

Widok. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture

title:

Time Is Not on Our Side: Reading "Solaris mon amour" by Kuba Mirkurda

author:

Peter Verstraten

source:

Widok. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture 36 (2023)

URL:

<https://www.pismowidok.org/en/archive/2023/36-visibility-and-invisibility-of-violence/time-is-not-on-our-side-reading-solaris-mon-amour>

doi:

<https://doi.org/10.36854/widok/2023.36.2754>

publisher:

Widok. Foundation for Visual Culture

affiliation:

SWPS University

University of Warsaw

keywords:

solaris; hiroshima mon amour; trauma

abstract:

Review and analysis of the film Solaris mon amour by Kuba Mikurda.

Peter Verstraten - Peter Verstraten is Assistant Professor Film and Literary Studies at Leiden University. He wrote among others "Film Narratology" (2009) and two studies on Dutch Post-War Fiction Film, respectively in 2016 and 2021. His latest publication is a monograph, in Dutch, on the ten films of Alex van Warmerdam (2022). With two directors of photography, he co-edited "Shooting Time: Cinematographers on Cinematography" (2012). He is also a regular contributor to "Senses of Cinema".

Time Is Not on Our Side: Reading "Solaris mon amour" by Kuba Mirkurda

- *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mirkurda, 2023.

During a round-table discussion organized by the editorial board of *Cahiers du cinéma* in July 1959, Jacques Rivette remarked that *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959) constituted a "parenthesis in time." For Rivette, "the 'time' of *Hiroshima* can just as well last twenty-four hours as one second." To start with, the film is ostensibly circular, for "at the end of the last reel you can easily move back to the first."¹ Apart from a very brief coda in a hotel room, the film concludes with the silent encounter in a nightclub between a nameless French actress and a nameless Japanese architect – "Elle" [Her] and "Lui" [Him]. This meeting seems to precede the film's opening scene, showing their bare shoulders and arms in a close embrace. Their bodies are drenched in ashes, dew, or sweat, deposited by the "atomic mushroom."² In his reading of Rivette's observation, Alex Ling explains that *Hiroshima mon amour*'s present collides with its past not only because of the film's circular structure but also because the past here bleeds into the present:³ the war's indelible impact on the present is emphasized throughout the film. During the one night and a day the couple can spend together before her return to France, Elle discloses that she had been "mad in Nevers" during the war's final years, when she was aged between eighteen and twenty. Lui wants to hear about the affair she had, because he presumes that then "you must have begun to be who you are today." While she starts narrating,



"Karlino", *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mirkurda, 2023

shots of Hiroshima are crosscut with shots of Nevers, where Elle's German lover died, and the disgraced Elle, her head shaved, was held in a cellar as punishment for having an affair with a member of the Nazi occupation force. The rhythm of the crosscutting varies: the shots of Nevers are sometimes brief inserts, sometimes longer sequences, and the transitions are usually effected via hard cuts and occasionally via dissolves. Because of the crosscutting, and because Elle addresses Lui, as she had her German lover, by the familiar pronoun "tu," it is clear that Elle's newfound love has been "infected" by her scandalous love affair in Nevers.⁴ In Resnais's film, two kinds of trauma are pitted against each other. As part of the international film on peace that Elle is shooting, there is a scene showing a huge anti-nuclear parade in the streets of Hiroshima. The fake procession of the collective trauma of a city ravaged by radiation is juxtaposed with Elle's personal tragedy. As I will explain below, there are different stances toward both the working of memory and the credibility of testimonies, and this is significant enough to require any new work that references *Hiroshima mon amour* to reflect on issues of trauma, (post)memory, and temporality. Kuba Mikurda's *Solaris mon amour* (2023, 47 minutes) refers to Resnais's feature in its very title, combined with a reference to Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris*. Though *Solaris* was published in 1961, Mikurda, a Polish filmmaker and film lecturer, was intrigued that Lem began writing it in 1959, the year *Hiroshima mon amour* was released. In this article, I aim to argue first that Mikurda's linkage of Resnais and Lem creates two opposing accounts of the traumatic loss of a beloved, and, second, that the Polish science-fiction film *On the Silver Globe* [*Na srebrnym globie*] (Andrzej Żuławski, 1988) resonates more strongly in Mikurda's essayistic film than Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 adaptation of Lem's book. Despite this resonance with Żuławski's sci-fi, I will finally insist that *Solaris mon amour* offers an alternative that is inspired by

the very last pages of Lem's *Solaris*.

