The Duality of Memory According to Andrei Tarkovsky's '*Solaris*' and '*Mirror*'

Eimear Young

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) (programme name). It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

Eimear Young

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Abstract

Andrei Tarkovsky, through the medium of film, meditates on the nature of the human condition, exploring the planes of existence which exist beyond the limits of our literal reality, and which instead reside within the realms of consciousness. In order to question the nature of these alternative planes and their relationship to our immediate, material reality, the director entwines depictions of a literal, physical world with those of a realm which exists beyond the rules and boundaries of this 'real' world (or, more accurately, which utilises the surreal logic of consciousness and manifests it within the logic of the 'real' world).

This dichotomy between filmic worlds allows the director to shift freely between portrayals of reality and illusion in order to thoroughly interrogate the implications of the dualistic pairs, such as the internal and external, objective and subjective, and more or less 'real' states of our reality, that exist across the borders of the human mind. More specifically, in his films '*Solaris*' (1972) and '*Mirror,*' (1975) Tarkovsky utilises the spaces of such dual worlds in order to explore the dichotomies implied by the subjective human experience of time that is memory.

In order to examine the questions posited by these films, I will, through the lens of various philosophical ideologies, as well as through means of comparison and counterpoint, consider the disconnect, but also the resonance, that exists between these ontological territories, and the nature of the limits which separate them. Moreover, I will consider how Tarkovsky, through the medium of cinema, transgresses the boundaries of time and space so that his complex mazes of temporal threads ultimately produce a unified vision of time in a cinematic experience which provides us not with any answers, but which instead provokes within each viewer a moment of quiet introspection and, subsequently, elicits a profoundly personal reflection on the nature of our own reality, and on the fragility of our human perception of it.

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Introduction

Andrei Tarkovsky's work is deeply enmeshed in philosophical issues relating to the human condition, often challenging the limits of our reality through on-screen manifestations of intangible thought-planes such as those of memories, dreams and hallucinations. In Tarkovsky's work, the borders which delineate the planes of illusion and reality are in a constant state of flux, reflecting the very nature of consciousness and its relativity to our outward, physical reality. As stated by Nariman Skakov, 'Tarkovsky defines his art in impossibly possible terms – his definition is based on the constant striving towards the unachievable.'[1] Indeed, through a recurring preoccupation with that which exists somewhere beyond our immediate, physical reality, and which instead resides in, and can only be confronted by a depiction of otherwise 'impossible' mental planes, Tarkovsky's films ultimately point towards a viewing experience which both questions and, at times, transcends the ontic limitations of our immediate reality.

In particular, Tarkovsky's work often explores, through the medium of film, issues relating to time, and, more precisely, the subjective human experience of time that is memory, which, in his films '*Mirror*'(1975) and '*Solaris*' (1972), is expressed through a rich tapestry of interweaving temporalities and recollections of seemingly varied levels of realism. Tarkovsky's portrayals of memory often underscore the duality between this intangible, perceived 'unreal' world of our memories as a subjective construction of our pasts, and the more objective, immediate, perceived 'real' world of our present physical existence. According to Daniel McFadden, the 'breakdown of the barrier between the subjective and objective entrench Tarkovsky as an auteur whose work requires interpretation to create narrative continuity.'[2]

Unlike the philosophical arguments of those presented by Jacques Derrida or Martin Heidegger (whose work I shall reference later on) which similarly question the limits of the human mind through coherent discourse, Tarkovsky rather enacts the interplay between these dual worlds on-screen in an experiential argument which, challenging

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[1] Skakov, Nariman. '*The Cinema of Tarkovsky: Labyrinths of Space and Time*' London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. 2012. Web. 03 May 2020

[2] McFadden, Daniel. '*Memory and Being: The Uncanny in the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky*' University of Victoria. 2012. Web. 03 May 2020

'viewer perception and cognition by shifting between or simultaneously representing inner and outer states of reality,'[3] results in a highly personalised experience for the viewer, in which the full weight of time and the human implications of its passing can be fully felt, and the arising philosophical questions internalised. Tarkovsky's strategies as an artist allow him to present these arguments in an all-encompassing manner which, expressing the motivation of his films formally, overcomes the limits of the human mind, cultivating a filmic space in which the characters' memories can appear before the viewer as vividly as their present reality, providing an arena in which it becomes possible for the audience to relate to the characters' experience as they encounter a 'metaphysical crisis and set out on a journey in the labyrinth of space and time,'[4] a journey which ultimately leads to a moment of philosophical enlightenment extending not only as far as the characters on the screen, but also to the audience.

If, however, we are to consider Nicolae Sfectu's argument in relation to '*Solaris,*' (although the same can certainly be applied to '*Mirror'*) 'man's attempts to classify and maintain forms of interaction with unknown entities will always be condemned to failure and will reflect a major mistake in the panoptic world in which we live.' He continues that '*Solaris'* 'begins as a search for answers and comes to provide these answers with a whole range of different questions,'[5] and, in much the same way, any consideration of Tarkovsky's work is significant not because of any answers the filmic material provides us with, but instead because of the moment of contemplation it offers the audience.

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[3] Donato Totaro. '*Time and the Film Aesthetics of Andrei Tarkovsky,'* in *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, Volume 2, Number 1. 1992. Web.

[4] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 75

[5] Nicolae Sfectu. '*Solaris, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky - Psychological and Philosophical Aspects'* MultiMedia Publishing. 2019. Web. 03 May 2020

Chapter One:

'This Side'

Tarkovsky's films reside in an 'intermediate position, somewhere between reality and its artistic impression,'[6] presenting an 'interaction between the real and the imaginary,' [7] through their sprawling filmic landscapes which slip freely in and out of dreams, memories and the 'real' world, all presented with varying levels of realism. In order to discuss how these dualistic representations coalesce to form Tarkovsky's ultimate consideration of the nature of human memory, we must first contextualise his portrayals of the more elusive, ethereal and intangible nature of consciousness, by considering how his films too present a real, objective, material world, and a consideration of what is a familiar, reliable and anchoring 'actual memory.'[8]

'Dasein'

Firstly, let us discuss Derrida's consideration of 'death,' (which I will return to in more detail later), as a border that we must eventually cross, but don't have access to while residing in the world of the living. Citing the philosophical ideologies of Heidegger, he refers to our reality as the 'this side'[9], a concept which, in Tarkovsky's depictions of familiar, comforting and reliable 'actual' memories, is intrinsically linked to the humanity of his characters. Subscribing to this logic, let us 'start from here first, from this side here. A mortal can only start from here, from his mortality.'[10] For, according to Derrida's consideration of Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein,' which refers to the human experience of 'being-there,' with an awareness of our impending death, which he posits grants our lives a uniquely human sense of meaning, 'it is on this side, on the side of Dasein and of its here, which is our here, that the oppositions between here and over there, this side and beyond, can be distinguished."[11] The same can be applied here; if we are to consider the more

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[6] Ibid., p. 101

[7] Ibid., p. 101

[8] Menard, Op. Cit.

