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The Poetry of Temporal Cinematic Sculpture: An Exploration of the Transmedial Poetics and Mnemonic Chronotopes in Andrei Tarkovsky's 'Zerkalo'

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Abstract*— This paper aims to delineate transmediality of adapting poetry into a cinematic narrative. Through a narratological analysis, an Enquiry into how Andrei Tarkovsky with the use of his film "Zerkalo" or Mirror (1975), successfully transfers chronotopic data from the orthographic medium to the cinematic medium. The paper highlights the central motif of chronotopic representation of memory and its relation to autobiographical elements in the film. It goes on to explore the challenges faced by the cinematic medium under the contemporary challenges of commodification of art and the subversion of state as a narrator by Andrei Tarkovsky through Sculpting in time sans chronological coherence. The paper goes on to discuss the extensive use poetic logic over cinematic narrative causality. Ultimately, this study aims to reaffirm the relevance of Tarkovsky's "Zerkalo" in content-saturated contemporary times and discuss the paradox of a cinematic narrative being more of a poem than cinema itself.

Keywords: Transmedial Transference, Transmedial poetics, Mnemoic Chronotopes, Narratological Determinism, Narrative conditioning.

I. POETRY OF CINEMA. TRANSMEDIAL POETICS

"Cinema was born when people began to feel a lack of time - I don't think someone from the 18th or 19th century could survive in our era. They'd simply perish from the pressure imposed on them by time… And it's cinema's task to articulate this problem in a poetic fashion. [3, 00:49:53-00:50:20]" – Andrei Tarkovsky

Temporal Cinematic sculpture in all its allusive clarity calls upon the most important purpose of cinema, a purpose so often recalled by the maestro Andrei Tarkovsky himself. The importance of capturing time using cinema, the spirit of which he has profusely reiterated in his book 'Sculpting in time'. The documentary "Andrey Tarkovsky. Cinema Prayer," directed and written by Andrey A. Tarkovsky, provides us with an extensive compilation of archival footage and recordings of the Zerkalo's Director. The documentary enables the spectator an access to the side of Tarkovsky that portrays him as a visionary auteur whose artistic vision is characterized by a profound integration of philosophical and poetic concerns and goes on to elucidate the reasons as to why Zerkalo had to be philosophical yet epitome of visual poetic expression, a conduit that exists solely to facilitate contemplative spiritual ignition of the spectator's mind. Whereas this analysis put forward by the documentary on the transcendent behaviour of Zerkalo posits the question of what cinema is and can be. An analogous comparison can be drawn between the relationship of the novel to the book, which holds the novel and that of the film to the cinema, where it is screened. A movie or a film is the interpretable material accessed by spectator akin to text in a book. This syllogism serves as a metaphorical distinction between the content and the container. The only difference being the multiple levels of transmediality that cinema possess compared to orthograhic material which is closest (disregarding oral storytelling) in transference of the raw idea being signified by the author, whereas compared to the layers of mimetic transference the cinema has gone through. Cinema is therefore transmedialy adaptive in nature, a consideration to the terms of the art form it seeks to convey. From the moment of its conception all throughout to its cinematography during its production and thereafter with the cinematic technique of editing that happens during post production1 - it goes through several stages of transmedial conversion which includes plotting representations of the writers' ideas on to the script and from there graphically representing them on to the storyboard and from there visually capturing them using moving images via a camera which is as close to the storyboard as possible, wherein here, essentially an audio-visual conversion of orthographic material takes place with several processes throughout up to its finality. Apart from these multiple adaptive transitions of the material passing from the authorial source to the final target, what differentiates the source medium (whether its human or artificial) from the target medium in its function and form is

