

**EXTENDED  
ABSTRACT**

# Water symbolism in Tarkovsky's works

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**Introduction**

Cinema is one of the most pervasive media for the expression and conveyance of concepts and meanings to the audience. Tarkovsky's movies, meanwhile, are a deep visual representation of his intellectual and emotional surges. In general, Tarkovsky's views and filmmaking are full of symbolic and poetic concepts. Reflecting upon his works, it can be inferred that the four elements have a special place in his movies. Our research question is: what does the symbol of water as one of the elements of nature mean in Tarkovsky's works?

The present study aimed at the symbolic expression of water in the works of Andrei Tarkovsky and developing a new concept in the mind of the audience. In line with this study, we can mention the most relevant sources, such as a book entitled "The Restored Hope of Tarkovsky's Cinema" by "Babak Ahmadi" in 2005. This book is a combination of Tarkovsky's book and newer perspectives regarding a review of Andrei Tarkovsky's cinema. Another source that

can be referred to is a book entitled "Psychological Analysis of Time and Immortality in Tarkovsky's Cinema and Art, Literature and Mindset" by "Mohammad Sanati" in 2002. In this book, the first discussion has dealt with the art and literature of mentality from modernity to postmodernism from different aspects. Thereafter, in the section of time and immortality in Tarkovsky's cinema, the author discussed his subject under seven titles.

**Methodology**

The current qualitative study analyzed Tarkovsky's works using semiotic analysis. The present study took a closer look at Tarkovsky's works and his views on cinema and the process of symbol formation in his works according to the theories of "Christian Metz" in the field of semiotics in cinema. It performed a semiotic study of water symbolism in the works of Andrei Tarkovsky.

**Results**

Tarkovsky emphasized the constant presence of elements of nature in all scenes. We can see the predominant power of nature in connection with humans and naturalism in Tarkovsky's thought. In his movies, he has consistently used the four main elements one of which

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is water. Water washes and purifies, and it seems to be the element to which Tarkovsky feels closest.

Tarkovsky's interest in the element of water was evident in all of his movies, from the very beginning in his short movie "steamroller and violin" and later in movies, namely "Ivan's Childhood", "Andrei Rublev", "Solaris", "Mirror". "Stalker", "Nostalgia" and "Sacrifice". The ubiquitous presence of water in Tarkovsky's movies is accompanied by a variety of concepts. Such recurrent images in his movies make the audience think of the symbolic meaning of water in various forms, along with its aesthetic meaning since formal logic cannot justify these very exaggerated repetitions.

In Tarkovsky's first four movies, water and rain signify happiness. Rain is a vibrant theme. In the last three movies, wetlands and ponds are reflections of dead water. Tarkovsky is a narrator of human insecurity and suspense. Apart from the sense of suspense that has been repeated by the image of wind or weightlessness in the world of dreams, water observation can evoke another meaning. The destiny of water, which is clear and first at first, is dirt and mud. Every flowing water vibrantly pursues its journey to death. Water observation elicits the process of decay and the final death. In this sense, water in Tarkovsky's work carries the double meaning of birth and death.

About the semiotic system, it can be observed that each movie is accompanied by visual cues. We cannot put a limited interpretation of Tarkovsky's works, rather they are open to diverse interpretations. Independent of the author's intentions as well as his/her intended meanings, a cinematic text can always carry different or even transformative connotations in the face of audiences and analysts. It does not deny the author's intent, rather the construction of the implied author's intentions and his/her intellectual and social system is quite effective in the process of unfolding symbol meanings used in his/her works. Tarkovsky artistically depicts his complex, mysterious, and poetic thoughts about the world with tangible signs and symbols in his movies.

## **Conclusion**

Tarkovsky's works are a reflection of his way of life. Tarkovsky himself does not specifically regard the elements of his movies as symbols, rather he argues his aesthetic view of life is central to the creation of his works. Nevertheless, it cannot be accepted that analysts judge and review his work only in this way. His Tarkovsky movies take on a visual, mysterious, and poetic quality conveying truths to their audience in an inspiring and intuitive way. As a filmmaker, Tarkovsky, with a unique and poetic view, was able to use the four elements of nature to create works that would make him a popularly acclaimed filmmaker.

In the current study, the four main elements of nature in Tarkovsky's cinema were regarded as symbols whose structural analysis enabled us to enter the realm of cultural studies. Accordingly, this study did not adopt a mere aesthetic approach. Therefore, it can be concluded that Tarkovsky's interest in the use of these elements carries a semiotic and symbolic meaning and in each of the movies, it creates a special feature consistent with the artwork and evokes a novel meaning in the mind of the audience.

The present study specifically analyzed the element of water in Tarkovsky's movies. It can be noted that he has artistically represented different concepts such as life, death, happiness, insecurity, sanctity, fear, and isolation by the use of water symbol beyond the aesthetic view and incorporated those concepts and hidden meanings in his artworks.

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