

Autonomy of the Duplicate Woman and the Seduction of the Strange in Tarkovsky's *Solaris*

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Abstract: Tarkovsky's *Solaris* converts Stanislaw Lem's science fiction into a tragic drama: not only a problem of conscience, but also a dilemma of action. If there is a dramatic antihero, Kris Kelvin, there is also a tragic heroine, Hari, and both are antagonistic and complementary forms of the same conscience. Some effects of this hypothesis unfold, in successive order of the experience of the strange: the dread, the seduction, and the familiarity in the relationship with the double. However, there is a higher degree in the fantastic character of this drama: the autonomy of the duplicate woman, her discourse as well as her decision in the outcome, attitudes which permit a feminist interpretation of the film. Hari's speech represents a critique of the historical and existential condition of woman, and Hari, on the other hand, embodies an inauthentic subjectivity according to Simone de Beauvoir's thinking.
Keywords: Woman; Tragic Conscience; Strange; Tarkovsky; Solaris.

Autonomia da mulher duplicada e sedução do estranho no *Solaris*, de Tarkovsky

Resumo: *Solaris*, de Tarkovsky, converte a ficção científica de Stanislaw Lem em um drama trágico: um problema da consciência, mas um dilema também da ação. Se há um anti-herói dramático, Kris Kelvin, há também uma heroína trágica, Hari, e ambos são formas antagônicas e complementares de uma mesma consciência. Alguns efeitos se desdobram de tal hipótese, na ordem sucessiva da experiência do estranho: o pavor, a sedução e a familiaridade na relação com o duplo. Mas há um grau superior no caráter fantástico dessa história: a autonomia da mulher duplicada, seu discurso e sua decisão no desfecho, atitudes a partir das quais é possível fazer uma interpretação feminista do filme. O discurso de Hari representa uma crítica da condição histórica e existencial da mulher, e Hari, em contrapartida, encarna o drama de uma subjetividade inautêntica, conforme o pensamento de Simone de Beauvoir.

Palavras-chave: mulher; consciência trágica; estranho; Tarkovsky; Solaris.

Autonomía de la mujer duplicada y la seducción de lo extraño en *Solaris*, de Tarkovsky

Resumen: *Solaris*, de Tarkovsky, hace de la ciencia ficción de Stanislaw Lem un drama trágico: un problema no solo de la conciencia, pero también un dilema de la acción. Si hay un antihéroe dramático, Kris Kelvin, igualmente hay una heroína trágica, Hari, ambos formas antagónicas y complementarias de la misma conciencia. Algunos efectos se desarrollan de esta hipótesis, en orden sucesivo de la experiencia de lo extraño: el pavor, la seducción y la familiaridad en relación con el doble. Pero hay un grado aún superior en el carácter fantástico de esta historia: la autonomía de la mujer duplicada, su discurso y su decisión en el desenlace. Actitudes en razón de las cuales es posible proponer una interpretación feminista de la película. El discurso de Hari representa una crítica de la condición histórica y existencial de la mujer, y Hari, en cambio, encarna el drama de una subjetividad inesencial, según el pensamiento de Simone de Beauvoir.

Palabras-clave: mujer; conciencia trágica; extraño; Tarkovsky; Solaris.

Introduction

Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* is a cinematic work of art that corresponds to another work of literature, *Solaris*, by Stanislaw Lem. The eponymous title denotes the planet around which the story takes place, a planet whose surface "was less than that of Europe," and which revolves around two suns, one red and one blue, with an atmospheric composition "which contained no oxygen" (LEM, 2017, p. 16). *Solaris* received the Grand Jury Prize and the International Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972. As a work of art, its cinema has the virtue and danger of responding to nothing but the dilemmas and challenges it poses, and how it poses them, sensitively and structurally, to its viewer. Thus, the film also becomes an autonomous organism in relation to the source that inspired it, like a satellite from whose orbit it could detach itself, for two reasons: first, because the value of the original text, when opportunely harnessed in the adaptation, gains voice, scenery, and performance; but also because of what the script subverted in relation to its source — especially, what matters most in this study,¹ the inclusion of the speech by one character, Hari, who in the film is played by Natalya Bondarchuk, a speech about her condition and her existence, directed towards the male scientists in the station, which may, as I intend to show, translate the drama of an inauthentic subjectivity (drama lived in Hari's duplicated body), but it is also a discourse that critically responds to the condition imposed on women, historically and ontologically, according to Simone de Beauvoir's argument, as we will see below. The Polish novel *Solaris* is from 1961 and the Russian feature by Tarkovsky, 1972. The latter converts Lem's science fiction into a tragic drama: a problem of conscience, but also a dilemma of action. If there is a dramatic anti-hero, there is also a tragic heroine, and both are antagonistic and complementary forms of the same consciousness, which cannot deny that which occurs: the appearance of the replica of a past companion and the illusion of reliving the interrupted romance, without the guilt of the separation and the subsequent suicide of the companion. Certain effects unfold from such a hypothesis, in the successive order of the experience of the strange: dread, seduction, and familiarity in the relationship with the double of the woman who loved him. But there is a higher degree to the fantastic character from this story: the autonomy of the duplicated woman, her discourse and her decision at the end, attitudes from which it is possible to derive a feminist interpretation of the film. Finally, there is Kelvin's return to Earth and his reconciliation with the familiar universe.

I do not intend to make a comparative study between Lem and Tarkovsky, but rather to consider the situation in which the cosmological will to know is curtailed, and even derided, by the rigorous and involuntary materialization for its crew of the object of desire and anguish, a psychic and at the same time moral drama: the improbable, in the causal order of consciousness, reappears in space not only as the ghost of an unresolved dilemma, but also as a humanized form of a living body, with whom one must live. This is, above all, the case between Kris Kelvin (Donatas Banionis) and Hari (Natalya Bondarchuk). Kris Kelvin is the epicenter of the narrative, although it is Hari who is the twist. Hari's speech in the film produces a feminist spin, even though Tarkovsky does not expound on the content of his work in those terms. Hari is not only the echo of a female voice reproduced by a male consciousness, but the expressive place of a radically feminist critical articulation of the historical and existential condition of women. Based on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (2016a, 2016b), the question can be formulated as follows: how does one make oneself human within the feminine condition? Or conversely, how does one become a woman, subjugated to a non-human condition? Hari is the impossible but real double, found again in space, ten years after her death on Earth. In the novel, Kris Kelvin is the narrator, the psychologist whose purpose in traveling is to recover contact with the Solaris station: his report on the condition of the crew members could entail the continuation or termination of research on the planet.

