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**DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA**

**Behind *Traumnovelle* and *Eyes Wide Shut*:  
Representation of women as passive subjects and  
Freud's uncanny feeling from "The Uncanny"**

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## **Statement of Intellectual Honesty**

**Your name:**

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**Title of Assignment:** Behind *Traumnovelle* and *Eyes Wide Shut*: representation of women as passive subjects and Freud's uncanny feeling from "The Uncanny"

I declare that this is a totally original piece of work; all secondary sources have been correctly cited. I also understand that plagiarism is an unacceptable practise which will lead to the automatic failing of this assignment.

Signature and date:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Georgina", with a horizontal line drawn through it.

January 19, 2024

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## Abstract

“Things have changed a lot between men and women since Schnitzler’s time.”

Frederic Raphael (1994)

“Have they? I don’t think they have.”

Stanley Kubrick (1994)

The novel written by Arthur Schnitzler, *Traumnovelle*, and its film adaptation, *Eyes Wide Shut* directed by Stanley Kubrick, narrate the actions of Fridolin: a doctor who after having a conversation with his wife (Albertina) about their sexual fantasies, decides to follow his desires. Throughout the book, the author gives us a male point of view of how Fridolin’s uncanny feeling takes control of him as a consequence of Albertina’s fantasies and dreams (in which she is unfaithful and lets people crucify her husband).

When *Eyes Wide Shut* was released, many critics determined that the movie did not have enough sexual scenes, as it was expected to be “the sexiest film ever”. However, for Stanley Kubrick, this was an opportunity to change the point of view that Arthur’s Schnitzler gave to the novel and give women characters more prominence. During the novel, Fridolin tends to blame Albertina for her fantasies and incarnates a chauvinist position. Nevertheless, I propose that Arthur Schnitzler, by writing through the man’s point of view, gives the reader a distorted vision of the events, and Stanley Kubrick, by changing the aim of the work, gives women more importance.

Therefore, my aim is to demonstrate that in *Traumnovelle* the main objective of the work is to demonstrate that the uncanny of the male character takes control of him and makes him blame the woman and carry out a series of actions that cause the infidelity in the relationship, and in *Eyes Wide Shut*, the importance the director does of women characters does not equal to give a feminist point of view.

To accomplish this TFG, I will be analysing the thoughts and actions of the characters of both movie (*Eyes Wide Shut*) and the novel (*Traumnovelle*). To make a proper dissertation, they will be analysed with Freud’s theory of “The Uncanny” and from a genre perspective. Likewise, the shots, the scenes, and how *Eyes Wide Shut* was produced, will be compared with Arthur Schnitzler’s use of words.

**Keywords:** *Dream Story*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, uncanny, gender, Stanley Kubrick, Arthur Schnitzler.

## **1- Introduction**

In 1926, a Viennese writer called Arthur Schnitzler published *Traumnovelle*, a *novelle* (as the title indicates) that, through the story of a series of infidelities inside the marriage between Fridolin and Albertina, mixes two realities: dreams and the reality itself.

This blurring between dreams and reality is directly related to “The Uncanny” of Sigmund Freud: the specialist philosopher of psychoanalysis. By reading this novel, the uncanny feeling and the psychoanalysis of Freud are understood. Another aspect to be taken into account, as the novel was written in the early 1900s, is the role of women in the book: the feminine characters that appear in this *novelle* are represented as passive characters.

Furthermore, in 1999, Stanley Kubrick published *Eyes Wide Shut*, a cinematographic adaptation of *Traumnovelle*. The movie was expected to be “the sexiest film ever”, but the director used the opportunity to recreate Schnitzler’s work to give the story a feminist point of view by giving more prominence to women characters.

### **1.1- Schnitzler, Freud, and the psychoanalysis**

Arthur Schnitzler was born in 1862, in Vienna, and studied medicine at the University of Vienna, the same university where Sigmund Freud, a very influential philosopher, and author of famous works like “The Ego and the Id” or “Studies on Hysteria”, studied.

Although they studied at the same place, it was not until 1906 that Freud contacted Schnitzler to eulogize his novels.

