BETWEEN THE REAL AND SIMULATED
THE REPRESENTATION OF MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS IN BLACK MIRROR’S
“SAN JUNIPERO” AND “BE RIGHT BACK”

Academic article
Word count: 8704

Sofie Steenhaut
Student number: 01307491

Supervisor: Dr. Sander De Ridder

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master New media and society

Academic year: 2016 - 2017
The increasing mediation of interpersonal relationships by social media has predominantly been represented negatively in television and cinema. These representations can be situated as a valuable part of a historical debate in academia and popular discourse between pessimists (naysayers) and optimists (yaysayers). Whereas naysayers claim we live in a “culture of simulation” causing us to feel socially disconnected, yaysayers declare the simulated online complements the real and provides social liberation. Although representations in popular culture do not have a linear effect on the public discourse, they do create meaning which is incorporated in the complex understanding of mediated relationships.

An interesting case in this regard is the near-future science-fiction anthology series *Black Mirror* (Brooker, 2011-). *Black Mirror* touches upon various societal topics concerning new media, including mediated relationships. The near-future sub-genre imagines a future only a short time from now, making these topics feel very close to home. The series thus sparks online debates where familiarities are drawn between the series and real-life, reflecting on what the increasing technology saturation means for our society.

In this paper, we analyse two episodes – *Be Right Back* and *San Junipero* – in *Black Mirror* as case studies in the current representation of the nay- and yaysayer debate on screen. We use an in-depth thematic film analysis - including cinematographic and narrative elements - to interpret the main themes debated by nay- and yaysayers: social disconnection versus social liberation and the dichotomy between the real and the simulated.

We conclude that *Black Mirror* presents the naysayer perspective on mediated relationships, confirming the negative representation on screen, yet simultaneously subverts it by also including the yaysayer perspective. *Black Mirror*, as other popular cultural texts, can therefore contribute to the complex understanding of what our mediated relationships mean for us today, harmonising the nay- and yaysayers.

**Keywords:** Mediated relationships, social media, representation, television, *Black Mirror*, thematic film analysis
ABSTRACT (NDL)

De toegenomen mediëring van interpersoonlijke relaties door sociale media wordt negatief geregisseerd in televisie en cinema. Deze representaties kunnen gesitueerd worden als een waardevol deel van een historisch debat in academisch en populair discours tussen pessimisten (naysayers) en optimisten (yaysayers). Terwijl naysayers poneren dat we in een “culture of simulation” leven, resulterend in sociale isolatie, beweren de yaysayers dat het gesimuleerde online de werkelijkheid complementeert en net sociale vrijheid bewerkstelligt. Hoewel representaties in populaire cultuur geen lineair effect hebben op het openbare discours, creeëren deze wel betekenissen die opgenomen worden in het complexe bewustzijn rond gemedieerde relaties.

Een interessante case in dit verband is de nabije-toekomst science-fiction anthologie serie Black Mirror (Brooker, 2011-). Black Mirror haalt verschillende maatschappelijke thema’s aan, inclusief gemedieerde relaties. Het nabije-toekomst sub-genre verbeeldt een toekomst die niet zo ver in de toekomst ligt. Dit maakt dat de aangehaalde thema's heel bekend aanvoelen. De serie is dan ook onderwerp van online debatten waar de link gelegd wordt tussen de televisieserie en de werkelijkheid, reflecterend over wat de toenemende technologie-saturatie betekent voor onze samenleving.

In deze paper analyseren we twee afleveringen - Be Right Back en San Junipero – in Black Mirror als case studies in de hedendaagse representatie van het nay- en yaysayer debat in televisie en film. We gebruiken een kwalitatieve, thematische film analyse – met inbegrip van zowel de narratieve als de cinematografische elementen – om de belangrijkste thema's besproken in het nay- en yaysayer debat te analyseren: sociale isolatie versus sociale vrijheid en de dichotomie tussen de werkelijkheid en het gesimuleerde.

We concluderen dat Black Mirror het naysayer perspectief op gemedieerde relaties representeert, een bevestiging van de algemene negatieve representatie, maar tegelijkertijd subversief omgaat met dit perspectief door ook het yaysayer perspectief op te nemen. Black Mirror kan daarom, net als andere populaire culturele teksten, bijdragen aan het complexe bewustzijn van wat onze gemedieerde relaties vandaag betekenen, het nay- en yaysayer perspectief verzoenend.

Sleutelwoorden: gemedieerde relaties, sociale media, representatie, televisie, thematische film analyse
# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 2. THE NAY- AND YAYSAYER DEBATE REGARDING MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS

### 2.1 A short sketch of the debate

### 2.2 Naysayers: “Alone Together”

- **2.2.1 Social disconnection**
- **2.2.2 Real vs. Simulation**

### 2.3 Yaysayers: “Networked Individualism”

- **2.3.1 Social liberation**
- **2.3.2 Real vs. Simulation**

## 3. MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS ON SCREEN

## 4. ANALYSING BLACK MIRROR: THEMATIC FILM ANALYSIS

## 5. MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS IN BLACK MIRROR

### 5.1 Plot

### 5.2 Social disconnection vs social liberation

- **5.2.1 Social disconnection**
- **5.2.2 Social liberation**

### 5.3 Real vs. simulation

- **5.3.1 The robotic moment: substituting the real for the simulated**
- **5.3.2 Living with/in the simulated**
- **5.3.3 The authenticity question**
- **5.3.4 Unplugging: a solution?**

## 6. CONCLUSION

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## APPENDIX
1. Introduction

The way in which we communicate and socialize with others - “sociality” – is increasingly mediated by “social” media, most infamous by social networking sites such as Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2017). But what are social media? Are not all media “social”? Social media can be distinguished from the mainstream media of print, radio, and television in the sense that this particular subset of media are fundamentally defined by their sociality. The actual use of the medium determines whether it is a social medium (Bruns, 2015).

What does the increased mediation of our social life mean for our interpersonal relationships? How does social media impact sociality? The key question that dominates the public and academic discourse is whether social media makes people more or less social (Quin & Papacharissi, 2014, p.189-190). In academic discourses, we can identify two opposing visions regarding this question: the naysayers and the yaysayers, both of which have long cultural histories (Baym, 2015, p.1, p. 43; Katz, Rice & Aspden, 2001; Parigi & Henson, 2014, p. 161).

Mediated relationships seem to be negatively represented and discussed in media and popular culture (e.g. Bussmann, 2013; Naughton, 2012; Stout, 2010). Specifically, in cinema and television, representations are predominantly negative (Rosewarne, 2016a, 2016b; Syvertsen, 2017; Young, 2006). According to (post-) structuralists, movies and television are one of many systems of representation through which we make sense of the “real”. Allen (1987) states that television does not simply reflect the real world but constructs representations of the world based on complex sets of conventions. These representations do not have a linear effect on the “real” world but they do create meaning which is incorporated in our complex understanding of the world around us (McKee, 2003). The negative representations can therefore have an impact on the nay- and yay debate regarding mediated relationships, and vice versa.

It is therefore important to analyse the representation of mediated relationships on screen. An interesting case study in this regard is the near-future science-fiction anthology series Black Mirror. The series was first aired on Channel 4 in the UK but was picked up by Netflix for its third season, making it accessible to an international audience. Every episode touches upon a different societal topic concerning new media, including mediated relationships. Black Mirror can be categorized under the near-future science-fiction sub-genre which imagines a future only a short time from now, making it feeling very close to home (Berlatsky, 2016;
Black Mirror does not offer a positive perspective. It is a “suspenseful, satirical series that taps into our collective unease about the modern world” (channel4.com). The series sparks online debates on fora, video-essays, articles, drawing familiarities between the series and real-life, reflecting on what the increasing technology saturation means for our lives (e.g. Chambers, 2017; Wortham, 2015).

In academic literature, a considerable amount of scholars has written about Black Mirror. The series is used as a starting point for reflection on various topics, literally used as a black mirror. Indeed, Black Mirror touches upon topics studied in a variety of disciplines: media and communication studies (Boren, 2015; Huber, 2017; Phillips, 2017; Ungureanu, 2015), cultural studies (Osterman, 2015), sociology (Boren, 2015) and psycho-analysis (Blazer, 2017; Schnebelen, 2016; Singh, 2014).

The notion of representation has however been neglected in academic research. The representations in Black Mirror are used as a soundboard to bounce established theories off and expand on them, yet the episodes themselves are almost never approached from the perspective of film or television studies (except Salem, 2015). Therefore, we will thematically analyse two episodes of Black Mirror - Be Right Back (Brooker & Harris, 2013) and San Junipero (Brooker & Harris, 2016) - as case studies in their representation on the nay- versus yay debate concerning mediated relationships and look at how these perspectives are articulated within the text. By regarding the episodes as cinematic texts, we try to fully comprehend the meaning represented in the episodes. San Junipero and Be Right Back were chosen because they are the only episodes centering around a couple relationship, directed by the same director Owen Harris, in which the mediated relationship takes centre stage. Although Be Right Back has been researched in several papers (Boren, 2015; Singh, 2014; Salem, 2015), San Junipero is underrepresented in academic research on Black Mirror (except Phillips, 2017) and neither have been put side by side for a direct comparison.

In the following sections, we will elaborate upon the nay and yay debate surrounding mediated communication, mainly through the opposing theories of naysayer Sherry Turkle (2011, 2015) and yaysayers Wellman and Rainie (2012). Next, we will look at the way mediated relationships have been represented in cinema and television. We conclude by thematically analysing two episodes from television series Black Mirror in their representation of the nay- and yay-perspective concerning mediated relationships.
2. The nay- and yaysayer debate regarding mediated relationships

2.1 A short sketch of the debate

In the 20th century, research regarding social media and sociality focused on the influence on community. The disagreement in academic discourse started here already. On the one hand, there was the optimistic view. Rheingold (1993) for example put forth the idea that the Internet could facilitate alternative, online communities. He valued these communities as valuable and useful as offline communities. The naysayers on the other hand such as Beniger (1987), Gergen (1991), Nunes (1995) and Turkle (1996) stated that these online communities are not equally valuable as "real" communities and even devalues real-life communities.

Survey research around the turn of the century researched more into the influence of the Internet and social media on interpersonal relationships. The first national survey of the public’s use of the Internet dates from 1995 (Katz & Aspden). The findings supported a more positive interpretation of the Internet's impact in terms of interpersonal communication. About the same time however Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay and Scherlis (1998) launched a longitudinal study of Internet use with a negative conclusion. The participants who used the Internet showed declines in face-to-face communication with family, smaller social circles, and higher levels of loneliness, stress and depressive symptoms. These studies sparked a number of surveys examining the same question, none of them providing consensus on the subject (Shklovski, Kiesler & Kraut, 2006, p. 252). Even recent meta-analyses failed to reach a cohesive conclusion (Parigi et al., 2014; Shklovski et al., 2006).

