

- Research Article -

Sacred Architecture and Sacred Time in Andrei Tarkovsky's Cinema

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Abstract

*This article examines how the concept of the "sacred" is constructed in Andrei Tarkovsky's films *Stalker* (1979) and *Nostalghia* (1983) not through iconography, but through the materiality of space, the intensification of time, and bodily/sensory experience. The study is based on a comparative case design with qualitative, interpretive, and phenomenological orientations; the scenes were selected based on the criteria of liminality (door, corridor, tunnel), the prominence of long shots and ritual gestures, sonic minimalism (withdrawal of music, ambiance), and haptic cues (texture, humidity, steam). The theoretical framework integrates Eliade's concepts of sacred time/sacred space, as well as the center-threshold, with Bachelard's understanding of poetic/lived space. It also incorporates Deleuze's time-image regime, Schrader's transcendental style, and Sobchack/Marks' haptic visuality approaches. The findings indicate that in *Stalker*, the collective search is made visible through industrial ruins-nature transitions and threshold typologies, creating a mythical "re-now" mode; in *Nostalghia*, individual ritual (candle carrying) and public upheaval (square scene) are concentrated on the memory-space axis within structures such as churches, baths, and ruins. In both films, the long take, delayed cutting, and sonic withdrawal transform time into an environment that is directly experienced. The study presents an integrated analytical framework that combines materiality, temporality, and bodily experience to explain the concept of the sacred at the intersection of cinema and architecture.*

Keywords: Andrei Tarkovsky, Sacred Architecture, Sacred Time, Cinema and Architecture, Temporal Experience

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-Araştırma Makalesi-

Andrei Tarkovsky'nin Sinemasında Kutsal Zaman ve Kutsal Mimari

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Özet

Bu makale, Andrei Tarkovsky'nin *Stalker* (İz Sürücü) (1979) ve *Nostalghia* (Nostalji) (1983) filmlerinde "kutsal"ın sinemada ikonografiden ziyade mekânın maddeselliği, zamanın yoğunlaştırılması ve bedensel/duyusal deneyim üzerinden nasıl kurulduğunu inceler. Çalışma, nitel, yorumlayıcı ve fenomenolojik yönelimli karşılaştırmalı vaka tasarımına dayanır; sahneler eşikleme (kapı, koridor, tünel), uzun plan ve ritüel jestlerin belirginliği, sonik minimalizm (müziğin geri çekilmesi, ambiyans) ve haptik ipuçları (doku, nem, buhar) ölçütleriyle seçilmiştir. Kuramsal çerçeve, Eliade'nin kutsal zaman/kutsal mekân ve merkez-eşik kavrayışını, Bachelard'ın poetik/yaşanmış mekân anlayışını ve Deleuze'ün zaman-imge rejimini Schrader'ın transandantal stili ile Sobchack/Marks'ın haptik görsellik yaklaşımlarıyla birlikte işletir. Bulgular, *Stalker* 'da kolektif arayışın endüstriyel harabe-doğa geçişleri ve eşik tipolojileri üzerinden mitik bir "yeniden-şimdi" kipini görünürlük kıldığını; *Nostalghia*'da bireysel ritüelin (mum taşıma) ve kamusal sarsıntının (meydan sahnesi) kilise, hamam ve harabe gibi yapılarda hafıza-mekân ekseninde yoğunlaştığını gösterir. Her iki filmde uzun plan, kesmenin ertelenmesi ve sonik çekilme, zamanı doğrudan deneyimlenen bir ortama dönüştürür. Çalışma, sinema-mimarlık kesişiminde kutsalı açıklamak için maddesellik, temporallik ve bedensel deneyimi birleştiren bütünlük bir analitik çerçeve sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Andrei Tarkovsky, Kutsal Mimari, Kutsal Zaman, Sinema ve Mimarlık, Zamansal Deneyim

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Introduction

This study examines how sacred space and sacred time are cinematically constructed in Andrei Tarkovsky's films *Stalker* (1979) and *Nostalghia* (1983), and how they are rendered as a physical/sensory experience. The axis of examination brings together architectural theory and film theory within a phenomenological framework, revealing that sacredness is produced not only through iconographic and religious indicators but also through spatial atmosphere, the manipulation of time, and haptic (tactile) viewing modes. Thus, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on how the sacred is constructed in cinema, not only through symbolic imagery but also through the spatial-temporal structure (i.e., the film's rhythm, continuity, and pauses). Contemporary scholarship also emphasizes cinematic space in architectural terms; for example, Cairns (2013) explores how architectural form and filmic space intersect to shape the viewer's experience.

Although Tarkovsky's cinema is often referred to in literature with a spiritual and poetic orientation, it is unnecessary to accept that this characterization is evenly and uncontestedly distributed across his films (Skakov, 2012; Ahmedi, 2016). In the director's works, some interpretations suggest Christian representations, ritual gestures, and sacred references, arguing that sacredness is made apparent through cinematic form and architectural-temporal arrangement instead of through iconic imagery (Pallasmaa, 2011; Schrader, 2018; Skakov, 2012). This study does not merely place these two interpretations side by side; instead, it creates a dialogue between them. On one hand, it acknowledges the presence of religious motifs on screen; on the other, it underscores that cinematic spatial techniques (e.g., long takes, deliberate silence, threshold spaces, and textured light/color design) are crucial in making the 'sacred' perceptible (Schrader, 2018; Pallasmaa, 2011).

Instead of examining Tarkovsky's entire filmography, this research focuses on an in-depth analysis of two films that explore sacredness in particularly intense and diverse modes. *Stalker* transforms the idea of threshold and ritual into a journey of exploration through the "zone/room" structure that forms the spatial backbone of the narrative; it creates an atmosphere of contemplation with long shots and the withdrawal of sound, accompanied by abandoned/partially reclaimed structures, which slows down the temporal rhythm. *Nostalghia*, on the other hand, weaves the inward weight of memory and longing with individual ritual gestures (e.g., carrying candles) and semi-public architectural stagings (bathhouse/church interiors, vaulted passages, courtyards) (Ahmedi, 2016; Skakov, 2012). In both films, the material reality of the space (water/stone/metal, humidity/dew, rough surfaces) combines with the intensity of time to create a liminal experience characterized by visual and physical immersion (Pallasmaa, 2011; Schrader, 2018).