[9] Derrida, Jacques. '*Aporias'*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1993. Web. 03 May 2020.

[10] Ibid., p. 55

[11] Ibid., p. 52

troubling questions that Tarkovsky's portrayals of memory pose, we must first consider his depictions of the 'what we all know'[12].

The 'Heimlich' ('Homely')

Moreover, Tarkovsky's depictions of memory often, as I will briefly discuss later, reflect the Cartesian concept of mind/body dualism which states that the mind and body are distinct entities, as his characters' minds often reside in a space which is far from their physical body. However, let us first consider how his films too echo, at times, Heidegger's belief, in rejection of Descartes' mind/body dualism, that our minds are intrinsically linked to our material world. For, even when the characters' minds seem not to be totally present in their physical bodies, their consciousnesses, particularly in the form of manifested memories, are often deeply enmeshed with a very specific, material location from their past. In both '*Mirror*' and '*Solaris,*' for example, the characters' vivid memories of their childhood homes seem to embody their deep instinctual desires to return to a place of comfort and safety which is familiar and 'homely,' or what Freud refers to as 'heimlich.' These memories of home are often presented as the characters' primary anchor to something inherently 'real' in an often surreal world, in a manner which seems to suggest that the characters' humanity are strongly rooted in a basal, instinctual manner to their homes, even if their bodies are not physically there. In fact, arguably one of the most important images in both films is the recurring image of the protagonists' familial dwelling of a wooden cabin or 'dacha,' which acts as an ever-present anchor to their physical and ontological home. Skakov states that 'the connection of a person with his or her natural habitat defines his or her philosophic horizon'[13] and in much the same way, Tarkovksy's characters' connection to their familial homes provide a foundation upon which the characters' broader philosophical linkage to other planes can be explored.

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[12] Gratton, Peter *'Tonight's Lecture on Heidegger, Derrida, and the Aporias of Death'* Philosophy in a Time of Terror, 2017. Web. 03 May 2020

[13] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 78

Recurring motif of the homely dacha, as seen here in 'Mirror' (left, fig 1.1) and 'Solaris' (right, fig 1.2)

'*Solaris,*' for example, attests to the fact that 'It is not possible to think as if outside the human body, and humanity constantly explores the unknown through reference to the already familiar;'[14] as, even in a film whose otherworldly subject matter concerns a team of cosmonauts investigating the supernatural behaviour of an alien planet against the backdrop of a mechanical space station, the film is anchored to recurring vivid depictions of Kris' memories of his familial home, which become his only reference point to his humanity in the sterility and artificiality of the space station and its surreal happenings. Furthermore, while we see Kris burning his possessions in the beginning of the film, he brings home videos of earth to the planet with him, an act which demonstrates the significance that these links to his earthly life possess to him. In addition, he brings a tin box full of soil, a recurring image which, mirroring the natural imagery we see in the depictions of his home on earth in the opening shots, acts in a similar fashion, emphasising that, although Kris' body is far from home, his consciousness is not. The other cosmonauts echo this sentiment, informing Kris of how their deceased colleague, Gibarian, who desired to "go to the Earth, to the worms," had attached strips of paper to a ventilator, so as to mimic the rustling of leaves as if he were back on Earth, cementing Dr. Snaut's statement that "we don't know what to do with other worlds."

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[14] Ibid., p. 78

The Humanity in Memory

Moreover, such homely memories are a significant component of what differentiates the 'real,' biologically human characters (Kris and his fellow cosmonauts) from the 'artificial' humanity of the phantoms which are manifested by the alien planet. The phantom of Kris' dead wife, Hari, for example, outwardly presents as identical to the supposedly 'real' human characters, however her lack of an earthly memory is a critical factor which differentiates her from the humanity demonstrated by the other characters, with her inability to recall her past and her subsequent feelings of disassociation causing her immense distress. However, once Hari is exposed to images which trigger memories of what Skakov calls 'the real entity'[15] that is earth, the ultimate representation of the 'real,' she states that she is "becoming a human being", which is echoed by Kris' statement that "now you – and not her – are the real Hari".

The earthly memories to which Hari is exposed are represented visually by Pieter Bruegel's series of paintings, '*The Hunters in the Snow*,' which are 'presented as ultimate visual impressions of Earth,'[16] connecting Hari to her memories of her 'real' earthly home. Kris' home videos act in much the same way, depicting similarly homely scenes of their family and the dacha. We can consider these, according to Daniel McFadden, to be 'Kris's unadulterated memories' and 'the only glimpses we get of Kris's objective past.'[17] Kris' memories then are, in a way, possibly more 'real' than his present hypnogogic reality of the space station, and similarly, Kris' memories provide Hari with a reality that is more 'real' than her immediate, memory-lacking existence on the space station. Furthermore, Snaut, a 'real' human, who has lived away from earth on the space station for many years, comments that "we're losing our dignity and human character", arguably suggesting the profound and fundamental impact that the potency of these characters' earthly memories have on their very sense of human identity. Thus, for both the cosmonauts and for the

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[15] Ibid., p. 78

[16] Ibid., p. 86

[17] McFadden, Opp. Cit., p. 49

phantom Hari, it is their memories, rather than their present reality, which tie them ultimately to their humanity.

Memory Reconstructed

'*Mirror,*' a highly autobiographical film, reflects this notion of the 'real' memory on multiple levels, essentially functioning as an on-screen reconstruction of Tarkovsky's authentic, personal memories from his own childhood, entwined with collective memories of objectively real historical events. Moreover, in order to depict these memories, Tarkovsky employs several archival sources and stock footage, and relies on photographic references and historical documentation. Firstly, much of '*Mirror*' is filmed in a replica of Tarkovsky's own childhood home (fig 1.1), which he built in the same spot as his own home once stood, using photos taken by his godfather as reference, further cementing these depictions of 'real' memories into the realm of authenticity.

