate all lives into the one ruling ring. To summarise, the first three modes of borrowing have a say and a share in bringing into being the

one ruling ring, and these forms of becoming are indebted to the ringmaster bringing them into appearance. Therefore, Sauron, the Dark Lord, and the One Ring are one, as Gandalf would later tell Frodo. Sauron's nature brought the ring to the stage. According to him, the bringing into being (*poiesis*) is the putting onto the stage of something that is heading towards incarnation from the backstage at every opportunity. Here, we can argue that the Heideggerian view will be incomplete in making sense of J. J. R. Tolkien's universe. For there is nothing that Sauron and Melkor cannot corrupt, except the Valar and Eru—which could potentially even corrupt the Valar. Revealing what is prone to corruption is a modern approach that will not find much place in Tolkien's universe, and it necessitates a modern narrative. Everything created in Middle-earth is imperfect. Therefore, the ring has nothing to reveal or force to reveal. The living entities, whoever wears the One Ring, whether Bilbo, Frodo, Gollum, Galadriel, and perhaps even the Valar, since they were also created by Eru, become corrupted and maligned—I do not include Tom Bombadil here as he is a different issue. I think Bombadil is a deliberately inserted bug by Tolkien himself in the universe.

The will to bring into appearance, which prevails in four causes, that is, the act of making manifest, is getting into being. Therefore, according to Martin Heidegger, technique is a form of revealing. This is also how Aristotle (2004) tells the difference between *tekhne* and *episteme* in *Nicomachean Ethics*, books 3 and 4. *Tekhne* reveals that which cannot appear on the scene by itself, cannot be formed, cannot come into existence, and is not yet in existence, and therefore can emerge and take form in Heidegger's thought; in our example, the will to dominate all lives. Thus, the ring, which has been revealed as it was commanded to do its work, stands on the stage, ready to be used and to exist. We can also explain this situation with Markus Gabriel's definition of existence as seeing something in a field of meaning.³⁰ Thus, the film's narrative comes out of the axis of the two brave Hobbits' journeys to *Mount Doom*. An object-oriented approach thinks that it has the chance to turn a new perspective on the film through the object of an illness that sometimes expresses more power than the subject, although it is not the subject. So how can we object to this idea? Thinking within Tolkien's universe, the ring can never be the object of an illness that expresses

³⁰ For more detailed discussion, please see Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist*, p. 50-72.

more power than the subject. The book's title is not *The Ring*; it is *The Lord of the Rings*. The One Ring can never become an object that expresses more power than Sauron. The issue in the story is not a question of expressing power either. The One Ring subjugates the will of free peoples; it is the story of the conquest of free will. Under normal circumstances, even if someone who would never obey Sauron (for example, Gandalf) wears one of Celebrimbor's Nazgûl rings, he eventually becomes a wraith and falls under Sauron's yoke. Then, it is evident that analysis needs an approach that completely rules out subject-centred possibilities.

Inspired by Heidegger's approach, object-oriented ontology takes its revolt against the subject-centred worldview further than in any other tradition. There is a secondary situation here. In the latter case, objects become objects of human experience, that is, sensual objects, so that they can only be experienced through their sensual qualities. Thus, the field of the agency is opened to non-human things. It is an indirect agency since these objects do not come into direct contact. Objects are in a tense relationship network with their structures that are not identical to their properties, and this relationship network is responsible for all the changes that occur in the world. What makes Heidegger important is that he brings up the order of beings operating in the background. Contrary to the tradition of phenomenology, our communication with the world is not always through consciousness. Most of the time, it is a question of contacting a material and tool. This can also be defined as an unconscious communication state. For example, we do not think about oxygen in daily life or the amount of oxygen in the world. Unless we think about it, oxygen is passive in the human mind, invisible, so to speak (Harman, 2019, p. 17). But in a situation where the amount of oxygen decreases and the amount of nitrogen increases, as in *Interstellar*, oxygen and nitrogen become visible because humans do not breathe nitrogen. The attention of man or other objects is suddenly struck by the solitary instrumentation of another instrument. It also draws attention to the fact that perceiving something directly with the mind is not grasping the whole of its reality. Therefore, one of Martin Heidegger's greatest legacies to philosophy is the model of beings beyond the senses and reason, impenetrable, in everyday use. The approach of object-oriented ontology that transcends Martin Heidegger appears in these lines of Graham Harman:

“For if it is true that no human theoretical, perceptual, or practical encounter with objects can ever exhaust the surplus reality of things, the same is true even of non-human objects in their relations with each other. Ultimately, the rift between things and our encounter with them is not the contingent product of a human, alien, or animal “mind,” but occurs automatically in any relation at all. When a stone strikes the surface of a pond, the stone is real, and so too is the pond. Through their interaction, they have either one-way or two-way effects on each other. But clearly the stone does not exhaust the reality of the pond, and neither does the pond encounter the full reality of the stone. In other words, it is not just humans that are finite, but objects more generally” (Harman, 2020, pp. 19-20).

Harman brings to the fore a thought that is rare in the history of philosophy. While dealing with object-object relations, so, we can claim that the object’s objectivity encounters another object and interacts in a way, but that this is not a form of communication; it is an untranslatable reality. This approach of Harman turns into a theory of everything based on his aesthetic philosophy. In the way object-oriented ontology treats the object, the Overlook Hotel is both a real and a sensual object. While real objects exist regardless of whether they act on other things at the moment (which exists when the Overlook has no effect, like a rock), sensory objects exist by communicating with other real objects (this is especially true of the Overlook). But if objects avoid direct contact, how can the Overlook's contacts with other objects be explained (object-oriented ontology does not consider humans in a separate category)? For such contact to occur, a third component, namely an intermediary, must be involved in a relationship. According to Harman, objects cannot make direct contact, but require a vicarious mediator/vicarious causation (Byrant, 2010). In other words, this approach suggests that each direct relationship is mediated by an indirect relationship, that is, objects A and B can only connect through another object (object C), in a sense, we can only make sense of an object with another object. In this context, mediation indicates that the explicit content in any communication tool such as films is under the control of the hidden elements (objects) in the sub-domain of the tool. This intermediary is the Overlook’s ‘shining’ visitors or employees.

In aesthetic experience, the real object disappears and the qualities are thrown here and there. Here, the artistic audience comes into play and creates its own object by collecting the scattered qualities. *Endosymbiosis* is the idea that evolution happens primarily through the symbiosis of two previously independent creatures. They come together and form one, new creature. A lot of the parts on the inside of human cells originally did not belong to ourselves, they were parasites. Then we use some of these parasites to be able to survive in the heavily oxygenated atmosphere (Harman, 2017, p. 112).³¹ Let's focus on the two objects in this example. Edmund Husserl talks about how all mental acts have some object (Harman, 2017, p. 152). So, if people are thinking, judging or wishing about something, there is always an object there. According to Husserl, people can also have mental acts that aim at unreal objects. It means people can hallucinate or dream. For this reason, the debate often comes up as to whether or not Husserl is talking about real objects or is he just talking about any object, real or imaginary that can be presented to the mind without distinguishing between the two. There is a paradox here because we have two kinds of qualities in the object. One is completely accidental and the other is essential. Husserl gives a solution to this paradox but Harman thinks that it does not work. His solution is that any of the features we think of as the thing that we get through the sense that are the accidental ones. Those can be all varied. They can all be changed. The ones that we get from the intellect are the essential ones. Harman calls them the real ones. The real qualities of a thing are the ones that the intellect makes contact with those are the ones that will not change and this is, of course, a fairly classical rationalist position. Instead of saying that the intellect gets the deeper properties of the thing than the senses, Heidegger says *praxis* gets a closer relation to things than theory does. He thinks we know better the hammer when we are using it and if the hammer breaks or if we start

³¹ Graham Harman argues that he took this concept from biology. But this alone is not a reasonable methodology. Because ultimately, biology provides us with a model to explain what it is interested in. These models may contain functional principles and propositions, as well as some true propositions and normativity. But this does not require that a concept from biology be taken as a self-evident truth without analysis. Thus, if Harman is going to take this concept, it should be discussed how legitimate the idea will be in his own philosophy and philosophy in general. The concept of symbiosis, which appeared in *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (2017), was not discussed in detail in Harman's later works.

making theories about hammers as some physicists do, then somehow, we are in a derivative relation to the thing (Harman, 2019, p. 19). Harman thinks that is also a wrong approach. For him, any human way of approaching the thing is going to get us closer to the thing itself because human perception and human intellect, both objectify things in a certain way. Besides, both human practice and human use also objectify things. Both of them are equally distant from the thing in itself. The thing in itself is simply what we get when all of our relations to the thing are subtracted, and of course by definition, we cannot get at that thing directly. We have to get at it indirectly, elusively and elliptically. This is why figurative language is often so important for object-oriented ontology. Philosophy and arts are not from of knowledge. They are cognitive enterprises that give us a different kind of access to the thing than knowledge.

As I mentioned before, Martin Heidegger thinks that our practical relations with things in which they are invisible and we are simply using them without noticing are somehow a direct and intimate relationship. Graham Harman thinks that Heidegger does not push it as far as he should. In the first place, the practice does not exhaust the object. Second, Heidegger does not present anything at all about the relation of things between each other when there are no humans around. We should not limit objects to human use. Yet, one may ask, “Where is referential unity of significance that Heidegger brings up in his tool analysis?” and claim that the object is not a unity, rather it exists within an already given unity or totality of meaning. The tool can only be understood in terms of a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ that defines our ‘invisible’ engagement with it. Dasein, or the human being, is also caught up in this referential totality and therefore correlated with the tool as an object. Heidegger does not speak of an object or a subject prior to relations, even the term relation is improper here, the ‘object’ for Heidegger is always bound up in referential use that takes place within a horizon of sense opening up the projective structure of Dasein.³² For this reason, some may define Harman’s approach as ‘very selective’ with his reading of Heidegger.

For example, it is not the case when we sit in a chair. We are not coming into contact with all of the properties of the chair. There are lots of properties in the chair that do not have anything to do with the human form and how it bends in order to sit.

³² For detailed discussion, please see Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*.

There are strange smells in the chair that only dogs and mosquitoes can confront. There are other electromagnetic properties in the way it reflects ultraviolet light, which we cannot see. The chair is always going to be more than any human interaction with it. So, the object is always a little bit mysterious. In other words, weird is that which cannot be replaced by its qualities. Whenever we have any experience that we call weird or unsettling, it is something where it is inexplicable that we cannot quite put our finger on what was strange about it. On the other hand, any relation between any two things even if they are completely mindless and inanimate will fail to exhaust its terms. Object often means a specific durable thing that one can put in a museum or can move around to a warehouse. It means anything that has any kind of unified reality and that would include historical events. These unified individual things are withdrawn, they are not impenetrable, not only to our knowledge. In other words, one cannot know the true reality of a plastic bottle because it always is an infinite surplus of properties that one can never exhaust. Objects also do the same thing to each other. There is nothing special about poor, tragic finite humans who cannot grasp the interior essence of things.

Why? It is because all human experiences are sensual, not sensible. Sensual means that we are making direct contact with something. There are two spare distinctions within sensual realm. The first one is the difference between objects and their qualities. The second distinction is between medium and mediator. We are all operating in a given medium at any moment. It can be a certain technological medium or it can be a certain historical period. Or let's think more physically, there is a certain air quality in our bedrooms. Then we have got mediators. They are the sensual objects that we use to make contact with the real. It is an aesthetic experience: "Either we encounter a mere object with literal qualities, in which case it is simply not something aesthetic, or we are made to perform the work of an absent object that we have been convinced is missing, in which case we do have an aesthetic experience" (Harman, 2019, p. 140). What does it mean to say that there are certain objects in our field of experience that can give us contact with the real, even though the real is outside of our experience, at any given moment? Well, the cinema, as an art, is the enemy of

literalism.³³ Metaphor is the easiest and clearest case of anti-literalism. Most artists think that it is the greatest gift. Same logic works for *mise-en-scène*.

