

**Defining Speculative Film:
In Search of a New Space in Science Fiction Cinema
Through *Solaris***

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**“Speculative Film”i Tanımlamak:
Solaris Üzerinden Bilim Kurgu Sinemasında Yeni Bir Konum Arayışı**

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- 3) Solaris
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- 5) Speculative

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ABBREVIATIONS

Fantasy: As to be used in its dictionary meaning;

-A capricious or fantastic idea; a conceit.

-An imagined event or sequence of mental images, such as a daydream, usually fulfilling a wish or psychological need.

-An unrealistic or improbable supposition.

-A hallucination.

Phantasy: The Freudian use of the word which is also taken by Jean Laplanche. I am using it with this spelling in order to distinguish it from its everyday use.

SF: Speculative Film. I chose this abbreviation to avoid confusion with SF.

SF: Science Fiction.

ABSTRACT

My approach in this M.A. dissertation is twofold: on the one hand I explore the playful ‘staging’ of Sigmund Freud’s notion of the ‘id’ in SF cinema and its effects on SF genre. On the other hand I attempt to define a new term: ‘speculative film’ that intertwines the notions of psychoanalysis and fantasy. This twofold exploration is based mainly on an analysis of Stanislaw Lem’s book *Solaris* (1961) and its two filmic adaptations: Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972) and Steven Soderbergh’s *Solaris* (2002). Following the 40-year evolution of the same text allows me to inquire about the term ‘speculative film’ within the concurrent perspectives and aesthetics of SF. Stemming from the theme of the inner mind within the terminology of SF cinema, the narratives of *Solaris* evolved into a new stage which can no longer be defined as a genre. I believe that speculative film as more like an approach has the potential to cover a wide-ranging scope within today’s cinema in terms of both content and form. Throughout my thesis, I discuss both the space and meaning of the often confusing genre, SF and the relevance of ‘speculative film’ within the context of *Solaris* texts and the films of my choice.

ÖZET

“*Speculative Film*”i Tanımlamak: *Solaris* Üzerinden Bilim Kurgu Sinemasında Yeni Bir Konum Arayışı” isimli yüksek lisans tezinde iki yolda hareket eden bir yaklaşımım var: bir yandan bilim kurgu sinemasında Sigmund Freud’un ‘id’ kavramının farklı yorumlarını ve bu kavramın bilim kurgu türüne etkilerini inceliyorum. Bir yandan da bu kavramın ve çeşitli yorumlarının ışığında psikanaliz ve fantezi kavramlarının iç içe geçtiği ‘speculative film’ adında yeni bir terim tanımlamaya çalışıyorum. Bu iki kollu incelemede esas olarak aldığım metin Stanislaw Lem’in romanı *Solaris* (1961) ve onun iki film uyarlaması olan Andrei Tarkovsky imzalı *Solaris* (1972) ve Steven Soderbergh’in *Solaris*’i (2002). Aynı metnin 40

yıllık evrimini takip etmem ‘speculative film’ terimini bilim kurgu türünün deęiřen perspektif ve estetikleri doęrultusunda arařtırmama yardımcı oldu. Bilim kurgu sinemasının terminolojisinde yer alan ‘i bilin’ temasından yola ıkan *Solaris* metinleri zaman iersinde bir tür altında tanımlanamayacak kadar bařka bir noktaya geldiler. Yeni bir türden ziyade bir yaklařım olarak ele aldığım speculative film’in bugünkü sinemada ierik ve biim bakımından geniř bir alanı tanımlama potansiyeli olduęuna inanıyorum. Tez alıřmam boyunca hem kendi iinde karmařık olan bilim kurgu türünün konum ve anlamını, hem de *Solaris* metinleri ve dięer setiğim filmler üzerinden ‘speculative film’ teriminin geerlilięini tartıřıyorum.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following project my argument is twofold: On the one hand I will explore the playful ‘staging’ of Sigmund Freud’s notion of the id in SF cinema, and on the other hand I will attempt to define what I will call “speculative film” that intertwines the notions of psychoanalysis and fantasy, and focus particularly on the theme of the inner mind within the terminology of SF cinema. Combining these approaches I will argue that as much as speculative film, such as *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (1984), *Solaris* (1972), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Alphaville* (1965), *Blade Runner* (1984), *Event Horizon* (1997) or more recent examples of cyberpunk like *Strange Days* (1995) and *Signs* (2002) owe to SF literature and film, they have evolved into a new stage which can no longer be defined as a genre. I believe that speculative film has the potential to cover a wide-ranging scope within today’s cinema in terms of both content and form.

My exploration of speculative film will be based on an analysis of Stanislaw Lem’s book *Solaris* (1961) and its two filmic adaptations: Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972) and Steven Soderbergh’s *Solaris* (2002). Following the 40-year evolution of the same text allows me to inquire about the term “speculative film” within the concurrent perspectives and aesthetics of SF.

