

Still a Total Mystery: A visual analysis of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Part One: The Dawn of Man

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“You're free to speculate as you wish about the philosophical and allegorical meaning of the film – and such speculation is one indication that it has succeeded in gripping the audience at a deep level – but I don't want to spell out a verbal road map for *2001* that every viewer will feel obligated to pursue or else fear he's missed the point.”

Stanley Kubrick

## Introduction

*2001* has been praised for its visual effects and technical execution, but it is also well known for its minimal dialog and ambiguous final sequence. These characteristics have contributed to the film's reputation for perplexing and confounding some viewers. Film critic Roger Ebert attended the Los Angeles premiere of *2001*, and in a retrospective review written decades later he recalled the variety of reactions from the audience: "To describe that first screening as a disaster would be wrong, for many of those who remained until the end knew they had seen one of the greatest films ever made. But not everyone remained. Rock Hudson stalked down the aisle, complaining, 'Will someone tell me what the hell this is about?'" (Ebert, 1997).

The message of *2001* is primarily communicated through visual rather than verbal symbols. Kubrick confirmed this as a deliberate creative choice in an interview published in *Playboy* magazine shortly after the film's release. Responding to a question about the film's symbolism, Kubrick explained: "*2001* is a nonverbal experience; out of two hours and nineteen minutes of film, there are only a little less than forty minutes of dialog. I tried to create a *visual* experience, one that bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content" (Norder, 1968). The adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" certainly applies to the succession of images presented in *2001*.

The present paper is a case study of *2001: A Space Odyssey* consisting of a detailed, though not exhaustive, visual analysis of the film's first segment entitled "The Dawn of Man". The thesis advanced in the present paper is twofold: first, the majority of information in *2001* is communicated visually, and a close visual analysis is essential to understanding what the filmmakers are trying to convey to the audience. Secondly, a visual analysis can elucidate the meaning of the film's infamously enigmatic narrative, a meaning that is ultimately obfuscated by strictly verbal interpretations. The warrants for these claims will be established through a content analysis of the mise-en-scene of the film and semiotic analysis of the symbolism present throughout the film. In order to provide context for some of the images the essay will occasionally refer to information provided in an early draft of the film's screenplay written by Clarke and Kubrick.

This author of this essay recognizes that filmmaking is a fundamentally collaborative endeavor. A single author can write a novel, one artist may craft a painting, a lone musician can compose a piece of music, but it takes a small army to produce a professional motion picture. Stanley Kubrick is considered an auteur director whose distinctive visual style and creative vision is evident in all of his films, and while many people worked on *2001* Kubrick oversaw all aspects of the production starting from the film's inception. Contemporary literary criticism considers the possible messages and meanings of a text such as a novel or film without inferring authorial intent, but this essay takes the position that the philosophical themes and concepts alluded to in *2001* are the result of deliberate creative choices made by Kubrick, and will therefore often refer to "Kubrick" as shorthand for "the filmmakers" and occasionally for the film itself.

The opening image of *2001* is of an astrological event: the conjunction of the earth, moon and sun. It is an ostentatious opening sequence, and beginning the movie by depicting an event of such magnitude may seem pretentious to some, but by correlating the start of the film with an astrological alignment Kubrick confidently communicates to

the audience that the film they are about to see is an event in itself, something momentous. This opening sequence, with its audacious orchestral accompaniment and bold Futura titles seems to be saying, "Pay attention. This is important."

## The Dawn of Man

The first section of *2001* begins with a fade-in from black on a dark, rugged landscape silhouetted against the luminescence of a pre-dawn sky, cast vividly red by the rising sun. A title card appears on screen: "The Dawn of Man." The scene then cuts to another shot of shadowed mounds and peaks against orange-blue iridescent sky, then a jump cut a little forward in time to when the edge of the sun is just beginning to peak above the hills. This is followed by a shot of the magnificent orb of the sun in full, and the landscape made visible in daylight: a vast and arid region, identified in the screenplay as the African continent 3 million years ago.

