

# Distance Listening: Musical Anachronism in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*

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## Abstract

It has long been recognised that *Barry Lyndon* deploys a range of anachronisms both visual and musical. The visual anachronisms have been the subject of serious and stimulating investigation by scholars including Ralf Michael Fischer and Tatjana Ljujić, but I will argue that there is a much richer deployment of musical anachronism in the film than the critical discourse has recognised thus far. The many and varied musical anachronisms to be found in *Barry Lyndon*, which I will present in detail, in fact make a significant contribution to the film's explorations of history, representation and the relation between appearance and reality. Anachronism undermines the claim of a fictional work to represent a past time by underlining the fact that it was constructed at a later date – it presents an apparent contradiction. This fact means that an examination of musical anachronism in *Barry Lyndon* also provides an opportunity to investigate the way Kubrick's film deliberately puts multiple apparent contradictions into play. These include the relations between immediacy and distance, performance and intimacy, and also completion and incompleteness. All these contradictions support the film's pervasive theme, which, I will argue, is that of pretence. Despite their subtlety, then, anachronistic musical effects in *Barry Lyndon* can be shown to bear upon the very heart of what the film is about.

**Keywords:** Kubrick; Barry Lyndon; musical anachronism

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## 1 Introduction

In what follows, I will argue that the many musical anachronisms to be found in Stanley Kubrick's 1975 film *Barry Lyndon* can be read as contributing to the film's explorations of history, representation and the relation between appearance and reality.<sup>1</sup> *Barry Lyndon* reveals that our only access to history is via representation. Stanley Kubrick's directorial decisions neither pretend to achieve an unmediated access to the past nor claim that the inescapability of representational mediation means that all such access is fundamentally indeterminate. Rather, his choices demonstrate how historical representation allows us to learn something both about the time that is purportedly being represented, and about the various stages of representation that have followed, culminating in the present of the film's production, the mid-1970s. Maria Pramaggiore aptly uses the metaphor of the palimpsest, which she defines as "a text that is always in the process of becoming", to characterise Kubrick's treatment of history in *Barry Lyndon* (Pramaggiore 2013: 37).

Seen from the perspective of their historical provenance, the film includes roughly three categories of music. First, there is music from the time depicted (the mid eighteenth century), performed more or less non-anachronistically. Second, there is music written at the time but arranged and performed in ways that only developed after the period shown (even, in some cases, after the mid nineteenth century, which is the period when Thackeray's novel, on which the film is based, was written). And thirdly, there is music which was written after the time depicted. Within these three categories there exist subtle and complex variations on a wide variety of anachronistic devices.

I do not claim that the musical anachronisms in the film were necessarily introduced for the purpose of exploring these questions, but rather that even if other concerns led to their selection in the first instance, their retention affords many opportunities for meditation on the nature of history. I will also argue that, in addition to being a site for the examination of these possibilities, the apparently contradictory nature of anachronism (undermining the claim of a fictional work to represent a past time by revealing its construction to have occurred at a later date) also provides an opportunity to investigate the way Kubrick's film deliberately puts into play a number of other apparent contradictions, such as those between immediacy and distance, performance and intimacy, or completion and incompleteness. These contradictions support the film's pervasive theme, which is that of pretence. When we take anachronism into account, the film's music can be read as contributing to this theme in ways that have not often been recognised.

## 2 History and representation

*Barry Lyndon* is by no means the only work by Kubrick which displays an interest in the eighteenth century, particularly in its visual art and its decor. Pramaggiore observes that eighteenth century neoclassicism "appears again and again in Kubrick's films, from the paintings that adorn the walls of the general's chateau in *Paths of Glory* to the death chamber of astronaut Dave Bowman in *2001*" (Pramaggiore 2015: 25).<sup>2</sup> Bowman (Keir Dullea)'s "death chamber" is clearly anachronistic, but there the intention is to represent the brevity of human existence and the irrelevance of what seem to us profound changes when seen from the vantage of an alien intelligence. In *Barry Lyndon*, on the other hand, the smallest changes can be of importance.

Only a few years after the film's initial release, William Stephenson argued that "a possible key to interpretation of the style of the work is to consider that *Barry Lyndon* is not simply a drama with historical background, but is also *about* history" (Stephenson 1981: 251). A corollary of this is that a full appreciation of its historical content

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<sup>1</sup> This essay has benefitted from comments from a number of people who read earlier versions or heard it as a conference presentation. I wish particularly to thank Alex Clayton and I.Q. Hunter. In addition, many thanks indeed to Nicholas Lash and Cedric D. Reverand with their help in tracking down certain research materials.