In the following section, we will dive deeper into recent theories of naysayers and yaysayers. For the naysayers, we will discuss the theories of MIT technology and society professor Sherry Turkle (2011, 2015). For the yaysayers, we will mainly examine Networked (2012) by Wellman and Rainie. The quoted theories contextualise the thematic analysis of the selected episodes of Black Mirror.
2.2 Naysayers: “Alone Together”

2.2.1 Social disconnection

“As we instant-message, e-mail, text, and Twitter, technology redraws the boundaries between intimacy and solitude”, Turkle (2011, p. 11) writes. This statement expresses a technological deterministic perspective. It is not people who shape the use of technology but the technology’s affordances which shapes our actions – “we are shaped by our tools” (Turkle, 2011, p. 10).

Turkle states we have become accustomed to a state of being “alone together”. We are “always on”, always connected, yet we are alone. The constant online connectivity leads us disconnected from real-life relationships. Whenever it suits us, we can wander in and out of the physical real. Your loved one could be with you physically, but always somewhere else at the same time. Mediated conversations are deemed to replace real-life connections. When new communication technologies arise, it has often been accompanied by this same anxiety – e.g. telegraph (Punch, 1906, see Figure 1) or television (Putnam, 2000).

Figure 1. Cartoon “forecast for 1907” (Punch magazine, 1906)

Mediated relationships are preferred because we can keep these online connections at a controlled distance. Turkle refers to this behaviour as the “Goldilocks effect”. The substitution of real relationships for these shallow connections lead to loneliness. Consequently, we tap
back into the network. This state of being “alone together” therefore leads to a paradox: we are lonely but fearful of intimacy.

2.2.2 Real vs. Simulation

This paradoxical state of mind leads to what Turkle calls the “robotic moment”. This means we delegate important human relationships – especially at childhood and old age – to robots. Digital connections and the sociable robot offer the perfect solution to our loneliness but fear of real intimacy. They offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of real friendship.

In the robotic moment, we have started to prefer the simulation over the real. Turkle also wrote about this shift in her book “Life on the screen” (1995): “We are moving towards a culture of simulation in which people are increasingly comfortable with substituting representations of reality for the real” (p. 10-24). Nunes (1995) goes even further and applies Baudrillard’s simulacra concept (1994) to the digital age. Although Baudrillard never directly addressed the issue of mediated relationships, nor the Internet, Nunes (1995, p. 314) states that his comments on telematics, along with his more general critiques of modernity, can provide an interesting means for exploring the real and the simulated. The Internet is a hyperreality, “a real without origin or reality” (Baudrillard, 1994, cited by Nunes, 1995). Indeed, in reality, the Internet is a complex network of host machines that communicate with each other but when we talk about the Internet, we talk about the cyberworld “within”. This metaphor of cyberspace presents the Internet as its own world; it is a simulacrum, a copy without a connection to anything real.

Turkle looks for solutions in her latest book “Reclaiming conversation” (2015). She calls for an unplugging, a return to “reality”: choosing not to carry your phones all the time, carving out spaces at home or work that are device-free – so-called “sacred spaces” for solitude and conversation. This unplugging has been echoed by others as well (Powers, 2010). There even exists an online community “Sabbath Manifesto” where you can pledge to unplug regularly and find information on how to do this.
2.3 Yaysayers: “Networked Individualism”

2.3.1 Social liberation

In opposition to the naysayers, yaysayers dismiss technological determinism: “Technology does not determine human behaviour; humans determine how technologies are used” (Wellman & Rainie, 2012, preface).

Their research is a direct reaction to naysayers, specifically Turkle. They write that by incorporating gadgets into their lives, people have not become disconnected but changed the way they interact with each other: they have become increasingly networked as individuals. This means it is the person who is the focus of the network, not the family, not the work unit, not the neighbourhood nor the social group. This “networked individualism” is a new operating system, it describes the way in which people connect, communicate and exchange information (Wellman & Rainie, 2012).

The networked operating system offers individuals more freedom than people have experienced in the past. More freedom to tailor their interactions and increased opportunities about where and with whom to connect (Wellman & Rainie, 2012). As shared location has lost its status as a prerequisite for a first meeting, the range of potential relational partners is bigger than at any previous point in history, writes Baym (2015). Although people mainly use social media to maintain existing relationships, they are also used to form new relationships. In many cases, relationships emerge naturally out of online communities. People also actively seek new relationships, e.g. on dating websites.

Baym mentions two positive affordances of the Internet in forming relationships (2015, p. 113-118). Firstly, it enables connections that might otherwise not be formed. In online forums and groups, in online gaming communities etc., we bump into people who share our interests rather than those who happen to be in the same physical location. Not only geographical barriers are broken down, also social boundaries lose their meaning. Cross-sex friendship and relationships transcending age barriers for example are more common online than offline. Secondly, online communication lowers the social risk of communicating due to the increased anonymity. This anonymity makes some people more willing to disclose personal information, which fosters intimacy and closeness (McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002).
2.3.2 Real vs. Simulation

Wellman and Rainie (2012) write that mediated communication does not substitute real-life communication but complements it. Jurgenson (2012a) states that the entanglement of the on and offline leads to an “augmented reality”. Our offline lives drive the online life and vice versa. The naysayer’s call to unplug and “reclaim conversation” does not agree with this point of view. Jurgenson (2012b) calls this so-called need to unplug a “fetishisation of the offline”. Because there is no offline, this offline “real” world is a lusted-after fetish object that some claim special ability to attain, and it has always been a phantom.

Walther (1996) states that mediated communication can even be hyperpersonal – more real that face-to-face interactions - because users can create impressions and manage relationships in ways more positively than they might be able to conduct face-to-face thanks to the ability to selectively self-present and edit their appearance. This aligns with the Internet’s positive affordance to lower the social risk and therefore encourage intimacy.

Television and cinema are important intermediaries in the discourse concerning the mediated relationship nay and yay debate. Representations on screen do not have a linear effect on the debate but they do create meaning which is absorbed in our understanding of mediated relationships. In the next section, we will take a look at how mediated relationships have been represented on screen to contextualise our own analysis of Black Mirror.
3. Mediated relationships on screen

Since the mid-1990s the Internet has come to have a distinct presence on screen (Rosewarne, 2016b, p. 36-37). For much of the history of the Internet in film, movies that included the Internet were overwhelmingly defined by the genres of science fiction (The Matrix, 1999; The Lawnmower Man, 1992), horror (The Net, 1995) or were fantastical in their depiction of the Internet (Hackers, 1995) (Tucker, 2014, p. 2-5). It is thus not surprising that negative representations of technology and sociality take the win. Indeed, science fiction in film has always been about exploring and reflecting common fears. The same way horror tends to reflect fears about the present, science fiction reflects worries about where the present might take us if we don’t make different choices (Robinson, 2015).

One of the key narrative themes in science fiction cinema is the duality of humanity versus science, technology and rationality (King & Krzywinska, 2000; Rosewarne, 2016a). This can be a utopian representation in which rationality is presented as an approach that can conquer “irrational” behaviour and fear of the unknown (e.g. The Day The Earth Stood Still, 1951, 2008). But the rational utopian films are far outnumbered by technological nightmares that present technology as having a negative effect on the quality of human life (King et al., 2000, p. 11-35; Matheson, 1992; Young, 2006, p. 195-196). This fear of dehumanisation is also represented in other genres than science fiction. Common tropes are the uploaded-consciousness trope (e.g. Transcendence, 2014), the framing of Internet users as somehow different from “normal” people and as too closely connected to technology (e.g. Lisbeth in The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, 2011; Sheldon in The Big Bang Theory, 2007-) and the blurring of man and machine (e.g. The Lawnmower Man, 1992) (Rosewarne, 2016a, p. 37-40).

We can draw a parallel between this theme and the naysayer perspective on mediated relationships. Humanity, emotions, “hard” real-life relationships are replaced by technological, empty online connections. Indeed, Rosewarne’s (2016b) analysis of over 300 film and television examples – ranging from thrillers through to Christian-drama - confirmed her assumption that the Internet’s role in intimacy is largely framed as problematic.

Young (2006, p. 195-196) states that films about electronic media before the Internet like Tron (1982) and WarGames (1983) already showed a “paranoid discourse” regarding mediated communication, yet they expressed wonder as well about the emerging technologies. The rise of the modern Internet in the 90s created its own unique set of
anxieties (Rosewarne, 2016b), overwhelming the good-humoured fascination of the previous decade (Young, 2006, p. 195-196).

These cyberphobic narratives asked questions about just how “real” interactions are online, if not outright deceit and just how romantic matches are when made through a machine (Rosewarne, 2016b). Syvertsen (2017) analysed five films reflecting themes in media scepticism and resistance from different periods and perspectives: Being there (1979), Videodrome (1983), The Truman Show (1998), Disconnect (2012) and Her (2013). He concluded that all five films portray societies where real-life relationships are under threat, reflecting the naysayers’ perspective on mediated relationships.

Syvertsen (2017) concluded that there is a difference between the television films (Being There, Videodrome and The Truman Show) and the films about social and online media (Disconnect and Her). Firstly, the degree of alienation is more profound in the latter, where the erosion of personal and social bonds has evolved to a point where real-life relationships are depicted as almost completely dysfunctional. In Disconnect, the main characters prefer mediated relationships. As the plot evolves, the intimacy and focus in the online scenes stand in stark contrast to the portrayal of “real-life” interactions which are distant, cold and sometimes aggressive and violent. The film reflects the criticism of naysayers that social and online media draw individuals away from their nearest and dearest, undermining personal bonds and family rituals. In Her, Turkle’s “robotic moment” is represented in that love is transferred to robotic systems. Her and Disconnect thematise the loss of human contact in a mediated reality, loneliness in a society saturated with opportunities for communication. The only hope for the characters of a better life is to take a break from technology and begin talking to each other, echoing the naysayers’ need to unplug.

Secondly, Syvertsen (2017) noted that media is represented as deceptive rather than authentic in all five films but it is driven further in the online and social media films. In Being There, Videodrome and The Truman Show, characters obsess over the borderline between real and fake. But in Disconnect and Her, constant confusion between what is real and what is faked is shown as an integral part of communicating online. In Disconnect, all relationships are deceptive or potentially deceptive, and in Her fakery no longer counts as deception: fake love letters and love affairs with machines are accepted as real and natural. The dehumanisation theme, the duality and erosion of humanity, emotions and real relationships by technological, empty technology and online connections is clearly presented.
Recently, there is a boom of near-future fiction with television shows such as *Black Mirror* (2011-), *Orphan Black* (2013-) and *Humans* (2015-) and films such as *Her*, *Ex Machina* (2014) and *High Rise* (2015). These narratives don't take us to distant worlds but merely take a step or two into the screen we are already looking at (Berlatsky, 2016; Chambers, 2017). Science fiction is not used as a warning about what the future might bring, but a reflection on today's world.

