

them spoke of his work in hushed tones, and why people still continually watch the films, repeat the lines, and pay tribute in myriad other forms of imitation and affection. Kubrick speaks across the spectrum. The film gave my parents pause, at least enough to satisfy my longing that they demonstrate feeling at the sight of tragedy, and maybe, by extension, at the sight of love. Love of which object? Art, creator of art, or emissary of art? Kubrick had the mass appeal I needed to entreat the two most important people in my life, whose divorce triggered an impulse to blame myself for its vagaries. If we could connect through *Barry Lyndon*, I thought we could share whatever else life had in store for us.

We did quietly connect over *Barry Lyndon*, but my greatest malfunction was thinking this would improve our relationships. We interacted in a zone of pushing and pulling emotional baggage, the driving force in Kubrick's universe. The mirror disturbed, and gave us a basis for unearthing, but love can leak out far from stimulus. If it comes from the heart, it's a maudlin intimacy. If it comes from the mind, it's a cold, rational gel. The charge and its after-expression is in the background of the painting or the frame, in the white space of the page. Art can only go so far, it can inspire, but it isn't the change itself—the human being has to take the art and make the next step alone.

And what of that epilogue? What does it speak to? All that was Rocco at the time of *Barry Lyndon*'s setting (from the 1750s to 1789) does, finally, not come through, and for good reason. Schubert's music is from the nineteenth century, Vivaldi's from the sixteenth. The film might show us eighteenth century Europe, but the emotions and behaviors belong to all centuries, and specifically the world of the early- to mid-1970s. Why all the deceit? As Kubrick prepared the screenplay and film, the story of Watergate broke. Was this calumny transposed so easily onto another place and time which simply contained all the excesses and sour-faced problems of another without the benefits of the industrial revolution? As some historians argue that books of history are more about the time they were written than the time they describe, so it seems any artistic piece about another age is destined to be marooned in the era in which it was conceived. In Thackeray's novel, what would become Kubrick's epilogue appears early on, as a commentary by Barry himself about the early troubles of his mother and father:

IT WAS IN THE REIGN OF GEORGE III
THAT THE AFORESAID PERSONAGES LIVED AND QUARRELLED:
GOOD OR BAD, HANDSOME OR UGLY, RICH OR POOR
THEY ARE ALL EQUAL NOW

In examining this there is one curious word that has echoes: "quarrelled." On his deathbed, Brian asks that his parents never "quarrel," but Kubrick admits that the audience has just been watching a film showing people who "lived and quarrelled." Not "lived and laughed" or "lived and cried," but "quarrelled." Obvious, as it is, to say that everyone, no matter their station in life, will one day be equal, Kubrick decided it bore repeating. And "in the reign of George III"? Most everyone lives under some government or rule—is this Kubrick's statement on humanity? His abacus for prefiguring carnage coming and past? The epilogue speaks in egalitarian tones to me, but it shares in the spirit of many of Kubrick's endings—we're all fucked but we're all in this together—especially *The Killing*, *Paths of Glory*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Eyes Wide Shut*. His endings are cosmic, as if he were a seer stationed in outer space, peering in on what makes us human and why we try and so often fail to be satisfied. If I attempt to account for the appearance of the Star-Child at the end of *2001*, and my head tingles from reincarnation jitters, it is only because the apparent awe of that finale is too inspiring. Okay, rebirth—but what is the next step? Are we going to do it right this time? How?

Kubrick is the great leveler. Bill, Jack, Barry, Alex, HAL, the government officials and generals, Humbert, Quilty, and Johnny Clay from *The Killing*—they all pay in different ways for their lies, their violence, their lack of conscience, and their unconsciousness. But in no other film is Kubrick's leveling so explicitly voiced than in *Barry Lyndon*, because it concerns a society dependent on etiquette as reinforced by the circumlocutions and eschewals of language—language is as key to one's survival in Barry's world as avoiding bullets is today. To deliver the message in his films, Kubrick utilizes pregnant dialogue intrinsic to his characters and their faults—be they psychotic lovers or generals, a conniving computer, a band of rogues, a failed writer from Boulder, an oblivious doctor in love with himself, the half-hearted figure of *Barry Lyndon*, or Barry's stupendously innocent son Brian. They are all fated to the same end.