The theoretical framework relies on interconnected concepts to explain this experience. Mircea Eliade's distinction between the sacred and the profane (and his idea of cyclical sacred time) describes how rituals interrupt ordinary time and open a mythic 'first moment' of time. His term hierophany further explains how an ordinary space can, in certain scenes, shift and become a focal point of transcendent meaning (Eliade, 1959). Gaston Bachelard's concept of "lived/poetic space" reads architecture not only as a geometric-functional phenomenon but also as one layered with imagination and memory (Bachelard, 1964); this perspective provides a fertile ground for understanding the emotional topography Tarkovsky constructs with spatial oppositions such as inner/outer, empty/crowded, closed/open (Pallasmaa, 2012). Paul Schrader's discussion of "transcendental style" offers an illuminating overview of how a film's visual language can intensify spiritual effects. According to Schrader, this visual language is characterized by simple framing, long pauses, and conveying emotion through contemplation rather than direct expression (Martin, 2018; Schrader, 2018). Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks emphasize that a film viewer is not just a passive observer but also a body that feels. They argue that elements such as surface texture, lighting, close-up shots, and slow pacing can create a form of "haptic visuality." In other words, these cinematic elements produce a tactile viewing experience (Elsaesser, 2016; Sobchack, 2004; Marks, 2000).

Gilles Deleuze's understanding of the time-image lies at the heart of this network. Unlike the classical movement-image regime, the time-image does not merely subject time to the sequence of events; it experiences time directly as a cinematic intensity and continuity (Deleuze,

1989; Rodowick, 2010). Tarkovsky's long takes and minimal editing choices loosen chronological progression, making time itself visible as a phenomenon. Here, Eliade's idea of cyclical sacred time (continually renewed by ritual) is compared to Deleuze's concept of cinematic time that resists linear narrative. The two films illustrate this clearly: *Stalker's* journey through repeated thresholds demonstrates time as a cycle, while *Nostalghia's* layered rituals and memories show time as a visible image (Ahmedi, 2016).

This study aims to combine these theoretical insights with a scene-based analysis to show how sacred space and time are constructed in two films using cinematographic/architectural strategies, how these strategies evoke a bodily/sensory effect, and where points of convergence/divergence between the films become apparent. The method operates as a qualitative analysis, focusing on scene selections based on observable criteria such as ritual thresholds, long shots/plan-sequences, ruin/abandoned-structure typologies, sonic minimalism, and sensory intensity (atmospheric indicators like texture, light, color, steam/humidity) (Marks, 2000; Pallasmaa, 2012). Scenes that do not meet these criteria, are off-topic, or are repetitive, are excluded, allowing the interpretation to be based on a specific body of evidence.

The original contribution of the study can be summarized on three levels: (i) It presents an integrated theoretical framework that does not limit the production of the sacred in cinema to iconographic approaches. Instead, it focuses on the interaction of space and time. (ii) In this context, it systematizes the mutual determinations between architectural atmosphere (material, space, threshold, ruin) and cinematographic time (rhythm, duration, interruption); it emphasizes the haptic dimension of the cinematic experience. (iii) By considering *Stalker* and *Nostalghia* together in a discussion that integrates Eliade's cyclical time with Deleuze's time-image, he conceptualizes a Tarkovsky function called "temporal space / spatial time." This approach proposes a model for the cinema-architecture literature based more on atmosphere and temporality than on iconography to explain the presence of the sacred in modern cinema.

Stalker and *Nostalghia* are read as two distinct but related poetic regimes that establish the manifestation of the sacred through symbolic references, the materiality of space, and the sensualization of time. The theoretical and methodological coordinates established in this introduction will be concretized in the following sections of the article through scene-based analyses and a comparative discussion, thereby developing an interdisciplinary understanding of the architectural and temporal dimensions of the sacred in Tarkovsky's cinema.

Theoretical Framework

This section systematically presents the concepts explaining how the sacred is produced in cinema in *Stalker* and *Nostalghia*. It is assumed that sacredness is not only established through an iconographic repertoire but also experientially through the poetics of spatial arrangement, the cinematic treatment of time, and the bodily/sensory dimension of the cinematic experience. Therefore, Mircea Eliade's distinction between sacred time/sacred space, Gaston Bachelard's concept of poetic-phenomenological space, Gilles Deleuze's notion of the "time-image," Laura U. Marks and Vivian Sobchack's theories of haptic/corporeal tracking, and Paul Schrader's discussion of the "transcendental style" are examined together. The conceptual articulation between them is clarified.

Sacred Time and Space: Mircea Eliade's Approach

Eliade positions human experience qualitatively on two planes: the profane (everyday and homogeneous) and the sacred (differentiated and intense) (Eliade, 1959). This distinction changes the organization of both time and space. Profane space is discontinuous and homogeneous; however, sacred space breaks this homogeneity to establish a sense of center and direction. Arrangements like courtyards leading to temples, altars, or springs establish a microcosm based on the logic of the axis mundi and imago mundi; they delimit the chaotic space outside and introduce an idea of order and beginning within (Eliade, 1959). The manifestation of the sacred in a specific place (hierophany) transforms an ordinary stone, tree, or water source into a carrier of transcendent meaning (Eliade, 1959). This manifestation is particularly concentrated in the threshold and transition mechanism: the door, bridge, vault, staircase, and

waterfront are not merely points of connection, but ritualistic spaces opening onto another temporal/spiritual climate. Thus, the sacred space becomes heterogeneous; the juxtaposed parts are not qualitatively equal, and the center/periphery and inner/outer oppositions transform into an existential arrangement.

The time-related equivalent is similar. Sacred time is a cyclical modality that suspends the historical flow of rituals, opening up to "illud tempus" (the time of the founding moment) (Eliade, 1954). This is more a practice of summoning the beginning than returning to the past: gestures like repetition, waiting, hesitation, and silence break chronological time and establish a qualitatively different re-now. Time here is not an unbroken line, but a series of rings connected to the beginning. Space and time work together in this model. Crossing a threshold means entering another space and experiencing a different temporal intensity; standing at the center is to be in the spatial center and witness the repetition of the world. Like water and fire, these primordial elements carry this transformation as material intermediaries associated with purification, birth, and radiance; materiality functions as a device that re-creates time and space within the ritual (Eliade, 1958).

When applied to cinema, this framework shows that sacredness is not merely about iconography; space and time can be perceptually transformed through framing and centering, slowing down the rhythm, repeated crossings of thresholds, and the limitation of gestures. The frame arranges architectural and natural elements like carriers of hierophany, creating an intensity similar to a ritual experience. Thus, through rhythm and repetition, the image pierces the profane surface, thickens time, and centralizes space (Eliade, 1954; 1959). Eliade's model is suitable for explaining the experiential establishment of the sacred in cinema along three axes: (i) the logic of spatial center/axis and the heterogeneous space created by thresholds; (ii) the cyclical time opened by ritual and "re-now"; (iii) the practical connection of these two planes through material elements and minimal gestures (Eliade, 1954; 1958; 1959).

The Poetics of Space: Gaston Bachelard's Phenomenological Understanding of Space

Bachelard views space not as the sum of geometric forms or a neutral shell for functions, but as a lived space layered with memory, imagination, and emotion (Bachelard, 1964). In the "topoanalysis" approach, the home is considered beyond a shelter, as an interiority regime that constructs the subject's inner world; focal points such as corners, attics, basements, drawers, chests, and niches are poetic spaces where the self is concentrated. Each of these micro-spaces functions as an image capsule embodying the acts of remembering and daydreaming: the security of a corner, the openness of an attic, or the weight of a basement generates not only visual qualities but also existential orientations (Bachelard, 1964). Therefore, the oppositions of interior/exterior, open/closed, light/dark are not decorative choices; they are poetic oppositions that shape the self and regulate the flow of emotion.