Adventure travel and the will to know

It may seem an ordinary question with which to begin our analysis of *Solaris*, and yet it has, by way of inquiry, its extraordinary effect: what moves someone to travel without opposing the detours along the way, without knowing whether or not he will return to his homeland, and if he does, without knowing whether he will remain the same? Jonathan Swift's classic character Gulliver gets lost on the way to India, suffers at the hands of the tiny creatures of Lilliput, makes his way back home, but does not stay more than two months with his family: "for my insatiable desire of seeing foreign countries would suffer me to continue no longer [in London]" (SWIFT, 1985, p.117). This urge, of course, is not found in abundance. Our travels are, as a rule, programmed. But fiction can give us a taste of exploration, a taste incited not infrequently by the desire to know and the curiosity of the unknown. But isn't there also a desire for power in the obstinacy of the adventurers, space crew or time travelers? As in the novel "*We*", by Yevgeny Zamyatin, in the

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words of the protagonist D-503, an engineer who builds the Integral, a ship he plans to launch into space, in the technocratic and optimistic splendor of the 26th century:

Your mission is to subjugate to the grateful yoke of reason the unknown beings, who live on other planets [...]. If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically faultless happiness, our duty will be to force them to be happy. But before we take up arms, we shall try the power of words (ZAMYATIN, 1924, p.1).

Force them to be happy, by rhetorical cunning first, before warlike persuasion. No choice is given to the foreigners or barbarians of space: they are subjected "to the grateful yoke of reason," because no choice is given to the very earthly society that sings the State Anthem, a state for which bodies are like "the squares of rhythmic, Taylorized happiness" (ZAMYATIN, 1924, p.50). In the year *Solaris*, Stanislaw Lem's book, 1961, was published, US President John F. Kennedy announced to Congress the audacious undertaking of a trip to the moon. The Soviet Union had already launched the world's first artificial satellite in 1957. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were at the height of the Cold War, an actual war in military and geopolitical terms, but also in technological and space terms. Kennedy spoke with that conviction that Americans have plenty of:

But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why, thirty-five years ago, fly the Atlantic? [...] We chose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard. Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills (KENNEDY, 1962).

The natural pride of imperialists: they devote themselves to ends that can measure their own means, because they are not easy, but difficult. What is the logic behind this? The ends matter to the extent that they test the means, the technical conditions, the power of a resource, or the success of an explosion. If we turn to *From the Earth to the Moon* by Jules Verne (1978), the project to launch a rocket to the moon in 1865 is conceived inside a club of gunmen in the city of Baltimore, in the United States, deeply disappointed by the fact that there is no more war, fearful of seeing their precious knowledge of artillery and ballistics go unprofitable and ineffective. If there is no more war, let's invent rockets! Where do these rockets aim, what do they seek, all this is secondary to the Baltimore warmongers' club, in their boredom of having to live in peace.

Science fiction and tragic drama

Only fantastic literature brings together genres as distinct as they are intersecting, such as science fiction, tragic drama, and travel chronicles. Tarkovsky's *Solaris* is at this crossroads. The Russian film, based on the Polish novel by Stanislaw Lem (published in the era of the arms and space race), is not exactly science fiction. Science fiction is one of the elements of *Solaris*, an element that for Tarkovsky was the least important, even though he enjoyed building rockets and space bases, as he himself admits (TARKOVSKY, 1998). When his friend Tonino Guerra reads a letter from a young woman who asks him if science fiction is for him a world he falls in love with or a way to escape reality, Tarkovsky, in the documentary *Voyage in Time (Tempo di viaggio)*,² produced by RAI TV, answers from his armchair, "Neither one thing nor the other." Tarkovsky poses two problems to the question, on the basis of which he confesses to being uncomfortable with the idea that his films are purely science fiction: first, because he doesn't like to escape life; second, because he refuses to see a film of his reduced to a genre, especially for commercial appeal. "So when I made science fiction films I didn't consider them as such" (VOYAGE IN TIME, 1983, own translation). *Solaris* put him at that risk, since he could not "avoid certain fanciful details" (*Voyage in Time*, 1983). On the other hand, regarding the film *Stalker* (1979), he says, "taken from a science fiction novel [*Roadside Picnic*, by Arkádi and Boris Strugátski] I seem to have managed to overcome the genre and destroy any sign of science fiction" (VOYAGE IN TIME, 1983). But what, after all, was *Solaris* about? Tarkovsky answers in his book *Sculpting in Time*, originally published in 1986: "*Solaris* had been about people lost in the Cosmos and obliged, whether they liked it or not, to take one more step up the ladder of knowledge" (TARKOVSKY, 1989, p.198). The infinite yearning for knowledge, "given freely," he adds, "is a source of great tension, for it brings with it constant anxiety, hardship, grief and disappointment, as the final truth can never be known (TARKOVSKY, 1989, p. 198).

Tarkovsky went on to speak of a conscience that comes from the fact that the human being has exceeded the moral law, a conscience that torments him: "even conscience involves

² The documentary *Voyage in Time (Tempo di viaggio)* is about Tarkovsky's trip, with his companion Larisa Tarkovskaya, to Italy, where they are received by the poet and script writer Tonino Guerra to study the locations for Tarkovsky's next film, *Nostalgia*, from 1983. Larisa Tarkovskaya's views and interventions, as assistant director, are fundamental to the film's choice of locations, directed at the less touristy and predictable Italian landscape, architectural or natural, with a distinct beauty and depth, when compared to those that have become more repeatedly seen in travel agency advertisements or in cinema itself.

