The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky in the Russian Literary and Philosophical Traditions

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

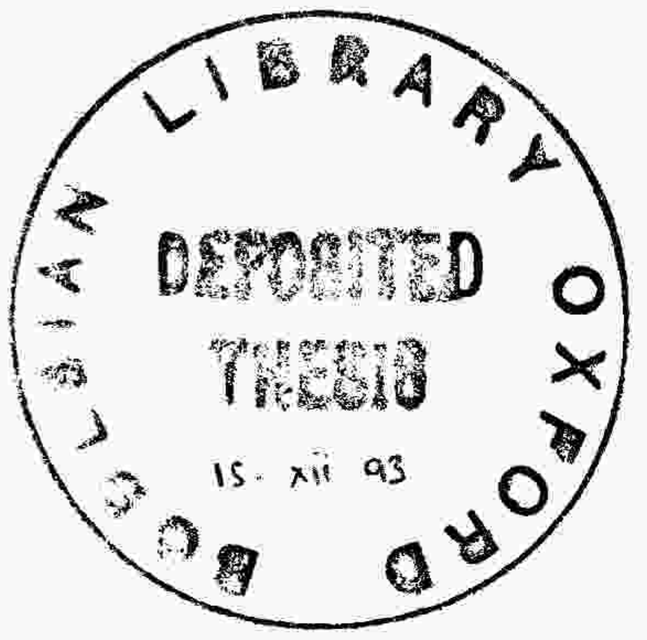
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by

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Trinity Term, 1992



Abstract

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The central contention of this dissertation is that the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky is informed by ethical, philosophical and aesthetic concerns that have long dominated Russian culture. The starting point is Tarkovsky's assertion that his art represents 'a continuation of the classic Russian cultural tradition'. The main focus of the dissertation is an examination of a small group of themes in Tarkovsky's work, and how these relate to specific antecedents in Russian culture; these specific subject areas will be discussed in terms of generic themes and motifs in Tarkovsky's work, which include: the disruption of harmony in modern life; the despiritualization or spiritual alienation of modern man; the necessity for redemption through self-sacrifice; and the need to relate emotionally to art.

The division of the thesis is thematic, with each of the five main chapters devoted to one subject area. This has not excluded (where appropriate) at least partial consideration of other themes and motifs.

Chapter One is a discussion of Tarkovsky's aesthetic in terms of the (cinematic) critical method known as 'transcendental style'. The aim of the chapter lies in its central contention that Tarkovsky's form, if it is to be considered against

any external, critical framework, can most legitimately be defined in terms of 'transcendental style', a method that concedes the dominance of respective cultural traditions to 'transcendental' directors.

The purpose of Chapter Two is a consideration of Tarkovsky's films mainly in terms of three distinct aspects of icon painting: contemplation, the concept of transfiguration and tradition. All of these conditions, it is suggested, are germane to Tarkovsky's aesthetic convictions and to many individual sequences in his films.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the importance of painting to Tarkovsky's aesthetic, and how far this demonstrates the 'Russianness' of his sensibility.

Chapter Four considers the seminal importance of nature imagery in Tarkovsky, and how representative this is of Russian cosmology, in which nature is accorded a privileged status.

Chapter Five is an appraisal of nature motifs that appear to possess great meaning for Tarkovsky, namely the earth, water, fire, and trees, as well as specific animals and birds.

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Table of Contents

Table of Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Introduction p.1

Chapter One: Tarkovsky and the Language of 'Transcendental Style' p.28

Chapter Two: Images of Transfiguration - Elements of the Russian Iconic Tradition in Tarkovsky p.97

Chapter Three: 'The Painterly Eye' - The Influence of Painting on Tarkovsky's Aesthetic p.167

Chapter Four: Images of Nature Transfigured p.235

Chapter Five: Motifs of Mother Nature p.303

Conclusion p.345

Appendix (Filmography) p.359

Bibliography

Table of Illustrations

1. Andrei Arsen'evich Tarkovsky (1932-1986) p.ix

2. The 'everyday' in Mirror p.68

3. 'Disparity' in Stalker p.77

4. The final stage of 'disparity', in Solaris p.84

5. 'Decisive moments', in Mirror p.87

6. The final 'stasis' shot, in Nostalgia p.94

7. The 'contemplative' opening shot, in Stalker p.121

8. The 'more real' world, in Ivan's Childhood p.137

9. Sanctity, in Andrei Rublev p.150

10. Andrei Rublev: 'The Old Testament Trinity' p.152

11. The three protagonists of Stalker p.153

12. (Russian) icon of St John Climacus p.159

13. Frontality, in Sacrifice p.160

14. Frontality, in Stalker p.161

15. Icon of the 'Kazan Mother of God' p.162

16. Eugenia: a 'parody of Renaissance humanism'? p.176

17. Leonardo da Vinci: 'Portrait of a Young Woman' p.179

18. Margarita Terekhova, in Mirror p.180

19. Leonardo: 'Adoration of the Magi' p.182

20. Piero della Francesca: 'Madonna del Parto' p.186

21. Vittore Carpaccio: 'The Return of the English Ambassador' p.190

22. Mirror p.195

23. Jan Van Eyck: 'The Annunciation' p.196

24. Pieter Brueghel: 'Hunters in the Snow' p.197

25. Hieronymus Bosch: 'Christ Carrying the Cross' p.200

26. 'The Writer' p.200

27. 'The Zone' p.200

28. Bosch: 'St Christopher Carrying the Christ Child' p.202

29. Temptation, in Andrei Rublev p.206

30. Bosch: 'Temptation of St Antony' p.206

31. Paintings by Tarkovsky p.214

32. Marc Chagall: 'Above the Town' p.229

33. Images of weightlessness, in Mirror p.230

34. 'Mother nature', in Mirror p.268

35. The 'skomorokh', in Andrei Rublev p.277

36. A 'man of the earth': the Stalker p.282

37. Domenico's house, in Nostalgia p.290

38. Bosch: 'Garden of Earthly Delights' (left wing) p.298

39. 'Garden of Earthly Delights' (right wing) p.298

40. 'Garden of Earthly Delights' (central panel) p.299

41. Boriska's 'confession to the earth' p.305

42. Horses, in Ivan's Childhood p.328

43. The dog as 'Charon', in Stalker p.331

44. One of Tarkovsky's last drawings p.338

45. The 'Tree of Life', in Sacrifice p.341

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Above all I am indebted to my wife for her continual support and encouragement, and it is fitting that these acknowledgements end with her.

Note

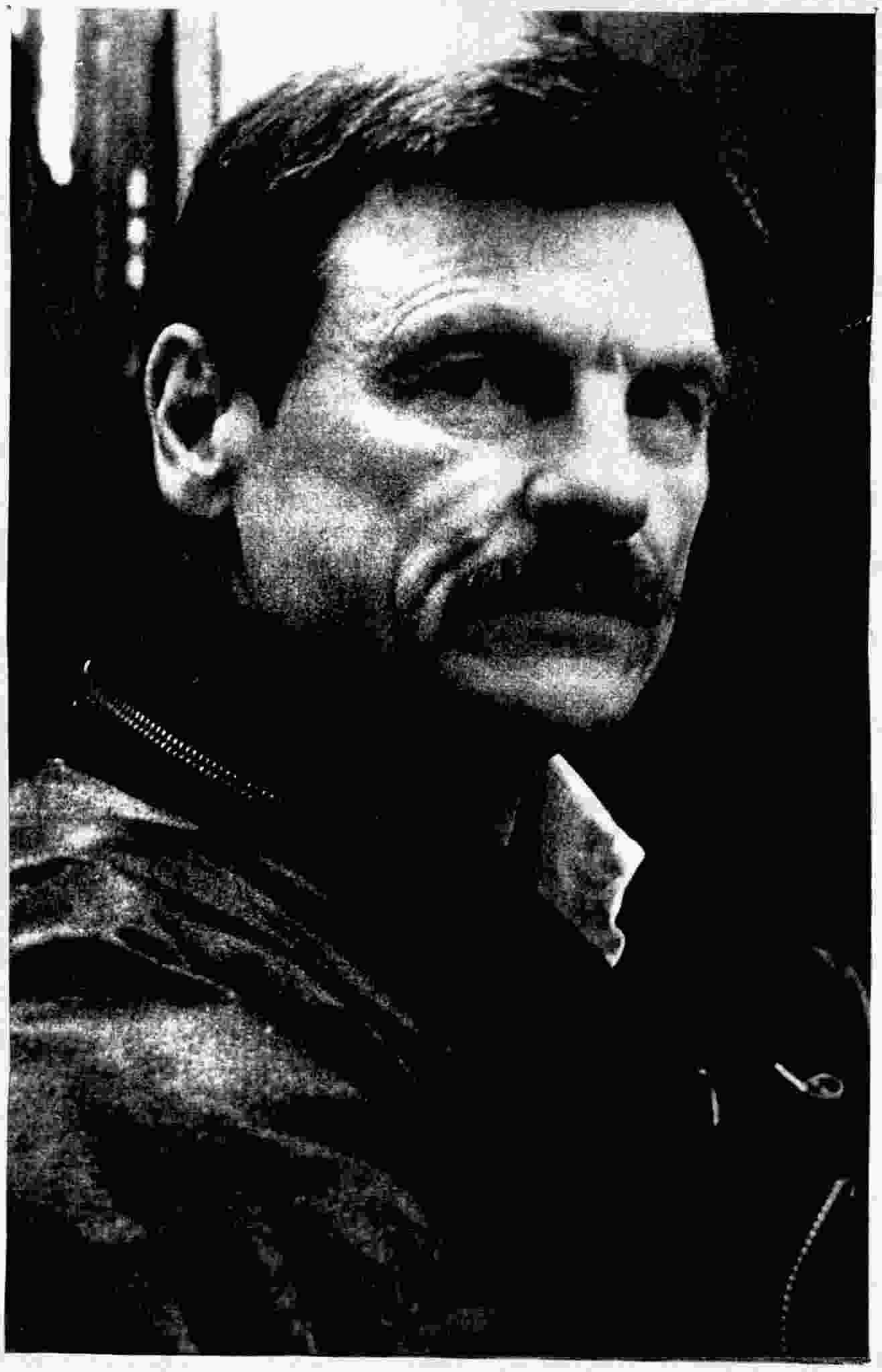
Translations from Russian and French are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

All other conventions follow the MHRA style book.

To Anne

'All would probably agree that sculpture was brought to perfection by the ancient Greeks; nor is it likely that further progress will be made in heroic epic poetry or pure tragedy. I venture to go further, and do not think it too bold to assert that just as the ancients had perfected those artistic forms, so the modern European nations have exhausted all other forms of art known to us. If art has a future, it lies in quite a new sphere of activity...'

Vladimir S. Solov'ev (1890)



Andrei Arsen'evich Tarkovsky (1932 - 1986)

Introduction

'At its best, cinema comes between music and poetry. It has reached as high a level as any art form. And as an art form it has consolidated itself'.[1]

Andrei Tarkovsky

With the new atmosphere of *glasnost'* that now prevails in Russia, the rehabilitation of artists who defied the canons of Stalin's 'Socialist Realism', or challenged the stifling orthodoxy of the (Brezhnev) 'period of stagnation', no longer has the power to excite or surprise. The re-emergence of art that focuses on the individual and his inner world, and which explores ethical, religious and metaphysical problems, contains many echoes of that other era of flourishing artistic creativeness: the Krushchev 'thaw', which proved a formative time for many of the recently 'rehabilitated' poets, novelists and filmmakers. The generation of sixties'[2] artists (*shestidesyatniki*) which broke free from the cultural dictates of the Stalinist period found a new freedom to experiment with form and, most significantly, to pursue an entirely new thematic agenda. As an important participant in this process,[3]it would

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[1] Cited in Tony Mitchell, 'Tarkovsky in Italy', Sight and Sound, 52 (Winter 1982/83), 54-56 (p.56).

[2] In cultural terms it is convenient to consider the 'sixties' in Russia as the period spanning the twentieth and twenty-second congresses of the CPSU (1957-1967).

[3] One writer has commented that the work of Tarkovsky and Vasilii Shukshin provides 'the most telling indicator of the reality of the internal freedom enjoyed by the *shestidesyatniki*'. Yurii Tyurin, 'Andrei, pervym zvannyi', Russkaya mysl', 3 April 1992, p.17.

be surprising if the work of the filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky was not to some extent informed by the motivations, themes and motifs of contemporary artists. Tarkovsky indeed shared with many artists of his generation a fundamental opposition to 'socialist realism' in all its aspects. Moreover, the free and creative spirit of that age, the infatuation with poetry, the desire for a new type of hero, and the fresh thematic developments all have clear echoes in Tarkovsky's work.

In cinema, one of the first results of the yearning for a new focus was the emergence of the 'childhood' (or 'the world through the eyes of a child') theme.[4] Such films as Serezha (1960) by Georgii Daneliya and Igor Talankin, and Introduction (1963) by Talankin can be compared to Tarkovsky's The Steamroller and the Violin (1960) and Ivan's Childhood (1962) in their desire to explore complex social, psychological or philosophical problems through the medium of children ('childhood', of course, would also be a recurring theme in Tarkovsky's later films). Another theme which features throughout Tarkovsky's oeuvre refers to the problematic relationship of fathers and sons. Reflecting the difficulties of the contemporary generation in 'rediscovering' its spiritual forefathers (as well as conveying the angst caused by the physical loss of 'fathers' during the war and the Stalin 'terror'), this is an important concern of sixties filmmakers, and is addressed in such films as Andrei Smirnov's Belorussian Station (1971) and Marlen Khutsiev's I Am Twenty (1964). A further concern of the Soviet cinema of the sixties was the re-interpretation of history, and the use of historical parallels to underline contemporary problems; Igor Talankin's film version of an autobiographical story by

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[4] According to one critic, in the early sixties literally every Soviet republic produced a film on the theme 'the world through the eyes of a child'. See Neya Zorkaya, The Illustrated History of Soviet Cinema (New York, 1989), pp.235-236.

the poet Olga Bergol'ts, Daytime Stars (1967), comes into this category, and was released within a year of the most spectacular, imaginative and poetic representative of the genre: Tarkovsky's Andrei Rublev (completed 1966, released 1971).

Of wider importance for the development of Tarkovsky's aesthetic was the gradual emergence in Soviet cinema of a 'poetic' style. This is already apparent in Mikhail Kalatazov's The Cranes Are Flying (1957) and Grigorii Chukhrai's Ballad of a Soldier (1959). The sixties, however, are marked by an extraordinary outpouring of poetic visions, some of which encompassed an explicitly spiritual or religious dimension, often involving images or motifs associated with the figure of a suffering and humiliated Christ. Otar Ioseliani's April (1960) and When the Leaves Fall (1967); Sergei Paradzhanov's Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors (1965) and The Colour of Pomegranates (1968/1971); Tenghiz Abuladze's I, Grandmother, Iliko and Illarion (1963) and Prayer (1969); and Aleksandr Mitta's Shine, Shine, My Star (1970) are some of the more outstanding examples of the new emphasis on spiritual or ethical awareness, on the defence of personal dignity, or on the rediscovery of national or ethnic identity.

As a student at the Moscow Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) Tarkovsky was privileged to study in the group led by Mikhail Romm, one of the most remarkable and talented figures of the older generation of filmmakers, whose pupils included virtually all of the outstanding directors of Tarkovsky's generation. Tarkovsky also undoubtedly profited from his association (and occasional collaboration) with some of the best cinematic talents of his day, including Vasilii Shukshin, Andrei

Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, Larissa Shepit'ko, Elem Klimov and (later) Aleksei German.

Notwithstanding the many thematic and experiental links that tie Tarkovsky to this first, and most remarkable, generation of 'post-thaw' filmmakers, it is nevertheless possible to argue that Tarkovsky's films, with the intensity of the response which his images evoke, merit a privileged position in Russian cinema. For Professors Bàlint Kovàc and Akos Szilàgyi, for instance, Tarkovsky is the 'central figure' in post-war Soviet cinema, whose aesthetic is a continuation of classic *Russian* culture and art:

> [Tarkovsky's art] marks a return to the fundamental problems of Russian history, and his approach is also traditional. Not only does he present in a new form - in the spirit of Tolstoi and Dostoevsky - the moral ideal of classic literature; he also revives one of the characteristics of the Russian intelligentsia: a tendency to depict an interior life striving towards perfection. [Moreover, Tarkovsky] wishes to demonstrate the continuity of Russian history and culture. Unlike most of his contemporaries he does not return to the classic tradition in order to contrast *politically* the old and new cultures. His films give the impression that he does not admit to the existence of two different cultures, since he plainly refuses to judge from any political point of view.[5]

Tarkovsky's reputation rests on a comparatively small number of films: one short (forty-six minute) feature film which became his diploma submission at VGIK; and seven full-length films. They are The Steamroller and the Violin (Katok i skripka), 1961; Ivan's Childhood (Ivanovo detstvo), 1962; Andrei Rublev (Andrei Rublev),

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[5] Bàlint Andràs Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), pp.17-18.

1966/1971; Solaris (Solyaris), 1972; Mirror (Zerkalo), 1974; Stalker (Stalker), 1979; Nostalgia (Nostal'giya), 1983; and Sacrifice (Zhertvoprinoshenie), 1986. Of these, Tarkovsky wrote or co-wrote the scenarios for five films, and substantially adapted the prose works on which the other three (Ivan's Childhood, Solaris, and Stalker) were based. Tarkovsky wrote two further (unfilmed) screenplays: Hoffmanniana (Goffmanniana), which was based on the life of the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann, and A Light Breeze (Svetlyi veter) which was modelled on Aleksandr Belyaev's Ariel. His early death prevented the realization of a number of other cherished projects, including screen versions of Hamlet, The Idiot and The Life of Saint Antony.

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This dissertation is largely devoted to an exploration of Tarkovsky's contention that his art represents 'a continuation of the classic Russian cultural tradition'.[6] The

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[6] Cited in Aleksandr Glezer, 'Ya schitayu sebya prodolzhatelem klassicheskoi russkoi kul'turnoi traditsii', Strelets, 4 (1985), 37-41 (p.41). Tarkovsky's critical writings contain many references to the notion (one that he clearly felt to be central to his work) that his films represent a return to an vision of Russian culture that is most perfectly encapsulated by nineteenth-century Russian literature, and above all by Tolstoi and Dostoevsky. As he wrote: 'I never draw parallels between myself and contemporary artists. Yet I always in some sense feel at one with the artists of the nineteenth century. [...] What is extremely important to me is my link with a classic Russian cultural tradition that continues to this day. I was one of those who endeavoured, perhaps unconsciously, to realize this link between Russia's past and future. For me the absence of this link would be fatal. I would not be able to exist. For the artist always links the past and present, he does not exist only for the moment.' Cited in Leonard Noiger and Ezhii Illg, 'Vstat' na put',' Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 109-130 (pp.112-113).

primary argument is that Tarkovsky's work is informed by ethical, philosophical and aesthetic concerns that are pre-eminent in Russian culture, and which reflect the richness of Russia's artistic and spiritual heritage. Tarkovsky considered that cinema at its best could rival, and even surpass, the more traditional art forms in the expression of an essentially 'transcendental' reality. A key priority throughout his truncated career was to develop cinema's own unique language, and a continual theme in his writings the desire to exploit 'the potential of cinema as the most poetic of art forms'.[7]

Tarkovsky's faithful adherence to Russian themes had, even before his death in 1986, already earned him the epithet of 'classic Russian artist' from a number of Soviet film scholars.[8] Such sentiments have also found support in wider artistic circles, and Tarkovsky's work has attracted appraisals by philosophers, academicians and such writers as Andrei Voznesensky, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Father Aleksandr Men', and even Jean-Paul Sartre.[9] Attacked by some for his uncompromising

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[7] Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), p.18.

[8] The most forceful (Soviet) exponent of this view appears to have been Dmitrii Salynsky; see his article, 'Rezhisser i mif', Iskusstvo kino, 12 (1988), 79-91. It can be argued that all of Tarkovsky's films (including Nostalgia and Sacrifice) are, to varying degrees, about Russia. As he wrote: 'I am a Russian artist. My films are about Russia. But sometimes it may be necessary to see Russia from the outside'. Cited in David Robinson, 'Andrei Tarkovsky: "I am not guilty",' The Times, 11 July 1984, p.14. Referring specifically to his final film, Sacrifice, Tarkovsky wrote: 'I am Russian, and I will remain Russian. Even though I'm making a film in Sweden with Swedish actors, if will still be a Russian film. If you look closely at the people in the film perhaps the Russian aspect becomes clearer.' Cited in Nicole Zand, 'Une villa tchékhovienne en Suède', Le Monde, 1 June 1985, p.15.

[9] There is also a considerable body of critical material by Western scholars and critics on Tarkovsky's films, although the latter often overlook the wider spiritual and

antipathy to modern thinking in such areas as psychology, sociology, literary and film criticism, and for his repudiation of feminism, the publication in English of Tarkovsky's diaries in March 1991 led to renewed criticism, and to charges of arrogance and even 'boorishness'. Yet for many of his admirers Tarkovsky is 'the only Soviet filmmaker of genius for forty years',[10] whose art is an antidote to the 'hatred that has poisoned [Soviet] ethics and art',[11] and which remains 'as unequalled today as were the novels of Tolstoi and Dostoevsky in the last century'.[12] For one British critic Tarkovsky's 'handful of completed works is individually of such weight and vision that each one of them alone might have secured him a place in film history'.[13] One of the most eulogistic appraisals of the director prefaces a useful study of mythology in Tarkovsky's films by the Soviet film critic Dmitrii Salynsky:

> Tarkovsky stands before us as the continuation of a tradition of Russian philosophical art, and one so fully and independently expressive of this tradition that he can justifiably be termed a 'classic' artist [*klassik*]. Tarkovsky is 'classic' because, through his films, he

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cultural dimensions of his work. Referring to Western analyses of the films, Anna Lawton has written: 'Often [Tarkovsky's films have been] interpreted in strictly humanistic terms, even by those critics who admired their spiritual depth. Today, after Tarkovskii's last film, The Sacrifice, it is no longer possible to ignore the religious underpinning of Tarkovskii's art'. Anna Lawton, 'Art and Religion in the Films of Andrei Tarkovskii', in Christianity and the Arts in Russia, edited by W. Brumfield (Cambridge, 1991), pp.151-164 (p.153).

[10] Mikhail Yampol'sky, 'Kak byt' khudozhnikom', Iskusstvo kino, 3 (1990), 25-36 (p.34).

[11] Georgii Pomerants, 'Zrimaya svyatost',' Iskusstvo kino, 10 (1989), 32-39 (p.33).

[12] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, pp.19-20.

[13] Peter Green, 'Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986)', Sight and Sound, 56 (Spring 1987), 108-109 (p.109).

> sets before his contemporaries the most fundamental questions that have always tormented mankind.[14]

For Tarkovsky these 'fundamental questions' had long been the province of the Russian religious philosopher, and the director's own perennial search for truth mirrored the characteristic attitude of the Russian intelligentsia. Like many of the latter, Tarkovsky was less concerned with matters of academic philosophical interest, or with theological, dogmatic or ecclesiastical questions, than with problems concerning the meaning of life and death, the meaning of history, suffering, love, evil and faith. The central themes in his work concern the disruption of harmony in modern life; the revelatory and salvatory powers of art; and the need for redemption through self-sacrifice. Above all, the conviction that modern man has lost all sense of the divine, and the consequences of this spiritual alienation, is a persistent theme of Tarkovsky's films and, increasingly, his critical writings. A similar sense of estrangement, of 'metaphysical void', and of growing despair at the denial of material values has been eloquently expressed by Bishop Kallistos Ware:

> The divine is the determining element in our humanity; losing our sense of the divine, we also lose our sense of the human. This is strikingly confirmed by what has happened in the West since the Renaissance, and more notably since the industrial revolution. An increasing secularism has been accompanied by a growing dehumanization of society. The clearest example of this is to be seen in the Leninist-Stalinist version of Communism, as found in the Soviet Union. Here the denial of God has gone hand in hand with a cruel repression of man's personal freedom. Nor is this in the least surprising. The only secure basis for a doctrine of human liberty and human dignity is the belief that each

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[14] Salynsky, p.79.

man is in God's image.[15]

Two particular aspects of Tarkovsky's attitude can be held to be entirely indicative of his 'Russianness'. The first is his universalism, and obsession with Russia's messianic role in world history and culture; and the second concerns Tarkovsky's fundamental approach to art, whose primary purpose in the director's eyes should consist of the 'expression of the Absolute'.

'Universalism', commented the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, 'is a specifically Russian quality'.[16] Tarkovsky undoubtedly shared with many of his predecessors a deep longing for an idealized Western culture and civilization: both his films and his critical writings are replete in references to the great writers, musicians and painters of the West. However, they also reveal a profound empathy for the religious polemic of such philosophers as Vladimir Solov'ev, as well as for the latter's utopian dream of the unity of Christendom (and particularly for the central role of Russian spirituality in this regard).[17]

Though often ambivalent about his own religious beliefs, Tarkovsky was much concerned with the problem of how to foster 'spiritual consciousness' through his

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[15] Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way (Oxford, 1987), p.67.

[16] Nikolai Berdyaev, Samopoznanie (Paris, 1989), p.293.

[17] Solov'ev's views on Russian messianism are described in his article 'La Russie et l'eglise universelle', in La Sophie et les autres écrits français, edited by François Rouleau (Lausanne, 1978), pp.126-295.

films.[18] Tarkovsky's exaltation of weakness over strength, childlike virtues over adult, illness over fitness, madness over sanity, old over new, and culture over science are constant themes in his work. An essentially Christian worldview defines both the ethical basis for his approach to the 'definition of the Absolute', as well as the cultural tradition that characterizes his own aesthetic. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have concluded:

> One has to recognize that the relationship between Good and Beauty represents the Christian ideal for Tarkovsky. In contra-distinction to the ancient Greek concept, Christian thought considers that what is good is also beautiful; but what is beautiful is not necessarily good. In Tarkovsky's films, children, the paralysed, the poor and the sick are beautiful, nature (creation) is beautiful; but harmonious bodies, the accomplished, the healthy, normal or satisfied are not always beautiful. The first of these is more spiritual, leans towards the infinite and opens the world to man. The second is material, and is witness to man's perfection, to his harmonious exterior and interior.
>
> The Absolute [in Tarkovsky] is manifest directly through nature, culture, the weak - women and children - the sick, the holy fools, and ascetics.[19]

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[18] Tarkovsky's writings are littered with references to the idea, central to his aesthetic, that only art could recognize or define the Absolute. As he writes in Sculpting in Time: 'The idea of infinity cannot be expressed in words or even described, but it can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible. The absolute is only attainable through faith and in the creative act'. Sculpting in Time, pp.38-39.

[19] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.23.

The division of this thesis will be essentially thematic, and each of the five main chapters will attempt to define an important area of aesthetic or philosophical influence on Tarkovsky's films. Let us briefly rehearse the principal arguments.

Chapter One: Tarkovsky and the Language of 'Transcendental Style' - Certain Correspondences considers Tarkovsky's 'style' in terms of the critical method known as 'transcendental style'. The main argument of the chapter is that 'transcendental style' provides an invaluable framework within which to approach Tarkovsky's cinematic form. A working definition is given of the term 'transcendental style', and reference made to the works of critics who have helped define the genre, including Henri Agel, Amédée Ayfre and Paul Schrader. The three stages of 'transcendental style' are delineated: 'the everyday', 'disparity' and 'stasis'. Within these parameters a number of specific techniques are considered: montage, attitude to time and rhythm, sound, acting, camera movement and colour. Parallels between Tarkovsky's 'style' and that of such directors as Robert Bresson are highlighted, and a general appraisal given of how Tarkovsky's form can be accommodated within this critical method. The tenets of 'transcendental style', it is argued, provide a valuable analytical method with which to approach Tarkovsky's aesthetic, notwithstanding certain inconsistencies. Significantly (for the main argument of this thesis), the method also stresses the primacy of respective cultural traditions to 'transcendental' directors. Notwithstanding some important stylistic similarities with the work of non-Russian directors Tarkovsky, it is concluded, remained motivated primarily by his awareness of being a Russian artist.

Chapter Two: Images of Transfiguration - Elements of the Russian Iconic Tradition in Tarkovsky compares Tarkovsky's films to the aesthetics that underpin Russian icon-painting in three distinct areas: contemplation and beauty; the concept of transfiguration; and tradition. Certain technical corres-pondences between icons and Tarkovsky's films are also suggested. The chapter begins with a general discussion of the image in Russian culture, continues with an examination of the art of icon-painting, and concludes by proposing specific aspects of the latter that may have particular relevance to Tarkovsky. The unique status of icons in Russian culture, it is argued, as well as the importance to the latter of generic iconic attributes (transfiguration, beauty) is entirely germane to Tarkovsky's own aesthetic convictions, and to specific images in his films. Tarkovsky's affinity with icon-painting, his exaltation of the 'image', it is concluded, has a particular resonance in Russian culture and is at the heart of his own aesthetic.

Chapter Three: 'The Painterly Eye' - The Influence of Painting on Tarkovsky's Aesthetic considers the importance of painting to Tarkovsky's aesthetic. Painting, it is argued, has long had a powerful influence on Soviet filmmakers, and appears to have played an exceptionally important role in the development of Tarkovsky's film-language. The chapter is divided into three main sections, each of which examines the possible influence of a particular period or genre on Tarkovsky, and how far such influence is compatible with the main argument of the thesis. The first section focuses on Renaissance and pre-Renaissance Italian art, and on how Tarkovsky's own ambivalence towards the Renaissance may have been fashioned by a long-standing debate among Russian artists and philosophers on the merits of Renaissance

humanism. The second section considers the works of Brueghel, Bosch and Dürer, and the specific use Tarkovsky may have made of themes and motifs from such paintings. Section three examines the parallel Tarkovsky may have drawn between medieval art and the apparent spiritual motivations of the early Modernist and Surrealist painters, including Chirico, Chagall and Kandinsky. The Western painting in which Tarkovsky has shown most interest, it is concluded, provides further evidence of his essentially Russian sensibility.

Chapter Four: Images of Nature Transfigured examines one of the most important areas of Tarkovskian cinema, and one of the great driving forces of Russian culture: nature. Tarkovsky's approach to nature, and its treatment in his films, owes much to 'traditional' Russian views of the elements as expressed in literary, philosophical and religious works. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which discusses the theme of the earth as it is presented in Russian culture generally. Allusion is made to Russian cosmology (pagan and Christian) in which nature has a privileged position. The influence of Patristic thought on Russian spirituality, and the image of nature in the works of Berdyaev, Solov'ev, Florensky, Bulgakov, Tolstoi and Dostoevsky is considered. The second section briefly discusses Tarkovsky's apparent affinity with the views of such writers, examines Tarkovsky's aesthetic of nature in general terms and, giving examples from his films, concludes that the director's philosophy derives much from specific elements of the tradition outlined in Section One.

Chapter Five: Motifs of Mother Nature is divided into five sections, each of which considers a particular area of Tarkovsky's fascination with the natural elements. The specific motifs discussed are: the earth; water; fire; animals, birds and insects; trees and the forest. The chapter will discuss the symbolism, or otherwise, that nature would appear to possess in Tarkovsky's work, and how this relates to Russian culture in general. Thus, earth imagery is linked to the Russian 'cult of Mother Earth'; water has powerful benedictory associations; fire may be linked to the themes of violence and the apocalypse; animals suggest an ideal of simplicity and harmony; trees have an important resonance in Russian culture generally (and in the poetry of Arsenii Tarkovsky in particular), and may be associated in Tarkovsky's conception with the themes of faith and sacrifice. The motifs of nature, it is concluded, play a central role in Tarkovsky's film language, and reveal the extent of the director's indebtedness to Russia's folk, mythological and spiritual heritage.

The appendix contains a 'filmography', featuring production details of each film, and a list of his other (unfulfilled) projects.

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Andrei Arsen'evich Tarkovsky was born on 4th April 1932 in the village of Zavrazh'e, in the Yur'evetskii district (*raion*) of Ivanovskaya province (*oblast'*), on the Volga. The village no longer exists, the area in which it stood having been flooded during the process of constructing the Kuibyshev Hydro-electric Dam.

Tarkovsky's parents were Maria Ivanovna Vishnyakova and Arsenii Aleksandrovich Tarkovsky, both of whom had studied at the Literary Institute in Moscow (*Moskovskii Literaturnyi Institut*) where they met. Both parents also wrote poetry, and Arsenii Aleksandrovich's first book of verse (Pered snegom) would later attract critical acclaim when published in 1962 (when he was fifty-five).[20] Little is known of the early history of the Tarkovsky family, although it is believed to have originated in or near the town of Tarki in Dagestan.[21] Tarkovsky's (maternal) great-grandfather, Vishnyakov, was a governor of Moscow; and his (paternal) grandfather, Aleksandr Karlovich Tarkovsky, is known to have been a prominent member of the 'People's Will' (*Narodnaya Volya*) revolutionary movement of the 1880s, a fact which earned him ten years exile in Yakuta.[22]

Tarkovsky's early years were spent in Zavrazh'e, in the home of his maternal

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[20] Born in 1907, in the town of Elizavetograd (in the Soviet period known as Kirovograd) in the southern Ukraine, for most of his adult life, until his belated recognition as a poet, Arsenii Aleksandrovich was known chiefly for his translations of poetry (mainly from the Oriental languages), an occupation which remained his main source of income. His poetry, at once deeply lyrical and mystical, reflects his own profound admiration for such poets as Fedor Tyutchev. Tarkovsky's work was highly regarded by Marina Tsvetaeva and Anna Akhmatova (among many other poets), with both of whom he enjoyed a close personal friendship. Akhmatova, apparently, considered his poetry to be comparable with that of Mandel'shtam. On this subject see Feliks Medvedev, 'Sud'ba moya sgorela mezhdu strok', Ogonek, 3 (1987), 18-21.

[21] A charter of Catherine II, dated 19th April 1793, apparently mentions the name 'Mohammed Tarkovsky, Prince of Dagestan', who is petitioning Russia for assistance and protection in the task of converting to Christianity. See Andrei Tarkovski, Le temps scellé, translated by Anne Kichilov and Charles de Brantes (Paris, 1989), p.227.

[22] Aleksandr Karlovich, it appears, would later receive a personal request from Lenin to publish his reminiscences of Narodnaya Volya. See Medvedev, p.19.

grandmother, Vera Nikolaevna and her (second) husband Nikolai Matveevich Petrov. The latter was a physician who worked at the local hospital, and personally delivered his step-daughter's first child, Andrei, for which purpose the young Tarkovsky couple had made the long and difficult journey from Moscow in 1932. Arsenii Aleksandrovich left for Moscow in June of the same year (to find employment), and would not return to Zavrazh'e. His wife, however, remained until 1935, when she would leave with her son and two-year-old daughter, Marina, for a small farmstead which she had managed to rent near the village of Tuchkovo, one hundred kilometres west of Moscow. With the death of Nikolai Matveevich in 1936, they would soon be joined by Andrei's grandmother. By this point the relationship between Tarkovsky's parents had already deteriorated, leading to their divorce in 1935.[23] The years 1935 - 1937 were spent at the farmstead (known as the *khutor 'Gorchakovykh'*), and were amongst the most onerous of Tarkovsky's childhood. He later described this period in the following terms:

> I lived with my mother, grandmother and sister - that was our whole family. In effect I was raised in a family without men. I was raised by my mother. It is possible that this is reflected in my character. [...] This was a very difficult time, since ... my father had already left the family. I remember that one night he came back and demanded that I be allowed to live with him. But I had

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[23] All of these facts would, in some form, later affect Tarkovsky's work as a filmmaker. It is difficult to exaggerate the impact on Tarkovsky of the early trauma of his parents' separation. The Prologue to Mirror, in which a stuttering adolescent is eventually able to pronounce the words 'I can speak', has been interpreted by some critics as a metaphor of Tarkovsky's prerogative to express himself creatively. However, it is clear that it refers specifically to his liberation (in Mirror) from his life-long inhibition in discussing the despair he experienced at his father's leaving. This is discussed in Marina Tarkovskaya, 'Ya mogu govorit'...', Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 101-108.

already decided that, should my mother agree to this, I would not go with him, despite the fact that I badly needed a father. From that point on we would always wait for his return, just as we did later, during the war.[24]

The family returned to Moscow in 1937, to settle in the two-storey, wooden house on *Shchipovskii pereulok*, in south-west Moscow, that would remain their base for more than twenty years. From 1939 to 1941 Tarkovsky attended school in Moscow, until, with the onset of the War, the entire family was evacuated to the town of Yur'evets, the 'barge-hauler capital of the Volga', situated only some fifteen kilometres from Zavrazh'e. The two years spent there made a vivid impression on the nine-year-old Andrei, and a great many recollections find their way into the film Mirror: the refugee children from besieged Leningrad; memories of the military instructor and firing-range; the exchanging of personal belongings for food; the interminable waiting for letters from Arsenii Aleksandrovich, who had been wounded in action, and was recovering in a military hospital; the declamation, under the flickering light of an oil-lamp, of Arsenii's verse.[25]

In 1943 the family returned to Moscow, and spent the remaining summer months in the village of Peredelkino, to the south of Moscow, where Maria Ivanovna had

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[24] Aleksandr Gershkovich, 'Ispoved' Andreya Tarkovskogo', Kontinent, 42 (1984), 385-406 (pp.386-387).

[25] Tarkovsky had planned to film many of these scenes in Yur'evets itself; however, after visiting the location, prior to shooting Mirror, his 'bitter disappointment' at the changes to the town compelled him to look elsewhere. The sequences were eventually shot at Kolomenskoe, near Moscow. See Marina Tarkovskaya, 'Journey Into the Past', Soviet Film, 12 (1990), 24-25.

obtained work as a caretaker at the local Pioneer camp. In early autumn the long-awaited, but entirely unannounced, return from the War of Arsenii Aleksandrovich took place at the dacha in Peredelkino, an event captured graphically in Mirror.[26] After returning to the flat in Moscow, Andrei was detained for many months in a local hospital, where he received treatment for tuberculosis. On his release Tarkovsky resumed his education at school No. 554, where he developed a close friendship with classmate Andrei Voznesensky.[27] The school certificate of the eleven-year-old Andrei does not evince strong interest in any particular discipline, though it does, in Maya Turovskaya's words, 'show a complete lack of any ability or interest in mathematics or the physical sciences and adequate marks in the humanities'.[28] Andrei's education had been a cause for concern of his mother for some years: as the product of a traditional artistic upbringing (it was the firm wish of his mother that Tarkovsky should work in the field of art), at the age of thirteen he had already been studying music (piano) for some seven years.[29] The boy's impulsive, restless nature led to several changes of direction in his artistic and educational inclinations: music was abandoned in 1945,[30] and he enrolled at a high school with a special emphasis

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[26] This sequence was filmed at Peredelkino.

[27] According to Voznesensky, who later devoted one of his poems to Tarkovsky's memory. See Andrei Voznesensky, 'Belyi sviter', in O Tarkovskom, edited by Marina Tarkovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp.36-39.

[28] Maya Turovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989), p.16.

[29] Tarkovsky's first film, The Steamroller and the Violin, largely reflects his own experiences of these early piano lessons.

[30] He would later express regret at his decision not to pursue a musical career, commenting that his life 'would have been easier as a conductor'. Cited in Gershkovich, p.389.

on art (the *Khudozhestvennaya shkola imeni 1905 goda*), where he studied painting and sculpture in addition to his regular classes. This experiment lasted only a few months;[31] finally, in 1951, Tarkovsky entered the Institute of Oriental Studies (*Institut vostokovedeniya*), where he studied Arabic until a sporting accident, causing serious concussion, compelled him to drop out in the middle of his second year.

Throughout this period Maria Ivanovna had been working as a proof reader at the *Pervaya obraztsovaya tipografaya* (a local print shop), and her meagre salary provided the only income for the family of four (the two children, mother and grandmother). Despite her many self-sacrifices, life, even by the standards of Moscow in the late 1940s, appears to have been exceptionally difficult for the Tarkovsky family; the usual financial problems were compounded by the frail state of Andrei's health, and by the boy's difficult nature. In later life Tarkovsky would pay tribute to his mother's remarkable fortitude and determination to ensure her son's success as an artist: 'Our life was extraordinarily difficult in all its aspects. But everything that I have achieved in life, the fact that I became a director, is entirely due to my mother'.[32] It was also due to his mother's efforts that in 1953 Tarkovsky obtained work as a 'collector' (ordinary worker) on a geological expedition to the Turukhanskii region of Siberia. Here, he spent a year travelling on foot through the

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[31] According to Tarkovsky's brother-in-law, Aleksandr Gordon, in his article, 'Studencheskie gody', in O Tarkovskom, pp.40-54 (p.46).

[32] Cited in Gershkovich, p.388. Later in this interview he continues: 'At that time we often went hungry, and I am referring to genuine hunger: that is to live not knowing whether one would have a crust of bread to eat the following day. It is an extremely onerous and humiliating condition. On the other hand it teaches one compassion for others.' p.402.

taiga and along the Kureika river, collecting samples and completing an album of sketches. He would later describe this experience as 'the most beautiful of my life',[33] and one which 'served to confirm my decision to become a film director'.[34]

Tarkovsky returned from the expedition in 1954 and immediately applied to VGIK. He passed the entrance examinations well, and was accepted for the directors' course, which was supervised by Mikhail Romm. Tarkovsky joined VGIK at an auspicious moment, a decision having been taken in 1953 to dramatically increase film production.[35] As Maya Turovskaya has pointed out, other factors, besides the obvious increase in opportunities that this strategy offered, would have an important impact on Tarkovsky's future development:

> The war generation had arrived at the Institute not long before [Tarkovsky]. It was this generation that gave birth to the so-called 'VGIK' school. They were young, but not too young to have fought, so they were already experienced and consciously striving to pour that experience into the arts: they burst upon the scene first in poetry, then in prose, theatre and cinema. Although they were still final-year students in the artistic institutes they were already beginning to be published, though their hour of glory was yet to come. It was they who were destined at the end of the fifties and the start of the sixties to bring forth new themes and new means of expression, a new view of life and of the protagonist who lives it.[36]

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[33] Cited in Gershkovich, p.388.

[34] Cited in Turovskaya, p.16.

[35] The output in 1954 was forty-five films, compared to sixty-six in 1956.

[36] Turovskaya, p.17.

The six years spent at VGIK witnessed important landmarks in Tarkovsky's personal and professional life: these included his marriage to fellow student Irina (Irma) Raush, who would later play the part of Ivan's mother in Ivan's Childhood, and 'durochka' in Andrei Rublev; his first viewing of films by Bunuel, Rossellini and Bergman; as well as the origins of his collaboration with another student on the directors' course: Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. (Together they would write The Steamroller and the Violin, Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev and Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky's The First Teacher). Tarkovsky's first student films, a screen version of Hemingway's The Killers and a war-documentary entitled There Will Be No Leave Today (Segodnya uvolneniya ne budet), already betray some of the characteristics that would be associated with his later work, as fellow student, Aleksandr Gordon, has observed:

> Andrei was [always] clearly in charge, and was very serious about his work. [When shooting The Killers] he gave the camera students, Alvarez and Rybin, plenty of time to do the lighting well. He created long pauses, generated lots of tension in those pauses, and demanded that the acting be natural. There was no music, just talking and the whistling of one of the bar customers, played by Andrei himself. Romm praised the film, and it was also well liked by our fellow students.[37]

Tarkovsky's first important film was The Steamroller and The Violin, which he made in 1960 to qualify for the diploma requirements of VGIK. This short (forty-six minute) film, which was made under the aegis of the 'Children's and Youth's Films'

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[37] Gordon, p.44.

section of *Mosfilm*, was an unexpected critical and commercial success, and quickly led to Tarkovsky's transfer to another section of the studio. A simple tale of a steamroller-driver's friendship with a young musician, the film is distinguished by its poetic, lyrical treatment of everyday events and objects, by its emphasis on atmosphere, and by the apparent lack of importance of action or dialogue (only thirty-five sentences are spoken in the entire film). The same qualities are evident in Tarkovsky's first 'full-length' film, Ivan's Childhood, a project which Tarkovsky was requested to take charge of when the film's original director, Eduard Abalov, was dismissed for incompetence. Tarkovsky, somewhat reluctantly, accepted the studio's offer, but imposed certain conditions: the scenario would have to be completely re-written; not one metre of the Abalov footage would be used; and all of the actors and film-crew would be replaced.[38] The film, completed in 1962, in record time, and on half of the original budget, immediately established Tarkovsky's reputation by winning eight international prizes, including the prestigious 'Golden Lion' at Venice, and the 'Best Director' award at San Francisco.

With Andrei Rublev began Tarkovsky's notorious difficulties with the Soviet film establishment. His application to make the film was submitted in 1961, and permission finally granted in April 1964. The extraordinary scale and complexity of the film, the first 'realistic' attempt to convey the Russian Middle Ages, astonished the Moscow film world. However, after the film's première in 1966 the intensity of the political-ideological criticism meant that Andrei Rublev remained 'on the shelf'

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[38] On this subject see Antoine de Baecque, 'Portrait d'un cinéaste en moine poete: entretien avec Andrei Tarkovski', in Andrei Tarkovski, edited by Antoine de Baecque (Paris, 1989), pp.106-111.

until 1971, and (despite its unofficial showing at Cannes in 1969) was cleared for export only in 1973.[39] Tarkovsky's next film, Solaris, was released in March 1972 and, although it attracted further vituperation from Soviet critics, was immediately offered to the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the 'special jury prize'. Solaris did not repeat the critical success of Andrei Rublev: common complaints centred on the film's length (145 minutes), its slowness and somewhat laboured moralizing, and the film's 'anthropocentrism'. The completion of the autobiographical Mirror in March 1974, as Turovskaya has observed, 'marked the fullest expression of Tarkovsky's personality as director'.[40] Initially entitled Confession, then A Bright, Bright Day, and finally Mirror, the screenplay was written over a two-week period in February 1968, by Tarkovsky and the playwright Aleksandr Misharin, at the cinematographers' retreat facilities (*Dom tvorchestva kinematografistov*) at Repino.[41] The unconventional nature of the screenplay, the apparent lack of cohesion between episodes, the rejection of any accessible plot-structure, and the intensely personal nature of the material led to a rejection of the initial draft by Romanov, then chairman of the Soviet film ministry, *Goskino*. With the appointment of Filip Ermash to this post, permission was finally given to proceed with the project, shooting began in September 1973, was completed by March 1974, and the film was released the same year. Tarkovsky's next film, Stalker, was based on a short story by the leading

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[39] A relatively full account of the filming and subsequent vicissitudes of Andrei Rublev is given by Tat'yana Vinokurova in her article, 'Khozhdenie po mukam "Andreya Rubleva",' Iskusstvo kino, 10 (1989), 63-77.

[40] Turovskaya, p.61.

[41] The evolution of the screenplay is described by Misharin in his article 'Na krovi, kul'ture i istorii...', in O Tarkovskom, pp.55-66.

science-fiction writers Arkadii and Boris Strugatsky: Picnic By the Roadside (Piknik na obochine). The publication of the screenplay, now called The Wish Machine (Mashina zhelanii),[42] revealed a dramatic transformation from the original story, with virtually all of the science-fiction or 'cinematic' elements eliminated. After a great many technical and bureaucratic difficulties (the first print of the film had been completely destroyed during processing), the film that finally emerged in 1979 contained still fewer of the original Strugatsky themes: the Stalker, the Zone, the notion of wishes fulfilled and the invalid daughter. The film, which (predictably) provoked a generally unfavourable response from Soviet critics, and which *Goskino* allowed to appear at Cannes only unofficially (to ensure that it would not win a prize), proved to be the last Tarkovsky would make in the Soviet Union.

In July 1979 Tarkovsky was invited to Italy by the screenwriter Tonino Guerra, in order to prepare a project that would eventually become Nostalgia. He returned to Italy in 1980, and by May of that year the final draft of the scenario had been co-written with Guerra. Within a few months Tarkovsky and Guerra had also completed a short documentary film, A Time to Travel (Tempo di Viaggio), on the subject of Tarkovsky's life, and his conception of Nostalgia. In February 1981 Tarkovsky visited Britain, and was invited to lecture in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London; a number of proposals were put to him by such organizations as The Royal Shakespeare Company (to direct Hamlet), The National Film School (to supervise a course in

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[42] See Arkadii Strugatsky, 'Mashina zhelanii', Sbornik nauchnoi fantastiki, 25 (1981), 7-39. Strugatsky discusses his collaboration with Tarkovsky over Stalker in 'Kakim ya ego znal', Ogonek, 29 (1987), 7-8.

directing), and Oxford University (to lecture on cinematography).[43] Tarkovsky left Moscow again (for Italy) on 7 March 1982; he would never return to Russia, although at this point he had no intention of remaining abroad. Nostalgia, a co-production of *Sovinfilm* and *RAI TV*, was filmed between September 1982 and March 1983; at Cannes that year the film won Tarkovsky the 'Special Grand Jury Prize' for directing (which he shared with Bresson's L'Argent).

By May 1983 Tarkovsky had been joined in Italy by his (second) wife, Larissa Pavlovna, and now began to contemplate seriously the possibility of settling in the West. In June a flat was purchased in the town of San Gregorio, near Rome (the family would later move to a permanent home in Florence). At least three important projects still provided a legitimate reason for remaining in Western Europe: a production of the opera 'Boris Godunov' at Covent Garden in London (which was staged in autumn 1983); continuing negotiations with a German company over the publication of Hoffmanniana; and the writing of The Witch, a screenplay that would evolve into Sacrifice. On 10 July 1984, at a press conference in Milan (staged by the Catholic organization *Movimento Popolare*), Tarkovsky announced his decision to request political asylum, and to settle in Italy.[44] A number of personal, as well as professional, factors may have contributed to his decision not to return to Russia, including the fact that his mother was no longer alive (she died on 5th October 1979),

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[43] According to Tarkovsky's diaries; see Andrey Tarkovsky, Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-86, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), p.271.

[44] At the press conference Tarkovsky was supported by Mstislav Rostropovich, Vladimir Maksimov and Yurii Lyubimov, all of whom had already given up their Soviet citizenship.

and a genuine fear of not being given sufficient work to provide for his family. The catalyst, however, appears to have been the determined efforts of Sergei Bondarchuk, the official Soviet representative at the 1983 Cannes Festival, to prevent any prize being awarded to Nostalgia. Bondarchuk, in Tarkovsky's words, 'fought like a lion against the other jury members, and did everything possible to discredit me and my film'.[45]

Many other, long-standing, grievances were aired at the press conference: in the course of twenty-four years he had been allowed to make only six films (and had, therefore, effectively been unemployed for eighteen years); few prints were made of his films (only 196 of Stalker, for instance); the latter were given a low (third) category distribution designation; and Tarkovsky, despite the large amounts of foreign currency his fims earned, was paid derisory amounts for his work, often, in his words, being 'unable to find even five copecks in my pocket to pay my bus-fare'.[46]

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[45] Cited in Irina Ilovaiskaya, '"Mne ne budet khvatat' moei Rossii...": Milan, 10 iyulya press-konferentsiya Andreya Tarkovskogo', Russkaya mysl', 19 July 1984, p.13.

[46] ibid., p.13. There is no intention here to deal in any detail with the substance of Tarkovsky's complaints. Tarkovsky, unquestionably, was the victim of official obstruction, antipathy and lack of official recognition; as Turovskaya has observed, 'There was the memory of how Andrey Rublyov had been treated; the years of waiting, developing ideas which never came to fruition; his absolute inability to compromise; and the fact that not only were there continuing aesthetic confrontations with the Soviet film bureaucracy, but also ... antagonism from his professional colleagues'. Turovskaya, p.136. Nevertheless, one has to recognize the considerable advantages Tarkovsky enjoyed throughout most of his career; as a Soviet filmmaker Tarkovsky had access to facilities, funding, talent and production time that Western directors of relatively 'elitist', non-commercial films would have envied. Moreover, it is reasonable to conclude that Tarkovsky succeeded in realizing his most cherished plans, as he once conceded: 'All I can say is that I have made the films I really wanted to make'. Cited in Angus MacKinnon, 'Tarkovsky: The East Sees Red', Time Out, 691 (1983), p.51.

Moreover, the many letters Tarkovsky had written to the Soviet authorities from Italy, requesting permission to remain in the West in order to complete his other projects, demanding that his ageing mother-in-law and son be allowed to join him in Italy, as well as assurances about his personal and professional future, were all ignored.

A contract had already been signed in May 1983, with Anna Lena-Wibom (a producer from the Swedish Film Institute), to produce Sacrifice. Preparations began in Berlin, in January 1985, where Tarkovsky was staying on a fellowship from the German Academic Exchange Service. By the time filming began in Stockholm, in March 1985, Tarkovsky was already very ill, and work alternated with periods in hospital. Shooting of Sacrifice was completed by December, and Tarkovsky returned to Italy. His fifteen-year-old son, Andrei, was finally given permission to leave Russia, and arrived in Paris on 19 January 1986. On 10 June Tarkovsky was taken to the Anthroposophical clinic, near Baden-Baden, Germany; thereafter he was transferred to a Parisian cancer clinic, where he died on 29 December 1986. He was fifty-four. Following a requiem mass at the Cathedral of St Sergius, Tarkovsky was buried according to the rites of the Russian Orthodox Church at the ('Russian') cemetery of Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois near Paris.

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Chapter One

Tarkovsky and the Language of 'Transcendental Style': Certain Correspondences

> *'... and I felt ashamed as I thought about people coming to the cinema to see my films. Ashamed, because nothing that I have done is actually cinema, and my films should not be seen. They have to be lived through together with me, and who can possibly do that?'*[1]
>
> Andrei Tarkovsky

The critical approach to film that has emerged in recent years associated with the term 'transcendental style' does not of itself provide the definitive framework within which to appraise Tarkovsky's work, or to define the tradition which provided the motivation for his films. Yet the work of such scholars and artists as Amédée Ayfre, Jean Bazaine, Henri Agel, Jacques Maritain, Robert Warshow and Paul Schrader contains much that is of value in assessing Tarkovsky's techniques and overall 'style'. It also provides invaluable terms of reference within which to consider Tarkovsky's work as a filmmaker, and as the contemporary of directors who have adopted a comparable approach from quite different cultural standpoints.

This chapter will attempt to define Tarkovsky's art in terms of the tenets of transcendental style as conceived (for the most part) by the above critics. The aim of the chapter might be expressed in terms of a number of key questions: What is

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[1] Andrei Tarkovsky, Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-86, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), pp.319-320.

transcendental art? How does cinema relate to other transcendental art forms, and how can cinematic techniques evoke the Transcendent? How faithful is Tarkovsky's approach to this style, particularly in the areas of acting, camerawork, dialogue and sound? To what extent does Tarkovsky's allegiance to transcendental style add to or detract from the central contention of this thesis: that Tarkovsky's preoccupations are fundamentally Russian, his art a continuation of a classic Russian cultural tradition?

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Section One

There is little consensus over what constitutes a definition of the Transcendent, or its expression in art. The need to transcend normal sense experience, the immanent, in order to reveal what is by definition a greater and essentially sacred reality, has long been a subject of debate among artists and philosophers. Beyond this truism lies the vastness of man's efforts to express in a sensible form an intrinsically unknowable reality. Such art is not sectarian, but is present in all cultures and historical periods. It is an object of philosophical discussion in Plato, Plotinus and Kant; and is expressed, for instance, in the painting and architecture of medieval Europe, the culture of Zen Buddhism and the icons of Eastern orthodoxy. The term 'transcendental' can be interpreted variously: it can refer to the Transcendent or Holy itself; to objects or art which attempt to express the Transcendent; or to the human experience of the Transcendent, often in the form of mystical vision or revelation. Sacred art, correspondingly, can be expressive of each of these three nuances.

Schrader has summarized the various approaches in the following terms:

> (1) works which *inform* the viewer / reader / listener about the Transcendent, which by their very definition must come directly from the Transcendent itself since no man can know about the Holy; works such as untampered nature (common revelation) and 'divinely-inspired' Scriptures (special revelation), although this category may be only theoretical since even many theologians regard the various Scriptures as only expressive of the Holy, (2) works which *express* the transcendent in human reflection, man-made, man-organized, or man-selected works which are more expresive of the Wholly Other than of their individual creators, works such as the Byzantine ikons or Zen gardens, (3) works which relate the human experience of transcendence, which *express* not the Transcendent but the human who experiences the Transcendent, works such as expressionist paintings or any of the many psychological novels about religious conversion.[2]

Beyond this definition there is little that can usefully be extrapolated from the multitudinous literary and critical efforts to establish a genuinely non-sectarian definition of the term 'transcendental', or its application to art. Some points may be self-evident: art can determine nothing about the Transcendent, about the unknowable itself, but only about human perceptions of the latter; as Schrader puts it: 'Human works ... cannot *inform* one about the Transcendent, they can only be *expressive* of the Transcendent'.[3] Transcendental art can be religious, but it is not confined to a single religion or culture. Transcendental art is highly autocratic: its exponents, once committed, are unable to accept other forms of artistic expression as being of equal

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[2] Paul Schrader, Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer (Berkeley, 1972), p.6.

[3] ibid.

value. Such artists are often estranged from their immediate culture, and instead seek refuge in older, more spiritual currents from their own, or other, traditions. An obsession with the transcendent in art has led to the end of creative production for some artists, and even to madness. Such art invariably provokes charges of elitism and arrogance, and is often considered irrelevant to the needs and desires (for entertainment) of the contemporary 'consumer' of the arts.

In cinema one can now speak of an established tradition of filmmakers whose successive works have consistently sought to express, in cinema's own unique language, the Transcendent. The themes, motifs and style of their films, self-evidently, have had little in common, either with what is termed 'commercial cinema', or with 'socialist realism'. The work of these artists does not constitute a genre, but is the product of widely ranging cultures over a period of some eight decades. One can, however, point to a number of common stylistic features: austere camerawork; acting devoid of self-consciousness; an absence of 'intellectual' montage techniques of the kind favoured by Eisenstein; and, overall, an almost indefinable 'other' quality which may on occasions be intrinsically religious in purpose, but which always points to a means of approaching an essentially transcendental reality.

It is against this background that one might approach the work of Carl Dreyer (1889-1968), Aleksandr Dovzhenko (1894-1956), Yasujiro Ozu (1903-1963), Robert Bresson (b. 1907) and Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986).[4] The degree to which these

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[44] One can of course name other directors in whose films elements of transcendental style are to be found; one thinks in particular of Bergman, Antonioni, Bunuel, Pasolini, Renoir, Rossellini, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa. Stasis shots, disparity,

directors successfully evoke a spiritual style in their work varies enormously, in part reflecting the level of their commitment to the style and the philosophy which underpins it. In general one can point to an ascending order of commitment to the style: there is a clear and qualitative difference between Dreyer's films, which are marked by a certain ambiguity towards transcendental style, and the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, which forcefully aim to express the Transcendent.[5] All of the filmmakers named above, however, worked within specific cultural parameters, actively employing quite divergent traditions in the common purpose of expressing the ineffable and invisible. Thus Dreyer can be placed in the tradition of Northern European art and theology, and his films evince the influence of Gothic architecture and medieval painting.[6] Dovzhenko's work is rooted in Ukrainian folk culture, and reflects his own peasant upbringing and affinity with the 'earth'. Ozu's films were profoundly influenced by Zen art and have been compared by some critics to Japanese

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decisive action - are a feature of such films as Pasolini's The Gospel According to St Matthew (1964), Bunuel's Nazarine (1958) and Simon of the Desert (1965) and Wim Wenders' The Wings of Desire (1987). All of these films contain scenes that equal or surpass the decisive action or final stasis shots in Bresson or Ozu. Similarly, in what is commonly termed 'commercial cinema', many instances can be cited of the successful use of one or more elements of the style.

