

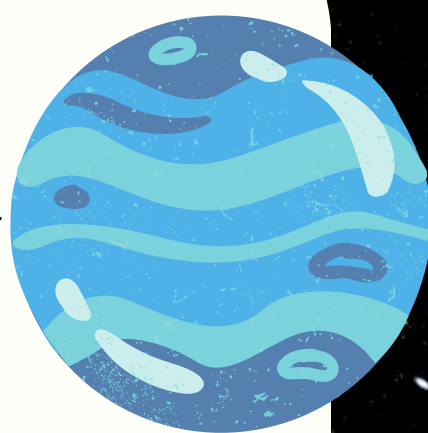
COMPARISON OF FILM ADAPTATIONS AND THE BOOK STANISŁAW LEM'S "SOLARIS"



The book

Stanisław Lem is the author of the well-known book “**Solaris**”, which is one of the brightest representatives of science-fiction literature. The author attracts readers’ attention and interest to the book with the idea of the planet where human minds are being researched, especially how people would behave if the people that were close and dear to them suddenly appeared in their lives again.

The idea of the story is unordinary, especially if one takes into account that the story was written in 1961. As readers, we got used to the stories where people are exploring new planets and are trying to establish contact with other beings with the aim of exchanging cultures or technologies. Stanisław Lem, on the other hand, took an interesting approach to the study of human nature, as he created the planet which is covered with ocean. However, on that planet the ocean is the sentient organism that plays a role of an “**alien psychoanalyst**” who perceives human's behaviour in the circumstances where their feelings, memories and phobias that are deeply hidden in their subconscious materialise into real life.



The **Ocean** in the book is not only the tool that causes the development of the story; it is the separate character whose intention and true motives are left hidden not only for the characters of the book, but also for readers until the very end. Thus, the answer to this mystery has to be answered by the readers. Although we know that the **Ocean** can make replicas of humans based on the memories and feelings of those people that it researches, still the full capacity of **Ocean's** abilities were left unknown.

The mysteries of **Solaris** remain unsolved, but it does not make the story incomplete. On the contrary, the ambiguous ending of this book encourages readers to believe that the story and the world created by Stanisław Lem continue to exist, even though they can never be certain of what happens next. No less important topic that runs through the book is human nature and psychology.



"**Solaris**" is another argument in favour of the belief that Lem in his books tends to be quite sceptical about humankind's role in space. He does send his characters out there to explore the unknown, but every time he confronts them with their own, very human, limitations.



When Kris Kelvin, the main character of "**Solaris**", arrives at the station, he is confused with what he encounters there: one scientist dead, another possibly drunk, and another locked in his laboratory, unwilling to leave it. It's not easy for him to solve the mystery of the station, as the others seem to refuse to cooperate with him.



Lem introduces the reader to the planet with extensive descriptions of foregoing studies, discoveries, and theories. He is very vivid with the ecosystem he created there, and as usual in his books, he pays attention to the details of presented landscapes. However, also, as usual, it's not exactly easy to picture his vision. Lem likes to compare his inventions with possible earth equivalents,

only to finish these comparisons by saying that it may resemble something already known for humankind, but in fact not. The **Ocean** and his creations may be one of the examples of it.

Readers get a very detailed description of the gardens and other ocean's creations, only to later discover that these constructions are unimaginably enormous, which destroys the entire previous sense of readers' comprehension.

However, the most important case of "**Solaris**" is its debate on human conditioning and aptitude. The first argument is that as humankind we are unable to precisely determine what is reality (in a philosophical sense), what our mind really is, whether Blaise Pascal was right with his famous quote from "Pensées":

“Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed.”,

and whether

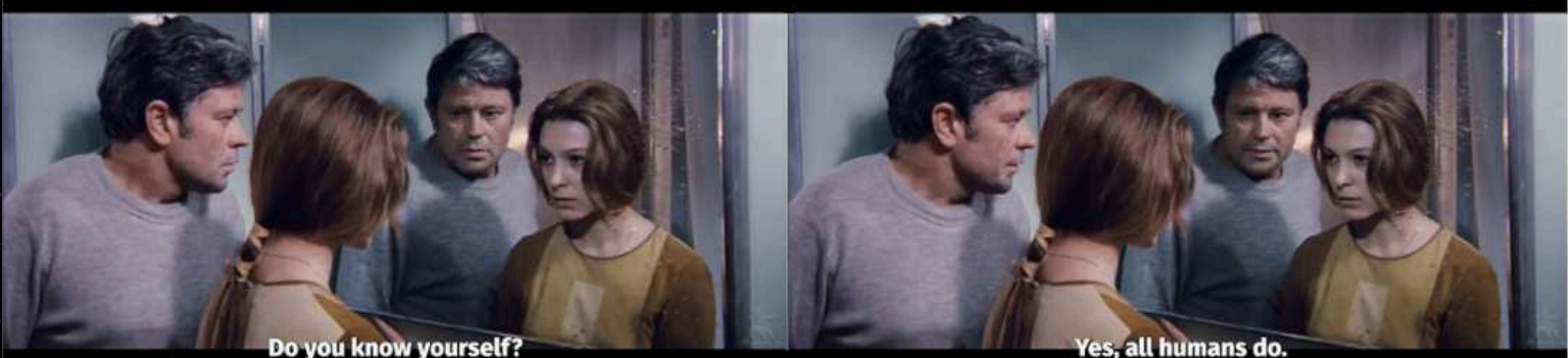
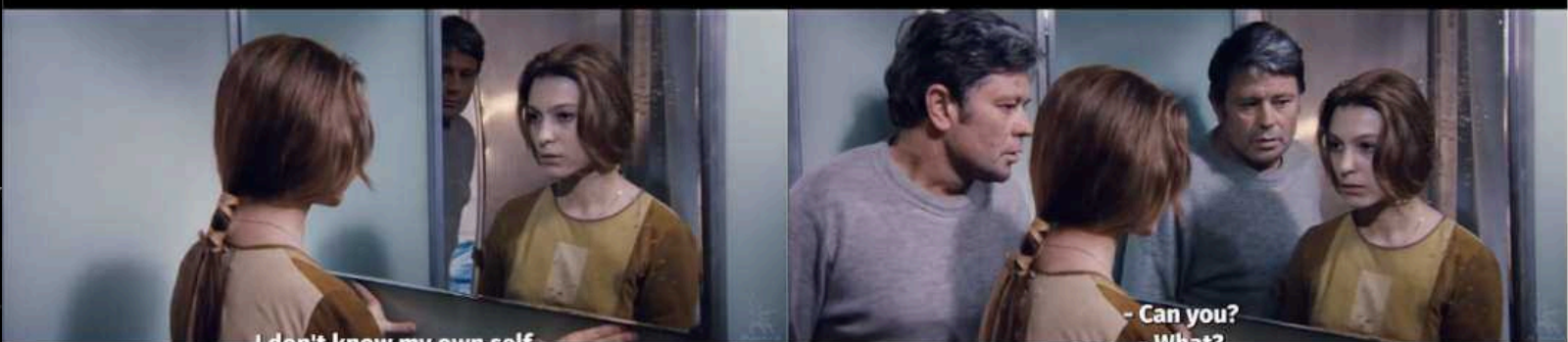
“Thought really constitutes the greatness of man.”