an element of tragedy" (TARKOVSKY, 1998, p. 199). This seems to me a central premise for the aesthetic argument of *Solaris*. It could be called 'tragic consciousness'. Greek poetry did not invent the concept of conscience, at least in the modern sense of a subject's conscience, by reason of which it would be able to think, decide and feel guilty. Even though Euripides had already established the relationship between conscience and suffering in his Orestes, depicted in 408 B.C.: "What sickness (*nósos*) ruineth thee?", Menelaus asks. And Orestes answers in verse 396: "Conscience (*sýnesis*), to know I have wrought a fearful deed". (EURÍPEDES, 1912, p. 157). Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia, his daughter, sister of Orestes and Electra: a demand of the gods for Agamemnon's journey to Troy, whose fleet gains favorable winds to cross the sea. Clytemnestra, to avenge her daughter, kills Agamemnon on his return from Troy to the palace of Argos. Orestes avenges his father's death: he fulfills the cycle of umbilical violence of guilt and redemption, by matricide. The notion of *hybris* is also fundamental to Greek tragedy. *Hybris* is unrestrained, a break with some order, the idea that a boundary has been crossed, the boundary that separates the divine from the human, by a divine trap, but also by a human pretension, a will to excess, an unbridled power, an audacity whose effect could not be calculated: the punishment inexorably falls on the mortal, king or slave, man or woman. Oedipus knows that he kills a man on the way, deciphers the riddle of the sphinx at the door of Thebes, knows that he marries a widowed queen, but does not know how much his story already belonged to that city. Oedipus feels deceived by the god Apollo. Apollo, which in turn is the name of the spacecraft that took the first men to the moon: Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

The argument of *Solaris*, more than the scientific exploration of a planet, is about the imposition of the past on human destiny. "When I read Lem's novel, what struck me above all were the obvious moral problems between Kelvin and his conscience, as manifested in the form of Hari" (TARKOVSKY, 1994, p. 362). Tarkovsky supposes Kelvin suffers from "a guilty conscience, because he feels guilty for a crime, and tries to change inwardly in relation to Hari" (TARKOVSKY, 1994, p. 363). This perspective was, by the way, one of Lem's frustrations in relation to the film: Tarkovsky did not make *Solaris*, but *Crime and Punishment* (Lem, 1987). "What we see in the film is only how the abominable Kelvin has driven poor Hari to suicide and therefore has pangs of conscience that are aggravated by her apparition: a strange and incomprehensible apparition" (LEM, 1987). Coincidence or not, Tarkovsky opens his 1970 diary with a very revealing note: "For now I must read. Everything Dostoyevsky wrote [...] 'Dostoyevsky' could become the main motto of everything I want to do in cinema" (TARKOVSKY, 1994, p. 3). He then cites the urgency of *Solaris* and his tensions with the Russian production company: "Now *Solaris*. For the moment progress is agonizingly slow because things have reached a crisis point with Mosfilm" (TARKOVSKY, 1994, p. 3).

Perhaps Kris Kelvin does not try, nor does he want, to "inwardly change" anything with respect to what he experienced with Hari, as Tarkovsky supposed, but he only feels that it is less humanly cruel to be resigned to the absurdity of finding his lover again in the orbit of another planet. It is a resignation that becomes reciprocal complicity, a form of life for two. Lem, on the other hand, could not deny the condemnation of his character, imposed on himself, because of the memory of a woman for whose death he has always, in some way, felt guilty; and the narrator confesses this, in the novel, when he is first caught by Hari: "now she was lying across my bed and gazing at me as if she didn't know I had killed her" (LEM, 2017, p. 93). Therefore, this is not only a psychic drama, but also a moral one. This encounter of Kelvin with the double of a not fully sublimated past is a handy key to open the first doors of insight into the plot of *Solaris*. The past from which Kris could not deviate, could not protect himself, neither by psychology, with all its rationality, nor in space, with all its immensity. The not always welcome past, in the rupture of which often lies the surprise of its return. It is an old argument if we reflect on Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, c. 429 b.C., but equally on John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960). The return of the past can be translated, in Freudian terms, as the reactivation of the repressed, whose emergence produces the feeling of the strange. It can take place in a banal experience, but one that is sufficiently disquieting to remove what underlies the subject and to erupt from another place that which was thought to be vanquished. The disturbing (*unheimlich*), or the strange, for Sigmund Freud (2003, p. 151) is what once familiar: "Here too, then, the uncanny (the 'unhomely') is what was once familiar ('homeley', 'homey'). The negative prefix *un* - is the indicator of repression." There is no feeling of the strange without the presupposed normality, in spite of which the gears of the unconscious act, although the unconscious is not reduced to what has been repressed, since the repressed, as Freud says, "is a part of the unconscious" (FREUD, 1963, p.116).³ The disturbing was there, we just didn't see it, and we couldn't have seen it, because it was neutralized by consciousness.

³ In his 1915 essay *The Unconscious*, Freud warns: "We learn from psychoanalysis that the essence of the process of repression does not consist in eliminating, annulling the idea which represents the 'instinct,' but in preventing it from becoming conscious. We then say that it is in a state of 'unconsciousness,' and we can offer good proof that even unconsciously it can produce effects, including those that finally reach consciousness. Everything that is repressed must remain unconscious, but let us note at the outset that the repressed does not cover what is unconscious. The unconscious has the larger scope; the repressed is a part of the unconscious." (FREUD, 2010a, p. 100).

The drama of Kris Kelvin is anticipated in the film by the narrative of a professional colleague, Burton (Vladislav Dvorzhetsky), to a council of scientists dedicated to the investigation of the universe: a statement recorded on videocassette a decade or more earlier, and reviewed now in the warmth of Kelvin's parents' home, the day before his departure. The host welcomes Burton with friendship, and jokes about Kelvin, his son: "He has been working too hard, all night sometimes. The science of solaristics of this! He reminds me of a bookkeeper making up his accounts" (*SOLARIS*, 1972).⁴ The tautological irony translates the idle circle within which studies on the planet have revolved for a century. The psychologist, during the family session, talks about the degeneration of solaristics. At the end of the video, Kelvin has a conversation alone with Burton, but not before casting his eyes on the photograph of a young woman framed on the wall, his mother, as we learn later, a figure of unique power and meaning for Tarkovsky. The second sign, decisive for the drama, is also a photograph of a woman: she catches Kelvin's attention among his old papers thrown into the fire, after the quarrel with Burton. This woman, as we discover when he is already at the station, was his companion, Hari. The first woman, his mother, he loses during his youth, without Tarkovsky clarifying the reasons. The second, his companion, ends her own life in her youth. The absence of both women occupies Kris Kelvin's imagination in space, and not by chance: the trauma of the disappearance of the mother figure as a young man, the impact of a separation and a suicide in youth.

