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Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine

The focus of this article is *The Shining*, both Stephen King's novel (1977) and Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film adaptation, treated as if they formed an 'interbeing,'¹ the one an outgrowth of the other. The argument is as follows: the affective relationship between Jack Torrance, played by Jack Nicholson in the film, and the Overlook Hotel, where he is the winter caretaker, yields a becoming-insect on the part of Torrance, entranced: the Hotel, mesmerizing, is coded as insectile. Once there with his family, depending on the job to see them through financial hardship, Torrance – alcoholic, bad-tempered, inadequate, entitled – enters into an alliance with the Overlook's 'dark nest,'² gradually yielding the assemblage of this article's title: Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine. In *The Shining*, becoming, unlike its non-hierarchical articulation in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, functions as a realignment with power. At the Overlook, Torrance receives commands concordant with the discourse of an 'honoured' place and 'just' retribution, in terms of either rewards and recognition (for him) or punishment (for anyone wanting his balls³ or trespassing against his will). In Deleuzo-Guattarian vocabulary, which I assemble here in a sort of glossary of recurring terms: rather than deconstructive of the 'majoritarian' subject – the subject of power; a 'molar' entity – becoming is here patriarchized and accrues 'consistency,' leading back to form after all.⁴ This consistency is distributed like swarms of wasps – the Overlook is wasp-force – not usually considered to be 'oedipalised'⁵ creatures, recruited to the cause of phallic subjectivity. The event of becoming, rendered through 'demonic' wasps but executed in the name of the Father, is 'overcoded' with form, its elements 'reterritorialised' or 'facialised' to indicate precisely the restoration of form or figure.

I propose the interbeing (novel; film) in order to ‘shine’ on the processes of becoming developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which in turn allows us to think through the occurrences in *The Shining*. The reading I perform situates *The Shining* – perhaps a little illegitimately or parasitically – in the chapter on becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, whose subsections are variously identified as ‘memories,’ acquired, first, by particular subjects (a moviegoer, a naturalist, a Bergsonian, a sorcerer, etc.) and subsequently emanate from movements, haecceities or molecules, points or blocks, even secrets, whose contents are too big for their forms.⁶ I suggest a missing or hidden supplement to this particular chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus* – memories of a Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine – concentrating on providing an interpretation, or revealing a blind spot, of becoming that establishes form instead of undoing it. Becoming should not automatically, as it were, be assumed to be anti-form and anti-fascist (frequently the dominant, seductive discourse), but considered in its transformations all the while staying alert to the danger of its being swept up in forms, that is, rigidly organised subject formations and a politics of the ‘proper’. I understand the latter – at work throughout *The Shining* as well as in the contemporary world – as a politics of ‘rightful’ belonging, assumed to be ‘owed’ or ‘deserved’ by those whose subject status is never in question but who, yearning for a hierarchy and control denied or lost, feel conspired against, held back, dragged down. *The Shining* is a ghost story whose source of terror is a white daddy death cult: white men demanding, and pounding into being, a regime established on their eternal sovereignty. The object of this brutalising violence, both physical and psychic, are the preterite – women, children, racialised subjects – ‘fucking up’⁷ the phallic order. What we witness in *The Shining*, where a perverse terminology of restitution endlessly circulates, is what happens when becoming infers or resurrects form, specifically the form of hegemonic, by default white, masculinity, ‘rightfully’ rendered and operating through the currents of a becoming-insect.

This essay is divided into three sections, beginning with an investigation of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming mapped onto *The Shining*, and expounding the political motivations for the argument. This part ('Forms' of Becoming) also already gestures towards the phenomenon of fascination, manifested in the face and central to the subsequent section ('Dark Space, Play Face'), while the final section ('Sound Souls') concentrates on the Overlook Hotel's gaze which, as Lacan reminds us, does not necessarily involve the organ of sight.⁸ The Overlook is legion, a composite of patriarchal and capitalist/settler colonial violence apparent in novel and film. The former establishes the patrilineage of abuse – which itself exceeds *The Shining* and reverberates throughout King's work as a whole – while the latter situates the Hotel, built between 1907 and 1909, on top of an 'Indian' burial ground, participating in and perpetuating the genocidal violence the settlers used to found their nation. The Colorado Lounge, the Hotel lobby with its Navajo and Apache designs – native American artefacts are on display in other parts of the Overlook, too – 'rudely [incorporates],' as Roger Luckhurst observes, the culture it has exterminated. Luckhurst continues to argue that we are invited to read the Lounge, and the Hotel in general, historically though the tracking shot emphasising the vastness of this interior space, evoking the buried atrocities that constitute the United States and national white manhood.⁹

