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Origin Stories: Stanley Kubrick's Collaborations

Manca Perko

There is an undeniable connection between a filmmaker's life and his work, and as a result, his personality defines his working practice. Personal characteristics assigned to Kubrick affect our image of the director, our understanding of his working methods and the nature of his collaboration.

Such a man takes –and gives– immense pains in carrying out a resolve like this. To be a part of his team is to surrender a part of one's life in a very real sense. Self-discipline in this kind of director demands a degree of despotism –basically benevolent, yet ruthless in never allowing anyone or anything to jeopardize the work of constructing a movie in his own image of it.¹

Alexander Walker, a prominent Kubrick academic, portrayed the director's "ruthlessness" which serves as an example of the myth of Kubrick as the "master controller", whose working practice was not based on collaboration. The myth is still widespread today. Paul Edwards ascribes Kubrick's despotism to his calculating nature, his behaviour on the set of *The Shining* (1980) exemplifying it:

Shelley Duvall, the leading lady in *The Shining*, portrayed a character that became more distressed, exhausted and distraught as the film goes on. Kubrick deliberately instilled a poisonous atmosphere around her, haranguing her at every opportunity, ordering the entire crew to ignore her, so that as the shoot progressed her performance naturally began to mirror her character's own.²

Shelley Duvall³ recently confirmed Kubrick's implementation of this method, indicating how his perfectionism and manipulation had led her to question whether her collaboration with Kubrick was a success in terms of personal expe-

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- 1 Alexander Walker, Sybil Taylor & Ulrich Ruchti, *Stanley Kubrick, director*. New York: Norton, 2000, p. 8.
 - 2 Paul Edwards, *The Life and Myths of Stanley Kubrick - Death By Films*. 2017, Death by Films, [www.deathbyfilms.com/the-life-and-myth-of-stanley-kubrick], last accessed 6 October 2017.
 - 3 Flashback: Shelley Duvall & Stanley Kubrick, Battle Over "The Shining", 2018. *Rolling Stone* [www.rollingstone.com/movies/flashback-shelley-duvall-battles-stanley-kubrick-w450947], last accessed 6 October 2017.

riences. But the following examination of the testimonies and debates on the collaborative nature of Kubrick's work provides information of the opposite; that, in fact, Kubrick's working process was actually of a highly collaborative nature. This article investigates how various academic and practitioner accounts of collaboration in Kubrick's crews fit or challenge the myths and clichés of Kubrick as a co-worker. I refer to these testimonies as *origin stories*.

Origin stories is a term I use to refer to individual stories and anecdotes from Kubrick's crew members on the topics of entering a collaboration with Kubrick, their perceptions of him and how collaboration with Kubrick affected their work and personalities. The analysis of these *origin stories* attempts to shed light on the ways in which Kubrick possibly defied the clichéd assumption about his ability to collaborate and, in the process, questions the applicability of auteurism in Kubrick studies.

Dennis Bingham⁴ already points out that the problem academics face regarding Kubrick studies relates to the question of auteur theory's place within film studies: "Kubrick is a problematic figure for academics because of discredited auteurist baggage his reputation has carried." Therefore auteurism and the director's absolute creative autonomy over his films should be challenged by breaking free from the existent prevailing perceptions of Kubrick and welcome a new perspective. Instead of focusing on the search for new interpretations of his films, relevant information on his work practice can be found in considering Kubrick as a collaborator and not as a single, uncompromising authority. In the quest to identify the collaborative practices employed in Kubrick's films, collaborative relationships become my focus. I examine the connotation of information attainable from Kubrick's film productions and aim to identify the nature of both, group and individual work processes.

Kubrick managed his crews with a set of complex ideas on filmmaking. The way he applied them in his productions displays patterns of behaviour, actions and the nature of the relationships, developed in Kubrick's crews. Collaborative relationships affected the film, Kubrick himself and the individual workers on his team. However, the opposite is the case as well; behaviour, actions and relationships influenced the effectiveness of the collaboration. The intricate connection between the collaboration and co-working relationships requests an explicit elaboration of the characteristics of these processes. The characteristics of collaboration mimic group formation in the society in general and I elaborate on them by taking into account the creative factors in group formation. I approach the analysis of their implementation in Kubrick's case by considering collaboration as a social phenomenon.