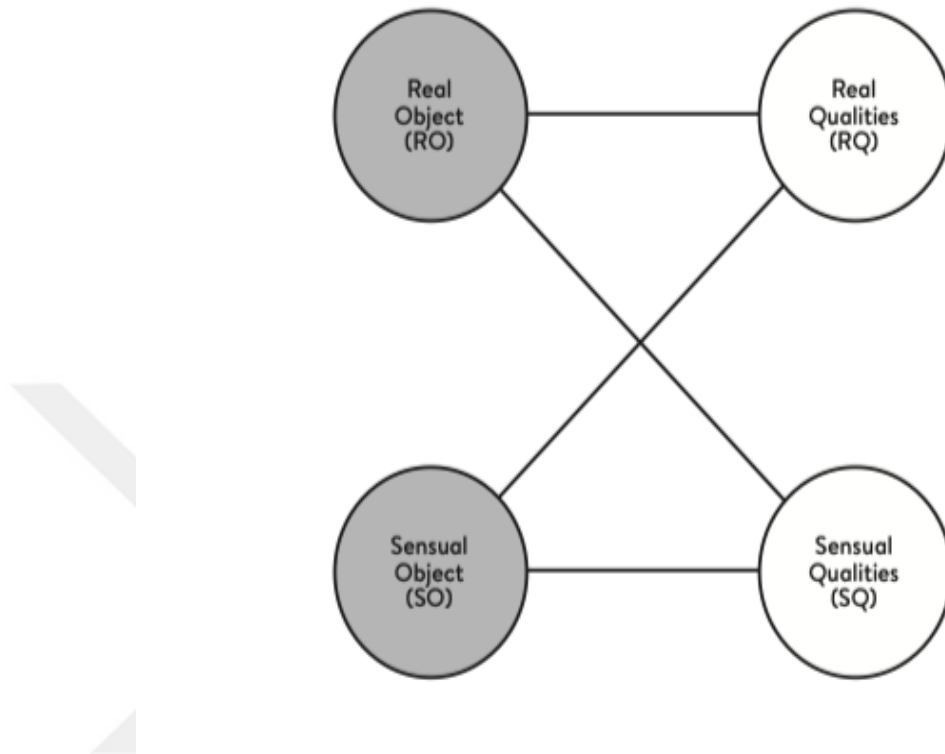


Figure 3. Graham Harman's quadruple object (Harman, 2017, p. 80)

Harman's diagram tells the whole story. There are the real objects and essential qualities. This part of the rubric is the Heideggerian approach. At this point, you do not really know what an object, for example, the hammer is. It never becomes fully visible. When we add Edmund Husserl's ideas, it becomes more interesting. In his analysis, objects are encrusted with extra properties that we are supposed to try to get rid of. It means when we are analysing the object, we are supposed to turn it in our hand say which its qualities here are not essential. It means what features does an object need in order to be itself. There are also real qualities. We cannot just strip away all the qualities from the object and have it still been an object. There are some features it needs. At this point, Harman does not think that the mind can get any closer to the

³³ Literalism is the idea that a thing is nothing more than a sum total of properties. In other words, it is the idea that one can define any object accurately by simply listing all the qualities it has.

essence of the object. We are still limited by the limits of our cognition. The essence of the object is not something equivalent to whatever we can know about the essence of the object. So, it is about the fact that objects and their qualities are never quite in sync and this is what makes things happen. Objects seem to have certain qualities that they do not actually belong to it without transfer quality sometimes. In his book *Object-oriented Ontology: New Theory of Everything*, Harman gives an example there of Homer's famous metaphor, the wine-dark sea. He asks what does the wine-dark sea mean (Harman, 2017, p. 83) and says it does not just mean that the sea is the same colour as the wine. Because when Homer says wine dark sea, he is also trying to imply that the other properties of wine also belong to the sea like drunkenness, oblivion, danger and loss of inhibition.

So, what is happening is that the wine qualities are being shifted onto the sea. There are two interesting things to note here about metaphor. One of them is that the resemblance cannot be too close or too distant or it will not work. Suppose we say the river dark sea that is almost not a metaphor because river and sea are both water and there is not that much difference. What metaphor is doing is splitting the object in its qualities by transferring one set of qualities to an object that normally does not happen. Another interesting thing about metaphors that is not true of literal statements is that metaphors are irreversible. If we say wine-dark sea and then we say sea dark wine, the second one is also a metaphor but it is completely different. Because in the second one, the wine is the subject and it is getting sea's qualities. There is a tension there between the object and its qualities that we do not have in the literal language. The metaphorical "wine-black sea" instead of the literal "dark blue sea" is cancelled; the sensory object "sea" that does not have such unexpected qualities. A real object is needed to perform the task. But since the sea, which is a real object, also withdraws, the sensory attributes of the metaphor are then supported by the only real object that is not withdrawn: I myself, the real experiencer of the metaphor (Harman, 2017, pp. 82-83).

For a better understanding of the argument, the place of Overlook Hotel in the mise-en-scène should be examined. As film critic Dale Schneck (1980) says, "The real star of *The Shining* is the set of the Overlook Hotel." (p. 49). Dick Hallorann tells Danny that some places 'shine' like people, and that the Overlook is such a place. Grand interiors and endless hallways get more loving care from Stanley Kubrick than

does his cast.³⁴ In other words, Kubrick, whose sure-handed, meticulous, 50-takes-per-scene directing is well-known, took a bold step in giving *Overlook* such a free reign. With plenty of aerial footage of the road leading up to the hotel, several exteriors of the building, and lots of odd-perspective shots inside the hotel, all add up to an overwhelming sense of bigness and isolation. Some things show how uncanny they are even from afar. When we consider the *mise en scène* and the metaphor, which is one of the objects of the *mise en scène* aesthetically, an object seems to disappear behind its own surface qualities, forcing the audience (which is itself an object) to step in and take the place of the disappearing object in a theatrical way. It is not enough to simply describe the visible in all its subtleties. Because, as long as it does not cause a problem or is not used by people, no detail in the *mise-en-scène* is noticed. For instance, the air we are breathing is something we probably are not thinking about unless it becomes polluted or somehow heavier than it was. However, it is known that the details in the *mise en scène*, on their own, work in the background, even if they are overlooked. For the sake of clarity, Martin Heidegger focuses on the hammer example, which usually goes unnoticed until this tool fails to function or is suddenly exposed to our conscious gaze. It is a real object that runs silently deep inside. In other words, there is got to be something that makes the artwork an object, independent of its components and of its outward effects. According to object-oriented ontology, two real objects do not come into contact with each other directly, but only through the fictional images they present to each other. An object cannot relate directly to another object, but only to its attributes, which makes metaphor possible. Even if every object, image, or metaphor we encounter in the film only presents us with the outlines or reflections of the interiority of the thing itself, it is we ourselves who give ourselves entirely to all these experiences. The thing in itself haunts every relation: “. . . in art the part of the image which looks towards the object is subordinated to our efforts, as

³⁴ Since the *Overlook Hotel* is essentially a central character in the story, its conception and design were fundamental. Production designer Roy Walker sent a team (including Kubrick's daughter Katharina) around the United States to photograph hotels that seemed suitable for the story. Then Walker and Kubrick spent weeks reviewing the photos and making selections for the various rooms. The Colorado Lounge, with its Navajo motifs, is based heavily on the Ahwahnee Lodge in Yosemite Valley. Other inspirations include a Frank Lloyd Wright men's room in an Arizona hotel (the basis of the red men's room where Jack's encounter with Grady takes place) (Hill, 2021, 530).

basically thespian beings, to become the new object generated by the metaphor” (Harman, 2017, p. 85).

In short, aesthetic experience is a kind of causation that arises when people have two sensual objects in a frame and it is the equivalent of Immanuel Kant’s phenomenal realm. People only see sensual objects interacting with other sensual objects. The way that it happens is two sensual objects indirectly meet in the experience of a real object and that real object is the audience. So, the audience is the site of causation. It only has meaning and reference to the audience, real objects. We only have indirect access to the reality of objects. This approach leaves enough room for further film criticism because it presents reality as an ineffable mystery, it is something people can never know. In this part of the thesis, the application of object-oriented ontology on *mise en scène* was replicated through *The Shining*.

3.2 Vitality of Overlook Hotel’s Objects

“Shirley Jackson was right. Some houses are born bad.” – *Rose Red*.

The concept of vitality is often associated with human life as a neurophysiological or biological being due to the anthropocentric predisposition of man. In a broader sense, animals, plants, bacteria and fungi are included in the narrative. On the other hand, viruses are problematic parts of this narrative. It is certain that buildings are not included in the living class. This current acceptance of normality hinders the creation of the literature on the phenomenon of life; it is because of this supposed *thematic distance* that few philosophers have studied this phenomenon directly. However, linguistic arbitrariness aside, the phenomenon of life appears to be closely related to a reasonably broad metaphysical debate. Speaking of film studies, the notion of *vitality* seems at first glance—perhaps at many later glances too—to be a distant subject to film studies. Considering that the mentioned phenomenon does not appear to be a legitimate subject of study even for philosophy, it is pretty utopian to see it as a legitimate subject for film studies as well. Nevertheless, in this section, it will be discussed that it is a topic to be addressed when it comes to film studies and object-oriented ontology. Taking the vitality into account, it is in everyone’s mind that film studies can only serve here as a mere metaphor. When considered more

technically, it brings to mind the vivid colour palette, the use of light, or areas such as make-up. Adding vitality to a subject and scene is to bring it to the fore. In other words, it is the act of clarification. Precisely at this point, this supposed thematic distance between film studies and vitality reveals a rich metaphysical speculation possibility when considered from another angle.

After the opening sequence that relies heavily on establishing shots, the first object or character the audience sees is the Overlook Hotel. Knowing how the space spreads in a scene helps the audience a lot. Every shot in this sequence is very similar as they all use a pan to move through the shot, and this makes it difficult for the audience to decipher the meaning of the film as it gives almost nothing away from the sequence. One thing the secret starts to give away a genre is with the use of non-diegetic sound what this creates is a tremendous sense of mystery and terrifying vitality of something as the shots may not reflect what the sound is. For instance, there is some element of Indian rallying cry in the soundtrack. However, this choice works as a better narrative in *The Shining* that indicates the villains of *The Shining* are not clear from the start (as the film progresses this element of mystery becomes more and more apparent).³⁵ It also reflects that the location of the Overlook Hotel is tremendously isolated in the middle of nowhere. The opening sequence hardly uses any fundamental conventions of horror films in terms of lighting and location but the fact that it is music helps to tell the audience it is still a traditional horror film.

Danny asks Tony (it was actually a manifestation of his shining talent) about the Overlook Hotel, and a vision appears after that question. A river of blood flows into the screen, toward the audience.³⁶ However, it means that people are all exposed

³⁵ For this reason, the process of this thesis has mainly been to note the connections, and then to see which ones congeal into larger patterns. So far I have not identified any art object that does not connect in some way to the other art objects, so I am guessing that the interconnection is intentional. But is every last conclusion I draw from those connections intentional? Perhaps not. Therefore, speculative theories such as moon landing and Carl Gustav Jung's *The Red Book* were not added.

³⁶ When natural colours are used, one or two colours can be brought to the fore for dramatic effect. For example, in *Don't Look Now* (1973), red is used to highlight the danger. Thus, the agency of destiny is underlined. This narrative transports us away from the area we feel safe in, into a foreign, makeshift, disturbing realm of meaning. Thus, the uncanny gradually begins to invade the viewer's world with Nick Roeg's choices (parallel narrations, pre-enactments, visual and auditory echoes). For instance, the blood-like red stain that we see on John's slides at the beginning of the film is a pre-enactment of the

to thousands, millions of images every day, and they feed off of images. The use of images as a tool for memory and recall is a well-known method. This method is sometimes referred to as *mnemotechnic*, associated with an Ancient Greek goddess, Mnemosyne. What people mean by remembering, in its simplest definition, is to wander through places. As an Indian burial ground, the Overlook Hotel can be seen as a form of remembering as well. Objects that are tools for remembering have the potential to produce complex stories. In other words, if it is thought that there is a notion attributed to each object or a concept that each object symbolizes, the situation may become quite complicated or a straightforward story may be remembered and conveyed differently by going through very complex ways. What needs to be done is to place images of the objects people want to remember in many familiar places, and this can be called memory placement. In this way, the Overlook Hotel is a cite of American history. Making the invisible hidden behind the object visible in the physicality of the object is the semiotic power of the silver screen. Hallorann even says, “When something happens, it can leave a trace of itself behind, say, like, if someone burns toast. Well, maybe things that happened leave other kind of trances behind – not things that anyone can notice, but things that people who shine can see” to Danny.