However, transcendental style cannot be defined in terms of any one of its elements. Frank Capra's occasional use of disparity, or Bunuel's interest in stasis, does not mean that these two directors are transcendental artists. Both borrow aspects of the style, but their own priorities lie elsewhere. The true transcendental filmmaker is aware that the desired effect can only be achieved through the careful progression from the familiar world to another reality. This is discussed later in the chapter.

[5] This observation applies equally to the school of young 'Tarkovskian' filmmakers which has grown up since Tarkovsky's death. Indeed, the films of such directors as Aleksandr Sokurov, Konstantin Lopushansky and Aleksandr Kaidanovsky suggest, if anything, an even greater reliance on transcendental style, and evoke metaphysical concerns in a more overt manner even than Tarkovsky's own films.

[6] This is discussed in Phillippe Parrain, Etudes Cinématographiques 53-56: Dreyer - Cadres et Mouvements (Paris, 1967).

three-line verse (the *haiku*).[7] Bresson's philosophy derives much from his near obsession with Catholic theological dilemmas: from Jansenism, and from the pre-Renaissance tradition of Scholasticism. In aesthetics, Bresson was greatly influenced by Byzantine iconography, whose importance for the director Schrader has described in some detail.[8] Finally, Tarkovsky's films stem from a rich inheritance of Russian spiritual culture and philosophy: they reflect themes and motifs that have preoccupied Russian artists for generations, but which, until Tarkovsky's appearance, found little resonance in contemporary Soviet cinematic culture.

Let us, then, consider the philosophy that underpins the term 'transcendental style' as it applies to cinema, and the critical method that has evolved to describe such films. For Amédée Ayfre, transcendental style is 'a sort of mystical halo which envelops [the film] and which evokes a whole world of sentiments, and which brings to it, as it were, a certain profundity'.[9] Citing the art critic Etienne Souriau, Ayfre continues: 'It is, if you like, the feeling of vague mystery, of a secret which is presented to us enigmatically ... [This, then, is] transcendence, whose indubitable presence one senses in any work or art worthy of the name'.[10] Schrader's approach centres on two premises: that there exist artistic hierophanies (expressions of the

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[7] See Tom Milne, 'Flavour of Green Tea over Rice', Sight and Sound, 32 (Autumn 1963), 182-186.

[8] See Schrader, pp.98-105.

[9] Amédée Ayfre 'Cinéma et transcendence', in Le Cinéma et le sacré, edited by Henri Agel and Amédée Ayfre (Paris, 1961), pp.151-176 (pp.152-153).

[10] ibid., p.153.

transcendent) in film; and that similar methods and techniques are employed in divergent cultures, resulting in a common style in film. Schrader held that all directors committed to the technique shared one, overriding aim: to eschew 'all conventional interpretations of reality: realism, naturalism, psychologism, romanticism, expressionism, impressionism, and, finally, rationalism'.[11]

Both Ayfre and Schrader, correspondingly, find it helpful to define transcendental style less in terms of what it is, than what it is not. Most films contain conventional means of conveying their purpose: plot, acting, characterization, narrative, camerawork and editing all assist the viewer in 'understanding' the film. Transcendental style involves the elimination, or paring to a minimum, of such techniques. The viewer is compelled to seek meaning elsewhere, to devise a means of interpreting the film that does not draw upon conventional cinematic perceptions of reality. In essence, the aim of this process does not differ from that of classic sacred art: to awake in the viewer an awareness of the ineffable, and of the possibility of transcending the immanent. Such films also emulate older art forms in the priority they extend towards what can broadly be termed the 'irrational': if most films seek to avoid boredom by constant change and variation, transcendental films delight in repetition and slowness. Similar imperatives place the pantheistic or theocratic over the humanistic; the sacred over the profane; and tradition over experiment.

Such is the intellectual basis of transcendental style in film. But such critics as Ayfre, Agel, Bazaine, Schrader and others have also elaborated a precise, formalistic,

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[11] Schrader, p.10.

critical method according to which transcendental style can be recognized. They have also devised their own critical vocabulary in order to define more perfectly the various stages of transcendental style. We will consider each term in turn.

The Everyday (*le quotidien*) as a critical term appears to have been first used by the painter Jean Bazaine.[12] It has since been adopted by all of the critics named above. The everyday, in this context, is the detailed depiction of the daily banalities of life, or what Schrader terms the 'meticulous representation of the dull, banal commonplaces of everyday living'.[13] For some filmmakers, the exclusive use of the everyday may be termed 'realism'; for the transcendental director, however, it is no more than a prelude to the moment when ordinary reality is transcended.

In conveying the everyday, many transcendental directors have drawn upon the aesthetic of the documentary film. Dovzhenko was typical in this respect, and borrowed many documentary techniques, including the use of actual locations, of non-actors, 'realistic' soundtracks and detailed close-ups. The documentary film style was important to Dovzhenko, and is frequently alluded to in his theoretical writings. Referring to his film Michurin (1947), he wrote: 'I want to make Michurin in the documentary style. I want the film to appear to the viewer as if noone had made it, as if it had not been shot and as if no actors feature in it'.[14] The effect of his

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[12] See Jean Bazaine, Notes sur la peinture d'aujourd'hui (Paris, 1948).

[13] Schrader, p.39.

[14] Cited in Boris Tarasenko, 'Rol' kinodokumentalista ogromna', in Uroki Aleksandra Dovzhenko, edited by Boris Tarasenko and Nonna Kapelgorodskaya (Kiev, 1982), pp.108-113 (p.109).

approach, he concluded, was 'the creation of a more vivid and precise vision of the world and of objects'.[15] Above all, Dovzhenko's style involved the meticulous depiction of detail, the laboured concentration on tiny events, trivial sounds and everyday objects. Many passages in Earth (1930) - the apple trees, horses, mud, funeral procession, the homes and lifestyles of Ukrainian peasants - are rendered in such detail. Other films - Ivan (1932), Arsenal (1929), Shchors (1939) - contain scenes equally compelling and lyrical: the everyday becomes the substance out of which the higher purpose of the film eventually makes itself known.

Bresson was referring to realism of this sort when he wrote: 'The supernatural in film is only the real rendered more precise. Real things seen close up'.[16] Bresson's own films (and for the same reason) contain a similar concentration on everyday reality. In conveying the everyday, the documentary style was as profoundly important to Bresson as it was to Dovzhenko. The style is particularly evident in Bresson's 'prison-cycle' films: Diary of a Country Priest (1950), A Man Escaped (1956), Pickpocket (1959) and The Trial of Joan of Arc (1961). More generally, these same films provide the best examples of Bresson's use of transcendental style. In common with Dovzhenko, Bresson conveys the everyday through a precise choice of details, objects, sounds and situations. He also favoured actual locations, non-acting (and non-actors) and 'realistic' sound track. As Schrader has observed: 'Bresson's "reality" is a celebration of the trivial: sounds, a door creaking, a bird chirping, a

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[15] ibid., p.110.

[16] Cited in James Blue, Excerpts from an Interview with Robert Bresson (Los Angeles, 1965), p.2.

wheel turning, static views, ordinary scenery, blank faces'.[17] In the case of A Man Escaped Bresson's pursuit of 'documentary truth' required a cast composed entirely of non-actors (the lead role is played by a philosophy student), and the use of Montluc Fort, Lyons, where the actual events portrayed in the film took place. Once again, this concentration on detail proves to be careful and deliberate preparation for a deeper experience of the film, for some future 'hierophany'. One critic has described the effect of A Man Escaped in the following terms:

> Every detail, when examined, proves to have its clear and deliberate place in the aesthetic system of the whole; nothing happens by accident, or without a specific effect in view. Every sound on the beautifully composed sound-track, for instance, whether something as apparently casual as a distant train-whistle or the clatter of a street-car outside the walls or as complex in its implications as the sections of the Mozart Mass has its own part to play, reminding us of the world outside, life going on, or separating us from the immediate realities of the situation and enforcing a degree of philosophical endistancement which enables us to judge the action *sub specie aeternitatis*.[18]

Bresson's concern to depict the everyday, it should be emphasized, is not motivated by a desire to evoke 'real life': realism in Bresson is not simply realism, but a stepping-stone to a wider, transcendental, effect. Bresson, indeed, had little regard for realism in which this higher purpose was absent: the contrived, artificial events which are presented as 'real life' in most films held no appeal. Bresson went to great lengths to eliminate the effects (he uses the word 'screens') that most

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[17] Schrader, p.63.

[18] John R. Taylor, Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear (London, 1964), pp.132-133.

directors employ to convey 'reality', namely acting, plot, camerawork, editing and music. Bresson increasingly attempted to eliminate plot. It provided a simplistic relationship, based on suspense, between viewer and event, which destroyed any spontaneous appreciation of individual images, as well as the interior drama affecting the hero. Acting, like plot, was '... for the theatre, which is a bastard art'.[19] Acting was 'psychological', relying on the actor's interpretation of the character he plays, an interpretation Bresson considered inherently simplistic, and incapable of doing justice to the complexity and the interior world of the character. Instead, Bresson instructed his actors in non-expressiveness: the actor's will was completely subordinated to that of the director, and the former was given neither an explanation of the central idea of the film, nor of the personality of the character he is playing. Self-expression is replaced by automatic movement, and by submission to the will of the director. Actors, and others involved in the film, are not collaborators, but are relegated to the status of tools to be used by the director. Bresson wrote: 'Films can be made only by by-passing the will of those who appear in them, using not what they do but what they are'.[20]

The same ascetic principle governed Bresson's camerawork, which is normally confined to a single composition or angle: a static frontal shot, normally with the camera at the chest level of a standing person, into which the character enters, remains for a time, and then leaves. Like other aspects of Bresson's work, his essentially static camerawork gives no 'clue' as to the overall meaning or emphasis

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[19] Cited in Taylor, p.116.

[20] ibid.

of the scene: the viewer is able to appreciate the necessity and even beauty of the composition, but is left with a lingering feeling that much is left unsaid, and that its true importance lies elsewhere. Schrader has written the following on this aspect of Bresson's technique:

> Any possible shot - high angle, close-up, pan - conveys a certain attitude towards a character, a 'screen' which simplifies and interprets the character. Camera angles and pictorial composition, like music, are extremely insidious screens: they can undermine a scene without the viewer's being aware of it. A slow zoom-out or a vertical composition can substantially alter the meaning of the action within a scene. [...]
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> Like all of Bresson's 'everyday' techniques, his camerawork postpones emotional involvement; at this stage the viewer 'accepts' Bresson's static compositions, yet is unable to understand their full purpose.[21]

Editing in Bresson is similarly unostentatious. Much of Bressonian cinema tends to comprise static, medium-to-long shots (often of people talking), in which the apparent absence of editorial judgement does not interfere with the viewer's own ability to 'interpret' the scene. The result is twofold: each scene (and the film as a whole) is devoid of emotional climax (Bresson considered that emotional or sentimental involvement ran counter to the essential spiritual purpose of his films); and the emphasis is placed not on the relationship between shots or scenes (in effect, the plot, which was anathema to Bresson), but on the integrity of each image, and on the artistic power of the film as a whole. As he wrote of Un condamné à mort s'est échappé: 'The shooting script consists of 600 shots, but there are no sequences; the

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[21] Schrader, pp.67-68.

whole film is one long sequence'.[22]

Bresson's soundtrack is among his most effective and subtle means of conveying the 'everyday'. Sound in Bresson is invariably confined to simple, 'documentary' (often natural) sounds: birds singing, wind blowing, dogs barking, a distant train whistle or church bell. Bresson held that the ear was more creative than the eye and allowed for greater freedom of imaginative effort on the part of the audience. As Schrader has commented: 'These minute sounds can create a sense of everyday life that the camera cannot. These "close-up" sounds are like the close-up shots of Michel's hands in Pickpocket: they establish a great concern for the minutiae of life'.[23] Music, by contrast, forms no part of Bresson's 'everyday': with its profound emotional potential it is an element of transformation, and is reserved for a higher stage of transcendental style.

Much of what has been said in relation to Bresson's approach to the everyday can also be applied to the cinema of Yasujiro Ozu and (to a far lesser degree) Carl Dreyer and a small number of other directors. Each aspect of Ozu's film-making - plot, acting, camerawork, editing and sound - suggests that his rendering of the everyday was conceived within the same restrictive criteria employed by Bresson. Like Bresson, Ozu has an intense antipathy towards plot:[24] ostensibly his films concern

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[22] Cited in Taylor, p.130.

[23] Schrader, p.69.

[24] A feeling exemplified in the following remark by the director: 'Pictures with obvious plots bore me now. Naturally, a film must have some kind of structure or else it is not a film, but I feel that a picture isn't good if it has too much drama or

the disintegration of family relationships, the estrangement of parents and children, in post-war Japan. Frequently, such disintegration is expressed in terms of father-daughter or mother-daughter conflicts, as was the case in Ozu's best-known films, Late Spring (1949), Late Autumn (1961), An Autumn Afternoon (1962) and Tokyo Twilight (1957). Yet, as will be seen later, these rather uneventful situations - which are remarkably similar in each film, and which even feature the same group of actors - were merely a pretext which allowed Ozu to introduce into cinema traditional Japanese thought and art, and, above all, the culture of Zen.

Ozu's approach to acting is similar to Bresson's: no explanation is given to the actor in terms of the 'meaning' of the film, or directions concerning which emotions are to be conveyed; all expression is to be eliminated from the actor's performance; and repeated rehearsals held to wear down any lingering self-expression, and replace it with routine, automatic movements. As Ozu explained: 'It's very easy... to show emotion in drama: the actors cry or laugh and this conveys sad or happy feelings to the audience. But this is mere explanation. Can we really portray a man's personality and dignity by appealing to emotions? I want to make people feel what life is like without delineating dramatic ups and downs'.[25]

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action'. Cited in Donald Richie, 'The Later Films of Yasugiro Ozu', Film Quarterly, 13 (Autumn 1959), 18-25 (p.21).

[25] Cited in Schrader, p.66. In his later films Carl Dreyer would also seek to diminish as far as possible expressionism on the part of his actors. In casting, the important thing was not the skill of the actor, but his 'essential' quality. As one critic has observed '[In Dreyer] inexperienced actors, amateurs, worn old faces [were] all chosen for their presence (their "mental resemblance", Dreyer has called it) and ability to merge with the atmosphere, setting and story, rather than for their proven acting ability'. Tom Milne, The Cinema of Carl Dreyer (New York, 1971), p.26.

Camerawork in Ozu similarly reflects the director's minimalist approach to his work: almost every shot is from the same height (normally this is of a person in the seated *tatami* position); the composition (as in Bresson) is frequently frontal, normally involving at least one person facing the camera; and the camera is static. This is particularly evident in Ozu's later films, where the camera almost never moves (use of the tracking shot was abandoned early in his career), and where there are no panning or zoom shots. Ozu's editing is equally ascetic: regular, logical cuts which do not interrupt the flow of a scene, but confer steadiness and rhythm. The soundtrack in Ozu appears to have been as carefully conceived as in Bresson's films: sparing, deliberate sounds (factory whistle, train sounds) in a precise context which bring a peculiar importance to the accompanying visual references; as in Bresson, music is used only during decisive action. Above all, Ozu values silence: the many silences in his films give added meaning and import to the (relatively few) sounds and dialogue. Unquestionably, the positive meaning which Zen attributes to emptiness, stillness and silence is at the heart of Ozu's meaningful and active use of such ingredients.

In the cinema of Dovzhenko, Bresson and Ozu the everyday is conveyed by techniques which reveal a remarkable consistency in the purpose and sensibility of those artists. In each, the everyday is the prelude to a moment of truth, of 'transcendence'; the asceticism of the everyday, the lack of emotion, of expressiveness, denies the viewer the ability to pass moral or emotional judgement on what he has seen. A sense of unease is created, the interested viewer realizes that there is more than the everyday, and the ground is laid for an understanding of the

next level of transcendental style: disparity.

Disparity

If the qualities associated with the everyday are coldness, asceticism and restraint, then 'disparity' begins by the director attempting to introduce a degree of emotion to the film by attributing to one or more characters a moral or spiritual quality. Against the unfeeling environment that has hitherto been presented, the viewer gradually perceives a sense of growing discord. Disparity is a quality chiefly associated with the personality of the film's protagonist(s): the viewer perceives the growing estrangement between the character and his environment until, at a decisive moment, the spiritual motivations of the strategy are revealed.

Many techniques are employed by the above-named directors to convey disparity. However, Bresson's main films provide sufficient illustration of the concept, and also suggest the most plausible analogies with Tarkovsky's work. In Bresson's films the alienation between his main characters and their immediate environment is the root cause of disparity. Bresson's heroes are often frail, otherwordly, introverted and obsessive individuals, who see their earthly lives merely as a metaphor for a greater passion: the 'holy agony'. They are the 'fools in Christ' whose contempt for human reasoning and knowledge is sanctioned by St Paul:

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
(I Corinthians 1. 19).

For ye see your calling, brethren, now that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called:
But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.
(I Corinthians 1. 26-27).

The hero of Bresson's The Trial of Joan of Arc exemplifies this type. The film, based entirely on transcripts of Joan of Arc's trial, describes a woman who appears completely indifferent to her certain, violent end. Such an image seems at odds with the atmosphere created by the brutality and corruption of her accusors, and by the effects of the everyday. As Schrader has observed: 'It is a shock when Joan of Arc answers her corrupt inquisitors with sincerity, forthrightness, honesty, and complete disregard for her personal safety - she is not responding to her environment in a 1:1 ratio. She answers her judges as if she were instead speaking to her mysterious, transcendental "voices".'[26]

If martyrdom is the appropriate vehicle for Joan's passion, obsessiveness is no less evident in A Man Escaped and Pickpocket. In the former, Fontaine's overwhelming desire to escape from prison is the focus of the film: in the latter Michel's obsessive pickpocketing has the same function. ('Some men are above the law' he confides to a police inspector). Both of these worldly passions, though, are simply the metaphors which express the natural struggle and spiritual 'passion' of the

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[26] Schrader, p.77.

protagonists. The alienation of the 'fool in Christ' is most perfectly expressed in Bresson's Diary of a Country Priest. The film describes the experiences of a young priest who arrives at his first parish to be confronted by apparently antagonistic and spiteful parishioners. His physical sickness and increasing social alienation from the villagers seems to mirror his spiritual struggle,[27] which the priest in a revealing passage compares to the Passion of Christ.

> The fact is that the Mount of Olives was where I always found myself. Now, through the voice of my old master, Our Lord had blessed me with the knowledge of my chosen place ... a prisoner of Christ's agony.

The priest, like Joan, can understand his alienation from his surroundings only in terms of the Way of the Cross: his burden is one of spiritual acceptance, which he cannot fully comprehend, but nevertheless accepts as a demonstration of grace. His physical and spiritual worlds lead ineluctably to his early death (martyrdom, in his terms), a traumatic event which, once again, the viewer has not been prepared for within the terms of the everyday.

The priest's death marks the final stage of disparity: a decisive action which should represent what Bresson calls a 'moment of transformation' in the viewer's perception of the film. This is often an incredible event which completely overturns the bland effects of the everyday, and (usually to a musical accompaniment) instead demands a sudden emotional commitment from the viewer. In A Man Escaped it is

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[27] The three levels of the priest's alienation - *sickness, social solitude* and *sacred solitude* - have been described in some detail by Jean Sémolué in his book Bresson (Paris, 1959), p.69.

Fontaine's remarkable escape; in Pickpocket, the unfeeling Michel's sudden expression of love for Jeanne, a family friend who comes to visit him in prison. In The Trial of Joan of Arc the decisive event is Joan's martyrdom. The powerful effect of this scene, and the 'moment of transformation' it should evoke in the viewer, has been described by Ayfre:

> The images of the bonfire which end the film express with a simplicity and beauty rarely seen in any other sacred art form the attainment, through death, of eternal life. The body ... disappears into the sky, and only a half-burnt stake remains to mark one of those mysterious points where history occasionally collides with eternity.[28]

The impact of the 'decisive action' on the viewer is critical to his acceptance or rejection of the film as a whole. It requires an emotional commitment to enter into Bresson's 'moment of transformation': but once this is given, the viewer has also accepted the director's logic, including the latter's contempt for human reasoning, and is prepared for the third and final stage of transcendental style.

Disparity, in conclusion, is a vital step in the realization of transcendental style. Its purpose is to produce in the viewer a sense of unease, a feeling that there is more than one dimension to images which hitherto have stressed only the ordinariness and banality of everyday life, and refused him any possibility of emotional involvement. Disparity relieves this by introducing otherwordly, saintly characters into the narrative. These are normally considered 'mad' by their peers, yet this madness (the

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[28] Amédée Ayfre, Conversion aux images?: 1) Les images et Dieu, 2) Les images et l'homme (Paris, 1964), p.271.

director infers) is merely disguised divinity. The twin tensions of the everyday and disparity inevitably result in a 'decisive action' whose acceptance by the viewer is normally rendered easier by the accompanying sounds of classical music. As Bresson wrote: 'Music can transport us into a region that is no longer simply terrestrial, but rather cosmic, I would even say divine'.[29] The final stage of that journey is conveyed by 'stasis'.

Stasis

'Stasis', or frozen motion, is the quiescent image or scene which marks the final stage of transcendental style and closes the film. It is often a still view of nature which (in some directors) carries pantheistic suggestions of the 'all-unity' of existence. An emphasis on all-unity is particularly evident in the codas of Ozu's films: the slow silent sequence of a river which ends Tokyo Story (1953); or the mountain at the conclusion of Late Autumn. Ozu's Late Spring contains perhaps one of the finest examples of stasis: the lengthy shot of a vase in the darkened room which marks the end of the film. Schrader has described it in the following terms:

> The father and daughter are preparing to spend their last night under the same roof; she will soon be married. They talk calmly about what a nice day they had, as if it were any other day. The room is dark; the daughter asks a question of the father, but gets no answer. There is a shot of the father asleep, a shot of the daughter looking at him, a shot of the vase in the alcove and over it the sound of the father snoring. Then

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[29] Cited in Leo Murray, 'Un condamné à mort s'est echappé', in The Films of Robert Bresson, edited by Ian Cameron (London, 1969), pp.68-89 (p.79).

there is a shot of the daughter half-smiling, then a lengthy, ten-second shot of the vase again, and a return to the daughter now almost in tears, and a final return to the vase. The vase is stasis, a form which can accept deep contradictory emotion and transform it into an expression of something unified, permanent, transcendent.[30]

Stasis in Ozu clearly owes much to a culture (Zen) in which inner harmony and the harmony between man and his environment are the cardinal virtues. In stasis, ideally the earlier conflict is resolved and man is again at one with nature and with himself. In Bresson, similarly, stasis should suggest an 'invisible world' or, what the director in his writings has termed, 'an invisible hand'.[31] Though Bresson never refers directly to the 'Absolute' or the transcendent, his belief in God's mysterious presence on Earth ('The wind bloweth where it listeth') is at the heart of his work as a filmmaker, and the codas of his films are intended as the most forceful expressions of this conviction. In The Trial of Joan of Arc the final silent image - the lengthy shot of the charred stake - becomes the spiritual expression of Joan's suffering and self-sacrifice. In Diary of a Country Priest, the closing shot of the shadow of a crucifix, together with the priest's final words ('All is grace') has the same function; in A Man Escaped stasis is conveyed by the long shot of a darkened street, with Fontaine and Jost disappearing into the distance after their escape from Montluc Fort; Pickpocket ends with an image of Michel's face through the prison bars; in his final words to Jeanne, who has come to symbolize spiritual reality, is revealed Michel's acceptance of God and of grace, and he tells her: 'How long has it taken me to come

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[30] Schrader, pp.49-51.

[31] Cited in Conversion aux images?, p.270.

to you'.

In any successful appeal to transcendental style, the viewer comes to accept its three stages: the everyday, disparity and stasis, and, in consequence, to feel that his experience has provoked an awareness (even if transitory) of the divine. But the critical method outlined above (or any method) can pursue the 'why' of aesthetic appreciation only imperfectly; the precise process by which this occurs in any individual's appreciation of spiritual art must of necessity remain mysterious. Much clearly depends on his own spiritual and aesthetic sensibility as well as his suscepibility in the face of an essentially mystical reality. Equally important is the degree of empathy the viewer has with the main thesis of the film (however understood), and his ability to share and comprehend the culture of which it is part. These, though, are problems common to any work of religious art.[32] In cinema there are many forms of 'religious film': however, the task of conveying a spiritual reality, it can legitimately be claimed, is performed with greatest effect by the stages of transcendental style in general, and the films of Ozu and Bresson in particular.

Conclusion

Thus far this chapter has sought to outline the chief characteristics of a film style that contains much of value for any appraisal of the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky.

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[32] There is no room here to deal with the wider issues relating to the human experience of religious art, a subject which has been dealt with exhaustively elsewhere. Gerardus van der Leeuw's Sacred and Profane Beauty: the Holy in Art, translated by David Green (London, 1963), and John Dewey's Art as Experience (London, 1934) are particularly helpful.

Little mention has been made of the respective *cultures* that provided the inspiration for the films mentioned. Yet Zen and European Christianity are central to the purpose of both directors: Bresson's work stands in the didactic Judeo-Christian tradition of a simple redeemer - Moses, Christ, the saints and mystics - whose battle against adversity becomes an example to lesser mortals. Ozu's protagonists (and there can be several heroes in any one of his films) face an internal struggle to achieve harmony and participate in the transcendent. Important though these traditions are for Bresson and Ozu, there can be no space here to deal with an area to which a considerable body of literature has already been devoted. For our purposes, the significance of Bresson and Ozu lies in their apparent reliance in a common *style* to convey quite divergent cultural and religious priorities. The extent to which the same stylistic parameters successfully contain the spiritual culture of Tarkovsky's Russia will be the focus of Section Two.

Finally, the balance between the disparate elements of transcendental style, as with any religious art form, will largely determine the success or failure of the film as a work of art. An important section of Schrader's book is devoted to this question, and the author finds it helpful to refer to the critical method first outlined by Jacques Maritain in Religion and Culture (New York, 1930). Maritain discerns two quite distinct 'means' (*moyens*) at work in any religious work of art. The first of these he terms *moyens temporels riches*, which Schrader translates as 'abundant means'. This refers to the necessary, physical, sensual and practical aspect of a work of art: the subsidiary characters or the background, for instance, in a painting or icon. The second is *moyens temporels pauvres* ('sparse means') the 'proper means of wisdom'

beloved of the poet and philosopher, whose only purpose is the elevation of the spirit: the central character and gold leaf of an icon, for example. Schrader wrote:

> The artist who wishes to express the Transcendent cannot neglect either the abundant or the sparse means, but he must know their priority. The abundant means must serve to sustain the sparse means, the sparse must yield to a spiritual awareness. [...] The ratio of abundant and sparse means can be a measure of the 'spirituality' of a work of art. The more a work of art can successfully incorporate sparse means within an abundant society, the nearer it approaches its transcendental 'end'.[33]

It follows from this that entirely non-spiritual works of art can rely wholly on 'abundant means', and, at the other extreme, an artist like Kandinsky could effectively ignore the everyday and the recognisable ('abundant means'), and devote himself exclusively to an exploration of 'sparse means'.

In cinema the inherent 'realism' of the medium means that such an extreme approach is less practical, though there are of course films which dispense entirely with the everyday, and attempt to achieve instant 'stasis'. Warhol's Empire (1964) or Michael Snow's Wavelength (1966-71) come into this category, and both include lengthy, uninterrupted shots of a single subject.

Such films, in denying the crucial element of *progression* from abundant to sparse means (or, within the framework previously described, from the everyday to stasis) cannot be considered successful in terms of transcendental style. The antithesis of the 'stasis film' - the conventional

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[33] Schrader, p.155.

'religious film' - often completely eschews the value of sparse means to concentrate, often in a somewhat spectacular manner, on the more sensual attractions of the everyday.[34] These films, of course, are equally alien to transcendental style, and rely for effect solely on the familiar, cinematic 'everyday', including narrative, character empathy, special effects, setting and acting.

This section has argued that it is possible to define transcendental style within a set of precise conditions. Let us now examine how far the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky can be considered representative of that particular tradition of spiritual films.

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[34] Schrader, in his book, takes a delight in exposing some of the cinematic chicanery employed by such filmmakers as De Mille in films like The Ten Commandments. Films of this sort, he contends, are simply an appeal to sentimentality and vague 'holy feelings'. The directors of these films, he concludes, may well be able 'to make an ardent atheist sympathize with the trials and agonies of Christ. But he has not lifted the viewer to Christ's level, he has brought Christ down to the viewer's'. Schrader, p.164.

Section Two

To those familiar with the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, the extent to which his work appears to operate within the restrictive parameters of transcendental style as described in Section One will be apparent. The coincidence of views (as expressed in many critical articles and books) between the Russian director and his counterparts in Europe and Japan is most striking in two particular areas: they all share a remarkably similar worldview or philosophy of life, encompassing a deeply held belief in religious art, and in their own national spiritual culture; and they also share a conviction that in the modern world cinema is most favourably placed to build on its antecedents in other branches of religious art, and that this object is best achieved by adhering to a certain rigid, and formalistic, cinematic style.

In his writings Tarkovsky makes frequent reference to a small group of directors whom he regards as sympathetic to this approach. He does not use the term 'transcendental style' (which, in any case, is a critical expression that would have been equally unfamiliar to Bresson or Ozu), but it is clear from his choice of filmmakers that a 'spiritual style' is what he has in mind:

> In cinema there are basically two categories of directors. One consists of those who seek to imitate the world in which they live, the other of those who seek to create their own world. The second category contains the poets of the cinema: Bresson, Dovzhenko, Mizoguchi, Bergman, Bunuel and

Kurosawa, the cinema's most important names.[35]

It is equally clear from the context of such remarks that Tarkovsky counts himself among the number of these directors, although he would deny direct influence. Significantly, the filmmaker for whom Tarkovsky most repeatedly expresses admiration is the leading practitioner of transcendental style, Robert Bresson,[36] followed closely by Aleksandr Dovzhenko.

> If I appreciate the work of film directors like Alexander Dovzhenko, Ermanno Olmi and Robert Bresson, it is because I am attracted by the simple and ascetic. I believe these are the qualities art should strive for. And faith.[37]

This is a characteristic attitude of the transcendental filmmaker: each in his own way attempts to instil in the viewer a respect for the values of his own spiritual culture. Above all, he seeks to generate faith in the Transcendent. In this sense Tarkovsky is entirely representative of the tradition outlined above: faith in the ineffable and invisible is an important theme in his films, and is a prominent area of discussion in his critical writings. The conviction that the acquisition of

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[35] Andrei Tarkovski, 'Rencontre avec le public', Positif, 284 (1984), 24-28 (p.25).

[36] It is clear that Tarkovsky's admiration for Bresson centres on the latter's spiritual *style*; the specifics of Bresson's cultural or religious polemic remained a mystery: 'Bresson as a director is a man of rare sensitivity. As a Russian I find his Catholicism incomprehensible, but I'm taken by the *manner* in which he tells his stories'. Cited in Nick Anning and Chris Auty, 'The Confessions of Andrei Tarkovsky', Time Out, 568 (1981), p.10.

[37] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'In Search of Faith and Freedom', The Economist, 14 July 1984, p.90.

faith by the viewer is central to Tarkovsky's purpose is the main thesis of one of the most useful studies of the director's work to date. In Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski, Professors Kovàcs and Szilàgyi argue that Tarkovsky's work, in the best traditions of metaphysical art, seeks primarily to induce faith in a transcendental reality, in 'another world', the suggestion of which is attained by a consistent 'poetic logic' in each of his films. Referring, for instance, to Stalker, Kovàcs and Szilàgyi made the following observation:

> The events of the film have a logical connection only if the viewer can imagine that the functioning of the Zone gives them meaning. If not, the film becomes incomprehensible. In order to imagine this the viewer must believe in the invisible functioning of the Zone, of which he has no proof. The acquisition of this faith is the sensation which characterizes Tarkovsky's films. The world of action contains an 'other', 'transcendent' world which is always indicated by certain elements of the visible world. The presence of this world is the sensation which binds the structure of all his films - if it fills the spectator.[38]

In general terms, one can claim that Tarkovsky's approach to art is consistent with the transcendental tradition of filmmaking outlined in Section One.

Tarkovsky's great love of Zen culture[39] provides an obvious link with Ozu, and

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[38] Bàlint Andràs Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andrei Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), pp.40-41.

[39] Tarkovsky was familiar with the *haiku* in Russian translation (by Markovna), a version which he describes as 'very mediocre' in Time Within Time: The Diaries, p.153. In the same entry he announces his intention to read Basho in the Japanese original.Tarkovsky's particular fondness for the *haiku* (mentioned twice in his book Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), pp.66 and 106) is evident in his own work as a filmmaker. He wrote: 'The Zen poets ... work to eliminate interpretation, and in the process a parallel is created between the real world and the one the artist creates in his work of art'. Cited in Ian

his appeal to the ancient aesthetic of Russian icon painting[40] is analogous to Bresson's own fascination with (and borrowing from) Byzantine iconography. All of these (culturally diverse) art forms, of course, share common cause in attempting to define a religious reality.

Let us then consider how the specific features of transcendental style, as defined above, are mirrored in Tarkovsky's own films.

The Everyday

The chief characteristic of the everyday is the meticulous representation of the daily banalities of life, and the mysterious concentration on seemingly trivial objects and detail in a manner that bestows an unexpected importance on these things. The exaltation of the everyday object is one of the most consistent features of Tarkovsky's films, and is unquestionably linked to his great interest in painting.[41] In such films as Mirror and Stalker, the most careful and detailed attention is paid to the simplest of objects: in the former, *old* objects, particularly those with a specifically cultural or ancestral resonance (oil-lamp, family mirror,

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Christie et Mark Le Fanu, 'Tarkovski à Londres', Positif, 249 (1981), 24-28 (p.26). The influence of Zen is considered in some more detail in Chapter Four.

[40] The importance of Russian icons to Tarkovsky's work is the subject of Chapter Two.

[41] Tarkovsky's obsession with 'the magic object' and 'the secret soul of things' is discussed in Chapter Three.

books, jug and wash-basin) often convey a sense that these things are important in themselves, and somehow possessed of special meaning. In Stalker the concentration is mainly on *new* objects: in the dream sequence, a pan along a river bed reveals syringes, a revolver, coins and other detritus. Elsewhere in the film, particularly in the Zone, inordinate attention is paid to other emblems of man's obsession with technological progress: rusty machinery, old cars, tanks, telegraph poles. This old-new dialectic, expressed most starkly in the films Mirror and Stalker, is pursued in each of Tarkovsky's films, to the extent that certain objects (as is also the case in the films of Bresson and Ozu) have become familiar icons in the director's cinema-language.

In common with other transcendental directors, Tarkovsky appears to favour a documentary approach in conveying aspects of the everyday. He uses obvious documentary methods: non-expressiveness in acting, non-actors (on occasion), 'live' sounds and actual locations. (The most dramatic example of the latter was the complete reconstruction on its original site at Tuchkovo of the family dacha for Mirror). In one film, Tarkovsky's pursuit of documentary truth led to the dramatic inclusion of actual documentary material (the newsreel film of the Soviet army crossing Lake Sivash in 1943, which features in Mirror). Yet Tarkovsky was aware of the limitations of the documentary style: like Bresson, his aim was not simply 'realism' but an exploration of the *potential* of everyday objects, scenery and events. Interestingly, Mirror was originally to include live interviews with Tarkovsky's mother (filmed surreptitiously), whose perception of the past was to be contrasted with that of the narrator. This approach, though, was deemed too

'realistic', as the director explained:

> I subsequently had to abandon that structure, which would have been too direct and unsubtle, and replace all the proposed interviews with the mother with acted scenes. [...] The two elements carried quite different concentrations of material, different times and time pressures: on the one hand the real, documentary, exact time of the interviews, and on the other the narrator's time in the memories, recreated through acting. And the whole thing was somehow reminiscent of Cinéma-Vérité and Jean Rouch and that was not at all what I wanted.[42]

In this revealing comment is encapsulated Tarkovsky's attitude to realism and the documentary style: the latter could be effective, but should not detract from the non-realistic emotional intensity of the film as a whole. The Lake Sivash newsreel, to the strains of Pergolesi's 'Stabat Mater' and Arsenii Tarkovsky's poem 'Life, Life', is a successful (in Tarkovsky's terms) borrowing from the documentary tradition: it has a powerful, emotional, almost ethereal, quality which fits naturally into the transcendental ethos of the film. As Tarkovsky wrote: 'The boundless perspective of these recorded moments created an effect close to catharsis'.[43]

Equally important in conveying the everyday is the non-expressive approach to acting described in Section One. Here, Tarkovsky's views are broadly comparable with those of other transcendental directors, though there are some inconsis-

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[42] Sculpting in Time, p.129.

[43] ibid., p.131.

tencies.[44] Bresson chose non-actors for most of his important roles; Tarkovsky (with a few exceptions) favoured professionals. Bresson refused to use any actor in more than one film; Tarkovsky (like Ozu) preferred a select group of actors, some of whom featured in as many as five different films.[45] In common with both Bresson and Ozu Tarkovsky chose his actors not for their acting ability, but for their 'essential' quality, for perceived personal characteristics that corresponded to the director's requirements. He wrote:

> The one thing the film actor has to do is express in particular circumstances a psychological state peculiar to him alone, and do so naturally, true to his own emotional and intellectual make-up, and in the form that is right only for him.[46]

Equally reminiscent of Bresson and Ozu is Tarkovsky's conviction that expression should be eliminated from the actor's performance and that no 'hints' or explanations should be given as to the overall 'meaning' of the film or the precise emotions that the actor should convey. In practice, this meant that discussion

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[44] In his lectures at the Moscow Film School (VGIK) Tarkovsky expressed great admiration for Bresson's approach to acting, whose chief virtue (he felt) was 'non-expressiveness'. In the unpublished notes on which these lectures are based, Bresson's view's on acting are examined in some detail, and are clearly presented as definitive. See Andrei Tarkovsky, Lektsii po kinorezhissure, edited by Konstantin Lopushansky (Moscow, 1981) pp.104-106.

[45] Nikolai Grinko, for instance, who features in all of Tarkovsky's films from Ivan's Childhood to Stalker. Tarkovsky's favourite actor was Anatolii Solonitsyn, who played Andrei Rublev, Doctor Solov'ev (Mirror), and the Writer (Stalker). Five other actors have important roles in more than one film: Yurii Nazarov (Andrei Rublev, Mirror), Oleg Yankovsky (Mirror, Nostalgia), Irma Rausch (Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev), Kolya Burlyaev (Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev) and Erland Josephson (Nostalgia, Sacrifice).

[46] Sculpting in Time, p.141.

between Tarkovsky and his actors often remained at a superficial level, causing resentment among those whose analytical approach to the profession had evolved over many years of involvement with the theatre.[47] Donatas Banionis, for instance, who played Kris Kelvin in Solaris, later provided the following insight into his own working relationship with Tarkovsky:

> The work turned out to be extremely complicated and, for me, an actor of the psychological school, unusual. I must honestly say that I did not always understand what the director said. Tarkovsky explained himself in uncommon categories of causality and images - sometimes even unrelated to particular sequences or the film as a whole. When he was seeking spiritual contact with an actor, he did not use traditional psychology, but the medium of feelings.[48]

Tarkovsky was fond of citing René Clair's famous remark: 'I don't work with actors, I pay them'.[49] His preferred actors, correspondingly, were those who did not ask questions, had an emotional bond with the character they were playing, and exuded an almost child-like trust in the director. In common with Bresson and Ozu, Tarkovsky had his own means of reducing 'expressiveness' on the part of his actors: scenes were rarely rehearsed; shooting would often take place at the end of

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[47] A problem compounded by the highly intellectual approach to acting that obtained in Soviet theatre, in great part due to the influence of Stanislavsky.

[48] Donatas Banionis, 'Priobshchenie k nevedomomu', in O Tarkovskom, edited by Marina Tarkovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp.131-139 (p.133).

[49] See, for instance, Sculpting in Time, p.145.

a working day, when the actor was too exhausted to perform; and his players were continually exhorted to 'stop acting'.[50] Tarkovsky, apparently, regarded Bresson's Diary of a Country Priest (by all accounts the Russian director's best-loved film) as the perfect model for this technique[51] and, in one of his most revealing statements on the subject of acting, virtually paraphrases Bresson's own views:

> When I am making a film I try not to wear down the actors with discussion, and am adamant that the actor should not connect any piece he plays with the whole, sometimes not even to his own immediately preceding and following scenes. In the scene in Mirror, for instance, where the heroine is waiting for her husband, her children's father, sitting on the fence and taking puffs of a cigarette. I preferred Margarita Terekhova not to know whether he would ever come back to her. The story was kept secret from her so that she would not react to it at some unconscious level of her mind, but would live through that moment exactly as my mother, her prototype, had once lived through it, with no foreknowledge of how her life would turn out. There is no doubt that her behaviour in this scene would have been different had she known what her relationship with her husband was to be in the future; not merely different, but

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[50] According to Natal'ya Bondarchuk, 'Vstrechi na "Solyarise",' in O Tarkovskom, pp.140-162 (p.147).

[51] See Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Menya bol'she vsego udivlyaet', in Mir i fil'my Andreya Tarkovskogo: razmyshleniya, issledovaniya, vospominaniya, pis'ma edited by Anetta M. Sandler (Moscow, 1991), pp.315-319 (p.316). There are, however, wide variations in the performances of actors and actresses in Tarkovsky's films: in the later films, for instance, a tendency towards theatricality is particularly evident. In general it is fair to claim that Tarkovsky did not pursue the goal of non-expressiveness with the same consistency and ruthlessness as Bresson or Ozu. One could add that, at least in terms of acting performances, none of Tarkovsky's films attain the sublimity of Journal d'un curé de campagne.

falsified by what she knew of the sequel.[52]

Tarkovsky would appear to share the antipathy of other transcendental directors towards plot. Only his earliest film, Ivan's Childhood, has anything approaching the manipulation of events commonly understood by the term 'drama'. Even this film, though, represents a considerable simplification of the original prose work (Vladimir Bogomolov's Ivan) in terms of the number and importance of physical 'events'. The focus, rather, is on the internal drama and personal tragedy of the hero, Ivan, a concentration which is assisted by frequent flashbacks, and by the memory and dream sequences, which conspire to downgrade even further the relevance of plot. Andrei Rublev consists of eight episodes and a prologue, which purport to describe the earthly life of Rublev. However, there is no sense of progression between episodes, and each one has an independent existence which (with a few exceptions) neither recalls nor anticipates action in the rest of the film. Rublev plays an entirely passive role throughout: his function is that of witness to terrible and destructive events, and the purpose of the film is to convey his internal, spiritual evolution in the face of that reality. The denial of suspense, which is such an obvious feature in Bresson's films, has an interesting parallel in Andrei Rublev, in the episode entitled 'The Bell' (Kolokol). The boy, Boriska, volunteers to cast the bell, claiming that his father has left him the secret. The bell is cast, successfully, after which the viewer learns that Boriska did not, after all, possess any special knowledge of bell-making. In choosing to impart this information after, rather than before, the dramatic bell casting

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[52] Sculpting in Time, p.141.

sequence (the effect of which is to reduce considerably the suspense of the scene), Tarkovsky echoes Bresson's own characteristic tendency to deny any audience empathy for a character by means of the plot. The viewer, secure in the assumption that Boriska *knows* his craft, contemplates the deeper meaning of this single-minded devotion to express a God-given talent.[53]

Other films - Solaris, Stalker, Nostalgia, Sacrifice - have a similar disregard for recognisable plot-structure. The agenda in all of these films is internal or metaphysical, the leading character invariably a variant or alter ego of Tarkovsky himself (as in Ozu's films, Tarkovsky's heroes tended to reflect the age of the director), the sparse physical events charged with allegorical intent, and the ultimate purpose of the films the exploration of the director's personal philosophical or ethical obsessions. Mirror is a slight variation of this pattern and represents a brief recapitulation of the episodic structure of Andrei Rublev. The sequences are equally unrelated, even to the extent that great difficulty was experienced during the cutting process.[54] The subject of Mirror, and its main theme (anamnesis) also militated against plot; the result is a curious juxtaposition of time scales; a celebration of imagery - arbitrarily chosen, and often of great beauty; and a highly subjective exploration of one man's memory. Tarkovsky wrote:

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[53] Boriska, in Tarkovsky's terms, is 'the true spiritual hero [of Andrei Rublev]. The film aims to show an infectious, frenzied energy emerging from such a troubled epoch: it awakens in Boriska and bursts into flame with the bell'. Cited in Maya Turovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989), p.50.

[54] According to the film's editor, the montage required seven months' work. See Ludmila Feiginova, 'Pyat' fil'mov s Tarkovskim', in O Tarkovskom, pp.260-267 (p.263).

> In my films, the story is never of great importance. The real significance of my works has never been expressed through actions. I try to speak of what is most important, to show things that are not necessarily linked logically. I am seeking a way of showing subjective logic - thoughts, dreams, memory.[55]

Editing is at the core of Tarkovsky's aesthetic, and is one of the most obsessive themes in his critical writings.[56] It is also consistent with the unostentatious, anti-dramatic form of Bresson and Ozu. The Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev wrote that 'the problem of time may well be the fundamental problem of philosophy'.[57] Tarkovsky's preoccupation with time was philosophical, and derived naturally from his essentially metaphysical sensibility, and his conviction that cinema was the only medium that could disturb or even conquer the passage of time and, in the process, create an entirely new aesthetic experience. Other directors were judged on their ability to recognize and manipulate this unique potential:

> In so far as sense of time is germane to the director's innate perception of life, and editing is dictated by the rhythmic pressures in the segments of film, his handwriting is to be seen in his editing. It expresses

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[55] 'In Search of Faith and Freedom', p.90.

[56] There is little sense here in dealing in any detail with Tarkovsky's views on editing and montage, a subject which is set out prolifically in his numerous critical writings. Particularly helpful is his article 'Zapechatlennoe vremya', Iskusstvo kino, 4 (1967), 68-79; as well as Sculpting in Time, pp.113-124. Useful criticism of Tarkovsky's montage technique appears in Turovskaya's chapter 'Space and Time in Tarkovsky's Work', pp.85-93; Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, pp.32-35; and Feiginova, pp.260-267.

[57] Nikolai Berdyaev, Samopoznanie (Paris, 1989), p.42.

his attitude to the conception of the film, and is the ultimate embodiment of his philosophy of life. I think that the film-maker who edits his films easily and in different ways is bound to be superficial. You will always recognise the editing of Bergman, Bresson, Kurosawa or Antonioni; none of them could ever be confused with anyone else, because each one's perception of time, as expressed in the rhythm of his films, is always the same.[58]

Tarkovsky's well-known antipathy to the 'intellectual' montage techniques of Eisenstein has to be seen in this context. Such films as Alexander Nevsky (1938) Tarkovsky considered lacking in rhythm, over-burdened by an excessive number of (short) shots, and devoid of an authentic time sense. Eisenstein's editing was direct and unsubtle, and, above all, did not allow the audience 'to bring personal experience to bear on what is in front of them on film'.[59] Tarkovsky's own style, unsurprisingly, was antithetical to this approach: montage should be restrained, betray a strong sense of rhythm, involve as few shots as possible and, most significantly of all, be organic and natural. 'A film is like a river: the montage should be infinitely spontaneous, like nature itself'.[60]

Many of Tarkovsky's views on editing and time may, as Ian Christie has suggested, derive from André Bazin's essay 'The Ontology of the Photographic

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[58] Sculpting in Time, p.121.

[59] ibid., p.118.

[60] Cited in Michel Ciment, Luda and Jean Schnitzer, 'L'artiste dans l'ancienne Russie et dans l'URSS nouvelle: entretien avec Andrei Tarkovsky', Positif, 109 (1969), 1-13 (p.6). This interview also reveals in some detail Tarkovsky's views on montage in Eisenstein.

Image'. The director's student years and early films coincided with a period (the early 1960s) when basic principles of cinema (particularly montage technique and narrative function) were under challenge, and when Bazin's work first became available in Russia. Most of Tarkovsky's films are marked by long meditative shots, though this is a feature that becomes more marked in his later work. The lengthy entry sequence into the Zone (Stalker), the candle ritual at the end of Nostalgia, and the final shot (of the burning dacha) in Sacrifice are particularly notable. However, one wonders if the director's growing predilection for lengthy shots does not detract from the merits of simplicity which he also held dear, and which is so successful a feature of the cinema of Bresson and Ozu. As Christie observed: '[Tarkovsky's concept of time] may have led him down the dangerous path of "aestheticizing" time by unduly protracting it in his last films'.[61] Christie concludes, however: 'In Ivan's Childhood, Andrey Rublyov and Mirror he succeeded in creating compelling new rhythms by controlling the "flow" of time from shot to shot and through whole sequences'.[62]

Camerawork in Tarkovsky stands in contradistinction to his (otherwise remarkably faithful) adherence to the values of transcendental style. The completely static camerawork of Ozu and Bresson is consistent with their overall thesis that nothing in a film should simplify or interpret a character or event. The films of these directors are correspondingly free of close-ups, panning, high angle

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[61] See Ian Christie, 'Introduction: Tarkovsky in his Time', in Turovskaya, pp.ix-xxvii (p.xxi).

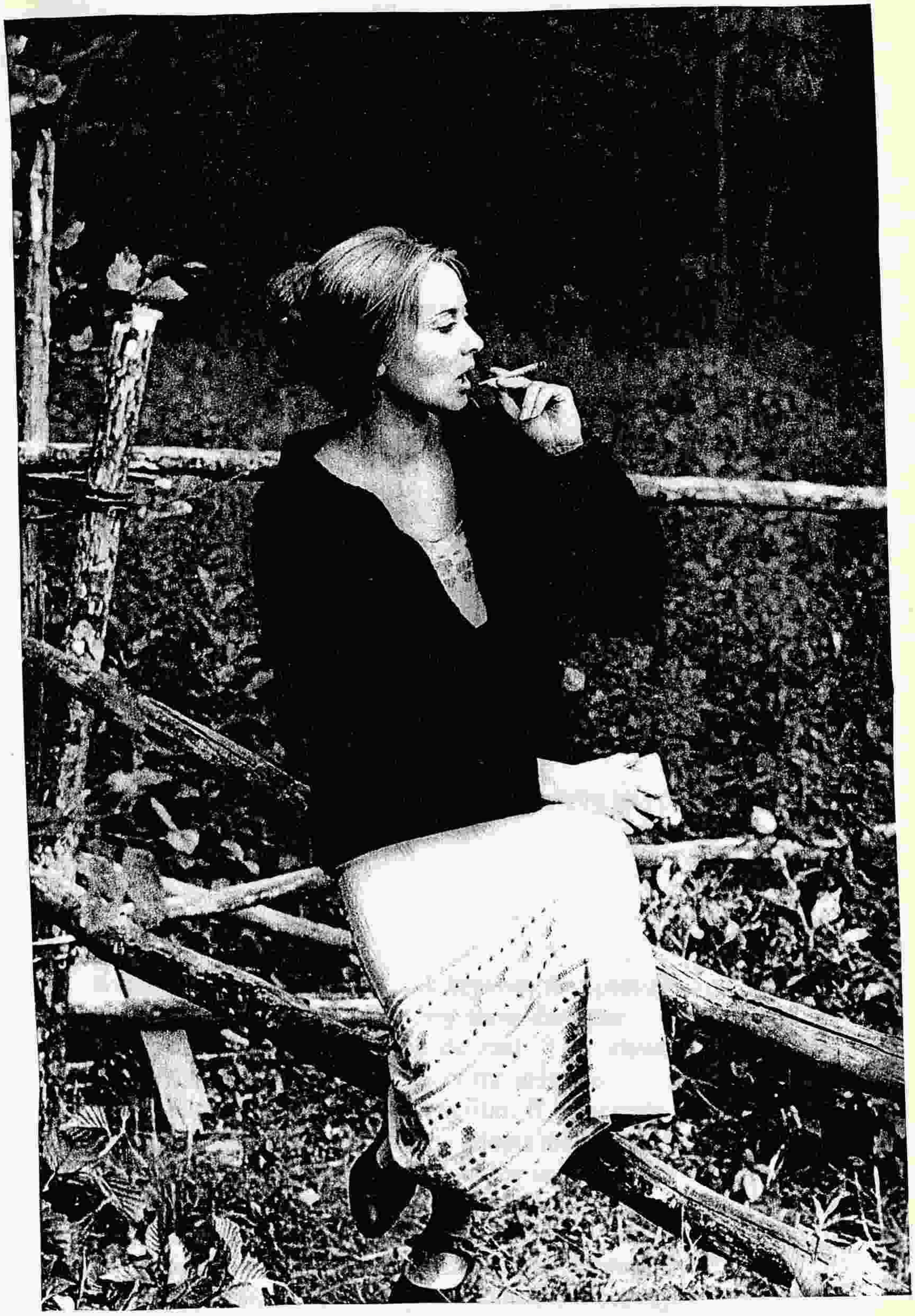
[62] ibid., pp.xxi-xxii.

or any other shots which might add to the camera's editorial prerogative. Russian directors in the great age of montage (Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Eisenstein), whose guiding principle was so antithetical to Tarkovsky's, also, ironically, avoided camera movement, fearing, as one critic has expressed it, that the latter 'tended to remind the spectator of the presence of the camera'.[63] In Tarkovsky, though, the moving camera is central to his aesthetic. Many of the most memorable sequences from his films involve spectacular camerawork, often lengthy pans or high angle shots. Ivan's Childhood begins with a dramatic flight by the camera, as it accompanies Ivan's race down a hill; at the end of the film (Ivan's final dream) a flying camera also follows the boy as he runs into a river. In Andrei Rublev, as Rublev and Theophanes the Greek debate a theological point, the camera leaves the two men and presents us with a series of images of nature; the same moving camera is a feature of Kirill's meeting with Theophanes; later in the film there is a spectacular high angle view of the raid on Vladimir, presented literally from the perspective of a bird. In the opening sequence of Mirror a long tracking shot, beginning in a forest, ends with a shot of a young woman sitting on a fence; at the end of the film the camera retreats into the same forest. In the middle of Mirror the camera follows the same woman as she runs to a print-shop, and then accompanies her through a maze of corridors.[64] Stalker contains a long pan of a

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[63] Ralph Stevenson and Guy Phelps, The Cinema as Art (London, 1989), p.75.

[64] The cumulative effect in Mirror of this persistent attention by a moving camera to a single individual is the creation of an intense empathy for, as well as a feeling of participation in the scene. Tarkovsky attached unusual importance to the concept of audience participation. The effect of the moving camera clearly does suggest to the viewer that he is part of the action: the many examples of the camera 'following' one of the protagonists, or leaving the scene of the action entirely to follow an independent path of its own have become familiar



2. The 'everyday' in Mirror. 'A long tracking shot, beginning in a forest, ends with a shot of a young woman sitting on a fence...'

litter-ridden river bed, accompanied by readings from the Book of Revelations, the music of Artem'ev and an argument between the Writer and Scientist. Nostalgia ends in the long, unbroken tracking shot (one of the longest in cinema) of Gorchakov, as he tries to cross the dried-up pool of St Catherine bearing a lighted candle. Sacrifice has many examples of the moving camera, the most dramatic of which is the final sequence in which we follow Alexander as he prepares for and finally commits his 'sacrifice'.

Camerawork of this sort, though having little in common with transcendental style, does present considerable advantages to a director whose aim throughout was to foster audience participation in his films, as well as to enhance the meditative appeal of individual images. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have suggested, this aspect of Tarkovsky's approach (if no other) can usefully be compared to the cinema of Jean-Luc Godard:

> Both seek to create a direct link between the spectator and the universe of the film: they show the latter from a unique viewpoint [angle de vue]. If the viewer rejects this, he must equally reject the universe described, and remain outside the film. If he accepts [the viewpoint of the camera], he adopts the approach of the film and his relationship with the universe that is conveyed. Thus the film absorbs the viewer and creates a direct rapport between him and the world. In Godard, this method is at the service of ideology and didacticism; in Tarkovsky, by contrast, it conveys

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Tarkovskian trademarks. This is an area of his aesthetic that the director has virtually ignored in his theoretical writings, and it should not be taken as an implied criticism of transcendental style. The link between Russian iconography, participation and the moving camera in Tarkovsky is discussed in Chapter Two.

meditative participation.[65]

Tarkovsky's use of sound corresponds in several important aspects to the approach of Bresson and Ozu. Music is generally confined to occasions of obvious disparity and stasis, though its use is less sparing, and somewhat more indiscriminate.[66] Tarkovsky's attitude to everyday sounds, though, is remarkably faithful to transcendental style. Above all, his recognition of the fundamental importance of the soundtrack in conveying a spiritual reality echoes Bresson's own conviction that 'the eye always leads to the exterior, the ear leads to the interior'.[67] Tarkovsky's films evince a multitude of commonplace, everyday (but carefully chosen) sounds that add enormously to the transcendental effect of his visual narrative. Like Bresson he favoured the use of the simplest and most familiar sounds, which seemed to acquire new meaning in their (often anomalous) settings. Many natural sounds were particularly favoured: moving water in its many forms (dripping from ceilings, poured from jugs, fast moving streams, waterfalls, rainstorms); milk spilling onto a floor; sounds of fire (burning bush, conflagrations); bird sounds; a dog barking in the distance; wind in the trees or bushes, or ruffling the surface of a field; the distant sound of a train whistle. These and many other sounds are conveyed with a remarkable and consistent poetic logic that is quite exceptional in film soundtracks. One senses that in this area Tarkovsky benefited to some extent from the experience of the other *auteur*

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[65] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.36.

[66] Music in Tarkovsky will be discussed at a later stage of this chapter.

[67] Cited in Stevenson and Phelps, p.200.

directors, but endeavoured to pursue his fascination with sound in yet more radical areas. He wrote:

> Bresson is brilliant in his use of sound, so is Antonioni in his trilogy ... But all the same, I have a feeling that there must be other ways of working with sound, ways which would allow one to be more accurate, more true to the inner world which we try to reproduce on screen; not just the author's inner world, but what lies within the world itself, what is essential to it and does not depend on us.[68]

Tarkovsky, it appears, devoted a great deal of time to experiments with sound: widely varying liquids were tested for their acoustic potential; the different sounds given off by burning beech and pine were deemed significant; electronic sounds and music (used in Mirror and Stalker) were now in a position 'to deal not only with cosmic, but also human problems'.[69] Tarkovsky's production assistant and interpreter on the film Sacrifice has given the following assessment of his attitude to sound:

> I know of no other director who uses sound with such care ... and with such insight into the human psyche. Andrei pointed out ... that even on first hearing a sound which to the conscious mind may seem trivial may nevertheless make a deep impression on the viewer - just as deep as anything visual. The trembling of crystal, a coin rolling across the floor, the rustling of pages being turned, the sound of wood being chopped, of feet sinking into clay and rotting leaves ... all these attach themselves to and remain in

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[68] Sculpting in Time, p.159.

[69] Cited in Eduard Artem'ev, 'On byl i vsegda ostanetsya dlya menya tvortsom...', in O Tarkovskom, pp.211-223 (p.222).

the memory of the viewer. 'Sometimes it is sound that defines the visual narrative and not vice versa. A sound effect is more than a simple illustration of what is happening on the screen.