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what core poetic transmediality attempts to analyze under its narratological lens. Transmedial poetics at its core is an attempt itself to realize the poetics and transmedial similarities between two mediums as it so happens in this case to be a study of poetry within and through the performative text of cinema using Andrei Tarkovsky's film mirror (1975) romanizedly Zerkalo. The movie in analysis has proven to be a testament when it comes to breaking grounds within the specific niche of adapting poetry to a visual narrative such as cinema. The movie Zerkalo is undoubtedly a watershed moment in the world of cinema in this regards where the boundaries that demarcates one medium from another, such as here being that of cinema and poetry, is blurred into non-existence. In order to understand transmedial poetics, a deeper understand of transmediality is necessary. Although it originates from the phrase 'transmedia storytelling' derived from Henry Jenkins, an American media scholar and Provost Professor. Where the term is used to define stories that are not confined to singular form of media but spread throughout different mediums for example the movie 'Interstellar' by Christopher Nolan can not be understood fully unless one happens to read the 'The Science of Interstellar' by Kip Thorne. Therefore the transmediality we touch upon is not of this definition but the one that adheres to its narratological roots. Therefore the discussion is exclusively projected towards transmediality alone, not to be confused with transmedia storytelling.

Aestheics of poetry in Zerkalo is not lost on the spectatorial experience. It captures mnemonic spatiality, temporality and human experience in the most philosophical and poetic structure possible for the cinematic narrative medium possible. The movie under fine scrutiny can reveal poetic techniques that are unfamiliar to cinematic narrative-scape. The mnemoic chronotopic data is unaffected by the execution of transmedial poetry in cinematic narrative. Zerkalo proves that a cinematic narrative can perform as poetry. Everything is, and has the capacity to perform as Poetry, preserving its function all throughout its performance is very close in its etymology sense of poesis2. Zerkalo performs as a poetry all the while retaining its function as a cinematic narrative. The cinematic techniques is transmedialy adapted to the poetic techniques. One of the most notable is the refrain in the movie which happens at 16:49, 1:18:43, 1:34:45 is a moving imagery of gentle breeze blowing through a dell near the protagonist's home.



Figure 1. The Refrain from movie Zerkalo

An incomplete version of it happens at the beginning timestamped at 16 minutes 49 seconds into the movie. This is clearly an adoption of poetic form into cinematic narrative. With each iteration it takes on a different meaning. It is essentially the 'never more' of Zerkalo. The scene is shot in monochrome3 . There are also hyperbolic elements in the film such as the burning of the barn during a rain. The wind that passes through the field during the doctor's visit. More prominent poetic techniques is the use of oneiric images throughout the movie. These scenes have become iconic and bedrock of popular culture with several iterations of it permeating throughout the cinemascape since its creation. Oneiric images or dream sequences even at its etymological sense point to personification of dreams yet another poetic technique. The scenes in the movie depicting levitation of human body, of a drenched house crumbling down etal. Then there is use of real life footage from soviet era wars in such a manner that intensify and ground the film to reality. The contrasting effect of the montage with fictional metaphorical elements in the movie accentuates the emotional depth that the auteur wants to convey through their art is very similar to the poetic technique of juxtapostion4. With all of these examples substantiating the fluidity of film narrative. Its possible that such a narrative could take the form of a prose or an essay, it could be fiction, it could be non-fiction in the case of documentary. Out of all the attempts made Zerkalo remains one of the closest a cinematic narrative has ever been to embodying a poetic form. A paraphrasal of Tarkovsky's commentary on his own work - mirror would be - 'if you are looking for usual storyline, characters and a happy ending you would be dissapointed; because Zerkalo has non of these'. To expect all of these that Zerkalo can not provide would be like reading a poetry that discusses about philosophicality and spirituality of life and then criticizing the same poetry for

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not being a story with characters and story arc and a happy ending.

"when the last poet dissapears, life loses all meaning" – Andrei Tarkovsky. A cinema prayer.

Zerkalo's form is poetry based, stems from the Transmediality of the phenomenon – poetry, because it is non-media specific. It can be applied to any medium regardless of communication involved. It is not just confined to its transference into cinematic narratives. The transmedial poetics of it can be found in several mediums such as music where it could be metrically aggressive in genres such as in Rap or, video games where you can find poetical resonance throughout gameplay like in 'Gris' by Nomada Studio.

