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Thesis

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Fig 1.

A hermeneutical study of the meaning
and interpretation of the cinematic metaphor,
with specific reference to *The Mirror*,
a film by Andrei Tarkovsky.

INTRODUCTION

Within this essay, I propose to present a discursive analysis of the cinematic metaphor. I will firstly analyse the poetic metaphor, as in critical theory, much of the work relating to the poetic metaphor is applied to the cinematic. I will analyse what a cinematic metaphor is and I will attempt to prove that cinematic metaphor is perhaps closest to the unconscious thought and is superior to both the verbal and visual metaphors. Firstly I will review Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*, and discuss the cinematic metaphors used within, pointing out what successful/unsuccessful metaphors are and whether or not these metaphors contribute to the obtuseness of his films. Finally I will analyse the metaphor of the mirror in terms of the Mirror Phase – Lacanian theory, as I feel this is the only way these images can convey meaning or can be seen as metaphoric.

Chapter 1

1

Background in semiotics - the process
by which we study cinematic
metaphor.

In film the image (signifier) and its meaning (signified) are almost identical as opposed to literature wherein the word and its meaning are not. The reader of a page invents the image, the reader of an image does not. Film consists of short-circuit signs in which the signifier nearly equals the signified.

Semiotics in film concentrates on the syntegmetic, this is the main area in which film is different from the other arts. The syntegmetic is the meaning which adheres to an image when it is compared with other shots that we see. The sense is made from its surroundings. In film this specific meaning is formed in the editing/montage process— how the film-maker presents the shot or meaning of the shot to us.

The paradigmetic connotation, in film, is when our understanding of the image/shot depends on its having been chosen a range of other possible shots— in other words how to shoot the shot. In literature the paradigmetic is more important when attributing meaning— how to say it bears more relevance than how to present what is said (syntegmetic), whereas in film how to present the shot leads to more significant meaning than how to shoot it. In film therefore, meaning the metaphor-maker intends to make is found in how the shot is presented, in literature the metaphor-maker realises his metaphors in the words that are chosen, not the presentation of the words.

This is the fundamental difference between metaphor in literature and metaphor in film.

Peter Wollen/ C.S. Peirce suggests in 'Meaning and Cinema' the following cinematic signs – the Icon, Index and the Symbol. The icon is a sign in which the signifier represents the signified mainly by its similarity to it or likeness, i.e. portraits/diagrams. The symbol is an arbitrary sign in which the image has neither a direct or indexical relationship to the signified, but neither represents it through convention.

The Index is the sign which we are primarily concerned with in this thesis as it can be connotative– metaphorical by nature, or technical. An Index measures a word/image etc. not because it is the same as it but because it has an inherent relationship to it, i.e. metaphorical – rolling gait suggests a man is a sailor; technical: medical symptom would be an index of health, a clock an index of time. Most of the connotative power of film, the expressiveness, depends on devices, largely indexical and also metaphorical to convey meaning which is not literal. Two other cinematic shorthand figures of speech which can also be metaphorical but are tropes (figurative language) in their own right are metonymy and synecdoche.

A metonymy is a euphemism used in which we use an aspect of an idea to convey an object (substitute naming), e.g. we can speak of a military officer as the brass, Northern Ireland as the North. Synecdoche is like metonymy except one uses the general for the specific, the part stands for the whole or the whole for the part, e.g. 'all hands on deck' meaning sailors or a car is a 'motor' or a 'set of wheels'.

In film associations of heat, sweat or hazy shimmering atmosphere on screen can be indexical, metonymical and metaphorical. The traces of sweat suggest heat, the idea of hotness – a trace indicates a larger idea

A well-known metonymical device in film would be falling calendar pages to indicate time passing by. A well-known synecdochic shot would be close shots of marching boots to indicate an army passing by.

We understand images in context in relation to categories of choice (paradigmatic) and in relation to categories of construction. Much of the meaning we make in film is construed not from what we see but from that which we do not see. Figurative tropes give cinema a large amount of its meaning. Indexes, Metonymy, ~~Synecdoche~~ ^{synecdoche} and metaphor. Our understanding of film is heightened by the use of these cinematic configurations. While the literal i.e. what we see is

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largely denotative in film, metaphorical indexes, metonymy, synecdoche give a connotative dimension to the interpretation of images within film.

Carlos Casteneda's character Don Juan in 'A Separate Reality'¹ explains to his apprentice,

- Once you learn you can see every single thing in the world in a different way.
- Then Don Juan you don't see the world in the usual way anymore.
- I see both ways. When I want to look at the world I see it in the way you do. Then when I want to see it, I look at it the way I know and perceive it in a different way.
- But - what's the advantage of learning to see?
- You can tell things apart. You can see them for what they really are.

But when Don Juan looks at images he sees them as they are, yet when he sees them he draws meaning to them, interprets them. The advantage of semiotics, of trying to perceive what the nature of metaphor and other tropes within film is to 'truly' grasp the connotative meaning of film and to form experiences from it.

Chapter 2

2

The study of poetic metaphor and
its influence on cinematic metaphor.

Components of cinematic metaphor
and views on interpretation.

'The student of visual effects does well in taking metaphor seriously for they must tell us something of the way our experiences are categorised.'

E.H. Gombrich

Metaphor is as much an application of the visual as the literature. As I. A. Richard puts it, thought is metaphorical, metaphor is "fundamentally a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts. Thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison and the metaphors of language derive therefrom."

