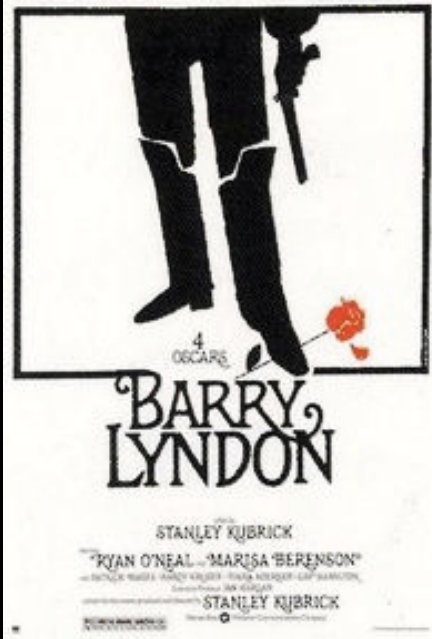


The Buffalo Film Seminars



November 23, 2004 (IX:13)



STANLEY KUBRICK. (26 July 1928, New York, New York—7 March 1999, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, England), generally regarded as one of the greatest directors, made only 13 feature films. He so loathed the first of these (*Fear and Desire* 1953) that he withdrew it from circulation. The others are: *Killer's Kiss* 1955, *The Killing* 1956, *Paths of Glory* 1957, *Spartacus* 1960, *Lolita* 1962, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* 1964, *2001: A Space Odyssey* 1968, *A Clockwork Orange* 1971, *Barry Lyndon* 1975, *The Shining* 1980, *Full Metal Jacket* 1987, and *Eyes Wide Shut* 1999. He produced and shared the screenwriting credit on most of his films. He also edited and photographed *Killer's Kiss*, *Fear and Desire*, and two of the three short documentaries he did before he turned to features. There's a story that Kubrick was so dissatisfied with the work cinematographer Russell Metty was doing on *Spartacus*, that he told Metty to just sit there while Kubrick did his job. Metty did as he was told—and won that year's Academy Award for cinematography. Kubrick also did much of the "documentary" footage in *Dr. Strangelove*. "A film," Kubrick said, "is - or should be - more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later." Kubrick was nominated for 12 Academy Awards for best screenplay, director, or picture, but the only one he ever got was for Special Visual Effects in *2001*.

JOHN ALCOTT (1931, London—28 July 1986, Cannes, heart attack) shot only 19 films, four of them with Kubrick: *The Shining* 1980, *Barry Lyndon* 1975 (for which he won a Best Cinematography Oscar they're still talking about), *A Clockwork Orange* 1971 and the Dawn of Man sequence in *2001: A Space Odyssey* 1968. Some of his other films are *No Way Out* 1987,

Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes 1984, *Under Fire* 1983, *Fort Apache the Bronx* 1981 and *Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?* 1978.

RYAN O'NEIL (20 April 1941, Los Angeles) came to fame on the prime-time soap opera "Peyton Place" (1964-69). He delivered an Oscar-nominated performance in the terminally-gooey *Love Story* 1970. He's been in about 40 movies, none of them as interesting as *Barry Lyndon*, which took advantage of his pretty-boy looks and emotional vapidity. He named his son with Farah Fawcett, with whom he lived from 1980 through 1997, Redmond, after his character in Kubrick's film.

Michael Ciment: Kubrick on Barry Lyndon

Michel Ciment: *You have given almost no interviews on Barry Lyndon. Does this decision relate to this film particularly, or is it because you are reluctant to speak about your work?*

Stanley Kubrick: I suppose my excuse is that the picture was ready only a few weeks before it opened and I really had no time to do any interviews. But if I'm to be completely honest, it's probably due more to the fact that I don't like doing interviews. There is always the problem of being misquoted or, what's even worse, of being quoted exactly, and having to see what you've said in print. Then there are the mandatory -- "How did you get along with actor X, Y or Z?" -- "Who really thought of good idea A, B or C?" I think Nabokov may have had the right approach to interviews. He would only agree to write down the answers and then send them on to the interviewer who

would then write the questions.

Do you feel that Barry Lyndon is a more secret film, more difficult to talk about?