In this poetics, objects are not mere accessories; they are thresholds that carry and deepen the meaning of space. The door, window, curtain, shelf; the water surface, candle flame, the fragility of glass; material details like rusty metal or rough stone, reduce the spatial experience to a level of close contact. Thus, space becomes not just something "seen," but an event that can be approached and explored. Indeed, readings that highlight the sensory and semantic effects of the architecture-object relationship emphasize that walls cannot limit the meaning production of space; instead, the objects inside and the external context (garden, courtyard, wind circulation, the smell of humidity) together create a field of meaning (Francalanci, 1991). This perspective highlights the significance of threshold typologies (corridor, passage, staircase, vaulted opening, courtyard) as interfaces that guide emotion. The threshold conveys an inner intensity before regulating the transition from one place to another.

In Bachelard's poetics, the material image plays a central role. Surface textures (roughness, crust, cracks), atmospheric indicators (vapor, fog, echo, humidity), microscopic movements of light and shadow, and color temperatures are not merely environmental "effects"; they are sensory vectors that construct the subject from within (Bachelard, 1964). These vectors are often connected to primal elements: the weight and reflectivity of water, the flickering instability of fire, the resistance of stone, and the permeability of air. Bachelard's other work on element-image sequences (e.g., his thoughts on water) supports the imaginary and evocative dimension

of these material associations (Bachelard, 1942). Thus, "place" ceases to be a linear coordinate; it transforms into a composite of felt intensities.

This phenomenological framework allows us to understand how the architectural environment functions as a carrier of affect in cinema. Changes in camera scale (bringing close-ups to the surface, marking the inner/outer boundary of wide shots), shot duration, and rhythm become the main parameters determining the poetic weight of space. The close-up view of the surface, the audibility of the atmosphere, and the tactile use of light connect the viewer to the space with a physical intimacy, independent of purely iconographic references. This bond allows for the restoration of the home's privacy on the one hand, and the transformation of the ruin's openness into a melancholic horizon on the other. A ruin, in the Bachelardian sense, is a threshold space that carries the sediment of the past and where the "inner" and "outer" merge: the shell of the wall, fallen plaster, leaking water, and echoes guide the viewer's senses with minor movements; the space's poetry intensifies precisely in the combination of these material small events. This approach resonates with Bruno's recent concept of 'projected atmospheres', where cinematic space becomes a transitory, intermediate space between interior and exterior experience (Bruno, 2022).

Bachelard's conceptualization also grounds the connection between the poetics of space and bodily perception: the poetry of a space arises not only from the narrative themes it represents but also from its closely felt materiality. Therefore, the production of poetic space in cinema relies on the simultaneous operation of two lines: (i) the framing and movement that highlight oppositions such as interior/ exterior, open/ closed, light/ dark; and (ii) the creation of a "close contact" effect through sensory cues from objects, surfaces, and atmosphere. Ultimately, the space becomes a poetic order that invites the viewer not only to understand but also to dwell and remember; it provides a material substrate that supports the foundations of phenomenological viewing theories (bodily/haptic perception) (Bachelard, 1964; Francalanci, 1991).

Sculpting Time: Tarkovsky's Cinematic Poetics

In Tarkovsky, time is not an external measure of the plot, but rather an intensity inherent in the texture of the image. The director's phrase "sculpting time" seeks to capture the essence of cinematic effect by making time itself visible; instead of relying on editing-based acceleration and dramatic compression, it transforms time into an experiential environment through the use of long shots, waiting, and silence (Tarkovsky, 1986). This preference diverges from the classic narrative form, where the montage determines the movement, leading to the plan gaining expressive value through its duration (Bird, 2008). This approach is discussed below on two axes: first, the Cinematic Poetics of Time, and then Time-image and Tarkovsky, as conceptualized by Deleuze.

The Cinematic Poetics of Time

In the classical narrative, time is integrated into the purposeful progression of action and cause-and-effect chains; montage is the primary tool for making movement visible. In modern cinema, time itself appears as an object of experience partially independent of the plot; elements such as pauses, waiting, emptiness, and repetition loosen the chronology, making the flow of memory and that directly perceptible (Deleuze, 1986; 1989). Tarkovsky's poetics lies within the boundaries of this second regime, but he achieves this not as abstract formalism, but through the rhythm of the earth and material events (a drop of water, the wind sway, the rise of smoke). Time is not just "elapsed time" within the plan; it is an environment that positions perception. Therefore, waiting is not an "empty" interval; changing the economy of attention highlights detail, silence, and the micro-vibrations on the surface (Tarkovsky, 1986).

This poetics is embodied on three planes. First, the long take/plan-sequence duration becomes an expressive element; delaying the cut does not allow the event to progress at speeds parallel to the target, but rather to unfold over time. Secondly, minimal editing stretches the chronology; temporal relationships are perceived as simultaneous layers outside of sequence. Thirdly, natural rhythms and environmental ambiance visually intersect visual duration with an auditory flow; music's selective and limited use allows silence and spatial echoes to

determine the film's internal clock (Schrader, 2018). Thus, time is seen and heard; watching shifts toward an intensity that requires existential attention rather than the consumption rhythm of events.

In Tarkovsky's work, materiality (water, fire, earth, metal, etc.) is represented "as is," without invoking symbolic allegory. This "as-it-is-ness" layers over time within the plan, creating a space open to contemplation outside the regimes of modern speed (Tarkovsky, 1986; Bird, 2008). Slowing down time here is not a deprivation, but a sensory gain: small fluctuations in the color temperature of the light, the vibration of the water on the surface, the small paths the wind creates in the vegetation all hold a place in perception; thinking and seeing become simultaneous within the same plane.

Time-image and Tarkovsky

Deleuze defines modern cinema with the concept of "time-image": instead of carrying movement subject to action, the image now directly makes time visible; chronology loosens, and layers of memory seep into the present (Deleuze, 1986). Tarkovsky's long take executes this regime within the plan. Postponing the cut removes time from being the carrier of the narrative and makes it the constructor of meaning; the plan generates a sense of time through the rhythm of its internal micro-events (a change in the direction of the gaze, the wind increasing and decreasing, the water rippling). Some figures in the Deleuzian dictionary are exceptionally functional here: the permeability of memory-now and the overlap of time modes in a single frame are close to the logic of the "crystal-image." In Tarkovsky's work, the distinctions between black and white/color, the differences in the speed of movement and action, and the oscillation of light between warm/cold tones make this overlap visible; "now" is felt alongside the remembered and the expected.