same small white carriage the same two sheep pulled on his birthday, the Reverend offers a recitation, echoing his marriage remarks in sternness: "We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed is the name of the Lord." God exists in *Barry Lyndon* because England is a Protestant nation. What of fate? What of karma? Barry cheated his way to his position. It's in keeping with the theme and action of the film that he should lose out as well. What is the history of Europe and the world outright? Enormous spills of blood over power, land, and money. Bloodsport, revenge. When Brian is killed by an insatiable need to enjoy his birthday present (a horse) and breaks his promise to Barry about going to the farm to see it (risking a "good whipping" from Barry), he continues the great chain of deceitful reverberations in the film. While Barry's many indiscretions mostly advance him in society, he climbs upward only enough to lose everything, including a leg. Brian's deception leads to his death and, by extension, Barry's—freeze-framed out of any more life at the end. In Kubrick, what characters desire the most gets them into trouble.

Why else would Kubrick relish the myth of Icarus in his only publicly recorded speech after 1968, the acceptance of the 1997 Directors Guild of America Lifetime Achievement Award?

How can I speak to the pain of losing a child when, thankfully, I haven't? Many would say "imagination," a fiction-maker's bane. And a few others, in the philosophical vein, would counsel how imagined pain can be worse than real pain. Most people who watch *Barry Lyndon* have not lost children and they still feel—they gulp and sniffle at what could be. They see their mother and father before them as many might in dreams. Parents they do or did have, even if no children. Everyone exists at that triangle formed by the parents and child at the deathbed. People either place themselves as one of the parents or as the child, or possibly in both positions at once. No matter what Barry has done or is, the audience ignites on behalf of Brian and vicariously for Barry, as Kubrick surely knew they would. This complicates the picture, asking us to delve into the dark of our hearts to try and explain this tragedy to ourselves. What makes identification with a film's essence is the ability to place oneself in character, and by extension, in the very frames—those fragments and figures that could be life. To live a work of art—the salty surrender to a form more knowing and final, so these Bruegels, Bachs, and Becketts take our lusts and leech them dry—is to be informed enough to sense our time will come.

I feel pain beyond my means, my pity, and my years because Kubrick

sought to create the kind of art that makes possible the deepest identifications in the human soul. I can speak to the pain of losing a child because Kubrick's artifice wills it. "Pain pays the income of each precious thing," says the Bard. I have seen myself and everyone else and their deaths by this sequence in *Barry Lyndon*—one consecrated vision flowing and flown.

Because the strains of an unhappy family spread through *Barry Lyndon* in a more stately treatment than the pompous "Fuck you, mom!" of most modern art, I was most excited to show the picture to my parents. I needed to connect with them, seeking their understanding of who I was at eighteen years—a person invaded by and as indebted to Kubrick as a drowsy, desperate lover. *Barry Lyndon* was the first of Kubrick's two films with children playing a pivotal role, to be followed by *The Shining*. The former seduced me to try and present it to my parents for connection's sake. Divorced, my parents would, separately, meet Kubrick for final approval.

My father fell asleep watching *Barry Lyndon*. My mother fell asleep watching *Barry Lyndon*. I fell asleep with my mother as we watched *Barry Lyndon*, leaving a family friend to fend for herself through Barry's early army experiences. As Abbas Kiarostami has said, "I don't like to arouse the viewer emotionally or give him advice. . . . I prefer films that put the audience to sleep," so I see no ill in letting oneself have Kubrick put one to bed. Out of the rambunctious, violent, or threateningly violent final five Kubrick films, *Barry Lyndon* is the most easeful, encouraging snoozing more than any other. My mother and father recovered after their early naps and did watch the rest—all the videoed celluloid down to the last wordless scene and the all-word epilogue. I don't believe I could actively place my contumely with the world at age eighteen by citing a specific grievance or scenario of destruction wished for, but I believe what I autobiographically asked both my parents, via Kubrick, was: What if I were created by a marriage, as Brian was, between two people whose connection seemed a tad unwholesome? And what if that son died? Would it change your lives if I were to die? How would they change? Was I wayward enough to believe that if they cried for Brian, they would cry for me? I was, but did I know how recriminations can make a piss taken in old age sting? Or how as the body breaks down and hopes and desires become scores that will never be settled, certain oblivion gets clearer? I believe I was aware enough to grok Kubrick wasn't fucking around—that real life, however candy-colored or shit-scented, did at some base, though dreamlike level, resemble the world of Kubrick. That's why some of my elders with little aesthetic appreciation about

ry's cunning and vigor are never to return, for he has had all the little he loved in life taken away. Like Jack at the end of *The Shining*, Barry's ability to utilize language breaks down and he only says one word, "yes," three times during the duel. This is the extent of his speech following the deathbed scene until he repeats the doctor's line, "Lose the leg?"—a silence lasting some twenty minutes of screen time.

