

The first thematic lens flare in cinema history?

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I googled “thematic lens flare” and received zero results.

Eyes Wide Shut: Dr. Bill is invited by Sally to come inside.

Is (1.57.43) a momentous shot in cinema history? Is EWS *the first film to utilise a lens flare in a thematic way*? “Where the rainbow ends”—is death.

Reflections on the camera lens are used thematically at (1.54.30): Christmas light reflections overlay a door, behind which sits a nervy Dr. Bill. The colored lights indicate his agitated state of mind—recalling the usage of colored dots visible behind his head at (57.37): “You’re a long way from home.”

We see a rainbow flare while Alma is preparing the poisonous omelet or omelette (depending on your position) in PT (1.54.00).

What *might be* an intentionally thematic use of a lens flare: While Jack talks to Ullman, Jack’s foot neatly taps, yes, a lens flare (6.43). Whether he knows it or not, Jack is already consummately integrated with the Overlook (as he tells Wendy later: “it was as though I had been here before”).

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EXPANDED COMMENTARY.

The following is in two parts: Part I poses a question; Part II provides commentary.

I. GENERAL QUESTION

1. If EWS was shot over *fifteen months* of continuous shooting;
2. If the Sonata Café scene was shot *three different times* in *three different locations*;
3. If the Hotel Jason scene, about *three minutes in duration*, required *a week of shooting*;
4. If Domino's character (occupying a running time of about *eight minutes*) took *three months to film* . . .

If these examples are true, does it stand to reason that Kubrick would ignore a rainbow lens flare that occupies a prominent amount of frame-space (and overlays the film's male star) for almost TWO CONTINUOUS MINUTES of screen time?

[1. is well documented; 2. reported by Todd Field; 3. by Alan Cumming; 4. by Vinessa Shaw.]

II. COMMENTARY

1a. “Don’t you want to go where the rainbow ends?” Gayle and Nuala attempt to seduce Dr. Bill, who responds: “That depends where that is.” At this early moment in EWS, *the audience does not yet know “where the rainbow ends”*.

1b. Experiencing the visible world—being alive—is experiencing the phenomenon of color. *There is nothing visible to us without, first and foremost, color*. Form without color cannot be seen by human eyes.

1c. There are over *two dozen spoken references* to “see” or “seeing” in EWS.

2a. When Dr. Bill enters the Inner Room of Rainbow Fashions, he enters into an existential, metaphysical realm. Most of Kubrick’s films inhabit Rainbow Fashions. (1) Milch is dressed like a dishevelled Jack in *Shining*; (2) eighteenth-century garments recall *Barry Lyndon*; (3) location’s dimensions, and camera movement revealing location, recall opening shot of *Clockwork*; (4) daughter (*Lolita*), and Spanish garments (*Carmen* is a running theme throughout the book *Lolita*); (5) “Have you no sense of decency?” is *the*

classic phrase from American McCarthy era (*Strangelove*); (6) floor rug, its shape and color, recalls monolith; (7) mannequins recall *Killer's Kiss*.

2b. For human beings, the phenomenon of being alive requires *assuming a role (or roles) for a lifetime*, and living in the *artificial environment* of human civilization. Dr. Bill, emblem of logic and reason, believes himself a free-thinking individual. Actually, unwittingly, Dr. Bill is *a character inside an artificial construct of which he has no idea*. The Inner Room of Rainbow Fashions has the existential, absurdist vibe of Samuel Beckett and Pirandello.

2c. Kubrick built a set of Manhattan to—for one reason—demonstrate how what we call “real life” is itself as artificial as any art. EWS demonstrates how logic and reason are oases within a larger *dream story*.

3a. Dr. Bill visiting Sally’s apartment commences an unbroken continuum of *fifteen minutes of running time occupied with the theme of death* (HIV-positive Domino; Death stalking Dr. Bill; Ex-Beauty Queen fighting for life; Mozart’s Requiem as coffee shop muzak; dead in the morgue). Inside Sally’s we see the prominent rainbow lens flare.

3b. This rainbow lens flare is associated with (a) the dialogue at Ziegler's and (b) the thematic presentation of Rainbow Fashions. This lens flare is the *culmination* of a running theme of the film. This lens flare, in fact, *explains* a running theme of the film.

3c. CONCLUSION: Inside Sally's apartment, the rainbow lens flare *reveals* a fundamental thematic concern of EWS: that the "end of the rainbow"—is death.

4. QUESTION: *In what other film has a lens flare not only been associated with, but REVEALED a thematic meaning?*

Speculation awaiting confirmation: *The thematic lens flare in EWS is the first of its kind in cinema history.*

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