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Simulacra in Science Fiction

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Abstract

The paper examines the concept of simulacra, focusing on their employment in contemporary science fiction. It provides examples from literature as well as from popular cinematography, in order to present the topic in a more familiar context. These examples include Wachowski's The Matrix, Gibson's Neuromancer and Fassbinder's Welt am Draht reflected in the light of ideas of theorists such as Baudrillard and Deleuze. The purpose of this paper is to provide the basic notion of the concept in connection with the science fiction genre, while also offerring a wide range of subject-related material.

Defining the Term

Simulacra are viewed as a tool for negotiating authenticity in a condition of ambiguity. The realization of the inauthentic leads us towards true values. The wide spectrum of the purpose of their use in science fiction ranges from criticism of mass-produced items of consumer culture, up to the main existential questions concerning the nature of knowledge of reality. However, the aparent concept is complicated by simulacra's own sort of validity and right to existence. There are many descriptions of the simulacrum in terms of content and in terms of extent.

Merriam-Webster simply states that "1. it is an image, a representation of the reality" or "2. An insubstantial form or semblance of something". The exact term, which comes from Latin, means "likeness, similarity" and was first mentioned in the 16th century, however the idea of the concept can be found as early as Plato's *Sophist*: "Of image making there are two kinds – the art of making likenesses, and the art of making appearances. The latter may be illustrated by sculpture and painting, which often use illusions and alter the proportions of figures in order to adapt their works to the eye" (Plato, p. 31). Plato wanted to discuss the dualism of an essence and an appearance, an idea and an image. Making likenesses stands for icons. Their aim is the embodiment of the qualities of the original. They stand for truthful representation of the real. On the contrary, "making appearances" carries a negative connotation of "a false image" or "a distorted copy".

From the point of view of Deleuze, "the Platonic task is "distinguishing the good from the false copies, or even more, the always well-founded copies from the simulacra, ever corrupted by dissemblance. It is a question of insuring the triumph of the copies over the simulacra, of repressing the simulacra, of keeping them chained in the depths, of preventing them from rising to the surface and "insinuating" themselves everywhere" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 48). Based on the ideal of representation, where the real and the sign are equal, the aim was to

ensure the creating of faithful images as opposed to simulacra upon which yet another false image can be built, thus violating the principle of truth. However in the contemporary world, there is no sense in striving for the triumph of icons over simulacra. They have won and are insinuated everywhere. The world is full of simulations and false resemblances, ranging from staged media events through false artefacts in the "real" world, up to virtual realities and parallel lives of people in the world of computer simulation. There are various points of view towards this situation and its consequences. Deleuze suggests "to raise up simulacra and to assert their rights over icons or copies. The goal is the subversion of this world, 'the twilight of the idols.' The simulacrum is not a degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power..." (Deleuze, 1983, p. 52). It means that the simulacrum is real, and that the false image is just as real as the true icon. They share equal rights and validity on the landscape of representation.
Baudrillard takes the idea even further stating that it is the real which has almost disappeared. He uses the allegory based on Borges's fable, where the cartographers of an empire drew a map so detailed that it ended up covering the whole territory. As the empire declined, so the map fell into shreds. Some of them were still discernible in the deserts, slowly rotting away. He suggests that today's situation is of the territory, whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. He says that it is the real, not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts, which are not deserts of the empire, but deserts of the real itself (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). The murder of the real perhaps started with the invention of language as a tool for representation of the real world. Today, virtually every space and aspect of existence has been coded, named and described in the system of signs. Simulation, as opposed to representation, "stems from the radical negation of the sign as a value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (p. 6). Therefore our, human world is from the beginning of culture a gigantic simulacrum, perpetuated by the process of using previous signs as referentials.
For the purposes of this paper, the concept of simulacra will be presented in a more general way, as an umbrella term for various phenomena.[1] Among many others are simulated worlds such as in *The Matrix*, artificial beings which we see in *Blade Runner*, and non-genuine artefacts as for example the fake historical items in *The Man in the High Castle*. The idea is that they represent a deviation from – or false or inauthentic form of – "real" objects, experiences or environments. Below will be discussed their categorizations, examples and purposes of their use by authors.