All the above mentioned exemplary films transgress the generic laws of SF. This transgression not only ignores or offends the presence of scientific necessity within the texts, but also adds a dimension that can stretch the idea of ‘speculation’ to its extremes. Removing the ‘science’ part of the definition means increasing the possibilities and improbabilities within the text. I also would like to stress the ‘film’ instead of ‘fiction’, since my central focus

will be on films of that territory. I think that this yet unnamed space can have a name. While investigating this new term, the project is also a kind of pathfinder through various lines of thought that run in other directions under the big umbrella of “SF”.

I will present an introduction of terms regarded to be predominantly psychoanalytical paradigms to enable me to use them for the analysis of the ‘speculative films’ that I have chosen in my project. My particular focus will be specifically on films that feature the fantastic or unreal as an element of plot, theme or setting, or all of them in their narratives. Due to their appeal as an analogy of dream and fantasy structures in psychoanalysis, I believe that such a reading would be a supporting tool to illuminate their creation-thought processes.

At the very beginning of this thesis there was one film that gave me a keen interest and inspiration to dwell on the subject of the ‘id’ in SF cinema. It is Fred Wilcox’s *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a 50s big budget sci-fi film, the pop adaptation of Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. Here is a brief plot summary:

When Commander Adams and his crew are sent to investigate the silence of a previous mission spacecraft and its crew on a remote planet, they find all but two have died. Dr. Morbius and his daughter Altaira have somehow survived a sinister invisible force. Adams is about to realize that Morbius has made a discovery, and has no intention of sharing it (or his daughter) with anyone. Consequently he and his crew will have to fight and kill the monster, which is nothing but the primordial destructive impulses of Morbius himself.

The film contains many genre defining elements, such as Krell science, the brain booster, Robbie the Robot, and humans traveling in an interstellar craft; (all seem to outweigh as genre-defining elements) however, when it turns out that the “monster from the id” is what

Morbius lets loose in the absence of conscious control, the film's generic code collapses. This adventure fantasy with romance stage-manages Freudian theory in its SF context. Limited within the science fictional generic framework, it displays a very primitive understanding and literalizing of Freudian fantasy. Yet with an anti-scientific and metaphysical underpinning, it is a sophisticated SF film compared to other 50's films. It mixes light horror and a Freudian twist in a mainstream space opera with a fantastical SF setting produced by advanced special effects. Its subtext, though explicit and secure, allows the film to question the 'science' part of the SF genre. The drive of the film is built on what Slavoj Žižek calls the "id machine"ⁱ, which is a highly advanced computer that can materialize the hidden primitive content of the mind. The association of breakthrough technology with the primordial and uncultured fantasies of the human produces a repackaged Frankenstein. Examining the dual nature of man, its use of psychoanalytic elements brings *Forbidden Planet* into a place where it transgresses the conventions of the SF genre. That is why I think there is a need for a more far-reaching and broad-minded name than SF to describe this film.

Following this motivation, having searched through the history of SF as a genre and its terminology, I came across a term that made me stop and consider if it was the appropriate word for what I am trying to express: "speculative fiction". Strongly connected with the New Wave movement in SF history, it significantly broadens the scope and meaning of SF. Emerging as a reaction against hard SF that insisted on using science as its backbone, New Wave was exalted in change and experimentalism in both content and form. Speculative fiction emerged as a result of that movement. There was an increase in a certain type of fiction that could only be tangentially conceptualized by 'what if'. The definition of SF was narrow and not flexible enough to describe this newly evolved type of fiction. The definition of speculative fiction could cover more complex narratives, wide ranging themes, in depth

characterization, and more difficult language within SF context. The use of the term is still prevalent as the collectively used title for the so-called “fantastic genres”, which will be clarified in the consecutive chapter.

When moving from literature to follow the course of SF cinema, one encounters the same difficulty and blurring of the genre. Thus, I think there is a need for an attempt to define films that do not conform to the outline of SF. As the cinematic counterpart of speculative fiction, ‘speculative film’ allows different agendas unconnected to ‘science’ to be layered in its narrative use. Making radical departures from reality or radical speculations about what reality might be like, or might have been like; speculative films contain a depth of narration with multi leveled and twisting impossibilities.

