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O *Espelho* de Tarkovsky: Fragmentação discursiva como gagueira

Resumo

O *Espelho* (1975), terceiro longa-metragem de Andrei Tarkovsky, é considerado a sua obra mais pessoal. O desdobramento poético do filme é marginalmente narrativo na medida em que conta uma história através de fragmentos discursivos temporalmente desconjuntados que minam a continuidade narrativa. As vinhetas são, na sua maioria, dramatizações das lembranças do protagonista de acontecimentos infantis, sonhos e devaneios, que articulam uma lógica temporal que requer uma espacialização não convencional da narrativa para torná-la coerente. Na sua constelação analítica, discernimos uma dinâmica repetitiva de identificação empática como estratégia de engajamento com o espectador. Apontamos a labor iterativa do protagonista como a gagueira que espelha a luta do indivíduo para encontrar uma voz como expressão de uma identidade coletiva.

Palavras-chave: Tarkovsky. O Espelho. Gagueira. Narrativa.

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Tarkovsky's *Mirror*:
Discursive Fragmentation as Stuttering

Abstract
Mirror (1975), Andrei Tarkovsky's third feature film, is deemed his most personal work. Its poetic unfolding is by many accounts marginally narrative in that it tells a story as an assemblage of temporally disjointed discursive fragments that undermines conventional modes of narrative continuity. The vignettes are, for the most part, dramatisations of the protagonist's memories of childhood events, dreams, fantasies and day-dreams articulated through a temporal logic that requires an unconventional spatialisation of the narrative to render it coherent. In its analytical constellation, we discern a repetitive dynamic of empathic identification as a strategy of engagement with the viewer. We identify the iterative travail of the film's protagonist as a stuttering that mirrors the individual's faltering struggle to find a voice as expression of a collective identity.

Keywords: Tarkovsky. Mirror. Stutter. Narrative.

Tarkovsky's *Mirror*: Discursive Fragmentation as Stuttering

Mirror (1975), Andrei Tarkovsky's third feature film, is usually deemed his most personal film.[1] It is putatively a filmic exposé of the inner life of Alexei, a middle-aged Russian intellectual who is bed-ridden for unstated reasons – possibly from undergoing a spiritual crisis or suffering a mental breakdown or collapse.[2] The film treats us to a succession of vignettes which Tarkovsky affirms can be construed as the unraveling of consciousness or the unfolding of a man's memories at death's threshold. In an 1987 interview with Jerzy Illg and Leonard Neuger, Tarkovsky states that *Mirror* "is in a sense closest to his theoretical concept of cinema" and in his book ***Sculpting in Time*** (1986), Tarkovsky refers to *Mirror* as his most "autobiographical" film. Following Tarkovsky's lead (1986), various writers and critics (REDWOOD, 2010; ROBINSON, 2006; SYNESSIOS, 2001) have established or inferred a direct correlation between some of the settings, people and events from Tarkovsky's life and the locations, characters and scenes in the film itself – Natasha Synessios's book, ***Mirror*** (2001) goes so far as presenting a wealth of family photographs of Tarkovsky's youth which served as direct inspiration for much of the imagery and art direction of the film. And though the film is supposedly based on the "psychological truth" of Tarkovsky's memories, family myths and personal experiences, the result is still a very subjective piece of work which is likely very far from any objective truth. Still, one can't help but wonder if the film as an autobiographical family drama might not be a thinly veiled exposé of Tarkovsky's own life.

The film flashes back and forth temporally between scenes from Alexei's childhood in the 1930's and 1940's in the Russian countryside and Alexei's adulthood in the "present-day" Soviet Union of the mid-1970's when the film was produced. For the most part, the presented vignettes are dramatisations of Tarkovsky's ideations, i.e. subjective presentations of memories of childhood events, of dreams, of fantasies or day-dreams. Many of the memorial ideations are drawn from family memories and the interplay with dramatic recreations of family stories, idealised fantasised imagery, projections, oneiric imagery, and documentary archival footage. Mostly, these vignettes illustrate or re-enact in dramatic form these ideations from a period spanning before his

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1   Possibly, the film is an extension of ***Solaris***, the novel, for as the space scientist Snaut's states in Lem's book: "We are only seeking Man. We have no need of other worlds. We need mirrors"

2   This might not be the most salutary clinical diagnosis to describe Alexei's condition but there is a return to this common-sense notion to describe a deeper understanding of depression. This terms has recently made a revival particularly through the work of Canadian historian of psychiatry, Edward Shorter at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto.

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conception around 1930, to the final moments around 1974, but there are also non-diegetic elements, such as music, poetry and paintings that appear as meta-commentary to the underlying narrative and make one question the subjectivity of the point of view being vehicled by the film: is it Alexei's story shown on screen or is it Tarkovsky's story played out through Alexei? These questions cannot be answered with certainty even if one is tempted to lean towards interpreting it as Tarkovsky meditating on his own life – a sentiment intimated by a diary entry from "Perhaps cinema is the most personal art, the most intimate" (1986, n/p).

