2001 vs. Solaris: A Futuristic and Filmographic Tit-for-Tat during the Cold War Space Race

2001 Solaris'e Karşı: Soğuk Savaş Uzay Yarışı Sırasında Fütürist ve Filmografik Bir Kısasa Kısas

Ödül CELEP[1]

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ABSTRACT

The Cold War ideological conflict and its bipolar reflections between Capitalist and Communist blocs were reflected in both macro politics rhetoric and everyday popular culture in the world, including those of the US and the former Soviet Union. In particular, the Cold War between the two superpowers also included a critical Space Race for exploring and discovering the rest of space for humanity. This space race was reflected in no artwork better than cinema and films. Both Stanley Kubrick and Andrei Tarkovsky were prominent and independent film directors of their times. Yet, neither represented the bloc they belonged because of their independence in filmmaking. After Kubrick released *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), the film changed the way the wider audiences perceived the science fiction genre. Four years later, Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky released *Solaris* (1972) as a 'reply in kind' to 2001. Since then, the two films, both seen as masterworks today, were often comparatively examined within the wider context of their political times. The purpose of this research is to shed light on this wider context of the two films and two directors as two masterminds of filmmaking.

Keywords: Cold War, Arms Race, Stanley Kubrick, Andrei Tarkovsky, 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), Solaris (1972)

ÖZ

Soğuk Savaş'ın ideolojik çatışması ve bunun Kapitalist ve Komünist bloklar arasındaki iki kutuplu yansımaları, ABD ve eski Sovyetler Birliği (SSCB) dahil olmak üzere dünyadaki hem makro politika söylemine hem de günlük popüler kültüre yansıdı. Özellikle iki süper güç arasındaki Soğuk Savaş, insanlık için uzayın geri kalanını incelemek ve keşfetmek için kritik bir Uzay Yarışı'nı da içeriyordu. Bu uzay yarışı, sinema ve filmlerden daha iyi hiçbir sanat eserine yansımadı. Hem Stanley Kubrick hem de Andrey Tarkovski, kendi zamanlarının önde gelen ve bağımsız film yönetmenleriydi. Ne var ki, ikisi de film yapımcılığındaki bağımsızlıkları nedeniyle ait oldukları bloğu temsil etmiyorlardı. Kubrick'in *2001: Bir Uzay Yolculuğu*'nu (1968) yayınlamasının ardından film, daha geniş izleyicilerin bilim kurgu türünü algılama biçimini değiştirdi. Dört yıl sonra, Rus film yönetmeni Andrey Tarkovski, 2001'e "nazire olarak" *Solaris*'i (1972) çekti. O zamandan bu yana, her ikisi de bugün başyapıt olarak görülen iki film, çoğu kez, içinde bulundukları siyasal dönemin daha geniş bağlamı içinde karşılaştırmalı olarak incelendi. Bu araştırmanın amacı, film yapımının iki dehası olarak bu iki filmin ve iki yönetmenin daha geniş bağlamına ışık tutmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Soğuk Savaş, Silahlanma Yarışı, Stanley Kubrick, Andrey Tarkovski, 2001: Bir Uzay Yolculuğu (1968), Solaris (1972)

[1] Işık University, Department of International Relations, odul.celep@isikun.edu.tr, **ORCID:** 0000-0002-3624-0642

"We are all wanderers…"

— Carl Sagan

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

— Albert Einstein

1. Introduction

The Cold War period (1947-1991) included a bipolar world system, divided and polarized along two superpowers of the world, the United States of America (US) and the former Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR), with the former championing 'capitalist democracy' while the latter representing an authoritarian form of socialism (Waltz, 1979; Isaacs et al., 1998; Leffler, 2008; Westad, 2017). This primarily ideological competition at world level also included a contest for science-technology and space exploration in a futuristic context. The decades of the 1960s and 1970s experienced this futuristic space contest most strongly in macro politics, everyday life as well as popular culture. First, we humans landed on the Moon, then we started to talk about bringing our human civilization to nearby planets: Mars largely, or even Venus to a few like Carl Sagan.

This space race during the Cold War was reflected in no artwork better than cinema and films. Both Stanley Kubrick and Andrei Tarkovsky were accepted to be the greatest film directors of their times by the 1960s. Kubrick was world widely known after his masterwork *Spartacus* (1960), a Hollywood color film for which he worked with a superstar celebrity like Kirk Douglas. Kubrick would add to his filmography even more controversial films like *Lolita* (1962) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) in later years. So, when Kubrick released *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968, he was already a master of cinema and filmmaking. Tarkovsky, on the other hand, was already a popular and troubled film director in his own country, the USSR, after his first and second full-length feature films *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *Andrei Rublev* (1966). The Mosfilm of the USSR, the centralized state-run institution that monopolized the production of films in the country, was unhappy with both his films on the grounds that they did not include Soviet socialist realism and did not endorse the Soviet ideology directly or indirectly whatsoever.