In this long preamble to the film, Kelvin refuses Burton's testimony to scientists who, at the time, had no longer given him credit. Burton flew over the ocean from Solaris to rescue two colleagues who had gone missing in an aerial exploration: he describes the viscous fog, the calmness of the surface, the sight of trees, and finally the huge, repulsive child on the planet. The video recording shown at the beginning of the film replaces what comes only later in the novel, in the chapter entitled "The Little Apocrypha," a collection of solaristic dissertations: mysticisms, proofs and conjectures, a book throughout which, occupying a prominent place, Kelvin finds Burton's famous report. Burton's presence in the *datcha* (cottage), his statement watched on video with the family (through which the first images of the ocean already appear), followed by the personal conversation between him and Kelvin: all this is created by Tarkovsky. After leaving, Burton makes a video call to his friend, Kelvin's father, to further share the bizarre realization that the child seen on the planet was the same one he had recognized on the lap of the wife of Fechner, one of the companions killed in the explosion, when he went to her house to offer condolences. Burton is in his car, driving through long tunnels and overpasses, among other vehicles that intersect in the most open plan image of a city whose machines fly over like points of light in the contrast of the night with their headlights on: Tarkovsky chooses Tokyo as the location for this sequence. Similar to what happens in the Greek tragedies, the unacceptable truthfulness of the facts is reason enough for Burton to be neutralized by the diagnosis of madness. Oedipus compels Tyrethias, the blind diviner, to tell the truth, but upon hearing it, Oedipus refuses to understand it, and suspects a plot to usurp his throne (Sophocles, 2017). For Kris Kelvin, the problem is simple: either he resolves to stop the research on Solaris, which is already dragging on, or he proposes to bomb the planet. Burton then asks Kelvin, "Do you want to destroy that which you are not capable of understanding?", and says further, "No, I don't advocate knowledge at any price. Knowledge is only valid when it rests on a foundation of morality." (*SOLARIS*, 1972).

Although science fiction does not overlap with the existential dimension of the cosmological plot, with which Tarkovsky is decisively concerned, the discussion about ethics and science is posed, as in this dialogue, created by the director. In the book, there is a conversation between Kelvin and Snaut that is also very significant in this sense. Dr. Snaut (Jüri Järvet), a cybernetics scholar, is the one who receives Kelvin at the Solaris station, and he greets him in a very confused and frightened state. The day before, a companion of both, physiologist Guibarjan (Sos Sargsyan), had committed suicide. Suicide is recurrent in this story. Later in the book, Snaut speaks to Kelvin, "I'll telling you for last time: this, here, this is a situation beyond morality" (LEM, 2017, p. 133). If science is only valid when it is based on moral foundations, how can one act humanely when the will to know (for the sake of contact with beings from other worlds) produces a situation beyond possible morality? This seems to me to be the ethical problem of both the book and the film. What, therefore, does not interest Tarkovsky in science fiction is the futuristic vice that might obscure the problem of the human condition: either in the relationship with the unknown, or in the intrigue with the known. The idea of a distant planet whose ocean was a kind of giant brain was, as an idea, fantastic enough for Tarkovsky not to miss what seemed most dramatically decisive in this story: human existence, the absurdity of living it, love as a broken illusion, its recurrence, a punishment but a lesson as well. Jean-Claude Carrière (1994, p. 138) is right when he says that "science fiction ages even faster in films than in books, for it has to give visible shape and substance to the future." Not for nothing, Tarkovsky advises his costume designer not to use space clothing on the characters: "thirty years from now people will laugh at us," recounts the costume

⁴ The quotations from the film *Solaris* (1972), directed by Tarkovsky, were taken directly from the English subtitles provided by the Russian film studio Mosfilm.

designer herself, Nelli Fomina (2016). The cosmonautic fiction of *Solaris* thus serves as a pretext for Tarkovsky to put into play a real problem at stake, that of consciousness itself: between the cognition of phenomena and the moral suffering caused by their meanings. In Kelvin's case, it is the discovery of the living ghost in the present and the remembrance of a past that, as such, cannot be changed. But besides this loving pair, Kris Kelvin and (Hari's) double, Tarkovsky inserts another, problematic enough to render much of the history of psychoanalysis: the pair of Kelvin and his mother (Olga Barnet).

Cinema has a power similar to literature: to scrutinize the human soul in all its aspects. Antonin Artaud claims "phantasmagoric films, poetic in the dense sense of the word. But what does this mean? "Cinema demands excessive themes and minute psychology. It requires speed, but above all repetition, insistence, going back over the same thing. The human soul under all aspects" (ARTAUD, 2010, p. 10, emphasis added, own translation). *Solaris* is a kind of vivisection of the soul of a psychologist in space, fated to expose an impossible desire for the materialized form of the double of a woman, Hari. But it is the double, and this seems extraordinary to me, that quickly attains the autonomy of her femininity, and leans towards humanization, via two attributes: the feeling of love and the recognition of being a woman in that place, whose conditions, as inhuman as they may be, do not prevent her from assuming some independence in relation to her own feelings, for which she fights and because of which she occupies the platform of speech before the men of science.

The seduction of the strange and the most painful atom

The film is almost three hours long. It is Tarkovsky's third feature film, after *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *Andrey Rublev* (1966). Bach's *Prelude in F minor* is featured in the opening credits, images of lots of seaweed, many trees, a lake, and the first forty minutes bring us closer to the familiar landscape around Kelvin. The cottage of his father and his companion, the arrival of a friend, children playing, lots of rain suddenly, and a lone horse in the scene, as not uncommon in Tarkovsky. It is not only the scene of a farewell, but a harbinger of the unknowable, with the tensions that Burton's presence does not alleviate. But what is so strange about this much-studied and yet so little-known planet? Only there Kelvin and we, the spectators, will find out. It is the guests: the ocean's response to the rays sent by the station. In Lem's book there is even a chapter entitled "The guests". In Polish it is the word *goście*, which in Proto-Indo-European corresponds to *g'oști* (stranger or enemy). In Latin *hospes* designates the one who receives hospitality, the stranger, and *hospis*, in turn, the outsider, the enemy. Each crew member welcomes his or her 'guest': a creature that returns to their cabins, follows their habits and needs, learns to eat, and has human form. How does this happen? This is the conundrum in which the characters of Sartorius, Snaut and Kelvin are placed. How this riddle is handled varies from one crew member to the next. The phenomenon led physiologist Guibarian to suicide, one day before Kelvin arrives at the station. At the time, Snaut warns the psychologist, "If you see anything out of the ordinary, not me or Sartorius, try not to lose your head." "What would I see?" asks Kelvin. "That depends on you," Snaut replies (SOLARIS, 1972). The answer is almost an oracle. Whatever happens, it reminds the new crew member that the three are not on Earth. Before leaving Snaut's cabin, in the film, practically pushed by the scientist, Kelvin looks into the interior of the quarters and catches a bare ear, rendered close by the camera frame. The door is closed, Kelvin takes the corridor, finds Guibarian's cabin and a videocassette tape intended for him. He watches Guibarian himself on the screen, who addresses Kelvin and advises him not to take the phenomenon, nor its consequences, for madness: it could happen to anyone in that place. Like Sartorius, Guibarian advocates bombing the ocean as the only possible way to contact the monster. The ocean is called at times 'monster' in the novel: a "thinking monster", incomprehensible and immeasurable.⁵ Its organic formations are also monstrous. In the book, by the way, there is a chapter, "The Monsters", describing the imposing phenomena of the sea creature, analyzed in Geise's monograph, which Kris comes across in the library: waves, eruptions, cataclysms, according to scientific names, longueurs, mimoids, symmetries, and their various forms, islands, mountains, Greek and Roman constructions.

