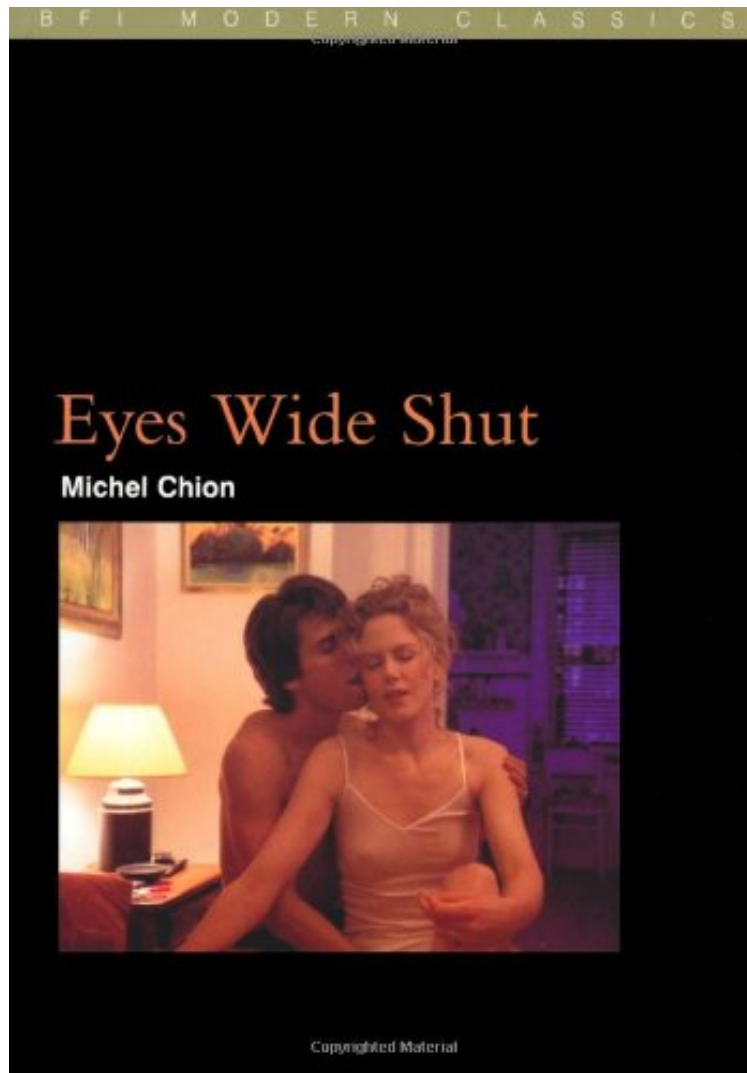


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## Eyes Wide Shut (BFI Film Classics)

*Michel Chion*

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**Michel Chion : Eyes Wide Shut (BFI Film Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eyes Wide Shut (BFI Film Classics):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent, but Quirky- for EWS diehards onlyBy DavidMichel Chion's book on Eyes Wide Shut may disappoint some looking for a solid, unwavering analysis of the film. Chion offers no such thing. Rather, he approaches the film with a sensitive, keen eye for detail and a penchant for unique and quirky insights. He makes many observations, but has no urge to unite all these observations under one thematic banner, as many are wont to do. That is, Chion observes Eyes Wide Shut as a film full of signifiers, without signifieds. For Chion, there is no signified-in-waiting, no monumental possible revelation of the film's "meaning," that will tie all

the patterns and events of the film together. This is somewhat refreshing, as most people seek to pin a film down- to make declarative, concrete statements on what the film, without hesitation, is "about." Chion's love for the film is so seemingly great that he cannot bring himself to pin it down to anything in particular. Which is fine; *Eyes Wide Shut* is indeed a film brimming with ambiguity, a film in which, as Chion notes, banal and supposedly important lines of dialogue are given the same level of attention and emphasis. (Chion: "The film does not impose on us a hierarchy of what is important and what is not.") All in all, this is a great, fascinating read- though somewhat slight, coming in at just under 100 pages. Anyone infatuated with *Eyes Wide Shut* would do well to give Chion's book a chance, though with a fair warning not to expect any sort of traditional analysis.

