

Dealing With Our Bloody Past: Repression vs. Recognition of American History in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*

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This essay explores how director Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* establishes the Overlook Hotel as an environment where conservative complacency has become the norm and all hope of progression is lost. By using a maze motif and the backdrop of Native American genocide *The Shining* explores and critiques how modern America was constructed.

Introduction

In 1980 anticipation was high in the United States for Stanley Kubrick's new film *The Shining*, as it would be the iconic director's first foray into the horror genre. Yet, when the first trailer for *The Shining* premiered in the U.S., audiences only witnessed one horrific image to tease the film. The trailer started on a shot of a hallway ending in an elevator. Audience members may have noticed the Native American motif on the elevator doors and the columns in the hallway, or perhaps the mezzo-American red paint covering the hallways and columns. Names began to scroll up the screen in the electric blue font that was used for the credits in *The Shining* as menacing music built louder and louder in the background. There was a slight pause as the name "Stanley Kubrick" passed before blood suddenly began to trickle out from the corners of the elevator. The doors never opened, yet they could not contain the river of red that gushed out of every crevice of the door, engulfing the camera and audience itself. This image, one of the signature scenes of *The Shining*, is the most literal portrayal of the blood upon which the Overlook Hotel was built. Film historian Geoffrey Cocks interpreted this image as "...the blood of centuries, the blood of millions, and, in particular, the blood of war and genocide in Kubrick's own century" (185). Even though the doors of the elevator desperately try to contain and conceal the blood, they cannot, for the blood is the very structure of the hotel itself, or as film critic Bill Blakemore interprets: "the blood upon which this nation, like most nations, was built as was the Overlook Hotel" (Blakemore).

In *The Shining*, director Stanley Kubrick uses ghosts and the motif of being trapped in a maze in order to critique how contemporary America was built and how individuals choose to interpret this history. The Overlook Hotel is constructed as a haunted environment where characters must choose to interpret or repress America's own bloody past, a choice that ultimately decides their own fate. The resort hotel buries its bloody history within itself to the point where it cannot be contained and leaks from the walls themselves. However,

the ghosts within the hotel are not the spirits of the Native Americans but instead those of the previous residents of the hotel, those who have also been lost within the macabre trappings of the hotel and are doomed to repeat the same cycles of violence over and over. Jack Torrance, the doomed caretaker of the hotel in the film, is an individual corrupted and entrapped by the bloody history of the hotel and, by extension, America. The ghosts of the hotel haunt Jack and lead him to not only accept the history of the hotel but allow him to become obsessed and eventually entrapped forever within it. By contrast, Jack's son Danny resists this corruption and is able to escape the metaphorical and literal maze by taking a more objective view of the Overlook Hotel. While much scholarship has been written about the motif of the maze in *The Shining* and the idea of genocide's presence in the film, there has not been an exploration of Danny and Jack as representations of differing paths of confronting American history. This paper will examine how Jack grows to represent the complacent conservatism of the hotel while Danny offers the audience some hope for a progressive future.

Jack as damaged goods

Jack Torrance is not a mentally stable person at the beginning of *The Shining*. This fact might seem obvious to those who have seen the film; certainly by the end we have seen enough evidence to conclude that Jack has been brought to madness by the ghosts of the hotel, but it is important to note that Jack is not exactly a model citizen prior to the events of the film. He is a recovering alcoholic with a history of abusing his only son, Danny, and who mistreats and clearly does not love his wife, Wendy. When he accepts the responsibility of looking after the hotel for an entire winter, in his mind he is starting over. He even mentions several times that he is starting to outline an ambiguous "writing project." The ultimate irony ends up being that there could not be a place more ill-suited for Torrance to start over than the hotel. In fact, his own history of violence fits perfectly with the Overlook's own grisly past.

The history of the Overlook Hotel is mostly parsed out in two conversations with the hotel's manager, Stuart Ullman. The first of these takes place as Jack is interviewing for the position and meets Ullman in his office. During this conversation, Ullman tells Jack about an incident where a previous caretaker "hacked his family to pieces, and then neatly stacked them in a room before putting both barrels of a shotgun in his mouth." This is information that Jack brushes aside, claiming that Wendy will love it, since she's a "horror film and novel buff," implying that the haunted history of the hotel is more of an attraction than an actual deterrent. This moment is where we first see how the history and violence linked to the hotel is treated in such a candid manner. Randy Rasmussen, an author who breaks down films scene-by-scene in his work, thinks this moment is so ridiculous that he relates it to *Dr. Strangelove*, another Kubrick film: "like President Muffley trying to tell Premier Kisseff about a nuclear attack on Russia, he [Ullman] alternately acknowledges and minimizes the horror" (Rasmussen 239). Essentially, the idea of Ullman withholding this information about the hotel seems so ridiculous that it is comparable to a black comedy.

