

Thais Flores Nogueira Diniz

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

ABSTRACT: A film storyboard is a large section of the film produced beforehand. Although they are like comics, they are essentially different, serving as tools in the making of the film. They allow producers to visualize the scenes and find potential problems before they occur. Many filmmakers have storyboarded only certain scenes or haven't used them at all, but some have used it extensively in place of doing a script. This paper will examine the efficacy of the interaction between the production of Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and storyboards by Christopher Baker, mainly the ones concerning the fantastic and dreamlike atmosphere of Arthur Schnitzler's *Dream Story* in scenes such as Alice's dream, the mask ball and the costume shop. I will try to compare parts of the storyboard with the abovementioned scenes in order to investigate their efficacy in conveying Schnitzler's story.

KEYWORDS: storyboard; film adaptation; Stanley Kubrick; *Eyes Wide Shut*

RESUMO: Chamamos de *Storyboard* uma parte significativa de um filme produzida previamente. Embora sejam como quadrinhos, são totalmente diferentes, e servem de ferramentas no fazer do filme. Permitem aos produtores visualizar cenas e encontrar possíveis problemas antes que estes ocorram. Muitos cineastas usam *storyboards* apenas para algumas cenas ou mesmo nunca o usam. Porém alguns têm usado *storyboards* extensivamente em lugar do roteiro. Este texto examina a eficácia da interação entre a produção de *Eyes wide shut (De olhos bem fechados)* e quadros de *storyboards* de Christopher Baker, principalmente os que se referem à atmosfera fantástica e onírica do romance de Arthur Schnitzler, *Dream Story*: os sonhos de Alice, o baile de máscara e a loja de fantasias. Tentarei comparar partes da *storyboard* com as cenas mencionadas acima com a finalidade de investigar sua eficácia na tradução da história de Schnitzler.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Storyboard; adaptação fílmica; Stanley Kubrick; *De olhos bem fechados*.

¹ This text, part of a project financed by FAPEMIG and CNPq, was first presented in a Portuguese shorter version at the XI ABRALIC (July 2008 São Paulo, Brazil) and also in English at the 8th International Conference on Words and Images Studies (International Association of Word and Image Studies, Paris 7-11 July, 2008)

Introduction

As if it were a comic, a storyboard is an illustrated vision of how a film producer or director imagines what the film ought to look like. This is an effective way of communicating between producer or director and the rest of the team. It is like the plan of a building (or even the model) that will guide the work of the engineer (or workers) in a building. Storyboards guide the film or TV team in order to do that which the director has in mind. Differently from traditional scripts, which only describe the action and express the dialogue, storyboards also describe camera angles and visual transitions. The words of the script may be poetic, but the images of the storyboard are the very realization of that poetry in space (BEGLEITER, 2001: 3). Therefore, just as the screenplay is the script for the narrative of a story, the storyboard is the visual script.

Storyboards appeared to substitute cartoon scripts, since it is impossible to give an exact idea of something, such as, for example, “a funny expression on his face”. Early on, cartoon producers began to realize that a drawing said much more than words and included more and more sketches to their scripts until drawing all the story became a routine procedure (SIMON, 2007: 6). First they had the habit of putting sketches on flannelgraph board which were later called storyboards. Later on these sketches replaced written texts which were reduced to a minimum, limited only to dialogues and simple camera instructions.

Nowadays storyboards are used to develop or throw out an idea, highlight the script or visualize it in its final form. They are common in filming live commercials and action scenes, acrobatics and special effects. It is meant to provide a visual flow of the story.

Because it is a pre-visualization technique, a drawn version of the film, it becomes a resource which is widely used by filmmakers. They are a series of sketches of the main sequences and allow producers a preview of scenes and potential problems even before they arise. Some filmmakers make sketches of only a few scenes, but others make wide use of this resource, substituting the script. In this paper, I intend to examine the interaction between the production of the film *Eyes Wide Shut*, by Stanley Kubrick, and the storyboards drawn up by Christopher Baker, especially in the scenes that illustrate the atmosphere of dreams in Arthur Schnitzler's novel which inspires the film: Alice's dream, the masked ball and the costumes shop. I will try to compare Baker's sketches to scenes in the film to analyze the "intermediatic" process underlying the translation/"transcreation" which occurred.