Mirror places us deep in Deleuze's realm of the time-image where "the real is no longer represented or reproduced but 'aimed at'" (DELEUZE, 1989, p. 1) and leaves us to intuit the drama according to our capacities as a viewer. The narrative temporally bounces back and forth from the two different eras, often without adequately cueing the viewer when jumping from one time period to another. These memorial plateaus work independently of each other, but are also linked in Alexei's mind and allow movement from one era to another without effort. The effect is that spectators often find themselves temporally disoriented within the film and unable to situate themselves within the film's temporal constructions: viewers find it difficult to ascertain whose subjectivity is being articulated or in which historical era the vignette is taking place, and therefore are unable to relativise events in terms of one overriding homogeneous metric of time. If time is an accident of duration, and duration is an accident of existence, in *Mirror*, the elements which constitute duration[3] seem to not hold together from scene to scene – at first viewing, the articulation of duration does not function coherently in order to constitute a credible joint functioning of the scenes that enables a coherent perception of progression.

In a 1982 interview with Tony Mitchell, Tarkovsky stated that "Film is a mosaic made up of time," and in *Mirror* disjointed time is a key narrative device. The film is narrative in that it tells a story as an assemblage of discursive fragments, but in a way that questions and undermines the conventional mode of narrative continuity – not even the filmmaker was certain during the editing process[4] that the narrative structure would gel, never mind hold coherently for a mainstream or uninitiated viewership. To understand *Mirror* one not only has to feel the time pressure of shots but also how the chronology is structured of that which is being presented. To do so the viewer has to spatialise the vignettes, constellate them temporally in relation to one another, and correlate them to Alexei's biographical timeline – something which is not always obvious. Some sequences, such as the dream sequences and the archival newsreel footage segments, are not clearly time-stamped; at other times the filmmaker withholds contextualising information whose lack to a Russian viewer might be trivial, but for non-Russian

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3   In line with Bergson's conception of duration as a multiplicity.

4   During the editing process Tarkovsky and Lyudmila Feiginova, the editor of the film, produced 21 different versions of the film not only to solve the problems of narrative flow but also to incorporate emendations requested by the studio and Goskino USSR, the government's State Committee for Cinematography.

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viewers represents the difference between getting the meaning and significance of some scenes, or disorientation due to the absence of cultural context. These narrative dislocations are then further complicated by what appear to be systematic confusions and disorientations produced by substitutions of similar environments, false continuities between scenes, layering of voice-over narrated poems by Tarkovsky's father and narrated by the old man himself, and the recurrence of dramatic elements and the same actors in different historical eras. Although the result of all these spatio-temporal disjunctions makes for an ambiguous and puzzling story-line, repeated viewing is rewarding, in that with subsequent viewings, the richness and intensity of the narrative and the details of the visual organisation reveal themselves. This serves the purpose of showing how the ideas Tarkovsky is articulating manifest themselves at the personal level over time, but also how they reflect the larger social context and form part of the Russian national character as repeating bits of a common memory of the quotidian. Thus, *Mirror* makes spectatorship more of an *encounter* than a viewing, in that the habitual in memory is subverted and requires of the viewer a deeper 'memory work' of searching within their own historical experience for the grounds for understanding and identifying with the story.

Any mosaic – including filmic ones made out of time – make more sense when viewed as a whole than when seen one tessera at a time. The vignettes, for the most part, do not diverge from conventional narrative or continuity editing within themselves, but the causal linkage between one scene and the next is often vague, weak, or, at first sight, non-existent. Overall, the articulation of time and the causal seriality of the vignettes is ambiguous to say the least: eventually, the sequential organisation ends up "making sense", but through a logic and on a level of its own. In terms of the orthodox narrative structure 3 act paradigm, of set-up, confrontation, resolution, we see right away that *Mirror* does not conform. It is not a dialectic proposition in the sense of Act I-thesis, Act II-antithesis, Act III-synthesis where the events in *Mirror* do not subscribe to the classsical dramatic paradigm of positing of a problem in the first 30 minutes, a proliferation of obstacles and impediments which the protagonist must overcome in the ensuing 60 minutes, and a final resolution of 30 minutes where the initial problem is worked out (FIELD, 1979). One can neither say that *Mirror* follows a coherent dramatic arc where the action follows one continuous motion from beginning to end and which entrains characters and dramatic situations towards a succinct reconciliation of dramatic drives. Nor is the film's construction Aristotelian in its inevitable conclusive finality.