 '*Tarkovsky's reconstruction is not only effected through personal dreams and family memory, but also through photography: the objective register that complements the subjective impression of the past. Gorning's photographs made possible not only Tarkovsky's exact reconstruction of the villa for filming purposes but also for clothing, design and fixtures. They were the vital springboard for reconstruction, but also a photographic register of the personal … It is clear from the director's diaries and comments that the images of the wood and the house have intensely private associations*"[18]

Furthermore, similarly to the recurring, vivid natural imagery that defines Kris' earthly longing in *'Solaris,'* the interiors of Tarkovsky's reconstructed childhood dacha are depicted with meticulous attention to detail and through highly sensual illustrations of a warm and peaceful family home, all of which combine to transform these filmic depictions of an idyllic childhood memory from the realm of mere impressions of the past into an extremely vivid, specific and meaningful moment from the director's real childhood.

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[18] Orr, John. '*The Demons of Modernity: Ingmar Bergman and European Cinema,*' New York: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2014. Web. 03 My 2020

Vivid imagery and attention to detail in the portrayals of the 'real,' authentic roots of the characters in 'Mirror' (left, fig 2.1) and 'Solaris' (right, fig 2.2)

Furthermore, the authenticity of these on-screen memories is heightened by the presence of Tarkovsky's real family members in the making of the film. Firstly, the film echoes the real-life relationships between Tarkovsky and his family. For example, Tarkovsky's father, just like Alexei's father, was absent for much of his life, and likewise, Alexei's estranged relationship with his wife and son, Ignat, is comparable to Andrei's personal relationships with his first wife and child.[19] In addition to this, Tarkovsky's real mother, stepdaughter and second wife also act in the film, and Tarkovsky's real father, Arseny Tarkovsky, narrates the film with his poetry. Therefore, although these memories, as we will discuss later, are brought into the figmental arena of the overall filmic material, it is reasonable to argue that the film, in some sense, is as much a meshing together of Tarkovsky's own life as it is a work of fiction. As stated by Skakov, here, 'the real, together with its familial relations and private anxieties, enters the fictional space of cinema,'[20] where 'the artistic realm is approached not by means of imitating nature, but by pointing to something which is already there,'[21] in this case, the 'already there' being Tarkovsky's lived experience.

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[19] Tüfekçi, Ali. '*Andrei Arsenevich Tarkovsky: Russian auteur with legacy of distinctive time, film aesthetics,*' Daily Sabah, June 2020. Web. 03 May 2020

[20] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 109

[21] Ibid., p. 125

A photograph of Tarkovsky's real mother (left, fig. 3.1) and his recreation of this memory in 'Mirror' (right, fig 3.2), illustrating the authenticity of his realisations of childhood memories

Perhaps even more significant however, is the fact that '*Mirror*' complements these intimate, personal memories with depictions of collective memories and illustrations of identifiable historical events which undisputedly took place in real life, cultivating a concrete sense of the aforementioned 'this side,' particularly as Tarkovsky injected documentary footage from these events directly into the film, even more deeply rooting the film into a sense of objective history. The quality of this material 'is flawed, and no attempts were made to restore and refine it. The texture of the film bears witness to the past and to the harsh conditions endured during the shooting process,'[22] so that the film is steeped in a sense of objective truth, both in form and content. These examples, then, would suggest that our memory, rather than being a strictly ethereal or intangible force, has the capacity to function as a reliable and fundamental element within the structure of our perceived reality, allowing us to penetrate 'beyond the veils drawn by time,'[23] and to overcome, and hence draw meaning from beyond, the limits of our immediate surroundings.

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[22] Ibid., 125

[23] McFadden, Op. Cit., p. 51

Chapter Two:

‘The Other Side’

Before we can explore the significance of Tarkovsky's depictions of the 'this side' in relation to memory, let us discuss the 'other side;' the memories which are portrayed as being unreal, unreliable or inauthentic in nature. Firstly, let us expand on our earlier mentions of Derrida and Heidegger's treatment of death, which they consider not in an ontic, physical, or biological sense (which they refer to as 'perishing'), but rather in the ontological sense as it relates to Dasein (which they refer to as 'death proper' or 'properly dying'). Derrida and Heidegger describe this death as the crossing of a border, or as an experience which 'remains just beyond our ability-to-be.' They define this experience not as an annihilation, but as a 'a possibility-of-Being,' a 'possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there,' of ' Being-no-longer-in-the-world,' or indeed, 'the possibility of the impossibility.' [24] This death is a 'passage out of life'[25], or a 'climbing or going (scandere) above or beyond (trans) "it," via transcendence.'[26] Derrida's concept of the 'aporia' is similarly defined as 'an interminable experience,' which resides 'at the limits of truth.' He describes the aporia as a 'passage,' a 'traversal without line and without indivisible border,' or a 'trespass-passage of a line, transgression of a border, or step beyond [pas au-dela] life-to another figure of the border between life and death.' Conversely, the aporia can too be defined as a 'nonpassage,' a 'deprivation of the pas' ('pas' meaning 'step') or indeed, the contradictions that exist within these ideologies.[27] Furthermore, Derrida notes that there are 'different ways of living,' just as there is 'more than one limit,' or more than one type of dying.[28]

Memory as a Death Proper

Let us consider then, how Tarkovsky's work encourages us to consider memory and the act of remembering as a 'death proper' which encompasses the concept of the aporia, as an experience existing outside of the limits of our reality, as something beyond the borders of our immediate experience of life, as a death of the real, present self, as a 'limit of truth' or 'limit of human life' which we cannot fully access from

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[24] Gratton, Op. Cit.

[25] Derrida, Op. Cit., p. 45

[26] Gratton, Op. Cit.

[27] Derrida, Op. Cit., p. 23

[28] Ibid., p. 30

'this side' of our known reality, or indeed as an inherent contradiction in itself.[29] In this way, Alexei and Kris, and indeed the director himself, in their recalling of their pasts, confront this ontological death; through the act of remembering, they transcend their physical world, surpassing 'the limits and boundaries of the life-world,'[30] or what is referred to in '*Solaris*' as "the boundaries of human knowledge". These memories, however, are often represented in ambiguous and unnatural terms which denote that the 'real' moments, of which the memories are mere re-enactments, can never truly be relived authentically. Peter Gratton, discussing Derrida's work, notes that we can 'never have a relation to death' as it 'can never be actual,'[31] and likewise, Tarkovsky's characters are demonstrably detached both from their memories and from the moments to which their memories refer.