As the main focus of the thesis, *Solaris* will be the text that I will be working on in terms of my exploration of ‘speculative film’. *Solaris*, the sentient ocean, represents the unknowable alien. When the protagonist, Kris, arrives at the space station built to explore *Solaris*, he will have to confront his own fantasies, namely his dead wife whom he could not forget, now materialized as a phi-creature. Eliminating the distinction between the inner and outer world, Lem’s philosophical speculations on the possibilities of the human condition are of a high intellectual order. In this elimination, the ‘science’ is not scientific but metaphoric. Like in *Forbidden Planet*, the theme of ‘id-machine’, the mind controlling force that can materialize one’s unspeakable ideas or desires, is still here, but in an incomparable sophistication. In *Solaris*, the protagonist Kris has to deal with Rheya, his dead wife that has been recreated from his inner thoughts and fantasies about her. He starts receiving visits from the wife he loved ten years before and who also killed herself because Kris abandoned her. Still haunted by her suicide, Kris starts toying with his own consciousness because right from

the start a part of him realizes that it is a simulacrum of Rheya. A crushing, burning guilt compounded with love places Kris' mind in an enigmatic emotional state. He knows that she is not real and yet can't stop loving her. This brings a moral depth to the story. *Solaris* functions as a mirror to reflect the complexities of our values. By depicting the impossible relationship between the inconceivably different other mind of the ocean and the human consciousness, *Solaris* adds a new dimension to the SF text: articulating the contradiction between the incomprehensible and science questions the whole idea of science and SF.

Subsequent chapters will focus on the relationship between SF cinema which concentrates on the notions of inner mind and consequently the development of 'speculative film' through an analysis of three different *Solaris* texts.

NOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

ⁱ Slavoj Žižek, “The Thing From Inner Space” in *Artmargins*. 1999
<http://www.artmargins.com/content/feature/zizek1.html>

The “Id” of Science Fiction Cinema

I

From the beginning of mankind up to the present, we have lived with the supernatural and the occult. Our fascination with them date as far back as prehistoric cave paintings. Cinema that embraces the supernatural or the unreal as an aspect of its narrative context emerges from a type of curiosity or fascination about ourselves and the values we hold. This fascination comes from our need to question the imagination or actualization of terrors and desires that haunt our dreams. It is to witness our dreams, as symptomatic of the dynamics of the psyche, come true.

Our imaginations mostly do not correspond with ‘concrete reality’ and undeniably embody our desires. Imagination works as a repository of what is potential, and when accommodated within the cinematic machine it is capable of showing that we live in a world of constructions rather than of solid essences. Becoming more visually mediated, we often cling to the sense of “everything is like cinema- I see myself in images” which implies the dreamlike character of the cinema.

According to Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis, phantasy involves the organization of desire, lack and repression. As the staging and imaging of the subject and its desire, it is an organizing force both within our psychic life and within a variety of cultural forms. “Unconscious wishes and the fantasies are as immutable a force in our lives as any material circumstance.”ⁱ Accordingly, it refers to its role in organizing and representing sexuality. Any discussion of phantasy brings us to the realm of psychoanalysis, where we deal with its formative power and psychic reality. Generally, the appeal of the cinematic medium is as an

analogy for mental processes, particularly films that display the structure of fantasies in different forms and contexts similar to psychoanalysis.

Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis define phantasy as the “mise-en-scene of desire”. The emphasis is on its setting. Examining the complex dynamic of desire and fantasy, Lacan argues that “the fantasy is the support of the desire, not the object.” It means that fantasy is a desiring process.

“At the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections. It is that lack at the heart of desire that ensures we continue to desire.”ⁱ

Following this statement, films can be considered as “dream factories”ⁱ that generate a myriad of ‘objet petit a’, objects of our desire. The ‘objet petit’, as Alenka Zupancic puts forward, “designates nothing but the absence, the lack of the object, the void around which desire turns.”ⁱ So at the end of a film we in ourselves realize that behind our desire is nothing but our lack. That lack is in the essence of desire and allows it to prevail. But it also means that desire can never be satisfied by the object of its need, hence the object is always elsewhere. That is why cinematic narratives can also be taken as the projection of impossible objects of desire. The cinematic machine has the essential faculty to build structures that imitate or create an irrational, or unreliable, or multivalent reality. The cinematic institution itself has many connotations such as a pseudo market, a collective social experience, a mass medium, an instrument of mass manipulation or surrogate satisfaction, scopophobia, a tool for national propaganda or the revolution of the imagination. In an era of visual gluttony it can be argued that the cinema, being itself both a symbolic system and an imaginary operation, enables us to articulate desire. Cinema by providing ready made fantasies and “mass produced daydreams, as vehicles of either a coercive or a potentially liberating wish-fulfilment”ⁱ, acts like a projection of the dynamics of our inner world.

So far, I've made an analogy between phantasy as in psychoanalysis, and cinema as the medium of activating potential fantasy; moreover, in another usage, the fantasy denotes a genre featuring alternate versions of reality and elements based on or existing only in fantasy, can be rendered within the territory of psychoanalysis. According to this approach, the fantasy genre is founded on the structure of dream; the key to it is psychoanalysis, which is "the modern science of reading dreams"ⁱ.