Yet, it is not just a criticism of consumer society or a genocidal act from history. Despite what some people may think, psychic powers (if they exist) such as telepathy, telekinesis and precognition, all the rest have no moral gradient. They are neither good, nor bad. Hallorann also explains that “shining” is inherently neutral. It can be experienced in positive ways. On the other hand, the fact that Danny’s shining means he picks up the negative emotions and underlies abusive tensions in his family and the residual energies of historical events in the Overlook Hotel. Yet, places are different, and it is the point that a quotation from *Rose Red* mini-series (which is written by Stephen King) should be on the spot: “Shirley Jackson was right. Some houses are

death of John’s daughter. Because his daughter’s raincoat was also red. With Roeg’s narrative techniques, the concept of destiny becomes a visible threat. So much so that it is almost like a killer straight out of a slasher film. What is more uncanny, weirder and more frightening than the existence of certain “things” or “forces” that govern our lives and the world?

born bad.”³⁷ Some believe that some places have their own form of life, a vitality which may or may not be conscious as people are. The Overlook Hotel belongs to the category of *Rose Red*. If there was once consciousness in both of them, their consciousness manifested itself early. Similarly, the problem was that even before there was a house in place of *Rose Red*. It means that piece of ground seemed to make people mad. It overleaps the history of the Overlook Hotel. Not surprisingly, *Rose Red* also shows vitality. People come on Monday and count 74 rooms, come back on Friday and come up with 87 or 97 at *Rose Red*. It is as if it metastasized. At some point, after 1950, *Rose Red* grew on its own. One may claim that *Rose Red*'s vitality is more powerful than the Overlook Hotel's. In such places, people like Danny play the role of electricity. If one applies electricity to the muscles in the leg of a dead frog, the muscles will contract hours after the frog has died. It is implied that the hotel itself is trying to feed on people's shining. In other words, Danny is the hotel's psychic equivalent of electricity. Moreover, the hotel is not that dead. For this reason, the Torrance family will see much more than a single twitch.

It seems complicated but it is not. When Danny moved in with his family, the hotel begins to feed on him at once. But yet again, never in large amounts that the hotel would like. Danny would have to die for the hotel to feed properly. When Danny resists to the hotel's attempts such as a woman's attempt in Room 237, the hotel begins to work on Jack instead. If the audience listens to the dialogue between Jack and the hotel's bartender, they can hear them make references to a third, more powerful party, e.g., 'orders from the house'. Once Hallorann was killed by Jack however, the hotel was able to feed on all the shining he had. Notice how Wendy began seeing the hotel come to life only after Hallorann was killed. This is an energy exchange. It is necessary to think about the relationship of this energy exchange with the vitality of the hotel. Although graveyards seem to be the place of the dead, they are also the place of life because of the possibility of the dead coming back to life. So, every cemetery contains the possibility of resurrection. This may not be the usual form of life. It can be a life between life and death. Due to the location of the hotel, the dead may not be disconnected from the living world. It is possible for the dead on the earth to be

³⁷ She is author of *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), following the publication of her very famous short story called *The Lottery* (1948).

connected to life with an energy that we do not know or understand yet. In this respect, I think it is very important that the hotel was built on a cemetery. It is known that in the animistic model of religion, it was believed that ambiguous forces affected the human soul and body.

What if the audience also has psychic powers? Moreover, what if the cinema ontologically is a form of *hauntology*?³⁸ In *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014), Mark Fisher borrows the term, *hauntology* from Jacques Derrida and applies it to the field of music and popular culture (literature, cinema etc.) in a broad sense. For Fisher, haunting can be seen in every object from music albums to other forms of popular culture. It is the remembrance of the disappearance of the future in the age of late capitalism. His concept of hauntology has similar features to what Fredric Jameson calls the “nostalgia mode”, one of his formulations of postmodernity as the cultural logic of late capitalism. According to Fisher and Jameson, the “nostalgia mode” or “style” of postmodernity never attempts to represent the past, on the contrary, it tries to reinvent the objects and emotional structures of past decades (Fisher, 2014, p. 5). *The Shining* is a critique of the exploitation of nostalgia, at least in many film readings on this subject say so. Unlike Quentin Tarantino films, the film is not a pastiche feast of dead objects and cultural codes of the past. If there is possible to think separately thought and existence, I would like to use this concept in a slightly different sense.

First of all, the object is an entity that has the capacity and the act of interacting within itself and with other objects. If we treat the untranslatable side of the object as if it were also a parapsychic feature, would not the audience be psychics? In Danny’s vision, a blood river flows into the screen, toward the audience. Since a real object that embraces the hotel's violent past does not exist in *mise en scène*, this object is replaced by the audience. Thus, the river of blood turns into an object describing the violent

³⁸ Jacques Derrida proposes *hauntology* instead of *ontology* because *ontology* has a sense of tangible certainty (Fisher, 2014, 17). I think there is no strict differences between these two terms. It is also possible to say the “theory of being” for *ontology*. Throughout its historical journey, *ontology* has been preeminently preoccupied with questions about “which entities exist” or “can be said to exist” and “how such entities can be grouped,” “be associated in a hierarchy,” and “be subdivided according to similarities and differences.”

past. It is no longer just blood that is seen on the scene. As of now the scene has real objects, sensual objects, real properties and sensual properties. The object called *the audience* made this possible. In other words, blood is a sensual object and has infinite sensual qualities. When Stanley Kubrick presents the scene, he also creates an analogy. Infinite sensual qualities are in interactions. The blood river in *mise en scene* becomes something else in the eye of the beholder. It is the blood river of American history now. Yet, one cannot know what it is like to be the blood river of American history. For this reason, the blood river is no longer a sensual object presented directly to thought. This happens when an object ceases to be visible and then exits the analogy state. The side of the object that needs to be translated directs our attention to what is missing. Sometimes, on rare occasions, every metaphor and *mise en scène* in the film creates a new object. Graham Harman (2019) calls these objects as ‘artful objects.’ These real objects have sensual qualities. Harman (2019) explains the situation as follows:

“It follows from the insights of phenomenology that for every object there is always a tension between that object and its own qualities: “tension” meaning that the object both has and does not have those qualities, since within certain vaguely defined limits the object can exchange its current qualities for others. In the normal case of sensual objects, a tree can have countless different properties depending on how and from what angle and distance we confront it, and both the sensual tree and its sensual qualities are confronted directly in experience.” (p. 68).

The objects that play the metaphor and the scene the way they want are the audience. It is a kind of performance art (Harman, 2019, p. 69). Is a genre of art possible without the audience? For object-oriented ontology, the answer is no because in all art forms, what distinguishes the aesthetic phenomenon from other experiences is that the audience is called upon to replace the missing object and support only the qualities that are semi-reasonably assigned to it. When the audience hears the call, s/he takes action and fulfils his/her duty. Why is such a process taking place? Because the artwork is not reducible to what humans observe its at first glance. It has a depth just like any other object. So, first of all, in a field where hermeneutics is inevitable in

many ways, film critics should accept that objects are mysterious and they can have indirect access to their reality.

Another element that adds vitality to the liveliness of the hotel is the structure of beings that are described as ghosts. It has been stated before that imaginary or fictional things are also objects. Although they are defined as ghosts, they all have reflections on other objects such as doors, mirrors, or floors. So, might these reflections not be ghosts? If they are not ghosts, then what are they? For example, the reflection of the twins (14:30) Danny saw in The Games Room is at the door. Considering the symmetry and detail in *mise en scène* in Stanley Kubrick's work, this may not be an overlooked error. So, these ghostly beings can also be seen as manifestations of the hotel. To capture such manifestation every detail from camera movements to lighting needs to be examined. The onset and escalation of these manifestations after Danny sets foot in the hotel proves how Danny's psychic powers provide energy to the hotel. This energy is a life force.

Ullmann tells the history of the area where the hotel was built: "The site is supposed to be located on Indian burial ground, and I believe they actually had to repel a few Indian attacks as they were building it." Immediately after, one of the objects in the hotel is encountered, it is a snow-driving vehicle and it is called 'snow cat' (15:30). It will help Danny and Wendy to escape the hotel. In these scenes, lateral tracking shots give the audience a sensation that the hotel follows human subjects, and it is not a friendly following because of Kubrick's choices. Kubrick loves wide angled lenses, they make the sets look large and they augment that sense of motion, and they need to be on a camera that is level four and a half level to rear because if the cameraman tilts up and tilts down even slightly, those lenses do something called keystoneing which makes the set look distorted and somewhat bizarre.³⁹ In a sense, Kubrick was not like a film director, he was more like a medieval artisan working in an ivory tower, sort of sculpting, grinding and polishing away until he had the perfect result and perfect image. It is known that there are some technical issues that Kubrick insists on. For instance, Kubrick had shot the film with a shooting ratio of 102: 1, compared to the

³⁹ The cameraman prefers to use this lens when shooting a subject that is stuck in a tight space. In this way, the cameraman will reveal as much of an object's relations with the environment as possible (Kafali, 1997, p. 37)

typical 5:1 to 15:1. As another example, film critics and students will see that Kubrick's use of low angles while Danny on his bicycle supports the audience to be on the same or close level with Danny's perspective (Mather, 2013, p. 142): "A low camera height, on the other hand, can work to enhance our identification with children, one of the enduring tropes of photojournalism" (Mather, p. 209). Kubrick is a master at choosing the right angle and the right lens to tell the story powerfully. Every element, every colour, every shade is there for a specific purpose; its place in the visual and narrative scheme has been carefully calculated. Last but not least, the Steadicam's contribution is huge to create an eerie atmosphere because as Wendy describes the hotel is "like a ghost ship." (Nelson, 1982, 202). For an unearthly place, an unearthly, a new technology is needed. While other films of the mid-1970s had utilised Garrett Brown's invention for specific effect, *The Shining*, not surprisingly, was the first film to use the new technology extensively.⁴⁰ It is a well-known fact that Kubrick loves to use new innovations in his films. He even describes the Steadicam as "a magic carpet", he says, "It's like a magic carpet. The fast, flowing camera movements in the maze would have been impossible to do without the Steadicam." (Gallese and Guerra, 2020, p. 101).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Garrett Brown was also responsible for the 'low mode' tracking shots of the boy in his toy car, pedalling along the endless labyrinthine corridors of the massive, confusing hotel. The same techniques was used in the maze: the hedges, made from chicken-wire-covered frames woven with strands of yew, were about 2.5 metres (8 ¼ feet) high, but with the stediest camera and a very wide-angle lens, they looked a third taller again (Hyland & Wilson, 2018, p. 114).

⁴¹ Thanks to the shock-proof feature of this apparatus, an unshakable, fluid and natural movement like the current camera is possible (p. 75).

