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Arthur Schnitzler´s *Traumnovelle* and Stanley Kubrick´s "Eyes Wide Shut": The Structure of Fantasy and Reality Then and Now

The experience of the fantastic has been variously interpreted by theorists as sensory illusion, a product of the imagination, an intrusion of mystery into the context of real life (Todorov 25-26), or a break with the established order "through an irruption of the inadmissible" (26) within everyday reality. Todorov posits the fantastic as a gateway between the uncanny and the miraculous leading to the contradiction of two worlds: the real and the supernatural, where the laws of nature are no longer operative or function in unknown ways (25). The *Traumnovelle* probes the uncertainty, ambiguity, and ambivalence of the fantastic experience on the border between these two spheres, where the fictional events become "incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected" (46). Most of the film critics reviewing Stanley Kubrick´s "Eyes Wide Shut" neglect to mention that it is based on a novella by the Austrian physician and writer Arthur Schnitzler which was first published in 1926. Conceding that it may be an "enigmatic masterwork," Derek O´Connor calls it "a searing dissection of marital deception, fantasy and sexuality shot in an ominous, heavy-handed gothic noir fashion..." (par. 3). The locale has been moved from Turn-of-the-Century Vienna to present-day New York, but the characters and the storyline remain essentially the same. Refusing to dismiss the Kubrick film glibly, as Michael Atkinson does, O´Connor admits that "there´s aspiration, allusion, intelligence and craftsmanship on display here" (par. 2). While Brian A. Gross is of

the opinion that Kubrick "had all but lost his passion and vision" (par. 5) in the years before his death (in March of ´99), Gregory Avery calls the film a "black valentine to the world, ...where the mysteries finally become enveloped themselves within mystery" (par. 1). He acknowledges Schnitzler´s influence and asks the important question: "What drew Kubrick to this material?" (par. 6)

Schnitzler was writing at the time when Freud was beginning to investigate the structure of the psyche and the nature of libidinal energy. Central to Schnitzler´s works is the power of Eros transcending the boundaries created by society and class, sometimes with fatal results. Love and death are closely linked, as they are in Freudian theory. Freud himself knew the novella and wrote to Schnitzler that he was pondering it: ". . . über Ihre Traumnovelle habe ich mir einige Gedanken gemacht" (Scheible 119). He found himself in agreement with many of Schnitzler´s ideas and considered him his double (121). Trained in physiology and neuropathology at the Vienna Medical Faculty by the same teachers, Ernst Brücke and Theodor Meynert, they shared a materialistic and pessimistic view of the human being, whose free will (according to the Helmholtz School of Medicine) was at the mercy of the unconscious and physical and chemical forces (Segar 114-115). Freud admired Schnitzler´s understanding of human drives and his undermining of cultural certainties and social conventions in his works (Scheible 121). In trying to liberate himself from the determinism of the unconscious during the last decade of his life, however, Schnitzler proposed giving greater attention to the "Mittelbewußtsein" or intermediate conscious, which corresponds to Freud's "Vorbewußtsein" (119), since

that is the threshold where unconscious drives are made conscious and conscious elements recede into the unconscious. Freud himself never explicitly differentiated between the conscious, subliminal, and unconscious levels at which fantasy operates, but he was interested in the links between these different systems, presenting fantasy "as a unique focal point where it is possible to observe the process of transition between the different psychical systems..." (LaPlanche and Pontalis 316). The topography of this process has been problematic for psycho-analysis, since the transaction between the private (mental, internal) and the physical (public, external) realms belongs to "the between perception and consciousness" posited by Lacan (56) in the transactional space of fantasy (Wright 84). Kubrick´s film operates in this realm between fantasy and reality or *Traum* and *Wirklichkeit*, which preoccupied Schnitzler and his era. The title of Schnitzler´s work, *Traumnovelle*, suggests the paradoxical nature of the experience described, since *Traum* alludes to the process of images rising into consciousness, while the *Novelle* is a realistic form defined by a very tight structure and a *Leitmotiv* (Heyse). The title of Kubrick´s film retains the paradox: "Eyes Wide Shut" alludes to seeing in a dream-like state, eyes being opened wide by dream events, fantasy, and real adventures resembling a nightmare. They lead to insights that remain hidden in the waking state and bring the main characters to a new level of consciousness in their relationship with each other by undermining the security of their everyday existence as a married couple with a young child.