We use two episodes in near-future anthology series *Black Mirror* as case studies to analyse the representation of the nay- versus yay debate concerning mediated relationships.
4. Analysing *Black Mirror*: thematic film analysis

Unlike almost all academic research on *Black Mirror* (except Salem, 2015), we will regard the episodes as cinematographic texts. This means that we will analyse the narrative elements, as well as the cinematographic elements to understand the meaning of the text. Both of these elements form patterns which our minds recognize and link together; they convey meaning (Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 2016, p. 52). If only one of both elements are analysed, a piece of the puzzle, of the meaning of the text is lost. Incorporating the cinematographic elements in our analysis allows us to fully comprehend the meaning represented in the episode.

We take a closer look at the related themes by using an in-depth thematic film analysis. The theme of a text refers to that text's substance, its principal idea, what it is about. Themes are however usually implicit or indirect (Elsaesser & Buckland, 2002). There is no clear-cut way to analyse films for their implicit themes. Therefore, we look onto the film analysis method proposed by Van Kempen (1995). Basically, there are two steps in the analysis of a movie text, or in our case an episode. First, we describe the narrative and cinematographic elements of the episode. Then, we analyse the way in which these elements are combined, how they convey meaning inside the cinematic form.

To register the narrative and cinematographic elements, we will firstly segment the plot. A segment is a narratively meaningful part of the episode (Van Kempen, p. 131). Secondly, we will analyse the episode for “threads”, cinematic elements which return through the episode to discover motives. Various motives assemble a theme (Van Kempen, 1995, p.158). We will do so by systematically documenting the notable narrative and cinematographic elements of the relevant codes – bundles of elements - of each segment. The codes we will analyse are a combination of relevant codes arising from the source material and the relevant codes according to Van Kempen. The full analysis, including screenshots of relevant cinematographic shots, is included in the appendix.
5. Mediated relationships in *Black Mirror*

5.1 Plot

In *Be Right Back*, we meet thirty-somethings Martha and Ash, a long-term couple moving into Ash’s old family house. Ash passes away and Martha is left alone. A friend tells her about a software which collects all of the public data of the deceased and mimics them, creating a sort of social media avatar. After finding out she’s pregnant, Martha tries the software. First, she can chat with it (textual Ash) but quickly she uploads more content so she can talk to it on the phone (oral Ash). She starts to blur the real Ash with the simulation. She goes even further and purchases the real-life version, a second Ash is born (Ash 2.0). At first, she feels like she has got Ash back. But after talking to her sister, she realises the replica is just a simulation. She tries to get rid of it but cannot go through with it. The episode ends with Martha and her ten-year-old daughter visiting the Ash replica in the attic, where he is just a memory.

*San Junipero* tells the story of Yorkie – a white, timid woman - and Kelly – a black, outgoing woman. They meet in the seaside town San Junipero (SJ) in the summer of 1987 and fall in love. It is revealed that SJ is a virtual reality world created as immersive nostalgia therapy for the elderly in which you can “travel back” to other era’s. It also offers the possibility to “pass over” into SJ after death. Kelly – who is in a retirement home - visits Yorkie in the real world and finds out she has been quadriplegic since she was 21 years old and cannot physically react in any way. Yorkie is about to marry Greg, a nurse, so he can sign her euthanasia papers to pass over. Kelly decides to do this instead of Greg. When Kelly visits SJ, she and Yorkie fight because Kelly does not want to pass over when she dies. Her daughter died before the SJ system existed. Therefore, her husband decided not pass over and neither will she. She eventually does decide to pass over and be with Yorkie in the SJ afterlife.

5.2 Social disconnection vs social liberation

The main contradiction between nay- and yaysayers is their contradictory belief whether social media renders us less or more social. *Be Right Back* represents the naysayers’ perspective. Ash’s social media behaviour disconnects him from Martha and when Martha starts using the software that imitates her dead lover, she prefers the easy connection with virtual Ash over real-life contact with her sister Naomi. When Martha is confronted with
reality, she realises how superficial the simulation really is. Mediated connections on social media cannot be equally meaningful and satisfying as real-life relationships.

San Junipero also seems to take this stance. SJ is a “party town”, it is not made to accommodate lasting, deep relationships. The story of Yorkie and Kelly however subverts this narrative in showing it can be done and represents the naysayer’s perspective on mediated relationships: social liberation. The virtual offers more freedom and opportunities to connect with others, breaking physical and social barriers.

5.2.1 Social disconnection

"Just checking you’re still solid. You keep vanishing. Down there {points at his phone}. It's a thief, that thing."
- Martha, segment 1.2

Ash is a representation of what Turkle means by being “always on”. She describes technology like a phantom limb, it has become so much a part of us (2011, p. 18). Indeed, for the short period of time we see the real Ash, he is mostly immersed in his phone. Sarah talks about Ash’s social media use as if about an addiction.

“He was a heavy user, he’d be perfect.”
- Sarah, segment 1.4

The first scene of the episode (segment 1.1) is a perfect illustration of being always on which leads people to ignore their loved ones who are physically present. Ash is sitting in a van, scrolling through a twitter-like social medium. When Martha comes up to the car with two coffees in her hands, Ash does not notice her until she bangs on the window. Narratively, this incident is an example of how we are always “on” which leads us to ignore the people who are physically present. It is the same logic that has been present since the dawn of technology and persists in the digital age: time spent “in” technology draws us away from our physical present loved ones. This is also cinematographically enforced. The first time we see Ash is through the window of the van, blurred by the rain (screenshot 1.1). This blurred screen represents Ash not really being there, he is “in” his smartphone, immersed in the screen. The window also forms a visible barrier between Ash and Martha when she comes up to the car (screenshot 1.2).
In the storyline, it is implied that Ash’s being always “on” has caused his car accident. Due to an unexpected work assignment, Martha can’t accompany Ash to return the rented van. Ash mocks he has to “drive all the way there alone, pick up the car alone, drive all the way back alone”, emphasising each “alone”. Boren (2015) deems this dialogue to be an actual reflection of Ash dreading to be alone. Turkle (2011) indeed states that being always on brings new anxieties of disconnection with it, a kind of panic. People cannot be alone anymore. This could have caused Ash to text while driving. The latter is indeed implied as Ash takes out his phone upon entering the car.

When Martha starts using the software on her phone, she goes into the state of always “on”. When she drops her phone, she freaks out and starts crying, feeling like she is losing Ash all over again. This panic reflects Turkle’s observations. Turkle recounts people saying the loss of a cell phone can “feel like a death” (2011, p. 16-17).

When Martha is “on”, she also avoids real-life contact in preference of Ash’s simulation, the substitution Turkle warns us about. Easier, mediated relationships on networked devices, robots and A.I. are the preferred connection of choice. This motive runs through the episode as Martha ignores her sister Naomi’s calls. Naomi functions as the personification of Martha’s real-life relationships. When Naomi first calls Martha, Martha lies to her sister that everything is fine, implores her not to come and cuts her off quick. She goes back to her laptop to talk to textual Ash. This happens again when Martha goes on a hike while she talks to oral Ash. Naomi calls Martha but she doesn’t answer the phone, preferring to talk to oral Ash.

Martha is confronted with reality when Naomi visits her after Martha doesn’t return her calls. When Naomi leaves, they hug and Naomi says she thinks it’s great she’s moving on. She thinks Martha is already seeing another man because she saw men’s clothes in the
bathroom. After this encounter with reality, Martha starts to get annoyed and ultimately angry at Ash 2.0 for being a mere simulation of Ash instead of the real Ash. In a way, Ash 2.0 is the perfect Ash. He looks like him “on a good day”, he never argues with Martha and is an excellent lover. Yet, this version of Ash does not mean anything to Martha. It is not enough.

“Yeah well, you aren't you, are you? … You're just a few ripples of you. There's no history to you. You're just a performance of stuff that he performed without thinking and it's not enough.”
- Martha, segment 1.8

The episode therefore takes Turkle’s stance that mediated connections on social media cannot be equally meaningful and satisfying as real-life relationships. The rejection of Ash 2.0 conveys that social media is an incomplete representation of people, hence mediated relationships can never be meaningful. The simulation of Ash can never replace the real relationship she had with him.

In *San Junipero*, the superficiality of online connections also seeps into the narrative and cinematography. Social media is not seen as a place for deep, hard relationships, for emotions. It is just meant to be fun. This aligns with Turkle’s critique that relationships are reduced to easy connections. People are seen as “objects to be accessed – and only for the parts we find useful, comforting or amusing” (2011, p. 228).

Yorkie: "You don't know who I am. You don't know what this means."
Kelly: "This means fun. Or it should. And this... This is not fun, okay?"
Yorkie: "So you don't feel bad? Maybe you should feel bad. Or at least feel something."
- Yorkie and Kelly, segment 2.5

In the beginning, Kelly does not seek deeper relationships, she uses other people for her own pleasure. After she had sex with Yorkie, she disappears into other era’s, fleeing from the connection she had with her. Kelly seems to behave according to the “Goldilocks effect” (Turkle, 2011, p. 10-16). Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. People want to be connected but from a distance, in amounts they can control how they are presenting themselves. Kelly wants to have connections, but not too close.
This social media-logic makes it hard to forge meaningful connections. The character of Wes serves as an example of this. He looks for something “more than just sex” but cannot find it, he is lonely and desperate. He therefore winds up in the Quagmire, a sort of dodgy nightclub where people seem to live out their darkest desires. The Quagmire can be read as a liberation, living "limitless". People can come here to do what the offline world doesn’t allow them to do. But it is not represented this way. The Quagmire stands alone in a dusty, raw desert – its isolation emphasised by remote, subdued guitar music. Inside the Quagmire, the people are dressed in black, leather, chains, horns, etc., everything is tinted in a green, red or blue hue, with bright white lights flashing on the scene while hard rock music plays, showing people kissing, holding a snake, choking someone with plastic, someone in a cage… (screenshot 2.14 & 2.15) All of this combined creates a dangerous and scary atmosphere. It could be seen as a visualisation of the “Badlands” theme where the Internet is framed as a geographical location where people are more likely to be different, creepy or completely dangerous (Rosewarne, 2016a, p. 40-42).

*Screenshot 2.14 & 2.15: The Quagmire is presented as dangerous and scary, “Badlands”.*

It is also negatively spoken of by Kelly in her fight with Yorkie.