In the chimpanzee experiments carried out by Beatrice and Robert Gaudren (Carl Sagan, *Dragons of Eden*, 1977) chimpanzees with a vocabulary of 100/200 words using Ameslan (a type of sign-language) were able to describe a duck as "water-bird", a watermelon as "drink-fruit" and a radish as "cry-hurt food". The primates translate the pictorial images into language, their associations and thought-process is metaphorical. In order to establish meaning they must resort to metaphor.

James Dickey, the poet, analyses the process wherein a metaphor is formed into four different themes.

1. Making picture comparisons in the mind.
2. Discovering the threads of continuity that run through these pictures and which create a narrative of dramatic action.
3. Recombining these elements so that they undergo a "fruitful interchange of qualities, a transference of energies, an informing of each other."

4. Translating this process into the medium of language.

The metaphor-maker for the visual stops at step 3. Yet the metaphor was primarily formed as an image, though both would not signify in the same way.

Paul Ricoeur (*The Rule of Metaphor*, 1977) lists the making of a metaphor

as a three step process of: selection, substitution, language formation. This would indicate that our first thoughts are literal from the metaphorical.

Metaphor can also be said (I.A. Richards: The Philosophy of Rhetoric) to be an idea stated in terms of another, belonging to a different category so that either our understanding of the first idea is transformed, or so that from the fusion of the two ideas a new one is created. The first idea is known as the tenor, the second is called the vehicle. The effort or exertion to span the gap between tenor and vehicle is known as the tension of a metaphor. If the metaphor has no tension it becomes a dead metaphor, i.e. the categories have joined together to form a word which has solely a literal meaning e.g. skyscraper.

In a metaphor, a change must take place. Either from the combination of the two ideas a new one is created or the first idea is changed in some way. Metaphor is figurative, its categories are broken down so that fresh meaning can be expressed.

N.Roy Clifton is one of the directors who has advanced the theory of cinematic metaphor. He holds the cinematic metaphor ~~earlier described as the~~ to be an image in the narrative and the idea or event compared to it. The event in the narrative is comparable to the tenor (the first idea), the idea compared to it resembles the vehicle. The interacting of the two to form experience is similar to the tension of the metaphor.

He states the cinematic metaphor as being "an image on the screen and some event or idea compared with it, together giving a visible form to an attitude or comment."

Thus the description holds with the earlier one of a poetic metaphor put forward by I.A. Richards. A visual metaphor or cinematic metaphor contains both vehicle and tenor and entails an experience.

Clifton continues: "the two members blur into one, the image and its meaning beyond being taken in at the same moment, as if the image had lost its

own identity and could only convey the figurative meaning contrived for it." ⁶

Therefore the image is taken over by the event/idea which is compared to it, changing the original outlook of the image to become something new (or combining the two to create something new), the viewer gaining some sort of experience from the interaction of the two. The viewer interprets the experience according to Clifton.

In the Godfather -Part 2 -Al Pacino as the Don shuts his wife out of the house when he finds her visiting their children. The image/shot shows him closing the door on her, but the meaning or experience we get from this image is that he is not just closing the door on her but cutting himself off from all life giving relationships.

The image is taken over by its meaning. The event, the closing over of the door juxtaposed with the idea compared to it gives it an entirely new figurative meaning.

This meaning, however, is the result of the judgement of the audience. Though the metaphor-maker might intend that this is the experience he conveys, he can never be totally sure of the correct manipulation of the audience's mind as everyone delegates meaning according to their own individual perception and associations with different objects and ideas.

Clifton gives the viewers a hand in the creation, he says "they are given the cement and gravel, but they must mix the gravel." ⁷

He adds: "As a director has deliberately assembled what we see in the frame and the order in which the frame comes before us, if what I find appears to be a figure, I am justified in giving whatever meanings an average viewer would."

He places only two qualifications on the freedom of interpreting the metaphor, firstly, if the director does not have a metaphorical style it may be unlikely that he is using a metaphor, secondly, if there is no other reason for shooting the shot other than metaphorical.

Interpretation is the third factor Clifton designates as part of the metaphor. He feels the audience has a part in this i.e. the metaphor maker does not control the meaning of the metaphor, rather the audience must interpret according to their own associations and assumptions. The maker may intend that his audience acquire certain beliefs, the audience may acquire these beliefs but they can never know whether this was the intention of the metaphor maker.

As Jung says (104B: 363 The Individual and the Community)

Even the man whom we think we know best and who assures us himself that we understand him through and through is at bottom a stranger to us. He is different. The most we can do, and the best, is to guard against the outrageous stupidity of wishing to interpret it. ⁸
Thus the audience cannot assume to know the metaphor makers' intention and interpret according to it, they must instead take on the responsibility themselves.

Eisenstein intends that the audience share his vision. He states that the purpose of film is 'not to recreate the literal world but to communicate the artist's personal experience of reality, and his understanding of its significance'. He intends to achieve this by making the audience work at the meaning of his images, stating that it is the 'dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author'. ⁹ He feels it is possible to communicate his experience precisely to the audience by making them work at the interpretation of the image.

Tarkovsky also holds this view. He wishes to make his audience search for the meaning in his work. He resorts largely to the metaphorical in order to make his special meaning. He feels 'associative linking... possesses an inner power which is concentrated within the image and comes across to the audience in the form of feelings'. ¹⁰ This is the process which intrigues him, whereby the audience must strive to interpret these images and build them into a whole or to think further than has been stated. This he feels puts the audience on a level with the artist in their perception of the film.