'The Poetry of the Memory'

Moreover, Tarkovsky, in his book '*Sculpting in Time,*' suggests that any human perception of the world is innately flawed, as humans are 'limited in their capacity for knowing the world by the organs of the senses that nature has given them'. He proceeds to reference Nikolai Gumilyov's thoughts that, with additional senses, we would be able to perceive our world more truthfully, having access to its other dimensions, and deduces that 'every artist is thus limited in his perception, in his understanding of the inner connections of the world about him.'[32] Therefore, even if Tarkovsky was attempting to create an utterly realistic rendering of his past, this would be a futile exercise as it would rely heavily on human observation, a deeply unreliable tool of objectivity; he notes that 'each person tends to consider the world to be as he sees it and as he is conscious of it. But alas, it's not!'[33] Tarkovsky's films, then, can be thought of essentially as staged interpretations of an already flawed human perception of reality. Reality, then, is filtered not just through the filmmaker's interpretation, but also through the filmic process which inherently must

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Orr, Op. Cit., p. 32

[31] Gratton, Op. Cit.

[32] Andrei Tarkovsky. '*Sculpting in Time*' Texas: University of Texas Press. 1989. Web. 03 May 2020

[33] Ibid. p. 185

adopt a particular viewpoint (i.e. that of the camera). Tarkovsky concludes that it is 'meaningless to talk about naturalism in cinema as if phenomena could be recorded wholesale by the camera, irrespective of any artistic principles, so to speak in their 'natural state'. This sort of naturalism cannot exist.'[34] However, this unattainable 'naturalism' is quite apparently of little interest to Tarkovsky, who states that:

'*memory has to be worked upon before it can become the basis of an artistic reconstruction of the past; and here it is important not to lose the particular emotional atmosphere without which a memory evoked in every detail merely gives rise to a bitter feeling of disappointment. There's an enormous difference, after all, between the way you remember the house in which you were born and which you haven't seen for years, and the actual sight of the house after a prolonged absence. Usually the poetry of the memory is destroyed by confrontation with its origin.'* [35]

Indeed, the often surreal and otherworldly nature of the memories portrayed in both '*Mirror*' and '*Solaris*' attest to his preoccupation with the 'poetry of the memory' which quite often cannot be communicated purely by the flaccidness of reality. He remarks:

'*an author's lyrical experience seldom coincides with what he actually does in real life ... An author's poetic principle emerges from the effect made upon him by surrounding reality, and it can rise above that reality, question it, engage in bitter conflict; and, moreover, not only with the reality that lies outside him, but also with the one that is within him.*' [36]

Evidently, then, Tarkovsky's interest lies in presenting 'his' world, rather than that which we might consider to be 'real,' so that the 'reality' we see on screen, the 'reality' that lives 'within him,' can hardly be considered a reliable representation of our, or even his own, real, literal world. Likewise, Tarkovsky states that 'artistic

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[34] Ibid. p. 185

[35] Ibid. p. 29

[36] Ibid. p. 82

creation is not just a way of formulating information that exists objectively … In the end it is the very form of the artist's existence, his sole means of expression, and his alone.'[37] Thus, his films are self-consciously and, in fact, necessarily, subject to lapses in objectivity, as the domains which Tarkovsky sculpts grant him the ability to express intangible concepts which cannot be depicted through a faithful transcription of reality, often concerning 'the impossibility' or 'the limits of human truth' that don't exist on 'this side' of a death proper. His work reflects his belief that 'cinema is the one art form where the author can see himself as the creator of an unconditional reality, quite literally of his own world,' and such worlds, he claims, reveal 'man's aspiration towards the infinite,' making 'incarnate his longing for the ideal.'[38]

'The Limits of Human Truth'

The physical rules of Tarkovsky's worlds, harbouring phenomena that, to the 'this side' (or what is referred to in '*Solaris*' as "life down there"), are physically impossible, embodying the ethereal nature of the 'other side,' in a manner which is starkly detached from the laws of our own natural reality, and is instead rooted in the logic of the memory-worlds of the characters, existing at the 'limits of human truth.' For example, in '*Solaris*,' adjacent to the astronauts' 'natural,' earthly memories, there is a form of 'unnatural' memory, occurring when the planet reflects the astronauts' memories back to them as 'guests' which are identical replicas of their loved ones, but which lack fundamental human characteristics such as the ability to sleep or to remember their past lives.

Furthermore, Hari, the reproduction of Kris' deceased wife, demonstrates superhuman physical capabilities and, although she dies violently multiple times, 'the seemingly infinite capacity of the visitor to regenerate itself indicates a kind of corporeal stasis (an eternal return of the body).'[39] Sartorius, rejecting the Cartesian notion of mind/body dualism mentioned earlier, reduces Hari to a mere ''mechanical reproduction. A copy. A matrix," whose inhuman molecular makeup overrules any

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[37] Ibid. p. 103

[38] Ibid. p. 104

[39] Buchanan and MacCormack, Op. Cit. p. 56

emotional or psychological characteristics she possesses. In addition to Hari's inhuman physical composition, her identity too is merely a collage of Kris' memories, rendering her a 'fragmentary, proximal facsimile'[40] which is 'imposed onto Chris's reality by the Ocean.'[41] Therefore, Kris 'does not act as merely the 'source' of the simulacra but rather also as the 'point of view' from which the simulacra might be viewed.'[42]

The phantom Hari, Solaris' interpretation of Kelvin's memories of the 'real' Hari, is then unreal in more than one sense; not only is she a product of Solaris' making, but of Kris,' too, 'whose recollective idiosyncrasies must inform the simulation,'[43] rendering her a product of multiple layers of subjectivity. Thus, 'these visitors are not—and cannot ever be—the people they represent, because they're made entirely from outsiders' memories: incomplete, inaccurate.'[44] In fact, like any figment of human memory, Hari's existence depends completely on her proximity to the source (in this case, Kris). She states that, to the cosmonauts, the guests are "something external, a hindrance. But it's a part of you. It's your conscience." In this way, the remembered versions of the protagonists' loved ones in both 'Solaris' and indeed 'Mirror,' embody the figure of a Dasein which is 'not yet determined as human (subject, ego, conscience, person, soul, body, etc.)' or the 'arrivant,' the 'dead,' the 'revenant,' 'ghost' or 'that which returns'.[45]

Similarly, Derrida discusses the concept of 'awaiting (one another) at the limits of truth' and considers 'the ancient belief that the dead are not dead, or are not quite dead.'[46] Likewise, in both 'Mirror' and 'Solaris,' the memory-figures of the

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[40] Buchanan and MacCormack, Op. Cit., p. 56

[41] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 89

[42] Buchanan and MacCormack, Op. Cit. p. 56

[43] Ibid. p. 57

[44] Sarah Welch-Larson. '*Colors from the Past: On Memory in Solaris*' Bright Wall/Dark Room. Web. 03 May 2020

[45] Derrida, Op. Cit. p. 35

[46] Ibid. p. 62

protagonists' loved ones incarnate this figure who is not physically present in the protagonists' immediate, material reality in a natural sense, but rather resides in their consciousness, appearing to them merely as a revenant which transgresses the aporetic border of the 'other side' so that, through the protagonists' act of remembering, these ghostly figures may intrude upon the 'this side'.