<sup>2</sup> Pramaggiore's *Making Time in Stanley Kubrick's Barry Lyndon* is a rare book-length study of the film (the only one currently available in English), it contains many insights and is valuable for its thorough research, but the author unfortunately spends too much time telling us what she will argue rather than arguing it closely. Her central concept of an "aesthetic time", by which she intends an artistic use of time wherein "emotions and critical judgements are intertwined" or, putting it even more bluntly, viewers have "the possibility of both feeling and thinking" (2015: 9) seems to me too flimsy to be of real critical value.

requires a fairly fine-grained examination of the chronologies that it activates. We need to consider the time when the narrative is set, the time when Thackeray's novel was composed, the time when Kubrick's film was planned and made, and the chronologies of the various artefacts represented within the film – paintings, music, costumes, buildings, and so forth. Simply thinking in terms of the eighteenth (the fictional narrative), nineteenth (Thackeray) and twentieth (Kubrick) centuries is insufficient.

The primary temporal manipulations with which the music in *Barry Lyndon* is associated are not anachronisms but narratological devices. Stephan Sperl has pointed out the ways in which Kubrick deploys music in an anticipatory fashion, paralleling one of the functions of the narrator:

The first use of *British Grenadiers* foreshadows Barry's military service, the march no. 14 from *Idomeneo* introduces the movement of the protagonist into aristocratic circles, and the *Trio in E-flat* suggests Barry's later liaison with Lady Lyndon. In all three cases music serves an anticipatory function, which is also assigned to the narrator. (Sperl 2006: 157)<sup>3</sup>

The music, like the narrator, seems narratologically to be deployed from a point in time subsequent to the conclusion of the narrative, and is thus able to produce effects of dramatic irony which are only recognised as such in retrospect. Anachronism does not detract, or distract, however, from these more immediately apparent devices. Rather, attending to the specific historical provenance of the music deepens its ironic potential, adding admittedly subtle but nonetheless perceptible levels of historical irony.

*Barry Lyndon* is a film whose attention to surfaces prompts us to look beyond them, not so much to the depths concealed by the surface as to the accumulated layers of which the surface is merely the uppermost instance. We do not observe how well, or how poorly, the masks that Barry (Ryan O'Neal) adopts obscure his authentic self; rather, Barry's long series of pretences prompts us to question the very existence of an authentic core that is separable from his acts of public performance. These narrative questions are supported by the film's visual and sonic dimensions. Pramaggiore argues at one point in her book that "the music functions in the same way as the paintings do, as another sensorially and materially rich layer of discourse" (Pramaggiore 2015: 172). I think this is correct, but later she seems, in a rather opaque sentence, to contradict herself and to argue that painting and music operate in the film in contradictory ways:

Just as paintings provide a means for Kubrick to materialize history in the image, a way of bringing the weight and density of the medium into cinema, the music dematerializes and undoes that sedimentation, threatening a discourse of failure yet again, and raising the prospect of history left unfinished. (2015: 172)

I believe that attention to the provenance of the music does not support this view, but rather provides another example of historical sedimentation.

There are also parallels in the affective qualities of the film's visual and musical strategies. At times, we might consider the music in the film – just like the opulent surroundings of Barry's rise – to be excessive, even irritating. The music is hard to ignore; it does not operate like well-behaved non-diegetic music, giving cues as to mood but largely staying out of the way. It is often, somehow, too prominent.<sup>4</sup> But in these moments, might we not argue that the music itself displays an excess of 'surface', and thus that far from detracting from the other elements of the film it is behaving exactly like them, by making us conscious of surface and sceptical of whether it has any true depth to conceal?

<sup>3</sup> My translation of: "Der erste Einsatz von *British Grenadiers* nimmt Barrys Militärdienst vorweg, der Marsch Nr. 14 aus *Idomeneo* leitet den Wechsel des Protagonisten in die aristokratischen Kreise ein, und das *Trio in Es* deutet Barrys spätere Liaison mit Lady Lyndon an. Musik erfüllt in allen drei Fällen eine antizipatorische Funktion, wie sie auch dem Erzähler zugewiesen ist."

<sup>4</sup> It achieves this without ironic reference to older styles of Hollywood film scoring that may once have seemed inconspicuous but are now anything but. As Claudia Gorbman so rightly says: "Inconspicuousness is a tricky term: now that the practices and idioms of film scoring have evolved far beyond the classical model, contemporary audiences have difficulty not noticing the lushness and frequent slavishness of music to picture in those old movies, so that what was once coded as inconspicuous is now perceived as intrusive and even camp" (Gorbman 2006: 5).