Both directors were known to be resisting the powers that be at their times: Kubrick started to question and resist Hollywood especially after *Spartacus* (1960) while Tarkovsky got involved

in multiple conflicts with the Mosfilm from his first full length feature onwards. Hollywood vs. Mosfilm is not a black-and-white comparison, but rather like a comparison of apples and oranges for Kubrick and Tarkovsky, respectively. Hollywood constituted a corporate and cultural authority figure, while Mosfilm was directly and effectively influential on the content of all films made in the USSR, thus constituted a political and state-monopolistic institution. All in all, however, neither Kubrick nor Tarkovsky had a concern for pleasing Hollywood or Mosfilm and its audiences and authorities, or any audience for that matter. They were both committed to their independence in their filmmaking.

Neither director claimed to represent the Capitalist West or Socialist East poles that they belonged to in their films, because both directors were ahead of their political times and contexts. Kubrick was no fan of US Capitalism, while Tarkovsky never embraced the official Soviet Socialist ideology. Similarly, neither Kubrick was a Soviet fan, nor Tarkovsky pro-American. They were both idealistic film directors with progressive and independent visions of their own, who could keep a distance from the corporate and political authorities of their times. This is why the release of these two science-fiction films, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972) were great artistic extensions of their times, providing alternative but visual, futuristic but serious, novel yet respectable approaches to going beyond human limits in space exploration.

This piece aims to shed light on the wider context of these two masterpiece films, as well as their specifics, limitations and of course, their comparison. The major research inquiry of this research is “how can the two films, 2001 and Solaris, be compared as science-fiction films with respect to their directorial contexts and political times?”, which is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding filmmaking by the two directors during the Space Race period. Our purpose is not to point out which film is better or worse, not a comparison of superiority but an objective comparison of film content and directorial understanding, with references to their commonalities and differences. The next section presents a theoretical framework and history of cinema together with its effects of popular culture in general. The third section contextualizes the Cold War and the Arms Race between the two superpowers within a bridge that connects this particular history with science-fiction films. The fourth section directly compares and contrasts the two films of our selection, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972) as two major artworks that represent Kubrick’s and Tarkovsky’s take on space exploration, also within the context of Space Race. Finally, the piece ends with conclusionary remarks on the reciprocity of the two directors and two great films.

2. Cinema, History, Politics and Popular Culture

Both the Cold War/Arms Race and Cinema/Filmmaking are phenomena of the 20th century. So, the Arms Race and films, including science-fiction films, are contemporary in every sense of the term. The history of cinema and filmmaking goes back to the late 19th century. The birthplace of contemporary cinema is France. The birthdate of cinema is often considered as the year 1895, the year in which, the Lumière Brothers, Auguste Marie Louis Nicolas Lumière and Louis Jean Lumière, the inventors of Cinématographe[2], showed their short films to a wider audience for commercial public screening for paying visitors at Grand Café in Paris.

Since its foundation in the late 19th century, cinema has become a universal cultural phenomenon of show and transmission, as well as a major instrument of social power and political clout with both national and international ramifications. As the 'magic' of cinema has spread widely in the world in the 20th century, its power has left behind all other forms of art such as stage theater, music concerts or written literature. In its own history, cinema has become the most powerful instrument of political propaganda, the ideological apparatus of states, even an agency of social change and revolution. Throughout the Cold War, Hollywood and the US government were supposed to be strategic partners (Şengül, 2005: 1). Furthermore, several film directors have inspired generations psychologically and politically. In time, not only films and politics have become interwoven, but also a new film genre was born: Political cinema.

Though cinema industries in the world have often been known as progressive-leftist and secular-liberal, filmmakers have used their films for conservative, right-wing messages as well. For instance, if films like *Novecento* (1976), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Before Stonewall* (1984), *Rosa Luxemburg* (1986), *A World Apart* (1988), *Billy Elliot* (2000), *Enemy at the Gates* (2001), *Machuca* (2004), *Persepolis* (2007) and *The Young Karl Marx* (2017) constitute only a small sample of leftist, liberal or revolutionary films, movie productions such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Triumph of the Will* (1935), *The Eternal Jew* (1940), *The Green Berets* (1968), *Frailty* (2001), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), *I Am Gabriel* (2012), *American Sniper* (2014), *Kirk Cameron's Saving Christmas* (2014) and *2000 Mules* (2022) are a few examples of right-wing, conservative or nationalist films. The films do not have to be political, of course. Several films aim to entertain the audience with no intention of political brainwash or propaganda whatsoever, such as action and science-fiction films of Hollywood. Furthermore, not all

[2] The etymology of Cinématographe stems from the combination of two Greek words: *Kinema* (motion, movement) and *Grapho* (to graph, to record, to write). Thus, the word *Kinematographos* means "moving images" or "motion picture" as film is also called today.

political films have direct or explicit political content. In our case, both films of our selection, 2001 and Solaris, have rather implicit and subtle political messages that are open to our human interpretations rather than constituting an outright political agenda leaning one way or another.