II

Through a metaphysical web of dream, cultural myth, and the fantastic constructed by the cinematic apparatus might not be easy to find the way. The films I chose for the analysis are SF texts (*Forbidden Planet* and *Solaris*) that display incarnations of the idea of the "repressed unconscious". For instance, in *Forbidden Planet*, the hidden aspect of Dr. Morbius' personality is his unconscious which comprises the repressed contents that have been denied access to the consciousness. The planet Altaira is actually Morbius' fantasy: his imaginary scenario wherein he has organized his repressed impulses. Or in *Solaris*, the sentient ocean is itself the mystical power that materializes the protagonist's fantasies, which are the manifestations of his repressed mental processes. In both cases, there is the presence of an intelligence that can create physical phenomena in a way that renders science impotent. And this presence in both of the narratives functions to externalize the inner mind of their protagonists.

With some approximation, we can compare the films that draw upon the unconscious wells of fantasy based upon Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalytic theories that elucidate connections among unconscious components of our mental processes. These films, after all, follow the threads of Freudian imagination. Thus, I will follow Freud's dream interpretation;

his conception of id-ego-superego; Lacanian conceptual and linguistic categories of human reality; and the Žižekian notion of the Real. Undertaking such a psychoanalytic reading will be a helpful key to understand both the creation-thought processes of chosen films as well as our reflections on them.

Films featuring the fantastic (Here I am using the word in its dictionary meaning, not the genre “the fantastic” that Tzvetan Todorov defines) can incarnate the inconvenient or resisted psychological powers that we have not thought or dared to integrate into our lives, and infect those into our “inner cinema”. Those films obliterate the need to distinguish the inner and outer world. Needless to say, this is why they have impossible creatures, zombies, vampires, beasts, psychos, freaks, and the mystery. All kinds of irrationality stem from the ‘rich archives’ of the id. “The unconscious sends all sorts of vapors, odd beings, terrors, and deluding images up into the mind-whether in dream, broad daylight or insanity”ⁱ, or in filmic narratives. Freud’s id concept is a chaotic realm. As the reservoir of instinctive impulses it is dominated by the pleasure-principle and blind wishful thinking. The id does not learn, nor does it grow up. It has the ego telling it what it can’t have and the superego telling it what it should not want, but the id works solely out of the pleasure principle. It wants. In Lacanian psychoanalysis the unconscious is also the ground of all being, but not in the same way. His triadic structure ‘Symbolic-Real-Imaginary’ is a linguistic model that serves to situate the human’s entrance into the social order. There is a gap between the world we conceive ourselves as the world we live in, the world around us (reality), and the inexplicable place where there is only pure materiality that exists beyond language (The Real). Since the Real hinders the smooth running of our constructed ‘reality’, which Lacan names as “Symbolic”, we don’t want to confront it. We need to confide so badly in our little social and linguistic take of ‘reality’ that we always delay the encounter with the unspeakable presence of the

Real. That might be the reason why we consider its presence to be traumatic and leading us to the abyss. Slavoj Žižek prefers to call this presence “the Thing from inner space”. It is the Thing, because it is indefinable, points to nothingness yet exists in us, somewhere. The Thing is thus clearly rendered as a part of ourselves that we eject into reality. It has no place in the Symbolic network. This intervention of the Thing that seems to be a void place renders reality incomplete and inconsistent. It is a traumatic substance that cannot be symbolized. The frustration between the Real and the world of shared meaning and common interests, the world of the Symbolic, is what is also called “mind development”. In our social reality we seek out or avoid the *Real*, the zero level; especially when we are children we have many *imaginary* friends from books, films or our own illusions, and we also love experiencing *Symbolic* moments; moments in which we feel chipper, when we practice our patterns of role behavior as part of the texture of social reality.

While exploring the fantastic in a cinematic context and how it is staged in different forms, the first genres we encounter are the so called “fantastic genres”. These are the fantasy, horror and the problematically SF genre, which will be the central focus of this project. They may differ in form or content, but these three genres are connected by the same blood. The common characteristic of the fantastic genres is their departing from our consensus reality, and featuring unreal or fantastic forms based on or existing only in fantasy as an element of plot, theme or setting. The world they display can be wholly different from our own, so that it can only be delineated or unfolded by means of supernatural forces, magic, miracles, or science. These three genres, in literature, are also collectively known as “speculative fiction”.

SF is both associated and contrasted with the other two genres fantasy and horror. The fuzziness of the SF genre lies in its inherently paradoxical combination of two contradictory

words: science and fantasy. That is why its definition remains confused. As Hal Duncan states in his article:

“...breaching the everyday world of realism with the strange, the unfamiliar, with things which should be possible but aren’t yet, or things which should not, should never, be possible. It is our reaction to the possibility and the desirability of these unrealities being made real, as much as the scientific plausibility of the unrealities themselves, that defines whether a story is SF or fantasy or horror, and it is because our reactions are complex that these forms do not just coexist as separate types of imaginative fiction but instead constantly cross-over, feeding into and off of one another.”ⁱ

There is an intrinsic link between the genres of SF and fantasy. While SF attempts to keep the supernatural in a rationalized format, fantasy does not need a rational connection to our known world, or a scientific explanation, or even cognitive logic. Fantasy creates a world that adheres to a different set of laws in which supernatural phenomena are explicitly allowed. This world should not be necessarily validated by the laws of reason. The characters can be imaginative non-human races, or the setting can be the European Medieval.