And even if the film is dependent on the oral tradition of the storyteller to relate and communicate experience, the film dispenses with the linguistic to craft a narrative dependent on the visual. As Benjamin (1969) writes, the storyteller takes what he tells from experience and makes it the experience of those listening to his tale. The spectator comes to link the vignettes by identifying with the depicted situations and events through an accumulation of empathic identification with the characters' predicaments and

difficulties and not through a cause-effect link from one scene to the next. Through the empathic inhabiting of the protagonist and his predicaments, Tarkovsky (1986) places the viewer within the experience as an invisible actant and not external to it as an observer; the viewer enters into the narrative and becomes one with the protagonist. It ceases to be an encounter with an "expressive network" but a contemplation of the work, where we become entwined into the temporal weave rather than a gazer or observer of the work. By overcoming the cause-effect duality, this empathic identification, in theory, would make for a more active viewer that is more engaged, more invested, and thus becomes a "participant in the process of discovering life" (Idem). It is the kind of thinking that inverts the techniques of estrangement and distanciation that are so prevalent in Left-wing literary aesthetics: Tarkovsky makes things strange in the sense of rendering common situations atypical and remarkable – common objects recur unexplainably, the same actor plays different rôles, events from daily life become charged with inexplicable uncanniness. But Tarkovsky's device of "making things strange", which in Russian literature is called остранение (*ostranenie*), works the estrangement the other way: rather than distancing the spectator, his puzzling estrangement piques the viewers' interest and produces entrainment and involvement, the opposite effects of alienation. The viewer is seduced not by being sensorially overwhelmed by the spectacle but through the engagement of thought and empathy.

One of Tarkovsky's principal aesthetic preoccupations with *Mirror* is the manifestation of time and the making felt of time passing as what he calls time pressure. How does a filmmaker make the passage of time visible and make it a palpable entity? In film we feel time and can sense its passage directly or indirectly. We understand time through the on-going production of difference as an intuited movement of thought through affections or inferred from the perceived modifications of attributes of things: the former is a direct subjective experience of time as pure differential whereas the latter is the objective expression of time of a derived inferential as indirect experience. Thus, our experience of time as a feeling of passage can either be intuited or it can be inferred and within these two extremes we can draw more towards one or the other to feel the intensity of passage, the pressure of time.

Tarkovsky achieves this sensation of pressure by calling attention to the manifestation of passage divorced from any purposeful articulation of transition: by emptying the event and calling attention to procession or its lack, we are left with an affective impression of becoming describable only through poetic expression. Thus, the scenes in *Mirror* for example, where we see Marusya weeping while staring out of the window at the dacha watching trees grow, or stock footage of soldiers trudging through the muddy waters of Lake Sivash, imbues the unfolding narrative with an affective time pressure through association which transcends the rational, the sensorial and the spiritual individually and requires a poetic expression to bring out its significance as a synthesis of time as an intensity – we are conscious of this time pressure whenever we feel a shot is too long, or that something has happened too quickly

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within the frame, but we seldom examine 'poetically' this surfeit or dearth of duration once we have identified the activity in question: we quickly become bored by the apparent tediousness or vexed by the fleetingness. In the *Ethics* II D5, Spinoza writes that "Duration is an indefinite continuation of existing" (SPINOZA 1985, p. 447) and adds that it is 'indefinite' because one can't know how long a thing will last from its own nature. *Mirror* underscores indefiniteness by generating a hang-time, a serially indefinite suspension to procession and deferral which can awaken vexation, exasperation and sometimes a dark levity through the rhizomic budding of emergent possibilities in lines of flight. But, a shot that hangs, and hangs, and hangs calls attention to itself as a passage of time inferred from the activity at hand, but soon leads to feeling time not as objective but as subjective experience. So that first we understand time as passage through its visible manifestations as things undergoing physical change but then this quickly gives way to an affective palpability of time where only a deeper, more complex (metaphysical?) questioning can engage the experience and which can only be answered poetically. Hence, in *Mirror*, we infer time through the gusts of wind which rustles through the fields of buckwheat or as a tremor of the leaves on trees, objects falling off tables, water running on walls or mirrors, fire consuming barns and tree branches, etc but these events lead to questions as to what lies behind the Heraclitean animation of these things in the universe so that at first we perceive time as dependant on the physical change of the contents of the universe, and then come to feel change as independent of any particular process or as immanent to the process itself. This is a deeply materialist conception of the world where even emotions, impulses, notions and judgments are regarded as material objects – as corporeal – and therefore having a physical manifestation (ZELLER, 1892).

Time expresses itself physically in Tarkovsky's films because it is also material in its manifestation as an active yet invisible agency which transforms the world – not unlike the air currents and other invisible agencies which are invisible yet whose action can be discerned. We can then speak of the shot as having an internal temporality in the way that music has an internal feeling of time (a tempo and rhythmic intensity) specific to its material (read physical) expressiveness. By extension, every moment in a film would have its own time signature, both in terms of a temporal character as well as the filmmaker's imprint, which is revealed and coloured by a visual metaphor that indicates and conveys the time material or time content as the intensity of time as pressure flowing within a particular shot or scene. In keeping with the Stoics' materialist ideas, a scene would exhibit time pressure when the material that produces time pressure is within it (ZELLER, 1892). This material time pressure is felt throughout the film as an intensity in the dramatic circumstances that produce the phenomena of life – it can be dosed, mixed in heavier or faded-out depending on how much time pressure we need felt within the shot. Once we understand time pressure this way, its presence can be seen and sensed throughout the movie not only as an invisible diegetic presence but as a stylistic or formal trait of the filmic: camera movement, under

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or overcranking, stock coloration, etc. For Tarkovsky, continuity editing within a long-take aesthetic takes on a different dimension in that the engine which principally motivates cuts is time pressure and the task of the filmmaker becomes one of "maintaining the operative pressure, or thrust, [that] will unify the impact of the different shots" (TARKOVSKY, 1986, p. 117). But in this film, it will be the contrast of time pressure between the different vignettes which will be at play and which will open up the expressive possibilities of the montage of time signatures.