4 Dennis Bingham in Mario Falsetto (ed.), *Perspectives on Stanley Kubrick*, New York: G.K. Hall, 1996, p. 218.

A film crew is a group of film workers who engage in the creative process with the common aim of producing a film. At the same time, the crew is not only a unit but a body formed of individuals. This fact places collaboration in a social process which takes place in a social environment. In this analogy, the crew represents a form of social environment and consequentially displays its own social rules and practices. I employ Vlad-Petre Glăveanu's⁵ two theoretical social approaches to analysing collaborative creative work as they will enable me to identify the representative characteristics of collaboration in Kubrick's projects – a socio-cognitive and a sociocultural approach. The socio-cognitive approach encompasses cognitive elements, such as the conditions that guide working in film industry. Examining them will allow me to identify the circumstances present in Kubrick's working environment. The socio-cultural approach explores techniques used in connecting the individuals in a film crew. In the attempt to achieve compromises between collective and individual intentions, the socio-cultural approach explores communication techniques used to achieve a higher motivation in groups. The socio-cognitive and socio-cultural features detail an individual's career path up to the moment of becoming a part of Kubrick's crew. Disclosing workers' stories on origins of collaboration displays various perceptions of the circumstances in which they entered a collaboration with Kubrick. At the same time, the origin stories address the myths on collaborative relationships between individual workers, crew as a group and Kubrick himself.

Kubrick operated with the two social concepts simultaneously, and the constant shifting between them resulted in a mixture of methods and practices used in his collaborations. Collaboration in Kubrick's crews can be analysed with the use of the same approaches employed in observing groups operating in the society in general. The film industry is not only a part of the society but functions as a society on its own. It follows certain conventions which I identify by separating the stories into two thematic blocks; perceptions of the crew's shared creative vision and perceptions of individual power on the ladder of hierarchy in the film industry.

As soon as workers entered Kubrick's crew, their creative process ceased to be individual work. They formed a working relationship that was led by a joint intention. The common intention was represented by attempts to make sense of their specific working world. As John Thornton Caldwell⁶ explains it; the common intentions are the "glue matter", intended to create social cohesion in a group of workers. The individual workers were *glued* into a crew using a collective effort, a collective intention.

5 Vlad-Petre Glăveanu, *How are we creative together? Comparing sociocognitive and sociocultural answers. Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 21, no. 4, SAGE Publications, 2011, p. 473-492.

6 John Thornton Caldwell, *Production culture*, Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008.

Without collective intention, we have no obvious explanation for the coordinated action. For instance, is the performance of a symphony simply an aggregate of individual performances motivated by the belief that by intentionally performing part of a score one is contributing to the performance of the piece, or does each individual performance directly correspond to the collective intention “we will perform this symphony”?⁷

Coordinated actions, or successfully operating collaborating relationships in the crew, are a result of intentions the crew members share. In the simplest form, this is the intention to create a film. A more complex definition would be the common perception of ideas and concepts in the making of the project. A shared vision is so represented by group intentions as motives of “we-intentions”⁸. These intentions have to be communicated in such a way, that each crew member understands them. They then have a choice to follow or not to follow the shared vision.

A shared vision (socio-cultural approach)

I begin by breaking the myth of Kubrick as the uncompromising leader of his crew. In fact, Kubrick was a good communicator. Despite his intention of delivering his vision, he was also open to suggestions/ideas from other crew members. In an interview, James B. Harris, Kubrick’s partner in their first production company, commented on Kubrick’s collaborative techniques: “He was a listener, which is rare. When he was with people, they really felt that they were appreciated. He was very interested in what people had to say.”⁹ Kubrick communicated his vision to his co-workers by using techniques, such as telephone persuasion, employing the principle of *divide and rule* and developing mentorship relations.