Teach yourself to listen to and hear ... sounds'.[70]

Disparity

The techniques used by Bresson, Ozu and (to an extent) Dreyer in conveying the everyday have many parallels in Tarkovsky's films, though, as we have seen, there are certain differences. An examination of disparity in Tarkovsky (a considerably less complex area) again reveals a remarkable similarity in approach, notwithstanding a certain number of inconsistencies.

The main characteristics of disparity are: the growing alienation of one of the main characters (often a 'holy fool') from his unfeeling environment, occasionally culminating in his martyrdom; a 'decisive action' which acts as a dramatic counter to the asceticism of the everyday; and the (sparing) use of music, usually classical, as an accompaniment to 'decisive moments' which anticipate the final act. The first of these criteria presents little difficulty in relation to Tarkovsky's films: the 'fool-in-Christ' figure is an enduring motif, and is presented in a more consistently tangible form than in Bresson, Ozu or Dreyer. Four films contain clearly

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[70] Layla Alexander, 'Andrei Tarkovsky - Enigma and Mystery', Soviet Film, 7 (1989), 32-36 (p.36).

recognisable fools-in-Christ: Andrei Rublev, Stalker, Nostalgia and Sacrifice. In the three other films, important personages are endowed with at least some of the traits commonly associated with the holy fool in Russia: self-abnegation; performance of heroic acts (*podvigi*);[71] self-sacrifice; disregard for personal appearance; obsessiveness and hysteria.[72] In this appeal to *yurodstvo*[73] (folly in Christ, madness) Tarkovsky evokes one of the most remarkable and enduring phenomena in the Russian tradition. The Russian fool-in-Christ (*yurodivyi*) has had a peculiar resonance in Russian spiritual culture since the fifteenth century, and continues to exercise an important influence on Russian thought and art.[74] The image of the suffering and humiliated Christ, central to the ethos of *yurodstvo*, may also suggest much that is characteristic of the Russian spirit, as Kologrivov has claimed: 'It is possible to conclude that the "yurodivyi", more than any other

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[71] The *podvig* in Russia always contains an ethical or spiritual dimension, and has similar overtones in Tarkovsky. All of his important protagonists are capable of dramatic self-sacrifice for the sake of some higher ideal. He wrote: 'There have never been any heroes in my films (apart perhaps from Ivan) but there have always been people whose strength lies in their spiritual conviction and who take upon themselves a responsibility for others (and this of course includes Ivan).' Sculpting in Time, p.207. In this characteristically Russian posture is evinced the ethos of *podvizhnichestvo*, an attitude that is represented as the cornerstone of Russian spirituality by Stephen Graham, in The Way of Martha and The Way of Mary (London, 1917), especially pp.111-120.

[72] Namely, Ivan (Ivan's Childhood), the inhabitants of the space station Solaris (Solaris), and the doctor (Mirror).

[73] From the Russian *yurod*: something uncommon; Russian *yurodivye* may stem from the similar phenomenon in Byzantium, known in Greek as *salos*.

[74] On the phenomenon of *yurodstvo* see Ioann Kologrivov, 'Yurodivye christa radi', in Ocherki po Istorii Russkoi Svyatosti, edited by Ioann Kologrivov (Brussels, 1961), pp.239-250, as well as Georgii Fetotov, Svyatye drevnei Rusi (Paris, 1931); on the influence of *yurodstvo* on more recent Russian thought see Nadezhda Gorodetzky, The Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought (London, 1938).

religious type, best reflects the characteristic ethnic and spiritual traits of the Russian. The love of Christ and of his cross lives, until his death, in the heart of every Russian...'[75] Tarkovsky wrote the following:

> I am drawn to the man who is ready to serve a higher cause, unwilling - or even unable - to subscribe to the generally accepted tenets of a worldly 'morality'; the man who recognises that the meaning of existence lies above all in the fight against the evil within ourselves, so that in the course of a lifetime he may take at least one step towards spiritual perfection.[76]

Andrei Rublev is the first film in which this theme emerges fully. The hero, Rublev, is aware of his messianic destiny - to preserve the spiritual values of a nation at a time of unparalleled barbarism, and to save 'the people' from spiritual death through his art (an enduring Tarkovskian theme). Rublev's role as saviour and as christological prototype are underlined by the film's original title, The Passion According to Andrei. The suggestion of Rublev's *yurodstvo*, of his 'love of Christ and of his cross', is further emphasized by the crucifixion scene which forms the backdrop to the extended philosophical dialogue between Rublev and Theophanes the Greek.[77] The conversation reveals that, in contradistinction to

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[75] Kologrivov, p.248.

[76] Sculpting in Time, p.209.

[77] Based on the famous medieval sermon by Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev entitled On Law and Grace.

The discussion between Theophanes and Rublev, interestingly, exactly mirrors the opposing theological viewpoints of two of the greatest polemicists in early medieval Russia. The twelfth-century Kirill of Turov was one of the best known Byzantine scholars, whose rhetoric was renowned for its hyperbole, solemnity and

Theophanes' cynicism, Rublev, in Tarkovsky's words: '.... searches for the grain of hope, of love, of faith in the men of his time. And he expresses it through his conflict with reality'.[78] Yet Rublev, despite his messianic role and his 'conflict with reality' is not a *yurodivyi*, but, rather, the perfect embodiment (in Tarkovsky's terms) of the suffering and prophetic artist. He is the hero, whose path to faith and creativity is aided by the apparently irrational and obsessive behaviour of a genuine fool-in-Christ (in this case, by the girl known as 'durochka': little fool / imbecile), and by the equally uplifting *podvig* of the young bell-founder, Boriska.

The role of the *yurodivyi* is more central in Stalker. The Stalker is the archetypal Russian *yurodivyi* (he is actually referred to as such by the Writer and by his wife): he is an agonised, half-mad individual, who is completely oblivious of his physical appearance or material needs, and who is held in contempt, and even attacked, by his two companions. The Stalker has no name. His role, like that of the other two characters, is symbolic of a state of mind: The Stalker is the holy fool / visionary; the Scientist is the positivist; and the Writer the God-seeker / sceptic. The Stalker, like other *yurodivye* in Tarkovsky, is a spiritual guide

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emphasis on suffering and atonement. Ilarion lived in the eleventh century and was widely regarded as the best theologian and preacher in ancient Russia. More significantly, he was the first metropolitan of Kiev of Russian origin (all the others were Greeks), and his views strongly evince a traditional Russian approach to Christianity based on 'joyful confidence in Christ' and on the certainty of salvation by His grace. The theological debate is discussed in some detail in George Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity (Harvard, 1946), pp.69-93.

[78] Cited in Ciment et Schnitzer, p.8.

whose sole function is to inculcate belief (in the metaphorical 'Zone') into his clients, and to lead them to the truth. The Stalker, as one critic has expressed it, 'feels that that his mission is to help mankind rise above the debris of a materialistic civilization, establish contact with its inner self, and achieve a communion with the universal spirit'.[79]

In Nostalgia, the central metaphor is once again the voyage to salvation, the *yurodivyi* and guide represented by the madman, Domenico.[80] In Domenico's obsession with the end of the world, and with the need for universal repentance, is suggested the eschatological tendency in the Russian spirit which Berdyaev described in The Russian Idea.[81] Other aspects of Domenico's character mirror the habitual attitudes of the Russian *yurodivyi*, most noticably his oscillation between the opposing ideals of self-salvation and the deliverance of others,[82] and his final martyrdom through self-immolation. Domenico's role is to provide a solution to the spiritual crisis of the film's hero, Gorchakov, whose eventual 'leap of faith' is symbolized in the final, dramatic and irrational ritual of carrying a lit candle across the pool of St Catherine. Domenico, who has previously spent several years in an asylum for other indiscretions, is continually prevented from

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[79] Anna Lawton, 'Art and Religion in the Films of Andrei Tarkovskii', in Christianity and the Arts in Russia, edited by W. Brumfield (Cambridge, 1991), pp.151-164 (p.155).

[80] 'Domenico', in Italian, means 'man of the Lord'.

[81] See Nikolai Berdyaev, Russkaya Ideya (Paris, 1946), pp.10-11.

[82] This is an enduring theme in Tarkovsky's work, and a problem with which he was personally obsessed. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.



3. 'Disparity' in Stalker. 'The Stalker is the archetypal Russian yurodivyi'.

accomplishing this task himself by 'sane' people who come to his rescue. The notion (also found elsewhere in Tarkovsky) that those within asylums are more complete human beings than 'sane' individuals in the outside world, is a familiar theme in Russian literature - from Garshin's The Red Flower and Chekhov's Ward No. 6 to, in the Soviet period, Valerii Tarsis' Ward No. 7. Tarkovsky's evident sympathy for the *yurodivyi*, and more generally for the weak and infirm, is not unrelated to this theme. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have observed:

> In the films of Tarkovsky the mad and the weak represent divine wisdom, which is beyond the limits of 'good sense'. In the irrationality and apparent abnormality of madness, is manifest the true madness of the normal world; in a more profound sense, the madman is more sane than the sane men of the world who have brought humanity to the brink of catastrophe.[83]

In Sacrifice the theme of the apocalypse has taken on a concrete expression: it assumes the form of the threat of imminent nuclear holocaust. In this, his last film, Tarkovsky places before us his stark vision of the future: a world devoid of spirituality, divorced from God and Nature, is now facing the End. The hero, Alexander, offers himself to God in self-sacrifice to save mankind from the impending catastrophe. His way is shown initially by the eccentric postman Otto, and more conclusively by the *yurodivyi* and / or 'witch' Maria,[84] who

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[83] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.158.

[84] 'Witch' in Russian is *ved'ma*, from *vedat'* (to know / have knowledge of). The original title of Sacrifice was The Witch, but was changed mainly due to the fact that the English and Swedish has none of the connotations of 'knowing' that

'sacrifices' herself to Alexander. In the personality of Maria[85] (also the name of Gorchakov's spouse, as well as of Kris Kelvin's first wife) is fused a curious blend of pagan magic and Christian values: we learn from Otto that she is a 'witch from Iceland' and has special powers; yet a crucifix and other Christian imagery are prominent in her room. A conflation of paganism and Christianity is often held to be characteristic of Russian culture in general,[86] and of the Russian *yurodivye* in particular. Filmed in Sweden, with an entirely non-Russian cast, Sacrifice nevertheless remains a quintessentially Russian film, and the character Maria represents the final embodiment in Tarkovsky's work of Russian *yurodstvo*.

Yurodstvo is a significant and recurrent theme in Tarkovsky, and one which is accorded its own imagery: most of his *yurodivye* are marked with a mysterious white attribute as a sign (presumably) of their visionary or mystical nature. Female *yurodivye* wear white scarves, or scarves marked in a certain distinctive manner. In Andrei Rublev, 'durochka', thus attired, reappears at the highly symbolic

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Tarkovsky judged essential to the Russian. See Layla Alexander, p.36.

In Alexander's erotic 'union' with Maria, Tarkovsky may again be referring to the mystical and highly esoteric philosophy of Vladimir Solov'ev, whose views appear to have had a significant influence on the director. In his essay The Meaning of Love (Smysl lyubvi), Solov'ev points out that the Bible views sexual love as 'knowing', 'having knowledge of' another person. Man's striving for 'knowledge' of the Transcendent is only possible through symbolic union or *syzygy* with the 'eternal feminine', Sophia. This is discussed further in Chapter Four, in the context of a discussion of Sophia's role as the incarnation of all-unity (*vseedinstvo*).

[85] The choice of the name Maria or Mary in this context has clear suggestions of the cult of Mary in pagan (and, subsequently, Christian) Russia. See The Russian Religious Mind, pp.360-362.

[86] On this subject see the discussion of *dvoeverie* (ditheism) in Chapter Four.

moment when the bell is rung for the first time. The Stalker has a clear tuft of white hair. Maria wears a scarf displaying a pattern in the shape of a white feather. Other characters are similarly endowed: Kelvin (Solaris) and Gorchakov (Nostalgia) both have the distinctive white tuft, and the Stalker's daughter, in recognition of her extraordinary spiritual strength, wears the familiar scarf.

Notwithstanding the importance of the *yurodivyi* motif, Tarkovsky is ambiguous about their role as spiritual guides and prophets. The success of his fools-in-Christ in delivering souls is rarely convincing. As suggested above, Tarkovsky was tormented by the opposing merits of saving oneself and seeking salvation for others. Ultimately, his films posit the case for individual responsibility, and suggest the futility of attempting to instil faith in others.[87] Referring to the film Nostalgia (though their remarks have a wider significance in Tarkovsky's oeuvre) Kovàcs and Szilàgyi make the following observation:

> The Russian religious conscience is never content with the idea of saving an individual soul; it is forever concerned with universal salvation since [according to its own logic] all souls are linked and cannot find salvation unless one soul carries with it all the others. From this point of view, Tarkovsky's Russian characters are close to Chaadaev's position that the independent individual and the community principle are in opposition [...] Each person must find his own path to faith: to find it through an intermediary is impossible. To want to save others engenders violence. Domenico is neither an intermediary nor a saviour. He is Gorchakov's reflection in the mirror and accomplishes his aspirations. As Kierkegard wrote: 'Faith begins where

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[87] This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

reason ceases'.[88]

As suggested in Section One, the alienation of leading characters from their immediate environment is an important condition of disparity. This is self-evident in the case of the 'fools in Christ': but the heroes of Tarkovsky's films (who are rarely *yurodivye*) are also alienated individuals who suffer from the metaphysical 'disruption of harmony' in modern life, from the separation of the spiritual from the material. For some (Ivan, the narrator in Mirror, Gorchakov, Alexander) this leads to death or the lunatic asylum. Others (Rublev, Kris Kelvin) regain a sense of harmony through the selfless example of others; while the character for whom Tarkovsky himself probably felt most affinity[89] - the Writer in Stalker - reacts in a similarly positive manner to his experience of the Zone.[90]

The final stage of disparity is a dramatic or incredible event, a 'decisive action' which dispenses with the constraints of the everyday and openly calls for an emotional response from the viewer.[91] In Andrei Rublev the 'miraculous'

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[88] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.159.

[89] Tarkovsky wrote of the Writer: 'I feel very close to him. This is a person who has been misled, but, I think, one who is capable of finding a spiritual answer'. Cited in Aldo Tassone, 'Entretien avec Andrei Tarkovski', Positif, 247 (1981), 23-26 (p.26).

[90] This point is often overlooked: the Stalker in despair assumes that his efforts to persuade his clients of the Zone's special status have been in vain. Unknown to him, the Writer has undergone a metamorphosis. Tarkovsky writes: 'A much more important character [than the Stalker] is the Writer, who went to [the Zone] a cynic, a pragmatic, but returned a man who could begin to speak of human worth'. Cited in Leonard Noiger and Ezhi Illg, 'Vstat' na put',' Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 109-130 (p.119).

[91] In common with that in other transcendental films, the decisive action in

casting of the bell by a boy who admits to never having discovered the secret of bell making fulfills this function. In Solaris, it is the final scene in which Kelvin kneels before his father (a parody of the return of the Prodigal Son), in a completely unexpected gesture of humility and repentance. In Mirror the final sequence artificially combines two or even three points in time: Maria Vishnakova (Tarkovsky's mother), as a young woman, is lying in a field discussing with her husband the possibility of having a child; in the background we see Maria as an old woman (played by the director's actual mother) leading the same children we saw in the opening scene across the field. In Stalker the incredible event is the apparent telekinetic powers of the Stalker's daughter who, in the final scene, is able by the sheer intensity of her gaze to move glasses across a table.[92] In Nostalgia there are the twin events of Gorchakov's unexpected death, and Domenico's self-immolation. Sacrifice ends with the powerful imagery of Alexander setting fire to the family dacha.[93]

In Tarkovsky's films, these dramatic events are often preceded by lesser 'decisive moments' which, nevertheless, are central to the hero's growing spiritual awareness. Such moments are normally accompanied by music, 'the greatest of all

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Tarkovsky is orientated towards the viewer and not the hero of the film. The latter is often absent from the event altogether in Tarkovsky, in favour of the more private, undramatic 'decisive moments' which anticipate the final action.

[92] In Stalker this event is rendered all the more unexpected by the failure of the Zone to evince any special or supernatural qualities, contrary to the viewer's expectations.

[93] Interestingly, Tarkovsky uses Schrader's own term - 'decisive action' - in describing Alexander's final act. See
Sculpting in Time, p.209.

the arts',[94] which Tarkovsky considered crucial in the task of evoking 'all-unity'.

He wrote:

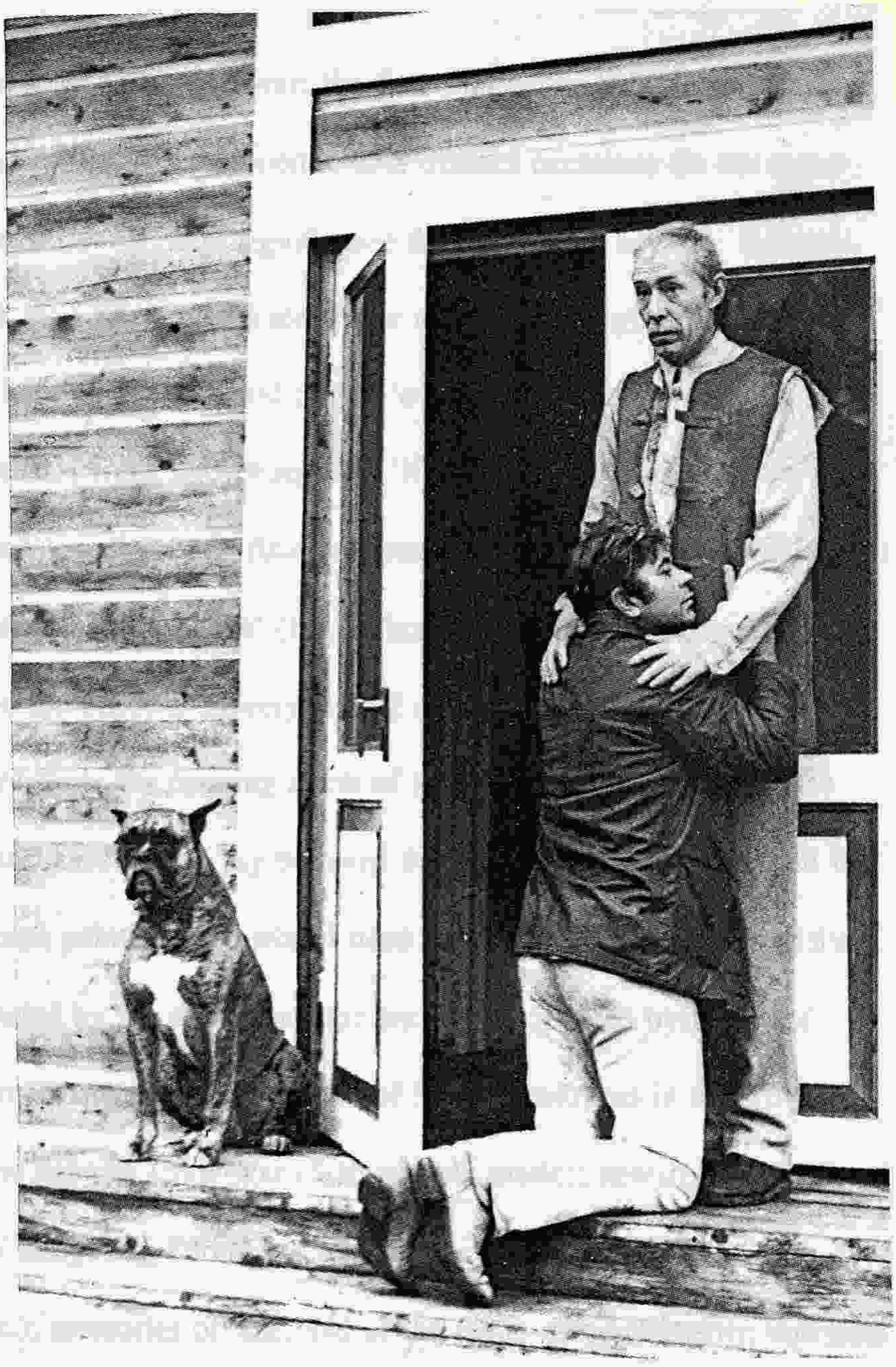
> Music is not just an appendage to the visual image. It must be an essential element of the realisation of the concept as a whole. Properly used, music has the capacity to change the whole emotional tone of a filmed sequence; it must be so completely one with the final image that if it were to be removed from a particular episode, the visual image would not just be weaker in its idea and its impact, it would be qualitatively different.[95]

Much of the music in Tarkovsky's films was specially commissioned from the composers Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov and Eduard Artem'ev. However, towards the end of his career Tarkovsky would rebel against the 'affectation' of commissioning music, and would turn instead to classical or folk pieces that, he now felt, more satisfactorily conveyed his vision. In all cases music is used relatively sparingly, and is intended to enrich the specific emotional or spiritual quality of a particular sequence - often a key moment in the hero's evolution. In Ivan's Childhood, Ovchinnikov's wistful, evocative music has precisely this impact during the three sequences when Ivan relapses into the 'more real' world of his dreams and memories. In Andrei Rublev, ethereal bell sounds, fragments of Orthodox liturgical chant and Ovchinnikov's theme, 'The Night of / before Ivan the Bather' (Noch' na Ivana Kupalu) introduce similarly seminal episodes from Rublev's life: his first meeting with Theophanes; witnessing the pagan midsummer festival of

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[94] 'In Search of Faith and Freedom', p.90.

[95] Sculpting in Time, pp.158-159.



4. The final stage of 'disparity' in Solaris.

Ivan the Bather; the sacking of Vladimir; the first trial of the bell. In Solaris, music by Artem'ev and Bach is confined to four distinct occasions on the space-station, each of which has a fateful significance for the hero. They are: Kelvin's first encounter with Hari (Artem'ev's electronic music); first sight of the Ocean, followed by film of Kelvin's childhood (Artem'ev / Bach's Chorale Prelude in F minor); Kelvin and Hari enter into Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow' (Artem'ev / Bach Chorale Prelude); and Snaut's final endorsement of Kelvin's rehabilitation 'It is time for you to return to the Earth' (Bach Chorale Prelude). The scene of Kelvin's farewell to the Earth is entirely devoid of music and filled instead with the sounds of nature. As in the opening scene of Mirror, from which music is also conspicuously absent, here Tarkovsky believed that music would have 'turned the scene into a landscape painting, and what I need is reality'.[96] In Mirror 'decisive moments' recapitulated by the dying narrator are also underlined by bursts of music. The most important are: recollections of Spanish refugees in Moscow / newsreel film of the Spanish Civil War (Spanish folk music); newsreel film of Soviet balloonists / the young Tarkovsky examines a volume of Leonardo's drawings (Pergolesi); memories of war, and of the firing-range (Purcell); newsreel film of Soviet soldiers crossing the Sivash marshes / liberation of Prague / Hiroshima / Chinese border clashes (Artem'ev); father returns from the war (Bach); visit to wife of Dr Solov'ev / mother sells earrings for food (Purcell); parents lying in field / Tarkovsky is conceived / mother leads two children across field (Bach). The underlying purpose of these excerpts has been stated explicitly by Tarkovsky: 'Music can bring to the material filmed a lyrical note born of the

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[96] Artem'ev, p.218.

author's experience. In Mirror ... music is often introduced as part of the material of life, of the author's spiritual experience, and thus as a vital element in the world of the film's lyrical hero'.[97]

Tarkovsky claimed that in Stalker the chief function of music was to stress the fundamental incompatibility between Eastern and Western values. Citing Kipling, the director asserted that 'East and West may co-exist, but never understand each other'.[98] This thought was deemed particularly important for Stalker, and is a theme reflected in other aspects of the film. Artem'ev's original musical solution to this problem was the improvisation of a European melody (the fourteenth-century hymn 'Pulcherrima Rosa', devoted to the Virgin Mary) on Eastern instruments, including the *tar*. This idea was eventually abandoned in favour of an Indian melody played on a combination of flute, Eastern instruments and synthesizer. The result is a striking, haunting theme whose use is largely confined to the Zone; outside the Zone, by way of contrast, the music is clearly and symbolically Western in character. The 'decisive moments' are as follows: opening scene of Stalker, wife and child in bed, (train sounds / Marseillaise); Stalker's wife falls to the floor in epileptic fit (Wagner); Stalker arrives in the Zone and throws himself to the earth (Artem'ev's improvisation); the Writer is warned not to take a short route to the room (Artem'ev); the Stalker's dream

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[97] Sculpting in Time, p.158.

[98] Cited in Eduard Artem'ev, 'On byl i vsegda ostanetsya tvortsom', Muzykal'naya zhizn', 17 (1988), 12-14 (p.13). This differs in some important respects from Artem'ev's similarly named article in O Tarkovskom, especially in relation to the composition of Stalker's soundtrack.



5. 'Decisive moments' in Mirror.

sequence (Artem'ev); leaving the Zone, the Stalker walks home with his wife and child (Artem'ev); the Stalker's daughter displays telekinetic powers (Beethoven).[99]

In Nostalgia music is used considerably more sparingly, and accompanies only the most significant steps in Gorchakov's metaphysical 'journey'. These are: the opening dream sequence, featuring a Russian landscape and members of Gorchakov's family (Russian lament / Verdi's 'Requiem'); Gorchakov's entry into the house of Domenico (Beethoven); Domenico's death (Beethoven); Gorchakov's death (Verdi); final (stasis) scene of snow falling on roofless cathedral and Russian landscape (Russian keening song).

In Sacrifice the musical soundtrack is similarly unobtrusive. The film opens and closes to the sounds of Bach's 'Herr, Erbarme Dich' (Lord, have mercy) from the 'St Matthew Passion',[100] though the most commonly heard sound is the Lapp shepherd calls[101] which seem to preface moments of danger or disharmony

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[99] Together with Tchaikovsky, Beethoven was Tarkovsky's least favourite composer. On the subject of Tarkovsky's taste in music and the arts in general, see Viktor Loisha, 'Takoe kino', Druzhba narodov, 1 (1989), 214-232 (p.228).

[100] The music of J.S. Bach was literally an obsession with Tarkovsky. Artem'ev has written: 'Andrei could not live without Bach... his music accompanied him daily and he knew it to perfection'. 'On byl i vsegda ostanetsya dlya menya tvortsom', p.216. Another colleague observes: 'He was lost in music: Bach, Bach, Bach and nothing else'. Ebbo Demant, 'V poiskakh utrachennogo vremeni', in O Tarkovskom, pp.342-388 (p.343). Tarkovsky himself characterized Bach's appeal as follows: 'In Bach all the vital seeds of music are brought together, like the world in God. Nowhere else has there been such polyphony'. Time Within Time: The Diaries, p.146.

[101] 'Wailings reminiscent of a shaman's invocations', as Layla Alexander has

(Alexander's two apocalyptic dreams, for instance). The other moments of musical interest are: the beginning of the central (sepia) section of the film / Alexander's first talk with Maria (the Japanese Hotchiku flute music of Watazumido Shusho); Alexander plays the organ prior to his encounter with Maria (Bach prelude); end of central section of film / Alexander wakes up (Shusho); Alexander switches on hi-fi / sets fire to house (Shusho).

The music in Sacrifice, as is the case in all Tarkovsky's films, has a powerful emotional quality, subtly interacting with and deepening the visual narrative. Music in Tarkovsky is compatible with the ethos of disparity, itself a paradox, in Schrader's terms, of:

> ..the spiritual existing within the physical [which] cannot be 'resolved' by any earthly logic or human emotions. It must, as the decisive action makes inescapably clear, be accepted or rejected. If the viewer accepts the decisive action (and disparity), he accepts through his mental construct a view of life which can encompass both.[102]

The final stage of transcendental style, and one which seeks to represent this acceptance, is stasis.

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described them. See Alexander, p.36.

[102] Schrader, p.82.

Stasis

Of all the stages of transcendental style in Tarkovsky, stasis most consistently and unreservedly refers to the ideal of stillness, harmony and wholeness implicit in the final shots of such films as Diary of a Country Priest, Late Spring or The Gospel According to St. Matthew. The conclusions of Tarkovsky's films strongly reaffirm the possibility of the central character's spiritual resurrection, as well as the potential for all-unity (*vseedinstvo*) that is such an enduring theme in Russian spiritual culture.[103] Above all, stasis shots convey the hope that, despite the often oppressive or pessimistic nature of the films, man will ultimately resolve the disharmony between his spiritual and material existence. This hope is typically expressed through children, who feature in virtually all of the director's concluding shots (Sacrifice, interestingly, is dedicated to Tarkovsky's son 'in hope and faith').

This notion is expressed most simply and lyrically in the final shot of Ivan's Childhood, where the boy runs along a sunlit beach into the waters of the Dnieper. In Andrei Rublev the stasis shot is one of the most accomplished in transcendental cinema. It begins with an abrupt transition from monochrome to colour, the first indication of which is the image of red burning coals, followed by the slow movement of the camera over the brightly-lit surface of some of Rublev's greatest icons - 'Christ the Pantocrator', 'The Trinity' - and concludes in a shot of horses standing in a water meadow, peacefully grazing under the rain. The impact of this

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[103] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

sequence can usefully be compared to the effect and function of icon painting: to represent the spiritual caught in the material, or the perfect synthesis of spirit and matter. As Lawton has observed: 'The quest for harmony and perfection that has tormented the protagonist throughout the film ... suddenly achieves mystical splendor in the epilogue with the appearance on screen of Rublev's icons'.[104] Tarkovsky himself was clear that this sequence was crucial to any understanding of the film. He wrote:

> The relationship between the colour ending and the rest of the film [in black and white] was for us the expression of the relationship between Rublev's art and his life. This can be summarized as follows: on the one hand, everyday life - realistic and rational. On the other the artistic expression of this life - a logical succession. The final colour sequence - about 250 metres of film - was indispensable to us to enable the spectator to relax, to prevent him leaving the theatre immediately after the black and white images. This was in order that the viewer had time to detach himself from Rublev's life, time to reflect, and so that by seeing the colour and listening to the music we imposed on him, some general ideas of the film as a whole might lodge themselves in his mind. I think that if the film had ended immediately after 'The Bell' episode, it would have been a failure.[105]

In Solaris the stasis shot is achieved as the camera, in a slow backward movement, gradually reveals the family dacha and surrounding grounds to be an island on the surface of the mysterious ocean Solaris. The final shot of Mirror is reminiscent of the stasis shots of Bresson, and particularly Ozu, in its reaffirmation of all-unity in

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[104] Lawton, p.159.

[105] Cited in Ciment et Schnitzer, p.9.

nature: a long, slow retreat from the main characters into a dark wood; the strains of Bach's 'St John Passion'; sudden silence, followed by the shout of a child and bird sounds. The stasis shot in Stalker is the final revelation of the extraordinary spiritual energy and visionary power of the Stalker's daughter: her reading of Tyutchev's poem 'I love your eyes, my friend', as well as the physical demonstration of her telekinetic powers. In Nostalgia stasis is again obtained by the backward tracking shot: a Russian landscape is gradually revealed - dacha, trees and Gorchakov, sitting by a pond with his dog. The camera retreats further and we see in the background the roofless walls of an Italian cathedral. Snow begins to fall, we hear Russian music. The implication of all-unity in these shots - particularly the unity between the two opposing worlds of Russia and the West - is especially striking. The final shot in Sacrifice may, as Lawton has suggested, owe much to Tarkovsky's respect for the *haiku*. Other Japanese motifs underscore the film visually and orally (the Japanese flute music, Alexander's kimono), and it is possible that in the final stasis shot Tarkovsky sought to convey the asceticism, 'discipline of mind' and suggestion of all-unity implicit in the *haiku*. The shot itself is uncomplicated: a camera slowly ascends the dried-up tree planted by Alexander and his son at the beginning of the film; Bach's 'Herr, Erbarme Dich' is heard again; the camera returns to Little Man who is lying at the foot of the tree; we hear his voice for the first time '"In the beginning was the Word". Why is that Papa?' This final shot is clearly associated with the opening imagery of the film (which featured Leonardo's painting 'The Adoration of the Magi', in which the tree of life is prominent and where a gift or 'sacrifice' is offered to the Son of God), and has the effect of underlining Alexander's 'sacrifice' to God. Anna

Lawton has interpreted the shot in the following terms:

> The oriental stylistic ascetism [of the *haiku*] is coupled with Tarkovskii's deeply rooted Christian philosophy. Four horizontal planes - the grass, the beach, the lake, the sky - four strips of color intersected by the black vertical line of the Tree of Life that fastens them together like a clasp. The tree's bare branches extend gracefully and hesitantly in two opposite directions, creating the effect of a flat figure, like a Japanese ideogram (or a cross).[106]

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss Tarkovsky's films in terms of the critical method that has become known as transcendental style. The central thesis of this approach is that in their desire to represent the Transcendent, filmmakers in different cultures have developed a common form. Transcendental style is not intrinsically religious, but it represents a method by which different artists seek to express a transcendental reality, in whatever form the latter may be perceived within the director's own national tradition. The transcendental artist is thus confronted by two contingencies: the dependency on temporal cinematic means to express an irrational, ineffable truth; and the propensity (consciously or otherwise) to work within defined cultural parameters in conveying that truth. The extent to which Tarkovsky evokes a Russian spiritual tradition in his films is

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[106] Lawton, p.161.



6. The final 'stasis' shot in Nostalgia.

discussed in forthcoming chapters; it is now, though, possible to conclude that Tarkovsky's *style* is remarkably consistent with that of other transcendental filmmakers. This is evident in his overall approach to cinema as a medium possessing extraordinary (and largely unrealized) potential for expressing in an entirely novel and exciting manner, the ancient truths of the medieval painting, icon or *haiku*. It is also manifestly true of many specific aspects of Tarkovsky's filmmaking techniques.

As we have seen, Bresson is the director for whom Tarkovsky had the greatest regard, and many of the former's views on cinema have a direct parallel in Tarkovsky's own convictions as set out in numerous critical articles, interviews and the book Sculpting in Time. A respect for the techniques of the documentary, restrained acting, unostentatious editing, an emphasis on 'natural' or documentary sounds (or, simply, silence), and the use of classical or folk music are all features of the films of Ozu, Bresson and Tarkovsky. Camerawork is less analagous, though one can argue that the greater use of the moving camera in Tarkovsky actually enriches the transcendental effect of his images. The techniques of disparity are replicated with remarkable consistency in Tarkovsky's films; 'fools in Christ' or alienated, obsessive individuals are a feature of each of his films, as indeed is the case, not only in Bresson's 'prison cycle' films, but also in Ozu (less dramatically) and Dreyer (Joan of Arc, Marthe, the witch in Day of Wrath (1940), or John in Ordet (1955) for instance). A similar consistency is apparent in Tarkovsky's rendering of 'decisive actions'. Stasis is a feature of every Tarkovsky film, and, arguably, is conveyed with greater imagination and intensity than in

either Bresson, Ozu or Dreyer.

It is ironic that Tarkovsky's apparent reliance (consciously or otherwise) on the main tenets of transcendental style - a cinematic style which, as we have seen, is common to a number of quite distinct cultures - may be seen to emphasize the 'Russianness' of his aesthetic. An obsession with one's own national culture is a hallmark of transcendental style; Bresson and Ozu in particular seem totally bound by their respective traditions, a fact which Schrader has conceded:

> Most characteristics of a work of art are inseparably linked to their culture. Transcendental style is 'a way of liberation' from the terrestrial to the Other world, and consequently its origins are necessarily intrinsic to the particular culture from which it springs [...]
> Each artist must use the raw materials of his personality and culture.[107]

Following this consideration of the characteristic features of transcendental style and its relevance to Tarkovskian cinema, the remaining chapters of this thesis will be devoted to an examination of the 'content': namely the concern to reinterpret a Russian spiritual tradition that ultimately would confer on the director a unique standing in Russian cinema.

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[107] Schrader, p.53.

Chapter Two

Images of Transfiguration: Elements of the Russian Iconic Tradition in Tarkovsky

'We are crucified in a single dimension,
while the world is multidimensional.
We sense the other world, but suffer from
the impossibility of knowing its Truth...' [1]

Andrei Tarkovsky

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest certain parallels between the idiom of Russian icon painting and specific elements of the art of Andrei Tarkovsky. The chapter will open with a general discussion of the image in Russian culture, and will indicate in broad terms some of the important historical and ecclesiastical developments that have led to Russian icon painting's singular status within Russian culture. Tarkovsky's views on such matters, and how these may have made an impact on his own work, will be considered. The chapter will then briefly describe the theological background to icon painting, though the exegesis will mainly be confined to three areas that have special relevance to Tarkovskian cinema: contemplation, the notion of transfigured reality, and tradition. The following section (the bulk of the chapter) will then assess the value of these intrinsic iconic qualities (and more concrete iconic motifs and symbolism) to Tarkovsky's aesthetic. The emphasis will be mainly on the theoretical, spiritual confluence of icons and film: the appearance of actual icons in Tarkovsky is

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[1] Andrei Tarkovsky, Le temps scellé, translated by Anne Kichilov and Charles de Brantes (Paris, 1989), p.8.

rare. Russian icon painting, it will be concluded, has a significant role to play in elucidating both Tarkovsky's overall worldview, as well as certain particular aspects of his film language.

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Tarkovsky's last film, Sacrifice, ends with the words: 'In the beginning was the Word... but why, Father?'[2] This rhetorical question, put by Alexander's son, Little Man, after his father has been unceremoniously taken off to the asylum, apparently refers to Alexander's observation at the beginning of the film: 'You know, "In the beginning was the Word", but you are as mute as a fish, my little fish.'[3] Given the pre-eminence of both scriptural references and children in Tarkovsky's films, it seems fitting that Sacrifice should end with a biblical citation, and that the last image (as is so often the case in his films) should be that of a child: symbol *par excellence* in Tarkovsky's conception of moral and spiritual rebirth. Nevertheless, the precise significance of this allusion to the Gospel of St John is at first sight far from clear. Is it perhaps a recapitulation of what appears to be the dominant idea of Sacrifice: the desperate need for humanity to stop talking, to put an end to *words*, and take decisive action to avert the coming catastrophe? This is Alexander's complaint:

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[2] Andrej Tarkovskij, Le Sacrifice, edited by L. Schirmer (Munich, 1987), p.174 (scenario of film).

[3] ibid. p.55.

> How tired I am of hearing my own voice! 'Words, words, words'. Only now do I understand what Hamlet meant. He couldn't stand the windbags. Exactly the same with me. Why do I talk, then? Is it possible to hope that someone will stop talking in order to resolve to do something useful. Or at least try.[4]

It seems plausible at least that 'In the beginning was the Word... but why...' is on one level a desperate plea for action from a man who, until the end of his life, remained convinced that the Last Judgement was not a biblical metaphor, but a physical, ineluctable and imminent reality.[5] Yet this rather simplistic reading of the concluding sequence of Sacrifice can at best reveal only one side of Tarkovsky's purpose. The true import of this scene, in all probability, lies elsewhere.

One is occasionally surprised at the rather banal level of the dialogue in Sacrifice. Though this is a criticism that might reasonably be made of Tarkovsky's last two films, taking Tarkovsky's work as a whole, one undoubtedly has a sense

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[4] ibid. p.61.

[5] This statement has to be seen in the context of Orthodox doctrine on the *imminence* of the Apocalypse, which emphasizes that history will, without warning, be brought to a sudden end through divine intervention. Two important Scriptural justifications are cited in support of this dogma: 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power' (Acts 1. 7); and 'For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night' (1 Thess. 5. 2). Bishop Ware has added 'Whether the End comes late or soon in our human time-scale, it is always *imminent*, always spiritually close at hand. We are to have in our hearts a sense of urgency'. Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way (Oxford, 1987), p.180. For an insight into Tarkovsky's views on the Apocalypse, see Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Slovo ob apokalipsise', Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 94-100.

that speech is very much the weak link in his aesthetic.[6] Tarkovsky's unquestionable talent lies for the most part in the realm of images, and in the relationship between image, sound and time that characterizes his own unique film language. The motif of speech (and its antonym, silence) he approaches thematically, by such means as the vows of silence of Andrei Rublev and Alexander,[7] the speech impediment of the adolescent in the prologue to Mirror, the stuttering of Ivan (Ivan's Childhood) and Boriska (Andrei Rublev) and the dumbness of Little Man. One critic has suggested that both silence and speech defects in Tarkovsky symbolize a 'dumbness of the spirit',[8] the ultimate solution to which is the creation of works of art. However, this is not entirely convincing: the evidence is rather that Tarkovsky saw silence not as an ailment - as something to be 'cured' - but as a virtue.

With the recent publication of his diaries, it has become clear that Tarkovsky was familiar with (and to some extent influenced by) the principal works of Eastern Orthodox doctrine and tradition, and was particularly attracted by the

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[6] Tarkovsky himself was of course conscious of this deficiency, yet increasingly saw words as irrelevant to the medium of serious film: 'For me what counts is the image and above all the light. The dialogue does not count, the characters do not count. [...] I am for cinema using as few words as possible'. Cited in Barthélemy Amengual, 'Andreï Tarkovsky après sept films', in Etudes Cinématographiques 135-138: Andreï Tarkovsky, edited by Michel Estève (Paris, 1986), pp.157-167 (p.167).

[7] In Sacrifice the motif is given added emphasis by a number of other events or comments; one example is Viktor's remark: 'Did you know that for years Gandhi refused to talk for one day each week?' Le Sacrifice, p.57.

[8] Maya Turovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989), p.80.

more mystical teachings of the Fathers, as well as by the lives and works of medieval Russian saints. He could not, therefore, have been unaware of the special importance that Orthodox thought has always attributed to the positive virtue of silence as a means of approaching the Transcendent. Silence, for instance, was central to the *way of negation*, or the apophatic approach, that was disseminated by the highly influential (on Orthodox tradition) Hesychast[9] movement. A sense of the importance that Orthodox saints attributed to silence can be gauged from aphorisms of the following kind: 'Habitual silence, well observed, impels the thoughts upwards towards heaven' (St Gregory); or 'Speech is the organ of this present world. Silence is the mystery of the world to come' (St Isaac the Syrian). This is also a characteristic attitude of Russian religious philosophers; Nikolai Berdyaev, for instance, wrote: 'Apophatic theology, the theology which bears witness to the *Deus absconditus*, is the only adequate theology'.[10] Tarkovsky's critical writings reveal the director to be profoundly sympathetic to this view. Professors Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have described his approach in the following terms:

> Tarkovsky considers art [...] as a kind of silence (of absence of words), active and loving. The cinema is the only artistic medium that can express this conception [...] Verbal declarations are important in his films, but at critical moments, speech is transformed into murmurs, sighs or poems [...] which

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[9] From the Greek *hesychia*, meaning 'quiet'. The Hesychast controversy, and its importance to Orthodoxy, is discussed in Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (London, 1985), pp.70-78.

[10] Nikolai Berdyaev, Samopoznanie (Paris, 1989), p.104.

finally give way to total silence.[11]

Tarkovsky's most loquacious characters are invariably cast in the most negative roles. One of the most revealing examples of this occurs in Andrei Rublev, where the Father Superior's censure of Kirill is: 'You were always a champion of words'.[12] This distrust of 'words', apparently, applied equally to the making of films: 'It is easier to work with people who don't talk',[13] Tarkovsky declared in an article in Le Monde.

Silence and its corollary, contemplation, are Tarkovsky's answer to 'words, words, words'. In a culture that has produced, among many other great literary figures, Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoi, Tarkovsky's apparent contention that the dominant role in Russian cultural history has been played, not by the Word, but by the Image,[14] may seem surprising. Referring to the film Sacrifice Tarkovsky wrote:

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[11] Bàlint Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), p.138.

[12] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Andrei Rublev', Iskusstvo kino, 5 (1964), 126-158, (p.130). Scenario of film (part 2).

[13] Cited in Nicole Zand, 'Une villa tchékhovienne en Suède', Le Monde, 1 June 1985, p.15.

[14] This view finds support from such noted philosophers as Leonid Ouspensky. In The Meaning of Icons he suggests the following: 'It can be said that if Byzantium was pre-eminent in giving the world theology expressed in words, theology expressed in the image was given pre-eminently by Russia. It is characteristic in this sense that until the times of Peter the Great there are few spiritual writers among Russian saints; on the other hand many saints were iconographers.' 'The Meaning and Language of Icons', in The Meaning of Icons, edited by Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky (New York, 1983), pp.23-49 (p.45).

> My principal aim has been to pose, in as stark a manner as possible, fundamental questions on our life on Earth, and to invite the spectator to rediscover the long-forgotten essence of our existence. Films, visual images, are not less capable of doing that than words, especially in an age when the latter have lost their magical and incantatory qualities, and when language for [the hero of Sacrifice] has become mere chit-chat, devoid of all meaning.[15]

This contention stems from one of the fundamental historical causes of Russia's cultural isolation from the rest of Europe: language. The proposition might be simplified in the following terms: until Peter the Great's reforms (late seventeenth, early eighteenth century), neither Latin nor Greek played any important part in the cultural or scholastic life of Russia. The almost exclusive reliance on Church Slavonic in teaching and worship helped deepen the existing cultural divide with the West where, of course, the classical languages were indispensable to any serious study of philosophy, theology, the arts and sciences. Nicolas Zernov has assessed the significance of the language barrier as follows:

> The linguistic isolation of the Russian people had several unexpected consequences. The first was the restricted use of the word, spoken and written, in the various manifestations of Russian culture. The Western mind, trained in the clear logical atmosphere of classical civilization, found it most natural to use speech as the main channel of expression for emotions as well as for ideas. Russian culture, by comparison, appears almost speechless.[16]

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[15] Le temps scellé, p.209.

[16] Nicolas Zernov, Three Russian Prophets (London, 1944), p.21.

This is in no sense to deny the significance of important works of secular and religious literature in the Russian Middle Ages. However, in general terms it can be said that Russian literature did not play its full part in the cultural life of the country until the nineteenth century.

In Russia other, more visual, art forms reached a high level many centuries before literature joined the mainstream of Russian culture. Early Russian architecture attained an extraordinary degree of sophistication and complexity, particularly in the northern principalities of Vladimir-Suzdal, Novgorod and Pskov. The twelfth-century Church of the Intercession on the River Nerl, for example, which features in the Prologue to Andrei Rublev,[17] is widely regarded as 'one of the greatest creations of early Russian artistic genius'.[18] Tarkovsky, interestingly, perceived much that was of value to the modern Russian artist (including to filmmakers) in the traditions of ancient Russian architecture that are conveyed so sympathetically in Andrei Rublev. He wrote:

> As far as nature is concerned, the cinema artist has predecessors of genius - Russian architects. The locations chosen for all of the great cathedrals reflect

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[17] Tarkovsky's choice of the Church of the Intercession is interesting. The architecture of the Vladimir-Suzdal school, of which this church is the best surviving example, was distinguished by a sort of elemental 'Russianness', by an originality that was often absent in southern Russian architecture where Byzantine influence predominated. Hence Mikhail Alpatov's assertion that 'The Church of the Intercession on the Nerl [...] could have been created only in Russia. [It] provides an occasion for pondering what the *genius loci* means in art, what part is played in art by the national character'. Art Treasures of Russia (London, 1968), p.32.

[18] Vladimir Plugin, Khram Pokrova na Nerli (Leningrad, 1970), p.4.

> such care and precision, and the latter so harmoniously interact with nature, that it is quite breathtaking. The artist should never forget that architecture should be a continuation of nature or, in cinema, should reflect the state of mind of the hero(es), as well as the conceptions of the author.[19]

Nevertheless, the greatest and most influential of Russian visual art forms, and the one with most relevance to Tarkovskian cinema was not, of course, architecture but icon-painting. Consider the following statement: 'The profoundest revelations of Russian thought in the Middle Ages are found in the colours of the ikons, not in books.'[20] One could add that the philosophical and aesthetic importance of the icon continued well beyond the Middle Ages,[21] and it is even possible that its influence can be seen in certain aspects of official Soviet culture.[22] There is little doubt that iconic influence is also a key constituent of Tarkovsky's films. However, before developing this argument it is necessary to make a few preliminary observations on the place of icons in the Orthodox

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[19] Andrei Tarkovsky, Lektsii po kinorezhissure, edited by Konstantin Lopushansky (Moscow, 1981), p.118. Unpublished notes of lectures given at VGIK.

[20] Zernov, p.21.

[21] Hence Alpatov's assertion, for instance, that 'In [early Russian icon-painting] many features of the new Russian art, the works of such masters as A. Ivanov, Surikov and Vrubel, and also the aesthetics principles of poetry from Pushkin to Blok were anticipated'. Drevnerusskaya ikonopis' (Moscow, 1974), p.61.

[22] Not least of which is Lenin's notorious dictum that 'For us, Cinema is the most important of all the arts'. James Billington concludes: 'Under Stalin the icon lived on [...] as a model for mass indoctrination. [...] Pictures of Lenin in the "red-corner" of factories and public places replaced icons of Christ and the Virgin. Photographs of Lenin's successors deployed in a prescribed order on either side of Stalin replaced the old "prayer row", in which saints were deployed in fixed order on either side of Christ enthroned'. The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (London, 1966), p.36.

tradition.

Central to Orthodox thought is the notion that the Earth 'notwithstanding its imperfection, was intended to become the glorious temple of the Holy Spirit, and that man was empowered by God to be the chief agent in the process of this transfiguration'.[23] Both man and the whole of material creation would thus eventually be transfigured:[24] 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away' (Revelation 21. 1). The redemption of both matter and man is bound up with the Orthodox doctrine of icons, since man alone, as the bearer of the Divine Image, could anticipate through his art the invisible or transfigured world. However, the methods used by the icon-painter could only be figurative or symbolical,[25] since the truth they represent is essentially beyond comprehension, and could only be perceived by the spectator subjectively through what Thomas Merton has called 'the highest

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[23] Nicolas Zernov, The Russians and their Church (London, 1978), p.105.

[24] The doctrine of transfiguration is central to the metaphysical purpose of the icon. According to Orthodox thought the transfigured world is all about us; however, to apprehend it requires the direction of our attention by such means as the holy icons. Father Pavel Florensky has written the following: 'The spiritual world surrounds us. But because of our immaturity we are not aware of its presence, and only unconsciously is the general character of the flow of spiritual events impressed upon us'. 'Ikonostas', Bogoslovskie trudy, 9 (1972), 83-148 (p.98).

[25] Icons are essentially symbols, for the spiritual reality they represent cannot be conveyed other than through symbols. Much of the meaning of iconic symbolism has been lost over the centuries, with the exception of some basic colours, as well as a few specific symbols from the Old and New Testaments (such as the lamb, fish, candle, cup and fire) and from pagan mythology (Cupid, Psyche and Orpheus, for instance).

expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life'[26]: contemplation. Nicolas Zernov has defined the metaphysical purpose of the icon thus:

> [Icons] were for the Russians not merely paintings. They were dynamic manifestations of man's spiritual power to redeem creation through beauty and art. The colours and lines of the 'obraza' [icons] were not meant to imitate nature; the artists aimed at demonstrating that men, animals and plants, and the whole cosmos could be rescued from their present state of degradation and restored to their proper 'Image'. The 'obraza' were pledges of the coming victory of a redeemed creation over the fallen one [...] The artistic perfection of an ikon was not only a reflection of the celestial glory - it was a concrete example of matter restored to its original harmony and beauty, and serving as a vehicle of the Spirit. The ikons were part of the transfigured cosmos.[27]

A central aspect of icon-painting is the emphasis it places on Tradition. Orthodoxy sets great store by what Timothy Ware has called 'its sense of living continuity with the Church of ancient times'.[28] To an Orthodox Tradition is a complex amalgam of the books of the Bible, the teachings of Christ, patristic writings, the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, the Canons and the Holy Icons. Thus, icons are not merely religious pictures, but a part of the Tradition, and a means whereby God and the invisible world are revealed to man. The icon-painter, correspondingly, is not free to experiment or innovate as he pleases, but has a responsibility to work within certain constraints. This does not entirely exclude the

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[26] Thomas Merton, Seeds of Contemplation (London, 1972), p.1.
[27] The Russians and their Church, pp.105-106.

[28] The Orthodox Church, p.203.

expression of the artist's own aesthetic sentiments, but it does require his working within prescribed canonical rules. In one of the most remarkable studies of the theology of icons, Father Pavel Florensky's The Iconostasis, it is argued that the canon is no obstacle to creativity, and even acts as a stimulus to true talent:

> Canonical form, by raising a man to the heights already attained by humanity, frees his creative energy for further conquests, for creative ascents, and saves him from the necessity of repeating lessons already learnt. The obligation of canonical form - or rather the gift that humanity makes of canonical form - is a liberation, not a limitation. The true artist does not seek his own at any cost, but only the beautiful.[29]

This is a fundamental articulation of Orthodox views on religious art. Though the canons determine not only the subject of an icon, but also how it should be depicted, acceptance of canonical form is a recognition that art springs from the community, from the Tradition, and that artistic freedom should not mean the totally untrammelled expression of the artist's personality (seen by many Orthodox as characteristic of Western art).

Thus if one were to list the peculiarities of the icon, to define what sets it apart from other forms of pictorial art, one could say that the icon combines in itself two realities: a historical, earthly reality; and a superior, transfigured and necessarily *beautiful* reality - a spiritual world which can only be revealed symbolically through contemplation, always granted, as Florensky writes, that '... the

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[29] Florensky, pp.105-106.

spiritual condition of the viewer is such as to allow him to grasp its spiritual essence.'[30] This sensibility has a powerful resonance in Russian culture, and has exerted considerable influence on other artistic currents. To give one (not inconsequential) example of the latter: the formula of religious symbolism - *a realibus ad realiora* (from reality to greater reality) - developed by the poet Vyacheslav Ivanov is an important consequence of the emphasis on transcendence implicit in icon painting. As Father Alexander Yelchaninov has written:

> The world is a system of symbols *a realibus ad realiora*, the reflection of the spiritual world in the corporeal form of this world - 'the example and shadow of heavenly things' (Hebr. 8, 5). The value of symbols is the joy caused by the knowledge that our world is a likeness of that other world. Hence the icons, candles, the smoke of incense.[31]

The unique mode of receiving this revealed Truth is the Tradition, since icons are not designed according to the will of the painter, but in accordance with the inviolable laws of the Church. Orthodox art, self-evidently, is conservative, though it cannot be dismissed as mere conservatism: it seeks not to gratify the ambition of the painter nor to promote originality for its own sake, but desires only the Truth. The true artist, in Florensky's words:

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[30] ibid., p.102.

[31] Father Alexander Yelchaninov, 'Fragments of a diary', in A Treasury of Russian Spirituality, edited by George P. Fedotov (London, 1950), pp.417-485 (p.478).

> ... is unconcerned with the miserable, ambitious question whether he is the first or the hundredth to speak the truth. It is sufficient that it is true and that the value of the work is guaranteed. [...] The Church, which is the 'pillar and foundation of truth', insists upon one thing only, and that is truth.[32]

Icon painting is also fundamentally a 'theology of beauty'. The materials of an icon are not in themselves venerated, but only their depiction of beauty as an attribute of the Kingdom of God. As Ouspensky has written:

> The beauty of the visible world lies not in the transitory splendour of its present state, but in the very meaning of its existence, in its coming transfiguration laid down in it as a possibility to be realised by man. In other words, beauty is holiness, and its radiance the participation of the creature in Divine Beauty. The beauty of an icon is the beauty of the acquired likeness to God and so its value lies not in being beautiful in itself, in its appearance as a beautiful object, but in the fact that it depicts Beauty.[33]

Central to this 'theology of beauty' is colour: indeed, the icon has justifiably been termed 'a language of colours'.[34] Bright and variegated colours are particularly characteristic of Russian iconography (and pre-eminently in the work of Andrei Rublev, whose use of colour conveys an extraordinary sense of harmony, strength

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[32] Florensky, p.106.

[33] Ouspensky, p.35.

[34] This is an important area of Eugene Trubetskoy's study: Icons: Theology in Color (New York, 1973).

and joyousness), which is often contrasted with the more ascetic, refined and solemn Byzantine style. The Russian icon is also ascetic, but, as Ouspensky has observed: 'its asceticism is of quite another order. Here the accent is not on the arduousness of the endeavour, but on the joy brought by its fruit.'[35]

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Let us now consider how far, if at all, these basic principles of icon painting can generally be applied to the medium of film, and more specifically to the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky.

The assertion that the art of icon painting has exerted specific influence on a modern filmmaker is, of course, not entirely novel. As briefly mentioned in Chapter One Robert Bresson found merit (and inspiration) in the *aesthetics* of Byzantine iconography, though his main *theological* preoccupations remained rooted in the Western tradition. Bresson's apparent borrowings from icon painting has already been explored by Barthélemy Amengual[36] and Paul Schrader,[37] who conclude that the similarities are primarily technical: frontality, non-expressive

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[35] Ouspensky, p.45.

[36] See Barthélemy Amengual, 'Rapports avec l'art byzantine', Premier Plan: S. M. Eisenstein, 25 (October 1962), p.97.

[37] See Paul Schrader, Transcendental Style in Film (Berkeley, 1972), pp.98-105.

faces, hieratic postures, symmetric compositions and two-dimensionality, they point out, are common features of both icons and Bresson's films. Similar claims might be made of Tarkovsky's approach, though underlying the Russian director's appreciation of icons is a more intuitive empathy with and understanding of the theology that underpins icon painting, and the central role of the latter in depicting the beauty of the transfigured world.

Bresson, in broad terms, almost certainly felt greater affinity for the ascetic and restrained qualities of Byzantine art, than for the more vivid beauty, warmth and emotionality of Russian icons. He wrote: 'Painting taught me to make not beautiful images but necessary ones'.[38] The beautiful image, Bresson contended, merely diverted attention from the internal, spiritual drama of the main character. The deliberate absence of colour from all of Bresson's important 'prison-cycle' films (and from many others), is one obvious manifestation of this attitude, but all of his films evince a coldness and even rationality that appears alien to the Russian sense of beauty. As Amengual has noted: 'The Bressonian beauty... (if beauty there is) is a far-off beauty, abstract and cold - almost demonic. I refer, of course, to *visible* beauty.'[39]

It is in this posture that the most significant discrepancy arises between Bresson and Tarkovsky. In the latter's films beauty is central to the director's

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[38] Cited in Schrader, p.68.

[39] 'Andreï Tarkovsky après sept films', p.174.

purpose.[40] He wrote: 'I think that one of the saddest aspects of our time is the total destruction in people's awareness of all that goes with a conscious sense of the beautiful'.[41] Many other pronouncements reinforce this conviction: 'In every gesture an artist makes ... he tries to fulfill some ideal of beauty'.[42] Five of Tarkovsky's seven main features are filmed entirely in colour,[43] as is the pivotal and symbolic concluding sequence of Andrei Rublev; and many of Tarkovsky's scenes exude a superfluity of beauty (often heightened by accompanying 'unnecessary' poetry or music) that Bresson, undoubtedly, would have considered entirely gratuitous. Tarkovsky's aesthetic was undoubtedly informed by generic Russian art forms (literature, as well as icon painting) in which beauty has always been accorded a privileged status. Dostoevsky's famous formula 'Beauty will save the world'[44] may be the most forceful statement of this idea: however the theme is not confined to his novel The Idiot,[45] but has a wider resonance in Russian

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[40] As Amengual has observed, 'The abundance of beauty ... characterizes the art of Tarkovsky'. ibid., p.173.

[41] Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), p.42.

[42] Angus MacKinnon, 'Tarkovsky: The East Sees Red', Time Out, 691 (1983), 51.