In the *Traumnovelle*, Fridolin navigates a realistic universe in fin-de-siècle Vienna. With Albertine, he lives in an apartment near

the General Hospital in the Josefstadt (*Dream Story* 185). As a doctor, he is called to the bedside of a dying patient in the Schreyvogelgasse, but reality takes on a spectre-like quality as he walks into the night through the Rathauspark toward a coffee house near his apartment. Only a short distance from home, he feels far removed from the tranquil domesticity of the opening scenes of the story. The warm air of a false spring seems "pregnant with dangers" (193): those of his profession, which exposed him to a deadly disease like diphtheria; those connected with his heritage as a Jew, subject to possible violence by fraternity students (195); and those of promiscuous sexuality offered by whores. While he contemplates the proximity of death in his everyday life, Fridolin´s quotidian recedes more and more into a ghost-like realm, and he suddenly feels free from all responsibility and severed "from all connection with humanity" (197), so that he follows the invitation of a young prostitute, though he does not succumb to her advances. He was "moving away from the habitual sphere of his existence, into some other remote and unfamiliar world" (201). Such an exchange of universes is typically romantic, which by definition implies "fantastic" (Frenzel 300). For the German Romantic Novalis, the real world is exchanged for an ideal world, a mental construct, in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Hymnen an die Nacht*, and for E.T.A. Hoffmann, the real and ideal realms (both sublime and daemonic) are intertwined. Transcendence can take place in either direction. As an aesthete, Schnitzler belonged to a group of neo-romantics called Young Vienna, who (around 1900) formed a counter-movement to German naturalism, using symbolist and impressionist techniques (Pochlatko,

Koweindl, Amon 141). Like the romantics, Schnitzler explores the depths of the human soul or psyche, and like the impressionists in painting, he uses the real world as a point of departure for his probing of the mysteries of human subjectivity and emotion. As William M. Johnston points out, "Schnitzler sought to expose a latent world behind the manifest one. No less than Freud, Schnitzler believed that every impression imparted at once knowledge and illusion . . . . Hence the paradox . . . . that the familiar seems strange and the remote, ordinary" (173). Both as a doctor and as an artist, Schnitzler questions the determinism inherent in scientific and literary theories of his time by empowering the characters in this novella to transcend the limitations of their existence and to accept ethical responsibility by making moral choices and asserting their will as a result of the intrusion of the fantastic and uncanny in their lives.

For this purpose, the form of the novella is eminently suited. The origins of the novella may date back to the arabic makame of the tenth century (Hermes 7). It had didactic function, like the novella, which Auerbach dates back to the Renaissance (Kunz 5), a time of increasing individual consciousness. By confronting stress situations in which the security of the self was jeopardized, the main characters had to assert themselves against unexpected and incomprehensible events that undermined their ordered existence. One prerequisite for the novella was that it had to deal with real contemporary events and had to be "news" for the audience. According to Wieland, the central event had to be realistic, happening in the here and now (Kunz 34). Goethe defines it as "eine sich ereignete

unerhörte Begebenheit," i.e., an event which has actually occurred and never been heard of before (Kunz 34). The term "unerhört," (unheard of) may also be interpreted as meaning extraordinary, shocking. Thus, the novella differs from a story in that it must deal with an extraordinary event, in Paul Heyse´s opinion, an exceptional case: an "Ausnahmefall" (Kunz 66). Tieck calls this event unique, strange (Kunz 53). The norms by which the audience of the novella lived were presumed to be in contrast to the extraordinary events of the novella, so that a certain tension was created by the opposition of the two. A narrative frame anchoring the novella in a specific time and place offered a moral reference point and gave the audience a secure position from which the events of the novella could be judged, providing them with a certain distance toward these events. This distance derived from the conviction that the fate operative in the novella could not touch them.