Lem's characters seem to be the counterpoints to Pascal's beliefs. Even equipped with thoughts, and great minds, they are unable to fully comprehend the universe, to deal with the struggles coming from the cosmos' unknown. It is Kelvin who states:

“Man has gone out to explore other worlds and other civilizations without having explored his own labyrinth of dark passages and secret chambers, and without finding what lies behind doorways that he himself has sealed.”



Humans cannot successfully explore the universe because they still haven't solved the mysteries of their own minds.



The second point is that humans don't explore space in order to discover new worlds, **but to rediscover themselves**. It's Snaut (Snow) who says in "The Little Apocrypha" chapter:



"We are only seeking Man. We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds. A single world, our own, suffices us; but we can't accept it for what it is. [...] At the same time, there is something inside us which we don't like to face up to, from which we try to protect ourselves, but which nevertheless remains [...]."

It is speculated that the **Ocean** represents this mirror Snaut (Snow) mentions, or rather its creations. The so-called guests, ghosts from the characters' past, allow us to peek into their psyche, revealing the truth about their (or maybe humankind's?) nature, but it's the truth that remains ciphered. This irony may refer to the previous point: **we are in no position to truly know ourselves.**



Kelvin and Harey's story may be interpreted as another “**mirror**”. Even though their “original” relationship wasn't flawless, and eventually led to the woman's death, the relationship Kelvin establishes with Harey's phantom seems to be more genuine. She is supposed to be the embodiment of his memory of Harey, therefore we may venture a guess that this was this better version of her, as people tend to have idealised versions of others in their minds. Like Kelvin loved the Harey he imagined instead of the real one, humans search for the reassurance of their own existence instead of accepting the unfamiliarity of other beings.

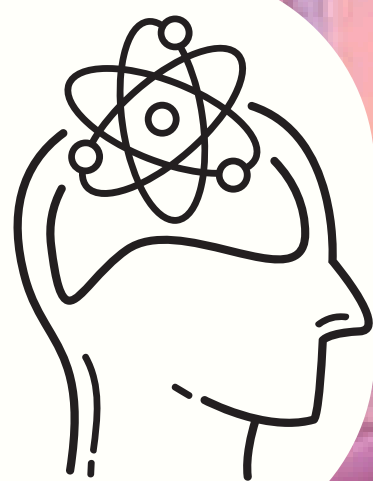


And the final point concerns the ocean: humans tend to anthropomorphize non-human beings, reflecting onto them their own thoughts, or morality. Gibarian in Kelvin's dream said:

“We are the cause of our own sufferings. The Polytheres behave strictly as a kind of amplifier of our own thoughts. Any attempt to understand the motivation of these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism. Where there are no men, there cannot be motives accessible to men.”

It is a common argument in every speculation that occurred in the book, when trying to establish what exactly those ghosts are, and why the ocean creates them. Sartorius agreed with Gibarian in arguing that **Ocean's** actions were unpremeditated, with a belief that there was no malice, or deliberate cruelty on the ocean's side. How could it be, when a) the **ocean** was not a human being, b) there was no way of determining whether the **ocean** had a consciousness, c) scientists were unable to establish contact with it.

Lem once again presents a book full of scientific aspects, extensive technical descriptions, and bases the book's plot on philosophical questions about humankind's relation to itself and to the universe. It's no wonder why it became such a breakthrough in his career, and allowed a broad audience to discover his writings.



THE MOVIE (1972)

СОЛЯРИС

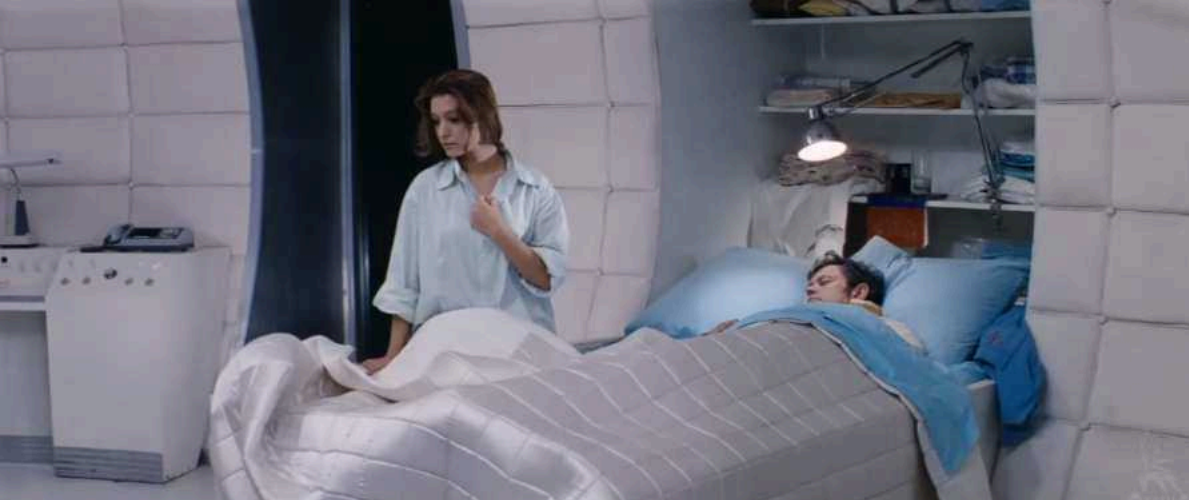
SOLARIS

Stanisław Lem had several reservations about Andriej Tarkowski's vision and adaptation of "**Solaris**". He stated that for him extremely important was the whole sphere of cognitive and epistemic considerations and issues, but, along with Solaris's landscapes, it was absent in Tarkowski's movie. While it's understandable that the author himself could feel like he knew the best, it is important to remember that cinematography has limited possibilities of transcending characters' mental and cognitive sphere. An optimal adaptation is unattainable when a significant portion of a literary work is devoted to the protagonist's contemplations, theories, and paraphrased extracts from the books he was reading.