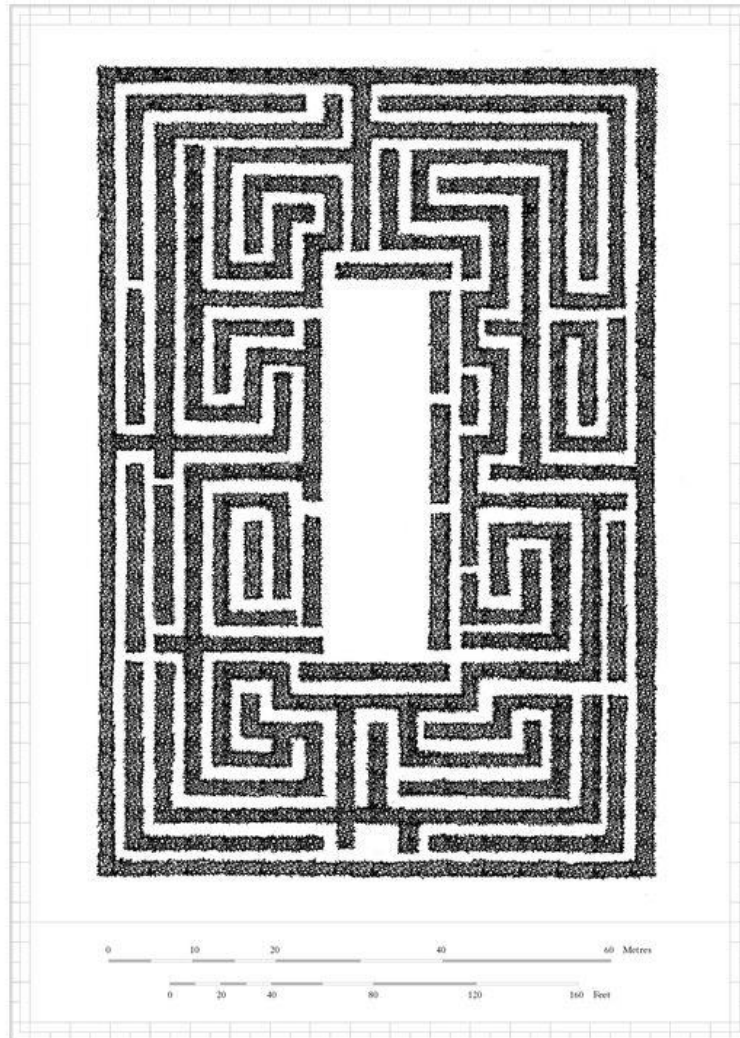


Figure 4. The Shining's tremendous maze (Overlook Hotel, Rocky Mountain, Colorado, USA, 1980) from *The Maze: A Labyrinthine Compendium* (Hyland & Wilson, 2018, p. 114)

One of the most important motifs in *The Shining* is the labyrinth or the maze. Hyland & Wilson (2018) says, “Stanley Kubrick kept the maze model in his trailer during 14-month shoot of *The Shining*, plotting moves like the former professional chess player he was.” (p. 114). Even Wendy makes a mention of the term “labyrinth” as she is going through the kitchen: “This while place is such an enormous maze, I feel like I’ll have to leave a trail of breadcrumbs every time I come in.” So, the idea of the labyrinth brings a couple of things to the audience’s mind. First of all, it kind of gives a description of the Overlook Hotel which is enormous in many ways and has so may

rooms, corridors, and fields to get lost. It also provides many metaphorical understandings and thematic works for film critics. One may claim that the maze is an expression of a power dynamic that it tries to make it as disorienting as possible for the people who are trying to navigate their way through it. Another one may claim that it is a critique of American history. Many finds the maze a symbolic representation of the film. For instance, Marco Lovisato (2017) quoted Jorge Luis Borges: “The idea of a house built so that people could become lost in it is perhaps more unusual than that of a man with a bull’s head, but both ideas go well together and the image of the labyrinth its with the image of the Minotaur. It is equally fitting that in the centre of a monstrous house there be a monstrous inhabitant.” It is really interesting quotation but Lovisato’s interest with this quote remains on a psychological level and he says, “This eerie use of editing suggests that the two of them are simultaneously in the real labyrinth and in Jack’s mind, secluded from the rest of the world and subjected to the psychopathic attentions of their deranged father-husband” (Lovisato, 2017, 128).

In short, there are different approaches such Freudian or Marxist ones toward *The Shining* in terms of film criticism. They are also legitimate approach but I want to talk about maze from a different angle. What kind of object is a maze? The most straightforward answer to this question is that it is a puzzle where people lose their way. Therefore, all approaches based on this definition can be accused of intellectual laziness. In addition, these approaches do not give the aesthetic experience the value it deserves. However, in the first case, the metaphorical object with the characteristics of an excuse is the object of a situation in which it is impossible to find the way out, that is, of despair. Is not the feeling that horror films rely on the most is despair? How does the maze become an object of despair? When the maze that defines the entire existence of the Overlook Hotel is acknowledged as the object of despair, a deep separation and tension are observed between the object and its qualities. The only real object, the spectator, replaces the helplessness that does not exist as a real object, which adopts the qualities of a metaphor maze. For no matter what purpose Kubrick built the maze alone, the maze cannot appear as any other object if the spectator’s aesthetic experience and the real object do not play the role. Thus, all the technical efforts of the filmmakers are in vain. So, every filmmaker needs to include the audience in the equation. Otherwise, everything is left to chance.

This approach can be applied to almost any scene and any object. For example, in the scene where Danny talks to Hallorann about ‘shining,’ kitchen knives appear above Danny’s head as in a few scenes before (Nelson, 1982, 204). Here again, the audience is needed as a real object in order for the knives to be transformed from metaphor to an object of danger. Otherwise, it is not possible to create any meaning with the sensory object and its sensory qualities. Contrary to popular belief, no plan informs the audience and imposes a designed response. Every line, every shape, every form, every texture and motif in the frame is waited to translate by audience. If the audience’s ability to make objects is denied, does not the work of many cult directors only consist of actors repeating specific plans and compositions, opening in the same way, editing in the same rhythm, and giving the same pose? When we leave the audience out, both genre cinema and many directors become indistinguishable from the builders who construct fake visual universes that cannot even seduce themselves with their cut-and-paste formalities. It is quite possible that you can predict the films included in this universe. For example, most open in the same way, are constructed in the same rhythm, and close similarly; in short, they always tell the stories that pose as ‘I am different’ in the same manner. These films, which could not die even though their content was taken, revealed many faces/words that resembled them over time, like a prayer stuck in its own repetition. It is a fact that, in the films of some directors, we witness an extra ‘value’ (or surplus) that carries the so-called anti-virus function, a current that brings about an anomaly. But these directors are very few and generally belong to the tradition of surrealist cinema. Alain Robbe-Grillet, Andrzej Żuławski, Jacques Rivette, Bertrand Blier, Dušan Makavejev, Jan Švankmajer, Elem Klimov, Werner Schroeter, Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Jean-Luc Godard, Juraj Jakubisko, Luis Buñuel Portolés, Éric Rohmer, Shūji Terayama, Marguerite Duras, and Olivier Smolders are some of these directors.

There is another crucial detail that proves the liveliness of the hotel and the fact that the hotel is not different from the maze. During the kitchen tour, Wendy, Danny, and Hallorann enter the freezer where the meat is kept (16:08). Right next to the door they enter, there is a special section reserved for the cooks and the central part of the kitchen. Inside, Hallorann explains in detail to Wendy and Danny the types of meat and what they can eat: 15 rib roasts, 30 10-pound bags of hamburger, 12 turkeys, 40 chickens, 50 sirloin steaks, two dozen of pork roasts, and 20 legs of lamb. When they

leave the freezer, the hotel's background has completely changed (16:39). The exit structure is visible instead of the special section reserved for the cooks and the rest of the kitchen. Even if it might be a mistake, the presence of three doors in the same corridor and the fact that they exit from the door they entered from a different place may indicate that the hotel is playing some little tricks. The setting is shifted to give the audience a sense that the Overlook Hotel is constantly changing and shifting to become even more maze-like and disorienting. It should not be forgotten that Kubrick loves to create unsettling atmospheres and do tricks with background objects. For instance, there is a scene that Danny plays with his toys on the carpet, in the sequence there is a, probably intentional, continuity error on the hexagon that Danny is standing. In the first shot with the zoom out his hexagon has an opening in front of him, the ball enters the hexagon from this opening. If you look at the carpet again after Kubrick cuts to Danny's back, the opening of the hexagon is not on Danny's front anymore, it's on his back! Kubrick intentionally played with the continuity of the objects and the spatial logic in *The Shining* to give this eery feeling to the images. When he cuts again to Danny's front, you can clearly see that the hexagon Danny is standing had changed, because now the opening is not the same as when the ball rolled in. On the other hand, this continuity error hints at the vitality of the hotel. I have always seen it as the hotel changing around Danny, trapping him within its maze.

Hyland and Wilson (2018) also give formal knowledge about the maze: "The design of the maze is Baroque in style – an odd thing to come across in an early twentieth-century hotel in Colorado." (p. 114). It is almost like the hotel built the maze by its own mysterious powers. Yet, the design was typical of Kubrick's approach to production design, instead of making his sets and props frightening, he based them on found images and objects in order to make it more alive. It also reflects the American history because of native American details. Besides, The Overlook's maze "is rumoured to have been based on a design from Schönbrunn in Austria, although they look very different now. When *The Shining* was made, the maze at Schönbrunn had been gone for 90 years." (Hyland & Wilson, 2018, p. 114).

Jack is taken to the bathroom by Mr. Grady to clean his jacket. They stood opposite each other. Jack framed left and Mr Grady framed right. Maintaining the 180-degree rule would mean wherever the camera moved Jack should stay to the left of the frame and equally Mr Grady on the right (Coëgnarts, 2019, p. 106). However, Kubrick

decides to cut to the other side of them as Jack is manipulated by Mr Grady. This cutting breaks the rule and suddenly and quite jarringly swaps the framing and placing Jack where Mr Grady should be as these cuts occur it becomes increasingly more obvious that the two are interchangeable one. Mr Grady is Jack and Jack is Mr. Grady so to speak. Mr Grady says to Jack that he “has always been the caretaker. I should know, because I have always been here.” Almost every scene in *The Shining* has a feeling it evokes: the vitality of the hotel. Dynamic symmetry, colour palette and contrast are some of the devices for vitalization. Kubrick had full liberty on how the objects, lighting and all other features will be used to convey something to the story.

Towards the end of the film, the audience sees that the hotel has come to life completely. A memory or an image is gushing out from everywhere. The hotel’s vitality takes different forms and is related to different symptoms, causes and historical events from different time periods. It reflects the genocidal history of the United States, suicides, homicides, hysteria, neurasthenia, manic disorder, depression, borderline personality disorder, and addictive personality disorder. Wendy witnesses this powerful vitality with her own eyes. The blood gushes out behind the doors that this imagery indicates that the hotel is closer to destructive dark forces reflects the masculine fear of what will happen if suffered ones break out of the boundaries that dominate ones deem appropriate for them. For sure, the history of horror cinema is a long adventure, written in deep pain and tragedies, ranging from the wrath of the innocent souls to the demonic and evil spirits that capture human beings, the bodily functions that disrupt the balance of man, the mysterious games played by the mind.

Stanley Kubrick has successfully brought to the screen the moments when an object or an experience takes action at any moment. Another secret behind this success is editing. Vsevolod Pudovkin's approach to editing is one of Kubrick's golden rules: “The foundation of film art is editing ... The film is not shot, but built, built up from the separate strips of celluloid that are its *raw material*. Things recorded by the camera, Pudovkin said, were only so many *dead objects*: The man photographed is only raw material for the future composition of his image in the film, arranged in editing.” (Luckhurst, 2013, 37). It is not surprising that raw material and dead objects are highlighted in this interesting quote. Anyone who works in the film industry is aware that they are dealing with these raw materials and dead objects. These are at the core of movie design. It could be argued that this is how Kubrick sees everything and

everyone. That is why there is a cold distance between the audience and the characters and the story. In Kubrick's filmography, the human face is not cinematography. However, for directors like Ingmar Bergman and Robert Bresson, the human face is valuable and an important part of cinematography (Singer, 2007, 75; Steimatsky, 2017, 228). In Kubrick, dead objects and raw materials first come to life, then become thought, and finally create an unexpected world.



Figure 5. The Colorado Lounge (The Shining, 1980)

In short, every object is open to indirect access. If so, the knowledge of metaphor is not accessible through literalism. In the thesis, this understanding spreads to all objects in the frame. Thus, the object is not purely the object of literal knowledge. It is a cognitive activity without a form of knowledge. The object is not just a set of qualities that stand together out of habit. During the art experience, the audience streers for an object. In other words, the only way to realize the thing initself for now is aesthetic pleasure, which can only be experienced through a metaphorical language. Let's imagine the objects in figure 5 in this direction. As I have mentioned before, object-oriented ontology defends the thesis that the noume grants access to the aesthetic noumenal field in a way. Every object here, especially those that are important in the scenario, unfold themselves in the aesthetic experience. A tapestry can acquire the qualities of a massacre only during the audience's aesthetic experience.

It is also possible to express this situation literally, but any literal expression undermines art. However, the audience, who can take the place of a real object, can carry such information within the art experience.

The vitality of the hotel is also at the center of the book.⁴² Jack Torrance senses the hotel's vitality as he flips through the history of the Overlook Hotel. Stephen King describes this vitality as follows: “Suddenly it seemed that he could almost feel the weight of the Overlook bearing down on him from above, one hundred and ten guest rooms, the storage rooms, kitchen, pantry, freezer, lounge, ballroom, dining room...” (King, 1977, p. 173). In this understanding, the hotel’s vacant rooms are potential spaces awaiting the return of guests who check in regularly. The vitality of the hotel becomes more evident day by day: “Around him, he could hear the Overlook Hotel coming to life. It was hard to say just how he knew, but he guessed it wasn’t greatly different from the perceptions Danny had from time to time . . . like father, like son.” (King, 1977, p. 356). It reveals the vitality of the words used when mentioning the hotel:

“The Overlook has gotten into your daddy.” (King, 1977, p. 387).