Tarkovsky's interest in poetry is evident from his love for Haiku. In his book, Sculpting in time He mentions Haiku's ability to create "images in such a way that they mean nothing beyond themselves",highlighting the poetic power of the form. He explains that his fascination with haiku - '...is its observation of life—pure, subtle, one with its subject; a kind of distillation.[2, pp. 66]' . This concept is not only relevant to Haiku but also to Tarkovsky's filmmaking process. Tarkovsky's work on Zerkalo is an attestation to this.

In this film, the Soviet era landscapes and its way of life permeate every frame, exemplifying the idea that 'The more closely the image corresponds to its function, the more impossible it is to constrict it within a clear intellectual formula.[2, pp. 106]' . This concept is a direct reflection of Tarkovsky's understanding of Haiku and its application to filmmaking. By integrating this principle onto his process, he attempts to transfer the essence of poetry into his cinematic narratives.

Transference being discussed here, as in cinematic narratives, isn't limited to psychoanalytics as suggested in mnemonic chronotope transference, but falls inside the scope of this paper which has to interact more with knowledge transference, in this use case the ability to apply and effectively transfer chronotopic data of one medium to a different one.

Tarkovsky's use of poetry to guide his principle filmmaking process allows him to create a unique subjective yet emotionally immersive experience for the viewer, transcending the determinism of spectatorial expectations from cinematic storytelling. In Zerkalo, Tarkovsky employs a film narrative that makes use of poetic imagery and symbolism, which in turn facilitates the film's use of time and space as a mnemonic device. Time and Space are two important elements of Zerkalo or any other movie of Tarkovsky for that matter. By combining the past and present, and blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy, Tarkovsky creates a chronotope that is both personal and universal. This also defines the Mnemonic chronotopes that the spectator is invited to participate in Zerkalo. This mnemonic spectatorial experience, allows audience to recall their own memories and emotions associated with the Soviet era.

II. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MNEMONIC CHRONOTOPES

Chronotopes are representation of time and space in language or discourse. A concept developed by Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin, its use has been integral to his theory of meaning in language and literature. Zerkalo having autobiographical elements falls into the context of Tarkovsky's work which primarily deals with the philosophical questions regarding time and the space inhabited by that period. The narrative manifestations of memory and its examination as a humane experience in "Zerkalo" is a thoroughly engaging and meticulously detailed aspect of the film, warrants a critical reevaluation of its thematic and emotional significance. Formatting a cinematic representation of a memory chronotopically and transmedialy into poetry is a challenging endevour. A veteran such as Tarkovsky effortlessly does just that with Zerkalo and his command over cinematic language helped him overall to achieve this. To understand the chronotopes especially the ones associated with autobiographical memory. Another work mentioned previously, A documentation of his reflections on this idea will be used as a supplementary layer of insight to muse upon mnemoic chronotopes in Andrei's cinema, cinematic feature documentary – 'Andrei Tarkovsky. A cinema prayer'

The process Andrei Tarkovsky has adopted to represent autobiographical mnemonic chrontopes onto his artwork is intriguing. Rather than objectively recreating it, he rather turns to subjective wish-fulfillment through the process of film making. His creative vision is guided by retrospective emotional resonance drawn from his personal experiences. This approach is quite evident in a number of scenes throughout the movie. One such moment in Zerkalo is the separation of his parents. It is quite interesting to recall the scene in Zerkalo which depicts the disembodied father, Tarkovsky's real-life father, engaging in a conversation with the young Ignat (Tarkovsky) regarding his desire to have his son live with him in the midst of his divorce proceedings. This scene is semi-autobiographical because of its representational divergence from the actual events in Andrei's life. According to Tarkovsky's recollection, the conversation occurred without his involvement, recalling the night of his parent's argument regarding the custody of