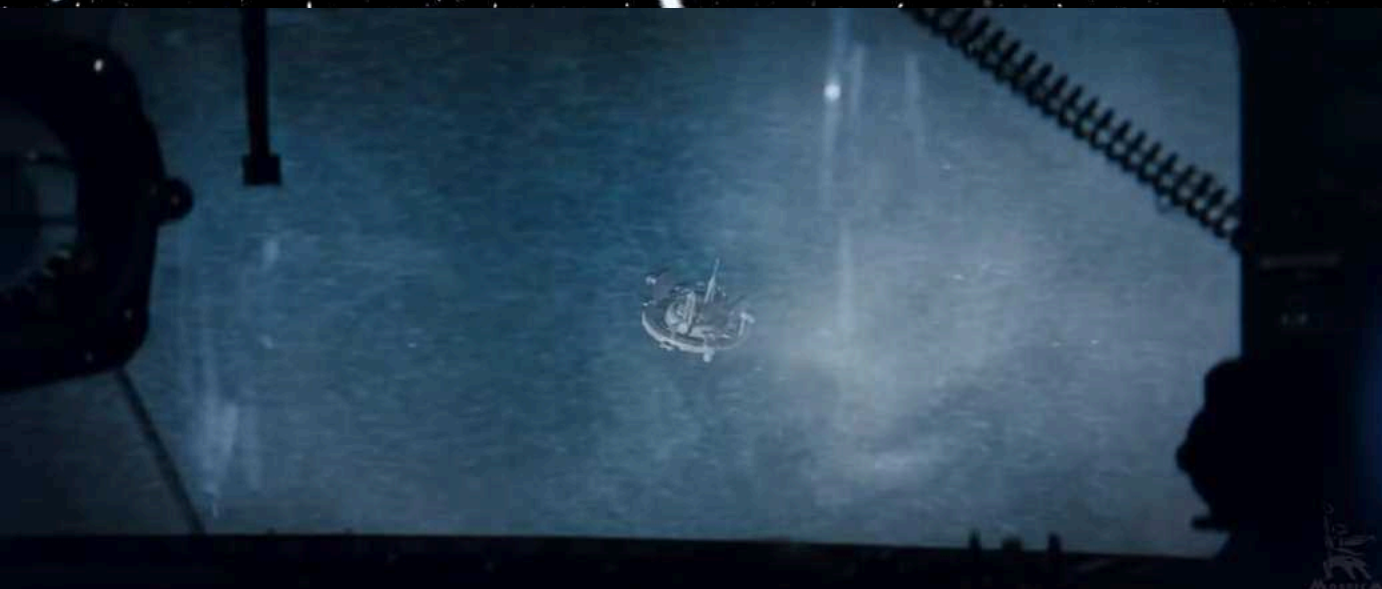


However, the argument with landscapes is both on point and missed. Lem provides very vivid descriptions of **Solaris**'s biosphere, landscapes, and surroundings in general. The palette consists mainly of the shades of red. Movie starts with the opposite colours: green and blue, and is not really changing much later on. It's quite puzzling why the producers put so much emphasis on the colour blue, and more cold than warm tones.



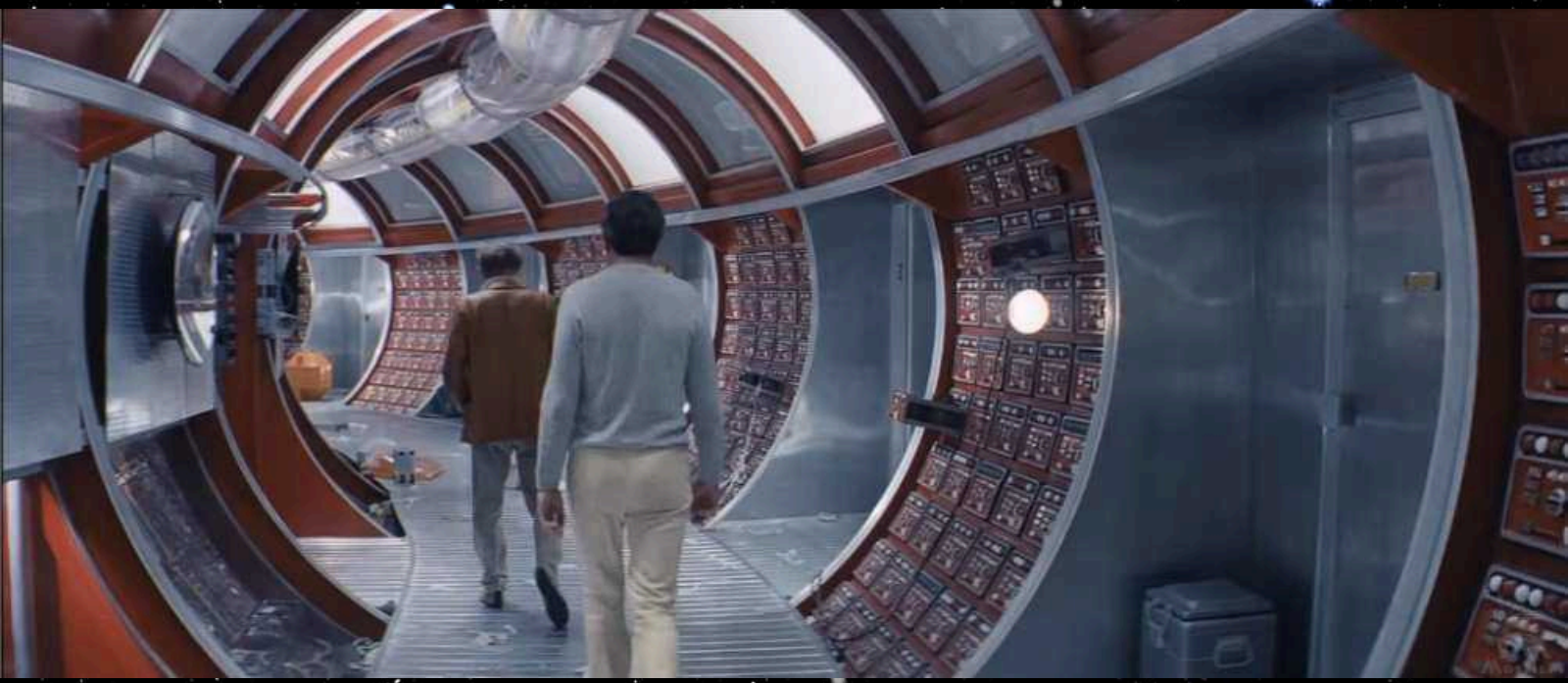


The **Ocean** also appears only in such hue:



Pictures of **Solaris**'s landscapes could be something that could save the movie, but here comes the missed point part: the movie was created in 1972. There is absolutely no way to compare this movie to, for example, "**Dune**", which was directed in the past few years. The lack of technical means, CGI, and other wonders of our 21st century cinematography, makes it difficult to discuss whether Tarkowski could have shown us something more of **Solaris**'s boons.