In the novel, the metaphor that organises the narrative, including the repressed history, of the Overlook is a wasps' nest, heard, in the film, through the music: 'secret wasps'¹⁰ conceptualise an invisible force that enters Jack Torrance's psychic archive. The reading below depends very much on the interstitial (the overlooked and underplayed), a defining feature of becoming, something that happens between relations, disrupted selves. The schizoanalytic approach to *The Shining* – the methodology which I adopt – amounts to making a rhizome, integral to this essay's prose, a type of nesting, too: the wasps discovered,

everywhere, on revisiting *The Shining*, on the pages of the novel, in the musical content of the score music. In Kubrick's film, swarms of wasps suggest themselves through the works of Béla Bartók, György Ligeti, Krzysztof Penderecki, Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind. Rather than 'outside' of the narrative, in a non-diegetic space, these sounds are instead acousmatic, which Michel Chion, in *The Voice in Cinema*, defines as 'a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen,'¹¹ without being able to be tied to a particular subject and, specifically, face. This source in *The Shining* is unseen, because faceless, occupying the entire field of vision: the Overlook Hotel is acousmachine, a 'voice-being' that comes from everywhere and 'is impossible to defuse'.¹²

My concern, throughout this essay, lies in tracing the insectile – that which pertains to an entomological fascination – across novel and film. If the first section is designed as a guide navigating through and against established ways of reading Deleuze and Guattari, scandalously paired with Lacan, the subsequent section is alert to the ways in which becoming-insect functions in relation to Torrance's absorption into Hotel-space. This interpretation hinges on a particular understanding of, and reaction to, spatiality developed by Roger Caillois. In 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,' Caillois speaks of the reciprocal topographical organisation between subject and environment observed in the behaviour of mimetic insects, whose mechanism of assimilation to space mirrors the dispossession of the 'legendary' psychasthenic subject, unable to distinguish itself from its surroundings. In his article, Caillois notes that the 'epiphenomenon' of becoming-space is compelled by fascination,¹³ an observation deployed in relation to Jack Torrance, fascinated by Hotel-space and adapting to the spatiality he finds himself caught in. Fascination is, of course, read in the face, just like subject formation occurs by way of the face. Who gets to have a face is equivalent to asking who gets to be a subject, recognised because of 'specific faciality

traits'¹⁴ that make up the signifying system of the face. Deleuze and Guattari describe the operations of the 'faciality machine' – really a 'White Man' machine; it only recognises the 'man-standard' – as overcoding apparatus.¹⁵

When a body is 'facialised,' it is assigned value as a subject. Processes of overcoding are as such linked to the face, to attempts at making the face and by extension the subject legible in the eyes of the Law/State. Becoming-insect in *The Shining* is similarly legible in the face: Torrance's fascination, freezing his face into a smile, both corresponds to and further generates a becoming-insect, a metamorphosis stimulated by his mode of engagement with Hotel-space. This particular configuration, occasioned by Caillois' article, understands Torrance as site where the subject, like the mimetic insect, organises itself topologically according to the Overlook's weird coordinates. Becoming-space, the distribution of subjectivity in relation to the 'space-agency'¹⁶ of the Hotel, is hence an entomological phenomenon also describing the affective becoming of the 'human' (Torrance, in this case). As a result, becoming-space = becoming-insect, though the latter further manifests itself through a phagocytosis, as it were, of the subject,¹⁷ whose assimilation is captured, in King's novel, in an apparent facelessness, emergent 'behind' false faces or the impassively faced. Midnight, as King writes, is the time to unmask, when 'everybody exposed faces that were those of rotting insects'.¹⁸ Although easily interpreted as an anthropocentric and racist event – the 'White-Man face' assaulted by the total other – in *The Shining* becoming-insect functions as process for the recalibration of an implacable master subjectivity. Rather than posing a threat to the masculine order, becoming-insect materialises an absolute, diffusive white sovereignty, a mode of an overwhelming phallic and necropolitical organisation picked up through *prise de son*, repurposed to study the voice, usually 'there to be forgotten about in its materiality'.¹⁹ In cinema, *prise de son* tends to be used so as to drown out everything that

interferes with the 'human' voice, privileged over other sounds. The last stage of this analysis, however, foregrounds the swarming 'sound souls'²⁰ of the Hotel, whose material presence and wasp-voice refer back to the 'macroface,'²¹ everywhere and omnipotent, of the Father.

'Forms' of Becoming

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, becoming functions as an un-doing of the subject without regression or, conversely, progression. Becoming stages an 'involution' as opposed to an evolution,²² and can never be captured by the verb 'is' succeeded by an imago, to borrow an entomological term, the final stage in an insect's metamorphosis. It has 'no term,'²³ by which point something has been reached or settled, but concerns alliances effectively ending the form of the subject: subject becomes event. A brief account of becoming according to Deleuze and Guattari includes: an 'irresistible deterritorialisation' that affects the subject, throwing it out of its Oedipal drama; the expansion, as it were, of the thing called the 'human' into the more-than-human; pack affects or 'unnatural' assemblages replacing 'family feelings or State intelligibilities,' making possible a politics of 'minoritarian groups,' that is, the preterite, subaltern, those in revolt, who are extrinsic.²⁴ The process dissolves form or the organism of the coherent subject by way of 'becoming' relations between organs, functions, particles. These enter into a 'zone of proximity'²⁵ or a haecceity, a composition of affective intensities that disrupt the molar or majoritarian entity, a subjectivity defined by form, which is rooted and closed.