Film adaptation

Stanley Kubrick's film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, is based on the novel by Viennese Arthur Schnitzler, *Traumnovelle*, written in 1926, and translated as *Dream Story*. The novel is the account of the trip of a man in the hidden paths of his own unconscious. It is set in Vienna, at the end of the 19th century and exposes the hypocrisy of bourgeois culture, by exploiting the desires, fantasies and repressed passions under the surface of an apparently happy marriage.

The protagonist of the novel, Fridolin, is a 34-year-old successful physician who lives with his wife Albertine and his daughter. The plot, which uses ideas from Freud and portrays Viennese society at the beginning of the century, shows the search of a physician in a marriage crisis, who lives two nights and a day of strange experiences – it is not clear if they are real or onyric. This is after his wife has

confessed to a sexual fantasy with an officer. This revelation brings a great disquiet to her husband's mind. He then leaves and wanders the street at night. Dream and reality are mixed. After spending a night in orgies, the husband goes back home and his wife tells him a bad dream: he was being tortured and crucified while she was making love to the officer. Fridolin is outraged and considers the dream proof that his wife wants to cheat on him and decides to go after his sexual temptations.

In this search, he finds that strange things happen, disturbing him even further. On returning home the second night, he finds his wife asleep and, at her side on the pillow, is the mask he had used in the orgy of the previous night. Fridolin, repentant, tells her all his adventures, however, listening to him, she comforts him and they welcome the new day.

The dominating theme of the novel is psychological: it discusses issues of disloyalty, jealousy, guilt and focuses on the desires and fantasies of a couple. When confessing these intimate desires, they begin to deal with feelings of insecurity, betrayal and resentment. The tension between duty and desire is evident. In the end, the couple agrees that no dream is totally real life and that reality does not cover all of life.

There are some changes in the order of events and in the period and place: 20th century New York and 19th century Vienna. The environment of dream and fantasy however is common to both works.

Eyes Wide Shut starts with the couple getting ready to go to a party. The husband, Bill (Tom Cruise) and his wife, Alice (Nicole Kidman) show great intimacy and a great concern with their daughter. At the party the family structure begins to crumble when Bill becomes involved with two models and Alice becomes involved

with one of the guests who courts her. Bill's affair is interrupted by a call from the host to assist a prostitute who is unconscious as a result of an overdose.

Next day at home the couple have a sincere talk. She tells him of a recent fantasy she had about a naval officer they had encountered on a vacation. Bill is disturbed by Alice's revelation, but the conversation is interrupted by a call to the deathbed of the father of a now-engaged female friend, who impulsively kisses him and tells him she loves him. He rejects her impulses and takes a walk down the streets of New York. He meets a prostitute and goes to her apartment. Again he is interrupted by a phone call this time from his wife, after which he calls off the encounter.

Then he goes to meet, at the Sonata Café, his friend Nick, who he has met at the party. There he learns that Nick has a later engagement that evening where he must play the piano while blindfolded. To gain admittance to the place, one needs a costume, a mask and the password "Fidelio", Nick tells him. Our doctor drives to a shop called "Rainbow Fashions" and offers money to the owner to rent him a costume at that time of the night. With the costume, Bill takes a taxi out to a country mansion where a quasi-religious sexual ritual is taking place. One woman comes to Bill, takes him aside and warns him that he does not belong there. He then meets another girl in whose company he walks through a few rooms where an orgy is taking place. The first woman insists that he is in danger for they suspect that he is an outsider but he refuses to go out. Bill is then taken to the masked, red-cloaked Master of Ceremonies who decides to punish him. The masked young woman who had tried to warn Bill now intervenes and insists that she be punished instead of him. As she is taken away, Bill is ushered from the mansion and warned by the red-cloaked Master not to tell anyone about what happened there.

Just before dawn, Bill arrives home guilty and confused, where his wife Alice is now awake and tells him of a troubling dream in which the Naval Officer emerged, stared at her, and the two of them began making love surrounded by many other couples doing the same. She then started having sex with many of those men and laughing at the idea of Bill seeing her with them.

The next morning, Bill returns to the mansion where he had been the previous night but is expelled. Then he goes in search of Nick. After locating his hotel the desk clerk there tells Bill that a frightened Nick had checked out a few hours earlier after returning with two dangerous-looking men. Before going to work, Bill goes to return the costume and the shop proprietor offers his daughter for prostitution. As Bill has misplaced the mask, he is billed for it.