In 1922, for his sixtieth birthday, Freud wrote the second and last letter to Schnitzler. The philosopher mentioned that he had been avoiding meeting him because of his thoughts about the author being his double. Even though he mentioned the writer as his double, he did not think he had an identical doppelgänger, the philosopher explains:

“Not that I am easily inclined to identify myself with another, or that I mean to overlook the difference in talent that separates me from you, but whenever I get deeply absorbed in your beautiful creations I invariably seem to find beneath their poetic surface the very presuppositions, interests, and conclusions which I know to be my own” (Freud, 339)

He also mentions in the letter that “Your determinism as well as your skepticism-what people call pessimism-your preoccupation with the truths of the unconscious and of the instinctual drives in man, your dissection of the cultural conventions of our society, the dwelling of your thoughts on the polarity of love and death” (Freud, 339) moved the “uncanny feeling of familiarity” (Freud, 339) in him. Freud, in his work, “The Uncanny”, defines the uncanny as a “sudden revelation of that which has long remained hidden” (Wisely, 122).

By considering the letter, in the *novelle*, it can be identified connections between the behaviour of the characters and the theory of “The Uncanny” of the famous philosopher.

## **2- Analysis of *Traumnovelle***

### **2.1- Introduction to *Traumnovelle***

*Traumnovelle* or *Dream Story* (in English) is a novel written by Arthur Schnitzler and published in 1926. In the *novelle*, the author explains the story of a marriage that leaves the taboo of sexual fantasies apart and has a conversation about them. As the female main character, who is called Albertina, explains how she has had fantasies before the marriage, an uncanny feeling is awoken in the male main character (Fridolin) and leads him to commit a series of infidelities.

The infidelities bring him into a secret club where an anonymous woman will have to sacrifice herself in order to save Fridolin’s life. Fridolin justifies his actions with Albertina’s dream in which she betrays Fridolin’s confidence by committing an infidelity and letting him get murdered. At the end of the *novelle*, the marriage has a last



conversation about the incidents that have happened recently, and they argue to ignore them.

If an analysis of the title is made, the translation in English of *Traumnovelle* is *Dream Story* as all the story revolves around dreams and reality being mixed, but the University of Minnesota, analysing the title in German, arrived to the conclusion that “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).” (Borchard, 3). Thus, in *Traumnovelle*, the relationship between the alteration of Fridolin’s conscious and unconscious is practically proven by the title, and the mention of *novelle* in it, demonstrates that the book will be a short novel that has a *Wendepunkt*: a decisive action that causes the developing of the argument. In this case, the lector finds it at the very beginning, when Fridolin and Albertina have the initial conversation that affects Fridolin's masculinity.

## **2.1- Main topics of the *novelle***

If a superficial reading of the novel is made, the main topic that would be identified would be “infidelities”, as the plot focuses on the infidelities of Fridolin towards Albertina after having the conversation about their premarital fantasies, but if a thorough reading is made, the main topic noticeable in the *novelle* is the blurring between the reality, the fantasy, and the dreams.

This blurring of reality is seen through the protagonist's continuous references to not knowing whether what he is living is real or not and the fighting against his thoughts of returning home. This leads us to two of the main topics I will be exposing in this TFG: the uncanny feeling and the *Mittelbewußt*.

The objectification and the submission of the women is another main topic of *Traumnovelle* that the author unconsciously portrayed in the characters: the submission of the anonymous woman and how Albertina is portrayed during the *novelle* are two examples of it.

## **2.2- The *Mittelbewußt***

Schnitzler, in relation to Freud's psychoanalysis (although he supported the theory), had a different opinion: he thought that the division between the ego, the superego, and the id was not necessary, as he reckoned that some people were "predetermined to do more good than others" (Wisely, 131) this meant that some humans had more from the id than the superego and vice versa. Although this little difference, both, the author and the philosopher, had ideas in common: they both believed in the existence of the unconscious and the conscious.

Furthermore, Schnitzler supported the idea that the area between the unconscious and the conscious was important and named it *Mittelbewußte*. This part of the psyche, according to the author's theory, is more accessible than Freud's unconscious and it stores the dreams and the behavior control mechanisms.

"Eine Einteilung in Bewußtsein, Mittelbewußtsein und Unterbewußtsein käme den wissenschaftlichen Tatsachen näher. Das Mittelbewußtsein [...] ist das ungeheuerste Gebiet des Seelen- und Geisteslebens; von da aus steigen die Elemente ununterbrochen ins Bewußte auf oder sinken ins Unbewußte hinab. Das Mittelbewußtsein steht ununterbrochen zur Verfügung."

"A division into consciousness, middle consciousness and subconsciousness would come closer to the scientific facts. The middle consciousness [...] is the most immense area of the soul and spiritual life; from there the elements rise uninterruptedly into the conscious or sink down into the unconscious. The middle consciousness is uninterruptedly available." (Schnitzler, qtd. in Alexandra, 78)

The *Mittelbewußte* has a very important role in the novel, it can be seen in the characterization and the continuous thoughts of Fridolin that are narrated.