Kubrick’s frequently communicated over the telephone to get somebody interested in a project and collaboration. Actor Leon Vitali received Kubrick’s invitation for continuous collaboration six months after finishing *Barry Lyndon* (1975):

I got a phone call, and he said, “How would you like to go to America and find a little boy (the character of Danny) for *The Shining*?” He’d sent me the book actually. He’d sent me the book with the equivalent of a Post-It on the cover. He said, “Read it!” It was like an instruction. And so I thought, if he tells me to read, I better read it. And I read *The Shining* in a day. And he rang me the

7 Paul C. Sellors, *Collective Authorship in Film*. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* [online], Vol. 65, no. 3, 2007, p. 263-271 [www.cronistas.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Collective-Authorship-in-Film.pdfWiley-Blackwell], last accessed 19 February 2016.

8 John Searle, *Collective Intentions and Actions*, in P. Cohen, J. Morgan & M.E. Pollack (eds.), *Intentions in Communication*, Cambridge, Mass: Bradford Books, MIT Press, 1990.

9 Jamie Duvall, *The Kubrick Series Uncut: James B. Harris* [online], 2010, [www.movie-geeksunited.net/uncut.htm], last accessed 10 December 2016.

next night. And I picked up the phone and he said, "Leon, did you read it?" It wasn't like, "Hello, it's Stanley," or anything like that. He says, "Leon, did you read it?" I said, "Yeah, I read it."¹⁰

Vitali's immediate reaction to Kubrick's command cannot only be ascribed to his desire to collaborate again but the result of Kubrick's efficient telephone technique of persuasion. The latter was a reoccurring practice in forming crews for his projects. Larry Smith recalls being approached for the position of a DOP on *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999):

Just having worked with Stanley on *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining* and knowing really what's required in terms of body and soul. I didn't say yes immediately which a lot of people find hard to understand. But I didn't say yes because I had my own career, I was working as a DOP and I had a company which I was running as well. I just thought I don't know how difficult this would be? So I went away and said I will speak to you in a few days. I thought about it. I thought about it long and hard. [...] Thought about it some more. And then, in the end, I said that I would do it.¹¹

Kubrick's telephone persuasion was successful because, in his negotiations, he relied on his "social capital".¹² Social capital establishes the position in the film industry business and dictates the choice of *whom* to approach and with which means. Social capital represents the nature of the relationships one builds in the industry. Kubrick was aware of this, employing the *being close without being close* approach in his telephone conversations. These tactics were employed to negotiate collaborations but they also gave him sufficient control over the production of the film. He would ensure his creative control over a project by following the *divide and rule* principle. The divide and rule is a strategy for gaining and maintaining power by breaking up larger concentrations into pieces that individually have less power than the ruling one. Kubrick exercised division of power by giving freedom to an individual worker to express his ideas by leading a smaller unit in the crew, *i.e.* becoming a sector's leader. The advantage of this approach is not only that it divides the tasks between workers; it also prevents small powers from linking forces by creating smaller collaborations in the form of mentorships.

Such a division of power can be observed in Kubrick's camera department. A small camera crew meant building collaborative relationships in the

10 Brad Schreiber, On Kubrick: An Interview with Leon Vitali, *Tin House* [online], 2013 [www.tinhouse.com/on-kubrick-a-conversation-with-leon-vitali], last accessed 25 October 2017.

11 Jamie Duvall, The Kubrick Series Uncut: Larry Smith [online], 2012 [www.moviegeeksunited.net/uncut.htm], last accessed 10 December 2016.

12 Candace Jones & Robert J. Defillippi, Back to the Future in Film: Combining Industry and Self-Knowledge to Meet the Career Challenges of the 21st Century, *Academy of Management Executive* [online]. 1996, Vol. 10, no. 4. [www.researchgate.net/publication/233857487_Back_to_the_Future_in_Film_Combining_Industry_and_Self-Knowledge_to_Meet_the_Career_Challenges_of_the_21st_CenturyResearchGate], last accessed 25 October 2017.