For example, Middle Earth in the J.R.R. Tolkien’s acclaimed fantasy series *Lords of the Rings* is an invented parallel world. He created his epic saga in an intertwined universe rooted in ancient mythology, fairy tales and theological themes. This imaginative fiction based on unrealities that removed so drastically from our experiential reality yet so totally convincing in its creative detail, that it becomes itself “the ultimate chronicle of stewardship of the earth”ⁱ. The publisher of the book was right by saying: “the English-speaking world is divided into those who have read *The Lord of the Rings* and those who are going to read them.”ⁱ After the popular success both of the book and the film adaptation by the director Peter Jackson, the strange thing is the perception of that Tolkien found out some secret chronicle about the real history of Earth. For many of us, his fabricated mythology is so authentic and coherent in itself, that it is attributed with reporting the actual chronicle of the

Earth. Or at least we tend to ask: “why not?” On the other hand, it also greatly expanded the demand for fantasy fiction and cinema.

There may be confusion concerning the term ‘fantastic’, mostly due to Tzvetan Todorov’s theoretical work on the ‘fantastic’. What differentiates the fantasy genre from Todorov’s notion of the “fantastic” is that the latter intrudes fantasy or mystery elements into the context of real life, where these elements are representational. “The fantastic narrative generally describes men like ourselves, inhabiting the real world, suddenly confronted by the inexplicable.”ⁱ According to Todorov, to be truly fantastic, the text must contain a hesitation that exists in the ambiguity over which system, the realistic or the supernatural, will prove to be the explanation of the events. Following this, the generic marker of the fantastic are not the sum of the generic conventions like character, theme or setting, but an effect experienced by the reader’s indecisiveness between two mutually exclusive ways of understanding the events presented in the text. The most typical type of fantastic story can be one that brings the evil one to a contemporary setting. The legendary Faustian story might be the most popular example of this kind of fantastic story which has been used as the basis for many fictions and folk tales.

III

As mentioned before, the dividing lines between SF and its related genres (horror and fantasy) are often fluid. It can perhaps be argued that SF is simply a modern form of fantasy, which developed parallel to the rise of science and technology as driving agents in modern society. However, science in SF, with a set of formulated tropes may provide a wide range of settings and nurturing environments to unmask or lock up or protect the inexplicable or unreal; science can rationalize what seems to be an irruption of the inadmissible. The theme

of alien invasion is based on this dynamic. It involves a battle between an extraterrestrial civilization and Earth people. Although the stories may follow different plots, the confrontation is always between human and nonhuman, the others.

Darko Suvin's articulation of SF as the "literature of cognitive estrangement," refers to the essence of the double operation of estrangement and cognition. As the figural generic marker of SF, the estrangement part of SF is what makes it fantastic and imaginative. And that is also the reason why it breathes like a subgenre of fantasy, "the grandmother of all fictions, for like 70 years."ⁱ But the "science" attachment in relationship to fantasy may cause confusion. In contrast to fantasy that tends to loose cognitive ties to our Earthly reality, science in canonical SF tries to act as the only explanation for everything that exists. But it cannot be the only and single answer to the complexity of our being. As a result, SF and fantasy constantly change their disguises and overlap. In some cases the essential position of science solves every dilemma of society, but in others it cannot deal with the mystery of the singular individual. This paradoxical part of SF is exactly what cannot be defined because that part counts on science. Relying on science, SF as a genre opens up the possibility that in return may question its relevancy. The scientific change is important for its effects on our social and psychic realities rather than for itself. For instance, when the scientific conditions presented in a SF story change or falsify over time, should we then evaluate that story as dead or garbage? These SF texts should not be valued for their scientific accuracy, but should be celebrated in terms of their willingness to speculate on universe, society and man.

From our current position, we know and it is also proven that science is itself liquid, with constantly changing hypotheses. The world is not what it seems, and the ambiguity of science stems from the fact that it insists on being the only explanation for the whole reason

of being. But it is not. That is why it is wrong to discuss SF through science. Further, most of the time rationality fails; science used in SF is always fake, does not live in a vacuum, and is sometimes metafictional. Such vague generic laws also generate an inconsistency within the genre. There are many SF narratives in which science is completely imaginary and the technology not only implausible but impossible. It can be also noted that the theme of 'impossible now' is the strength of SF. The basic icons of SF, like time machines, faster than light spaceships are products of the imagination and most of the times are technologically inexplicable and scientifically discreditable. Or there are many metaphorical innerspace fictions, which can be reformulated as journey fictions. J.B. Priestley suggested that SF mistakenly attempted to explore the "other side of the Sun rather than...the hidden life of the psyche."ⁱ Within the last decades of SF there is the individual psyche that seeks the leading role in most of the narratives. Accordingly, this takes us back to the root of the horror genre, where we find the fearful effect that when rationality is in abeyance, terrible things happen.