To make sense of the film, the vignettes simply cannot be compiled linearly, back-to-back, as a concatenation of occurrences linked by causal succession: the narrative elements of *Mirror* must be spatialised differently in order for us to make sense of the story. Rather than unspooling the vignettes as a linear sequencing of cause and effect, they must be constelled and contemplated, like stars on the firmament, to see what relations emerge between them as an assemblage and not only in terms of what precedes and follows. This leads us to see the film as an experiential cartography, as planes of space-time patched together, quilted together, which render visible forces and energies unperceivable in their linear outlaying. By spatialising the vignettes this way, we establish a semiotic web between the vignettes which changes the morphology of the story and how it can be virtually mapped out much like a mosaic or the surface of a quilt, the purpose of this is "to rebuild the entire living structure of its connections" (TARKOVSKY, 1986, p. 184): what attractions or aversions begin to form; what linkages can be drawn between the various vignettes, what associations can be made to allow relation to emerge. The term that is clamouring to assert itself in the constellation of these vignettes is "expressive network", but the vignettes as nodes in a semiotic network tend to be triangulated rigidly thus limiting the freedom of expression and reducing their valence of symbolic possibility. In engaging *Mirror* as a filmic text, the linear expository progression of vignettes and the maintaining of time pressure continuity is not as important as the constellation of ideas or implications which together compose a weave of possibility, an openness as to what the narrative can be, that defies the singular, certain interpretation. This constellation of narrative elements and details is a well of potential indeterminacy from which we will always be able to draw. What is key here is the rationale which dictates the sequencing of the vignettes as differentiating, "as joined together in another way, which works above all to lay open the logic of a person's thought" (TARKOVSKY, 1986, p. 20). The guiding logic of assemblage is a poetic reasoning, a mode of thinking which is above the rational, the emotional or the sensorial, and which Tarkovsky understands as emulating associative thought processes – the laws through which thought informs itself, which are not those of reason or science – and which therefore is closer to life itself and, more importantly for the artist, revelatory of poetic truth.

A poignant illustration of this is how the film treats us to a succession of vignettes which Tarkovsky himself affirms can be construed as the unraveling of consciousness, or the ramblings of a melancholy, bed-ridden middle-aged man, or the unfolding of a

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man's memories at death's threshold – how else is one to interpret letting go of a bird in hand when laying sick in bed?[5] "It is, however, characteristic that not only a man's knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life – and this is the stuff that stories are made of – first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death" (BENJAMIN, 1969, p. 94). As common lore has it, when one dies, one's life unspools like a movie before one's very eyes! The film demonstrates "the slackening of the sensory-motor connections" to give us the purely optical and sound situation of a man reduced to helplessness, who has relinquished his practical functions in the world in order to delve into his deepest memories, dreams, and mental associations and reveal them to the world as the banality of the quotidian and the inability to act wilfully (DELEUZE, 1989).

If the *Mirror*'s reflections are disjointed it is because the relations that they reflect are fragmented, and if the narrative is fragmented, it is because it is has been made to reflect the numerous fractured relations – human and non-human – that Alexei entertains in his life and with the world itself. When Tarkovsky asserts that the film is a mosaic perhaps he is also alluding to the dynamic of the reflections of relation within the film itself – the film as a mosaic composed of the shards of a broken or shattered mirror or a multiplicity of mirrors reflecting into each other as a multiplicity of spatio-temporal discontinuity. We can see this through the art direction in the scenes in the large living room which eventually becomes Alexei's sick room and the progressive presence of windows onto the outside world and the walls replete with mirrors.[6] The room is a telling metaphor in that as the space where convalescence is taking place, it indicates the integrative work that Alexei must undertake. Visually and cognitively, the windows and the mirrors, present an "unnatural" break-up of space by virtue of how each has a different 'point of view' which selects and compels a reflection on space-time on that which opens up before them. The windows break up exterior space, i.e. the world out there; the mirrors break up internal reality as a fractured unreconciled consciousness.
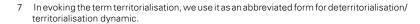
The recurrent need within the film is to somehow re-establish "the links which connect people […] those links which connect me with humanity, and all of us with everything that surrounds us" (TARKOVSKY, 1986, p. 192): empathic identification with the characters, situations and events indicates it as a motif which expresses itself through the intensification of repetition and difference: which will repeat, elide, slide forward, distort and confuse that affirmation of need to identify empathically. It is the aggregation of the repeated empathic identification with the vignettes that constitutes the narrative continuity in *Mirror* – but this insistent hammering of the same experiential motif through its formal differencing

5   Alexei's death is an ambiguous death in that it does not necessarily signify the cessation of life. Death can also be interpreted as as a sign of renewal and transformation – as the symbology announced by the card of Death in the Tarot, which calls on one to start completely over by letting go of the past – and subsequently, as a sign of hope – as in the Nicene Creed wants us to believe "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come".

