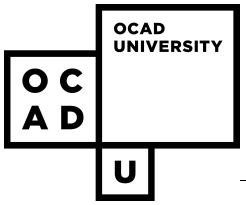

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Simulation, Simulacra and Solaris

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Simulation, Simulacra and *Solaris*

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There is only one bad thing about sound sleep. They say it closely resembles death.
- Don Quixote

And death shall have no dominion.
- Dylan Thomas

The Precession of Identical Beings

The simulation of Being becomes a central concern in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) and Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* (2002) – adapted from Stanislaw Lem's 1961 novel *Solaris*[1] – both films grapple with the implications posed by the blurring of boundaries between the human and the inhuman, between reality and artifice. According to Jean Baudrillard, simulation 'is the dominant schema in the current code-governed phase' that is epitomized in the simulacra, which is produced from a model without an original reality (1993, 50). In the era of digital technology, the act of simulation is one in which there is no longer any reference to reality, instead what we have is a simulation that is generated without allusion to something real, but rather to a code or model that finds its origins outside of concrete reality. 'Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential Being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin

[1] It is important to note that Lem 'decidedly did *not* like Tarkovsky's film,' as stated within an interview provided by Televizja Polska F.A. (Krakow, Poland) in the extras of the newest North American DVD version of Tarkovski's *Solaris*: 'Though ostensibly similar in plot, Tarkovsky's film explores completely different themes from Lem's philosophically oriented science fiction.'

or reality: a hyperreal,' Baudrillard argues in 'The Precession of Simulacra' (1994a, 1). The hyperreal situation in *Solaris* – where visitors or guests manifest themselves in response to the thoughts of the disoriented crew of the space station orbiting the Solaris planet – directly confronts the growing cultural uncertainty concerning the ability to define the boundaries of reality, specifically in relation to advancing technologies that define our interactions and even production of that reality. As we argue, the events depicted in *Solaris* serve to challenge the principle of human reality through the existence of a *real* simulated Being. This text investigates the formulation of this simulated Being specifically through a comparison between the ways in which Tarkovsky and Soderbergh treat the presence of the guests.

The phantom visitors or guests, produced through the unknown power of the Solaris planet, are constructed from models that exist in the minds of the space station crew, specifically through the code provided by the individual's memory. For example, in Soderbergh's *Solaris* Rheya is brought into existence from the memories of Chris Kelvin following his first night of sleep in proximity to Solaris. The notion of originality and the possibility of simulating a unique existence is the crux of the dilemma facing the characters within the story, in which reproduction becomes a Faustian process rife with moral uncertainty in the act of unlimited creation without reference to the real. The resulting inability to distinguish the real from the imaginary reflects Friedrich Nietzsche's statement: 'We have no categories at all that permit us to distinguish a "world in itself" from a "world of appearance"' (1968, 270).[2] In the hyperreal world of *Solaris*, the real becomes increasingly indistinguishable from simulations and the divide between human and inhuman becomes a morally and philosophically ambiguous one. This is most evident in the question of authenticity that is raised in relation to the resulting guests, simulations based on a multiplicity of memories, centres upon the fundamental relationship that we draw

[2] In this statement, Nietzsche clearly outlines a significant stream of Baudrillard's project regarding the world as simulation and simulacra, whose influence he has repeatedly noted. As he tells Sylvère Lotringer: 'I…read Nietzsche very exhaustively, and in German – I am a Germanist by training – and it was some sort of perfect integration into that universe' (2005, 218).

between originality and Being. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' Walter Benjamin states:

> It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced. (2003, 254)

This substitution of a mass existence for a unique existence, as evidenced most clearly by the multiple versions of the guests – a second copy of Rheya appearing after Kelvin eliminates the first – exposes one of the key philosophical tenets of Being: that an existence is unique and therefore unreproducable.

The multiple versions of Rheya undermine this conception of Being as unique and individual. Each copy of Rheya exists and exhibits conscious awareness of that existence and, furthermore, she is tormented by the idea that she is not the original Rheya. As she states to Chris, she is Rheya and she is not. This is Martin Heidegger's conception of dasein, which is a Being's sense of Being: 'Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself' (2008, 33).[3] Contrary to Benjamin's conception of authenticity, Rheya has a unique existence, a presence in the time and space of her being that is unique to her, even though she is a copy. This leaves us with the question: what part of Being or dasein is determined by an originary model or code, that is by the original memory on which the copy is based? Or to restate: does our code determine our being?