After the publication of the book, Freud admitted “that a work of art completed what a scientific theory was incapable of explaining.” (Wisely, 131) meaning that exemplifying the existence of the conscious and the unconscious makes understand better the theory of the psychoanalysis than the theory itself.

As mentioned before, the *Mittelbewußt* is the part of the psyche where the conscious and the unconscious connect and where the negative thoughts and impulses are repressed. This part of the psyche is present throughout the *Traumnovelle*.

In the *novelle*, Fridolin fights against his thoughts continuously as they are divided between the responsibility (going home) or following the repressed thoughts that have come to light (keep the adventure): “He shuddered slightly and decided he’d rather go anywhere than home”. (Schnitzler, 55). “No, I can’t turn back, he thought. I must go through with this, even if it means death.” (Schnitzler, 56). This frustration the character experiences is caused as a consequence of Albertina explaining him her fantasy; Fridolin stops repressing his desires and starts acting and doing what his mind orders him without repressing and filtrating bad behaviors, meaning that Fridolin’s *Mittelbewußt* fails from the very beginning of the novel, and makes the character perceive the reality in a distorted way: “Ever since this evening’s conversation with Albertina he was moving farther and farther away from his everyday existence into some strange and distant world.” (Schnitzler, 36)

For Schnitzler, something that was positioned in the *Mittelbewußt* apart from the repressed thoughts, were the dreams. He understood them as a way of communicating or perceiving situations. During his whole life, to inspire himself for his novels, the author made the decision to write his dreams to make an analysis of them. In one of these dreams, Schnitzler explained how “his wife Olga is taken to her execution while Schnitzler himself does not care about this in his dream” (Beuerle and Schredl, 165). This dream

appears to have a similarity with Albertina's dream where Fridolin is crucified, and Albertina seems not to care. Albertina's dream can be interpreted as the way the vision the character has towards her relationship and the situation she is living: her relationship is plenty of unfaithfulness and it is starting to die. This is a manner of the author to relate the novel directly with him.

### **2.3- The uncanny feeling in Fridolin**

Freud directly relates the uncanny with the blurring of the wall between fantasy and reality "... an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred" (qtd in David, 57), and, as a consequence of this relation, he thought that Sand-man was related to it "the sense of the uncanny attaches directly to the figure of the Sand-Man and therefore to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes" (qtd. in David, 56). The relation between the uncanny and Sand-Man is made because in E. T. A. Hoffman's "Sand-Man", the main character, Nathaniel, confuses the reality and the fantasy of the myth, causing a blurring between reality and fantasy or dreams. Schnitzler, in this case, in *Traumnovelle*, reflects the "uncanny" throughout the book.

The story is narrated from a subjective perspective: Fridolin's mind. Therefore, the reader experiences reality through Fridolin's eyes, not objectively.

As the reader reads through Fridolin's mind, the sexual fantasy of Albertina appears in Fridolin's thoughts and is narrated "At the same time, he thought of his wife, without knowing why, and he was conscious of some bitterness and a vague animosity against the man with the yellow handbag on the hotel stairs in Denmark." (Schnitzler, 24). This demonstrates how the fantasy is the principal cause of the rejection of the idea of returning home "He felt strangely disinclined to go home" (Schnitzler, 26) and starting his adventure.

In *Traumnovelle*, the “uncanny” feeling is seen from the very beginning. When both, Fridolin and Albertina, have the conversation about their fantasies, it supposes to Fridolin a loss of his masculinity and a feeling of jealousy arises inside of him “There was a scornful expression about his mouth” (Schnitzler, 15): it is in that moment where the *Mittelbewußt* fails and the uncanny feeling is freed, takes charge of Fridolin and supposes the realisation of the night adventure of the main character.

After refusing to go home, Fridolin decides to go to a café near his residence. During his walk, he realises that he has passed the café, and the character keeps repeating that his life feels unreal:

“He was in narrow street in which only a few doubtful-looking women were strolling about in a pitiful attempt to bag their game. It’s phantomlike, he thought. And in retrospect the students, too, with their blue caps, suddenly seemed unreal. [...] Albertina, too, whom he could see in his mind’s eye soundly sleeping, her arms folded under her head—even his child lying in the narrow white brass bed, rolled up in a heap, and the red-cheeked governess seemed to belong to another world”. (Schnitzler, 31).