### 3 Immediacy and distance; performance and intimacy

In her excellent contribution to *Stanley Kubrick: New Perspectives*, Tatjana Ljujić positions her interpretation of Kubrick's use of eighteenth century visual art in *Barry Lyndon* in opposition to scholars such as James Naremore and Ralf Michael Fischer, for whom the film "presents a relativising argument on art and historicity, thereby questioning its own status as a historical film", as well as to Robert Kolker, Alexander Walker and Thomas Allen Nelson who, she argues, interpret the film as "disabling the viewers' absorption into the narrative, instead inviting a distanced, contemplative and critical viewing mode" (Ljujić 2015: 239). For Ljujić, Fischer (despite his own warning against "rash interpretative conclusions" [Fischer 2014: 170]) uses a speculative identification of nineteenth century painter Adolph Menzel as the source for the style of *Barry Lyndon's* candlelit scenes, alongside the clear musical anachronisms (chiefly the Schubert piano trio), as evidence that Kubrick intended the film to raise questions concerning historicity. She, on the other hand, finds the perception of Menzel's influence unconvincing but acknowledges that Kubrick used many anachronistic paintings (including works by Menzel for scenes other than the candlelit scenes) as sources for *Barry Lyndon*, and is certain that Kubrick "was well aware that he was using anachronistic material" (Ljujić 2015: 246). She is clear that the reason for the film's anachronisms "was not a wish to relativise his film's claim at historical authenticity, but rather wish [sic] to visually capture the complex emotive world of his characters" (2015: 249).

I believe it is possible to steer a course between these two perspectives. Distrust of historical sources is certainly to be recommended, but need not be synonymous with thoroughgoing dismissal of all claims to historical accuracy; on the other hand, the indications that Kubrick tended to elide accurate representations of historical artefacts (that are themselves representations) with accurate representation of the historical period itself does not mean that we must do the same (Ciment 1982).<sup>5</sup> The immediacy that Ljujić points out can help us become aware of the complexity of historical reference in the film. Becoming absorbed via anachronistic means does not preclude us later recognising the anachronism and thereby being led critically to examine our own absorption; the question of the *relationship* between immersion and distance is a crucial one throughout *Barry Lyndon*. The two concepts do not exist in simple opposition to one another but rather in a dialectic. Recognising our immersion can lead to greater subsequent distance (as we grow suspicious of that which drew us in) or, alternatively, distance may be a crucial factor in achieving immersion: feeling excluded can heighten the desire for inclusion.

Mark Crispin Miller observes that "intimacy and performance are at odds throughout *Barry Lyndon*" (1976: 1374). I think that, rather, the surprise is that they do not have to be at odds: the public may be an arena without self-conscious performance (as, sometimes, in war: Barry does not save Captain Grogan [Godfrey Quigley] because of the glory such an act might bring him, and the scene is played far more for emotion in the film than in the novel [Johnson 1995: 89]),<sup>6</sup> while the intimate may be highly performed (as in Barry's and the Chevalier [Patrick Magee]'s activities at the gaming tables). The pairing of immersion and distance itself raises questions crucial to the narrative about the relationship between performance, emotion and sincerity. The fact that a character is to some extent putting on a pretence does not mean we can entirely dismiss his sincerity. The path that eventually leads to Barry's downfall is all set off because, as very young man, he insists on the duel with Captain Quin (Leonard Rossiter). He insists, that is, on a performance of feelings which are real and intense, and yet at the same time he knows at some level that both feelings and performance are reactions to the demands of what he 'ought', in the eyes of society, both to feel and to do. Performing and feeling can be dissonant without being entirely artificial. (The duel, of course, turns out itself to be a sham.) Later we discover that intimacy may be a source of distance (as it is for Barry and Lady Lyndon [Marisa Berenson]), and performance may lead to immersion (as Bullingdon [Leon Vitali]'s 'performance' with Bryan [David Morley] does, violently).

With regard to the music in the film, there are two questions to tackle here: first, the different connotations

<sup>5</sup> The director's maintenance of such a view is related to his highly dubious claim, made in the same interview, that "in a film you have objective reality in front of you all of the time" (Ciment 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Johnson finds in this scene a reference to the death of the boy's father in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). He also sees Barry's later rescue of Captain Potzdorf (Hardy Krüger) (which does not occur in the novel) as "spontaneous", but I do not think we can be quite so sure of that as we are in Grogan's case.

of intimacy and performance, of the self-conscious and the artless, in the film's diegetic music; and, second, the affective qualities of the music for the film viewer with respect to how far they encourage immersion or distanced contemplation. The diegetic music covers a broad span from that which accompanies the dancing of Captain Quin and Nora (Gay Hamilton), to the highly stylised performance conventions of Lady Lyndon and Reverend Runt (Murray Melvin)'s performance with the orchestra in Castle Hackton. In both cases there is a heightened awareness of audience, but in the first it is tempered by a context of participation (there seems to be roughly as many dancers as onlookers, and it may be presumed that many onlookers will have previously or subsequently been or become dancers themselves), whereas in the second case the audience's role is utterly circumscribed and permits no movement or making of sound except at prescribed points. Between these two cases lies the sonata by Jean-Marie LeClair we briefly see played by Lady Lyndon, Runt and the young Bullingdon (Gengaro 2013: 182). Here the music is completely private: the performers have no audience except (crucially) for each other. Shared music-making dramatises both a son's love for his mother and the Reverend's (perhaps less than chaste) regard for the same woman.