The seemingly inauthentic guests that visit the crew orbiting Solaris blur the line separating the human and inhuman by undermining the notion that a state of Being is impossible without an origin. Baudrillard adopts and employs Benjamin's ideas in 'Clone Story,' in which he states:

[3] In a 1994 interview with Rex Butler, Baudrillard hypothesizes that the detour that technology has taken our culture on leads to a radical 'absence from oneself,' which he states 'would be the counterpoint to Heidegger's hypothesis that technology puts us on the path to the ontological truth of the world' (1997, 49).

> There is a procession of reproduction over production, a procession of the genetic model over all possible bodies. It is the irruption of technology that controls this reversal, of a technology that Benjamin was already describing, in its total consequences, as a total medium, but one still of the industrial age…but still without imagining the current sophistication of this technology, which renders the generation of identical *beings* possible, though there is no possibility of a return to an original being. (1994, 100)

The guests, as a procession of identical beings, cause a dilemma for the crew because they undermine the notion of a unique and original being, one that exists in a specific time and place never to return after death. More accurately, through their existence on the space station, the guests redefine the possible boundaries of being, a possibility that precludes the return to an original Being. Similar to the conceptual problematics inherent in cloning technologies, to which Baudrillard is directly and metaphorically referencing, the guests serve as embodiments of a state of being that is antithetical to human definitions of Being human: specifically through the dialectical boundaries of humanity as defined by the inhuman or other. The human is therefore defined or understood through exclusionary means, in which, as Judith Butler describes, 'the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation (1993, 8).[4] In other words, the possibility of identical Beings challenges the view of the unique and originary existence of human life.

The Eternal Return of the Model

The question of whether the guests achieve a human-like status or Being is fundamentally connected to issues of mortality and immortality, or the divide between human and inhuman. At their most basic level, the guests are produced or brought into Being from a model based upon memories and are therefore simulations and not 'real.' As Baudrillard states in 'Clone Story,'

[4] It is important to note that Butler's discussion of 'the human' is directly related to her discursive investigation of 'sex' and gender as categories that are used in defining 'the human.'

the double or simulation is precisely not an extension of a real body, but instead

> it is an imaginary figure, which, just like the soul, the shadow, the mirror image, haunts the subject like his other, which makes it so that the subject is simultaneously itself and never resembles itself again, which haunts the subject like a subtle and always averted death. This is not always the case, however: when the double materializes, when it becomes visible, it signifies imminent death. (Baudrillard 1994, 95)

This imminent death in fact represents the lack of origin that plagues the guests, as simulated Beings, precisely because the existence of such Beings represent the death of the idea of a return to an origin. This is Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence or return: 'existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness' (1968, 35).[5] As a simulation of Being that literally returns from the minds of the space station crew, the guests exist without meaning or aim in themselves, yet their recurring presence is far from meaningless or conclusive. 'Returning is being, but only the being of becoming,' Gilles Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition*, 'Only the extreme forms return – those which, large or small, are deployed within the limit and extend to the limit of their power, transforming themselves and changing one into another' (1994, 41). Are the guests Beings that are becoming? If the guests are a form of eternal return, what is it that is returning in their simulated presence?

In Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, Sartorius – who plays the parallel role to Soderbergh's Dr. Gordon – says to Hari: 'You're just a reproduction, a mechanical reproduction. A copy. A matrix.' Hari replies: 'Yes. But I am becoming a human being.' This exchange between Sartorius and Hari illustrates the differentiation that begins to develop between Hari and the model from which she is produced: Hari is *becoming*. As Steven Dillon points out in *The Solaris Effect*: 'Hari's identity does not just waver between human and inhuman, between reality and hallucination, but between art

[5] Nietzsche's eternal return relates directly to Baudrillard's conception of the disappearance of the subject into the object. As Baudrillard states: 'The Eternal Return is now the return of the infinitely small, the fractal – the repetition of a microscopic, inhuman scale' (2001, 77).

and technology. How should we categorize her existence?' (2006, 13). Tarkovsky presents a moral debate in the exchange between Hari and Sartorius in the library (one that Hari ultimately loses when she hopelessly submits herself to his annihilator) over what it means to be human. A point that Hari strikes home when she says to Sartorius: 'In inhuman conditions, he (Kris) has behaved humanely. And you act as if none of this concerns you, and consider your guests…something external, a hindrance. But it's part of you. It's your conscience.' In this manner, the guests function as manifestations of conscience – guilty or otherwise – for the space station crew, Solaris providing the opportunity for them to correct their self-perceived wrongs.