In a section on becoming-music and the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge '[t]he fact that there is no deterritorialisation without a specific reterritorialisation.' This realisation

should subsequently ‘prompt us to rethink the abiding correlation between the molar and the molecular,’ between that which is rigidly organised, unified, defined by form, and that which is other, formless and unruly. Deleuze and Guattari continue: ‘no flow, no becoming-molecular escapes from a molar formation without molar components accompanying it, forming passages or perceptible landmarks for their imperceptible processes’.²⁶ The molar always lies in wait, awaiting its irruption into the scene of becoming. Becoming or swarming, beyond Deleuze and Guattari and as expression of the body politic, has the potential to renegotiate the model of modern sovereignty, as Eugene Thacker argues in his two-part investigation on ‘Networks, Swarms, Multitudes’.²⁷ Rather than located in a single place, person or thing, a swarming sovereignty, while dynamic, might still be predicated on some type of organisation, even if not centrally controlled, an articulation with which it nonetheless remains compatible. Lauren Wilcox’s work on swarming and becoming-insect similarly shows that these organisational modes ‘no longer only represent a line of flight outside of the masculinist politics of control’ because ‘appropriated for a necropolitics of surveillance and warfare’.²⁸ Figurations like becoming-insect can, then, come to behave as strategies of masculine sovereign power, even if these fly in the face of Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptions of becoming-other. The assemblage generated in *The Shining*, *Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine*, operates in and according to such a regime, whose ultimate manifestation is the ‘individuation’ it produces. This individuation might be notated as molecular arrangement, with its predominance of hyphens, but is in fact molar unity.

At first glance, the story of *The Shining* is not material to be considered in conjunction to the ‘minoritarian’ politics of becoming. To begin with, there is no doubt that Jack Torrance experiences his becoming as anything but molar, as a ‘becoming ... major’²⁹ realising his potential for dominance. In *The Shining*, becoming is phenomenon of crystallisation –

literalised in Kubrick's film: daddy freezes to death – and is, further, brought about through a negative conception of desire incongruous with Deleuzo-Guattarian thinking, refuting the Lacanian concept of lack at the heart of the desiring subject. It is not, however, impossible to demonstrate a 'productive dialogue' between Deleuze and Lacan, as Boštjan Nedoh and Andreja Zevnik have shown, although that dialogue tends to circumvent the 'most irreconcilable moments'³⁰ such as the 'problem' of desire. I'm not proposing to resolve this problem; rather, I am putting it to work in order to show how becoming has been seized by masculinist discourses, so adept at appropriating tactics of resistance and creative energies, like the figuration of the swarm, to its cause.

The Shining lends itself to readings focused on the problematics of becoming even before entering its narrative realm, bearing in mind John Sears' argument in *Stephen King's Gothic*. Sears re-reads King's immense, excessive oeuvre as textual machine whose identity (like that of genre more generally) always exceeds itself and is constantly reworked 'into new forms,'³¹ though both the new and the idea of form are concepts that must be put under pressure. He understands King's writing as becoming, his novels as desiring machines, establishing Deleuze and Guattari as a compelling methodological framework with which to approach it. The 'logic' of becoming, bound up with practices of re-reading because of King's performance of genre, is at work in *The Shining* too, where it is simply articulated as such, a becoming contested in the face: 'faces are running, changing, becoming something pestilent'.³² The face is zone of transformation, explicitly conceived as insectile, hosting 'rotting insects' or otherwise 'crawling' with 'heavy-bodied wasps.'³³ The process of becoming consequently happens at multiple levels or nodes, outside the text and inside it, while also comprising the many proliferations continually supplementing the 'original' with additional dimensions: *The Shining* sprouts, returns, is parasitic, insists.

In his article ‘The Unempty Wasps’ Nest,’ Graham Allen briefly considers the wasp, a ‘sclerophthalmic animal . . . with hard, lidless eyes’ and suggests that the Overlook Hotel offers up ‘a mode of vision with sees everything and sees it all the time’. He notes that this vision is ‘unbearable, because it is total, like the vision of a god, or like the vision of a movie-camera, another “being” that does not have eyelids to close, a sclerophthalmic machine if you will.’³⁴ Allen’s focus lies elsewhere, in practices of reading, interpretation and adaptation open to chance, but his analysis of the Overlook’s gaze, returning the trope of the wasps’ nest in the novel, nonetheless identifies what makes *The Shining* so compelling. Indeed, it often appears to yield an obsessive, paranoid interest, demonstrated, for example, in the 2012 documentary *Room 237*, featuring a number of more or less convincing and imaginatively argued approaches to the film. *The Shining* triggers a compulsion to repeat, urging acts of re-reading, viewing and interpretation, as if it constituted a traumatic neurosis. It is a text that multiples and persists in various forms, including: a sequel to the novel (*Doctor Sleep*, 2013), also made into a film (2019); the ‘reparative’ TV mini-series (1997), scripted by King and therefore more faithful to the novel; an opera (2016); a wiki site; a *The Simpsons Treehouse of Horror* episode (1994); a sequence from Steven Spielberg’s 2018 film *Ready Player One*; a 1993 single by the Dutch band *Hocus Pocus*; Jack Torrance’s ‘posthumously’ published ‘writing project,’ *All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy* (2008); Melania Trump’s terrifying White House Christmas decorations (2018 and 2019), compared, on Twitter, to scenes from the film. Officially released perspectives of the Trump White House decorations are photoshopped to integrate the dead Grady girls or a close-up of Torrance’s frozen face, not at all looking out of place in coldly symmetrical arrangements. A whole culture industry revolves around the Overlook Hotel as fascinating object: the Hotel is produced as such across these iterations. The Overlook is enigma which, like Medusa’s head, suspends its onlookers in a gaze that interpellates by surprise, through sound, for example, displacing the