Kubrick's main theme is to track the descent of man. His later works (as well as earlier in *Lolita*) use the borrowed literary method of following one character and mapping his journey through the madness of living: from Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, to Barry Lyndon, to Jack in *The Shining*, Joker in *Full Metal Jacket*, and Bill in *Eyes Wide Shut*. Yet in spite of how much of Barry is presented, he remains elusive. Because Barry hides from himself (understandably, as he can be barely said to know himself), Kubrick trots out the narrator, who reveals things before they happen, waxing over any narrative tension, so the audience is ever ahead of Barry, perhaps making it easier to view him compassionately because, compared to the Irishman, we are in the position of God. Still, even the narrator becomes insignificant. For twenty minutes, from the moment after Lady Lyndon's suicide attempt until the shot of one-legged Barry leaving the inn following the duel, the narrator is silent; the drama of the impending duel reigns.

How are we to take such a man who destroys most everything he sees, yet dotes on his son, loving him with what the narrator calls a "blind impartiality"? Is this selfishness in extremis? People speak of living for their children—they do, they must. If Barry's only happiness was his child, who can argue that his concern for Brian was the most selfless act of his life? But didn't he also carry his injured uncle off the battlefield, as well as Captain Potzdorf, rescuing him from certain death? Barry is advanced for his heroism, but his hunger for all other kinds of advancement pervades the film and his marriage to Lady Lyndon is one long, lonely means to an end (the death of his son) that he wouldn't have wanted or thought possible. Hence, tragic. Incredibly, Barry lands the fiercest malcontent's greatest dream—he marries into a position where people will serve only him, and his friendless existence will seem full because of his money and property, even though, in truth, it is more empty than before. The two women in his life might have been his most intimate equals, but he quashes his wife and his mother is an awful role model, only negatively charging him, speaking with a Lady Macbeth-like power-thirst during a quaggy interchange about his future:

You have not a penny of your own. Upon her death the entire estate

would go to young Bullingdon, who bears you little affection. You could be penniless tomorrow and darling Brian at the mercy of his stepbrother. . . . [T]here is only one way for you and your son to have real security. You must obtain a title. I shall not rest until I see you Lord Lyndon. You have important friends. They can tell you how these things are done. For money, well-timed and properly applied, can accomplish anything.

It is perhaps too simplistic to say Barry relates to Brian best because he is a child himself, but it is false to assay any more convenient reason.

The death of Brian. Of the many deaths in Kubrick's cinema, this death is the most important, excepting maybe the destruction of the world in *Dr. Strangelove*. The deaths of others—Jack, HAL, Quilty—are called for, but this one goes against natural law. It's the one not prepared for and, incredibly, it is not the deathbed scene where I steam up so much as its curious precursor, where the narrator reveals to the audience ten minutes before it happens what is going to occur. Whatever joy we see Barry sharing with his son, while they page through a picture book or practice fencing, is truncated by the doomed words accompanying the shot showing Brian weakly swinging a croquet mallet as he is watched by Barry, his mother, Lady Lyndon, and the Reverend (with three dogs interspersed between them; the one in the middle, behind Brian, frolics), all in a balanced arrangement. A prideful film glazes their eyes, sightlines joined in a large upside-down pyramidal composition. This shot is again a reverse zoom, starting on the mallet and pulling back to show Brian, then his family and the dogs (a reverse lineage, a three ages of man—the parents are just behind him and his grandmother is in the background), while the narrator delivers the keynote on mortality. Here are the most precious words on Barry's tragedy (mostly transposed from Thackeray), for however much a crude deceiver he is, how can the audience begrudge him his coming torment?

Barry had his faults, but no man could say of him that he was not a good and tender father. He loved his son with a blind impartiality, he denied him nothing. It is impossible to convey what high hopes he had for the boy and how he indulged in a thousand fond anticipations as to his future success and figure in the world. But fate had determined that he should leave none of his race behind him and that he should finish his life poor, lonely, and childless.