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Andrei. He was merely a passive observer to the discussion that took place. He was not even the same room but rather in his bed and his parents were under the impression that Andrei and his sister were asleep. This is one of life's scene that has been recreated numerous time by filmmakers, revisiting this specific moment with their own interpretation and use of creative license in the artistic process. – one of the most recent being 'The Fabelmans' by Steven Spielberg, where a psycholanalystical transference between the director and the passive observance of the director's childhood self takes place. For Tarkovsky, however, that moment stayed with him as an immutable memory that later on he was not only able to recreate but also reconfigure it in his movie. Its depiction crosses in to the realm of wishful thought process. The depiction of this moment also enters the domain of Tarkovsky's obssesion with temporality. In December 1976, Andrei Tarkovsky's sole venture into theatrical direction, a stage production of Hamlet, was premiered at the Lenkom Theatre in Moscow. The eponymous role was performed by Anatoly Solonitsyn, an actor who had previously collaborated with Tarkovsky on multiple film projects. Andrei's interpretation of Hamlet is that the protagonist's actions are motivated by a desire to rectify the fragmented nature of time. This perspective is expounded in his critique of Hamlet. where he puts forward that the whole point of hamlet being - "he condemns himself to death… condemns himself to service of other out of a desire to mend the torn fabric of time". The context can be reapplied to the artistic process of Tarkovsky, where his personal struggle with filmmaking is not crisis of indulgence in wishful thought process, but rather an attempt to restore temporal order of his existential being. It serves as an anchor to the Tarkovsky's ability to exercise control over his work's chronotope. The act of reconstructing and reconfiguring his memories through the lens of art offers a cathartic release from the trauma of his childhood, where the observer might feel like they are not in control and indulges in construction of paracosms to cope with reality, But as an artist they are able to transfer this paracosmic constructs into an exercise of dominion over the narrative and its temporal framework. This autobiographical reworking of his past serves as a comforting mechanism for Tarkovsky, allowing him to reconcile with the past using the present, to assert his control over the narrative of his life. This absolute control of autobiographically reconstructing and mnemonic reconfiguration is in fact a heterocosm that comforts the artist of the knowledge that what could have been and what will be always point to the present where their control exists.

As mentioned before, many of the cinematic motifs in his films are heavily influence by the formative years of Tarkovsky where he chose to stay with his mother. His experiences with her during the evacuation, relocation of him and his sister Marina to Moscow, where his mother assumed a position as a proofreader at a printing press, and his father's withdrawn demeanor during that time and Tarkovsky's own hospitalization feature prominently in his film mirror as a significant narrative thread that weaves the fabric of narrative's motifs.

Another autobiographical instance is not a factual recreation but rather a deliberate reconstruction of a personal memory, specifically one related to his sister, which is then recontextualized and filtered through the director's own subjective lens. The iconic scene from "Zerkalo" of a bird landing on a boy in a desolate, snow-covered landscape, devoid of foliage, serves as a private allusion to the director's own experiences with his sister, who was frequently followed and perched upon by birds. In his personal musings, as documented in "A Cinema Prayer," Tarkovsky poses a question of rhetoric on the significance of this phenomenon, and responds by suggesting that such an occurrence is typically reserved for individuals of good moral character. Conversely, the director's own experience of being shunned by birds, which is coincidentally a projection of textbook self-loathing and guilt – a classic and often overly romanticized characteristic of a tortured (artist in general) Poet (in this case a tortured Director). The scene is an attempt at externalization, to free himself, of the unresolved psychological conflict and to an extend wish-fulfillment.

The narrative design employed by the director in the scene, discussed before, echoes the cinematic introspection exhibited all throughout Tarkovsky's Mirror. Another of his seminal work in an orthographic genre is Sculpting in Time, which primarily focuses on his reflections on the cinema. The work at the very first of its chapter starts of with negative reviews on Mirror. Where Tarkovsky mentions his own experience with non-constructive criticism, specifically from the Soviet Union's Engineers, who deemed his film "incomprehensible" and since the film was state funded they felt that state should also be held accountable for his work. This criticism was adumbrated by tension between artistic vision of Tarkovsky and state control. Mostly because it didn't follow Socialist Realism. The state-mandated style of art, Tarkovsky was accused of wasting public funds on a "private" or "self-absorbed" project that the average worker couldn't understand. This also presents us with a paradox - where a state funded Zerkalo is comparable to a hypothetical studio funded Zerkalo in late stage capitalistic phase due to the commodification of art which makes Zerkalo even less of a possiblilty signifying death of pure poetic cinema.

