

Schnitzler as a Space of Central European Cultural Identity: David Hare's *The Blue Room* and Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*

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The status of Arthur Schnitzler's works as representative of *fin de siècle* Viennese culture was already firmly established in the author's own lifetime, as the tributes written in 1922 on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday demonstrate.¹ Addressing Schnitzler directly, Hermann Bahr wrote: "As no other among us, your graceful touch captured the last fascination of the waning of Vienna, you were the doctor at its deathbed, you loved it more than anyone else among us because you already knew there was no more hope" (500); Egon Friedell opined that Schnitzler had "created a kind of topography of the constitution of the Viennese soul around 1900, on which one will later be able to more reliably, more precisely and more richly orient oneself than on the most obese cultural historian" (504); and Stefan Zweig noted that:

[T]he unforgettable characters, whom he created and whom one still could see daily on the streets, in the theaters, and in the salons of Vienna on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, even yesterday... have suddenly disappeared, have changed. ... Everything that once was this turn-of-the-century Vienna, this Austria before its collapse, will at one point... only be properly seen through Arthur Schnitzler, will only be called by their proper name by drawing on his works. (511)

With the passing of time, the scope of Schnitzler's representativeness has broadened. In his introduction to the new English translation of Schnitzler's *Dream Story* (1999), Frederic Raphael sees Schnitzler not only as a Viennese writer; rather "Schnitzler belongs inextricably to *mittel-Europa*" (xii). If that is indeed the case, what is one to make of two of the latest adaptations of Schnitzler's works and the controversy they have generated?

Stanley Kubrick's much anticipated cinematic spectacle *Eyes Wide Shut* (an adaptation of Schnitzler's 1926 *Traumnovelle*) was released in the summer following his death on March 7, 1999 (at age 70, of a massive heart attack), a few days after he had delivered the final print to Warner Bros. and a few weeks after David Hare's *The Blue Room* (an adaptation of Schnitzler's play *Der Reigen*) had closed after phenomenally successful runs in London's

West End and on Broadway. Unlike previous film and stage adaptations of Schnitzler's works, such as Max Olphus's nostalgic *Liebelei* (1933) and *La Ronde* (1950) or Tom Stoppard's more hard-boiled *Dalliance* and *Undiscovered Country* (1986),² these two adaptations recouped some of the shocking impact that Schnitzler's originals had on their audiences, in no small part due to the scintillating presence of Australian actress Nicole Kidman, who starred in both. This article explores how Central Europe came in the case of these two turn-of-the-millennium Schnitzler adaptations to signify sex in the English-speaking entertainment industry's imagination.

ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

In his Preface to *The Blue Room*, Hare explains the attraction of Schnitzler's play for him, that Schnitzler's "essential subject is the gulf between what we imagine, what we remember, and what we actually experience," and he extols "Schnitzler's prescience to chart this treacherous, twentieth-century territory of projection and desire." For Hare, then, Schnitzler is first and foremost an explorer of the psyche. However, "Schnitzler was not only Freud's almost exact contemporary. He was also, like Freud, like Chekhov, a doctor." Hare justifies the loose nature of his adaptation twofold: "when Sam Mendes asked me to adapt Schnitzler, I instinctively chose to follow Ophuls's example, licenced by the knowledge that the author himself never put the material into a form where he foresaw it being performed." As Hare reminds us, Schnitzler wrote *Reigen* in 1900 to be "read among friends" and its eventual premières in Vienna and Berlin in 1921 were subject to police persecution. Therefore, he sets the play not as Schnitzler does, in the Vienna of the 1890s, but rather "in one of the great cities of the world, in present day" and updates the characters that encounter each other in the sexual daisy-chain. As a world-weary critic for *Time* put it in a review bearing the headline "Room for Improvement":

Hare updates the play in predictable ways – the soldier becomes a taxi driver; the 'young miss' a miniskirted model – and has all the parts played by the two stars. The casting gimmick, along with the chicly impersonal production (a semiabstract set framed in neon), makes the vignettes seem more facile and obvious: Schnitzler's acid portrayal of sex as the great leveler on a climb up the social ladder now looks more like Love, American Style. (Z. 184)

In their screenplay of *Eyes Wide Shut*, Stanley Kubrick and Frederic Raphael take similar liberties with Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*. During one of their initial discussions on the collaboration, Raphael records in *Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick and Eyes Wide Shut* asking Kubrick: "F.R.: Are you thinking of doing it in period? S.K.: Period? No. In New York. Today. In the present, I shoulda said. What do you think?" (25, italics in

original). In addition to transposing the setting to present-day Manhattan, they shift the time from the end of Carnival to Christmas, chop much of the lengthy husband-wife exchanges of fantasies and dreams, and add a decisive character, a surrogate father/director figure by the name of Victor Ziegler who frames the film – it is his party to which the husband and wife, Bill and Alice Harford, are invited at the opening of the film, and to him that Bill returns at the end for the answers that Schnitzler's Fridolin is able to figure out for himself. Raphael likened the process of writing the screenplay to an academic exercise: "It seemed that I could still work the old trick whereby, as a schoolboy, I had transposed the eighteenth-century letters of Junius into Ciceronian prose. *Mutatis mutandis* was the slogan to keep in mind; change only what needs changing, but then change it without piety or trace" (75). Like Hare, however, Kubrick insisted, according to Raphael's account, on maintaining the novella's underlying insight, its "myth":

He has decided that Schnitzler's dated and very European story can, and will, be translated to the U.S. now and he resists any questions about its 'relevance.' (Why do I play the producer and raise such vulgar issues?) He has – in words he would never use – bought the 'myth.' It is only by seeing it in that light that I can get rid of its dust. But then, like a man stirring in his sleep, S.K. *almost* faces the mundane American reality which says that a couple like F. and A. would 'get a divorce.' Yet he has become enough of a European for the marital myth to have leeches on to him. (51, italics in original)

It is clear that Raphael attributes Kubrick's empathy with Schnitzler to a shared European imagination, in which he only unwillingly participates.³

What Hare and Kubrick see in Schnitzler, and Raphael resists, is the fundamentally humane yet detached view of humanity characteristic of a particular stream of the medical profession, and a similar stream of the artistic community which Hare and Kubrick inhabit(ed). Schnitzler has been described as "a courageous diagnostician of the people and society of his time" (Nehring 191).⁴ This remark applies equally to Hare and Kubrick. In the introduction he wrote for a collection of his early plays, Hare cites a long passage from Tom Wolfe on how, when he first came to New York, "the most serious novelists abandoned the richest terrain of the novel: namely, society, the social tableau, manners and morals, the whole business of the 'way we live now'" (8) and expresses a fundamental agreement with Wolfe:

I can't tell you how accurately that expresses a feeling I have always had as a playwright and which I know colleagues have experienced, that sense that the greater part of the culture is simply looking at the wrong things. I became a writer by default, to fill in the gaps, to work on the areas of the fresco which were simply ignored, or appropriated for the shallowest purposes: rock music, black propaganda, gun-selling, diplomacy. And yet I cannot believe to this day that a more talented writer will not come along and *do* the whole scene. In common with other writers who look with their own eyes, I have been abused in the newspapers for being hysterical, strident and obscene, when all I

was doing was observing the passing scene, its stridency, its hysteria, its obscenity, and trying to put it in a historical context which the literary community seems pathologically incapable of contemplating. (9, italics in original)

In other words, Hare has not only been walking through life with his eyes wide open, he has made a serious effort to translate his vision into plays. Observation implies a critical distance, something which Raphael noted while working with Kubrick on the screenplay to *Eyes Wide Shut*:

Stanley didn't challenge my remark that some people (like Fridolin) are born with a membrane between them and the reality which seems so enviably accessible to others. Being 'behind the camera' is the objective correlative of that feeling, and perhaps its furtive cure... those who cannot live desire power over the living. (48)

He further muses:

I used to think that what interested him was scandal. That is only partly so: what 'amuses' him in scandal is the capacity of the camera to confront the unspeakable without blinking... its mechanical inability to distinguish between the human and the inhuman. The camera is free alike of scruples and of morals; by virtue of its cold nature, it flinches from nothing visible. Kubrick wishes he could be like that. Choosing what should be outrageous, he is grimly pleased to alarm, terrify or titillate an audience while himself remaining unexcited. He likes to be 'clinical,' as they say (his father was a doctor). (148)

Raphael disparages, and I will argue here radically undervalues, this clinical quality of Kubrick's. The following readings suggest a more discerning evaluation of the surgical sensibility necessary to make a remarkably self-reflexive film contrasting the problematic, deadening nature of objectification and representation, particularly as this concerns the female body. However, before sketching the contours of this shared vision, I will show how it has been profoundly, one might even say willfully, ignored or dismissed in the English-language reception of *The Blue Room* and *Eyes Wide Shut*.

RECEPTION: SCHNITZLER = SEX

In *Acting Up*, the diary which David Hare kept from August 4, 1998, to June 18, 1999, of his first ever acting experience in *Via Dolorosa*, the play he was commissioned to write about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Hare keeps track of how the concomitant production of *The Blue Room* is progressing. After its première at the Donmar in London's West End, coverage was generally positive: "Charles Spencer got carried away in the *Telegraph*. He said the show had provided him with sexual images which would fuel his fantasies for the rest of his life" (94). This was the infamous "pure theatrical Viagra" remark, which was to be mentioned by many if not most subsequent reviewers. After that, "the coverage of *The Blue Room* got tackier. The *Evening Standard* had a piece saying bugger-the-plot-look-at-that-body.

“Thirty-one and no cellulite” seems to sum up the critical reaction to that particular piece of work” (95). However, in his diary, Hare claims that “the fact that the press has only reviewed Nicole’s body and overlooked the play doesn’t bother me” (97); he understands that:

her success is not an *arts* story in the U.S., it’s a *news* story. ... At a baseball game in San Diego the other night a man called out to Tom Cruise: ‘Where’s your wife?’ He answered, ‘Doing a play in London.’ The fan responded at once. ‘Oh yeah. Is that the sexy one where she plays five parts?’ Cruise grinned back. ‘Yeah. That’s the one!’ (106, italics added)

Headlines such as “Nicole Kidman’s Behind,” “The Bottom Line,” “Nicole Takes Off” and “Barenaked Lady” indicate that the play also struck a prurient chord when it opened at the Cort Theater on Broadway several months later.

When *Eyes Wide Shut* was released a further several months hence, a similar publicity machine went to work. First, in Kubrick’s absence, the film’s producers put together “an immensely noisy publicity campaign – Kubrick’s last film; one of the world’s greatest directors tackles the subject of sex, sex, sex by staging the most erotic orgy scene ever filmed; see Nicole Kidman nude; see Tom Cruise nude; see the couple married in real life make love on the screen” (Siegel 77). In one of the few thoughtful reviews of the film, Lee Siegel offers a useful debriefing on this circus discourse, which indicates the terms in which the film was generally discussed:

Yet in debunking all the hype about the sex, the critics never got beyond the hype about the sex. They seemed intent on proving how sexy they were, and how sophisticated they were about sexiness, because when sexiness is marketed as vigorously as it is in America today, one had better appear to have mastered the market. (79)

Reviewers of both *The Blue Room* and *Eyes Wide Shut* concentrated on the nudity and sexual acts in and of themselves without considering the artistic effect and significance of how that nudity et al was being presented. While *Eyes Wide Shut*’s co-screenwriter was aware of its erotic potential – “It’s so dated and yet it’s... strangely... *something*, isn’t it? Erotic? If nothing else. Is it anything else?” (Raphael 23) – its reviewers tended to concentrate on the unerotic nature of the orgy, and use it as a reason to criticize the film:

I can state unequivocally that the late Stanley Kubrick, in his final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, has staged the most pompous orgy in the history of the movies – David Denby in *The New Yorker*;

[A] ring of kneeling supermodels (identical proud firm breasts, straight hair, no hips) wearing only masks and black thongs and looking extremely chilly... It is a very tacky orgy – Louis Menard in *The New York Review of Books*;

It can be revealed at last that there are acres and acres of female pubic hair on display, but no male members... [in] the otherwise boring free-for-all orgy sequence – Andrew Sarris in *The New York Observer*;

The masked orgy, much hyped in advance publicity for the movie, feels more ludicrous than provocative, more voyeuristic than scary... it is curiously devoid of sexual energy... the entire orgy sequence feels deliberate and contrived – Michiko Kakutani in the *New York Times*. (all cited in Siegel, 76, 79-80)⁵

In the case of *The Blue Room*, reviewers were split. Michael Feingold writing in the *Village Voice* claimed that “Schnitzler’s intentions were actively unerotic” (150), while Jack Kroll in *Newsweek* drew attention to the play’s underlying eroticism:

The sky-diving, mountain-climbing Kidman was undaunted by the relentless sexuality of *The Blue Room*. The most erotic scene in the play is one in which the playwright tenderly dresses the model after they’ve made love. ‘That was my idea,’ says Kidman. ‘I thought it was sexier for him than ripping her clothes off.’ (89)

However, as with *Eyes Wide Shut*, the (un-)erotic tension in the play was generally not explored but rather held against it: “a society in which the cheap thrills of celebrity and quickie sex are sovereign is a society willing to pay anything for the chance to see a famous actress’s rear end in shallow, pseudo-highbrow erotica – which can’t even boast of a positive review in the *Times*” (Dreher 51).

In his diary, Hare identifies “an element of evasion [which] enters whenever a work is about sex” (127). The example he cites is John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*:

When I see revivals of *Look Back in Anger*, I’m always astonished that no one remarks that the play’s true shock value and originality lies in its unusual focus on bed. ... Before its première in 1956, the leading practitioners of British theatre were T.S. Eliot, whose attitude to bed, I think we may say, was somewhat to the right of mistrustful, and Noël Coward, who made no secret of thinking of bed as a place where you merely endanger your dignity and your sense of humour. Along comes John Osborne, childish or child-like according to your own point of view, but anyway with a D.H. Lawrence-like conviction that people can’t be known, can’t be understood except through the act of love. The character of Helena – the woman who affects to despise Jimmy Porter, but who longs to sleep with him – is there to tell you that nothing which is said outside bed matters. Nor does it for Jimmy. Rail and rationalize all you like, it’s bed where the real business is done. My God, no wonder the play still takes the audience aback! No wonder Osborne’s achievement is to this day resented. (127)

Hare goes on, not to explore the role that the performative plays in making this achievement possible, but rather to link his adaptation with Osborne’s play:

Perhaps that’s why I’ve been amused to see how much *The Blue Room* has rattled one or two of my colleagues. A fellow playwright got angry with me, as if it were my fault. ‘It’s

because of the nudity. It's only because of the nudity. The day Iain Glen said, 'Why don't we take our clothes off?' was the day *The Blue Room's* fate was sealed.' He said it with terrific purpose, like a man trying to close a door in a high wind. (127)⁶

For this reason, among others, Hare declares himself "obstinately fond of it. It's something the theatre never does successfully – to be charming and erotic and clever, all at the same time" (106). What I would like to do in the following section is open the door on that high wind, and consider some of the comparative elements which constitute the artistic visions behind *The Blue Room* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, elements completely left out of the titillating reviews.