Does God take away Brian? As the miniature coffin is wheeled off by the

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.

Aptly, in the middle of their first kiss, Kubrick cuts to them being rowed about in a miniature pleasure boat, a scene over which the narrator ironically says: "To make a long story short, six hours after they met, her ladyship was in love, and once Barry got into her company he found innumerable occasions to improve his intimacy and was scarcely out of her ladyship's sight." This shot, bridged by Schubert's indelible *Piano Trio No. 2*, bleeds over to a shot of the two of them walking through the extravagant grounds at Spa in Belgium. Their courtship consists of the enjoyment and view of the most operative word in *Barry Lyndon*—property: "I'm a man of property," Quinn blusters at the beginning of the film, igniting poor Barry's fire to possess the same. After these scenes, the happiness of Barry and Lady Lyndon only consists of the few minutes during the wedding ceremony where Reverend Runt glares at Barry while saying that marriage "is not in any way to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites like brute beasts that have no understanding." Incredibly, in the next scene, the marriage enters its nadir, as the Vivaldi piece plays for the first time. While riding in the coach, Barry blows a long stream of smoke into his wife's face after she asks him not to light up. She coughs, but Barry kisses her quickly and tantalizingly, toying with someone he now has under his dominion. It is clear that he will not respect her anymore, for he now has what Quinn had so many years ago to steal away his first love—property.

Money. Property. Prestige. Conquest. How else could Redmond Barry survive? Barry is probably Kubrick's most complicated human subject. Barry cries, Barry kisses. He is fatuous in one scene and tender in the next. What made Kubrick fall for this character? Who did Kubrick see in this huckster? In one of the only books on Kubrick by someone who knew him personally over an extended period of time, Michael Herr, co-screenwriter on *Full Metal Jacket*, says:

I don't want to give the impression that I didn't get extremely irritated, that I never thought he was a cheap prick, or that his lack of trust wasn't sometimes obstructive and less than wholesome, that his demands and requirements weren't just too much. . . . [D]on't think just because you've known a few control freaks in your time that you can

imagine what Stanley Kubrick was like.

From "I like the artist's use of the color blue," while trying to impress as someone aesthetically inclined when buying property that will garner him a title, to "You're not going to die," a directive to his soon-to-be-dead son, Kubrick colors Barry into a man who hardly develops morally until it's too late. He only ages to survive—as many of Kubrick's protagonists do.

Three distinct stages of man are on view in *Barry Lyndon*, from the shine of youth, to swindling adulthood, to the failure of old age—from life as gain, to life as loss. For each, Barry provides a face. Perceive how Ryan O'Neal appears in the first frames as a fresh, spry youngster, before his heart is broken by his cousin. Jilted by her wedding announcement, he looks on across the dining table, his anguished face suffused with the soft Irish sunlight. The close-up of O'Neal from a side angle is as reverent as it is magical. On par with the greatest portraiture, the understory of low light on his boyish features focuses our gaze at something simultaneously beautiful and sad. His blue eyes are blank—pain has frozen his features in an unclean rictus. How long did it take O'Neal to summon this? How many takes were requested to tap into such wellsprings of hurt?

Flash then to just before the intermission. At Spa, Barry's more angular adult face, the second, is powdered white, with his white wig knotted back and his lips repulsed from showing their obvious triumph by hiding in his mouth. After Barry learns cues from the Chevalier, he grows more cunning. His sly smile toward sickly Lord Lyndon infuriates his lordship. Barry says, "I hope you're not thinking of leaving us so soon, Sir Charles?" but the latter guffaws about how he will not die so soon for his wife to get remarried, presumably to Barry. In closing, Barry says, "Sir, let those laugh that win," and with Barry's luck, Sir Charles soon dies. The candlelight in this gallery warms and blurs the photography—in the eighteenth century, all wealthy people have a pallor about them. The rich have spoils, and the leisure to sit in their rooms, gambling useless money, despoiling themselves and spoiling away in the process. Barry is already so sure of his attaining a "position," he simpers with pity, looking down on Sir Charles as if the old man were an ant.