At home, Bill thinks about Alice's recounting of the scene while he watches her with their daughter. He also goes to the home of the prostitute with a gift but her roommate tells him that the girl has just discovered she has HIV. Worse of all, Bill discovers that the girl that "saved" him at the party the previous night was now dead.

When Bill returns home, he sees the mask he had rented on his pillow next to his wife. He breaks down in tears and, as Alice awakes, he decides to tell her the whole truth of the past two days.

The next morning they forgive each other, and conclude that dreams and actions of only one day will not reflect the truth about their lives.

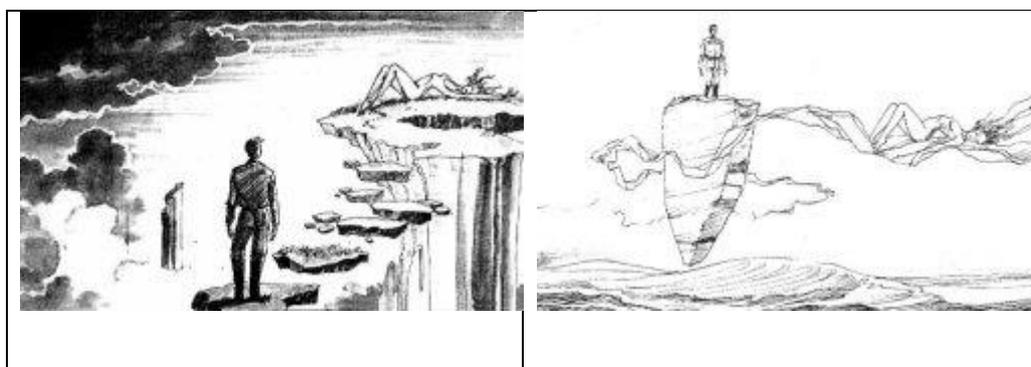
As Schnitzler's story, Kubrick's film is therefore a critique to a society where married men betray their wives, revealing a cynical world, rotten and full of betrayal. But here also reality and fantasy are mixed and ambiguity remains, when we perceive

the dream atmosphere that passes over both stories. As there are many indications that Bill's experiences are no more than dreams, I will try to show the role of Christopher Baker's storyboards in the production of the film, especially those related to the three scenes that portray this dream atmosphere: Alice's dreams, the costume shop and the mask ball.

Alice's dreams

The first episode analyzed is Albertine's dreams (Alice in the film). In the novel, the wife confesses to a sexual fantasy with an officer, when they were on holiday in Denmark. This greatly distresses her husband, who, on returning home after taking part in the orgy, hears his wife's account of a nightmare related to the confession she had made: he was being tortured and crucified, while she was making love to the officer and other men.

Christopher Baker's four sketches shown below (fig. 1) may refer to some oneiric sequences from the novel *Traumnovell*. The woman portrayed is, certainly, Albertine/Alice (Nicole Kidman); the man could be Fridolin/Billm (Tom Cruise) or even the young Danish man, desired by the wife, since only these two male figures appear in her dream, the others being described by the novelist as an "infinite tide of nudity foaming against Albertine".