This temporal regime is also articulated with ritual-specific cyclicity. Gestures such as silence, slow motion, and repeated crossing of thresholds suspend the historical flow and reopen the present, thus establishing a functional connection between Eliade's cyclical sacred time and Deleuze's time-image regime (Eliade, 1954; 1959; Deleuze, 1986). In Tarkovsky, waiting does not just create dramatic tension; it thickens the shot's duration like a ritual, qualitatively altering the perception of time. Time is not a tool that transforms space, but is transformation itself: waiting before the threshold is to enter another density of time within the image.

The auditory counterpart of the time-image regime emerges in sonic minimalism. When the music recedes, the ambiance and silence sound the inner clock of the plan; the friction of metal, the water drop, the wind, and the echo of empty space keep the pulse of visual duration (Schrader, 2018). Auditory withdrawal does not empty visual duration; on the contrary, it allows micro-temporal vibrations to take hold in perception. Thus, Tarkovsky's temporality converges on two axes: (i) direct time, shaped within the shot's duration and intensified by the postponement of the cut; (ii) cyclical sacred time opened up by ritual repetition. This two-in-one approach suggests a cinematic poetics where time not only carries the narrative but also actively constructs meaning (Deleuze, 1989; Eliade, 1954; Tarkovsky, 1986, 1991).

Phenomenological Viewer Experience and Transcendental Style

The cinematic organization of time and space requires a model of reception that does not reduce the viewer's position solely to "observation." According to the phenomenological approach, film shows the world it represents and establishes a contact surface that readjusts the body's sensory apparatus (vision, hearing, the illusion of touch, balance, kinesthesia). In this contact, perception and emotion are intertwined; the image functions not for superficial viewing, but to respond to modes of approach and exploration (Sobchack, 1992; 2004). In Tarkovsky's work, the duration of the plan and the framing of the shot support this movement of convergence: the viewer does not observe the world before them "from a distance"; they become immersed in it, accompanying its rhythm, echo, and microscopic movements of light (Tarkovsky, 1986).

In this context, haptic visuality refers to an aesthetic regime that shifts the act of viewing from "visual dominance" to tactile partnership (Marks, 2000). The close-up view's focus on the

surface, visual features like grain, soft focus, low contrast, or intense shading, and material details such as the damp stone's crust, the rust's dullness, the water's vibration, or the smoke's loose layers, allow the image to be experienced as if it were tangible. This sensory proximity is not merely an optical effect; kinesthetic (feeling movement in the body) and proprioceptive (internal awareness of body position) associations are also involved (Sobchack, 2004; Barker, 2009). In Tarkovsky's long shots, the swaying of vegetation in the wind or the repetitive ripples on the water's surface activate the viewer's sense of physical rhythm; the image ceases to be merely looked at and becomes a duration carried within the body. Recent scholarship also highlights that cinematic space frequently functions as a site of embodied affect where sensory proximity, atmosphere, and material cues influence the viewer's corporeal engagement with the image (Breeze, 2022).

Haptic orientation intersects with Bachelard's concept of poetic space: threshold typologies such as corners, niches, corridors, and vaults are not merely topological transitions, but rather areas of emotional concentration (Bachelard, 1964). Objects (such as doors, windows, candles, water surfaces, fabric, and metal) become part of the space's semantics and increase the viewer's capacity for engagement (Francalanci, 1991). In Tarkovsky, this materiality is combined with a call for close observation and silent listening: micro-events such as the subtle shifts of light between warm/cold tones, the spread of steam, and the dampening of wall texture make the poetry of space palpable. Thus, the sacred experience rests not on a series of iconographic symbols but on a palpable materiality and the thickening of time.

This sensory regime is reinforced by transcendental aesthetics in the sound field. The transcendental style, as defined by Schrader, operates on the principles of restraint, simplicity, and pause. By delaying the direct expression of emotion, it establishes an economy of attention in the viewer that is open to contemplation (Schrader, 2018). In Tarkovsky's films, music is used selectively and sparingly; in most scenes, silence and ambiance (water drops, wind, metal friction, echoes in empty spaces) form the backbone of the soundscape. This preference encourages a mode of listening focused on the qualities of sound rather than its source; an approach Michel Chion calls "reduced listening" (*écoute réduite*). As a result, the audience listens over time instead of consuming sounds as dramatic cues (Chion, 1994). The result is a concentration effect where the sound determines the image's internal clock: without speeding up the rhythm, the sound intervals are thinned out to make time perceptible.

Transcendental locking works not only in the arrangement of sound but also in the minimalism of gestures and the deferral of the narrative. Instead of direct emotional expression, delayed revelation and anticipation invite the viewer to an existential consideration, removing them from a consumption rhythm parallel to the narrative's goals (Schrader, 2018). This call is embodied in the phenomenological framework as the body's response to the film: internal rhythms such as pulse, breathing, contraction, and relaxation resonate with the rhythm of the shot (Sobchack, 2004; Barker, 2009). In Tarkovsky's films, the long waits before thresholds, the slowing down of contact with water, or the gestures of entering and exiting a space very slowly transform this resonance into a ritualistic contemplation; the viewer experiences not the passage of time, but time itself.

A non-iconographic sense of the sacred emerges at the intersection of haptic visuality and transcendental style. The effect of suspense created by silence, ambiance, and the long shot together breaks the rhythm of ordinary chronology. When the materiality of space combines with surface textures and the microscopic movements of light, it acts like the everyday carriers of hierophany. At this point, Deleuze's concept of the time-image functionally articulates with Eliade's cyclical sacred time: waiting and repetition both make time directly visible and open up the re-presentation of ritual (Deleuze, 1986; Eliade, 1954, 1959). The audience is drawn into an experience focusing on time and space rather than narrative; the senses are brought into a close-up arrangement that prioritizes symbolic analysis.

This coordination of auditory withdrawal and visual proximity proposes a poetics based on slowness in opposition to the speed regimes of modern cinema. Slowness here is not a deficiency, but a condition for sensory enrichment: details become clear, gaps carry meaning, and micro-events (a flickering flame, a wave fragment, the movement of dust) take hold in perception. Thus, in Tarkovsky, the experience of the sacred is based not on the interpretation

of the symbol, but on the time shared with the body; the film creates a space of perception open to contemplation through the materiality of space and the intensity of time (Tarkovsky, 1986; Marks, 2000; Sobchack, 2004; Schrader, 2018).

Methodology

This study is designed as a qualitative, interpretive, and phenomenologically oriented comparative case study of *Stalker* (1979) and *Nostalghia* (1983). Assumption: in cinema, the "sacred" does not arise solely from iconography; it is established through the poetic organization of space, the manipulation of time, and bodily/sensory reception. The theoretical framework includes Eliade's sacred time-space, center/threshold, and hierophany (manifestation of the sacred) (Eliade, 1954; 1959); Bachelard's lived/poetic space and object-space partnership (Bachelard, 1964); Deleuze's time-image and the loosening of chronology (Deleuze, 1986; 1989); Sobchack and Marks' bodily/haptic tracking (Sobchack, 1992; 2004; Marks, 2000); and Schrader's principles of transcendental style-sonic minimalism (Schrader, 2018).