Not really. I've always found it difficult to talk about any of my films. What I generally manage to do is to discuss the background information connected with the story, or perhaps some of the interesting facts which might be associated with it. This approach often allows me to avoid the "What does it mean? Why did you do it?" questions. For example, with *Dr. Strangelove* I could talk about the spectrum of bizarre ideas connected with the possibilities of accidental or unintentional warfare. *2001: A Space Odyssey* allowed speculation about ultra-intelligent computers, life in the universe, and a whole range of science-fiction ideas. *A Clockwork Orange* involved

BARRY LYNDON (1975) 184 min

Ryan O'Neal...Barry Lyndon/Redmond

Barry/Lt. Jonathan Fakenham/Lazlo Zilagy

Marisa Berenson...Lady Lyndon, Countess of Lyndon, Vicountess of Bullington, Baroness Castle Lyndon of Ireland

Patrick Magee...The Chevalier de Balibari

Hardy Krüger...Capt. Potzdorf

Steven Berkoff...Lord Ludd

Directed, produced and written by Stanley Kubrick

Based on the novel by William Makepeace Thackeray

Original music by The Chieftans, Leonard Rosenman

Non-Original Music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg

Friedrich Händel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Giovanni

Paisiello, Franz Schubert, Frederick The Great, and

Antonio Vivaldi

Cinematography by John Alcott

Film Editing by Tony Lawson

Nominated for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay

Oscars; won for Best Art Decoration, Best Cinematography,

Best Costume Design and Best Music

law and order, criminal violence, authority versus freedom, etc. With *Barry Lyndon* you haven't got these topical issues to talk around, so I suppose that does make it a bit more difficult.

Your last three films were set in the future. What led you to make an historical film?

I can't honestly say what led me to make any of my films. The best I can do is to say I just fell in love with the stories. Going beyond that is a bit like trying to explain why you fell in love with your wife: she's intelligent, has brown eyes, a good figure. Have you really said anything? Since I am currently going through the process of trying to decide what film to make next, I realize just how uncontrollable is the business of finding a story, and how much it depends on chance and spontaneous reaction. You can say a lot of "architectural" things about what a film story should have: a strong plot, interesting characters, possibilities for cinematic development, good opportunities for the actors to display emotion, and the presentation of its thematic ideas truthfully and intelligently. But, of course, that still doesn't really explain why you finally chose something, nor does it lead you to a story. You can only say that you probably wouldn't choose a story that doesn't have most of those qualities.

Since you are completely free in your choice of story material, how did you come to pick up a book by Thackeray, almost forgotten and hardly republished since the nineteenth century?

I have had a complete set of Thackeray sitting on my bookshelf at home for years, and I had to read several of his novels before reading *Barry Lyndon*. At one time, *Vanity Fair* interested me as a possible film but, in the end, I decided the story could not be successfully compressed into the relatively short time-span of a feature film. This problem of length, by the way, is now wonderfully accommodated for by the television miniseries which, with its ten- to twelve-hour length, pressed on consecutive nights, has created a completely different dramatic form. Anyway, as soon as I read *Barry Lyndon* I became very excited about it. I loved the story and the characters, and it seemed possible to make the transition from novel to film without destroying it in the process. It also offered the opportunity to do one of the things that movies can do better than any other art form, and that is to present historical subject matter. Description is not one of the things that novels do best but it is something that movies do effortlessly, at least with respect to the effort required of the audience. This is equally true for science-fiction and fantasy, which offer visual challenges and possibilities you don't find in contemporary stories.

How did you come to adopt a third-person commentary instead of the first-person narrative which is found in the book?

I believe Thackeray used Redmond Barry to tell his own story in a deliberately distorted way because it made it more interesting. Instead of the omniscient author, Thackeray used the imperfect observer, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the dishonest observer, thus allowing the reader to judge for himself, with little difficulty, the probable truth in Redmond Barry's view of his life. This technique worked extremely well in the novel but, of course, in a film you have objective reality in front of you all of the time, so the effect of Thackeray's first-person story-teller could not be repeated on the screen. It might have worked as comedy by the juxtaposition of Barry's version of the truth with the reality on the screen, but I don't think that *Barry Lyndon* should have been done as a comedy. *You didn't think of having no commentary?*

There is too much story to tell. A voice-over spares you the cumbersome business of telling the necessary facts of the story through expositional dialogue scenes which can become very tiresome and frequently unconvincing: "Curse the blasted storm that's

wrecked our blessed ship!" Voice-over, on the other hand, is a perfectly legitimate and economical way of conveying story information which does not need dramatic weight and which would otherwise be too bulky to dramatize.