“The hotel put it here.” (King, 1977, p. 387).

“The hotel made him drink it.” (King, 1977, p. 388).

“The hotel caught Daddy.” (King, 1977, p. 388).

“The hotel is trying to hurt him . . .” (King, 1977, p. 388).

“It’s not your daddy talking, remember. It’s the hotel.” (King, 1977, p. 392).

“. . . the hotel kept trying to get into his head . . .” (King, 1977, p. 439).

In another example, Wendy stabs Jack in the back, and Stephen King describes the aftermath of the stabbing as follows: “She thought she had never heard such an awful sound in her whole life; it was as if the very boards and windows and doors of the hotel had screamed.” (1977, pp. 414-415). There is a liveliness in the memories of the hotel. It is as if the events in the hotel never die. For instance, Dick Hallorann explores this situation before the Torrance Family do: “I don’t know why, but it seems that all the bad things that ever happened here, there’s little pieces of those things still

⁴² It could even be argued that Stephen King's hotel was more alive. Yet, *The Shining* mini TV series (1997) is not included in the thesis because the film got poor reviews from both the audience and film critics.

layin around like fingernail clippins or the boogers that somebody nasty just wiped under a chair.” (King, 1977, p. 100). These bad things appear in every object of the hotel. They appear in rooms, mirrors, bathtubs, hallways, even elevators.

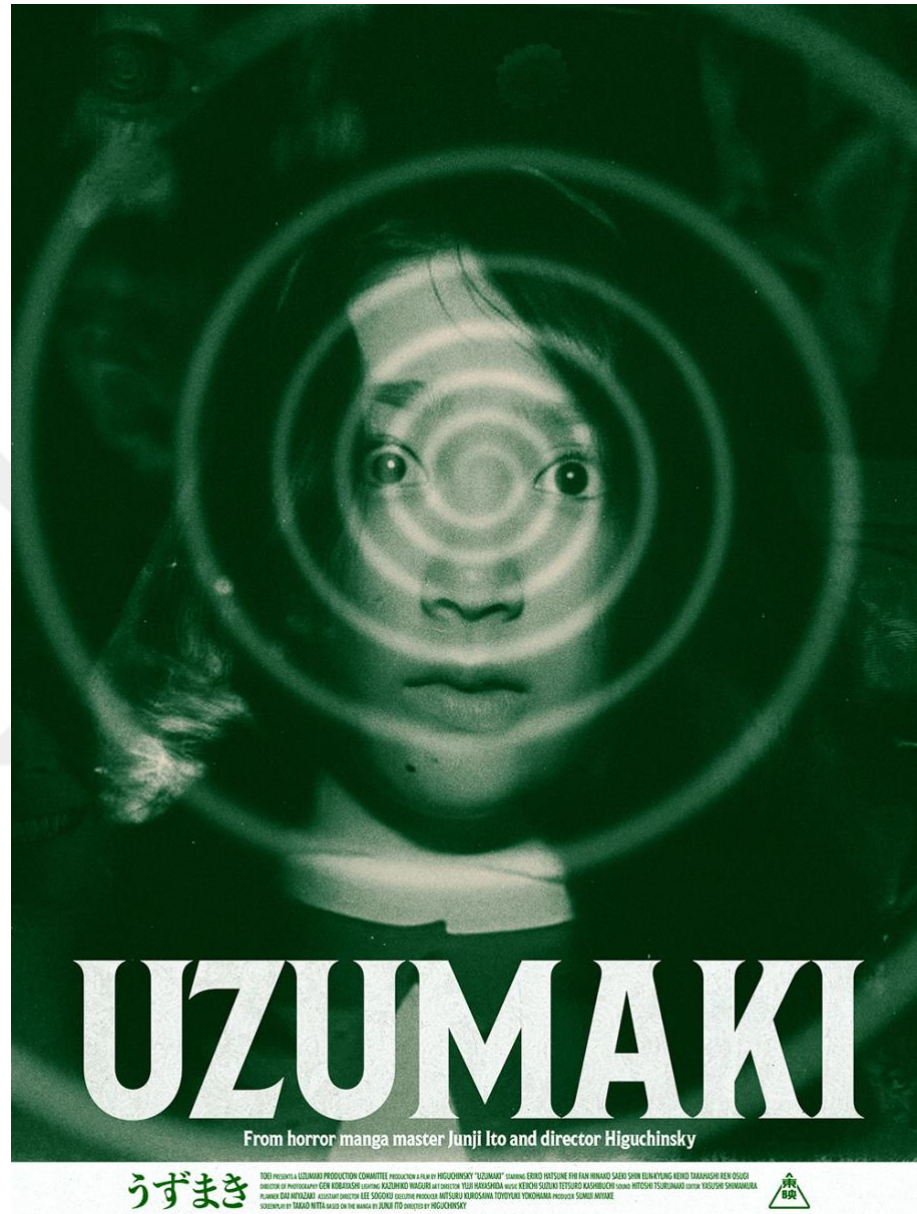


Figure 6. The poster of *Uzumaki* (2000) (Higgins, 2021)

Why is vitality so important as a concept? The concept of vitality is important in almost every medium. I would like to briefly discuss this issue over *Uzumaki*. An alien, distant, sometimes fascinating and sometimes disturbing shape becomes an object that brings the people of Kurouzu-cho into its own order. All existing ties come to a breaking point; the whole town is about to transform into another entity with its

inhabitants. Junji Ito shelves the usual laws of physics in *Uzumaki*, one of the successful examples of the ‘cosmic horror’ genre. In a town, which is heading towards a cosmic order where human life has no value, we see that the spiral shape spreads from the most ordinary items of daily life to the flow of water, the bushes in the countryside, the architecture of the town, human limbs, and even weather events. It is a negative kind of ‘fascination’. What is weird not only disgusts or terrifies us, but also draws our attention, intrigues and even excites us. This feeling can be seen as a kind of *jouissance*, a state of fascination that derives from the inseparable union of pleasure and pain. In the film adaption of the manga, we witness Mr Saito admiring a snail on the wall. Immediately after this incident, Mr Saito’s son Suici tells his friend, Kirie that something sinisterly is wrong with the town. The next day, Mr. Saito comes to Kirie's father, Master Goshima. Master Goshima is engaged in pottery making and ceramics. Mr. Saito says that this is “spiral art”. Right after, he asks Master Goshima for a plate with a spiral pattern. This obsession is no ordinary obsession or collecting. Mr Saito does not go to work due to his obsession; he has been out of his study room. He spends all day looking at the spirals. With this enchantment, it is as if his whole existence is boiling.

The two uncanny and fascinating aspects of the story meet Tzvetan Todorov’s structuralist definition of fantasy fiction. In other words, Junji Ito has succeeded in creating a fiction arising from the tension between the uncanny and the fascinating. In the sequel, the spiral continues to become lustfully desired, something both terrifying and fascinating: “The Thing overwhelms, it cannot be contained, but it fascinates.” (Fisher, 2016, p. 17). Thus, this form (or order), which cannot be exhausted in any way, takes the whole town under its control step by step. As the obsession with the spiral infiltrates the majority of the population, natural naturalism (the empirical world made up of logic and Euclidean geometry) shatters and leaves its place to hypernaturalism, a relatively broader feel of the material cosmos, just as in the stories of H. P. Lovecraft (Fisher, 2016, p. 20).⁴³ For example, while the dishes placed in the

⁴³ We can see that H. P. Lovecraft violated Euclidean geometry in the following quote: “It would be trite and not wholly accurate to say that no human pen could describe [the dead creature on the floor], but one may properly say that it could not be vividly visualized by anyone whose ideas of aspect and contour are too closely bound up with the life-forms of this planet and of the three known dimensions.” (Lovecraft, 2005, 389). Lovecraft repeats this trend often in *The Dunwich Horror*. For example, when

oven are cooking, their shape becomes distorted, weather events change, people's behavior becomes strange. Even the lens of the town's lighthouse melts into a spiral. In other words, a new realism (what Graham Harman calls *weird realism*) pretends to open the thing in itself to other objects. It is already there because it is real. In other words, reality does not appear as a phenomenon that can be immediately understood and grasped within the limits of the mind. It is not literal, as suggested by object-oriented ontology. The spiral, through its qualities, makes it impossible to be fully grasp by humans. It eliminates the possibility that what is experienced will be ignored at a pre-given level, as if they were fantasies put together by people. Although Harman might think otherwise, Immanuel Kant's inaccessible noumenal field is a perfect match for the cryptic secrecy of Lovecraftian creatures. These creatures have more than just a shallow base that makes mating impossible. Because, although the subjects have encountered these creatures and the places they are in, the area of uncertainty does not disappear. Therefore, I think the pantheon of H. P. Lovecraft and Junji Ito deserves the value Harman places on aesthetic experience. The main reason for this is that every image and metaphor about the spiral and the spiral (the relationships established with the qualities of an object makes the metaphor possible) present us the inwardness of the thing itself, and the reader is the main object that gives himself completely to this whole experience.⁴⁴ In other words, it does not generate knowledge about any approach to the spiral, but rather creates things from itself.

Moreover, a problem posed by Quentin Meillassoux (2013) may come to the fore: "Nothing allows me to be certain that nature will not, soon, at this very moment, start doing just about anything, as in the Humean billiard game, defying every theory and every possible experience." (p. 10). For Meillassoux, the question is whether our

Curtis Whateley sees the creature hidden at the top of the mountain, he gives a description that cannot be fully visualized in his mind. The city in *At the Mountains of Madness*, on the other hand, resembles a perverted interpretation of known geometrical laws, exhibiting no architecture known to man. The near inconsistency of such descriptions undermines any attempt to render them visually (perhaps this is why we do not come across an admirable Lovecraft adaptation in the cinema). According to Graham Harman (2008), these definitions only implicitly point to an unspeakable substratum of reality (p. 339).

⁴⁴ I find the approach of Markus Gabriel in his work *Fiktionen*, which deals with art as a reality/being with appearance (although his approach is not identical with Harman), meaningful in this direction: "Kunst ist Schein, der Sein ist."

certainty about a fixed nature is reasonable, and if not, where does the assurance come from that makes us so confident that truth will be consistent in everyday life and in the future? Junji Ito removes this precision with a flick of the pen. Starting from Hume's problem, Meillassoux (2013) asks: "...what allows us to exclude the possibility of the fantastical trajectories of billiard balls that he evokes, as a result of a pure inconstancy of physical laws?" (p. 26) Starting from this rational approach, which reveals the metaphysical essence of models, it is possible to examine the approaches of speculative realism under a new object theory. Thus, it becomes possible to discuss the untranslatable and intrusive excess of each object. Harman's approach aims to remove the object from the activity of empirical synthesis and separate it from its dependence on the act of thinking. Junji Ito's handling of the spiral is similar to Harman's object approach.

"Where did this shape come from or how did it come about, which captivates us forever and stimulates our curiosity about the infinite cosmic space beyond the limits set by our sight and ability to analyse?" The answer to such questions is a mystery. At the root of the question of whether the spiral can be considered as a life form lies a problem of 'thematic distance'. In the broader sense, the concept includes animals, plants, bacteria and fungi. Viruses are the problematic parts of this concept. It is certain that buildings are not included in life. Thematic distance has prevented the formation of a rich literature in different disciplines on the phenomenon of life. If so, it is unknown whether it is a material, physical entity with a collective consciousness, or whether it is a virus whose nature has remained mysterious, infecting language, sentences and words like in *Pontypool*. The spiral that gradually dominates the townspeople can be an alien, a curse, or a shared delusion. For example, Gökhan Kodalak, one of the *Manifold* writers, sees the spiral as a platonic notion of *idea*. This approach is also possible and fairly consistent. Since we have limited information on the material structure of the spiral and its past, it can be argued that a shape that affects the town, and its people, described as "perfect" by Mr Saito and many others, is a frightening reflection of Plato's concept of *idea*. Kodak (2017) describes it this way: "Ito's narrative focuses on the horror of the fact that if the ideas have their own objective existence independent of us, these ideas constantly affect us from the other world, while we are unable to do much except surrender to their gravitational force and imitate them for better or worse." From this point of view, it can even be claimed

that the spiral is a single matter, blobject, or a hyperobject.⁴⁵ Because the spiral clings to the entities that communicate and relate to itself.