A wide establishing shot of the vast African plain is followed by closer shots of rocks, then bushes and shrubs, and then bones. Skeletal remains lay sprawled in the dirt, and then a close-up of an animal skull with curved tusks. In this brief montage of images Kubrick has already established evolution as one of the film's key themes. The succession of shots of rocks, then plants, then bones displays a chronological progression of increasing complexity, an understanding of evolution as proceeding through the stages of mineral, vegetable, and animal. Billions of years of evolution have just been conveyed visually in a matter seconds.

Another cut, and the skeletal images of death are replaced by the film's first scene of living creatures. Two ape-like animals with coarse black fur are crouching on the ground, picking and eating grass that is growing amongst some boulders. The screenplay refers to them as "man-apes," and supplemental literature identifies them as hominids, early ancestors of *Homo Sapiens*. Evolution is progressing to the human stage. A pig-like animal with dark grey skin and pronounced snout, identified as a tapir in extracurricular literature, is the next living creature to appear on screen. Next, there is a scene of hominids and tapirs together, both grazing on the vegetation around them. As one tapir approaches a shrub that a hominid is eating from the hominid scares it off with a burst of loud, guttural grunts.

There are more brief shots of hominids and tapirs, the numbers of animals increasing with each successive shot. They continue to eat the plant food in their immediate vicinity. An ostensibly irritated hominid angrily pushes a tapir away from his food source. This is immediately followed by another scene of a tapir slowly approaching a shrub, only to be intimidated away by a hominid screeching and flailing its arms. These scenes establish another theme that will become increasingly important in this sequence: competition for scarce resources and the territorialism it engenders.

The scene changes to several hominids scrounging on the rocky ground amidst the bones of a large animal, larger than the ape-men. Behind the hominids is a ridge several feet above where they are scavenging food. Suddenly another animal leaps down from the ridge. It is a leopard, and the big cat pounces atop an ape-man, wrestling his prey to the ground as the other hominids flee, screeching in terror. As the leopard gnaws on his quarry the screen fades to black. This scene introduces a significant development:

animals preying on other animals, whereas the hominids and tapirs have only been shown to rely on the available vegetation for food.

Fade-in on a new location: a small body of water, something between a puddle and a pond, which will henceforth be referred to as “the watering hole”. Four ape-men sit at the water’s edge, cupping the muddy liquid in their hands and bringing it to their mouths to drink. Several more hominids are huddled nearby, picking at each other’s fur or digging in the dirt. Some howl and screech. The angle changes: from a rocky incline overlooking the watering hole a second group of hominids quietly approaches, slowly crawling close to the ground in an apparent attempt at stealth. The hominid in front of the group looks back at those following him, visually identifying him as the leader. Clarke and Kubrick’s screenplay identify this ape-man as Moonwatcher, and makes clear that the hominids at the watering hole are another pack or tribe. As Moonwatcher and his group approach the watering hole they disturb some small stones causing them to clatter amongst the rocks. This noise signals their approach to the other hominids and destroys their attempt at stealth. The group at the watering hole immediately begins screeching and jumping up and down. The two packs howl and flail at one another, some beating their chests with their fists, as Moonwatcher’s group steadily advances toward the watering hole, and the other group eventually retreats from the location. Victorious, Moonwatcher’s group gathers around the water and begins to drink. The screen fades to black. This encounter establishes that territorial disputes and competition for resources occur not just between hominids and tapirs, but also between different groups of hominids. Behaviors that were previously depicted in the film as occurring between members of different species now are depicted amongst members of the same species.