"*You want to spend forever somewhere nothing matters? End up like Wes? All those lost fucks at the Quagmire trying anything to feel something?*"

- Kelly, segment 2.8

The quagmire is a lonely, desperate place for lost souls. They don’t dare to “unplug” and officially die, therefore staying in some kind of empty existence limbo, desperate to feel something “real”. The Internet is no place to forge meaningful relationships.

The story of Yorkie and Kelly however subverts this narrative in showing it can be done and represents the other side of mediated relationships: social liberation.
5.2.2 Social liberation

Yaysayers state the new “networked” operating system offers individuals more freedom to overcome geographical barriers and connect with others they otherwise would have never met. Yorkie would have never been able to form her relationship with Kelly without the virtual reality world SJ. SJ can be defined as a social medium in the story of Kelly and Yorkie because the actual use of the medium is connecting the two women. The technology gives Yorkie the opportunity to break her physical barriers. This theme is made apparent through dialogue.

"Without this place, I never would've met someone like you".
- Yorkie, segment 2.6

Not only physical barriers are broken down. As Baym (2015, p. 113-118) sets forth, social boundaries lose their meaning as well in online relationship formation. Yorkie was not accepted by her family when she came out to them. When she “arrives” in SJ, she still carries these social boundaries around with her in her mind. When Kelly asks her to dance with her, she hesitates. Dancing with a woman wasn’t tolerated in her offline world.

Kelly: "We have to dance to this!"
Yorkie: "With each other? Oh no, dance floors aren't my thing."
Kelly: "Oh, let’s not limit ourselves."
- Kelly and Yorkie, segment 2.1

Yorkie also carries her offline limitations visually with her. Her glasses are a symbol for the limits imposed on her by her offline environment and situation. In segment 2.2, Yorkie is preparing herself to go to the bar Tucker’s and meet Kelly for the second time. The camera zooms in on her reflection in the mirror (screenshot 2.8). She takes of her glasses and tries on different outfits to various soundtracks. The significance of her taking of her glasses is accentuated by an extreme close-up of her glasses being put down (screenshot 2.9).
In the end, when Yorkie “passes over” to SJ, she takes off her glasses and leaves them behind on the beach (screenshot 2.10). She accepts herself, without limits, she is free. Later on, she wears playful sunglasses, having fun in her new life (screenshot 2.11).

5.3 Real vs. simulation

A second disagreement discussed is the contradictory perspective of nay- and yaysayers on the “real” offline - and the “simulated” online. Naysayers blame the social disconnection on the present “culture of simulation”. We have replaced the real for the simulated, or even for simulacra. Yaysayers do not agree with this substitution and claim the simulated complements the real. It is even considered more real and authentic by some.

Be Right Back can be seen as an illustration of Turkle’s “robotic moment”, the complete substitution of the real for the simulated. The emphasis on the fake nature of simulations is visually present in both episodes through the motive of mirrors. Mirrors are a constant reminder that what we are looking at is not real. San Junipero however subverts this theme;
Yorkie and Kelly defy this unauthentic nature and form a lasting, deep relationship. The question whether we can be authentically ourselves online - and therefore form authentic relationships - is also explored through the motive of Yorkie’s glasses.

Naysayers try to find a solution for the social disconnection resulting from the substitution of the real for the simulated. They call for an unplugging, a return to “reality”. This unplugging is represented in Be Right Back and San Junipero. San Junipero however again subverts this theme by questioning whether it really matters if we blur reality with simulation. Be Right Back also contains this question but much less outspoken. In the end, San Junipero doesn’t only makes us wonder, it concludes it doesn’t really matter whether we live in reality or simulations.

5.3.1 The robotic moment: substituting the real for the simulated

Narratively, Be Right Back serves as a perfect example of Turkle’s “robotic moment”. Instead of relying on her real-life relationships – exemplified by her sister Naomi – Martha relies on a simulation of her dead boyfriend to cope with her grief.

As time progresses, Martha “upgrades” the simulation from text-based, to oral-based, to eventually creating a new Ash. Her perception of the simulation evolves with these incremental steps. At first, she recognises it for what it is: an imitation. In segments 1.5 (textual Ash) and 1.6 (oral Ash), she still makes the distinction between the deceased Ash and the simulation. This is apparent through dialogue; she says for example “You sound just like him” or “That’s just the sort of thing he would say”. At the end of segment 1.6 however, she doesn’t make the distinction anymore. After getting an ultrasound, she drops her phone while talking to oral Ash. She freaks out and starts crying, feeling like she is losing Ash all over again. She rushes home and recharges her phone. The phone still works and oral Ash calls her. She cries and tells it she’s sorry for dropping “him”.

“I dropped you, I’m so sorry.”

- Martha, segment 1.6

After this incident, oral Ash proposes the "next level" which Martha eagerly accepts. She gets a hump of synthetic flesh delivered to her home and follows the instructions of oral Ash. While Martha is talking to it on the phone, there is a shift of focus between Martha and the phone, to amplify how she treats oral Ash like a person (screenshots 1.11 & 1.12).
Screenshots 1.11 & 1.12: Martha treats oral Ash like a person, emphasized by focussing on the phone when “he” talks.

In segment 1.7, the substitution is complete with the rebirth of Ash 2.0. Although Martha is uneasy at first, they have sex at the end of the segment. Afterwards, she tells Ash 2.0 she loves him to which he replies “I love you too”, mimicking the real Ash and Martha during the first sex scene.

5.3.2 Living with/in the simulated

The increasing ease Martha has with substituting representations of reality for the real would be an example for Turkle to support her claim we have shifted to a culture of simulation (1995, p. 10-24). She attributes this cultural shift to the eroding boundaries between the real and the virtual. The ambiguity about the difference between reality and simulation is a recurrent theme in both episodes through the motive of mirrors and reflections. Mirrors are a constant reminder that what we are looking at is not real.

The first time we notice this in Be Right Back is when the real Ash takes a picture of a childhood photograph to post it online. Visually, the only clear image in the shot is the picture Ash is taking from the photograph (screenshot 1.3). He shares it because others might find it funny, yet the memory behind the picture is not funny at all. The picture was taken at the first family outing after Ash’s brother died. The picture in itself is therefore already fake because young Ash was smiling, but it was a fake smile. The picture Ash posts online is consequently an unauthentic post of an unauthentic picture. To take this ‘unauthenticity’ even further, Ash 2.0 is seen in a later scene commenting on the picture, calling it “funny” (screenshot 1.10). While doing so, he is reflected in two mirrors. He becomes Baudrillard’s simulacrum: a copy with no foundation in reality.
Another example of the mirror motive occurs during Ash and Martha’s sex scene in the beginning of the episode (segment 1.2). The first shot of this scene is the reflection in a mirror of Ash and Martha having sex (screenshot 1.4). From that point of view, it looks pretty exciting. But when the camera pans, we see the real deal and the sex turns out be quite boring. This scene contrasts with the sex scene between Ash 2.0 and Martha in segment 1.7. The sex is amazing, since Ash 2.0 has learned “set routine based on pornographic videos”. Other examples are included in the appendix.

The mirror motive is also used in *San Junipero*. A lot of the walls inside Tucker’s are cladded with mirror-like panels, showing distorted reflections (screenshots 2.1 & 2.2). The reflections of the people in the mirrors are warped, vague, hinting at the fake nature of SJ. SJ can be seen as a “hyperreality”, with no resonation to a real world.
The difference with *Be Right Back* however lies in the subverting of the motive. Although the mirrors constantly remind us SJ is not real, Yorkie and Kelly defy this unauthentic nature and form a lasting, deep relationship.

The most important scenes in this regard are the scenes inside the bathroom at Tucker’s. In the first bathroom scene in segment 2.2, Yorkie follows Kelly inside after a flirtatious game in which the two kept glancing over at each other across the room while Kelly talked and danced with a guy. When Yorkie enters the bathroom, she can be seen through a double mirror shot (screenshot 2.3). Kelly keeps looking in the mirror at her own reflection, still playing a game with Yorkie. The camera focusses on the reflections in the two separate mirrors (screenshot 2.4). When Yorkie drops the act and shows her vulnerability to Kelly, the mirrors fade as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them (screenshot 2.5). The women have found a true connection inside a world of simulations.
In the second bathroom scene in segment 2.5, Yorkie confronts Kelly about hiding from her. When Yorkie enters, Kelly is again seen looking at her own reflection. She is keeping up appearances, she wants to present herself in a way she thinks she’s supposed to (screenshot 2.6). They fight and Yorkie leaves Kelly alone in the bathroom. She looks at herself again in the mirror and punches her reflection (screenshot 2.7). The glass shatters but her hand is unscathed and when she looks up, the mirror is whole again. She breaks the simulation of herself and accepts her deeper feelings for Yorkie. Yet, she cannot break the simulation completely. The mirror fixing itself immediately is a reminder that they are still inside the virtual, the unreal.

5.3.3 The authenticity question

The question whether we can be authentically ourselves online is explored through the motive of Yorkie’s glasses.
As stated before, Yorkie’s glasses are a visualisation of her offline limitations. It does however also signify Yorkie’s authenticity at the same time. When Yorkie meets Kelly for the first time, Kelly remarks how refreshing it is meeting someone who is “authentically” themselves.

"Don't get me wrong. It's refreshing. I mean, look around. People try so hard to look how they think they should look. They probably saw it in some movie. But I liked these {glasses}. You're authentically you."

- Kelly, segment 2.1

When Yorkie is trying on different outfits before meeting Kelly for the second time in segment 2.2 and takes of her glasses, the authenticity question creeps up. Is Yorkie trying to break her limits or is she just faking? The camera films her reflection in the mirror to emphasize the artificial nature of her make-overs (screenshot 2.8). When Yorkie passes over to SJ in segment 2.8, she takes off her glasses and leaves them behind on the beach. As stated before, this can be read as Yorkie leaving behind her limitations. But it also raises questions about who Yorkie really is. Without her glasses, her limitations, is she still herself? And are the relationships she builds therefore authentic?

From a naysayer perspective, it would be argued she isn’t her authentic self anymore, she fully substituted the simulation for reality and the connections formed are therefore not real. From a yaysayer perspective however, it would be argued that SJ offers Yorkie to engage in “hyperpersonal” communication (Walther, 1996). Without the interference of the environmental reality, social evaluations are not impeded by messy hair, lack of make-up or other imperfections, pronounced physical distractors or disabilities. She can be her true self.

5.3.4 Unplugging: a solution?

Naysayers try to find a solution for the social disconnection resulting from the substitution of the real for the simulated. They call for an unplugging, a return to “reality”.