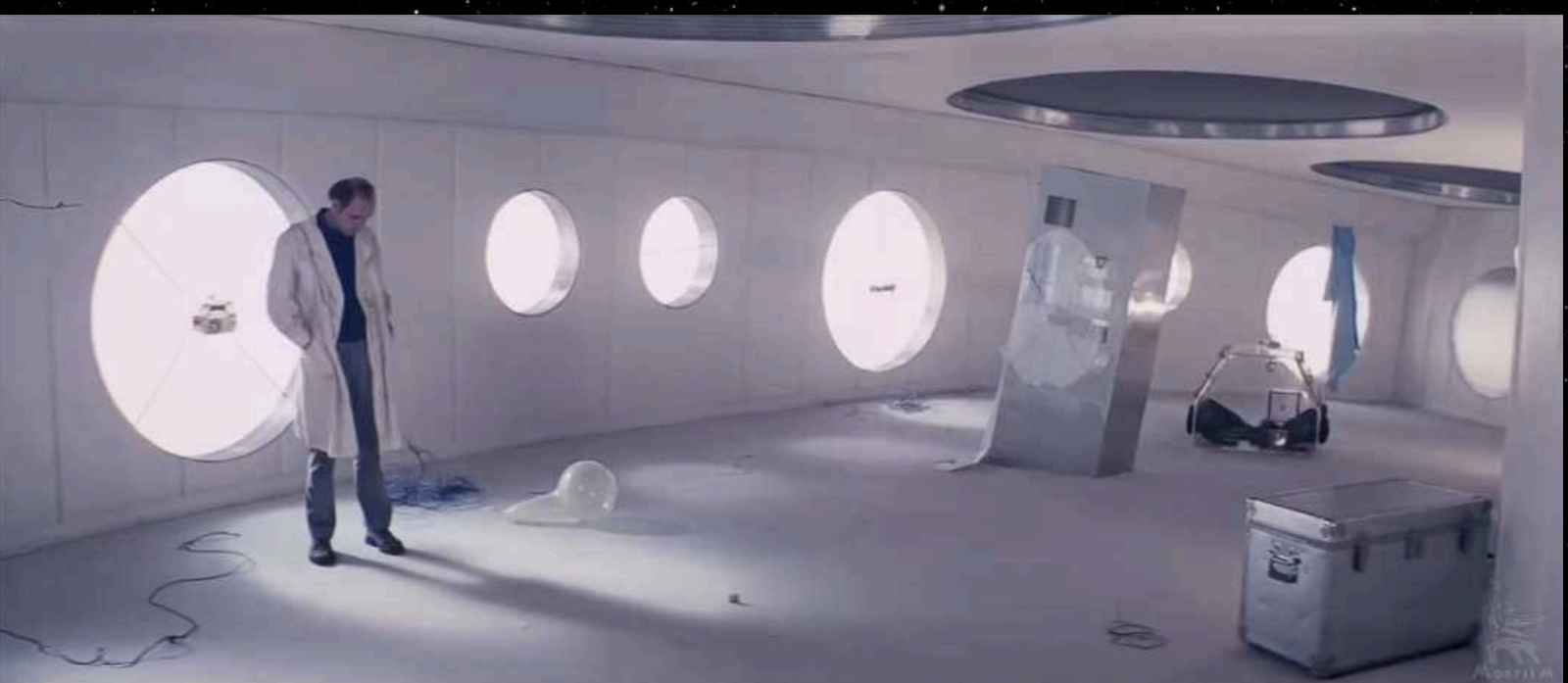
However, the scenography wasn't all that bad, and may be something to appreciate from our modern point of view, as for us these designs represent more of "**retro futurism**" looks.



The main hallway with its red and silver coding is alright, even if closer looks greet us with rather tacky-looking details. The same goes for Kelvin's room, all white and also in a round shape.



What is a bit disappointing is this lack of scientific/technical touch. There could have been more done in terms of presenting the viewers the rocket, the engine room, or the radio station which was Snaut's (Snow) main residence. Particularly random is the setting of the passage to Sartorius's lab; there are devices and things serving no function at all.



The plot is altered at the beginning, starting with *scenes that don't appear in the book at all*. There are new characters introduced: Kris's father, aunt, somewhat his mother. Story of Berton (Burton) is introduced at the beginning, as a documentary seen by Kelvin, and Berton (Burton) himself, even though he never plays such a role in the book. Characters from the hearing say Kelvin's statements and thoughts in the book later on.

Producers took an interesting take on Berton's role in general. They introduce him as an **active character**, make him interact with Kris, and his father. There are some facts mentioned by him that didn't appear in the book as well: the newborn seen by Berton was Fechner's son. We can also assume it was the same kid accompanying him in the taxi. He could have been the embodiment of Berton's troubled past with **Solaris**, but it's generally intriguing since Berton wasn't that important in the story.

Other new scenes that were introduced in the movie are scenes with Kris and Harey watching some clips from earth, Snaut's birthday party, Freudian dreams and visions of his mother. An interesting nuance is also an ikon in Kelvin's room (can be seen in the corner of the second picture under the colours paragraph), since it is stated in the last pages of the book that humankind is long after its "**religion phase**".

Some scenes, like dream with Gibarian, experiment with an encephalogram, are missing, and some, like Harey's blood test, or getting messages from the other scientists, are changed. Despite that, the course of the action more or less corresponds with the book's plot. Events seem a bit rushed, happening too fast, but it's because of the lack of the "thoughts" parts.

Characters are true to their book's prototypes. Snaut and Harey are played very well. Only Kelvin's actor seemed a bit off, absent-minded and emotionless most of the time.

The movie is by no means a perfect adaptation of Stanisław Lem's book; however, from the outset, certain factors made it nearly impossible. First of them is probably the book itself, and its plot based mostly on the character's thoughts, not actions. The second one is the time when the movie was produced. With modern technology the movie could make up for the missing part with beautiful, picturesque photos of the planet, but it wasn't possible back then.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Stanisław Lem's "**Solaris**" was published in Poland in 1961 amid the Cold War era, *characterised by political tension and ideological struggle*. The story reflects **contemporary fears**, notably those about humanity's role in the cosmos and the potential implications of scientific research. At the height of the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union, Lem's investigation of space flight and contacts with extraterrestrial life sparked broad interest in the idea of exploring the universe. However, "**Solaris**" also serves as a cautionary tale about the limitations of human understanding and the *risks of arrogance, mirroring existential concerns about humanity's ability to understand and control the forces of the universe*.



Tarkovsky's film portrays the Soviet era's artistic sensibility and philosophical explorations, which were marked by a complicated *interplay between governmental control and creative expression*. Tarkovsky's adaptation keeps many of Lem's novel's philosophical ideas and existential issues, but it also integrates Soviet cinematic style and symbolism, such as lengthy takes, moody cinematography, and an emphasis on interior psychological landscapes. Tarkovsky believed in the capacity of cinema to explore the depths of human awareness and the secrets of the soul, which is reflected in the film's emphasis on introspection and emotional resonance.