In the film's sequence, Kelvin walks away from Guibarian's cabin and goes in search of Sartorius (Anatoly Solonitsyn), who is slow to answer and will not let him in. Sartorius comes out of his cabin and tightly holds the door against which there is a knock from the inside, but it does not prevent a tiny man from escaping from its interior, who makes a lot of noise and pulls him inside again. The first hour already elapsed, Kelvin's gaze goes through the circular hatch and we see the image of the ocean. Tarkovsky explores the plastic effects of a colloidal surface in contrasts of light and dark greens, with shimmering dots and circular movements. A young

⁵ When, for example, at the end, Kelvin undergoes the encephalogram: "My encephalogram. A complete recording of all my cerebral processes, converted into oscillations of a bundle of rays, to be sent down below. Into the depths of that elusive, boundless monster [...] The encephalogram is a total recording. Including subconscious processes" (LEM, 2017, p. 135). But already at the beginning of the book the ocean is called a "thinking monster" by the narrator, before which the scientists thought they were, as if it were a "protoplasmic sea-cum-brain" (LEM, 2017, p. 20).

redheaded woman walks down the hallway, at Kelvin's back. Startled, he follows her, and reaches the refrigerator where he finds the body of his friend, Dr. Guibarían. Back in his room, he watches the recording of his friend from where he left off, when he catches a glimpse of the young woman he saw in the station galleries. Exhausted, he lies down on the bed and sleeps. We feel the lapse of time, since his troubled landing, when a part of a girl's face appears under the firelight of the hatches. The frame slowly opens: she is sitting in the armchair in front of Kelvin, who awakens. It has been ten years since Hari left, she would be twenty-nine now, but she looks the same: "the dead remain young," Kelvin thinks in Stanislaw Lem's book (LEM, 2017, p. 47). She approaches, climbs into bed, and they kiss. Kelvin sits up, he is overwhelmed. Hari finds a portrait, looks in the mirror and recognizes herself as the young woman in the photograph. She has the feeling that she has forgotten something. She asks if he loves her. It is unbearable for her to be away from Kris. Kris, she calls him, always by his first name. The psychologist does not accept this reality; he has been sweaty, very sweaty, since he arrived in the orbit of Solaris. He convinces his visitor to put on an astronautic suit. On the launch pad, Kris leads her inside the rocket and quickly ejects it: he sends Hari into space. Snaut, a little later, making fun of his colleague, but also calming him down, comes to learn of Hari's suicide. Snaut tells him about the appearance of the guests, a phenomenon that begins soon after the radioactive bombing experiment over the ocean, without, however, there being an explanation until then of how the protoplasmic organism extracts the information from our memory, much less how the guests get past the station's shielding. Snaut tells Kelvin that he has been lucky: "This woman is only part of you past. Image if you had seen something else, something unknown in your experience, out of the recesses of your soul?" (SOLARIS, 1972). If Kelvin felt fear, as he tells Snaut by way of apology, he soon feels anguish, not knowing whether or not he can prevent Hari's return. "You think she'll come back?" he asks. Snaut replies, "She will and she won't." "Hari the second...", Kelvin asks further. "There may be many of her," Snaut replies (SOLARIS, 1972). Clément Rosset cites the cases of unfolding personalities of the other in horror stories from his book *The Real and Its Double*, published in 1976. It was not the original that appeared to the narrator or protagonist, but the perverse double. Only at the end of the plot does "the original in person suddenly appear, mocking and revealing itself at the same time as the other and the real" (ROSSET, 2008, p. 92, own translation). This causes dread. In the case of *Solaris*, the horror is reversed: the original is denied from the beginning at the station; only her memory was left; she could not be there, her personality unfolded into an extraterrestrial creature, which has body, word and emotion. Rosset suspects the origin of the anguish suffered in the lure between the visible and the real, in dealing with the other: "Perhaps the foundation of anguish, apparently linked here to the simple discovery that the visible other was not the real other, must be sought in a deeper terror: of the self not being the one I thought I was" (ROSSET, 2008, p. 92, own translation). In Lem's novel, Kelvin dreams of Guibarían, but in the dream itself he denies him as the real Guibarían and the specter of the fellow asks him, "And how do you know who *you* are?" (LEM, 2017, p. 115). The question leads the subject back to the impact of the first astonishment, in the re-encountered abyss between what one imagined himself to be and who one no longer knows who he is. The duplicate existence of the other generates distrust about who one is: after all, what constitutes our humanity and what are its borders?