While fate in the novella often manifests itself as an external force over which the individual has no control, in Schnitzler´s Traumnovelle, the crisis situation is provoked by marital discord originating with the sharing of sexual fantasies about and desire for people both partners met while on a holiday in the past. Like Schnitzler, Kubrick explores the fantasy realm of unrealized sexual encounters, and his critics fault him for that, calling the film "all tease" (O´Connor, par. 3), or "an agonizingly long, perversely dull, childishly conceived fantasia on marital sexual angst" (Atkinson, par. 1). While admitting that the film is "provocative, vivid, and strange (par. 1), " Michael Atkinson ridicules the central orgiastic scenes, where the main character obtains unauthorized entry to the

Secret Society that threatens his life once he is unmasked and discovered as an outsider. Precisely this, however, is the pivotal point of the novella, the extraordinary event at the center of the narrative: the magic realm full of danger and terror which denies access to the uninitiated. Kubrick´s widow Christiane correctly observes that it is not so much about sex as it is about fear (Schickel, par. 4). As in a symphony, the love and death themes are intertwined from the very beginning of the novella, reaching a crescendo in this central scene, where “the orgiasts, resenting William´s intrusion on their saturnalia, threaten him with humiliation and death, and he is ´redeemed´ only by the intervention of a mysterious woman, who pays for his life with her own” (Schickel, par. 3).

Kubrick is remarkably faithful to Schnitzler´s text, but he introduces the death theme somewhat earlier, at the Christmas party, where in an upstairs bathroom, a woman is on the verge of dying of a drug overdose. It is possible that she is the woman who saves Bill´s life when he is expulsed by the Secret Society, offering to die in his place. In the end, one wonders if the woman in the morgue was killed, committed suicide, or died accidentally, and her identity remains shrouded in mystery. In the novella, the love/death chord is struck for the first time at the bedside of Marianne´s father, where she confesses her love for Fridolin. It is the prelude to the encounters with the prostitute who carries a venereal disease (in Kubrick´s film it is AIDS) and the mysterious woman who offers to sacrifice her life for him. The coach carrying his friend Nightingale to the secret destination along the Alserstraße toward the Viennese

suburbs, possibly the Galitzinberg, becomes a hearse in his eyes, and refusing to turn back from his nocturnal odyssee, Fridolin insists, “My way lies forwards, even were it to my death” (Dream Story 219). Having arrived at his destination, he finds himself in a room full of ecclesiastical revellers, monks and nuns with masks, an eerie gathering with sacred music. He hears old Italian religious canticles that become secular, sensuous and ecstatic when the nuns shed their habits and reappear naked, wearing only a veil and a mask and begin dancing with the monks who had dropped their cowls to become courtiers in colorful costumes (220-222). Repeatedly, Fridolin is warned by a masked woman that he is risking his life by intruding on this gathering and finally is forced to leave in the hearse waiting outside. The love/death theme reaches a crescendo in the orgiastic meeting of the Secret Society, followed by the dénouement of his first return home, a prisoner in the hearse that drives him around the Liebhart Valley to an unknown destination. His intoxication with the mysterious woman gives way to “anxiety and fear” (234), yet at the same time a determination to find her again and to ascertain if all he had experienced during the past few hours had been a dream or hallucination, a delirium caused by diphtherial fever.