ART WORKS

Schnitzler's *Reigen* und *Traumnovelle* and their late 1990s adaptations share a consummate craftsmanship and artistic attention to the geographies of desire, and yet these four works have all received more criticism than praise in this regard, even on the part of the adaptors themselves. Hare's response to criticism in the *Guardian* that he had desecrated a masterpiece is: "It's hard to believe he's read the original or he'd know it's profoundly dodgy. Great idea for a play but, believe me, not a great play" (93). Raphael's response to reading the anonymous manuscript Kubrick sent him is similarly mixed: "It's very dated. And the translation's so... stiff. Quite a bit of it's pretty silly and pretentious. Those overwritten dreams! But there's something... convincing about it" (22). These sentiments are echoed by critics of the adaptations. One of the harsher responses to Hare's work was from Mark Steyn:

[T]hough Miss Kidman brings a commanding conviction to *The Blue Room*, the real shock of the production is to discover that the raw material is mostly as clunky and witless as her Hollywood stuff. Nothing Miss Kidman does here comes close to her sly, satirical turn as Suzanne, the perky but homicidal weather girl in the 1995 film *To Die For*. But to rise above the cardboard cut-outs of Hare's script does constitute a triumph of sorts. ... [I]f anything, this version's types are even flatter and more obvious than the original's. Hare has never been very good on sex (see *Skylight*, etc.), and in this instance he's contented himself with taking a clever trifle and reducing it to the opportunity to see Miss Kidman get, as the British say, shagged senseless: he's made a mounting out of a molehill. (48)

Of the multitude of critical voices belittling Kubrick's final work, let a short quote suffice: "This two hour and 39 minute gloss on Arthur Schnitzler's fantasmagoric novella feels like a rough draft at best" (cited in Siegel, 76). While I am not claiming that these voices are unanimous, they do constitute a rather substantial strain in the reception. Finding unqualified odes to the stellar artistic aspects of these two Schnitzler adaptations certainly proves much more difficult. What gets lost in these Manichean judgments

is the formal aspects of these works, and the subtleties of their construction.

Traumnovelle

To begin with the lesser known *Traumnovelle*, one is immediately struck by the echoes and repetitions it contains, which the following recounting highlights.⁷ At the outset of the novella, Fridolin and Albertine put their daughter to bed so that they can continue discussing their experiences at the previous evening's ball, where Fridolin was solicited by "two dominoes dressed in red" (7, 4)⁸ and Albertine chatted up by a stranger with a "blasé, melancholy air and foreign-sounding – evidently Polish – accent" (8, 4). After mutually confessing to each other extramarital desires awakened during their previous summer's holiday "on the Danish coast" (9, 6) and Albertine's additional confession of her desire for her future husband "at the Wörthersee, shortly before our engagement" (13, 10), Fridolin is called away on a house-call to the dying *Hofrat*, where he is greeted by the *Hofrat*'s daughter Marianne, "but in the meager light he had difficulty making out whether her cheeks turned red as they usually did when he appeared" (15, 14). Fridolin muses that "Marianne would certainly look better than she did... if she were his mistress. Her hair would be less dry, her lips redder and fuller" (16, 15). On the next station of his journey, he encounters Mizzi, "a pretty creature, still quite young but very pale with lips painted red" (24, 24), which upon closer inspection turn out to be "not made up but were a natural red" (25, 25). After he draws back from her embrace, she picks up "a red dressing-gown lying over the back of the bed, which was made-up and ready, slipped into it and crossed her arms over her breasts so that her figure was hidden entirely" (25, 26). He starts "to make love to her as he might to an ordinary girl or a woman that he loved" (26, 26), but after she withdraws herself from his embrace, "she wrapped a narrow blue shawl [in the original, it's a "*Wollschal*"] around her, lit a candle to light the way for him, and accompanied him downstairs to unlock the door" (26, 26). His next nightly encounter, in a lower class coffee-house, is with the piano-player, *Nachtigall*; "[t]he son of a Jewish dram-shop owner in a Polish backwater, he had in due course reached Vienna from his home town to study medicine" (29, 30). Fridolin's ne'er-do-well former acquaintance, who had given up on his medical studies and earned a living playing the piano, leads him into temptation by inviting him to a masked ball in a house on the city's outskirts, the fulcrum of the novella's plot. However, in order to attend this ball, Fridolin needs a costume, and at the costumier's, he stumbles across a disturbing scene involving the costumier's daughter: "two masked figures in the red robes of vehmic court judges rose from their chairs... while simultaneously

a glittering dainty creature disappeared from sight" (36, 38). Having secured the costume, he learns from Nachtigall, to his consternation, that: "the password's Denmark" (38, 42). He climbs into a nearby coach, follows Nachtigall to a villa on the Galitzinberg, secures entry into the villa, and is immediately approached by a masked nun whose "blood-red mouth glistened beneath her black lace mask" (41, 45). He can "clearly make out the blood-red mouth gleaming behind the lace veil" (41-42, 45), which warns him to leave immediately, and becomes "intoxicated, and not merely by her presence, her fragrant body and burning red lips" (45, 49). He ignores her warnings, and is exposed as an interloper when: "Two other courtiers, one in yellow, the other in blue [in the original, the second is "*in Rot*"] came up. 'The password, sir,' they both said at once" (46, 51). He does not know the password for the house, only for the entrance, and is only released when the mysterious woman offers herself in his place. Upon returning to the coach, he finds "a little further up where his coach was supposed to wait for him a dim reddish light was shining. From the lower end of the street the hearse appeared, as though he had just summoned it" (49, 54). When he returns home, he finds Albertine in the throes of a disturbing dream, which eerily echoes the details of his experience in the villa and begins "in the little villa on the Wörthersee where I stayed with my parents the summer we became engaged" (55, 62). The next day is a mirror image of the previous one. Amidst his professional responsibilities, Fridolin pays a visit to Nachtigall's hotel in the Leopoldstadt, then Vienna's Jewish quarter, and discovers Nachtigall gone, escorted to the Nordbahnhof by two dubious characters. When settling accounts with the costumier, one of the vehmic court judges from the previous night comes out of the daughter's room, "lit a cigarette with the lighter on the desk and left the apartment" (64, 72). As he approaches the villa a second time, the sky is "pale blue" (67, 76) and he passes a young boy "clad in blue woolen clothes" (68, 76). His presence at the villa has been anticipated, and he is handed a billet warning him to desist with his inquiries. After attending to more patients, in the evening he pays a visit to Marianne, where he first encounters her fiancé and then Marianne, who while clad in black, reddens slightly (72, 81). He then tries to take sweets to Mizzi, but a girl who lives in the same house and who has "half-open lips" (75, 84), with no color to mention, confirms that Mizzi is in the hospital. In one of the more elegant coffee-houses around City Hall, he reads in a newspaper that a Baroness D. has taken poison after returning to her hotel at 4 o'clock in the morning in the company of two men. Fridolin immediately jumps to the conclusion that she is the woman who sacrificed herself for him at the party. He goes to the hotel to make enquiries and discovers that two men had also called on the Baroness that morning, which is how her unconscious body

had been discovered: “Furthermore, they had not apparently been dealing with a real Baroness Dubieski, the name under which the lady had registered at the hotel. This was the first time she had ever stayed at that hotel, and at least among the aristocracy there was no family of that name” (79, 88-89). He goes to the morgue but realizes when he sees the colorless body, “the pale corpse” (86, 96), that he cannot and does not want to know if it’s the same woman:

then he intertwined his fingers with the dead woman’s as if to fondle them, and, stiff as they were, they seemed to be attempting to move and to take hold of his; indeed he thought he could detect a faint, distant [the original is “*farbloser*”] gleam in the eyes beneath those half-closed lids, trying to make contact with his own. (84, 94)