Harey's second death in *Solaris*

"You saw nothing in Hiroshima." So runs the famous opening line of *Hiroshima mon amour*, spoken by Lui in a flat voice, to which Elle monotonously replies that she saw everything: a hospital, a museum, Peace Square, newsreels. For her, these objects provide evidence of the past's remnants and help her cope with the present. According to this causality-based logic, understanding the past can, ideally, yield a promising future. By contrast, for Lui, Hiroshima is outside the scope of history, or, in the words of Rivette during the round-table discussion, "the passing of time is effaced."⁵ The horrible event was too gruesome to represent, and thus one can neither fathom its aftermath nor produce memories of its atrocities. In Lacanian terms, one can say that Elle is caught up in the dialectic of desire, and Lui in the quicksand of the drive. A desiring subject is under the illusion that the longed-for object exists and that successful pursuit of that object is possible. For Elle, the dead German was her original love-object, and she is fearful that she will cease remembering the blissful experience: "I tremble at the thought of having forgotten so much love." Like Lui, Elle is currently married, but she has a husband only out of convenience. She tells Lui about her true lover in order to escape the "horror of oblivion,"⁶ so that she can still believe that the object of desire exists. Moreover, her adulterous affair is an attempt to repeat the "original" love, which is why she conflates Lui with the German during her accounts. The experience she hopes for is a repetition with a difference, and such wishful thinking requires a narrative that moves forward.

In the final part of *Hiroshima mon amour*, however, Elle has interior monologues in which she muses over Nevers. It becomes increasingly clear that she is constantly re-enacting the death of

her first lover. When Lui says, "I would have preferred you had died in Nevers," she replies: "So would I." This fifth act is marked by the logic of the drive, which does not aim for an impossible goal but instead enjoys the incessant repetition of loss. With the film's final words, Elle and Lui each identify the other with the place of their respective traumas. Elle: "Hi-ro-shi-ma. That's your name"; Lui: "That's my name. Yes. Your name is Nevers. Ne-vers in France." They have sacrificed their names (which, in the film, they never have in the first place), as if they are no longer participating in the symbolic circuit – the order that propels desire. Unlike desire governed by cause and effect, the drive's repetition implies that one is stuck in time, out of time. On the one hand, *Hiroshima mon amour* spans a full day, depicting a romantic encounter between traumatized characters. On the other hand, as Rivette observed, the film can also be regarded as lasting a mere second, as if, due to the lovers' traumatic experiences, no sort of narrative progression can now be possible. To underscore the latter option, it makes sense that Resnais's film has a circular structure, and that the constant crosscuttings between past and present evoke a certain atemporality.⁷ *Solaris mon amour*, which Mikurda made in close collaboration with editor Laura Pawela and sound designer Marcin Lenarczyk, can be considered a companion piece to Resnais's film because of two shared features. First, though Mikurda's project has the vague contours of a narrative set-up built upon a beginning, middle, and end, there is a hint at circularity, as in *Hiroshima mon amour*. Mikurda's film begins with "Ziemia [Earth], 1961," and the last scene, functioning as a coda, is preceded by the same title card: "Ziemia, 1961." Second, and much more importantly, both films question the status of the images we see. In the first fifteen minutes of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Elle is recounting what she has "seen" in the city, her words illustrated by "descriptive" shots: patients in a hospital, the museum, the Peace Square – empty but also

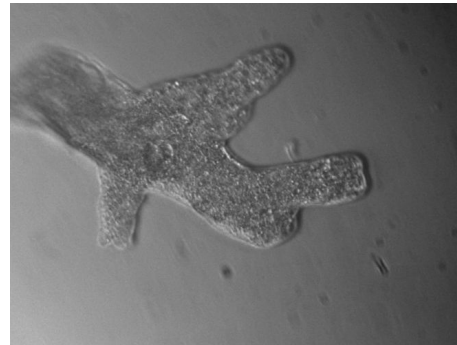
with tourists. Lui, however, persistently denies that she has seen anything at all, which makes us skeptical toward the descriptive footage. From his perspective, such fairly average shots of the city are delusional and may even be non-existent: no more images of Hiroshima remain after the atomic bombing; all causal connections have been consistently short-circuited.