Orders of Simulacra

I have decided to draw upon the orders suggested by Baudrillard. The orders listed can be interpreted as presenting the chronological development of simulacra – from the simplest form of the false image in the first order, through the multiplication of it in the second, up to the total simulations which correspond with contemporary SF in the last one. There are three orders of simulacra:
Natural simulacra are defined as "simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image" (p.121). This concept corresponds to the imagery of Utopias, starting with Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516), Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534) and Campanella's *Civitas Solis* (1602). "Transcendent sphere, a different universe takes form (transcendence is outlined in depth, even in unconscious structures, but in any case the dissociation from the real world is maximized, the island of Utopia stands opposed to the continent of the real)" (p.122). It is a simulation, where the difference between the real and the model is very clear. The works focus on then current social issues and present their idealised versions. "Fair social laws existed in their era, but they were not applied to all people. These works are programmed patterns, or a plan of action for the future" (Genčiová,

1980, p.14). They picture life "not as it will be or as it might be or as it could be, but as it should be or as it should not be" (Allen, 1971, p.265). In other words, the authors demand fair conditions for everybody by creating a sort of false image of the society of the 16th century. They are not a science fiction strictly speaking. Isaac Asimov describes this genre as Social Fiction: "It is that branch of literature which moralizes about a current society through the device of dealing with a fictitious society" (Asimov, 1974, p.264). They are social satires. They describe the societies which are the reflections of their contrapositions in the real world. In perspective of platonic dichotomy, they represent the simplest form of simulacra, first order – the image apparently based on the model world as opposed to the real.

Productive simulacra are defined as "simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production - a Promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the Utopias related to this order of simulacra)" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 121). To this category belongs classic science fiction with its roots in the late 19th century. The Industrial Revolution and its technological advancements enabled authors to elaborate their fictional universes on the basis of the endless possibilities of mechanical production. "It is most often nothing other than an unbounded projection of the real world of production, but it is not qualitatively different from it. Mechanical or energetic extensions, speed, and power increase to the nth power, but the schemas and the scenarios are those of mechanics, metallurgy, etc. (To the limited universe of the preindustrial era, Utopia opposed an ideal, alternative universe. To the potentially infinite universe of production, science fiction adds the multiplication of its own possibilities)" (p. 122).

Jules Verne and H. G. Wells outlined the possibilities of technology in classics such as *Around the Moon* (1870), or in *War of the Worlds* (1898). The latter depicts a conflict enriched by the element of extraterrestrial civilization. They enable the author to employ his fantasy in its fullest range. Since everything is possible in the world of advanced technology, aliens are equipped with heat-rays, very similar to lasers, and they use black smoke – something similar to what the world saw two decades later in the form of mustard gas. Luckily, at the end of the story, the invaders are unable to deal with earth's bacteria, and eventually die. The author also employs the first order of simulacra here. However, as Wells might be considered anti-utopian in his early work, the Martians do not stand next to the island of the real as its idealised version. The negative features of imperialism and the invaders' policies are highlighted, and the stress is put on avoiding the rise of such a mentality. Huxley, Orwell and Čapek continued building their fictional worlds on the basis of progress in terms of technology, but they did not forget to emphasize the grim consequences rising from the slower development of human nature. In Orwell's fiction for example, a Telescreen for every outer party member might be perceived as advancement, yet we know there was a negative side to this. Karel Čapek takes a more satirical view in *Absolute at Large (1922)*. He introduces an invention which can produce large amounts of cheap energy. But the by-product is "absolute" – a sort of divine essence embedded in the matter itself. The machine soon spreads all over the world, and so does the absolute. So everywhere we see an abundance of production but also of religious experiences. However, this is not good for business in economic terms. Because of an abundance of virtually everything that can be manufactured, world trade collapses – nothing has monetary value. The outcomes of augmented faith are religious conflicts. In war, globalization is reflected as we see "battles of the Chinese with the Senegalese riflemen on the shores of the Finnish lakes" (Čapek, 2013).