Just as on the previous night, he returns home to a sleeping Albertine. This time, however, there is “something very close to Albertine’s face on the other pillow, on *his* pillow, something dark and quite distinct, like the shadowy outline of a human face” (86, 97, italics in original) – the mask from the previous evening “which evidently had slipped out without his noticing that morning as he rolled up his costume” (86, 97). Fridolin breaks down, his sobbing wakes Albertine, he declares his desire to tell her everything, does, and “[b]y the time Fridolin had ended the first grey light of dawn was coming through the curtains” (87, 98).

This accounting highlights the intricate, parallel, echo-like nature of Schnitzler’s plot construction and the way color and nationality serve as leitmotifs. In the first half of the novella, impassionate, unsatisfied passion is coded red and foreign (Polish); only passion coded domestic, i.e. Albertine’s passion for her future husband at the Wörthersee, the well-known holiday resort in Carinthia, meets with fruition. In the second half, after Fridolin’s debacle at the masked ball, this passion is stripped of its allure and replaced with cold, bleak images of mortality, images which throughout the novella are associated with sexuality. The stream of Fridolin’s thoughts upon leaving the dead *Hofrat* and wandering through the streets evidence this relation:

The dead man he had just left came into his mind, and with a shudder of revulsion he reflected how, in compliance with eternal laws, corruption and decay had already set to work in that emaciated body stretched out full length under the brown flannel coverlet. He was glad that he was still alive, that for him such ugly matters were still probably a long way off; glad that he was in his prime, that a charming and lovable woman was there at his disposal, and that he could have another one, many others, if he so desired. (21, 21)

His first thought upon encountering “a few wretched whores... strolling on their nightly man-hunt” is that they are “[l]ike ghosts” (24, 23), and this link is later made more explicit:

What was another man's life to him, indeed, what was his own? Should one always risk it only out of duty or self-sacrifice, never on a whim, or out of passion or simply as a test of fate?

And again it crossed his mind that his body might already be carrying the seed of some fatal disease. Wouldn't it be absurd to die because a child infected with diphtheria had coughed in one's face? Perhaps he was already sick. Didn't he have a fever? Wasn't he perhaps lying at home in bed this very moment – and hadn't everything he believed he had experienced been nothing more than his delirium?

Fridolin opened his eyes as wide as he could, put his hand to his cheek and brow, and felt his pulse. Scarcely above normal. Everything was fine. He was fully awake. (53, 58-59)

Eyes Wide Shut

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Stanley Kubrick shows a masterful sensitivity to Schnitzler's themes and leitmotifs and effectively reproduces them in the medium of film, with his own inimitable shadings to his own inimitable ends. Nationality is diffused, made more pan-Germano-Slavic (i.e. Central European in its dark, almost Balkan sense), and its leitmotif function is taken over in places by pan-European literary and musical allusions. The very Viennese-sounding waltz with which the film begins, and which accompanies Bill on his long night's journey into day, is not by one of the Straußes but rather by Shostakovich, while the harsh notes of György Ligeti's "Musica Ricercata II" sound at pivotal moments and Liszt's "Nuages Gris" provides the backdrop of the morgue scene. The stranger at the opening ball who accosts Alice is not Polish but Hungarian, and he reveals his lecherous intentions in references to Ovid's *Amores*.⁹ Nightingale is also not from Poland. He has "a wife and four boys in Seattle"; however, he is playing at the Sonata Café when Bill finds him, and finds out that the password to the masked ball is Fidelio. The costumier, called Milich, is played by the Croatian-born Rade Serbedzija (or Rade Sherbedgia as he has become known), an actor firmly established in the cinematic imagination as Slavic on the basis of roles in *Before the Rain*, *The Saint*, *Mighty Joe Young*, and *Mission Impossible 2*.

Red and blue also coexist in an uneasy, brilliantly constructed tension on Kubrick's palette of passion. While many scenes feature bright red objects, such as the door to the building into which the prostitute Domino invites Bill; the stairs which Bill descends into the Sonata Café, the carpet in the entryway of the villa, the central circle of the orgy and its conductor, and Ziegler's pool table, red is also most suggestively juxtaposed with blue, the color of Bill's fantasies about his wife making furious love with her holiday fling. Blue seems to be always lurking in the background, like the guilt and other conflicted emotions which well up in Bill as he tries to negotiate

between societal propriety and desire. There are, for example, two signs outside the Sonata Café when Bill first stops by in the night: "Sonata Jazz" appears in blue neon about the red awning on which "Sonata Café" is written in white letters, while in the light of the next day the blue neon has been switched off. This juxtaposition of color is established at the opening party, when Bill is summoned upstairs to treat the overdosed call-girl with whom Ziegler has been cavorting.¹⁰ While Bill is attending to her (telling her to open her eyes), the camera pans a hastily dressed Ziegler, over whose shoulder we see a painting of a nude reclining on a bright red divan with blue flowers on it, in the same pose in which the nude Mandy has collapsed.¹¹ The next evening, during Alice's confession of the lust she felt for the naval officer, she is sitting beneath a blue-lit window with rich, red-flowered curtains reminiscent of the upholstery in the painting. The window behind Marianne when she confesses her love to Bill is of a similar blue hue, as is the lighting in their daughter's room when Bill returns from the orgy, and the bedroom during the recital of Alice's dream, while the hallway in the background, in which half of a painting and a photograph of Alice in a bright red top, is brightly lit. When Bill comes home from Ziegler's explanation of Mandy's accident, the windows are again lit in blue, as again is their bedroom, the mask and Alice. The next day, Alice is wearing a blue bathrobe and backlit in red, while red and blue dominate the color scheme of the store they take their daughter Christmas-shopping in. Because the film follows Bill and his perspective, we are encouraged to associate this color scheme, which is omni-present throughout the film and of which I have only mentioned more prominent examples, with the ambivalence of his hot and cold passions and his problematic relationship to women and their bodies.

The opening scene in *Eyes Wide Shut* is of Nicole Kidman from behind; blink and you miss her suddenly sliding her black slip from her shoulders to expose her statuesquely luminesque form. The differences between science's often destructive proclivity to objectify and contain (everything, including the female body) and art's (and women's) potentially humane proclivity to escape objectification through signification is the axis which Kubrick grinds with precision in this film. Unlike Albertine, Alice is given a profession. While her husband's is connected with medicine, hers is connected with art: she is an unsuccessful manager of art galleries, her lack of success underscoring her artistic sensibilities (one presumes she and not Bill is responsible for lining the walls of their Manhattan apartment with large, sumptuous paintings). The contrast between Bill's and Alice's spheres is established in the sequence on Bill's day at work after the Zieglers' party. The short, stark scenes in which Bill sees patients all contain beautiful long-

haired women in varying states of undress and are intercut with brightly colored domestic scenes of Alice getting dressed, doing homework and wrapping Christmas presents with her daughter. *He* is surrounded by living females he treats in as detached a manner as possible; *she* is surrounded by painted works she has made part of the family.