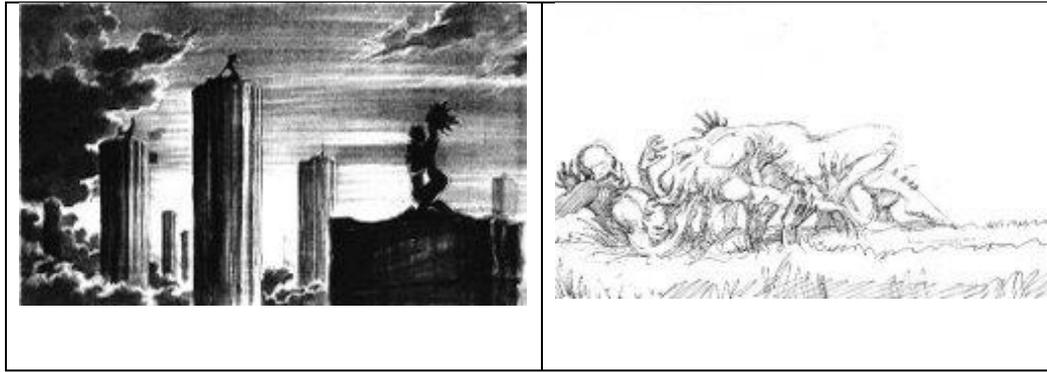


Fig. 1

In the account of the dream in the novel, Fridolin is dressed as a prince, with a golden dagger. Therefore, it is possible that the male figure in the sketch does not portray the husband. Schnitzler describes the man desired by Albertine simply as a young man in Denmark. If it is agreed that the clothes of the man portrayed in Baker's sketches are those of a naval officer, then these drawings must be later than the filmmaker's decision about the final adaptation of the novel, which did not include the scene of the second account of the dream. In the film, Alice narrates with words both the fantasy and the nightmare.

Marit Allen, costume designer in the film, said that one of the scenes eliminated referred to the dream described by Schnitzler: "One of the scenes that I remember was never shot, but was present in the copy. It is the great scene of the dream, close to the end of the film. It was extremely complicated... Tom crucified... thousands of naked bodies making love... Stanley, obviously, did not think it was necessary and, setting it aside, decided not to shoot it "(Lo storyboard)². Although none of the four sketches is a faithful illustration from Schnitzler's pages, the fantastic and vaguely disturbing atmosphere of the illustrations is the same as the novel. The

² My translation: "Una delle scene che ricordo non fu mai girata, ma era presente nel copione, è la grande scena del sogno, verso la fine del film. Era veramente complicatissima... Tom crocifisso... migliaia di corpi nudi che facevano l'amore... Stanley evidentemente non l'ha trovata necessaria, e fui sollevata quando decise di non girarla."

dream sequence initially planned, as shown also in the sketches, is not present in images of the finished film, but only reported by Alice when she awakens.

Kubrich chose to create, in black-and-white flashbacks, only the scenes that refer to Bill's mind, obsessed with the narrative of his wife's fantasies. In several flashbacks, she is portrayed in the officer's arms, having sex ever more intensely, as we can see in the following frames (fig. 2).



Fig. 2

In the costume shop

The second scene I refer to is the costume shop. In the novel, this episode is described as follows:

He led Fridolin up a spiral staircase to the storeroom.
There was a pervasive smell of silk, satin, perfume, dust

and dry flowers; here and there in the looming darkness red and silvery objects glinted; then suddenly a string of little lights came on between the lockers of a long narrow gallery stretching back into the gloom. To the left and right of them costumes of every imaginable kind were hanging: on one side there were knights, squires, peasants, huntsmen, sages, orientals, fools; on the other, maids of honor, courtly ladies, peasant women, chambermaids and queens-of-the-night. Appropriate headgear was on display above the costumes, so that Fridlin felt as though he were walking down an avenue of gallows-birds on the point of asking one another for a dance. Herr Gibiser followed along behind him (SCHNITZLER, 1999: 38).

The drawings below (fig. 3) show two men walking through rooms full of clothes and costumes. These drawings could then refer to Gibisier's (Milich) shop during Fridolin/Bill's first visit.





Fig. 3

However, the atmosphere of this sequence is quite different from that which appears in the film: here the smoothing and strong bright-dark lights prevail in a clearly noir style. *Eyes Wide Shut*, on the other hand, makes a softer use of light, choosing a subtler way to create suspense. The three frames below (fig. 4) belong to the costume shop at night, when Bill comes in search of the costume to go to the party. Lighting and the gesture of the owner give the tone of the film.



Fig. 4

The style of the shop which is portrayed in the film, if compared to the sketch made by Baker to this end (fig. 5), shows that the filmmaker has actualized the story. We can infer this from this drawing, different from the others by its style and without costumed characters. It may have had the objective of pre-visualizing the atmosphere of the shop, while the precious croquis of a more narrative type may have served as a

storyboard. The appearance of the costume rental shop shown here is more relevant to the period of the novel.