Kelvin's cabin is now shrouded in a glistening copper coloration in darker contrasts. "Kris, where are you?". Hari returns between the shadows, removes her crocheted shawl and places it on the chair, next to the other one, identical to the one she had stripped herself of before being thrown into the stars. In the novel, Kris vents, "These two identical dresses [shawls] were the most terrible thing of all I'd experienced till now" (LEM, 2017, p. 82). The double of a double lost in space, but rather, mimesis of the same woman missing on Earth. Impossible to leave her alone. In a scene of anguish, locked inside the cabin, to reach her lover, Hari slams herself against the metalized door until she tears it open and cuts herself all along the body. She has the advantage of regenerating quickly, even from acid, as Kelvin can soon after prove in the chemical analysis of her blood. When the three scientists finally meet, Hari accompanies Kris, and he introduces her. Sartorius and Snaut explain that the creatures are made of neutrinos, not atoms like us, and that their stability depends on the force field generated by the ocean. Sartorius, noticing Hari, praises Kelvin for possessing "a excellent specimen." Kelvin does not like it, "She is my wife!" (SOLARIS, 1972). When Sartorius proposes an autopsy on his partner, the psychologist tells him that this would be the same as amputating his own leg, after all, she felt pain when she cut herself on the door. Pain becomes the criterion from which Kelvin protects his guest from any offensive experiments. Snaut says that the ocean captures the information for the creation of guests from their dreams, and proposes two methods for their disintegration: the emission of rays in the direction of the ocean to destabilize the neutrinos, or Kelvin's encephalogram. The idea of the encephalogram is to capture his daytime thoughts and send them to the ocean to block his nighttime activity, which is when the guests return as *visitas regressam*.⁶ The psychologist once again stands up for Hari, or

⁶"Sartorius thinks that since the 'guest' always appears only when we wake up, apparently the ocean takes the recipe for its production from us during our sleep. This is why it acts this way. So Sartorius wants to send it our waking state, our

rather, for her simulacrum. He now fears her end. He does not want to undergo the operation. He has come to love her as perhaps he had never loved her, even the Hari from Earth.

Both are perplexed and confused by their situation: Kelvin is no longer the same man who knew and loved the original Hari; and the replica Hari is different from its matrix [...] The replica Hari is now, for Kelvin, the one and only true Hari: it is the Hari from Earth that has become a ghost of his memory (Nazareno Eduardo de ALMEIDA, 2013, p. 167).

Psychic inversion: the double becomes the only one, while the real becomes the illusion, and is thus repressed again. Kris loves her, but cannot love her except in the orbit of Solaris. Here, there is what Louis Vax calls the “seduction of the strange”: “The feeling of the strange makes the human strange to himself. It ‘alienates’ him.” (VAX, 1987, p. 13, own translation). There is a struggle, but it is different from the battle between the master and the slave. “The struggle against an outside obstacle is exalted and fortified by combat. The feeling of the strange is a temptation: in the face of its threat, courage consists in flight and cowardice in confrontation” (VAX, 1987, p. 13, own translation). Free from the confrontation with scientific truth, Kelvin has the courage to allow himself to be attracted by the strangeness of the situation. The psychologist is the one who, for this very reason, enters radically into contact with the ocean: they speak the same language, through a woman’s body and voice. It (the ocean) entered me, says Stanislaw Lem’s narrator, “Yet it had entered into me, I have no idea how; it had sifted through my entire memory and found its most painful atom” (LEM, 2017, p. 136).

Familiarity of the strange and autonomy of the duplicate woman

Why would Tarkovsky have avoided the futuristic setting and costume of science fiction? To stay close to literature? The advantage is that in literature one can more easily abstract the futuristic image of science fiction and therefore preserve the territory of strangeness: by the appearance of normalizing the absurd. The reader easily minimizes the first shock and is absorbed by the expansion of a private universe, in the long complicit conversations of a couple, in the encounters and casual caresses. In the film, Kelvin even shares with Hari a videotape recorded by his younger father. Tarkovsky uses these videos as narrative layers, screens within screens: snow mountains surrounded by trees, similar to Bruegel, which is underlined later. Kris’ mother appears in this recording, at different moments in the landscape, melancholic, and elusive; Kris as a child, then as a younger man. At the end, Hari appears, waving and leaning on a tree. “That woman in the white fur coat, she hated me,” comments the Hari from space about Kelvin’s mother (SOLARIS, 1972). She died before they met, Kris says. This is a symbolically curious game of overlaps between one woman and another, as if they were vying for the place of Kris’ dearth, in the extended mourning for loves not fully lived. Not by chance, in Kris Kelvin’s deliriums during his encephalogram, already at the end, the maternal image returns: he sees Hari in color, goes to meet her and embraces the female body, now in black and white, and the face we see next, from another plane, is that of his mother. How was your trip? she asks. He says he is tired, he feels lonely, and his mother answers him tenderly: “You seem to lead such a strange life. You’re sloppy, you don’t take care of yourself” (SOLARIS, 1972).

Dread, seduction, and familiarity: these three levels of the strange are important in interpreting *Solaris*. The sense of panic and dread at Hari’s first appearance, reconciled by seduction and the naturalization of the strange, provides fertile territory for subsequently accepting the familiarity of a life together. But beyond these three levels, there is another factor that sets up a higher and distinct degree of the strange in *Solaris*. As Hari’s double hears the conversations between the men and realizes what is at stake, she learns that Hari did indeed poison herself and that she, in turn, results from something different from the original Hari. She pleads with Kris to tell her. He tells her about his relationship with the Hari from Earth, the move to another city, then the repeated fights, the breakup, the suicide threat by his companion, her death soon after leaving her. “Maybe she realized that I didn’t love her, but now I am loving her,” Kris says, and asks Hari to go to sleep. “I don’t know how to sleep,” she replies, and speaks of distant memories, and is aware that it is not a dream. “It’s still a kind of sleep,” Kris states (SOLARIS, 1972). In Lem’s book, Kelvin tells his stellar companion, “Because I did something terrible.” “To her?” asks Hari of Solaris. “Yes, when we were...”. “Don’t say,” she interrupts him, “Why not?” “Because I want you to know that I’m not her” (LEM, 2017, p. 126). The replica detaches herself from her original to love a man to whom she already felt she belonged, whereas Kelvin realizes that he loves another woman, because what he thinks he has done in the past does not authorize him to love the same woman, the one who is dead. Estranged from herself, Hari’s double repeats the fate of her original, attempts suicide, takes liquid oxygen, but fails. The repetition of the trauma for Kelvin is negated by Hari’s revival. “It’s horrible,” Snaut comments, “I’ll never get used to these constant resurrections,” and withdraws (SOLARIS, 1972). It is a terribly dramatic scene. Hari is lying dead and pale with her eyes open. She

conscious thoughts, you see,” Snaut explains to Kelvin in the novel (LEM, 2017, p. 196).