The picture fades-in on shots similar to those from the beginning of the sequence: the barren African landscape, although now the sky is darkening in twilight rather than brightening with the approaching dawn. A brief shot shows a leopard (perhaps the same leopard from earlier) lying atop and likely guarding his latest kill, what appears to be a dead zebra. The scene changes to a new location: cave-like openings and rocky enclosures where hominids are gathered, some huddled together others sprawled about as if lounging. They pick at each other’s fur, they growl at each other, some appear to be holding or cradling their young. The last remnants of sunlight are disappearing from the sky and screen fades to black. These images convey an impression of a pack or tribe gathered together for safety amongst a hostile environment. The shot of the leopard atop a felled zebra reminds the audience about the earlier leopard attack on an ape-man, and the fact that the hominids must be wary of deadly predators that can leap out of the shadows without any warning. The introduction of rival hominid groups presents another potential threat to their safety. One can only imagine what other dangers lurk in the dark of the night. Without the light of the sun to illuminate their surroundings the hominids cluster together in their cave mouths and rocky enclosures, an area that it is easy to imagine was selected because of the natural defenses and relative security that it provides. Here one can extrapolate from the previously established theme of evolution that Kubrick is depicting a hypothesis for how human communities began, with groups gathering together for whatever protection could be afforded by large numbers of individuals, congregating in the most defensible locations that could be found. In essence this is a view of human civilization being born out of the practical necessity of surviving in a hostile environment. From this notion and the film’s theme of evolution it could be

extrapolated further that advancements in the species and society are born from adversity; that the drive to overcome or improve difficult circumstances leads to innovation. The adage “necessity is the mother of invention” succinctly expresses this basic idea. Another related idea is the concept of “adaptation” in Darwinian evolutionary theory. This is yet another theme that will be explored further as *2001* progresses.

The next scene is in daylight, ostensibly the next morning. The hominids are sprawled on top each other, sleeping. One begins to awake and slowly opens its eyes, blinking in the sunlight. The screenplay identifies this hominid as Moonwatcher. As Moonwatcher begins to rise, his gaze falls on something off-screen and stays fixed on it. Moonwatcher sits up and starts grunting and howling with increasing force, then begins stamping his foot on the ground and screeching to rouse the still-sleeping hominids. Gradually the others begin to wake up, and they too seem agitated about whatever it is that Moonwatcher has seen. The shot cuts to a wide angle that shows the hominids’ rocky encampment recognizable from the earlier dusk scene. However, there is a noticeable difference: a small monument is standing in the midst of their natural sanctuary. A rectangular shaped object situated upright and long-ways, standing roughly 10 feet tall, 3 feet across and half foot deep, with dimensions given as 1x4x9, the object is completely black in color and smooth on all sides. Its smooth surface, right angles, and straight edges stand in stark contrast to the rocky outcroppings and other natural landscapes seen so far in the film. These physical characteristics give the impression that it is not a natural phenomenon but something created, and the sudden appearance (apparently overnight) make it seem like someone or something intentionally placed it amongst the sleeping hominids. The screenplay refers to the object as the New Rock, but hereafter in this essay it will be referred to as the Monolith.

The hominids quickly scramble out from their sleeping sites and circle around the Monolith, screeching and howling in apparent fear of the strange object or anger at the sudden intrusion into their territory. Moonwatcher breaks from the rest of the group and hops around the base of the Monolith, stamping his foot agitatedly. Eventually Moonwatcher moves closer to the Monolith, although he does so with trepidation. He reaches out his hand as to touch the Monolith, but quickly withdraws his arm before his fingers come into contact with the surface. The alien object seems to have struck fear into the hominids, but perhaps it has stirred awe and fascination as well. Finally he touches the Monolith, just lightly brushing his fingers against the surface before quickly pulling his hand away. But then he touches it again, running his hand along the smooth side of the object. Others now approach the Monolith and, following Moonwatcher’s example, they also begin touching the object. Eventually the entire group is crowded around the base of Monolith reaching out their hands to touch it.

The scene cuts to what is ostensibly a low-angle shot looking up from the base of the Monolith. The sun is just visible peaking over the top of the Monolith, and directly above the sun in the frame is a thin sliver of a crescent moon. Several reviewers have noted the resemblance of the image in this frame to the unfinished pyramid capped with the Eye of Providence, “like the Masonic symbol on the dollar bill” (Gilbert, 2006). The similarity between this shot in the film and the symbol of the unfinished pyramid is so close that it must be a deliberate reference, and the image is repeated later in the film.