THE PORTRAYAL OF THE PLANET SOLARIS

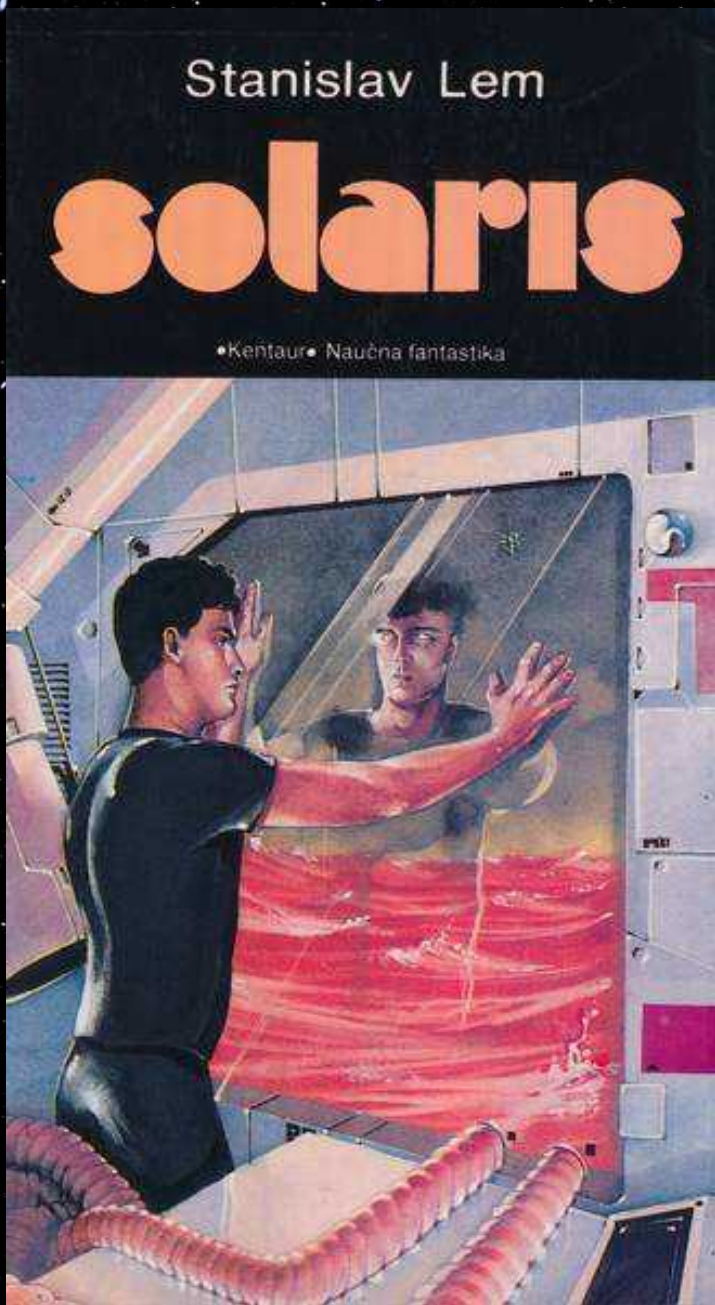
Stanisław Lem's "**Solaris**" depicts the planet Solaris through scientific studies, personal stories, and the protagonists' experiences visiting there. Lem's story emphasises Solaris' mysterious and unimaginable character, portraying it as a huge and enigmatic entity beyond human comprehension. The planet's surface is depicted as being covered in a continually moving and evolving **Ocean** that appears to be intelligent, affecting its surroundings and causing bizarre events. Lem employs detailed imagery and technical vocabulary to evoke shock and wonder, along with anxiety and existential dread in both the characters and the readers. Solaris has a tremendous influence on the human psyche because *it compels the characters to confront their deepest fears, wants, and traumas*, which frequently result in psychological breakdowns or existential crises.



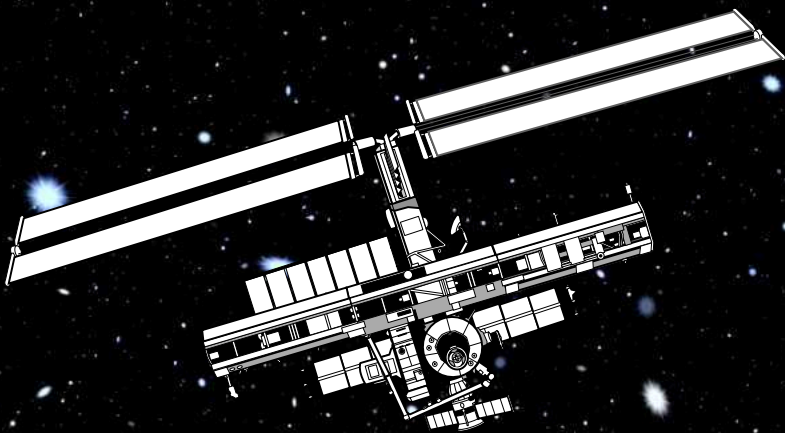
Tarkovsky's 1972 film adaptation of "**Solaris**" is more ambient and contemplative in depicting the planet and its impact on the human mind. Tarkovsky's slow-paced cinematography, sorrowful images, and minimalist musical accompaniment create a pervasive sense of solitude and sorrow throughout the picture. *The planet is represented as a huge, lonely expanse cloaked in mist and fog, with brief glimpses of weird and unearthly events.* Unlike the novel, the **film concentrates on the protagonists' emotional and existential reactions to Solaris** rather than its scientific features. Tarkovsky addresses themes of memory, regret, and desire, utilising the globe to represent the human psyche and the secrets of the soul.



THE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF KELVIN



In Stanisław Lem's "**Solaris**," Kelvin is portrayed as a highly analytical and introspective individual, severely impacted by his background and striving to find peace with his feelings. Throughout the novel, Kelvin's psychological journey is closely related to his interactions with the planet Solaris and the manifestations it generates depending on his memories and wishes. Kelvin goes through a significant metamorphosis as he battles his own inner demons and the enigmatic nature of Solaris, eventually obtaining a greater knowledge of himself and the human dilemma.