Kate McQuiston argues that the music in the film divides clearly into two types: "the functional, physically active, and joyful music of the lower classes, on one hand, and the stylized, still, restrained music of the aristocracy, on the other" (2013: 92-3). Pramaggiore reads her as arguing that there is a clear progression from one to the other, whereas in fact "Kubrick juxtaposes folk and formal musics throughout the film" (Pramaggiore 2015: 170); Pramaggiore emphasises the sedimented history of Handel's *Sarabande*, the piece which is present for almost twenty percent of the film (Sperl 2006: 169): "Like Redmond Barry, the music is a colonial import, smuggled into the stultifying halls of the British aristocracy and gussied up" (Pramaggiore 2015: 171). In fact the conflict is only apparent. Pramaggiore is correct to emphasise the effects of historical sedimentation but McQuiston is also right that "the Irish folk music of modest means and carefree dancing in scenes of Barry's youth gives way to the still orchestras and audiences in the music rooms of high society" (McQuiston 2013: 93). Early in the film, people dance (though Barry can only look on at Nora and Captain Quin); later, only the musicians are permitted to move. We see no aristocratic dancing in the film; a masked ball scene that Kubrick shot was eliminated (Pramaggiore 2015: 36).

What of the affective qualities of the music with respect to the viewer? It seems that anachronistic music was initially selected precisely for reasons of emotional and immersive affect. Production designer Ken Adam has implied that Kubrick's sense of eighteenth century decor was not always very strong, meaning that Adams had to fight not to include some Victorian interiors that Kubrick had become attached to (Hars-Tschachotin 2014: 92). For his part, Kubrick told Michel Ciment that:

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. (Ciment 1982)

Kubrick also comments on Handel's *Sarabande* in similar terms:

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. (Ciment 1982)<sup>7</sup>

Such observations by the director are in keeping with Ljujić's argument that the anachronisms in the film originate in a desire for greater immersion on the part of the audience. But, as I have argued, immersion and distance have a complex and intertwined relationship in *Barry Lyndon*. What initially helps immerse us might later come to distance us if we recognise its historical disjunction with the story into which we have become immersed.

<sup>7</sup> Morricone was considered to compose a score, and Nino Rota was actually approached (McQuiston 2013: 89).

## 4 Types of anachronism

I will now return to the three-fold division I set out at the beginning of this article to help us survey the use of music in the film. To begin with, we have music that is, both in its date of composition and style of performance, not anachronistic with regard to the temporality of the diegesis. The most important example of this is the second movement, *Adagio ovvero largo*, from Bach's *Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C minor* (BWV 1060), which is performed by Lady Lyndon and Reverend Runt, before being interrupted by Bullingdon leading young Bryan into the room, wearing his half-brother's shoes. Even here, however, we are dealing with adaptation, because Lyndon and Runt perform the work not on two harpsichords, but on harpsichord and flute. This demonstrates, however, that adaptation is not synonymous with anachronism, as McQuiston points out: "Such substitution of one instrument for another was common in Baroque music and continued in domestic music making thereafter" (McQuiston 2013: 93).<sup>8</sup> Fidelity and anachronism in *Barry Lyndon* are (like intimacy and performance) a pair whose relationship subverts our expectations. The *Concerto* is not performed faithfully with regard to its text, but such infidelity is faithful to performance conventions at the time and hence not anachronistic. The opposite is the case with Handel's *Sarabande*. Although their orchestration is far from faithful, many of these arrangements stick more closely to the notes of the score than a contemporary performance would have done. A contemporary performance on harpsichord, for example, would have ornamented the notated material considerably; the presence of a harpsichord in the opening title music signifies 'eighteenth century', but it is very much not played in an eighteenth century style.