[43] This, despite his frequently expressed contention that colour in film is essentially artificial, and actually acts against efforts to achieve realism. See, for example, Lektsii po kinorezhissure, pp.119-122.

[44] Tarkovsky refers to 'Beauty will save the world' in Charles de Brantes, 'Andrei Tarkovsky o tvorchestve i o sebe', Russkaya mysl', 1 August 1986, pp.12 and 14.

[45] It is present in The Possessed, for example, where one finds the following assessment (by Verkhovensky): 'Do you realize that mankind can get along without ... science, without bread, but without beauty it cannot carry on, for then there will be nothing more to do in the world! The whole mystery is there, the whole of history is there! Even science could not exist for a moment without beauty'. Fedor Dostoevsky, Sobranie sochinenii, 12 vols (Moscow, 1982), ix,

prose and poetry, and in Russian religious philosophy (beauty is a pre-eminent theme in Solov'ev, for instance).

However, Tarkovsky, it can be argued, appears to have been swayed by the specific idiom of Russian iconography. This is largely a subjective contention, based on a reading of his films: Tarkovsky rarely mentions icons in his writings, and never directly acknowledges their influence on his own work. Despite the director's rather voguish reputation as an 'icon painter in film'[46] there is, indeed, little empirical evidence to justify this appellation. An 'icon painter in film' is a title which, as Vladimir Lossky says in another context, 'through being too rich in meaning, runs the risk of finally having none'.[46a] However, indirect acknowledgement of iconic influence is implicit in declarations of the following nature: 'closest of all to me is ancient *Russian* painting';[47] or again: 'In my view the status of Russian iconography is unattainable by any other art, including perhaps that of the Italian Renaissance'[48]; or, elsewhere, in the confluence Tarkovsky apparently perceived between the revelatory purpose of icons, and the

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pp.29-30.

[46] Few critics have explained what is meant by this rather vague term. It is found in the following articles: Peter Green, 'Andrei Tarkovsky 1932-1986', Sight and Sound, 56 (Spring 1987), 108-109 (p.109); and 'Andreï Tarkovsky après sept films', p.167. The same thought is expressed in slightly different terms in: Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.83; Guy Gauthier, Andrei Tarkovsky (Paris, 1988), p.37; Jacques Demeure, 'Nous sommes tous des peintres medievaux', Positif, 117 (1970), 65-67 (p.67); and Barthélemy Amengual, 'Tarkovski le rebelle: non-conformisme ou restauration?', Positif, 247 (1981), 3-15 (p.12).

[46a] Cited in Ouspensky, p. 11.

[47] Cited in Viktor Loisha, 'Takoe kino', Druzhba narodov, 1 (1989), 214-232 (p.228).

[48] Lektsii po kinorezhissure, p.120.

nature of the creative process itself:

> When one kneels before an icon to pray, one finds the right words in order to express one's love to God: but these words remain secret, mysterious. Similarly, when an artist [creates] he also is praying, he is communing with God in the creation of his art, and he finds the right words. This is part of the mystery of Creation. Art here takes the form of a gift. Art cannot 'serve' unless it is a gift.[49]

A similar conflation of the icon and prayer is conveyed through Tarkovsky's mouthpiece Alexander, as the latter peruses a large volume containing plates of Russian icons. This is his assessment: 'Such remarkable refinement. Such wisdom and spirituality, and such pure, childlike innocence. At once profound, and yet virginal. It's unbelievable, like a prayer. And yet it is all lost; we no longer know even how to pray.'[50]

Significantly, Tarkovsky was familiar with Vladimir Lossky's seminal The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (London, 1973),[51] and with a work that

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[49] Cited in Antoine de Baecque, 'Portrait d'un cinéaste en moine poéte', in Andrei Tarkovski, edited by Antoine de Baecque (Paris, 1989), pp.106-111 (p.111).

[50] Le Sacrifice, p.67.

[51] According to his diaries. See Andrei Tarkovsky, Time Within Time: The Diaries, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), p.156. Lossky's work is pivotal to any understanding of the fundamental tenets of the Orthodox dogmatic tradition. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church in particular features certain aspects of icon painting which have a special relevance to Tarkovsky's aesthetic, including the symbolical opposition of light and darkness, contemplation, beauty, transfiguration and tradition.

has already been mentioned: Father Pavel Florensky's The Iconostasis.[52] Florensky's extraordinarily wide-ranging essay deals not only with the theology of the icon, but with such diverse subjects as Medieval, Renaissance and modern painting, music and the interpretation of dreams. As will be seen in later chapters, many of Florensky's views on these matters have a direct bearing on Tarkovsky's own treatment of such themes. However, the real importance of The Iconostasis lies in the unparalleled brilliance and profundity of the passages relating to the metaphysics of the icon; and it is these which appear to have had the greatest impact on Tarkovsky's own aesthetic views.

Iconic influence on Tarkovsky is manifest mainly in two areas: in the adherence to key iconographic principles or conventions, and in concrete or symbolic representations of iconic images or motifs. Three of the most important iconographic principles - contemplation, transfigured reality and tradition - are essential elements of Tarkovskian cinema. Let us consider each of the above in turn.

The preponderance of 'contemplative' imagery in Tarkovsky, and the emphasis laid on the virtue of contemplation in his writings, owes much to Tarkovsky's

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[52] Mentioned briefly in Sculpting in Time, p.82; and more comprehensively in his unpublished Lektsii po kinorezhissure. The important influence of The Iconostasis on many of Tarkovsky's aesthetic and philosophical convictions has thus far gone unnoticed by Western scholars, no doubt in part due to the lack of an adequate, full-length translation of the latter into any major European language. For an account of the controversy which has arisen in connection with the publication of this work, both in Russia and elsewhere, see John Lindsey Opie, 'On the Icon', Eastern Churches Review, 8 (1976), 11-13 (p.11).

fundamentally neo-Platonic views on the meaning and purpose of art, and to his intuitive sympathy for icon-painting. For Plato, contemplation was the sole means by which a superior or 'transfigured' reality could be perceived,[53] a process which Plato saw as the return of the soul to the realm of the divine. In his essay on Plato, Andrew Louth has written the following:

> The soul is naturally divine and seeks to return to the divine realm. And it does this in the act of contemplation - *theoria* - of Being, Truth, Beauty, Goodness. This act of *theoria* is not simply consideration or understanding; it is union with, participation in, the true objects of true knowledge.[54]

In order to contrive the appropriate contemplative response from the viewer, Tarkovsky employs conventional cinematic constructs: frequent tracking shots, lengthy takes, silences, extended imagery of nature, painting or actual icons, and the tactic of permitting the camera a measure of freedom to ignore what appears to be the main action of the scene (two people talking for instance) and follow an apparently independent course of its own. (In Stalker, the discussion between the Writer and the Scientist while the camera pans along a river bed, is one example). This technique has also been adopted by such cinéastes as Godard who, like Tarkovsky, used it as a means to increase the viewer's sense of participation (another key Platonic principle) in the scene. Participation is central to

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[53] This will be considered in more detail later in the chapter.

[54] Andrew Louth, The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition (Oxford, 1989), p.3.

Tarkovsky's purpose, and in some ways can be likened to the narrative techniques that Tolstoi used to increase the reader's 'affective awareness' of a scene. In his analysis of War and Peace Richard Gustafson concludes:

> The mode of narration which thrusts the reader into the scene, not the psyche, creates for the reader an effect of presence. The reader participates, not in the character's inner knowledge, but in the character's experience of the event as the character is experiencing the event.[55]

Interestingly, Gustafson compares Tolstoi's method to the art of film, and throughout his book employs such cinematic terms as 'close-up' and 'slow-motion'.[56] With its emphasis on participation the above effect can usefully be compared to the impact of certain Tarkovskian sequences. Professors Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have pointed to the intrinsicality of participation and contemplation to any proper understanding of Tarkovskian aesthetics:

> Participation forces the viewer to transform perceptions into observations, permitting him to understand the profound relationships [between man and the world] that Tarkovsky can not make clear in any other way; the viewer has to capture

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[55] Richard Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy - Resident and Stranger (Princeton, 1986), p.256.

[56] Tolstoi himself, of course, was not unaware of the extraordinary potential of the new art form to confer an immediacy and intimacy that he felt increasingly lacking in literature. He wrote: 'I rather like [the cinema]. This blending of emotion and experience - it is much better than the heavy, long-drawn-out kind of writing to which we have become accustomed. It is closer to life. [...] The cinema has divined the mystery of motion. And that is greatness'. Cited in Jay Leyda, Kino: a History of the Russian and Soviet Film (London, 1983), p.410.

them through the images.[57]

Such imagery, self-evidently, does not seek merely to illustrate: it provides the ambience essential to any serious understanding of the spiritual essence of the film. In religious art and philosophy contemplation is often associated with the acquisition of faith,[58] and the association of both elements is also clearly implicit in Tarkovsky's purpose. The most forceful demonstrations of this occur in Stalker, and centre on the Stalker's three monologues on the loss of faith in contemporary society (the first two addressed to his two companions, the third to his wife). On each occasion the Stalker's polemic is followed by long, uninterrupted, slow-paced and strikingly beautiful shots (the pan along a river bed; the rain-shower in the Room; the apparent telekinetic powers of the Stalker's daughter), giving the viewer time to reflect on the discourse. Contemplation, in imagery of this nature, is simply the means by which the viewer can begin to apprehend the existence of a superior or transfigured reality. However, as the director made clear in an early essay, a degree of empathy and effort on the part of the audience is essential:

> Any idea that is offered to the audience indirectly, and that is correctly perceived by the audience in spite of the indirect treatment, will be all the more appreciated by that audience because it calls upon the

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[57] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.36.

[58] As Merton has written: 'Contemplation is a kind of spiritual vision to which both reason and faith aspire, by their very nature, because without it they must always remain incomplete'. Merton, p.1.

creative efforts of the audience itself.[59]

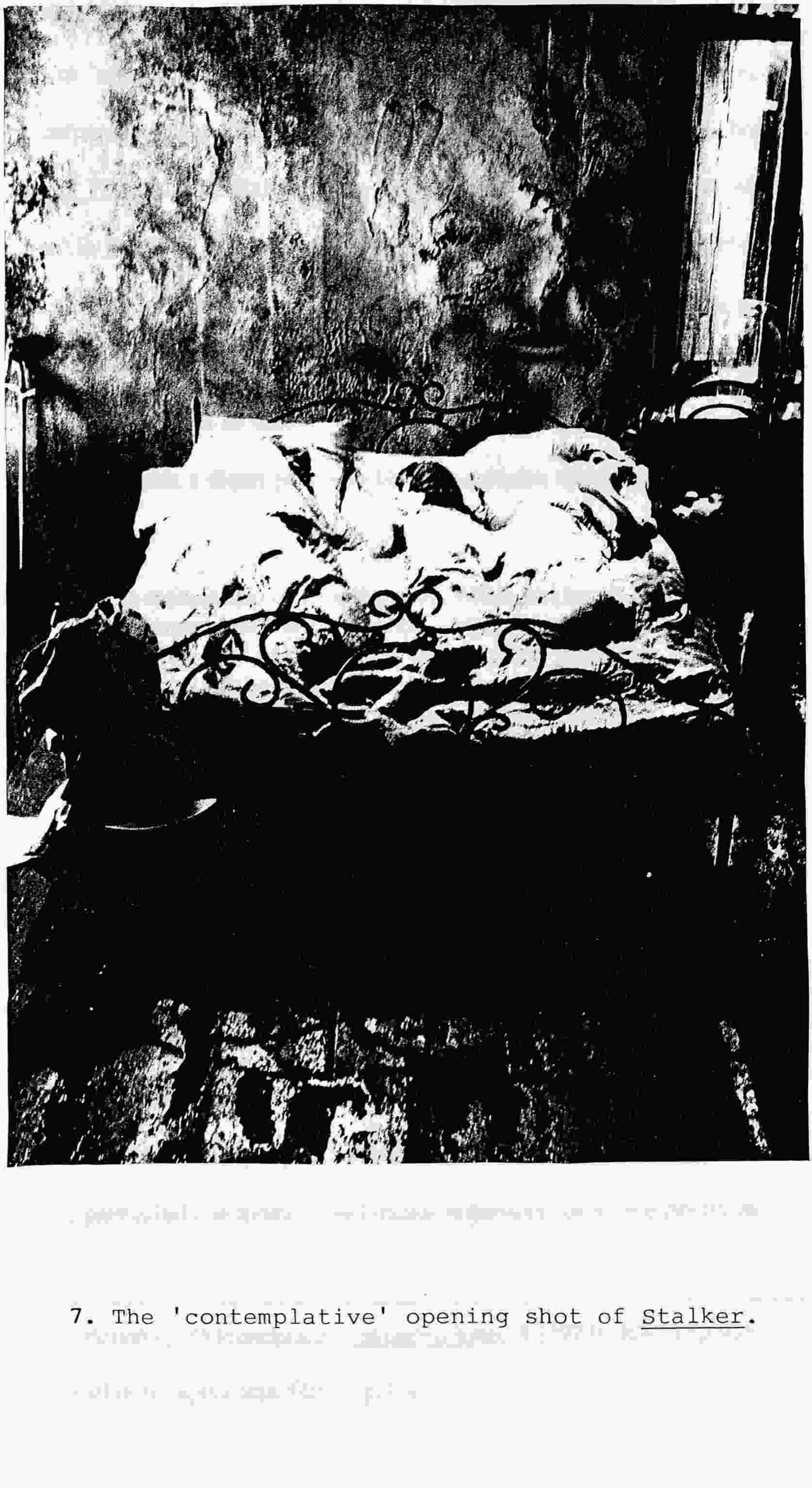
The contemplative quality of Tarkovsky's films is further underlined by his approach to time, which is radically different to that of most other filmmakers. The lengthy duration and extreme slowness of his films marks a sharp departure from the montage techniques elaborated by such film theorists as Eisenstein. This can be illustrated by the simple expedient of comparing the structures of such films as Stalker and Eisenstein's October. Stalker, a film which lasts 161 minutes, has some 142 shots; October, which lasts only 103 minutes, has 3225. Similarly, Mirror, a film which lasts 106 minutes, has only about two hundred shots - less than half the number one would expect in a film of that length. This dramatic restriction in terms of the number of shots in Tarkovsky's films and corresponding increase in length, heightens their meditative quality, and underlines the lack of importance of dramatic structure or plot.[60] Tarkovsky's reticence on the subject of narrative structure in his films should be seen in this context; it also partly elucidates the loose structure of such films as Andrei Rublev, Mirror, and Nostalgia (the structure of Mirror was rearranged more than twenty times before the final version took shape).

Structure in Tarkovsky generally yields to the primacy of the image, and to

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[59] Cited in Turovskaya, p.19.

[60] The lengthy opening sequence of Stalker is a typical instance of this. Shots of more than one and a half minutes duration are unusual in cinema: this sequence lasts more than eight and a half minutes.



7. The 'contemplative' opening shot of Stalker.

the prevailing sense of 'captured time'. For Tarkovsky, time was a medium to be controlled or 'sculpted'; cinema's uniqueness lay in its ability to capture time, to give it a corporeality that could convey spiritual substance. The title of his book (Sculpting in Time), of his diaries (Time Within Time) and the appearance of the word 'time' in the titles of various other critical writings, reflects the belief that lay at the heart of his exegesis. He wrote: 'I see my task to be the creation of my own, personal stream of time, the realization on the screen of my own perception of the movement or flight of time'.[61] As Barthélemy Amengual has observed, there is in this attitude a direct parallel with the aesthetics of icon painting:

> The materialism of Byzantine art, which conferred on the immateriality of the divine a palpable body by inscribing it in gold, enamel, stained glass, precious stones ... can be compared to the quasi-materiality that Tarkovsky conveys in the duration of his shots. The icon transposes spiritual 'qualities' into physical space; Tarkovsky transposes them into physical time.[62]

The meditative quality of Tarkovsky's images is further enhanced by his frequent use of the tracking shot. Unlike the zoom, whose essentially artificial effect actually distances the viewer from the scene, the moving camera increases the viewer's sense of participation, mysteriously bringing him into the image, and making it easier for him to grasp its essence. Tarkovsky uses tracking shots extensively, particularly in memory and dream sequences, or where poetry is

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[61] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'O kinoobraze', Iskusstvo kino, 3 (1979), 80-93 (p.92).

[62] 'Andreï Tarkovski après sept films', p.168.

being recited. The slow movement of the camera achieves two things: it heightens the poetic, contemplative effect of the sequence, and it represents the viewpoint of the viewer, who, in consequence, actually seems to be participating directly in the event. The opening and closing sequences of Mirror, where the camera emerges from or retreats into the forest, are conventional Tarkovskian travelling shots: on both occasions the viewer is intimately involved in the action; both scenes are based on memories; and both are accompanied by music or poetry. As a result of these techniques an intense feeling of empathy is aroused in the viewer towards the individual concerned. In this case, one is given a sense of the personal tragedy surrounding Tarkovsky's mother - a young woman who was abandoned by her husband during the war years and compelled to raise two young children unaided.[63]

Contemplation is essential to any proper appreciation of Tarkovsky's most poetic imagery.[64] Lengthy takes, slow-paced shots of natural landscapes, of organic objects and of water and fire have an obvious 'contemplative' quality. The

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[63] A remarkable instance of audience participation in Mirror is evident in a letter received by Tarkovsky from a 'working woman from Novosibirsk': 'Everything that torments me, everything I don't have and that I long for, that makes me indignant, or sick, or suffocates me, everything that gives me a feeling of light and warmth, and by which I live, and everything that destroys me - it's all there in your film, I see it as if in a mirror. For the first time ever a film has become something real for me, and that's why I go to see it, I want to get inside it, so that I can really be alive'. Cited in Sculpting in Time, p.12.

[64] One of the more unquantifiable influences on Tarkovsky's aesthetic is Zen poetry, in particular the *haiku* of the Japanese poet, Basho (1644-1694) for whom Tarkovsky had a great regard. Nevertheless, the qualities that distinguish Zen art - simplicity, naturalness, directness, profundity and especially the importance which Zen attributes to contemplation, have an obvious parallel in Tarkovsky's overall approach to art.

forest scene in Andrei Rublev, the garden at the beginning of Solaris, the gust of wind which sweeps the field of buckwheat in the opening sequence of Mirror, the long rail-car journey and the rain shower in the ruined building in Stalker: these are events which are irrelevant in terms of the dramatic structure of these films. However, their importance, as suggested above, does not lie in the structural context. Such images slow the pace of the film, giving the viewer time to reflect on what has gone before, or on what has just been said. Often the subjective, personal associations out of which these images are conceived inhibit any rational attempt to attribute 'meaning'. Occasionally, though, scenes like this allow for the introduction of motifs which have a wide resonance in Russian culture.[65] The contemplation of such motifs by the 'receptive viewer' was important to Tarkovsky as a means by which the meaning of the film as a whole could be grasped. He wrote:

> [By contemplation] I mean the viewer working out for himself that which has given birth to the artistic image or thought. It is completely personal. The artistic form, the sense of the image can only flow from observation. If it is not based on contemplation, then the image becomes a symbol, which can be explained by reason. But then, the artistic image no longer exists.[66]

Like all art Tarkovsky's films, while objectively perceived by their creator,

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[65] One example is the 'Trinity' motif, whose symbolism in Tarkovsky is dealt with in more detail on pages 151-155.

[66] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Krasota - simvol pravdy...', Literaturnaya gazeta, 8 April 1987, p.8.

must be subjectively received by the viewer, who can approach them only through the prism of his or her own experience and spiritual condition. However, the distinctive blend of beauty and metaphor that characterizes Tarkovsky's work suggests a further, and most significant, analogy with icon-painting: the icon, according to Alpatov, is 'not so much an object of worship as of contemplation, through which the eternal mysteries of existence are revealed to man.'[67]

Tarkovskian imagery, similarly, suggests a reality which is beyond the immediate sensory world, a transfigured world which can be apprehended by the attuned viewer through contemplation.[68]

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The significance for icon painting of the notion that there exist two separate spheres of consciousness - an earthly, historical reality, and a 'superior' reality - has already been briefly mentioned. This idea is not of course exclusive to Orthodoxy, but is central to mystical thought in any tradition, including that of the West (Erigena, Eckhart, Böhme); as well as being a primary concern of Western

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[67] Art Treasures of Russia, p.96.

[68] This perception of contemplation as a means to attain a higher, more perfect, reality is shared by many Russian philosophers. In The Spiritual Foundations of Life (Dukhovnie osnovy zhizni), for instance, Vladimir Solov'ev writes: 'Contemplation requires of man that he should *come out* of the world, rising as it were to the surface of the dark water into the sunlight of ideas, breaking out from bodily existence as from a prison or a shroud. The dualism and antithesis of the ideal and the real worlds remain insoluble, there can be no conciliation between them.' Vladimir Solov'ev, Sobranie sochinenii, second edition, 10 vols (St. Petersburg, 1911-1914), iii, 360.

philosophers from Plato onwards. Even Kant's largely rational philosophy consisted largely in demonstrating that 'appearance is not reality'; and Schopenhauer speculated about 'the more real world to be revealed by thinking'.[69] 'Man', wrote Berdyaev, 'has always been and still remains a dual being participating in two worlds: in the highest divine and free world, whose image he is, and in the natural world in which he is immersed.'[70] The evidence of Tarkovsky's films is that this idea also plays an important role in his aesthetic and philosophical conceptions.

In Tarkovsky's art the existence of separate spheres, or worlds, has already been recognized by a number of critics. One scholar has postulated the existence of two distinct realities (he uses the word 'zones') in each one of Tarkovsky's films;[71] and Professors Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have largely based their book, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski, on this phenomenon (as the title would suggest). The latter contend that certain aspects of Tarkovsky's work are directly comparable with the art of icon painting in their capacity to represent another reality. One example they cite demonstrates the central importance for Tarkovsky of his Russian roots: the frequent allusion to specific motifs[72] which have a profound

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[69] Arthur Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, edited by R.J. Hollingdale (London, 1985), p.12.

[70] Nikolai Berdyaev, Smysl istorii (Berlin, 1923), p.98.

[71] See Dmitrii Salynsky, 'Rezhisser i mif', Iskusstvo kino, 12 (1988), 79-91.

[72] One instance of this is the *yurodivyi* motif, which is peculiarly suited to the task of evoking another reality, as Bishop Kallistos Ware has pointed out: '[The *yurodivyi*] is a living witness to the truth that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; he testifies to the reality of the 'anti-world', to the possibility of the

resonance in Russian culture. They write:

> Tarkovsky uses cultural citations as icons (the latter *represent* something)... In effect his images no longer describe the world but show a certain conception of the world. This reality manifests itself through the images.[73]

In Tarkovsky, this 'two world' duality is, once again, linked to his essentially Platonic views of art. 'The function of art', Tarkovsky wrote, 'is to mollify [*razmyagchit'*] the human soul, to render it capable of turning to good'.[74] Moreover, art (according to Tarkovsky) is the only means by which one can recognise and define the Absolute. This conviction, which is central to Tarkovsky's aesthetic, is expressed in various forms in his writings, where such terms as the Absolute (*absolutnoe / absolyut*), the infinite (*beskonechnoe*), absolute truth (*absolutnaya istina*), spiritual truth (*dukhovnaya istina*), the eternal (*vechnoe*), the ideal (*ideal'noe*) occur frequently. What emerges from these essays is Tarkovsky's acceptance of a 'higher reality' - a world of the senses, completely distinguished from the world of the intellect:

> Through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form.

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impossible.' The Orthodox Way, p.131. See also the discussion of the *yurodivye* in Chapter One.

[73] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.39.

[74] Cited in Aleksandr Glezer, 'Ya schitayu sebya prodolzhatelem klassicheskoi russkoi kul'turnoi traditsii', Strelets, 4 (1985), 37-41 (p.41).

> Art could be said to be a symbol of the universe, being linked with that absolute spiritual truth which is hidden from us in our positivistic, pragmatic activities.[75]

In Plato's Republic the dichotomy between appearance and reality is conveyed by means of the famous parable of the cave, according to which those who are bereft of spiritual vision are compared to prisoners sitting in a dark cave with their backs to the light watching the play of their shadows: the shadows are appearance, the light comes from the 'real world'. The prisoner who escaped the darkness of the cave, into the light, Plato adjured to return to his fellow-prisoners and instruct them as to the truth. Philosophy, for Plato, is a kind of vision, a 'vision of truth'. Reality is truth, and truth is synonymous with *good*. Bertrand Russell has put it as follows: 'The underlying assumption [in Plato] is that reality, as opposed to appearance is completely and perfectly good; to perceive the good, therefore, is to perceive reality'.[76]

Tarkovsky's own views on art are consistent with this philosophy. Like Plato, Tarkovsky believed that the artist / philosopher could apprehend the 'more real' world by means of a vision, and that ultimately only art was able to convey the nature of that vision to the reader or viewer. Citing Florensky's The Iconostasis, Tarkovsky found it helpful to elucidate this notion in terms that echo Plato's own metaphor:

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[75] Sculpting in Time, p.37.

[76] Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (London, 1984), p.141.

> In his reflections on the nature of the icon, Pavel Florensky writes: 'Imagine that you are in a sealed and locked room, but one which has a window slightly ajar, through which you are able to speculate about the existence of another world'.[77]

In most of Tarkovsky's films dreams, memories, sound effects, colour changes and the techniques of 'transcendental style' are the favoured means of communicating his vision of 'another world'. Above all, Tarkovsky continually sought to underline the prevailing sense of ambiguity in his work by deliberately introducing contradictions, paradoxes and antinomies. As Anna Lawton has observed, there is in this attitude a further parallel with the aesthetic principles of icon painting:

> If time gives the image the corporeal weight that makes it perceptible, the visual compositional elements confer to the image its ambiguity - the ambiguity that affords a glance beyond the representation of the image itself into the world of things unseen. The ambiguity (or, in Christian terms, the mystery) is usually generated by the mediation of paradoxes. The icon by its very nature mediates a paradox, being at the same time representation and presence of the Truth. Tarkovskii's cinematic icons, without being sacred objects, are nevertheless meant to integrate irreconcilable opposites.[78]

Antinomies[79] occur in most of Tarkovsky's films, and serve to underline his

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[77] Lektsii po kinorezhissure, p.24.

[78] Anna Lawton, 'Art and Religion in the Films of Andrei Tarkovskii', in Christianity and the Arts in Russia, edited by W. Brumfield (Cambridge, 1991), pp.151-164 (p.160).

[79] The 'antinomian' dialectic of irrationality was introduced into the tradition of

conviction that there can exist two equally true, yet apparently conflicting, realities; and that 'reality' can be perceived only subjectively. In The Meaning of History, Berdyaev assessed the value of antinomies as follows:

> The knowledge of Absolute life can only be attained through the recognition of the antinomy of this life. This contradiction is a sign that we are communing with the deepest mysteries of spiritual life, which we cannot approach through the superficial criteria of formal logic.[80]

Ivan's Childhood contains an early suggestion of antinomy: in a dream sequence Ivan is standing with his mother at the head of a well. His mother remarks that even during the daytime the well is deep enough for it to reveal stars on the surface of its water. Ivan asks how it is possible to see stars when it is not night. His mother answers: 'For us it is day, for them it is night.' In Andrei Rublev, as the three monks are leaving the Trinity monastery, they are unable to agree on the number of years they have lived in the monastery, and finally accept the subjectivity of each of their views. In Mirror, the boy, Asafiev, when ordered to 'about turn', completes a turn of three hundred and sixty degrees, ending up in his original position. An argument then ensues with his instructor over the

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modern Russian thought by Florensky. In Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny, he points out that single Truth is possible 'only in heaven', while here, on Earth, there are a number of truths. Thus, for instance, there are many dogmatic antinomies: Divine Oneness and Trinity, predestination and free will etc. 'Only at moments of illumination by grace are those contradictions reconciled in the mind, not rationally but in a superrational way.' Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny (Moscow, 1914), p.159.

[80] Smysl istorii, p.64.

different interpretations of the verb 'to turn' (*povorachivat'sia*). In Nostalgia, Domenico inscribes on his wall the formula: 1 + 1 = 1. Later, Gorchakov reinforces this attack on Euclidian logic with his demonstration that two drops of water, when joined, become, not two, but one.[81]

Throughout Tarkovsky's films the effect of this strategy is to awaken in the viewer a sense of the irrational, anticipating the latter's eventual recognition of a 'two-world' duality. In Stalker irrationality takes the form of an arcane ritual, deviation from which, according to the Stalker, threatens instant retribution. In the Zone, we are told, 'the straightest path is not the shortest'. Progress by the Stalker and his two clients is correspondingly slow, and follows a set pattern: one of the men hurls a metal nut in a direction indicated by the Stalker. When one of the men has retrieved the nut it is adjudged safe for his companions to follow, after which the procedure is repeated. Again, the only purpose of this and other seemingly pointless procedures laid down by the Stalker is to inculcate in his clients a respect for the irrational, the acquisition of which is the first and most crucial step towards perceiving the 'higher reality'. In Stalker this is symbolized by the Zone, at the centre of which is the Room:

> The whole tactic of the Stalker consists in stretching the credulity of his clients, in strengthening their belief in the Room. They have to comply with his absurd rules, and are incited to perform actions

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[81] Domenico's 1 + 1 = 1 formula may be another allusion to Florensky's Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny, whose epigraph *finis amoris ut duo unum fiant* (the end of love is that two should become one) expresses the main idea of Florensky's metaphysics, namely the dogma of consubstantiality.

> whose outcome is uncertain. Thanks to these demands he thinks that his clients will be ready to enter the Room, not only because they will believe in it, but above all, because they will no longer need to test the reality of its power in order to retain their faith.[82]

Sacrifice features the previously untried register of the parable in conveying this concept. Three parables are related: the first and third by Alexander, the second by Otto the postman. The moral of all three lies outside the boundaries of conventional wisdom, and two contain elements of the fantastic. The 'parable of the dried-up tree' tells of Pavva, an Orthodox monk, who plants a withered tree on the summit of a mountain, entreating his disciple, Ivan Kolov, to keep it watered each day. After three years of apparently wasted effort, Kolov arrives one day to find it in full flower. The 'parable of the strange photograph' concerns a woman who is photographed with her son in 1940; she forgets to collect the photograph; her son is killed in the war; twenty years later her picture is taken again, and the image of the woman's lost son appears beside her in the photo. Finally, there is the 'parable of the defiled garden', which Alexander relates to Maria. Some years before, Alexander had visited his mother, who was on her death bed. Alexander, without asking her opinion, undertakes to put in order the garden which she had neglected for years. When the work has finally been completed he realizes, belatedly, that he has destroyed the pristine beauty of the place.[83]

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[82] Jacques Gerstenkorn and Sylvie Strudel, 'La quête et la foi' in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.75-104 (p.93).

[83] These stories are a measure of the affection Tarkovsky felt for the fantastic tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann, whose works exercised a strong influence on Russian literature in the 1830s. Tarkovsky's appreciation of Hoffmann led (in 1975-76) to

Scriptural sources provide some understanding of the power of parables to convey fundamental truths. Christ's own justification of the parable is conveyed in the following terms:

> It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to [others] it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (Matthew 13. 11-13).

Parables, in these terms, are consistent with Tarkovsky's aim of suggesting directly in images the existence of a 'higher reality'. Such stories should foster our awareness of the 'invisible world', and nurture our sense of a spiritual reality. 'Truly, we are blind', concludes Otto, 'we see nothing'.[84] Twenty years before, in Andrei Rublev, we find a similar maxim: 'Everything contains a truth that escapes description',[85] Rublev tells his apprentice Foma.

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his writing Hoffmanniana, a film scenario on the life of the German writer. (This scenario was published in Iskusstvo kino, 8 (1976), 167-189). The film was never made.

In common with Dostoevsky and other Russian writers, Tarkovsky perceived in Hoffmann an aspiration towards 'an ideal', towards a higher 'more beautiful' reality. Joseph Frank, in assessing his influence on Dostoevsky, writes: 'What gives Hoffmann the upper hand is that the supernatural and unearthly interpenetrate and fuse in his work with the commonplace and the versimilar; sometimes Hoffmann even seeks his ideal outside the earthly, in some extraordinary world that he accepts as superior, as if he himself believed in the existence of this mysterious enchanted world'. Joseph Frank, Dostoyevsky (London, 1987), p.75.

[84] Le Sacrifice, p.84.

[85] This phrase does not feature in the film scenario.

The role of antinomies, parables, the ritual of Stalker and the occasional Biblical aphorism is essentially precursive: by such means the way is prepared for the viewer's eventual apprehension of the 'inner world'. But in each of Tarkovsky's films the two-world duality is given a more concrete, physical symbolism. The means by which this is conveyed differs from film to film, but the boundary between both worlds is always clearly defined and the 'other world' is always more spiritual and interior than the sensory world.

Stalker contains the clearest and most physical demonstration of the 'other world': the Zone. Its status is clear, not only from the lengthy approach on the rail-car which precedes the arrival of the Stalker and his clients, but from the extreme difficulties the three men encounter in traversing the boundary which separates it from the 'everyday world' (the barbed-wire fence, the volley of gunfire).[86] Another significant feature of Stalker is Tarkovsky's subtle use of colour to distinguish between the different realms. The entire opening section of the film is shot in sepia: the film changes to colour only when the three men arrive in the Zone. The Zone is shot entirely in colour, apart from the two brief dreams of the Stalker, where the photography reverts to sepia. After leaving the Zone, sepia tones are again used until the final sequence featuring the Stalker's daughter Martyshka, which is filmed in colour.

The main theme of Stalker is faith, and the two-world duality of the film

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[86] The crossing of the frontier between the two worlds in Tarkovsky is invariably marked by similar trials.

might be expressed in allegorical terms of faith and non-faith. The colour coding seems to delineate these divisions fairly consistently: the contingent world is essentially a spiritual desert, devoid of faith (and correspondingly of colour). The Zone is the Church: an irrational place with its own religious ritual, whose mission is to nurture faith.[87] And, just as the colours of the icons are central to their metaphysical purpose,[88] the transfigured image in Tarkovsky is also colourful. As suggested above, colour and beauty are synonymous in his images: the aim of both is to depict the invisible world. The final colour scene of Stalker, where the Stalker's daughter is shot alone, is a poignant demonstration of this: Martyshka has faith, yet, as is not the case with her father, her faith is intuitive and not kept alive by frequent visits to the Zone. Martyshka, though a cripple (a *yurodivaya*), has the inner strength and conviction her father lacks: her apparent telekinetic ability is the proof of this. Martyshka perceives the invisible world effortlessly, and to her therefore the world is full of colour.

In Ivan's Childhood:

> A profound metaphysical gulf separates the two worlds; this is the organizing principle of the film, and the action is concentrated on the possibility of throwing a bridge across this gulf. Everything centres on one question: is it possible to cross the gulf - the river - which separates the two worlds, the world of

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[87] The symbolism may be as follows: The Zone = The Church, The Room = Altar. As Florensky has observed 'the Church is the ladder of Jacob that leads from the visible to the invisible, but the altar is the place of the Invisible itself'. 'Ikonostas', p.96.

[88] See pages 110-111.

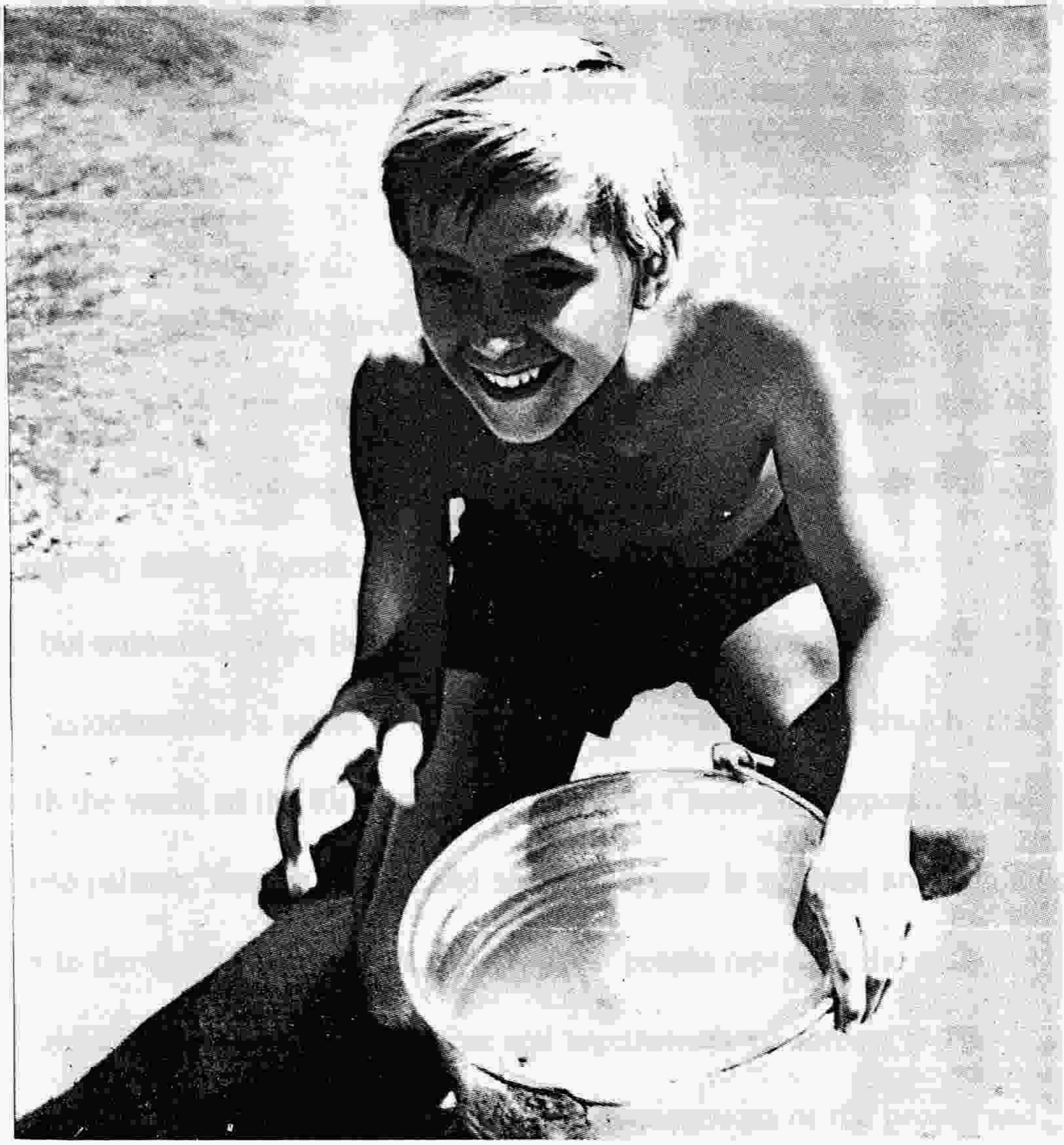
life, and the world of death?[89]

War and Peace, Death and Life, are the realities of Ivan's Childhood. The immediate, historical reality is the Second World War, opposed to which is the other world of Ivan's dreams, memories and visions. Throughout the film the immediate reality (the war) is for the most part a world of darkness and shadows: the night crossings of the river, the bunker and forest scenes. The inner world of Ivan's dreams is a world of light: idyllic summer days at the dacha, and childhood memories of his mother. But Ivan's dreams are the only link between the world of war and the world of peace: Ivan, in Sartre's words, has been 'forged by violence',[90] he has become brutalized and is at home only with those men who, like himself, have adjusted themselves psychologically to the 'realities' of war, who feel at ease with war. Such a man is Captain Kholin, Ivan's closest friend. His counterpoint is the nervous, but cultured, Lieutenant Galstev, who shows Ivan the Dürer engravings, and who possesses a record-player. Galstev feels ill at ease with the war, is familiar with German culture, speaks good German and does not see the Germans as enemies. Ivan naturally has only contempt for the lieutenant. The only world remaining to Ivan is the war: it is for this reason that he refuses to be sent to an orphanage behind the lines. Yet Ivan, like most of the protagonists of the film, does not survive the war. Ultimate survival in the film is not merely physical, but ethical: Galstev is capable of preserving a vision of the inner ethical world and, for this reason, he is the only

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[89] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.53.

[90] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'A propos de l'enfance d'Ivan', in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.5-13 (p.7).



8. The 'more real' world of dreams in Ivan's Childhood.

character in Ivan's Childhood to survive. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have written: 'In Tarkovsky's films man must acquire an ethical force and an interior peace to be capable of [survival]'.[91]

In Andrei Rublev physical survival is again linked to spiritual salvation. Rublev's inner journey, his quest for faith, is the ethical core of the film, and is essentially dependent on events which occur in the exterior world during Rublev's physical journey through Russia. Rublev's role seems, therefore, passive: he observes, but outwardly plays little part in the action of the film. His world, though, is associated (by a series of cultural motifs - icons, the bell, church, the forest) with the world of the Russian people, with the Country as opposed to the State, whose palaces, feuding princes and soldiers, appear in contrast and symbolic opposition to the world of the people. The Russian people represent the real, ethical world of tradition, religion, culture and togetherness (*sobornost'*). The State is the historical world: superficial, violent, contemptuous of the people and their traditions. The brutal world of the State causes Rublev's loss of faith; the selfless example of the people, exemplified by the communal casting of the bell, is his salvation.

The two worlds of Solaris suggest a related theme, and one which appears in various guises in Tarkovsky's films: how does one establish a relationship with the community and the tradition it represents without sacrificing one's own individuality? In common with Andrei Rublev, the 'more real' world of Solaris

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[91] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.56.

takes the form of an inner journey by the hero of the film. Kris Kelvin's quest, like Rublev's, is accompanied by a series of cultural motifs, though now it is not Russia that represents the Tradition, but the natural and cultural riches of the Earth itself. Brueghel's paintings, the bust of Socrates, Rublev's 'Trinity', the music of Bach, the natural beauty of the garden in the opening scene: these provide a glaring contrast with the emblems of the historical world, which include not only the soulless, technological artificiality of the space station Solaris, but also the bleak vision of the modern city described by Burton's lengthy road journey. In Solaris, Kelvin's acquisition of 'ethical force' takes the form of the reawakening of love for his dead wife Hari. His rediscovery of the other, ethical, world, his redemption by love, is presented by Tarkovsky as the return of the prodigal son; this is the meaning of the final scene in which Kelvin kneels before his father, symbol *par excellence* of continuity, tradition and community.

In Mirror the inner world is exclusively the world of dreams and memories of a dying man. The ultimate consequence of the narrator's fatal illness, in the manner of the hero of Tolstoi's story The Death of Ivan Ilyich, is his spiritual and ethical rebirth.[92] In Mirror the present features only in the penultimate (hospital room) scene, though even here we do not see the narrator himself. The rest of the

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[92] The notion of spiritual rebirth through illness or suffering, close to Tarkovsky, is also of course a familiar feature of the work of other Russian writers and philosophers. As Dostoevsky observes in Crime and Punishment: 'A man in health is above all a man of this earth and is bound for the sake of completeness and order to live only in this life. But as soon as one is ill, as soon as the normal earthly order of the organism is broken, one begins to realize the possibility of another world; and the more seriously ill one is the closer becomes one's contact with the other world'. Sobranie sochinenii, v, p.279.

film is the world of the past, and is a world in which the narrator re-examines his life, chiefly in terms of his relationship with his mother, father, wife and son. In this way, memory itself becomes the means of salvation. Yet this anamnesis theme, which also appears in Solaris, has applications which go beyond the personal crisis of the narrator. By his use of newsreel film, Tarkovsky may be attempting to link the contemporary spiritual crisis of Soviet society with that of its past, and suggesting that only by remembering can Russia ever come to terms with her past.[93] 'All historical knowledge', wrote Berdyaev:

> ...is but a remembrance, one or other form of the triumph of memory over the spirit of corruption. By means of memory we resurrect the remote past which had seemingly perished or been engulfed in some dark abyss. Memory is therefore the eternal ontological basis of all history.[94]

This is the essence of the two-world duality in Mirror. The film, as one scholar has noted:

> ...alludes to the relationship between the contemporary Russian generation [Tarkovsky's own] and their spiritual forefathers. The mirror of the title is the mirror of memory. It is the film itself in so far as it unveils the forgotten history of Tarkovsky and his compatriots. In this way, Tarkovsky proves how

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[93] That, at least, is the inference to be drawn from Tarkovsky's claim that: 'One does not have the right to separate private events from those which have a historical dimension. The link between individual memory and history is also the subject of [Mirror]'. Cited in Jacques Fieschi and Dominique Maillet, 'Andrei Tarkovski', Cinématographe, 35 (1978), 25-27 (p.27).

[94] Smysl istorii, p.90.

> cinema can become the conscience of a race, the confessor of its guilt and remembrance of its past.[95]

The two worlds of Nostalgia is more complex. The division between the real and the 'more real' worlds can be interpreted in various ways, but essentially it appears to describe the rupture between past and present and / or between Russia and the West. Gorchakov's exile in Italy is the background to one of Tarkovsky's most resolutely autobiographical films, and the inner world of its hero is placed in stark opposition to Western culture and Western values. Tarkovsky has said the following of the film:

> I have always been interested in a person's inner world, and for me it was far more natural to make a journey into the psychology that informed the hero's attitude to life, into the history and cultural traditions that are the foundation of his spiritual world.[96]

Gorchakov's world is an inner world of memories and dreams of Russia, which are filmed in black and white or sepia. The extreme asceticism of these visions of Gorchakov's earlier life may be an attempt to convey what Tarkovsky regards as the most commendable features of the Russian psyche: incessant 'God-searching', simplicity, faith in the community, a love of internal freedom and a love of nature and art. In contradistinction to these quintessentially spiritual attributes, stand the symbols of the West: the Roman ruins, the churches, the seductive beauty of the Italian landscape, and the painting of Fra Angelico. Florensky, in The Iconostasis,

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[95] Richard Kearney, 'Mirrors of History', Film Directions, 3 (1978), 4-7 (p.7).

[96] Sculpting in Time, p.204.

speaks of the 'sensuality of Renaissance art'.[97] Tarkovsky undoubtedly shared many of Florensky's views on art, and in Nostalgia one senses that the director regards (post-medieval) Western art (and Western civilization in general) fundamentally as sensual and 'exterior': 'I have had enough of your beauties. You know nothing about Russia', Gorchakov lectures Eugenia. Eugenia is clearly the embodiment of Western values; her sensual beauty, apparent freedom, individualism and affluence signify that Eugenia is incapable of love, of earning Gorchakov's love or of acquiring faith. Consequently, despite her apparent freedom, Eugenia is inwardly ill at ease and unhappy: she is, though, too attached to the exterior world to be capable of salvation.

We have already seen in Ivan's Childhood and in Stalker the difficulty or impossibility of crossing the gulf which separates the two worlds.[98] In Nostalgia Gorchakov's 'nostalgia' is for a world that no longer exists: it is a world of the past, of nature, of childhood and of his dead mother. It is an idealized, ethical world to which return, particularly after Gorchakov's exposure to Western culture, is now impossible. Gorchakov's crisis is compounded by the gradual realization that for him there can be no return to this ideal,[99] and that life in the alternative,

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[97] 'Typical of the Renaissance world is a sensual, vivacious colourism combined with an awareness of the ontological fragility of the flesh'. 'Ikonostas', p.118.

[98] On this subject one is again reminded of Solov'ev: 'The dualism and antithesis of the ideal and the real worlds remains insoluble, there can be no conciliation between them.' Dukhovnie osnovy zhizni, p.360.

[99] This theme is underlined by references to the object of Gorchakov's research in Italy: an eighteenth-century peasant musician Pavel Sosnovsky (based on the life of Maximilian Berezovsky, 1745-1777) who committed suicide shortly after returning to Russia from a ten-year stay in Italy.

exterior world of despiritualized, sensual beauty and pointless aesthetics is equally impossible. Nor is the evangelistic, religious world, which the 'holy fool' Domenico represents, a solution. Domenico's method of 'saving the souls of men' relies on compulsion, on fear of the Last Judgement (an option dismissed by Tarkovsky in a previous film, in the course of the revealing conversation between Andrei Rublev and Daniil). Thus, 'for Tarkovsky, the community ethic is the most important, but if it is imposed other than through the free moral choice of the individual, the result is madness and terror'.[100] Ultimately, only one course is open to the person who is unable to come to terms with the physical world, and for whom the ethical world is a vision only of the past: Gorchakov dies because he is unable to preserve the 'ethical force' and inner harmony essential for the survival of all Tarkovsky's heroes. Nostalgia, however, ends on an optimistic note, in the statement of harmony and all-unity that is implicit in the concluding shot. This features a Russian landscape - a large, sloping, mist-covered field, a dacha, horses, a pond beside which Gorchakov is sitting with his dog. The camera moves back, revealing that the entire scene is contained within the roofless walls of a great Italian cathedral. The two worlds, the *mise en scène* seems to suggest, are no longer in conflict, but have finally attained a state of harmony and integration. Anna Lawton has interpreted this final shot in the following terms:

> On the conceptual level this composition suggests a surrealist landscape, where a small fragment of rural Russia sits comfortably inside the nave of a majestic Italian cathedral - the hero's subconscious effort to reconcile two opposite worlds. The main theme of the

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[100] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.163.

> film - the search for harmony and balance, for integration and wholeness - materializes in this concluding vision, in this fragment of sculpted time. The duration of this shot is long enough to become noticeable. The shot exceeds conventional duration, with the effect that time itself becomes a significant structural element. Furthermore, it is not a frozen frame, the mise-en-scène is perfectly still, but the running of the camera stresses the time element. And suddenly, snow starts falling on the Russian landscape through the cathedral's ceiling, suggesting at one time divine blessing and a congealed state of harmony. The artist has attained the absolute. In his icon he has created eternal life that exists simultaneously inside and beyond time.[101]

The most singular feature of Sacrifice is the universality of its ethical message. The film, shot in Sweden in 1986, could have been made in any northern European country at any time in the post-war period. This sense of isolation in time and space is enhanced by the choice of costumes and hairstyles, by the nature of the dialogue and by the architecture and landscape. The effect is to broaden the context of (and, consequently, deepen audience empathy for) the narrative as a whole, and the nature of the 'other world' in particular. In Sacrifice the latter takes up the entire central nocturnal section of the film and centres on Alexander's apocalyptic vision. This vision, the culmination of Alexander's growing world-weariness, ultimately provides the means of his salvation: the sacrifice of all that he holds dear in the name of a higher ideal. Tarkovsky is clear that his hero's vision means that he has forged a link with the 'inner world':

> [Alexander] takes the crucial step, thereby infringing

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[101] Lawton, p.160.

> the rules of 'normal' behaviour and laying himself open to the charge of folly, because he is conscious of his link with ultimate reality, with what could be termed world destiny.[102]

Alexander's 'link with ultimate reality', his perception of the inner world, takes a form that is anticipated in such films as Stalker and Nostalgia: the central, catalytic episode of Sacrifice is differentiated by means of a specific colour code from the rest of the film. Tarkovsky's use of colour is at its most complex and subtle in Sacrifice; a conscious attempt was made to eliminate colour as far as possible, with the result that transitions between the different realms of the film are almost imperceptible. Nevertheless, Alexander's vision, which begins with his looking for Little Man in the garden, and ends when he wakes up on the couch in the morning, is distinguished by darkly-lit sequences that are almost completely devoid of colour.

In describing Alexander's nightmare, the word 'vision' has been used above; it is, though, left deliberately ambiguous whether his experience is dream or reality. In all Tarkovsky's films the vision of the transfigured world has primarily an ethical function, and ultimately Alexander is saved by his *belief* in the vision, and by his decision the following morning to act on his vow despite the natural temptation to dismiss the entire experience as a dream. In speaking of this, his last film, Tarkovsky (unusually) has referred in direct terms to the two worlds of its hero. It is a definition that can be used without difficulty of any one of Tarkovsky's heroes:

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[102] Sculpting in Time, p.209.

> He is a man who knows that life does not consist only of material values, and that there is a transcendental world which is still to be revealed to him ... And when unhappiness appears, when disaster threatens, he, acting in accordance with his personality, turns to God as a last hope.[103]

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The importance of tradition to the art of icon-painting has already been suggested. This aspect of iconography is among the most important elements of Tarkovsky's aesthetic. One of the many apparent paradoxes surrounding Tarkovsky centres on the fact that, though he is now widely considered among the most innovative and original filmmakers of our time, Tarkovsky saw himself as one of the most traditional artists of his generation. Tarkovsky's views, if applied to painting or music, might now broadly be termed 'post-modernist': he saw his art as a reaction against what he described as 'the pretensions of modern "poetic cinema",'[104] and as a return to a form of naturalism which, in Soviet cinema, he considered characteristic chiefly of the films of Aleksandr Dovzhenko. However, Tarkovsky's traditionalism is rooted, it may be argued, not primarily in early Soviet cinema, but more deeply in Russian literature, philosophy and iconography. The view of the Hungarian scholar, Seladi Acosh, that Tarkovsky was the first

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[103] 'Andrei Tarkovsky o tvorchestve i o sebe', p.12.

[104] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Zapechatlennoe vremya', Iskusstvo kino, 4 (1967), 68-79 (p.73).

Soviet director to borrow from specifically Russian (as against Soviet) cultural traditions in such a manner, is an eloquent (though possibly overstated) testimony to this idea:

> Eisenstein was the founder of Soviet cinema of the revolutionary type. Tarkovsky pioneered the Russian cinema. When we say Russian, we do not mean national ideology or themes but something deeper. He managed to follow and apply creatively in the second half of the 20th century everything that was original in the Russian 19th - the image of the Russian intellectual, thinking, suffering, and repenting for what has happened in the course of his people's history and in his own personal life this century.[105]

Many of Tarkovsky's views on the importance of tradition in art seem almost to paraphrase Florensky's views, as set out in The Iconostasis. Both men felt antipathy for modern painting, and for the concept of *avant-garde* and experiment in art. Both Florensky and Tarkovsky also shared a fundamentally ambivalent attitude to the notion of artistic freedom, and both perceived a necessity for the norms and guidance afforded by tradition. This is Tarkovsky's view:

> I ... find it very hard to understand it when artists talk about absolute creative freedom. I don't understand what is meant by that sort of freedom, for it seems to me that if you have chosen artistic work you find yourself bound by the chains of necessity, fettered by the tasks you set yourself and by your own artistic vocation. Everything is conditioned by necessity of one kind or another [...] It's curious to reflect that even the inspired Rublyov worked within

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[105] Cited in Jonathan Steele, 'Moscow Diary', Guardian, 17 April 1989, p.19

the strictures of the canon![106]

Florensky is equally clear that tradition saves the artist from the necessity of repeating lessons already learnt, and is unequivocal that the true artist is not concerned with the question whether he copies someone else, but only with depicting the truth:

> Acceptance of the canons provides the feeling of a link with humanity, and communicates the assurance that mankind has not existed in vain, that it has not been deprived of truth. The understanding of truth that is framed by the canons has been examined and clarified in the consensus of peoples and generations.[107]

It has been suggested above that Tarkovsky, in seeking the truth proffered by tradition, draws upon a wide variety of Russian cultural sources. Orthodox spirituality, though, has unquestionably been his main source of inspiration, particularly the aspects of Orthodox tradition that have a special authority in the Church: the Book of Revelation, the Gospel of St John, the writings of St John Chrysostom, the Lives of the Saints and Athanasius' Life of Saint Anthony. However, iconography, which uniquely encapsulates the Orthodox Christian Tradition,[108] merits a unique place in Tarkovsky's conception. Icons express a metaphysical reality, not through words or concepts, but directly by means of

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[106] Sculpting in Time, pp.179-180.

[107] 'Ikonostas', p.106.

[108] See Vladimir Lossky's article, 'Tradition and Traditions' in The Meaning of Icons, pp.9-22.

images. 'Icon painting', writes Florensky, 'is living metaphysics; it is concrete, not abstract metaphysics'.[109] Tarkovsky's view of the directness of the cinematic image is comparable: 'The literary word can only be received through symbols, through concepts - for that is what words are; but cinema, like music, allows for an utterly direct, emotional, sensuous perception of the work'.[110]

Technical correspondences between Tarkovsky's films and the traditions of Russian iconography are manifest in Tarkovsky's adherence to a number of specific principles. Colour has already been mentioned as a key constituent of both; another important parallel is the opposition of light and darkness. The metaphors of light and darkness are probably the most frequently cited in Patristic writings, and are also central to the ethical purpose of icon painting.[111] Since icons depict a transfigured reality, it follows that there can be no source of light which would illuminate objects from one direction or other, and that objects are themselves permeated by the Divine Light. Nor can there be shadows, since no shadows exist in the kingdom of God. Florensky defines the ontological power of light thus: 'The Metaphysics of light ... is the fundamental characteristic of icon painting. [...] Darkness is sterile. Darkness is outer darkness, which means that it is placed outside God'.[112] In certain sequences Tarkovsky also employs light and

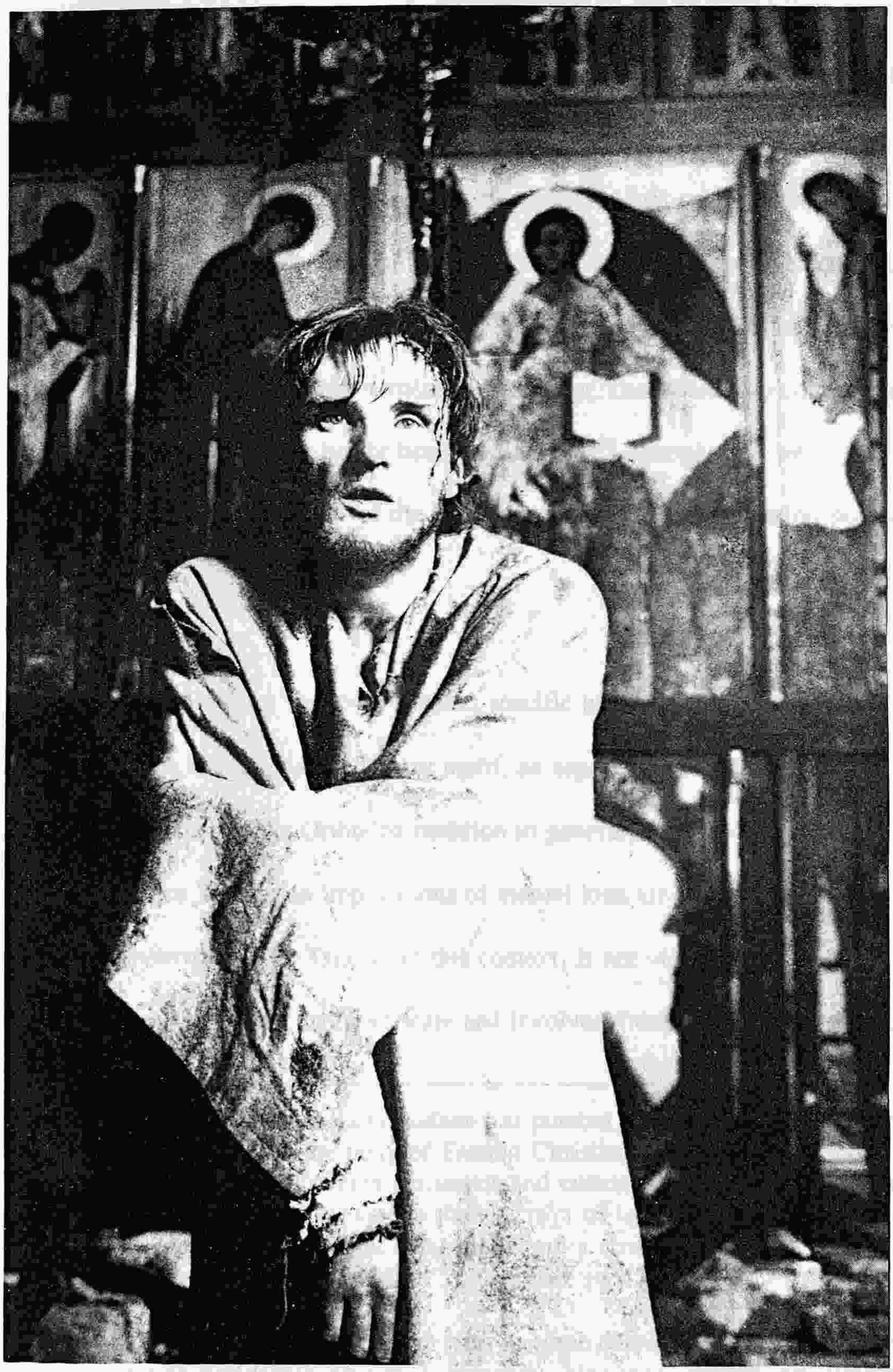
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[109] 'Ikonostas', p.123.