Films do affect individual perceptions, understanding and judgments. As each democratic citizen has equal access to culture and artworks, individual experiences with cinema collectively influence popular culture at the macro level as well (Dumazedier, 1960). In this context, it is fair to claim that films can have radical transformative power on society (Lynn 2023). After all, especially historically and politically motivated films often have a cause to spread to the society at large. Historical films, for instance, are often judged by their factual accuracy. While some films about past lives and events are known to be accurate such as *Das Boot* (1981), *Come and See* (1985), *Apollo 13* (1995) and *Downfall* (2004), some are marked in later years as historically inaccurate such as *Amadeus* (1984), *JFK* (1991), *Braveheart* (1995) and *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Nevertheless, when a historically inaccurate Amadeus receives 8 Academy Awards (Oscars) including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Leading Actor, and four Golden Globes and several other awards in 1984, it becomes a challenge to prevent the film from distorting the audience's historical perceptions from actual reality. Therefore, regardless of their politics, it is a critical and ethical responsibility for filmmakers to reflect historical personalities and the flow of events as accurately as possible to wider audiences.

The birth of Film Studies as an academic field in universities and colleges corresponds to the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1960s, the studies of films were inseparable from politics, also in accordance with the revolutionary spirit of the decade as well as the effects of the 1968 generation and its social and psychological extensions. Famous film directors like Pier Paolo Pasolini, Miloš Forman, Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, François Truffaut, Bernardo Bertolucci and several others in Europe and the rest of the world were seriously effective on film studies and research. Similarly, these directors and their films were quite influential in the widespread acceptance of connection between cinema and politics for students of film studies and wider audiences. Naturally within the spirits of the times back then, the widespread and dominant perspective in film politics was Marxism (Rushton, 2013: 33). However, in later years, even though the film industry has been mostly in liberal hands, conservative, nationalist, religious and right-wing spheres of influences were founded as well. As of today, though Hollywood is known to be liberal, left-wing in the US context and standards, the spirit of the times is no longer radical, Marxist or Communist whatsoever.

During the Cold War years (1945-1991), the US perceived itself as the leader of the 'free world', also with respect to the argument of American exceptionalism. Since the Cold War was about ideology and economic systems, the US and its people often saw themselves as a superpower of ideological supremacy as well. American mentality of the Cold War, that is fighting and containing Communism and the sphere of influence by the USSR (Soviet Union), was a priority felt not only in macro politics but also everyday life of Americans at the micro level as well (Viñas, 2023: 14-15). The Domino Theory was invented for justifying the foreign policy of the US aimed at containing and eventually crushing the Soviet Union on the fear that the loss of one nation to Communism would be followed by the consequential, one by one fall of all other nations in Asia and the Middle East as victims to Communism quite fast (Grant, 2012: 335). The fear of Communism together with the Domino Theory was also in the everyday life of Americans. Thus, the psychology of American exceptionalism as an ideological warrior of Capitalism and anti-Communism was felt in the everyday lives of Americans. In this context, the Arms Race was not separable from the "us versus them" perception in American popular culture, 'them' referring to the Soviet Union and its 'dirty' ideology. Whoever won in Space Race would eventually win the moral-ideological war as well, and the US was doomed to win this war as the champion of freedom and democracy in the world.

3. The Cold War Space Race and Science-Fiction Films

The Cold War (1947-1991) was a period of bipolarism, with the US and former Soviet Union (USSR) as the two leading and competing rivals in world political arena. These two superpowers of their times were involved in a political, economic, geopolitical, ideological, and technological/scientific rivalry, which also included a competition for space exploration. Both the US and USSR led a set of countries as their allies or satellites with the US leading the First World countries of capitalist development and the USSR leading the Second World countries of socialist development, the Western and Eastern blocs, respectively. Finally, the Third World belonged to all the rest of the world, mostly Africa and Asia as non-aligned category. During this period, the common belief was that there were only two major alternative paths to democracy, and one of them was the correct path, and the other one flawed, in a black-vs-white context. Today, we know better in the sense that democracy is a more complex phenomenon than just this duality.

The Space Race was a 20th-century rivalry between the two Cold War superpowers, the US and USSR, to achieve superior spaceflight capability, whose psychological onset goes back to

ballistic missile-based nuclear arms race between the two starting in the post-WWII period. The US started out this race as the only user and controller of nuclear weapons. It was Harry Truman, the US President during the last days of WWII, who used the nuclear weapons as a leader on a global scale for the first time by making the decision to drop atomic bombs to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. After it was widely understood that the superpower allies of WWII against fascism, the US and the USSR, were not difficult friends but long-term enemies, a prolonged period of arms race started between the two. The arms race was a perpetual, never-ending process of bipolar rivalry. The USSR tested its first nuclear weapon in 1949. The US and USSR tested their first hydrogen bombs in 1953 and 1954, respectively, which proved to be far more destructive than atomic bombs. Soon afterwards, the two superpowers pointed tens of thousands of nuclear warheads against one another, capable of making a doomsday possible, with a potential to end the entire human life on earth.[3] The mutual potential to kill and destroy at this level was not experienced by earlier civilization or generations whatsoever, which made the world political atmosphere during the Cold War even more risky for the entire humanity.