In fact, if anything, the *Concerto* might be anachronistic by being too early rather than too late: J.S. Bach's music was by the latter part of the eighteenth century falling out of favour and being supplanted by the likes of C.P.E. Bach, Mozart and Haydn (Gengaro 2013: 180). The uninvolved demeanour of the audience is also by no means necessarily historically accurate. Pianist Robert Levin has discussed accounts of contemporary performances by Mozart in which impressive ornamentation by the soloist was applauded during the movement ("Programme One: Passing It On!"). Stephenson contests the historical authenticity of the general portrayal of the demeanour of the aristocrats in the film:

The film presents aristocrats, dressed in the clothes of the 1780's, as smiling hypocrites whose only allowable emotion in public is witty spite. [...] Seeing the later eighteenth century presented thus on screen is an eerie vision for anyone aware of the writings of historians of recent decades, who have begun to reinterpret the era as an Age of Sensibility when fashionable people made a cult of expressing their emotions and following them out to their finest nuances. (Stephenson 1981: 254)

Handel's *Sarabande*, an example of my second category (a non-anachronistic composition performed anachronistically), bookends the chronology of the film's music. The piece was originally written about a generation before Barry is supposed to have been born and is one of the oldest pieces of music used in the film. Its chord sequence is even older, dating to the seventeenth century; the piece uses the "folia chord progression" which is often attributed to Jean Baptiste Lully, though it in fact predates him (Gengaro 2013: 166). At the same time, however, Leonard Rosenmann's arrangements make use of techniques that refer to twentieth century conventions of film music composition, and thus it is also the most modern music in the film.<sup>9</sup> Rosenmann also gives Paisiello's *Cavatina* an utterly anachronistic arrangement by giving much of the melody to a mandolin (although some of the ensemble textures end up making its sound remarkably reminiscent of a harpsichord). Rosenmann's arrangements collapse time, drawing attention simultaneously to the time of the diegesis and the time of the film itself.

<sup>8</sup> Mozart's march, from his *Idomeneo*, is another non-anachronistic work used in the film, although it too is played in an adjusted arrangement (Sperl 2006: 163).

<sup>9</sup> "His (Rosenmann's) variations play with deep timbres and short, percussive articulation and rhythmic variety – the creative proving grounds of the twentieth century. His use of timpani as a melody instrument places his variations firmly in the twentieth century, and well out of Handel's time, but deeper timbres such as these and the low strings Rosenmann favors in many instances also root the variations in twentieth-century film music" (McQuiston 2013: 96). Rosenmann was not brought in until photography on *Barry Lyndon* was completed (Gengaro 2013: 163).

"Women of Ireland" has a similarly broad provenance: the words derive from the eighteenth century, but the tune was written by Seán Ó Riada in the 1960s (Gengaro 2013: 169). A slightly more compressed range of time is represented by Vivaldi's *Cello Sonata in E minor*:

The choice of a piece by Vivaldi is not in itself remarkable, but in the guise of Paul Bazelaire's (1886-1958) lush, romantic arrangement of his modest sonata movement, and the expressive rendition of the solo part by Pierre Fournier (1906–86), "the aristocrat of cellists," it is quite transformed. [...] It could almost be Brahms. (McQuiston 2013: 96)

Finally, we have the clearly anachronistic, specifically the much-commented upon presence of Schubert's *Piano Trio in E-flat* (op. 100), which is deployed in a decidedly unfaithful rearrangement: "Producer Jan Harlan oversaw the more drastic alteration of Schubert's trio and made changes that would sacrifice a central principle of the movement for the sake of the dramatic needs of the film" (McQuiston 2013: 99).<sup>10</sup> The notes and instrumentation are Schubert's, but the material has been edited and reordered according to the demands of twentieth-century film music conventions. Schubert was only a child when the characters in the narrative are supposed to have died, so unlike the Bach, which is unfaithful (in a sense) but not anachronistic, Schubert's music is deployed both unfaithfully and anachronistically. The prominence of a piano, making its first appearance later in the film than the harpsichord, signifies the development of performance conventions and might remind us of the contingency of musical history: the fact that a harpsichord sounds archaic to us but a piano does not is because of contemporary musical practice and will by no means necessarily remain the case. In later times, the harpsichord and piano may come to be, as the final title says of the characters, "all equal now".

Might one argue that the subtleties of anachronism I have outlined are too subtle to have an effect for any viewers other than pedantic film scholars? Pramaggiore writes of the film's "sedimented and thus potentially illegible image of pastness" (2015: 167). Certainly, concerns about anachronism are unlikely to be in the forefront of the mind of anyone but a specialist during a first viewing. The effects are too fleeting and will probably be different from viewer to viewer and viewing to viewing. This is why I have not attempted any close reading of the effect of musical anachronism on any particular moments in the film: the risk of the spurious would be too great. I would argue, however, that it need not take much to trigger an awareness of anachronism: perhaps a feeling that some of the arrangements seem "not quite right", or a vague recollection of Schubert's dates: "Wasn't Schubert a bit later than this?". McQuiston describes the sensation as follows:

The effect is a bit like seeing a familiar person in a dream, then realizing he is not whom one had thought. The small changes make it seem as though very good replicas are standing in for the real thing, creating an unsettling sense that handily conveys doubt as to whether Redmond will ever attain peerage. (2013: 95)

This particular "unsettling sense" seems to me to be a little too individually speculative to be of much wider application, but it does emphasise the way that the music participates in the film's exploration of pretence, and I am fully in agreement with McQuiston about the slightly uncanny sensation Kubrick's musical selections can create. Whether we pursue such sensations is up to us; my argument is that there is much to reward us if we do.