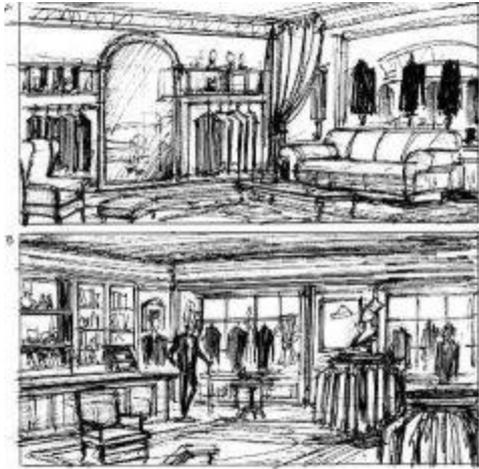


Fig.5

The Mask ball

The third episode in which the storyboard may be discussed is the mask ball.

In the novel, the environment of the mask ball is described as follows:

˘ Fridolin entered the dark, dimly lit, high-ceilinged room., draped with black silk hangings. Some sixteen to twenty masked revelers, all dressed in the ecclesiastical apparel of either monks or nuns, were strolling up and down. The softly resonant tones of the harmonium, playing an old Italian sacred tune, seemed to descend as if from on high. In one corner of the room stood a small group of people, three nuns and two monks, who had been looking round at him rather pointedly and then quickly turning away. Noticing that he was the only one with his head still covered, Fridolin took

off his pilgrim's hat and strolled up and down, trying to seem as innocent as possible. (SCHNITZLER, 1999: 44)

Here, the clothes have only a religious and chivalrous meaning: initially, Fridolin thought he was surrounded by friars and nuns; then, the women strip and are left only with a veil/mask on their faces. However, when Fridolin is surrounded and threatened, there are men with red and black masks of knights.

The drawings below (fig. 6) represent frames from the masked ball, at which Fridolin/Bill arrives after his wife's confession. However, differently from the novel, these sketches show a greater variety of costumes.



Fig. 6

Baker's visual style, which can be seen in all the drawings both for the environments and the lighting chosen for the scenes, could serve as a first treatment for the adaptation of the novel. It is probable that initially Kubrick thought of transposing faithfully *Traumnovelle* onto the screen, as a costume drama, which

would explain the style of Baker's sketch. However, he may have changed his mind when Frederic Raphael was hired to help him in modernizing Schnitzler's text, so as to dislocate the action and the characters from the *fin-de-siecle* Vienna to the end-of-millennium New York. This kind of modernization is suggested by the way the costumes are portrayed during the mask ball. As a consequence, costumes in the film are reduced to cloaks, hoods and masks (fig. 7) and the women are always naked, differently from the way they are presented in Baker's drawings.



Fig. 7

Raphael began to work with Kubrick in 1994, while Baker had already worked for him for a year. This fact suggests that, at first, Kubrick must have thought of creating a costume drama—which is evinced by Baker's sketches-- and later given up the idea and modernized the scenery to the 20th century. Therefore, in the final version, much of what was proposed by Chris Baker was altered as a result of Kubrick's decisions to change the site and period of the film.

Conclusion

Some images of the film presented here reiterate the idea that Christopher Baker's drawings, although created to help substantiate Kubrick's ideas during the "translation", were discharged at the moment when the director decided to modernize the story by modifying time and space of the novel. This was what this paper sought to demonstrate. Between Schnitzler's text and Kubrick's film there may have been another text, a storyboard, the role of which was initially to help the filmmaker creating a costume drama, located in 19th Century Vienna. However, on deciding to make a cultural translation, with the plot unfolding in another place and another time—New York in the 20th Century—this intermedial text has disappeared.

References

- BEGLEITER, Marcie. **From Word to image: storyboarding and the filmmaking process**. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2001.
- CHION, Michel. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Trad. Trista Selous. BFI Modern Classics. London: British Film Institute, 2002.
- KUBRICK, Stanley. (dir) **Eyes Wide Shut**. 1999. Film.
- Lo storyboard di Christopher Baker (Fangon): Un approccio visivo abbandonato, sviluppato da conceptual artist di A.I. <http://www.archiviokubrick.it/opere/film/ews/storyboard.html>_ Accessed on the 23th of February 2012.
- SIMON, Mark. **Storyboards: Motion in Art**. 3rd edition Amsterdam: Elsevier Inc., 2007.
- SCHNITZLER, Arthur. **Dream Story** (Penguin Twentieth Century Classics); trans. by J.M.Q. Davies, with introduction by Frederic Raphael. Penguin Books, 1999.