And finally, the third face, after his son's death, is embittered Barry. With no makeup, he painfully, meekly gapes at his step-son in the salon and during the last duel, knowing he must avail himself in response to Bullingdon's call for satisfaction. With his hair naturally grayed, his aged face impastoed with anguish, and deliberately sealed forever, Bar-

teen seconds, but it's enough to disturb. The viewer responds internally, all thoughts in a flash: I don't know what is happening, and, I may not know why, but it's exciting. Maybe it's the transfer of power, or essence, away from Barry.

I can also understand the outspoken woman's remark with a modicum of compassion, a grain of gold that has inchingly grown inside me in recent years, tallying more encounters with the cold and cruel as well as the joyful and ingratiating of our species. People talk in code, and if the listeners are affected, sometimes only those closest to their storm will be able to decipher the degree of forsaken emotion penetrating the inside of their neo-numbered hearts. Some people delight in equivocation and will not admit pain in the groin to be that, but rather something happening to someone else. Some are already emotionally neutered and know not how to accept the art presented to them, but instead keep their hurricanes situated in their own well-fed and well-groomed cages—strengthening by squats and curls of bland, unaffectionate sentences about most everything but themselves. *Barry Lyndon* is not my favorite Merchant Ivory film, either.

While being a very serious and sad work of art, *Barry Lyndon* retains some substructure of a comedy of errors. The great heresy that describes life, seemingly survival of the fittest, is presented as a multiplayer game of lies, theft, and cover-up. It starts in the film's second scene, revealing Barry's infatuation with his cousin Nora, who hides a ribbon on her person for him to find. Barry seems to know the ribbon is in his cousin's bosom, but will not search there and says he can't find it. She calls him a liar after she shows him where it is and then he trembles "at the joy of finding the ribbon." Then to the deceiving of Captain Quinn by Nora, as well as the duel, where Barry's bullets don't kill, though Quinn is reported dead. Then the deception by the thieving father and son, as Barry is robbed of his horse and money after trying to escape the Quinn business. Soon, he joins the British army, serves in the Seven Years' War, and deserts by stealing papers and pretending to be a British officer, sleeping with a lonely German war bride on his travels. After Prussian Captain Potzdorf calls him out, he serves in the Prussian army and begins the imposture of serving as a spy for Potzdorf and the Minister of Police. In turn, he lies to them about their spying into the Chevalier's life because he feels compassion for his fellow Irishman. The Chevalier devises a plan and Barry dresses up to impersonate him, to get them both out of Prussia. There follows the deceit and cheating that he and the Chevalier employ at the card tables in Europe. All of this is before the one-hour and thirty-minute mark, whereupon Barry espies Lady Lyndon and the

rest of his life is fated.

Similar to *Eyes Wide Shut* in its incredible odyssey of encounters in its first half (which contrasts with the slow burn of the second), *Barry Lyndon* could have been played all for laughs, but in both films Kubrick enlists mostly melodrama in his case against humanity. Still, one can't help but chuckle at Barry's bilious statement about the paintings he might buy with his new wife's money, when he has no artistic appreciation about him: "I love the painter's use of the color blue." Or when Sir Charles Lyndon, the sick, soon-to-be-deceased husband of Lady Lyndon, caterwauls, "Come, come sir, I'm a man who would rather be known as a cuckold than a fool," while trying to stand up to Barry in front of the former's card-playing friends. These card tables are the same that pave the road for Barry to assume the title of Barry Lyndon, and the same kinds his wife seeks refuge in when they meet and, again, later, when her husband plunges into other women, with her money.

In *Barry Lyndon*, the comic repeatedly touches up against the cruel, so much so that we know we are in a world as real and unforgiving as the one outside the spectacle of the screen—a chilly place where on the way to the parking lot after the show, a young man will rush to give you the glove you've dropped, but an old man in an idling car will lay on the horn and *What the fuck?* you out of the parking space that you and the do-gooder are blocking by standing face-to-face, happy.