Ghostly representations and Native Americans in The Shining

The second of these history lessons occurs as Ullman leads Jack, Wendy, and Danny on a tour of the hotel and the grounds. Here, we quickly learn that the hotel was built on

an ancient Native American burial ground. Ullman passes over this casually, remarking that a few attacks were even repelled during the construction of the hotel. Once again, Ullman talks about a violent episode in the hotel's past without much consideration. Rasmussen also notes this in his analysis: "His casual manner reduces a once passionate cultural conflict to a trivial footnote in history" (245). From this very early point in the film, Kubrick is planting the idea of the hotel's history being repressed. What we as an audience can infer from Ullman's actions is that the denial of the history of the hotel has been passed all the way down to the present day. This is further evoked when Wendy asks whether famous people had stayed at the hotel in the past. Ullman replies: "Oh yes, in its heyday movie stars...all the best people." As he says this the group walks through a hallway leading to the Colorado Lounge, a room rife with visible Native American décor and even a portrait of what looks to be a chief hanging on the wall: "We are invited to read the cues in the room historically and clearly in relation to the violent history of the American frontier and the destruction of the Native Americans" (Luckhurst 43). From the get-go, *The Shining* is anything but subtle about presenting the history of the hotel as haunted by the genocide of Native Americans, and yet nobody at the hotel seems unsettled by this fact.

By introducing the possibility of Native American ghosts, Kubrick is evoking a popular trope that has haunted American horror stories for a long time. The presence of a Native American haunting brings out a very unique response in American audiences, and can even lead to questioning the basis upon which the United States is founded:

...the ghosting of American Indians presents us with a host of doubts about America and the American ideology....Ghostly Indians present us with the possibility of vanishing ourselves, being swallowed up into another person, another ideology. When ghostly Indian figures haunt the white American imagination, they serve as constant reminders of the fragility of national identity. (Bergland 5)

By this, Bergland infers that the presence of Native American ghosts challenge our sense of national pride and the ideology upon which this nation was founded. In *The Shining* we see this enacted by the fact that the Native Americans don't appear as ghosts. Rather, the ghosts in the film are trying actively to preserve their dominance over the Native Americans. Contrary to the initial set up of the film, these Native American ghosts are not present nor trying to exact revenge on the patrons of the hotel. Rather, every hallway is decorated with some sort of piece of art or pattern that evokes Native American culture. This is a choice Kubrick specifically makes to link the violence that takes place over the course of the film with the history of the hotel. As the story unfolds and we witness Jack slowly slip into madness, the audience is constantly reminded that he is haunted by the past of the hotel and everything that has happened there. Or, as film scholar Bill Blakemore says, "*The Shining* is also about America's general inability to admit the gravity of the genocide of the Native Americans—or, more exactly, its ability to 'overlook' that genocide" (Blakemore). As Blakemore suggests, the ghosts of the Overlook want to overlook the genocide and continue life as they best remember it. However, the Overlook Hotel's past is a maze of violence and bloodshed that manifests itself into these ghosts that haunt Jack until he becomes one of them. Jack wants to repress his violent past while

the hotel has already been doing that since its construction. Thus, the film chronicles Jack's slide towards acceptance within the mazes of the hotel.

Danny and his hope for the future

Jack's son Danny also comes emotionally damaged to the Overlook Hotel, though in a very unique way. Danny learns from Dick Holloran, the kindly African American cook of the Overlook, that he has the ability to "shine." This is a kind of telepathic power that enables him to see visions, either from the past or the future. Danny also has an imaginary friend named Tony who he says is "a little boy that lives inside my mouth." Danny uses Tony as a coping mechanism for these images he sees; his ability to create a reliable method to deal with these visions already places Danny ahead of his father in terms of how he chooses to confront the past.