Furthermore, physically impossible acts such as levitation, rain falling indoors, and other impossible spatio-temporal distortions highlight how removed from typically 'real' experiences the characters' memories are. For example, the scene in which Kris and Hari experience a moment of zero-gravity and float in each other's arms emphasises that the 'unreality of their situation is always all too apparent.'[47] Echoing the ideologies of Derrida and Heidegger, this scene is a 'visual image of togetherness-in-apartness, of our departed loved ones forever floating in our consciousness,'[48] so that here, Kris and Hari exist in the 'non-genuine sense of experience, the "there alongside" that is not there alongside, and the being-with that is not being-with.'[49]

The levitation scenes in 'Mirror' (left, fig. 4.1) and 'Solaris' (right, fig. 4.2) denote the otherworldly physical laws of the memory-planes in each film

The Artifice of Objectivity

As discussed earlier, many elements in '*Mirror,*' such as the presence of Tarkovsky's real family members, lend a certain authenticity to the piece, however this is often subverted so that it simultaneously highlights the artifice of the reconstructed

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[47] Dillon, Op. Cit., p. 14

[48] Azadeh Jafari. '*Tarkovsky's Madonnas*' TIFF. 2017. Web. 03 May 2020

[49] Gratton, Op. Cit.

memories. For example, by having these family members, as well as the other actors, play multiple roles spanning several generations, Tarkovsky creates a paradox, emphasising the duplicity of their presence and the unreliability of the memories. This is vocalised by Alexei who tells his wife (played by Margarita Terekhova, who also plays his young mother) "when I recall my childhood and mother, somehow she always has your face," so that, again, we understand these depictions to be a representation of an intangible, inner memory-world rather than a faithful recreation of the memories themselves. Similarly, Tarkovsky's use of identifiable archival footage, which we considered earlier as a mark of authenticity, conversely suggests a certain level of artifice in the context of the film. Similarly to what Menard calls Alexei's 'virtual memories'[50] of his parents discussing their future child, we are aware that it is impossible that either Tarkovsky or Alexei could have witnessed events which took place before they were born. Moreover, Tarkovsky suggests that such 'documentalism and objectivity have no place in art. Objectivity can only be the author's, and therefore subjective, even if he is editing a newsreel.'[51]

Likewise, in 'Solaris,' although various artworks including Bruegel's 'Hunters in the Snow,' as discussed earlier, anchor the characters to the 'real' domain of earth in a manner which appears to emphasise the realness and humanity of their homely memories, these artefacts are mere copies of the original pieces, exemplifying the 'ghostly artifice of art.'[52] Likewise, although we have already considered how the dachas of each film reflect Freud's notion of the 'heimlich,' they too are ultimately rendered 'unheimlich' (unhomely), and, upon inspection, appear to be as fragmentary, incomplete and detatched from reality as the characters' memories are. The replica of Tarkovsky's childhood home in 'Mirror,' for example, accurately reconstructed as it might have been, is ultimately still a recreation, which is inherently artificial in nature, and likely idealised. This sentiment is echoed in 'Solaris' when Kris' father states that ''this house reminds me of my grandfather's house. I really liked it. So we decided to build one just like it." Furthermore, when

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[50] Menard, Op. Cit.

[51] Tarkovsky, Op. Cit. p. 50

[52] Dillon, Op. Cit. p. 14

Kris finally returns to this home, it is revealed to be yet another false, illusory manifestation of his memories. Similarly, in '*Mirror,*' the layout of the dacha is highly disorienting and 'the instability of the house's structure reflects the disharmony between conscious and subconscious.'[53] It is evident, then, that the dachas in each film, more than just being faithful recreations of Tarkovsky's childhood home, are reflections of the flawed nature of the memories of the house itself, and subsequently, suggest the unreliable nature of any mental reconstructions of our past.

As I will discuss in Chapter Three, however, these representations of the unreal nature of memory need not be in opposition with our earlier considerations of memory as something 'real,' but rather their significance lies in these contradictions. Much like Derrida's concept of the aporia, the contradictions between these ideas do not necessitate a solution, but instead it is the problems that are significant. Tarkovsky states, 'I can only say that the image stretches out into infinity, and leads to the absolute,' and indeed, by navigating, but not necessarily contesting, Tarkovsky's paradoxical depictions of the unknown, we may acquire a glimpse of the absolute.

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[53] McFadden, Op. Cit. p. 49

Chapter Three:

'Resonance Between Sides'

Until this point, we have primarily considered the 'real' and 'unreal' aspects of memory according to '*Solaris*' and '*Mirror*' to be somewhat opposing in nature, however, as I will discuss in this chapter, their significance often derives from the ways in which they intersect, complement and indeed contradict each other, often in a manner which suggests that our compounded reality is necessarily comprised of both the 'real' and the 'unreal,' each requiring the existence of the other in order to be significant, echoing Tarkovsky's statement that 'sometimes the utterly unreal comes to express reality itself.'[54] However, if we are to assume Skakov's position that 'memory is neither real nor unreal,' being 'situated somewhere between the realms of reality and dream,'[55] it is then, in fact, inaccurate for us to attempt to classify the memory realms of Tarkovsky's films as we have been, as their significance arises from the very fact that they cannot be bound to this strict binary.

Questioning 'What We All Know'

Let us first consider how Tarkovsky's depictions of memory, reflecting both the nature of the aporia as well as the 'possibility of the impossibility' that is the death proper, derive their meaning from their inherent paradoxes. In the case of the aporia, Gratton states that 'Derrida's modus operandi is less to reverse binary oppositions— though that he might do—than to show the presuppositions at the heart of a work, all in order to show that that supposition, supposedly so grounded in "what we all know," whatever is common sense, is put into question by that very discourse,'[56] and likewise, the inconsistent nature of the memories in both films encourages us to reconsider our presumptions about the 'what we all know,' and to question our own tendency to assume, often in error, that our memories are faithful representations of our pasts. Similarly, when we consider the 'limits of truth' embedded in discussions of the aporia, we imply 'that the truth is precisely limited, finite, and confined within its borders. In sum, the truth is not everything, one would then say, for there is more, something else or something better.'[57] When Alexei and Kris surpass these

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[54] Tarkovsky, Op. Cit., p. 152

[55] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 102

[56] Gratton, Op. Cit.