The peripatetic high point of the novella, however, is sustained by a second uncanny event, a doubling of the crisis situation central to the novella. While Fridolin ventured out into nocturnal Vienna to seek adventure and test his manhood in a threshold experience full of dangers, inviting and denying initiation at the same time, Albertine experienced sexual abandon with her fantasy lover in a dream more ecstatic than Fridolin´s encounter with the Secret Society. Her dream

mirrors his experience: He appears in a black cloak like the costume he had rented from Gibiser to attend the masked meeting, and he is sentenced to death by a princess who was his fantasy lover from their holiday in Denmark. In the novella, "Denmark" is the password for entrance to the Secret Society, connecting the fantasy sequence at the beginning to the central event. In the film, the password is "Fidelio," alluding to Beethoven´s opera and the notion of fidelity, which connects with the ending of the novella, where both partners return to each other and the security of their marriage. Day remnants (in Freudian terms *Tagesreste*) are apparent in Albertine´s dream, in which her fantasy becomes real in the embrace of the young Dane and perhaps countless others in an orgy that fills her with shame and horror at the same time she experiences sexual abandonment and bliss. She describes the emotional component of her dream as surpassing anything conceivable in a waking, conscious state. While in Schnitzler´s novella, Fridolin imagines Albertine safely at home in deep sleep after his encounter with Marianne, in the film, she "floated before his mind´s eye" (Schnitzler 197) yielding herself to the Dane. He is actually seeing her dream images (rendered in black and white inserts in the film), as she is tuning into his experiences with the Secret Society. Her narration of the dream when he returns home, like the confession of her sexual fantasies, arouses his anger, because his own experiences seem "ridiculous and insignificant" (247) by comparison, and his need for revenge motivates him to pursue his quest for sexual adventures and then to report them to her, to "get even with this woman who had revealed herself through her dream for what she really was, faithless, cruel, and treacherous, and whom at

that moment he thought he hated more profoundly than he had ever loved her" (247). Albertine´s confession of the content of her dream when Fridolin returns home for the first time can not lead to understanding and reconciliation between the spouses as long as he keeps his own secret adventures from her. He does not confess until his second return home when he sees the mask on the pillow next to Albertine´s face. In doubling the extraordinary central event, Schnitzler gives as much attention to Albertine´s dream as he does to her husband´s encounter with the Secret Society, while Kubrick renders only the highlights that connect with Fridolin´s real adventures and allude to Albertine's psychic connection with him. The director also retains the doubling effect of Schnitzler´s novella in the dénouement of the film, which evolves into a murder mystery, "a thriller with the possibility that conspiracies and murders have taken place" (Ebert, par. 2).

German theorists like August Wilhelm Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Theodor Storm, among others, consider the novella as the sister of the drama (Kunz 18). Like a play, it has rising action leading to the climax, or shocking event, and falling action toward a resolution of the central conflict. A novella does not show the development of the whole personality, but rather a segment which has tension, a crisis, and pointedly shows what human life is, bringing into focus the problems and themes which give the novella its structure and the "silhouette" so important to Paul Heyse (10). It is shaped by the "falcon" (reminiscent of Boccaccio´s *Decamerone*), a central symbol that functions as a *Leitmotiv*, alluding to an idea, person, or situation in music or literature. For both Schnitzler and Kubrick,

this organizing principle is the mask. Schnitzler´s novella opens with reminiscences about a masked ball during the carnival season, where Albertine and Fridolin engaged in flirtation with others, in order to escape the banality of the occasion. The trivial masked encounters introduce the themes of seduction, resistance, jealousy and illusion of missed opportunity, longing for freedom, danger, and adventure. In Kubrick´s film, masks appear for the first time on the wall of the first prostitute´s bedroom, perhaps symbolizing primal passion and inviting transgression of marital vows. The masked ball has been transformed into a Christmas party, alluding to the themes of love and redemption in the novella rather than ambiguity and deception. The two women Bill Harford encounters are not dominoes visually anticipating the hooded cloak and half mask of the participants in the central scene, but shallow beauties who promise to take Bill Harford to the end of the rainbow. This allusion, however, picks up on fairy tale elements and the idea of a magic realm which he enters by renting a hooded cloak and a mask from the owner of Rainbow Fashions. In the end, Bill finds the mask he wore at the secret orgy on the pillow next to his sleeping wife, which prompts him to confess to her in tears the events of the previous night, so that the film, like the novella, ends with forgiveness and reconciliation.