These thoughts provoke confusion to the reader: is he dreaming? Or is he dissociating from reality? That is what Schnitzler wanted to create: the blurring between fantasy and reality. Moreover, the reality that is narrated, whether is real or not (as Fridolin is reassured that it is not real), frees him from his responsibilities “Although this idea made him shudder a bit, it also reassured him, for it seem to free him from all responsibility, and to loosen all the bonds of human relationship”. (Schnitzler, 31)

The confusion the character is experimenting continues with the meeting the protagonist has with Mizzi: an underage prostitute who approaches him with a question in which she seems to know Fridolin’s profession although they do not know each other “Won’t you come with me, doctor?” (Schnitzler, 31).

After the meeting with Mizzi, the blurring of reality is still seen when he is reunited with Nachtigall, an old friend from the medicine career. Nachtigall explains to Fridolin

that he works as a pianist in a secret club. He continues to explain that, to enter to this club, a password is needed. This password, which is confessed to Fridolin, is “Denmark” and it is a clear allegation of the fantasy of Albertine with a Danish sailor which is the trigger of the protagonist’s behaviour.

After the anonymous woman “redeems” Fridolin in the secret club, a feeling of dissociation appears again “Perhaps at this moment he was lying at home in bed—and everything he had experienced was merely delirium?” (Schnitzler, 75) and with the password and the past events it would be coherent that the actions were only in the character’s mind. The reader does not know if it is all in Fridolin’s mind or if it is really happening.

The next day of the events, Fridolin has a sense of desire to find the woman who has saved his life in the secret club. After finding out in the newspaper an article which explains that a woman has committed suicide, Fridolin has a feeling that this woman is the anonymous woman that had met last night. In order to find her, he visits the morgue and there, an uncanny feeling runs through Fridolin’s veins again: “indeed, he almost felt that a vague and distant look from underneath her eyelids was searching his face. He bent over her, as if magically attracted.” (Schnitzler, 121). The protagonist seems to be attracted to the dead body and out of the reality.

Albertina’s dream is an important aspect and the last that will be mentioned of the uncanny feeling that Fridolin continuously experiences: when she narrates her dream, she explains that she is with another man and surrounded by other couples: being a reference to what has Fridolin experienced during that night in the secret club “And for a long time, I had not been alone with this one man on the meadow. Whether there were three, or ten, or a thousand other couples I don’t know” (Schnitzler, 83).

The events mentioned confirm the hypothesis of Freud's "The Uncanny" and psychoanalysis influence in Schnitzler's piece of art: the narrator (Fridolin) confuses himself and the readers in the sense that they do not know whether what is happening is real or just a dream.

#### **2.4- The representation of women in a passive role**

In Freud's 1932 work "The Femininity", the author wrote that the "masculine" was usually related to "activeness" and the "feminine" to "passivity" and believed that this had to be with the fertilisation of the ovary: the ovary stays immobile in a passive way while it waits for it to be fertilised. Therefore, he considers that the passive behavior of women and the active behavior of men is caused by the biological aspects of the beginning of life. Considering the fact that Freud and Arthur Schnitzer had very similar principles as he was defined by Freud as his "double", the passivity of women is one of the principal aspects of the novel that can be identified through a gender perspective. During the novel, the author gives us several cases of it:

Firstly, when Albertina appears (which is not very often), she appears as a passive woman character. The character of Albertina embodies a passive subject who barely leaves home: it is not described in the book that she does any other activity than cleaning or taking care of her daughter "Albertina would not stay in bed longer because of her duties as housewife and mother." (Schnitzler, 7). This type of behaviors in the 1920s were barely seen in real life, as women after the First World War, became emancipated and had the opportunity to work and be independent from their husbands.

Another aspect to consider about Albertina is that, when she discovers Fridolin's adventures, Fridolin expects that she will forgive him because he considers that the dream she had is a justification to his actions and that she will blame herself for dreaming about his death: "Fridolin confidently hoped that, remembering her own dream, she would not

be inclined to take this too seriously, no matter what might have happened” (Schnitzler, 125).

Mizzi is another example of the subordination of women towards men and women's denigration. She is an underage woman who is practicing prostitution in order to win money, ““ Seventeen”, she said, and sat on his lap, putting her arms around his neck like a child. (Schnitzler, 33). In this chapter, Fridolin’s masculinity is hurt by Mizzi: the main character tries to sexually abuse the child after her words.