The audience can never know exactly the mind of the artist on the exact



beliefs he may wish to set forward. They may acquire the beliefs but never know whether they were intended to acquire those beliefs or not. I believe interpretation is individual. That the artist is wrong in expecting an audience to understand his personal beliefs and acquire them. The audience may only gain an experience and that experience is individual, though it may contain some parts of a universal or general consensus. I feel that the images used by the artist may be laden with personal imagery and remain somewhat obtuse to the audience/viewers.

In this chapter we have looked at the development of the poetic metaphor and subsequently the cinematic metaphor. Both of their functions are to connote meaning. From the experiments with chimpanzees we may arrive at the opinion that metaphor is a primary source of meaning, we think metaphorically. I. A. Richards agrees with this, stating thought to be metaphorical. The formation of metaphor advanced by James Dickey would seem that in making a metaphor we think visually first. The poetic metaphor contains the tenor the vehicle and the tension between according to I. A. Richards. The cinematic contains the tenor and vehicle and the experience interpreted by the audience according to N. Roy Clifton. The interpretation he advocates is one which the audience must make for themselves. Eisenstein, Tarkovsky however believe that the audience will interpret according to the beliefs of the artists, however I would contend that this is not possible, the audience instead judging for themselves.

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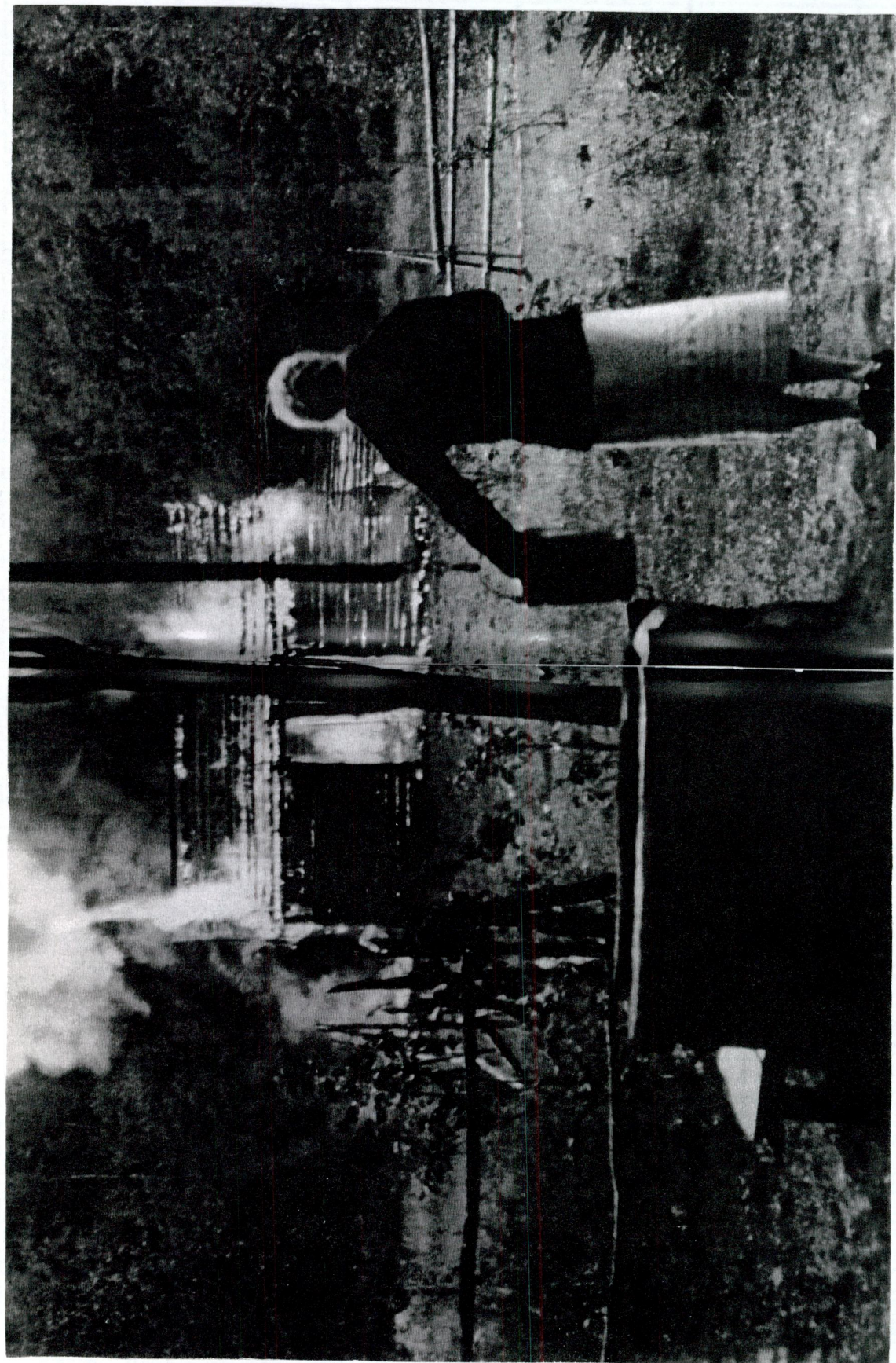


fig 2.

Chapter 3

3.

