

The Hidden (And Not So Hidden) Messages in Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut" (pt. I)

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"Eyes Wide Shut" was promoted as a steamy, suspenseful movie starring the "It" couple of the day: Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. While the actors were prominently featured in the movie, it is everything around them that told the true story of "Eyes Wide Shut". Stanley Kubrick's attention to detail and symbolism gave the movie an entire other dimension – one that cannot be seen by those who have their eyes wide shut. This multiple-part series will look at the hidden symbolism of Kubrick's final film.



I remember when I first watched *Eyes Wide Shut*, back in 1999. Boy, did I hate it. I hated how slow everything was, I hated how Nicole Kidman tried to sound drunk or high and I hated seeing Tom Cruise walk around New York looking concerned. I guess I reacted the same way critics did at the time the movie came out and thought: "This movie is boring and there is nothing hot about it." More than a decade later, equipped with a little more knowledge and patience, I re-watched the movie ... and it blew my mind. In fact, like most Stanley Kubrick films, an entire book could be written about the movie and the concepts it addresses. *Eyes Wide Shut* is indeed not simply about a relationship, it is about all of the outside forces and influences that define that relationship. It is about the eternal back-and-forth between the male and female principles in a confused and decadent modern world. Also, more importantly, it is about the group that rules this modern world – a secret elite that channels this struggle between the male and female principles in a specific and esoteric matter. The movie however does not spell out

anything. Like all great art, messages are communicated through subtle symbols and mysterious riddles.

Stanley Kubrick unexpectedly died only five days after submitting the final cut of the movie to Warner Bros, making *Eyes Wide Shut* his swan song. Considering the fact that *Eyes Wide Shut* is about an occult secret society that eliminates those who cross its path, some theories arose about Kubrick's death and its suspicious nature. Did he reveal to the public too much, too soon? Maybe.

Let's look at the main themes of Kubrick's last creation.

The Modern Couple

The stars of *Eyes Wide Shut* were the "It" couple of 1999: Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Those who were expecting the movie to be a sort of voyeuristic experience showing hot scenes of the couple were probably very disappointed. The audience rather got a cold, egoistic and profoundly unsatisfied couple, one that seems to be tied together not by pure love, but by other factors, like convenience and appearances. While the couple is very "modern" and "upper-class", the forces that keep it together are the result of basic, primal and almost animalistic behavior. If we look at the instinctive behavior of humans and animals, males primarily look for females that have good child-bearing qualities while females look for a strong provider. Remnants of this behavior still exist today as males tend to display wealth and power to attract females while females showcase their beauty to attract males. In *Eyes Wide Shut*, the couple perfectly follows that instinctive script.

Tom Cruise's character is called Dr. Bill ... as in dollar bill. Several times during the movie, Dr. Bill either waves his money or his "doctor badge" at people to get them to do what he wants. Bill is part of the upper class and his dealings with people of the lower class are often resolved with money.



In order to get this taxi driver to wait for him in front of the elite mansion, Dr. Bill tears up a hundred dollar bill and promises him to give him the other half when he comes back. Dr. Bill's motto is probably "Everybody has a price". Does his own wife have a price?

Played by Nicole Kidman, Alice lost her job in the art world and is now fully supported by her husband's salary. While she lives very comfortably, Alice appears to be extremely bored with her life as a stay at home mother. The name Alice is most likely a reference to the main character of *Alice in Wonderland* – a fairy tale about a privileged girl who is bored with her life and who goes "through the looking glass" to end up in Wonderland. In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Alice is often shown staring at the looking glass – grooming herself or ... maybe looking for something more to life.



Alice is often shown in front of the mirror and making herself pretty. At the beginning of the movie, almost everyone who talk to her mention her appearance. Her daughter Helena (maybe named after Helena of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world) follows in her footsteps.



Promotional images for the movie feature Alice kissing Bill but looking at herself in the mirror, almost as if she was seeing an alternate reality.