The US-USSR arms race later escalated into a higher level for exploring the outer space between the two superpowers. It is fair to argue that it was the USSR, which started the Space Race even before John F. Kennedy became the US President and mentioned the American goal of 'going to the Moon'. One of the initial developments was the launch of the Sputnik satellite, the very first human-made satellite to successfully reach space, by the USSR in 1957. This development led the US to create the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) the next year, 1958, as a response. The USSR was the first to send a human, Yuri Gagarin, to space in 1961. Gagarin orbited the earth once in the spacecraft named Vostok 1 in a time period of about one and a half hours. This was a significant technological, scientific and psychological victory by the USSR, and a surprise and major setback for the US because sending a human to space was a common goal between the two competing superpowers. Yet, the following developments changed the psychology of the Space Race, as sending a human to space was only an initial step, later to be followed by sending humans (astronauts) to land on the Moon.

The climax of the Cold War Space Race came when the two nations engaged in a Moon landing race during the late 1960s. First, it was John Glenn who became the first American to orbit the earth with the Mercury capsule in 1962, which restored the US dedication to compete

[3] Bennett Sherry, "Arms Race, Space Race", World History Project, https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-origins/era-7-the-great-convergence-and-divergence-1880-ce-to-the-future/x23c41635548726c4:other-materials-origins-era-7/a/arms-race-space-race

scientifically and technologically with the USSR. Later came the American achievement of landing on the Moon. Unlike the earlier experience with sending a human to space, it was the US which landed and stepped foot on the Moon first in 1969, with US astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. Some historians interpret the Moon landing as an American victory marking the end of Space Race but there is no universal consensus either. The tension of space race between the two superpowers faded in later years owing to the changing conditions of the Détente Period in later years, which paved the way for a joint US-Russian effort for space exploration.

Maybe it is not so surprising that the first ever human landing and foot-stepping on the Moon took place in 1969, one year after the release of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The political conditions for constructing narratives of futuristic, science-fiction scenarios for humanity were already there, as natural components of their global, political times. The Space Race had gained a new momentum after John F. Kennedy's declaration that he wanted the US to land a man on the Moon and return him safely to Earth in US Congress in as early as 1961.

Despite the escalating space race, the science-fiction genre in cinema was not a popular one up until the mid-1960s. Not many people were truly interested in science-fiction genre as these films were often low-budget ones with not very professional and realistic special effects, often unconvincing and unpleasant (Kolker, 2017: 142-144). In a way, science-fiction was considered to be an 'inferior' genre like horror, not to be taken as seriously as films of higher, 'elevated' genres like drama or film noir. It was a common belief that only children and youth showed interest in the science-fiction genre as film producers often stayed away from such 'childish' films (Moskowitz, 1965: 7; Fenwick, 2018: 5).

Kubrick was known as a director of rare yet high quality cinema, and he gave a try to different genres, like horror with *The Shining* (1980) and Vietnam War with *Full Metal Jacket* (1986). As a respected filmmaker, Kubrick contributed to the elevation of previously lesser appreciated genres including horror and science-fiction. Kubrick's 2001 influenced the way many people perceived the science-fiction genre, as 'adults' started to take this genre seriously after the release of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968. Just like *The Shining* (1980) was a great contribution to the horror genre, 2001 was a similar treat for the science-fiction genre.

Tarkovsky's connection with the science-fiction genre was an entirely different story in a different, wider context. Neither *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) nor *Andrei Rublev* (1966) were welcomed by the Mosfilm because of political reasons, as neither film embraced Soviet socialist

realism, and neither film propagated the Soviet regime to the rest of the world. In a way, science fiction genre was a safe strategy for both Tarkovsky and Mosfilm. When Tarkovsky made historical, literary or political films, the risks of engaging in a conflict with and being censored by Mosfilm was quite high because of exactly this reason: Tarkovsky simply did not care! (about Soviet socialist realism). This attitude becomes much more apparent and outright to the naked eye with historical and political film genres. However, the science fiction film genre creates a 'veil effect' on both the story telling and scenario writing, as several messages are transmitted in rather indirect ways or other unique ways. This is why Tarkovsky's two science fiction films, both *Solaris* (1972) and *Stalker* (1979), were less problematic for Mosfilm politically compared to Tarkovsky's films of other genres including *Mirror* (1975), *Andrei Rublev* (1966) and *Ivan's Childhood* (1962). In other words, science fiction genre created a safe haven for Tarkovsky's independent filmmaking.