Barry Lyndon is another version of the Kubrickian pathos by which the world is webbed by desire for money, flesh, war, war-games, and other conquering excursions, including ultraviolence. With all the con-niving dominating Barry's early life, is it a surprise he expands his chest like a pigeon to gain the affections of Lady Lyndon? Just before he meets her, the narrator, Michael Harridan, proudly confides that

[f]ive years in the army and some considerable experience of the world had by now dispelled any of those romantic notions regarding love with which Barry commenced life, and he began to have it in mind, as so many gentlemen before him, to marry a woman of fortune and condition,

and there follows the storied wordless seduction at the card table consummated outside after Lady Lyndon announces she will have a breath of air in order for Barry to follow and fetch. As Kubrick himself stated in an interview with Michel Ciment,

They gaze longingly into each other's eyes and kiss. Still not a word

continual hankering after *Barry Lyndon*? This epic downer of celluloid casts its perspicacious glow and I easily roll over to be bathed in it. Still, it has quiet doses of Kubrick's dark, droll humor, as person after person is deceived, insulted, purloined, and made to seem quite backward, even if they hold high societal positions.

Kubrick adapted a pre-Victorian novel for the screen, penned by the author of *Vanity Fair*—by far the more popular skewering of English society. In William Makepeace Thackeray's source material, Barry narrates his own story under the title *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon Esquire* (first issued as *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*). Kubrick sifted and rearranged plot points and introduced an omniscient narrator who oversees and judges the actions of the scoundrel, putting the viewer at a seeming advantage in getting information about Barry—albeit at the whims of the narrator (or Kubrick himself), as will be shown. This obliquity fuels Kubrick's approach, playing against the audience's prejudices, challenging us to identify with Barry, as with his other renowned, vainglorious protagonists: Alex, Jack, and Dr. Bill.

The debits and credits of so much of man's inhumanity to man are portrayed with astounding opulence, but *Barry Lyndon* is a bunker-buster bomb for all ages, races, and genders. It won't even allow its eventual victor to hide from its rigorous and unforgiving eye. Lord Bullingdon is whipped by Barry and beaten, but Bullingdon is a bit of an asshole, as well, beating his own half-brother Brian (the only other child to be released from his mother's womb, but of Barry's Irish seed) because he can't stand how his mother has been taken in by the "common opportunist," as young Bullingdon calls him, and how their family fortune (and his) has been squandered. Everyone, except possibly Reverend Runt, is looking out for number one.

If my hankering knows its waist size, then it knows the object of the hanker is tragedy and the drama of a family created and destroyed with no key of sentimentality struck, not even when Barry's young child Brian, head wrapped like a shell-shocked soldier from the First World War, lies on his deathbed in front of his powerless parents, who have steadily become removed from each other's lives, and asks them, in a mushy, wholly girlish voice, to hold his hands and promise "never to quarrel so, but to love each other so that we may meet again in heaven. Lord Bullingdon said quarrelsome people will never go." No, not even then.

Some years ago in Oregon, my friend and I "showed" *Barry Lyndon* to our relatively new girlfriends—a double date to test dexterity. Recently, after another "showing," I was asked if I liked sad movies. I answered unequivocally—yes. I know I experience life as, for the most part, a sad

exercise, a dolorous bath with a great number of seemingly happy but humorless people who will only lean on another so as to avoid a manic episode. To pretend we exist otherwise would amount to a patty-cake played when one is forty and not drunk or in love. Of course, there are joyful moments—watching waves, traveling, love, families that get along (in the end)—but just as often there is a tart jibe from a caramelized envy or a half-hidden hurt in one of our familiars, necessitating more sarcasm, but possibly creating pleasureless entropy. I'm just kidding, someone will say, and though I'll often laugh it off, I have dwelled some minutes on those harmless recriminations. They hurt. We hurt. People are in pain and no amount of brainwashing will have me handing in grand celebrations of sadness in exchange for the crooked farce of the television sitcom or social media's happy masks. There is joy in sadness, comedy in confusion, we live all sides of life—if there's too little drama in our art, we say it's not real enough, and if too much, we say it depresses us. But as William H. Gass avers, "If tragedies weren't tragic, no-one would go to them."