The world has become more globalized and interconnected, mainly thanks to the market economy. This productivist extrapolation is taken further with American science fiction of the Golden Age, which began in the late 1930s and lasted approximately to the early 1960s. In the fashion of second-order simulacra, globalization turned into "galactization" and had been

extrapolated thousands of years into the distant future. Asimov's Foundation is an exaggerated metaphor for globalization. The central motif is progress. The Empire provided "twelve thousand years of stability, peace and progress for twenty five million planets" (Herec, 2008, p. 123). Peace, financial stability and development. These are the promises on which productive simulacra are elaborated. Similar to Asimov's universe is the one we see in the movies of George Lucas – in *Star Wars* (1977), where The Old Republic, an interplanetary democratic state had existed in balance for twenty-five thousand years. Thousands of worlds in the galactic core are tied by political and trade agreements. Everything ends eventually, however, and the successor of the Republic, the Galactic Empire, was able to continue the dream of endless mechanical expansion and built the Death Star – an artificial construction the size of a moon with millions of army units on board. In classic science fiction, the world of the mid-20th century was moved to space. This allowed authors to extend the possibilities, to multiply them by thousands and millions, which means endless production, endless advancement. However, sometime during the late 1950s, the circumstances changed. The expansion turned inwards. With the situation down on earth, deep space became irrelevant.

Simulacra of the hyperreal are defined as "Simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game – total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 121). The situation was recognized as the crisis of materialism and consumer culture. Many authors started to look at issues of that time. The turn from so called "hard science fiction" to "soft science fiction" is characteristic for this era. "The term first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s and indicated SF based not on engineering or the hard sciences (for example, physics, astronomy, or chemistry) but on the soft sciences, and especially the social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, and so on)" (Clute, Nicholls, 1993). The question then was not what is possible, but what is real, valid and important. The focus turned from the world to the mind, or as Bruce Bethke once said, genres of science fiction emerged, which focused less on the achievements of humans in spaceships and laboratories, and more on how those achievements might change humanity.

It was the emergence of postmodern literature. In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale identifies the major split between modernist and postmodernist fiction as a "movement from an epistemological domain to an ontological one" (McHale, 1987, p. 7). The difference is that the epistemological assumes there is a world, which can be known, and searches for an objective truth. The ontological point of view on the other hand denies a stable world. The first one deals with properties of existence through rationalism and empiricism, while the second one questions existence itself. Such questions are: "What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (p. 8). The postmodern features in science fiction literature include simulacrum, the ambiguity of consensus reality, and changes in characters' perception of the world. Narration is usually in the form of a stream of consciousness – non-linear, frequent changing of settings, information overload. The works often employ irony and everything is permeated by intertextuality. Nothing is taboo, anything is possible and there are no boundaries.

I have chosen Wachowski's *Matrix* (1999) to introduce the third, final order of simulacra, because it embodies its main features. A virtual world constructed by machines stands opposed to the real. As in Borges's fable, the machines create an artificial world, a sort of map. It is a cyberspace based on the world as it was at the end of the 20th century, referred to as the peak of human civilization. This sort of utopia from the future point of view in the movie serves as a model for the fabrication of machines, which is, as Morpheus explains, a neural-active simulation called the Matrix. The Matrix is a computer program to which the minds of people are connected via implants in their brains, while their bodies serve the

function of batteries in a world which is – due to a previous apocalypse caused by the last desperate attack by people – deprived of the sun, the previous main source of energy for the machines. The main protagonist, Neo, is a man living in the system, believed by Morpheus to be the chosen one, who is supposed to defeat the machines. After he is offered the famous red pill which exposes the truth, he is physically disconnected from the machine-human interface. Morpheus shows him, in another simulated environment, the world as it "truly" exists and welcomes him to it by the famous phrase quoting Baudrillard: "Welcome to the desert of the real." The reason they use an artificial environment is because the world above the surface of the earth is toxic and, furthermore, the whole surface is covered by the machines and their structures, heavily reinforced and protected. The image of the outside, totally swallowed by the components of machinery, is an example of the second order of the simulacra – the total extrapolation of the idea of mechanical production. At the end of the trilogy, we discover that even this version is not true, and that Neo, after fulfilling all his objectives seemingly leading to the redemption of humanity, is faced with the task of choosing twenty-four people to establish the new Zion, the last stronghold city beneath the earth's surface, to start the process of the system and resistance all over again. Via the Architect, the programmer who is the creator of the Matrix, it is revealed to him that the process of finding the chosen one – who is in fact an anomaly in the system which cannot be eliminated, somehow embedded in human nature – is at the beginning of a new, 7^{th} cycle.