[110] Sculpting in Time, p.176.

[111] On this subject see the chapters entitled 'The Divine Light', in The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, pp.217-235; and 'Darkness and Light', in The Orthodox Way, pp.169-177.

[112] 'Ikonostas', p.142.



9. Andrei Rublev. 'Sanctity is marked ... by a transfiguring light'.

darkness as a means of differentiating between the real and 'more real' worlds (in Ivan's Childhood, for example, where Ivan's dreams are always depicted in brilliant light, in contrast to the shadowy war scenes). Light can also indicate the acquisition or absence of 'ethical force' in his characters. One example occurs in Andrei Rublev, in the scene featuring Kirill's meeting with Theophanes the Greek. During their conversation Kirill remains in obscurity; Theophanes by contrast is illuminated from above by a bright beam of sunlight.[113] Theophanes, we presuppose, has 'seen the light' of the transfigured world; Kirill, equally, remains 'outside God' and in the darkness.[114]

Throughout his films Tarkovsky makes specific use of other iconographic symbolism. One example is the Trinity motif, an aspect of doctrine that has a particular resonance in the Orthodox tradition in general, and in Russia in particular, where Trinitarian implications of mutual love are associated with the concept of *sobornost'*. The Trinity, in this context, is not viewed as an abtruse dogma (though it contains many intricate and involved theological implications),

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[113] Light imagery of this sort, as Gustafson has pointed out, is not uncommon in the Orthodox tradition: 'In the piety of Eastern Christianity, sanctity is marked [...] by a transfiguring light which permeates and emanates from the body (as with St Seraphim of Sarov). Dostoyevsky's slanting rays of light from the sun and Tolstoy's sky permeated with light emanating from a central source are literary images of this Eastern doctrine of God'. Gustafson, pp.450-451.

[114] The light-darkness metaphor is dealt with in some detail in Solov'ev's article 'The Meaning of Art' (Obshchii smysl iskusstva); his views, though, are summed up in the following comment: 'According to the old conception, now widely prevalent again, moral evil is identical with the dark, unconscious, physical life, and moral goodness with the rational light of consciousness that develops in man.' Sobranie sochinenii, vi, pp.75-90 (p.78).



10. Andrei Rublev: 'The Old Testament Trinity'



11. The three protagonists of Stalker.

but as something that has profound practical significance for everyday life. As Bishop Kallistos Ware has pointed out:

> There is an integral connection between our love for one another and our faith in the Trinity: the first is a precondition for the second, and in turn the second gives full strength and meaning to the first. [...]
>
> Made after the image of God the Trinity, human beings are called to reproduce on earth the mystery of mutual love that the Trinity lives in heaven. In medieval Russia St Sergius of Radonezh dedicated his newly-founded monastery to the Holy Trinity, precisely because he intended that his monks should show towards one another day by day the same love as passes between the three divine persons. [...] Because we know that God is three in one, each of us is committed to living sacrificially in and for the other.[115]

Certain aspects of Trinitarian thought appear to have informed Tarkovsky's aesthetic: the themes of love, self-sacrifice and *sobornost'* are present in some form in all of his films. But throughout his oeuvre the motif is also given a more precise expression: it first appears in Andrei Rublev, whose main character is a monk of the Trinity Monastery. It is also implicit in the association between Rublev, Kirill and Daniil, and most graphically in the form of Rublev's great masterpiece 'The Old Testament Trinity', which is gradually revealed in the wonderfully colourful and celebratory concluding sequence. Rublev's 'Trinity' was conceived in the early fifteenth century, when Russia was still under the Mongol yoke, and the icon has long been seen as a symbol of the need for Russian unity at a time of intense fratricidal fighting. Tarkovsky, though, adopting both the motif

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[115] The Orthodox Way, p.49.

and its symbolism, was impressed by its deeper, spiritual meaning, which he clearly considered not without relevance to our own time. This attitude is manifest in Sculpting in Time, where he writes of 'the human, spiritual meaning of the "Trinity" which is alive and understandable for us who live in the second half of twentieth century. This is how we approached the reality which gave birth to the "Trinity".'[116]

In Andrei Rublev one can speculate that the Trinity is symbolic of the organic unity of the artist, the people and the Russian land. But elsewhere the motif reappears in a multiplicity of forms: in Solaris Kris Kelvin brings to the orbital space station a small reproduction of Rublev's icon; in Mirror it is present in the form of a poster advertising the film Andrei Rublev; in Stalker the motif is implicit in the appearance of (and certain positions adopted by) the three main protagonists.[117] In these films one can, of course, interpret the symbolism of the Trinity in various ways: however, in Solaris it may represent the unity of individual, Tradition and the Earth, and in Mirror the unity of three generations of a Russian family. In Stalker there are suggestions of the polyphony of Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov: of three equally valid, but irreconcilable,

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[116] Sculpting in Time, p.79.

[117] In Stalker the Trinity motif appears in various forms, one of which is the twice-repeated and carefully constructed *mise-en-scène* involving the three main protagonists standing round a circular table in the tavern. A similar image - of three men surrounding a round table (one which carries obvious suggestions of Rublev's 'Old Testament Trinity') - also features in the scenario of Andrei Rublev, although the episode does not appear in the final version of the film. Some general aspects of the Trinity motif in Stalker are considered in Gerard Pangon's article, 'Un film du doute sous le signe de la Trinité', in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.105-112.

world-views.

Other iconic motifs can be detected in Tarkovsky's films. In Mirror Ignat's simple act of lighting a fire in the courtyard may be an allusion to a (not infrequent) iconic theme: the Burning Bush.[118] Christological symbolism, including the fish or lamb, occurs in such films as Solaris, Stalker, and Sacrifice. In Stalker an image of St John the Baptist (or 'Forerunner'), one of the most popular subjects of Russian iconography, appears during the Stalker's dream sequence; presumably the intended analogy here is with that other preacher of penitence and 'voice crying in the wilderness' the Stalker himself. The ladder is another feature of Russian icons, particularly icons representing St John Climacus (or John of the Cross), and is a common symbol in both the Eastern and Western traditions of 'the mystic's route to God'. The symbolism of the ladder in representing the path to a more spiritual reality is important to Orthodoxy; it is for instance the central metaphor of Climacus' The Ladder of Divine Ascent, and is a feature of the writings of such prominent saints as Isaac the Syrian:

> Enter eagerly into the treasure house that is within you, and so you will see the things that are in heaven; for there is but one single entry to them both. The ladder that leads to the kingdom is hidden within your soul. Flee from sin, dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the stairs by which to ascend.[119]

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[118] Given that Mirror is dedicated to Tarkovsky's mother, the Marian symbolism of the Burning Bush may represent a further dimension of this shot.

[119] Cited in The Orthodox Way, p.71.

Ladders are also one of Tarkovsky's most consistent motifs, and the context in which they appear in his films suggests that they have a similar, symbolic, function. In Stalker the three protagonists have to ascend a ladder before reaching 'the Room where all wishes will be granted'; Domenico climbs a ladder to commit his act of self-immolation; and in Sacrifice Alexander descends a ladder at the beginning of his apocalyptic 'vision'.

It has already been suggested that as well as theoretical, there are certain technical similarities between Byzantine iconography and the cinema of Bresson. The same claim might be made in relation to Tarkovsky, in whose films non-expressive faces, hieratic postures and, in particular, frontality, reveal the pervasive influence of iconographic portraiture. Lengthy frontal shots of the protagonists are a feature of most of Tarkovsky's films, though the phenomenon is more pronounced in his later work. Some of these shots - the Writer (Stalker) adorned with a crown of thorns, Maria[120] (Sacrifice) - evoke familiar iconographic subjects. However, the most striking example of frontality occurs in Stalker, in the concluding shot of the Stalker's daughter Martyshka. With her head inclined to the left, and covered by a traditional Russian golden shawl, this image suggests what is probably the most widespread icon of the Virgin in Russia: the Kazan Mother of God. The inclined head, a sign of humility, and the golden halo,

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[120] Wearing the distinctive headscarf (also a feature of female characters in Tarkovsky's other films) Maria's association with the Mother of God prototype familiar to Russian icons is enhanced by the image of the Pskov Mother of God which Alexander peruses in a book on Russian icons. The main frontal shot of Maria occurs shortly afterwards, as she is discussing the supper arrangements (bread and wine) with Adelaide.

which Ouspensky tells us is an 'exact pictorial representation of an actual manifestation of the spiritual world',[121] also suggest the quality of *umilenie* (lovingkindness) that (though rare in Byzantium) is a principal theme of Russian icon-painting. In this final shot Florensky's words again seem germane:

> When the Apostle [...] admonishes us to become children of light [...] is he not describing the same process that is accomplished by the icon painter himself? The painter begins with the preliminary description, indicating with gold the images to come; and he ends with the fully revealed light. Illuminating with gold the figures of these children of the light.[122]

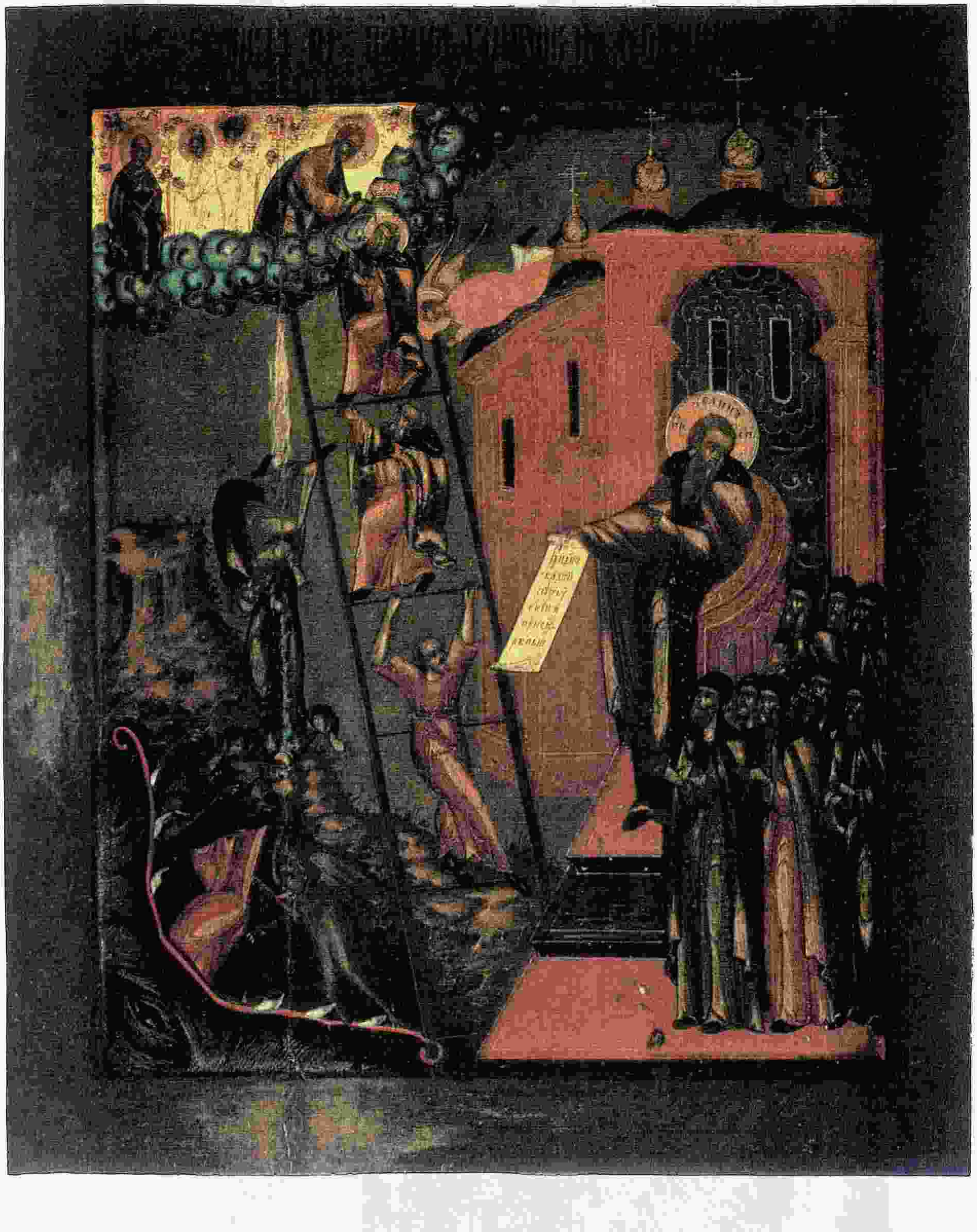
This concluding sequence of Stalker contains many of the iconic qualities of Tarkovskian cinema that have been discussed earlier: it is a slow-moving, lengthy, evocatively contemplative scene entirely without dialogue, and it is brilliantly lit and in colour, conceivably suggesting Martyshka's apprehension of the transfigured world. Finally, the scene replicates one of the most traditional Russian icon forms.

The Orthodox attitude to Tradition, notwithstanding its conservatism, must also be seen in terms of its commitment to the notion of living continuity: fidelity to the past must not be stagnant, but creative. As Timothy Ware has pointed out, Tradition, as a living thing, must be ready to assume new forms:

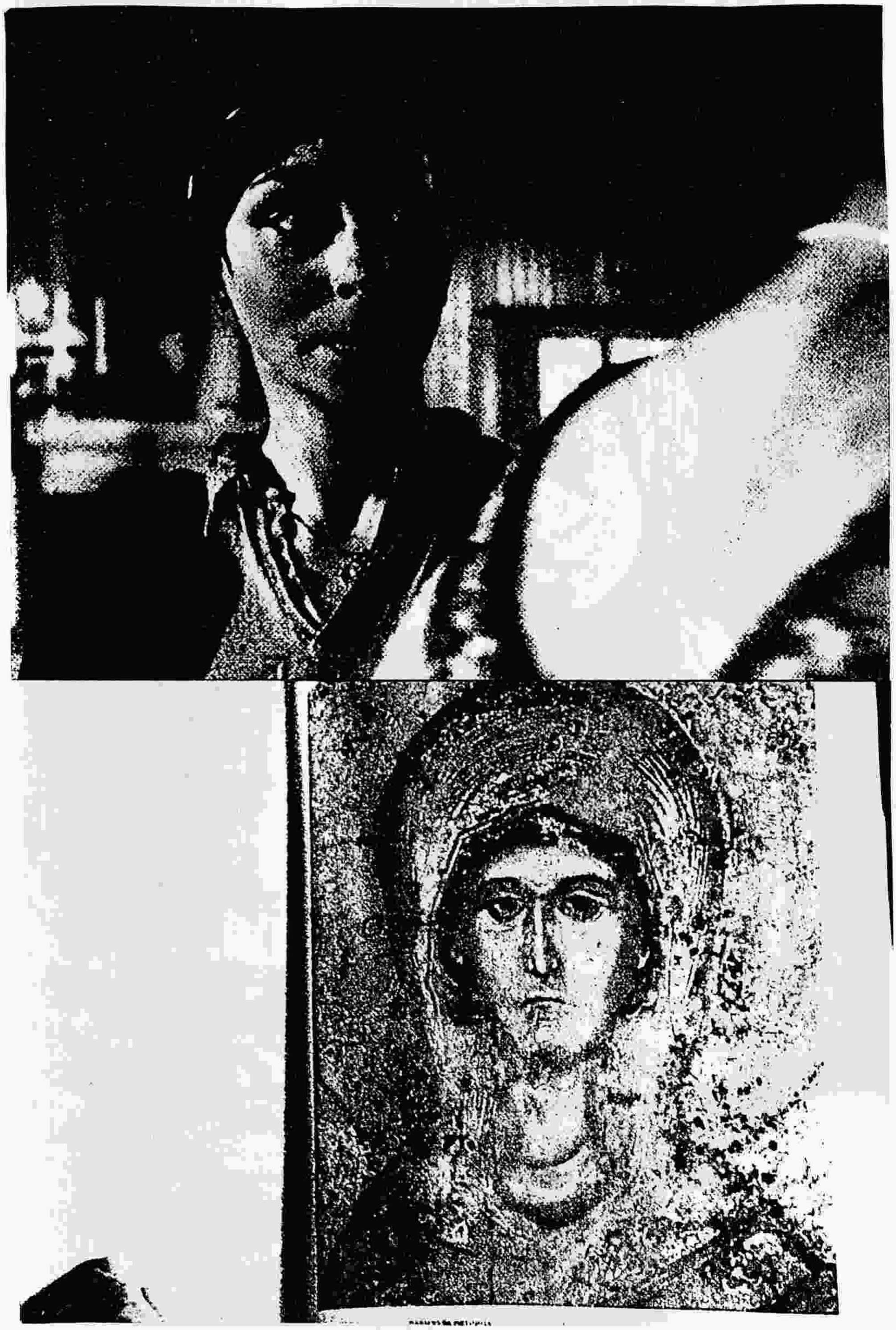
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[121] Ouspensky, p.38.

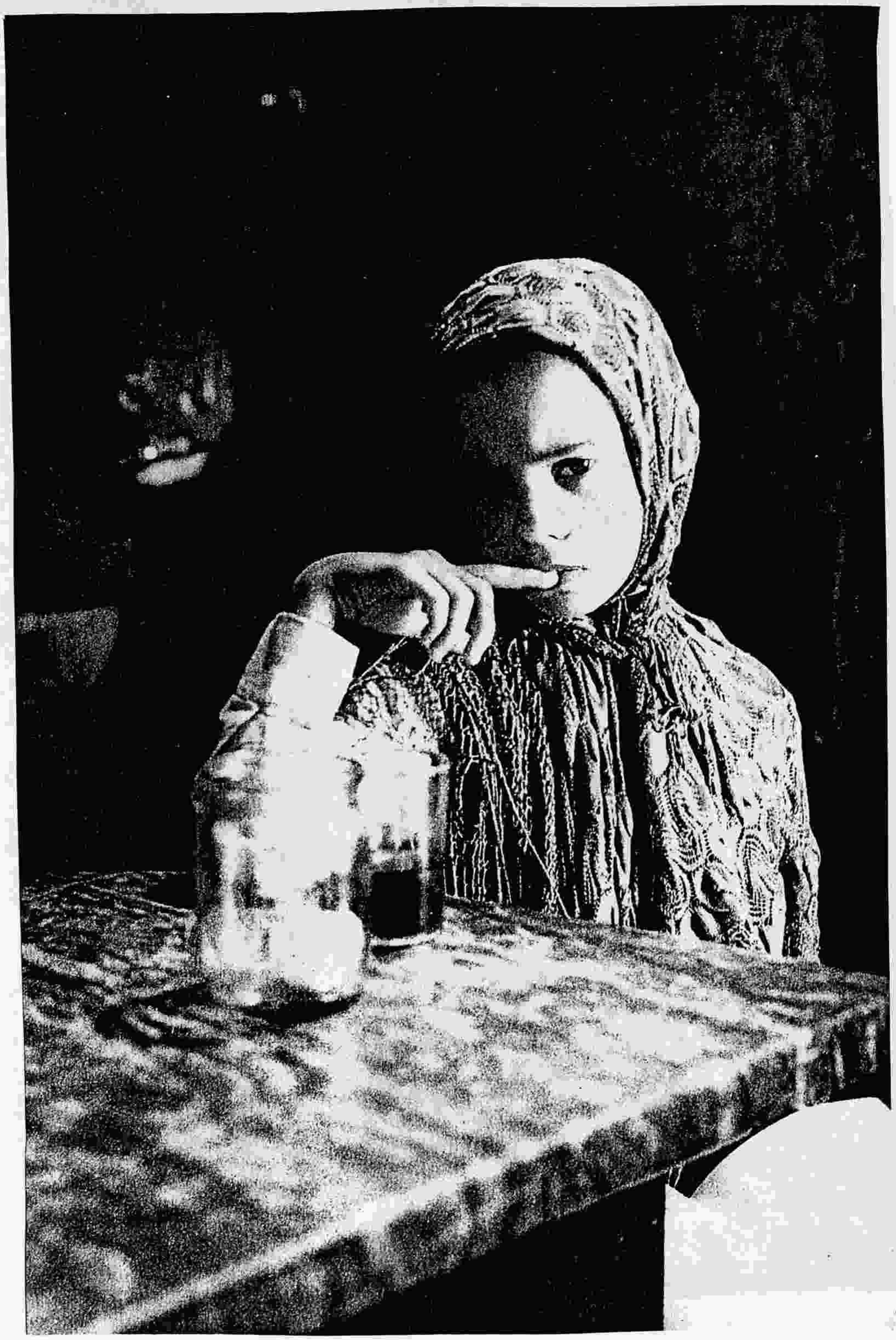
[122] 'Ikonostas', p.144.



12. (Russian) icon of St John Climacus



13. Frontality in Sacrifice.



14. Frontality in Stalker.



15. The Kazan Mother of God.

> The Orthodox conception of Tradition is not static but dynamic, not a dead acceptance of the past but a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present. Tradition, while inwardly changeless (for God does not change), is constantly assuming new forms, which supplement the old without superseding them.[123]

The question arises, therefore: is it possible that an entirely modern artistic form can ever be faithful (in any meaningful sense) to ancient iconic traditions?[124] In his critical writings Tarkovsky is always clear that cinema is not a synthesis of other art forms, and that films are more than novel adaptations of prose works, paintings or icons. Film is so intrinsically different from these other forms that any comparisons must necessarily be qualified. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that Tarkovsky, whether or not he saw his art as a 'supplement' to the iconic tradition, to a large extent drew his inspiration from the aesthetic and philosophical traditions of Russian iconography. The importance which Tarkovsky attributed to tradition is apparent in all of his films, and what might be regarded as his definitive position appeared in one of his first interviews, published in the French journal Positif:

> I read in your press, and it gave me more pleasure than all the rest, that I work without cutting myself off from traditions. I would go further: I am

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[123] The Orthodox Church, p.206.

[124] This is Leonid Ouspensky's judgement: 'Each nation and each period, by transmitting in images the same truth, creates different types of icons, at times very similar, but often differing greatly from one another. There is no contradiction in this, for a single revelation manifests itself in different aspects in accordance with the requirements of one or other epoch'. Ouspensky, p.44.

> persuaded that nothing serious can be born without the basis provided by traditions. There are two reasons for this: firstly, as a Russian I cannot escape the bonds which attach me to my land, history, art and cinema.[...] Secondly, I do not believe I have the right to experiment, since I have a fundamentally serious attitude to what I am doing. [...] An artist should not concern himself with vague plans and drafts - he should make important films.[125]

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In conclusion, one can reasonably claim that Russian iconography has had a significant impact on Tarkovsky's philosophical and aesthetic convictions. This is evident in specific, technical similarities (although the inherent differences between icons and film impose certain limitations on this course of inquiry), and more importantly in the spiritual ethos of (particularly Russian) icon-painting. The emphasis placed by the latter on beauty, transfiguration and tradition Tarkovsky found entirely germane to his own approach as a filmmaker. A fundamental empathy with the subliminal power of icons also, undoubtedly, enhances the quintessentially spiritual character of his films.

The paucity of physical appearances of actual icons is matched by the absence from Tarkovsky's films of a narrow or sectarian religious polemic, and the latter

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[125] Michel Ciment, Luda et Jean Schnitzer, 'L'artiste dans l'ancienne Russie et dans l'urss nouvelle', Positif, 109 (1969), 1-13 (pp.6-7). This is a very Russian sensibility. Compare Berdyaev: 'A tie with the past and what is sacred in it is to be at one with the creative dynamism of life; fidelity to the testaments of the past is fidelity to to the creative dynamism of our ancestors' lives. A tie therefore with our ancestors, with our native land, with all that is sacred, is to be at one with the creative and dynamic process which is addressing itself to the future...' Smysl istorii, p.50.

may partly reflect the profoundly ambiguous nature of his own religious convictions. Stemming from the same ethical Christian tradition that forms the spiritual basis of much of classical Russian literature, Tarkovsky's films reflect a similar intense preoccupation with the 'accursed questions' that beset Russian thought: the meaning of life and death, immortality, the meaning of history and the problem of faith. In an early interview Tarkovsky defined his position as follows:

> I can say that I do not have an organ by which I can experience God. I am ready to speak on the problems of the absolute in a philosophical sense, that engages me very much, but it is very difficult for me to speak of God because for me he is silent, and I am not the first to say that.[126]

On this question the majority of his writings and interviews contain inconsistencies or even denials of personal religious belief: however, in Tarkovsky's diaries (particularly in the later entries) he expresses both faith in Russian Orthodoxy, and belief in God. Thus: 'How can man live without God? Only by becoming God, which is not possible...'[127] However, his diaries also suggest that the director considered that the desire to believe, the possession of 'spiritual potential', is perhaps more important than having faith. One of the few citations he makes from Dostoevsky concerns this crucial point. It is taken from the conversation between Stavrogin and Shatov in The Possessed:

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[126] Cited in Fieschi and Maillet, p.27.

[127] Time Within Time: The Diaries, p.314.

'I just wanted to know - do you yourself believe in God or don't you?' Nicolai Vsevelodovich looked at [Shatov] sternly.
'I believe in Russia and in Russian Orthodoxy ... I believe in the body of Christ ... I believe that the Second Coming will be in Russia ... I believe ...'
Shatov began to splutter in desperation.
'And in God? In God?'
'I ... I shall believe in God.'[128]

There is, then, this final parallel between the icon and the gratuitously beautiful image in Tarkovsky: both should awaken in the viewer a sense of his own spiritual potential. In contemplating the transfigured image, in Tarkovsky's words, 'the best sides of our souls are made known, and we long for them to be freed. In those moments we recognise and discover ourselves, the unfathomable depths of our own potential, and the furthest reaches of our emotions'.[129] Thus, while only art can recognise and define the Absolute, in Tarkovsky the aim is not to foster religious belief in any evangelistic sense, but to prompt the viewer to the call of truth.

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[128] Cited in Sculpting in Time, p.42.

[129] ibid., p.43.

Chapter Three

'The Painterly Eye': The Influence of Painting on Tarkovsky's Aesthetic

'Without painting... I would not have been able to take a serious attitude to film'.[1]

Andrei Tarkovsky

It is perhaps an overstatement to suggest that, throughout the history of Soviet film, a disproportionately influential role has been played by painting.[2] Unquestionably, painting has also played an important part in the artistic conceptions of many non-Soviet filmmakers: Bresson, Kurosawa, Bunuel, Warhol and Peter Greenaway, for instance, were painters before embarking on a career in film. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the influence of painting on Soviet directors is, and has always been, of a special order. This chapter will briefly consider the nature of such evidence, but will mainly concentrate on the unusually important role painting has played in the evolution of Tarkovsky's film-language, as well as of his wider philosophical and artistic worldview. The chapter will be divided into three main sections, each of which will consider the possible influence of a particular period or genre on Tarkovsky's aesthetic. Thus, the first section will examine Renaissance and pre-Renaissance Italian art, and how the continuing debate among Russian artists and philosophers on the merits of Renaissance humanism may have contributed to Tarkovsky's own ambivalence

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[1] Cited in Aleksandr Gershkovich, 'Ispoved' Andreya Tarkovskogo', Kontinent, 42 (1984), 385-406 (p.389).

[2] On this subject, see M. Andronikova, Skol'ko let kino? (Moscow, 1968); see also Mark Zak, Kinorezhissura: opyt i poisk (Moscow, 1983), particularly pp. 233-244.

towards Renaissance art. The second section will mainly consider the works of three early medieval masters of modern Europe: Brueghel, Bosch and Dürer, and the way in which Tarkovsky may have employed specific motifs and themes, borrowed from such paintings, in his own narrative. The final section will concentrate mainly on the parallel that Tarkovsky appears to have drawn between medieval art and the spiritual motivations that inspired the early modernist and surrealist painters of this century, including Chirico, Chagall and Kandinsky. Overall, the case will be made that Tarkovsky's approach to (and use of) Western painting is entirely consistent with his own sensibility as a Russian artist, and does not detract from the essential 'Russianness' of his aesthetic.

An exhibition which took place in Münich, in March 1990, provided a graphic illustration of the importance of painting and other visual art forms to Soviet filmmakers. Entitled 'From Eisenstein to Tarkovsky' (Von Eisenstein bis Tarkowsky), this was a collection of more than one hundred and twenty paintings and drawings, being the work of some eleven Soviet directors over a sixty-year period.[3] Many of the latter had unequivocal views on the debt Soviet cinema owed to painting, though few perhaps would go so far as Kuleshov, in asserting that 'the director who could not paint, could not create good films'.[4] Eisenstein's drawings are well-known, and have often been exhibited in the Soviet Union and

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[3] The full list is: Sergei Eisenstein, Aleksandr Dovzhenko, Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Paradzhanov, Vladimir Naumov, Aleksandr Mitta, Revaz Esadze, Rezo Gabriadze, Yurii Il'enko, Igor' Minaev, Andrei Tarkovsky.

[4] Cited in Evgenii Volkovysky, 'Ot Eisensteina do Tarkovskogo', Ogonek, 13 (1990), p.17.

elsewhere; but painting was equally important to two other great Soviet filmmakers of the period: Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. In an interview given in 1943, Pudovkin expressed a widely-held view about film's relationship to painting:

> As far as I can remember I doubt if I saw a single film before 1920. As a matter of fact I didn't even consider the cinema an art form. But the theatre was a different matter. I was much more interested in it than ... in my job. What attracted me most at that time, however, was painting. I spent all my leisure time painting.[5]

In common with Kuleshov, Dovzhenko had worked as a painter before he began to work in cinema in 1926. In 1949 he wrote: 'I am now convinced that had I received the proper experience and education, I would have become a better painter than I am now a director'.[6] At the risk of oversimplification, it might be said that, if the influence of painting on Dovzhenko and on other early Soviet directors is of a general nature, and ultimately unquantifiable, the tendency in more recent Soviet cinema has been towards the imitation or copying of scenes from specific works of art.[7] This tendency has now crystallized as the 'film-painting' (*fil'm-kartina*) genre,[8] one of the best-known examples of which is The

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[5] Cited in Jay Leyda, Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film (London, 1983), p.149.

[6] Cited in Iosif Kiblitsky, 'Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Tarkovsky i drugie', Russkaya mysl', 9 February 1990, p.14. On the general area of Dovzhenko the painter, see Uroki Aleksandra Dovzhenko, edited by Boris Tarasenko and Nonna Kapelgorodskaya (Kiev, 1982), pp.122-139.

[7] Tarkovsky's conception of the role of painting in film, which is quite different from the one outlined above, will be considered later.

[8] So far as I am able to judge the term 'film-painting' was first used by the film scholar, Mikhail Bleiman,in an article which appeared in Iskusstvo kino, 7 (1970).

Legend of Tyl (1976), by Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov. This film, which concerns the struggle for the liberation of sixteenth-century Flanders from Spanish occupation, contains numerous evocations of the works of the great Flemish masters: Peter Brueghel the Elder and Hieronymus Bosch. One critic has written the following of the film:

> [It] unfolds with a huge number of frames, which resemble painting fragments. The characters ... reveal a direct relationship with the figures depicted in the paintings of the Dutch artists of the XVIth century, and in particular of Peter Brueghel the Elder.[9]

In consciously adapting for the screen such specific Brueghel masterpieces as 'The Battle between Carnival and Lent' or 'The Parable of the Blind', Alov and Naumov sought, apparently, to convey the poetry of these paintings, and to explore the problem of time as it is presented in such paintings. As the film critic M. Andronikova has written:

> In the extraordinarily absorbing paintings of Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Brueghel ... it is possible to discern a most interesting search for a means to portray time; there is, as well as a sort of 'parallel montage', a 'painting narrative'; this flow of time is present in Brueghel's famous 'The Parable of the Blind' - being a sequence of events, each of which conveys the same image and is of the same duration.[10]

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[9] Zak, p.234.

[10] Andronikova, p.13.

One can of course debate the merits of this view, as well as the value of The Legend of Tyl; what is significant is the value attributed to the aesthetic, ethical (and even metaphysical) aspects of such painting by contemporary Soviet filmmakers, as well as the fact that the latter sought to re-create scenes which evoke specific works of art, rather than to cite actual paintings or to consider the overall aesthetic of a particular artist as a useful source of motifs, themes and ideas.

Against this background it would be surprising if the influence of painting was not in some form present in Tarkovsky's aesthetic. Tarkovsky, indeed, passionately loved painting for its own sake: in his youth he spent three years at art school, and at one point considered painting as a career. He later said that his work as a filmmaker would have been inconceivable without this early involvement with painting.[11] Many of Tarkovsky's friends and colleagues have testified to his unusually detailed knowledge of a wide range of painting forms and genres. Mikhail Romadin, for instance, the artist who worked with Tarkovsky on Solaris, has assessed the range of Tarkovsky's interest in painting as follows:

> Tarkovsky's interest in painting was quite broad, though selective. It included Russian icons, Giuseppe Archimboldo and George de La Tour, as well as the surrealists and the caricatures of Saül Steinberg. However, he prefered classical art to that of the Romantics. In modern art, he loved those artists who maintained a sort of dialogue with the old masters: Salvador Dali, René Magritte, Henry Moore, Giacometti. All the same, despite the fact that Tarkovsky regarded painting with great interest, and

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[11] See Gershkovich, p.389.

> knew it well, the influence of the latter affected him only indirectly. He was wary of drawing parallels between different art forms, and sought always to liberate the language of cinema.[12]

Romadin's last point is important: Tarkovsky's relationship with painting, and the role he perceived it would play in his films, was carefully conceived. Though the director's attachment to painting provided a rich source of inspiration on a number of different levels, he was unambiguously hostile to the notion of a *synthesis* of different art forms. His concern was always to develop cinema's own unique language, which he considered in no way inferior to the language of painting or literature. It was in this area that his main objections lay to the aesthetics of, for instance, Pasolini, Fellini, Eisenstein, Naumov or Alov, whose films, he felt, relied rather too heavily on traditional forms - painting, literature and theatre.[13] Tarkovsky wrote:

> Cinema, as a new art form, has broken with the tradition of painting, and there is no need, in my view, to restore this link. [...]
>
> One should not confuse the respective tasks of painting and cinema. The essence of a painting is imitation, or focus. Cinema is a different matter; here, one arranges space in such a way as to create the illusion of time. The introduction of painting into cinema is leading to the destruction of the film-image.[14]

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[12] Mikhail Romadin, 'Kino i zhivopis',' in O Tarkovskom, edited by Marina Tarkovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp.163-168 (pp.163-165).

[13] According to Romadin, p.165.

[14] Andrei Tarkovsky, Lektsii po kinorezhissure, edited by Konstantin Lopushansky (Moscow, 1981), p.120. (Unpublished notes of lectures given at VGIK).

In common with Aleksandr Dovzhenko,[15] a filmmaker with whom he felt great affinity, Tarkovsky rejected a 'surrogate painting' approach to cinema, and instead found, in Romadin's words, 'not a direct, but a more remote link between painting and cinema'.[16] In general terms, Tarkovsky held that, unless the painting itself appeared in a film, then its influence should only be felt indirectly: to underline philosophical ideas, or as a source of motifs; the actual subject of a painting should not be re-created. Of more interest to Tarkovsky, however, was the artist's overall aesthetic, his philosophical worldview, the manner in which he conveyed the transcendental, and (perhaps unconsciously) the degree to which his art satisfied Tarkovsky's own (very Russian) sensibility. Let us, then, now consider in some detail the nature of Tarkovsky's indebtedness to painting.

Like many Russians, Tarkovsky was fascinated by the extraordinary artistic and cultural riches of Italy, and, like numerous Russian artists[17] before him, the director felt compelled to visit (and ultimately to settle in) that country. Many aspects of Italian culture have had a powerful attraction for Russians. The churches and walls of the Moscow Kremlin, which were built by Italian architects specially invited to Russia for that purpose, are but one manifestation of this appeal. But Rome's traditional role as the seat of the Roman Catholic church has also provided an exotic alternative to many Russians, alienated (often for political

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[15] See Uroki Aleksandra Dovzhenko, p.135.

[16] Romadin, p.165.

[17] The list includes Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoi, Tchaikovsky, Merezhkovsky, V. Ivanov, Bunin, Gorky, Blok.

reasons) from their own church. One critic has defined the essence of Italy's appeal for Russians in the following terms:

> The influence of Italy has generally been ... diffuse and pervasive, depending less on the legacy of specific writers [than on] the special magnetic attraction which Italy has always exercised on Russians. This feeling is an emotional, intuitive response to the country, based on a mysterious sense of inner affinity which defies rational analysis. More than any other country, Russians have traditionally regarded Italy as their second homeland.
>
> [Moreover] the country often served as a bridge which enabled Russians to reestablish their links with the classical world of ancient Rome and Greece by retracing a path back through the Italian Renaissance and Middle Ages.[18]

Many of Tarkovsky's acquaintances have written of his deep love of Italy, and of the inspiration which he drew from Italian culture. The following appraisal, by the Polish director, Krystov Zanussi, is particularly instructive:

> I saw ... how Andrei felt at home in Italy, and how, in common with many Russians, he loved this country. He loved Italy as he could never love France, despite the fact that in France he was both adored and respected. But for Tarkovsky the Cartesian rationalism which he associated with France was always burdensome, and he fought against it. In Italy, in the atmosphere of intuitiveness and human warmth [*serdechnost'*] that pervades Italian culture,

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[18] Pamela Davidson, The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov: A Russian Symbolist's Perception of Dante (Cambridge, 1989), p.12. On the subject of Russian fascination with Italy, see also Pavel Muratov, Obrazy Italii, 2 vols (Moscow, 1911-12). As Muratov observes in the preface: for Russians a trip to Italy was never a casual matter, but always a spiritual pilgrimage which invariably had profound repercussions on the visitor's soul.

he felt incomparably better.[19]

Above all, it was his early appreciation of Italian painting that would leave an indelible imprint on Tarkovsky's aesthetic. There is much in Italian art that appeals to what one might crudely term 'the Russian sensibility'; early medieval Italian paintings (particularly the work of Duccio and Giotto) grew out of the same tradition of Byzantine iconography that gave birth to the Russian icon; Renaissance art, and the profound philosophical and spiritual upheaval that it reflected, has been a recurring theme in the works of many Russian writers and philosophers, including Berdyaev, Solov'ev, Florensky and Fedotov.[20] Let us, then, now consider the possible impact of some of these currents on Tarkovsky's aesthetic.

Tarkovsky's well-known regard for the works of Leonardo[21] stands in isolation to his otherwise hostile view of Renaissance art. The latter features in his films, but its use appears ironic. This is most obvious in Nostalgia, in which the personality and appearance of Eugenia seems a thinly disguised parody of the material humanism of the Renaissance - the appropriate vehicle, in the director's eyes, for the denunciation of modern materialism and spiritual degeneracy that is

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[19] K. Zanussi, 'Korotkie vstrechi, dolgii razgovor', Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 150-153 (p.152).

[20] The figure of Leonardo da Vinci is particularly important in this regard, one of the most obvious manifestations of this being Dmitrii Merezhkovsky's epic novel, Leonardo da Vinci. One is also mindful of the profound impression made upon Eisenstein by Freud's essay on Leonardo. See Leyda, p.194.

[21] Of Tarkovsky's many utterances on the subject, his declaration that he 'loved the paintings of medieval Russian artists and Leonardo above all others', can be considered fairly typical. Cited in Viktor Loisha, 'Takoe kino', Druzhba narodov, 1 (1989), 214-232 (p.228).



16. Eugenia: a 'parody of Renaissance humanism'?

such an important theme of Nostalgia. As one critic has commented:

> Nostalgia has a rich subtext drawn from literature and painting. While the central metaphor of the voyage to salvation alludes (very appropriately, given the setting) to Dante's Divine Comedy, the painterly landscapes and some of the characters' portraits are inspired by the iconography of the Italian Renaissance. Eugenia's figure - her head and garb - is the incarnation of Leonardo's idea of perfection. This image of ideal Beauty through which man reaches his spiritual fulfillment also had its literary antecedent in the medieval figure of the 'woman angel'. In the Divine Comedy such was the figure of Beatrix. Suffused with an aura of religious mysticism, she was the guide to salvation. However, Eugenia's role as a guide is ironic. In Tarkovskii's films she is a travesty of the 'woman angel', her exterior appearance being an empty shell around a dead soul.[22]

The ironic quotation of Leonardo's ideal of human perfection and beauty that Eugenia may suggest, in no sense detracts from Tarkovsky's profound admiration for Leonardo. The director's views (on Leonardo, and on painting in general) might be compared to those of Father Pavel Florensky, for whom Leonardo's 'magic light' was the exception to the 'Italian rationalistic illumination, that is so typical of Renaissance atheism'.[23] Leonardo's influence can be felt throughout Tarkovsky's work; the Soviet film critic, and colleague of Tarkovsky's, Maya Turkovskaya, wrote of the 'seminal importance of Leonardo da Vinci on Tarkovsky's films'.[24] She goes on to claim that the battle scene in Andrei Rublev

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[22] Anna Lawton, 'Art and Religion in the Films of Andrei Tarkovskii', in Christianity and the Arts in Russia, edited by W. Brumfield (Cambridge, 1991), pp.151-164 (p.157).

[23] Father Pavel Florensky, 'Ikonostas', Bogoslovskie trudy, 9 (1972), 83-148 (p.140).

[24] Maya Turkovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989), p.139.

was depicted in the style of Leonardo, drawing upon the latter's Treatise on Painting. Here, though, we will consider the range of Leonardo's influence on just two films: Mirror and Sacrifice.

In Sculpting in Time, Tarkovsky has provided a graphic description (which is worth reproducing in full) of how Leonardo can be used to good effect by the filmmaker:

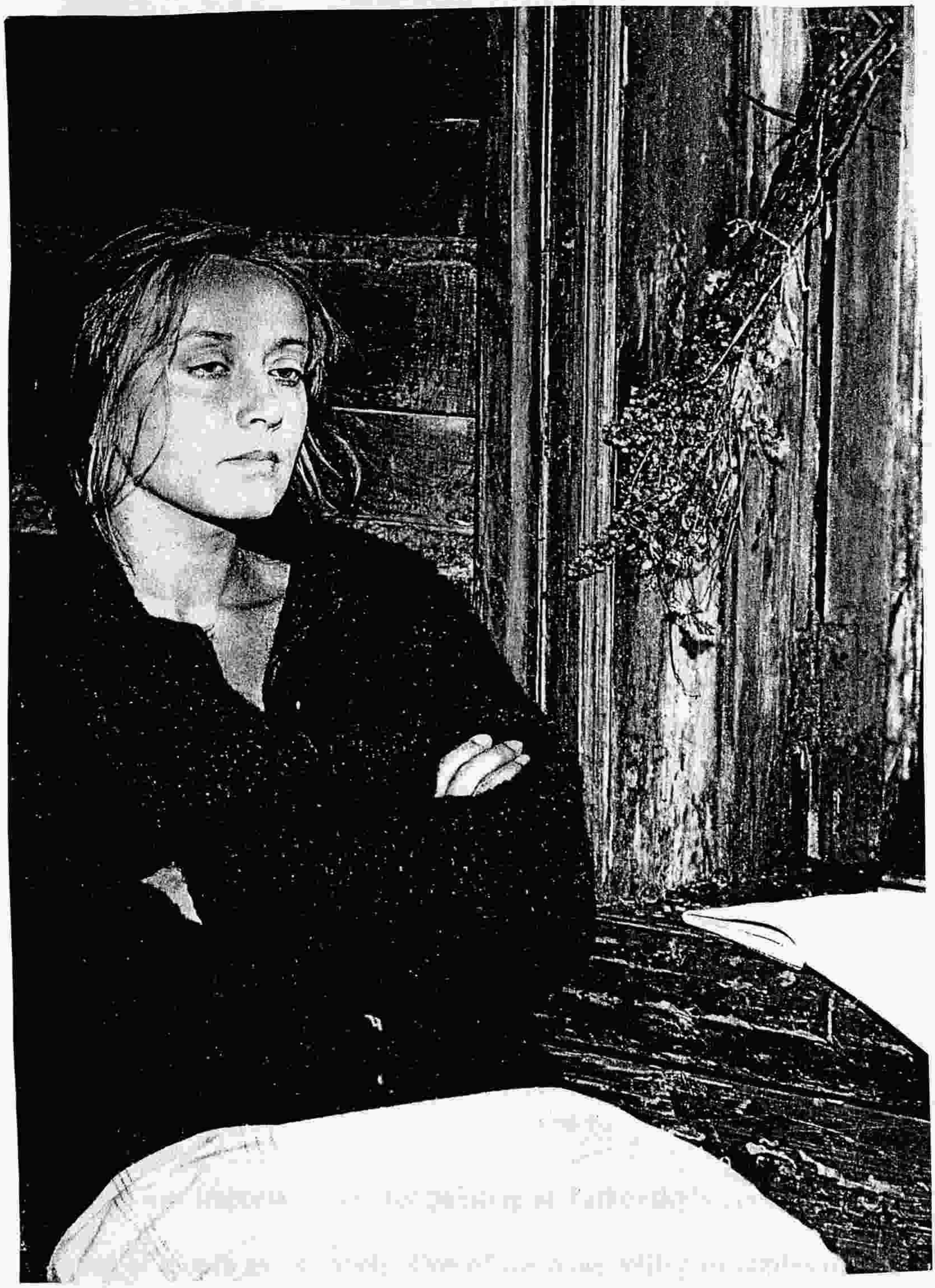
> Let us look at Leonardo's portrait of 'A Young Lady With a Juniper', which we have used in Mirror for the scene of the father's brief meeting with his children when he comes home on leave.
>
> There are two things about Leonardo's images that are arresting. One is the artist's amazing capacity to examine the object from outside, standing back, looking from above the world - a characteristic of artists like Bach or Tolstoy. And the other, the fact that the picture affects us simultaneously in two opposite ways. It is not possible to say what impression the portrait finally makes on us. It is not even possible to say definitely whether one likes the woman or not, whether she is appealing or unpleasant. She is at once attractive and repellent. There is something inexpressibly beautiful about her and at the same time repulsive, fiendish. And fiendish not at all in the romantic, alluring sense of the word; rather - beyond good and evil. Charm with a negative sign. It has an element of degeneracy - and of beauty. In Mirror we needed the portrait in order to introduce a timeless element into the moments that are succeeding each other before our eyes, and at the same time to juxtapose the portrait with the heroine, to emphasize in her and in the actress, Margarita Terekhova, the same capacity at once to enchant and to repel.[25]

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[25] Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), p.108.



17. Leonardo da Vinci: 'Portrait of a Young Woman with a Juniper Twig'.



18. Margarita Terekhova in Mirror.

In this unusually detailed (for Tarkovsky) assessment of the influence of a single painting by Leonardo on Mirror, two things become evident: the director is interested less in the purely aesthetic qualities of the painting than in its psychological (or, elsewhere, philosophical) complexity; and secondly, Tarkovsky's attachment to a particular painting could result from very personal, subjective associations (based on actual events), the recreation of which on screen helps produce the 'timeless element' mentioned above. An emotional attachment to Leonardo is, perhaps, a consequence of the childhood experience of coming across 'piles of art books' (mainly of Leonardo's works) in the abandoned dacha at Peredelkino where Tarkovsky's family lived during the war years. The importance of these art books for Tarkovsky is suggested by the Mirror scene which is referred to above. Tarkovsky later described them as:

> ... abandoned books, like children abandoned by their parents, like us. Leonardo da Vinci really coincided with our feelings of abandoned children. [...] The masterpieces of Leonardo are like illustrations, by analogy, of our feelings.[26]

A further, and no less important, role for painting in Tarkovsky's conception was as a rich source of motifs and symbols. One of the more telling examples of this is the use of Leonardo's unfinished masterpiece, 'The Adoration of the Magi' in Tarkovsky's final film, Sacrifice.[27] A detail from this painting (the head of one

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[26] Cited in Jacques Fieschi and Dominique Maillet, 'Entretien avec Andrei Tarkovski', Cinématographe, 35 (1978), 25-27 (p.27).

[27] On this subject, see Peter Green's article, 'Apocalypse and Sacrifice', Sight and Sound, 56 (Spring 1987), 111-118.



19. Leonardo: 'Adoration of the Magi'.

of the Kings who is proferring a cup, and the hand of the Christ-Child who is reaching out to touch it) forms the background to the opening credits of the film; after this the camera slowly moves up the painting, revealing the Virgin and Child, a tree held by angels, a ruined building, and, in the distance, horses. The importance of the painting to Sacrifice is underlined by its appearance at every important juncture in the film: indeed, it can be seen as a final manifestation of some enduring Tarkovskian motifs (tree, child, horse, ruins) as well as providing a key to the interpretation of the film. The picture, essentially, depicts a present-giving in commemoration of a birthday, precisely the reason Alexander's guests have assembled. This symbolic gesture suggests the main theme of the film - sacrifice - since it is ultimately through the sacrifice of Christ that the world is to be redeemed. The symbolism of the present-giving is underlined by Otto who, having presented Alexander with his gift (a framed, original seventeenth-century map of Europe) remarks 'Why shouldn't [my gift] be a sacrifice? Of course it is. A present must represent something of a sacrifice - otherwise, what sort of gift would it be?'[28]

Other elements in the painting find their counterparts in the film: the ruined architecture can be taken as part of the eschatological symbolism[29] that pervades Tarkovsky's films in general and Sacrifice in particular. The tree in the painting also has its counterpart in the film; in the opening scene, Alexander is

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[28] Andrej Tarkovskij, Le Sacrifice, edited by L. Schirmer (Munich, 1987), p.76. (Scenario of film).

[29] In medieval and Renaissance painting, ruined buildings were commonly regarded as a symbol of the decline of the old order, or of the collapse of civilization.

planting a dried-up tree while he relates to his son the 'parable of the dried up tree', in which an Orthodox monk, named Pavva, plants a withered tree on the top of a mountain, entreating his disciple to water it each day. This he does, and arrives one day to find the tree in full flower. At the end of the film one sees Alexander's son, Little Man, carrying two buckets of water towards the tree his father has planted. The final shot is of Little Man, having completed his task, lying down to wait beneath the tree. It is tempting to see in this image one of the most ancient mythological (and, subsequently, Christian) motifs: the Tree of Life. As one Soviet critic has observed, 'in the Tree of life [*Mirovoe derevo*] there is a unity of life and death ... of good and evil and a symbol of sacrifice that transcends all epochs'.[30]

It has already been suggested that Tarkovsky's overall attitude to Renaissance painting was unsympathetic. Clearly Leonardo's 'universal light' was the most obvious exception to this view, but on occasion Tarkovsky was also attracted (though to a far lesser extent) by the quite different traditions of two other Italian painters: the Venetian, Vittore Carpaccio, and Piero della Francesca. Only one painting by the latter features in any of Tarkovsky's films: The 'Madonna del Parto', which appears in Nostalgia. The citation of this painting is interesting for two reasons; firstly, the context in which it appears suggests a reiteration of the familiar 'sacrifice' theme: in the opening sequence of the film Gorchakov's guide - the affluent and career-minded Eugenia - has entered the

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[30] Dmitrii Salynsky, 'Rezhisser i mif', Iskusstvo kino, 12 (1988), 79-91 (p.86). 'The Tree of Life' will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

chapel of the Virgin to see the della Francesca masterpiece (Gorchakov having decided after all not to view the painting). The French critic, Antoine de Baecque, has described Eugenia's reaction to the painting in the following terms:

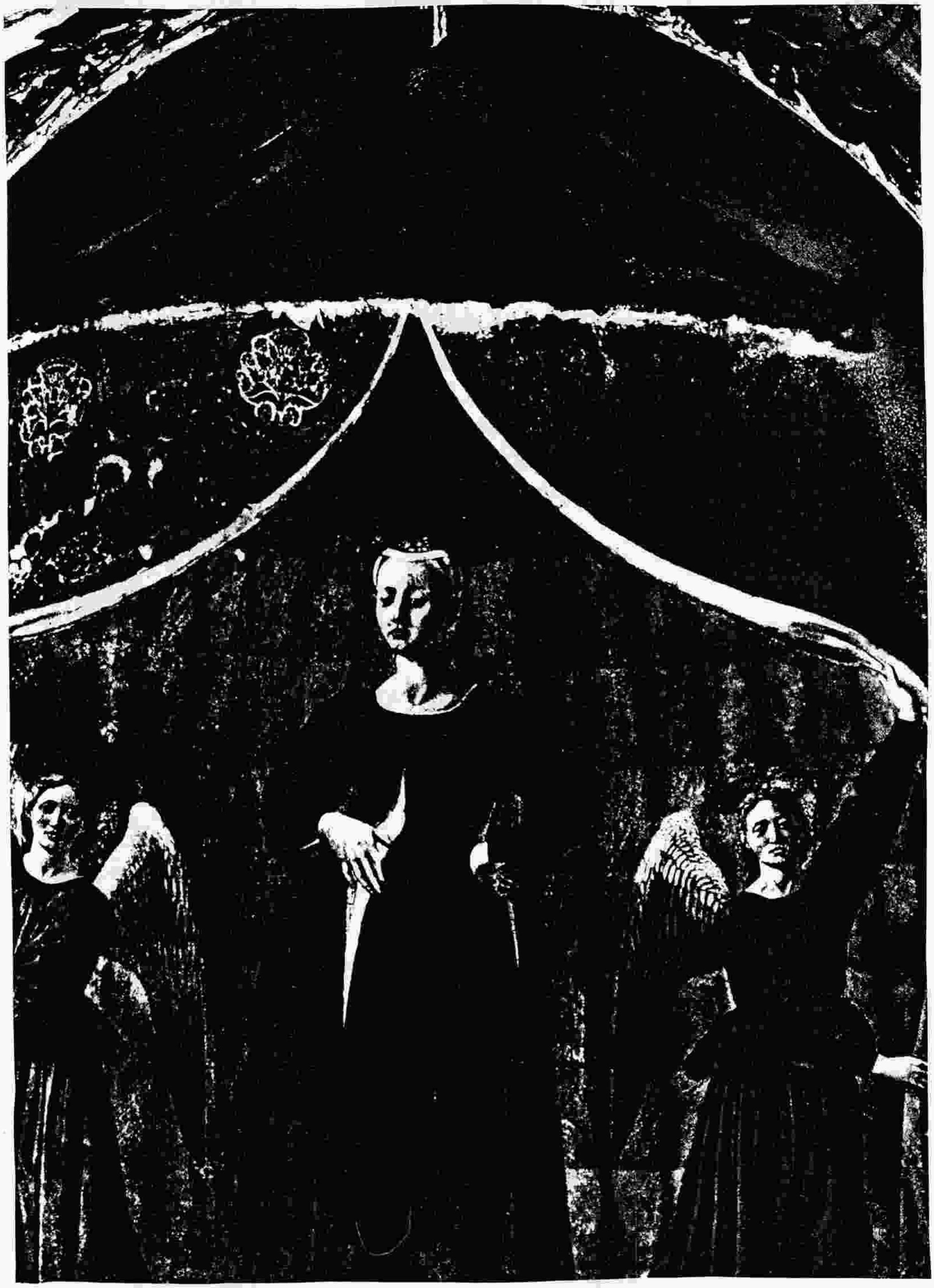
> In one decisive shot, Eugenia's eyes meet those of the 'Madonna del Parto' by Pierro della Francesca, the most beautiful pregnant woman in the history of Italian painting. This meeting of eyes is crucial: Tarkovsky sees it as the moment of truth in his film. The uncertain, evasive look of the seductress, the living woman, who is integrated into the condemned artifice of the contemporary world, is succeeded by the quiet assurance of the painted image of the mother who bears Jesus.[31]

Eugenia retreats from the painting in some confusion. 'I have never understood those things, although I am a woman', she confides to a priest, referring to the ideal of motherhood that is implicit in the painting, and subsequently underlined by the nature of her conversation with the priest. 'Have children and raise them with patience and sacrifice', he advises.

The 'Madonna del Parto' also has a more iconic, almost pre-Renaissance quality that Tarkovsky would find appealing for a quite different reason. An important part of Tarkovsky's attitude to art was his appreciation that art should transcend the individual beliefs, understanding and experience of the artist, and that artistic freedom should not mean the totally untramelled expression of the artist's personality. This principle of 'catholicity' (*sobornost'*), a principle which is

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[31] Antoine de Baecque, Andrei Tarkovski (Paris, 1989), p.56.



20. Piero della Francesca: 'Madonna del Parto'.

fundamental to icon-painting, Tarkovsky regarded as essential to the profession of an 'objective truth' in art.[32] It was in this area that the director perceived the greatest distinctions between, what he broadly termed, 'Eastern and Western art':

> The West is forever shouting, 'This is me! Look at me! Listen to me suffering, loving! How unhappy I am! How unhappy! I! Mine! Me! In the Eastern tradition ... the person is totally absorbed into God, Nature, time; finding himself in everything; discovering everything in himself.[33]

As has already been suggested early Italian art is closer in many respects to the 'Russian sensibility' than the art of any other country. A rather indirect indication of this is given by Leonid Ouspensky, in his article 'The Meaning and Language of Icons':

> An individualistic approach to art in the Church destroys its unity, breaks it up, deprives individual artists of the link with one another and with the Church. In other words, the principle of catholicity is replaced by the cult of individuality, exclusiveness, originality. In this sense the example of Bernadette of Lourdes is very significant: 'Shown an album of pictures of Our Lady, she rejected with horror the Renaissance ones: she tolerated Fra Angelico's; but she lingered with a certain satisfaction over quite early, rigid, depersonalised mosaics or frescos'.[34]

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[32] The importance of catholicity and tradition in Tarkovsky's aesthetic is discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

[33] Sculpting in Time, p.226.

[34] Leonid Ouspensky, 'The Meaning and Language of Icons' in The Meaning of Icons, edited by Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky (New York, 1983), pp.25-49 (pp.42-43).

In this sense, the ethereal, spiritual, transcendental qualities of the 'Madonna del Parto', qualities which are commonly attributed to both early Italian painting and to Russian icons alike, undoubtedly contribute to the pervasive sense of 'nostalgia', that one finds in all Tarkovsky's films, and which is the main theme in this, his first foreign film.

