

# Sculpting in Time, with Andrei Tarkovsky

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## Sculpting in Time, with Andrei Tarkovsky

Tarkovsky opposed to the movie editing and considered that the basis of the art of cinematography (movie art) is the internal rhythm of images. He considers cinema as a representation of distinctive currents or time waves, transmitted in the film through its internal rhythm. Rhythm is at the heart of the "poetic film". A rhythm like a movement inside the frame ("sculpting in time"), not as a sequence of images in time. (Menard 2003) As Donato Totaro says, editing brings together sequences that are already filled with time. (Totaro 1992, 24) Time within the frame expresses something significant and true that goes beyond the events itself, received differently by each spectator. The rhythm is not determined by the length of the sequences, but by the pressure of time passing through them. (Menard 2003)

In a statement articulating the similarities between Deleuze, Tarkovski and Foucault's heterotopic<sup>1</sup> model, (Foucault 1971) Deleuze states

"The time image has the power to affect the way we think by cutting off the ordered flow of chronological time, the continuity upon which the unity and wholeness of the subject is founded. The time image fuels thought and pushes it to the limit where new concepts take shape, and new forms of subjectivity and ways of being in the world arise." (Deleuze 1985)

For Ian Christie, who discusses the problems of formalism in cinematography, Tarkovsky's film produces a radical movement in modern cinema because it releases the film from the director's constraints, allowing the film to live in its own time:

"Formalism, they [David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson] believe, unlike some structuralist and psychoanalytical methodologies, crucially implies an active spectator ... Bordwell proposes a 'constructivist' theory which links perception [Tarkovsky] and cognition [Deleuze] ... Bakhtin's most influential concept is probably 'dialogism', which emerged particularly from his study of Dostoevsky's novels ... involves distinguishing between an author's direct speech and that of his characters... Bakhtin showed how these (i.e. 'speech genres') interact with literary genres to define a 'genre memory' [Tarkovsky] which sets limits to each genre... Maya Turovskaya (1989) has used the concept of the chronotope to illuminate Andrei Tarkovsky's idea of cinema as 'imprinted time'." (Christie, Hill, and Gibson 1998)

Deleuze writes about Tarkovsky's text about the "cinematographic figure" as follows:

"Tarkovsky says that what is essential is the way time flows in the shot, its tension [i.e. time-pressure] or rarefaction, 'the pressure of time in the shot'. He appears to subscribe to the classical alternative, shot or montage, and to opt strongly for the shot (the 'cinematographic figure' only exists inside the shot)." (Christie, Hill, and Gibson 1998)

In the film *Solaris*, the interior of the space station is decorated with full reproductions of the painting cycle of *The Months* (*The Hunters in the Snow*, *The Gloomy Day*, *The Hay Harvest*, *The Harvesters*, and *The Return of the Herd*) by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, and details of *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* and *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565). The film also makes reference to Tarkovsky's previous film in 1966, *Andrei Rublev*, by placing the icon of Andrei

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<sup>1</sup>Heterotopia is an evolutionary change in the spatial arrangement of an animal's embryonic development, complementary to heterochronicity, a change in the rate or timing of a development process.

Rublev in Kelvin's room. Tarkovsky's references and allegations in the film are attempts by the director to provide a historical perspective in the art of cinematography to evoke the viewer's feeling that cinema is a mature art. (Jerzy and Neuger 1987, 137–60)

Tarkovsky contrasts, in film, Earth as the source of life and the obsolete and inert space station, along with dynamic images of underwater plants, fire, snow, rain. The contrast also appears between the original scenes (visit to his father's house with a lively pond and blooming trees) and the final one in the same place, but where this is cold outside, the pond is frozen, and the trees are naked.

Tarkovsky included levitation scenes for their photogenic value and magical inexplicability. (de Brantes 2008) Water, clouds and reflections were used by him for their surreal beauty, for photogenic value, and for their symbolism. (Bellis 2008)

Solaris has precise and creative affinities with the fantastic area of Russian literature.

The metaphoric interactions, bipolarities, ambiguous miracles we also meet to Bulgakov, Dostoevsky, Gogol and Strugatsky, Tarkovsky transfer them to the image. In the film, the dialogue between mankind and the planet manifests itself exclusively through images, exemplifying, in an original and complex way, how the image communicates and contributes to the development of knowledge. (Salvestroni 1987)

Tarkovsky appeals to a whole gallery of famous paintings hanging on the station walls and repeatedly focused, and three film inserts: Berton's investigation; Gibarian's message before suicide, and a childhood movie shot by his father. These sequences, like the products of the ocean's unconscious, act as a teleportation in time, defying causality and allowing the past and even the dead to return (Gibarian, Kris's mother, Kris's dog from childhood). Although there is

among some scientists and philosophers the idea that one can ever imagine a reality defying causality, an argument that can bring fiction on an equal footing with "reality." (Sfetcu 2018)

The movie critic Maya Turovskaya claims that the past has a special significance for Tarkovsky, he is always on an equal footing with the present; the world of imagination coexists with the real world. What Tarkovsky presents as dreams, imaginations, memories is the "individual flow of time" of the character. In this scheme of things, all moments in time are co-equal, existing alongside the apparent intrigue. (Turovskaya 1989)

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