In addition, it is seen that the spiral transforms everyday reality by influencing consciousness. It can be argued that the gaze formed in the tendency of the society responds to its desires. Mr Saito's son, Suiçi, draws attention to the increasing number of ostentatious people in the town lately. A more surrealist view, on the other hand, can focus on the rhythmic complexity produced or emerged as a result of the integration of the actional symmetry created by accepting the spirals as overlaid graphic objects with other asymmetrical objects (such as people, plants, water currents), and from this focal point, it is possible to focus on the rhythmic complexity between the geometric and the mental. may think that the emerging abstract and metaphysical harmony has surreal tones. In addition, it can be argued that spirals remove asymmetrical or symmetrical objects from their everyday meanings and functions and turn them into an imaginary montage. But this should not be confused with what surrealists call the *dream object*. Of course, when the spiral is considered, it is possible to talk about a connection established between the perceptible reality originating from the physical structure of the eye and the metaphysical imaginary universe originating from abstract graphic designs. Only in this connection, the eye does not come to the forefront as an organ, the gaze is not conceptualized, and an abstract graphic universe model is not constructed as an artistic-imaginary value. From this perspective, surreal readings will not yield satisfactory results considering Junji Ito's *Uzumaki*. The spirals impose a monistic structure that makes any imaginary assembly impossible. The spiral becomes the symbol of an order in which the object

⁴⁵ Timothy Morton uses the term hyperobjects to refer to things that are more dispersed in time and space compared to humans. Hyperobjects stick to other objects they touch (or indirectly communicate with), no matter how resistant an object may be. In this way, hyperobjects overcome even distances that the human mind cannot travel, meaning the more an object resists a hyperobject, the more it sticks to the hyperobject. It is impossible to escape from a hyperobject. These objects are so large that it refutes the idea that space-time is fixed, concrete, and coherent. Hyperobjects are too dispersed in time and space to achieve unity in a particular local manifestation. They occupy a larger area than other entities can ordinarily perceive. Thus, hyperobjects appear to come and go in three-dimensional space, but may appear different to an observer with multidimensional vision. They consist of relationships between multiple objects. Objects can detect a hyper-object's trace on other objects only when it is revealed as information (in Harman's theory, this is more possible through an aesthetic experience).

is able to gain access to the absolute. In other words, the spiral refers to the basic existential meaning of being beyond the epistemological relevance between object and subject.

Although I like alternative approaches, I find it more appropriate to support Junji Ito's choice. Because we do not have enough information about the ontology of the spiral. Yet we know it has a kind of vitality like the Overlook Hotel. His readers know well that H. P. Lovecraft was an advocate of such indifference. He is one of those who disagree with the idea that there is a conscious teleology of the universe. Regardless of its structure, the spiral does not care about human life and does not put people to a test. Step by step, it incorporates the town it is infected with (or where it always hides somewhere and emerges from time to time) into its (strange) structure and order. This approach is also seen in H. P. Lovecraft's letter to the editor of *Weird Tales* in 1927: "Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. These must be handled with unsparing realism, (not catch-penny romanticism) but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown – the shadow-haunted Outside – we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold." (Fisher, 2016, p. 20).

Jane Bennett defines vitality in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* as follows: "By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own." (Bennett, 2009, p. 8).⁴⁶ In this respect, it can be claimed that the hotel has some vitality in itself. The hotel clings to entities that interact with it, especially those that 'shine'. Timothy Morton (2013), quotes William Wordsworth to describe this feeling as follows: "As he rows away from a mountain, it seems for a while to loom ever larger in his field of vision, as if it were pursuing him, due to a strange parallax effect in which more of a suitably massive object is revealed as one goes farther away from it." (p. 52).⁴⁷ People are inclined to think of things in terms of their users, that is, from producing knowledge through them to eating and drinking, feeling and experiencing them, as passive participants or docile means of all kinds of

⁴⁶ In other words, a new structure of agency is needed.

⁴⁷ Morton (2013) claims that William Wordsworth was "the first cinematic artist." (p. 72).

activities. Nonetheless, every being is primarily a bundle of affect or affirmation relationships. The dimension constituting the thing's reality and mode of existence is its capacity to produce and receive actualised effects within this bundle of relations. Therefore, every being must be defined in this way, also by its mode of existence. In other words, things must be seen as an arrangement that constitutes them, as modes of existence defined by their power to produce effects determined within a network.

We must then see that difference becomes a fundamental concept: that the differences of things become too ontological to be viewed simply as external differences between things. What is differentiated by modes of existence is constantly differentiated in-itself in a fundamentally temporal dimension. This is actually something we all know, that from time to time, as well as in humans, all kinds of things differentiate their power to influence and be affected through encounters that occur. This idea is most observed in the current approaches of *new materialism*. According to the new materialism, everything in the universe consists of the self-organisation of matter. What we call *reality*, or the fabric of this reality, is produced through the self-organisation of matter into different levels, forms and relations, in a way that can be described as the actualisation of virtual powers and the creation/selection of new virtual powers by actual arrangements, viz. the emergence of things between these two movements. All kinds of reality, from the enormous realities like galaxies to smaller realities like our dreams or the dreams of stray cats, are produced by the multitude of things and relationships, the arrangements that bring together their various powers. For this approach to be put into practice not only in philosophy but also in film studies and the humanities, it is necessary to rethink films by using approaches such as new realism, new materialism or object-oriented ontology (Karayemiş, 2020).

If Stanley Kubrick had met object-oriented ontology before psychoanalysis, if this were possible, maybe we could watch a very different film. In a parallel universe, he could find another way to use more objects from Stephen King's *The Shining* such as 'an empty wasps' nest that mysteriously revives and attacks Danny; an animal topiary (rabbits, dogs, lions) that keeps moving and guards the entrance of the Overlook Hotel; a fire hose; an elevator that moves by itself and contains signs of the 1945 ball (a mask, confetti); a roque court; a model playhouse/replica of the Overlook Hotel in which Danny feels a malign presence" (Nelson, 1982, p. 202) and the film would become less open to Freudian readings. What is the problem with a film being open to

Freudian approaches? Because of Kubrick's attitudes towards to Stephen King's novel, some critics believed that Kubrick rejected superstition and parapsychology. It is true that Kubrick is not into parapsychology, yet he does not reject it. You may think that all of us are in a situation of not seeing the other person as they are and deifying them, and then getting angry with them as if there could be such a god.

Since identity, that is, cogitans, is in the foreground, no object can express enough power to announce its existence except ghost-like presences. In other words, Kubrick fails to think of objects in terms of their activities, actions, and strengths rather than their features. Always being content with the ambiguous, making it a habit does not serve the cinema, but also blocks many possibilities, killing the natural philosopher who exists and should exist in the director. Thinking of each quality as an event, a becoming that originates in the substance can enable cinema to offer a richer experience. It would be interesting, if you ask me, to establish a film language that embraces a reality that arises from the way things happen in themselves and shows that this reality can always manifest as a world of various interactions, more than human consciousness can encompass. Perhaps in this way, cinema would be freed from the confinement of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, namely identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance, which caused some surrender to representation, and everything would not be reduced to a world of representation. I am talking about an ontologically realistic, monosubstantial or pluralistic, non-anthropocentric and immanent film language (Balanuye, 2020, p. 45).

3.3 The Future of the Criticism

Every film review is also a question of how to understand a metaphor and mise en scène. These aspects force film critics to find new ways of thinking. From this point of view, the film is a part of the question of not only movement but also being. Identifying frames with movement alone does not make the meaning fluid, in a way, it pollutes and problematizes it like an act of blasphemy. The infinite potential makes the singularity and the potential of the singularity visible. Film criticism has to accept this singularity as a challenge. Otherwise, the assets that remain as local residents made for local residents will be forgotten. Object-oriented ontology reflects the insistence of

the principled. The lived and placed objects thus have an independent existence, freed from the domination of only one mind or minds.

Why should film critics care about vitality of a hotel? Human-centred approaches such as psychoanalysis and linguistics move away from defining the processes of producing film criticism as material processes or processes with their own dynamic and morphogenic capacities. Therefore, it seems that current film critics (I do not talk about mainstream film reviews because they are under the influence of current identity politics) are trying to find a new way between *post-humanism* and *trans-humanism* on the one hand and *post-anthropocentric* theories on the other. Especially in recent years, a lot of research has been carried out on realistic and object-oriented approaches in fine arts and humanities, and the number of works related to objects has increased rapidly. Every academic pursuit, not just film criticism, is on the verge of understanding that mechanisms that are largely causal do not necessarily involve linear causation. So, it is reasonable to discuss that most of the things film audience encounter are not present to their consciousness, and that is actually very rare. The number of things about which they are not thinking right now is much greater than the things they are thinking about. For instance, there is a one in twenty thousand chance of a disastrous earthquake every day in Istanbul, and if that happens, people will suddenly be grateful for the solid ground. So, it creates a duality between what is present at hand and what is ready to hand in Heideggerian sense. In other words, there is something here and there that cannot be never fully expressed in the current moments. Yet, it does not mean that film critics should turn that world of objects into a system that decors refer to backgrounds, and background refer to people want to keep safe and warm themselves and the desire of people refers to their own existence. It also does not mean that objects are nothing more than their relation to all the other things because those relations are all working right now. Object-oriented ontology claims that there is a surplus that is not inscribed in the system of relations.

At this point, I claim that art is about a relation between the beholder and the artwork and object-oriented ontology puts a twist on it. Then, what is this twist? Our relation to an artwork is itself an art object. Ourselves and art objects create a kind of bond, a theatrical bond so that we and art objects a new object. For this reason, Harman says art is “a language or system of expressive signs whose function [is] not to tell us about things but to present them to us in the act of executing themselves.” (Harman,

2017, p. 71) Metaphor, mise-en-scene, and subtext give film critics some insight into how art objects work. Imagine a language that could make it seem like we are experiencing the earnest of a thing. This is what art does. José Ortega y Gasset says “Cypress is like a flame” as an example (Harman, 2017, p. 74). When the poet says the cypress is like a flame or even they cypress is a flame, it does not mean that cypress has the same shape as a flame. Poet use that as an excuse to link them to in a more absolute way, and readers can imagine they cypress as being on fire or as being actively burning things (Harman, 2017, p. 74). A metaphor allows readers to think of the cypress as having flame qualities. Let’s imagine that metaphor is reversed and the flame is like a cypress. In that case the flame is subject and it has cypress qualities. It means that it has solidity, it is rooted and it grows like a tree. Readers can rest in its shade. This is what makes the metaphor challenging. In metaphor, the creator and the beholder only need two things: real object and sensual qualities. There is no such thing as an object without qualities or qualities without an object. In other words, they are always together.

The metaphor, the cypress is like a flame turns the cypress into a black hole. It means there is object there for the flames to attach themselves. There is an empty space. There is only one real object that the flames can be attached and that object is the beholder, audience. As the beholder of the artwork, we become real objects. It is not image of us that are looking at the art. It is really us who are experiencing and enjoying the art. We are the only real object there because the cypress has disappeared. Audience is part of the process who support the qualities of the flame and that is why art has to be theatrical. Harman (2019) claims that this commentary on metaphors is similar to method acting (p. 71). Thus, art becomes a reality that is appearance.

There are other alternative ontologies as well. Alphonso Lingis gives the example of one of his former students who went into a beautiful temple in Kyoto, Japan and snowflakes were falling, then there was a guy who put a walkman on his ears and was listening to pop music. Lingis was trying to claim this was ethically wrong, it was a violation of the temple. In other words, he was not treating the temple with the respect it deserved. According to him, it was kind of an insult and objects demand a certain treatment. In the most beautiful places on earth, people sometimes feel like they should be silent (Harman, 2017, p. 67). In other words, Lingis says that there are commandments that somehow determine all our actions. For example, when

you see a burning cigarette butt in the forest, you probably step on it. It would be a mistake not to step on the butt because you do not want the forest to burn. So, people all know that somehow there are commands outside of themselves. Linis goes further in this regard. According to Lingis, if you have, for example, delicious gourmet chocolate, it would be wrong to swallow it all at once and lick it up in five seconds with a cup of coca cola. You need to eat gourmet chocolates the right way, in the right setting, and piece by piece, slowly and with pleasure.