“ “ You’re simply afraid”, she said softly—and then to herself in a barely audible voice: “It’s too bad”. These last words made the blood race through his veins. He walked over to her, longing to touch her, and declared that he trusted her implicitly and saying so he spoke the truth. He put his arms around her and wooed her like a sweetheart, like a beloved woman, but she resisted, until he felt ashamed and finally gave up.” (Schnitzler, 34)

Fridolin's attempt to abuse his power as a man demonstrates the superiority he thinks men possess and verifies that the work is written under Freud’s principle in which he states that women are passive subjects.

Apart from the passive role of women, the objectification of women can be identified too. At the very beginning of the *novelle*, Schnitzler describes the protagonist and his love life “He was, in fact, still in the prime of youth, he had a charming and lovable wife and could have several women in addition, if he happened to want them.” (Schnitzler, 27), by using these words, the author portrays women as an object that men can possess whenever they want.

In the scene of the secret club, women are seen as objects too (this will be more noticeable in *Eyes Wide Shut*). In the club, whilst the men are dressed as cavaliers, women are naked and seen as objects of observation to cause male pleasure “The delight of beholding was charged to an almost unbearable agony of desire. And the others seemed to experience a similar sensation.” (Schnitzler, 59). As an object, when the anonymous woman warns him about the danger he is in, Fridolin does not take it seriously, he thinks



the woman is going to give him her services, as she is perceived as a “sexual toy”: “But I know what I’m doing. You are not all here just to make us mad by looking at you. You are doing this to unnerve me still more”. (Schnitzler, 61)

Furthermore, in this work, Schnitzler clearly relates women figures with the dead, sacrifice, and dead coming to life, but in a manner in which the topic is not related to horror. To understand what Schnitzler wanted to share, it is better to know that when Freud published “Über Psychoanalyse”, Schnitzler had a very different opinion about the dream symbols and “the idea that sexuality supercedes all other determining causes for behaviour” (Wisely, 132), and, as Wisely stated, he did not agree to what Freud mentioned in his work about the libido (the philosopher wrote that the opposite of the libido was death wish) “The opposite of Freud’s libido concept is not for Schnitzler the death wish” (Wisely, 132), meaning that death wish and sexual desire can coexist.

When Fridolin must run away from the secret club to escape from the danger, the anonymous woman decides to sacrifice herself to save Fridolin’s life: a person who is completely unknown to her. The murdering of the woman changes the vision of her through the eyes of Fridolin and makes her desirable. “Life means nothing to me if I must leave here without you.” (Schnitzler, 68). The anonymous woman, therefore, embraces the idea of a passive woman who gives her life to a man as hers did not have any value and confirms the theory of Schnitzler that affirmed that death could provoke a pleasant feeling.

During the *novelle*, therefore, women incarnate the vivid figure of what Freud reckoned the feminine behavior should be: “Freud considered was their biologically destined position as subordinate to men.” (Revesz, 325). Schnitzler portrays women as housekeepers (Albertina), sexual objects, and passive objects throughout the book. This

point of view provokes in the reader a certain rejection to women's actions, mostly to Albertina's dream.

At the end of the novel, the chauvinism does not cease. Albertina and Fridolin decide to keep the relationship and forget about what Fridolin has done and what Albertina has dreamed, but if an interpretation of the end is made, two interpretations can be extracted:

Fridolin seems not to forgive Albertina for what she has thought in the past. Albertina's dream supposes an offense to Fridolin and his masculinity, a reason to justify his actions and blame her. As a result, Fridolin superimposes his masculinity and, as Albertina knowing that she can not do anything to contradict his husband (she is a passive subject), comes to the conclusion that both, her dream and his husband's reality have the same seriousness and will not break the relationship: "I think we ought to be grateful that we have come unharmed out of all our adventures, whether they were real or only a dream". (Schnitzler, 126)

Another of the interpretations that can be made by considering the familiar situation is that, Albertina, in order to not alter his daughter's childhood, decides to continue in the relationship: she does not want to get a divorce to protect her child.

## **2.5- Conclusion**

In *Traumnovelle*, the reader finds in several situations that Fridolin does not know if the events he is living are real or not. The whole novel is a constant fight between dreams and reality and that is what makes this *novelle* a piece of art. Although the author's main purpose was to confuse the reader, another aspect of the novel can be clearly analysed nowadays: the passive role the woman has been given.

Albertina, who is supposed to be a protagonist, only appears on a few occasions. She is a housekeeper and as she is aware of her condition and her position in the

relationship, she knows that whether she accepts or not the events that have happened, who will have the last opinion and decide what is going to happen is going to be Fridolin. Another three passive roles that are seen are Mindy, the underage prostitute who sexualizes herself and is almost abused by the protagonist, the anonymous woman who sacrifices her life to an unknown man, and the women who are part of the secret club who are used as sexual objects: they are trapped in a passive role where they only have a function: give pleasure to men.