The painting of the early Renaissance artist, Vittore Carpaccio, provided Tarkovsky with a quite different source of inspiration. In Tarkovsky's avowed admiration for Carpaccio one is given a sense of the lingering contradiction that colours his perception of art. One could argue that Carpaccio's work is the embodiment of Renaissance humanism, and the antithesis of the spiritual principles inherent in medieval cosmology. Yet, for Tarkovsky Carpaccio was the antidote to the 'over-intellectual and sickly allegorical tendentiousness' that pervaded the art of that archetypal Renaissance figure: Raphael. Carpaccio, in Tarkovsky's view, successfully and courageously managed to convey the new relationship (being formed in the early Renaissance period) between individual and external reality. In his commentary on one of Carpaccio's paintings (probably 'The Return of the English Ambassador', from the 'St Ursula' series, though it is not stated) Tarkovsky expresses his admiration for, what is in effect, the anthropocentric principle implicit in the painting:

> When you analyse [the painting] the principle is extraordinarily simple, and expresses in the highest sense the essentially humanistic basis of Renaissance art; far more so, indeed, in my opinion, than Raphael. The point is that *each* of the characters in

> Carpaccio's crowded composition is a centre. If you concentrate on any one figure you begin to see with unmistakable clarity that everything else is mere context, background, built up like a kind of pedestal for this 'incidental' character. The circle closes, and as you gaze at Carpaccio's canvas your will follows, meekly and unwittingly, the logical channel of feeling intended by the artist, wandering first to one figure apparently lost in the crowd, and then on to the next.[35]

Tarkovsky's contention - that an extraordinary psychological and even metaphysical principle appears to be at work in Carpaccio's crowded compositions - has left its mark on his own work. Carpaccio's influence thus is most obviously felt in the crowd scenes of his films, and particularly in Andrei Rublev, in the episode entitled 'The Raid' (Nabeg). In Solaris Carpaccio's principle was tentatively introduced into the scene of Kelvin's leave-taking of the Earth. Tarkovsky considered that in each of Carpaccio's paintings the characters are completely absorbed in their own thoughts, in their own internal world, do not look at one another and appear to have no relationship with the surrounding, empirical reality. Mikhail Romadin has described Tarkovsky's attempt to convey this effect in the Solaris scene:

> A garden table, behind which the cosmonaut is sitting. It is raining. The rain falls on the table, on the teacups, on the face of the cosmonaut. He is not supposed to react to the rain; in order to create an atmosphere of unreality he should act as if he were in another dimension. But instead [the actor] involuntarily huddles-up beneath the rain. 'The shot is

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[35] Sculpting in Time, p.50.



21. Vittore Carpaccio: 'The Return of the English Ambassador' (fragment).

ruined. What a pity!' said Andrei. This is only one small example of the effect of painting in Tarkovsky's language of cinema [*kinoyazyk*]. The image, born in painting, had to undergo a metamorphosis before it became a cinematic image.[36]

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The painting of Northern Europe Tarkovsky found equally rich in themes and motifs. Here, the works of the great masters[37] of late medieval Europe - Brueghel, Bosch, Dürer and the Van Eycks - would echo some of the main spiritual themes that preoccupied the director throughout his life: the Last Judgement, death, sainthood, faith, the mysticism of the Earth.

Brueghel's works provide some of the most consistent leitmotifs in Tarkovsky's oeuvre. This is most evident in Andrei Rublev, where at least one scene (The Crucifixion) was directly inspired by Brueghel's 'Christ Carrying the Cross'.[38] Many of the characteristics Tarkovsky admired most in the Flemish master are conspicuous in this picture. In particular, Brueghel depicted Christ's progress to Golgotha without exoticism of costume or architecture, but entirely as

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[36] Romadin, pp.165-166.

[37] On the subject of the influence of early Flemish and Dutch painting on Tarkovsky, see A. Lupandina, 'Nikolai Dvigubsky', Sovetskie khudozhniki teatra i kino (1975), 71-76.

[38] According to a statement made by Tarkovsky in Michel Ciment, Luda et Jean Schnitzer, 'L' artiste dans l' ancienne Russie et dans l' URSS nouvelle: entretien avec Andrei Tarkovsky', Positif, 109 (1969), 1-13 (p.10).

a public execution of his own day. This 'local realism' is, of course, one of the most striking features of the crucifixion scene in Andrei Rublev, which takes place against a snow-covered and obviously Russian landscape.

The embellishment of Biblical scenes with details drawn from everyday life was common to the late Middle Ages; contemporary mystery plays and devotional literature, for example, frequently interpreted the sacred stories in simple, everyday terms in order to render them more immediate to the reader or viewer. Tarkovsky's 'Russian Crucifixion' is only one of many medieval borrowings to be found in his films, though this type of 'local realism' is not entirely without precedent in Russian art.[39] Tarkovsky's conception is close to that of Brueghel's in a number of other respects: in both crucifixion scenes most of the bystanders seem utterly unaware of the significance of the event. They either go about their business unconcernedly, or stand around gaping in curiosity. Children, who play such an important role in both Brueghel and Tarkovsky, add to the prevailing sense of public holiday. The anachronistic presence of an Orthodox monk (Andrei Rublev) at the Crucifixion recalls the figure of a Catholic priest in Brueghel's painting (the same motif appears in the painting which inspired Brueghel's work: Bosch's own 'Christ Carrying the Cross'). The Crucifixion scene in Andrei Rublev is also a synthesis of two Brueghel compositions which feature throughout Tarkovsky's films: the snow-covered landscape, and crowds of people,

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[39] The Russian painter, Mikhail Nesterov, in his painting entitled 'Holy Russia' (1906), also depicted Christ in a snow-covered Russian landscape, though Nesterov's artificial, idealized conception bears little further resemblance to the 'peasant Christ' figure of Tarkovsky's film.

often peasants working together in harmony. Brueghel painted a nu mber of winter scenes, including two of his best known works, 'The Massacre of the Innocents' and 'The Adoration of the Magi in the Snow', but none seems to have captivated Tarkovsky quite so much as 'The Hunters in the Snow'. This painting inspired the scene in Mirror in which the boy, Asafiev, is seen walking to the top of a snow-covered hill. As he stops beside a tree, the scene moves into slow motion and a bird flies from the tree down on to his hat. Birds are among motifs employed most consistently by Tarkovsky, and such an image recalls a familiar motif in medieval painting: that of the dove as symbol of the holy spirit conferring grace. Tarkovsky's metaphor may be a slight variation on this theme; this is his own explanation of this curious event:

> My wife attracts birds. When we walk in the forest, birds fly close to her - she is like them, a part of nature. Some country people even call her a sorceress. Now, I know there is no malice in her at all, birds will never approach an evil being. In the film, the child has just misbehaved, so to show the audience he isn't some kind of delinquent, beyond hope, I illustrate with the bird a hint of his true nature.[40]

Both bird and tree feature prominently in 'Hunters in the Snow', which conveys a bitter day in the depths of winter. The general bleakness of the landscape - the bare trees, frozen ponds and dull sky - is reinforced by Brueghel's partial elimination of colour, an effect which Tarkovsky borrowed for the Mirror scene,

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[40] Philip Strick, 'Tarkovsky's Translations', Sight and Sound, 50 (Winter 1980-81), 152-153 (p.152).

and which he would later bring to refinement in Sacrifice. The painting is one of three Brueghel works featured in Solaris[41] where, at Snaut's birthday party, the camera pans in and out of the painting in much the same way as it did with the icons at the end of Andrei Rublev. In Solaris the beauty and sheer aesthetic refinement of Brueghel's works provide a glaring contrast with the soulless, technological artificiality of the space station. But in both Andrei Rublev and Solaris the quotation of artistic masterpieces in this manner has also a powerful transcendental quality; one critic has compared these two sequences in the following terms:

> Both sequences are an attempt to use a great work of art as a means of transcendence. But whereas, in Rublev, this transcendence is juxtaposed to the rest of the film, in Solaris it is situated at the heart of it, and Brueghel's affirmation of the natural world is embodied within the dramatic context, of Hari becoming human. It makes a very different sense to pan and zoom into Brueghel's illusionistic landscape than into the flaking color areas of a Rublev ikon; and I think it is the difference between the humanistic and the merely aestheticizing.[42]

Part of Brueghel's great gift lay in his ability to reveal the organic link between man, the community and the earth. All of Tarkovsky's heroes have this organic relationship with the community or with the earth; for Tarkovsky, those who try to detach themselves from the community inevitably come to a tragic end.

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[41] The others are 'Wheat Harvest' and 'Tower of Babel'.

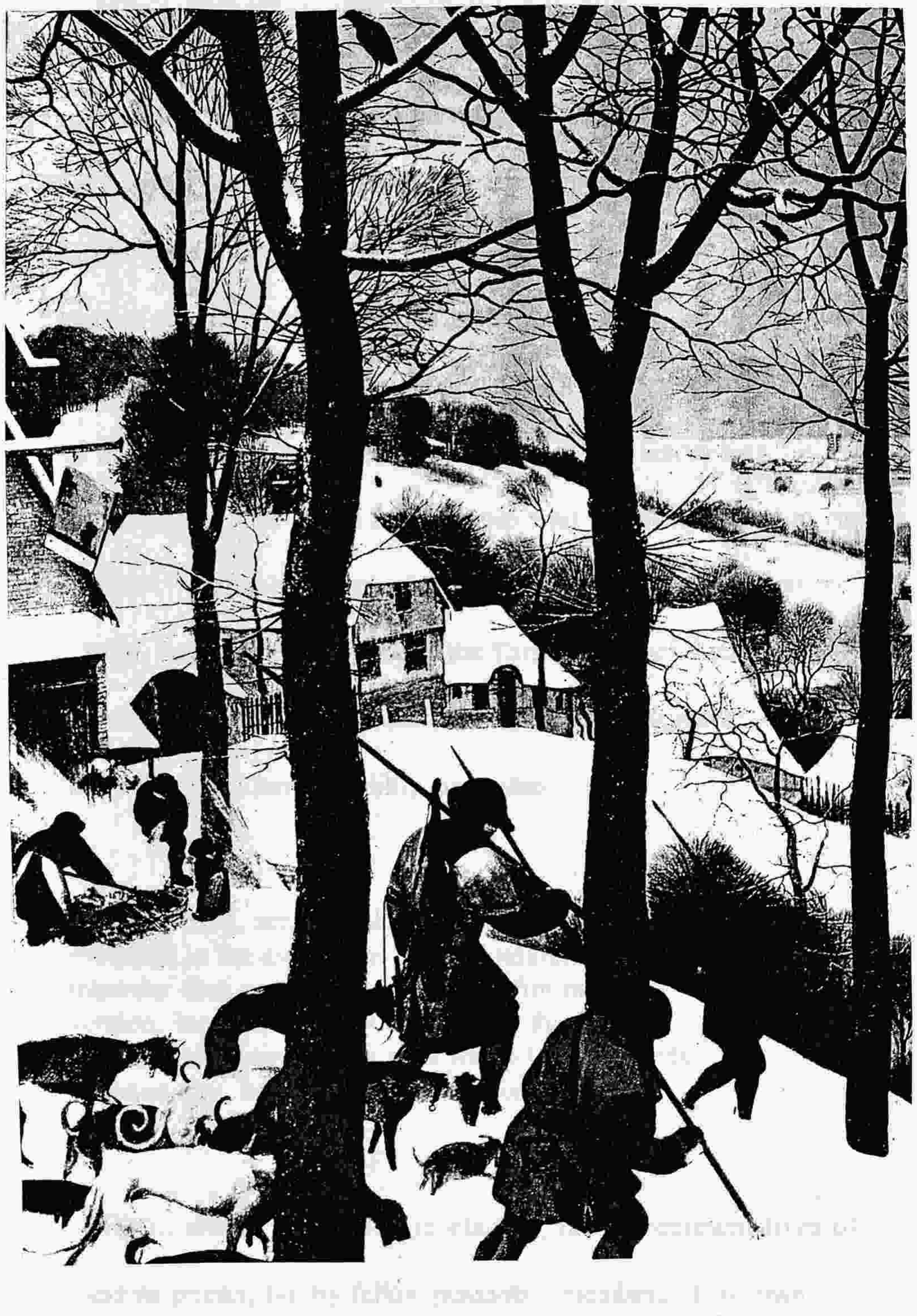
[42] Timothy Hyman, 'Solaris', Film Quarterly, 3 (1976), 54-58 (p.57).



22. Mirror



23. Jan Van Eyck: 'The Annunciation' (detail).



24. Pieter Brueghel the Elder: 'Hunters in the Snow'.

This is the moral of the prologue in Andrei Rublev, in the episode of the flying peasant, Efim, an episode which may have been inspired by another Brueghel work: 'The Fall of Icarus'. The Icarus analogy is more apparent from a reading of the scenario than from the film itself. In the former, the whole episode (which is placed in the middle of the film) involves, not a balloon, but a pair of home-made wings. The change was made, as Tarkovsky admitted, '... in order to destroy the Icarus complex of the episode'.[43] In the Middle Ages the fall of Icarus was commonly understood as a parable of the fate of those who 'foolishly aspire to rise above their rank in life'.[44] Tarkovsky's moral lesson may be a slight variation of this: his peasant, Efim, has attempted to escape the Earth, to detach himself from the community in order to pursue his personal dream of flying. However, as Professors Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have plausibly suggested:

> ... his invention, sensational as it is, does not correspond to the aspirations of the community. Tarkovsky does not want to criticize Jefim or his invention, but he does draw attention to the fact that if the inventor cannot find a path which leads towards the community, he risks being destroyed.[45]

Before his historic flight, interestingly, Efim is attacked, not by representatives of authority, by soldiers or priests, but by fellow peasants - members of his own community.

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[43] Andrei Tarkovsky 'Zapechatlennoe vremya', Iskusstvo kino, 4 (1967), 68-79 (p.78).

[44] Walter Gibson, Brueghel (London, 1988), p.40.

[45] Bàlint Andràs Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), pp.91-92.

The paintings of Hieronymus Bosch represent a different (though equally Russian) proclivity in Tarkovskian cinema and in Russian culture as a whole: the theme of the Apocalypse. Any discussion of Bosch's influence on Tarkovsky is bound to be, to a certain degree, tentative: in his theoretical writings Tarkovsky makes no mention of Bosch. There is, though, a certain amount of circumstantial evidence to support the assertion that Bosch is as least as important in Tarkovsky's conception as Brueghel.[46] During his lifetime Brueghel was commonly regarded as 'a second Hieronymus Bosch', and many of his paintings and drawings - particularly the 'Seven Deadly Sins' - clearly drew upon the same imagery as Bosch, and employed the same motifs and allegorical method. The differences between the two artists, though, are probably more important than the similarities. Brueghel, as Tolnay has observed, '... creates a synthesis between nature and the soul of man'.[47] His paintings always take an essentially realistic view of nature, a view that was quite alien to Bosch. Bosch's inspiration derived from the darker side of nature - alchemy, evil, dreams, the spirit of the earth and of inanimate objects. Bosch's works are among the most important medieval representatives of what has been termed 'imaginative' art, a genre which 'presents a fantasy or experience of the artist in an "unrealistic" even dreamlike, and sometimes "abstract" manner'.[48] Bosch, indeed, turns away from human reality to a more metaphysical world of redemption and fantasy, a world '... in which nature is

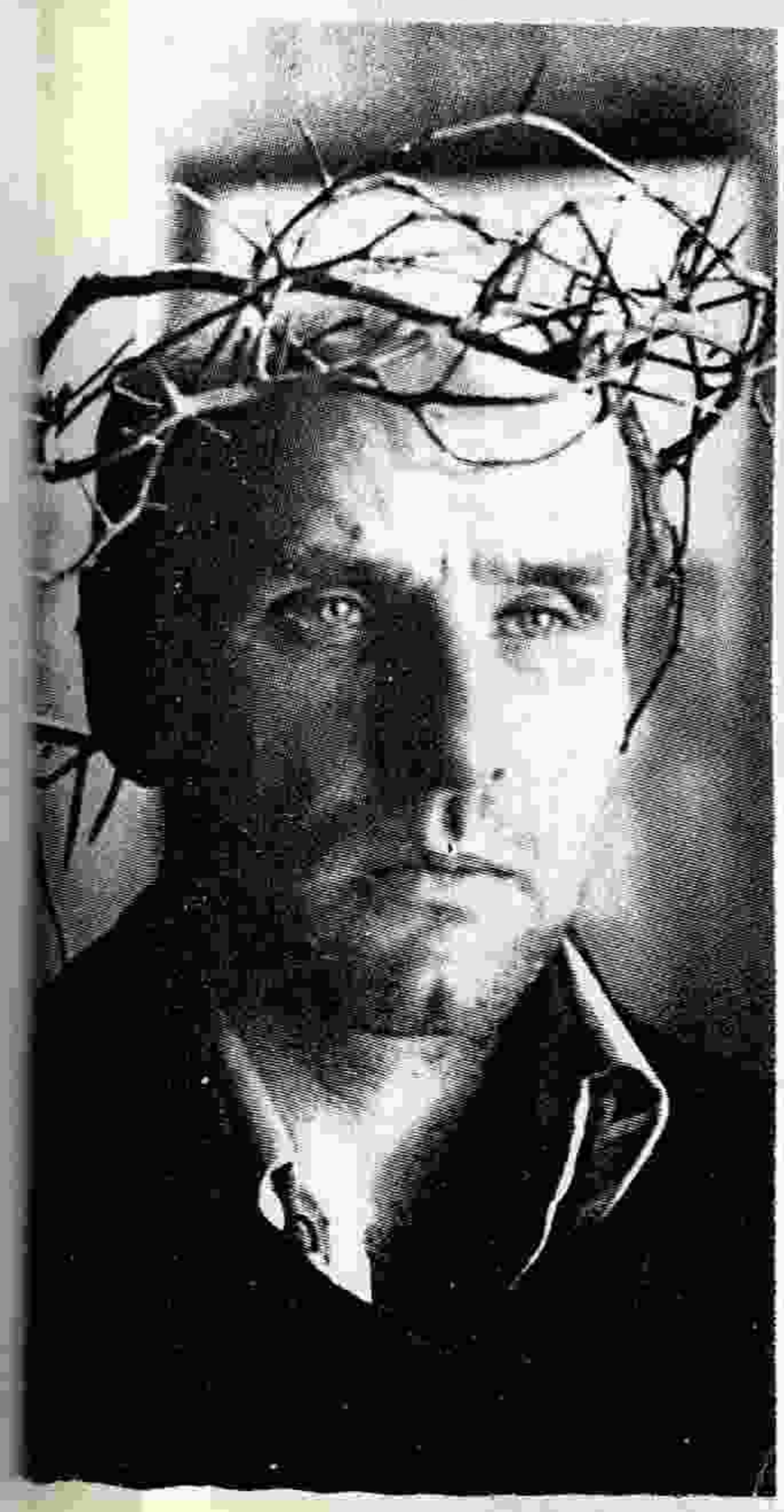
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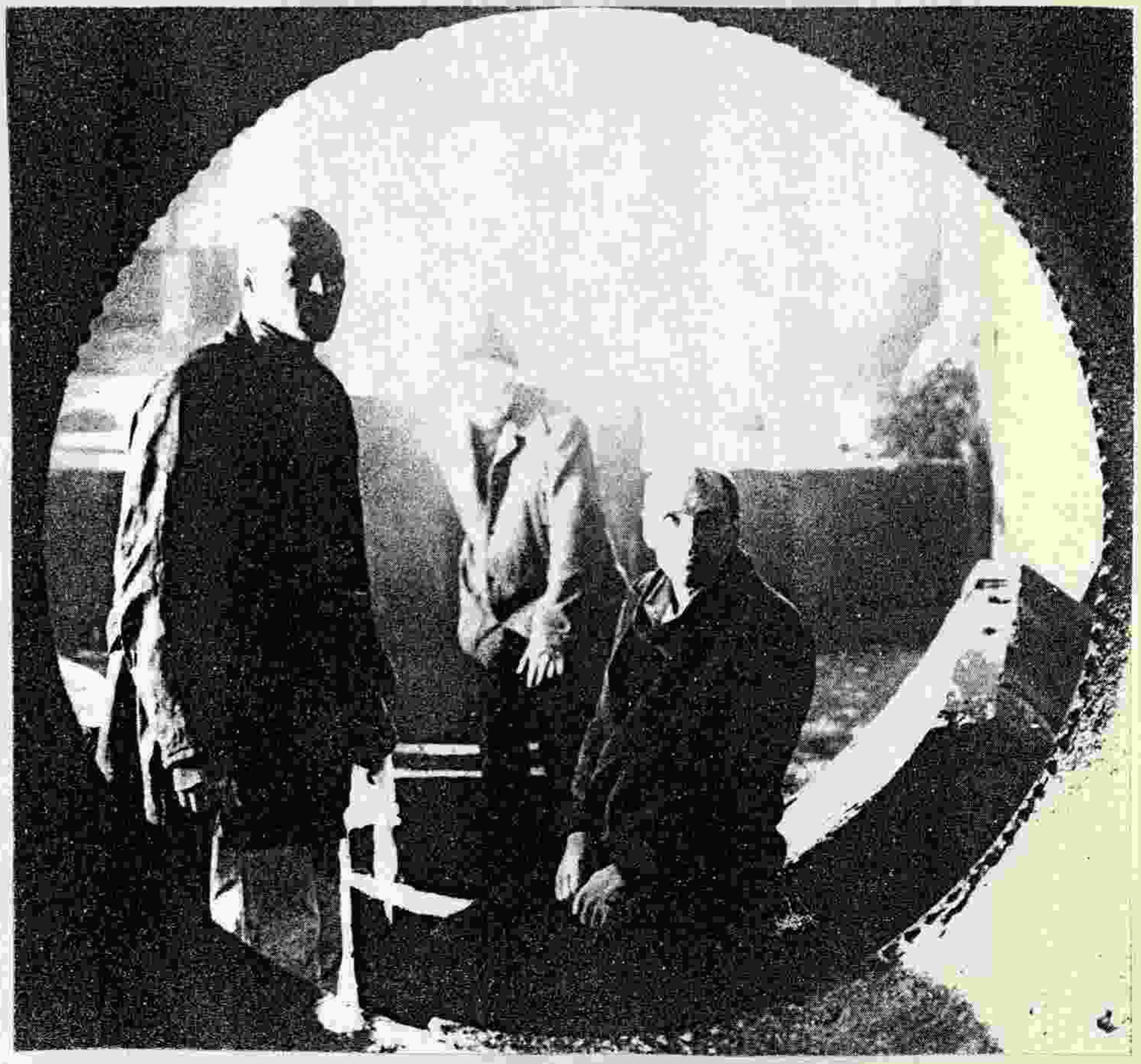
[46] In the course of private discussions with colleagues and friends of Tarkovsky, I have established that Bosch was in fact one of Tarkovsky's best-loved painters.

[47] Cited in Arturo Bovi, Brueghel (London, 1980), p.8.

[48] Anièla Jaffé, 'Symbolism in the Visual Arts', in Man and his Symbols, edited by Carl Jung (London, 1978), pp. 257-322 (p.278).







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25. Hieronymus Bosch: 'Christ Carrying the Cross'.

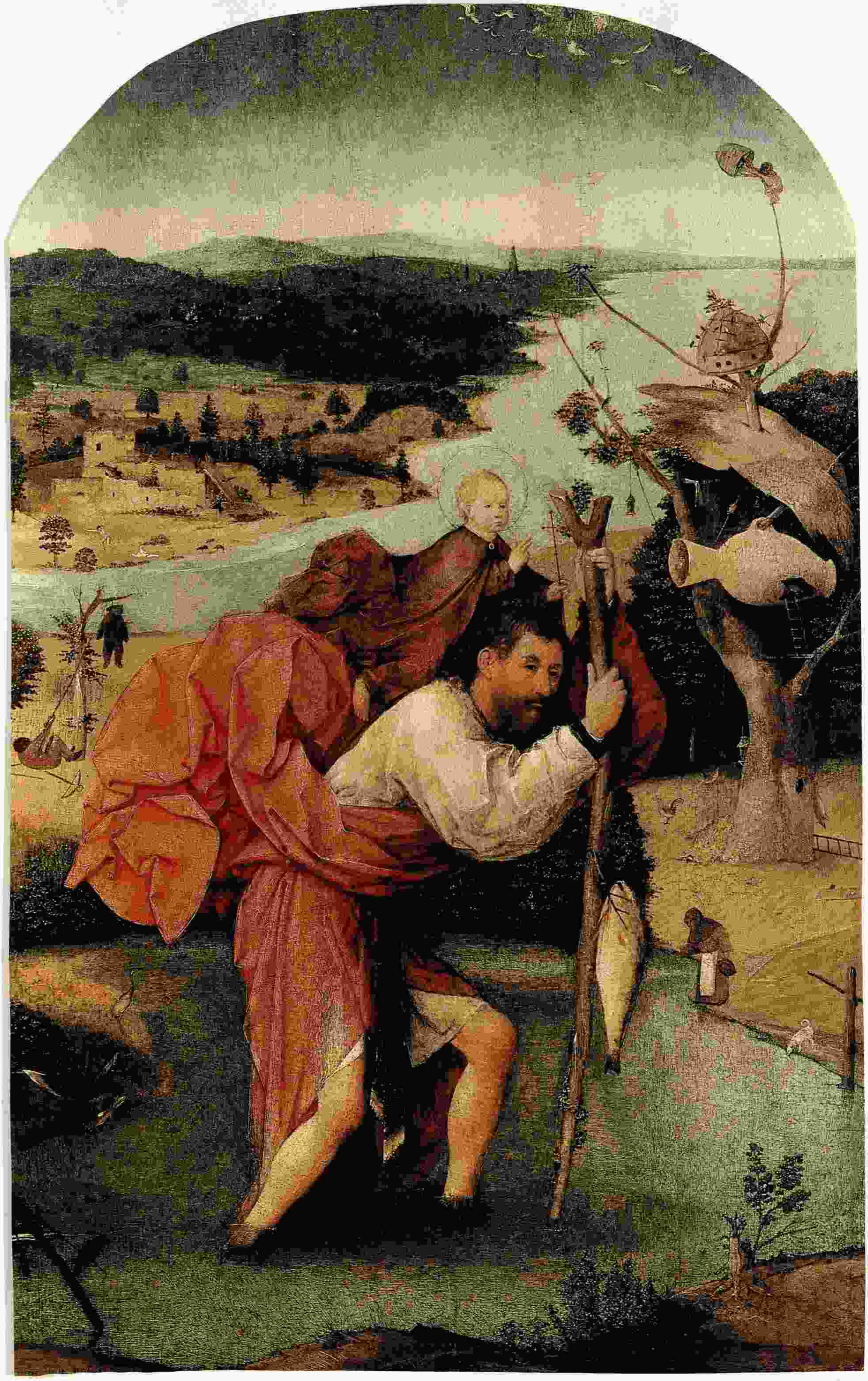
26. The 'Writer'.

27. The 'Zone'.

'Bosch' imagery in Stalker.

Overleaf:

28. Bosch: 'St Christopher Carrying the Christ Child'.



violated and deformed'.[49]

Much of Bosch's vision has a relevance to Tarkovskian cinema. Tarkovsky, in a number of his films, seems to share Bosch's predilection for 'violated and deformed landscapes'. Stalker provides a number of obvious examples. Towards the end of the film the Stalker leaves his tavern and sets off home with his daughter on his shoulders. Against a nightmarish background of industrial waste, the Stalker trudges along a river, beyond which a large factory or power-station spews out fumes. The scene is curiously reminiscent of Bosch's 'St Christopher Carrying the Christ Child', which contains not only the central figure of a man carrying a child, but also the river, tavern, evil-charged landscape and buildings blazing in the distance, as well as some of the motifs one commonly associates with Tarkovsky's films. Such images find a familiar parallel in the iconographic codes followed by Bosch and other medieval and Renaissance painters. These, often drawing upon Biblical or mythological sources, saw ruined houses, for example, as symbolic of the transience of life, or the decline of the old order. Other objects - fish, bowls and jugs - were symbols of water which, in turn, represented purification. Candles, flames and other conflagrations symbolized fire and, ultimately, enlightenment or divine retribution.

Tarkovsky makes full use of such iconographic conventions in his films. With Bosch, in particular, Tarkovsky shares not only the medieval painter's predilection for metonymy and other forms of symbolism: he also appears to echo

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[49] Bovi, p.9.

three of Bosch's most obsessive themes: the monastic ideal of retreat from the world; man's moral blindness and pursuit of materialism at the expense of his spiritual welfare; and the Apocalypse. Tarkovsky's interest in monasticism is rarely explicit in his films, though the reclusive nature of many of his heroes - Alexander (Sacrifice), Domenico (Nostalgia) and the Stalker for instance - is testament to his interest in the ideal of retreat. Tarkovsky had intended (after the completion of Sacrifice) to make a film about the life of St Antony the hermit (founder of Christian monasticism), the objective of which seems to have been an exploration of the conflict between personal salvation, and the salvation of others, a conflict which for Tarkovsky was implicit in the Orthodox concept of *sobornost'* (catholicity / togetherness / community). Tarkovsky explained his conception of the St Antony project in the following terms:

> From the Orthodox point of view, *sobornost'* is a very important aspect of dogma. For Orthodox believers the Church is a community [*sobornost'*] of people united by common feelings, a common faith. Why then does a saint give up everything and go off to the desert? In order to save himself. But what does he do about other people? This question of the relationship between participating in life and personal salvation concerns me a great deal.[50]

St Antony is a recurring figure in Bosch's works, and his appearance in many of the painter's drawings and paintings reflects a medieval fascination with the lives of saints and hermits. Nowhere in medieval painting, though, were the

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[50] Cited in Charles de Brantes, 'Andrei Tarkovsky o tvorchestve i o sebe', Russkaya mysl', 1 August 1986, p.12.

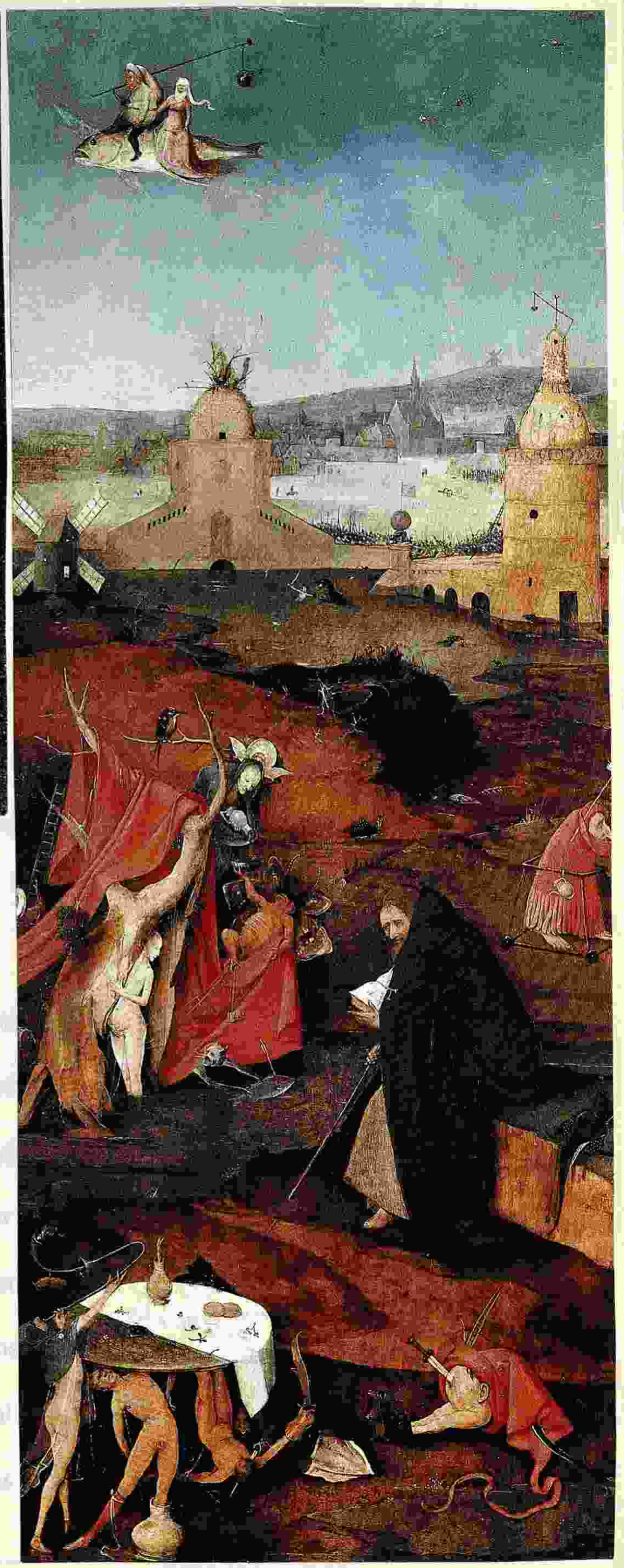
vicissitudes of the spiritual life detailed more comprehensively and vividly than in Bosch's 'Temptation of St Antony' triptych. In such paintings Bosch (unlike other medieval painters) rarely has his saints perform miraculous exploits or endure spectacular martyrdoms: like Rublev, they exhibit the more passive virtues of contemplation, prayer and study.

Andrei Rublev is the film which owes most to Bosch's conception of sainthood. The episode entitled 'The Feast' (Prazdnik) contains a scene which is almost certainly a direct result of Bosch's influence. This describes a celebration of the pagan feast of 'John the Bather' (Ivan Kupala) and (as suggested in Chapter One) is one of Tarkovsky's most overt references to the *dvoeverie*, or duality of Christianity and paganism, in Russian culture. In Tarkovsky's film Rublev first stumbles upon these pagan festivities as he is out collecting firewood. Intrigued by the sight of naked men and women running through the wood, he follows a couple, and is captured by some peasants who take him to a hut, where they tie him to a cross in a kind of mock crucifixion. A beautiful, naked 'witch' now appears from behind a ladder and Rublev's temptation begins. This part of the scene bears a strong resemblance to the 'Temptation of St Antony' triptych which features St Antony's temptation by the 'Devil-Queen' (even the ladder is present in Bosch's painting). Lust was a favourite target of Bosch, who obviously shared the widely held medieval suspicion of carnality and material beauty:

> [Medieval man] was taught that sin presents itself under the most alluring aspects, and that behind physical loveliness and agreeable sensations often lurked death and damnation. The visible world, in



29. Temptation in Andrei Rublev.



30. Bosch: 'Temptation of St Antony' (triptych).
Right Wing: 'St Antony in Meditation'.

short, was not unlike those little ivory carvings popular in Bosch's day which display a pair of embracing lovers or a voluptuous female nude, but when turned round reveal a rotten corpse. What Bosch shows us, in other words, is a false paradise whose transient beauty leads men to ruin and damnation.[51]

Tarkovsky's scene may have a similar moral: it is noteworthy that, later in the scene, as Rublev is on his way back to his companions, he comes across an old woman sitting in a dilapidated izba; her eyes seem to suggest a resignation and preparedness for death; clearly the amorous events of the night before no longer hold any meaning for her. Her advanced years and general senility provide an obvious contrast to the youth and beauty of the witch. (Tarkovsky uses a similar device in Mirror, where shots of his young and beautiful wife are continually interwoven with images of his aged mother).

Berdyaev once wrote that 'an eschatological tendency is part of the structure of the Russian soul'.[52] Tarkovsky unquestionably shares this Russian predilection for the Apocalypse theme. In Andrei Rublev, for instance, the episode entitled 'The Raid', which features the Tartar raid on Vladimir, has much in common with Bosch's famous 'Last Judgement' triptych and, to a lesser degree, with Brueghel's 'The Triumph of Death'. Bosch's influence can be seen not only in specific cases of torture, but in the general topography of Tarkovsky's landscape: the river, numerous conflagrations and burning buildings. Foma,

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[51] Walter Gibson, Hieronymus Bosch (London, 1988), p.87.

[52] Nikolai Berdyaev, Russkaya ideya (Paris, 1946), p.199.

Rublev's apprentice, is shot in the back by a Tartar archer, recalling a figure in Bosch's painting who suffers the same fate. During one sequence, the camera is slowly raised above the town to reveal a vast, panoramic nightmare: burning buildings and scenes of torture and violence. Many medieval and Renaissance painters, Dürer and Leonardo, for example, saw the End in terms of columns of water or floods. Tarkovsky, though, like Bosch, allotted fire the chief role in his eschatological drama. This is not surprising given the traditional Russian fear of fire, and a widely held Russian belief in the cleansing power of flames, as well as the fact that fire was the dominant symbol of the Last Judgement in Russian iconography.

The Apocalypse theme also occurs in an earlier film - Ivan's Childhood - in the shape of Albrecht Dürer's famous 'Apocalypse' series. In citing the great fifteenth-century German master Tarkovsky employs one of his most richly symbolic images. Dürer's 'Apocalypse' is symbolic on two counts: the four horsemen is a timeless image, as relevant to Dürer's contemporaries as to the protagonists of Ivan's Childhood who on a daily basis are compelled to face the reality of death and Judgement. As one critic has observed:

> Dürer in Ivan's Childhood is not only an expression of the link between different ages: he also embodies the whole of human time. It is significant that Ivan does not even notice the artificiality of the medium in which Dürer works, but takes his Horsemen of the Apocalypse literally as Germans that the artist simply

happened to see and draw.[53]

This 'artificiality of the medium' may reflect another dimension of the metaphor: the Horsemen are taken by Ivan as a literal image of the German invasion of Russia. But the medium itself - the engraving - only underlines the cultural distinctions between Russia and the West that are implicit in this image (and in the discussion that accompanies it). For Florensky engraving was the very epitome of Western rationalism and individualism, and of the triumph of logic in art (in 'The Iconostasis' Dürer's works are described as 'archetypally rational'). Florensky does not hesitate to ascribe to the materials used in art a cultural or religious significance. The *wood* used in Russian icons reflected the organicism of Russian culture; the undulating *canvas* of compliant Renaissance painting echoed the 'sensuality' of the Renaissance world; the flat *metal* plate which the engraver worked on corresponded to the rational nature of his art. Florensky concluded:

> Engraving was developed on Protestant soil, and the greatest engravers correspond to varieties of Protestantism (in Germany; in England). [...] Engraving is ... constructed by virtue of identity, contradiction ... and in this respect it has the profoundest connection with German philosophy. There is an intimate affinity between true engraving and the inner essence of Protestantism.[54]

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[53] Turovskaya, p.91.

[54] Florensky, pp.118-119.

The profound ambivalence that is a feature of Tarkovsky's appreciation of Renaissance art, would not, at first sight, seem to be present in his assessment of modern painting. In his theoretical articles and essays Tarkovsky's polemic appears consistent: modern art is the antithesis of the 'catholic' principle implicit in icon-painting, and is individualistic, exclusive, original, despiritualized and ultimately meaningless. Thus:

> Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake. What purports to be art begins to look like an eccentric occupation for suspect characters who maintain that any personalised action is of intrinsic value simply as a display of self-will. But in artistic creation the personality does not assert itself, it serves another, higher and communal idea.[55]

This view is, broadly speaking, characteristic of the Russian (religious) philosophers; it is especially prevalent in the aesthetic philosophies of Vladimir Solov'ev,[56] Nikolai Berdyaev and Pavel Florensky.

For Berdyaev, the 'degenerate tendencies' of modern art and literature merely reflected the 'surrender of the spirit of eternity to the polluted spirit of the

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[55] Sculpting in Time, p.38.

[56] Solov'ev's objections to modern art centred on its despiritualized nature, on the absence of 'beauty' contained therein, and on the increasing gulf between man and nature which he perceived in modern artistic genres. See, in particular, Solov'ev's 'Tri rechi v pamyat' Dostoevskogo', Sobranie sochinenii, second edition, 10 vols (St. Petersburg, 1911-1914), iii, pp.185-223. That Tarkovsky was familiar with Solov'ev's writings is now clear from his diaries. See Andrei Tarkovsky, Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-86, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), p.3.

time'.[57] Such art, in Berdyaev's view, marked a fundamental divorce between man and nature; it reflected, moreover, a profound rupture with antiquity and the Renaissance:

> All these modern artistic currents denote a profound disintegration of human forms, the shattering of the integral human image. The search for a perfect nature and perfect human forms had been the motivating power of the Renaissance and constituted its link with anti-quity. Futurism is synonymous with the end of man as the greatest theme of art. It both eliminates and disintegrates man in art, which becomes a confusion of elements.[58]

Berdyaev's polemic was directed mainly against the growing futurist and cubist movements, and in particular against the works of Picasso, which Berdyaev considered archetypally anti-humanist and anti-Renaissance in character.

Florensky's view of modern art is comparable, though it is never tinged with the nostalgia for Renaissance humanism that is prevalent in Berdyaev's writings. Florensky's concern, moreover, was less with the modern secular art of the West, than with the exponents of a 'new realism' in Russian icon-painting, chiefly Vrubel', Vasnetsov and Nesterov.[59] In Florensky's opinion:

> Most of these painters see neither clearly nor

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[57] Nikolai Berdyaev, O naznachenii cheloveka (Paris, 1931), p.146.

[58] Nikolai Berdyaev, Smysl istorii (Berlin, 1923), p.207.

[59] Tarkovsky's view of this tendency in modern icon-painting, and particularly in Nesterov's paintings, was equally disparaging. See Aleksandr Glezer, 'Ya schitaya sebya prodolzhatelem klassicheskoi russkoi kul'turnoi traditsii...', Strelets, 4 (1985), 37-41 (p.39).

confusedly - they simply see nothing at all. They are content to modify superficially an external image in such a way that semi-conscious memories of icons ... are joined to it. [...] The fact that modern painters require models for their depiction of sacred subjects is sufficient proof that they see no supernatural image and if they see anything at all it is an image deriving from a different order, one that disturbs rather than aids spiritual contemplation.[60]

It seems clear, then, that among the philosophers in whom Tarkovsky showed most interest, there is a widely-held antipathy to the various currents prevailing in painting (and in the other arts) in late nineteenth - early twentieth century Europe and Russia. On occasions, in articles and interviews, Tarkovsky's views appear to coincide almost exactly with the sentiments of such philosophers: to give but one example, in common with Berdyaev Tarkovsky considered the work of Picasso 'too intellectual ... and without spiritual foundation'.[61] One could cite other such instances: however, what would seem beyond doubt is that Tarkovsky, in general terms, shared this apparent philosophical consensus against modern painting.

And yet, this may be to take rather too simplistic a view. There are some indications that Tarkovsky's attitudes, at least to the philosophy which underpinned the emergence of modernist currents in painting, was positive and sympathetic, a fact which may even (as we shall see later) have impacted on his own work as a filmmaker. There is, for instance, the evidence of Tarkovsky's own paintings and

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[60] Florensky, p.107.

[61] Cited in de Baecque, p.108.

drawings, a number of which are obviously 'modernist' and abstract in style.[62] It has already been pointed out that in modern art Tarkovsky prefered the works of artists who 'maintained a sort of dialogue with the old masters'[63] - specifically the works of two of the greatest surrealists: René Magritte and Salvador Dali. This apparent interest in surrealism may not, at first sight, appear wholly consistent with Tarkovsky's well-known views on the importance of the spiritual in art. However, many modern artists of the early twentieth-century (including the surrealists) saw their art as a reaction against the increasing degeneracy, as well as the intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy, of figurative painting. Such degeneracy, which, it might be claimed, first manifested itself in the Renaissance as a conflict between knowledge and faith, merely reflected the increasing conflict between man and his instinctual foundation, between nature and mind, between the conscious and the unconscious - that are the hallmarks of modern civilization. A growing awareness of the need to give expression to this sense of alienation (of man from nature), as well as to new concepts of 'reality', is apparent in the paintings and theoretical writings of the early modernists (Kandinsky's famous essay Concerning the Spiritual in Art (Uber das Geistige in der Kunst) being one of the earliest manifestations of this). Above all, such artists perceived the essential 'unimaginability' of the higher reality to which modern art now aspired. As one 'Jungian' psychologist has observed:

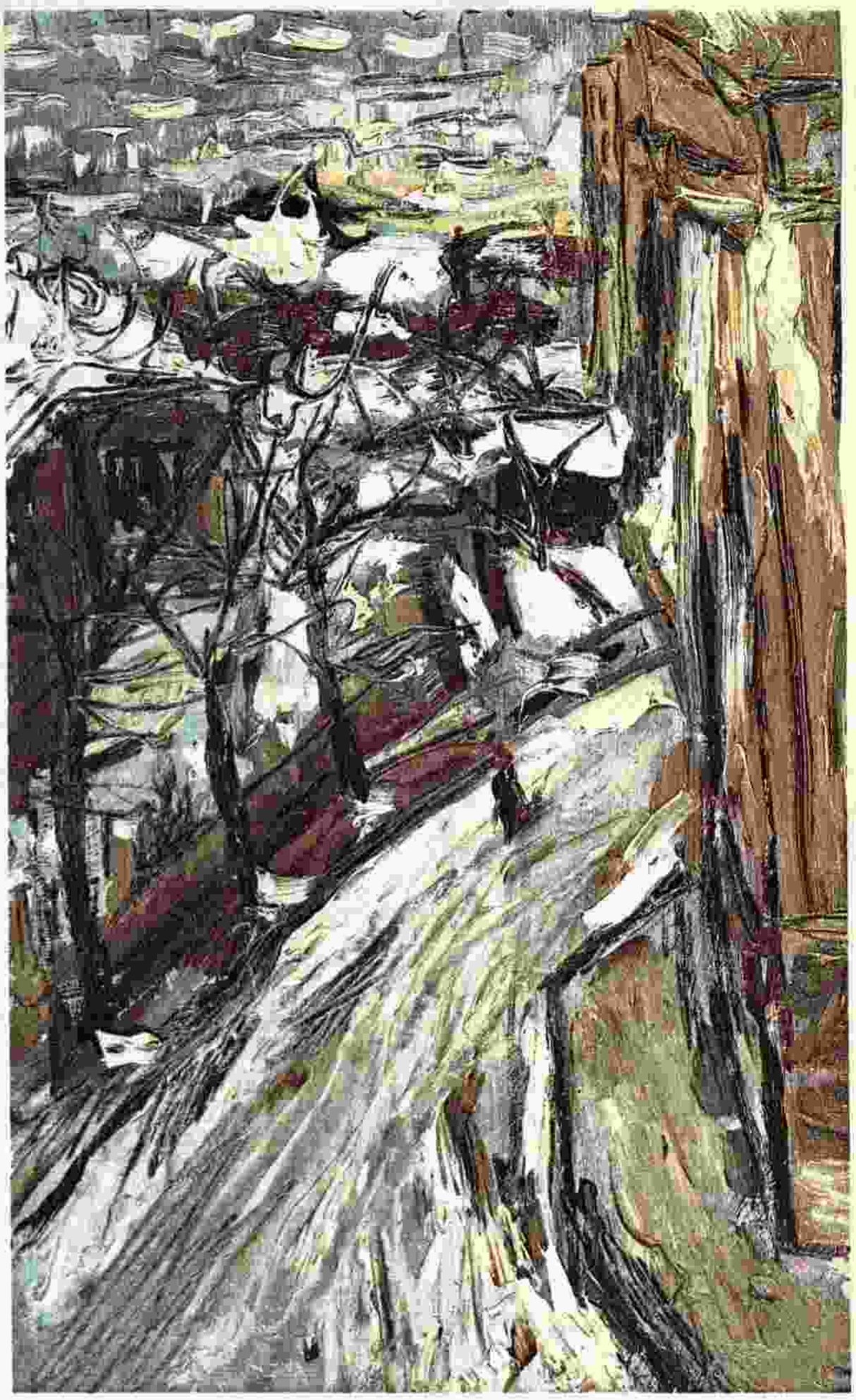
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[62] Particularly the paintings entitled 'Abstraction' (Abstraktsiya) and 'Church from a Window' (Tserkov' iz okna), both of which are reproduced in Volkovysky, op. cit. For a more comprehensive view of Tarkovsky's (and other Soviet directors') paintings and drawings see Von Eisenstein bis Tarkowsky: die Malerei der Filmregisseure in der UdSSR, edited by Igor Jassenjawsky (Munich, 1990).

[63] See page 171.

31. Paintings by Tarkovsky:

'The Willow Trees' (1947)



'Grandfather's House' (1947)



> It is a characteristic of this ... world behind the worlds of physics and the psyche that its laws, processes, and contents are unimaginable. That is a fact of outstanding importance for the understanding of the art of our time. For the main subject of modern art is, in a certain sense, unimaginable too. Therefore much modern art has become 'abstract'. The great artists of this century have sought to give visible form to the 'life behind things' and so their works are a symbolic expression of a world behind consciousness (or, indeed, behind dreams, for dreams are only rarely non- figurative).[64]

One of the first artists to give form to the existential dilemma of contemporary man was the Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico. Chirico, the founder of the so-called *pittura metafisica* (metaphysical painting), who was deeply influenced by the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, sought inspiration in what might be termed 'the magical exaltation of the object'. His task was to convey the essential senselessness of life, the Nietzschian 'metaphysical void', by depicting everyday objects torn from their utilitarian contexts, and often set against dreamlike, 'surrealistic' backdrops of Italian towns. In this search for the transcendental in simple objects, Chirico particularly favoured furniture. Many of his paintings contain images of tables, chairs, mirror-fronted wardrobes, divans torn from their habitual domestic context, and placed in the middle of streets or squares, or in open countryside ('Furniture in the Valley' (1927) is one of the best-known examples of the latter). Chirico wrote:

> To discover newer and more mysterious aspects we must have access to new combinations. For example:

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[64] Jaffé, p.303.

> a statue in a room whether it be alone or in the company of living people, could give us a new emotion if it were made in such a way that its feet rested on the floor and not on a base. [...] The furniture to which we have been accustomed since our childhood awakens in us feelings with which many of us are familiar. And yet as far as I know furniture is not credited with the power of being able to awaken ideas of any particular strangeness within us. For some time I have noticed from experience that this is often possible.[65]

Chirico's use of objects recalls medieval alchemical notions of 'spirit in matter': namely the belief that all matter, including inanimate objects, contains a soul. 'Every object', wrote Chirico:

> ... has two aspects: one current one which we see nearly always and which is seen by men in general, and the other which is spectral and metaphysical and seen only by rare individuals in moments of clairvoyance and metaphysical abstraction, just as certain bodies formed of materials that are impenetrable to the sun's rays only appear under the power of artificial light, which could be, for example, X-rays.[66]

Thus, for Chirico, a work of art must relate something that does not appear in its visible form. Chirico was but one of a number of painters to exalt the object, to give it a significance in art not seen since medieval times. A key aspect of Kandinsky's Concerning the Spiritual in Art is his conviction that 'everything has

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[65] Giorgio de Chirico, 'Statues, Furniture and Generals', in Metaphysical Art, edited by Massimo Carrà (London, 1971), pp.151-153 (pp.151-152).

[66] Giorgio de Chirico, 'On Metaphysical Art', in Metaphysical Art, pp.87-91 (p.89).

a secret soul'; and the painter expressed great admiration for artists who 'sought the inner by way of the outer'. Kandinsky wrote:

> Cézanne made a living thing out of a teacup, or rather in a teacup he realized the existence of something alive. He raised still life to such a point that it ceased to be inanimate. He painted these things as he painted human beings, because he was endowed with the gift of divining inner life in everything. His colour and form are alike suitable to the spiritual harmony. A man, a tree, an apple, all were used by Cézanne in the creation of something that is called a 'picture', and which is a piece of true inward and artistic harmony.[67]

Elsewhere, Juan Miro, Picasso, George Braque and Max Ernst all created 'collages' from scraps of rubbish and from newspaper clippings. The German painter, Kurt Schwitters, worked mainly with objects retrieved from his bin: scraps of paper, cloth, nails and railway tickets.[68] As Anièla Jaffé has pointed out, such tendencies merely underlined the 'old alchemical tenet according to which the sought-for precious objects is to be found in filth'.[69]

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[67] Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, translated and introduced by Michael Sadler (New York, 1977), pp.17-18.

[68] This is not, of course, to suggest that the medieval view of the material world (that objects reflect a higher reality), or that the alchemical view (according to which precious materials might be contained within lowly materials) can in any strict sense be compared to the way in which objects are perceived by the modern painters mentioned here. Indeed, the motivation which lay behind (for instance) Schwitters' 'raising-up of the discarded object' may have been primarily non-spiritual. The point is simply that such painters (for their own reasons) attributed to lowly objects an importance in art not seen since the time of the early Flemish masters.

[69] Jaffé, pp.291-292.

The celebratory optimism of Marc Chagall's works might seem remote from Chirico's Nietzschian pessimism. However, the two are in some ways comparable. Chagall shared with Chirico (to whom he is sometimes compared) a desire to explore the unconscious world by means of irrational, dreamlike images. Both artists rejected the prevailing aesthetic of the years 1910-25 and concentrated instead on a 'celebration of an imaginary world'. Chagall's rich imagery was rooted both in the mystical cult of Eastern Judaic Hasidism, and in Russian folk culture. Mysticism and ethical struggle lay at the heart of Hasidism, a fact which partly explains the essential 'unreality' of Chagall's images:

> The world that Chagall grew up in was tinged with magic, and he represented it faithfully in his paintings. The regular appearances of animals in his canvasses - donkeys, cocks, goats, cows, etc. - makes sense only when it is related to a supernatural vision of the common links between all creatures, in a universe where all things are possible.[70]

Chagall returned repeatedly to the same themes and motifs in his works in an attempt to express metaphysically and metonymically a unique and subjective poetic vision: the 'floating couples', the village, animals, flowers, lamps, mirrors. Two themes predominated in his paintings: love, and the search to know the divine. He wrote: 'Everything may change in our demoralized world except the heart, man's love, and his striving to know the divine. Painting, like all poetry, has its part in the divine; people feel this today just as much as they used to'.[71]

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[70] Michel Makarius, Chagall (London, 1988), pp.11-12.

[71] Cited in Jaffé, p.296.

There is much in the above brief survey of surrealism[72] that has relevance to Tarkovskian cinema. Above all, the inspiration which the Surrealists derived from dreams in articulating their visions of the unconscious, of the 'higher reality', is of central importance in understanding the position of dreams in Tarkovsky's aesthetic: both Tarkovsky and the surrealists often based their images on actual dreams, and in general it might be said that their work represents a dreamlike transposition of reality. Tarkovsky placed a very high value on the revelatory power of dreams, though they remained for him 'a veritable mystery ... the secret that lies behind half of human existence'.[73] Wherever possible he sought to capture his dreams on film. In Sacrifice, for instance, the extremely 'Freudian' and 'surrealistic' scene in which a naked girl chases a cock was based on a dream that the director had had on location in Gotland during the actual shooting of the film. Despite the production problems involved, Tarkovsky demanded and obtained permission to film his dream. The German producer, Ebbo Demant, later described it as 'the most inimitable fatalistic scene of the whole film! Here he foresees his whole destiny'.[74] Whatever the truth of Demant's observation (and it would be gratuitous to consider further the extremely subjective associations involved here) for the moment it is sufficient to say that, in common with the works of the surrealists, dreams in Tarkovsky's films (dreams or visions

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[72] Many of the painters mentioned here can (to varying degrees) be considered 'surrealistic'; Chagall and Chirico who were always reluctant to identify themselves with a theory never considered themselves part of the movement, though their work came very close in spirit to that of the surrealists.

[73] Cited in Layla Alexander 'Andrei Tarkovsky - Enigma and Mystery', Soviet Film, 8 (1989), 32-34 (p.34).

[74] Cited in Alexander, p.34.

appear in each of his films) play a crucial role in conveying his sense of a higher reality.[75]

The obsession with the 'magic object' and the 'secret soul of things' that is such a feature of surrealist art, finds a clear parallel in Tarkovskian cinema. It is obvious even from a superficial viewing of his films that inanimate objects are possessed of a meaning that does not succumb easily to rational explanation. Objects are endowed with an ontological significance in all of Tarkovsky's films and, although their function will often be mainly symbolic, there is equally a sense that such objects are meaningful in themselves, and that, by virtue of their utter simplicity, they are able to transcend concrete reality to reveal what the Italian painter, Carlo Carrà, described as 'that higher, more significant condition of being where the whole splendour of art resides'.[76] In Stalker, for instance, during the lengthy pan of the camera along a polluted river bed in the Zone, one finds 'things' - coins, a syringe, a revolver, rusty metal pipes and other detritus - arranged in what appears to be essentially a metonymical representation of the decay and essential shallowness of modern life. In Mirror on the other hand the objects are rooted in a specifically cultural, ancestral or natural context: the oil-lamp, family mirror, old books, jug and basin, the wooden furniture, the dacha itself, trees, fruit, plants. Such things seem to underline, for Tarkovsky, the

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[75] On the general subject of dreams in surrealist art, see André Breton, Manifestes du Surréalisme (Paris, 1946) in which Breton (the founder of surrealism) expresses a central tenet of the movement: 'Can dreams not be used to solve the fundamental problems of life? I believe that the apparent antagonism between dream and reality will be resolved in a kind of absolute reality - in surreality'. (pp.117-118).

[76] Cited in Jaffé, p.292.

essential 'organicism' of Russian culture, its link with the natural world. In the Soviet cinema and theatre artists' journal (Sovetskie khudozhniki teatra i kino) one finds the following assessment of 'objects' in Mirror:

> 'Things' are silent witnesses of our existence. They are carefully chosen by the artist, although at times they seem simply to appear ... involuntarily, almost by necessity. Their existence is not only explicable but essential. Moreover, abandoned by people they continue to live their own independent life - tiny particles of all being. Their imperceptible inner movement continues: a spoon falls from a bowl, a potato from the table, milk spills on the floor. Even time in [Mirror] is marked by quiet but precise sounds of dripping water, by the crackle of an expiring oil-lamp.[77]

Mirror is particularly rich in examples of the 'transfigured object'. It is a film in which the most careful and detailed attention is paid to even the tiniest of objects, the simplest of which can be mysterious. As has been suggested above the movement of inanimate objects in Mirror particularly effectively illustrates this sense of 'inner life'; another example of this is the lingering shot of a slowly disappearing mark of a cup on a table surface. Much of this attention to detail appears in the best traditions of still-life and other painting. A similar tendency is evident in the poetry of Tarkovsky's father, Arsenii Aleksandrovich, a special feature of which is the poet's 'strange language of objects' in his articulation of the limitless beauty of the surrounding world and all it contains. The selected excerpts from Arsenii's verse which are read aloud in Mirror subtly underline this

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[77] Lupandina, p.72.

aesthetic of 'transfigured objects':

> Vibrant rivers lay inside the crystal,
> Mountains loomed through mist, seas foamed,
> And you held a crystal sphere in your hands,
> Seated on a throne as still you slept
> And - God in heaven! - you belonged to me.
> You awoke and you transfigured
> The words that people utter every day,
> And speech was filled to overflowing
> With ringing power, and the word 'You'
> Discovered its new purport: it meant 'King'.
> Ordinary objects were at once transfigured,
> Everything - the jug, the basin - when
> Placed between us like a sentinel
> Stood water, luminary and firm.[78]

The predilection many of the surrealist painters had for scraps of rubbish, filth, and used objects of every kind has been pointed out earlier. Such artists evidently saw a particular charm in what was old, worn or used. This is equally true of Tarkovsky, who in this matter was also much influenced by Eastern traditions, in which great respect is accorded to the age of both people and 'things'. Tarkovsky set great store by the Japanese concept of *saba* (or *patina*) which literally means 'rust'. *Saba*, in a sense, is the mark of time. In Tarkovsky's films this idea would play an important role in his attitude to detail, and in his efforts to experiment with time. He wrote:

> The Japanese have a concept which they have named 'patina'. This word expresses the particular

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[78] From the poem 'First Meetings' (Pervie svidaniya). See Arsenii Tarkovsky, 'Pervie svidaniya' in Izbrannoe: stikhotvoreniya, poemy, perevody (1929-1979) (Moscow, 1982), pp.168-169. English translation by Kitty Hunter-Blair in Sculpting in Time, p.101.