sector was faster. Often they took a form of a student-mentor relationship. DOP John Alcott¹³ assisted in executing the Kubrick vision but he was at the same time aware that he had started his career by following on the footsteps of many DOPs and camera assistants: “I was Geoffrey Unsworth’s assistant and I was naturally brought in to work with him on *2001*,” (Alcott 1980).¹⁴ He entered the relationship as Kubrick’s student and later became a mentor himself. Alcott built a good collaborative relationship with his focus-puller, Douglas Milsome, working with him on a few films¹⁵. He was on track with Milsome’s training and progress. Together with Kubrick, they recognised Milsome’s working quality and Kubrick offered him a promotion. “If he saw someone that he thought had potential, was young, very enthusiastic, hard-working and had some talent, he would give any young person a break in that role,” Brian W. Cook¹⁶ wrote, explaining Kubrick’s work practice. Kubrick’s willingness to function as a mentor was an amazing opportunity for film workers. Peter Hannan, a focus-puller, recalls: “I was being paid to go to university, really. It was extraordinary.”¹⁷

Hierarchy of individual power (socio-cognitive approach)

Despite the fact that working with Kubrick was a once-in-a-lifetime chance, some of the previous collaborators, such as Ken Adam, a production designer, were offered collaboration and refused it:

And so I got out of doing *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But he got me on *Barry Lyndon*. I didn’t want to do it. He was a very difficult man to work with –extremely talented but on *Barry Lyndon*, had a sort of nervous breakdown and I said to myself, no film is worth going around the bend for– it’s because we were so close, you know. He was impossible at times and I used to take his guilt onto me, apologizing to actors for something we had done, when I was really apologizing for Stanley. I lost my perspective, and so did he.¹⁸

The intensity of Kubrick’s demands seems to have been perceived by his crew members as a distinctive form of control over the project and the group’s creative process. At this point, a question of power arises. Did collaboration exist or was Kubrick, in fact, the sole ruler of his projects? The answer can be found

13 He worked as a cinematographer on the following Kubrick’s films: *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Barry Lyndon* (1975) and *The Shining* (1980). He did additional photography (second camera operator) on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

14 Michel Ciment, *Kubrick*, New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984.

15 *The Shining* (1980) and *Barry Lyndon* (1975).

16 Jamie Duvall, The Kubrick Series Uncut: Brian W. Cook, 2010 [online] [www.movie-geeksunited.net/uncut.htm], last accessed 10 December 2016.

17 *Interview with Peter Hannan*, 2016 [in person].

18 Fionnuala Halligan, Ken Adam in his own words, *Screen Daily* [online], 2016 [www.screen-daily.com/ken-adam-in-his-own-words/5101706.article], last accessed 25 October 2017.

by bringing attention to cognitive elements inspected in the process of the crew formation. Some of the crew's testimonies presented in the introduction of the article indicate that Kubrick was the individual power at the top of the ladder of hierarchy. If that were the case, the socio-cultural feature of the collective intention would have initiated greater motivation and emotional satisfaction of the group by recognising every individual work to the same extent. The issue with this aim is that, although film productions aspire to do so, the extent to which it occurs in practice is questionable. Actual working practices in film production can be ambiguous. To comprehend them, one should observe the real film working practice from a cognitive perspective on crew formations.

Learning about the industry requires knowledge of the film production process. An existing hierarchy dictates the individual worker's career path in the form of restrictions. Producers might seem the main actors in enforcing the "corporate scripts"¹⁹ but they, in fact, follow the rules set by *film culture*. The rules refer to various limitations, forming a framework of film industry rules which are implemented by people on directorial positions. For example, a producer or other financier of the film project implements certain ethical restrictions (*e.g.* Video Recordings Act's tests of suitability potential for under-age viewing)²⁰ or legislative restrictions that come from the positions of power in the industry (*e.g.* British Board of Film Classifications²¹). For instance, BBFC employs legislation regarding allowed work material: "If a work is found to contain material which falls foul of UK law, then it will be cut from the work. If the work as a whole is found to be in breach of the law, then it may be denied a certificate and rejected."²² The rules, imposed on institutions and people in positions of distributing power, have to be followed by workers operating in the film industry. The impact the hierarchal order has on the framework of rules in film industry profoundly affects the relationships formed in the process of the film production.