The only time I saw *Barry Lyndon* projected (not in the newer, digitally-modified print) was at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 2006. In the first few seconds following the end credits, an elderly woman bedecked in too much scent announced how the feature we had just seen was not her favorite Merchant Ivory picture. I didn't realize then, but can now decry with more authority, how people may look for hours at images and generate such conversely different views on what they have seen, spouting a tired testament to their intimates that will either be aped or avoided on the walk to the restaurant afterwards. To some, many movies look the same. The angles are similar, the light is nothing special, and when one anticipates a cut to see what a character is looking at, it is magically provided. The timing of Kubrick's editing isn't so disjunctive, at least here—what surprises and confounds is more what he chooses to display in the shots he cuts to. Why that shot then? Why the exact opposite view of Jack and Charles Grady in the red bathroom from one end to the other, breaking the unwritten 360-degree rule? Why the fascinating shot as Barry lies convalescing at an inn, after having the lower half of his left leg amputated following the final duel? Graham, the chief financial advisor at Castle Hackton, comes to visit Barry and his grim mother, who sits by his side. Graham is winded from his walk up the stairs when he enters the room, but Kubrick films this entry in a distinctive break from the style that has held the film for nearly three hours. Suddenly, there's a subjective shot from Barry's point-of-view, as he watches Graham pop into the room and sit down. It lasts only nine-

Pain Pays the Income of Each Precious Thing

For an intellectual product of any value to exert an immediate influence which shall also be deep and lasting, it must rest on an inner harmony, yes, an affinity, between the personal destiny of its author and that of his contemporaries in general.

— Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

BARRY LYNDON. I can't believe there was a time when I didn't know that name. *Barry Lyndon* means an artwork both grand and glum. Sadness inconsolable. A cello bends out a lurid sound, staining the air before a piano droopingly follows in the third movement of Vivaldi's *Cello Concerto in E Minor*. This piece, which dominates the second part of the film, steers the hallowed half of my head to bask in the film's heavy melancholia. Why should I so often remember it? What do I have to do with this film? I only received it with a steady swallow owing to its three-hour running time, Stanley Kubrick's longest. What makes *Barry Lyndon* my own story? Have I lived to subsume it or have I subsumed it to live?

As the Criterion Collection saw fit to release a new restoration (the first of Kubrick's five Warner Bros. films to be given such treatment), isn't it time to ask if style and content are more inextricably wound together in *Barry Lyndon* than in any other Kubrickian enterprise? What is *Barry Lyndon* if not the incredible research and work behind it by Kubrick—as well as by art directors, camera operators, costume designers, technicians, musicians, historians, assistants, and actors? The yield? It would be photographed (superfast lenses Kubrick obtained from NASA

captured the candlelit scenes) in a certain way (three hundred days of shooting) and what would be photographed would be the correct images: at the best time of day, in the best locations, with the best costumes on the best people, with the best words flying out of their mouths, and the best expressions painted on their faces—albeit through a chaos of sorts, as Kubrick reworked the script nearly every day and, according to an interview with production designer Ken Adam, shut down production for six weeks in order to reassess the entire project. That was an unconscionable development in major film production, and something Kubrick did again, to a certain extent, on his final three films—*The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Eyes Wide Shut*—making them only better.

Which people are represented by the Earl of Wendover, the man Barry leans on for help in obtaining a title? "My friends are the best people," he says. "Oh, I don't mean that they are most virtuous, or indeed the least virtuous, or the cleverest, or the stupidest, or the richest, or the best born, but the best. In a word—people about whom there is no question."

One brief scene frequently comes to me unbidden, more than any other. Barry sits in a boat with his son, fishing. Sunned by the light of the British Isles, they lifelessly hold their rods, as a dog sits frozen in the bow, for the entire thirty seconds of the unbroken shot. It is one of the patented reverse-zooms that make up *Barry Lyndon*, though it begins in the act of roaming, not starting on a fixed point, pulling back to show them in their enclave. Nothing moves except the camera and the small stream that Barry and his son barely float on as the Vivaldi plays over their ennui in the aftermath of Lord Bullingdon leaving Castle Hackton following Barry's brutal public beating of him—upstart behavior leaving Barry cast out of the high circles he once courted. We are witnessing one of the countless quiet moments that make up life—a solemn *durée* where people realize nothing, but are simply disconsolate while watching life pass by. These thirty seconds over the course of the film's three hours create a finite microcosm of *Barry Lyndon* as a whole. The downcast mood holds itself. The scene exemplifies Barry's sense of being perplexed, pinioned, and aghast at life, yet not intending to blacken the vision which created it. It wordlessly broadcasts despair in creating a monument to it.

How complex is the film, released on December 18, 1975, the last Kubrick to have a winter release? It ended a year already crammed with Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, Robert Altman's *Nashville*, Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger*, Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon*, Arthur Penn's *Night Moves*, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*, and Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*. Why my