Also in contrast to Albertine, Alice understands herself and her sexuality in a more empowered way. During the day, at home and while out shopping, in spaces coded female, Alice wears glasses signifying intelligence and insight. Whereas it does not occur to Bill to question what happened between his wife and her dancing partner when he was called upstairs, Alice, noticing both Bill chatting with the two models and his ensuing absence, deduces that he may have left with them for the same purpose the Hungarian wanted her to briefly absent herself with him: sex. The argument she instigates reveals that this logic does indeed have a basis in Bill's essentializing attitudes about what "men" and "women" are like:

Alice: 'Because I'm a beautiful woman the only reason any man wants to talk to me is because he wants to fuck me? Is that what you're saying?'

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

Alice outmaneuvers Bill, by pointing out that he is a man and therefore must have wanted to have sex with the models, before moving on to what he thinks "women" are like:

Alice: 'Now when she is having her little titties squeezed, do you think she ever has any little fantasies about what handsome Dr. Bill's dickie might be like? Hm?'

Bill: 'I assure you, sex is the last thing on this fucking hypothetical woman patient's mind.'

Alice: 'And what makes you so sure?'

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... 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...'

The film goes on to show that they don't, and it charts the inner turmoil that can result when a man like Bill ventures out into the unreflected territory of his desires. The final word of the film, which Alice is given (as Al-

bertine is in the novella), caps this tribute to language's, art's and women's colorful capacity for signification, which stands in stark contrast to the scientific, male-dominated "black and white" view which Bill (dis)embodies. Alice's answer to her husband's pathetic "What should we do?" is decidedly different than Albertine's "never inquire into the future" (88, 99). Unlike Albertine, Alice insists on asking, on knowing, and knowing carnally. Her speech is peppered with "fucking" and her final answer, that she loves him and they need to fuck, draws attention to the disturbing tendency of this signifier to conflate the passion of their physical *intimacy* with the orgiastic yet impersonal passion presented at the Zieglers' and at the masked ball. Thus Kubrick's color-coded worldview nuances and differentiates the power of passions, which for Schnitzler was simply the antinomy of death, by locating them both in artistic objects of desire, whether women or artworks, and in the objectifying and containing forces which they are shown to have the capacity to escape.

Der Reigen

Schnitzler's ten-round sex-fest is not inscribed with any color, but rather shrouded in darkness and dark sentiments concerning our mortal coil. In the first episode set late in the evening, on their way along the banks of the Danube to a secluded spot for their tryst, the whore warns the soldier: "Easy. It's dark there. One slip, and you're in the Danube." Soldier: "Might be the best thing" (6). In the second, the soldier is together with a parlor maid on "a path leading from the Wurstelprater out into dark avenues of trees" (8) and much of the dialogue between them deals with "how *dark* it is" (8, italics in original). In the next episode with Herr Alfred, however, she complains that "it's so light" (15), despite the fact that his excuse for ringing for her is to have her lower the blinds. With the young wife, Herr Alfred complains repeatedly that "life is so empty, so trivial. And so short. ... Isn't life frightfully short, Emma?" (23), and when she objects that the rented room they are in is "so light" (23), he takes her into the adjoining bedroom where it is "quite dark" (24). In the next episode, the young wife engages her husband in an awkward conversation about his past experiences. He ends up confessing that his saddest memory is about someone who is dead and adds: "It may sound ridiculous, but I have the feeling that all these women die young" (36). In dialogue six, the husband is in a private room of a restaurant with a young miss whose "eyes are gray really. At first I thought they were black" (44). The miss is then with a poet who refuses to turn on a light for her because he finds that "the twilight is so comforting. Today we were bathing in sunshine all day long. Now we've come out of the bath, so to speak, and we're wrapping the twilight round us like a bathrobe" (51), a sen-

time he finds profound enough to immediately jot down in his notebook. After they make love, he wants to see her, lights a candle, “walks up to her with the light and contemplates her for a long while... Poet: ‘You’re beautiful. You are Beauty! You are Nature herself perhaps! You are Sacred Simplicity!’ Little Miss: ‘Ouch! You’re dripping wax on me! Why can’t you be more careful?’” (56). The poet is next with a *grande-dame* of an actress in a room in a country inn which is bathed in moonlight; at the end of an episode spent trading barbs, he chides her for missing a performance to annoy him, and she counters by saying her love for him had made her ill: “A whim, you call it? I die for love of you, and you call it a whim?” (66). In the penultimate scene with the count, she is also on her deathbed: “Count: ‘Your mother said you weren’t very well, Fräulein. Nothing too serious, I hope?’ Actress: ‘Nothing serious? I was dying!’ Count: ‘Oh dear me! Not really?’” (67). The count is the apex of nihilistic sentiment expressed by the male characters in the play. He envies the actress her disgust of people: “Just as I imagined: you’re a misanthropist. It’s bound to happen with artists. Moving in that more exalted sphere... Well, it’s all right for you, at least you know why you’re alive.’ Actress: ‘Who told you that? I haven’t the remotest idea why I’m alive” (70) and he proceeds to “enlighten” her with his own style of philosophy:

Happiness? Happiness doesn't exist. None of the things people chatter about real exist. ... Love, for instance. It's the same with love. ... Enjoyment... intoxication... there's nothing wrong with them, they're real. I enjoy something, all right, and I know I enjoy it. Or I'm intoxicated, all right. That's real too. And when it's over, it's over, that's all. (70)

He attempts to postpone their lovemaking until the evening, saying he finds “love in the morning pretty frightful” (73) but it doesn’t take long for her to succeed in seducing him: “The actress draws him to her. Count: ‘It *is* hot.’ Actress: ‘You find it so? And dark, like evening... It *is* evening, Count. It’s night... Shut your eyes if it’s too light for you. Come! Come!’” (73, italics in original). In the final episode, he awakens out of a drunk to discover himself with the whore, can’t remember any of the previous evening and muses:

I’ve known quite a lot of girls who didn’t look so virtuous, even in their sleep. Upon my soul... now Lulu would say I’m philosophizing, but it’s true, sleep does make us all equal, it seems to me, like his big brother – Death... Hmmm, I’d like to know if... No I’d remember after all... (77)

Sleep and death, as well as sex, are the great equalizers in Schnitzler’s work, all states intimately bound up with corporeality and opposed to artistic and spiritual realms. As the actress tells the count: “It’s not your spirit that interests me” (74). Rather it’s hot wax on pale flesh that matters.