[57] Derrida, Op. Cit., p. 1

boundaries of truth, interweaving their present realities with their memory planes, a duality is created which lays bare the turmoil of the human condition, and the struggle that exists between their souls and the external, physical worlds in which they reside, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

The Blurring of Borders

Similarly to our consideration of memory as a kind of properly dying, Skakov, discussing Kris' recital of '*Don Quixote,*' states that, in the passage, Sancho considers 'the notion of temporariness by comparing sleep with death, which culminates in the disappearance of the human capacity to experience time – that is, to live' after maintaining that 'the firmness of our understanding of reality, which seems to accommodate numerous binary oppositions, is in fact unsteady, and it is loosened in sleep, which transfers us into a realm devoid of binaries. The mind of a sleeping person,' he attests, in a similar fashion to the minds of Alexei and Kris in the act of remembering, 'enters a different space' in a 'fulfilment of Jacques Lacan's 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think.''[58] This act of metaphysical transcendence similarly echoes Derrida's consideration of the act of blurring 'the borders of the very concept of death,'[59] and is realised by the ever-shifting nature of Tarkovsky's memory-planes.

Likewise, according to Skakov, 'Mirror attempts to explore the relationship between past (history) and present by 'confusing' the realms of social and individual memory. As a result, the rigid boundaries between the social and individual domains are eliminated by the contraposition of the visual documents with the narrative episodes.'[60] He continues that these 'real' elements are 'brought into the texture of the film, and their alien nature is consciously exposed,'[61] creating a 'perplexity about the juxtaposition of non-chronological fragments, stressing the indivisibility of time and the infinite possibility of a perception that journeys beyond the borders of the screen. Tarkovsky achieves a sense of temporal unity through the confusion between

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[58] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 91

[59] Derrida, Op. Cit, p. 46

[61] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 125

ontological states, an inseparable feeling of being in a here-and-now simultaneously with a there-and-then, in short, a sense of not being so much in the present but more in the past.'[62] Indeed, the film's fluid and fragmentary temporal tapestry of individual and collective memories both suggests a unifying oneness of time, while simultaneously heightening the tension between the objective and subjective nature of the memories themselves. Furthermore, the collective memories depicted through archival footage, and particularly the manner in which these sequences are interweaved quite seamlessly with Alexei's individualistic memories, are suggestive of his ultimate separation from his past, implying that he is no more proximal to his own personal memories than he is to these collective memories which do not belong to him.

'The Impossible Void'

According to Peter King, we remember our lives 'as a mix of the actual and the hoped-for.' He continues, quoting Peter Green's statement, that 'Mirror marks an attempt to recover the vision of childhood as well, not just the memories, but the unexplained mysteries, with all their discontinuities and distortions of time; a child's eye view of the world and history.'[63] In this way, we may consider the discrepancies in Alexei's memory realm to be just as integral to our understanding of his life and his perception of it as a totally reliable recollection. Moreover, Alexei's fixation with this memory world, and particularly the fragmentary nature in which it appears, suggests the internal struggle between the deepest desires of his subconscious mind, and his present actuality. While Alexei appears to display a deep longing to return to a childhood which is free from the complexities of his adult life, the phantasmagorical nature in which his childhood appears to him underpins the vanity of his longing, and the compromised nature of these mere representations of a past which he can never relive in its originality.

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[62] David George Menard, Op. Cit.

[63] Peter King, '*Memory And Exile: Time And Place In Tarkovsky's Mirror,*' Leicester: De Monfort University. Web. 03 May 2020

Alexei's mortal helplessness in the face of the ever-advancing force of time is echoed particularly by his preoccupation with memories relating to his failed personal relationships which often suggest his shortcomings as a son, husband and father, and his apparent inability to resolve his resulting feelings of guilt. Just as the unreliable nature of his memories suggests the futility of his longing to return to his childhood, it also suggests that he will never attain the closure or absolution of guilt that he seeks. Thus, the uneven and stuttering nature of Alexei's memory plane embodies the stagnation of man in the face of time, residing in a perpetual state of limbo between 'a childhood that is already in the past and to which it is impossible to return, and a death in the future which cannot yet be experienced. The director finds himself in the impossible void of his present situation.' [64] In this way, Alexei's internal and external experiences of time don't necessarily oppose each other as much as they converge to illustrate the struggle of the human experience.

Similarly, in '*Solaris,*' the disparities between the characters' comforting, earthly memories and the foreign, unnatural memories which are transmitted as messages from the cosmos, mirror the tensions between Kris' conscious self and subconscious desires, as his tortured mind attempts to reconcile the metaphysical separation between his past and present lives. According to Bijaya Biswall, '*Solaris*' is 'about the obscure ocean our lives are, of our innermost regrets and demons. It is about the obsession with external exploration while evading the responsibility of self-exploration and introspection.' [65]

Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the dichotomy between the physical domain of Earth and the hallucinatory planet Solaris, and the contrasting physical laws of each, too reflect the conflict between Kris' outer, present self and his turmoiled subconscious. As stated by Sfectu, quoting Richard Duffy, the space station 'forms a type ontological no-man's land,'[66] on which the more ethereal aspects of Kris' consciousness can be explored, in juxtaposition with his physical, Earth-bound

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[64] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 132

[65] Bijaya Biswall, '*Andrei Tarkovsky as an Existentialist Cinematic Philosopher'* High on Films. 2020. Web. 03 May 2020

[66] Sfectu, Op. Cit., p. 5

corporeal self. For example, when Kris actively indulges himself in the realm of the comforting, homely memories depicted in his home videos, yet is repulsed by the unnatural memories of Hari which he is forced to relive against his will, his evident desire to suppress the memories of his deceased wife becomes evident through comparison, revealing the profound depth of his guilt surrounding her death. Much like Alexei's memories of his failed relationships, Kris' unnatural memories of Hari here personify his guilty conscience.