Inner Speech. Is cinematic metaphor
closed to unconscious thought &
thereby the best means of
relating experience.

Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?"

W.B. Yeats, The Circus Animals Desertion

A metaphoric relation has been established between cinema and language through a theory of signifying practices based in psychoanalytic discourse. This is known as inner speech.

'The primary visual cortex breaks down images of the external world into millions of constituent parts. The secondary visual cortex converts the individual features of objects perceived into complete, manifold structures... dynamic patterns. The function of the tertiary cognitive part of the cortex is to combine the visual tactile motion ... and auditory- vestibular sections of the brain. These sections are not ever fully developed in the human infant but mature gradually and become effective by age four to seven. ^{1 12}

In "The Man with a Shattered World": Luria p35-40 the case of a soldier is cited. The soldier had been shot in the head. Luria writes that

He referred to his major disability as a loss of speech memory... He felt as if he was 'in a kind of fog all the time, like a heavy half-sleep. My memory is a blank. I can't think of a single word. All that flashes through my head are some images, hazy visions that suddenly appear and just as suddenly disappear giving way to fresh images... Whatever I do remember is scattered, broken down into disconnected bits and pieces.'

The soldier indicates through his repression of speech that he has lost the abilities of tertiary section and reverted to a pre-linguistic mode of signification. These images are the pre-cursor to language and is the mode one would employ if they decided to abandon spoken language.

In relation to cinematic metaphor the important thing to gain from this is that thought is formulated into words and images, the images coming before the words, thereby implying the cinematic metaphor to be more akin to the original thought than its verbal metaphor the word. This would imply that visual metaphor was more capable of conveying experiences to us than the verbal

metaphor.

Eisenstein supported this view. David Bordwell (Screen 15, Winter 24-25)¹³ proposes Eisenstein's view of inner speech as involving a "non-verbal psychic associationism underlying all behaviour, including language". This speech he saw as sensuous, pre-logical and ultimately private.

Eisenstein's theory of inner speech is not unlike the function of the secondary visual cortex described earlier. (If so this would liken the experience to that which the soldier has undergone.) Thus the mind sorts and associates objects seen and breaks them down into dynamic patterns and structures.

I.A. Richards connects metaphor with inner speech. Richards proposes inner speech as "fundamentally... a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts. Thought is metaphoric and proceeds by comparison and the metaphors of language derive therefrom."¹⁴

According to these views Eisenstein proposes inner speech as non-verbal but a dynamic force which continually associates and re-associates objects in the mind, leading to opinion. We decide in accordance with these continually reforming associations. I.A. Richards agrees with this, substituting associations for the thought process. He also states that language derives from this process and that this mode of association/ thought process is metaphoric. This dynamism is metaphoric. This would conclude that inner speech is non-verbal and metaphoric.

If inner speech is indeed non-verbal and metaphoric then what does its associations take the form of? If it is connected to the secondary cortex then it could be a 'dynamic pattern' which (as the soldier experienced) would be visual.

Inner speech could possibly be both metaphoric, and non-verbal but visual. Then at the root of inner speech would be the visual metaphor. Film's metaphors would be closest to inner speech as they are not static, like inner speech its associations/ thought process is dynamic, ever-moving and

interchangeable.

Eisenbaum saw film metaphor as parasitic on verbal metaphor. Paul Willenehnan was of a similar mind speaking of literalisms, e.g. the way a camera angle might literalise specific phrases such as "look up to", the camera would be looking up at the person who was speaking. ¹⁵

Eisenbaum cited Hitchcock's films to probe his point. For instance Strangers on a Train (1951) a number of commentators agreed that the constant interplay between word and image was rampant throughout this film. Hitchcock endeavours to orchestrate an elaborate verbal and visual play on the expressions "criss-cross" and "double-cross" (e.g. crossed railroad tracks, crossed legs, crossed tennis racquets; tennis doubles, double scotches, alternating montage as a double, lap-dissolve as a criss-cross of images and so forth). This serves to prove that Eisenbaum felt the images were derived from words and not the other way around. The visual metaphor relied on the verbal trope (connotative phrase). ¹⁶

I have described the analysis of metaphor by James Dickey who cites that the pictorial image appears in the mind before the verbal. This is further enforced by Luria's description of the working of the mind. Eisenstein, basing his theories on psychoanalytic discourse, advocates inner speech as non-verbal. Whereas I.A. Richards supports this, stating inner speech to be metaphoric. Eisenbaum feels inner speech is verbal and the word precedes the visual. The importance of this debate is to construe whether or not in the workings of the mind the visual precedes the verbal.

The impact this has on the cinematic metaphor is to decide whether or not it is closer to the experience than the verbal. Does image come before language, and if it does indeed precede it perhaps it is closer to our thought process the unconscious, the self. Conveying experience through visual metaphor would seem to be superior in communicating the unconscious than through language. Conveying experience through cinematic metaphor would seem closer

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again than visual metaphor to experience/ meaning as cinematic metaphor is dynamic, everchanging which is akin to Luria's explanation of the secondary cortex of the brain wherein the structuring of the visual and the associations it makes are formed.

Image informs language. The primacy of the visual image over language is evident by the evidence put forward by Luria, Eisenstein, etc. The visual metaphor is superior to the verbal metaphor in communicating the conscious by closer than either of these to the unconscious and to the origin of thought/ truth is the cinematic metaphor as it images Luria's description of the secondary cortex of the brain wherein dynamic, interchanging associations and patterns are made. The cinematic metaphor is superior to visual and verbal in connoting the unconscious meaning and therein is closer to expressing experience/ meaning. Cinematic metaphor is superior to verbal image in conveying unconscious thought and experience.