subject into the other's field of vision.³⁵ The shining, or the shine, in fact partly functions as another word for fascination and is, at any rate, allied to its affective power, considering the fundamental passivity into which the shining/fascinated subject sinks. The encounter with the Overlook, fascinating object, is one which structurally calls for returns, not only because it remains enigma, but because 'we' desire to be held captive in an eternal, sclerophthalmic, gaze.

My argument arises out of the dynamic between these things: the subject's (also mine/our) 'passion for the image'³⁶ of the Overlook Hotel, signalling integration into the Hotel's gaze and field of vision or desire; *The Shining's* function as proliferating, parasitic text; because the planes of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus* have to be supplemented with the memories of an assemblage left out of the picture. The constellation *The Shining/A Thousand Plateaus* provides a way to interject into a discourse on becoming that tends to assume its counteraction to State power – white male supremacy and misogyny – and to take for granted its orientation towards an ethics of responsive engagement with the other. As Lori Brown has shown, the other body in the process of becoming is frequently abandoned by Deleuze and Guattari; she writes that the resources of care might be present in their work, but that the commitment in the well-being of the other is missing.³⁷ Brown's purpose is to expand the ethical possibilities of their tenth plateau – the chapter on becoming – by 'gather[ing] methods' that enable such a commitment.³⁸ I follow suit by seeking the continual activation of the political and ethical potentiality of becoming, which has never lost its urgency. Alliances must be formed, but not on the basis of identity, identifiability or majoritarian positions, and all the while being alert to the mechanisms co-opting becoming to regimes of State, from which it is not, at any rate or forever, exempt.

Certain majoritarian transversals already exist in the tenth plateau, ‘abject reterritorialisations,’³⁹ as Deleuze and Guattari put it, that haunt the dissolutions of form described and discovered across the different instances of ‘remembrance’. Reterritorialising aspects occasionally enter passages of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as we have already seen. I further temporarily suspend some of the givens, the ‘good,’ of becoming, namely that it cannot function as part of a molar structure, aggregating multiplicities so as to make them serve one Master. *The Shining* functions as a case study to think this suspension, the processes by which becoming becomes molarised. The proposition of becoming/swarming realised in this conjunction *A Thousand Plateaus* + *The Shining*, another interbeing, is that with which some of us are intimately familiar: the figuration (map of the living dead)⁴⁰ of total phallogocentric control. This unlikely alliance allows us to push further the potential radicalisation of political and ethical thought that Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* is turned toward but whose central concepts must nonetheless not escape scrutiny. It might well be that the suspicion of a non-sanctioned, somehow wilfully trespassing, intervention lingers, yet trespassing is itself so crucial to the demonic-paternal logic operating in *The Shining*. The politics of the ‘proper’ at the Hotel constantly invokes rules, often unwritten and obscure, regulations and contracts that must be observed by the Father-Caretaker on the lookout for those who are where they shouldn’t be:

Husbands and fathers did have a certain responsibility. Father Knows Best. They [women and children] did not understand. That in itself was no crime, but they were *wilfully* not understanding. He [Torrance] was not ordinarily a harsh man. But he did believe in punishment. And if his son and his wife had wilfully set themselves against his wishes *against the things he knew were best for them*, then didn’t he have a certain duty—?⁴¹

My analysis, indexed, as it is, to an energy to trespass, braces itself against the law of the Father ('Father Knows Best') by paying attention to *The Shining*'s architecture or infrastructure of molarisation, that is, the Overlook Hotel, whose poetics is that of the swarm, usually perceived, not least in horror fiction, as destroyer of form. I am not, however, using *The Shining* to argue that horror fiction is generically 'predisposed' to save stable categories of identity – therefore imagining becoming as catastrophic – but to focus on an 'abiding' molarity repressed in the process of becoming.