Identity and the Uncanny

Just as the dual planes of 'Solaris' are linked through depictions of the home, the phantom Hari's dubious 'human' identity too is anchored by earthly recollections which transgress their ontological borders, allowing her to 'regain memories of her own past, to rediscover her former reality when she was a real person.'[67] Moreover, Hari's existence, similarly to the manner in which the concepts of the aporia and the death proper derive meaning from their inherent contradictions, simultaneously embodies the previously discussed contradictory concepts of both the heimlich and the unheimlich. Thus, the antagonistic facets of her existence intersect in a manner which exemplifies what Freud refers to as the 'uncanny,' provoking an unsettling feeling due to her familiar yet simultaneously unfamiliar nature. Here, reality and illusion intersect in a manner which calls Kris' humanity into question, as when he 'faces the uncanny phantom of his dead wife on Solaris, his mind constantly returns to Earth to resolve the moral problem: his personal guilt. The alien otherness of science fiction is internalized.' [68] Furthermore, if we are to consider that Hari's sense of human identity is, in fact, much like that of Kris and Alexei, whose identities are rooted in the subjective impressions of the past that are their own memories, the unreliability of our own perceptions of reality, being based on the similarly partial representations of our pasts that are our own memories, is called into question.

Likewise, this idea of the uncanny is meaningful in relation to the image of the dacha in both films, the significance of which is heightened by its duplicitous nature.

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[67] Ibid., p. 84

[68] Skakov, Op. Cit., p.83

McFadden notes that both characters 'embark on journeys that take them away from their homes, but these departures initiate a dissatisfaction' which 'triggers the appearance of the uncanny nostalgia power of home,' [69] as both a source of torture and comfort to the characters. Moreover, inhabiting 'the borderline between the real and the fictional,' the nature of the dacha, 'an impression of a real entity,'[70] emphasises the ambiguous nature of the memory-plane in which it resides. In '*Solaris,*' the images of the home depicted in the earthly artefacts such as Bruegel's paintings and the home videos momentarily erase the border between the two planets, acting 'as a teleportation in time, defying causality and allowing the past and even the dead to return,'[71] enabling the planets to 'negotiate their real and at the same time hallucinatory status.'[72] This reconciles the 'two seemingly disjoined spaces and realities: those of Solaris and Earth,' implying that 'only art, and by extension imagination and even hallucination,' or indeed memory, 'are able to resolve the conflict between the present reality of Solaris and the distant memory of Earth.'[73]

Metaphysical Homecoming

The image of the dacha is perhaps most significant, however, in the films' final scenes, both of which epitomise the films' propensity to interrogate the borders that exist between the space of the death proper and the realm of the living by exposing their artifice and emphasising the tenuous relationship between the potently familiar memories, and the unreal nature of the memories themselves. While Kris' vivid memories of home seem to represent, much like Alexei's, a deep longing to return to a particular kind of humanity, the duplicitous nature of the Solaris-manifested vision of his home in the final scene is revealed by the surreal image of rain falling inside the dacha, creating a tension which underscores both the ultimate intangibility of this memory, and by extension, the illusory nature of human memory itself.

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[69] McFadden, Op. Cit., 48

[70] Ibid., p. 112

[71] Sfectu, Op. Cit., p. 8

[72] Skakov Op. Cit., 93

[73] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 94

According to Skakov, for Kris, the dichotomy between the two planets 'is not valid, for the opposition between the two is reconciled on – or rather by – the alien planet … The subjective and objective realms are indistinguishable.'[74] Furthermore, this 'return of the protagonist to his own domain via the alien entity – the planet Solaris – is a purely symbolic act: the man approaches his inner human self through palpable contact with spectral phenomena,'[75] and moreover, we are unsure, when Kris kneels at his phantom father's feet, whether this symbolic act of homecoming is representative of a decision on Kris' part to finally confront his past, or whether he has instead surrendered himself to these ultimately facile memories, rendering him, like Alexei, a passive dweller of his memory-world, unable to initiate any rectification or recourse of his 'real,' present life. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the Kris in this scene is even the 'real' Kris, or a phantom whose state of humanity is akin to the ghostly Hari. However, 'in both scenarios, the visual fulfilment of Kris's desire is important. Both would consist of the same memories and psyche.' [76] Moreover, regardless of Kris' physical or ontological makeup, 'what is important is his mother, the porch, his father and Chris returning back to the eternal values that are the most important: the beauty of the world's landscape, family, home, art and the moral law within him.'[77]

Similarly, in 'Mirror,' the dacha acts as an 'intrinsic connection that links the temporal and spatial relationships presented in the film whose polyphonic nature is expressed in the last sequence where the blending of space and time occurs as the past merges with the present, expressing the indivisible unity of time.'[78] In this final scene, following Alexei's death, a similarly ambiguous distortion of space and time occurs as a shot of his young parents, preceding his birth, gives way to the image of his childhood self, accompanied by his now inexplicably elderly mother, in a sequence which makes little temporal or spatial sense. In this shot, however,

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[74] Ibid., p. 94

[75] Ibid., p. 98

[76] McFadden, Op. Cit., p. 47

[77] Elena Ringo, *'Dreams of Home in the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky'* Indie Cinema. 2015. Web. 03 May 2020

[78] Menard, Op. Cit.

similarly to the final shot of '*Solaris*,' the act of metaphysical homecoming is represented physically; both films end where they began, as the characters return to what they understand to be the true meaning of life. [79]

Spectatorship and the Memory Experience

The significance of these dualistic concepts and the interplay between them is confined not only within the diegesis of the film itself, however; this discourse also offers a lens through which we can consider the nature of the relationship between the film itself and its audience. Just as the exchange between reality and illusion imbues the film with meaning internally for the characters, the way in which the world of the film 'relates to a reality that we already understand through experience' is too significant.[80] In this sense, we can think of the filmic world not as one 'imagined entirely by the film-maker but as one that borrows and integrates elements from the world we already know into its fantasy,' ultimately allowing us each to recognise our own humanity within the tapestry of the films which appear before the us as an interpretive experience, not unlike a memory.

Indeed, as stated by James Walters, 'how a thing appears becomes inextricably linked to what we understand it to be'[81] and, with this in mind, let us again consider the concepts of the aporia and the death proper, and their relevance not just to the filmic content, but to the relationship between the illusionary world of the film and the 'real' world of the spectator. Walters states that '[Stanley] Cavell's description of the screen as a barrier between two worlds is fundamental as it symbolizes the ontological borderline between the two spaces,'[82] with the screen functioning, akin to an aporia in itself, as a border between the real and the unreal, between the two dimensional filmic world and the three dimensional world inhabited by the audience. Discussing Branigan's musings on the nature of this two-dimensional cinema screen, Walters calls attention to 'the viewer's role in interpreting that apparent flatness as

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Walters, Op. Cit., p. 21

[81] Ibid. p. 12

[82] Ibid. p. 18

essentially three-dimensional, creating a textured world.' [83] In this sense, we can consider the act of cinema-going to be a kind of death proper in itself, as the audience, through this act of interpretation, overcomes the limits of their physical presence, and transcends the screen-border.