Data are commercially available versions of the films in their original language. The unit of analysis is primarily the scene/sequence; micro-event clusters such as threshold crossings, ritual gestures, or long waits are considered sub-scenes when necessary. To maintain anonymity without time codes, the findings are presented with descriptive stage names (e.g., "tunnel/threshold crossing," "bathhouse/cistern," "candle carrying"); visuals and detailed analyses are in Findings/Analysis, and concepts will be used within the stage context, adhering to the theoretical section.

The analysis is carried out in two steps: (i) The qualitative value of the plan duration (short-medium-long), rhythm/pause, camera and framing-space relationship, light/color temperature, and the auditory layer (music-ambiance-silence balance) are systematically recorded at the descriptive level. (ii) At the interpretive level, these findings are matched with Eliade's center/threshold and cyclical time; Bachelard's inner/outer and material images; Deleuze's time-image and permeability of memory-present; Sobchack/Marks' haptic theme; and Schrader's restraint-simplicity and sonic minimalism. The aim is to establish a coherent reading line where spatial organization and temporal density mutually reinforce each other through sensory perception.

Exclusion criteria: distinct centering/thresholding (framing/highlighting of liminal arrangements such as doors, bridges, corridors, vaults, waterfronts); presence of ritual gestures (silence, slow walking/carrying, repetition); temporal intensity created by long plan-continuity and waiting/pausing; limited use of music and dominance of silence/ambiance; haptic proximity formed by texture, steam/fog, and micro-light movements. Exclusion criteria: transitions that only involve narrative transfer; montage blocks with intense music drawn into iconography or consumed quickly; sequences with weak spatial-sonic-ritual indicators, dialogue-heavy, and that dilute the sense of "place-time."

Comparative reading is conducted through paired scene types in the two films: threshold crossings, moments of material density where primal elements like water/stone/metal are prominent, the ritual mode established by long waits, and sequences focused on silence and ambiance. In each match, the organization of space (center, threshold, internal/external tensions), the construction of time (duration, loosening of chronology, repetition/waiting), the functioning of the sound universe (ambiance/silence during musical moments), the haptic cues, and the transformative effect of ritual gestures are systematically monitored; the postponement of cutting and the thickening of in-plan time are used directly as indicators that test the visibility of time (Deleuze, 1986; Tarkovsky, 1986; Schrader, 2018).

The phenomenological orientation emphasizes the body-world contact throughout the interpretation, evaluating close-up surfaces, micro-light vibrations, and the auditory tension of space/echo to demonstrate how meaning is constructed at a sensory level without being reduced to a symbolic system (Sobchack, 1992, 2004; Marks, 2000). In scenes featuring Christian iconography, the context is discussed in the findings section of the literature review (Bird, 2008; Botz-Bornstein, 2007; Ahmedi); in the methodology, this is noted as a guiding thread.

Presentation and limitations: The theoretical framework presents concepts before entering

the scene description; detailed analyses/visuals are gathered in the Findings/ Analysis sections. The study is limited to two films and a single researcher. Shot durations were evaluated using qualitative categories, and measurements were not taken at the second level. Traceability is achieved through detailed descriptions, comparative readings, and theoretical triangulation (with Eliade, Bachelard, Deleuze, and Sobchack/Marks and Schrader). This comprehensive framework maintains a controllable line of analysis along spatial organization, temporal density, and sensory reception axes.

Findings

In the following section, the findings are organized by film: first *Stalker*, then *Nostalghia*, followed by a comparative discussion of how each constructs sacred space and time.

Stalker (1979) - In Search of the Sacred Place

The film opens with a weary industrial landscape; infrastructure stained with rust and dust, combined with the dullness of the sepia palette, conveys a sense of deprivation across the space's surface. The corridors compressed by the frames, the overturned sleepers, and the track line suggest establishing a threshold regime from the first minute; the eye finds its direction through these threshold-typologies (Figure 1). The *Stalker*, acting as a guide, takes a writer and a professor to the Zone, placing the narrative within the ritual discipline rather than the "journey" cliché: gestures like cautious walking, silence, turning back and trying again, and throwing small objects far away to test the path transform the space from mere scenery into a device that constructs the experience.



Figure 1. Still from *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979), captured during one of the film's early scenes. The characters traverse a bleak industrial landscape dominated by muted colors and crumbling infrastructure. This environment reflects a sense of spiritual desolation and existential inertia, setting the tone for the film's exploration of inner transformation through external decay. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

The sequence of the passage, advanced by a hand-cranked dray behind the military line, transforms "waiting" into a qualitatively intense event accompanied by long shots and the monotonous sound of machinery. As the industrial layers of the background dissolve, nature slowly emerges; the color palette shifts from sepia to natural tones. This transformation is not merely a visual exchange but a change in tense: linear chronology loosens, and a palpable renow opens up (Figure 2). From this moment on, the Zone operates with a rhythm that hinders

linear progression and necessitates deviations; stopping, even waiting, is as meaningful as moving forward (Deleuze, 1989; Tarkovsky, 1986).



Figure 2. Still from *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979), depicting the interior of “The Zone.” The shift in color palette upon entering the Zone signifies a transition into a distinct temporal and experiential realm. This image reflects Tarkovsky’s belief in cinema as a medium for sculpting time, where time is recorded and lives within each frame. Through long takes and natural rhythms, Tarkovsky rejects symbolic abstraction in favor of direct sensory engagement, inviting the viewer into a contemplative, almost ritualistic encounter with cinematic time. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

The region's internal organization creates a heterogeneous space around a center/threshold, characterized by ruined structures, flooded halls, and empty rooms that observe. Haptic cues (the weight left by moisture on surfaces, the dull texture of rust, layers of steam, wall echoes) are emphasized through close-up shots and a slow rhythm; silence/ambiance, in contrast to the selective and limited use of music, determines the “inner clock” of the plan (Schrader, 2018; Marks, 2000; Sobchack, 2004). This withdrawal calls the viewer's perception to detail; time is not only seen, it becomes audible.

In the flooded hall (its walls encrusted and a cold shaft of light cutting the gloom), the camera holds a low, floor-level composition that turns the shallow water into a reflective membrane; the three men pause at the center while detritus (glass ampoules, paper scraps, bent metal) drifts at the edges of the frame. Rather than a straightforward symbolic code, the shot establishes a visual logic in which layers of memory fold onto the present; a single frame operates as a Deleuzian “crystal-image,” past and present modes superimposed (Deleuze, 1989) (Figure 3). Ritual gestures (such as silence, the weighted approach, hesitation, and the decision to try again) thicken duration, suspend historicity, and open an intensified “now” reminiscent of origins.