As Baudrillard says of this situation, "It is the implosive era of models. The field opened is that of simulation in the cybernetic sense, that is, of the manipulation of these models at every level (scenarios, the setting up of simulated situations, etc.) but then nothing distinguishes this operation from the operation itself and the gestation of the real: there is no more fiction" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 122). What Baudrillard is trying to say is that we can never know what is real, because models precede reality. We are caught in observing and building on inauthentic models instead of exploring the real. Also, the allegory of the map becomes inadequate, since there is no certain reality anymore. The precession of simulacra have caused them to be the only reality we know. One is totally lost in this world of simulation and the search for authenticity becomes almost, if not impossible. The ongoing process of pursuing the truth through never-ending exposure of layers of untrue is a Sisyphean task.[2]

The Purpose of Simulacra

The concept is also well known in cyberpunk, the science fiction subgenre. Simulacra are employed as tools for a dynamic narration which poses a great number of questions, but the provided answers are few and ambivalent. Because of the all-permeating technology able to alter and to create new realities, instead of a stable universe, the reader finds himself in degrading multiverses, where he cannot be certain about anything. As Herec puts it: "Simulacra flow, create new discussion, dispute the independent observer which is the model of subject based on compatibility with culture. They dispute the values derived of binary dichotomies... deny the borderline between reality and illusion. Hyperreality does not produce meaning, does not provide the fixed facts which are disconnected from fantasies" (Herec, 2008, p. 178).

The platonic dualism and the image of the fight between good and evil, the division of mind and matter and the question of truth and false is transformed into ambiguous chaos of the lesser of two evils, or the blending of machine and intelligence, sometimes attributing soul. The search for the authentic moves to a different domain: simulated worlds, if not misused, offer freedom. They can be places not limited by space, time or other laws of physics. In other words, they offer the possibility to carry out projected dreams, which would otherwise be impossible in the real world. The question is when is this process out of hand, or how can a paradise be turned into a prison? In Huxley's essays, doors of perception open both to heaven

and to hell. The same case we find with technology: "The person who lives his illusions in a virtual world becomes the prisoner of his phantasms. The real world he perceives as an echo, distorted and provided by the drug and the machine. Later, even this echo is supplemented by simulacra, images without model. In a digitalised world, an exchange of reality for image, territory for map, becomes a widely accepted mistake" (Herec, 2008, p. 146).
Yet is this true? Are artificial worlds or beings mere simulacra without any rights compared to their real world counterparts? The answer is complicated, since the certainty about one valid reality vanishes. As Herec says, "[the] antithesis of nature-technology, human-inhuman, body-soul are losing their privileged position in the portraying of the world. The problem of contemporary fantasy is not the difference between fiction and reality, but the dissolution of this difference" (Herec, 2008, p. 124). In a way, it is the murder of the previous real. On the other hand, new realities are created where the search for the authentic can be pushed into new dimensions. What is human is mainly discovered through exploring the principles of ethics. Will the characters react with adequate emotions and reactions in a world ever more corrupted by false substitutes for reality? The focus is not so much on why the world is so complicated and ambiguous as it is, but what will the characters make of it, and what will be the consequences for them. Works of this category can be seen as ontological exercises with the aim of pursuing authenticity.

Examples from Contemporary Science Fiction
As mentioned above, the simulacrum has become a widely used concept in contemporary science fiction, which could largely be represented by cyberpunk. This subgenre has its roots firstly in dystopian literature dating from the early 20th century, but secondly in the works of authors of the early second half of that century, such as Phillip K. Dick, William Burroughs and Thomas Pynchon. It explores sociological, political and metaphysical themes. The stories are dominated by monopolistic corporations, authoritarian governments and altered states. The main questions are what is real and what is fantasy. Mental illness versus sanity, the real versus imagination, combined with the use of psychoactive substances are among the common themes. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is a novel that employs all the orders of simulacra.
The world of *Neuromancer* is the world of the high-tech, which stands for a technologically advanced future. Yet there is also a low-life aspect, which means that we see a lack of speed in social advancement. Not only was it the first cyberpunk novel; in the eyes of many people it remains the best. It is the first part of Gibson's *Sprawl Trilogy*. *Neuromancer* was published in 1984. The trilogy consists also of *Count Zero* published in 1986 and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* from 1988. The novel was awarded three of the most prestigious awards for science fiction – the Philip K. Dick Award, the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award. The characters are human beings penetrated by technological devices. Information is the most precious commodity in this world, which is no longer a homogenous reality but is intersecting with a cyberspace called the 'Matrix'. These two worlds are closely connected and actions in one have consequences in the other. This is the idea of the seriousness of virtual worlds, or simulacra, where for instance manipulation of the data on markets might have extensive effects concerning whole countries. Since the real world itself is merged with its counterpart, it becomes a part of this simulation, and the simulation therefore becomes a part of the real. These worlds are interconnected in hyper-reality. There is sometimes a lack of distinction between the two. A computer hacker dwells only in cyberspace. By the use of encryption programs or anonymity networks such as TOR, it is virtually impossible to find out the identity of a person who discloses sensitive information concerning the military, corporations, etc. The activity affects the world as if it had been disclosed by a real person, yet it is in fact only an image of a person, and the model itself stays lost beneath the simulation.