Be Right Back offers the same solution. When Ash keeps ignoring Martha in segment 1.1, she firmly says “glove box”. The immediate response of Ash putting his phone inside the glove box signifies this is something that has happened before and this is their compromised solution to the problem.
We also see the unplugged theme represented in Naomi. She is seen twice in homely settings with her kids while Martha calls her. The first time (segment 1.3), Naomi answers her phone. She is comforting Martha about Ash’s delay. In the meantime, she is cleaning toys while her husband and children watch television next to her. She is not present in this family moment but elsewhere. The second time Martha reaches out to her sister, Naomi doesn’t hear her phone ringing because she is busy with her children (segment 1.5). These two scenes seem to voice the opinion that family time should be an unplugged zone.

San Junipero also seems to follow Turkle that there should be unplugged moments but subverts it at the same time. Indeed, there is a time limit to the elderly being plugged in the SJ system. The reason behind the limitation is so the elderly won’t confuse reality with the simulation. Kelly’s reply however subverts the idea that this matters.

Greg: "They say you go crazy when you've had too much. You don't leave your seat. You disassociate body from mind."
Kelly: "Like that doesn't happen in every senior home already."
- Greg & Kelly, segment 2.7

5.3.5 Reality and simulation: does it really matter?

In Be Right Back, Martha’s friend Sarah serves as a catalyst for questions about how it matters whether something is real or not. The software is suggested to Martha by Sarah, who also used it after losing her husband. In the dialogues between Sarah and Martha, the duality between the real and simulation is explored. At the funeral, Sarah talks about the “unreal” feeling she got after her husband Mark died.

"It's not real, is it? At Mark's wake I sat there thinking 'It's not real'. The people didn't look real, their voices weren't real. It's like you're out on a spacewalk and no one can..."
- Sarah, segment 1.4

The next conversation occurs after Sarah signs Martha up for the software without her knowledge. Martha calls her, angry about what she has done. Sarah urges her to try.

Martha: "It won't be him"
Sarah: “No, it's not. But it helps."
- Martha and Sarah, segment 1.5
These two conversations are the only two between the two friends, supporting our claim that Sarah’s purpose is to make us wonder about the importance of “reality”. If it helps, who cares? The reality of losing one’s partner might seem more unreal than talking to a simulation of them.

*San Junipero* doesn’t only make us wonder, it proves it doesn’t really matter whether we live in reality or hyperreality. In the final segment 2.9, shots of Kelly and Yorkie having their happily ever after(life) in SJ (screenshots 2.16 & 2.18) intersperse with shots from Kelly’s data being uploaded to the SJ system (screenshots 2.17 & 2.19). The scenes “in” SJ are tinted by a pink neon light filter. This contrasts with the harsh blue, cold colours of the datacentre. By placing the real – the datacentre – and the virtual, the artificial – SJ – next to each other, the episode seems to it doesn’t really matters what is real and what not. If it is real for you, and you are happy, then that is all that matters.

*"It looks so real. It feels so real."
- Yorkie, segment 1.8*
6. Conclusion

We analysed the episodes Be Right Back and San Junipero of the dystopian, near-future science-fiction anthology series Black Mirror as case studies in the current representation of the nay- and yay debate concerning mediated relationships on screen.

By using an in-depth thematic film analysis, we interpreted the themes related to mediated relationships and the continuous debate: social disconnection versus social liberation and the dichotomy between the real and the simulated. The naysayers claim that social media renders us less social, while the yaysayers declare the opposite. Naysayers attribute the social decline to the present “culture of simulation”: we have replaced real relationships for simulated, fake online connections. Yaysayers have a contradictory perspective on the “real” offline - and the “simulated” online: the simulated complements the real. Some even consider the online more real and authentic.

As would be expected from the dominant negative perspective on screen and the “black” rationale of the series, the pessimist point of view is represented in both episodes. Be Right Back represents the naysayers in their stance on social disconnection, as well as their position on the difference between the real by the simulated. The episode concludes that mediated connections do not signify and evoke loneliness. The only way out is to unplug. San Junipero also includes negative representations of mediated relationships. The social virtual reality medium SJ is represented as fake and not suitable to accommodate lasting, deep relationships. The real and the simulated are also not meant to get mixed up since the SJ system comes with a time limit.

San Junipero however subverts both themes and represents the yaysayer perspective. Firstly, thanks to the social medium, Yorkie is able to break her physical and social barriers and develop a lasting, deep relationship with Kelly. Secondly, the “fake” nature of social media is challenged. Is Yorkie more or less herself when she has let go of her offline self? Finally, San Junipero proposes it does not really matter if we blur the lines between the real and the simulated. Be Right Back also poses this question but reaches a different conclusion.

Black Mirror therefore confirms the negative perspective on mediated relationships on screen and subverts it at the same time. Black Mirror, as other popular cultural texts, can thus contribute to a more balanced representation of the nay- and yay debate on mediated
relationships in film and television. This can add to the complex understanding of what our mediated relationships mean for us today, finding a middle ground between pessimists and optimists.

It should be noted that the used method is not objective. The analyst is an undeniable part of a qualitative film analysis. We try however to overcome this limitation by encapsulating the series *Black Mirror* into the history of mediated relationships on screen. Further research could analyse the reception of representations on mediated relationships to consider how the audience gives meaning to these articulations and how these representations contribute in their understanding of what the increasing mediation means for our interpersonal relationships.
Books and readers


**Academic articles**


**Unpublished sources**


Internet sources


**Audiovisual sources**


Appendix

This appendix includes the analysis of the segments of the two analysed episodes *Be Right Back* and *San Junipero*. The relevant narrative and cinematographic elements of specific codes are noted. The analysed codes are a combination of relevant codes arising from the source material and the relevant codes according to Van Kempen (1995, p. 161). Screenshots referring to important cinematographic motifs are also included.

Codes

- **Narrative elements:**
  - Day/Night
  - Weather
  - Place
  - Characters
  - Plot

- **Cinematographic elements**
  - Visual elements:
    - Camera use (distance, movement, framing, sharpness)
    - Mise-en-scène (colours, lighting)
  - Sound elements:
    - Music
    - Sounds

Abbreviations

*Distance camera-object*

- ECU: extreme close-up
- CU: close-up
- MCU: medium close-up
- TS: total shot
- LS: long shot
- ELS: extreme long shot

*Characters: Be Right Back*

- A: Ash
- TA: Textual Ash
- OA: Oral Ash
- A2: Ash 2.0
• M: Martha
• N: Naomi (M’s sister)
• S: Sarah (M’s friend)

Characters: San Junipero

• Y: Yorkie
• K: Kelly
• W: Wes
• AG: Arcade guy
• G: Greg
• SJ: San Junipero

Screenshots

Be Right Back

Screenshot 1.1
First image of Ash, behind a blurry window.

Screenshot 1.2
The window is a visual barrier between A and M.

Screenshot 1.3
Uploading a fake replica of a fake picture on social media; a simulacrum.

Screenshot 1.4
M and A are making love, first thing we see is the scene in a mirror.
Screenshot 1.5
Mirror motive.

Screenshot 1.6
Mirror motive.

Screenshot 1.7
Mirror motive.

Screenshot 1.8
M’s reflection in the ‘black mirror’ of her laptop. Mirror motive

Screenshot 1.9
Uploading content of A, first see M’s reflection. Mirror Motive.

Screenshot 1.10
Ash 2.0 is the ultimate simulacrum. Double mirror shot.
Screenshot 1.11
Martha treats oral Ash like a person, emphasized by focussing on the phone when “he” talks.

Screenshot 1.12
Martha treats oral Ash like a person, emphasized by focussing on the phone when “he” talks.

San Junipero

- Mirror motive

Screenshot 2.1
Mirrors distorting the reflections of Tucker’s.

Screenshot 2.2
Blurred reflection of Y in the mirror.

Screenshot 2.3
Double-mirror shot.

Screenshot 2.4
Only reflections in the mirror in focus. K is still playing a game, pretending.
Screenshot 2.5
Mirror shot fades as they look to each other.

Screenshot 2.6
K looking at herself in the mirror.

Screenshot 2.7
K punches the mirror which cracks but instantly repairs.

- Glasses motive

Screenshot 2.8
Y looks at her reflection.

Screenshot 2.9
Y puts down her glasses.
Y lays down her glasses and leaves them behind.

Y is wearing sunglasses.

- Lighting contrasts

Neon lights Tucker's.

Subdued, grey colours at beach house.

At the quagmire, red lights.

At the quagmire, green lights.
Screenshot 2.16
The hyperreality SJ.

Screenshot 2.17
The real SJ; a datacentre.

Screenshot 2.18
The hyperreality SJ.

Screenshot 2.19
The real SJ; a datacentre.
**Segment analysis: Be Right Back**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>TIME (minutes)</th>
<th>NARRATIVE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>VISUAL ELEMENTS</th>
<th>SOUND ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Title</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Day/night</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Day/night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Weather</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Weather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Where</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Characters</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>00:16 - 02:30</td>
<td>- Van</td>
<td>Camera techniques</td>
<td>Colours are dark, Colours are dark,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td></td>
<td>- A &amp; M</td>
<td>(distance, movement, blue hue.</td>
<td>blue hue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Night</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Plot</td>
<td>framing and sharpness)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Raining</td>
<td></td>
<td>A is sitting in a van, waiting at a gas</td>
<td>M is wearing a light</td>
<td>Hear news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>station. He is scrolling through a social</td>
<td>blue raincoat.</td>
<td>bulletin on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>media application on his smartphone -</td>
<td></td>
<td>the radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Twitter like (small texts).</td>
<td></td>
<td>about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M comes up to the car in the pouring rain</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with two coffees in her hands.</td>
<td></td>
<td>synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When M arrives at the car and calls out to</td>
<td></td>
<td>flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A to open the door, A doesn't notice her.</td>
<td></td>
<td>advances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When he does open the door, he keeps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ignoring her to take the coffees and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>immersed in his smartphone. She asks him</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I snotted in yours, is that okay?&quot;. He</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>responds with &quot;Yeah... What?&quot; He</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>obviously didn't listen to her. He</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>apologizes. When he takes his</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>smartphone, M retorts with &quot;glove box&quot;,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>signifying this is something that has</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>happened before and this is their solution to the problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They drive on and sing along to the radio.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Camera techniques**
Dolly shot to show the gas station in the rain.