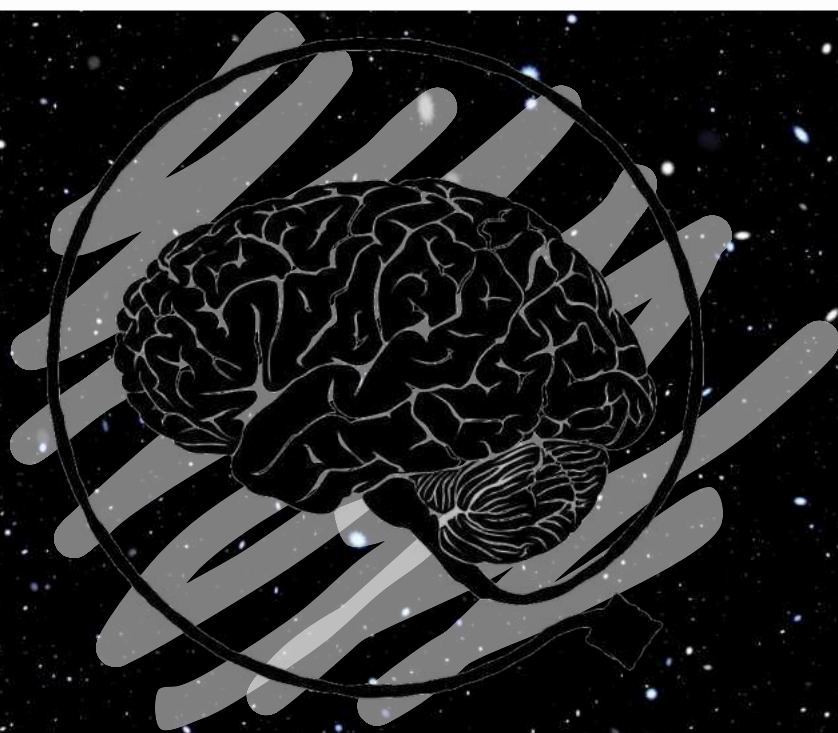


In the movie Kelvin is shown with a similar feeling of contemplation and emotional depth, but with a stronger emphasis on his interactions with other characters, notably his deceased wife, Hari. Tarkovsky investigates Kelvin's psychological journey mostly via his contacts with Hari's odd replicant, which represents his unresolved sentiments of remorse, sadness, and desire. As Kelvin faces the apparition of his departed wife, he is forced to confront his own emotions and the intricacies of human relationships, finally leading to a cathartic reunion with his past and a renewed feeling of acceptance.



NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND PACING

The **book's narrative structure is primarily linear**, following the progression of events as the protagonist, Kelvin, arrives at the orbiting space station. Lem unravels the narrative through a **combination of scientific findings, personal testimonies, and philosophical thoughts, interspersed with moments of contemplation and scientific research**. Flashbacks and dream sequences are employed rarely but successfully to convey insight into Kelvin's background and inner thoughts, deepening his character and complementing the story. The novel's pacing is methodical and reflective, enabling readers to immerse themselves in the story's complexity and reflect on its existential themes at their own pace.



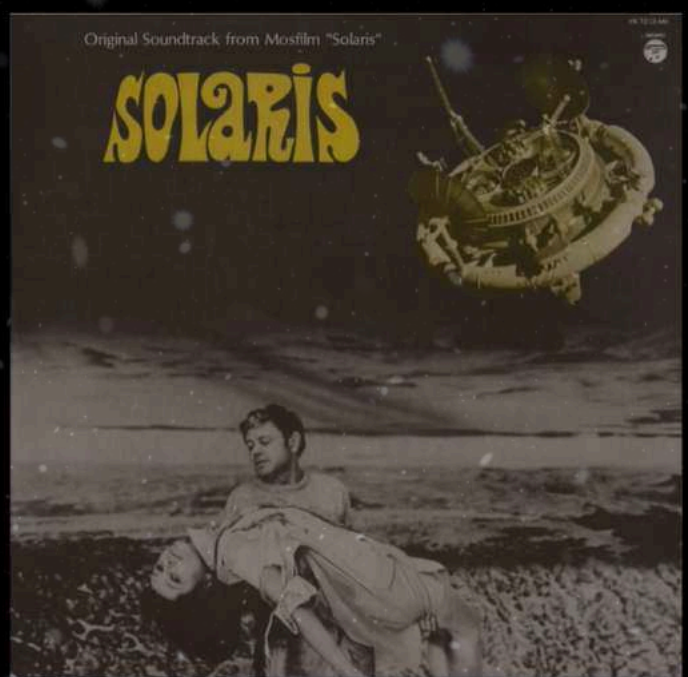
On the other hand, **film adaptation employs a more atmospheric and philosophical narrative structure**. The picture moves at a sluggish pace, with lengthy shots and little conversation adding to the atmosphere of calm meditation and existential uneasiness. Tarkovsky uses flashbacks and dream sequences more heavily than the novel, blurring the distinction between past and present, truth and illusion. These episodes increase the characters' psychological depth and add levels of meaning to the plot, resulting in a feeling of ambiguity and mystery that dominates the whole film.

ANDREI TARKOVSKY'S

SOLARIS

MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN

Eduard Artemyev's musical soundtrack is a crucial component of the film's symbolic portrayal of the story's themes and atmosphere. Artemyev's score blends electronic and traditional elements, with haunting synthesiser melodies overlaid over orchestral arrangements. The soundtrack emphasises the film's emotional resonance and existential concerns, heightening the feeling of mystery and wonder surrounding the planet Solaris and its impact on the protagonists. The music also includes repeating melodies and ideas that reflect the cyclical nature of memory and awareness, lending depth and complexity to the film's story.



The sound design of "**Solaris**" is likewise atmospheric, with an emphasis on ambient noise and subtle clues that heighten the film's sense of dread and discomfort. Tarkovsky used sound to express the creepy atmosphere of the space station and the weird events occurring on the planet Solaris, such as the unexplained noises of the ocean and the creaking of the station's construction.

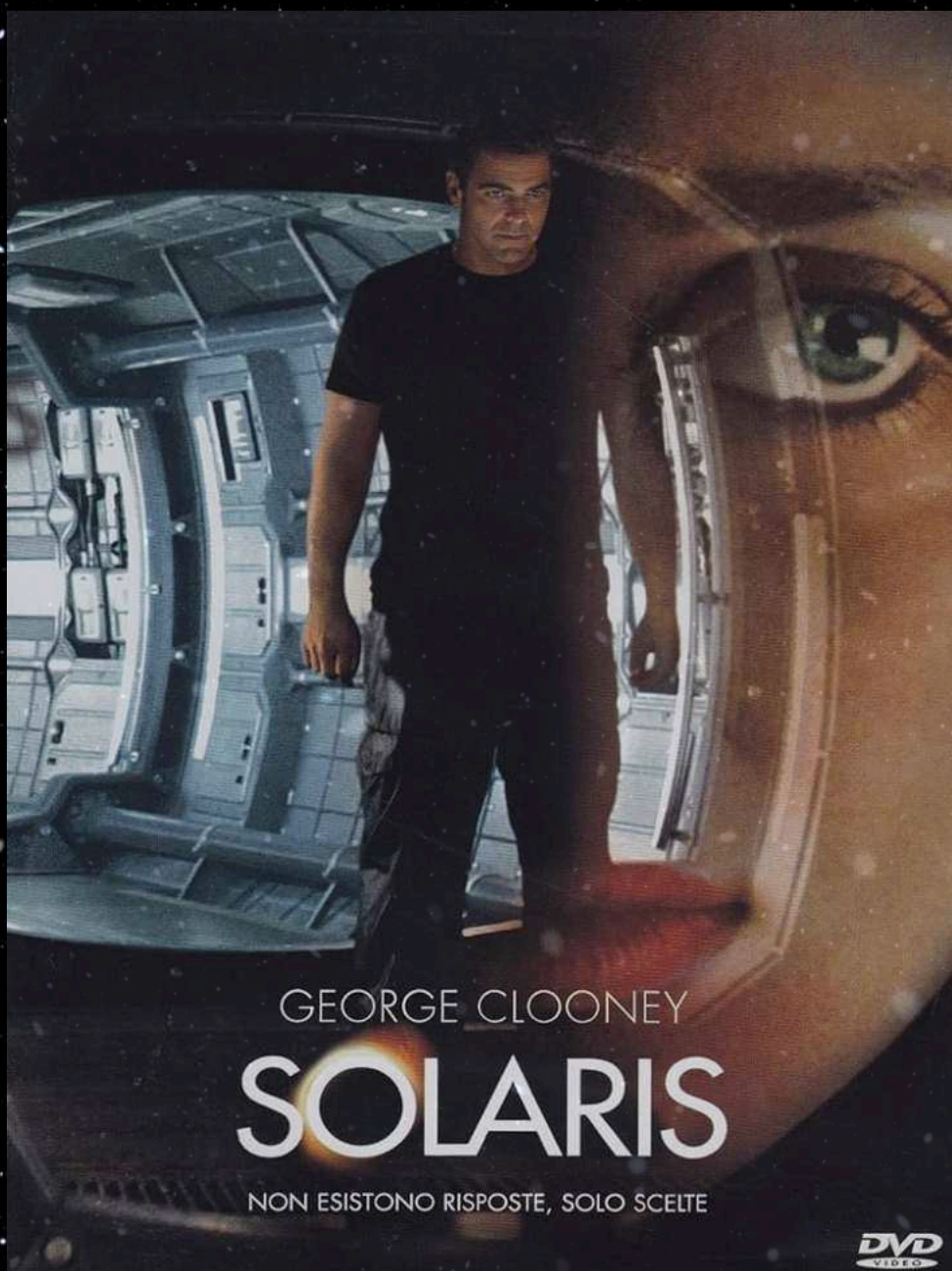
Silence is also employed well to generate tension and expectation, allowing spectators to immerse themselves in the characters' inner lives and emotional difficulties.