4. 2001 (1968) vs. Solaris (1972): Directors and Film Comparison

This section presents a comparison of two directors of the two films, then continues with a more particular comparison of the two films of our selection, *2001* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972). The methodology of comparison of films is multifold and multi-faceted. Film critics are often all over the media of all types, so there are non-scientific, casual film talks, for sure. However, there are also different methodologies that can be used scientifically in both film analysis and comparison of films. Obviously, due to variety of methodologies applicable, one can start with a quantitative-qualitative distinction in the methodology of film study. For instance, content analysis methodology is applicable to film analyses (Brylla, 2018), and it can work in both ways. Content analysis is a particular methodology used in not only social sciences but also arts and humanities. It is often cited as an unobtrusive methodology as the researcher does not have to communicate with people or deal with survey data either (Babbie, 2021: 325-354). It is a method for determining the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within a social artifact or human product such as a text in novel or newspaper, film, music records, paintings, and so on. Content analysis allows the researchers to compare and contrast, quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of selected terms, themes or concepts. Researchers can use quantitative ways such as word frequency to see how certain words or themes have been repeated, etc. Or alternatively, researchers can engage in a deeper, qualitative, contextual analysis to infer about the cultural and political settings of the context within which

the text was written.[4] Thus, the qualitative-quantitative spectrum is wide open for quite many methodological interpretations.

Aumont and Marie (1988) recognize several types of approaches to film analysis and comparison including: (1) text-based film analysis (structural approach), (2) topic-based analysis (narrative approach), (3) picture and sound approach (iconic analysis), (4) psychoanalytical and (5) historical approach. Despite their differences, all of these types are essentially qualitative and descriptive.[5] Sobchack and Sobchack (1997) offer an alternative methodology, suggesting that a viewer can observe the three film components as raw data: film space, film time and film sound. Not all scholars propose output-based approaches on methodology either. For instance, Benshoff and Murphy (2024) propose an entirely different set of methodologies (almost sounding like evaluation perspectives), including ideological analysis, auteur theory, genre theory, semiotics and structuralism, psychoanalysis and apparatus theory, feminism, postmodernism, cultural studies and contemporary approaches to race, nation, gender and sexuality. We will not get into a detailed discussion about each of these methodologies because of spatial restraints, also because this study is not particularly about methodology. When it comes to film comparison, a certain set of film elements have been proposed for a comparative analysis: setting, theme, genre, cinematography, editing, performance, sound, and the like. This research makes use of a qualitative and interpretive language and focuses on directors, story-telling and the wider time-space context, when comparing the two selected films, *2001* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972).

Kubrick and Tarkovsky were apt directors for a reflection of space exploration on film and filmmaking. Both directors were well-known filmmakers of their times. Tarkovsky and Kubrick both resembled to and differed from one another. They both overlapped and diverged. For instance, both directors used classical music extensively in their films, such as the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Strauss and so on. Both directors had excessively independent minds and strategies of filmmaking. Neither director had a concern for pleasing their audiences. Both directors took large times for making their films. So, both have a relatively short filmography (see Table 1 and 2 below). It took long years for both directors to move on from one film to the next. Plus, Kubrick has had a large number of failed projects with which he lost a lot of time including Napoleon, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Aryan

[4] See "Overview" (of Content Analysis), *Columbia University Irving Media Center*, https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/population-health-methods/content-analysis#:~:text=Content%20analysis%20is%20a%20research,words%2C%20themes%2C%20or%20concepts.

[5] See Aumont Jacques and Michele Marie (1988). L'Analyse des Films / Analysis of Film. Paris: Armand Colin.

Papers. Even more, Kubrick was known to take a large number of takes for filming the scenes of his films.[6] On the other hand, Tarkovsky had to shoot most of Stalker for a second time because of the ruining of the original film materials during the initial post-production process in the laboratory. It was later speculated that the political authorities destroyed the original film materials on purpose. Therefore, both directors had legitimate excuses for having relatively short filmographies as film directors.

Table 1

Stanley Kubrick Filmography (as Director)

Year	Film Title
1951	Day of the Fight (Documentary short)
1951	Flying Padre (Documentary short)
1953	Fear and Desire (Kubrick's first long film)
1953	The Seafarers (Documentary short)
1955	Killer's Kiss
1956	The Killing
1957	Paths of Glory
1960	Spartacus
1962	Lolita
1964	Dr. Strangelove
1968	2001: A Space Odyssey
1971	A Clockwork Orange
1975	Barry Lyndon
1980	The Shining
1987	Full Metal Jacket
1999	Eyes Wide Shut

Source: American Film Institute Catalog (accessed 25 October 2024)

Table 2

Andrei Tarkovsky Filmography (as Director)

Year	Film Title
1956	The Killers (Student film, also actor)
1959	There Will Be No Leave Today (Student film)
1961	The Steamroller and the Violin (Student film)
1962	Ivan's Childhood
1966	Andrei Rublev
1972	Solaris
1975	Mirror
1979	Stalker
1983	Nostalghia
1983	Voyage in Time (Documentary)
1986	The Sacrifice

Source: Internet Movie Database (IMDb) (accessed 30 October 2024)

[6] Kubrick's commitment to perfection led him to shoot 148 takes of a scene in The Shining, setting a world record for most retakes for a dialogue scene. Kubrick's many takes were an outcome of him figuring out what he wanted to get from a scene, as he often started with vague ideas initially.