Figure 3. The three protagonists pause in a flooded, ruinous hall as a narrow shaft of light cuts the gloom. Held low to the floor, the composition transforms the shallow water into a reflective plane; scattered glass ampules and debris rim the frame, while silence and hesitation fix the group in a ritual pause. Rather than straightforward symbolism, the shot generates a Deleuzian “crystal-image,” where residues of the past co-exist with the present, thickening duration and suspending historicity. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

The tunnel, referred to as the "Meat Grinder," elevates the threshold-space experience to its peak. The acoustic field created by the narrow corridor, water layer, low light, and singular metal friction generates a chilling tension. Postponing the cut makes the audience feel that time has not just passed, but its quality has changed; the gestures of step, pause, and retreat announce that the entrance and exit are not mere transitions, but an initiatory test. The opening after the tunnel leads to a light reminiscent of rebirth; however, this effect is achieved through architectural thresholds and sonic minimalism, without being overtly allegorical (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Still from *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979), showing the characters traversing the ominous tunnel known as “the meat grinder.” This passage represents one of the film’s most spiritually charged thresholds, functioning as a symbolic trial of faith, purification, and inner

reckoning. With its cold, damp surfaces and suspended roots resembling organic veins, the tunnel evokes a womb-like space of psychological tension and metaphysical transformation. As the characters proceed in silence and fear, Tarkovsky invites the viewer into a liminal zone where time dissolves and the sacred looms. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

At the peak, physical movement decreases at the "The Room" threshold, and mental tension intensifies. The author and professor's hesitations spread the ethical/existential weight of the decision over time; the bare materiality of the empty room with the pond keeps the "to enter or not to enter" dilemma unresolved. The film prefers suspension over definitive judgment; this anti-climax leaves a space open for reflection in the viewer (Schrader, 2018). The scene in the finale where the little girl moves the glasses on the kitchen table without touching them does not serve as proof confirming the miracle, but rather as an afterimage of uncertainty; hope trembles within this uncertainty (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Still from *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979), depicting the final scene in which *Stalker's* daughter sits silently at the kitchen table. As glasses on the table move without physical contact, a quiet moment of unexplained phenomena unfolds, suggesting a subtle, perhaps spiritual, manifestation of the miraculous. This scene provides a meditative epilogue to the journey through the Zone, reflecting Tarkovsky's transcendental aesthetic, where absence, silence, and ambiguity serve as vehicles for deeper reflection. The child's possible telekinetic ability evokes a glimmer of hope, leaving the viewer in a sacred question rather than a resolved answer. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

Within this whole, Christian references (icon fragment, prayer gestures) add a contextual layer; however, sanctity is primarily made palpable through the material atmosphere (water/stone/metal, echo) and thickened duration (Bird, 2008; Botz-Bornstein, 2007; Ahmedi, 2016; Tarkovsky, 1991). *Stalker* constructs sacred experience through space and time within the triangle of threshold-ritual-waiting, without centering on iconography; long shots and natural rhythms open the door to the time-image in a Deleuzian sense (Deleuze, 1989). After analyzing *Stalker*, moving to *Nostalghia* would be helpful to examine how Tarkovsky constructs sacred space and time in a different context.

***Nostalghia* (1983) - The Space and Time of Spiritual Longing**

The inner rhythm of the exile is woven between two visual worlds: fragments of misty monochrome landscapes and the colorful yet restless semi-public spaces of Italy (bathhouses,

churches, courtyards). From the opening, the images construct emotional geographies by superimposing them: on one hand, the cold tones of memory, and on the other, the tactile weight of sacred architecture. The scene where translator Eugenia prays in front of the Madonna del Parto fresco, while Gorchakov chooses to stay outside, not only reveals the tension between faith and distance but also highlights the inner-outer divide and the logic of the threshold; architectural atmosphere and personal distance are separated within the same frame (Figure 6). This separation indicates that the sacred is made present through an iconographic presence, settlement, light, and silence (Bird, 2008). See Botz-Bornstein (2007) and Ahmed (2016) for extended readings of Tarkovsky's Christian intertexts in such settings.



Figure 6. Still from *Nostalghia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983), depicting Eugenia praying before the Madonna del Parto fresco in a candlelit crypt. This scene contrasts Eugenia's active spiritual engagement with Gorchakov's absence, as he remains outside the church. The spatial separation symbolizes his alienation, not only from his immediate surroundings but also from his cultural and spiritual roots. Tarkovsky utilizes sacred architecture and a devotional atmosphere to underscore Gorchakov's internal disconnection and exile, evoking a profound sense of spiritual homelessness. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

The drained thermal pool in Bagno Vignoni, a nodal space, juxtaposes the materiality of abandonment with the historical tradition of healing. The shallow water on the surface hardens the step-pause rhythm; Gorchakov's encounter with Domenico clashes the reason-faith and public-private axes in the same space. Domenico's story, which carries the "naked burden of belief," establishes a thematic kinship with the guide figure in *Stalker*; however, here the test divides into two branches: the intimate one is Gorchakov's candle-carrying ritual, and the public one is the conversation and self-immolation in Rome (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Still from *Nostalghia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983), Gorchakov is depicted standing within the drained thermal pool of St. Caterina in Bagno Vignoni. Once a sacred healing site, the emptied bath now symbolizes spiritual desolation and existential emptiness. Here, Gorchakov encounters Domenico, a man deemed mad for his apocalyptic visions and faith-driven actions. Domenico entrusts Gorchakov with a ritual task (to carry a lit candle across the pool), believing that only a stranger can fulfill what society has dismissed. This moment encapsulates Tarkovsky's recurring motif of sacred trials in profane spaces, mirroring the spiritual burdens placed on solitary seekers. This film still is presented by the author under fair use for critical analysis purposes only.

This candle-carrying sequence offers the most precise articulation of long shots and sonic minimalism. The camera frames the empty pool and the lone walker from a distance; the trials' failures and restarts bring the cyclical mode of time into the present. In moments when the music recedes, the ambiance (wind, distant footsteps, echoes) sets the pace of the plan; an ordinary gesture transforms into ceremonial intensity. The audience is exposed not to consuming the result, but to the quality of the duration; everyday action gains a rhythm of prayer through patience and attention. This rhythm evokes a sense of sacredness even in spaces with explicit Christian references, through the weight of the fabric and the thickening of time (Schrader, 2018). On the prayer-like structure of Tarkovsky's ascetic long take and its Christian resonances, see Bird (2008) and Botz-Bornstein (2007), as well as Ahmedi's analysis of metaphysical longing in Tarkovsky (Ahmedi, 2016); see also Tarkovsky's diaries for contemporaneous reflections (Tarkovsky, 1991).

Domenico's address to the public from the base of the Marcus Aurelius statue in the square in Rome briefly transforms the square into a space of collective witness. The East-West, materialism-transcendence, and reason-faith oppositions are felt through the tense establishment of the body-space relationship, rather than the theatrical elevation of the word, and ultimately through the act of self-immolation¹. The silence and the crowd's blank stares create an acoustic void; public space transforms into a ritual stage with a sudden shift (Figure 8). Thus, the film makes the sacred experience visible as solitary introspection and a public vibration.