The Blue Room

As with Kubrick, Hare, too, picks up on Schnitzler's subtle yet distinctive thematic elements in his adaptation and, as the title indicates, modulates the shadings. While the first episode follows Schnitzler's in setting a dark mood, it adds another symbolic layer, that of water:

Girl: 'Watch out. It's dark down here. One foot wrong, and you're in the river.' Cab driver: 'I'd love to be in the river...' Girl: 'Watch out, or we'll both be in the water...' Cab Driver: 'Great.' Girl: 'We'll both be in the water.' *Music engulfs them. The lights go out. A projected slide reads: THREE MINUTES.* (4)

The next episode, which takes place in "a darkened storeroom, next to a dance hall" (6), more explicitly associates this mood with the dangers of sex: "Au Pair: 'It's so dark. My God, look how dark it is.' Cab Driver: 'Girls say they're scared, but what are they scared of?' Au Pair: 'The dark. They're scared of the dark'" (7). With the student, in one of many gender-bending twists in the adaptation, she is the one who asks him to pull the blinds, and the leitmotif function is assumed by the glasses of water he orders her to pour for him: "Student: 'I'll just have some water.' Au Pair: 'There's the tap.' Student: 'Can you get me a glass?... Let the water run, so it's really cool.' *The water overflows from the glass into the sink. She keeps it running... She has taken the glass across to him and puts it in his hand. Their hands touch*" (14); and by the cobalt color of her clothing – "*The AU PAIR is sitting in a blue blouse and slacks and stunning blue slippers writing a letter*" (13); "*He has suddenly dropped to her feet, still nervous.* Student: 'And what beautiful shoes. Blue as well. What do you call them? Indigo?' Au Pair: 'Cobalt.' Student: 'Are they... I mean, what I'm asking, do you get them from the same shop?' *He wraps himself around her knees*" (17) – which is replaced by yellow – "The light is liquid now, yellow" (18) – after their intercourse is interrupted by the doorbell. Water also figures in the next episode. This time, however, it is the student who is ordered about: "'Student: 'Do you want a brandy?' Married Woman: 'Yes, But get me some water first.' Student: 'I'm sorry?' Married Woman: 'A glass of water. You do have a kitchen, don't you?' Student: 'Yes.' *He hasn't moved.* Student: 'Have a brandy instead'" (22-23). The married woman's husband confesses to her that he had an affair, and was in love, with a married woman who "died in a godawful mess of drink and obsession. Which is, to be honest, what I knew would happen. There was something tragic in her. Something not right. And that is what appealed. That is why... I fell so hard" (39). The link between blue/water, sex and death is made more explicit in the next episode when the husband, a politician, tells the coke-sniffing, pill-popping, champagne-downing model

that she reminds him of “someone I knew when I was young” (46). Like the husband in Schnitzler’s text, he, too, mistakes the color of his mistress’s eyes: “Politician: ‘I thought your eyes were green, but they’re blue really.’ Model: ‘And isn’t blue good enough for you?’ *He takes this as a cue. He moves to kiss her*” (47).¹² The song which the playwright sings to the model in the seventh episode, by candlelight because “there was a power-cut a few years ago, and afterwards I thought: why go back to electricity? Everything is cast in a magical light” (52), lends the play its title. In “The Blue Room,” the emptiness and lack of connection to which all of the characters are doomed reaches poignant expression in the chorus and final stanza:

I’m in the blue room
 I’m in the blue
 The dream was just a dream
 It wasn’t you

Tell me why this lonely feeling hits me
 That the person who I wanted wasn’t you
 And let me say, if politesse permits me,

I’m left with nothing save the color blue (54)

It further falls to the playwright (as it does to the director figure in *Eyes Wide Shut*, who is played, incidentally, by actor/director Sidney Pollack)¹³ to explain the motivations key to the piece, and one will note the water imagery evoked: “Restlessness. Longing. These things don’t go away just because of what we call progress. We still search. We still pursue the ideal. We land. We cast off. With luck, we make waves. But finally we have no control of the tide” (56). Again hot wax falls on firm flesh: “Ow! The wax is dripping. That bloody well hurts” (60), and again a male character assumes an oblivious female character to be closer to life than he is: “Playwright: ‘I’m not asking about your circumstances or even the men in your life. What I’m asking is: do you feel alive? Do you feel you’re really living?’ Model: ‘You don’t have a comb, do you?’” (61). The light in the room in the country hotel that the actress and the playwright share in the next episode is broken, and the conversation continues in a similar vein:

Playwright: ‘Somewhere perhaps there’s a man you haven’t met. A man who waits and is perfect.’

Actress: ‘Cricket, you do talk bollocks.’

Playwright: ‘But if you met him, then you’d stop searching. And if you stopped searching... well, if you stopped searching, then you wouldn’t be you...’

Darkness. Music engulfs them. The projected slide reads: TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES.
(68)

In the next episode, the actress is not on her deathbed but rather in her dressing room, and the aristocrat who comes to pay his respects sounds familiar notes. Before their amorous interlude, he philosophizes: "Aristocrat: 'I'm rambling. But my life is a search.' Actress: 'A search?' Aristocrat: 'Yes. For love which stays real'" (75), while afterwards, he muses: "Do you think any of us is ever just one person? Don't you think we all change, all the time? With one person we're one person, and with another we're another.' Actress: 'You think so.' Aristocrat: 'I do. I'm quite a different person when I'm mucking out'" (79). However, in the end the actress out-philosophizes him (one will note here, too, the similarity with Kubrick's adaptation in giving women a more powerful voice than Schnitzler did): "You're right. Everything ends badly, because everyone dies! It's built into the story. Nobody escapes. So until then, what? This way, at least we're alive. We're alive! Meet me tomorrow. Learn. It's the only way of learning" (80). The way the imagery in the last episode resonates with the ending of *Eyes Wide Shut* leads one to speculate whether Hare hadn't had access to Kubrick's jealously guarded script, or whether he was only picking up on the same undercurrents in Schnitzler: "Girl: 'What are you staring at?' Aristocrat: 'Oh, the way the light is falling. The way you woke!... *She turns over to go back to sleep. He stops. Her face is turned towards him, the sun stronger now, as on a mask*" (82). The hung-over, amnesic aristocrat ends this meditation on identity and desire on a deterministic note: "'The whole joke of life: you feel one thing but it comes out as another. Proust tastes the madeleine, but he sees the village.' *He suddenly calls out in what seems like genuine despair.* 'How do we change? How do we change who we are?'" (81-82). His comment to the cab-driver's girlfriend – "God, if you weren't... who you are, you could make your fortune" (83) – would seem to indicate that, for Hare, we can't, that in the end it is our human frailties which both equate and to a great extent determine us, which only serves to underscore the irony of the final exchange of "good mornings" which end the play.

WHY SCHNITZLER?

Why choose to adapt something by Schnitzler at all? Hare's case is easily explained. Sam Mendez approached him because of his impressive track-record, one which also accounts for his interest in the project. Which other English playwright can boast acclaimed adaptations of Pirandello's *The Rules of the Game*, Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* and *Mother Courage and her Children* and Chekhov's *Ivanov* in addition to over a dozen plays, screenplays for both television and film and an opera libretto?¹⁴ To put it another way,

imagine what Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard or Steven Berkoff would have done with Schnitzler's material.