Andrei Tarkovsky's
SOLARIS



Original Soundtrack

THE MOVIE (2002)



THE BEGINNING

The movie was shot in 2002 and so far, it is the newest version of the movie. If we compare the book's version and the movie's one, then in terms of the main points of the plot, they are **almost the same, except for the beginning and ending**. In the book, we got acquainted with Kelvin when he was about to board on the research station of Solaris, while, in the movie we are shown Kelvin's routine on Earth. Moreover, there was also the actual scene where Kelvin is asked to visit the research station on **Solaris** by Gibarian, while in the book we knew about it from Kelvin's thoughts.



THE PORTRAYAL OF OCEAN

It is clear that it would be hard to make the movie adaptation of the book where most of the text consists of the main character's pondering the situation that he happened to be in as well as some facts about the research that had been conducted before about **Solaris**. The latter is actually the part that was lacking a lot in the movie adaptation of the book. The movie lasts 1:38:03, but except for **Ocean**'s ability to replicate people, we didn't find out anything else neither about the planet nor about all of research that was done there,

while in the book it took a huge part of story and made it easier for readers to believe in the existence of such a planet. As it was previously mentioned in the article's section about the book, **Ocean** plays a vital role in the plot of the story, even if there was no real communication between **Ocean** and the characters. Therefore, the amount of information that was given about it as well as **Solaris** is meagre and definitely not enough to get to know the planet and its peculiarities.



In the movie we can clearly see how the planet is covered with ocean, but there **were no mentions about the fact that Solaris orbits two suns**, the red and the blue ones, thus the lighting of the research station changed throughout the story, which again, made the atmosphere of the book even more spectacular and it would definitely make movie seem even more picturesque.

“The planet orbits two suns: a red sun and a blue sun. For 45 years after its discovery, no spacecraft had visited Solaris. At that time, the Gamow-Shapley theory-that life was impossible on planets which are satellites of two solar bodies-was firmly believed. The orbit is constantly being modified by variations in the gravitational pull in the course of its revolutions around the two suns.”

Another detail that was missed in the movie, but that made **Ocean** to be a dangerous sentient organism was the way it was experimenting with the replication. In the book, one of the scientists, Berton, who wasn't mentioned in the movie even once, took a flight to see what was going on the planet and the thing that scared him a lot was the way **Ocean** was trying to replicate the baby.

“BERTON:... I could see its face, and it was a very young child. Besides, its proportions corresponded exactly to the proportions of a child's body. It was a . . . babe in arms. No, I exaggerate. It was probably two or three years old. It had black hair and blue eyes—enormous blue eyes! It was naked—completely naked—like a new-born baby. It was wet, or I should say glossy; its skin was shiny. I was shattered. I no longer thought it was a mirage. I could see this child so distinctly. It rose and fell with the waves; but apart from this general motion, it was making other movements, and they were horrible! **QUESTION:** Why? What was it doing? **BERTON:** It was more like a doll in a museum, only a living doll. It opened and closed its mouth, it made various gestures, horrible gestures. **QUESTION:** What do you mean? **BERTON:** ...you really would have thought it was a living child, if it hadn't been for the movements, the gestures, as though someone was trying ... It was as though someone else was responsible for the gestures . . . **QUESTION:** Try to be more explicit. **BERTON:**... an infant's movements are confused, random, uncoordinated. The movements I saw were . . . er . . . yes, that's it, they were methodical movements. They were performed one after another, like a series of exercises; as though someone had wanted to make a study of what this child was capable of doing with its hands, its torso, its mouth. The face was more horrifying than the rest, because the human face has an expression, and this face ... I don't know how to describe it.”



This particular moment showed us that although the **Ocean** wasn't perfect in replicating, it was evolving and becoming better. Its early abilities of replication were already scary and who knew how good it would become as time would pass by. Unfortunately, this scene and the dialogue **were not** included in the movie.

THE CHARACTER PORTRAYAL

In terms of the characters portrayal, it should be noted that most of the **actors performed their roles on the top level**, especially the actors who played Kelvin and Harey's roles (George Clooney and Natasha McElhone). The movie preserved their traits of characters and even added more moments between them when they were still on Earth. However, **there were some changes in the Harey's character**. Harey in the movie was shown to be more independent. In the book the author stated that even when she was alive she tended to be a hysterical person, while in the movie the Guest's version of Harey directly stated to Kelvin that her current behaviour might be influenced by the way he remembered her, which hints us that she wasn't necessary so hysterical while she was alive, it could have been just Kelvin's perception of her.