A crucial scene illustrating how Danny understands the past occurs as Jack has been touring the hotel while Wendy and Danny take stock of the kitchen stores. Dick gets Danny ice cream and tells him about his ability to "shine," and that he will see some horrifying images in the hotel. However, he comforts Danny with one piece of wisdom: "They're like pictures in a book, Doc, they can't hurt you." This quote forms the crux that juxtaposes Danny and Jack as representations of different reactions and interpretations of American history. Danny is told to treat his visions of the hotel as harmless images. Danny acknowledges these specters in the hotel but never gives in to their influence. Jack, on the other hand, initially chooses to repress these images but eventually gives in to them because he simply can't handle the haunting and instead gives himself over to the hotel. Roger Luckhurst, a scholar with *The British Film Institute*, describes the film as "a pessimistic account of the human failure ever to escape the ineluctable forces that entrap men" (87). Jack represents this entrapment, while the "ineluctable forces" are represented by the ghosts and their steadfast desire to cling to the past.

Jack and Danny as two different paths

"Pictures in a book" becomes a metaphor that both literally and psychologically explains the film. Dick is, of course, referring to Danny's ability to "shine" and see the horrific images of the hotel's grisly past. However, we also get a literal interpretation of these pictures in a book. In Stephen King's original novel upon which the film is based, Jack takes a trip to the basement of the hotel where he discovers a photo album containing a pictorial history of the hotel. While this scene doesn't appear in the film version, we do see the picture book open on Jack's desk as he tries to work on his "writing project," perhaps a source of inspiration for whatever he is writing about. As we see later in the film, however, the picture book is no muse and instead drives Jack to construct his gleefully psychotic "All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy" manuscript, a hopelessly winding maze of text that seems totally removed from rational thought. Jack and Danny are both given similar images of the history and violence of the hotel's past, and yet "Danny, Jack, and Wendy each make of Overlook and its past what he or she is equipped and inclined to make of it" (Rasmussen 234). What Rasmussen illustrates is that the main characters of *The Shining* each see the past of the Overlook through a different lens. However, it is how each character reacts to these ghosts that separate how they interpret the Overlook's past.

Danny and Jack also navigate the space of the hotel in very different ways. Three times in the film we get the famous shots of Danny riding around the hotel in his big wheel, exploring his surroundings and understanding the mazelike corridors of the hotel. By contrast, Jack sits in the middle of the hotel, unwilling or unable to explore the hotel. These scenes set up the hotel as a dizzying labyrinth where the interior begins to look similar to the famous hedge maze in the back of the hotel, as film scholar and professor Mario Falsetto notes in his stylistic analysis of Kubrick's films:

One of *The Shining's* most impressive features is the way it carefully sets up comparisons between the interior spaces of the hotel and the exterior maze space...Perhaps the most intriguing interpretation of the film's spatial strategies involves reading the space as a metaphorical landscape for Jack's (Jack Nicholson) deteriorating mind. The final nine-minute sequence of Jack chasing Danny through the maze could be viewed as a metaphor for Jack's frenzied mental condition. (70)

Here Falsetto connects the hotel's mazelike structure with Jack's deteriorating mental state. This idea can actually be pushed farther to connect the idea that Jack becomes more ghostly as the spaces of the hotel begin to trap him. Jack's deteriorating mind is actually just adjusting to the attitudes of the ghosts of the Overlook, willingly becoming trapped within maze. As Danny wanders and probes, navigating the space, Jack remains still, squatting over his typewriter in eerie concentration. Danny goes out and explores the hotel's hedge maze with his mother while Jack is content to stay inside and watch them from a window. As author Juli Kearns points out in the documentary *Room 237*, Jack literally becomes the Minotaur at the center of the maze, trapped in his own space, unwilling and unable to move and express himself as an individual.

Significantly, Jack wants to stay inside the hotel's maze rather than explore its surroundings...Symbolically, he wants to "forget" himself (Jack Torrance in the present time) and to "remember" not how to escape from the center of the maze but how to command its static and enclosed timelessness. (Nelson 207)

As Nelson points out, Jack is becoming more and more a part of the maze and, by extension, the Overlook Hotel. Jack is becoming similar to the ghosts of the hotel, complacent and happy with the time he's being trapped in.

