**From “The Sentinel” to 2001: A Space Odyssey**

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July 31, 2011

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I have now read and watched the Sentinel and 2001: A Space Odyssey twice, and the complexities of what was written, seems to have been completely missed or misinterpreted by the movie, at least if you consider just “The Sentinel” as the inspiration for the movie. In actuality the short story spawned the movie idea, but while the movie was being collaborated on by both Clarke and Kubrik, Clarke began the process of writing the actual 2001: A Space Odyssey book , which would give a larger range of imagery to effectively compare.

Using the short story, the only portion of the movie that is relevant is the section where they are on the moon. Sadly, even this section of the movie is difficult to compare, because there are elements in the scenes and adaptations that come directly from the book more than the short story, and the message of Clarkes book, is no longer the same message as the short story.

In order to appropriately, analyze the visual and auditory information that is relevant we must first understand the message that Clarke was trying to convey with the short story.

Reading the story as written by Clarke, I see someone who while writing science fiction, is writing science fiction to address philosophical issues that he foresees as legitimate issues that humanity should be thinking about in regards to space travel or space exploration.

In 1948 he finished his college degree in physics and mathematics , and as such would have been well connected to the scientific community of the day in possible projects and problems that were being considered or theorized, this would include the possibilities of space flight.

As such, I see the relevance in the ideas and concepts that he posses in “The Sentinel” as valid concerns for the day, because even during those days, humanity was already beginning to attempt to reach the stars, and in less than a decade of writing this story there was the making of history with the launch of sputnik I.

While I do not believe that he foresaw specific space exploration events, and the space race that ensued. I do believe that with the dropping of the atomic bombs during World War II he saw that if that energy were ever able to be properly harnessed it could easily be the key to the stars for humanity, and that we should consider the possible ramifications of what we may find.

This is clear as “The Sentinel” ends its story with the acknowledgement and stated belief of the purpose of the monolith. In that as it was no longer transmitting the signal of no change, and that the aliens that had deployed the monolith would return to investigate, and that humanity has no way of determining the intentions of those aliens good or bad until it is too late.

This of course should cause humanity to keep this thought in mind, if we ever happen to find unknown technology while exploring space. Without understanding why that technology exists, we cannot understand the ramifications that any interactions with that technology may incur.

With that basic message from the short story understood, the visual concepts of the movie in comparison to the short story can be put into proper perspective. The short story and the movie do not actually coincide until half way through the second act, when they are actually flying across the moons landscape heading towards the site of the monolith.

During the moon-traveling portion of the act, I believe that Kubrik does an extremely good job of translating the description of the moon, with its vastness of space, and many ranges of mountains and craters.

Unfortunately, that is where the similarities to the short story end as the descriptions from the book now take over. During the scene of traveling to the monolith, the vehicle they are in is flying, and while it does appear that it could have caterpillar movement on the ground, there is no description of this vehicle being able to fly in the short story, only in the book .

The description of actually finding the monolith is described as a glint of light at the top of a nearby mountain that catches the main characters eye, who then goes to investigate, only to find a huge plateau with the monolith being in an area that is untouched by the passing of time. When the book and movie both show the main character as someone that is just showing up onsite at the request of the controlling company to oversee the investigation of the monolith, which was dug out, in some form of archeological venture.

In the short story this discovery leads to the realization that the monolith was placed on the moon for a specific reason, and that now that the monolith had been disturbed indicating a sufficient level of intelligence the aliens would more than likely return, sooner than humanity may expect; and that we have no way of knowing how that alien race will react to our presence in space.

This is completely bypassed and ignored by both the movie and the book, as the message is changed from us needing to be cautious in our space exploration and any technology that we may find, to that of humanity intentionally attempting to locate the aliens, and in the end having the sole survivor of the exploration transformed into an immortal that protects humanity from its own destructive nature.

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