Kubrick expertly uses the dramatic structure of the novella in his film, lavishly and opulently rendering the images from Schnitzler´s text. In key scenes (the opening quarrel, Alice´s dream narrative, and the ending), he employs the author´s exact words, which sound utterly natural in the modern setting thanks to superb

acting by Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. In his last film, Kubrick deals with human problems which transcend time and are no less relevant today than they were a century ago. He conjures up the terror beyond the surface of the quotidian and, like Schnitzler, tests the boundaries of convention while posing moral questions in examining the power of eros and fantasy in our time. Anya Kubrick, one of Kubrick´s daughters, considers the film a very personal statement from her father, stating that he felt very strongly about its subject and theme, and that “he honed down in it exactly the ideas, principles and moral philosophies he had lived by” (Schickel, par. 20). The subject of the film, as Schickel points out, “is not sex itself, where there are plenty of conventions to guide the filmmaker, but sex in the mind, for which there are very few precedents to guide him” (Schickel, par. 4). Perhaps the director´s dilemma is that a fantasy when objectified on screen becomes real, losing its powerful allure. This may account for some of the negative criticism. But this film has its own kind of magic and fascination, and Kubrick masterfully manipulates his medium to create a haunting masterpiece that transposes fin-de-siècle Viennese decadence and ennui to the American contemporary scene where drugs create the altered state of consciousness leading to the events that transgress the boundaries of daily reality and threaten to destroy secure lives. Even though Kubrick adds the figure of Ziegler to explain away the mysteries of Bill´s adventures, there remains a note of doubt about his assertions that the threats of the Secret Society were staged and that all was a charade. In the end, it is not entirely clear where the truth lies, though the mask on the pillow has something to do

with it, hinting at magic and disenchantment, ecstasy and fear, fantasy and disillusionment and the range of emotions associated with them. It is the key to the revelation of secrets but keeps its mystery, ambiguity and eeriness, capturing the mood and allusiveness of the novella.

The movie derives its strange atmosphere in part from the doubling technique used by Kubrick, who incorporates Schnitzler´s novella in a modern frame, achieving an overlay of time: the turn of the century past and present, a spell-binding odyssey into the depths of the human psyche and the dark side of human nature, which knows no temporal boundaries. The haunting musical score, too, is a collage of melodies both nostalgic and modern, harmonious waltz rhythms and threatening atonality in the piano leitmotif associated with the Secret Society and the mask. The musical elements support or ironize the ideas and themes of the novella and with the imagery create spell-binding effects. Kubrick, like Schnitzler, offers no easy answers or reassuring certainties (Walker, par. 18). Both raise questions about the human mind and its construction of reality at the same time they explore the role of fantasy and the transgression of boundaries, revealing the dread beyond the surface of the quotidian and the fragility of human relationships.

In her review of “Eyes Wide Shut” Yazmin Ghonaim notes that Kubrick creates “curiosity, fear and anxiety” (par 1) in the viewer and attributes these effects to the careful construction of the film itself. Like Todorov, who locates these elements of the fantastic within the semantic field of literary texts (92), Ghonaim believes that the “haunting” mood of Kubrick’s film derives from the

constituent elements of the filmic medium: color, sound, camera movement, and transition techniques. The camera movements are fluid, scenes are carefully paced, dissolving into one another or fading slowly into black (Shargel 18). Recurrent images constitute leitmotifs not only within this film but other Kubrick films as well, revealing his signature as auteur (Ghonaim, par. 2). The female nude, for example, represents possibly fatal risk as well as aesthetic beauty and as a leitmotif (like the mask, mirrors, and curtains of light) connects various segments of the film, echoing or varying the connotation of the image, depending on the context in which it appears. Sound operates in a similar manner with musical leitmotifs and forms which connect past and present, supporting or ironizing the themes of the film by creating a mood of dissonance, poignancy, nostalgia and sentimentality, or evoking apprehension and fear.