## 5 Diegesis

The music of *Barry Lyndon* deploys, then, a rich collection of anachronisms and non-anachronisms. Some of the most striking effects that this collection enables are facilitated by Kubrick's strategies regarding diegetic and non-diegetic effects.<sup>11</sup> Most of the music in the film is in fact non-diegetic, but is often the kind of music

<sup>10</sup> Schubert's early work, the *German Dance No. 1*, is another anachronistic inclusion. It is, though, played faithfully according to the score (apart from the omission of some repeats), and is closer in style to the music of the period than the later *Piano Trio*.

<sup>11</sup> I consider diegesis to be a *production*. Thus I demur from Jeff Smith's argument that some sonic effects that play on the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction are based on misapprehension. He discusses, for example, the joke in *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks, 1974) where apparently non-diegetic music is revealed to be being played by the Count Basie orchestra: "The scene contains one of the film's most famous gags – one that depends on the audience's initial misapprehension of the music's status as nondiegetic. That, however,

one feels one “could” have heard during the scene. This includes the *Hohenfriedberger March* we hear when Barry first comes upon soldiers from the Prussian army (could an army band be just around a bend in the road?), or the music we hear during gambling scenes. Kubrick is able thereby to achieve delicate effects. When we first hear “Women of Ireland” the music is clearly non-diegetic, but during the dinner scene where Barry throws the glass of wine at Captain Quin, the fact that the music begins on a harp and ceases as Barry’s uncle (Liam Redmond) gets up to propose a toast suggests unseen diegetic musicians. On the other hand, the way the harp gives way to the same arrangement we have heard before (which uses a band too large for impoverished gentility to have been likely to afford) suggests that it is non-diegetic. Dramatically non-diegetic effects (such as the Handel arrangements we hear under the duels with Quin and with Bullingdon, or the reappearance of “Women of Ireland” when Barry is making headway with Lischen [Diana Körner]) are notable for their scarcity.<sup>12</sup>

Kubrick also extends the distinction between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, which we are most familiar with in relation to music, into the visual register. There are in the film both diegetic and “non-diegetic” paintings (cinematic compositions framed and lit so as to allude to paintings). The latter, however, clearly predominate. We only glimpse the diegetic paintings in passing or at an angle or a distance or in dim light; there is nothing in *Barry Lyndon* like the end of Tarkovsky’s *Andrei Rublev* (1966) or Straub-Huillet’s *Une Visite au Louvre* (2004). Instead we have the use of painting or sculpture as part of a larger composition used to comment, often ironically, on the action: see, for example, the Cupid statue in the first scene between Barry and Nora, the statue next to which Lady Lyndon spots Barry kissing a servant, the painting we see behind Barry when he kisses Lady Lyndon in the bath, or the huge painting of a large family group dwarfing the tiny figure of Barry with Bryan on his knee. This strategy of embedding one artwork in another, as Frank Cossa points out, Kubrick in fact shares with eighteenth century painting (1995: 81).

Attention to the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music is what enables Kubrick to deploy his anachronisms without compromising the sense of an attempt at representing the eighteenth century. Unambiguously diegetic music in the film includes the British army band performing the *Piper’s Maggot Jig*, drunken soldiers singing “British Grenadiers” and the *Hohenfriedberger March*, and Lady Lyndon, Reverend Runt and Bullingdon performing Jean-Marie LeClair’s trio sonata. We never hear any clearly diegetic anachronistic music. Ljujić notes this and goes so far as to say that she is “not sure that the term ‘anachronism’ is adequate after all”, because explicit diegetic anachronism is avoided throughout (2015: 256). Kubrick’s interest in representing what the period might “actually” have looked or felt like bears this out. His interest in historical representation did not bar him from attempts at recreation that did not employ artistic sources: in attempting to recreate eighteenth century lighting conditions, Kubrick was not compelled to restrict himself to “recreating the lighting atmosphere of the candlelit rooms as they are represented in eighteenth century art” (Ljujić 2015: 257): he was not only interested in how lighting was represented but what the rooms in question would have looked like under candlelight, had one actually been there during the eighteenth century. The historical reference-points of the film’s visual strategies (eighteenth century painting and twentieth century cinema) either share conventions (such as linear perspective), or they do not overlap and hence do not conflict. Thus, an eighteenth century painting can be imitated at one point in the film (and we are admittedly aware of the formalism of this) but not ‘conflict’ with a handheld camera style elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> When considering the relation-