There is an abrupt cut and the scene changes to the same area where the leopard attack occurred earlier. A lone hominid, Moonwatcher again, crouches on the ground

digging in the dirt near some skeletal remains. Suddenly he becomes still, and he looks up and cocks his head to the side as if suddenly struck by something. The earlier low-angle shot looking up at the monolith suddenly appears on the screen and quickly disappears again, creating the impression that the image had just flashed onto Moonwatcher's "mind's eye". Moonwatcher looks back at the bones before him and cocks his head from side to side as if regarding the skeleton with curiosity. He picks up a bone, lifts it, then lets his hand drop to the ground, bringing the bone into contact with the other remains of the skeleton. The impact of bone-on-bone sends part of the skeleton askew. Moonwatcher again lifts his hand and brings the bone down on the skeleton. This time a rib-bone is flung into the air. Intrigued and apparently exhilarated by this development Moonwatcher begins bringing the bone down onto the skeleton with greater and greater force, culminating with him swinging the bone two-handed to smash the skull lying before him. The piece of bone in his hand is now a club, at once the first weapon and the first tool. Something momentous has happened here, and the editing makes plain that this development of conceptual thought, of tool-making, and of weapon-wielding is directly linked to the appearance of the Monolith and Moonwatcher's interaction with it.

The scenes of Moonwatcher smashing the skeleton with the bone-tool-weapon are intercut with images of tapirs being brought violently to the ground, ostensibly from being clubbed over the head with the bone-weapon. This sequence is followed by a scene of Moonwatcher scurrying up a hillside, clutching the bone in one hand raw red meat, tapir probably, in the other. He sits and bites into the raw flesh. The following two shots show groups of hominids, bone-clubs at their sides, hungrily devouring tapir meat. These scenes portray yet another paradigm shift in the status quo as presented in the film up to this point: the transformation of the ape-men from herbivores to carnivores. Prior to these scenes the hominids were only depicted eating grass, berries, nuts, whatever could be found amongst the sparse vegetation on the plains. By killing the tapir, Moonwatcher becomes the second animal depicted killing another creature in the film, the first being the leopard. There is a significant difference between the two instances. The leopard is designed by nature to be a carnivore and predator, possessing the sharp claws and teeth that enable it to deliver fatal blows and bite into flesh. The hominids overcome this physiological disadvantage through tool-making, by utilizing the bone as a weapon. With this primitive technology the hominids are able to kill other animals despite their lack of claws, although they still lack the carnivore fangs and jaws. Thus the film has depicted the first instance of ape-men overcoming the natural order of things through technology.

The action then returns to the watering hole where the rival groups are again engaged in territorial dispute, howling and flailing at each other, but there is an important difference this time: Moonwatcher and his group are wielding bone-clubs. Moonwatcher advances to challenge the leader of the rival group, and they meet in the shallow water. As his opponent charges at him, Moonwatcher brings his club down on his rival's skull. The assaulted ape-man crumples to the ground, his body shaking with violent spasms as Moonwatcher continues to bludgeon him with the bone. Other members of Moonwatcher's group take turns striking the body with their bone-clubs. With shrieks that sound frightened and bewildered, the members of the rival group retreat from the watering hole. The territorial conflicts and competition for resources have now escalated to the first interspecies mortal violence, another significant development.

Moonwatcher, now the conqueror of his world, howls triumphantly and flings his bone-club into the air above him. What follows has been called a “brilliant jump-cut” and “perhaps the most famous edit in contemporary film” (Kolker, 2006). The camera follows the bone in close-up as it spins end-over-end against a background of blue sky. Just as the bone reaches its apogee and is about to succumb to gravity’s pull and begin falling back to earth, the scene abruptly cuts to an image of an orbiting satellite, sized and situated in the frame to visually match the bone, against the black background of outer space. Rather than falling to earth, the satellite silently glides high above it. Through technology humanity has again upended the natural order and overcome the bonds of gravity itself.