Jack's subverted feelings surfacing

The first time Jack physically interacts with a ghost is after Danny encounters the ghostly woman in Room 237. Upon seeing mysterious injuries on Danny's neck, Wendy accuses Jack of injuring their son, causing Jack to storm off into the "Gold Ballroom," the main party room of the hotel, and stare into the mirror across the dry bar, begging for some alcohol. Before long, Jack is greeted by Lloyd, the calm yet sinister-looking bar-keep that begins to liquor Jack up and lets him rant about his dissatisfaction with Wendy. The interesting part of their conversation is when Jack references "White Man's Burden," without any provocation, a poem by Rudyard Kipling that is commonly interpreted as a

poem endorsing imperialist rule of other countries:

The implication, of course, was that the Empire existed not for the benefit—economic or strategic or otherwise—of Britain itself, but in order that primitive peoples, incapable of self-government, could, with British guidance, eventually become civilized (and Christianized). (Cody)

Jack's reference to this poem that justifies imperialism in the middle of casual conversation suggests that he is giving in to the influence of the hotel. As Cody notes, Kipling may be suggesting through his poem that it is up to white "Empires" to colonize "primitive people." The fact that Jack is beginning to think in these terms represents his assimilation into the ghosts of the hotel. As film scholar Thomas Nelson points out: "...the fact [is] that soon he will forget himself and only remember a once latent urge to dominate and rule" (Nelson 223). As Cody notes, the poem is commonly inferring that it is up to white "Empires" to colonize "primitive people." Jack beginning to think in these terms represents his assimilation into the ghosts of the hotel. Film scholar Thomas Nelson points out: "...the fact that soon he will *forget* himself and only remember a once latent urge to dominate and rule" (Nelson 223). What Nelson suggests is that Jack is now remembering this desire to rule and his psychological makeup is becoming more akin to the ghosts of the hotel.

In the following scene we see Jack give himself over to direct physical contact with these ghosts in a way Danny never does. Up to this point in the film, Danny is invited several times by the ghostly sisters that haunt the hallways to "come play with us... forever and ever," and yet he resists. Jack, on the other hand, is enticed sexually by an attractive young woman ghost in Room 237, the same ghost who terrorized Danny moments earlier. Danny is recognizing and acknowledging these ghosts, but still resisting their influence. As Jack begins to engage with her, however, he pulls back to realize she is a decaying corpse, which becomes very representative of the enticing, yet rotten foundation of the hotel: "The rotting corpse of a now much older woman that Jack embraces is only revealed—as ever—in the revealing mirror, the logic of dreams making desire turn to revulsion" (Luckhurst 64). In other words, Jack actually sees through the hotel's invitation to become trapped in a moment of glory but accepts it anyway. After this encounter, Jack goes back to the room with Wendy and claims that he didn't see anything in the room. In this scene we see that Jack is now perfectly content to be in the middle of the maze. Despite being confronted with such a horrifying experience that clearly points to the dark nature of the hotel, Jack represses the incident and decides to stay.

By this point in the film, astute viewers will note the clothing choices of the film begin to slowly change as the story nears its end. Towards the beginning of the film Wendy and Danny are clad in clothes with a red, white, and blue color scheme, while Jack wears clothes befitting a schoolteacher. As the film goes on, however, and he becomes more aware of the ghosts in the hotel, Jack begins to look sloppier and disheveled while he only wears clothes with red, white, and blue. Danny and Wendy, however, slowly begin to shed the patriotic scheme in favor of different colors. In fact, Wendy actually dons a yellow cardigan covered in teepees towards the end of the film. This acts as another visual clue that Jack is becoming more and more rooted in the frontier-American perspective of the ghosts and sees Wendy and Danny as enemies that need to be eliminated, which is literally represented by their clothing.

A scene that shows Jack's full acceptance of the hotel's influence is a discussion he has

with the ghost of the prior caretaker, Grady. This is during Jack's second trip to the Gold Room, but this time more than just Lloyd are present. In fact, an entire party is going on with hundreds of partygoers dressed in dazzling 1920s attire. The discussion between Grady and Jack begins after Grady spills a drink on Jack, causing them to retreat into the bathroom to clean up. What follows is an interaction ripe with misidentification of both the two characters and the time which they live in. "Grady" at this point in the story resonates with audiences as the name of the previous caretaker who, according to Ullman, murdered his entire family with an axe. However, this Grady claims his name is Delbert, while the Grady mentioned earlier in the film is named Charles. Jack attempts to confront Grady, accusing him of being the previous caretaker; however, Grady denies this and then suggests that Jack has always been the caretaker, claiming, "I should know; I have always been here." *Sight and Sound* film critic Paul Meyersberg notes, "Events that seem to take place in the present may be re-enactments or simply memories of the past. To take *The Shining* at its face value is a mistake" (253). What this means is that *The Shining* is constantly placing its characters in re-enactments of events of the past, forcing them to re-enact moments over and over again. This is because the Overlook Hotel is a maze trapping the ghosts and the Torrance family inside, forcing them to retread the same path over and over.