But you use it in other way -- to cool down the emotion of a scene, and to anticipate the story. For instance, just after the meeting with the German peasant girl -- a very moving scene -- the voice-over compares her to a town having been often conquered by siege.

In the scene that you're referring to, the voice-over works as an ironic counterpoint to what you see portrayed by the actors on the screen. This is only a minor sequence in the story and has to be presented with economy. Barry is tender and romantic with the girl but all he really wants is to get her into bed. The girl is lonely and Barry is attractive and attentive. If you think about it, it isn't likely that he is the only soldier she has brought home while her husband has been away to the wars. You could have had Barry give signals to the audience, through his performance, indicating that he is really insincere and opportunistic, but this would be unreal. When we try to deceive we are as convincing as we can be, aren't we?

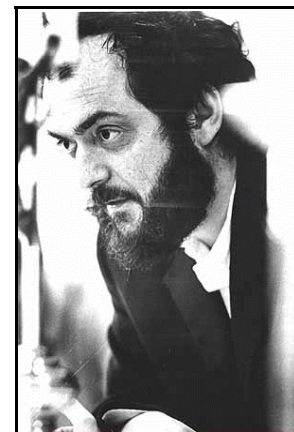
The film's commentary also serves another purpose, but this time in much the same manner it did in the novel. The story has many twists and turns, and Thackeray uses Barry to give you hints in advance of most of the important plot developments, thus lessening the risk of their seeming contrived.

When he is going to meet the Chevalier Balibari, the commentary anticipates the emotions we are about to see, thus possibly lessening their effect.

Barry Lyndon is a story which does not depend upon surprise. What is important is not *what* is going to happen, but *how* it will happen. I think Thackeray trades off the advantage of surprise to gain a greater sense of inevitability and a better integration of what might otherwise seem melodramatic or contrived. In the scene you refer to where Barry meets the Chevalier, the film's voice-over establishes the necessary groundwork for the important new relationship which is rapidly to develop between the two men. By talking about Barry's loneliness being so far from home, his sense of isolation as an exile, and his joy at meeting a fellow countryman in a foreign land, the commentary prepares the way for the scenes which are quickly to follow showing his close attachment to the Chevalier. Another place in the story where I think this technique works particularly well is where we are told that Barry's young son, Bryan, is going to die at the same time we watch the two of them playing happily together. In this case, I think the commentary creates the same dramatic effect as, for example, the knowledge that the Titanic is doomed while you watch the carefree scenes of preparation and departure. These early scenes would be inexplicably dull if you didn't know about the ship's appointment with the iceberg. Being told in advance of the impending disaster gives away surprise but creates suspense.

There is very little introspection in the film. Barry is open about his feelings at the beginning of the film, but then he becomes less so.

At the beginning of the story, Barry has more people around him to whom he can express his feelings. As the story progresses, and particularly after his marriage, he becomes more and more isolated. There is finally no one who loves him, or with whom he can talk



freely, with the possible exception of his young son, who is too young to be of much help. At the same time I don't think that the lack of introspective dialogue scenes are any loss to the story. Barry's feelings are there to be seen as he reacts to the increasingly difficult circumstances of his life. I think this is equally true for the other characters in the story. In any event, scenes of people talking about themselves are often very dull.

In contrast to films which are preoccupied with analyzing the psychology of the characters, yours tend to maintain a mystery around them. Reverend Runt, for instance, is a very opaque person. You don't know exactly what his motivations are.

But you know a lot about Reverend Runt, certainly all that is necessary. He dislikes Barry. He is secretly in love with Lady Lyndon, in his own prim, repressed, little way. His little smile of triumph, in the scene in the coach, near the end of the film, tells you all you need to know regarding the way he feels about Barry's misfortune, and the way things have worked out. You certainly don't have the time in a film to develop the motivations of minor characters.

Lady Lyndon is even more opaque.

Thackeray doesn't tell you a great deal about her in the novel. I found that very strange. He doesn't give you a lot to go on. There are, in fact, very few dialogue scenes with her in the book. Perhaps he meant her to be something of a mystery. But the film gives you a sufficient understanding of her anyway.