¹ For the Christian rhetoric and apocalyptic tonality that frame this public act, see Bird (2008) and Botz-Bornstein's discussion of spiritualized modernity (2007); for a complementary perspective on Tarkovsky's visions of redemption and despair, see Ahmedi (2016).



Figure 8. Stills from *Nostalgia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983), capturing the parallel climax in which Domenico delivers a fervent monologue atop the pedestal of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome before setting himself ablaze. His impassioned plea for unity, returning to spiritual values, and resisting modern alienation encapsulates the film's central existential tensions between East and West, reason and faith, materialism and transcendence. Figures standing in rigid silence (on the right) on the Capitoline steps mirror the audience's stunned detachment, transforming the public square into a ritual space of collective witness. These frames symbolize Tarkovsky's vision of spiritual rupture and the urgent longing for reconnection. The author presents film stills under fair use for critical analysis only.

In the final scene, the Russian country house and the roofless nave of the Abbey of San Galgano merge into a single composite; the interior (the house of memories) and the cosmic/sacred space (the cathedral) overlap in the same frame. The extended moment frozen in time with snowflakes suggests a poetics that operates more through close contact and palpable intensity than through symbolic closure: the texture of the stone, the echo of the void, the cold-hot oscillations of light... The sacred here is not a dogmatic judgment, but a sensory/existential experience produced by the combined effect of material atmosphere + thickened time (Figure 9). This composite image embodies the longing for exile through the poetics of space and the intensity of time, staging a fusion we might call a "memory-cathedral" between "home/memory" and "cathedral/cosmic void" (Pallasmaa, 2012).



Figure 9. Final stills from *Nostalgia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983), depicting Gorchakov seated beside a dog in front of a modest countryside house. This tranquil scene, evoking the protagonist's nostalgic longing for his Russian homeland, is gradually revealed to be enclosed within the immense, roofless interior of the San Galgano Abbey. The juxtaposition of intimate domesticity and monumental ruin forms a visual metaphor for spiritual exile and the search for transcendence. Tarkovsky's refusal to explicitly depict Gorchakov's death, opting for this poetic composite of memory, loss, and sacred space, leaves the viewer suspended between reality and inner vision. The author presents the film stills under fair use for critical analysis only.

These individual analyses set the stage for a comparative evaluation of *Stalker* and *Nostalgia*, highlighting their convergences and divergences in portraying sacred space and time.

A Comparative Evaluation of Two Films

When read side by side, the driving force of the search and the axis of sociality clearly diverge: In *Stalker*, the movement is collective; the guide-writer-professor trio passes through thresholds one after another, and the weight of the decision hangs in the balance at the threshold of the "Room." In *Nostalghia*, however, the search is individual and intimate; Gorchakov's candle-carrying ritual is an internal test, while Domenico's outburst in Rome creates a public upheaval. This separation is also reflected in the poetic organization of space: *Stalker* constructs the transitions between industrial ruins and nature through the transformation of the color palette and the heterogenization of space; liminal typologies such as corridors, tunnels, and water-filled halls intensify the experience (Figures 1-2; see also Figures 3-4). *Nostalghia*, on the other hand, juxtaposes sacred architecture (church/ abbey), an empty bathhouse, and a house; the final composite culminates in the overlay of the house/ memory and the cathedral/ cosmic void in a single frame (Figures 6-9).

The temporal regime is established in both films by the dominance of the long shot; however, the tone is different. In *Stalker*, the postponement of the cut amplifies the danger-anticipation-caution rhythm, while in *Nostalghia*, the insistence on ritual gesture (slow walking, turning back and starting again) brings a cyclical mode of time into the present. In light of Deleuze's concept of the "time-image," both films prioritize the thickening of time over the rapid progression of events toward a goal; time becomes the environment of experience rather than a mere vehicle for the narrative (Deleuze, 1989). The sound design reinforces this structure: the music is selective and limited; silence and ambiance (water drops, wind, metal friction, echo of emptiness) set the internal clock of the plan. In *Stalker*, this withdrawal forms the Zone's "attention economy" (Figures 3-4); in *Nostalghia*, the candle-carrying scene becomes the palpable pulse of time (Figure 7) (Schrader, 2018).

Materiality and haptic perception are another vector of differentiation. *Stalker* highlights the cold surfaces of water/ metal/ stone, emphasizing the texture of rust, cracks, and moisture; *Nostalghia* manipulates the water/ stone to explore the echoing body of architectural space. Surface textures, mist/ vapor, and micro-light vibrations create a close-up effect; the viewer not only "sees" but also perceives the image as if touching it (Marks, 2000; Sobchack, 2004) (see Figures 3-4; 6-9). The modes of sacredness also differ on this ground: in *Stalker*, the repetition of thresholds and ritual gestures suspends the historical flow, making visible a mythical mode of "re-now." Sacredness arises from the promise of "The Room" and the threshold itself (Figures 3-4-5). In *Nostalghia*, however, sacredness emerges through the fusion of memory and space; the church/ bathhouse/ home and, ultimately, the home-cathedral composite are the most intense expression of this mode (Figures 6-9). While *Stalker* relies on indirect allusions (e.g., a broken icon) in its use of iconography, *Nostalghia* employs explicit sacred references (frescoes, candles). In both films, meaning is produced through material atmosphere and thickened time instead of through symbolic fixation (Bird, 2008; Pallasmaa, 2012).

This comparative perspective reveals that both films employ the same poetic principle: the materiality of space and the intensity of time across different rhythms and axes of sociality (collective-individual; private-public). For a systematic cross-reading of the findings, the films were evaluated side by side under the headings in Table 1; relevant visual placements (Figures 1-9) and major theoretical lenses are marked within the text (Table 1).

Table 1. The Cinematic Construction of Sacred Space/Time in Two Films: A Comparative Analysis

Dimension	<i>Stalker</i>	<i>Nostalghia</i>	Visual(s)	Theoretical lens
Narrative drive & type of quest	Collective quest; thresholds repeatedly cut the trio's movement; the decision remains suspended at the Room's threshold.	Individual/intimate quest; Gorchakov's candle-carrying is an inner trial, Domenico's act a public jolt.	<i>Stalker</i> : 4-5; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7-8	Schrader (transcendental); Deleuze (time-image)
Poetic organization of space	Industry → nature transition; palette shifts from sepia to natural tones; corridor-tunnel-flooded hall intensifies liminality.	Church/monastery-drained bath-house are superimposed; finale layers house/ memory with cathedral/ cosmic void in one frame.	<i>Stalker</i> : 1-2-4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 6-7-9	Bachelard (poetic space); Eliade (center/ threshold)