> fascination and charm that time brings to 'things'. Old walls, old clothes, broken crockery: these are things in which fate itself is reflected.[79]

Thus, *new* objects in Tarkovsky's films are hard, artificial, proud and isolated from a cultural context (for instance, the space-station, 'Solaris', and all its contents); *old* things, by contrast, have character, are soft, weak and are organically linked to nature and to 'the people'.

'Dreamlike' images and objects are the accepted idiom of surrealist art, and it would be a difficult (and ultimately pointless) undertaking to attempt to identify specific cases of surrealist influence on Tarkovsky's aesthetic. However, it is worth considering two exceptions to that rule, namely the works of Giorgio de Chirico and Marc Chagall, whose paintings contain a number of recurring motifs that are also a common feature of Tarkovsky's images.

There is no 'empirical' evidence that Chirico's paintings in any sense influenced Tarkovsky's own work as a filmmaker.[80] Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a number of interesting (and quite specific) analogies between the work of both painter and director, some of which testify at least to the similarity of their

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[79] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Dlya menya kino - eto sposob dostich' kakoi-to istiny', Sovetskaya Rossiya, 3 April 1988, p.4.

[80] However, it is now at least clear from his diaries that Tarkovsky admired Chirico's work, and was personally acquainted with the painter's widow. See Time Within Time: The Diaries, p.246.

approach to art. In general terms Chirico could be described as a tragic and agonized 'God-seeker' - a mystic by temperament - who never found what he sought. Though his work is 'surrealistic' in spirit Chirico never identified himself with that (or any other) movement, but instead (like Tarkovsky) sought inspiration in earlier currents of Italian art, and particularly in the works of Fra Angelico, Carpaccio and Piero della Francesca. Chirico found particular merit in the painting entitled 'St Sebastian' by the renowned fifteenth-century Sicilian artist Antonello da Messina.[81] Interestingly, Tarkovsky originally considered adapting the same painting for a scene in Solaris:[82] the figure of St Sebastian (in precisely the attitude in which the saint appears in Antonello's painting - pierced by three arrows and tied against a pillar or tree) was to appear at one end of the long, curving, metal corridor of the space station. The citation of such a powerful cultural image was intended to provoke further 'nostalgia' for the Earth. In the end, this scene was never filmed: it would not correspond to Tarkovsky's preconceptions on the role of painting in film, namely that the subject of the painting could not simply be 'transported' to a film, but that either the painting itself should appear, or that the overall aesthetic of the artist might serve as a useful source of inspiration, themes and motifs. Thus, in the final version of Solaris Tarkovsky's indirect reference to Antonello was omitted in favour of the direct quotation of Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow'.

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[81] Chirico's praise for the 'St Sebastian' painting features in his article: 'Arnold Bocklin' in Metaphysical Art, pp.137-141 (p.139).

[82] According to Romadin, p.168.

Chirico's paintings invariably convey an unexpected, melancholy, more metaphysical aspect of the 'Italian spirit', as well as of Italian towns and of the Italian countryside: a view of Italy that he also found in the works of, among others, the early Italian masters cited above.[83] This view of Italy is precisely the one Tarkovsky hoped to convey in his film Nostalgia. The film depicts the country in a sombre manner that many observers have found unexpected and disturbing.[84] Tarkovsky avowed that Nostalgia was not 'yet another screen account of the beauties of Italy which amaze the tourists and are sent all over the world in the form of mass-produced post-cards'.[85] Nevertheless, even the director, upon seeing the final version of the film for the first time, called Nostalgia 'a spectacle of unrelieved gloom. The material was completely homogeneous, both in its mood and in state of mind imprinted in it'.[86]

Tarkovsky shared Chirico's desire, not only to convey the melancholy

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[83] On this subject see Chirico's article 'Seventeenth-Century Mania', in which is found the following appraisal: 'I know an Italian spirit that is sad, even in its joy, and more profound in its joy than in its sadness ... I find this spirit, with all the inevitable complications and deformations and additions born of painting (the most magical art), in the work of a Fra Angelico, of a Carpaccio, of a Signorelli, of a Botticelli, of a Pierro della Francesca, but I do not find even a shadow of it in any painting of the seventeenth century'. 'Seventeenth-Century Mania', in Metaphysical Art, pp.146-151 (p.148).

[84] As Turovskaya has observed, in Nostalgia 'we see none of the famous sights of Italy; the film steadfastly refuses to offer us what Gogol called the "lure of exotic, distant places", the picture-postcard sights, the places that it would be natural to see on a first visit to *la bell' Italia*, or even the natural lushness of the southern vegetation and the picturesque bustling settlements of the *mezzogiorno*. [...]

Few have been able to "de-Italianize" Italy as effectively as Tarkovsky'. Turovskaya, p.120.

[85] Sculpting in Time, p.202.

[86] ibid., p.203.

side of the Italian spirit, but also his belief that objects removed from their natural setting could possess certain transcendental values. This conviction, indeed, would come to form an important part of the director's aesthetic. Throughout his films one finds furniture and other objects removed from their habitual context and placed in gardens, in streets, on river-beds or elsewhere. In Stalker, the Zone is replete in examples of this phenomenon: the abandoned cars in the middle of a field, the coins, syringe, revolver and oil-painting on the river-bed. In Mirror, in the scene of the father's homecoming, a kitchen table stands in the garden,[87] on the surface of which a book of Leonardo's drawings[88] somehow adds to the prevailing sense of awe of the scene. In Nostalgia, the emptied pool of St Catherine at Bagno Vignoni provides a curious backdrop to salt-encrusted objects: bicycles, bottles, coins and, later, Gorchakov's burning candle. Nostalgia also contains one of the most explicit citations of Chirico's works, in the shape of the mirror-fronted wardrobe which Gorchakov comes across in the middle of a street. Though this may also, as Turovskaya has suggested, be a quotation from Bergman,[89] the mirror-fronted wardrobe is a favourite Tarkovskian motif which

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[87] On the subject of the appearance of furniture in natural surroundings, see Chirico's article 'Statues, Furniture and Generals'. Chirico wrote: 'The effect of furniture placed in deserted countryside in the midst of infinite Nature, is also very profound: like an armchair, a divan and chairs grouped together ...

And by contrast the countryside surrounding the furniture reveals to us an aspect of itself that we did not know'. (p.152).

[88] The curious magic that books and other reading materials, when read out of doors, seem possessed of was pointed out in a book for which Tarkovsky expressed great admiration in Sculpting in Time (p.46): Henry Thoreau's Walden. Thoreau wrote 'In those days when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground ... afforded me much entertainment, in fact answered the same purpose as the Iliad'. Henry Thoreau, 'Walden', in The Portable Thoreau, edited by Carl Bode (London, 1975), pp.258-572 (p.300).

[89] See Turovskaya, p.130.

has appeared in a number of his other films, including Mirror, Stalker and Sacrifice. Tarkovsky's apparent fondness for this particular piece of furniture was undoubtedly due to the fact that such a wardrobe was among the few pieces of furniture preserved by his parents as family heirlooms. This large wardrobe in fact dominated the tiny, two-room Moscow flat at Shchipkovskii Street, in which Andrei lived for many years. Tarkovsky's sister, Marina, would later describe it as 'almost alive ... a part of the family'.[90] The wardrobe, then, obviously has personal associations for the director, though its appearance in Nostalgia, in the middle of an Italian street, recreates the curious, almost transcendental effect of which Chirico spoke in his article 'Statues, Furniture and Generals':

> The reader may have noticed the singular appearance of beds, mirror-fronted wardrobes, armchairs, divans, and tables when one comes across them unexpectedly in a street in the midst of unaccustomed surroundings, as happens when people are moving house, or in areas where dealers show their merchandise on the pavement. The pieces of furniture then appear in a new light; they are reclothed in a strange solitude, a great intimacy grows between them, and one could say that a strange happiness hovers in the narrow space they occupy on the pavement in the midst of the fevered life of the town and the hasty comings and goings of men. [...]
>
> Furniture, removed from the atmosphere of our rooms and shown outside, awakens in us an emotion that also reveals a new aspect of the street in which it stands.[91]

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[90] Marina Tarkovskaya, 'Ya mogu govorit',' Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 101-108 (p.103). This article also contains photographs of Andrei and Arsenii Tarkovsky, taken against a backdrop of the mirror-fronted wardrobe.

[91] 'Statues, Furniture and Generals', pp.151-152.

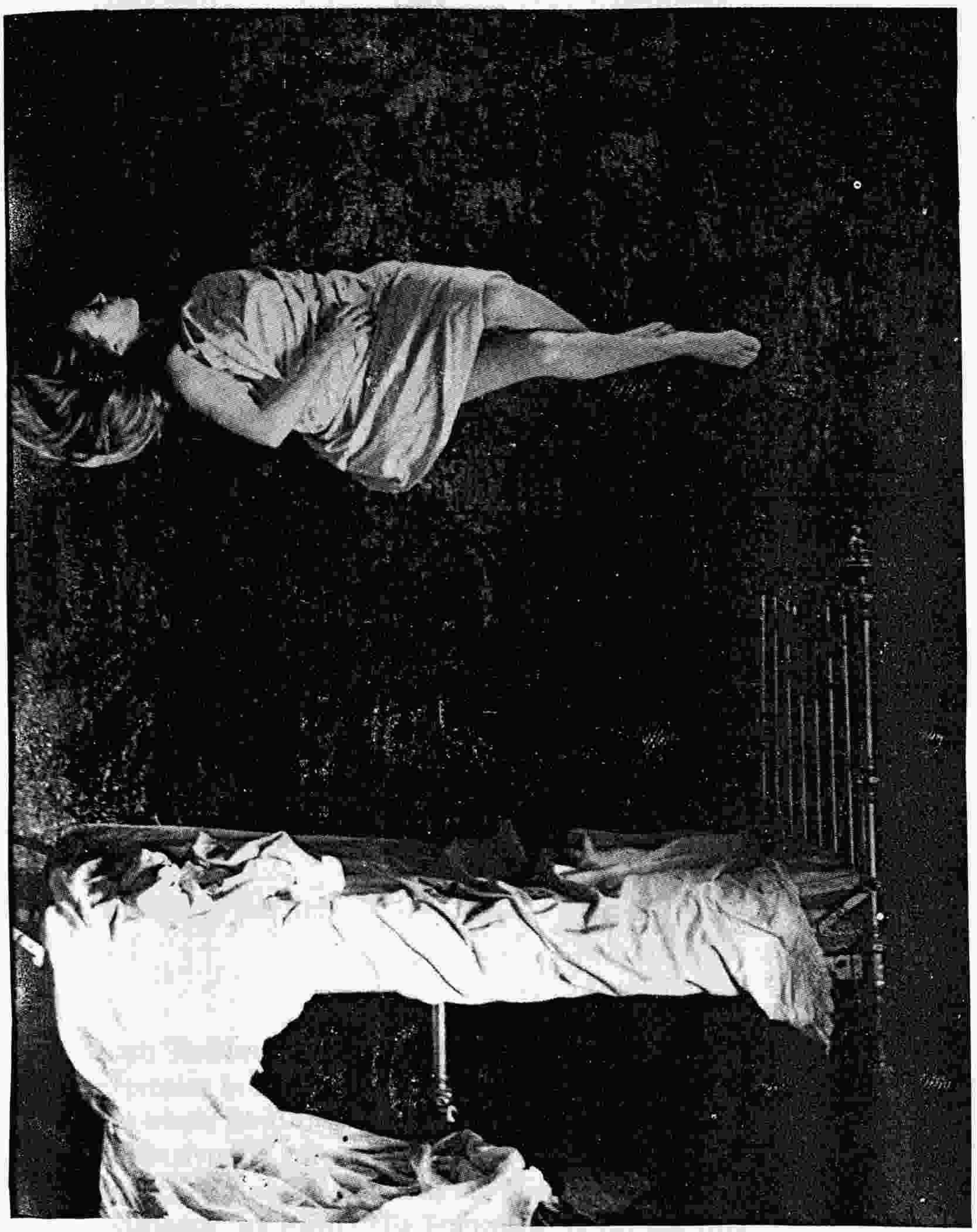
The painting of Marc Chagall, similarly, contains images of prosaic domestic objects - plates, jugs, bowls, spoons. One painting, The Mirror, combines two objects - an oil-lamp and a mirror - to extraordinary effect: the starkly simple image of the lamp caught in the murky depths of a mirror (in front of which is sleeping a small boy) conveys a curious feeling of enigma and mystery. Almost precisely the same image appears in Tarkovsky's film of the same name, in the scene at the neighbours' house where the Mother is attempting to barter her earrings for food. The long lingering shots of boy, mirror and expiring oil-lamp in the silent, darkened dacha contain the same inexpressible sense of mystery as Chagall's painting. One could point to other analogies between Chagall's paintings and Tarkovsky's images, the most noteworthy of which is probably the 'floating-couples' (or lovers) motif. 'Floating couples appear in many of Chagall's paintings - 'The Promenade', 'Double Portrait with Wineglass', 'Above the Town', 'The Birthday' - to mention but four examples. The 'floating lovers' is Chagall's clearest and most famous metaphor of love, and illustrates both literally and metaphorically the transports of love. The motif, as Makarius has pointed out, 'is the crystallization of feeling so intense that language itself can only express it in terms of images of flight and weightlessness'.[92] The same image of weightlessness appears in three of Tarkovsky's films: Mirror (Tarkovsky's mother and father), Solaris (Kris and Hari), and Sacrifice (Alexander and Maria); given their context, it is likely that such images are as richly symbolic as the original Chagall motif. Love is an important theme in Tarkovsky and finds

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[92] Makarius, p.28.



32. Marc Chagall: 'Above the Town'.



33. Images of weightlessness in Mirror.

expression in a number of metaphors; the 'flying lovers' though, is his most perfect image of the inexpressible essence of love, and of the ecstasy of physical and spiritual fulfillment.

* * * * *

In conclusion, one can say that painting plays an exceptionally important, if complex, role in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky. The various genres and paintings that interested Tarkovsky most reflected particular aspects of his own philosophy of art and life. Indeed, Romadin has argued that at the centre of each of his films lies a single painting whose influence pervades the entire philosophical and aesthetic narrative of the film:

> Each Tarkovsky film has its own painting which expresses in concentrated form, as it were, the idea of the whole film. In Ivan's Childhood - it is Dürer's 'Apocalypse'; in Andrei Rublev - Rublevs icons; in Solaris - Brueghel's painting; in Nostalgia - the 'Madonna' by Piero della Francesca. In his last film, Sacrifice, it is Leonardo's painting and Russian icons. Thus, the film image, in many ways evoked by painting and then transformed into the language of film, returns to the screen in its original form - as a painting.[93]

One could add that the image of John the Baptist (from Van Eyck's 'Ghent Polyptych') which appears on a river-bed during the Stalker's dream sequence,

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[93] Romadin, p.168.

mirrors that other 'voice crying in the wilderness' (John 1.20), the Stalker himself.

What is striking about Tarkovsky's overall view of painting is the consistency of his approach, the manner in which he perceives even in Western art (and perhaps unconsciously) elements of the 'Russian sensibility'. Early Italian art was praiseworthy for its pristine simplicity and 'similarity' to Russian medieval icons. In Brueghel's paintings, Tarkovsky was struck by the link he detected between individual, community and soil (thus reflecting a familiar Russian concern over the conflict between individual freedom, one's place in society and relationship with the land). Bosch's lofty spirituality and apocalyptic vision have had a powerful appeal to many Russian artists (including, as mentioned earlier, filmmakers), but Tarkovsky found both of these virtues particularly apposite for our own age. Similarly, the slight ambiguity which one detects in Tarkovsky's (generally hostile) attitude to Renaissance art, reflects an ambivalence which still persists among Russian artists and philosophers. Berdyaev wrote:

> One should point out that Russia occupies a unique position in relation to the Renaissance and its decline. For Russia, although she never experienced the Renaissance, has been more sharply aware of the humanist crisis than any Western European country. This fact explains the originality of her historical destiny. We Russians have never either experienced the exhuberant joy of Renaissance creation or been inspired by a genuine enthusiasm for humanism. [Thus] Russia's great literature, her most important contribution to the world, is not Renaissance in spirit.[94]

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[94] Smysl istorii, pp.219-220.

In the early currents of modern art Tarkovsky drew (what would appear to be) a curious parallel with medieval painting: the same spiritual motivations predominated, the same obsession with the 'inner soul of things', the same reliance on symbolism, the same 'mysticism of the earth'. Yet even Berdyaev, who took a negative view of modern art, observed that the latter 'displayed a marked tendency to fall back upon medieval sources as a reaction against the principles introduced by the Renaissance'.[95] Moreover, Tarkovsky was also enamoured of the 'anti-humanist' principle implicit, not only in modern painting, but in other branches of culture of that time: the prose of Bely and Joyce, and the anthroposophical teachings of Rudolph Steiner (in which the director took a profound interest). Thus, for Tarkovsky, the original aim of modern art - to give expression to the inner vision of man, to the spiritual essence of life - was a laudable one. But the subsequent degeneration of painting into 'mannerism' and 'modishness', partly explains Tarkovsky's deep and oft-stated antipathy to the concept of *avant-garde* in art; it may also explain the apparent contradiction which occasionally complicates his statements on the subject.

Finally, though it may seem anomalous to cite so much that is obviously 'Western' in support of the essential 'Russianness' of Tarkovsky's art, this in itself reflects a tendency, familiar among Russian artists, to immerse themselves in those Western works that allow them to affirm certain peculiarities about themselves, certain 'Russian qualities of soul'. The philosopher Vasilii Rozanov has observed:

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[95] ibid., p.210.

> Russians have this characteristic: they give themselves up fully to foreign influences ... but the more completely they give themselves over, ... the more powerfully do they exert a mysterious influence over that which they give themselves over to [...]
>
> The main thing is that when Russians give themselves over to something foreign, in the very transfer they preserve their ... ego. They preserve their 'souls', acquiring merely the body, the external forms of the foreign thing.[96]

This rather perceptive remark has an obvious relevance to Tarkovsky: indeed, the director might be taken as a vindication of Rozanov's formula. Tarkovsky's orientation was forever towards Russia, his concern always to create a synthesis between the individual and the community, beauty and spirituality. In this respect, even the debt which Tarkovsky owes to some of the great masters of Western painting only underlines his claim to represent 'a continuation of the classic Russian cultural tradition'.

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[96] Vasilii Rozanov, 'Vozle "Russkoi Idei",' in Izbrannoe (New York, 1956), pp.144-145 (pp.144-145).

Chapter Four

Images of Nature Transfigured

'Every visible or invisible
creature is a theophany...'
John Scotus Erigena

'If we look at the greatest
works of art we see that they
exist as part of nature...'[1]
Andrei Tarkovsky

There can be little doubt that the literary, philosophical and religious convictions which underpin Tarkovsky's aesthetic of a 'nature transfigured' are central to his film language. Nature has always been one of the great driving forces of Russian culture, and in general it is possible to speak of an intimate link between the natural elements and the work of Russia's greatest poets, novelists, philosophers, composers and filmmakers. Tarkovsky was greatly affected by the deeply-rooted 'mysticism of the earth' that pervades much of Russian culture; such a tradition found a ready response in a man who had cultivated a deep love of the natural world from early childhood. The many images of nature that appear in his films thus reveal a confusion of subjective, personal encounters with the natural elements (many emanating from childhood experiences), as well as a profound understanding of and empathy with nature as it has been perceived by Russian mystical poets and religious philosophers.

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[1] Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), p.166.

This chapter will consider Tarkovsky's images of nature in terms of 'traditional' Russian views of the earth, water, fire, animals and trees, each of which was an important element in both pagan animistic cosmology and Christian sophiology. Such views frequently find expression in Russian literature, philosophy and, to a lesser degree, cinema. In evaluating Tarkovsky's treatment of nature it is of crucial importance to keep in mind the tradition from which his aesthetic of a 'transfigured nature' has emerged. For this reason, the first section of the chapter will be devoted to a general discussion of the theme of the earth as it appears in pre-Christian folklore, in the Orthodox religion, and in Russian literature and philosophy. The second section of the chapter will deal with Tarkovsky's aesthetic of nature in general terms, and, giving examples from his films, will attempt to show that this philosophy derives from quite specific elements of the tradition outlined in Section One. Citations from Tarkovsky's theoretical writings as well as from his films will be used throughout. Overall, the case will be argued that nature forms one of the most significant aspects of Tarkovsky's philosophy of art, and that as well as being a further example of the 'Russianness' of his perceptions, images of nature in Tarkovsky are consistent with the tenets of 'transcendental style'.

Though this chapter will stress the essentially mystical perception of nature that appears to permeate much of Russian culture, this is not of course to deny the importance of 'nature mysticism' in the Western tradition. A mystical view of nature is prominent in the life and teachings of St Francis of Assisi; it is a significant feature of the writings of the thirteenth-century Dominican mystic,

Meister Eckhart, and of the sixteenth-century Protestant philosopher, Jacob Böhme. The fifteenth-century cult of Cabbalism taught a precise philosophy of nature in which everything in the visible world had an emblematic meaning. Everything in the natural world - colours, numbers, birds, animals, flowers, the natural elements - testified to the truths of Christianity. Thus, the shamrock is the living truth of the Trinity; the spider a symbol of the devil, and so on. For Blake, to contemplate nature was to 'cleanse the doors of our perception'. One can find echoes of such notions in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion, and in the works of such poets as Wordsworth, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Kathleen Raine.[2]

One can distinguish significant differences between 'nature mysticism' as it exists in Western thought, and the approach to the subject prevalent in the Russian tradition. In general, Eastern Orthodoxy, in great part due to its rich Hellenistic legacy, stresses the cosmological aspects of religion more strongly than does the Christian West, which places greater emphasis on anthropology. As Fedotov has noted, Russia, the inheritor of Byzantine cosmology, 'imparted to it a warmth, spontaneity, and even poignancy which went far beyond the western medieval sense of nature.'[3] In the West such an attitude, broadly speaking, never found acceptance in the mainstream of culture and religious philosophy: indeed, it was often dismissed as reversion to 'primitive pantheism'. Moreover, to what

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[2] For more on the subject of nature mysticism in the Western Tradition, see William Inge's Christian Mysticism (London, 1899), particularly the chapter entitled 'Nature Mysticism', pp.249-332.

[3] George Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity - the 10th to the 13th Centuries (Harvard, 1946), p.369.

extent a philosophy of nature was successfully amalgamated by Western thinkers into Christian theosophy is highly debatable. The Russian sense of nature, by contrast, has a profoundly ontological dimension. As Fedotov has pointed out, this attitude has two crucial aspects, both of which have a religious significance:

> The first is the consciousness of belonging to nature, of being deeply rooted in it. [...] The other aspect of nature is beauty. But the sense of beauty finds its way not only into nature but also into art.[4]

In Russia, as will be seen, this perception of nature is a significant feature in the works of many of her greatest artists, philosophers and filmmakers. Not least, a more rigorous, dialectical approach to nature is encapsulated in the mystical, and highly influential, doctrine of sophiology as it was popularized by the three greatest Russian religious philosophers: Solov'ev, Bulgakov and Florensky.

Section One: Aspects of Nature Mysticism in Russian Culture

In Russia, a cosmic conception of the earth - as the primary reality out of which we are created, by which we live, and to which we will return - is primarily a pagan legacy, yet it is one which characterizes the Russian spirit in both the Christian and Soviet periods. This truism has been the starting-point of most interpretative studies of Russian culture, of the 'Russian psyche' or of the 'Russian Idea'. Thus Berdyaev, in his principal work on the subject, declares early in his first chapter that '... a religion of the soil lies at the foundations of the Russian

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[4] ibid., p.371.

soul. The earth is the final intercessor' [*zemlya - poslednyaya zastupnitsa*].[5] James Billington, in his history of Russian culture, The Icon and the Axe, argues that nature is one of the 'three great forces' acting upon Russian culture (the others being its Christian heritage and Western contacts), and points out that 'behind the apparently accidental similarity of the Russian words for 'poetry' and 'element' (*stikhi, stikhiia*) lie many intimate links between Russian culture and the natural world'.[6] The cult of Mother Earth is one of the best-known manifestations of the vague pantheism of pre-Christian peasant Russia. This notion of 'universal motherhood' would in Christian times blend into the cult of the Virgin[7] that enjoyed such popularity in fourteenth-century Muscovy, giving rise at this time to such feasts as the Intercession (*Pokrov*) of the Virgin, which were unknown in earlier, Kievan, Russia. By virtue of her association with the land the Mother of God was and is accorded special veneration by Russians; indeed, as Berdyaev has pointed out, 'she even takes precedence over the Trinity'.[8]

A conflation of pagan fertility rite and Christian cult was certainly evident

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[5] Nikolai Berdyaev, Russkaya ideya (Paris, 1946), p.10.

[6] James Billington, The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (London, 1966), pp.ix-x.

[7] On this subject see D.T. Strotmann, 'Quelques aperçus historiques sur le culte marial en Russie', Irénikon, 32 (1959), 176-202 (especially pp.184-7). Strotmann writes '[In Russia] the idea of the earth as a source of nourishment and life rapidly became a Christian symbol, and was used abundantly in the liturgical texts of the Byzantine Church'. (p.186).

[8] Berdyaev, p.10.

among the 'first Russian sect', the semi-pagan *Strigolniki*.[9] It is generally assumed that the origins of one of the most curious religious rites - the famous confession to the Earth - is to be found among this late fourteenth - early fifteenth-century sect. This strange ritual would later be adopted by other sectarian groupings - the Old Believers (*Staroobriadtsy*), for instance, particularly those Old Believers (*Bezpopovtsy*) who had had no priesthood since the great schism with the established Church in the seventeenth century.[10] George Fedotov has offered the following insight into the practice:

> Both the sectarians and the Orthodox give the same explanation for this rite. 'If there is nobody else, one can confess even to the grass' (an Old Believer). 'What is to be done if illness takes you in a field or in wood? To whom if not to the Earth or to a tree have you to confess if there is no man?' (Orthodox). But of course the Earth is not just any object chosen at random. If the people choose it (her) for sacred confidence they have their deep reasons.
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> The sacredness of Mother Earth [has its origin in Russian paganism]. In Christian times the Earth preserved the qualities of a living or animated being, of a universal mother and even, to a certain degree, of a keeper of the moral law.[11]

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[9] It is important to remember that pagan rites continued to be practiced in Russia (particularly in the forests of the North), and pagan influence felt on various aspects of official Orthodoxy for many centuries after the formal conversion of Russia to Christianity in 988. One result of the Church Council of the Hundred Chapters (*Stoglav*) of 1551 was the banning of such practices. Despite this, such pagan vestiges as the Feast of John the Bather (*Ivan Kupala*) continued even into the early twentieth century, confused in the popular mind with the Christian feast of John the Baptist.

[10] The confession to the Earth, of course, would later form one of most profound aspects of Dostoevsky's complex theosophy.

[11] George Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind: The Middle Ages - The 13th to the 15th Centuries (Harvard, 1966), p.136.

An indigenous cult of Mother Earth undoubtedly contributed to what many Russian theologians regard as the special emphasis which has always been placed on nature by Orthodox teachings and ritual.[12] The great medieval epic, The Song of Igor's Campaign (Slovo o polku Igoreve), which Fedotov termed 'the most beautiful expression of the Russian sense of nature',[13] clearly suggests a pre-Christian source of Russian cosmology. One might also mention in this regard the books of the Apocrypha (which have always had a strong appeal to Russians), particularly the apocryphal vision of St Paul in which the Earth is depicted (along with the Sun and the Moon) complaining to God for the sins of men and demanding punishment. Equally important in this respect, however, are the works of the Greek Church Fathers, particularly those of Gregory Nazianzen, St John Chrysostom, as well as the writings of the middle and neo-Platonists (Philo and Plotinus, for instance), from which the Fathers drew considerable inspiration. Orthodoxy draws a distinction between the *essence* of God, and His *energies*; and this derives naturally from neo-Platonic notions that God is unknowable in

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[12] In recent years a number of books by Orthodox scholars have testified to the special importance attributed to nature in Orthodox doctrines. To what extent this is simply a response to growing awareness of 'the environment' it is difficult to judge. However, it does seem beyond question that, largely because of the central role that patristic writings have played in the formulation of Orthodox doctrines, the Eastern Church does take a more mystical view of nature. This stands in contradistinction to the views expoused by such Western thinkers as St Thomas Aquinas, Descartes and Francis Bacon, who have progressively exalted man above nature, with the result that anthropocentrism has become the fundamental motivating power of the Western world. On this subject, see in particular Phillip Sherrard, The Eclipse of Man and Nature (London, 1987).

[13] The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity, p.369.

Himself, but is made known in His activities and in His creations. Only by the proper contemplation of the cosmos, and of the natural world, leading to a 'sense of awe and wonder at the splendour of God's work, and a conviction of his existence'[14] can man apprehend the Absolute. The perception that God is made known in His activities, and that the created world is resplendent in ontological significance, is echoed in many Patristic works, and is a familiar theme in the works of Orthodox saints. St Maximus the Confessor, for instance, wrote the following:

> We do not know God in his essence. We know him rather from the grandeur of his creation and from his providential care for all creatures. For by this means, as if using a mirror, we attain insight into his infinite goodness, wisdom and power.[15]

Such ideas have also found a ready response among Russian thinkers, one reason for this being, as one scholar has suggested, 'the intense religiousity of a comparatively primitive society which shared the Eastern, Greco-Byzantine predilection for an epiphanic God; one who came down to men rather than requiring their ascent to Him'.[16]

In Russian theosophy a more precise formulation of this essentially neo-Platonic notion of nature would not emerge until the 1890s, when it formed an

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[14] Andrew Louth, The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition (Oxford, 1989), p.20.

[15] Cited in Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way (Oxford, 1987), p.31.

[16] Michael Cherniavsky, Tsar and People (Yale, 1961), p.229.

important element of the doctrine of sophiology as it was propounded by Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900).[17] The precise origins of Solov'ev's sophiology are still a matter of some disagreement, but the name of Sophia is familiar from gnostic writings, from the Book of Proverbs, and from the philosophy of the German mystic, Jacob Böhme. In a number of these sources Sophia is clearly assigned a feminine nature, but Solov'ev's own 'doctrine of the eternal feminine' may have been further influenced by the Russian cult of the Virgin and the latter's association with 'Mother Earth'.

Sophia, or 'Divine Wisdom', is at the centre of Solov'ev's theosophy and poetry. Known variously as the 'World Soul' or 'Mother Nature' (among other appellations), Sophia can be seen as Solov'ev's attempt to give form to his own deep-rooted neo-Platonism: Sophia was the incarnation of the divine principle of 'all-unity' (*vseedinstvo*), which is the Wisdom of God. Sophia, Wisdom, was the link between the earthly world and the transcendent reality; through a mystical erotic union with Sophia, man attains Divine Wisdom and union with God. As

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[17] There is no intention here to deal in any detail with Solov'ev's complex sophiological formulae. Only as it affects nature will his theory be considered, and then in as few details as possible.

In addition to Solov'ev's poetry, the principal works which underline his sophiology are 'La Sophia' and 'La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle' (written in French), both of which appear in Vladimir Soloviev, La Sophia et les autres écrits français, edited by Francois Rouleau (Lausanne, 1978). 'La Sophia' is published here for the first time. Also important are the articles 'The Meaning of Love' (Smysl lyubvi), in V.S. Solov'ev Sobranie sochinenii, second edition, 10 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1911-1914), vii, pp.3-60., and 'Beauty in Nature' (Krasota v prirode), in Sobranie sochinenii, vi, pp.3-74. See also Father Sergei Bulgakov's article 'Nature in the Philosophy of V. Solov'ev' (Priroda v filosofii V. Solov'eva), in Sbornik pervyi o Vladimire Solov'eve, no editor named (Moscow, 1911), pp.1-31.

Samuel Cioran has written:

> It is quite apparent that Solov'ev was intent upon creating two differing and opposing realms, the divine and the extra-divine. But he also sought to provide a constant bridge between them, to allow for a free and conscious, yet inspired, meeting of the two. The creaturely world is a mirror of the divine, but as a reflection, of course, reversed or transposed. The divine world has to attract the extra-divine to a union through the truth, idea and goodness of its example. All the forces and spirits of the divine find their false opposites or antitypes in the extra-divine. But the meeting of the two is prepared for by Sophia. She is the bridge, the manifested perfection that operates between two realms.[18]

Central to Solov'ev's theory of the potential all-unity between God, man and the earth was his conviction of nature's potential divinity. Solov'ev's views are not therefore pantheistic: nature was not divine but could become so through Sophia.

As Father Sergei Bulgakov has written:

> Nature is a living being, nature is truth, nature is the Absolute. However, unlike pantheism, which understands but also deifies nature, in Solov'ev nature is *other* than God though it is His creation, contains His form ... and will in time attain divinity. In Solov'ev's teachings there is a clear boundary between the Creator and created, but there is also a close link.[19]

Solov'ev's views on nature are more perfectly expressed in his poetry where,

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[18] Samuel Cioran, Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia (Ontario, 1977), pp.36-37.

[19] Bulgakov, p.18.

as Cioran has observed, 'nature has become so pure as to be practically the perfect earthly counterpart of Sophia - which is, after all, the ideal role of the World-Soul'.[20] In all of Solov'ev's nature poetry, but particularly in the poem addressed to Lake Saimo in Finland, where Solov'ev spent much of his time in work and contemplation, is affirmed nature's striving for *syzygy*, or union with the divine world. Here, Solov'ev's vision of 'Mother Nature' was as a semi-divine entity: her future lies in total union with the divine. Contemplation of nature is man's attempt to know God, but knowing implies union or *syzygy* without which true knowledge is impossible.[21] Thus, man's union with Sophia is necessary to 'know' God. Solov'ev wrote:

> It is essential to change man's relationship to nature. With nature ... he must enter into the same state of syzygic unity which determines his true life in the personal and communal spheres. Nature has hitherto been either the all-powerful, despotic Mother of an infant humanity [*mladenchestvuyushchego chelovechestva*], or a slave, a thing foreign to him. In that second epoch poets alone preserved and kept up a timid and unaccountable [*bezotchetnoe*] love of nature as a being possessing full rights and having, or capable of having, life in itself.[22]

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[20] Cioran, p.60.

[21] In 'The Meaning of Love' Solov'ev points out that the Bible understands 'sexual love' as 'knowing', to have 'knowledge' of another person, thus indicating the necessity of union in order to attain knowledge.

[22] 'Smysl lyubvi', p.59.

This essentially *panentheistic*[23] view of nature is on which characterizes Solov'ev's own poetry, and it is one which would prove to have an important influence on Russian literature and on other branches of culture. Solov'ev's poem, 'Oh Lady Earth! To thee I bent my brow' (Zemlya vladychitsa! K tebe chelo sklonil ya ...) is one of many poetic expressions of nature's 'life in itself':

Oh Lady Earth, to thee I bent my brow
And through thy shimmering and fragrant veil
I felt a kindred heart warm and beating,
Of universal life I felt the spell.
In midday rays with such burning languor
Descended grace from the resplendent skies,
And in response to it, welcome tender
From sparkling river and the woods did rise
And in this sacrament I clearly behold
The earthly soul merge into heavenly light
And in the flame of love all earthly sorrow
Dissolves like smoke in sunshine bright.[24]

A similar, panentheistic, view of nature would later be developed in a more dialectical form in the sophiological doctrine of Father Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944),[25] now regarded as the chief exponent of theological sophiology after

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[23] To give Bulgakov's definition: 'Panentheism - all in God, or all for God, in contradistinction to pantheism or all-godness'. Cited in Lev A. Zander, Dostoevsky (London, 1948), p.63. Zander adds '[Panentheism] combines faith in God with love for the world created by Him and, recognising the Creator in the creature, contemplates the creature in the light of divine glory and beauty'. (p.63)

[24] Vladimir Solov'ev, 'Zemlya vladychitsa! K tebe chelo sklonil ya ...' in Stikhotvoreniya i shutochnie p'esy V.S. Solov'eva (Brussels, 1970), p.22. English translation by Zander, p.47.

[25] The subject of nature in Bulgakov's writings is dealt with mainly in his books Filosofiya khozyaistva (Moscow, 1912), Svet nevechernii (Moscow, 1917), O Sofii, premudrosti Bozh'ei (Paris, 1935), and The Wisdom of God: a Brief Summary of Sophiology (London, 1937).

Solov'ev, as well as the chief architect of the famous sophiological controversy which took place in the Orthodox Church in the 1920s and 30s. Bulgakov derived many of his views from Dostoevsky's philosophy of nature, particularly as it is represented in The Devils, and also from Solov'ev, whom Bulgakov regarded as his spiritual forefather. However, unlike Solov'ev, Bulgakov attempted to construct a rational, theological framework for his sophiology, largely avoiding the mystical gnostic sources upon which Solov'ev had laid such weight. Bulgakov also differed from Solov'ev in his exegesis in restricting himself to the reinterpretation of traditional Russian and Orthodox sources. Fundamentally, though, Bulgakov's sophiology parallels that of Solov'ev in stressing the potential all-unity of heaven and earth. Sophia, Divine Wisdom, was the intermediary between heaven and earth and the bringer of *syzygy*: 'The creaturely world is united with the divine world in the Divine Sophia ... Heaven stoops towards earth; the world is not simply a world in itself, it is also the world in God, and God abides not only in heaven, but also on earth with man'.[26]

Three qualities distinguish the many references to nature that are to be found in Bulgakov's works: the conviction that loyalty to the earth is absolutely central to human life and activity (in art, science, economics, theology, philosophy); Bulgakov's panentheism (or, to be more accurate, panenchristism, since nature is seen by Bulgakov as not merely existing in God, but also as continually striving towards Christ); and his emphasis on the motherhood of the earth:

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[26] The Wisdom of God, p.34.

> Great mother damp earth ... in thee we are born, by thee we are nurtured, we touch thee with our feet, into thee we return. Children of the earth, love your mother, kiss her ecstatically, water her with your tears, with your sweat, fill her with your blood, feed her with your bones. For nothing is lost in her: the silent memory of the world preserves everything and brings everything to life and fruition. He who does not love the earth, does not feel her motherhood, is a slave and an outlaw, a miserable rebel against his mother.[27]

Equally important in Bulgakov's formula is the inherent beauty of the earth, an eternal beauty, in Platonic terms, which would move man to ecstasy and bring him to acceptance of a 'higher reality'. The following excerpt is typical in this respect, and contains many echoes of the vision of nature described by Makar Ivanovich in Dostoevsky's novel A Raw Youth, and later reproduced almost fully by that writer in the form of the Elder Zosima's Sophian vision in Brothers Karamazov:

> Sophia is revealed in the world as beauty which is the sensible manifestation of her presence. [...] For whom do flowers blossom in their beauty, more often than not unseen by human eyes? Why are birds decorated in bright colours, looking like living flowers? For whom have the lark and the nightingale made their songs? Why are the tiger and leopard so beautiful in their threatening grace, and the lion in his majesty? To what end does maidenly beauty blossom on earth? Is not all this the radiance of Sophia, shining through the inert 'matter'? This delight in beauty, this erotic ecstasy of creation, can have no other definition given to it than cosmic love.[28]

Bulgakov, then, like Solov'ev, concluded that beauty in nature must have an

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[27] Svet nevechernii, p.188.

[28] ibid., p.227.

ontological basis: it was, in Solov'ev's words 'a sensuous embodiment of one absolutely objective, all inclusive Idea'.[29]

The third prominent Russian philosopher to tackle within a sophiological framework 'the problem of the earth' was Father Pavel Florensky (1882-1943?). In common with Bulgakov's, Florensky's ideas were profoundly influenced by Solov'ev, and, as with Solov'ev, the all-consuming idea of Florensky's main work, The Pillar and Foundation of Truth (Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny), is also all-unity. In the tenth chapter, or letter, of Florensky's work (Pis'mo desyatoe: Sofia) the philosopher's mystical apprehension of Sophia is described in some detail. Sophia is 'the Great Root of all creation. Sophia is the first-created being of the creaturely world, the creative love of God [and] the ideal nature of the world'.[30] Unusually, Florensky's book, which was originally submitted as his doctoral dissertation, is punctuated by numerous highly poetic and romantic descriptions of the beauty of nature, which he uses to demonstrate one of his central convictions: the primacy of 'living religious experience' as the means for the knowledge of dogmas. As Cioran has written, 'Florenskij's geography is the otherworldly realm of mysterious nuance and divine revelation that exists by virtue of its own inner beauty and the power of love'.[31] Florensky's many descriptions of nature, then, are invested with an ontological significance: such beauty is an important means by which a higher reality is made apparent. The opening section of the fifth letter

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[29] 'Krasota v prirode', p.73.

[30] Father Pavel Florensky, Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny (Moscow, 1914), p.326.

[31] Cioran, p.248.

(Pis'mo pyatoe: uteshitel') gives the flavour of such descriptions:

> Do you remember, my quiet one, our long walks through the forest - through the forest of that dying August? The silvery trunks of the birch trees stretched up like palms, with their golden-green crowns freshly dipped in blood pressed close to the red and purple aspens. And the fine-textured hazels branching over the surface of the land like green gauze. A sacred solemnity breathed beneath the vaulted arches of that cathedral.
>
> Do you remember our deep-searching conversations, my distant but always present friend? The Holy Spirit, and religious antithesis - that was what interested us most. And we walked along through the cornfield near that forbidden grove, intoxicated by the blazing sunset, rejoicing that the question had been settled...[32]

An interesting feature of Florensky's work is his repeated assertion that the 'spiritual world' surrounds us but, because of our immaturity, we are unable to detect this 'kingdom of splendours' (*svetonosnoe tsarstvo*). The natural world provided many concrete instances, 'evidence', of the invisible world; the actions of birds, animals, trees and the natural elements Florensky took as 'proof' of the 'spiritual world'.[33] He wrote:

> The celestial vision is manifested as a 'token of covenant' [Genesis 9: 13], like the rainbow after the blessing of rain: it is a memorial, the most excellent image, and, since it expresses the first fruits of heavenly gifts to our consciousness and to all our life,

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[32] Florensky, p.109.

[33] The same notion is, of course, a familiar feature of Solov'ev's articles 'Beauty in Nature' and 'The Meaning of Love'.

it is also the promise and disclosure of eternity.[34]

The following passage is similarly expressive:

> When Christ healed a man who had been blind from birth the latter, upon seeing people for the first time, thought that they were trees! This is a primary manifestation of divine vision. But *we* don't see passing angels, neither as trees nor as the shadow of a bird that has come between us and the sun, although the more sensitive among us sometimes notice the powerful movement of angels' wings: such movement though is perceptible only as the merest puff of wind [*tonchaishee dunovenie*].[35]

Thus far, the emphasis has been on the image of nature as it appears in the works of three prominent religious thinkers / philosophers, and there is little question that such views have subsequently left their mark on Russian literature and on other branches of Russian culture. The enormous influence of Solov'ev's sophiology on the early writings of Aleksandr Blok, as well as on the works of other symbolists (Andrei Bely and Georgii Chulkov, for instance) has been well documented.[36] But Solov'ev's poetry was also an important influence on such writers as Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and Vyacheslav Ivanov,[37] in whose works a

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[34] Pavel Florensky, 'Ikonostas', Bogoslovskie trudy, 9 (1972), 83-148 (91-92).

[35] 'Ikonostas', p.98.

[36] On this subject, see in particular Cioran's essay, 'The Symbolist Assessment of Vladimir Solov'ev', in Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia, pp.89-104; and Evelyn Bristol, 'Blok between Nietzsche and Soloviev', in Nietzsche in Russia, edited by Bernice Glatzer Rozenthal (Princeton, 1986), pp.149-159.

[37] Indeed, Ivanov devoted an important article to the philosopher; see 'On the Significance of V. Solov'ev in the Destiny of our Religious Consciousness' (O znachenii V. Solov'eva v sud'bakh nashego religioznogo soznaniya), in Sbornik

'mysticism of the earth' is a prominent feature. Sir Maurice Bowra, in his introduction to an edition of Ivanov's poems, has stressed the underlying 'religiosity' of the poet's approach to nature in terms that might equally be applied to the writers mentioned earlier:

> [Ivanov's] gift was for seeing divine powers in the world, which gained through them a significance unnoticed by ordinary men. This enabled him to give to his own religious experience a concrete presentation ... and meant that the visible scene was shot through and informed by his conviction of divine powers at work in it. When he writes of nature, it is often through the illumination which religion has given him, and the result is that he sees in it much more than merely delights the senses.[38]

Ivanov's poems 'Earth' (Zemlya), 'Confession to the Earth' (Ispoved' zemle) and 'Crown of the Earth' (Venets zemli) among many others bear witness to the poet's essentially religious approach to nature:

> The Mother of God listens in far off skies,
> And commands the Earth-Mistress to pronounce judgement.
> Fall to the Earth sinner,
> And promise Her to sin no more.[39]

Ivanov, like Solov'ev, lays special emphasis on the 'motherhood' of the earth. As

pervyi o Vladimire Solov'eve, pp.32-44. For more on Solov'ev's influence on Ivanov see Pamela Davidson, The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov (Cambridge, 1989), particularly pp.89-99 and 223-4.

[38] Svet Vechernii: Poems by Vyacheslav Ivanov, edited by Dimitri Ivanov (Oxford, 1962), p.xxiii.

[39] ibid., p.84.

Professor Lev Zander has written, '[Ivanov] fully confirming that union with the mother earth banishes all that separates man from God and the world ("my sin died together with my pride"), he actually ascribes to the earth personal human features inherent in the image of the wife and mother: she "waited", "forgave", "promised".'[40] One could cite many further examples from the works of such diverse poets as Fedor Sologub, Boris Pasternak and Arsenii Tarkovsky to illustrate the enduring quality of the theme in Russian literature. The same is equally true of many Russian writers who pre-dated the attempts by Solov'ev, Bulgakov and Florensky to systematize in a philosophical framework ancient mystical teachings about the life-giving power of the earth. Thus in the works of, for instance, Fedor Tyutchev, Afanasii Fet, Fedor Dostoevsky and Lev Tolstoi one finds a remarkably similar, mystical, appreciation of nature.[41] In Tyutchev's poetry, for example, one finds a complete repudiation of the then fashionable notion in some Western circles - exemplified by Schiller's poem 'Greek Gods' - of the death of nature. For Schiller the death of Hellenic mythology was the death of nature herself. For Tyutchev nature was alive and possessed a soul; she could only be felt, not explained. As Solov'ev explained, 'the superiority of Tyutchev ... lies

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[40] Zander, p.48.

[41] Though somewhat incidental to the main purpose of this section, it is useful nevertheless to keep in mind the reciprocal affection and understanding of each others' works that prevailed between such writers (with the possible exception of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi). Concerning the problem of how to depict nature, one could claim that there was a particular convergence of views. Fet and Tolstoi were good friends and maintained a lifelong correspondence. Tyutchev and Fet composed verse in honour of one another; Fet dedicated other poems to Solov'ev and Tolstoi, and Solov'ev wrote 'The Poetry of F.I. Tyutchev' (largely devoted to the image of nature in Tyutchev), in which he described Tyutchev's lyrical poetry as 'the most valuable in Russian literature'. See 'Poeziya F.I. Tyutcheva', in Sobranie sochinenii, vii, pp.117-134 (p.117).

in the fact that he completely and consciously *believed* in what he felt. The beauty of nature he accepted and understood, not as a fantasy but as an absolute truth [*kak istinu*]'.[42] The first stanza of Tyutchev's poem 'She is not what you think, Nature' expresses in essence the poet's feeling for nature:

> She is not what you think, nature -
> She is not a mould, not a soulless countenance [*lik*].
> There is a soul in her, and freedom,
> There is love in her, and a tongue.[43]

In Tolstoi, similarly, nature is seen as a manifestation of the Divine. For Tolstoi nature was not separate from God but had a revelatory purpose: nature was emblematic of God's gift of life, a notion continually underlined in Tolstoi's fiction by the twin motifs of rain and sunlight. Water and light, both symbols of life in Eastern Christian thought, retain this meaning in Tolstoi's conception. In his diaries Tolstoi provides the following comparison between the divine forces at work in nature, and those in man:

> The rain waters the fields, woods, steppe, and the grass that grows on them. The trees and the grass have as a result of accepting this moisture the joy of growth, flowering, and fruition; but the moisture, the rain, also acts on the bare earth, softening it and preparing it for the possibility of accepting seeds and growing them. So it is with people. They consciously participate in the divine life, and they are not conscious of God, but nonetheless participate, not

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[42] 'Poeziya F.I. Tyutcheva', p.118.

[43] 'Ne to, chto mnite vy, priroda', in Sobranie sochinenii F.I. Tyutcheva, third edition (St. Petersburg, 1913), p.87.

even knowing it themselves, in His life.[44]

One can point to many instances in Tolstoi's great novels and short stories in which this view is conveyed more explicitly: the 'beneficent' or 'grace-giving' (*blagodatnii*) summer rainstorm in Resurrection, the mowing scene in Anna Karenina, Prince Andrei's 'experience of the sky' in War and Peace, the description of the mountains in The Cossacks. In each of these cases, man's encounter with nature has an inner spiritual meaning: as is the case in the works of other Russian writers and philosophers the beauty of nature in Tolstoi has a deeper ontological significance - it is an aid towards the characters' further apprehension of the Absolute. Richard Gustafson has summarized this phenomenon in the following terms:

> In [Tolstoi's] fiction nature gives life, sustains life, and renews life. Nature is the emblem of God's life in this world. Olenin encounters the mountains and sees the 'whole of God's world'. Characters who have no genuine experience of this life-giving nature in a profound sense do not live. Ivan Ilyich is the obvious example; Anna, Karenin, and even Vronsky, the perfect types, and urban dwellers the typical class. These characters are isolated from the source of life, and they have no God. The privileged moment in Tolstoy's fiction is the character's encounter with ... nature. [...] At some significant point the characters experience an interaction with this expanse of nature: they move onwards or towards it, while nature pours light or rain towards them. In these moments the characters ... discover the Divine within. In emblematic realism the experience of nature is a moment of grace. In the encounter with the expanse

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[44] Lev N. Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 90 vols (Moscow, 1928-1958), lvii (p.74).

of nature the characters' inner spiritual life is born.[45]

Though this is an aspect of Tolstoi's fiction that is often overlooked, there is in this attitude to nature much that resembles the teachings of the sophiologists. In particular, Tolstoi, in common with many of the writers and philosophers mentioned above, had an essentially Platonic worldview in which was assumed the existence of a higher unity to which all other things are subordinated. The doctrine of 'total unity' popularized by his younger contemporary Solov'ev and the correlative assumption that God is knowable, not in his 'essence', but only in his 'energies' (and, in particular, through the beauties of nature) was very close to Tolstoi. In this sense, Tolstoi, though commonly regarded as a heretical figure in Eastern Orthodoxy, can be seen as an artist who drew heavily on Russian Orthodox culture. Specifically, his metaphysics of nature derive from Solov'ev, as Gustafson has suggested:

> [Tolstoi's] images of nature are without exception sophiological. His understanding of the Force of Life created and uncreated, one might say, resembles the sophiologists' Logos, which gives life to an assumed existing reality. Tolstoy shares with Sophiology a panentheistic doctrine of God.[46]

Notwithstanding the importance of Tolstoi's visionary approach to the subject of nature the most remarkable, forceful and revealing statement of the theme in

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[45] Richard F. Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger (Princeton, 1986), pp.212-213.

[46] Gustafson, p.458.

Russian literature occurs in the works of Dostoevsky, particularly in the novels The Devils, Brothers Karamazov and A Raw Youth. Dostoevsky's views on nature will, in part, have been influenced by his association with the so-called *pochvenniki*, or 'men of the soil', a popular movement which, among other things, advocated a more organic form of literary criticism which would take account of historical, social and spiritual forces in Russian culture as a whole. A 'return to the soil' lay at the heart of this philosophy: the divisions between man and the natural world had to be overcome in favour of a 'restoration in the soul of a new, or rather a renewed, faith in the ... soil [*pochva*] and the people - a restoration in the mind and heart of everything immediate'.[47]

Reading the inspired and prophetic vision of nature as it emerges in the speeches of Mar'ya Timofeevna Lebyadkina (The Devils), Father Zosima (Brothers Karamazov) and Makar Ivanovich Dolgoruky (A Raw Youth), one is reminded not only of the *pochvenniki* worldview, but also of the more metaphysical doctrine of sophiology as it was later formulated by Solov'ev, Bulgakov and Florensky. The work of these writers has led to a greater understanding of some of the more abstruse passages in Dostoevsky, passages that, as Zander has suggested, conceivably even the author himself might not have been able to fully explain:

> It is only in the light of that [sophiological] doctrine that we can appraise Dostoyevsky's intuitions

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[47] Vasilii Zenkovsky, A History of Russian Philosophy, 2 vols (New York, 1953), i, p.402. See the useful discussion of the *pochvenniki* pp.400-432.

> ... the religious and metaphysical meaning of which is hidden from us. A tremendous amount of historical research and philosophical reflection was needed in order to bring out their full value for our understanding of the world, of man, and of man's relation to God. Thanks to that work, we are now able to detect in the very seed of the tree that has thus grown to maturity the embryo of the blossom and the fruit which, perhaps, Dostoyevsky himself did not see clearly.[48]

The Cripple, Mar'ya Timofeevna, is clearly Dostoevsky's chief mouthpiece in his effort to impart a cosmic vision of nature that has little in common with official Orthodoxy, but much to do with ancient, pre-Christian attitudes and beliefs among the Russian people on the sanctity and motherhood of the 'damp earth'. The Cripple's words, in a wonderfully simple and poetic form, express a similar 'heretical' doctrine of the earth to that elaborated many years later by Sergei Bulgakov. 'In my opinion', declares the Cripple, 'God and nature are one and the same thing'.[49] Later in the passage, 'the old woman' who engages Mar'ya Timofeevna in conversation will add: 'The Mother of God is great mother earth, and therein lies a great joy for mankind. And every earthly sorrow and every earthly tear is a joy for us; and when you fill the earth beneath you with tears a foot deep, you will rejoice at everything at once. And there will be nothing left of your sorrow; for such ... is the prophecy'.[50] The Cripple's wholehearted acceptance of this formula is taken by others as evidence of her feeble-mindedness

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[48] Zander, pp.38-39.

[49] Fedor M. Dostoevsky, Sobranie sochinenii, 12 vols (Moscow, 1982), viii (p.141).

[50] ibid., p.142.

(she does indeed suggest a familiar Russian type, the *yurodovyi*, or 'fool-in-Christ'). Referring to the old woman's remarks, she says 'Since then when I bow down to the ground at my prayers, I've taken to kissing the earth. I kiss it and weep'.[51]

In the person of the Cripple one finds many of the aspects of Russian nature-mysticism that have been mentioned earlier: she is the Eternal Feminine and, in Dostoevsky, symbol *par excellence* of the earth, whose sophiological description of nature conveys in classic neo-Platonic fashion the revelatory potential of Beauty in Nature; she appears to be the most pagan of all Dostoevsky's creations, yet her words have been taken by some as being profoundly Christian.[52] The Cripple is also a symbol of the Mother of God, whose name she bears, as well as of the principle of motherhood. Though a virgin, she confesses to having had a baby, and her own apparent motherhood is clearly linked by Dostoevsky to the femininity and Motherhood of the earth, which the Cripple continually refers to as the 'great Mother' (*velikaya mat'*).[53] Zander has written, 'The essence of femininity is motherhood; Woman is bound to be conscious of herself as Mother - such is the meaning of [the Cripple's] strange confession. In the face of that truth it is of no decisive importance whether "the baby" was real or imaginary.

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[51] ibid.

[52] This aspect of the Cripple's persona is discussed in Zander, p.53.

[53] On this subject see Georgii P. Fedotov, 'Mat' zemlya', in Polnoe sobranie statei, 4 vols (Paris, 1982), iii, pp.219-240.

Spiritually ... it is real'.[54]

Elsewhere in Dostoevsky, images of nature are more developed and detailed, sometimes taking the form of a vision in which perfectly ordinary natural scenes - of trees, grass, birds, animals - acquire a new and profound meaning. In such scenes the crucial thing is the apprehension of the world as beauty: what is seen is less important than how it is seen. Makar Ivanovich's 'vision' is one of the more striking examples of this:

> We spent the night, brother, in a field, and I woke up early in the morning when all was still sleeping and the dear sun had not yet looked out from behind the forest. I lifted up my head, dear, gazed around me and sighed. Everywhere, beauty beyond all words! All was still, the air was light; the grass grows - grow, grass of God; the bird sings - sing bird of God; the baby cries in the woman's arms - God be with you little man; grow and be happy, little baby! And it seemed that only then for the first time in my life I took it all in ... I lay down again, I slept so sweetly. Life is good, dear! If I were better I should like to go out again in the spring. And that it's a mystery makes it only the better [*A chto taina, to ono tem dazhe i luchshe*]; it fills the heart with awe and wonder; and that awe gladdens the heart: 'All is in Thee, Lord, and I, too, am in Thee'.[55]

This remarkable vision of nature was obviously extremely important to Dostoevsky: he reproduces it almost exactly five years later in Father Zosima's

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[54] Zander, p.93.

[55] Sobranie sochinenii, x (p.168).

own 'sophian' vision. However, the same novel, Dostoevsky's last, also contains what is probably the finest example of the 'panentheistic vision' in Dostoevsky, namely Alesha's description of a summer night, with its apophatic emphasis on silent contemplation of the beauty and mystery of nature:

> From the zenith to the horizon the Milky Way ran in two pale streams. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral gleamed against the sapphire sky. The gorgeous autumn flowers in the beds round the house went to sleep till morning. The silence of the earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens. The mystery of the earth was at one with the mystery of the stars. ... Alyosha stood, gazed and suddenly threw himself down on the earth.[56]

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Section Two: Tarkovsky and Nature - A General View

The purpose of the previous section was to illustrate the unusual and enduring power of what can loosely be termed 'nature mysticism' in Russian culture. Though such a survey might be considered peculiarly recondite in any study of a modern Soviet filmmaker, in fact it can be argued that many specific aspects of this tradition have a direct bearing on Tarkovsky's overall attitude to nature (as it emerges from his writings), as well as on the images of nature that appear in his films. In this context can be placed Tarkovsky's acknowledgement of many of the views of the Russian religious philosophers (whose works, as suggested in earlier

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[56] Sobranie sochinenii, xi (p.427).

chapters, have proved influential on Tarkovsky in other areas), especially those views concerning nature. Tarkovsky's debt to Russian nineteenth-century literature is not in doubt; in particular, his great love of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi (the latter's worldview is perhaps the closest of any Russian writer's to Tarkovsky's own) is implicit in many of his theoretical articles. Tarkovsky had a particular fondness for the works of the mystical poets, and it is significant that the only two poets directly cited in any of his films - Fedor Tyutchev[57] and Arsenii Tarkovsky[58] - represent two of the best instances of that genre in nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian poetry respectively. As will be seen later, many of the enduring features of the Tarkovskian treatment of nature - the motherhood of the earth, the association of nature with the 'eternal feminine', the redemptive power of the earth, the panentheism and, confusingly, the paganism of his vision - can be related to distinct elements of the tradition outlined in Section One.