6   The arrangement of mirrors on the wall adjacent to Tarkovsky's bed is reminiscent of a photograph of Tarkovsky laying in bed under a similar grouping of Orthodox Christian crosses on the wall adjacent to his bed.

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is a stutter, an intensification from within, as opposed to a refrain. Repetition reaffirms an idea's territorialisation[7] – but the rhythm of the stutter and that of the refrain, the scansions produced are two different modes of territorialisation. They are both processes of territorialisation in that they are both differential repetition of the same but the stutter is an outward expansion and densification from the midst whereas the refrain is outward bound into the unexplored as expansive territorialisation of the peripheral unknown of borders, limits, horizons; the movement of the refrain composes the milieu whereas the stutter densifies and enriches. They both propagate the "and, and, and" dynamic, one by announcing and annexing, the other by enriching the midst. Stuttering establishes density by the frustration or the problematisation of the creation of meaning as a site of aggregation, of condensation and agglutination which pushes outwards and creates its own becoming as a massification of meaning pushing from the interior outwards. It is a movement which infinitely frustrates completion and conclusion – stuttering densifies the territories centrifugally. It is a crater that sputters lava which aggregates, solidifies and territorialises from the centre as a pushing outwards. In contrast, the refrain heralds the annexation whether or not there are listeners and territorialises *de facto* through the utterance. But the rhythm of the stutter is not a sta – tat – tat – tam – tammer within the shot or a small number of frames, but one that makes its effects felt in the deep-water, longer-wavelength, swell of filmic language, in the virtual montage of the interaction of dispersed scenes.

The film opens with Ignat, Alexei's son, turning on a black and white television set. The audio sneaks in what is supposedly a televised documentary on stuttering where a female speech therapist is conducting a therapeutic intervention on a teen-age boy whose face is shows semblance to Tarkovsky. The boy demonstrates his stuttering, the therapist hypnotises him, lays her hands upon his head and he is cured – all in one continuous take as if to substantiate trough spatio-temporal continuity the Biblical miracle –at the end of the scene, he affirms "I can speak!" It is an unconventional way to start what is supposedly an "autobiographical" film in that in the opening four minutes we have been informed that we are watching a spectacle, a dramatised fabulation, that it is supposedly destined to inform and entertain, but also that the film we are about to watch is about stuttering and finding one's true voice. The significance of the opening shot can only be back-gridded after having watched the film, in that only later will we understand the full implications of the insinuated cynicism and snideness of the teen turning on the television is Alexei's son, Ignat, who has no spark – ironically lacking in the *igne*-ous, the inner fire that seems to denominate who he is – turning on this electronic invention which has put the living sound of the world into a little box and which is forcing out all related art forms such as books, cinema and theatre and has conquered our minds (SHKLOVSKY, 2017). The stuttering that Tarkovsky seeks to cure through his film is not the same type as the affliction portrayed in the faux-documentary opening

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7   In evoking the term territorialisation, we use it as an abbreviated form for deterritorialisation/territorialisation dynamic.

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sequence; it is a stammering of a voice seeking to find expression – a beyond what Synessios (2001) intimates as a mastering of craft. To use this particular affliction to describe the character's difficulties is quite disconcerting in that the symbolism of stuttering might perhaps go beyond that contemplated by Tarkovsky, for when we extend the metaphor, we open a Pandora's box where the metaphor can be applied to the filmmaker himself as a stutterer, to the film's narrative form as a stutter, and to the medium of film and its technological underpinning as a stuttering dynamic.

If "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1)[8] the opening scene presents a perplexing manner to introduce the film and condition the viewing of the entire film – for one, it would stop being a scene of therapeutic hypnosis to one of exorcism where the impediment would express sinful deficiency. The symbolism of speech is tied to the Ancient Greek λόγος (*logos*), as a derivation of λέγω (*lego*) "I say", which means both "word-speech" and reason, as well as discourse and account. It is translated into Latin as *ratio*, as "the power of the mind which is manifested in speech" (LIDDELL, 1883, p. 901). Logos is perhaps the most used and crucial word in Ancient Greek philosophy and it has undergone different interpretations and uses depending on the philosopher and school articulating the concept. For the Stoics, the universal logos, the κοινός λόγος, (*koinos logos*), was one of the names given to the supreme deity as expressive of the ordering principle as an immanent rationality of all the parts of the universe. The faltering of speech in stuttering is thus an indication that there is something amiss with the body/soul connection. As Plato writes in *Phaedo*, "When the soul and the body are united, then nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve" (PLATO, 1952, p. 232). Plato ascribed the soul to the connection with God and the body with the material or physical, and so because God is perfect and his logos unfaltering, there must be something amiss with the body. Thus, as Connor (2014) writes for most of its history, the cause of stammering was a physical ailment: for the Hippocratic School of Kos it was due to excessive dryness of the tongue; for Galen from too much moisture; Francis Bacon ascribed it to coldness; Alexander Ross attributed it to too much heat. With time, the humoral theories were replaced by mechanical theories and subsequently by physiological ones in the 19th century with the new psychology, and by psychogenetic ones with the advent of psychoanalysis. Even though stuttering is a physical affliction, by virtue of its reflecting a faulty connection with the spiritual or the Devine, it was attributed to a mental shortcoming or a character deficiency tied to demonic evil. Thus, stammering was linked with insanity and was treated with many of the techniques used for rehabilitating the insane as outlined by Foucault in *Madness and Civilisation* (2001).