Kubrick's case is more intricate and takes us to the heart of Central Europe's current signifying power. Kubrick's long association with the Schnitzler novella has become the stuff of legend. When Raphael began working on the project, he remarked: "I did not know at the time that he had been trying to find a way of making a movie out of this particular novella for more than twenty years" (23). Also the stuff of legend is Kubrick's "bewondering choice of material" (Brown 106). Beginning with his third feature film, the 1956 *The Killing*, which was based on little-known Lionel White's first novel about an unsuccessful racetrack robbery, his ten subsequent films were all adaptations of a breathtaking range of texts: *Paths of Glory* (1957) was adapted from Canadian Humphrey Cobb's 1935 novel about three French soldiers unjustly executed during World War I to cover for their higher-ups' blundering; *Spartacus* (1960) from Howard Fast's 1951 historical novel "which expanded the few known facts about the gladiator-led slave uprising of 73 BC into a simplistic left-wing polemic about the power of the masses and the corruption of the ruling classes" (Hughes 66); *Lolita* (1962) from Nabokov's pedophilic tale of a middle-aged man's obsession with a nymphet; *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) from Peter George (III)'s novel in which nuclear annihilation is narrowly averted;¹⁵ *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) from a short story of Arthur C. Clarke's which Clarke and Kubrick crafted into a contemporaneously written and published science fiction novel; *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) from Anthony Burgess's 1962 ultra-violent novella, which he wrote in a drunken stupor trying to purge himself of "the memory of what happened to my first wife, who was savagely attacked in London during the Second World War by four American deserters. She was pregnant at the time and lost our child" (cited in Hughes, 160); *Barry Lyndon* – "the adaptation of the minor Thackeray novel which Kubrick had made in 1975... and which had been a notable commercial and critical failure" (Brown 196); *The Shining* (1980) from Stephen King's 1977 best-selling horror story about the becoming psychotic of a caretaker in a desolate, haunted West Coast hotel; and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) based on Alabama-born Gustav Hasford's first novel, *The Short-Timers* (1979), which follows "US Marine recruits on a 385-day 'short-time' enlistment in the US Marine Corps, through the brutal and dehumanizing boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, to the middle of the Tet offensive and the Battle of Huế" (Hughes 220), and which was drawn from Hasford's own experiences as a combat correspondent in Vietnam – none of these can be described as innocent, unprovocative choices.

Kubrick's reasons for choosing to make a film of the *Traumnovelle* and not another *fin de siècle* text, say, Karl Kraus's *The Last Days of Humanity* or Hofmannsthal's *Everyman* have, of course, primarily to do with subject matter and approach. Kubrick would seem to have wanted to explore the nether regions of marital fidelity in as surgical a manner as possible because, as discussed above, it allowed him to leave a lasting pronouncement on the nature of art and artistic representation. There are, however, other considerations, which have to do with Central Europe.

Raphael describes Kubrick as “dream[ing] of capturing the *air* in Schnitzler's world and breathing it, furtively, into our New Yorkers” (59, italics in original). What kind of air was this and why would Kubrick want to breathe it “furtively” into his characters? To what purpose? In Schnitzler's 1924 novella *Fräuline Else*, a phrase recurs, breathed from the lips of a romantically yet ironically inclined daughter of a father with a penchant for embezzling. While vacationing with her rich aunt in the mountains, Else receives urgent telegrams from her mother requesting that she request a loan from, i.e. proposition, a wealthy acquaintance of the family who she innocently mentioned in a letter home was staying in the same hotel. “*Die Luft ist wie Champagner*,” Else sighs repeatedly. “The air is like champagne.” Hermann Broch diagnoses the effervescent, decadent quality of this air in his *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time: The European Imagination, 1806-1920* as an ethical poverty:

The ultimate meaning of poverty masked by wealth became clearer in Vienna, in Vienna's spirited swan song, than in any other place or time. A minimum of ethical values was to be masked by a maximum of aesthetic values, which themselves no longer existed. They could no longer exist, because an aesthetic value that does not spring from an ethical foundation is its own opposite – kitsch. And as the metropolis of kitsch, Vienna also became the metropolis of the value vacuum of the epoch. (81)

According to Broch, this vacuum registered on only a few of the writers of the day: “With the exception of Beer-Hofmann, who perhaps resembled him most, and Schnitzler, who resembled him least, they all spoke a foreign language – that of mere literature, hence, especially in Vienna, a language divorced from ethicality” (96). What Schnitzler shared with Richard Beer-Hofmann and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and what separated them from their light-spirited, more superficial contemporaries was their recognition of death:

For where there is no genuine connection with death and where death's absolute prevalence in the world is not continuously recognized, there is no true ethos, and Vienna, capital of a dying monarchy, had every connection with dying but not the slightest with death. The renowned Viennese sentimentality was the knowledge of farewells, a sense of leave-taking, the fruit of a perpetual condition of dying whose end one did not foresee and did not wish to foresee; death defined itself in everything from which one had

to take leave: 'Es wird ein Wein sein und mir wer'n nimmer sein' (There will be wine, and we'll be no more), as a truly poetic Viennese popular song puts it, at once light-hearted and melancholy. Hofmannsthal, however, took death seriously because he took life seriously, because his concern was ethical earnestness. (96)

As was Schnitzler's. Heinrich Mann echoes this sentiment in his tribute to Schnitzler's sixtieth birthday: "Schnitzler: that is most sweet life and the bitter necessity of death. Schnitzler: that is the cruel knowledge of the vanity of our existence between abysses and melancholy about so much that we might have been able to do but missed out on" (506),¹⁶ while Franz Werfel adds an important shading to understanding death in Schnitzler's works:

Not a heroic, not a religious death is shown, not a necessary death, in which one gives oneself up 'satisfied with life,' as the words in the Old Testament have it, not a death which is only the breaking out of a cocoon!! – Death, passing on, ceasing is feared by Schnitzler's characters because they've never completely been able to love and be loved, because the infinite reproach hasn't been resolved, the melody didn't find its cadence, stuck on the kiddy-steps of eros, not having crossed the beach of longing.

Schnitzler doesn't see death as a doctor – as critics have attributed to him for decades; he sees it as an ethicist. In the perhaps unconscious system of his worldview, death is a penalty for loneliness. (510)

Death in Hare's worldview is equally unromantic and hard. The final anecdote with which Hare ends his introduction "On Political Theatre" reads as follows:

An old American vaudevillian of the thirties drank his career away, fell into universal disfavour, but was finally found and put into an old people's home in California by a kindly producer who had once worked with him many years before. Visiting the old actor on his deathbed, the producer said, 'You are facing death. Is it as people describe? Is there a final sense of reassurance, a feeling of resignation, that sense of letting go that writers tell us consoles the dying?' 'Not at all,' said the comic, 'on the contrary. Death is none of those things that I was promised. It is ugly and fierce and degrading and violent. It is hard,' he said, 'hard as playing comedy.' All I would add is, not as hard as writing it. (11)

The hard reality of death is no stranger in Kubrick's work either. More shocking and provocative than the orgy scene in *Eyes Wide Shut* is the scene in the hospital morgue, when Bill (and the viewer with him) tries to recognize the dead female body on the dissection table, straining back in their memories to both the orgy and the overdose scene for identificatory features.¹⁷ It is on this table that Mandy's eyes are truly wide shut.¹⁸

The ethicality that runs through Schnitzler to these two adaptations of his work is what has not been recognized in the works' Anglo-American reception.¹⁹ English-speaking critics for the most part pretended, like bourgeois North American audiences at performances of the *Fledermaus*, that they were attending a highbrow work of art and not a piece of sentimental

Viennese fluff. The trap Kubrick and Hare lay for them was that they *were* in fact attending such a work of art, for which their usual *Fledermaus*-type judgments proved inadequate. Hare's distinction – "her success is not an *arts* story in the U.S., it's a *news* story" – is indicative here. The press treated Nicole Kidman as though she were a flouncing mezzo-soprano whose physical attributes were an integral part of the spectacle. Playing on the riff in *fin de Habsburg* culture between "true" and kitsch culture,²⁰ Kubrick and Hare underscore the value vacuum, which is as much a part of the current millennial malaise as it was in Schnitzler's time, the time of a dying Central European empire.²¹

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NOTES

¹ See Janz and Laermann for an in-depth analysis of the fin-de-siècle aspect of Schnitzler.