There is one group of hardcore SF that advocates positivist philosophy. Stating that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge, this group prefers to ignore or object to everything that cannot be justified by the cognitive logic of science. The conflict of this approach reflects also its mirror image in the SF genre. The Encyclopedia of SF argues that, by nature,

"much SF is anti-science, for reasons partly historic, partly intrinsic. It is science itself which, when it dreams, dreams monsters; in other words, the link between the bright light of science and the darkness of monstrosity is a link of blood and kinship."ⁱ

The fact that even science possesses a dark side links SF to the horror genre, where the unknown or inexplicable can easily find a place to manifest itself.

The bond between horror and SF is started with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a tragic story of a monster created by a scientist.

“It is the first genuine SF novel, the first significant rendering the relations between mankind and science through an image of mankind's dual nature appropriate to an age of science.”ⁱ

While it is about giving life to a dead body through electricity, the big question still remains “does this monster have a soul or not?” Science as creator of monsters is the myth that SF was founded on in the 19th century, at the same time as the birth of the Gothic novel, which emerged as a reaction to Enlightenment. It is the proof that what the Enlightenment created has turned against itself as its antipode. Being connected to the dark, mysterious and horrific, it is the ancestor of modern horror fiction. The dynamics of the horror genre are structured on the intrusion of the evil or supernatural, commonly manifested in monsters, amorphous or not. They are the cultural dark side manifestations of various conceptions. Nothing repressed stays repressed for long, and horror texts stage the return of the repressed in those monsters. They represent forgotten fears contorted and projected externally. “The proscription of these abominations is a powerful expression of human fear of the uncategorizable, of that which is betwixt and between.”ⁱ Horror is an element of pleasure often functioning to heighten and reinforcing desire.

“It's not disgust. It is fascination but also willingness to look at what is really there without flinching, and to say this is what we're made of, as strange and disgusting as it might seem at times.”ⁱ

Illustrating the paradoxical edges of the mankind and its civilization, it serves to put our being and reality into question: we find a part or extension of ourselves in that unreality both inherent in the moving image and in the narrative to witness the secret behind the curtain. As Joseph Campbell formulated the function of monster,

“By monster I mean some horrendous presence or apparition that explodes all of your standards for harmony, order, and ethical conduct.”ⁱ

The inner conflict we all have in us is turned into a creature with a revenging soul. Monsters are uncanny interruptions because they symbolize the dimensions of sexuality which are frightening, and remain one of the demonic forces in human consciousness.

“Contemporary horror has specialized in making the inside visible, opening it up and bringing it out and pushing the spectacle of interiority to the limit to find out what the limit is.” The spectacle of interiority is created or enhanced through technology or science in David Cronenberg’s films. As an off-genre director he is one of the best examples to intertwine horror and SF in his peculiar style. In his body horror films, the menace or the fear is connected to an unwanted physical transformation or invasion. This transformation happens through science. Investigating irrationality, his films deal with gray areas that oscillate between reality and imagination (*Naked Lunch*); between simulacrum and appearance (*Videodrome*); the Symbolic and the Real (*The Fly*). Standing apart from both genres’ standard issues, he never saw SF and horror as incompatible. He utilized the inherent danger that lies within the very nature of science as the theme or subject matter to create effects of horror. Reforming his kinship with Frankenstein he incarnates horror through new technology. In short, Cronenberg knows exactly, “what is bred in the lab holds no interest until it is out in the flesh.”ⁱ

Turning back from Cronenberg to history again, the dawning of SF appeared as the response to the irrationality of the Gothic mode. Though derived from the Gothic, SF has used the positivist science as the taming tool of that irrationality. The inseparability of these two genres was for some SF purists or protective partisans unbearable and unacceptable. In that context, I would like to mention the article ‘Children of the Light’ by Bruce F. Kawin, published in “Film Genre Reader III” in 2003. He asks “Are the threatening but beautiful

figures, like Dracula's wolves, "children of the night" or of the light?" For him the night is the symbol of horror and light of progressive science. As the propagandist of Enlightenment and the mythology of scientism he compared two films *The Thing* (1951) and *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951) and made a chart of oppositions like "army vs. scientists" or "inhuman vs. human". Fixing the rules for each genre in order to disconnect them, he aims to protect the strong attachment of SF to its own canonical conventions. As an example, according to his standards *Alien* (1979) is a horror movie; there is no question about it, though I believe there are many regarding its unique place as a SF film. What needs to be questioned is why *Alien* is labeled as a horror film "using elements that regularly crop up in SF"ⁱ, and not the opposite. I believe the only reason lies at Kawin's need to banish SF/horror from the SF genre, and keep SF's status as enlightened sci-fi.