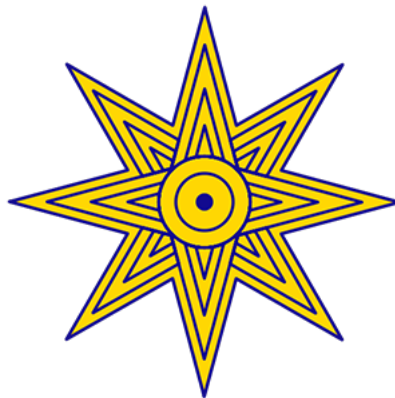
While the couple shows signs of fatigue, Bill and Alice put on their “happy masks” when it is time to attend social events. Like the elite people they socialize with, there is a big difference between the facade they put on and reality.

Brushing With the Elite

Bill and Alice go to a classy party given by Victor Ziegler, one of Bill’s wealthy patients. Judging from Victor’s house, he is not simply rich, he is part of the ultra-elite. While his party is very elegant and is attended by highly cultured people, it doesn’t take long for the viewers to realize that this facade hides a disgusting dark side. Also, small details inserted by Kubrick hint to a link between the party and the occult ritual that occurs later in the movie.



When entering the party, the first thing we see is this peculiar Christmas decoration. This eight-pointed star is found throughout the house.



The star at Zeigler’s house is nearly identical to the ancient symbol of the star of Ishtar.

Knowing Kubrick’s attention to detail, the inclusion of the star of Ishtar in this party is not an accident. Ishtar is the Babylonian goddess of fertility, love, war and,

mostly, sexuality. Her cult involved sacred prostitution and ritual acts – two elements we clearly see later in the movie.

“Babylonians gave Ishtar offerings of food and drink on Saturday. They then joined in ritual acts of lovemaking, which in turn invoked Ishtar’s favor on the region and its people to promote continued health and fruitfulness.”

– Goddess Ishtar, Anita Revel

Ishtar herself was considered to be the “courtesan of the gods” and had many lovers. While inspired in bed, she was also cruel to the men that got attached to her. These concepts will constantly reappear in the movie, especially with Alice.

During the party, Bill and Alice go their separate ways and are both faced with temptation. Alice meets a man named Sandor Szavost who asks her about Ovid’s *Art of Love*. This series of books, written during the times of Ancient Rome, was essentially a “How to Cheat on Your Partner” guide, and was popular with the elite of the time. The first book opens with an invocation to Venus – the planet esoterically associated with lust. Interestingly enough, Ishtar (and her equivalents in other Semetic cultures) was considered to be the personification of Venus.



Sandor drinks from Alice’s glass. This trick is taken right out of Ovid’s *The Art of Love*. It sends Alice a message that is not very subliminal: “I want to exchange fluids with you”.

Sandor’s name might be a reference to the founder of the Church of Satan: Anton Szandor Lavey. Is this Kubrick’s way of saying that this man, who urges Alice to cheat on her husband, is a part of the occult elite and its decadent ways? The Hungarian man is apparently skilled in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) as he nearly hypnotizes Alice with well calculated phrases about the futility of married life and the necessity of pursuing pleasure.

Meanwhile, Bill is discussing with two flirtatious models who tell him that they want to take him to “where the rainbow ends”. While the meaning of this enigmatic phrase is never explicitly explained in the movie, symbols talk for themselves.

Rainbows Everywhere

Rainbows and multicolored lights appear throughout the movie, from the beginning to the end.



The name of the store where Bill rents his costume is called “Rainbow”. The name of the store under it: “Under the Rainbow”. Kubrick is trying to tell us something...Something involving rainbows.

As if to emphasize the theme of multicolored rainbows, almost every scene in the movie contains multicolored Christmas lights, giving most sets a hazy, dreamy glow.



Almost every time Bill enters a room, the first things we see are multicolored Christmas lights.



Sometimes Christmas lights are the focal point of attention.

