

Title: Metaphor and the Desert in Andrei Platonov's "Takyr" and "Dzhan"
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In several of Andrei Platonov's works from the mid-1920s, including the essay "Chelovek i pustynia" (1924) and the story "Peschanaia uchitel'nitsa" (1927), the desert functions at once literally, as a specific geographical space that can be transformed through effective (Soviet) land management, and metaphorically, as a symbol for a world that can be remade using collective labor and heightened consciousness.

On the surface, it might seem that Platonov drew on the same symbolic framework while writing the short story "Takyr" (1934) and the novella "Dzhan" (written 1933-1935), for their plots celebrate the Sovietization of Central Asian deserts, following the conventions of socialist realist "liberation narratives," in the words of Philip Ross Bullock.

In fact, however, the metaphorical use of the desert in these texts is more nuanced than in Platonov's earlier works and more complicated than many critics have suggested. If the *plots* of "Takyr" and "Dzhan" point to a reading of the desert as a transformable world, the *similes and metaphors* in these texts subvert that reading. These devices are so repetitive and rely on such a severely limited register of comparison that they become dead-ended, casting doubt upon the potential of metaphor generally and, more specifically, upon the project of remaking the world so often celebrated with grandiose metaphors. Ultimately, these deserts stand not for a world that can be remade, but for themselves.

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