Grady goes on to further confuse identities by claiming that he had a wife and two daughters (the same as the murderous caretaker Ullman describes at the beginning of the film) and describes how he had to "correct" his wife and children, while suggesting that Jack do the same. Jack accepts this and does indeed try to "correct" Danny and Wendy. However, before he leaves, Grady adds one last statement: "Your son is trying to bring an outside party into this situation... a nigger cook." Jack is slow to respond to Grady; however, he also accepts the idea to eliminate Dick. Professor James Naremore suggests that "the reaction suggests that Jack's repressed racism, already revealed in the earlier conversation with Lloyd, has been given a new outlet" (203). Naremore makes the claim that Jack's repressed racism is given new life by Grady; however, this can be further extended to the idea that Jack is taking the next step towards becoming a ghost. Bit by bit he is accepting a past version of himself and disappearing into attitudes associated with the hotel's glory days.

Race through the maze

Danny indeed has used his ability to "shine" in order to communicate with Dick in a desperate attempt to summon help to the hotel. However, Danny's efforts prove futile as Jack buries his axe deep into Dick's chest, leaving his body to bleed over a Navajo-inspired rug. This act seemingly completes Jack's transition into one of the Overlook's ghosts by spilling the blood—of the minority hotel member no less—that the hotel demands. Drunk on his kill, Jack then chases Danny out of the hotel, howling as they both enter the maze in a frenzied and frantic game of cat and mouse. Jack attempts to track Danny through his footprints while Danny races through the maze he and his mother had playfully navigated only months earlier. This climactic moment also represents the choice Danny makes that ultimately separates him from his father: he retraces his footsteps. While Jack charges ahead, eagerly following the tracks in front of him, Danny retraces a few of his steps to end the trail then races out of the maze while his father is stuck inside. Jack then continues to limp around, his screaming becoming more and more nonsensical until he finally collapses. A cut away reveals a horrifying image of Jack completely fro-

zen, his face permanently stuck in a grotesque grimace as he dies of exposure.

This moment represents the final choice for both characters, the final moment where they decide how they choose to interpret the history of the hotel. Danny chooses to face what has happened and, in a literal act, retraces his steps, accepts the past and then strides forward towards his mother and (we presume) a future. Danny is able to look at the past in such a way that enables forward movement. Jack, on the other hand, traps himself within the maze and chooses to forever reside within the Overlook Hotel. As we see in the final frames of the film, Jack's body not only will be trapped in the hotel forever but his spirit will (and always has been) as well.

The final shot of *The Shining* is the final clue to unlocking the idea of America's past in conjunction with the Overlook Hotel. The photograph depicts a well-dressed Jack attending a party in the Gold Room, with the date on the photo reading: "July 4th, 1921." The simplicity in this lies in the fact that Jack has now officially conceded to the history and culture of the hotel. We just saw him literally captured in the middle of the maze, but now we see Jack entrapped on a more spiritual level. The date "July 4th" has obvious ties to the United States, but the year is every bit as important for this reading. As Luckhurst argues, the 1920s represent perhaps a "return to the last confident moment of class and race hierarchy in America in the 1920s, a response to the economic and social instabilities of the '70s that arguably helped foster the horror boom in the first place. The Overlook is America's past glory, frontier-triumphant, however bathed in blood" (Luckhurst 91). This means that Kubrick's decision to place these ghosts in the 1920s makes sense, because it evokes a time of extravagance and white dominance in America.

Events like the Tulsa Race Riot illustrate that America was struggling with racial acceptance, while at the same time the "roaring '20s" show an America that was drunk on luxury and spending. Thus, the '20s make sense as the apex of Overlook Hotel's history, a time when the hotel was at its absolute peak. The hotel and the ghosts essentially represent a time capsule where the past is always present and they never have to move on from the early '20s. This photograph represents Jack fully accepting this idea and becoming a ghost himself: "Jack has retreated to a distinctly American past, at a moment of national celebration just a few years after a victorious World War and nearly a decade before the Great Depression. *The Shining*, in its characters' perceptions and attitudes is a distinctly *American* nightmare" (Rasmussen 284). Rasmussen's point is well taken: Jack and the ghosts are in a moment that is perfect for them. At the center of the hotel's maze is a preserved past where these ghosts can stay in the same time forever and ever.