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III. NARRATOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND NARRATIVE CONDITIONING

Zerkalo was only green lit due to the leverage offered by the success of his previous film Solaris(1972), and Mosfilm the only state owned studio holding the power to release it and owing the print meant Zerkalo was certified "third-category" release, meaning very few prints were made and it was only shown in minor theaters and this often points to the tension between artistic expression and state censorship all the while making it clear that in late stage capitalism the script wouldn't have seen the light of the day. This assertion of the state and engineers that the film is "incomprehensible cinephilic elitism" speaks to the very essence of Tarkovsky's artistic philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of intuition and subjective experience in the creative process. In their rejection of the film, the Engineers and state studio unwittingly demonstrate the limitations of rational, didactic approaches to art, and the need for a more critical understanding of the cinematic medium. This is yet another classic example of public and state condemnation towards a cinematic narrative that defies narratological determinism. Narratological determinism, not to be confused with narrative determinism affects spectatorial, expectations of a narrative. Especially an audience that have been accustomed to or overexposed to a certain type of narrative conditioning that often happens in cinematic narrative, causing to form spectatorial expectations from a specific narrative medium (which is akin to a sort of pavlovian conditioning). This Narrotological determinism as well as state censorship (comparable to commodification of art) opposes Tarkovsky's desire to create a personal, cathartic work that transcends the constraints of Narrative conditioning and official approval, much like Tarkovsky's own struggle to express the complexities of his inner world through the medium of cinema at a deeply personal and emotional level.

The Andrei Tarkovsky has proven consistently throughout his works of his directorial agency and cinema as a fluid art content whose nature is malleable to the artistic vision of the director. Which unequivocally implies that a director is an algorithm through which transmediation of raw ideas of an artist to achieve an art that embodies an equilibrium between mimesis and diegesis and Ostranenie takes place. Andrei Tarkovsky views himself as he views hamlet - as a person who is acutely aware of the fragility of temporal continuity and is willing to do the necessary or in Hamlet's case make the ultimate sacrifice in order to restore it. Andrei Tarkovsky's work on Zerkalo has been a restoration of continuity in the multitudinal levels from personal experience of trauma, oppression and of artistic expectations.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING 'ZERKALO' NOW

The cinematic relevance of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1975 film, Mirror (Zerkalo[romanized russian]) and its impact on world cinema cannot be overstated. A testament to its enduring influence, the film is prominently referenced in Tarkovsky's seminal orthographic work, "Sculpting in Time," with a notable 123 mentions. Mirror's significance in world cinema is again cemented by its ranking as the 9th greatest film of all time in the 2012 Sight & Sound directors' poll. The film's cultural significance has also been recognized through the establishment of the Zerkalo International Film Festival, a recurring event dedicated to celebrating Tarkovsky's work and cinematic legacy. (also known as Tarkovsky Film festival – Zerkalo Zerkalo International Film Festival, Andrei Tarkovsky Zerkalo International Film Festival, Tarkovskyfest [ru] or simply Zerkalo,). Notably, this film festival is not the only tribute to the director named after one of his films, as evidenced by the existence of another film festival of derivative nomenclature – The Stalker.

V. ANDREI TARKOVSKY

Andrei Tarkovsky - Andrei Arsenyevich Tarkovsky, is a Director of Russian origin belonging to Soviet Union. He having only made handful of films, is definitively known for his impeccable oeuvre of filmography. He is considered one of the greatest film directors of all time. His films include Ivan's Childhood (1962), Andrei Rublev (1966), Solaris (1972), Mirror (1975), Stalker (1979), Nostalghia (1983), and The Sacrifice (1986) out of which the last two were done abroad due to falling out with the state film authorities at soviet union and then at Canne film festival. He later published his book 'Sculpting in Time' which were his reflections on the cinema and art in 1986. He passed away later that very same year.

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