With the advent of psychoanalysis, the causes of stuttering were reassigned from the physical to the mental/psychological. Isador Coriat, the renowned French psychologist, wrote in

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8   https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/John-1-1/

his *Abnormal Psychology* (1910) that stammering is a form of morbid anxiety due to unresolved pathogenic memory complexes from early childhood, which through psychoanalysis would directly remove the deeply-rooted dread or anxiety from the unconscious (CORIAT, 2005). Freud understood that stammering was not a moral problem and in fact wrote in a footnote in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1900) that stammering was not a sin – his development of psychoanalytic theory pushed the symbolism of stammering because "Stammering seemed to be the perfect example of a physical disturbance that enacts contrary impulses–the impulse to speak, and the impulse to withhold speech" (CONNOR, 2014, p. 21). According to Connor, this represents the struggle between the stammerer's investment in the magical power of words and the countermanding need to repress his own desire for verbal power – the enactment of castration anxiety: to speak, or to speak well, means to be potent; to be unable to speak – to be castrated. Hence, we project these not only upon Alexei but onto Tarkovsky himself through his telling us that as an autobiographical film, *Mirror* is examining the author's overcoming his struggle with his investment into the magical power of film and the countermanding need to repress his own desire for directorial power, trying to reconcile omnipotence and the failure of the authorial voice. To counter the Voice of Tarkovsky's real father who recites his own poetry in the film, and to perhaps deflect some of the lingering negative connotations of identifying himself with a castrated stutterer, Tarkovsky casts Innokenty Smoktunovsky[9], one of the Soviet Union's most celebrated stage and film actors, renowned for his nuanced and mellifluous voice, as the voice of the adult Alexei.

The stuttering teenager featured in the opening sequences is an interesting "origin" for Tarkovsky to preface the narrative as well as to launch the interpretation of the film in that it cues the viewer to listen to the voice of the film. In telling us that the film is a mosaic of time and by prefacing the film with the warning of stuttering, Tarkovsky is asking us to consider the film in two ways: he is telling us to look out for the filmic stammering as it is being presented, and he is telling us not to concatenate the scenes as they are being projected but to consider them differently so we can establish links and relations between them as tentative meaning-making. And so if we are to understand the stammering account as a kind of discursive madness, of linguistic delirium, of narratorial over-abundance, or of expressive resistance that resolves itself in due time, then we need to suspend our judgment along with our disbelief until we feel the cathartic relief of the protagonist finding his voice. Yet, amidst this tentativeness and perplication of possibility there is a struggle to close the series and move on – there's a belabouring of content within the expansion and the cumulation of potential as form which while adding richness to the possibilities of the narrative simultaneously strives and yearns for closure, seeks

9   Innokenty Smoktunovsky's life arc as a teenager was very similar to Ivan's, the protagonist of Tarkovsky's first feature film, *Ivan's Childhood.* "At the age of 17, he was mobilised into the army, and sent to the front straight from the infantry school in Kiev. It was 1943, and the Germans were being driven back towards the borders of the Soviet Union. Smoktunovksy was taken prisoner but escaped and joined a local partisan group with which he ended the war in Berlin." http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-innokenti-smoktunovsky-1381520.html

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a completive convergence which will allow it to move on – both in the sense of getting on with the story but also in the sense of allowing one to get on with life. But this narrative style which tries our patience by over-repeating and never getting to the point is a deliberate expository strategy of unfolding which, like all stuttering, is misunderstood and dismissed; and when detected it is simply denigrated and derided as a hindrance, as undue complication and at best a needless problematisation that somehow impedes passage to more significant realisations.

But the stammering as a balking annunciative promise, in its opening up the multiple possibilities within sputtering potential, becomes a proliferation of series which also expresses resistance: within the rhizomatic burgeoning of the advance, we find a reticence towards advancement and an opposition towards entrainment. There is a resistance to join the procession of related events which in its gathering expressive momentum dictates the advance as a coercive entrainment into the immanent forces emergent in the becoming itself. The stuttering is an expression of a becoming-subjectivity through a resistance to its own becoming as opposition to the channeling of narrative conditioning which immanently looks to complete and close the series of expression. There is an inherent resistance in the stuttering to the implicit tendency of language to draw us into the emergence of expression and the immanent channeling of understanding along the already well-trodden paths established by habitual memory. There's a stubborn opposition to be channeled towards a definitive conclusion, a built-in rebelliousness in the stutter that questions the authority natural to the social in language in that every step is disputed, examined and explored in its minutiae. Stuttering brings every step of advancement to a crisis, to the ground zero of procession by second-guessing the innate intelligence of the action-image: stuttering interrupts the immanent consummation of imagistic process by short-circuiting the instinctual or habitual determination that happens unbeknown to us in the centre of indetermination, in the fold, between stimulus and response, between action and reaction.