The battle between the initials 'S' and 'F' and between science and fantasy goes beyond the naive expression of "tomorrow's science can seem like today's fantasy". In its basic differentiation, science is grounded in extrapolation, analysis and empirical knowledge, while fantasy can be associated with intuitive knowledge. Robert Scholes by examining the etymologies of the words 'science' and 'fantasy' studies their historical relationship and comes to the conclusion, that;

"...they were forced to align themselves according to binary polarities offered by positivism: science or magic, extrapolation or escapism, this primary world transformed or a secondary world created."ⁱ

In another attempt to interpret their correlation, Žižek has metaphorized the relationship between science and fantasy as the topology of the two surfaces of the Möbius band in Lacanian register: "if we progress far enough on the surface of science, all of a sudden we find ourselves on its reverse, which is fantasy."ⁱ Combining these approaches, I

can say that in each SF text whether the presence of science is the dominant element or not, the confrontation with the Other is presented as fantasy. This is the point where ‘science’ and ‘fantasy’ meet. SF’s obsession with alien encounter is the key trope to open up new possibilities within the realm of the dark side of the human. “The meeting of self with other is perhaps the most fearful, most exciting and most erotic encounter of all.”ⁱ In both horror and SF, the creations (the Other) can be externally normal but internally monstrous or vice versa. Actually in every encounter with difference we enter the territory of psychoanalysis when we see ourselves in the Other. This means that SF film deals with unpleasant truths about us, the secret devils of every soul. The inner conflicts of human nature can force SF to face the postulation of the horror genre, which is that “we all live as the offspring of Original Sin and we are all monsters but for the grace of God which is not logically comprehensible,”ⁱ or conversely, by communicating with and domesticating the Other, SF might be able to reassert its dominance and subordinate the subject once again to the constraints of the Symbolic.

There's been lots of water under the bridge, since the term ‘science fiction’ came into existence in the 1930s when Hugo Gernsback founded the *Science Wonder Stories* magazine. Today the tyrannical insistence on scientific necessity and validity to achieve the ‘real’ is a delusion, and it is called by most SF nonconformists as “Gernsback Delusion”. Today, even hardcore fans have to admit that SF cannot be a pure genre because of its nature as a mongrel genre in which the narratives derive its concepts, story patterns and techniques from different sources, both literary and nonliterary and transmuted to such an extent that its generic functions expired long ago. When in the narratives inner space, the products of unconscious origin melt in a SF context, and the repressed and unapproved are staged together with scientific discourse, SF adds a new dimension to itself that breaks down its canonical conventions. In the following pages, I will deal with films that feature the notion of id in

different forms, in detail. Since the idea of fantastic and SF are closely related, the sliding door between the two allows for a new domain, a domain that can be called by another name rather than SF. This new stage of SF tells much more about us now. It concentrates on personal relationships and psychological traumas, and its intellectual, aesthetic and ethical content is not limited to its scientific content. This is where SF overflows. Science leaves its central position and the 'speculative' takes over. The repertoire of speculative is rich and unlimited. Science is an always changing phenomenon, and 'speculative' fits the idea of change in a way that entails an imaginative creation or a pretense that does not represent actuality but has been invented. In terms of cinema, the speculative film can imply any estranged universe. It does not even need to take place in the future. Exploiting the possibilities of contrary indications, the speculative film builds its act between newness and familiarity, since even in terms of SF, we already judge the science-fictional-ness of what happens by what we ourselves know of the actual world. The speculative story can resist any coherence, hence the viewers only partly believe in the world presented. It can move towards any kind of complexity of characterization, depicting the modern dilemma of man or of mystical evocation, or satiric content.

Turning back to my discussion point, the notion of the id, or the unconscious as our mystical extension is a prevailing and applicable theme for speculative films. Speaking in psychoanalytic terminology, "Lacan claims that art as such is always organized around the central Void of the impossible-real Thing".¹ One of the phenomena that I will explore is how the motif of the Thing appears within the diegetic space of SF cinematic narrative. My focus will be on the films that feature the conception of id, whose narrative deal with some impossible and horrifying Thing, like the alien concept in SF. And furthermore, how SF in these films makes itself irrelevant and creates a need for another domain that is off the genre.

That is what I prefer to call ‘speculative film’, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Starting from the *Forbidden Planet*, the proto speculative film that deals with the notion of the Thing as an “id-machine”ⁱ, I’ll be working on different approaches and paradigms that apply to three different versions of *Solaris*, namely, the original book and its two filmic adaptations. As will be discussed thoroughly in the third chapter, *Forbidden Planet* blends elements of horror in a space opera context, accommodates Shakespeare in a state-of-the-art SF setting and then adds on top of that a Freudian twist. That is why it is more than a pulp story. On the other hand, this space adventure is still trapped within the limitations of SF genre, so that its attempt to stage a Freudian fantasy in its most primitive form ends up in an Anti-Freudian monologue. Yet its passé content implies a metaphysical underpinning about the dual nature of humanity against science; that is why Bruce F. Kavin categorizes it as “horror”.