You made important changes in your adaptation, such as the invention of the last duel, and the ending itself.

Yes, I did, but I was satisfied that they were consistent with the spirit of the novel and brought the story to about the same place the novel did, but in less time. In the book, Barry is pensioned off by Lady Lyndon. Lord Bullingdon, having been believed dead, returns from America. He finds Barry and gives him a beating. Barry, tended by his mother, subsequently dies in prison, a drunk. This, and everything that went along with it in the novel to make it credible would have taken too much time on the screen. In the film, Bullingdon gets his revenge and Barry is totally defeated, destined, one can assume, for a fate not unlike that which awaited him in the novel.

And the scene of the two homosexuals in the lake was not in the book either.

The problem here was how to get Barry out of the British Army. The section of the book dealing with this is also fairly lengthy and complicated.

The function of the scene between the two gay officers was to provide a simpler way for Barry to escape. Again, it leads to the same end result as the novel but by a different route. Barry steals the papers and uniform of a British officer which allow him to make his way to freedom. Since the scene is purely expositional, the comic situation helps to mask your intentions.

Were you aware of the multiple echoes that are found in the film: flogging in the army, flogging at home, the duels, etc., and the narrative structure resembling that of A Clockwork Orange? Does this geometrical pattern attract you?

The narrative symmetry arose primarily out of the needs of telling the story rather than as part of a conscious design. The artistic process you go through in making a film is as much a matter of discovery as it is the execution of a plan. Your first responsibility in writing a screenplay is to pay the closest possible attention to the author's ideas and make sure you really understand *what* he has written and *why* he has written it. I know this sounds pretty obvious but you'd be surprised how often this is not done. There is a tendency for the screenplay writer to be "creative" too quickly. The next thing is to

make sure that the story survives the selection and compression which has to occur in order to tell it in a maximum of three hours, and preferably two. This phase usually seals the fate of most major novels, which really need the large canvas upon which they are presented.

In the first part of A Clockwork Orange, we were against Alex. In the second part, we were on his side. In this film, the attraction/repulsion feeling towards Barry is present throughout.

Thackeray referred to it as "a novel without a hero". Barry is naive and uneducated. He is driven by a relentless ambition for wealth and social position. This proves to be an unfortunate combination of qualities which eventually lead to great misfortune and unhappiness for himself and those around him. Your feelings about Barry are mixed but he has charm and courage, and it is impossible not to like him despite his vanity, his insensitivity and his weaknesses. He is a very real character who is neither a conventional hero nor a conventional villain.

The feeling that we have at the end is one of utter waste.

Perhaps more a sense of tragedy, and because of this the story can assimilate the twists and turns of the plot without becoming melodrama. Melodrama uses all the problems of the world, and the difficulties and disasters which befall the characters, to demonstrate that the world is, after all, a benevolent and just place.

The last sentence which says that all the characters are now equal can be taken as a nihilistic or religious statement. From your films, one has the feeling that you are a nihilist who would like to believe.

I think you'll find that it is merely an ironic postscript taken from the novel. Its meaning seems quite clear to me and, as far as I'm concerned, it has nothing to do with nihilism or religion.

One has the feeling in your films that the world is in a constant state of war. The apes are fighting in 2001. There is fighting, too, in Paths Of Glory, and Dr. Strangelove. In Barry Lyndon, you have a war in the first part, and then in the second part we find the home is a battleground, too.

Drama is conflict, and violent conflict does not find its exclusive domain in my films. Nor is it uncommon for a film to be built around a situation where violent conflict is the driving force. With respect to *Barry Lyndon*, after his successful struggle to achieve wealth and social position, Barry proves to be badly unsuited to this role. He has clawed his way into a gilded cage, and once inside his life goes really bad. The violent conflicts which subsequently arise come inevitably as a result of the characters and their relationships. Barry's early conflicts carry him forth into life and they bring him adventure and happiness, but those in later life lead only to pain and eventually to tragedy.

In many ways, the film reminds us of silent movies. I am thinking particularly of the seduction of Lady Lyndon by Barry at the gambling table.

That's good. I think that silent films got a lot more things right than talkies. Barry and Lady Lyndon sit at the gaming table and exchange lingering looks. They do not say a word. Lady Lyndon goes out on the balcony for some air. Barry follows her outside. They gaze longingly into each other's eyes and kiss. Still not a word is spoken. It's very romantic, but at the same time, I think it suggests the empty attraction they have for each other that is to disappear as quickly as it arose. It sets the stage for everything that is to follow in their relationship. The actors, the images and the Schubert worked well together, I think.