A number of critics (Ghonaim, Wells, and Ebert) have commented on the grainy quality of the film, which serves as a screen or filter to distance the viewer. This technique creates a boundary or threshold between the objective and subjective spheres, offering the possibility of transgression and the vicarious pleasure of voyeurism: a central theme of the novella and an essential characteristic of filmmaking itself. As a stylistic device, it alludes to the delimitation of the real world in impressionist painting and literature in the interplay of objective representation and subjective impression with its attendant ambivalence and ambiguity about the certainty of perception. The producer, Jan Harlan, revealed that the director deliberately strove for a “painterly look” (Wells, par. 16) appropriate to Schnitzler’s impressionist technique. For

Kubrick, film is about seeing in the sense of illumination (Gelmis 300), revealing hidden aspects of the self and making visible what is ordinarily unseen (Jackson 13). He was of the opinion that "film operates on a level much closer to music and painting than to the printed word" (Gelmis 302), and he used images and music to communicate complex ideas and emotions. The nudes in "Eyes Wide Shut" bring the idea of beauty in proximity with death, alluding to aestheticism and the cult of death in fin-de-siècle Vienna. At the same time, they are linked to the decadence and *ennui* of a sophisticated modern drug culture in New York, creating a superposition of historically remote time periods. The indirect references to the social and psychological doubleness of the film (Lee Siegel, par. 1) create tension between the past and present implied in the complex interplay of images, symbols, and visual and auditory leitmotifs. The interior curtains of light, most conspicuous at the Ziegler ball appear again in Gibiser's costume shop, connecting disparate scenes and juxtaposing the Christmas theme with the carnival motif while inobtrusively designating stations on the journey of illumination. They may also function like stage curtains, dividing the film into distinct segments like acts of a play, in keeping with the dramatic structure of the novella.

Hertha Krotkoff has pointed out the contradiction and tension between the ordered bourgeois world of the novella's frame connected with the theme of marriage and the intrusion of instinct and drives which explode the norms and limits of that existence (84). She interprets the mask as a symbol of liberation from social constraints in the guise of anonymity with an accompanying loss of identity

through the *persona* the wearer assumes. This depersonalization releases the drives metaphorically associated with the night as a sphere of mystery ruled by its own incomprehensible laws. Gibiser in the costume shop is a key figure for transporting masked revellers into that unknown territory, like Charon who ferries the dead across the Acheron to the underworld (87). The mask, associated with carnival, opens up the realistic form of the novella to the intrusion of the fantastic, revealing its double character. As a narrative form, the fantasy component may be traced back to another traditional literary genre, the *menippea*: a form of satire present in ancient Christian and Byzantine literature, as well as Renaissance and Reformation writings (Jackson 14). Like the novella, it subverts the social order by presenting exceptional cases, violations of established norms of behavior and etiquette (14-15). By telling "of descents into underworlds of brothels, prisons, orgies, graves" (15), it violates social propriety and interrogates normative systems, transgressing legality and tabus by dealing with criminality, eroticism, madness and death (15). In its search for truth, spatial and temporal ordering systems dissolve. For Bakhtin, the *menippea* is linked to carnival, which turns life inside out in "a ritualized suspension of law and order" (16), breaking class boundaries and sexual prohibitions.

The fantastic events in Schnitzler's novella take place at the end of carnival season. By substituting a Christmas party at the beginning of the film for the conjured memories of a carnival ball, Kubrick transgresses against the pagan implications of this ritualized event which forms the temporal backdrop for the narrative.