Tarkovsky underscores this by presenting us with a contemplative Hari who sits smoking as she looks at Brueghel's painting *Hunters in the Snow* – the camera panning over the painting as if imitating Hari's wandering eyes. Brueghel's painting is suddenly replaced with an image of Kelvin as a child playing in the snow. Hari notices Kelvin's presence behind her and says 'Forgive me, my darling I was lost in thought.' Hari has become lost in the thoughts of both Brueghel and Kelvin. When she speaks to Kris 'we realize that through Brueghel' and Kelvin 'she has been able to apprehend what it is to be a human being on earth' (Hyman 1976, 56). Part of the moral dilemma that the crew, most prominently Hari, concerns the boundaries that delimit human existence and knowledge. The ending of the film avoids answering these questions. Tarkovsky instead alludes symbolically to spirituality and religious belief, leaving the viewer in the position of confronting and negotiating these questions for themselves – in the same fashion that Hari engages with the painting by Brueghel.

Hari claims she is 'becoming human,' a process that is ironically concluded only through her own death – a virtual suicide in which what is destroyed is the ability of her image to return. Hari's transition from immortal to mortal through her death grants her the status of an entity that is aware of their own death, a status that is fulfilled only posthumously – knowledge that is often posited as the feature that distinguishes humanity from other living creatures. Her dasein understands itself in terms of the

possibility of Being or not Being itself (Heidegger 2008, 33). The period before Hari / Rheya's successful suicide, after being made aware of Sartorius / Dr. Gordon's successful annihilation of a guest/ visitor with their machine, is one in which she can be seen to be humanized through the knowledge of her mortality. But, this knowledge cannot be seen as an achievement of the status of Being because of her failed attempt to kill herself by drinking liquid oxygen, her return from death revealing her immortality. This unsuccessful suicide attempt shows that the knowledge of her mortality and her subsequent humanizing death can paradoxically only be known after death has occurred.

As a living Being, Tarkovsky's Hari never realizes her full potential to become a 'real' human; this lack of realization is problematic to the plot because it illustrates Tarkovsky's unwillingness to depart from his religious interpretation of Lem's book, in which *Solaris* becomes an embodied return to the divine. This is epitomized in the obviousness of the symbolic conclusion of the film, in which 'the image is that of the Return of the Prodigal Son,' an ending that Le Fanu notes even Tarkovsky 'was not pleased with' (1987, 53). Tarkovsky is much more concerned with the moral implications of humanity engaging with Solaris, of the price of knowledge. This is evident in the exchange between Burton and Kelvin on earth. Burton says to Kelvin: 'You want to destroy that which we are presently incapable of understanding? Forgive me, but I am not an advocate of knowledge at any price. Knowledge is only valid when it's based on morality.' To which Kelvin arrogantly responds 'Man is the one who renders science moral or immoral.' It is Tarkovsky's spirituality that prevents him from acknowledging the potential of the hyperreal in the diegesis of *Solaris*; instead he becomes preoccupied with love and hope in a world that appears to be rapidly exhausting both *feelings* in favor of *appearances*.[6]

[6] This criticism regarding the fact that Tarkovsky's films 'are not reticent about their spirituality and religious content' has consistently been 'a source of irritation and impatience,' as Le Fanu discusses at the end of his book on the filmmaker; at issue 'are grave matters of taste and tactfulness involved in the artist's coming down on the right side as between true religious feeling and religiosity' (1987, 138).

In a clear departure from the character of Hari, Rheya defines herself as incomplete to Kelvin. Rheya's inability to acknowledge her potential to *be* more than the predetermining and controlling model of Kelvin's memories leads her to question her relationship and connection to the planet Solaris that makes her physical presence possible on the station. As Rheya states in relation to Solaris: 'It created me and yet I can't communicate with it. It must hear me, though. It must know what's happening to me.' It is through this assumed agency on the part of Kelvin and Solaris that she first overlooks her own agency. Rheya defines herself as incomplete to Kelvin. As she states: 'Don't you see? I came from your memory of her. That's the problem. I'm not a whole person. In your memory you get to control everything.' Rheya's claim that Kelvin has *total control* over her, because he controls the model on which she was based, again serves to highlight her status as a third-order simulacra, which Baudrillard relates to the qualities of 'total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control' (Baudrillard 1994, 121). Rheya's statement is contradictory because the authority needed to give such a statement necessarily implies uniqueness and autonomy, a control that she attributes to Chris. Because she was created by Solaris and through Kelvin's memories, Rheya concludes that she an imaginary being and therefore not 'real.'