Did you have Schubert's Trio in mind while preparing and shooting this particular scene?

No, I decided on it while we were editing. Initially, I thought it was

right to use only eighteenth-century music. But sometimes you can make ground-rules for yourself which prove unnecessary and counter-productive. I think I must have listened to every LP you can buy of eighteenth-century music. One of the problems which soon became apparent is that there are no tragic love-themes in eighteenth-century music. So eventually I decided to use Schubert's *Trio in E Flat, Opus 100*, written in 1828. It's a magnificent piece of music and it has just the right restrained balance between the tragic and the romantic without getting into the headier stuff of later Romanticism. *You also cheated in another way by having Leonard Rosenman orchestrate Handel's Sarabande in a more dramatic style than you would find in eighteenth-century composition.*

This arose from another problem about eighteenth-century music -- it isn't very dramatic, either. I first came across the Handel theme played on a guitar and, strangely enough, it made me think of Ennio Morricone. I think it worked very well in the film, and the very simple orchestration kept it from sounding out of place.

It also accompanies the last duel -- not present in the novel -- which is one of the most striking scenes in the film and is set in a dovecote.

The setting was a tithe barn which also happened to have a lot of pigeons resting in the rafters. We've seen many duels before in films, and I wanted to find a different and interesting way to present the scene. The sound of the pigeons added something to this, and, if it were a comedy, we could have had further evidence of the pigeons. Anyway, you tend to expect movie duels to be fought outdoors, possibly in a misty grove of trees at dawn. I thought the idea of placing the duel in a barn gave it an interesting difference. This idea came quite by accident when one of the location scouts returned with some photographs of the barn. I think it was Joyce who observed that accidents are the portals to discovery. Well, that's certainly true in making films. And perhaps in much the same way, there is an aspect of film-making which can be compared to a sporting contest. You can start with a game plan but depending on where the ball bounces and where the other side happens to be, opportunities and problems arise which can only be effectively dealt with at that very moment.

In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, for example, there seemed no clever way for HAL to learn that the two astronauts distrusted him and were planning to disconnect his brain. It would have been irritatingly careless of them to talk aloud, knowing that HAL would hear and understand them. Then the perfect solution presented itself from the actual physical layout of the space pod in the pod bay. The two men went into the pod and turned off every switch to make them safe from HAL's microphones. They sat in the pod facing each other and in the center of the shot, visible through the sound-proof glass port, you could plainly see the red glow of HAL's bug-eye lens, some fifteen feet away. What the conspirators didn't think of was that HAL would be able to read their lips.

Did you find it more constricting, less free, making an historical film where we all have precise conceptions of a period? Was it more of a challenge?

No, because at least you know what everything looked like. In *2001: A Space Odyssey* everything had to be designed. But neither type of film is easy to do. In historical and futuristic films, there is an inverse relationship between the ease the audience has taking in at a glance the sets, costumes and decor, and the film-maker's problems in creating it. When everything you see has to be designed and constructed, you greatly increase the cost of the film, add tremendously to all the normal problems of film-making, making it virtually impossible to have the flexibility of last-minute changes which you can manage in a contemporary film.

You are well-known for the thoroughness with which you accumulate

information and do research when you work on a project. Is it for you the thrill of being a reporter or a detective?

I suppose you *could* say it is a bit like being a detective. On *Barry Lyndon*, I accumulated a very large picture file of drawings and paintings taken from art books. These pictures served as the reference for everything we needed to make -- clothes, furniture, hand props, architecture, vehicles, etc. Unfortunately, the pictures would have been too awkward to use while they were still in the books, and I'm afraid we finally had very guiltily to tear up a lot of beautiful art books. They were all, fortunately, still in print which made it seem a little less sinful. Good research is an absolute necessity and I enjoy doing it. You have an important reason to study a subject in much greater depth than you would ever have done otherwise, and then you have the satisfaction of putting the knowledge to immediate good use. The designs for the clothes were all copied from drawings and paintings of the period. None of them were *designed* in the normal sense. This is the best way, in my opinion, to make historical costumes. It doesn't seem sensible to have a designer interpret -- say - the eighteenth century, using the same picture sources from which you could faithfully copy the clothes. Neither is there much point sketching the costumes again when they are already beautifully represented in the paintings and drawings of the period. What is very important is to get some actual clothes of the period to learn how they were originally made. To get them to look right, you really have to make them the same way. Consider also the problem of taste in designing clothes, even for today. Only a handful of designers seem to have a sense of what is striking and beautiful. How can a designer, however brilliant, have a feeling for the clothes of another period which is equal to that of the people and the designers of the period itself, as recorded in their pictures? I spent a year preparing *Barry Lyndon* before the shooting began and I think this time was very well spent. The starting point and sine qua non of any historical or futuristic story is to make you believe what you see.