**Mise-en-scène**
Colours are dark, blue hue.

**Sound**
Hear news bulletin on the radio about "intelligent synthetic flesh advances."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.2 The Picture</th>
<th>02:33 - 05:46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House (just moving in, used to be A’s family home)</td>
<td>- Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A &amp; M</td>
<td>- Raining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot:</td>
<td>They are moving into a new house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sees a picture of himself as a young boy and sighs. He starts looking for his phone. M notices and says &quot;glove box&quot;. A retrieves his phone from the glove box in the rain. He takes a picture of the picture to post on the social network. M is in the kitchen.</td>
<td>A is wearing a green rain coat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While he is on his phone, A ignores M again. She throws a towel at him. A: &quot;What was that for?&quot; M: &quot;Just checking you’re still solid. You keep vanishing. Down there (points at his phone). It’s a thief, that thing.&quot;</td>
<td>House interior is pale green, beige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate conversation between A and M.</td>
<td>Brown, warm colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells about the photograph, how it isn’t a</td>
<td>have you&quot; - Yvonne Elliman (1977) &quot;How Deep Is Your Love&quot; – Bee Gees (1977)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A tells M he loves the Bee Gees. She doesn't believe him at first. M: "It's just... It's just not very you."
He starts singing his favourite Bee Gees song "How Deep Is Your Love". Go from the switching close-ups in the car to a LS of the van driving in the dark. Screen turns black --> Title

Title
sweet photograph but a bad memory since it was the first family outing after his brother died. His mother dealt with this loss by removing the pictures, their memories to the attic. She did the same when A's dad died. The picture of young A, "giving her a fake smile" is the only one left. M: "She didn't know it was fake." A: "Maybe that made it worse?" M kisses A's forehead.

A and M make love. It is not the most exciting sex - A climaxes before M, she comforts him about it, telling him not to worry about it – but it is loving. They tell they love each other.

Camera switches between close-ups of their faces. M looks compassionately at A. Shot of them in the sofa with the fire on the background.

First thing we see is the reflection of the sex scene in a mirror. It looks pretty exciting. But when the camera turns, reality seeps in and the sex turns out be quite boring.

1.3 Waiting

- 05:47-08:53
- House
- A & M
- Plot:
  M gets a job so she can't go with A to return the van. He mockingly says "It's fine. I'll drive all the way there alone, pick up the car alone, drive all the way back alone," always emphasizing the word alone. He kisses her forehead and goes out. When A steps into the car, he immediately takes out his phone. He drives off.

  M is working, she is drawing on a sort-of digital canvas. We see time progressing because she looks at the clock and the sun is setting.

  M gets worried. She calls A but reaches his

  The reflection in the window is filmed so we see the car leaving and M inside the house simultaneously.

  As time progresses, it gets darker.

Music is dark, ominous
voicemails. She calls the car rental service
to check if A returned the van, which he
didn’t.

As it gets even darker, she calls N, pacing
in the kitchen. N is playing with her kid
while she is on the phone. While N is
comforting M nothing bad has happened,
police arrive at the house. She opens the
door, sees the policemen and quickly
closes it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>Funeral</th>
<th>08:54 – 10:22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Day</td>
<td>- Funeral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- M &amp; S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Plot:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M sits in the car to the funeral.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the funeral, M sits down next to S who
has also lost her husband.
S: "It's not real, is it? At Mark's wake I sat
there thinking 'it's not real'. The people
didn't look real, their voices weren't real.
It's like you're out on a spacewalk and no
one can..."
M interrupts her. S recommends a software
that helps, that allows M to talk to A.
S: "He was a heavy user, he'd be perfect.”
As she pushes the subject, M snaps and
yells "Shut up".

| The green trees are|
| racing by through the|
| window (previously they|
| were static, quiet,|
| balanced). Now it is a|
| flux, something is|
| changing. We get a|
| feeling of M going|
| through it, she is letting it|
| happen to her.|

| During the conversation,|
| the person who is talking|
| is clear while the other is|
| out of focus.|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.5</th>
<th>Pregnancy and textual Ash</th>
<th>10:23 – 15:58</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Day</td>
<td>- House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Plot:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M works on the house. She paints – yet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Paints the faded colours|
| white. She wants to start|
| over.|

| The music |
| Night | leaves the markings on the wall charting A's growth as he grew up, cleans and rips out the carpet. She is trying to cope with her loss and move on. She vomits. She checks her e-mails. She got an e-mail from S to tell her she signed her up. She also got an e-mail with book recommendations to buy. All of them revolving around coping with grief. She winces and deletes it. Then she gets an e-mail from Ash. She gasps and deletes it quickly. She calls S to tell her she doesn't want it, it hurts, it's obscene and sick. S explains how the software works. It collects all of the public data of the deceased and mimics them. M: "It won't be him"  S: "No, it's not. But it helps." She tries to move on, working. She vomits again. She takes a pregnancy test. It's positive. She angrily throws the test away. She tries to call N. She is not answering because she is busy with her household, her kids. She tries to resist the urge to tell TA about the pregnancy. She gives in and opens the e-mail. It says "touch to talk". She touches it and the software starts downloading. She asks TA "Is that you"? He retorts with |
|---|---|---|
| | Focus on N's ringing phone, N and her kinds on the background are out of focus. When she gasps after receiving A's e-mail, her cyan-painted fingernails stand out. Focus on N's ringing phone, N and her kinds on the background are out of focus. When she gasps after receiving A's e-mail, her cyan-painted fingernails stand out. Focus on N's ringing phone, N and her kinds on the background are out of focus. When she gasps after receiving A's e-mail, her cyan-painted fingernails stand out. Focus on N's ringing phone, N and her kinds on the background are out of focus. |
| | Cyan-painted fingernails, wall of the bathroom behind M also cyan. The interface of the "chat room" is black and white. Resembles a memorial card. The interface of the "chat room" is black and white. Resembles a memorial card. The interface of the "chat room" is black and white. Resembles a memorial card. The interface of the "chat room" is black and white. Resembles a memorial card. The interface of the "chat room" is black and white. Resembles a memorial card. |
| | and sounds are subdued. The music isn't dark but tingling, small, hopeful. The jingle of the pregnancy test, announcing M is pregnant contrasts with her reaction. Hopeful, melancholic music swells as she is |
a joke, as real-life A would do. M laughs. She starts crying when she tells TA she's pregnant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.6 Oral Ash</th>
<th>15:58 -24:30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Night → day -</td>
<td>- House, cliffs, doctor’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- M, N, OA</td>
<td>- Plot:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N calls M. She lies that everything is fine, implores her not to come and cuts her off quick. She goes back to her laptop and says to TA she wishes she could speak to him. He tells her it is possible. M uploads video’s and audio recordings of A to the software. When the configuration is successful, OA calls her. OA sounds just like real A. M still makes the distinction though. &quot;You sound just like him.&quot; “That’s just the sort of thing he would say. “You were.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next day, M goes hiking. Through her earpiece she talks to OA and uses the camera on her phone to show OA her surroundings. She talks about the first time she went on that hill with him and how he told her the place was a famous lovers' leap where doomed couples jumped to their death in Victorian times. He responds that everyone who jumped there, jumped alone. He looked it up. Naomi calls her but she ignores the call.

It's completely dark besides her screen. The sudden darkness signifies she has been talking to TA for quite a while. Dolly shot of the room where M is sitting on her bed. We see her reflection in the mirror first before we see her. First shot is a perfect diagonal line on screen. This accentuates her getting back on her feet. The software is helping her grief, it is positive. The trees that we have always seen from outside a window, she is walking right into them, between them.

Talking to TA: tingling, hopeful, sort of wondrous music.

On the hike, she wears her light blue jacket. She is wearing his green sweater underneath. M is surrounded by the green nature and blue sea. Return of the colours when they were together.
M is getting an ultrasound. She records the sound for OA. When she walks out of the office talking to him, she drops her phone. She freaks out and starts crying. She rushes home and recharges her phone. The phone still works and OA calls her. She cries and tells him she's sorry.

M: "I dropped you, I'm so sorry."

OA proposes the "next step".

| 1.7 Ash 2.0: Right back where we started from | 24:30 - 35:07 | - House - M & A2 - Plot: The package gets delivered. M opens the package. She gasps. She says "Say something" to the lifeless hump of flesh in front of her. The camera focus shifts to the phone on the foreground. OA answers: "Let me see." M takes a picture of the box's content. She says it doesn't look like him. OA tells her it's blank until it is activated and to get the bath ready. She is mesmerized by the flesh in the plastic, touches the body, presses the thigh. OA urges her to get the bath ready. |
| | - Night - Windy | |
|  | | In the bathroom, M puts the body and electrolytes in the bath. All the while talking to OA. In the living room, OA tells M to not turn the lights on, to "let it brew". His voice starts to scramble as "it is starting to work". OA disconnects and M is left alone. She stands up from the couch and closes the window. |

When M drops the phone, the camera becomes unfocused, blurry, in and out of focus.

Harmonious.

When she touches his skin, her cyan fingernails are accentuated. This cyan is associated with the character of M, but it often seems to be a symbol for M's connection to A whom she is desperately trying to get back.

Creepy, eerie music.

Loud diegetic
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>She goes upstairs and listens at the bathroom door, we can hear the water bubbling, &quot;brewing&quot;.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M waits in the kitchen. She sooths herself by singing &quot;Right Back Where We Started From&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M hears sounds from upstairs. She goes to the hallway, A2 comes down the stairs. He jokes about his &quot;undignified entrance&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M &amp; A2 sit in on the couch. She goes into the kitchen to have a drink. A2 follows her. M: &quot;You look like him on a good day.&quot; A2: “The photos we keep tend to be flattering.” M traces his skin with her hands. He explains the technology. She starts crying, tells A2 how much she missed &quot;him&quot; and kisses him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the bedroom, M and A2 take their Shot from outside the house, through the window. Outside it's dark with a looming dark shape on the right of the screen, almost like a cross. The rectangular shape of the window exemplifies M being trapped in this situation, she can't go back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriller elements in this scene. The suspense is heightened by the frontal follow shot of M walking towards the staircase and the CU of A2’s feet walking down the stairs. When she touches A2, ECU of her hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we see A2 for the first time, he stands in front of a cyan door, again symbolising her connection to A. Cyan fingernails stand out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sounds, like the creaking stairwell, the wind, M's ragged breath. &quot;Right Back Where We Started From&quot; - Maxine Nightingale (1975). Creepy sounds and music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
clothes off. M tells A2 that he had a mole on his collarbone. A2 immediately grows one on the indicated spot. M tries to initiate sex but A2 does not respond as desired. He tells her there is no record of his sexual response and he can turn his erection on and off as he pleases. She kisses him and they have amazing sex. Just like with A, she tells him "I love you". He tells her the same. She gasps.

Sex scene: blooming, intense piano music.

1.8 Confrontation with the real

- Day → night
- House
- M, A2 & N
- Plot:
  M wakes up to find A2 with his eyes open. She startles and tells him to try to sleep next time.

M is painting. A2 comes in to ask if she needs anything. N arrives. M urges A2 to hide in the bedroom. They talk in the kitchen. When N leaves, M tells her they'll keep in touch more, but it is obvious she doesn't mean it. They hug and N tells M that she thinks it's great "she's moving on". She thinks M is already seeing another man because she saw men's clothes in the bathroom. M reacts shocked.