According to Çetin Balanuye, Immanuel Kant's the thing in itself is the ontology of power. Since "güç" in Turkish means "power" in English, I will translate the expression "Gvarsa" as "if P exists". Humans, like other beings, is if P exist. Everything that exists, exists because it expresses power. In other words, if it expresses power, it exists. According to Levi R. Bryant, we should not think of their existence as the carriers of dead and frozen so-called natures but as dynamic occurrences that are suitable for constantly acquiring new natural forces according to encounters and interactions (Balanuye, 2020, p. 116). Unlike Harman, Balanuye shows how the ideas he got from many different philosophers fit together. If an ontology is a good ontology, it requires at least two conditions: (i) it explains the most with the least assumptions, (ii) it does not multiply the existing ones. It can be claimed that Balanuye is more successful than Harman in this regard. However, Balanuye also seems to propose a somewhat infinite hypothetical ontology. The fact that "if p exists" does not only go through the concept of object makes Balanuye's ontology more logical and consistent. Nevertheless, the criticisms brought to Harman can be brought to Balanuye as well.

Why ontology is needed? It is simple because the invention and addition of various techniques and methods, namely conceptual tools such as frame, lens, light and colour, texture, movement, presentation and point of view, does not mean that cinema has nothing to do with reality. Filmmakers can change everything around in terms of time and their physical relationship to each other: the place may change, its mood, style, even the event itself may change. They create a new reality for the viewer's perception, either very faithful to what really happened, or completely different. It is a new reality. All film critics should start with two questions: Do the objects and props in the setting, whether physical or fictional ones have a crucial role that moves the audience and let them to be in an aesthetic experience? Does the arrangement of object, props, and physical or non-physical characters (human or

nonhuman) within that setting have some realism that concerns the audience? Do inanimate objects seem to have a mysterious surplus? Strange as it may sound, if the audience is not really immersed in the film, the artificial visual universe created by filmmakers becomes part of the literalism. In other words, no aesthetic effect occurs.



CHAPTER 4

LIMITATIONS

The most outstanding contribution of object-oriented ontology to film readings is that it brings to mind that performing or staging something can mean being it. Thus, it is possible to speak of anything that does not surround the actor in a scene as an object. Even before the object-oriented ontology came into the discussion, objects were included in the narratives, but in these inclusions the objects were in a passive state. However, when a student decided to write a thesis on the objects in the film from an object-oriented ontology, the objects were examined. The objects examined were limited to the objects in the decor. Therefore, in this thesis, the idea that the objects in Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining*, especially the Overlook Hotel, the audience and the artwork jointly form a third and higher object has been defended.

Yet, there are still questions to focus on: How can film critics write about "perspective" and "point of view" without anthropomorphizing (turning objects into subjects)? Even in Stanley Kubrick's case, the resulting change of perspective is still achieved in an editing room, not in some subject-independent object's view. Do objects have eyes or looks? If the mind is not what gives identity to cameras, scenery, or lights, then what is? As we know, cameras do not have perspectives, human subjects that set them up and operate them do. What if camera replaces an object? In this case, it would not be correct to talk about a human-managed camera. The camera adapts to the conditions of the object. Under these conditions, it is possible to talk about the perspective and view of the object. In other words, human factors are completely indecipherable due to poor penmanship. André Bazin's famous essay, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* strikes me as being at least vaguely object-oriented in that it calls attention to the dynamics of the collaboration between the movie camera, celluloid film stock, light and the subject(s) of the shot. In *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, Bazin lavishes as much attention on what the movie camera, celluloid film stock and light are capable of doing together (for him, capturing part of the photographed object's essence) as he does on the substance of the image that is imprinted upon said film stock (Friday, 2005, 346). Still, one may take some inspiration from Bazin's essay to get over the problem mentioned. On the other hand, object-oriented ontology indicates that not all objects are equally real, but they are

equally objects. So, it is also a mystery how accurate it is to create an object-subject conflict.

The main unresolved problem is the fictionality of the film. Reality is not reality to the exclusion of everything else. That is, there is a dimension that is not fully realised by reality, not fully expressed in reality, and not made sensible-interactive. Undoubtedly, this dimension does not constitute another fixed, abstract, or transcendent reality. On the contrary, it is itself immanent to this world, but not in the same sense as actual dimensions. Rather, the virtual is the condition of actuality. Let us take a classical paradox from the history of philosophy; this little paradox was put forward in Ancient Greece: Is a blacksmith still a blacksmith when he is not blacksmithing? What do we mean when we say that someone is a blacksmith? It is hard to see why this is paradoxical, but let us then think about it this way: If truth consists only of actual reality, that is, everything consists only of what it does and the elements that make it up, and if there is nothing else... In this case, what we must necessarily accept is that a blacksmith is a blacksmith only when he is actively blacksmithing (i.e., while forging iron in his hand). In other words, blacksmithing is only available during the event itself and not in any different situation. If you take this kind of proposition to the end, two things happen: Things can be nothing but what they do, and their change becomes inexplicable, even unthinkable. A blacksmith at work and a cook at home become completely different persons. The problem with accepting a single dimension, namely the actual, as real here, is that it causes the pain of constantly explaining the transitions between modes of existence as a formation from scratch or even creation from nothing. That is, the blacksmith disappears, is entirely cut off from reality, replaced by a cook, and comes into existence from non-existence. Moreover, such a view undermines the possibility of thinking beyond the actual by telling us that only the actual is real. The transformation itself becomes unthinkable.

The solution to this paradox, then, is to recognise that blacksmithing, that is, both muscular and cognitive abilities for working iron, are powers encapsulated in a single person's body in a virtual dimension. Unless an encounter, in this case, a relationship with iron and the tools necessary for this work, knowledge, fire, etc., occurs in an arrangement, the powers that make up what we call blacksmithing are only encapsulated in a virtual dimension. They are implicit potentials. Moreover, do not let the example of this paradox mislead us. What is meant here is not informational

access to this virtual dimension. On the contrary, it cannot be known which powers are surrounded by which things virtually until those powers become actual.

Of course, it is not possible to break away from the human or to make the human smaller in the narrative. It seems impossible to get rid of the absolutism of correlationism, but I feel like we are missing many things while focusing on people alone. Some legitimately may think that there a lot of areas which object-oriented ontology has not yet elaborated on that need to be clarified before it can be recognized as the future ontology of philosophy. They are, for sure, right. Besides, there is not much practical use of object-oriented ontology in filmmaking but demanding practicality from a philosophical theory is like demanding that Martin Heidegger tell carpenters how to use hammers better. He gives a different kind of discourse on the hammer that is great use in other ways such as metaphysical way of dealing with it.

Yet, object-oriented ontology is still newborn for many fields. So far, the most applied fields of this theory have been philosophy and architecture. For this reason, in other areas, it takes years of work before the approach can promise anything. Yet, it can be said that object-oriented ontology is promising in other fields as well. For instance, in first- and third-person shooter games, the difference between two is that one of them gamers see their characters on screen. Graham Harman (2009) wrote an article some years ago called *Zero-Person and the Psyche*. He discusses the idea that reality cannot be reduced to a description. It means if someone is describing the way someone is behaving or if someone describing the inner content of his/her mental life, in both cases, he or she is translating something he or she is not making direct control with the thing. The reality of mental life is zero-person state. It is not something that can be reduced to a description. It is a from that a description can get to obliquely, elusively, indirectly or metaphorically but it is never going to be able to cash it out in prose terms. I wish more attention were paid to the issues he drew attention to without making it a completely flat ontology. So, there are new commentaries related to object-oriented ontology can be proposed for many fields.⁴⁸

Another point that limits the thesis is that it does not include *new materialism* in the discussion. How can we express the new materialism? The new materialism is

⁴⁸ Object-oriented ontology has started to resonate in many different fields such as architecture (please see the works of David Roy and Tom Wiscombe).

based on materializing the gods, not rejecting them. So, new materialism claims that people, who are in intense contact with technology, perceive life entirely through inanimate objects. From a neo-materialist perspective, matter means much more than this Cartesian-Newtonian understanding. Matter is active, self-creative, productive and unpredictable development rather than passive and static one. In other words, new materialists think of a more dynamic and active natural world than the traditional mechanical understanding, and they reconceptualize matter, especially starting from biology and physics. Now, in this era, humans function as other kinds of prostheses, translation devices, even reproductive organs between other living and non-living things. It is all about perspective here. People are not only an evolutionary force of selection in the creation of new species, but also computers and so on. In the production of such technical machines, people also become for them a sexual selection force and a viral mutation operator. In other words, beyond technical machines, there is also a machinic sexuality operating at the level of social machines, and the functions of human components in this sexuality are extremely diverse. A machinic selection process involves the establishment and coherence of human and non-human arrangements, and the arrangement selection of different living and non-living components (Karayemiş, 2021). Who does the cinema appeal to in such an age? What can we write about movies in such an age? Has the relationship that films established with humans changed?

Another drawback of the approach is that it paves the way for a large number of interpretations and speculations. Of course, it is natural for speculative realism to cause speculation. But the extent to which speculation should occur and how to keep it under control is still a mystery. According to object-oriented ontology, relationships are accidental for things, things that come into relationships are not created by relationships; moreover, not every relationship leaves permanent marks on the components. Communication between objects is neither easy nor impossible, it is both possible and difficult. In other words, object-oriented ontology uses the word 'object' in an unusually broad sense. The question of how object-oriented ontology can deal with the infinite objectivity of any film should be raised by film critics and object-oriented ontologists. This is an ontological burden that no field can handle yet. The future goals of object-oriented ontology should be to explain the most with the least assumptions that exist. Endless duplication could undermine confidence in this

approach. In summary, the issue of producing an infinite number of objects may need to be reconsidered. It would be easy to take refuge in the thought of “what good have we seen from finite thoughts.” How object-oriented ontology can exist in a finite system of thinking should also be discussed again. However, the points where object-oriented ontology differs from flat ontology should also be preserved.

Besides, according to some, object-oriented ontology is apolitical. I never understood why academia had to be political. However, that evaluation is correct. The political pillar of object-oriented ontology is rather weak. Nevertheless, I could argue that subjects and conceptual schemas are less real, vital, or less important than others because they are not even the half of ontology. The external world is often outside of conceptual schemes and, in this respect, it is incorrigible. This is essentially a very political stance. It creates an ecological perspective. However, it should be admitted that Graham Harman’s interest in fields other than philosophy is noticeably less than other philosophers (see Giorgio Agamben and Slavoj Žižek). In his interviews, he argued that he was more interested in his field and he said that his approach was normal, even ideal (Yalçinkaya & Özyürek, 2020). Although I agree with the idea that not only philosophy but also political science should give a much larger role to non-human beings than before, it would be healthy to continue working on this idea without forgetting the danger and possibility of object-oriented ontology “ignoring” the “human”.

How can film critics overcome the challenges that object-oriented ontologists face as they watch, visualize and learn from films? How can film critics think critically about the ways in which their object-oriented film projects and reviews forms of world-making that ground frame-driven insights in real-world complexity? How can film critics draw on this process to bring marginalized voices back to the surface of humanistic inquiry? These questions may provide some opportunities to further think about the format of object-oriented ontology and its interactions with film studies in creative ways. Every field that exists has some interest in talking about individual units and what happens when they come into relation, how can they pull apart from relations. The point that if things were not contradictory and totally self-relating, they would not be open to us, is beautiful, and some even may enjoy hearing thoughts on how aesthetics can bring epistemology and ontology together – that is excellent. I hope energy of the thesis is contagious. At the same time, given other film studies students

and their trans-disciplinary synergies, film and television departments could also think about a more topical/theme-based seminar on, for instance, “Film Materialities”, so that film and television departments could occasionally invite scholars in film studies, media studies, philosophy, and other humanities etc. I think it can be very productive, especially in terms of building a bridge between other departments and film studies. In addition, exciting discussions on the theoretical side of the subject can be made by inviting people, such as Bruno Latour, Manuel DeLanda, and Graham Harman, who work in the fields of “new materialism” and “object-oriented ontology,” which can be considered as new approaches in philosophy to inspire those working in these fields. Film studies have the luxury of starting almost from scratch, especially when it comes to new realistic approaches, and this is a great asset for them as they can rethink the way collaborations, writing, and scholarly conversations are conducted in the field and adjacent areas of knowledge from their own little bubble. Our limits should not prevent us from attributing agency to both the observer and the observed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Anthropocentrism, a virus that sneaks into the structure of every film reading ever written, has created a society of film critics who suffer from indolence. In the world of this community, the agency of the objects we see in the film is irrelevant. The meaning of everything is examined within the subject. Everything tells the subject's story and appeals to the subject, ranging from script to acting and from acting to cinematography. However, even in the works of Walter Benjamin, one of the constant favourites of film and art critics, we cannot find such a deep subject-oriented reading as today; he includes those objects in his narrative much more than today's critics. Benjamin claims that traditional works of art have an "aura" of peculiarity, privilege, distance, and continuity. While the conventional picture allows us to immerse ourselves in peaceful contemplation, the film constantly changes our perceptions, creating a non-stopping shock effect. Watching a film, moving to a crowded city, or working with a machine are "shock" experiences that unveil objects' "intermediate" experiences. Its artistic equivalent is the montage technique. The montage, which shocks the viewer/audience through the linking of different things, has become, for Benjamin, the basic principle of artistic production in a technological era. The aesthetic experience he refers to is producing new forms and if discussed within the scope of the thesis, objects.