Fig. 3

Chapter 4

4.

Is metaphor a literal trope?

What, may we ask is the purpose of knowing what a cinematic metaphor is? How does it function and why do we care how it functions? We have already established how it is formed and how we recognise it. Also, that it is more akin to the nature of the unconscious thought than the visual metaphor and the verbal metaphor both of which it precedes. We will soon establish that its powers of connotation are expressive. It bears meaning, that is the only function it has. It is not literal. The function of a metaphor is to express meaning. The appropriate response to a metaphor, according to Stephen Davies, is "the thought entertained without belief that the metaphor states a significant truth." He cites this explanation, "My love is like a red rose." He does not intend the viewer to see that his love is prickly or stalky. Instead he wants us to experience the most likely aspect of that statement which is that his love suggests to him the beauty of a rose. If this is so then we have ascertained that the metaphor is not literal but trivially true. Its main purpose is to express an experience. The metaphor-maker wants to convey to us some aspect of the nature of his statement. He wants us to see something of what he sees or to try to convey to us an experience.

While I agree that the metaphor-maker's intention is to express an experience I do not believe that it is possible for this statement to be trivially true. I think Davies is being facetious, if he intends this statement to express even a glimmer of truth then one would expect his love to be sporting petals. The rose if not metaphoric and connoting a new meaning by the juxtaposition of the two words, image and event compared to it, is then non-literal and we must take it as such.

The metaphor-maker intends to convey an experience, the metaphor is non-literal. It is figurative. It changes the meaning of words to express new meaning, or it changes an image by comparing an event or idea to it. It does not

state the literal, otherwise it would not be able to convey a figurative/connotative experience.

Chapter 5

5.

Tarkovsky - his use of cinematic
metaphor and a psychoanalytic
discussion of it.

One might find many of Tarkovsky's films tedious or indeed boring by to-day's standard. Often his meaning is obtuse, the narrative abstract and it is difficult to see whether or not he is making a point or, indeed, if it is important to him whether or not he makes a point. In order to attribute meaning to Tarkovsky and to make sense of his film we must see the narrative as being extremely metaphorical in content. Indeed Tarkovsky himself has said his films are joined by a series of poetic links which are closer to the potential of film as "the most fruitful and poetic of art forms". He adds:

The birth and development of thought are subject to laws of their own, and sometimes demand forms of expression which are quite different from the patterns of logical speculation. In my view poetic reasoning is closer to the laws by which thought develops, and thus to life itself, than is the logic of traditional drama. ¹⁸

I would agree with all Tarkovsky proposes in reference to the poetic metaphor and through theory its impact on cinema. I feel that in cinema well-chosen metaphor is one of the most connotative means of conveying experience and helping the audience to "see" something. However, I feel that the difficulty in interpreting Tarkovsky's films is this - that many of his metaphors are false, they do not work. They are attempted in order to convey a particular experience but this is universally lost on most viewers.

Eisenstein, who was largely influenced by Levi-Bruhl who also influenced Freud, puts forward, strongly, this theory on the successfulness/unsuccessfulness of a metaphor.

A drive towards the thematic-logical side renders the work dry, logical, didactic. But over-stress on the side of the sensual form of thinking with insufficient account taken by the thematic - logical tendency - this is equally fatal for the work: the work becomes condemned to sensual chaos, elementless, raving. Only in the "dually united" interpretation of those tendencies reside the true tension - laden unity of form and content. ¹⁹

Perhaps this is the reason why we do not identify with Tarkovsky's metaphors, he

overburdens the aesthetic of his images. For example, I found the images in The Mirror very beautiful but many of them did not convey any experience for me.

The Mirror is a strange film, to say the least - difficult to watch, difficult to understand and difficult to interpret. It comprises a series of anecdotes and metaphors juxtaposed in a manner which has an intermittent narrative that neither connects or explains. My reading of it is of a young boy who becomes a man who feels alienated from his wife and mother; of an estranged wife who feels disillusioned with life and herself; of a mother who feels estranged from her son. It is about a man who feels guilty, perhaps feeling responsible for their disillusionment, but there is more to it than this, perhaps, if one was Russian it would be possible to discern more.

I will isolate the image of The Mirror and attempt to explain it through psychoanalytic discourse. I feel it would be impossible to review this metaphor through any other means, thereby making it inaccessible to most.

If Tarkovsky feels that by allowing the audience so much leeway in interpreting for themselves they will interpret in accordance with his intention, then he is sorely mistaken. It would be impossible for any audience, however well informed, to interpret the director's intention, be it ever so simplistic. They may, however, be able to make their own personal interpretation and take some experiences from the cinematic metaphor.

I chose this film, however, because it is a prime example of personal metaphor. Every frame, almost every few shots are intended to convey a meaning beyond the literal, beyond what is seen, yet nearly always it fails. I wish to show which metaphors are successful and which are not within this film; why certain metaphors fail; and examine whether it is because of these failed metaphors that the film is so obtuse.