² For discussions of Stoppard, see Bergel, Macris, Schippers, Guy Stern and J.P. Stern. According to the International Movie Database (www.imdb.com), 26 films have been based on Schnitzler's works:

1. *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999, dir. Stanley Kubrick)
2. *Un jour, ce soir là* (1995, dir. Laurent Boulangier) – Anatol
3. *Romance Romance* (1992, dir. Barry Harman and David Stern (IV)) – a musical
4. *Mio caro dottor Gräsler, aka The Bachelor* (1991, dir. Roberto Faenza, starring Keith Carradine, Miranda Richardson and Kristin Scott Thomas)
5. *Frau Berta Garlan* (1989, dir. Peter Patzak) – based on Max Ophuls's play
6. *Das Weite Land, aka The Distant Land, Terre étrangère, Unknown Country* (1987, dir. Luc Bondy)
7. *Abschiede* (1986, dir. Gedeon Kovacs, starring Karlheinz Hackl und Mijou Kovacs)
8. *Der Mörder* (1984, dir. Anton Reitzenstein)
9. "Ringlek" (1982, dir. Christian Lund) – *Der Reigen*

10. Komtesse Mizzi (1975, dir. Otto Schenk)
11. "Vienna 1900" (1973, dir. Herbert Wise (I)) – "A Confirmed Bachelor," "Mother and Son," "Spring Sonata"
12. Las tres perfectas casadas, (1972, dir. Benito Alazraki) – La Muerte de un solterón
13. Das Weite Land (1970, dir. Peter Beauvais)
14. Liebelei (1969, dir. Heinrich Schnitzler)
15. La Ronde, aka Circle of Love (1964, dir. Roger Vadim)
16. Die Letzten Masken (1962, dir. Rainer Wolfhardt)
17. Bacchusfesten (1962, dir. Håkan Ersgård)
18. Christine, aka L'amante pura (1958, dir. Pierre Gaspard-Huit, starring Romy Schneider and Alain Delon)
19. När man köper julklappar (1954, dir. Jan Molander) – Anatol, Act III: Weihnachtseinkäufe)
20. La Ronde (1950) (dir. Max Ophuls, starring Anton Walbrook and Simone Signoret)
21. Ángel desnudo, El (1946, dir. Carlos Hugo Christensen) – Fräulein Else
22. Liebelei, aka Flirtation, Light O'Love, Playing at Love, Une histoire d'amour (1933, dir. Max Ophuls, starring Magda Schneider and Wolfgang Liebeneiner)
23. Daybreak (1931, dir. Jacques Feyder, starring Ramon Novarro and Helen Chandler)
24. Fräulein Else (1929, dir. Paul Czinner, starring Albert Bassermann and Elisabeth Bergner)
25. Freiwild (1928, dir. Holger-Madsen)
26. The Affairs of Anatol (1921, dir. Cecil B. DeMille, starring Wallace Reid and Gloria Swanson)

³The divorce of the stars in the film, Cruise and Kidman, would be an example of this mundane "American" reality. Involvement in the film obviously did not provide adequate "European" immersion in "the marital myth."

⁴ Thomas Mann was also of the that this was a unique quality of Schnitzler's work, as he expresses in his sixtieth birthday tribute:

[I]t seems to me that its special characteristic is a certain harshness of life which *hurts* – the insensitive, the mercilessness. Moreover it has an erotic seriousness to it. (507)

⁵ It was not, of course, the first time in Kubrick's career that his films had met with such a reception. *Lolita*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Full Metal Jacket* received criticism for the pornographic nature of their portrayals in the first case, of youth, and in the latter two, of violence.

⁶ Hare's reaction is identical to Kubrick's reaction to *Lolita*:

'I was instantly attracted to the book because of the sense of life that it conveyed, the truthfulness of it, and the inherent drama of the situation seemed completely winning,' Kubrick told *Horizon* magazine in 1960. 'I've always been amused at the cries of pornography,' he added, 'because, to me, *Lolita* seemed a very sad and tender love story. I believe that Lionel Trilling, in an article he wrote about the book, said that it was the first great [contemporary] love story.' (Hughes 89)

⁷ I am indebted to the participants in the roundtable discussion on *Eyes Wide Shut* held at the University of Alberta in September 2000, who brought many of the fol-

lowing points to my attention. Particular thanks are due organizer and our special guests from the Institute of German Studies at the University of Vienna, Werner Michler and Karl Wagner.

⁸ The page numbers given are from Schnitzler's original and J.M.Q. Davies's translation.

⁹ I would like to thank Wladimir Fischer for drawing my attention to a further Central European connection, namely the fact that Ovid was at the time of writing the *Amores* an émigré in present-day Romania.

¹⁰ The Victorian elements of the Ziegler residence are noteworthy. Drawing on Mark Girouard's argument in *The Victorian Country House*, Janet Wolff reiterates:

[A]greement by 1850 about what a 'gentlemen's house' should be like included the requirements that 'it should provide decent quarters for the servants. It should protect the womanliness of women and en-courage the manliness of men.' As well as an extremely complex and often impractical arrangement of rooms, so that children, servants, mothers and fathers should only coincide at approved times and in approved places, Victorian houses also contained 'an increasingly large and sacrosanct male domain,' whose nucleus was the billiard room. The domain often expanded to include the smoking room and the gun room, and sometimes adjoining dressing room and study. (119-20)

¹¹ The painting is called "Paula on Red" and is by Kubrick's wife, Christiane. It can be seen on her website: www.christianekubrick.com.

¹² In Olphus's *La Ronde*, the eyes are blue as well, leading one to speculate whether Hare's coloration is a subtle homage to the film.

¹³ I owe this insight to Raleigh Whiting. However, the arbitrary nature of film-making must also be noted in this regard, as the same point could not be made about the actor originally cast and partially shot in the role of Ziegler, Harvey Keitel.

¹⁴ For Hare's own views on his work adapting, see the interview in *Stages of Translation*.

¹⁵ It was released under the pseudonym of Peter Bryant in the UK in 1958 as *Two Hours of Doom* and in the US in 1959 as *Red Alert*.

¹⁶ One will note that Schnitzler's lack of sentimentality is what Heinrich's brother, Thomas, described as "actually not Austrian at all," that is, not *typically* Austrian.

¹⁷ In teaching this episode, I have had students argue convincingly about the texture and shade of "Mandy's" pubic hair.

¹⁸ I am grateful to a medical doctor, William Lakey, for raising this insight. I would also like to add that this interpretation does not, of course, foreclose other productive avenues, such as the one following from the final sentence of Adorno's essay on Freudian theory: "Socialized hypnosis breeds within itself the forces which will do away with the spook of regression through remote control, and in the end awaken those who keep their eyes shut though they are no longer asleep" (132).

¹⁹ I would not like to be understood as claiming that this applies to every Schnitzler adaptation as I think the two works under discussion here are quite singular in this regard.

²⁰ I intend "true" here not only in the way German critics usually do, that is, as opposed to "trivial" or "entertainment" art (see Schulte-Sasse), but also in the sense of "true" place, which Meaghan Morris develops referring to Daniel Boorstin's 1961 *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* and Paul Fussell's 1980 *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the War*:

Following an influential distinction derived from Daniel Boorstin,... any motel is

necessarily one of the 'pseudo-places' defining the tourist world. For Paul Fussell, the characteristic sign of the pseudo-place is, from Disneyland to the airport, Switzerland to the shopping center, a calculated readability. True places are opaque to the passing observer, and 'require' active response – ideally, the rich interpretation that was 'literature' in the lost era of 'travel.' (35)

²¹ The author would like to thank the School of Advanced Study at the University of London whose generous institutional support made the writing of this article a reality.