The danger in an historical film is that you lose yourself in details, and become decorative.

The danger connected with any multi-faceted problem is that you might pay too much attention to some of the problems to the detriment of others, but I am very conscious of this and I make sure I don't do that.

Why do you prefer natural lighting?

Because it's the way we see things. I have always tried to light my films to simulate natural light; in the daytime using the windows actually to light the set, and in night scenes the practical lights you see in the set. This approach has its problems when you can use bright electric light sources, but when candelabras and oil lamps are the brightest light sources which can be in the set, the difficulties are vastly increased. Prior to *Barry Lyndon*, the problem has never been properly solved. Even if the director and cameraman had the desire to light with practical light sources, the film and the lenses were not fast enough to get an exposure. A 35mm movie camera shutter exposes at about 1/50 of a second, and a useable exposure was only possible with a lens at least 100% faster than any which had ever been used on a movie camera. Fortunately, I found just such a lens, one of a group of ten which Zeiss had specially manufactured for NASA satellite photography. The lens had a speed of f0.7, and it was 100% faster than the fastest movie lens. A lot of work still had to be done to it and to the camera to make it useable. For one thing, the rear element of the lens had to be 2.5mm away from the film plane, requiring special modification to the rotating camera shutter. But with this lens it was now possible to shoot in light conditions so dim that it was difficult to read. For the day interior scenes, we used either the real daylight

from the windows, or simulated daylight by banking lights outside the windows and diffusing them with tracing paper taped on the glass. In addition to the very beautiful lighting you can achieve this way, it is also a very practical way to work. You don't have to worry about shooting into your lighting equipment. All your lighting is outside the window behind tracing paper, and if you shoot towards the window you get a very beautiful and realistic flare effect.

How did you decide on Ryan O'Neal?

He was the best actor for the part. He looked right and I was confident that he possessed much greater acting ability than he had been allowed to show in many of the films he had previously done. In retrospect, I think my confidence in him was fully justified by his performance, and I still can't think of anyone who would have been better for the part. The personal qualities of an actor, as they relate to the role, are almost as important as his ability, and other actors, say, like Al Pacino, Jack Nicholson or Dustin Hoffman, just to name a few who are great actors, would nevertheless have been wrong to play Barry Lyndon. I liked Ryan and we got along very well together. In this regard the only difficulties I have ever had with actors happened when their acting technique wasn't good enough to do something you asked of them. One way an actor deals with this difficulty is to invent a lot of excuses that have nothing to do with the real problem. This was very well represented in Truffaut's *Day For Night* when Valentina Cortese, the star of the film within the film, hadn't bothered to learn her lines and claimed her dialogue fluffs were due to the confusion created by the script girl playing a bit part in the scene.

How do you explain some of the misunderstandings about the film by the American press and the English press?

The American press was predominantly enthusiastic about the film, and *Time* magazine ran a cover story about it. The international press was even more enthusiastic. It is true that the English press was badly split. But from the very beginning, all of my films have divided the critics. Some have thought them wonderful, and others have found very little good to say. But subsequent critical opinion has always resulted in a very remarkable shift to the favorable. In one instance, the same critic who originally rapped the film has several years later put it on an all-time best list. But, of course, the lasting and ultimately most important reputation of a film is not based on reviews, but on what, if anything, people say about it over the years, and on how much affection for it they have.

You are an innovator, but at the same time you are very conscious of tradition.