Ironically, this mistake of assuming Solaris knows what is *happening*, of mistaking the planet as the source of the returning models of existence – in terms of the guests and the crews' perception of reality in general – is one that Kelvin also makes. At one point in the film Kelvin poses the question to Gibarian: 'What does Solaris want with us?' Gibarian replies: 'Why do you think it has to want something?' It is important to note that Kelvin's interactions with Gibarian on the Solaris station are phantasmal, this exchange with Kelvin is presented in a dream-like state and Gibarian has already committed suicide. Gibarian's presence as a guest or manifestation of Solaris – which is the most likely scenario – serves to open up the possibility for understanding Solaris, a possibility that can be summed up in Gibarian's comment to Kelvin: 'There are no answers, only choices.' In other words, choices become the predominant means of defining Being for Kelvin,

who, because of a lack of answers, is placed in a position to make decisions on faith rather than scientific rationality. This presupposition of a causal relationship serves to limit Kelvin's ability, as well as the abilities of the crew, to understand the Solaris planet, because this relationship assumes a predetermined model on both sides. At the time Kelvin was unable to even consider Gibarian's question because he was too close to view the situation with impartiality, in much the same way that Rheya was initially unable to distance herself from the idea of being a simulation to face the possibility of her own uniqueness.

Rheya wrongly assumes that she does not possess the distance from herself necessary to judge her status as a Being when she holds herself to a predetermined model of Kelvin's memory of his wife. This becomes a question not of the real or the imaginary, as both are agents of Being, but rather the distance of Being: the distance between the levels of simulacra. This distance, similar to the temporal and spatial differences that divide the two films, is the space that separates the simulation from its model. And it is this distance, this space of being in a specific time and place, which makes Rheya unique. Within a moment of existence the real and the imaginary *are* the experiences of life.

The Athena, the name of the shuttle Gordon used to escape Solaris, provides a metaphor for the genesis of Rheya. Like the mythical Goddess, Rheya emerges from Kelvin's head as a whole person, even though she is modeled after a simulation. This is a metaphor of the reproductive process – the dream 'of an eternal twining substituted for sexual procreation that is linked to death' – in which there is a division that forms between the reproduction and the model from which the reproduction emerges (Baudrillard 1994, 96). This metaphor serves to expose the false concerns that Rheya and Kelvin have for the authenticity or reality of Rheya's Being. Regardless of the fact that she was created or simulated using the model of Kelvin's memory of his dead wife, ultimately she *is* a Being.

Simulated Being

The plots of both the Tarkovsky and the Soderbergh versions of *Solaris* are not concerned with the real per say, but rather in the differences used to define reality. More specifically, each film is concerned with defining the possible location or locations of reality in relation to the simulacra of image technology. In fact, the progressive genesis that Rheya goes through as a Being emerging out of the status of simulation and simulacra can be seen as mirroring Baudrillard's delineation of the orders of simulacra:

> To the first category belongs the imaginary of the *utopia*. To the second corresponds science fiction, strictly speaking. To the third corresponds – is there an imaginary that might correspond to this order? The most likely answer is that the good old imaginary of science fiction is dead and that something else is in the process of emerging. (Baudrillard 1994b, 121)

The first emergence of the guest Rheya begins as a manifestation of Kelvin's longing for his dead wife, that is as a counterfeit of reality which Kelvin himself disposes of because he knows it to be an imitation of *utopia*, and not real. In her second manifestation, Rheya appears to be the product of multiplication, as if she were one of a series of imitations based upon the real, but her status as part of a series negates her being mistaken for an imitation of reality, placing her instead in the realm of *science fiction*. This is the status that Hari is left in by Tarkovsky at the end of his version of *Solaris*. In Soderbergh's version, however, Rheya returns a third time at the end of the film coupled with a manifestation of Kelvin. This is the only way Rheya, as well as Kelvin, are able to 'exit from the crisis of representation' that is enacted through the eternal return of the guests, the real is 'sealed off in a pure repetition' of the simulation of Being (Baudrillard 1993, 72).

The continuing attempts of the crew orbiting the Solaris planet to define the 'real' within the multitude of simulated experiences, most notably the repeated return of the guests, therefore focuses on the problematic of attempting to distinguish between reality and simulation or simulacra. This distinction, however, is treated very differently by each of the filmmakers who, in a Baudrillarian sense, create their own hyperreal versions of *Solaris*.