Kubrick manipulated the framework of rules and hierarchies existing in the film industry, too. He was notorious for persisting on his vision, which dictated his behaviour, actions and affected the nature of the relationships he formed in the process of filmmaking. Film workers were aware of the intensity and the extent of Kubrick's overview of the production process, but they still decided to enter collaboration. Martin Hunter, Kubrick's sound assistant and later editor of *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), explains his decision to become a part of Kubrick's crew:

19 John Thornton Caldwell, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 3.

20 British Board of Film Classifications [www.bbfc.co.uk/education-resources/student-guide/legislation], last accessed 3 January 2018.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

I understood from the beginning that that was the way it was going to be and it's not a way that I like to work with most directors but in Stanley's case I just looked at his past track record and realized that I was going to come out of it with my name as editor on a very good film.²³

Despite not being familiar with his work methods, Hunter decided to collaborate with Kubrick. The decision was based on a compromise; the importance of the outcome of a collaborative relationship with Kubrick had for his career outweighed the negative aspects. Previous knowledge of Kubrick's work methods had generated some predispositions on expectations when entering the collaboration. It follows that film industry, as a business, follows certain conventions in the process of forming working relationships. I focus on the first act of entering collaboration in film production –the *negotiating process* between two parties, a process which I understand to be a communication process of a minimum of two people, commonly between the producer and the film worker entering the production crew.

Negotiations: Combining the socio-cognitive and the socio-cultural aspects

The success of a negotiating process depends on the individual worker's prior knowledge of the film industry, its demands and opportunities, and understanding of the social conventions that guide the process of forming collaborations. Film workers considerably benefit from being aware of the structure of the film production, of the kind of work expected from each specific working position and where their role fits in the collaboration. Hunter's previous collaboration with Kubrick on *The Shining* had given him insight into Kubrick's production structure, and into the characteristics of his collaborative environment conventions. This knowledge, based on experience, had given him an advantage in negotiating for continuous collaboration with Kubrick:

I first worked as a sound assistant on *The Shining* and I helped Kubrick with the making of the foreign versions of *The Shining*. At a certain point, *The Shining* had been released for more than a year and I was anxious to get on with my career, so I said to Stanley that I was looking for other work and he said, "no, no, don't do that, stick around, I'll have something for you". Eventually, I said "well, if it's the editing job on your next picture, then yes, I will stick around". And so he eventually said, "all right, yes, you can edit *Full Metal Jacket*."²⁴

23 Revisiting "Full Metal Jacket": An Interview with Stanley Kubrick's Editor, 2014 [online]. Twitter, [<http://ow.ly/VxOOy>], last accessed 10 November 2017.

24 *Ibid.*

Hunter's knowledge of the film industry is reflected by a better understanding of the hierarchy that existed in Kubrick's productions. He was conscious of its effect on the collaborative environment of the production he was about to enter. Hence, he employed a negotiating technique that resulted in a fruitful collaboration. Hunter's example represents a skilful use of socio-cognitive aspects found in collaborations. Knowledge in developing and maintaining relationships by working on his social capital and excellent communication skills made Hunter a good negotiator.

It follows, that for negotiations to end productively for both parties a combination of the socio-cognitive and the socio-cultural aspects has to be used. Communication, specifically conversations, are the basis of negotiating. While it is possible for discussions between producers and the potential collaborators to run smoothly, this was not standard practice with Kubrick. The origin stories testify of constant bargaining in negotiating collaborations. The challenge was negotiating the work fees. Evidence of Kubrick's rigorous constancy in negotiating an economically profitable agreement is observed in lists of exact calculations on payrolls for all the crew members²⁵. The lists are long and often include a comment from Kubrick on whether the calculated amount should really be as high as it is and how to lower it.

Kubrick's meticulous financial organisation was one of the reasons he was a successful producer and a hard negotiator. Because of the high amount of social capital he had accumulated in his career, he had the power to dictate the work process and consequently, affect someone's career. At the top of the hierarchy, he had an advantage in negotiating. His implementation of the socio-cultural features, such as the telephone technique of persuasion, *divide and rule* strategy and willingness to function as a mentor, incorporated the socio-cognitive features of Kubrick's knowledge of the rules and restrictions in the film industry. He exercised his power of decision-making by taking advantage of his hierarchal dominance in the film industry. Some collaborators adhered to his conditions and work practice for professional reasons, such as the benefit of the experience for their career. However, a few film workers were offered collaboration and refused it because Kubrick's control, in their opinion, was not only exercised over the project but over the crew as well. Ken Adam declined future collaborations precisely because he had had previous collaborative experiences with Kubrick.