A common misconception held by many reviewers of *2001* is that the film is comprised of four segments or chapters, considering the section following the dramatic jump-cut to be its own, untitled chapter. This is an incorrect inference. In fact, the film consists of three segments, each clearly identified by a title card. Even though there is a dramatic shift in the narrative after Moonwatcher kills the rival hominid, accompanied by a jump in time of millions of years and a change in location from Earth to outer space, the celebrated jump-cut from bone to satellite establishes a connection between the segments. This seamless edit is not a transition from one segment to the next, but an elegant way of continuing the chapter millions of years into the future. The jump-cut makes clear that the two segments are joined, not separate.

With the dramatic jump-cut Kubrick skips over millions of years of human development in an instant. Such an editing move makes a bold statement. All the social development and technological innovation from the bone-club to the spaceship occurred within the dawn of man. Millions of years later, mankind is still in its infancy.

The landscape is no longer the African plains but Earth’s outer atmosphere. There are shots of the sun and moon, and then a spacecraft come in to view. The ship looks similar to a commercial airplane (smooth, cylindrical fuselage, pair of wings, tail section, etc.) and is even designated with the Pan Am airliner logo. The spaceplane moves silently through the vacuum of space toward a steadily spinning structure that looks like two thin wheels joined in the center. Through the course of this scene it becomes clear that the rotating structure is a spacestation that the spaceplane is in the process of landing at.

The shot changes to an interior view of the spaceplane. The inside of the craft looks as much like a commercial jet as the outside: rows of seats facing uniformly forward along an aisle, and all of the seatbacks have television screens set in them (just as many airplanes do today). All of the seats are empty save for one. The lone passenger is an adult man with light skin and a brown suit, and he is slouched in his seat sleeping. The screen in the seatback in front of him is on, though no one is watching it. As will soon be made clear in the film the man is Heywood Floyd. Something slowly drifts into the foreground of the frame: a fountain pen, aimlessly floating in the zero gravity conditions of outer space. In the background, a sliding door opens at the end of the aisle and a woman steps through. She is wearing a white and yellow jumpsuit emblazoned with a Pan Am patch and any air traveler would recognize her as a flight attendant. The flight attendant walks down the aisle delicately, haltingly, placing her hands alternately on the walls and the seats as if to steady her balance. The shot cuts to a close-up of her feet: she is wearing slipper-like footwear with the words “Grip Shoes” printed on them. This simple shot establishes that her shoes have the ability to keep her on the ground instead of floating around the cabin like Floyd’s pen. Kubrick’s attention to technical detail in *2001*

is renowned, and this shot presents his idea of how people might cope with zero gravity when traveling through space. The flight attendant walks to where Floyd's pen is drifting and plucks it from the air and places it in Floyd's breast pocket.

This brief scene of Heywood Floyd asleep on the spaceplane is full of visual encoding and images that offer multiple interpretations. *2001* is not a film about the lives of specific people; it is about the journey of all humankind. Every image, every object in the film is metonymic: the celebrated jump-cut from bone to spacecraft communicates that Moonwatcher's bone-club is a synecdoche for all of humanity's tools and technology. With apologies to Dr. Freud, in *2001* a cigar is never just a cigar. Similarly, Heywood Floyd and the female flight attendant, the first human beings seen in the film, can be viewed as representatives of all men and women, or at least as symbols for feminine and masculine principles. Viewed from this perspective it is not just Heywood Floyd who is fast asleep, but Man collectively. With his tools sufficiently developed to the point that they can fly him to the moon and back, Man has fallen asleep while watching television. Yet Woman is awake, restoring order to chaos and setting right what is amiss without Man even noticing.