In a similar vein, the images that convey the "story" in Mikurda's film have no direct link to Lem's *Solaris*, its ostensible inspiration.

The shots have all been taken from some seventy-five films produced by the Educational Film Studio [Wytwórnia Filmów

Oświatowych] in Łódź in the 1960s,

and many have a non-narrative background, such as the footage accompanied by a solemn and descriptive voiceover: "This is the image of the sky as seen through a telescope. In the vastness of space, billions of tiny stars, almost any one bigger than our Earth." In addition to such space shots, *Solaris mon amour* has fragments of the technology of the time Lem wrote his novel, such as tube amplifiers, gears, and clocks, for Mikurda had wondered, as he said in an interview with Jakub Demiańczuk: "what if someone had made a genuine SF film in Poland in the 1960s, using this very technology, costumes, props?"⁸ Mikurda was intrigued by shots that could evoke the medical insight Lem possessed, for the sci-fi author was a physician by training: microscopic footage of brain tissue, blood molecules, micro-organisms, but also X-rays of pipes from a documentary on metal radiography. Mikurda chose to borrow images from educational films because they are made with the ambition to register phenomena as clearly as possible, but the most advanced film tools nonetheless fail in fully comprehending the cosmos. Hence, despite the clarity pursued, educational films



"Circulating blood", *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mikurda, 2023

make us realize that such phenomena "consistently resist cognition through film, scientific, or literary language."⁹ It was Mikurda's explicit aim to take a bold departure from the original context of the archival material. His *Solaris mon amour* has to be regarded in analogy to "abstract painting";¹⁰ in a non-figurative composition we see a shape or the vague contours of a face or landscape, and viewers have to connect the dots. There is no pre-programmed narrative to *Solaris mon amour*, but by re-interpreting material that has been taken out of its initial context, viewers can give new meanings to the re-edited fragments. Some viewers will claim that *Solaris mon amour* is indeed like an abstract composition, a mere assemblage of disparate audiovisual fragments. Such a reading is in the spirit of Lui's line of thought: these viewers have "seen" nothing, for they cannot make head or tail of the film. If, by contrast, viewers claim they have "seen" the "story" of a voyage to the mysterious planet Solaris, they adopt Elle's reasoning as presented in the opening act of Resnais's film. These viewers tend to fill in the gaps, whether via knowledge of Lem's source text or through other means. Causal connections produced by viewers are aided by voices on the soundtrack, some of them adopted from two radio-play adaptations of the book by the Teatre of Polskie Radio, made by Józef Grotowski in 1962 and 1970 respectively.¹¹ In the prolog, a male voice, that of Kris Kelvin, says: "The same dream again, for years now. Luckily, it is the kind of dream where you know you're dreaming." A few moments later, we hear a female voice: "Kris, please, tell me everything you know, everything you remember."

If we follow the option that has one build a narrative, then we can deduce that Kris has joined a mission to investigate the planet Solaris's peculiar orbiting. Space instruments have produced unexpected data, and "if you can't measure, then your knowledge is insufficient and inconsequential."