To conclude, *Traumnovelle* is a work that although the main aim is to entertain the readers and confuse them with an uncanny feeling, makes them reflect on society and how women were perceived in the 1900s.

### **3- Analysis of *Eyes Wide Shut***

#### **3.1- Introduction to *Eyes Wide Shut*:**

*Eyes Wide Shut* is a movie directed by Stanley Kubrick and starred by Tom Cruise, who represents Fridolin (Bill Harford), and Nicole Kidman, who is Albertina (Alice Harford). The screenplay was made by Kubrick and Frederic Raphael and was considered finished on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1999 (four days before the director's death).

This movie is the film adaptation of *Traumnovelle*. Although it is the only movie published that is based on this *novelle*, in 1930, Arthur Schnitzler had written a complete screenplay of *Traumnovelle* to make a movie directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst. The screenplay ended with the entrance of Fridolin in the costume shop. Even though *Eyes Wide Shut* is a very good adaptation, some details differ from the original work as the blurring of the fantasy and the reality wall, or the importance that is given to women.

### **3.1- Differences between *Traumnovelle* and *Eyes Wide Shut***

The book by Arthur Schnitzler is situated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Vienna at the end of Carnival. The movie, on the other hand, is situated in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in New York in the pre-Christmas period.

Although the movie is located in New York and from Hollywood, there are some references to the place of origin of Schnitzler: the soundtrack of the movie contains “Vienna, City of my Dreams” by Rudolf Siczynski and the password of the secret club changes to “Fidelio” which it appears to be the title of an Opera from the famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

The first characteristic that is remarkable of the difference between the book and the movie is the beginning: the book starts with both parents taking care of their daughter who is reading, but the movie starts with a shot of the nude body of Alice (Albertina’s incarnation) preparing for a pre-Christmas party (which in the book is a Carnival party). In the party, the main character (in the movie called Bill Harford), will meet for the first time after a long time his friend from medicine (Nachtigall). In *Traumnovelle*, Nachitgall appears a lot after when Fridolin enters the café after his patient’s death.

The initial party has a lot of importance for the plot of the movie. Unlike the book, the movie shows the woman who will save Fridolin’s life in this scene: Bill will have to visit her due to an overdose which will be her cause of death afterward.

In the ball, Fridolin and Albertina meet and flirt with people. That will be the cause of the conversation that makes Fridolin lose control over his repressed impulses. In the film, however, although both explain their fantasies after the party, the screenplay focuses on the aggressive manner Alice explains the fantasy to Bill. Bill’s reaction indicates his chauvinist ideals: he thinks that women only think about feelings and

commitment and that men only flirt with women because of their physical appearance or because of sexual interests.

According to what Egon Schwarz said, Victor Ziegler, the character who needs Bill Harford to help him with the woman with an overdose and it appears to be part of the secret club, functions as a *deus ex machina*, as he explains to Bill that the girl who has saved him, is, in fact, the same girl who was saved by the doctor in the Christmas party. Although there are some characteristics that confuse the audience: the name of the costume shop which is Rainbow (a place where the models who flirt with Bill mention him to go), and the fact that the daughter of the owner of the shop tells him which cloak to get, by ending the movie in this manner, Kubrick closes all the open borders that Schnitzler left opened in the book to let the readers think and conspire if the story has been part of a dream or the reality.

Throughout the book, as mentioned before, there are several occasions where the wall between reality, the dreams, and Fridolin's thoughts are blurred. The story mostly focuses on trying to confuse the reader with details like the password from the secret club, the scene where he desires the dead body of the woman from the club, or the mentioning of Fridolin's dissociation from reality. However, in *Eyes Wide Shut* the vision of the audience is not mostly focused on this blurring. Kubrick gives more importance to Bill's actions, infidelities and to portray naked women than to his internal voice. This vision was defined by C. H. Helmetag as a "voyeur vision".

### **3.2- *Eyes Wide Shut* patriarchy's point of view**

In Kubrick's movie, the objectification, and the possession of women under the patriarchy is a lot more noticeable than in the book.

Firstly, in the first shot of the movie in which Alice appears dropping her dress to the floor, the camera shows the spectator her nude body, objectifying her and making, as

Helmetag said, a voyeur vision in which the object to be seen is the woman. The showing of men's naked bodies will be performed only three times in the whole movie; however, naked women will appear in fifteen scenes during the two hours and a half the film lasts, meaning that the spectator is under the patriarchy's eyes: women are sexualized.