M goes into the kitchen to get a glass of water. A2 comes in to check on her. He ask her what "her friend" said. M reacts angry, she says that was her sister and that he knows her. M drops her glass. She shoves A2 away as he tries to help her clean it up. A2 has a chard of glass in his

The colours M uses in her paintings are very bright and happy. This contrasts with her previous paintings which were dark.

When N leaves, it's already dark so they talked for a long time.

When N leaves and M is left wondering if she really moved on, the wondrous music swells but there is a sharp tone in it which grows to overwhelm
hand. M looks apprehensive as he pulls it out, without bleeding.

M and A2 are lying in bed. M can't sleep. She gets even more annoyed with A2, she tells him if he is going to pretend being asleep, he can at least breathe. He tries but she sighs and turns the light on. She says it doesn't work, she can tell he is faking it. He asks her if she wants him to have sex with her. She asks him if he can just go downstairs. He immediately agrees. She gets upset because Real A wouldn't have meekly agreed and put on a fight. He tries to comfort her but she yells to get out. A2 is confused, M comes after him and pushes and hits him.

M: "You're not enough of him. You are nothing."
She tells him to fight her, to hit her. But he says he doesn't do that.
A2: "Did I ever hit you?"
M: "No, of course not. But you might have if I've done this…or this…{pushing and hitting him}"
He does offers her to insult her. She again tells him to get out. A2 leaves.

As A2 leaves, LS of M standing in the corridor, looking boxed in the darkness. A2 walks in the garden, he disappears in the darkness.

The sweet melody.
When A2 pulls the chard of glass out of his hand, the wondrous music plays. There is fascination about this technology.
| Day: Sunny | Plot: M wakes up. She looks out the window and sees A2 standing in the yard. A2 tells her he can't go further than 25 metres from his activation point unless his administrator is with him. He jokes and she laughs. He asks if he can come back inside. He feels "a bit ornamental out here".

When he's inside he looks at the photograph of A and says "funny", just like A posted online. M asks him to put it down.

They get in the car. The drive safe sign flickers like a memory. The song "How Deep Is Your Love" comes on the radio and FSA reacts with "cheesy", just like A would think according to people who didn't know him that well.

They arrive at the same spot where M went hiking, the famous lovers' leap. He jokingly yells "don't do it". She says she's not going to, and that A would have figured out what was going on. She says "jump".

A2: "I never expressed suicidal thoughts. Or self-harm."
M: "Yeah well, you aren't you, are you? You're just a few ripples of you. There's no history to you. You're just a performance of stuff that he performed without thinking and it's not enough."

A2 agrees to jump. M retorts that A would have been scared and wouldn't just jumped. A2 then starts crying and pleading window again, but now she sticks out her head. She is looking for a solution to the situation.

A2 stands in front of the fireplace mirror. There is another mirror as well and we get a double-mirror shot.

The camera seems to shake with the wind.

Standing on a cliff gives the sense of being at the end of your wits, it signifies an ending.

Sad piano music. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scene Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46:05 - 47:27</td>
<td>M arrives in her car. She and her daughter get out of the car. The daughter seems to be about ten years old. They have cake in the living room. The daughter says she needs another slice to take upstairs. M says it’s not the weekend, indicating she goes upstairs every weekend. M agrees. Daughter goes to the attic, where A2 is, next to other memories. She calls out to M who replies that she's coming, staring in front of her, like bracing herself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on the door frame where the indications of A’s height growing up is still visible. The car is cyan. It means M is still connected to A. It seems logic the car would be this reminder since we almost only saw him in a car and he probably died in a car crash. M’s fingernails are not cyan anymore though. She has moved on. When daughter goes upstairs: wondrous melody.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>TIME (minutes)</th>
<th>NARRATIVE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>VISUAL ELEMENTS</th>
<th>SOUND ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>00:26 - 13:18</td>
<td>- Y, K, W, AG</td>
<td>Pan shot following a car which stops. Then, the camera follows Y walking on the pavement. Long take inside Tucker's. Camera follows Y from behind into the room, then pan of the dance floor until the camera falls back on Y, then starts following her again as she walks through the crowd. Camera zooms in on her. When she hears the arcade sounds, the camera pans again to show the arcade corner. The camera zooms out as Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Night</td>
<td>- Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Heaven Is A Place On Earth&quot; (1987) When the camera focusses on the girl: calm, marvelled melody, like something good is about to happen. Walking in Tucker's: &quot;C'est La Vie&quot;(1986)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First thing we see is a shot of the sea and the lights of the seaside town in the distance.

First thing we hear: sound of waves, the sea

First thing we see is a shot of the sea and the lights of the seaside town in the distance.

First thing we hear: sound of waves, the sea

First thing we see is a shot of the sea and the lights of the seaside town in the distance.

First thing we hear: sound of waves, the sea

First thing we see is a shot of the sea and the lights of the seaside town in the distance.

First thing we hear: sound of waves, the sea
declines. She tells him she "just wants to get her bearings a bit".

Y goes to sit down in a booth. K sits down next to her and tells her urgently to go along with whatever she says. W comes up to the booth to urge K again to have sex with him, referring to the amazing time last week. K gets him to leave after telling him she needs to catch up with her friend, referring to Y. K tells him Y has only 6 months left to live to which Y adds "5 actually". After W leaves, they introduce themselves to each other. K tells she met W at the Quagmire.

K and Y order drinks at the bar. K looks intently at Y. Y asks what she's doing. K: "I'm ...regarding you." Y: "I feel like I'm being analysed."

K makes remarks on Y's outfit and asks about her glasses. K: "Don't get me wrong. It's refreshing. I mean, look around. People try so hard to look how they think they should look. They probably saw it in some movie. But I liked these glasses. You're authentically you." In their conversation, Y tells it's her first night in San Junipero. The song "Fake" starts and K drags Y to the dancefloor. K: "We have to dance to this!" Y: "With each other? Oh no, dance floors aren't my thing." K: "Oh, let's not limit ourselves."

walks towards it and focusses on AG. blue and purple.

The walls behind Y and K are cladded with distorting mirrors. The reflections of the people in the mirrors are warped, vague, hinting at the fakeness of SJ.

"Walk like an Egyptian" (1986)
<p>| - Raining | On the dancefloor, K tells Y to copy her. At first, this goes well. Then, K pulls Y closer to her. Y gets scared and feels like everyone is watching them. Y flees the room and goes outside. K also comes outside. Y says she was uncomfortable because everyone was looking. &quot;You know, two girls dancing.&quot; K tells her folks are way less uptight than they used to be and that it's a party town so no one's judging. In their conversation, it is revealed that Y has led a very sheltered life. K tells her &quot;SJ is a party town. All up for grabs.&quot; K makes a move on Y but she jumps up. She tells K she has a fiancé, G. She shakes K's hand and leaves. | CU's of K and Y. Y's face expression changes. She feels attracted to K and this scares her. Slow-motion as the music fades and Y looks around the room. Everyone is looking at them. Crane shot of Y standing in the rain, with neon lights looking down on her. Fragment ends with a shot of Y stepping a puddle of water, as the water settles, a bright full moon is reflected in it. | &quot;Fake&quot; (1987): Y tries to enjoy the dancing but feels like a fake, alienated from the others. CU's: music fades and the eerie, spacey music starts to play as Y looks around the room. We hear Y's breathing. When Y flees, the music resumes. When K makes a move: ponderous, music with a hint of arcade sounds. | Sharp metallic |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time jump of one week  - 1987  - Twilight → night - /</th>
<th>- Plot:  Y looks at herself in the mirror, she looks the same as the last time we saw her. She puts down her glasses and changes the cassette, each time changing in another outfit. In the end, she puts her glasses back on, wearing a blue jeans jacket, and steps out.  K is driving in her car. She arrives at Tucker’s. W is waiting for her. She threatens to “red light” him. W is desperate for the connection he thought he had with K. She tells him it was just sex, “no roots”.  Inside Tucker’s, a guy starts talking to K at the bar. Y walks in and sees them. K spots Y and they make eye-contact. K dances with the guy, all the time looking over at Y. Y is distraught and sits in the corner. On the opposite side of the room, K is sitting and talking with the guy. The women keep teasing and stealing secret glances. K goes into the bathroom. Y follows her.  In the bathroom, Y tells K she doesn’t know “how to do this”. “Just help me. Can</th>
<th>Screen goes black.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black screen with blue lettered “One week later” in a lower case, soft, italic font</td>
<td>Zoom in on Y’s reflection in the mirror. ECU of her glasses being put down. She is testing her limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |

| Conversation is filmed in front of the mirrors. First: reflections are in focus. When Y drops the act, mirror shot fades as they look at each other directly instead of at the reflections in the mirror, and the camera focuses on them. After sex scene: image of the sea, suggestive image of climax. Tilt shot from sea to the bed where K and Y are laying in. CU of K and Y when |
| Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Beach house environment: very subdued, flat grey colours. Contrast with the bright neon colours from Tucker's. Upbeat, electronic, arcade-like music |
she knew she liked women. K says she likes men too and she was married to a man but always knew. She had crushes but never acted on any of it because she was in love with her husband. Her eyes are wet with tears. She says he chose not to stick around and now she's passing through and before she leaves, she just wants to have a good time.

K looks at the clock. It's one minute to midnight. They lay together until the clock strikes midnight.

they are talking about K's marriage and attraction to women.

2.3 The Quagmire

Time jump of one week - 1987 - Twilight → night - /

- Tucker's, The Quagmire
- Y, W
- Plot:
Y goes to Tucker's. She is wearing her blue jeans jacket and a jeans short. She waits for Kelly but she doesn't show up. She asks the bartender if he's seen her. He replies he hasn't seen her all night and if she tried the Quagmire. Y asks what the Quagmire is. He smiles.

Y stands on a seemingly deserted road. Three bikers drive past her, shouting. In the distance, we see a factory-like building with a neon sign that says "Quagmire".

Inside Y sees people wearing SM-clothing, Black screen with blue lettered “One week later” in a lower case, soft, italic font

Tucker's: "Heart and Soul"(1987), "Lean on Me"(1986)

Dusty, raw colours and lighting.