"Neurons", *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mikurda, 2023

Due to a problematic landing, Kris has to undergo a medical examination, for he has suffered a "major shock." Since he has stopped making entries in his diary, the scientists at the Station insist he tell them what he remembers. We then see the face of a young boy and a light going off and on. The pivotal moment in Lem's *Solaris*, however, is that Kris's memory-image of his deceased wife, Harey, materializes at the Station. Initially, he thinks he is reliving one of his dreams. The woman he sees bears a perfect physical resemblance to the "eternally young" Harey, who had overdosed ten years ago, apparently as a reaction to his decision to break up with her.¹² Gradually, he comes to realize that this replica is "real," and that Harey's presence has been caused by the crew's bombing of Solaris's oceanic formations with X-rays. The resulting wings of foam have conjured Harey as Kris's innermost traumatic fantasy. The virtual spitting image suffers from "lapses of memory"¹³ but at the same time has information about Kris that the original Harey could never have known. This second Harey turns out to be a sheer emblem of his guilt complex. Since she is keen enough to observe his increasing unease with her existence, she swallows liquid oxygen. The suicide attempt would have been successful had she been a human being, but she is "only an instrument."¹⁴ Kris is deeply affected by her willingness to sacrifice herself for him. He would like to take Harey with him back to Earth, but immigration services will not accept a "clandestine passenger."¹⁵ She

understands they have no future together and, without informing Kris, she asks a crew member to make her disintegrate. Kris is at a loss when she has vanished, and goes to visit Solaris all by himself. As he sets foot on the planet, he is fairly certain the activities of the "liquid giant" will have a purpose, though he is equally sure the planet will not reveal its enigmas and cannot possibly respond to the tragedy of both him and Harey.¹⁶ By inviting us to read this story of Lem's novel in tandem with Resnais's film, *Solaris mon amour* evokes two sides of the same coin regarding the relation between "time and trauma."

Elle hopes that a new love affair can bridge the gap between past and present. She is under the illusion that desire for a contemporary paramour can restore the timeline and hence keep the memory of the dead German vibrant. But there is no way to come to terms with the trauma. Following the structural logic of the drive in the final act, she can only re-enact the structuring loss, and her identification as "Nevers" confirms that she is frozen in time. Unlike Elle, who cannot stop talking about the dead lover, Kris possesses repressed memories of the deceased Harey, blaming himself for her death. His space voyage had been an opportunity for a new start, to cut ties with his regret-laden past. Whereas Elle felt obliged to cherish the memory of her lover, Kris wanted to evade any memory of his. But, as psychoanalysis has taught us, what is repressed always returns in a different form. Here, that form is a non-human version of Harey; her mere presence functions as a reminder that one cannot escape responsibility. As Slavoj Žižek argues, this Harey is "undead": she is Kris's symptom, who will stick to him no matter how hard he wants to get rid of her.¹⁷ Because Harey realizes that she herself has no identity, she



"Ticket to the skies". *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mikurda, 2023

presumes that she is doing Kris a favor by committing suicide. In fact, the suicide attempt and the subsequent disintegration re-enact the original traumatic loss in ways that are the worst possible outcomes. Kris felt regretful about her first death, but now he also has to cope with her second death. At the end of *Hiroshima mon amour*, human exchange is still possible: after the repetition of each of their losses, Elle and Lui can call each other by their traumatic (city) names: this is their way of waving goodbye. In Lem's *Solaris*, however, Kris has not only lost Harey, but has lost her twice.

At the end of *Solaris*, Kris is left entirely to his own devices. He contemplates continuing to live on the planet, "among the objects we both had touched, in the air she had breathed."¹⁸ He adds to this that he hopes for nothing, and that is particularly important from the perspective of Lacanian ethics. The best way to cope with traumatic loss, as mentioned before, is to abandon the idea that loss can be recovered in the (near) future. According to the circular logic of the drive, one had better enjoy the incessant repetition of the loss. During his visit to the planet Solaris, almost entirely covered by an ocean of gel, Kris attempts to come to terms with what is not affected by the passage of time, and he wants to acquaint himself with that "liquid giant." In these last pages of Lem's novel, the planet is described in terms of textures and substances: "the alternating motion of the gleaming waves" of the ocean, with its thick foam "like the crawling skin of an animal"; the cliff "a huge bony membrane, pierced with holes, and full of knotty swellings."¹⁹ Kris emphasizes that he has never felt the "gigantic presence" of the planet so strongly, "or its powerful changeless silence."²⁰ In re-reading Lem's novel, Mikurda had been particularly struck by such descriptive details, and in the archive of the Educational Film Studio he had searched for excerpts that could function as equivalents to such descriptions: fragments of soil survey, close-ups of hands

with tiny objects found at excavations. In the interview with Demiańczuk, he mentions as a favorite image a shot of the thick rubber glove of a cosmonaut lifting something from the surface of a planet, probably a mirror or lipstick lost by some woman. According to Mikurda, matters of personal grief are best expressed in such an indirect manner: a protective glove taking up things that were once precious to someone.