Gender roles are portrayed and seen in the film as in the book. The scenes of Alice taking care of her daughter are displayed several times and she is the one who, in the very beginning of the movie controls and explains to the babysitter what she has to do: she is used to taking care of the house and Helena (the daughter). The couple follows the gender stereotypes as in the novel: the woman in the relationship is a housekeeper who takes care of her child and is always waiting for her husband to come back home, and her husband (Bill) works until it's dark and, in this case, commits infidelities.

In the Christmas party, in which Victor Ziegler is the host, both, Bill and Alice seem to flirt with other people. Bill flirts with two young women who are models and appear to be captivated by Bill's profession: he is a doctor. The two young women indicate how doctors are very smart, therefore, that makes the character more attractive. The models are represented as two women who try to seduce Bill in order to have sex with him; the director redirects the scene by making Bill the victim.

"Model 2: Do you know what's so nice about doctors?

Bill: Usually a lot less than people imagine.

Model 2: They always seem so... knowledgeable." (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 11:13)

On the other hand, Sandor Savos, the man who attempts to seduce Alice, approaches Alice only because of her beauty. When he asks for her profession, he expresses with irony how it is a shame that she is a housekeeper:

"Sandor Savos: What do you do, Alice?

Alice: Well, at the moment...I'm looking for a job. I used to manage an art gallery in soHo, but it went broke.

Sandor Savos: What a shame." (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 8:19)

Moreover, after letting him know that she is married, Savos expresses his misogynistic principles by explaining to the protagonist how women used to marry only to lose their virginity and be unfaithful to their husbands: he is trying to seduce and manipulate her to bring her to bed.

“Sandor Savos: You know why women used to get married, don’t you?

Alice: Why don’t you tell me?

Sandor Savos: It was the only way they could lose their virginity and be free to do what they wanted with other men.” (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 10:44)

After the party, Alice tries to break with the prejudices Bill has about women. He openly says that men who approach Alice only appreciate her beauty (referring to Sandor Savos). Alice, to break Bill’s ideas, expresses out loud his ideals to make him reflect on them: “So... because I’m a beautiful woman, the only reason any man ever wants to talk to me is because he wants to fuck me? Is that what you’re saying?” (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 25:07).

Although Bill negates what Alice says, he demonstrates that the perception he has about men’s thoughts and women’s thoughts is completely different. From Bill’s point of view, women only care about “security and commitment”.

“Bill: Well, I don’t think it’s quite that black and white, but I think we both know what men are like.

Alice: So on that basis, I should conclude that you wanted to fuck those two models. [...]

Bill: Look, women don’t... they basically just don’t think like that.

Alice: Millions of years of evolution, right? Right? Men have to stick it in every place they can, but for women, for women it is just about security and commitment and whatever the fuck else!

Bill: A little oversimplified, Alice. But yes, something like that.

Alice: If you men only knew.” (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 25:24)

What could seem to be a revelation towards the patriarchy ends up with Alice being again under patriarchy’s control. As she explains her fantasy with the naval officer to contradict Bill’s principles, she unconsciously expresses it as if she was a possession of the man “And I thought if he ever wanted me, even if it was only for one night... I was

ready to give up everything” (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 32:42). Bill’s reaction to his wife’s fantasy is treating her as if she was hysterical, demonstrating once again his chauvinist ideals. Moreover, afterward, when Bill starts imagining the sex scene between his wife and the man of her fantasies, Alice is the only one who is naked and succumbs to male desires: she does not possess him, she is passive towards the behaviour of the sailor. The reason that the only one who is naked in his imagination is Alice, demonstrates us, again, the voyeur vision Kubrick gives the spectator throughout the whole movie.

The sexualisation of the women is seen even in the women themselves: in the sex scene between Alice Harford and Bill Harford it is seen how Alice watches her own reflected in the mirror while she is having sex, “by identifying with her reflected mirror image, she effectively objectifies herself into a sexual object and thus adopts a regressively masculine point of view.” (Revesz, 320).

In *Traumnovelle*, Albertina has this dream in which she commits an infidelity towards Fridolin while being surrounded by other couples and letting people crucifix the protagonist. In the movie, the director changed the dream, he eliminated the crucifixion of Fridolin and converted it to a dream where Alice has sex with more than one person while she laughs at the protagonist, who keeps observing his wife being a possession to other men. Therefore, this is another example of the voyeur vision Kubrick gives to the spectator and, furthermore, the woman is the one being perceived as a sexual object. The same situation happens in the secret club, in which the only naked characters are women (as in the book) and they are used for male pleasure and continuously sexually abused by them.