is wearing a blue shirt, damp and transparent. There is dried blood on her lips; she suffers the first spasm, and the second, blood drips from her mouth. The shot opens up; we see her entire body, the depth of the corridor in the shape of arches, one leg bent, her elbows resting on the floor, her head raised. She writhes and lies down, has tremors and convulsions, struggles for air. Kris gathers her into a sitting position, and covers her with a robe. Hari reconstructs her perception of things, slowly, with half-open eyes, frostily sweaty. She doubts who she is and knows that she is fatally prevented from being the other, the original, and thus finds herself condemned to be the other, the other of the same, but also of the one who resurrects. She thinks she is repugnant to Kelvin, but he denies it; he says he loves her. Snaut warns Kelvin, "The longer they're with you here, the more human they become" (LEM, 2017, p. 131). Kelvin starts to have fits, collects himself with Hari, and has chills. If the feeling of the strange is generated by the horror of the unknown (even if it returns as the familiar), the alien or replicant, by gaining some existential consciousness, finds strange a reality from which she has always been excluded.

It is a truism in literature. The prohibition of humanity turns the being into the monster. It is the drama of Dr. Victor Frankenstein's creature. Hidden in the woodshed of a hut, he observes the life of a family through the cracks. He learns a love for words, the pleasure of listening to a song, he is enchanted by the people of that home, but soon realizes that he is not part of that world, nor of any world: he sees the impossibility of being accepted by others because of the terror that his image inspires. The feeling of revenge is born. The will to terrorize occupies the impossibility of being loved. But instead of killing the loved ones close to her creator, as did Frankenstein's creature in Mary Shelley's story (2015), the Hari of Solaris sacrifices herself: not necessarily for the beloved, even less for 'humanity', but rather, she sacrifices herself for the impossibility of loving or humanly feeling. It is she who orders the encephalogram-based test and the recording of conscious, daytime thoughts that are sent to the ocean, before the absorption of nighttime dreams: "An explosion of lights and a breath of wind," as Snaut says at the end of the film (SOLARIS, 1972). The operation is a success. Hari does not return. Snaut shows Kelvin the letter she wrote: she was sorry for betraying her partner, but she thought it was better for both of them. She confesses that it was she who asked the scientists to experiment on her self-destruction.

But before this outcome, there is a sequence in the film that is quite significant in understanding the phenomenon of the female humanization of the double: Snaut's birthday in the library. The scene sustains a repetition of icons from our culture: a bust of Socrates, Bruegel's series *The Months*, a Venus de Milo in the background of Snaut, candlesticks and candles, many books, of course, and a stained glass window behind Kelvin. Hari attends the meeting. They are gathered in silence, minus Snaut, who arrives later, quite late for his own birthday. He looks drunk, takes the book away from Kelvin: "It's all rubbish," takes another book, and asks Kelvin to read a certain passage. It is a line by Sancho from *Don Quixote*:

Senor, I know only one thing. When I sleep, I know no fear, no hope, no work, no blessing. Blessings on him who invented sleep, that balance and weight that equals shepherd with the king, and the simple with the wise. Sound sleep has but one defect-it smacks too much of death. (SOLARIS, 1972)

Sleep is the dodging of the real, the demiurgic slicing away of the everyday, and necessary. The real that is bearable, most of the time, but not all of the time, continuously. Neither the hopes nor the fears of wakefulness exhaust us. Sleep is similar to a cyclical interval between the anxieties and disappointments of daily, active, waking life. It only has the disadvantage of being close to death, by which in contrast all problems are solved, at least for those who are leaving. The library meeting is not a very pleasant celebration. The differences between the crew members are already quite clear, so they have nothing more to hide either. Sartorius mocks Kelvin for spending his days lying around with his girlfriend, not understanding what he has come to do on Solaris. Sartorius represents the pragmatism of the scientific spirit, the certain truth in its form of method, application, and result, and therefore thinks that Kelvin has completely lost his sense of reality. Hari intervenes in defense of her companion: "I think Kris is more logical than both of you," she speaks. "in these inhuman conditions he alone acted human. While you two pretend that it doesn't concern you, and that your visitors are just an exterior enemy. But the visitors are part of you, they are your conscience" (SOLARIS, 1972). She does not allow Sartorius to interrupt her. Hari calls herself a woman - "I'm a woman after all!" -, and puts herself firmly in the place of speech. Sartorius reacts: "Woman? You're not even a human being [...] You're only a reproduction, a mechanical repetition of the form! A copy from a matrix!" (SOLARIS, 1972). Dr. Sartorius displaces Hari to a provisional, alien place, without rights or worthwhile reasons to exist, feel, or speak. The truth told disturbs not only the scientist of humanity, but the man of science. Hari recognizes herself as a woman, even before she faces the problem of whether or not she is human. Wouldn't her feminine, not to say feminist, discourse also harbor a woman's body? (Although existing only in this encounter between Kris' unconscious and the materialization of the planet Solaris). Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, writes:

Now, what peculiarly signals the situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilise her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another conscience that is essential and sovereign. (BEAUVOIR, 1956, p.27)

The woman is the other of the man, but the other of the woman (the second sex) is not the man. There is, in this case, no reciprocity, much less authentic otherness: “for an individual of the second sex, the other sex is not the masculine, but the feminine, that is, her own. The woman is the other to herself. She is not the other of the Other, she is the other of the One” (Izilda JOHANSON, 2020, p. 4). As the other of the essential, she herself, woman, is constituted historically and ontologically as an inessential (or inauthentic) being, in existentialist terms. If the question, for Beauvoir (1956, p.27), is how one can realize oneself as a human being within the feminine condition, the question for Hari is: how to become a woman, subjugated to a non-human condition? Becoming a woman does not mean becoming something once and for all, the final cause of the immanence of her condition, since woman, as Judith Butler (1999, p. 43) writes, “woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification”.⁷ Hari thus embodies the drama of an inauthentic subjectivity, and it is in this sense that a feminist interpretation of Tarkovsky’s work is appropriate. As such, Hari represents a danger, a negativity, the predictable Manichaeism of her phantasmal condition, one might even say. But first, she is a threat presupposed in her presentation and position as a woman. For Beauvoir (1956, p.104):

At the moment when man asserts himself as subject and free being, the idea of the Other arises. From that day the relationship with the Other is dramatic; the existence of the Other is a threat, a danger. Ancient Greek philosophy showed that alterity, otherness, is the same thing as negation, therefore Evil.