The Mirror metaphor in The Mirror can be explained in terms of Lacan's the Mirror Phase. According to N.Roy Clifton a cinematic metaphor must consist



Fig. 4

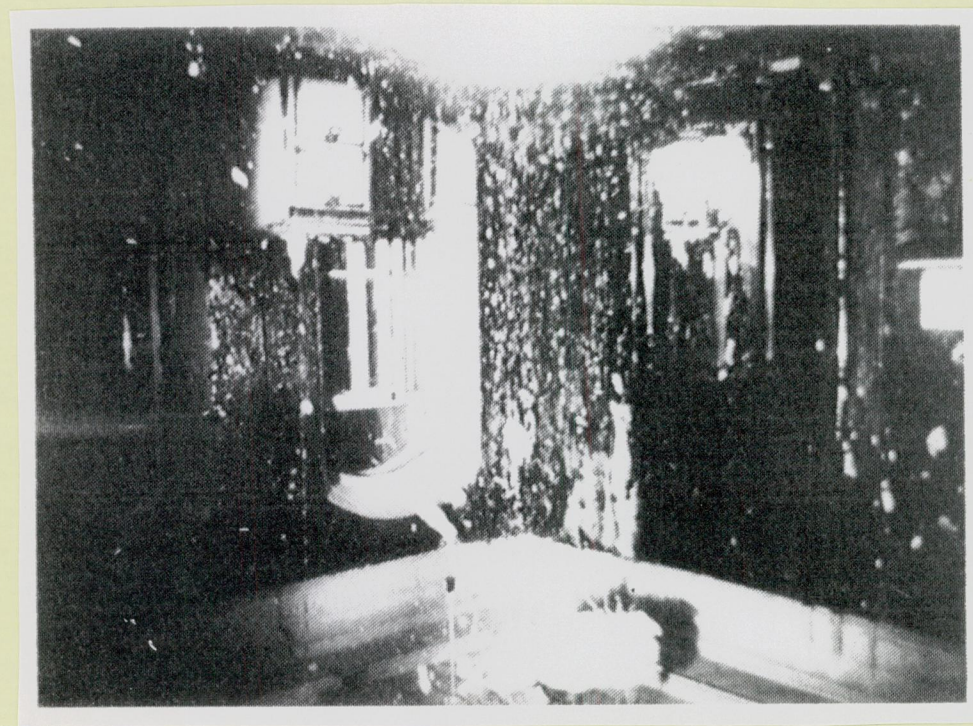


Fig. 5

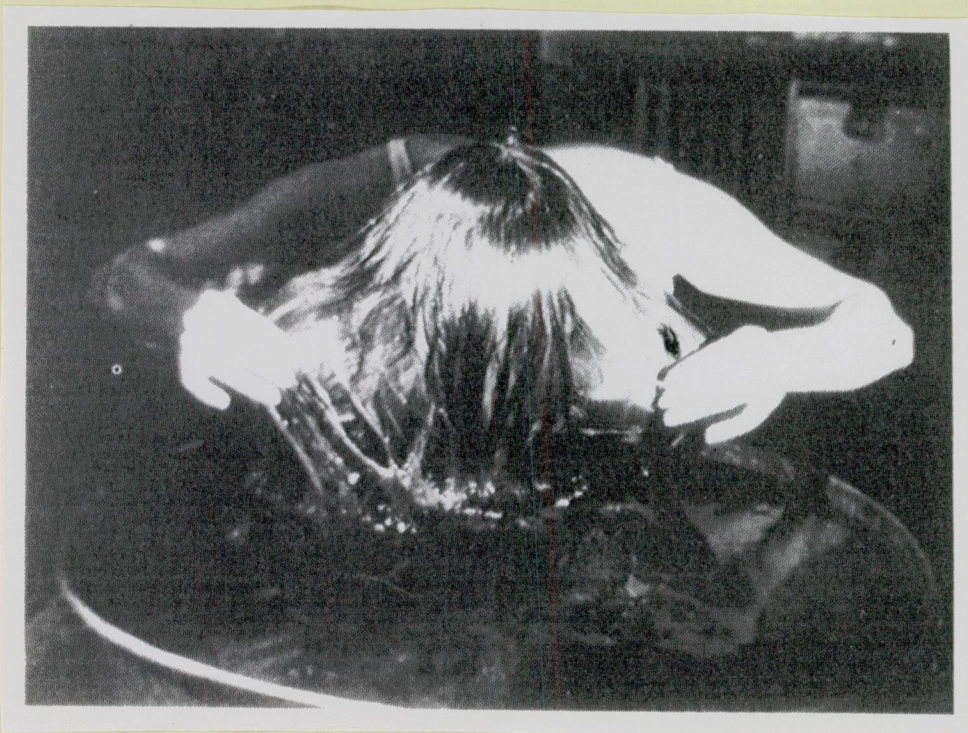


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

of an image and an event or idea compared to that image in order to give meaning which is interpreted by an audience. I feel in this controlling metaphor (a metaphor which runs throughout something) often the image is apparent but the event or idea compared to it is unclear or non-existent and therefore the tension or meaning is withheld. It is obvious that the director wants to convey meaning but cannot or will not.