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does not mean that it ever is nondiegetic. Nor does it mean that the music was situated in a fantastical gap between diegetic and nondiegetic space. Rather, the gag is produced as an effect of the film narration’s communicativeness” (Smith 2009: 23). The diegetic status of music is a matter of narration, so asking what the status of the music “really is” before the reveal makes little sense. It would be just as reasonable to say that its initial status is as sound offered as non-diegetic, but is subsequently designated as diegetic for comic purposes. I concur with Ben Winters that “‘background’ music plays a constitutive role in shaping our construction of the diegesis” and that it can “play an active role in the diegesis while still appearing to remain ‘unheard’ by its characters” (Winters 2010: 243), but would be unwilling to replace the term ‘non-diegetic’ entirely with “extra-diegetic” and “intra-diegetic”: the example from *Blazing Saddles* shows, I think, that we still have need of it. In this piece I retain the older terms due to the clarity afforded by their familiarity.

<sup>12</sup> McQuiston notes similar devices involving Schubert’s *Trio* (McQuiston 2013: 48). Compare Edward Branigan’s discussion of the diegetic status of the music at the beginning of Hitchcock’s *The Wrong Man* (1956) (Branigan 1992: 96-7).

<sup>13</sup> This is the case even though the use of specifically cinematic visual devices does raise intriguing and delicate questions about visual anachronism. Can a zoom be anachronistic? Clearly there were no zooms in the eighteenth century, so one might think the answer is yes, but if the zoom itself is ‘non-diegetic’ is its use any more anachronistic than panning the camera? One reason for saying yes might be that a pan can mimic the kind of visual perception available by simply turning one’s head – an experience certainly available



ship between different visual media we are concerned with a “double logic” of “*immediacy* and *mediation*” (Ljujić 2015: 259, emphasis in original). We can consider how a scene would appear to us, were we actually to stand in front of it, and use both painterly and filmic images to help us do so.

Alternatively, different temporalities may be combined but in a way that avoids blatant anachronisms. In *Barry Lyndon* “the portrayal of character of Lady Lyndon was inspired by nineteenth century representations of female figures, while her physical appearance was based on eighteenth century portraiture” (Ljujić 2015: 248). Ljujić finds a similar duality in Kubrick's handling of the military sections of the film:

The way Kubrick had envisaged his representation of Barry's life as a soldier was clearly more akin to the meatier war imagery of nineteenth century painting. In terms of production design, however, the film remains true to the eighteenth century. (2015: 255)

These anachronistic elements are enabled by the fact that the historical provenance of the emotional register of an image is harder to pin down than concrete details of costume and *mise-en-scène*. This is similar to the way that the emotional conventions of non-diegetic music allow Kubrick to ‘get away with’ anachronisms (they are ‘not really there’, that is, not part of the diegesis) but nonetheless allow them to register with the attentive audience member.

## 6 Completion and incompleteness; consistency

Alan Spiegel argues that “everywhere the methodology of the film attempts to transform a continuous action into a finished design, something happening into something remembered, a subject enacted into an object contemplated” (Spiegel 1977: 202). In contrast to this, Pramaggiore sees the film as narrating a failure to achieve completion:

Barry Lyndon's unfinished business relates to his construction of self: his inability to achieve the status of the heroic or even the historical... his incapacity to achieve completion – signified by his amputation – is the final source of sorrow in the film. (Pramaggiore 2015: 173)

These views are not incompatible but provide yet one more example of the coexistence in the film of the apparently contradictory. The melancholy of the film might lie precisely in the coexistence of a sense of looking backward with forward-looking projects that remain incomplete. We are made constantly to look back at a failed attempt to achieve completion, on activities ended but not concluded. In this, as in the very diversity of types of anachronism it includes, the film is consistent in its apparent inconsistency.

This is something that it shares with Thackeray's novel. Andrew Sanders argues that Thackeray

would seem to have been very conscious of the unsteadiness of his narrator's perceptions and to have purposefully exploited them; the story's consistency lies not in a sustained use of irony or innuendo, but in a reader's awareness of its artifice. (Sanders 1999: xiv)

Similarly, Kubrick is consistent in the way his reminders to the audience of the artifice of his film (particularly in the references to painterly forms of composition) alternate with immersive scenes (such as the chaos when Barry attacks Bullingdon or the melodrama of Bryan's death). For Willem Hesling, we are dealing with “a rather unorthodox film; very stylized in some places, almost documentary-like in others” (Hesling 2001: 265).

