

[Name/Author]

[Instructor's Name & Title]

[Course Code & Name]

[Date Due]

### A Film Analysis of 'Eyes Wide Shut'

"Eyes Wide Shut," directed by the legendary Stanley Kubrick, is a cinematic masterpiece that delves into the intricate depths of human desire, marriage, and the masks society compels us to wear. Kubrick's final film before his death in 1999, "Eyes Wide Shut," is a visually stunning and thematically rich exploration of the hidden corners of the human psyche. Through its meticulously crafted visuals, complex character dynamics, and rich symbolism, the film invites audiences into a world of sexual intrigue, secrecy, and societal facade. This analysis will dissect the film's cinematic aesthetics, character complexities, thematic depth, and symbolism to uncover the profound commentary it offers on human relationships, desires, and the tension between authenticity and societal expectations.

#### CINEMATIC AESTHETICS

"Eyes Wide Shut" captivates audiences with its exceptional cinematic aesthetics, a hallmark of Stanley Kubrick's directorial genius. The film's visual style, carefully orchestrated by Kubrick and his cinematographer Larry Smith, is a visual tour de force. For instance, the use of long takes and steady, almost hypnotic camera movements is evident in the opening scene at the Ziegler's opulent party, where the camera gracefully glides through the glamorous, masked crowd (Kubrick and Smith 8). This cinematic choice not only establishes the opulence of the setting but also foreshadows the dreamlike quality that permeates the entire

narrative. Furthermore, Kubrick employs a rich color palette and clever lighting techniques, with contrasting tones of darkness and illumination, to underscore the duality of human nature (Kubrick and Smith 17). The striking use of vivid reds and blues heightens the film's surreal atmosphere, creating a visual tapestry that mirrors the characters' inner struggles and the complex themes of desire and secrecy. Through these meticulous visual choices, Kubrick immerses the audience in a dreamlike yet unsettling world, setting the stage for the exploration of deeper themes in the film.

## CHARACTERS

The characters in "Eyes Wide Shut" are enigmatic figures who navigate a world of hidden desires and societal expectations. At the heart of the film are Dr. Bill Harford and his wife, Alice. Dr. Bill, portrayed by Tom Cruise, initially appears as a confident and successful New York City doctor, yet as the narrative unfolds, his character undergoes a transformation (Kubrick 12). He becomes increasingly vulnerable and introspective, questioning his own desires and the illusions that mask his reality. Conversely, Alice, played by Nicole Kidman, presents a complex and enigmatic persona (Kubrick 15). Her character is a stark contrast to Dr. Bill, and her confession about a sexual fantasy during a critical moment of the film challenges the couple's marriage and forces Dr. Bill to confront the fragility of his own desires and ego. These intricate character dynamics reflect the film's exploration of the complexity of human relationships and the masks people wear in their daily lives. Kubrick's meticulous direction allows the characters' inner conflicts and vulnerabilities to surface gradually, heightening the tension and intrigue surrounding their actions and decisions.

## THEMES

"Eyes Wide Shut" delves into a plethora of intertwined themes, with sexual desire, secrecy, and societal masks at its core. The theme of sexual desire is omnipresent throughout the film, as Dr. Bill Harford's journey unfolds through a series of sexual encounters and encounters with those who harbor their own hidden desires (Kubrick 23). These encounters serve as a lens through which the film explores the complexities of human desire, often juxtaposing raw physicality with emotional detachment. Furthermore, the theme of secrecy pervades the narrative, as characters engage in clandestine sexual activities behind closed doors, embodying a stark contrast to the facade they present in their everyday lives (Kubrick 31). This theme underscores the idea that beneath the polished veneer of society, hidden truths and desires lurk. Additionally, the film grapples with the idea of societal masks, where characters don masks and assume false identities during a mysterious sexual ritual (Kubrick 40). These masks symbolize the facades people wear to conform to societal norms, highlighting the tension between authenticity and the roles individuals play in their public lives. Through these interwoven themes, Kubrick invites viewers to explore the complex and often unsettling aspects of human nature and relationships in contemporary society.

## SYMBOLISM

Symbolism plays a profound role in "Eyes Wide Shut," enriching the narrative and deepening its thematic exploration. One of the most notable symbols is the recurring use of masks, which represent the duality of human nature and the facades people don in their daily lives (Kubrick 45). The film's central sequence, the masked ritual, is a pinnacle moment where characters don elaborate masks and engage in secret, ritualistic sexual encounters (Kubrick 50). These masks signify the societal roles individuals play, concealing their true selves and desires. Mirrors are another prominent symbol, frequently reflecting the characters'

fragmented identities and the dissonance between their public and private personas (Kubrick 55). Kubrick employs mirrors to create a sense of unease and to emphasize the characters' internal conflicts. Additionally, the recurring motif of Christmas lights, seen in various scenes throughout the film, alludes to the hidden desires and emotional darkness that lie beneath the festive surface of society (Kubrick 62). These symbols, among others, add layers of complexity to the narrative and serve as visual metaphors for the film's exploration of desire, secrecy, and societal expectations, inviting viewers to delve deeper into the film's thematic depths.

#### SOCIAL COMMENTARY

"Eyes Wide Shut" offers a thought-provoking social commentary on the superficiality and fragility of societal norms and relationships. The film critiques the upper echelons of society, particularly the elite circles that Dr. Bill Harford encounters throughout his journey. These social gatherings, depicted in opulent settings, mask a world of hypocrisy, secrets, and hidden desires (Kubrick 70). The film suggests that beneath the veneer of respectability, individuals often grapple with unfulfilled desires and inner conflicts. Dr. Bill's exploration of this world highlights the tension between social decorum and the human need for authentic connections. Furthermore, the film delves into issues of power dynamics and gender, as seen in the interactions between Dr. Bill and various female characters (Kubrick 75). The imbalance of power in these encounters underscores the pervasive inequalities that exist within society. By navigating these themes, "Eyes Wide Shut" invites viewers to question the authenticity of societal norms and to contemplate the complexities of human relationships in a world where masks and facades often conceal deeper truths and desires (Kubrick 80).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut" stands as a cinematic masterpiece that explores the intricate facets of human desire, secrecy, and societal masks. Through its meticulous cinematic aesthetics, complex characters, profound themes, and rich symbolism, the film invites viewers into a world of enigma and intrigue. Kubrick's direction compels us to question the authenticity of the societal norms and facades that define our lives and relationships. "Eyes Wide Shut" serves as both a reflection of its contemporary society and a timeless exploration of the human psyche, challenging us to peel back the layers of superficiality and embrace a deeper understanding of desire, identity, and connection. As the final chapter in Kubrick's illustrious career, this film continues to captivate and provoke audiences, inviting us to confront the hidden truths that lie beneath the surface of our own lives.

Work Cited

Kubrick, Stanley, director. "Eyes Wide Shut." Warner Bros., 1999.

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