

FURTHER READING

Stanley Kubrick's 'Napoleon': The Greatest Movie Never Made

Edited by Alison Castle, Taschen, 1112pp,
£44.99, ISBN 9783836523356

Speculating on the 'what ifs' prompted by 'greatest films never made' lists is the cinephile's equivalent to the historian's alternate-history exercise: irresistible fun, frequently revealing, but ultimately every bit as imponderable. What if Orson Welles had adapted Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as planned, instead of a little picture called *Citizen Kane*? What would the reverberations have been for cinema history?

We can never know, of course, just as we can never know if Stanley Kubrick's unmade film on the life of Napoleon – which he began work on in 1967, and finally abandoned in 1971, after making *A Clockwork Orange* – would have been his 'masterpiece', as the jacket for Alison Castle's book confidently claims. But, just as the pre-production material for Welles's Conrad adaptation gives insights into his working methods, so the real fascination here is in losing yourself in the vast quantity of original material, mostly drawn from Kubrick's own archives – where it outweighed the holdings for many of his completed films. Among the material included here is correspondence between Kubrick and historian Felix Markham, interviews, costume sketches, the 'final' script, essays and more. You're granted a remarkable intimacy with Kubrick's thought processes, following him through his astoundingly thorough research (for example, over 15,000 location photographs and almost 17,000 slides of imagery related to Napoleon) and creative decision making.

This a slightly more manageable and affordable edition of a book published in 2009, which came packaged as a box, with smaller books covering certain areas housed inside. This new edition organises the material in the same way, but reproduces the contents in one weighty volume. It's the result of an admirably obsessive thoroughness worthy of its subject. ➡ **James Bell**



On parade: a costume test chez Kubrick