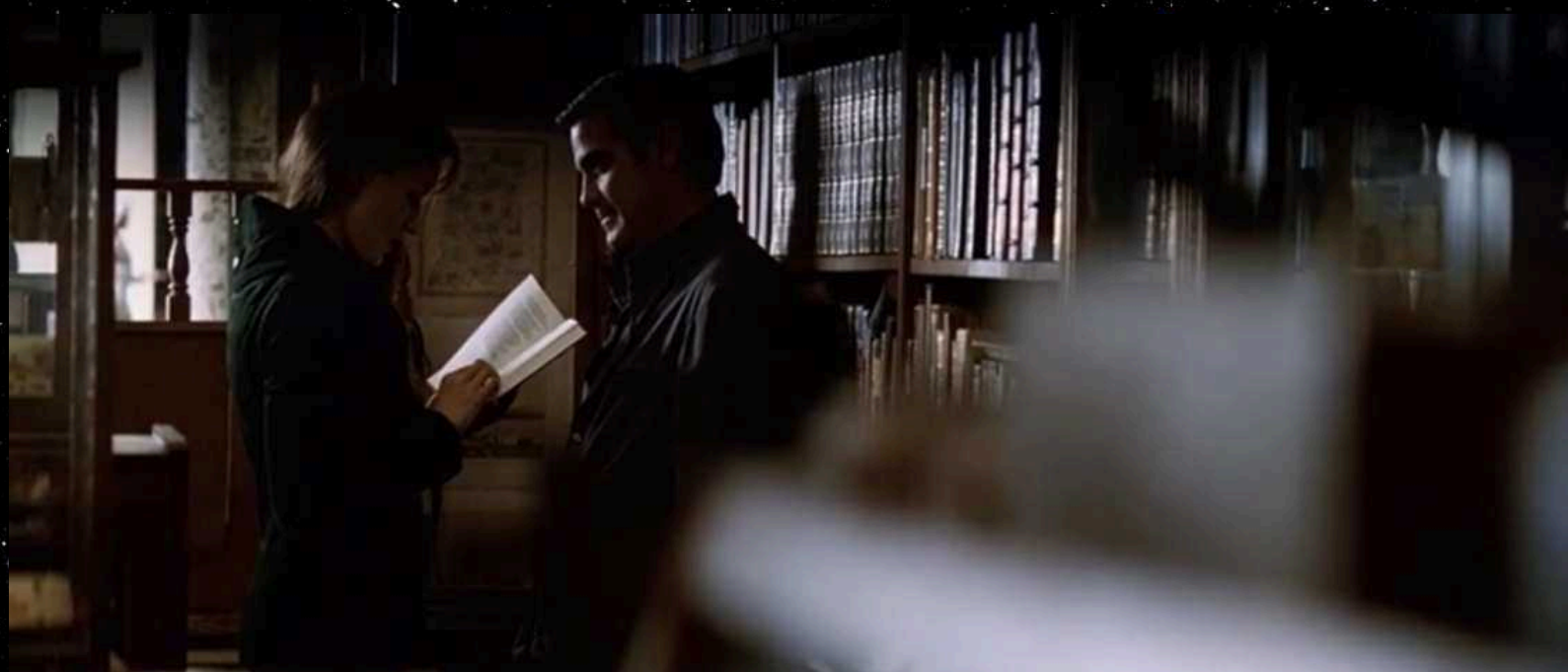
Moreover, in terms of appearance there **was also a small detail that was different in the movie and the book**. In the book, Harey first appeared wearing white beach dress which she couldn't take off, while in the movie it was a red dress and she didn't struggle with taking it off. The only possible way of taking it off in the book was when Kelvin decided to use scalpel “*to slit the dress down the back from neck to waist, so that she could pull it over her head*”.



This particular detail has already **suggested to us** that there was something unnatural to the way she behaved, how much she remembered and the way she looked like. Last but not least, in the book Harey had to be in the close vicinity to Kelvin. She couldn't even explain it herself, it was just her instinct. Towards the finale of the book she managed to control herself better and Kelvin could leave her to be alone even for a short period of time. In the movie, she just had to stay close to Kelvin for the whole time.



Another thing that the movie made better than the book was the amount of detail about **Kelvin and Harey's relationships** and what made Harey end her life.



There wasn't enough information about this in the book and that's why while reading once in a while the reader may catch themselves thinking: "**Why does Kelvin have such a connection to Harey and is not ready to let her go?**" In addition, it is worth noting that there is actually a huge difference between the book and its movie adaptation. The author of the **book emphasised more on the details about the planet**, the research and the study of human nature. The central focus of the narrative did not revolve around the relationship between Kelvin and Harey. The **movie**, on the contrary, **concentrated more on their relationship** while Solaris was rather the background element of the story.



The side characters of the story, such as *Snaut and Sartorius also went through some changes* in the movie adaptation. For instance, *Sartorius was replaced in the movie with the female scientist Gordon*. However, the role that the character played in the movie wasn't that different from the book. What's more, most of the personality traits of Sartorius were preserved in the movie's version of the character. In the **book he was a person who doubted everything** and didn't believe anyone completely. The **movie version** was pretty the same, although Gordon **was willing to rely on people** that surrounded her.

“

He stood with his back against the door, very tall and thin, all bones under his white sweater. He had a black scarf knotted around his neck, and over his arm he was carrying a laboratory smock, covered with chemical burns. His head, which was unusually narrow, was cocked to one side. I could not see his eyes: he wore curved dark glasses, which covered up half his face. His lower jaw was elongated; he had bluish lips and enormous, blue-tinged ears. He was unshaven. Red anti-radiation gloves hung by their laces from his wrists. For a moment we looked at one another with undisguised aversion. His shaggy hair (he had obviously cut it himself) was the color of lead, his beard grizzled. Like Snaut, his forehead was burnt, but the lower half only; above, it was pallid. He must have worn some kind of cap when exposed to the sun

”



Snaut's character in the book was a man who also was reluctant to believe those people that surrounded him, but not to such an extent that Sartorius did. If we compare the relationship of Snaut and Kelvin from the book and from the movie, one can clearly see that ***in the book they had more interaction with each other*** and that their relationship turned from being close to being rather suspicious of each other.

In the movie their relationships were rather neutral, neither positive nor negative. The appearance of the character was also different, as in the movie he looked just as a regular passenger, while in the book even if we weren't told that he was a scientist, we could have guessed it from the description of his appearance.



“In this armchair there was a little thin man, his face burnt by the sun, the skin on his nose and cheeks coming away in large flakes. I recognized him as Snaut, a cybernetics expert and Gibarian's deputy. In his time he had published articles of great originality in the Solarist Annual. It so happened that I had never had the opportunity of meeting him. He was wearing a mesh shirt which allowed the grey hairs of his sunken chest to poke through here and there, and canvas trousers with a great many pockets, mechanic`s trousers, which once had been white but now were stained at the knees and covered with holes from chemical burns. He was holding one of those pear-shaped plastic flasks which are used in spaceships not equipped with internal gravitational systems. Snow's eyes widened in amazement as he looked up and saw me.”



THE ENDING

In the book we were told that Harey disappeared forever. Unlike the book, the **movie** showed us the scene where **Kelvin and Harey are together again** and that was the finale scene in the movie. This moment left on a huge cliffhanger, since now we need to question if Kelvin really returned to Earth or something happened to him. Due to the fact that we didn't know the whole range of **Ocean**'s ability, we could also suggest that **Ocean** can resurrect dead people.



To summarise, one can state that the movie did good in the portrayal of the characters, but there was definitely a lack of details about one of the most interesting, but at the same time mysterious characters of the story – **Solaris** itself. The movie turned out to be more of a romance movie with the elements of science fiction.



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