Adam's reaction indicates how Kubrick's negotiating techniques sometimes caused confusion and discontent among his collaborators. This dissatisfaction originated from the discrepancy between workers' perceptions and expectations of work in the film industry and Kubrick's actual working practices. His crew members perceived his demands as a very distinctive form

25 The Stanley Kubrick Archive. London. University of Arts: Stanley Kubrick Archive, 2007.

of control over the project. Andy Armstrong, Kubrick's assistant director on *Barry Lyndon* (1975), admitted he and Kubrick did not speak the same language: "He was obsessed that certain things were the best things for that job,"²⁶ Armstrong argued against Kubrick's ability to collaborate by addressing Kubrick's practice of hindering an individual worker's autonomy of creative expression. Armstrong claimed that the collaborating conditions he had accepted came solely from Kubrick's side and, consequently, he felt unappreciated as a crew member. Garrett Brown, the Steadicam operator on *The Shining*, concludes that a collaboration with Kubrick was not possible. Kubrick supposedly considered his co-workers, for example, DP John Alcott, who Brown had collaborated with on *The Shining*, as assistants who would merely carry out the director's idea:

We executed Stanley's vision. I think John himself would have agreed that it wasn't his conception, he was the implementer. As we all were. I don't think many directors would say that about their DPs, that are really strong, even design the shots even the moves. John contributed certainly but I think none of us would stand out and say we were responsible for the look of that movie. Mere contributors. As was the art director and the production designer Roy Walker and the costume designer, the great Milena Canonero. All of us were marching to Stanley's tune.²⁷

Brown disputed the collaborative nature of Kubrick's work practice. By referring to Kubrick as the single-authority in his films, he endorsed Armstrong's interpretation of the director's behaviour and actions as unpromising. The two exemplified unsatisfied collaborators set an example of the effects of the hierarchy in film production on the relationships formed in the work process.

Although many collaborators depicted their experience of working with Kubrick negatively concerning creative freedom, it does not mean that Kubrick imposing his position in the hierarchy always hindered collaboration. Some of the crew members felt uniquely appreciated and treated as genuine collaborators. Martin Hunter defended Kubrick's collaborative nature, relating the director's behaviour and actions to the uniqueness of his working practice:

I know his methods drove some people nuts. They'd say, "it's completely illogical, the way he's doing this", but my response would always be, "I don't think logic has anything to do with this. This is part of his process and his process has proven to yield pretty wonderful results and I'm happy to go along with it."²⁸

26 Jamie Duvall, *The Kubrick Series Uncut: Andy Armstrong* [online]. 2011 [www.movie-geeksunited.net/uncut.htm], last accessed 10 December 2016.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Revisiting "Full Metal Jacket": An Interview with Stanley Kubrick's Editor, 2014 [online]. Twitter [http://ow.ly/VxOOy], last accessed 10 November 2017.

While some collaborators shared Hunter's opinion, some disagreed with Kubrick's collaboration practice. The feeling of being "cheated" out of recognition of their creativity by having had their freedom of expression entirely constricted, does not affirm the myth of Kubrick as the know-it-all director. It results in the opposite; it creates confusion among film workers who thought they understood the industry's working environment and the social conventions ruling film productions. But in fact, experiencing Kubrick's work practice gave them new knowledge on forming successful collaborative relationships, on how to socially nurture them for future collaborations and as such, embark on a journey of a successful career in film industry. From this point of view, the confusion caused represents a learning lesson for the film workers and, at the same time, justifies the difficulty of breaking the myth of Kubrick, the master controller.

Those *Origin stories* informed on the various circumstances in which the individuals entered into collaboration with Kubrick, their vision of it and how it affected their perception of the myths that are present in the film industry. By referring to group formation in pre-production as a social process, the already established approaches to studying creativity have been helpful in detecting the moments to focus on. Inspecting the circumstances of the time when Kubrick's crews were formed, helped to identify the cognitive elements, such as the conditions and the rules that guide film production (*e.g.* the hierarchal order of power) and the cultural elements, such as Kubrick's use of different techniques (all based on the strength of his social capital) in forming collaborations. The gathered information from Kubrick co-workers' testimonies and archival material allow me to conclude on how these findings affected individual perceptions of group work and how they function in the industry.