Returning to the film, Sartorius then writes her off as a woman by denying her as a person, and Hari replies, “Yes, perhaps... But I’m becoming human being! I can feel just as deeply as any of you. I can live without Kris already. I... I’m love with him. I’m a human being!” (SOLARIS, 1972). Feeling and loving, without necessarily depending on another, or seeing oneself fated to be ‘the Other’, become the principles by which it is possible to become human, to recognize oneself as human. Even if love is not predominantly for women an experience of mediation for themselves: “most often”, argues Simone de Beauvoir (1956, p.631),

woman knows herself only as different, relative; her *pour-autrui*, relation to others, is confused with her very being; for her, love is not an intermediary ‘between herself and herself’ because she does not attain her subjective existence; she remains engulfed in this loving woman whom man has not only revealed but created. Her salvation depends on this despotic free being that has made her and can instantly destroy her”.

Hari cries viscerally after declaring hatred for those men. Kris kneels in front of her; Sartorius shouts to stop him, as he does not accept his fellow scientist’s subordination to what he had earlier called a “fine specimen.” Sartorius withdraws. Snaut comments that they do harm by fighting, thus losing their human dignity. “No,” replies Hari from the station. You “are very human, but each one in his own way. That’s why you’re quarrelling” (SOLARIS, 1972). Kelvin escorts Snaut out, but soon returns to the library: Hari is alone, sitting on the table, smoking a cigarette, absorbed in the painting *Hunters in the Snow*. Along with her we contemplate the different figures on the canvas, a pause that also dilates our emotions. Suddenly, the candlestick levitates, and the chandelier shimmers. The ocean regularly changes the planet’s orbit, the station readapts itself, and internally loses its gravitational force. This is what happens at that moment. Hari and Kris are also suspended from the ground, slowly. Kris takes her by the waist. Overhead, in the foreground of the scene, is Cervantes’ open book, and we see one of Gustave Doré’s illustrations. To the sound of Sebastian Bach, the embraced couple levitates in the hall, as if in a dream, and we take in the scene: one of Tarkovsky’s most beautiful temporalities.

At the beginning of this whole sequence, when Snaut arrives at the library for the meeting, Sartorius proposes a toast to him. Snaut says something insightful enough to debunk our Western will to know, a prisoner not only of the most varied forms of machismo, but of a narcissistic humanism, in the legacy of which the “last man” (*der letzte Mensch*), in the words of Zarathustra (NIETZSCHE, 1905), feels the Earth becoming too small for him.⁸ Therefore, the knowledge of the

⁷ It is worth not only reading the full quote, but what follows from it, which serves as a rationale for what Judith Butler calls a “genealogy of gender ontology,” when she returns to Simone de Beauvoir for her clarification of the term woman: “It is, for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a telos that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body.” (BUTLER, 1999, p.43).

⁸ In Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the description of the “last man” appears: “What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is star? - so asketh the last man, and blinketh. The earth hath then become small and on it there hoppeth the last man who maketh everything small” (NIETZSCHE, 1905, p.11).

Earth is not enough for him; instead, what he seeks in the universe is nothing but the expansion of himself, of his knowledge and power, and of the Earth itself. The contact sought in the universe reinforces the imperialistic drive to subdue the unknown other. But how can one dominate what is unknown? Wouldn't the will to dominate the universe, and its living species, signal one of the symptomatic forms of machismo? The toast of Sarforius is in honor of Snaut and science, to which the latter replies:

The science? It's a fraud! No one will ever resolve this problem, neither genius, nor idiot! We have no ambition to conquer any Cosmos. We just want to extend the Earth up to the Cosmos' borders. We don't know want any more worlds. Only a mirror to see our own in. We try so hard to make contact, but we're doomed to failure. We look ridiculous pursuing a goal we fear and that we really don't need. Man needs man. (SOLARIS, 1972).

Final considerations

It is conceivable to think of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* as a tragic drama. Although Kris Kelvin is closer to the dramatic anti-hero, Hari, on the other hand, through her words and actions, is the tragic heroine par excellence. At the end of the film *Solaris*, Kelvin dreams of his mother at the station, returns to Earth, and kneels on the doorstep before his father, who welcomes him in the rain. This was one of the reasons why Lem clearly disliked the film. The writer expected Kelvin to find "something extraordinary in the universe," but the filmmaker created, according to the writer, "the vision of an unpleasant cosmos followed by the conclusion that one should immediately return to Mother Earth" (LEM, 2003). But for Tarkovsky, I suppose, the return closes the dramatic cycle by a peripeteia of the spiritual as well: one never returns the same. Especially when the 'same' woman, whom one supposedly knows, becomes 'another', unthinkable but real, and not just 'the other of the same'. Without her, however, the man, the protagonist, begins to sense the terror of finding himself alone again, and all the being of the universe is but the reverse of his nothingness, the echo of his emptiness. When the mirror of Kelvin's convictions breaks in space, it is Earth that welcomes him, albeit shattered and divided within himself. A conversation with Snaut, in the station library, raises some beautiful philosophical and existential questions for the final tone of the film: the reasons for life, the questions without answers, the will to know: "simple human truths we need mysteries. The mystery of happiness, death, love," says Kelvin (SOLARIS, 1972). The feeling of horror, seduction, and familiarity of the strange, on the part of Kris, and the autonomy of the duplicitous woman, on the part of Hari, with respect to the other and her own feelings, configured in the impetus of a speech and the sovereignty of this final decision, reveals not only the fragility of consciousness, but the danger of science, when they act under the illusion of a mastery of their means and ends. It is worth remembering that both science and consciousness are already creations and reproductions of gender hierarchies in the history of the West, predominantly male in the film itself.⁹ In any case, we remain foreigners in a cosmos as curious as it is fearsome. The extraordinary perhaps comes fundamentally from nothing more than the most familiar things on Earth, sometimes reserved for sleep, and other times in the unsublimated secrets of the heart.

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⁹ A very illuminating quote from Judith Butler is worthwhile in this regard: "in the philosophical tradition that begins with Plato and continues through Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre, the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body invariably supports relations of political and psychic subordination and hierarchy [...]The cultural associations of mind with masculinity and body with femininity are well documented within the field of philosophy and feminism. As a result, any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized" (BUTLER, 1999, p.17).

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