Dark Space, Play Face

In *The Shining*, becoming-insect is initiated through a dynamic which can in a first instance be refracted through what Caillois terms the 'mutual organisation' or 'reciprocal topography' between mimetic insect and space, an event that 'digests' the insect into the world immediately around it.⁴² He mentions the tactics of a type of butterfly, a Satyrid, flattening its wings so as to appear 'like a line almost without thickness, imperceptible, perpendicular to the flower where it has alighted.'⁴³ He subsequently links this force of assimilation to fascination and to personality disorders like schizophrenia, often experienced as disintegration (although Deleuze would call it connectivity). Caillois likens this phenomenon of the subject 'no longer [knowing] where to place itself' to a becoming-space, a state in which the apparent ontological distinction between self and other/environment fails to hold. The question 'where are you?' addressed to a schizophrenic elicits an impression of being pursued by space to the point that it replaces subjectivity:

Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his [sic] skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any

point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put.⁴⁴

Caillois is interested in the curious quality of relationship between subject and space. His approach proceeds from the perspective of the organism or self concerned, not from a space that somehow exists – over there – prompting mimesis or assimilation. A butterfly reacting to a flower produces the assemblage Satyrid-flower, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's notation, to the point that it becomes impossible to assign attributes to the one and not the other. To clarify: it is not as if the subject, without desire, were at the mercy of a fascinating object or space that on its own – without the interference of the on-looking entity at the other end – exerted its 'rays'. Rather, there is an interplay between subject and object already caught in desiring machines sweeping along the integrity of the I. If the I responds to the fascinating object/space by growing rigid and being rooted to the spot – *viz* Freud on Medusa⁴⁵ – then that mechanism of defence is not simply a negation of fascination. The ego cannot cancel out the fascinating element, because fascination is or collapses into desire. As such, it constitutes a movement that acknowledges a relation between subject and object. In other words, fascination is not that which belongs to the object, whose 'oral eye'⁴⁶ wants to engulf me but emerges over there, because over here I seek its recognition, just as I recognise myself in the object. The subject-object assemblage, like the Satyrid-flower, forms an aggregation of desire or, in Caillois' vocabulary (which is also the language of psychoanalysis), the I becomes 'convulsive possession'⁴⁷ of the fascinating object/space.

To be 'convulsively possessed' by space persists in genre fiction and particularly in King's work, often relying on and amplifying the 'magical hold'⁴⁸ of locations which 'destructure' and redirect the subject's desires.⁴⁹ Although such sites, like the Overlook Hotel, do not exert

the same fascination on every subject, their power is nonetheless considerable, further activated by the subject it can most easily claim. Even Kubrick's film, on the face of it denying the 'bad place' motif of its source material, engages with it, if less evidently so. The smile floating between novel and film codes Torrance's 'turn' into 'dark space,' despite existing, in the film, right from the start. The close-up of Jack's face, used repeatedly once ensconced at the Hotel, renders the smile as rictus, the expression *par excellence* of his fascination. In a still from the film, Torrance's face hovers over the miniature replica of the Overlook's hedge labyrinth outside, a curious smile etched into the corners of his mouth, his gaze riveted to an elsewhere. Following Caillois, fascination is the phenomenon that assimilates insect and (schizophrenic) subject to space. More generally fascination, according to Freud in his study on Leonardo da Vinci and Lacan in *Seminar II*, is fundamental to subject formation, often producing an excess of identification because fascination depends on the capacity to return it, to mimic it. Freud focuses on the lost smile of the mother, compelling Da Vinci to transfer it to every face he paints: it is indicative of fascination, an expression that, in this iteration – '[cold] and [lifeless]'⁵⁰ – means being transfixed, called away from the world. The smile is *Brennpunkt*, to borrow Esther Leslie's description of a 'splinter of space and time,'⁵¹ that pivotal moment which in a photograph draws and arrests the eye. Similarly, it is Torrance's smile in one of the most predominant stills from the film that registers his capture by the Overlook Hotel.

Unlike Freud's reading of the Gioconda though, Torrance's smile infers his father, fleshed out in the book (in its original release, the film only hints at a history of paternal abuse). Daddy is a difficult figure to identify with because his violence – the terrible domestic assaults – is initially unpalatable for 'Jacky-boy,' though he (like Danny, Jack's telepathic son, caught in the same Oedipal drama) loves daddy, Janus-faced, too. It takes the Hotel to

fully awaken the '[slumbering]'⁵² soul within, so that becoming-space brings about the total identification of 'Jacky' and daddy, arriving at the embodied resurrection of the despot-machine. In his *Seminar* on the ego in Freud's theory, Lacan argues that the subject only 'gains its unity in so far as it is fascinated'.⁵³ That unity, in *The Shining*, is the Overlook Hotel, organising Torrance's subjectification as a reflection of its order. Becoming-Hotel, cutting a smile into Jack's face, promises to restore subject unity, to rescue it from failure: the failure of a wannabe writer (Kubrick's film) or writer (King's book), of a husband and father to 'live up to his responsibilities' and discipline 'wilful' wife and child. Gouged exclusively into the face of the father, not just Torrance's but Grady's before him, the smile is associated with 'correction,' the expression proper to the phallic father:

'He [Danny] needs to be corrected, if you don't mind me saying so. He needs a good talking-to and perhaps a bit more. My own girls, sir, didn't care for the Overlook at first. One of them actually stole a packet of matches and tried to burn it down. I corrected them. I corrected them most harshly. And when my wife tried to stop me from doing my duty, I corrected her.' He [Grady] offered Jack a bland, meaningless smile. 'I find it a sad but true fact that women rarely understand a father's responsibility to his children. Husbands and fathers do have certain responsibilities, don't they, sir?'⁵⁴