Both were quite professional and good at writing adapted screenplays based on books and novels, but definitely not good at writing original screenplays. Kubrick did not care about winning prizes, but he won one Oscar for best visual effects for *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1969. In contrast, Tarkovsky did care about winning prizes, especially the Golden Palm (*Palm d'Or*) award at Cannes film festival. However, he could never win that prize, though his films received many other, rather special prizes such as the FIPRESCI prize, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, Grand Prix Spécial du Jury, and so on. Tarkovsky was a schooled film director, while Kubrick was a non-schooled one. Kubrick started with photography. He worked as a photographer for Look magazine before exploring filmmaking in the 1950s. Kubrick learned cinema on his own. He collected money and started with two short documentaries (see Table 1). Tarkovsky studied film at Moscow's VGIK (Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography), the oldest and best school of film at the Soviet Union at the times. Tarkovsky was a director of poetic cinema, as he used poems read out by his father (on his father's originally recorded voice) in his films. Just like Kubrick left Hollywood and the US altogether after *Spartacus* (1960), Tarkovsky left the Soviet Union once and for all after *Stalker* (1979). Just like Kubrick made all his later films in Britain, out of home country, Tarkovsky made his last three films in other countries like Italy and Sweden (see Table 2).

Neither Kubrick nor Tarkovsky was the film director who made science fiction films for the very first time. In fact, the very first science fiction film was A Trip to the Moon (*Le Voyage Dans La Lune*), which was released in 1902, directed by Georges Méliès, a French illusionist, actor and film director. However, the achievements that Kubrick and Tarkovsky made with their two respective science fiction films during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, namely *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972), not only elevated the genre of science fiction but also influenced several generations including the filmmakers of *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Lord of the Rings* franchises and tv series in later years.

Back in the 1960s and onwards, the science fiction genre of filmmaking, especially the popular and tentpole American films and Hollywood in particular, was directly influenced by Isaac Asimov's vision of the human future in space. This vision assumes that the extraterrestrial space beyond the earth and its components, including stars and planets, are there for human exploration and occupation. This is a vision that almost assumes that the rest of our existence in space is waiting for us, humans, to explore and bring life to them. There is also an implicit assumption that humans are fully capable of exploring and discovering the space as far as their

science and technology allows them (for a reference to this vision, please see Asimov, 1960; Asimov, 1979; Asimov, 1982).

This vision is still probably the most embraced narrative about space exploration and its future today. We, humans, already landed on the Moon and we are supposed to 'bring life' to Mars, if not Venus, or any other potential planet like earth as a next target. We are talking about warp machines, a utopia for today, but a revolution if ever realized as these devices would bend both space and time to take us to speed limits beyond speed light in our inter-stellar travels. This Asimov-inspired narrative is in its most pure and direct form when we hear past and contemporary discussions regarding the invasion of Mars or a journey to Mars, which has become a quite popular theme in scientific studies of a variety of fields including astrophysics, psychology and education (see Cantril 1940; Portree 2001, Cherif et al., 2010), as well as fictional artworks including films such as *A Trip to Mars* (1918), *Conquest of Space* (1955), *Red Planet* (2000), *The Martian* (2015), *Ad Astra* (2019). NASA has developed several spacecraft missions to Mars, such as *Mariner 9* (1971), *Spirit* (2003), *Phoenix* (2007) and *Mars* (2020). The human approach to Mars has become a psychological laboratory for our common instincts towards the outer space in the form of occupation most frequently.

This vision is not restricted to space studies or films. Nazım Hikmet (1902-1963), a Turkish poet, playwright, novelist and screenwriter, a 'romantic Communist' who was repeatedly arrested for his political beliefs and spent much of his adult life in prison or in exile, and whose poetry has been translated into more than 50 languages, reflects the same narrative or vision in his poem Strontium 90:

> "Weather's gotten strange,
> Now sun, then rain, then snow,
> It's from nuclear bomb testings, they say.
>
> Strontium 90, they say, is raining,
> On weed, milk, meat,
> On hope, freedom,
> On the great longing whose door we knock on.
>
> We are in a race with ourselves, my dear,
> Either we will take life to dead stars,
> Or death will descend upon our earth."[7]

[7] "Strontium 90 by Nazim Hikmet", Light Millenuim, https://www.lightmillennium.org/poems/2004/nhikmet_strontium90.html

Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) was initially evaluated in the US as the Soviet Union's 'answer' or 'reply in kind' to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). On an initial look, this comparison made perfect sense: both films were released a short time apart from each other, during the Space Race of the Cold War. The films were perceived as the artistic, cinematic reflection of the space race from two competing world superpowers, and thus "each film is posited to say what each country supposedly has to say about mankind's future role as privileged explorer of the cosmos from each of their specific national perspectives."[8]