The novel revolves around Case. He is a hacker who has tried to rip off his customers. They have destroyed his nervous system with an unspecified toxin developed by the military and since then he has lived a life of drugs and crime in Chiba, a peripheral part of the Tokyo urban area. His decay is stopped by Armitage, a mysterious figure who hires him to work with Molly, a hired assassin, on an unspecified mission. His brain functions are restored thanks to Armitage at the black clinic, however he also has toxin bags implanted, which will not be removed until the mission is complete. Later he, Molly, Armitage and Case, steal the ROM construct of a personality of dead computer hacker Paul McCoy, also known as Dixie Flatline from the Sense/Net corporation. The body, referred to as "meat," is simply a commodity. What matters is the mind, and uploading, downloading and manipulation of it in many ways, such as with psychoactive drugs, is very common. Dixie Flatline is a construct on a disc helping Case in cyberspace. Although a mere simulacrum – he is basically a software image based on a person's characteristics downloaded on a temporary disc drive – its role is crucial; it acts as if it were a real hacker. Another member of the team is Riviera, who joins in Istanbul. Thanks to his ability to project holographic images on the retinas of chosen subjects, he adjusts their realities for the benefit of the crew.

Their mission is in Straylight – the residence of the Tessier-Ashpool family, the family that owns Tessier-Ashpool S.A. It is revealed that they own the entire Freeside, which is an orbital station or a space colony where Straylight is located. Here, they discover that their plan is secretly guided by the AI called Wintermute, seeking connection with its counterpart named Neuromancer, which would result in a new, greater form of intelligence. This fusion is limited because of the laws prohibiting the exceeding of built-in limitations of AI (Turing Law Code). Therefore, the team is pursued by the Turing Police and the situation becomes quite complicated. Case is arrested, Molly is trapped inside Straylight, Riviera turns out to be a traitor and Armitage collapses after finding his true identity. He was just a puppet and his mind was altered and used by an AI for his leadership properties. He is a former soldier who survived operation Screaming Fist during the war in Europe. The only person who stays optimistic is Dixie Flatline. Although later, he too becomes a bit tired of his life after realizing that he is just a program and wishes to be erased.

In many late science fiction stories, we see something that could be called "nostalgia for the real". The virtual world is an amazing place, yet if there is no possibility to advance to the higher level, characters, which are sentient AIs, rather choose a way out of existence. This could be seen as a search for the authenticity of the real. Although the physical body is just a commodity, it has an inherent value and intuitively valid potential – if not transcendent, at least commercial. The commercial can be seen in the simstim business. Through devices implanted into the brain of a person (simstim celebrities or Molly), one can experience his or her body in real time. This idea was expanded in the movie *Gamer* where instead of transmigration into bodies of celebrities, gamers around the globe can buy their avatars in the form of criminals sentenced to death, to play a sort of action videogame. They are going to die anyway, since they are sentenced to death, so one media corporation decides to use them in a similar way as they used volunteers for the reality show Society in *Neuromancer*. Here people would buy their avatars and engage in wild parties, orgies and drug abuse they would not get to otherwise. And these become the most important parts of their real lives, which otherwise cannot offer something better. More real than the real we could say.