These lights tie together most scenes of the movie, making them part of the same reality. There are however a few select scenes where there are absolutely no Christmas lights. The main one is Somerton palace – the place where the secret society ritual takes place.



Sharply contrasting with the rest of the movie, Somerton is completely devoid of multicolored lights. Everything about this place is in sharp opposition with the “outside world”.

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, there are therefore two worlds: The Christmas lights-filled “rainbow world”, where the masses wander around, trying to make ends meet and the other world... “where the rainbow ends”- where the elite gathers and performs its rituals. The contrast between the two world give a sense of an almost insurmountable divide between them. Later, the movie will clearly show us how those from the “rainbow world” cannot enter the other world.

So, when the models ask Bill the go “where the rainbow ends”, they probably refer to going “where the elite gathers and performs rituals”. It might also be about them being dissociated Beta Programming slaves. There are several references to Monarch mind control ([read this article for more information](#)) in the movie. Women who take part in elite rituals are often products of Illuminati mind control. In MK Ultra vocabulary, “going over the rainbow” means dissociating from reality and entering another persona (more on this in the next article).



The models ask Bill to leave the “rainbow world” (there’s a Christmas tree right behind them) to indulge in the debauchorous rituals of the occult elite.

Behind the Curtain

Bill’s flirting with the models is interrupted when Ziegler calls him to his bathroom. There, we get a first glance of “where the rainbow ends” – the dark truth about the elite.



Bill meets Ziegler in his gigantic bathroom. The man is dressing up and is with a naked unconscious woman...who is not his wife.

If we rewind a little, when Bill and Alice first entered the party, they were welcomed by Ziegler and his wife in a room filled with Christmas lights. We saw two respectable couples talking about respectable things in room full of enchanting lights. But when Bill goes “where the rainbow ends” (notice there are no Christmas lights in the bathroom) we see reality: Ziegler with a Beta programming slave who overdosed on goofballs. When the woman gains consciousness, Ziegler talks to her in an odd, paternal matter, highlighting the fact that he’s the master and she’s the slave. The luxurious setting of this scene is Kubrick’s way of saying that extreme wealth does not necessary equal high morals.

Ziegler then urges Bill to keep everything he just saw a secret. The world “where the rainbow ends” must never be revealed to the outside world. It operates in its own space, has its own rules and depends on the masses’ ignorance.

Questioning Marriage

While Alice ultimately rejected Sandor’s advances, she was nevertheless enticed by them. The next day, Alice tells Bill that she could have cheated on him at the party. When Bill tells his wife that he loves and trusts her, she completely loses it. She then proceeds to tell him a story about how she was once ready to cheat on him with a naval officer she met in a hotel. This cruel story highlights the “Ishtar” side of Alice as she brings up in her husband feelings of jealousy, insecurity, betrayal and even humiliation. In short, Alice purposely summoned everything that is negative in relationships to pop Bill’s “love bubble”. This wake-up call prompts Bill to embark in a strange journey around New-York city, one that has multiple level of meanings. That strange night will ultimately lead him to the exact opposite of a monogamous relationship: Anonymous, masked copulation with strangers in a ritual setting. Bill’s journey will be further analyzed in the second part of this series of articles.

Conclusion of Part One

The first part of this series about *Eyes Wide Shut* took a broad look at Bill and Alice, a modern couple that has the “privilege” of brushing with the upper-echelon of New York. While everything appears great on the surface, Kubrick quickly tells the viewers to not be deceived by appearances and to not be impressed by exhibitions of wealth. Because, behind the “rainbow world”, exists a dark and disturbing reality, one that Kubrick exposes in many subtle ways throughout the

movie.

While Bill and Alice are simply “guests” in the elite circle, they are nevertheless fascinated and attracted by it. They see in this lifestyle a way of fulfilling their dark and secret needs. In the next part of this series, we’ll look at the occult meaning of Bill’s journey – a story told by subtle symbols peppered throughout the movie.

Read part II of the series →

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