The bland smile is expression or impression of fatherly 'duty,' the shine of his murderous corrections. If the Satyr in its perpendicular assemblage with the flower offers only a 'minimum surface'⁵⁵ to an observer to be seen in an otherwise imperceptible event, the smile in *The Shining* constitutes that surface, the lines of the mouth the site of a visible approximation between subject and object. Becoming-space or becoming-Hotel, encompassing the movement Deleuze and Guattari did not think possible, that is, becoming-

daddy, forms part of a complex manoeuvre that figures as a becoming-insect totally shaped by the law of the Father. The process of becoming, whatever its molecular possibilities in different circumstances, has thus far arrived at the formation of a Hotel-Daddy-Machine, an assemblage integrating Chion's concept of the acousmachine, inhabiting all points, 'forever and ever,' in space and time. From here on in, I am going to concentrate on the 'subsequent' stage of becoming taking place in *The Shining*, though the impression of a sequence of stages is misleading: the aggregation of the Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine really is launched from the start. Neither one of these 'intensities' circulates without the other.

Sound Souls

The site of convergence of the 'mutual organisation' between Torrance and Hotel is the face, forming playing field with the wasp-force of the Hotel. While the preceding part of the essay paid attention to the smile as indicator of the fascinated, overcoded subject, this part is concerned with facelessness, predominant in King's imagination. I take facelessness to mean and function in the service of the 'macroface,' the face of the Father, whose 'centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere'.⁵⁶ This macrofaciality – phallogocentric power machine – is produced and organised by the overcoding Hotel, inscribed as insectile. The section, consequently, is attuned to how sound realises the swarm-souls of the Overlook, a representation that is evident, almost unnoticeably, throughout King's novel, introducing the metaphor of the wasp as invading/occupying force way before the discovery of the nest in Part III. Gathered from the book's interstitial areas, a pack mode of insectility emerges in processes of (compulsive) re-readings: advice 'stings' depending on who dispenses it; 'nesting' wasps inhabit thoughts in the Hotel 'full of a thousand stealthy sounds,' in turn emanating from 'dark nest[s]' whose 'single group intelligence ... stings to death'.⁵⁷

Becoming correlates, as Deleuze and Guattari write, to that which swarms and stands in opposition to the ‘man-standard.’ In *The Shining*, however, ‘man’ – an awful incarnation without limit – is produced by wasps operating as molar system, the Hotel’s politics of masculine control. It is, on this note, significant that in the book, prior to his stay at the Hotel, Torrance had published a few short stories, the form that, according to Frank O’Connor, is intensely aware of ‘human loneliness’.⁵⁸ King’s Torrance, having lost his teaching job for beating up a student, with a similar record of abuse at home, is – exclusively because we are privy to his haunted interior life – a figure who would write in a form reflective of his own life of ghosts. Once at the Overlook, though, he dreams of compiling a long, explosive book on the history, in its entirety, of post-war America, situating the Hotel, the key to all mythologies, at its dead centre: a perspective overlooking, in command of, the field of representation, no longer shambling along on its margins.

Swarming has here undergone a ‘material transformation,’⁵⁹ stinging the ‘man-standard’ into place. In-human mechanism for the desire – demonic paternal authority – of the Hotel, Torrance functions as storage apparatus whose ancestral information is retrieved and which, smiling blankly, cites the laws of the Overlook Hotel. The Overlook’s ‘wasp-like buzz’ activates or disturbs the dark nest of the Father. Consequently, the ‘outside’ – despite Danny’s perception of ‘hurt-think’⁶⁰ as exterior, wasp-like thought – is internalised, archived as always already internal. The overcoding that the Hotel effectuates refers to the erasure of any kind of inscription that does not conform to its codes nor is designed to carry out its orders, rendered as the ‘somnolent buzz’⁶¹ integral to Torrance, discovering his unitary mirror-machine in the Overlook Hotel.

The wasps' nest as visual trope is missing in Kubrick's film, but the 'deadly siren song'⁶² of the Hotel is absent presence. The Overlook is insectile voice-being, the score music indicative of the 'speech' of an acousmachine, deriving from Chion's analysis of the 'acousmètre':

When the acousmatic presence is a voice, and especially when this voice has not yet been visualized – that is, when we cannot yet connect it to a face – we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name *acousmètre*.⁶³

The acousmachine, like HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), is voice without body,⁶⁴ without face. Coming from everywhere, the acousmachine inhabits everything and is in this respect affiliated to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the macroface. The Hotel's voice is sound 'without' semantic content or, at any rate, existing outside of language or information signals 'we' understand. Yet, as Chion proposes in *The Voice in Cinema*, 'there is no soundtrack' (*il n'y a pas de bande-son*),⁶⁵ a statement that echoes Derrida's '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*,' because there is no image that is not affected and animated by sound, even if sound is often swallowed up by the image. To dispense with 'the hierarchy of perception,'⁶⁶ subordinating all sounds to the image as well as to the 'human' voice and drowning out other remains that form the sonic terrain of a film, privileges that which is or becomes deafening in *The Shining*, that is, the acousmachine of the Overlook. Without face, the acousmachine – itself 'outside the image, and at the same time *in* the image,'⁶⁷ – is macroface, whose 'voice' is the place, the dimensions of the Hotel itself. There is nowhere to go, nowhere to be, where the Overlook is not.