Floyd's floating pen is another important element of this scene. Many commentators have noted the resonance between Moonwatcher's bone-club and the satellite that follows it after the jump-cut, but the real spiritual successor to the bone is Floyd's fountain pen. Moonwatcher threw his bone into the air in defiance of the laws of gravity, and the bone returns to the film triumphant over gravity's pull in the form of Floyd's pen. If the bone-weapon is understood as the original tool, then the pen is indeed its technological descendant. The flight attendant returns the pen to Floyd, a gesture that establishes Floyd as Moonwatcher's successor. Essentially Heywood Floyd is Moonwatcher after the jump-cut. And where is Floyd's ultimate destination on this space voyage? The lunar surface, of course. Even three million years later he still watches the moon.

The extended sequence of the spaceplane docking with the space station is mesmerizing, as the spacecraft begins spinning in synchronized pace with the rotating station in order to enter a docking bay. The sequence's theme of male and female can be seen in these scenes as well: the phallic or masculine Pan Am spaceplane seems to engage in a sort of mating ritual with the receptive, feminine space station. Their respective movements give the impression of a queer courtship; a celestial dance that ends with both parties falling into the same rhythm.

Floyd arrives at the space station where he must wait before boarding another spaceship that will take him to the moon. He exits what appears to be a sort of elevator operated by a woman in a pink uniform who informs him that they have arrived on his floor. Immediately after exiting the elevator he comes to a desk occupied by another woman in an identical pink outfit. They make small talk and wait for Floyd's contact on the station, Mr. Miller who arrives momentarily. Miller and Floyd shake hands and the receptionist instructs Floyd to proceed for "voice print identification". Miller thanks the receptionist, calling her "Ms. Turner". The receptionist's name is another indicator of the subtext encoded in the spaceplane docking scene. "Turner" could refer to the movements of the constantly rotating space station, so by having a woman named Turner in the scene immediately following the docking sequence Kubrick is emphasizing the connection between the space station and the feminine.

The scenes of Floyd rendezvousing with his contact on the station are the first instances of spoken dialogue in the film. After Turner directs Floyd to the voice identification station a close-up shot shows her pressing a button marked “English” at her desk. The introduction of dialogue and the reference to different languages is Kubrick’s way of drawing attention to another of humanity’s tools: language. Unlike spaceships and satellites language is invisible, but it is one of the most important tools that mankind has developed. Language will play an important role throughout the scenes on the space station. Another significant detail embedded in this scene is first mention of nationalities. When Floyd completes the voice print identification process he identifies himself as American. This is a further progression of one of the themes established in the

The interior of the space station is clinical: floors, walls, and ceilings all white and brightly lit. There is color, however, found in vibrantly red chairs and other features. Mankind’s new artificial environment is, at least visually, radically different from the natural environment the species started out in. Floyd and Miller are en route to the station restaurant but Floyd announces that he needs to make a phone call and will meet Miller later. Floyd enters a small room with walls of transparent glass and a chair and desk situated facing a wall-mounted screen; the 2001 equivalent of a phone booth. Floyd sits down; the image of planet Earth rotates incessantly in the space-facing window behind him. Using the control panel at the desk he enters some information, credit card number perhaps, and moments later a young girl with long dark hair wearing a dress appears on the screen before him. This is Floyd’s daughter who is home back on Earth. Floyd explains that he is busy traveling and will be unable to attend the girl’s birthday party the next day but that he is going to send a present. He asks her what she wants for her birthday and she says, “ telephone”. Floyd seems amused and says, “But we have telephones already. Isn’t there anything else you want?” The girl considers for a moment before replying that she would like a bush baby. He asks to speak to her mother and the girl tells Floyd that mother has gone shopping. He asks about Rachel, a caregiver most likely, and is told that Rachel is in the bathroom. Floyd wishes his daughter a happy birthday and tells her to have a nice birthday party the next day. The girl replies, “OK, bye-bye!” and disappears from the screen. The amount charged for the phone call appears in her place.