I try to be, anyway. I think that one of the problems with twentieth-century art is its preoccupation with subjectivity and originality at the expense of everything else. This has been especially true in painting and music. Though initially stimulating, this soon impeded the full development of any particular style, and rewarded uninteresting and sterile originality. At the same time, it is very sad to say, films have had the opposite problem -- they have consistently tried to formalize and repeat success, and they have clung to a form and style introduced in their infancy. The *sure thing* is what everyone wants, and *originality* is not a nice word in this context. This is true despite the repeated example that nothing is as dangerous as a sure thing.

You have abandoned original film music in your last three films.

Exclude a pop music score from what I am about to say. However good our best film composers may be, they are not a Beethoven, a Mozart or a Brahms. Why use music which is less good when there is such a multitude of great orchestral music available from the past and from our own time? When you're editing a film, it's very helpful to be able to try out different pieces of music to see how they work with the

scene. This is not at all an uncommon practice. Well, with a little more care and thought, these *temporary* music tracks can become the final score. When I had completed the editing of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, I had laid in *temporary* music tracks for almost all of the music which was eventually used in the film. Then, in the normal way, I engaged the services of a distinguished film composer to write the score. Although he and I went over the picture very carefully, and he listened to these *temporary* tracks (Strauss, Ligeti, Khatchaturian) and agreed that they worked fine and would serve as a guide to the musical objectives of each sequence he, nevertheless, wrote and recorded a score which could not have been more alien to the music we had listened to, and much more serious than that, a score which, in my opinion, was completely inadequate for the film. With the premiere looming up, I had no time left even to think about another score being written, and had I not been able to use the music I had already selected for the *temporary* tracks I don't know what I would have done. The composer's agent phoned Robert O'Brien, the then head of MGM, to warn him that if I didn't use his client's score the film would not make its premiere date. But in that instance, as in all others, O'Brien trusted my judgment. He is a wonderful man, and one of the very few film bosses able to inspire genuine loyalty and affection from his film-makers.

Why did you choose to have only one flashback in the film: the child falling from the horse?

I didn't want to spend the time which would have been required to show the entire story action of young Bryan sneaking away from the house, taking the horse, falling, being found, etc. Nor did I want to learn about the accident solely through the dialogue scene in which the farm workers, carrying the injured boy, tell Barry. Putting the flashback fragment in the middle of the dialogue scene seemed to be the right thing to do.

Are your camera movements planned before?

Very rarely. I think there is virtually no point putting camera instructions into a screenplay, and only if some really important camera idea occurs to me, do I write it down. When you rehearse a scene, it is usually best not to think about the camera at all. If you do, I have found that it invariably interferes with the fullest exploration of the ideas of the scene. When, at last, something happens which you know is worth filming, that is the time to decide how to shoot it. It is *almost* but not quite true to say that when something really exciting and worthwhile is happening, it doesn't matter how you shoot it. In any event, it never takes me long to decide on set-ups, lighting or camera movements. The visual part of film making has always come easiest to me, and that is why I am careful to subordinate it to the story and the performances.

Do you like writing alone or would you like to work with a script writer?

I enjoy working with someone I find stimulating. One of the most fruitful and enjoyable collaborations I have had was with Arthur C. Clarke in writing the story of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. One of the paradoxes of movie writing is that, with a few notable exceptions, writers who can really write are not interested in working on film scripts. They quite correctly regard their important work as being done for publication. I wrote the screenplay for *Barry Lyndon* alone. The first draft took three or four months but, as with all my films, the subsequent writing process never really stopped. What you have written and is yet unfilmed is inevitably affected by what has been filmed. New problems of content or dramatic weight reveal themselves. Rehearsing a scene can also cause script changes. However carefully you think about a scene, and however clearly you believe you have visualized it, it's never the same when you finally

see it played. Sometimes a totally new idea comes up out of the blue, during a rehearsal, or even during actual shooting, which is simply too good to ignore. This can necessitate the new scene being worked out with the actors right then and there. As long as the actors know the objectives of the scene, and understand their characters, this is less difficult and much quicker to do than you might imagine.

Stanley Kubrick, Director. Alexander Walker. W.W. Norton & Co., NY, 2000

Barry Lyndon was born on the rebound. Kubrick's long-planned epic about Napoleon had collapsed when a financially strapped MGM withdrew its backing. The blow was bitter.