A little bit earlier, "Interest in the simulacrum arose in the French philosophical context of the sixties" (Camille, 1996). It is perhaps because of the uprising of the counter-culture generation starting social revolution, which questioned the authenticity of the consumer lifestyle, values and ideologies, that the concept of fake substitutes for reality became widely discussed. Important parts of this culture were psychedelic substances, which in a way enable the subject to access different worlds. One of the main features is the questioning of "the

realness" of this world, and boundary dissolution between it and its versions. Propelled by the hunger for cognition, many experimental works were the fruits of this time. Among examples worth mentioning is the German movie *Welt am Draht* from 1973 directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

The movie is based on the novel by Daniel F. Galouye *Simulacron-3* written in 1964. The movie takes place during the 1970s in The Institute of Cybernetics and Futurology (Institut für Kybernetik und Zukunftsforschung, or IKZ). The organization in Berlin has developed a computer named Simulacron-1 that is capable of simulating a small town. The people are called Identity Units and apart from one unit, which is necessary for communication, are unaware that they live in an artificial world. This unit, called Einstein, knows their world is just a simulation or a simulacrum, and strives to get to "the real" world. The artificial world gets out of hand after another unit commits suicide upon discovering the truth. This can be perceived as "the nostalgia for the real". Professor Vollmer, who is in charge of the programme, dies in strange circumstances. Gunther Lause, who is the former chief of security at IKZ, suddenly disappears, and no one seems to remember him. Even the front page of a newspaper shows a different article a few days later. Stiller takes Vollmer's position and all of this makes him very uncomfortable. The character starts to question the authenticity of his world because of these anomalies and other slips, such as streets disappearing for a moment when he's driving his car. The unit Einstein succeeds in his effort thanks to a fault on a computer circuit. He is transferred into the body of a scientist, but later discovered and transferred back to Simulacron. All of this drives Stiller crazy.

On top of all that, his superior, Siskins, wants to use the computer for commerical purposes. Simulating the market environment could enable large industrialists to foresee the necessary steps to make profit. Here the story becomes a social criticism and explores the possibilities of exploitation of artificial environments. It shows distrust towards corporations and their private interests. It reflects the real state of using technology, where it is first used for military purposes, then for private profit and only then for the wealth of the majority. Stiller disregards this at first because of his personal belief, but later also thanks to the fact that he has discovered the untrue nature of his world thanks to Eva Vollmer. She has come from the level above to explain to him that his world is only a more advanced simulation of the higher level, and that he is a reflection of the real Stiller who is the chief director of the programme, who has been sent mad by his godlike powers over the Simulacron. Earlier the Stiller simulacrum also plays with creating images of other people just for entertainment. The movie explores themes of false-image making within a false world, but also the concept of the authenticity of these images, which are people in this case. For instance the Stiller simulacrum is shot at the end, but Eva Vollmer switches his personality with the real Stiller who has become mad, in a similar way as Einstein got to one layer above. During the film we see that he is more human in terms of the ethics of his actions than the authentic Stiller who had become corrupted by power. His programmed version has good somehow coded inside, therefore he stays pure. Also the title of the book suggests that Simulacron 1 is in fact Simulacron 3, which might mean that the Stiller simulacrum at the end is still not at the highest level of the real.

The author questions the basic philosophical concepts of being and the perception of reality, but also describes the monitored subjects and touches on themes of surveillance and the all-seeing observer. However, the biggest nightmare for the individuals is the validity of their world and the fear of it being only an illusion cast upon them. The work is in congruence with the third order of simulacra – we witness the manipulation of models at every level. There are simulations of simulations, which, we find, might be based also on an artificial model. Thus, as Baudrillard would say, "the principle of reality disappears" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 123). The movie is also interesting because of the depiction of virtual environments in an era when computers were only able to print graphs on rolls of paper. It was released in 1973 and is