Tarkovsky uses this problematic to approach questions of Being from the perspective of belief and conscience, whereas Soderbergh uses this problematic to ask questions of Being in relation to issues of identity and subjectivity. Let us focus on two examples that demonstrate this difference: the colour shifts used by Tarkovsky throughout his film and Soderbergh's decision to make Snow a guest.

Tarkovsky's use of colour shifts throughout his film demonstrates a preoccupation with the shifting perceptions of reality as filtered through memory that is often plagued by the doubts of conscience. The most dramatic use of colour shifts occur when Kelvin arrives on the station and he views the message left by Gibarian, whom Kris has just discovered has committed suicide. As the unsettled Kelvin barricades himself in his quarters to sleep, the film shifts from colour to black and white. The message he plays from Gibarian is tinted blue on the television monitor, while his room begins as black and white turning a blue tint as Kelvin understands and symbolically enters Gibarian's word. Gibarian speaks to Kelvin beyond the grave, his eyes seeking those of his friend: 'I am my own judge. Have you seen her? Kris, understand that this is not madness. It has something to do with conscience.' The television monitor casts a flickering glow on Kris's face as he looks away and thinks about what Gibarian has said. As Kelvin looks back at the television Gibarian walks away, ostensibly to his death, and the film turns white for a moment. After glancing at himself in a mirror, Kelvin picks up Gibarian's gun and lies down to sleep. The camera slowly zooms in on Kelvin's sleeping face; white scratches briefly appear on the surface of the film and quickly vanish. The scratches can be seen as representing the ontological instability of Kelvin's mind as Solaris manifests his memory of Hari in reality. A jump cut marks the shift from the black and white close-up of Kelvin's dreaming face to the orange tinted close-up of Hari's face. We next see Kelvin in full colour lying in his bed as he expressionlessly looks at Hari. Tarkovsky uses colour shifts in this sequence to convey the modulating boundaries between reality and memory.[7] Kelvin struggles with the moral

[7] Similarly, Soderbergh employs extensive use of colour filters primarily to distinguish between life on earth and the dream world of the space station. Kelvin's

uncertainty of what is happening to him and the crew his perceptions of reality and memory become unstable. Has he gone mad or is this real?

Through most of Soderbergh's film, Snow – who is distinctly different from Tarkovsky's corresponding character Snaut – is perceived and treated as if he was a 'real' human Being; a 'fact' that is challenged by the uncanny discovery of Snow's dead doppelganger hidden in the ceiling of the morgue. This discovery forces Dr. Gordon and Kelvin to re-evaluate their perspectives on him, a re-evaluation that exposes the contradictions inherent in their definitions of what constitutes a real Being. 'Nothing is worse than the truer than the true,' Baudrillard states; using the example of 'the automaton in the story of the illusionist,' he notes that

> what is terrifying is not the disappearance of the natural into the perfection of the artificial (the automaton made by the illusionist imitated every human movement so perfectly as to be indiscernible from the illusionist himself). It is, on the contrary, the disappearance of the artifice into the obviousness of the natural. (1990, 51)

Similar to the automaton, the guest Snow imitates human movement and action so perfectly as to be indiscernible from the original Snow himself. It is only at that end that Snow turns 'out to be another alien simulacra, just like Rheya' (Dillon 2006, 42). What is brought to light through this problematic scenario is the realization of the extent of their inability to distinguish reality from the imaginary, because it begs the question of what constitutes reality itself.

The model of reality that Dr. Gordon and Kelvin hold is dramatically challenged by Snow's story of his coming into Being. As the guest states: 'I survived the first thirty seconds of this b-b- life - whatever you want to call it - by killing someone and, oh, ah, by killing someone who happens to be me.' Snow's account of his own genesis, which highlights the struggle for defining existence that troubles both the guests and the crew, is a

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life on earth prior to his departure, and in his later memories, is a subdued orange-yellow tone. In contrast, the space station is predominantly a blue tint. As Dillon states '*Solaris* goes back and forth' between these two worlds, 'between past and present, Earth and space station, yet…neither world is more real or natural than the other' (2006, 43).

manifestation of the conflict over an inability to distinguish the real and the imaginary that is at the heart of *Solaris*. The increasingly unstable perception of the categories of reality and being by Gordon and Snow is further undermined by the indeterminate nature of Snow's subjectivity. The instability of Snow as a subject points to a disappearance of origin and end. The possibilities of disappearance for Baudrillard is one of metamorphosis:

> something which disappears, the traces of which are effaced, origin and end are effaced. So things are not any longer understood in terms of linearity. The passage to the state of disappearance, fundamentally, is the disappearance of the linear order, of the order of cause and effect. Therefore it gives to that which disappears in the horizon of the other the opportunity to reappear. (1993a, 54)

The unnoticed disappearance of the original Snow marks the disappearance of linearity, the vanishing of cause and effect. The planet Solaris offers the possibility of an endless chain of Beings that are without origin and end, an ontological instability that threatens the crew's perception of reality.