In his biography of Stanley Kubrick, Vincent LoBrutto reports Wendy Carlos' reflections about the score music in *The Shining*: 'Stanley wanted these sounds that would sneak in and go by. He called them low fly-bys. They were sounds that would sneak into you, subconsciously'.⁶⁸ These low fly-by sounds operate exclusively on the level of the score music, the swarm sounds and heartbeat of the Hotel acousmachine. The source music, on the other hand, diegetic music that belongs to the film's *zone visualisée*, briefly construes a precarious safe zone: William Lava's *Painted Sea Storm*, for example, plays on the television showing a cartoon in the opening scenes. Stephan Sperl notices how 'untroubled [*sorglose*] compositions'⁶⁹ like *Masquerade* by Jack Hylton and his Orchestra and Ray Noble's *Midnight with the Stars and You* refer to the Overlook revving into 'life' – the tune returns in the final scene, moving in on Torrance's smile arrested in the photograph from 1921 – while *It's All Forgotten Now* accompanies Grady in the blood-red bathroom, failing to remember murdering his wife and kids. The Overlook overcodes the messages of seemingly innocuous music, enfolding it into its infernal, core-less system. There is no dimension left untouched by the Hotel, whose voice is 'king sound,'⁷⁰ sneaking inside from a position that appears *hors-champ* to one that has always occupied everything in sight.

The entire sound field is subordinated to this sovereign, but by no means isolated, sound. A dense, stratified, 'low and slowly moving'⁷¹ cluster of notes corresponds to King's description of the 'somnolent hum of summer wasps in a ground nest, sleepy, deadly, beginning to wake up,' which, Sperl suggests, mirrors the labyrinthine architecture of the Hotel.⁷² The score music, the acousmatic voice of the Overlook, is the sound, an 'aural wash,'⁷³ that sets the tone and undoes time. Sound sequences, to once again gesture to Chion's work, 'often provide what might be called a certain temporal tonality,'⁷⁴ a way of traversing time, of feeling it unfold. This duration at the Overlook is perverted 'shimmering

time,' usually a pleasant temporal tonality which roots to the spot and is spellbinding, capturing the spectator in filmic events.⁷⁵ To be frozen, fascinated, assimilated: that's shimmering time at the Overlook, where time either stands still or, like the sounds that give it tonality, is all mixed up: Tuesday, Saturday, 4pm, 1945, 1921, etc. The voice draws 'you' in, held spellbound in shining time, by low fly-by sounds that imperceptibly produce a field of intensities, a vibrational, corridic infrastructure as politics of capture.

The age of insects (a misnomer for the reign of the Father) is inaugurated through sound in the film, which yields a becoming traced back to a centre of unification. The works by Bartók, Carlos and Elkins, Penderecki and Ligeti forge a climate of becoming under the watchful, unanchored eye of a voice-being that, though distributed and extending into every available space, remains an absolutely sovereign agency. 'I sometimes wonder,' writes Luckhurst, 'if this buzzing' generated by Ligeti's *Lontano* 'is the sound of the wasps' nest ... meant to evoke the hive mind of the Overlook Hotel, agitated with inhuman intelligence,' continuing that Penderecki's *Polymorphia* 'sounds like a horde of insects eating their way out of the string section'.⁷⁶ The score music, used to designate shining time, that arresting, spellbinding and insectile tonal temporality, orients Torrance towards 'becoming ... major.' To all these movements, there is a disturbing, asphyxiating closeness, even though they function as the motif for telepathy – communication, after all, at a distance. *Lontano*, purely by virtue of its name, is case in point. Italian for far away, *Lontano*, like those other aural phenomena, is sound as heartbeat, the manifestation of a vitally unliving sensibility, sentient yet undead and eternal, at once attractive and repellent, distant and claustrophobically near. Pulsations – the impression of sounds like wasps flying by – close in on their target, disturb it, tone it to the Hotel's singularity of purpose: this force is in command of the whole texture of the film.

Torrance, entranced, ‘enters into composition’⁷⁷ with the Hotel. This movement is a glide, continuous, automatic, like Danny’s space exploration by tricycle, itself followed by the smooth machinic gaze of something that is not an entity, as Garret Brown characterised his Steadicam.⁷⁸ The ‘territory sounds’ of the Overlook, characterising its locale, are swelling and abating, simultaneously ambient – filling the space of the film while also spilling beyond it, into the theatre where ‘we’ sit, immobilised – and internal: these sounds are unbound by space.⁷⁹ They have also always been there, like Grady, Torrance, the law of the Father, making it impossible to express or experience duration. Swarms of sounds, music of trance and terror, un-form the linearity of time, which is cyclical, like a refrain, spinning on an axis that returns the same acts of violence: ‘in the Overlook things just went on and on’.⁸⁰ Ligeti notes that *Lontano* functions as

a piece of music which gives the impression to continually flow along [*dahinströmen*], as if it had no beginning, and no end; what we hear is essentially only a section of something that has always already begun [*das schon immer angefangen hat*] and that will continue to reverberate forever.⁸¹