But when it comes to *Solaris*, the book written by Stanislaw Lem in 1961, we don’t talk about it is as SF or not, anymore. It is built upon a deep, intellectual speculation on humanity, particularly on its communication with the alien life form. The same theme of “id-machine”, the mind controlling force that can materialize one’s disremembered ideas or desires, the idea of the unconscious as the determinant force is still there, but in an incomparable sophistication. By depicting the impossible relationship between the inconceivably different other mind of the ocean and the human consciousness, the story transmits a new sense of perceptions.

The book and the cinematic versions, all have a range of subject matter and form that transcends the SF genre, each to different degrees defying categorization, and taking different guises, with atypical and contrasting agendas. Based on characters that cannot control their own Real's, they all deal with some impossible traumatic Thing, in one way or other. In the case of *Forbidden Planet*, Morbius unleashes "the monster from the id" in the absence of conscious control. In *Solaris*, however, the protagonist Kris can not prevent his inner thoughts and fantasies about his dead wife Rheya. Mainly the texts fit into the repertoire of speculative fiction and film because they gain energy from certain motifs and tropes of fantasy, horror, human sciences, theology and even melodrama. This concept of the id is a prevalent theme of both speculative fiction and film but the real point is how far a SF text dares to abandon its own autonomous world in the safety of its conservative mentality.

SF satiates psychic and emotional needs enabling us to experience other worlds, reproductions of ours but figurative symbolizing worlds. SF is about possibilities and change. The creed of change and speculation should be the reason for SF to exist, but in the more liberal sense, since these drives can also serve for the delusive metaphor of Enlightenment. I agree with Franz Rottensteiner's view that "SF is best described by the deep desire for the unattainable"¹. But this unattainable can also indicate or lead to the weaknesses and faults of humankind. What is promising about 'speculative' is that it is more flexible, covering any work of bold imagination on human situations and value judgments, even if they are drastically disconnected from the world we know or know of: it is possible that in *Forbidden Planet* incest could be normal; Morbius and his daughter could have a love affair, or the relationship between Rheya and Kris in *Solaris* could last forever.

Speculative film allows the SF genre to transgress its borders and surround different aesthetics by being open to any kind of estrangement in different context. The focal point of the coming chapter will be the exploration of the ‘speculative film’. Through *Solaris*, the unknowable and sentient ocean, I will try to adjust the term of then-named ‘speculative fiction’ into its cinematic praxis. While proposing to align its place mainly through *Solaris* texts, I am aware that these are abnormal and also peripheral examples. The original book seeks to be a SF story with its own particular space and philosophy. It feels the need to add to SF another dimension concerned with the relationship between man, God and universe. It reminds science to accept that “there are no single and simple answers to the complexity of our historical present.”ⁱ The leading word ‘speculative’ might turn SF into more a human study with a moral and hypothetical depth that puts the whole idea of ‘science as the backbone’ in crisis.

Genre is not the problem. This can be observed in the transformation of *Solaris* into its cinematic versions. Time proved that the same story can be translated into totally different paradigms, especially with the attached fact of the ‘literature/cinema adaptation’. It can generate incomparably diverse SF standards, that get off the track: *Solaris* (1972) the Soviet art movie of Andrei Tarkovsky, a representative of religious obscurantist/spiritualist tradition or 30 years later, essentially a Hollywoodian melodrama of *Solaris-love-story* (2002) made by Steven Soderbergh.

In Lem’s book, we initially perceive the ocean as the wholly ‘other’, something outside of ourselves but also indifferent to us, but then we recognize that it is a mere projection or extension of ourselves, acting as a medium for us to confront the Real. Overrating the unconscious this SF story asks what would happen when this id inside of us

appears all of a sudden, within a scientific marvel. Science fiction becomes speculative fiction or speculative film or something else? And as Solaris, the unknowable universe, gets stronger control, SF cannot use science as its metatext anymore. It simply becomes more visibly non-generic. (if this term would be any practical!)

To sum up; this project will concentrate on SF films that feature the notion of psychoanalysis and the inner mind. Still reminding us that SF originated from a genre that is based on mysticism and the supernatural, they also push the borderlines of the generic conventions to the edges. By attempting to integrate the unknown phenomena, which is unexplainable and comprises irrational motives, into its context, canonical SF malfunctions and creates a need for another domain to be defined that is off the genre. This definition should delineate the imaginative in a more extended horizon. That is, it should cover what SF cannot, such as portraying the multiplicities of reality, the infinite possibilities to create strange universes, exploring different levels of insights into society and the human condition, and also the postmodern condition. I argue that the terms ‘speculative fiction’ and its cinematic version ‘speculative film’ are appropriate for this new position. Moreover, it is very fortunate that the abbreviation ‘SF’ also stands for science fiction, speculative fiction, and even speculative film.

NOTES

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