Isolated, subdued guitar music
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.4 Looking for K</th>
<th>27:32 – 28:57</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time jump of one week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 - Night -</td>
<td>- Tucker's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y, AG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y is in 1980's SJ. She walks past the shop window featuring the TVs, this time showing an ad for the 1980 Chrysler Cordoba. In Tucker's, AG is playing Pacman. Y declines his offer to play with him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tucker's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y, AG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y is in 1996's SJ. She walks again past the shop window featuring the TVs, this time showing Alanis Morissette's music video for &quot;Ironic&quot; with a card next to the TV &quot;1996 model&quot;. In Tucker's, the arcade game has changed to a single shooter. Y goes to K's beach house but she isn't there either.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black screen with blue neon letters &quot;one week later&quot;, this time in a capitalised, cyber font.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black screen with blue neon letters &quot;one week later&quot;, this time in bold, lower case soft font.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y is wearing a yellow checked shirt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The movie poster on the building of Tucker's features &quot;Scream&quot;. Y is wearing a pink &quot;Funky Town&quot; (1980).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp metallic pitch and the sound of an electronic alarm clock.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same soundtrack plays as in the beginning of the episode. Now, it has a sad connotation to it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are people kissing, holding a snake, choking someone with plastic, someone in a cage... Y gets scared and flees the scene, constantly touched by people. In the hallway, she bumps into W. Y asks if he has seen K. W says no, she hasn't been there. He laughs at her; "you too, huh?". He advises her to try a different time. "She's worth the shot, right?". Y leaves.

All the disturbing images of the Quagmire are shown in short flashes.

Red, green and blue lighting, clothes people is black.

When Y flees the Quagmire: sharp metallic sounds.

Sharp metallic pitch and the sound of an electronic alarm clock.
Finding K and making up

Time jump of one week - 2002 - Night - /

- Tuckers
- Y, K, AG

Plot:
Y is in 2002' SJ. She finds K in Tucker's, playing Dance Dance Revolution with AG. K spots Y, who says hi. K walks away to the bathroom. Y follows her and stops her. K asks what she's doing there. Y says she was looking for her and that K hid from her. K replies angrily that she did not and that she doesn't owe Y anything.

Y follows K into the bathroom, confronting her with behaviour.
Y: "You don't who I am. You don't know what this means."
K: "This means fun. Or it should. And this... This is not fun, okay?"
Y: "So you don't feel bad? Maybe you should feel bad. Or at least feel something."
Y leaves K alone in the bathroom. K looks at herself in the mirror and punches her reflection. The glass shatters but her hand is unscathed and when she looks up, the mirror is whole again.

When Y confronts K in the bathroom: K is looking at herself in the mirror.

As the conversation gets more intimate the camera goes in CU.

Black screen with blue neon letters "one week later", this time in a typewriter, lower case font.

When K sees Y: surroundings around them are blurry. They only see each other.

When Y confronts K in the bathroom: K is looking at herself in the mirror.

The movie poster features The Bourne Identity. The TVs in the show window show MTV with 2002 Hits. Y has long hair and is wearing a light denim pants and jacket.

"Can't Get You Outta My Head"(2001)
K goes outside to look for Y. Y is sitting on the edge of the roof. K goes up to the roof. K sits next to Y on the ledge. She apologizes. She says she said she wouldn't do feelings in the time she was there and that Y freaked her out.

K: "I don't want to like someone. So you've been just ... totally fucking inconvenient. … It's just... I don't know how long there is."

She keeps talking but Y kisses her.

Music when K apologizes: doubtful, wary music but still arcade-like.

**Can I really see you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scene Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 33:55 – 38:34 | - Beach house  
- Y, K  
- Plot: Y and K sit outside the beach house where Y and K sit. K smokes a cigarette. Y tells she is getting married next week. They sit together silently.  
Y asks her what it meant when she said she doesn't know how much time there is. K says she's sick, the doctors gave her three months 6 months ago. She stubs out her cigarette, saying "it doesn't even taste of anything". K tells she won' be staying in SJ when she dies because of Richard, her husband, who chose not to pass over to SJ.  
Y says she also didn't know if she would try it.  
Y: “Jesus, without this place, I never would've met someone like you.”  
K says they could have met outside all of this but Y says firmly that they couldn't |

Camera follows K outside as she goes to sit down next to Y. As the conversation gets more intimate the camera goes in CU.

White curtains wave in the wind. Gives the illusion that the bedroom is on the beach.
K says where she is in real life, and asks Y where she is. Y tells her but tells she doesn't want K to come.
Y: "I don't want you to see me-. I'm scared."
K: "And I'm dying. Whatever you are, can't scare me," she says with a tear rolling over her cheek.
Y agrees that K can come visit her.

Shot of the clock striking midnight.

Spacey, exciting, unknown soundtrack. Same as when they first had sex.

Sharp metallic pitch and the sound of an electronic alarm clock.

Subdued version of the wondrous soundtrack.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.7 The meeting, the proposal and passing-over</th>
<th>38:34 - 47:01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hospital Y - Y, K, G</td>
<td>- CU of a hand. Another hand reaches out and takes it. Sun on the background. CU of sign that says &quot;Sienna Trust, Assisted Living&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

K is revealed to be an old woman living in an assisted living facility. She is helped by a woman as she walks to a futuristic looking car. Her assistant and K arrive at another facility, a hospital by the looks of it. She is greeted by someone, a doctor probably: "You must be K. She’s waiting for you". They enter a white room, where Y is laying in a bed, tethered to a breathing machine. Her eyes are open. The doctor tells K she cannot respond in any physical way but that she can hear her.

K approached Y. She looks at her and says "hello, stupid" with a smile. We can

K is wearing yellow, she stands out against the white and grey environment and clothing of everyone else.

Handheld camera, shaky camera as K walks to the car.
see K is still wearing her wedding ring. "It's good to see you", says K. She kisses Y's forehead.

K is walking in the hallway with her assistant. A man comes up to her and asks if she's K. He tells her he is G. He tells her he thinks it's great she came to visit her in person before she passes over. K reacts shocked, she didn't know Y was passing over. She asks when Y is passing over. G suggest to grab a coffee.

G tells K how Y ended up quadriplegic. When Y was 21, she came out to her parents. They didn't receive it well and told her they don't want a gay daughter, it's not natural and so forth. They fought and Y got in her car and ran it off the road. So Y has been quadriplegic for most of her life. That's why the SJ system is such a big deal for her. But until she passes over, she is on a five-hour weekly limit.

G: "They say you go crazy when you've had too much. You don't leave your seat. You disassociate body from mind."
K: "Like that doesn't happen in every senior home already."

K tells the system is there as a therapy, immersive nostalgia therapy.
K asks about the marriage between G and Y. G explains that the state is strict about euthanasia because they want to prevent people from passing over just because they prefer SJ flat out. You have to have a

CU of K taking Y's hand.

Shaky camera when the camera shoots something that K is looking at. To emphasize her sickness and oldness.

G is a plump, rosy checked man. You can see by looking at him he is a nice guy.

We can hear Y's ragged breathing.
sign-off from the doctor, the patient and a family member. But Y's family are very religious and won't sign the papers. A husband can sign the papers though, hence the wedding. K and G discuss the dying aspect of passing over to SJ.

K asks G to hook them up to the system. He succumbs to her pleas and hooks them up for 5 minutes.

K runs through the white curtains of the beach house to the beach where Y is standing. K proposes to Y to marry her instead of G. Y starts crying and kisses K.

They get married in Y's hospital room. K signs the papers right afterwards. All systems are disconnected from Y and a yellow liquid is transfused in her veins. The ragged breathing stops. A tear slides down Y's eye.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.8 The fight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>47:01 - 55:58</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Windy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Twilight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- At the beach, SJ
- Y, K
- Plot:
  - Y is standing in the water. She walks on the beach and sits down. She takes off her glasses and puts in the sand beside her.
  - K arrives back at the senior home. She gets uploaded into SJ. Y is still at the beach. K arrives at the beach in her car, wearing a wedding dress. Y also changes into a wedding dress in an instant. They drive off into the sunset.

  - Y and K are sitting on the hood of K’s car, looking at the sea and the lights of the town before them. Y screams out that "It looks so real. It feels so real". Y asks K to "be with her", to stay in SJ with her, to pass over with her. K refuses. K gets angry when Y keeps pursuing the subject. She gets up to leave. Y holds her and says "This is real. And this", putting K’s hands on her face, and gesturing to their wedding rings. K says it was just a kindness and tries to leave again. Y apologizes and pleads with her again. K persists and walks away. Y asks if it’s about her husband. K gets angry. Y keeps insisting K should be angry with her husband for leaving her. K slaps Y in the face.
  - K: "49 years. You can’t begin to imagine. You cannot know... the bond, the commitment, the boredom, the yearning, the laughter, the love of it. The fucking"

  - Soft edges on the frame. Focusing and unfocusing of shot of Y’s feet in the sea.
  - A flock of white gulls take off from the beach.
  - See Y and K through the window screen of the car.
  - Shot-reverse-shot CU’s of their faces when they argue.

  - Hear the gulls squawking and the waves rippling. Hopeful soundtrack.
  - Happy, arcade-like soundtrack, same as when they rode in K’s car for the first time.
Raining

She tells they had a daughter who died at 39 years old, before the SJ system existed. Her husband felt like couldn't pass over to SJ, "When she missed out, how can I?" She doesn't believe they are together now. She believes they are nowhere. But she doesn't want to stay in SJ either. She drives off in her car.

K drives faster and faster. It's one minute until midnight. When she sees a sign "road ahead closed", she pushes the gas pedal even harder. She crashes and flies over the windshield onto the beach. She lays still for a moment but then sits up, unharmed. Y stands over her, stretching out her hand to her but the clock strikes midnight and K disappears. K wakes up in her chair in the retirement home. Y walks away on the beach.

Angry, arcade-like music.

2.9 The reconciliation
- Present day
  - Day
  - /
- 1987
  - Twilight → night

- K’s retirement home
- K
- Plot:
  K is looking worse and worse. She is wearing a breathing tube in her nose and her breath wheezes. She is taken care of, but she is alone. One day, when looking at the beach from the terrace, she says "Well, okay then" as to herself or the nurse. The nurse is confused. K says "all things
"considered, I guess I'm ready." The nurse asks for what. K responds "For the rest of it".

Y walks to her car, a red cabriolet. She pops in a cassette. It's "Heaven On Earth" and drives away. As Y is driving through fields, K is transfused the yellow liquid in her veins and her body is buried in the same grave as her daughter and husband.

Y arrives at the beach house and honks the horn. K comes around the corner of the house, smiles and runs to the car. As K and Y drive into the sunset together, their data is stocked in the data centre "TCKR". Their nodes are just two small pieces in the entire data centre. We see a shot of them dancing together in Tucker's, something Y was never able to do.

Y is driving now, not K. Slow-motion of them dancing in Tucker's, with pink neon light filter. This contrasts with the harsh blue, cold colours of the datacentre, "reality". The blinking lights of the datacentre reminds us of the blinking lights of SJ as watched from afar.

Airplane flying over. Y is wearing sunglasses.

A red car. Just like K's.

The datacentre is blue, high-tech, no human. Everything is operated by machines.

“Heaven On Earth"