Kubrick had planned to make *Napoleon* immediately after *2001*. After all, as the French critic Michel Ciment notes, it was natural to follow the Nietzschean tone of the space epic with the terrestrial saga of the superman who changed the face and history of Europe. Napoleon's organizational powers had an irresistible affinity for Kubrick. As a filmmaker he also put a godlike faith in the grand plan and hankered to command his own Grand Army. To Kubrick's way of thinking, Napoleon was an emperor of logistics: a battlefield genius whose feats of planning brought every vital element together, at precisely the right time and place, to engage the enemy. What a filmmaker he might have made! His skills in giving orders commended him to a man who saw his own work as one huge communications system. In addition, Napoleon had a talent, unmatched since the Roman Empire, for multinational government, cultural initiatives, and social harmonization. All of these skills had tempting analogies with film production, direction, screenplay writing, and crisis management. In *2001*, Kubrick had created the cosmos; he was looking forward to ruling the smaller-scale but still considerable continent of Napoleonic Europe.

Cheated of his "destiny," he then made *A Clockwork Orange*, in which, as Ciment shrewdly observes, he uses Beethoven's music, which was inspired by Napoleon's rampage through Europe, to propel Alex on his violent trajectory through society. . . . Kubrick's film had unleashed irrational forces in a society which he had once considered a safer, quieter, less invasive place to work than Hollywood, or even New York. As a consequence the *Clockwork Orange* furor precipitated early evidence of what has since become Kubrick's dominant characteristic, a near complete withdrawal from public visibility. In this unsettled frame of mind, he sought a subject for his next film that would be remote from the contemporary world—and the threats it held. Early in 1973 he lit on William Makepeace Thackeray's first novel, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*. His choice one more surprised everyone—and baffled not a few.

The book was published in 1844 as monthly magazine installments, under the rather zany pen name of George Savage Fitzboodle. It is the picaresque story of a scoundrel who would be a gentleman, and was at first sight an astonishing choice for *any* filmmaker. On reflection, the motivation is less enigmatic. Barry, the eponymous narrator, tells his own story with total shamelessness—always a draw with Kubrick—and leaves it to Thackeray's subtext to reveal him to be a self-serving liar and disreputable parvenu. The moral contradiction provides an attractive tension. This view of an energetic opportunist, no better than his "betters," had an appealing irony for a filmmaker possessed of a large misanthropic streak in his cinematic outlook.

The story moved along vigorously if jerkily. It was already a rough film script. That could be smoothed over. Thackeray cut a swath through eighteenth-century society, painting people of wide social rank, moral condition, and nationality—Irish, English, and Prussian. After rejigging this story to emphasize his own pessimistic calculation of our chances in avoiding the traps of life, Kubrick now set out to re-create a history as strange and sensuously detailed as the speculative futures of *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange*. One other attraction, a crucial one, beckoned. The novel's period setting in the Seven Years War provided a panoramic view of military Europe, its commanders, army structures, and battlefields. Kubrick could come no closer to his *Napoleon* epic.

Hardly anyone outside scholarly enclaves was on familiar terms with Thackeray's book, so Kubrick could take liberties with impunity. What a relief after *Lolita*!

How he hit on it has never been convincingly explained. Kubrick is said to have all of Thackeray's work on his shelves at home. If so, it a fair bet that his library boasts a larger supply of moviemaking potential than any other filmmaker's home in the English-speaking world. Another possibility is that one of the academic historians signed up to consult on the aborted *Napoleon* pointed him toward this collateral source of inspiration about pre-Napoleonic manners and morality. Rumor has it that Kubrick sent Warner Bros. His screenplay from Thackeray's novel with title, dates, and characters' names all changed to protect the public-domain status of the source material against imitators. It's quite probable. Still in shock at the unwelcome notoriety suffered from the anti-*Clockwork Orange* campaigners, a congenitally cautious nature was turning into an obsessively secret one.

Most of the film was shot in Ireland and England, with second-unit work, mainly exteriors, done in Germany under long-distance instruction from Kubrick. The film was premiered in 1975.

Join us next week, Tuesday November 30 Francis Ford Coppola's **THE GODFATHER, PART II** (1976) and on December 7 for Orson Welles's **CITIZEN KANE** (1941) on December 7.

At the Amherst Theater, Monday November 29, 7:00 p.m.: Diane Christian hosts Michael Powell's and Emeric Pressburger's 1946 technicolor masterpiece **A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN)**.



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