This stylistic diversity is fundamental to the film's inquiries into the nature of history. Pramaggiore argues that

the film, like the Thackeray novel it is based upon, aspires toward both historical representation and metacommentary. Its revelation that representing history is impossible is not, for me, at odds with Kubrick's insistence upon shooting by candlelight or undertaking a rigorous program of preproduction research into the legalities of duelling. (Pramaggiore 2015: 37)

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in the eighteenth century – whereas, I presume, nobody in the eighteenth century ever had a visual experience similar to a camera zoom (looking down a telescope does not count because there is no continual change of magnification; varifocal lenses were not invented until the nineteenth century).

I agree with this, except that I do not believe that he shows, or attempts to show, that “representing history is impossible”. Rather, he emphasises that representation is all we have. Gilles Deleuze does not discuss *Barry Lyndon* in his *Cinema II*, but in discussing the relationship between world and brain in Kubrick’s cinema he insists on the importance of “a membrane which puts an outside and an inside in contact, makes them present to each other, confronts them or makes them clash” (Deleuze 2013: 212). The idea of a membrane which makes things present to each other is suggestive. Historical representation poses a synchronic challenge to the question of the nature of our access to history. The past and the present have only a diachronic relationship, but it is one that we can only access via the representational “membrane”, which is necessarily synchronic: we occupy the same time as the representation.<sup>14</sup> It is not we have no access to history (or that all our access is wholly indeterminate), but that we have no unmediated access, and that even that to which we have mediated access had its own mediated access to previous times. But this does not prevent us from trying to get as close as we can. As we have seen, it is possible to operate on parallel tracks simultaneously. Kubrick’s access to the eighteenth century can work alongside Thackeray’s: it does not have to be filtered by it at all times. As Kubrick observed about the costumes in the film, “The designs for the clothes were all copied from drawings and paintings of the period. None of them were designed in the normal sense” (Ciment 1982). It does not really matter what Thackeray says about clothes: Kubrick can go directly to contemporary sources.

Disparity does not foreground itself disjunctively in *Barry Lyndon*; earlier I quoted Kubrick saying that he chose anachronistic musical material that he could use without it sounding “out of place”. Thomas Allen Nelson has nevertheless argued that the film represents what he calls a “cinema of disparity” involving a “myriad of expressive forms” (Nelson 1979: 40). To these we might add a ‘myriad of points in time’. Different informational tracks are crucial to the cumulative effect of *Barry Lyndon*; its different elements often relate ironically to one another. As Bille Wickre puts it, the film’s “meaning depends on intricately linked levels of narration: the narrator as the third-person voice-over; the story line presented through the action and dialogue of the characters; the visual text and the visual subtext as counterpoints to the other narratives” (Wickre 2006: 166). Does the narration, for example, amplify what we might otherwise have concluded from what we see, does it ironically supplement it, or does it entirely undercut and hence replace it? (The critical debate on the status of the narrator’s comments about Lischen as Barry takes his leave of her is a case in point.) The music in *Barry Lyndon* contributes to these kinds of questions in a more subtle fashion than other aspects of the film, perhaps, but no less forcefully for that.

It might be possible to expand this inquiry by examining the contribution of musical anachronism to the tone of *Barry Lyndon*, and comparing this to other films by Kubrick. The music, like many of the elements of the film, has a certain deadpan quality. We are often unsure how to take it. Are we dealing with pretence or sincerity? Pretended sincerity or sincere pretence? Does the emotional power of the Schubert *Trio* indicate the depth of Barry’s feeling for Lady Lyndon or ironically emphasise its insincerity? The anachronisms only add to this lack of certainty. Should we be swept away by the music’s emotional power and sense of immediacy and consider anachronism a dryly academic concern, or should it render us suspicious of that very power? In *Barry Lyndon*, as in so much of Kubrick’s cinema, it is difficult to reach firm conclusions about such questions. Still, when we consider the historicity of the music in *Barry Lyndon* we must decide whether we are dealing with historically inappropriate music, justified by its affective qualities but whose historical inappropriateness is irrelevant to the drama, or, alternatively, if we are confronted with productively inappropriate (one might say *appropriately* inappropriate) music. Exactly what effects such appropriate inappropriateness might have remains open to debate, but I hope at least to have shown that there is good reason to take the latter course.

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<sup>14</sup> I am using representation in a very broad sense here. The same argument applies to enduring historical artifacts of any kind (including clothing, buildings, and so forth): we can only use such artefacts to explore the diachronic because they exist in a synchronic relationship to us.

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