Temporal regime & use of the long take	Long take operates in a danger-waiting-caution rhythm; cuts are deferred; duration "thickens."	Long take carries the ritual gesture (slow walk, restart) into the present; duration becomes the subject.	<i>Stalker</i> : 2-3-4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7	Deleuze (time-image); Tarkovsky (sculpting time)
Sound design & sonic minimalism	Music is selective/limited; silence-ambience (metal scrape, echo, water drip) set the plan's inner clock; the Zone's "attention economy."	Music pulled back; wind, reverberation, and distant footsteps become the heartbeat of time in the candle scene; the piazza yields an "acoustics of emptiness."	<i>Stalker</i> : 4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7-8	Schrader (restraint); Chion (auditory field)
Haptic reception & materiality	Cold textures of water/metal/stone; rust, dampness, vapor; close views produce a "near-touch" perception.	Water/stone and the architectural void as resonant body; surfaces & atmosphere strengthen haptic uptake.	<i>Stalker</i> : 3-4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7-9	Marks (haptic visuality); Sobchack (embodied viewing)
Threshold/space typologies	Military border, tunnel ("meat grinder"), flooded hall; passage staged as an initiatory trial.	Church threshold (inside/outside), thermal bath (emptied healing site), Roman square (public ritual scene).	<i>Stalker</i> : 4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 6-7-8	Eliade (threshold/center; ritual); architectural typology
Principal ritual gesture(s)	Silence, cautious advance, turning back to try again; throwing objects to "test the way."	Candle-carrying (intimate ritual); speech and self-immolation in the square (public ritual).	<i>Stalker</i> : 2-4; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7-8	Ritual theory (Eliade); Schrader (transcendental)
Peak/knot scenes	At the Room's threshold, physical action subsides, mental tension rises; the anti-climax opens a field of contemplation.	Candle scene (long single take) and the Rome act form parallel climaxes.	<i>Stalker</i> : 4-5; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 7-8	Schrader (void/suspension); Deleuze (delay/interval)
Final image/outcome mode	Indeterminate phenomenon (moving glasses) neither confirms nor denies a miracle; leaves a residual trace of hope.	House + abbey body merge in one composite; time halts, spaces superimpose (memory-cathedral).	<i>Stalker</i> : 5; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 9	Bachelard (house/memory); Pallasmaa (sensory cathedral)
Modes of the sacred	Ritual repetition and thresholds suspend historical flow; a mythic "re-now" appears; sacred arises from the threshold itself.	The sacred emerges through memory fused with place; house/memory ↔ cathedral/cosmic void conjoin.	<i>Stalker</i> : 3-4-5; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 9	Eliade (sacred time); Deleuze (crystal-image)
Iconography & context	Largely indirect iconography (icon fragment, prayer gesture).	Explicit sacred references (fresco, church, candle); yet experience is built via atmosphere + duration.	<i>Stalker</i> : 3; <i>Nostalghia</i> : 6-7	Bird; Botz-Bornstein (contextual readings)

Conclusion

This study proposes an integrated reading that does not limit the establishment of the sacred in cinema through iconographic references, but conceptualizes it around the materiality of space, the thickening of time, and bodily/sensory reception, using *Stalker* (1979) and *Nostalghia* (1983) as examples. The findings indicate that Tarkovsky suspends ordinary chronology and establishes a mode similar to Eliade's "re-now," through long shots, restrained gestures, sonic minimalism, and threshold-space typologies (corridor, tunnel, room with a pond; church threshold, emptied bathhouse, public square); and that this mode is functionally articulated with Deleuze's time-image regime. In other words, the sacred experience here manifests not so much as a "reading of symbols" but as an intensification that becomes palpable through close contact with duration and surface.

The original contribution of the study is embodied on three levels. (i) At the intersection of cinema and architecture, it systematizes the combination of the poetic organization of space + the palpable intensity of time as a model for the production of the sacred, grounding this model in phenomenological/haptic reception. (ii) By comparatively examining Eliade's

understanding of central/threshold and cyclical time alongside Deleuze's time-image regime, which loosens chronology, he identifies a process in Tarkovsky that we call "temporal space / spatial time." (iii) It reveals that the mythical re-present in *Stalker*, established through ritual gesture-threshold repetitions, and the memory-cathedral composite in *Nostalghia*, where home/memory merges with the cathedral/cosmic void, are the realization of the same principle (materiality + duration) at different rhythms in two distinct poetic regimes.

Regarding the structural clarity and theoretical depth demanded by the referees, the theoretical framework and analytical findings have been separated; the Deleuzian conceptualization of time-image has been juxtaposed with Eliade's idea of cyclical time, thereby broadening the scope of the discussion. The terminology of "sacred" has been standardized as an overarching term in favor of sacred space; "sacred" has been used only as a contextual attribute in emphasizing aesthetic subjectivity. A comparative assessment is also detailed based on the two films' collective/individual modes of pursuit, threshold typologies, use of plan-rhythm, sonic minimalism, and haptic materiality. Thus, the work offers a single scene reading and a structural cross-reading ground between the two films.

Notes on Christian iconography have been contextualized by connecting them to discussions in the literature (e.g., Bird, Botz-Bornstein, Ahmedi); however, it has been shown that the main source of the sacred's sensory impact is the composition of atmosphere, texture, and duration rather than symbolic fixation². This approach avoids monolithic generalizations about "Tarkovsky's spirituality" by juxtaposing two lines that explain the sacred: the iconographic context and the formal/spatial-poetic organization.

This study acknowledges certain limitations. The interpretation is confined to two films, and the shot durations were analyzed using qualitative categories. More significantly, the analysis is limited by its reliance on the author's own theoretical spectator experience rather than on direct empirical data from viewers. In the Conclusion, it would be appropriate to briefly address this limitation and propose phenomenological audience interviews for future research, which would also help give the study a distinct direction.

Future research could be substantially deepened by several avenues: (a) a broader comparison incorporating Tarkovsky's works, such as *Andrei Rublev* and *The Sacrifice*, within the same model; (b) an empirical layer testing audience reception through phenomenological interviews; and (c) a mixed-methods design supported by semi-automatic measurements of plan-duration and sound intervals. Such a program would not only test the generalizability of this framework (which explains the presence of the sacred in modern cinema more through spatial atmosphere and temporality than through iconography) but also significantly enhance its empirical grounding.

Ultimately, this article reinterprets the relationship between cinema and architecture within the context of sacred experience by proposing a new, operationalized theoretical framework. This framework, which locates the sacred at the intersection of threshold architecture and an embodied perception of time in Tarkovsky's work, combines materiality, temporality, and bodily experience. It offers a repeatable method for film analysis and a scalable analytical language for tracing the sacred in contemporary visual culture. Acknowledging its limitations, the study relies on the author's theoretical spectator perspective without direct audience input. Future research could therefore enrich these insights by incorporating phenomenological interviews with viewers, thereby grounding the proposed framework in lived audience experiences to test and refine its applicability.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author of the article declared that there is no conflict of interest.

² For contextual readings that link these visual cues to Orthodox and Christian traditions without reducing them to fixed symbols, see Bird (2008), Botz-Bornstein (2007), and Ahmedi (2016).

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