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Marred by a Ridiculous Theory By Ivo Shandor Let me start off by saying that I am a huge fan of the BFI Modern Classics series; I own several and plan to buy several more, given time. Chion's "Eyes Wide Shut" volume is not the best in the series, but is adequate. Chion did notice things that I missed, things that definitely make me want to go back and see the film again, having read this book. The greatest fault of this volume is that it has been poisoned by Chion's wacky "2001: A Space Odyssey" theory. He mentions it briefly in passing here, but for the full details you would have to read his "Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey." Allow me to spare you the trouble. You see, in the film "2001: A Space Odyssey," space administrator Heywood Floyd journeys to the moon (famously, to the tune of "The Blue Danube") and stops to make a videophone call to his daughter (played by Kubrick's real-life daughter). The girl wants a teddy bear for her birthday (a "bushbaby" in the film), and Floyd says he will see what he can do. The film then moves on to the story of Dave Bowman and the HAL-9000, and - to Chion's dismay - we never find out if the little girl got her teddy bear or not! Chion feels that it "must" have agonized Kubrick FOR THIRTY YEARS (!) that audiences never got to see his daughter get her teddy bear. So - according only to Chion - Kubrick made sure "Eyes Wide Shut" ends with the couple's daughter getting a teddy bear for Christmas. Now, since the film takes place close to the year 2001 (based on when it was filmed), and since the couple in "Eyes Wide Shut" (Bill and Alice Harford, played by Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman respectively) end the film by declaring their intent to, well, "perform coitus" (to put in clinically), then that "must" mean that the Star Child floating in Earth orbit at the end of "2001: A Space Odyssey" MUST be their unborn son looking down on them prior to his conception! And the scariest part is, Chion must really believe this - otherwise why would he mention it in two separate books? Having read many books about Kubrick, I find it fascinating that on the one hand, Kubrick's fellow directors were amazed at how different each of his films are (different genres, different historical periods, different plot structures), but on the other hand, film critics who grew up awed by "2001: A Space Odyssey" try to claim that every film he did after that was somehow, somehow connected thematically to "2001." When it comes to Kubrick, I tend to side with his peers; his critics (fans though they may be) are not quite right in the head.

12 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

A Nice Start, But Ultimately Inadequate By Tom From NY When Chion remembers to write about the actual film *Eyes Wide Shut*, he can be most interesting. His notes on the repetitious dialogue in this film, and in much of Kubrick's work, are very interesting, even if they don't go very far. Unfortunately, entirely too much of M. Chion's writing is vague and unmoored, unorganized. In the beginning of the essay, Chion makes what must be one of the most ridiculous assertions in the history of film criticism: that *Eyes Wide Shut* is narrated by Bill and Alice's unborn (and unconceived) son. This little bombshell is dropped into the reader's lap and not explained for several pages, and M. Chion's evidence to support this outlandish claim is, to say the least, unconvincing. If you want to read an interesting and thought-provoking essay on *Eyes Wide Shut*, seek out Thomas Allen Nelson's excellent book on Kubrick, entitled *Kubrick: Inside A Film Artist's Maze*. It is clearly and concisely written, and Nelson never makes an outlandish critical interpretation without rock-solid evidence to back it up. M. Chion would do well to follow Nelson's example.

Stanley Kubrick died on 7 March 1999 at his Hertfordshire home, having finished the editing of his last film. *Eyes Wide Shut* was released later that year. Adapted from Arthur Schnitzler's 1926 Viennese novel *Dream Story*, relocated and updated to contemporary Manhattan, *Eyes Wide Shut* stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman as a prosperous couple whose marriage is tested in the aftermath a series of sinister events. The film baffled many of its first audiences. It had all the lavish attention to detail of a Kubrick film but it seemed slow, enigmatic, too much of a dream. Michel Chion's extraordinary study of *Eyes Wide Shut* makes the case that it is one of Kubrick's masterpieces and a fitting testament. To appreciate this, though, it is necessary to look at what happens on the screen without bringing preconceptions to bear. The film needs to be taken at face value. Looked at this way, *Eyes Wide Shut* reveals itself to be a deeply moving film about characters who are not so different from real people, a film about life in which questions of meaning and motive lose their value.

From the Back Cover Stanley Kubrick died on 7 March 1999 at his Hertfordshire home, having finished the editing of his last film. *Eyes Wide Shut* was released later that year. Adapted from Arthur Schnitzler's 1926 Viennese novel *Dream Story*, relocated and updated to contemporary Manhattan, *Eyes Wide Shut* stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman as a prosperous couple whose marriage is tested in the aftermath a series of sinister events. The film baffled many of its first audiences. It had all the lavish attention to detail of a Kubrick film but it seemed slow, enigmatic, too

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