With this brief scene depicting a seemingly unremarkable conversation between parent and child Kubrick conveys considerable amounts of information about the state of human civilization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even though the scene is embellished with science-fiction trappings such as the space station setting and the speculative technology of “videophone” telecommunication (a visionary projection of possible future technology when the film was released in 1968, camera-enabled videophone technology is a reality in 2011) the basic details of the scene should be recognizable to any viewer: a parent traveling on a business trip phones his child to say hello and send birthday wishes. In order to deduce the most information from this scene, viewers must compare it to the earlier scenes with the ape-men. For one thing, scenes of Moonwatcher’s small tribe of hominids living in close proximity have given way to a vision of the human species spread all across the Earth and beyond. Floyd isn’t even on the same planet as his daughter. The implications of this physical distance for the familial relationship are emphasized by the additional detail of the missed birthday. Any viewer can surely find emotional resonance with the concept of a parent unable to be present for their child’s

birthday and the child's resulting disappointment. Floyd's substitution of a birthday present for actual presence indicates that the distance between father and daughter is more emotional than geographic. When Floyd's daughter asks for a telephone, she is really indicating a desire for direct contact and meaningful communication. The telephone represents these things and superficially provides them. Technology may make it possible for people who are separated by great distances to speak with and even see each other, but it cannot adequately substitute for the immediacy of interpersonal communication.

Afterwards, Floyd walks through the station. A group of four people, sit around a table drinking from glasses and conversing in Russian. Floyd sees the group, approaches one of the women and addresses her as "Elena" and extends his hand to greet her, and she addresses him as Heywood in turn. Referring to Dr. Floyd as her friend, Elena introduces her companions starting with the women: Dr. Kalinan, Dr. Stretyneva, and Dr. Andrei Smyslov. Upon hearing Smyslov's name Floyd tells the man "I've heard a lot about you."

Smyslov invites Floyd to sit with them, which he does, and offers him a drink, which he declines on account he has yet to eat breakfast. Mr. Miller is still waiting on him in the restaurant. Floyd crosses his legs and asks Elena about someone named Gregor, probably her significant other. She explains that Gregor is currently occupied with underwater research in the Baltic Sea, "So I'm afraid we don't see very much of each other these days." We learn that the group is returning to Earth having spent three months on the moon calibrating an antenna. Floyd mentions that his destination is "Clavius," a fact which seems to interest Dr. Smyslov. He says to Floyd, "[P]erhaps you can clear up the big mystery about what is going on there." Floyd claims ignorance of any mystery and Smyslov elaborates by mentioning odd incidents at Clavius in the preceding two weeks, and reporting that calls to "the base" (Smyslov) are answered by a recorded message stating that the phone lines are out of order. Elena relates that two days prior "one of our (this group possessive noun can reasonably be assumed to refer to the Russians as a national entity) rocket buses was denied permission for an emergency landing." Smyslov adds that such a denial of permission to land is a violation of the IAS Convention.

Asking Floyd if he can ask him a straightforward question, Smyslov says there are rumors that the problem with Clavius is the outbreak of a "serious epidemic," one of unknown origin. Floyd curtly replies, "I'm sorry, Dr. Smyslov, but I'm really not at liberty to discuss this." Smyslov presses him again, stating that if their own base was at risk from an epidemic they should be given all the facts, but Floyd reiterates the same response. Looking to change the subject and break the palpable tension between the two men, Elena asks Dr. Floyd if he won't reconsider having a drink with them. Brightening up considerably, he looks at his wristwatch and declines again saying he must be going. Elena says, "I hope you and your wife come to the IAC conference" along with their daughter, and he says "I hope we can" but that it is dependent upon "school vacations and all that sort of thing." Floyd tells Elena she and Gregor have a standing invitation to visit whenever they are in the United States. He bids the group farewell and shakes hands with Elena and Smyslov, the latter of whom says to him, "Whatever the reasons for your visit to Clavius, the very best of luck to you." Floyd bows to the two women and then walks out of frame. Elena and Smyslov sit back down and the group resumes their conversation in their native language. The screen fades to black.