The myth of Kubrick as a throat-cutting tyrant who is well aware of his status and exploits it to get his way can be broken with the existence of his mentoring work practice. An individual worker's learning experience could end with a promotion in another Kubrick film, as was the case with Hunter, Adam, Milsome, *etc.* However, Kubrick's work practice could also be understood as a controlling tool that disputes their individual creativity. Such ambiguity created confusion and dissatisfaction among workers who thought they understood the working environment of film production. It appears that Kubrick had the knowledge of all the processes taking place in the production and tried to manipulate them to have had his vision realised on the screen. But there are inconsistencies in the development of the relationships, and they can lead to the conclusion that Kubrick not only had the understanding but also practised the idea of collaborating. To creatively operate he had to –and did– cooperate.

Origin stories of successful and unsuccessful individual negotiations between the working conditions in the film industry and Kubrick's vision, indicated the intricacy of creative environments in film production. The observation of

the collaboration process through the eyes of Kubrick crew members, who can still be accessed today, would further expand the evidence that would help to determine in what way the process of collaboration had been affected by the changing circumstances over the years. It is possible that if the circumstances had been different, Kubrick's work practice might have taken a different shape.

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Abstract

Origin stories represent the information on the beginnings of forming collaborations, specifically in pre-production, in Stanley Kubrick's film crews. The common perception of Kubrick is that he was a brilliant tyrant with little to no ability to cooperate. The manner in which I challenge these myths is by analysing Kubrick's work practice as seen in the eyes of his co-workers and approaching it from a more sociological point of view.

The vast information available on the relationships between Kubrick and individual workers on his crew appears to take the form of data given in forms of interviews left to individual interpretation. Connecting them and looking from a broader theoretical perspective opens room for debates that have not been addressed from that angle. This paper presents the stories of origin that provide the information on the collaborative relationships and consequentially Kubrick's (un)collaborative nature itself. I explore the crew formation and indications it had for their career and their attitude towards film industry. Forming a good relationship can undoubtedly result in a good collaboration. But was that the case with Kubrick and how did it work?

Information obtained from interviews, data acquired from Kubrick's archive in London, and a careful analysis of the practices in the production permit to draw a conclusion on the nature of collaboration in Kubrick's crews.

Keywords

Collaboration, crew formation, hierarchy, creative control, autonomy.

Résumé

Origin Stories se réfère à l'étude de la formation des collaborations des équipes de Stanley Kubrick, particulièrement lors des pré-productions. On se représente généralement Kubrick comme un brillant tirant incapable de coopérer. Nous questionnerons ce mythe en analysant les pratiques professionnelles de Kubrick, telles que vues par ses collaborateurs, ainsi qu'en abordant la question d'un point de vue plus sociologique.

La vaste quantité d'informations disponibles quant aux relations qu'entretint Kubrick avec ses collaborateurs prend essentiellement la forme d'interviews, par conséquent ouvertes à interprétation. Mettre en relation ces diverses interviews et les confronter à des perspectives théoriques permet d'ouvrir un débat inédit. Cet article explore divers récits d'origines qui éclairent plusieurs relations professionnelles, et par conséquent le potentiel collaboratif de Kubrick lui-même. Nous explorerons la formation des équipes et les conséquences de ces expériences sur les carrières et les rapports à l'industrie cinématographiques de ces individus. La formation d'une relation solide permet indubitablement de mener à une bonne collaboration. Mais cela fut-il le cas pour Stanley Kubrick, et de quelle manière ?

Les données recueillies par les interviews, mais aussi dans les Archives Stanley Kubrick de Londres, associées à une analyse des pratiques de production permettent de conclure quant à la nature de l'aspect collaboratif des équipes de Kubrick.

Mots-clés

Collaboration, formation d'équipes, hiérarchie, contrôle créatif, autonomie.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I am a PhD student at the University of East Anglia finishing my research on Kubrick and his collaborators in terms of authorship and autonomy. I have been researching London's Kubrick Archive for over 3 years and have a long and useful practical background of a still active freelance assistant director.