A strange, toxic space opera

My analysis of Mikurda's short film has made use of the idea of intertextuality as a reading theory. The joining of the found footage from the Educational Film Studio at Łódź and the sounds, partly from the radio play, offer too few anchor points for a satisfactory interpretation. To understand the resonances in *Solaris mon amour*, one has to read the film through the lens of both Resnais's film and the novel *Solaris*. Mikurda's statement about the simultaneity of the release of Resnais's film and Lem's beginning to write the novel was a seminal guideline in that regard.

The ending or coda of *Solaris mon amour*, however, seems far removed from Lem's novel. The latter ends with Kris's solitary voyage to Solaris, but in Mikurda's film we see several characters (back?) on Earth, as the title card suggests. They are in beds in what seems to be a nursing home, and they all look very languid. A nurse turns a television on and we see an image of our galaxy. We get several freeze-frame inserts of the galaxy, which could be taken either from a broadcast or from the patients' own mental images. When one man closes his eyes, we hear the film's final words: "Are you sleeping, Kris?"

Because this scene takes place on Earth and hovers between dream and reality, the ending of *Solaris mon amour* seems closer to Tarkovsky's adaptation of *Solaris*. In the film, the encounter with the virtual Harey has taught Kris to face yet

another problematic, if not traumatic, relationship: attempting reconciliation with his father, he is on his knees, as if to beg his father's forgiveness. The setting is a dacha, but as the camera zooms out we get the impression that Kris could still be on Solaris and that the (attempt at) reconciliation is another hallucination produced by the planet's ocean waves. But Mikurda's film strikes no such optimistic chord: it seems, rather, that the characters in the nursing home are lethargic because the galaxy, despite all the thorough research into space, has disclosed none of its mysteries.

If there is one film which recalls the thrust of this ending, it would seem to be *Żuławski's On the Silver Globe*, the Polish science-fiction epic that is now a cult movie. Mikurda's previous project, the documentary *Escape to the Silver Globe* (2021), centered on the herculean task *Żuławski* imposed upon himself over eighteen months in 1976 and 1977, shooting this "strange, toxic space opera."²¹ *Żuławski* had just returned from self-imposed exile in Paris, where he had made his third feature, *That Most Important Thing: Love* [*L'important c'est d'aimer*] (1975). Returning to his native country, the charismatic filmmaker was, as Mikurda said in an interview, the "man who fell to Warsaw," an alien in his home city.²² The shooting of *On the Silver Globe* was shut down on the order of the Minister of Culture, and even the sets, costumes, and props had to be destroyed. *Żuławski* obtained permission in 1987 to finish the film after all, but about one-fifth of the original script could no longer be realized. Nonetheless, the length of *On the Silver Globe* is 166 minutes, because the film was meant to be a grandiose undertaking. Every *Żuławski* film is first of all "a *Żuławski* film," Mikurda has said, and in terms of its crazy ambition, this particular one is rivalled only by such megalomaniac projects as Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