Moreover, this crossing of ontological borders undergone both by the characters and by the audience is reflected and facilitated by the sensibilities of the filmmaker, whose style reflects the free-flowing nature of consciousness itself. The blending of reality and mind-realms in Tarkovsky's films is expressed through a mise-en-scéne which 'shifts freely from past to present, from physical reality to mental reality, from the outer world to the inner world,' involving a camera style which reflects 'psychological time; and the moving camera that merges real-time with memory-time,' encompassing a 'visual expression of dreams and memories in flux; static long takes and agonizingly slow movements that foreground temporality; long takes that capture the same real-time tension that existed in the shooting of a shot.'[84] This unique style, which Tarkovsky refers to as 'sculpting in time,' reflects the human experience of time, so that, rather than creating meaning by editing in a logical manner, Tarkovsky cultivates meaning by allowing the audience to feel the weight of time in the shot. 'Out of this ability to imprint time grows the cornerstone of Tarkovsky's aesthetics,' known as rhythm, time-thrust or time-pressure. This editing style allows the spectator to experience an illusion of time through the cinema screen, and 'reveals reality in its full objective glory,'[85] while simultaneously allowing Tarkovsky to 'to show the subjective logic – the thought, the dream, the memory,'[86] through spatio-temporal distortions.

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[83] Ibid. p. 16

[84] Totaro, Op. Cit., p. 26

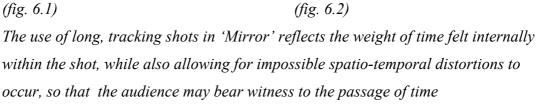[85] Skakov, Op. Cit., p. 3

[86] Ibid. p. 13

(fig. 5.1)   *(fig 5.2)*

The surreal logic of the mental plane is expressed visually in 'Solaris,' in this case through shifting colour schemes

(fig. 6.1)   *(fig. 6.2)*

The use of long, tracking shots in 'Mirror' reflects the weight of time felt internally within the shot, while also allowing for impossible spatio-temporal distortions to occur, so that the audience may bear witness to the passage of time

In this way, the form of both '*Mirror*' and '*Solaris*' pose the same questions as their content; the filmic style, mimicking the very act of remembering and embodying a kind of memory experience in itself, activates a deeply personal and interpretive response in the viewer, overcoming the border between the cinematic space and the 'real' world. Indeed, Menard likens any filmic material to 'a living organism because it grows in form and meaning after leaving the editing bench, detaching itself from authorial intent and allowing itself to be experienced and interpreted in individually personalized ways – just as those unique and precious moments in real life.'[87] Furthermore, John Orr, highlighting the profound implications of the reality-unreality dynamic, states that 'for spectators to share that diffuse, collective memory is the moment of transcendence. When Tarkovsky's film world works its wondrous

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[87] Menard, Op. Cit.

alchemy on his life-world, the spectator completes it, consummates it and shares the moment. The question of whose memory it is recedes. It is the shared memory of those who were never there. It is ours.'[88]

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[88] Orr, Op. Cit. p. 58

Conclusion

Tarkovsky, through the act of filmmaking, meditates on the subjective human experience of time and its passage, and through this meditation, puts the very nature of existence and, in particular, the human perception of it, into question. This filmic exploration of what Steven Dillon, quoting Mark Le Fanu, calls the 'present absence, of this poignancy,'[89] that is memory, is ultimately an exploration of what it means to be human, and to experience 'a life lived not solely in the present but in some complex temporal zone between past and present, one where the past remains present to us, where the past is not past.'[90] Through their interactions with the filmic material, the director, characters and audience alike are confronted with our own fragile experience of time and its passage and, thus, the very nature of our own memory-dependent perception of reality is called into question.

In the cinematic space of Tarkovsky's film-worlds, the commonly established boundaries of our world are transcended, and the present and past co-exist and weave in and out of each other seamlessly as illusion and reality become deeply and fundamentally entwined and difficult, and indeed counterintuitive, to separate. It becomes evident, when considering how this dynamic leads Tarkovsky's characters, as well as the audience, to transcendence through counterpoint that, as stated by Skakov, quoting poet Joseph Brodsky, 'on the scales of truth, intensity of imagination counterbalances and at times outweighs reality.' [91]

Similarly, according to Dillon, speaking about '*Solaris,*' 'everything combines to demonstrate that memory need not be extinction; and that on the contrary we live in significance to the extent that we are prepared to embrace the shadows of our loss.' He continues, asking 'isn't this also, really, the metaphysics of film itself? Derrida calls cinema the ''science of ghosts.'' Those actors on screen (the big screen, not just the screen-within-a-screen), aren't they also present to us

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[89] Dillon, Op. Cit., p. 10

[90] Sam Ishii-Gonzales, *'Mirror,'* in *CTEQ Annotations on Film*, Issue 70. 2014. Web. May 03 2020.

[91] Skakov, Op. Cit., 12

and absent at the same time? And isn't this in fact what makes the cinema often so poignant? Its present tense is so often also a past tense.'[92] Taking this into account, we can see the profound power of Tarkovsky's inconclusive cinema as a force of not just decoding or questioning the nature of memory or human existence, but also as an encouragement to accept and embrace the ever-wavering nature of our fragile humanity through the realm of art. In this way, it is irrelevant for us to come to a conclusion about the nature of memory or its metaphysical location; instead the experience of questioning, in this case through the artistic image, should be felt and not understood. As stated by Tarkovsky:

'By means of art man takes over reality through a subjective experience…An artistic discovery occurs each time as a new and unique image of the world, a hieroglyphic of absolute truth. It appears as a revelation, as a momentary, passionate wish to grasp intuitively and at a stroke all the laws of this world—its beauty and ugliness, its compassion and cruelty, its infinity and its limitations. The artist expresses these things by creating the image, sui generis detector of the absolute. Through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form…The idea of infinity cannot be expressed in words or even described, but it can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible… And so, if art carries within it a hieroglyphic of absolute truth, this will always be an image of the world, made manifest in the work once and for all time.'[93]

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[92] Dillon, Op. Cit., p. 9

[93] Tarkovsky, Op. Cit., p. 37-39

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