Tarkovsky's method of stuttering is definitely more demanding of the viewer, in that we are called to cobble together a narrative that exists on another level than the one that is sequentially being offered by the film's unspooling[10]. But whether this alienating distanciation is a satisfying means of engaging the viewer is another question – specially for a spectator who has been weaned on the drop-by-drop dispensation of linear cause and effect logic of most narrative progressions. The majority of narratives unfold according to a logic of cause and effect which encourages us to extrapolate what is going to happen next rather than figure out motivations in depth. In positing stuttering as a narrative strategy, Tarkovsky, not only "pushes language to its point of suspension" (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1993, p. 55) but also posits a two-fold dynamic of suspense – one, by way of keeping us guessing when the deliverance from the affliction will take place and how, how the conditions which will cure or alleviate the affliction take place;

10 But which obviously cannot be divorced from it.

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second, in the individual stutters, in the singular fragmentation as to what can possibly occur next: what will be the outcome or the upshot of each stutter as a crisis, as a critical moment in the advance of the halting progression, where will the next disjointed phonemene take us? This, of course is operative if the viewer is committed to the film – without engagement and empathic identification with the drama, there is simply disconnect and frustration.

There is also a fear implicit in the tentative advance of the stutterer that bespeaks of a super-awareness of leaving something out, of not expressing the totality of what is to be expressed, of a compulsiveness to not leave any stone unturned. It is a compulsion towards exhaustion, not in terms of fatigue but in terms of depleting potential, of extracting the whole of the possible as a "relentless Spinozism" (DELEUZE, 1997, p.152). The stutterer tries to exhaust the possible and vice-versa and to attempt to do is to play God – something Alexei seems to want to do as time keeper and time maker, as conceiver of the mosaic of time. He "combines the set of variables of a situation, on the condition that one renounce any order of preference, any organisation in relation to a goal, any signification" (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1993, p. 153).

Stammering is associated with left-handedness and limping or an uneven gait (CONNOR, 2014) and metaphorically ties the two afflictions to an inability to carry through the moment of the movement of thought as one continuous scansion. The stammering and the staggering are linked by the introduction of broken cuts, of halting stops, which impede the procession of the spectacle of the cinematic movement of thought. It is an ineptitude which demonstrates that the individual cannot carry a rhythm, is unable to produce the encompassing idea as an unbroken expression of a line of thinking as a continuous scansion. Stammering reconstitutes movement haltingly as an expansion through the intermission of continuous variation out of which can be extracted new creative and expressive possibilities. Thus, we can position the stuttering at the front of the film in two ways: as the filmmaker or the bed-ridden character looking to find their voice, of establishing a smooth, continuous movement of expression as a desirable objective – an expression of a wish fulfilment desire; or, the filmmaker wants to use stammering within the memorial process as a creative strategy to pull the interpretation of the past away from its habitual memorial recreation – the reconstitution of memory as an anarchival practice which teases out the habitual into its component unactualized potentialities. Each vignette or memorial fragment introduces a memorial wedge into the reconstitution of memory to leverage the expressive through the affective variation that is contained within each image and realign it differently to the others. Alexei's subjective reconstitution is achieved by interposing memorial assemblages, intercalating planes of consistency and densifying duration, by introducing stillborn sections which fragment an unvarying conception of the past as homogeneous space, in order to atomise movement to such a degree that one cannot discern between the false movement of infinitely small sections and a true continuity. This reconstitution of movement with immobile sections is what cinema does and what defines it. As Bergson

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writes, (and Deleuze repeats),

We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself. Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general (BERGSON, 1944, p. 332).

The cuts themselves, the stammering of the stutter, will come to exceed our perceptive thresholds as far as distinguishing the discrete from the continuous, the abstract from the concrete. This is a brute fleshing out of natural memory as an iterative search, as an iterative re-searching for lost time, as a quest for the multiplicity of meaning in the interstices of memory as picnoleptic folds of bygone experience. Through his imagistic exploration of stuttering, Tarkovsky segments the natural routing of arborescent phonetic construction by exercising the difference in the differential repetition of each phoneme into a rhizomatic profusion of nodes. This surfeit of expressive potential within each attempt multiplies the advance into a myriad of possibilities which only haltingly define the path which one can only guess is being established. Each stammered syllabic phoneme examines the inherent possibilities of expression of that sectioning as a juncture of potential in the flux of expression, and in *Mirror*, each vignette does the same in relation to the whole.