Apart from Mikurda's personal fascination with *Żuławski's* film,

there are three reasons to consider a linkage between *Solaris mon amour* and *On the Silver Globe*. First, the viewer can get the "story" of Mikurda's film only by filling in the gaps via Lem's novel. Similarly, the "story" of *On the Silver Globe* is difficult to follow because of its many ellipses; it is perhaps best to regard it as a sci-fi retelling of the Old and New Testaments. An ancient recording device has fallen from the clouds, and only an old machine can decipher its audiovisual images. The fragmentary episodes from a distant planet were apparently shot by a camera attached to the spacesuit of astronaut Jerzy, one of four crew members to survive their spacecraft's crash. The group intends to build a new colony but is confronted with an uphill battle. Due to the harsh environment, their descendants' behavior becomes ever more savage. Members of the younger generations consider it their duty to explore the foreign planet, but as they sail across the sea, they are either destroyed or enslaved by the Szerns, large birdlike creatures with a third eye in their forehead. A disillusioned Jerzy thereupon sends the recording device back home. Almost halfway through the film, Marek crashes into the planet and the humans believe that this descendant from Earth is their Savior. Amidst all the savagery, the heretics come to dominate and Marek ends up on a cross. As with Mikurda's film, such biblical references indicate that an intertextual reading works best to make sense of the fairly inscrutable story.

Second, there is a correspondence between *Solaris mon amour* and *On the Silver Globe* in terms of procedure. Mikurda had recounted becoming fascinated with *On the Silver Globe* because the cinematography was unlike anything he had ever seen; in the words of Michael Goddard, the film is "sheer excess – in every possible sense."²³ The presence of the camera in Żuławski's film is felt throughout almost its entirety, and is articulated via fast zooms, frontal shots in which characters directly address the camera, frequent jump cuts, fabulous tracking shots, and

disjointed, fragmented scenes employing wide-angle lenses. Moreover, the film is bathed in green-blue colors and the performances border on hysterical. But when Żuławski got the opportunity to complete his film after more than ten years' delay, he could not create the scenes he had originally wanted to shoot. His solution to this problem was to recount, in voiceover, all the missing parts, and to include documentary sequences he had shot in Warsaw in 1986. The result is a weird stylistic rupture, for the amazing cinematography of the actual sci-fi story contrasts sharply with the relative sloppiness of the contemporary recordings, ranging from people on elevators to chaotic, fast-moving handheld scenes speeding forward in the streets or in a cathedral. At the end of *On the Silver Globe*, Żuławski says in voiceover that "the small drama of this film and the larger and more noble dramas of our lives will continue to interweave into a web of triumphs and failures." He clearly hints at an allegorical reading of his film, which would therefore make it one of his "most abstract and yet most political films."²⁴ I will not interpret this allegorical impulse but restrict myself to observing that *On the Silver Globe* and *Solaris mon amour* address temporality in a similar way: space travel is in the service of the future, whereas the sci-fi stories themselves intertwine past (the Bible versus Nevers and the first Harey) and present (1980s Poland versus Hiroshima and the second Harey).

Third, and most crucially, both case studies draw connections between temporality and trauma. To start with, after Marta, one of the first-generation astronauts, has died in an arduous scene showing her giving birth to her third child, Jerzy muses about their mission: it was a "night terror, without dreams, a dream without waking." Jerzy has become an old man by then, because people age much quicker on the planet than on Earth, and he ends up being the only one with memories of home. Since only he can hold "humanity" as a moral compass, he fully realizes that, amidst all the chaos, serenity has gone. On the

verge of dying, Jerzy, who is more human than anyone else on the planet, concludes that he is "wounded like an animal." When the planetary scientist Marek then arrives, he is told that the violent Szerns "are only a reflection of ourselves called out from the dark." It is implied that the humans have landed on the planet to create an improved version of their own kind, but this new civilization has gone awry. The bestial Szerns are presented as projections of the astronauts from the moment they began to build their colony, as if mere figments of the humans' imagination, much like Harey was a virtual replica, born from Kris's mind as soon as he entered the Station. If the humans seem less wild and violent than the Szerns, this is only due to a false veneer of civilization. As if to conceal the true, brutal nature of the humans, their faces are often covered – by paint, by mud, by veils, by blood.