At the same time, the Christian theme is inverted in the cult ritual at the Long Island mansion, which takes place in a hall with architectural features that allude to non-Christian cultures. The dance music that follows the eerie invocation of a black mass in another room is reminiscent of tunes at Ziegler's party. By musically connecting the two scenes, the theme of possible infidelity recurs, recalling the image of Alice dancing and flirting in the arms of the Hungarian Sandor to the tune of "When I fall in love, it will be forever." While "Strangers in the Night" is playing, Bill converses intensely with the mysterious masked woman, who warns him of the danger of intruding on the ceremonies of the Secret Society. The mental juxtaposition of these two scenes created by the musical score contrasts the previously frivolous mood at Ziegler's with the somber apprehension in this central scene. Because Bill has gained illicit entrance to the fantastic realm, where Eros and Death beckon simultaneously, he does not know the laws which govern this strange gathering. Consequently, his experience with the mask is an individual rather than a collective one, strange and transformative in the Sartrean sense (17-18): he is unmasked as an outsider, forced to drop his mask and reveal himself. The mask on the pillow next to his wife at home toward the end of the film is the memory clue which prompts him to drop his facade in the marital relationship, to stop lying about his adventures and confess everything, making reconciliation possible. In this way, his nocturnal adventure becomes a profoundly humanizing experience that ends with mutual forgiveness, though perhaps exacting a human sacrifice, reminiscent of pagan practices. The Christian theme in the film is subverted like the

collective carnival motif in favor of the individual mask as gate to the fantastic and as instrument of transformation.

In his effort to corroborate the reality of his experiences and at the same time to demythologize them (symbolically by returning his costume to Gibiser's shop), Bill is led into a murder mystery in the dénouement of the film, which paradoxically heightens his sense of the fantastic. Finding Gibiser's shop closed, he inquires at the Sonata Café about Nick Nightingale, who has disappeared without leaving a forwarding address and was last seen at his hotel in the company of two husky men in the early hours of the morning. Kubrick externalizes his search for truth in the double structure offered by the novella: In the light of day, Bill revisits the stations of his nocturnal adventures, consciously seeking answers to the mysteries he encountered. The intense blue light (a Romantic leitmotif) in the windows of the houses he visited the previous night gives way to the subtler blue of dawn, indicating his increasing awareness by the light of day and his return to the natural order of things. Yet in his search, he is followed by a stranger whose appearance is accompanied by the threatening piano leitmotif associated with the Secret Society, a musical score consisting of a single piano key struck with varying degrees of intensity (Pratt 1). It accompanies his return home when he enters the apartment as a prelude to the discovery of his mask on the pillow next to his sleeping wife, alluding to the encroachment of the fantastic in his private sphere and the dangers to which his family might be exposed in retaliation for his indiscretions.

Instead of using interior monologue to question the reality of perception, as Schnitzler does, Kubrick adds the figure of Ziegler to rationalize the mysteries of Bill's nocturnal odyssey. Assuming the role of his alter ego, Ziegler addresses his questions and doubts at the end. As part of the frame, he is the voice of reason within the fictional reality of Bill's world, deconstructing Bill's fantastic experiences as the carefully staged construction of an illusory world. But Ziegler's perspective is not entirely persuasive, since he identifies himself as a member of the Secret Society, anxiously concerned with preserving the anonymity of its members and practices. Kubrick's film gives the viewer a choice: 1) to believe Ziegler, or 2) to continue questioning reality with Bill. Todorov comments on the proximity of the detective story or murder mystery to the fantastic in the solutions they offer: 1) There may be several easy solutions, all false, or 2) one entirely improbable solution which is the only right one, though it seems to defy reason (49). Kubrick articulates both options, and the conclusion of the film suggests that the relationship of fantasy and reality ultimately revolves around the nature of perception and the interpretation attributed to the subjective experience.