The enigmatic sounds of the Hotel are indicative of its forever; always present, they reterritorialize the fascinated subject as apparently faceless. In King’s work, as Sears notes, horror is ‘unfaced,’⁸² a dissolution of form that, like the secret wasps, can be glimpsed throughout *The Shining*: furniture lies on its face and is defaced; things hide behind faces that decay, are ‘ripped’ and false, become ‘shifting composite[s],’ are misted, smashed, rotting, unremembered.⁸³ Sears argues that the faceless other is situated as feminine in King’s writings, largely at hand of *Pet Sematary* (1983) and *It* (1986), invariably marking the gender-neutral pronoun ‘it’ as a ‘she.’ *The Shining* does not figure as part of the selection of

texts considered in his chapter because the novel does not fit with an interpretation that is, no doubt, indicative of King's work as a whole. The faceless entity in *The Shining* is the *Ungestalt* of the 'man-standard,' a disassembly that precedes a more terrifying remembering (working in both senses of the word) of the Father. The becoming-insect taking place in *The Shining* is absolutely bound to the despotic agency of the Father, materialising as insect-thing or, more precisely, as Hotel-Daddy-Wasp-Machine, 'restructuring' Torrance's face in its image.

On 2 June 2020, the day after his visit to St. John's Episcopal Church, where he had protestors, including the clergy, teargassed for taking to the streets against systematic racism and the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, Donald Trump posed for a photo at St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC. Donald and Melania Trump stand facing a crucifix, frowning into the camera, arms rigidly at their sides. In the background of an image-edited picture circulated on Twitter,⁸⁴ the dead Grady sisters lurk, framed in the blue-curtained entrance hall reminiscent of the arresting, oneiric perspective of the Overlook's blood-gushing elevator doors. Eerie blue light partly shines through the fabric of the drawn curtains, cascading down the left of the image: echoes of the Overlook Hotel. As already mentioned, the Trump White House ('Here's Donny!') keeps calling up references to *The Shining*, staging the perpetual recurrence of the same thing, that is, the horror of the molar entity, en fleshed, here, by the former President of the United States. The edited picture testifies to *The Shining*'s enduring deployment as source to be cited in the contexts of necropolitical control, commenting on the death-grip of white patriarchal power structures while, at the same time, drawing attention to its behaviour as perpetually parasitic text.

As Michel Serres argues, a parasite or signal – he also calls it noise, the sound souls, if you wish, of another order – entering a system does not necessarily mean the system’s cessation or alteration. A parasite is a ‘function of time,’⁸⁵ able to cause only a momentary interruption, after which the system resumes its smooth flow. The system (Trump’s presidency) does not break down as a result of this particular intrusion (the Grady girls) but is confirmed in its demonic power. The uninvited guests, who (don’t) belong, are, however, also capable of switching the relations between host (the original photo) and interrupting parasite (*The Shining*). The ghost-girls at the back of the picture are symmetrical, doubling each other as much as the couple in front, whose posture – arms arranged along their bodies – they mirror, suggesting that it might well be the former President and his wife that are the terrible apparitions to be transplanted as ghouls into other scenes, the corridors of the Overlook Hotel. The relations between parasite and host are revealed to be interchangeable in this instance: host and parasite are ‘*simpático*’.⁸⁶ In different circumstances though, with respect to the argument laid out above, *The Shining* retains its parasitical signal, prying open a passage between the molecular and an abiding molarity in the dynamics of becoming. Remembering, also, the hold that *The Shining* has over its addressees, sinking into the Overlook’s gaze, the insectile as operational mode of transformation at the Hotel might, after all, parasitically affect the patterns of becoming as they are described in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Notes

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- ² Stephen King, *The Shining* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 228.
- ³ King, *The Shining*, p. 178.
- ⁴ These terms are all used by Deleuze & Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* to indicate the subject of power. See pp. 30 & 263.
- ⁵ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 257.
- ⁶ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 316.
- ⁷ Stanley Kubrick (dir.), *The Shining* (Warner Bros., 1980).
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- ¹² Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, pp. 25 & 43.
- ¹³ Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,' trans. John Shepley, *October* 31 (1984), p. 25.
- ¹⁴ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 186.
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- ²⁰ King, *The Shining*, p. 306.
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- ²³ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 262.
- ²⁴ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 257, 262, 266, 271 & 272.
- ²⁵ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 301.
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- ²⁷ Eugene Thacker, 'Networks, Swarms, Multitudes,' Parts One and Two, *C-Theory*, available from: http://ctheory.net/ctheory_wp/networks-swarms-multitudes-part-one/?template=print
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- ³⁴ Graham Allen, 'The Unempty Wasps' Nest: Kubrick's *The Shining*, Adaptation, Chance, Interpretation,' *Adaptation*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (March 2015), p. 366.
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- ⁵⁵ Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,' p. 24.
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