As in the case of Tarkovsky's Hari – whose ultimate mortality paradoxically grants her posthumously the status of a human being which ironically denies all the consequences of her achievement – Snow is only able to achieve the status of Being through death. In a Baudrillardian twist, it is the death of the real that gives life to the hyperreal Being of Snow. In effect, this discovery reduces 'the sense that humans are radically distinct from aliens,' Dillon suggests (2006, 42). The Being of Snow is simultaneously himself and yet can never resemble himself again; he is unique through the mere fact that the distance between him and his dead 'original' has been collapsed. This is evident in the fact that the crew could not tell that he was a guest; not simply a copy of Snow but Snow's simulacra. The manifestation of Snow's double is therefore accompanied by imminent death, a death that resolves the conflict between the real and the imaginary through the death of the real itself. Thus, it is in the futile attempts of Dr. Gordon and Kelvin to construct a viable definition of what constitutes reality, to solve the dilemma that Solaris creates, that they come to realize the truth of what Gibarian tells Kelvin, 'There are no answers, only choices.' The choice of Snow's double was to live.

It is important to note the significance of the name 'Snow,' which makes reference to concepts of purity and rebirth, as well as death. Snow's act of defining himself in his statement 'I am a gift' implies the gift of new possibilities offered by Solaris; the gift that is given and received freely increases exponentially, it returns to the giver. But like all gifts, the gift must be returned. As George Bataille points out: 'Thus the gift is the opposite of what it seemed to be: To give is obviously to lose, but the loss apparently brings a profit to the one who sustains it' (1989, 70). Thus, Dr. Gordon's gift of death to Rheya through her use of the Higgs device results in a loss that literally drains the fuel-cell reactors of the space station. In response to this gift of energy and death, Solaris 'started taking on mass exponentially.' At first this gift appears to be at the expense of Kelvin's life, in the end however this expenditure reunites him with Rheya. This can be seen as a symbolic joining of the real and the imaginary through the gift of exchange – exemplified in Soderbergh's version with Solaris, visually represented as an egg, subsuming the (*spermatoid*-like) space station, in an enactment of the reproductive process. This consumption 'is the way in which *separate* beings communicate': it is in fact the final communication between Kelvin and Solaris (1989, 58). It is Kelvin's gift of himself to Solaris that allows him to eternally return as a simulated, hyperreal Being.

The unknown power of the Solaris planet, which is literally in excess of human understanding, manifests what the subject desires most. What then is the psychological implication of the 'original' Snow's manifestation of himself, a self that he tries to kill? It is interesting to note that in Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, Snaut memorably states: 'Man needs man.' In other words, man needs a reflection of himself. This is exactly what Snow gets with his guest and yet such a manifestation can only be a simulation or copy; Snow's double is therefore not 'man,' not human. This comment by Snaut is reflected by Soderbergh's version of Gibarian, who observes to Kelvin: 'We don't want other worlds we want mirrors.' Yet, the rationale for Rheya / Hari wanting to kill herself partially came out of the fact that she does not recognize her*self* in her reflection. The human characters of *Solaris* do not

want a simulation of reality: they want to see the world they imagine to be real reflected back at them.

The Puppet's Dream

Within their respective versions of *Solaris*, Tarkovsky and Soderbergh adapt Lem's text as a model upon which the simulated reality of their narratives are based. This process is further complicated when considering Soderbergh's no doubt intimate awareness of Tarkovsky's film.[8] The differences between the Tarkovsky and Soderbergh adaptations of *Solaris* can be seen in the subtle modulations within each version, with Soderbergh even adapting elements from Tarkovsky's adaptation. For example, Tarkovsky's reference to Cervantes' text within a text, 'sleep resembles death,' can be seen to parallel Soderbergh's anaphoric repetition of Dylan Thomas' famous line: 'And death shall have no dominion.' Both reflect a doubling, a copying of reality, the world within a world, and yet each in its own way utilizes particular possibilities within the rubric of simulation in order to develop the story in specific ways.