nowhere near as as well known as *Thirteenth Floor* from 1999, the movie which that year lost to *The Matrix* in the category of best science fiction release. It is easier to obtain, with basically the same storyline, yet for today's viewer it has more up-todate and appealing effects. Among many other notable works dealing with simulacra, which unfortunately due to the limitations and the aim of this work cannot be mentioned to a further extent, are: *The Truman Show, eXistenZ* and *Dark City*. The common element is a deviation from classic science fiction in terms of focus. There is a lack of a positive future that can be imagined. As in cyberpunk, because of the complexity and ambivalence of today's situation, the distant future is perceived unthinkable or unimaginable. Rather the focus is at most a few decades forward, or there is a theme of deconstruction of the present and past. Perhaps it is because of the exhaustion typical of the postmodern era. "Science fiction from the cybernetic and hyperreal era can only exhaust itself, in its artificial resurrection of "historical" worlds, can only try to reconstruct in vitro, down to the smallest details, the perimeters of a prior world, the events, the people, the ideologies of the past, emptied of meaning, of their original process, but hallucinatory with retrospective truth" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 123).
Another good example might be Steampunk. "Steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction, alternate history, and speculative fiction that came into prominence during the 1980s and early 1990s" (Clute, Grant: 1999, p. 895). With other subgenres, it offers alternate pasts. These genres use a sort of turning point in the past where history takes another course. Usually the tool of change is technology, like a type of engine which, if preferred over electrical and fossil fuel types, would make a great difference. The above-mentioned *Dark City* or *Howl's Moving Castle* are good examples of its visual style. Atompunk, Clockpunk or Dieselpunk are the representatives of other past oriented subgenres. Clockpunk for instance, is very similar to steampunk, but instead of steam engines, clockwork machinery such as springs is used. Because of this, it is sometimes referred to as a steampunk subgenre. Dieselpunk also employs its own type of engine and it is set in the era between the two World Wars. It employs the influences of the time such as film noir or art deco so the visual side of it seems to be most interesting. Atompunk is based on the post-World War Two era. Themes such as nuclear energy, space flight and communist paranoia are among the most frequently employed. Events such as Hiroshima or Chernobyl are among the major influences on this subgenre. The setting is frequently a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Computer games such as Fallout are a good example of its visual style.

Conclusion

What is human, and what is machine-like, alien, or the other, the unfamiliar? The frontier seems to blur. The problem with simulacra lies in the fact that the more advanced the technology of replication and production is, the harder it is to distinguish between a simulacrum and the authentic. The authentic becomes degraded, and also the world around becomes degraded due to the omnipresent forces of entropy typical for postmodern works. If we are really surrounded by an inauthentic world, the task is to search for validity. In the contemporary world, there is no sense in striving for the triumph of icons over simulacra. They have won and are insinuated everywhere. The world is full of simulations and false resemblances, ranging from staged media events to false artefacts in the "real" world, to virtual realities and parallel lives of people in the world of computer simulation. The stories mentioned in this paper imply that the universe itself is a kind of simulacrum, in other words, the world is a puzzle. It is a conundrum and it needs to be solved. The precondition for problem solving is doubt, and those who doubt are rewarded,[3] in this case with the knowledge that things are not always what they appear to be.
These examples represent a turning point in the genre of science fiction, because from some point, it is "no longer a romantic expansion with all the freedom and naivety that the charm of

discovery gave it, but, quite the contrary, it evolves implosively in the very image of our current conception of the universe, attempting to revitalize or reactualize the fragments of simulation, fragments of this universal simulation that has become the so-called real world for us" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 123). The simulacra pursue the search for ontological answers. In our world, these answers are complicated, since the certainty about one valid reality vanishes. It is up to each character, each reader and observer, to negotiate what is right. The reality, at least as a consensual, widely accepted set of values, is lost. It is composed of myriad manifestations, swiftly fluctuating as the point of view changes. There is no ultimate truth, only a never-ending chain of models of reality. Dualism is not the answer anymore, and the boundaries between artificial and real have disappeared. Virtual environments and simulated events have become a part of our primary reality. The drug-induced experience is real, just as are dreams, altered states, or the feelings of androids, for example. Blending occurs on every level and the worlds collide, creating entangled narrations.

The article introduced the basic notion of the concept of simulacra as we perceive them in science fiction stories. Many examples show that third-order simulacra are among the major elements employed in postmodern SF. The message is that the desperate assumption that the truth can be known has lost relevance, burried under layers of simulacra that are still building up. Whether it is due to the ever-advancing technologies of simulation, the growing amount of media-provided experience, or because of creating self-generated subjective worlds of fantasy, an objective reality of the second half of the 20th century is intangible, or, is slowly vanishing, just as the real rots away in the deserts mentioned in Baudrillard's conceptions.

Endnotes

[1] This is discussed in more detail in the diploma thesis on which this paper is based, *The World and its manifestations in the Work of Philip K. Dick (2013)*.

[2] Sisyphus, a king from greek mythology, was punished for his deceitfulness. His task was to roll a boulder up a hill, only to watch it fall back later. The story can be interpreted as portraying the meaninglesness or absurdity of the human position.

[3] Thomas the Apostle is known for questioning Jesus's resurrection when first told of it, and later, because of this doubt, he was the only one allowed to touch his physically wounded body.

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