Tarkovsky was inspired by an alternative vision of science-fiction in his writings and films. This was a progressive, left-wing and critical approach to human exploration of outer space.[9] Asimov's approach assumes that humans have the capacity to bring human civilization to different planets and stars, almost assuming humans are at the center of the universe and the rest of the space is all for our conquest. Progressive science fiction genre works, both books and films, combine this genre with an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-imperialist or an agenda in a similar vein. Examples include *1984* by George Orwell, *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess and *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore. These works often have a critical perspective to human civilization and they might offer dystopian futuristic scenarios instead of utopian, often underlying the weaknesses of human civilization rather than its strengths. When reflected to the outer space, progressive science fiction also questions the assumption of bringing human civilization to the rest of the space. A progressive science fiction work might bring forth the argument "Who are we, humans, to conquer the rest of the space in the first place?", or "What if the rest of the space is smarter than us?" A good example in this context is Solaris, which is filmed as a planet that outsmarts humans and makes them regret meddling with it. Instead of humans exploring and understanding the planet, it is the planet that explores humans by manipulating their individual perceptions and giving them illusionary as well as hallucinatory visions.

Kubrick liked Solaris, but Tarkovsky did not like 2001: A Space Odyssey. 2001 has mostly men, while Solaris has complex female characters. 2001 was adapted from Arthur C. Clarke's novel published in 1968 with the same title[10], while Solaris was adapted from Stanisław Lem's novel with the same title published in 1961.

[8] https://www.imdb.com/list/ls028307559/

[9] See Mehmet Açar, Solaris | Film Önü 49. Bölüm, TRT2, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ41LlkyuYs Solaris | Film Arkası 49. Bölüm, TRT2, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-vc0MW0vwE

[10] The screenplay was written by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke, and was inspired by Clarke's 1951 short story "The Sentinel" and other short stories by Clarke.

2001 has four major sections in the following order: The Dawn of Man; Black Monolith on the Moon; Jupiter Mission; Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite. It is a quite slow-paced film, too long, almost 2,5 hours, mostly silent and even boring. During the scenes of space travel, the film uses classical music, silence or the breathing sounds of the astronaut himself instead of a cliché music that often goes with the today's science fiction films of Hollywood. It is rich in visual diversity, and it relies on strong special and visual effects for its time. The film switches directly from pre-human primates to a space age in the future, from a bone to a spaceship in its famous scene of transition. It includes the subject of artificial intelligence (HAL 9000), and it uses symbolic language occasionally. Like many other films by Kubrick, 2001 was no different: like a brand of wine that always gets better with age. 2001 was not very well-liked during the initial release. Yet, it made a huge success at the box office at its times, and it is considered to be a masterpiece today. 2001 is generally considered to be the most influential science fiction film ever made. The film follows a voyage to Jupiter with the sentient computer and AI, HAL 9000, after the discovery of an alien monolith. HAL 9000 (simply HAL) is a fictional AI character and the main antagonist in the film. 2001 deals with themes of existentialism, human evolution, technology, artificial intelligence, and the possibility of extraterrestrial life. The film is noted for its scientifically accurate depiction of space flight, pioneering special effects, and ambiguous imagery. Its prolonged scenes of the main character, the leading astronaut falling into a wormhole towards the end and the film's ambiguous ending became legendary phenomena in later years.

Solaris is an alien planet in the novel and the film. The film was based on a novel by Stanisław Lem, a Polish writer of science fiction and essays on various subjects, including philosophy, futurology and literary criticism. He was strongly influenced by the alternative, progressive science fiction school, which differed largely from Asimov's mainstream futuristic vision on space exploration. Like Kubrick, who adapts novels without consulting the authors, Tarkovsky also adapted Solaris without consulting its author, so Lem was quite disappointed with the film after its initial release. Lem's novel goes on mostly in the space, while Tarkovsky's version goes on mostly on the earth with a small section in space. Though Mosfilm did not like Solaris at first, it could not ignore the film because of the popularity of Tarkovsky, Lem, and the novel Solaris.

Solaris is personified in the novel, like a conscious, individual decision-maker, almost like a human being. The film plot centers on a space station orbiting the fictional planet Solaris, where a scientific mission has stopped because the crew of three scientists have fallen into emotional

crises. Psychologist Kris Kelvin, the protagonist, travels to the station in order to evaluate the situation, only to experience the same or similar mysterious phenomena as the others. Kelvin sees a large, huge ocean on the planet of Solaris. He encounters his wife on Solaris, who is deceased back on the earth. He kills his wife three times on Solaris, but she always comes back to him. Then they realize that the ocean or the planet makes these people encounter their own illusions and hallucinations. Everyone experiences his/her own illusions on Solaris, thanks to Solaris.

Solaris shows to humans that humans are short of expanding their civilization anywhere or Solaris for that matter. On the contrary, humans are quite helpless and clueless about Solaris. It is not humans who outsmart Solaris. It is Solaris that outsmarts humans. Solaris manipulates humans' consciousness and makes them see things they do not want to see (their inner fears). Solaris won the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury at the 1972 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Palme d'Or. It did not win the award. It received extremely positive reviews from critics. It is often cited as one of the greatest science fiction films in the history of cinema. Steven Soderbergh made a remake with the same name in 2002 with George Clooney as the main actor.