The character of Rheya provides an ideal model for interpreting the levels of simulation and simulacra within the hyperreal world of *Solaris*. Rheya is a simulation not of the original physical Rheya, the person who killed herself on Earth, but of Kelvin's fragmented memories through which she has been reconstructed by the planet Solaris. As Dr. Gordon says to Kelvin in Soderbergh's version, this guest Rheya is 'a mirror that reflects part of your mind. You provide the formula.' As Deleuze notes: 'The identity of the simulacra, simulated identity, finds itself projected or retrojected on to the internal difference. The simulated external resemblance finds itself interiorized in the system' (1994, 302). The identity of the guest Rheya is not

[8] The cover of the North American DVD release of Soderbergh's *Solaris* presents the claim that it is 'A new version of Stanislaw Lem's sci-fi classic,' a claim that is repeated by the films producer James Cameron in the 'HBO Special: Inside Solaris' featurette on the DVD, in which he states: 'This isn't really a remake of the Tarkovsky film, it's a different adaptation of the underlying novel by Stanislaw Lem'. This strategy of distancing this version of *Solaris* from Tarkovsky's, claiming that it is not *really* a remake but is based upon an 'original,' appears to be an overt attempt to avoid having the film be viewed as a copy or simulation.

simply copied from an original model, but is in fact produced through a multitude of simulated external resemblances – imagery that exists only in Kelvin's memory – that have been interiorized into the guest's Being. In Tarkovsky's film there are two versions of Hari, while in Soderbergh's remake there are three versions of Rheya. We believe that it is Soderbergh's third version of Rheya – who appears after Dr. Gordon has helped the second Rheya end her life – that represents the merging of reality and imagination into a hyperreal Being.

This hyperreal meeting of reality and imagination is the materialization of the puppet's dream that Gibarian speaks of to Kelvin: 'But like all puppets you think you're actually human. It's the puppet's dream being human.' But more to the point is the dream of humans to exceed the limitations of the body while remaining sentient and in control. As Harold B. Segel points out in *Pinocchio's Progeny*:

> The fascination with puppets…reaches so far back into human history that it must be regarded as a response to a fundamental need or needs. It is, clearly, a projection of the obsession of human beings with their own image, with their own likeness, the obsession that underlies artistic portraiture, the building of statues, and the extraordinary and enduring popularity of photography. More profoundly, it reveals a yearning to play god, to master life… And finally the obsession with becoming godlike expresses itself in the most powerful of all delusions, the belief that one can create real life outside the normal human reproductive cycle. (1995, 4)

The disembodied distance between the guest Rheya and the human being Rheya – who, because she is dead, survives only in Kelvin's memory and exists essentially as a phantom or ghost – becomes reabsorbed in the simulation, standing in as an embodiment of the real. From the moment a guest comes into awareness of their surrounding they begin constructing a history within the space and time they are located, systematically forming their reality. For Kelvin, and eventually Rheya herself, this conflation of the distance between the real and the imaginary, as well as the subsequent investment of a lived history or reality together on the Solaris station, grants Rheya her unique existence, which is a manifestation of the puppet's dream.

In this manner, Rheya is not a counterfeit of an original person or human being, nor is she in a closed system in relation to a series produced from an original. She exists instead as a simulation based on the information model existing in Kelvin's imagination, a model that she appears to expand beyond by the end of the film. This corresponds with what Baudrillard refers to as a third-order simulacra, that is a simulacra of simulation, in which:

> There is no more counterfeiting of an original, as there was in the first order, and no more pure series as there were in the second; there are models from which all forms proceed according to modulated differences. (Baudrillard 1993, 56)

Through the process of reproduction, as in the case of the multiple simulations of Rheya, each successive version possesses the potentiality for a unique existence – after their materialization via the model – in that she is not bound to an original. In other words, even though Rheya is based on a model this does not predetermine the course of her existence. As Kelvin says to a distraught Rheya: 'I don't believe we are predetermined to relive our past. I think we can choose to do it differently.' With the possibility that a simulation is not predetermined to follow the model they are based on comes the potential for a new beginning. Rheya has the choice to become more than simply a simulation of Kelvin's memories of his lost wife: Rheya is capable of becoming a Being.