Bear in mind that Marek came to the planet because of a broken heart. He had been traumatized by the betrayal of his girlfriend Aza, who had found herself a new lover, Jacek. Initially, Marek is over the moon to have found a new love, Ihezal, but she will turn away from him, saying that they are "ill from evil and from lack of will. Our lives are like those of sores." Just after these words are spoken, Marek is stabbed in the back by a woman, clad in white, her face veiled. When the veils are removed, we see a face, painted blue and yellow and with thick sores: it is, apparently, Ihezal. The final episode also asks us to question the notion of place, for suddenly the earthling Jacek is present as a witness to Marek's crucifixion. And when someone contacts Jacek via a screen from a control room, Jacek is asked what to do with two stowaways in a rocket from the planet. His answer, "Let them go... to Old Earth," recalls the "Ziemia, 1961"



"Our planetary system", *Solaris mon amour*, dir. Kuba Mikurda, 2023

coda of *Solaris mon amour*.

By showing how three different works reverberate via the short film *Solaris mon amour*, this essay has focused on three different attitudes toward trauma, temporality, and space / place. In *Hiroshima mon amour* – which lasts either one full day or a mere second – past and present are interwoven to such an extent that trauma is identified with place. Elle and Lui do not have names as such, but are named after the place of their trauma: Ne-vers and Hi-ro-shi-ma. In *On the Silver Globe*, formally close to *Solaris mon amour* because of its idiosyncratic stylistic ruptures, Marek visits a distant planet to escape from a failed love affair, only to realize that the humans have created the Szerns as images reflecting themselves. These Szerns send back the message that, despite their pretensions of civilization, humans are truly wild at heart. While the planet had offered humanity the opportunity to revitalize itself, at the same time it had reinforced its inherent violence, because the colonists had narcissistically focused upon their own survival without acknowledging the materiality of the planet as a new environment. In that sense, *Solaris mon amour* provides a better alternative: the shots on both macro scale (the galaxy, excavations, soil survey) and micro scale (under a microscope) are not so much in the service of narrative progression or scientific knowledge, but are evidence of captivation with materiality. This preoccupation with the tactile quality and texture of objects is much in the vein of the end of Lem's *Solaris*, when Kris – burdened with an indelible guilt complex and hoping for nothing – feels the gigantic presence of the planet to such an extent that he can identify himself with that "dumb, fluid colossus."²⁵ That way, Kris can re-enact the loss of Harey, breathing in the air she had breathed, touching the objects she had touched.

1 Jean Domarchi, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast, Jacques

- Rivette, and Éric Rohmer, "*Hiroshima, mon amour*," in: *Cahiers du cinéma: 1950s, Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 69.
- 2 Marguerite Duras. *Hiroshima mon amour*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 15.
- 3 Alex Ling. *Badiou and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 137.
- 4 Ibid.,156.
- 5 Domarchi et al., "*Hiroshima, mon amour*," 69.
- 6 "Horror of oblivion" is Lui's expression.
- 7 This paragraph on the logic of the drive and atemporality is inspired by Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
- 8 Jakub Demiańczuk, "Kuba Mikurda, reżyser *Solaris Mon Amour*," *Polityka Weekly* (May 6, 2023), <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kultura/2210082,1,kuba-mikurda-rezyser-solaris-mon-amour-mysle-ze-lem-bylby-zadowolony.read>.
- 9 Mikurda, quoted in Demiańczuk.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 *Solaris mon amour* also adopts excerpts from the original soundtrack of the Wytwórnia films, which were created by composers associated with the Polish Radio Experimental Studio.
- 12 Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*, trans. Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), 55.
- 13 Ibid., 60.
- 14 Ibid., 149.
- 15 Ibid., 195.
- 16 Ibid., 214.
- 17 Slavoj Žižek, "The Thing from Inner Space on Tarkovsky," *Angelaki* vol. 4, no. 3 (1999), 224.

- 18 Lem, *Solaris*, 214.
- 19 Ibid., 209, 210.
- 20 Ibid., 212.
- 21 These words are Mikurda's. All quotes from Mikurda on *On the Silver Globe* are taken from an interview during Dok.fest München (May 9, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cuqw1kUvF8M>.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Michael Goddard, "Beyond Polish Moral Realism: The Subversive Cinema of Andrzej Żuławski," in: *Polish Cinema in a Transnational Context*, eds. Ewa Mazierska and Michael Goddard (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 244.
- 24 Ibid., 242.
- 25 Lem, *Solaris*, 213.