All in all, both film directors and both films are primary examples of humanity's inquiry and obsession with the unknown beyond the knowable space, namely the extraterrestrial. When we compare the two visions of the two film directors, we can see that Kubrick's vision is more down to earth, more concrete and natural, while Tarkovsky's outlook is more abstract and supernatural. Kubrick's scenario and vision of 2001, while being futuristic and not plausible in its own times (the 1960s), they are still within the boundaries of a technological possibility, such as voyaging through the depths of outer space with the assistance from a human-made mechanism of advanced artificial intelligence (AI). They are 'doable', just not yet. We can also witness this as humanity made progress with both space exploration and AI in the following years up until today. In contrast, Tarkovsky's script and vision of Solaris include themes like a conscious planet, Solaris itself, which can manipulate humans and their psychology on an individual basis (such as making them daydream according to their anxieties and fears) and bringing the dead back to life. Neither can be visioned futuristically as science does not predict human-manipulating space objects that can rewind the process of human death back to life. Thus, it is fair to say that Tarkovsky's Solaris blurs the line between reality and fiction, while Kubrick's 2001 neither does nor intends to blur the lines in such ways.

Based on that, one can argue that contemporary scientific and technological developments about space exploration prove Kubrick more accurate. However, if we assume that scientific studies can and will prove several utopias of today to realities in the future, like bringing the dead back, Tarkovsky might also prove accurate as well, within a more utopian-romantic future alternative. Both directors are gone, Tarkovsky passed in 1986, and Kubrick passed in 1999. However, both are 'immortal' as they continue to influence future generations. In Athes's words, "both Tarkovsky and Kubrick had a profound cultural, historical and even sociological impact on how science fiction was perceived by the general public and by other very important influencers, such as George Lucas, Carl Sagan and many other cultural and scientific personalities of the 20th and the 21st centuries" (Athes, 2021: 190).

5. Conclusion

Cinema is a relatively new form of art, much younger compared to other art forms such as written literature, stage theater and orchestrated music. In this sense, it is fair to argue that cinema is one of the toys of humanity throughout and particular to the 20th century. People read novels, saw music concerns and watched staged theater plays before until the 20th century, but they did not see films widely until the 20th century. Even though cinema is a novel form of art, it is stronger than many other art forms in terms of cultural transmission and political propaganda. Thus, filmmaking is a quite socially and politically influential form of artistic instrument. Our comparison of the two directors and their two particular films, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972) must be read and understood in this grander picture of world culture and politics.

The Cold War was a particular period of modern human history, in which two modern, secular, enlightened ideologies, namely Liberalism and Socialism, found bodies with the US and the Soviet Union respectively. Both superpowers had visions of liberalism and socialism of their own, Enterprise Capitalism and Leninism-Stalinism respectively. Today, we are far more aware that reality is more complex than this duality, and democracy has far more grey areas than we knew back during the Cold War times. Yet, both superpowers believed their own moral-ideological 'superiority' and the 'inferiority' of their rivals in a sharp, black-and-white duality, in a zero-sum game. Space Race was experienced during this time zone, as a result of new developments of humanity, particularly sending astronauts into space and landing on the Moon during the 1960s. This space race politics and psychology was reflected in both popular culture and artwork, including films and cinema.

Both Kubrick and Tarkovsky were great film directors of their times, and they also took on this space race psychology in their films. Even though neither was the first science fiction filmmaker nor director, their science fiction films, namely *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Solaris* (1972) were great contributions to the genre and literature of science fiction for humanity. Even though the films were quite different in story and characters, both films had futuristic space exploration visions of their own. Kubrick's vision gave the impression of a more concrete, down-to-earth future and developments as the US managed to land on the Moon a year after Kubrick's film was released, in 1969. In contrast to Kubrick, Tarkovsky had a more abstract and poetic approach to the subject of the extraterrestrial.

Based on our arguments, we can conclude that Kubrick has a more materialist and anarchical (even nihilistic) mindset compared to a more spiritual, faithful and progressive Tarkovsky. Kubrick's films reflect a more dystopian human reality (rather complexity) while Tarkovsky's stories possess hope for the future of human civilization. Tarkovsky's faith or hope is not necessarily about Christianity or an established monotheistic religion, however. One can interpret it as Tarkovsky's faith in not God necessarily, but Nature, humanity, our future as a species, and so on, in contrast to a pessimistic nihilism on humans as species. Kubrick's films often take the audience from the beginning and never let go because of an edge, either like the suspense in *The Shining* (1980) or disturbance in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Tarkovsky's films are slower-paced, and they require a higher level of insight, patience, intellectuality and introspection from the audience (see Jamal 2023).

Both directors and both films continue to influence generations. Prospective studies and developments in science and technology as well as social-cultural changes in the everyday lives of humanity will further demonstrate which film and which director was more farsighted in predicting the future from years, even centuries earlier.

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