As with Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), which was his first complete literary model for a film (Nelson 186), Kubrick found a psychological *mythos* in Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* which appealed to his musicality and could be rendered artfully in the visual medium of film. Burgess considered Kubrick's rendering of his own novel technically brilliant, poetic and full of new perspectives, not simply an interpretation but a new creation (345,

footnote 5). The same holds true for his last film: “Eyes Wide Shut” is the visual rendering of intra-psychic processes exploring the boundaries between reality and fantasy, that subjective and mental inbetween space where dream, daydream, and hallucination originate as products of subliminal and preconscious states which lead to the perception of fantastic and uncanny events. It is the objectified representation of mental processes which internalize outward reality and re-collect memories to match it: at once a presentation of images to the mind and perception of images recalled to mind. Ambiguity results in the interaction of objective and subjective levels: filmic representation and audience perception, with the possibility of false representation or false interpretation. The director was aware of creating ambiguity, believing that it was inevitable because of his medium. In his 1969 interview with Gelmis about 2001, he stated that “a certain degree of ambiguity is valuable, because it allows the audience to ‘fill in’ the visual experience themselves” (303). When dealing “on a non-verbal level, ambiguity is unavoidable” (303), because reactions to film images and music, like responses to all art forms, “are always deeply personal” (304). Like *A Space Odyssey*,” the most controversial film of 1968, “Eyes Wide Shut” proves Kubrick’s point that “a movie is a series of creative and technical decisions, and it’s the director’s job to make the right decisions as frequently as possible” (Gelmis 293, 314). While essentially keeping the structure and imagery of the novella, its themes and leitmotifs, Kubrick transforms his last literary model without destroying the spirit of the original, even though he uses cultural codes from a later historical era.

The negative reception of this film, as Lee Siegel points out, may be due to the cultural intrusion of art phobia as “dominant sensibility of the official culture” (par. 3). Critics denounced the film on the basis of pre-release publicity and disappointed expectations, or on the basis of Kubrick’s personality, using Frederic Raphael’s memoir *Eyes Wide Open* as a guide and neglecting to look at the film as a genuine work of art, an aesthetic universe full of puzzles, riddles, and games, highly orchestrated and stylized, yet full of erotic tension (Siegel). Stefan Mattessich, who considers “Eyes Wide Shut” the director’s “final filmic caricature” (par. 3), notes that the title of the film pre-figures critical misrecognition, because “a failure to see is inscribed within perception itself” (par. 3). He juxtaposes the emotional, cathartic elements of the film with its critical and rational aspects (par. 1), analyzing Kubrick’s use of caricature as a device for social critique in which exaggeration and typecasting satirize the pretensions of the bourgeoisie in anti-romantic fashion (par. 4). Kubrick uses visual and auditory cues (sentimental or nostalgic music, hesitating or slurred speech, exaggerated gestures) as a distancing technique, especially in the early scenes (Ziegler’s ball, the quarrel scene), to give the appearance of artificiality to the characters before they embark on their internal and external journeys of self-discovery. The “generic simplifications of caricature” (Mattessich, par. 5) in the frame reveal the hollowness and superficiality of society and create tension between the emotional and psychological drama that unfolds within the fantastic sphere. They heighten the sense of surreality of the real as opposed to the more profound reality of the fantastic,

subverting expectations and denying both the norm for the frame and the fantastic experience. Schnitzler violates the novellistic genre by using an essentially realistic form to explore mental processes which provide the interactive space for dream and fantasy, while Kubrick denies the norm for fantasy by rendering it concrete in alluring realistic images that seem to subvert the "as-if" mode of the fantastic. Although Kubrick adheres to Schnitzler's impressionist technique, highly conscious of artistic theory, he subverts the realism-based objective sphere of the film with caricature as a distancing device from the social frame and its conscious operations. As in his literary model, the two-dimensionality of the main characters is transformed by the introduction of the fantastic in their lives, making them real and believable and leading them from superficiality to a more authentic existence.

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