In some of the early shots in the film a dream sequence occurs observed by the child who watches his mother. He sees her as an Other, a strange abstracted being. The image shown is that of a woman whose hair is wet and covers her face, ^{Fig 6 & 7} she views her reflection in a basin of water and straightens up, unbalanced, her hair wet, hanging in strands and obscuring her face. She looks strange, surreal and unhuman-like. Lacan defines the Mirror phase as the stage when the ego comes into being through the infant's identification with an image of its own body. When the child sees its image (e.g. in a mirror, its mother's face or any other perceived as a whole), it mistakes the of this image for a superior being, an ideal. It sees it as reflecting itself and something other. It is an imaginative, fictitious ideal image which forms the basis for later identifications especially in love relationships. There is Narcissism, Misrecognition and Alienation in the moment of the Mirror. The narcissistic subject sees itself in others or takes an "other" for itself. It misrecognises the imagined wholeness/ ideal other as superior to itself so idealises what it sees or it misrecognises the image of the self as something other. This can only happen if the subject is 'alienated' – apart from the perfect image or:

The child is divided from the moment it forms a self-conception ...
In saying that's me it is saying I am another. 20

The child observes his mother, washing her hair he identifies her as something other, and sees himself reflected in her. He misrecognises her as an ideal. In order to preserve her image as an ideal he must dissociate himself from

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her. Later we see his mother in the dream sequence, she looks in the mirror and sees herself reflected as old. Perhaps this reflects the boy's desire not to alienated her as she is his mother fighting with the desire to perceive her as an ideal. Both these images could be cinematic metaphors. The first – the mother whose wet hair hands over her face, is frightening juxtaposed with the image of the child, which is the event or idea compared to it. Yet the child conveys no emotion of dismay. We cannot conclude from the images the alienation or terror of the child. Only when I apply Lacan's theory, or bring outside exclusive information to it, is a metaphor apparent, i.e. the image, that of the mother with wet hair covering her face compared with Lacan's Mirror phase – lead us to the experience of the child's observing his mother as something Other, an ideal. As Lacan says this is imaginary, but proceeds later in other love relations.

The second image in the dream sequence, that of the mother seeing herself reflected as an old woman in the mirror, compared with Lacanian theory again provides us with a metaphor – boy afraid to alienate his mother, yet he must in order to preserve an ideal.

Using N. Roy Clifton's qualification for interpreting a metaphor, Tarkovsky does tend to use metaphor and there are no other justifications for these images except metaphorical.

Again these cinematic metaphors, though highly developed and evolved if compared to the Mirror Phase, are totally inaccessible within the film unless an outside knowledge is brought to the reading or 'misreading' of the film.

The second instance we see the reflection in the mirror is when his wife is looking at herself. He says "you look like my mother". She rejoins "that's apparently why we separated". She recognises that he sees his mother as an ideal, in order to preserve her as an ideal her must alienate himself from her. He sees this ideal image reflected in his wife, again he has left her. The verbal acts as what Barthes would call an 'anchorage'. Words serve as a guide to point us to the

meaning of the visual. She misrecognises herself in the mirror as something other.

It could also be interpreted through the myth of Narcissus – he fell in love with his own reflection, this is a paradigm for the failure to possess the object of desire and for the love of the self which precedes loving other. Perhaps the constant stress of the reflection of the wife is her preoccupation with herself or selfishness and this is the reason he has left her, and her isolation is her obsession with herself as an ideal.

Tarkovsky presents us with an image but we have to search for the idea or event to compare it to, in order to interpret it. I feel this is a metaphor, but a poorly defined one and is only a metaphor because of the information I had to bring to it. This is somewhat exclusive.

Another metaphor shows herself looking at the image of herself and his mother in a photograph. The image itself is that of a photograph of her mother and herself held by her, her hands tremble. The words direct us, she says she looks like his mother. He replies you don't. This is after he has tried to get custody of their child. The image that of a reflection of herself and mother echoes the image we saw earlier in his dream of her seeing herself reflected as his mother. Earlier the narrator saw her as a reflection of an ideal. When she denies him custody of the child he is displeased with her and rejects her as an ideal.

The image of the photo – reflecting the wife and mother, is compared to the idea that the narrator perceives both his mother and in reflection his wife as images of the ideal. She recognises he is isolating them both and perhaps sees some of herself in the ideal. She says they look alike. This is a cinematic metaphor for his isolation and alienation of her through his own imaginary conception of the ideal.

These mirror images are complex. I could only interpret them according to psychoanalytic discourse. Without it they exist purely as images, as Eisenstein said