As mentioned before, Jack always existed in the Overlook due to his attitudes and how he chooses to interpret the past. He always existed there because of the haunted nature of the Overlook Hotel, which fosters a never-ending cycle that began during the construction and that will seemingly never end. Nelson again explores how the hotel is a maze constructed specifically to entrap Jack and the ghosts in this time: "Rather than exploring and discovering, making choices and risking both failure and success, he prefers to sit inertly in the center of an enclosed world and shine from above in god-like contemplation of the beauty of his creation" (Nelson 229).

In other words, Kubrick sets up the Overlook Hotel as a haunting rooted in complacency and conservatism. The specters of the hotel fight maliciously against anything that may bring about change within the hotel and are excessively good at eliminating anything that could bring this about. The hotel was built on blood, and now it sustains itself through the same blood and the same ghosts, occasionally adding some to their number.

The photograph we see at the end of the film is merely the final visual proof that Jack has accepted this fate and will be a ghost haunting those mazelike corridors for all time.

Conclusion

In an interview concerning why he wanted to tackle the challenge of directing a horror film, Kubrick offered up the following answer: “There’s something inherently wrong with the human personality. There’s an evil side to it. One of the things that horror stories can do is to show us...the dark side without having to confront it directly” (Howard 157). This, perhaps better than anything else, explains the true purpose of Kubrick’s film and explains what the haunted ghosts of the Overlook Hotel should really mean to audiences. Kubrick wanted to offer up a method for audiences to confront the bloody past of America, and any other nation for that matter, without having to become absorbed in the same way as Jack. Instead, audiences are treated to the horror in the same fashion as Danny; the information is laid out in front of us like “pictures in a book.” They are images on the screen that can haunt us but can’t harm us. What is important is that we, the audience, understand the importance of being able to face our faults, to confront our horrible history and be able to understand it, rather than constantly attempting to ignore it. Kubrick himself explained how humans tend to repress this history, rather than face it head on:

I think we tend to be a bit hypocritical about ourselves. We find it very easy not to see our own faults, and I don’t just mean minor faults. I suspect there have been very few people who have done serious wrong who have not rationalized away what they’re done, shifting the blame to those they have injured. We are capable of the greatest good and the greatest evil, and the problem is that we often can’t distinguish between them when it suits our purpose. (qtd. in Ciment 193)

Through these scenes and the mazes with which Kubrick litters his film, the audience gets a clear sense of the very unique haunting that is affecting both Jack and Danny. On the surface the Overlook Hotel is haunted due to being built on an ancient Native American burial ground. However, what we ultimately see in the film is that the hotel is haunted by repression. The ghosts in the hotel represent the ways in which America has denied its bloody past and instead chosen to remain blissfully unaware and live in a time of supposed glory. *The Shining* presents its viewers with two options: either repress this history, like Jack, and do not face the horrors at hand until their influence you; or behave like Danny and respect the horror without letting it fully overtake you. In this sense there is at least the hope of escaping from the vicious cycle that the Overlook represents. Of course Kubrick doesn’t definitively end his film but instead chooses to leave the ending ambiguous, open to all kinds of interpretations. For Jack, Kubrick suggests that the entire story has been repeated throughout history and will continue to be repeated in the future. As Luckhurst points out: “Circularity, by definition, refuses to force an ending. Instead, the last shot is a recursive revelation that demands an instant reviewing of the film to hunt for clues. And so we watch it again. And again” (91). Luckhurst’s idea unlocks the narrative maze that Kubrick sets forth for the audience. Ghosts by definition are trapped in the past; there is no future as much as there is always a present. By finishing the film with the photograph, Kubrick breaks down the idea of a traditional narrative. Instead

of offering an ending, he offers a cycle. The only hope the film offers is that Danny and Wendy escape at the end. They are alone in a blizzard with only a Snow Cat as a means of transportation, but they at least represent the hope of moving forward, unlike Jack and the ghosts of the Overlook.

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