In the final incarnation of Rheya, there is some ambiguity as to the model used for her simulation, as well as that of Kelvin's, who is himself represented as a simulation. This becomes apparent in the final scenes when Kelvin is shown cutting himself in his kitchen and the cut heals instantaneously; this scene mirrors one of the opening scenes of the film in which Kelvin cuts his finger in his kitchen on Earth. As Dillon states:

> Before he meets Rheya, Kris has tried to arrange a world without imagery, without illusion. Yet in the final sequence, which takes place we know not where…he has a photograph of Rheya stuck on the fridge. The image, and the film, may not be true, but it is necessary, or inescapable. (2006, 42)

This return of the beginning scene of the film represented at the end serves to correct Kelvin's mistakes that were present in the initial scene, a literal healing of old wounds. The picture of Rheya on the fridge – a correction in response to Rheya telling Kelvin that she thought it was odd that he had no pictures in his apartment – and, most importantly, the presence of Rheya. As Kelvin stated upon his simulated return to Earth: 'I was haunted by the idea that I remembered her wrong…that somehow I was wrong about everything.' The reconstitution of these elements can be seen as a mastery of his life that was not achieved in reality, where his existence was much like that of the puppet whose strings are out of his control. As Rheya states in response to Kelvin's question as to whether he is alive or dead: 'We don't have to think like that anymore.' Rheya and Kelvin 'are reduced to working on what happens beyond the end, on technical immortality, without having passed through death, through the symbolic elaboration of the end' (Baudrillard 1994, 91). The collapsing of such distinctions as life and death, mortality and immortality, real and simulation, raises the possibility of a fourth level simulacrum, one that annihilates the distance between reality and imagination through the possibility of an immortal existence, one that continually allows for new beginnings.

Kelvin, in fact, never leaves the Solaris station, turning around after stopping at the precipice of the Athena's docking door. He stays on the station, forcing Dr. Gordon to return to Earth alone. The scene of him in this kitchen without Rheya thus functions as a hypothetical vision of what his life might be like if he did return to Earth, abandoning on Solaris all of the hope and desire he has to correct the mistakes of his past; but this scene also demonstrates his previous lack of Being, as he simply lived without feeling hollowly performing the 'millions of gestures that constitute life on Earth.' 'If life is only a need for survival *at all costs*,' Baudrillard states in relation to Bataille's notions of expenditure and Death, 'then annihilation is a *priceless luxury*' (1993, 156). If Kelvin's life on Earth consisted simply in a need to survive *at all costs*, particularly after Rheya's death, the annihilation of his originary Being is a *priceless luxury* for the gift of his eternal return with

Rheya. This life may not be 'true,' but for Kelvin it is necessary and inescapable.

The end of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* presents a more ambiguous and religiously symbolic ending, with Kris returning to his dacha as the prodigal son who falls to his knees before his now dead father.[9] This scene ends with the camera pulling back to reveal the artifice or unreality of this return, the dacha being located not on Earth but on an island in the churning seas of Solaris. 'Are we to believe that the soft planet Solaris gives a reply,' Deleuze asks of Tarkovsky's film, concluding that it 'does not open up this optimism,' instead returning to an eternally 'closed door' (1989, 75). Unlike the overt hyperreality of Kelvin and Rheya's simulated Being after being subsumed within Solaris, Tarkovsky attempts to envision a return to the origin (the Father as divine), even if it is obviously unreal. If the Solaris planet allows Kelvin to 'play god,' the life created in the two versions of *Solaris* is dramatically different. Whereas Tarkovsky's Kelvin gives himself over to the will of Solaris, in a sense becoming the planet's puppet, Soderbergh's Kelvin creates the life he previously was unable to live, embracing the simulacra of the puppet's dream and allowing it to become *real*.

[9] One of the key material differences is the length of the films. Whereas Tarkovsky produces a long and intense 165 minutes, Soderbergh's version is a more condensed and stimulating 99 minutes. This difference has profound effects in terms of viewing experience, particularly in terms of Tarkovsky's discriminating and even excessive temporality. His films, according to Timothy Morton, 'annihilate the sense of time and use an experience of boredom…as the link between what we think of as the fully human (aesthetic contemplation) and what we think of as nonhuman' (2008, 90). This directly relates to Tarkovsky's moral and religious tendencies, which are also evident in all of his films, in which he attempts to use the experience of viewing as a form of meditative engagement. In addition to a filmic simulation of reality, which is arguably Soderbergh's focus and why he reduced the length of the film, Tarkovsky wanted to simulate or enact aesthetic contemplation through a direct experience of duration.

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