This “male gaze” and the violence against women is also seen in Mandy (the character who incarnates the anonymous woman from the secret club). In the first scene that she appears, her unconscious and naked body is seen: she has to be attended by Bill



as she has overdosed, but what is important about the situation is that Victor Ziegler (the host of the Christmas party), is having sex with her when this happens: she is being sexually abused as she is not in the proper conditions to consent a sexual relationship. Before redeeming Bill in the club, another strange scene is portrayed: a man takes her out of the spectator's view for a few minutes: she is going to be abused by another man from the "cult".

At the end of the movie, the same character, Ziegler, is who explains to Bill that the anonymous woman who "redeems" him is Mandy and that "Nothing happened to her after you left the party that hadn't happened to her before. She got her brains fucked out. Period" (*Eyes Wide Shut*, 2:17:12, qtd. in Revesz, 315). As Eva V. Revesz confirms in her essay, "What Kubrick (and Raphael) imply through Ziegler's vulgar expression is that her violent sexual abuse caused or at least contributed to her death." (Revesz, 315). Therefore, when Bill shows Ziegler the article in the newspaper in which it appears the death of the young girl, in the article itself, it appears that she had an affair with Leon Vitali. Leon Vitali is the actor who acts like the Red Cloak in the movie: Kubrick gives the spectator a hint about the cause of death: she was sexually abused by the boss of the secret club.

Moreover, both, Kubrick and Schnitzler make an anonymous woman (Mandy) sacrifice herself for a man who is completely or almost completely unknown to the woman: she submits to society and, takes a passive role that almost obligates her to save the man's life and be violated in the case of *Eyes Wide Shut*.

The continuous point of view of Mandy being overdosed and sexually abused gives us a perspective in which women submit to men's orders (Mandy sacrifices herself for a man) and are trapped in this patriarchal society where they are treated as objects, used as sexual objects and their only aim in life is to be beautiful and serve as housewives.

### **3.3- Conclusion**

It has been demonstrated that the vision in which the movie has been produced is through the eyes of the patriarchy and the director did not focus on the main aim of the book: confuse the public about whether they are seeing is the reality or Bill's dreams.

The scenes in which naked women's bodies appear provoke to the spectator a voyeur vision in which women are seen as sexual objects.

The submission of the feminine genre is seen both in the dialogues of the movie: Bill indicates how women only think about commitment and emotions and Ziegler talks about sexual abuse as if it was something that occurred and was in the day-to-day life of the character, and in the actions of the characters: women are the only characters who appear naked several times and submit to other people (men).

Thus, the first hypothesis made about the movie giving a feminist vision of Schnitzler's work is completely erroneous: *Eyes Wide Shut* conduces the spectator to a patriarchal and chauvinist universe where women are subdued to man's power.

### **4- Conclusion**

After analysing both: *Traumnovelle* and *Eyes Wide Shut* a proper conclusion can be extracted. Arthur Schnitzler's objective is to confuse the readers about the wall between fantasy and reality with the continuous mentions to dissociation of the main character (Fridolin), the password of the secret club which alludes to Albertina's fantasy, and the end of the novel where it is not clearly seen if what has happened was real or not, is made with success. The other aspect analysed about the passive role of the women is also seen in different moments: Albertina's work (she takes care of her daughter, and she is the housekeeper of their house), Albertina's reaction to Fridolin's unfaithfulness and the

behaviour of the anonymous woman towards Fridolin. Nowadays, *Traumnovelle* can make the readers realise how society has changed and was in the early 1900s.

On the other hand, Stanley Kubrick does not properly reflect Freud's ideas that Schnitzler wanted to expose or believed: the main mystery of the book which is the blurring of the wall between dreams and reality, is closed at the end of the movie where Victor Ziegler explains to Bill Harford about the secret club: all of the club is pure acting, it is not real, and how Mandy, the anonymous woman, dies from an overdose as she is portrayed in the movie as a drug addict and, even though Ziegler does not explicitly explain, from a sexual abuse by the Red Cloak.

What Kubrick portrays is the vision of the woman that appears not to have changed from the early 1900s to the last year of the century. After 73 years, society still normalises women not having jobs because their only objective in life is to take care of children and do housework and keeps seeing woman's bodies as sexual objects that only serve to pleasure men.

The director, by giving more importance to women characters, does not give a feminist point of view, it only highlights women's submission to patriarchy and, as a consequence of this projection, the spectator, nowadays, can make a critical comment on the society.

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