If we do take the stuttering at face value, as an alternative faceality of film language, then the continuous variation and techniques of literally applying difference and repetition to filmic elements would constitute an experimental extraction of new expressive possibilities. The stuttering that Tarkovsky produces in the film does not refer to the stammering as the way the characters speak within the film or of an insistent repetition of filmic elements or shots. This narrative of serial differentials which Tarkovsky offers us is not only the reproduction of the illusion of the cinema as a stuttering medium but also its corrective – it is through the stutter that one finds total possibility of expression. This mode of articulating the filmic which Tarkovsky considers the closest to his understanding of the cinema constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari might label a minor use of cinema through the "apertinent, asyntactic or agrammatical, asemantic" (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 1987, p. 99) putting into play of cinematic narrativity. In *Mirror* it is the stuttering of the filmic language itself which Tarkovsky generates as a becoming-minor of the cinema which opens up an alien language of film within the conventional naturalistic realism of mainstream filmic language. Thus, it is through this minor use of cinematic language that Tarkovsky brings about a creative re-articulation or decomposition of the received filmic language – it is "like language's line of flight, speaking in one's own language as a foreigner, making a minority use of language" (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1993, p. 22). For Tarkovsky, *Mirror* represents the closest expression of what the film language means to him, and in fact he creates a new minor language which even though it functions within the major language of conventional narrative cinema, it is a language all its own. He subverts the formulas of narrative expediency and

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dramatic efficiency to externalise that which is embedded in the visual but requires a montage of ungainly juxtapositions to allow the drama of the differential to emerge in all its disparate possibility. It is a destruction of that which cinema holds most dear: the semblance of unbroken continuity, the coherent immersive quality of the experience, the naturalistic realism that is inimical to alienation and distanciation, the ability to identify with the protagonist, and a constant effort to keep us oriented and situated within the space--time of the drama. Thus, Tarkovsky requires that we be attentive and engaged in the narrative by constantly questioning the relation between the principal character on screen and the scenes that are being shown, the relation of the filmmaker to the protagonist, and our own engagement as viewers to what is unfolding on screen. And it is only through the continuous repetition of this questioning as an iterative method that we become entrained in the film's own stuttering and come to perceive the drama of continuous variation that is being stuttered into our consciousness. By participating in this dynamic of stammering, we enter into the rhythmic patterns of the narrative and become complicit with the suspense-filled movement of thought as narrative progression as it is generated within Alexei.[11]

The stuttering dynamic of the film which we have described as an opening of an alien language which has to be understood, causes a kind of stuttering in the viewer as well. To discern these patterns requires that we encounter or confront the film as a stammering observerer – as a stuttering viewerer which goes beyond our own movement of imagistic indetermination – that needs to review the film in stutter mode where the study of the film, its viewing particularly as a digital file on a computer, allows us to view the film non-linearly, in the way an editor or film-maker views the film as it is being edited… a practice which makes our perception "stammer" and our cognition stutter, and renders our meaning-making a suspense-filled activity of what connections will arise next through "stuttering" as repetitions, as proliferations, as bifurcations, as deviations as becoming-meaning. We screen the filmrepeatedly, as obsessively overly-attentive stutterative viewers, in order to get at the gist of what is being shown – perhaps not only as a pleasurable scopophilic activity, but as enduring onanistic activity which gives us a feeling of unbounded life which we know will always be incomplete because the work is always be inconclusive and so are we – perhaps that is also at the root of the stuttering viewer. To do this we repeat frames, shots, scenes over and over, jump forwards and backwards in the film to establish relation, correspondence, interdependence and to ascertain the veracity of our observations, eliding whole sections of film, sliding forward and

11   Rhythm as the encompassing movement of life that ties all beings together as part of an all-embracing movement of history which can articulate the three tenses at the same time, within the present. In the last sequence of the film, we see a young Masha laying on the grass with her husband fantasising about the sex of their future child; we next see Masha as an old woman leading her infant children by the hand while in the far-off distance Masha or Natalya as a middle-aged woman is smoking a cigarette in the middle of a field. Time has become one agglomerated synthesis where the past, present and future coalesce into one continuous movement of thought in the mind of the protagonist. The old woman trudging through the country-side, infant children in tow, almost all in step, would indicate that they are on the same wavelength, that they are on the same rhythm plane.

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backwards in the narrative to satisfy an inkling of possible understanding, all the while distorting the temporality of the narrative to produce our own partial spacetimes of the work which hopefully will come together in some way just as the last sequence does for Tarkovsky.

Tarkovsky's genius shows in this film through the montage which enables the viewer to draw an impersonal, abstract movement from the sequential arrangement of the vignettes as a spatiotemporal constellation. From the personal attributes and attitudes of the characters in the story, Tarkovsky is able to extract the nameless movement implicit in each vignette as a series which converges into a durational synthesis of time. Each vignette activates and articulates memories as individual events which create sheets of time which fuse the duality of inner mental life and outside world as the unity of his entire life compressed in memory. The final resolution is a synthesis of time where the disjointed temporal sequencing and the splintering of the narrative exposition result in a reconciled whole, a synthetic final term which contracts "a number of external moments into a single internal moment" as a totalising yet indefinable meaning of life. (BERGSON, 1988, p. 34). "The insight which grasps this unity ... becomes the divinatory-intuitive grasping of the unattained and therefore inexpressible meaning of life" (BENJAMIN, 1969, p. 99).

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