This scene of Floyd speaking with the Russians is essentially a restaging and updating of an earlier scene: the rival groups of ape-men fighting at the water hole. Also a new type of weapon is revealed: information. Floyd is an alpha-male, a leader and figure of authority amongst his people, just as Moonwatcher was for his group of hominids. Through withholding information (and as will be revealed later, intentionally disseminating incorrect information, known in intelligence agencies as spreading “disinformation”) Floyd wields an invisible weapon against the Russians, members of a rival tribe. Smyslov’s body language and facial expression after Floyd curtly refuses to divulge any details of the conditions at Clavius convey extreme discomfort, almost as if Floyd had physically struck him with a bone-club. In this scene Kubrick demonstrates a prescient understanding that information becomes the most precious of resources in an information-based society.

The next scene opens with a shot of space. On the right side of the frame is the moon, and on the left side of the frame a space craft moves away from the camera toward the lunar body. The craft is round and colored white or light gray, with four rocket boosters facing the screen. From this vantage point the space ship looks not unlike the cratered lunar surface, though much smaller. “Blue Danube” returns to the soundtrack.

We move inside the vessel where a young woman in a white uniform identical to the one seen on the Pan Am flight is walking up some stairs with some trays. The room she is in is circular. She has just come from an elevator/lift looking thing in the center of the room. All around the room are seats facing outward through the windows/portholes. As on the Pan Am ship, virtually all the seats are empty save for the one occupied by Floyd who is again sleeping. The woman goes over to where Floyd is reclining, sees that he is asleep, then turns around and walks over to her co worker, another young woman in identical uniform who is wearing ear-bud style headphones in her ears and watching a television screen displaying some sort of martial arts or karate contest. The first woman hands a tray to the second, then glances over in the direction of Floyd and says something inaudible to the audience. The trays are apparently “meal trays” and have pictures of different types of food printed on them. The karate-watching stewardess prepares to slurp through a straw such illustrated selections as peas, corn, and carrots.

Back outside the ship we get another view/angle of the craft as it traverses the frame from right to left with the earth and sun visible in the background. Now a corridor inside the ship: yellow, semi 360 circular design. The first woman walks into the corridor through another sliding door carrying a lone food tray. She walks with a herky-jerky jolting motion that we recognize as an effect of wearing the grip shoes.

Now on the shuttle as Floyd is in transit to the moon. Again, the craft seems empty, though there are more passengers on this passage. Again Floyd and other passengers sleep and are attended to by beautiful flight attendants. Floyd eats from space-food zero gravity containers and considers the instructions for the zero-gravity toilet. The moon shuttle, shaped like an orb, gently descends to the lunar surface, and is then lowered into a below surface lunar station.

Now in the space base we see what we deduce to be a briefing or meeting room. Three long conference tables arranged in a u-formation around a lectern. The walls are sheer white and luminescent, apparently light is being projected onto them from around the room, possibly as visual aids and tools on the projection screens for meetings. There are two long tables parallel to each other and joined at their ends furthest from the

podium by a perpendicular connecting segment of table, sort of like the “head of the table,” at which sit three men: Floyd, Bill and Dr. Halvorsen. On the right of the men sit four people (three men and one woman), and there are five people on the left (again with one woman). At the opposite end of the room the podium is flanked by flags: on the left the American flag, and on the right a flag with an apparently cross-shaped design white in color on a field of blue. The flag is not recognizable to the present viewer.

A man in a plaid suit appears to be taking photographs of Floyd and the men seated on either side of him, Bill and Halvorsen. There is picture-ID badge on the left breast of his suit jacket. The photographic device he is using looks sort of like a modified Super 8 “pistol-style” camera. The three of them are conversing in hushed tones, as are the other assembled persons. After taking several pictures from various angles the photographer addresses the three men seated together:

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