Unless a film criticism is wrote that will make it possible to center the objects, film criticism continues to circulate within the borders of psychoanalysis. Given the film criticisms written on *The Shining*, many focus on the psychology of the characters in the movie. It can even be claimed that Stanley Kubrick was influenced by the theories of psychoanalysis.⁴⁹ It was not surprising because in the second half of the

⁴⁹ In *After Kubrick: A Filmmaker's Legacy*, Warner (2019) indicates the influence of psychoanalysis: "As several critics have shown, *The Shining* takes cues from Freud's inventory of uncanny things and events, adapting his investments in doublings, repetitions, doppelgängers, mirrors, and in/animate objects to the sensory needs of Gothic horror." (p. 127). For sure, Sigmund Freud's approach, which remained current until the 1970s, has since partially lost some of its influence due to the weakness of its experimental foundations. Great advances in psychiatry have been made thanks to newly developed

20th century, figures such as R. D. Laing stood out as influential scholars in psychiatry. His views gained widespread currency throughout the 60s and 70s. With its political, mystical and artistic reflections, *The Divided Self* (1965) became a guide to counter-culture as well as psychiatry.⁵⁰ Let's focus on Jack Torrance once again. What kind of problems does a caretaker face with when stuck in a hotel during the winter? The first things to mind, he is faced with are feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, emptiness, helplessness, inadequacy, reluctance and anxiety that constantly disrupts the individual's well-being and that the individual struggles to cope with, recurrent relationship problems, lack of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-love, instability, adaptation problems. But the film does not tell us anything about Mr Grady, who worked there as a caretaker before Jack Torrance, having similar problems. From this perspective, it is not a defensible standpoint to analyse the film only with psychoanalysis. Perhaps film critics should repeat the question of Richard McNally, a professor of psychology at Harvard University and an advisor the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. He asks "Are we pathologizing everyday life?" in his highly anticipated book, *What Is Mental Illness* (2012). He points out that the imbalance, the visible symptoms that interact with one another as a whole should be carefully described, otherwise he argues that there is a high risk of taking the natural emotional states of everyday life to be medical problems (McNally, 2012, p. 32). If film criticism continues to pathologizing film characters all the time, pathologizing can become chronic or repetitive problem in some cases.

While there is no doubt that cameras record, sets bring the scene to life, metaphors enable new forms of existence, combine harvesters cut crops, lamps illuminate spaces, fences mark boundaries, and traffic lights regulate traffic, the narrative is never set up that way. It is difficult to see how the camera, the decor, the metaphor, the combines, the lamps, the fence, or the traffic lights can act in a thought where the action is a priori constrained by intentional human activity. Objects are either a reality outside of us, and that is all we need to know about them, or what matters is our ideas about them. Any object cannot resonate outside of the web of

drugs and psychotherapy applications which is supported by neurology, clinical psychology and neuroscience studies. Yet, his approach still influential in humanities (mostly in literary departments).

⁵⁰ His other enormous contribution to literature is *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (1970).

material relations. Objects cannot speak; to rephrase it, the film critic criticises the film with the belief that it has a meta-language embedded in the language of objects. The problem lies in this belief. Because even though film critics generally consider people as a separate category, that is, as “subjects”, “objects” transform, translate, distort, and change meaning or elements. Objects, like subjects, are things that convey sense or power by transforming them. In an approach where everything in the universe is seen as the self-organisation of matter (and possible non-matter beings), what is called reality, the fabric of this reality, can be described as the actualisation of virtual powers and the creation or selection of new virtual powers/capabilities by actual arrangements, the emergence of things between these two movements. Thus, a new approach can be caught in film criticisms, which have turned into a vicious circle, started in the same way, edited in the same rhythm, and closed in the same way. For this, first of all, it is necessary to reject a common tendency in *German idealism*, namely, the idea that we can reach the *Being* only to the extent that it is compatible with the transcendental structures of our understanding and sense faculties. That is to say, the boundaries of the human mind should not determine the limit of the world. This does not mean that an individual reputation and value should be attached to a person. Because when the object is withdrawn, the inclusion of man in the object-object relationship as a real object through metaphor is nothing but a qualitative transformation in nature. Besides, there is no limit to thought and matter for the object. The object does not appear in the finite worldview. It is the person who is in the closure, and he is the one who will come out of this closure and realise that s/he is an indispensable part of the world of objects. Therefore, it is natural for human beings to reach random reality independent of us.

Within the scope of the thesis, which examines how this understanding will affect and transform the tradition of film criticism, first of all, the *object* definition of object-oriented ontology is included. According to the description taken from Graham Harman, an object is something that cannot be reduced wholly to its constituents or effects on other things. In line with Harman, the only necessary criterion for something to be an object is that it is more than its parts and less than its effects. Thus, a basis will be possible where the untranslatable and unruly excess (or surplus) of each and every object can be discussed. This definition can also be formulated as follows: Anything that can be considered on its own is an object. This is not an object fetishism or a sort of *vulgar materialism*, as artificial and fictional objects are also regarded as

objects. This object perception is different from the Kantian one, which emerges by giving unity to the representations that are animated through the activity of empirical synthesis (i.e., the reproductive activity of the imagination) with a verb of thinking (i.e., the verb of judgment). In other words, for Immanuel Kant, the object is something that is established. We enliven the empirical element in our imagination and establish the object by judging this empirical element with the act of thinking (Gözkân, 2020, p. 57). For Harman, on the other hand, the object is something utterly opposite to the thought of Kant because the object of Harman is not something that is established but something that nevertheless stands in itself and is irreducible. Thus, Harman actually represents a return to the previous metaphysical history that Kant treated and packaged as *traditional metaphysics*. This turn, which has not yet taken place in philosophy, is an entirely new approach to film readings.

To reach this understanding, Harman draws attention to Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the *noumenal*. According to Harman, Kant's phenomenal field is everything that people are able to encounter, perceive, use or think about, in other words, the field that takes place over twelve different categories of the understanding in space and time. The noumenal field, on the other hand, is the state of things in themselves that transcends experience, which we can never directly experience because we are limited in the conditions of human experience. So, object-oriented ontologists reject anything that offers direct access to reality or anything that suggests people can access reality directly. They also reject any kind of direct access through mysticism either through meditation or some kind of altered states of being or mind. They claim people do have some kind of indirect access but even it is not going to illuminate reality itself. What object-oriented ontologists are really trying to is uncover that objects really are in and of themselves.

The main claim of object-oriented ontology that concerns the thesis is the use of aesthetic language in the production of new objects.⁵¹ As Graham Harman puts it, art dynamically binds the audience to the aesthetic object to produce a new unified object, since art cannot reach the object itself by extracting its accidental qualities.

⁵¹ In terms of object-oriented ontology, the explanation that a new object is produced using the aesthetic language may be somewhat vague. Since the proposition “A is B” is different from the proposition “B is A,” what is meant by producing a new object is that the produced thing is also a different new object.

This idea is the main proposal of the thesis. Human subjects cause the existence of an aesthetic object as audience who take over the tasks of the lost or receding object in the Heideggerian sense. In this process, information or knowledge is not produced, but rather *the thing-in-itself* is created. Things are produced from the oscillation between the roles of being objects in a unified structure on the one hand, and being different types and qualities of objects on the other.

How can *The Shining*, one of the cults of horror genre, play a supporting role in this process? Why should film critics who want to create object-oriented film criticism visit the Overlook Hotel once? Stanley Kubrick had created an object in *The Shining* that Overlook Hotel resisted our first approach to it and made it more and more difficult to paraphrase it. In other words, Overlook cannot be conceived of as direct access to the forms of things. Thus, it is understood that the object's power of emergence/appearance (*surgissement*) and creative reproduction cannot be limited. It is impossible to deal with a film that is the subject of a phenomenon that is not governed by laws and is the result of an unlawful being with a restrictive view of the subject of tradition. Therefore, the interpretations have no guarantee when the subject is removed in film readings with this tendency.

So, a roadmap to follow for object-oriented film criticism is based on the following assumptions (i) It is recognised that objects have an existence independent of human beings, and moreover, they are constantly in a dynamic relationship with each other. (ii) There are two types of objects: real objects and sensory objects. Sensory objects exist only in association with some real object. Real objects do not relate to each other directly but through a sensory object. (iii) There is a side that hides itself in the language of objects. A literal translation of their language is not possible because the essence or form of an object is revealed only in itself and cannot be transferred to the human mind without being distorted. (iv) The completely untranslatable and inexhaustible side of this aspect of objects only emerges with the aesthetic experience of a spectator, and this aesthetic experience also takes place while watching a film. Therefore, films should also be included in the research field of object-oriented ontology. A research program that focuses on the traces left by *mise-en-scène* actors following their own paths and their activities in creating and breaking partnerships, rather than focusing on the level of analysis and what kind of groups they are, will make a difference in the contemporary debates of film criticism and philosophy of

cinema. I think this topic might offer an alternative in the study of the ‘object.’ Researches have to learn from them what existences turned into at the hands of the objects, which ways they used to fit it together, and what explanations would best describe the new emmergences they had to forge. Recognising the agency of objects and structures of mise-en-scène and putting them in an active role contradicts the basic norms of the social sciences and makes a new understanding possible. In other words, object-oriented film criticism’s main goal is taking agency away from human-centered perception and locating it in a wider group. So, the first movement is elevating of objects in the direction of agency. Film criticism should move objects from inanimate passive things to more active role to seeing them more as agents. Then, it means film criticism has to be as broad as possible. Taking into account the ontology of objects, film criticism should focus on a new perspective regarding autonomy of objects and how this autonomy relates to the pressure exerted on humans.

Although Graham Harman has not given enough space to films in his work yet, it is possible to hope that this approach will change in the coming years. Harman (2019) he still evaluates the cinema as follows: “Film is a hot medium, since we are always given each shot in a highly specific way, with no leeway for looking at things from whatever angle we please: we always see Humphrey Bogart the same way in each scene, no matter how many times the film is replayed. Stated differently, there are no autonomous objects in film, but only objects overdetermined in their exact relations with everything else.” (p. 178). The content of the thesis may push Harman to reconsider this idea, since the claim that the objects in the film are different from the other real and sensual objects that Harman deals with requires contrasting with the basic claims of object-oriented ontology. Just as object-oriented ontology was inspired by H. P. Lovecraft, it may take an unexpected form of inspiration in horror cinema. In an age where technological developments such as *Metaverse* are opened to discussion, perhaps it is necessary to talk about the possibility of each object's visuality rather than wasting time with non-visual objects. Thus, not only the majority of visual objects, but also new approaches to the ontology of visual objects can be obtained. Even though it is limited to a frame, no image in the scene can be fully translated, just as object-oriented ontology claims about objects. Artificiality does not take away from its objectivity, its reality and its untranslatableness. For this reason, it is necessary to allow what is on the stage to show itself in frames, and this can only be realized through

the aesthetic experience of the audience. These are ontological claims of speculative realism and object-oriented ontology about reality, and all together let film and television studies to think in a non-anthropocentric way. Without an object-oriented approach to cinema, film critics have nothing to say about object-object relations.



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