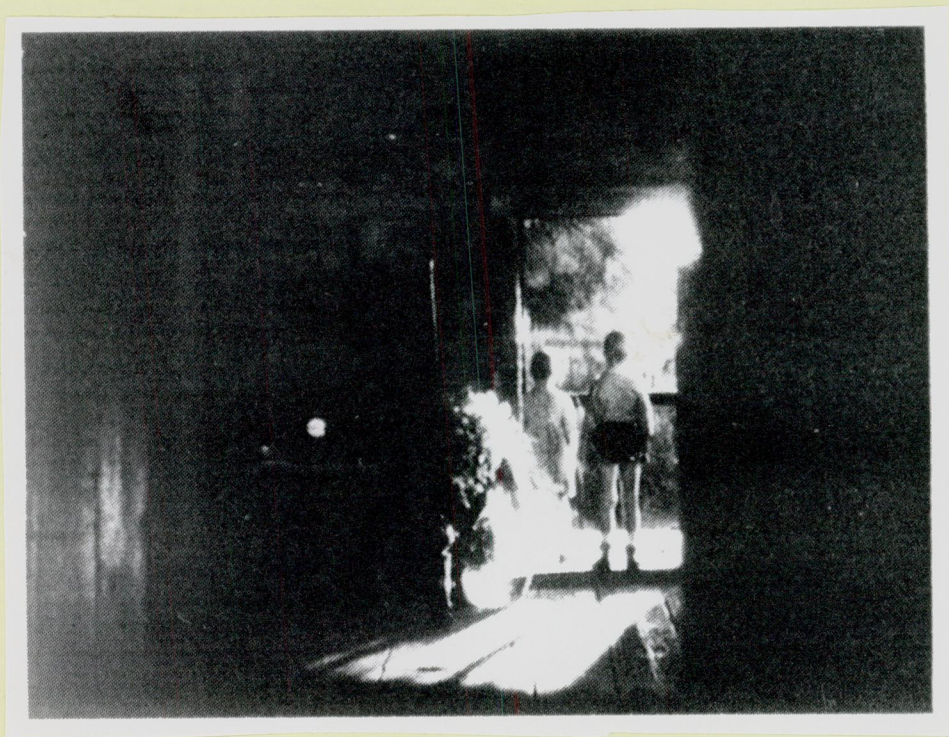


Fig 8



Mirror The fire sequence.

Fig 9

when the tenor or image was stressed to much so as to exclude the vehicle and meaning. The metaphor became too abstract, even raving.

Tarkovsky uses some metaphors to good avail. I find when he is dealing with the narrator and wife etc. The metaphors are obscure and personal. Indeed this story is meant to reflect his own upbringing, hence is another reason to be called the Mirror, because it is somewhat autobiographical. If they are personal metaphors however it is impossible to use them to convey specific meaning.

Many of these personal metaphors are based on fire and water. The interior of a room starts to rain, plaster falls everywhere. The image is beautiful but without context to add substance to, it is not a working metaphor, simply an image , yet it looks as if it's supposed to have some connotative value.

An image of a fire burning in the middle of nowhere appears after she is in the shower and there is no water. Again two images juxtaposed together as if to form meaning but dwelling on the image-sensual, raving instead of conveying experience.

Another image of Ignat and the bonfire. Using fire so many times, one would expect this to be a metaphor for something, yet it fails to produce meaning. In referring to himself Tarkovsky creates solely personal, highly evolved complex psychoanalytic metaphors.

However when he reverts to anecdote or clippings from war he produces some really worthwhile metaphors. He tells the story of a boy, caught up in the siege of _____, who is in military training who refuses to comply with the regulations of the service. The boy throws a hand-grenade at his military officer. The military officer lies in front of the grenade so as to protect the boys. Tarkovsky focuses on the bare skull of the man, part of whose head has been blown away – one can see the pulsation of the skull, it suggests fear, tension, excitement and loneliness. It is a well drawn metaphor. The pulsating skull of the soldier compared with the loneliness and isolation of the boy who has lost his parents in

the siege transfers to the loneliness, isolation and terror of the soldier. The audience interprets the metaphor as terror.

Further on the image of a nuclear bomb is shown. It is followed by the image of the same boy and a bird lands on his head. The boy takes the bird in his hand and crushes it. He is becoming a destroyer as he has been destroyed himself. The tenor is the boy crushing the bird on his head, the vehicle is our knowledge of the boy's situation, the tension or experience results in the visual analysis of perceiving him as destroyer and destroyed.

Tarkovsky claims he wishes to convey experience. He wants his audience to perceive his metaphors, to derive meaning from them, he has the confidence in them to do so. However, in accordance with many of his metaphors they seem either highly personal or laden with psychoanalytic meaning. They are difficult to attribute meaning to and often fail in expressing an experience. He is not unable to use cinematic metaphor and does so, to advantage in occasion throughout this film. One would conclude that these films are not accessible to all, Tarkovsky demands a prior knowledge and information of his audience to understand his imagery. He is being exclusionary but also obtuse as many of the metaphors could only have personal connotation.



Fig 10

Conclusion

Throughout this essay I have expounded on the theories of the cinematic metaphor. I have given an account of the cinematic devices used to analyse film and placed the metaphor in context. I have discussed the poetic metaphor and its influence on the theory of the cinematic metaphor. The cinematic metaphor can be viewed as possessing (as in literature) a tenor, vehicle and the experience that the metaphor entails which is interpreted.

The interpretation of the cinematic metaphor is as much a part of the workings of the cinematic metaphor as are its constituents, the image and event/idea compared with it in order to convey meaning. Through my interpretation of the cinematic metaphor, I have given evidence that would suggest it precedes both the visual and the verbal metaphors and is akin to the primary unconscious thought. Thus cinematic metaphor is invaluable in conveying experiences of the psyche.

I have proven metaphor to be non-literal but figurative, and imaginary trope, suggesting we translate the literal from the metaphorical, as thought is akin to metaphor at the highest level. We think in non-truths. Our ability is only to convey experience.

In terms of this knowledge, the workings of the cinematic metaphor, its closeness to thought and the unconscious, its need to be interpreted and the fact that it is non-literal, I have discussed Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror* and attempted to isolate some of the metaphors within it and attempt to discover whether or not they are successful/ unsuccessful. I have applied psychoanalytic theory to some of the metaphors, if indeed metaphor is closest to the unconscious then in order to interpret them perhaps one should have recourse to psychoanalytic discourse. However it is also a question of interpretation. In order to function a metaphor must be understood. I feel Tarkovsky is often exclusionary in his metaphors and for a metaphor to function it should be accessible within a general consensus.

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