In Soviet cinema a mystical approach to nature is not entirely without precedent. To this day Aleksandr Dovzhenko's epic film Earth (Zemlya) remains one of the most powerful statements on the theme. Earth is almost plotless: it is sustained uniquely by the inherent lyricism of its images of nature and by the 'philosophical sense of the earth' which Dovzhenko brought to the film from his own intimate experience of Ukrainian folk-culture. It is this aspect of the film that has been most influential on Tarkovsky, as he himself has revealed:

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[57] Tyutchev's poem, 'How I love your eyes, my friend' (Lyublyu glaza tvoi, moi drug), is read aloud in the concluding sequence of Stalker.

[58] Various Tarkovsky poems feature in Mirror, Stalker, and Nostalgia.

> Probably Dovzhenko is closest to me of all, because, like no-one else, he sensed nature. For me that is very important. Of course, I mean the early Dovzhenko of the silent period. His means of inspiration, his deification of nature, his pantheism is very close to me. Dovzhenko was probably the only director who did not distance the film-image [*kinoizobrazhenie*] from the atmosphere of the earth, and from the life contained therein. For all other directors [the earth] merely forms a background. But for him it is an all-encompassing environment. He perceived an inner link between himself and nature.[59]

The films of Vasilii Shukshin, the writer turned filmmaker of Siberian peasant stock, have often been praised for their down-to-earth depiction of nature, but Shukshin's harsh realism (in such films as Snowball-berry Tree (Kalina krasnaya) found little favour with Tarkovsky, who found Shukshin's images of nature superficial and 'unsophisticated'.[60] Tarkovsky favoured a more complex 'poetic' approach to nature, and one which took account of the wealth of Russian cultural traditions.

Let us then consider how that approach manifested itself in his films.

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[59] Ezhi Illg and Leonard Noiger, 'Vstat' na put',' Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 109-130 (p.115).

[60] For more on Tarkovsky's appraisal of Shukshin see 'Vstat' na put',' p.115, and Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Dlya menya kino - eto sposob dostich' kakoi-to istiny', Sovetskaya Rossiya, 3 April 1988, p.4. On the feud between Tarkovsky and Shukshin, see Ian Christie, 'Raising the Shroud', Monthly Film Bulletin, 637 (1987), 37-38 (p.38).

Nature has a privileged place in all of Tarkovsky's films. Few directors can have displayed less interest in the 'townscape', or in the life of the city, town or even village. The emblems of urban civilization and technology that do fleetingly appear - Berlin (Ivan's Childhood), Vladimir (Andrei Rublev), Moscow (Mirror), Rome (Nostalgia), Stockholm (Sacrifice), the space station 'Solaris', and the Stalker's decrepit lodgings, play an inauspicious - even apocalyptic - role. Their function is primarily to provide a contrast with the 'more real' reality that is the natural world.

Mirror is rich in examples of Tarkovsky's fascination with, and deep love of, nature. After the prologue featuring the stuttering adolescent, the film opens with a long slow tracking shot, as the camera emerges from a forest to reveal a young woman (Tarkovsky's mother, Maria Ivanovna) sitting on a wattle fence. It is difficult to convey in words the effect of this scene, but the ethereal quality - one of silent wonder at the mysteries of nature - is prolonged by the slowness and silence (punctuated only by the distant cry of the cuckoo and even more remote sound of a train whistle), by the effect of the wind on the surface of the field of buckwheat, and by the curious observation by a passing doctor that plants are perhaps 'only pure feeling and reason: they don't run anywhere; we humans cannot find rest, for we believe neither in ourselves nor in nature'. Though the doctor is not seen again, his words will hang over the film; indeed, they point to an important theme of Mirror: the necessity for man to re-establish a link with nature. As the main events of the film unfold, the natural elements seem to intrude

into the human domain with increasing frequency. The wind creates a ripple on the surface of the buckweat as the doctor traverses the field on his way home, and he stops to let it go by. The wind engulfs the forest by night, overturning a table which stands outside the dacha; by day it dries clothes, turns the pages of an album of Leonardo's drawings or extinguishes a paraffin lamp. Water, in the many forms it takes in Mirror, has a far from passive role: the driving rain on the streets of Moscow, causing pedestrians to run for cover, and Maria to hurry to the print-works; the water which dries up during Maria's shower; the lengthy, surrealistic dream scene in which Maria washes her hair, whilst rivulets of water stream down the walls; the objects rotting in the old well at the dacha; the familiar Tarkovskian image of spilt milk, dropping from table to floor; the river and streams. Fire is equally intrusive in Mirror: it destroys a barn and then appears mysteriously in the form of a bonfire[61] in open country, in a shot which lasts only a few seconds and whose purpose appears to be to link two of the main episodes of the film (the 'dacha' and 'printing-works' scenes). The forest is an all-pervading motif in Mirror. It appears not only at the beginning of the film, but also at the end, as the camera retreats into and is engulfed by the darkness of that same forest. 'In the middle of my earthly life, I found myself in a dark forest',[62]

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[61] Here, one is reminded of Pasternak's 'Zhivago' poetry:

You see the passage of the centuries is like a parable
And catches fire on the way.
In the name of its horrible majesty
I shall go freely, through torment, down to the grave.

(From 'Gethsemane')

[62] A reference to the first lines of Dante's Divine Comedy.

quips Liza, friend of Maria Ivanovna as she retires along a corridor of the printing works, after a long and bitter argument with her friend. In the course of this debate, there emerges an unexpected association between Maria and the forest: Liza compares her friend to Marya Timofeevna (the Cripple) from Dostoevsky's The Devils, claiming that Maria's 'semblance of emancipated independence' was as much a fantasy as the dreams of the Cripple. But the Cripple also brings to mind the forest motif to which she is clearly linked in Dostoevsky's novel:

> I carried [my baby] through a forest, and I was afraid of the forest; but what I wept for most was that I had a baby but couldn't remember whether I had a husband or not.[63]

Apart from the 'printing-works' scene, Maria's only appearances in Mirror occur in or near the forest, and, like the Cripple, she is and would remain without a husband, both during and after the war (Tarkovsky's own father would abandon his family at the end of the war).

The forest motif will reappear in the final scene of Mirror (chronologically, the earliest of all the episodes), where Maria and her husband lie in the long grass at the edge of a forest.[64] However, this scene, containing the moment of Tarkovsky's conception, underlines in a most dramatic form the wider

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[63] Sobranie sochinenii, viii, p.142.

[64] The long, backward tracking shot, from the bright meadow into the forest, the light gradually diminishing until the image is completely obscured, has been read by some Freudian critics as 'a retreat into the maternal womb'. See Anna Lawton, 'Art and Religion in the Films of Andrei Tarkovskii', Christianity and the Arts in Russia, edited by W. Brumfield (Cambridge, 1991), pp.151-164 (p.155).

Mother-Nature link that becomes the leitmotif of the film. The association between Tarkovsky's mother and nature is clearly a deliberate one,[65] and the director was obviously influenced by his own childhood experience of living in the country (at Peredelkino and Tuchkovo, near Moscow), for which many years later he would express gratitude to his mother:

> Nature is always present in [Mirror], and it is not only a question of style. It is truth. While my father was at the war, my mother took us to the country each spring. For her it was a duty, and since then I have associated nature with my mother.
>
> A man in a city has no idea of life; he does not feel how the time passes, he does not sense its natural flow. In nature, a child finds guarantees of his future, he trains his will. [...] My mother knew unconsciously that nature was indispensable, and she implanted in us a 'feeling for the earth' [culture paysanne].[66]

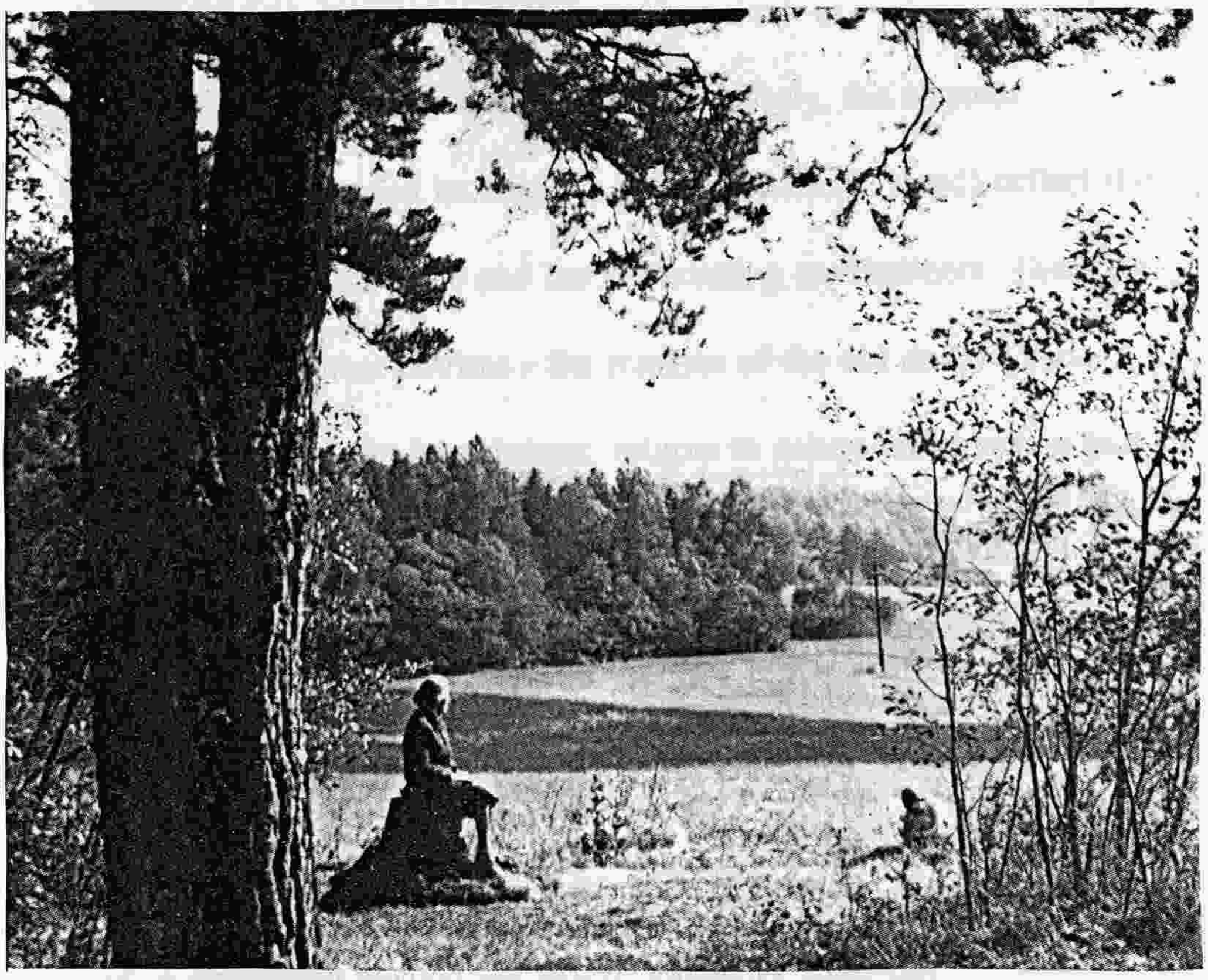
It is no surprise that the dacha - pre-eminent symbol of the Russian's[67] attachment to nature - occupies such a prominent place in Mirror. The dacha is the meeting place of the natural and human worlds. In Tarkovsky's films, as in Pasternak's early poetry, nature not only meets but overlaps - intrudes into - the human domain: the doors and windows are left open, and the sounds and smells of

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[65] Mirror is, of course, dedicated to Tarkovsky's mother, and the 'mother' theme is omnipresent in the film. The choice of music, for instance, includes Pergolesi's great hymn to the Mother of God, 'Stabat Mater', which forms the background to the old newsreel film.

[66] Cited in Claire Devarrieux, 'L'artiste vit en parasite sur son enfance', Le Monde, 20 January 1978, p.18.

[67] Particularly, of course, Russians of the *intelligentsiya*.



34. 'Mother nature' in Mirror.

nature, the wind, leaves, sun and rain enter therein. Similarly, the organic materials from which the dacha and its contents are built (chiefly wood) reflect the harmony that exists between that place and the surrounding environment. Even the images of rotting wood and other detritus - the remains of the old dacha - have a positive import: that which comes from nature, returns to nature and remains part of it. Such images take on an ethical aspect: in man's appreciation and understanding of the forces of nature, Tarkovsky suggests, lies hope for his own salvation. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have argued:

> [In Mirror] nature seems to judge the acts of the individual and the community. The disturbing magic of 'a gaze from beyond the world' emanates from the forest, and is perceived by the eyes of a child; this look evokes the universal calm, for it has always existed and will always exist. Nature is introduced into the rooms of a country house, into the lives of men, and sympathises with them. [...] Her marvellous eternity is the symbol of life, and reminds the hero of the film that he is part of a living whole. [...] If the individual, or the community wish to attain a state of grace they must acquire the kindness and spontaneity of nature.[68]

Many features of Mirror - the forest, dacha, the well, the link between mother and nature[69] - are present in a more elemental form in Tarkovsky's first full-

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[68] Bàlint A. Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), pp.121-122. Kovàcs and Szilàgyi apparently attribute the overall image of nature in Mirror to the inate pantheism of the director. See p.128.

[69] As one critic has observed, 'Already in Ivan's Childhood there is the association between a mother, killed in an absurd fashion during the war, and the luminous beauty of nature'. Michel Estève, 'Le temps du souvenir', in Etudes Cinématographiques 135-138: Andreï Tarkovsky, edited by Michel Estève (Paris, 1986), pp.63-73 (p.70).

length film, Ivan's Childhood. Here, however, images of nature do not appear to be as obviously endowed with the philosophical or ethical depth that characterizes the portraiture of nature in his later films. Instead, the distinguishing feature of Ivan's Childhood is the deliberate inclusion of events, images and sounds that are based on the director's childhood experience of nature[70] and which do not, consequently, feature in the short story on which the film was based (Vladimir Bogomolov's Ivan). The fact that Tarkovsky chose to introduce such elements, which are entirely incidental to the plot of the film, in itself suggests the importance he attributed to nature, even in this, his earliest film.

Many of the most lyrical episodes in Ivan's Childhood can be seen in this light: the forest scene, early in the film; the scene at the well; the spectacular opening sequence - an aerial shot,[71] which accompanies Ivan as he rushes downhill, having just examined in close-up a spider and its web; the birch-

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[70] Tarkovsky has written: 'I am firmly convinced of one thing: that if an author is moved by the landscape chosen, if it brings back memories to him and suggests associations, even subjective ones, then this will in turn affect the audience with particular excitement. Episodes redolent of the author's own mood include the birch wood, the camouflage of birch branches on the first aid post, and the landscape in the background of the last dream and the flooded dead forest. All four [of Ivan's] dreams, are based on quite specific associations. The first, for instance, from start to finish, right up to the words, "Mum, there's a cuckoo!" is one of my earliest childhood recollections. It was at the time, when I was first beginning to know the world. I was four'. Sculpting in Time, pp.28-29.

[71] Ivan's Childhood, it seems, was originally intended to start with Ivan flying through the trees, an image which was to be achieved by means of superimposition. Though finally rejected for Ivan's Childhood, the motif of flight would reappear in later films. See Maya Turovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989) pp.77-79.

grove[72] sequence, featuring Masha and Captain Kholin; the dreamlike scene of horses on the beach, unhurriedly eating apples under the rain. Tarkovsky's sister, Marina Arsen'evna, has described the source of these images:

> At the farmstead [*khutor*][73] we were surrounded by nature, or, rather, immersed in it. This perhaps was the most important of all. We bathed in cold streams, ran around barefoot and almost naked, and became healthy and strong. But imperceptibly, with our mother's help, we began to understand the universal beauty of nature, and the wonder of its detail: tender, pink bilberry flowers, brownish-red lychnis plants, last year's grey leaves, the piercing needles of young lily-of-the-valley ... spiders at the centre of their webs... This world was our domain.[74]

In Ivan's Childhood images of nature are almost exclusively presented through the medium of the four dreams:[75] they are an idyllic, idealized world, a bright transfigured reality that is set against the dark, contingent world of war. They bear witness to the double structure of the film, and would foreshadow the development of a more precise distinction between the 'two worlds' in Tarkovsky's later films.

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[72] The same evocative birch grove, situated near Moscow, would again feature in the 'blinding' scene of Andrei Rublev.

[73] The country house at Tuchkovo, near Moscow, where Tarkovsky, his sister and mother spent the war years.

[74] Marina Tarkovskaya, 'Ya mogu govorit'...' Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 101-108 (p.102).

[75] They are: the opening, forest, sequence; the scene at the well where Ivan's mother tells him that, even during the day, one can see stars in the water of the well; Ivan's trip on the lorry full of apples, with a little girl during a summer storm (Tarkovsky describes how this shot was achieved in Sculpting in Time, pp. 30-31); and the final scene, where Ivan is on a beach with his mother, playing hide-and-seek with other children.

This process is already apparent in Andrei Rublev. Here, to a great extent, key elements - water, fire, forest, earth, animals - are already accorded separate, quite distinct identities. Images of rain, streams, the forest floor, horses, are considerably more lengthy and contemplative than in Ivan's Childhood; they result from the application of what Tarkovsky termed 'the principle of direct observation',[76] which the director brought to cinema from his deep love of Zen poetry, particularly of the *haiku*. 'There are some aspects of human life that can only be faithfully represented through poetry',[77] wrote the director. From Andrei Rublev onwards, it is likely that Tarkovskian nature imagery owes a great deal to the precepts of simplicity, naturalness and discipline that are embodied in the *haiku*:

> The *haiku* lives most fully in nature, of great meaning to a people who never feel it to be outside themselves. Man is fulfilled only when unseparated from his surroundings, however hostile they may appear.[78]

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[76] Sculpting in Time, p.67.

[77] ibid., p.30.

[78] Zen Poetry, edited and translated by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto (London, 1977), p.22. One can find many evocative images from the riches of Zen poetry that suggest familiar compositions in Andrei Rublev and other Tarkovsky films. For instance:

Sudden rain -
rows of horses,
twitching rumps.
(Shiki)

Autumn wind -
across the fields,
faces.
(Onitsura)

Deer in rain -
three cries,
then heard as more.
(Buson)

The Prologue and eight episodes of Andrei Rublev unfold against an unrelenting backdrop of images of nature. In the episode entitled 'The Minstrel' (Skomorokh), Kirill, Daniel the Black and Rublev emerge from the Trinity monastery into the natural world, and are immediately compelled to seek shelter from the driving rain; the camera follows unhurriedly as they make their way through a primeval landscape of water meadows, swollen meandering rivers, grazing horses, sodden hay ricks and low hills. In 'The Passion According to Andrei' (Strast' po Andreyu), the forest is the background to the heated theological debate between Theophanes and Rublev,[79] in the course of which the camera wanders off to focus upon selected emblems of the natural world: the ferns swaying in the cold, northern river; the dead, already semi-decomposed swan; the ant army swarming over the legs of Theophanes; the dense forest undergrowth with its anarchic pattern of interwoven branches and roots. This final image coincides with a most revealing statement by Rublev: 'Prayer', he concludes, 'permits us to attain the invisible'. Earlier, Rublev has cited the Holy Scriptures:

> Take no thought for your body, what ye shall put on.
> Is not the life more than the meat; and the body more
> than the raiment?
> Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
> they toil not, neither do they spin. (Mat. 6:25-28).

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[79] The debate between Theophanes and Rublev is followed by a long monologue by the latter in defence of the Russian peasant, who by virtue of his endless patience, suffering and closeness to the land, is compared to Christ. The visual backdrop to this is the crucifixion scene featuring a Russian Christ figure.

The sum total of these declarations, the debate, Rublev's monologue and the natural backdrop, is now made clear: a unity of purpose emerges between word and image, and nature appears transfigured. The scene relies for its effect on the simple contemplation or 'direct observation', on the part of the viewer, of 'close-ups' of the natural world, and is accompanied by philosophical discussion and music. Christ's injunction to 'consider the lilies', which is often referred to in mystical texts to sanction a Christian philosophy of nature, is the most suggestive pointer to the panentheism of this scene, and invites a mystical interpretation. Thus, if religious mysticism can be defined as 'the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, the attempt to realise, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal',[80] then this scene can be considered archetypally mystical in its intent. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have observed, 'Here, the rapport with nature signifies an intimate relationship with the other world'.[81]

In 'The Feast Day' (Prazdnik) the forest once again forms the backdrop to the action of the film, though on this occasion it is in the context of the pagan Midsummer's Eve feast of Ivan the Bather. A curious ambivalence is apparent in this scene in Tarkovsky's depiction of the pagans. On the one hand paganism would appear antithetical and menacing to Christianity, and in the film this impression is reinforced by the threatening behaviour of some of the pagan group

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[80] Inge, p.5.

[81] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.81.

towards Rublev (he is tied up in a mock crucifixion and promised retribution the next morning). On the other hand, the pagans clearly have a special relationship with nature: they are a people of the forest; they run naked and unafraid in its midst; their feast is a celebration of nature's cycle (Midsummer day), and involves two of her most richly symbolic elements - fire (the lighted torches, the bonfires), and water (the mass immersion in the river). Our sympathy for the group is abetted by the knowledge that they have been forcibly converted to Christianity, but, fearful of the prince's retribution (his cruelty is demonstrated later in the film), are compelled to celebrate their ancient rituals in secret. To reconcile Tarkovsky's apparently conflicting views of the pagan sect, it might be helpful to return to the persona of the Cripple, who has been seen by some critics as an entirely pagan figure. Referring to this, one of Dostoevsky's most enigmatic figures, Professor Zander has written the following:

> Paganism and nature worship are a falsehood and a danger only when they are opposed to Christianity as something complete, true and legitimate. But if they be understood as the expression of a primary striving, as the creature's innate longing and joy, they enter Christianity as its matter and subsist in it as its natural basis.[82]

Tarkovsky's interest in the conflation of paganism and Christianity, a phenomenon which has a residual strength in Russian culture, was demonstrated earlier in the film in the central role allocated to the *skomorokh* (minstrel). The *skomorokhi* were commonly associated with *dvoeverie* (ditheism, or 'double faith'), and, in common with the pagans, were seen as having an intimate

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[82] Zander, p.53.

relationship with nature. One scholar has defined the significance of the *skomorokhi* in the following terms:

> To fully appreciate the cultural heritage of the Russian people one must first come to know the *skomorokhi*. Not only did they exert a preponderant influence on secular folk culture, but they also played a vital role in the religious life of the people. Their close ties to Russian paganism made the *skomorokhi* a ready target when the church and the state launched their vigorous campaign against superstition in the seventeenth century; yet, those ties also made them in a very real sense the embodiment of *dvoeverie*, that unique fusion of pagan and Christian elements that gave Russian spirituality its distinctive character.[83]

Tarkovsky's apparent empathy with the pagans can be interpreted in this light. It is a problem to which he would return in later films.

As we have seen, the arena for theological or philosophical debate in Tarkovsky's films is rarely provided by church buildings or the urban environment, and more often by nature itself. In the 'Last Judgement' (Strashnyi sud) we have another instance of this, though now it is not the forest, but the great Russian plain that is the background to the debate between Rublev and Daniil on the question of how the Last Judgement fresco in the cathedral of Vladimir is to be

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[83] Russell Zguta, Russian Minstrels: A History of the Skomorokhi (Oxford, 1978), p.122. The background to the *skomorokh* scene in Andrei Rublev has been described in detail by the actor who played the part. See Rolan Bykov, 'Filosof kinematografa', in O Tarkovskom, edited by Marina Tarkovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp.169-176. On the subject of *dvoeverie*, see E. Anichkov, Yazychestvo i drevnyaya Rus' (St. Petersburg, 1914).



35. The 'skomorokh' in Andrei Rublev.

painted. The Byzantine tradition (represented earlier by Theophanes and now by Daniil), with its severe asceticism, lays greater emphasis on the element of fear in such imagery than does the Russian Church. Rublev is repelled by the traditional images of sinners devoured by flames, and declares that he has 'no desire to terrorise the people'. Here, surrounded by an endless expanse of buckwheat, a location that was chosen out of deference for Tarkovsky's mother,[84] Rublev argues for tolerance and understanding of the 'people', and opposes Byzantine individualism to Russian 'community-spirit' (*sobornost'*). The scene is a reminder of the distinctions that divide the Greek and Russian branches of Orthodoxy; above all, the debate and its setting suggest the organic nature of Russian religious culture, the closeness of philosophy, theology and art to the Russian land.[85]

In a film about a futuristic space-station one would not normally expect to find much emphasis on nature. And indeed Solaris occupies a special place in Tarkovsky's oeuvre in that much of the footage was shot indoors, in the uniquely artificial world of the film studio. Nevertheless, nature plays an extremely important role in Solaris, though the essentially ethical issues raised in the film precluded the usual Tarkovskian concern with tackling the 'problem of the earth' within religious parameters. In a departure from Lem's novel[86] (on which the

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[84] According to Turovskaya, p.103.

[85] See Chapter One, p.67.

[86] Commenting upon this change to the Lem format, Tarkovsky wrote: 'The Earth was necessary to me for contrast, but not only for that... It was essential that the viewer was captivated by the beauty of the Earth, so that returning to the Earth after the fantastic atmosphere of Solaris, he could breathe freely and naturally ... and apprehend the salutary sadness of nostalgia'. Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Zachem proshloe

film was based), the Earth is introduced into the film in the key opening sequence, in the form of the huge garden which surrounds the old country house of the Kelvin family. This long sequence (it lasts approximately four minutes), which is presented entirely without dialogue, appears to have two main functions: the natural beauties of the garden - the long grass swaying in the river current,[87] the plants on the river-bank, the strands of mist, the sudden rain-storm, the distant call of a cuckoo, the grey horse - will later be contrasted with the monstrous urban landscape revealed by Burton's long road journey (filmed in Tokyo), and with the quintessential artificiality of the space-station.[88] Another important effect of the opening scene is to identify Kelvin as 'a man of the earth': his last hours before the trip to Solaris are spent here, in the garden. In the opening shot we see only his leg, followed later by his head - the rest of his body is shielded by plants and bushes: Kelvin is clearly at one with the natural world. After lengthy contemplation of his surroundings Kelvin eventually turns towards the house. Here is further evidence of his closeness to nature: his garage has been converted into a stable, he has dogs and pet birds, and, during a rain-shower, Kelvin remains seated in his chair under the open skies.

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vstrechaetsya s budushchim?', Iskusstvo kino, 11 (1971), 96-101 (p.101).

[87] This scene was shot near the town of Zvenigorod, some sixty kilometres east of Moscow.

[88] As Timothy Hyman has written, 'The landscape of these first sequences spells out a polarity, between garden and city, organic and inorganic, humanistic and anti-humanistic, which is obviously central to Tarkovsky's thought'. Timothy Hyman, 'Solaris', Film Quarterly, 3 (1976), 54-58 (p.55).

This scene contains another dimension which is already familiar from the portraiture of nature found in Tarkovsky's other films: there is an intimate link between the natural landscape and Woman. This is suggested not only by the predominance of the earth and water imagery, both of which have maternal associations,[89] nor by the figure of Kelvin's mother who appears at the climax of the scene, but also in the fact that Tarkovsky originally intended to introduce into the 'Earth' episodes, the figure of Kris's second wife, Maria.[90] As one critic has noted, 'Here, the earth and the water, linked to the figure of the mother, are united in the same metaphor'.[91] The metaphor will recur later, in the space station, during Kelvin's feverish dreams, which feature a conjunction of earth, water and the mother figure. His first wife, Hari, though dead, is also brought into contact with nature; indeed to some extent Hari has assumed the emblematic status (as a symbol of the Earth) that Tarkovsky envisaged for Maria. Kelvin enters the space station's library to find Hari staring absorbed in front of a large transparency of Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow'. Suddenly she is in the landscape, and, entering into it with her, we also behold the snow-covered hills, the skaters, birds, dogs and trees.

Kelvin's new-found love for Hari is the means to his own moral regeneration,

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[89] See Gaston Bachelard, L'eau et les rêves (Paris, 1981).

[90] Maria, who does not appear in the final version of Solaris, was evidently intended as a symbol of the Earth. See Turovskaya, p.53.

[91] Marie-Claude Tigoulet, 'La Solitude du Cosmonaute', in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.51-61 (p.55).

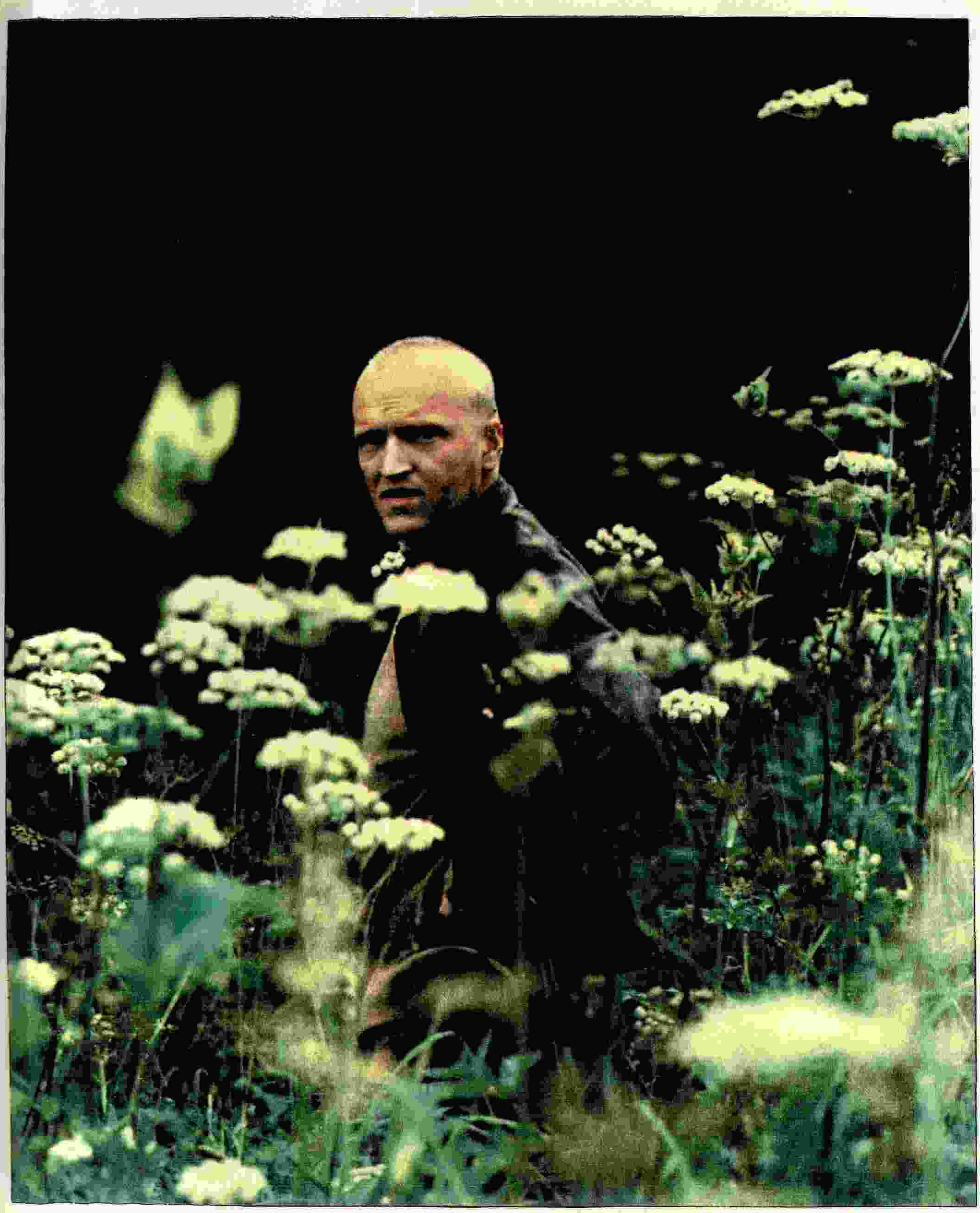
and his arrival on Solaris provokes a crisis in the incestuous and narrow-minded scientific team aboard the space station. Kelvin, though imperfect, is the 'man from the Earth' whose closeness to nature (he even brings a plant to Solaris) in Tarkovsky's eyes vouchsafes his moral and ethical superiority, and at least his potential for self-salvation. Snout and Sartorius - literally alienated from the Earth - are beyond redemption.

There would appear to be little doubt of the Stalker's credentials as a 'man of the earth'. Upon arriving in the Zone he declares that he has 'come home', and intimates that there is no return (at least not by the same route) by sending the trolley back in the direction whence it has come. The Stalker's first act in the Zone is richly symbolic: leaving his two companions, he pushes his way through the undergrowth and eventually throws himself, face down, on the deep grass.[92] As he lies in this place, partly hidden by the long fronds of grass, the camera rises, pans round and settles on the house which is the destination of their voyage.

This introduction to the Zone leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the unique status of the place: it is a place transfigured, an impression that is created not only by the sudden change from monochromatic to colour film, but by the silence and peace of the Zone, interrupted only by the distant howling of a dog, and a familiar Tarkovskian motif - the sound of a cuckoo. The Zone, though strewn with the

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[92] The Stalker's relationship with nature is later underlined in such actions as his lying on the river bank (with part of his body in the water) during breaks in the journey. The Writer chooses the (soft and moist) grass, while the Scientist sits on a (hard and dry) rock.



36. A 'man of the earth': the Stalker

decaying detritus of its one-time human occupants, stands in profound contrast to the horrors of the outside world: the Stalker's wretched dwelling, the railway shunting yard, the industrial landscape and seedy tavern. One critic has assessed the curious nature of the Zone in the following terms:

> The camera expresses the organic nature of the zone through images able to convey a sense of plasticity. The viewer can 'feel' the soft, formless, everchanging texture of the landscape, and can also feel the threatening power of its growth. The zone is swallowing modern civilization. Buildings that look like ancient ruins in canvases of the Romantic period are disappearing under a thick coat of vegetation and are invaded by water. Is this the end or a new beginning - as the Stalker seems to believe? Spiritual rebirth is essential and for that one must get in touch with one's roots and plunge into the earth in order to be able to soar to the sky.[93]

The much-vaunted and mysterious 'powers' of the Zone, however, prove to be non-existent: in this place only nature's resilience in the face of the massed onslaughts by science and technology can be considered in any way exceptional.

The image of nature that confronts the Stalker and his companions in the Zone evokes familiar scenes from earlier Tarkovsky films: the field of grass and wild flowers gently swaying in the wind (the characters speak of a 'wonderful field of flowers') the far-off cry of a cuckoo, the rain shower, the river and the entry of nature into the human domain (the pool of water and the fish in the Room). One

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[93] Lawton, p.156.

image in particular appears richly symbolic: the plant which grows from beneath a skeleton in the building containing the Room suggests St Paul's powerful metaphor of spiritual renewal:

> It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:
> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (i Corinthians 15. 43-44.)

Phillip Sherrard has assessed this passage in the following terms:

> The seed of corn is sown in the ground, as the natural body is laid in the grave. From the grain the plant grows, just as from the natural body the spiritual will also grow. The material body will be destroyed but the spiritual body will be raised up.[94]

Thus, in this simple image is distilled the essence of the film: the necessity for moral and spiritual renewal through self-abnegation and the denial of material reality.

Stalker is unusual in the marked absence from it of the motifs that have become almost routine in the Tarkovsky film: horses, 'mother' symbolism, the forest and flight are all absent.[95] The film is Tarkovsky's most ascetic and

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[94] Sherrard, p.38.

[95] Notwithstanding the absence of traditional Tarkovskian motifs in Stalker, the film does contain some naturalistic Christian symbolism: the crown of thorns, the brazier of coals suggesting the Burning Bush, the fish (symbol of Christ) and the plant growing out of a skeleton. On this subject see an interesting study by Jacques

simplified; one critic has characterized it as 'minimalist'.[96] Tarkovsky wrote:

> I eliminated all I could from the script in order to have a minimum of external effects. As a matter of principle I wanted to avoid distracting or surprising the audience with unexpected changes of scene, with the geography of the action, with elaborate plot - I wanted the whole composition to be simple and muted.[97]

Such an ascetic approach in Stalker militated against the usual Tarkovskian enthusiasm for in-depth studies of the natural environment. The landscape in Stalker is that of the soul, the quest internal and metaphysical, with a structure that has more in common with medieval literature than with the genre of science-fiction. If the portrait of nature in the film has one overriding purpose it is an ecological one: the final image in the Zone is one of a grace-giving, purifying rain-shower, descending into the Room containing the three protagonists. Stalker, though, ends in one of Tarkovsky's most anti-Utopian, apocalyptic landscapes: a giant factory spews out fumes into a poisoned atmosphere, filth into a dead river. The contrast, and the warning, could not be clearer.

After the asceticism of Stalker, Nostalgia sees a return to familiar Tarkovsky trademarks: the wooden dacha, the grey horse, the morning mist, the manifestation in many forms of fire and water. The film is Tarkovsky's first to be made outside

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Gerstenkorn and Sylvie Strudel, 'La Quête et la Foi', in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.75-104.

[96] Turovskaya, p.109.

[97] Sculpting in Time, p.194.

Russia, and yet Nostalgia opens upon a misty, black and white and obviously Russian landscape: a grassy bank sloping down to a lake; a grey horse in the background; members of Gorchakov's family (his wife and mother?) moving into the distance, followed by the Alsatian. We hear the keening lament of Russian peasant women, which eventually fades out to be replaced by the strains of Verdi's 'Requiem'. This scene contains many of the hallmarks of the 'image of nature transfigured' in Tarkovsky: it is a monochromatic dream sequence; the shot places woman at its centre, in obvious and symbolic harmony with her surroundings; and there is a dacha - symbol of man's ability to live at one with nature.

After this 'Russian prologue' the film begins proper in the hills of Tuscany. 'I'm sick of all these sickeningly beautiful sights of yours', Gorchakov complains to his Italian interpreter, Eugenia. In fact Tarkovsky's Italy has little in common with the familiar picture-postcard views of that country: his landscapes are often dark and forbidding, colour is eliminated as much as possible, there is little bright sunshine, an unexpected amount of rain and, in the final shot, even snow. In a film about alienation and Russian nostalgia, emotions that the director himself experienced during shooting, it is not surprising that the physical landscape is affected by the depressing psychological condition to which Nostalgia was dedicated. Nature, like every other aspect of Nostalgia, underlines the essential 'Russianness' of the film, as Tarkovsky himself has intimated: 'Working all the time in Italy I made a film that was Russian in every way: morally, politically, emotionally'.[98]

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[98] Sculpting in Time, p.202.

Two aspects of Nostalgia, in particular, underline the attitude to nature familiar to Russian culture generally: the motherhood of the earth and a cosmic sense of all-unity. 'A religious love of the earth lives strongly in the Russian people' wrote Berdyaev. 'Maternity is a fundamental category. The Mother of God precedes the Holy Trinity and is almost identified with the Trinity. The people feel closer to the Mother of God, an intermediary, than to Christ'.[99] In Nostalgia, a film which is (like Mirror) dedicated to the memory of Tarkovsky's mother, the death of Gorchakov's mother coincides with his leaving Russia. In the hero's mind, both things become one, and the loss of Mother-Russia will become an all-pervading motif in the film, precipitating his own eventual downfall. The protecting and life-giving power of the earth, will be associated with the motif of pregnancy, which occurs in various forms in Nostalgia. In a church we see the painting of the (pregnant) 'Madonna del Parto', and witness a ceremony celebrating the pregnancy of the Holy Virgin (during which a great number of birds are released from a statue of the Virgin); Gorchakov dreams of his pregnant wife; Eugenia desires to give birth; the words of the priest, affirming woman's sacred and life-giving mission: to have children. Such images complement the view of the earth which we see elsewhere in the film. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have pointed out, Gorchakov's gaze is often turned downward, to the earth: 'Gorchakov cannot prevent himself gazing at the earth, which protects and waits, conserves and reassures, like the character of the mother'.[100] The scene in the flooded church of San Vitorino, where Gorchakov declaims two poems by Arsenii

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[99] Berdyaev, p.10.

[100] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.155.

Tarkovsky, reinforces the link between Mother and earth. The first is on the theme of mother and childhood:

> As a child I once fell ill
> With hunger and fear. Off my lips I peeled
> Hard scales, and licked my lips. I remember
> Still the taste of it, selfish and cool.
> [...]
> And mother stands there beckoning, looks as if
> She's close, but I can't go up to her:
> I move towards her, she stands seven steps away
> Beckons me; I move towards her, she stands
> Seven steps away and beckons me.[101]

The second poem concerns the earth:

> I learned from the grass, filling a notebook,
> And the grass would begin like a soft flute to sound.
> [...]
> While I worked on this earth, having humbly received
> These two gifts - cool spring water and sweet
> smelling bread,
> Endless skies hang protectively over my head,
> And stars fell into my arms.[102]

The house of the fool-in-Christ, Domenico, provides a suitable backdrop to Tarkovsky's second important statement on the theme of nature. Like the 'zones' in Tarkovsky's other films, this is a privileged place in the director's vision; it is a place of truth, separated from the contingent world. In common with the dacha the status of Domenico's house is confirmed by the constant intrusion of nature into its

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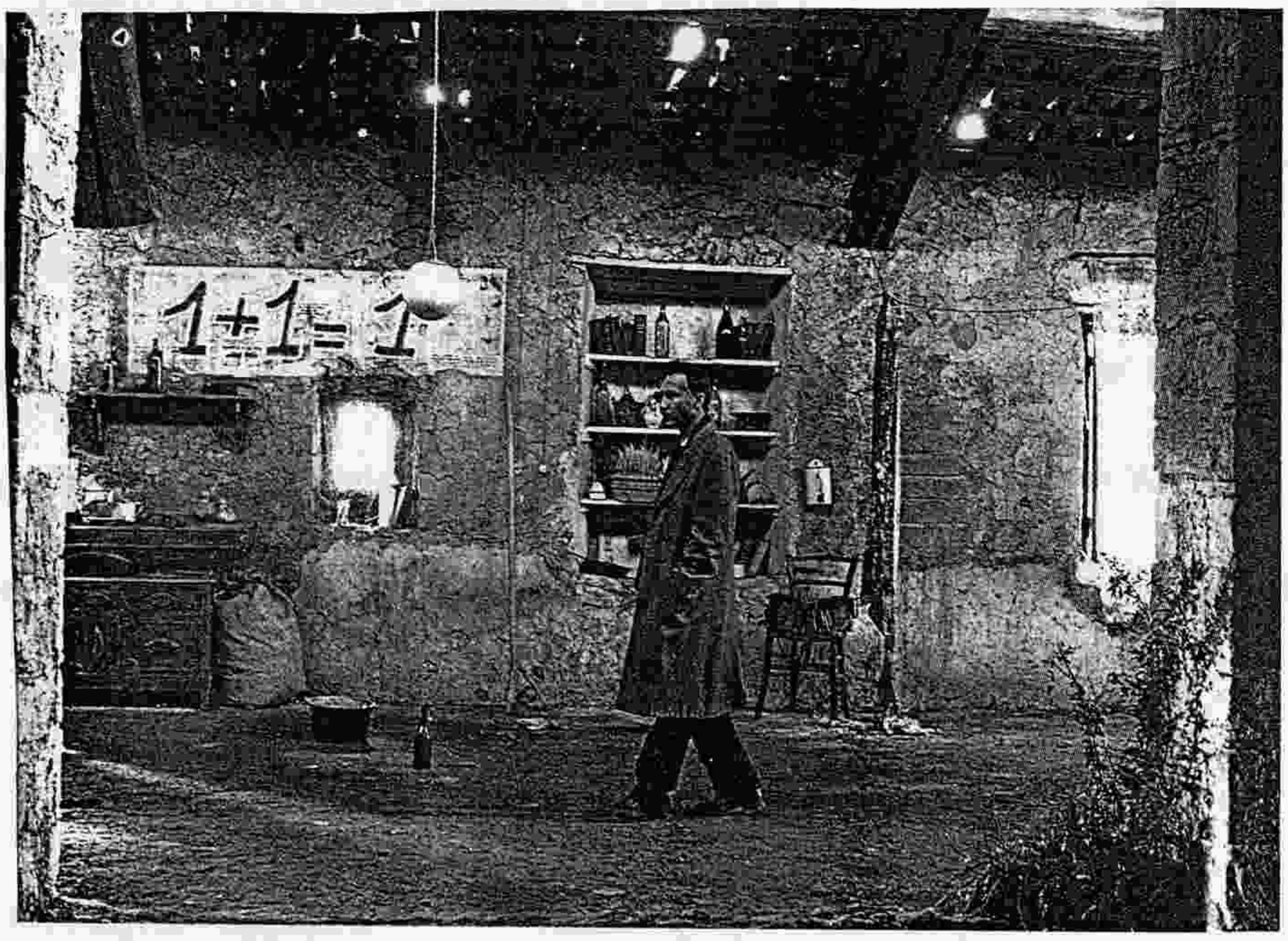
[101] Arsenii Tarkovsky, 'Ya v detstve zabolel', in Izbrannoe: stikhotvoreniya, poemy, perevody (Moscow, 1982), p.230. English translation by Kitty Hunter-Blair in Sculpting in Time, p.91.

[102] 'Ya uchilsya trave', in Izbrannoe, p.50.

heart: the many holes in the roof, allowing rain to pour in to form puddles on the floor, or to be caught in various receptacles; the house plants; the dog which wanders about freely, and, most curious of all, the large model landscape complete with trees, bushes, rivers and lakes, over which the camera pans immediately Gorchakov enters the house, eventually to rise in order to reveal the actual Italian landscape through the open window. Here, in this transfigured place, one finds inscribed on the wall, the formula: $1+1=1$. A visual demonstration of the same notion will subsequently be given by Gorchakov who shows that two drops of water, when joined, become, 'not two drops, but one'. This is the most overt reference in Tarkovsky (though it is present in all of his films) to the idea of all-unity between God, man and the earth that is so central to Russian sophiology. In common with the sophiologists, Tarkovsky may be suggesting that in contemplating nature man is attempting to know God; but knowing means union $(1+1=1)$ without which true knowledge is impossible. Moreover, nature, as intermediary between man and God, is capable of an active role in this regard by means of hierophanies or 'epiphanies'.[103] The intrusive role of nature has already

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[103] In modern times, the use of the epiphany as an artistic device can be traced to James Joyce, who, through his fiction, proferred the following definition: 'By an epiphany [Stephen] meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments.' James Joyce, Stephen Hero (London, 1981), p.188. Thus the epiphany is inevitably associated with the notion of religious revelation; this, at any rate, is the function the device fulfills in Tarkovsky's films, where nature is the favoured (though not exclusive) means of its realization. In essence, the epiphany postulates the presence of the Divine in the phenomenon, and not in the abstract idea. As one critic has written: 'The epiphany replaces the *idea* of things by the shock of their discovery by the *senses*. It is a concrete phenomenon, rare or banal, and at the same time, quasi magical; rapture, annunciation, transfiguration. Before a painting or listening to the strains of music or of a poem, will such an "unveiling" occur? Perhaps it will'. Barthélemy Amengual,



37. Domenico's house, in Nostalgia.

been commented upon in connection with such films as Mirror, but Nostalgia contains a more explicit reference to the Divine presence on Earth. As Gorchakov paces the nave of a ruined church, we hear an imaginary conversation between St Catherine[104] and God. The saint is begging: 'Lord, made known to him Your presence', to which is heard the reply, 'I am for ever present but he is not aware of it'. A noise of wings is heard, and a solitary feather falls circling to the ground.

In the final sequence a number of these elements come together in a remarkable synthesis. The scene is the same ruined church; Gorchakov with Domenico's dog is sitting within its roofless walls, on the damp earth in front of a pool of water. Behind him is a scene taken directly from his dreams: the wooden dacha, the telegraph poles and the trees. From above, flakes of snow (a familiar token of the Divine in Tarkovsky's conception) descend into the church; in the background banks of mist advance, blown by the wind. Few images in Tarkovsky reflect more completely the desire for harmony and all-unity between man and the Divine, and the crucial role of nature in achieving that goal.[105]

'Tarkovski le rebelle: non-conformisme ou restauration?', Positif, 247 (1981), 3-15 (p.13).

[104] Tarkovsky is clearly alluding to the series of personal encounters between St Catherine and God which is the subject of the fourteenth-century mystic's most famous work, the Dialogue. It is possible that in some ways Catherine provided a role model for the character of Domenico: his name suggests the Dominican order of which the saint was a member (she spent much of her life at the cloister of San Domenico); Catherine's life was as rigorously ascetic as Domenico's, and the saint, like Domenico, was commonly regarded as a 'fool-in-Christ'.

[105] It is probable that this image was inspired by the landscape painting of the German Romanticist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), and particularly by his study 'Ruin

In Tarkovsky's final film, Sacrifice, the image of nature would appear to combine both the familiar and the novel. As always in Tarkovsky the landscape is unexceptional: the low-lying, featureless Swedish plain, the soft northern light and pale sky. Here, after the exotic southern location (even though 'russified') of Nostalgia, the landscape would more readily suggest Russia. After the completion of Nostalgia the director wrote:

> As to my next film, I shall aim at ever greater sincerity and conviction in each shot, using immediate impressions made upon me by nature, in which time will have left its own trace. Nature exists in cinema in the naturalistic fidelity with which it is recorded; the greater the fidelity, the more we trust nature as we see it in the frame, and at the same time, the finer is the created image: in its authentically natural likeness, the inspiration of nature itself is brought into cinema.[106]

In Sacrifice the portraiture of nature undoubtedly is 'authentic' and 'naturalistic', though this is equally true of most of Tarkovsky's films. Meanwhile, the film does contain a number of familiar Tarkovskian trademarks. Mother and Nature are linked at the beginning of Sacrifice in two ways: the opening shot is of Leonardo's 'Adoration of the Magi' which the camera slowly traverses, rising vertically to reveal the Virgin and Child, then the tree and finally the natural backdrop to the painting. After this brief prologue, we see the hero of the film, Alexander, sitting under a tree with his son, Little Man. Alexander is interrupted in his long

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at Eldena' (1836). Friedrich's work found wide acceptance in Russia many years before the painter's reputation was established in the West, and the majority of his works are still to be found in Russian galleries.

[106] Sculpting in Time, p.212.

monologue (on man's inability to live in harmony with nature) by the arrival of Adelaide, the boy's mother. Both the early establishing shot of the mother figure (and like her antecedents in Ivan's Childhood and Mirror, Adelaide appears at the edge of a wood) and the lengthy philosophical soliloquy (one thinks of Rublev's speech, the Stalker's dream) take place in nature's midst. Equally familiar to the viewer of Tarkovsky's other films is the dacha motif. The remote wooden house in Gotland in which Alexander and his family now live was based on Tarkovsky's own dacha.[107] As a home to the hero, and 'man of the earth', Alexander, it is central to the overall purpose of Sacrifice. As Turovskaya has written:

> The idea of 'one's father's house' is one which Tarkovsky treats literally: it has to be a real house, a 'house with its windows on to the field', and not, for instance, a flat, like the city flat in Mirror, papered with newspapers during redecoration, or the wretched dwelling of the Stalker beside the railway yard, for both of these lack that which is essential: a house, however poor, is rich through its association with its environment, with the grass, the trees and the elements, such as cloudbursts or even conflagrations. It is just as much a part of nature as the life of the human spirit and, in a way, it is the point of contact between these.[108]

As in Tarkovsky's other films, in Sacrifice the natural elements play a crucial role. The earth (especially damp, muddy earth) ia omnipresent in the film: it features notably in the long tracking shot (during Alexander's apocalyptic dream) in which the camera (pointed downwards throughout) picks out rotting leaves,

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[107] According to his son, Andrei. Similarly, the characters of Alexander and Little Man are based on Tarkovsky himself and his son. See Ebbo Demont, 'V poiskakh utrachennogo vremeni', in O Tarkovskom, pp.342-383 (p.375).

[108] Turovskaya, p.142.

mud, vestiges of snow, detritus, coins and finally the bare feet of a child in the snow. Water takes many forms in Sacrifice: the sea, rain, snow, puddles, and the jug and basin of water used by Maria to wash Alexander's hands; the motif of fire is suggested by the ubiquitious oil-lamps, and by the final dramatic conflagration which consumes the house. As one critic has noted:

> Sacrifice is a film of water, of wind and of fire. The pure and calm sea-water that one can contemplate in the background of the opening and closing shots. The muddy and stagnant water of Alexander's dream which reminds us of the Stalker's vision. The stagnant water of the penultimate sequence, which reflects the orange, gold and black of the flames from the dacha.[109]

In general, one can distinguish three quite different attitudes to nature in Sacrifice, each of which appears to dominate a particular phase or cycle of the film. Sacrifice begins by suggesting the prelapsarian, pristine purity of nature: the bright naturalistic colours (predominately green) and the clump of trees and long grass (suggesting a pleasant, 'garden' ambiance); 'What silence, what peace',[110] exclaims Alexander. The biblical suggestiveness of these images is underlined by the parable of the Orthodox monk, Pavva,[111] which Alexander, seated on the earth, relates to his son, and by the subject of Alexander's monologue. 'Nature transformed is the result of original sin', he explains.

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[109] Michel Estève, 'Une esthétique de l'incarnation: Le Sacrifice', in Etudes Cinématographiques, pp.179-187 (pp.184-185).

[110] Andrej Tarkovskij, Le Sacrifice, edited by L. Schirmer (Munich, 1987), p.59. (Scenario of film).

[111] From Lives of the Fathers. See Andrei Tarkovsky, Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-86, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), pp.302-303.

> We are lost. Humanity has taken a wrong turning, and the route is terribly dangerous. The first sensation man felt ... was fear. He was afraid of everything, animals, storms, darkness. But instead of learning to live in harmony with nature, to share his destiny with her, of becoming her friend, man began to defend himself from her. Fear is a bad counsellor.[112]

From images of 'paradise lost', the emphasis in Sacrifice switches to the present. Here, as is often the case in Tarkovsky, colour helps to distinguish between the various sections of the film. The natural colour of the opening 'garden' scene is followed by Alexander's brief dream, after which the action moves indoors, to the dacha. In the remainder of the film nature is portrayed in two quite distinct ways: as subdued and almost colourless (the present), and, in the form of monochromatic dream sequences, as completely lifeless (the future). Examples of the former include the view of the landscape in front of the dacha (following the long indoor scene) in which Alexander is seen surveying a model of the dacha which sits amidst mud, pebbles, and pools. There follows a shot of the clump of pines; Maria appears, engaging Alexander in brief discussion. The action moves back to the dacha. This scene, like the later episode where Alexander travels by bike to Maria's remote farmhouse, is almost entirely devoid of colour. All of these scenes were filmed twice - in black and white, and in colour - in order, as Tarkovsky's chief cameraman, Sven Nykvist, explained: 'To eliminate colour as far as possible. It was necessary to find something *between* black and white and colour'.[113]

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[112] ibid., pp.55-56.

[113] Cited in Nicole Zand, 'Une villa tchékhovienne en Suède', Le Monde, 1 June 1985, p.15.

The degradation of colour continues in the third and final register of nature: the future. Here, the image of nature takes the form of unambiguously black and white dream sequences. There are three of these. The first follows the opening 'garden' episode and shows a scene of utter devastation: a Stockholm street strewn with detritus of every description, shattered windows, overturned cars; there is no sign of life. The second dream occurs after the television announcement by the Prime Minister (of impending war) and immediately before Otto's visit to Alexander. It begins with a tracking shot moving slowly from inside the dacha, along a dark wet corridor to a window. Outside we see Alexander, standing ankle-deep in the mud and snow; the camera pans over the thin layer of snow revealing coins, rags, plastic bags and other debris - imagery already familiar to the viewer of Stalker, and symbolic in Tarkovsky's conception of man's misuse of nature. The scene switches to a deserted farm and, using the same monochromatic imagery, Tarkovsky shows us the leafless trees, dirty snow, and the putrid remnants of a one-time human presence. The third dream follows Alexander's visit to Maria, and reverts once more to the devastated city street that is familiar from dream one. On this occasion, however, it is filled with people who run, panic-stricken, in every direction. The scene changes abruptly - to the clump of pines near the dacha, where Alexander and Maria (the latter dressed in the clothes and with the hairstyle of Adelaide) are sitting in the long grass. The shot comes to an end to the sound of Japanese flute music, and is followed by the final section of the film (the burning of the dacha) which is filmed in full colour.

Thus, nature imagery in Sacrifice can be seen in terms of three sections,

carefully delineated in colour and contents: the *past* ('paradise lost', Garden of Eden); the *present*, with the degradation of colour suggesting man's own degeneration, his alienation from the natural world, the poverty of the human condition; and the *future* (the Apocalypse). Such a clear division suggests a structure that has more in common with one of the great medieval triptychs than with modern cinema. One thinks in particular (given Tarkovsky's admiration for the painter) of Hieronymus Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights', which in a similar moralizing manner divides human history into past, present and future, each phase of which is represented by an image of nature (Eden, the garden of perversions or 'earthly delights', and an apocalyptic landscape of bonfires, burning trees and houses), and which follows a colour code broadly comparable with that of Sacrifice. In view of Tarkovsky's love of painting it would not be surprising if, in order to convey in this final film a vision of man's alienation from nature, the director sought the appropriate metaphor in the works of his beloved Bosch. As one critic has written of the 'Garden of Earthly Delights':

> [The painting] shows not the fulfillment of God's injunction to Adam and Eve, but its perversion. Man has abandoned the true paradise for the false; he has turned away from the Fountain of Life to drink from the fountain of the flesh which ... intoxicates and brings death.[114]

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[114] Walter Gibson, Hieronymus Bosch (London, 1988), p.93.



38. Left wing: Paradise.



39. Right wing: Hell.

Bosch: 'Garden of Earthly Delights' (triptych).



40. Bosch: 'Garden of Earthly Delights' (triptych).

Central panel.

In conclusion, it can be claimed with some degree of certainty that the image of nature in Tarkovsky's films owes much to a culture in which from earliest times nature has been exalted by mystics, poets and philosophers as having profound ontological importance. In many ways such attitudes persist in Russia to the present day, in contradistinction to Western traditions in which, broadly speaking, a mystical view of nature does not survive Renaissance humanism and the anthropocentric tendencies of the 'Age of Reason'. Tarkovsky in particular seems to have been intrigued by attempts by pre-Revolutionary Russian philosophers and theologians to express in a rigorous, dialectical form parallels to ancient folk teachings and beliefs about the Earth. Similarly, the works of mystical poets and of Dovzhenko provided an immensely important source of inspiration for Tarkovsky's images of nature. Tarkovsky's purpose can only properly be understood when seen through the prism of this tradition.

In a wider context, the director was acutely aware of the changing relationship between man and nature outlined in Berdyaev's Meaning of History,[115] and through his art sought actively to re-establish an animistic, organic attitude to nature that, in Berdyaev, is characterized as belonging to the first of three periods of man's relationship to nature: the pre-Christian period. The philosopher wrote:

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[115] Tarkovsky refers directly to this aspect of Berdyaev's philosophy in his article 'Slovo ob apokalipsise', Iskusstvo kino, 2 (1989), 94-100.

> First, there is the pre-Christian, pagan period whose main feature is the immersion of the human spirit in nature and its direct organic blending with it. This is the primary stage of man's relationship to nature in which his life is governed by an animistic conception. Secondly, there is the Christian period comprising the whole of the Middle Ages and marked by the heroic struggle of the human spirit against the natural elements and forces. The human spirit is divorced from nature and seeks refuge in its own inner depths; it is inclined to regard nature as a source of sin and of subservience to the baser elements. And finally there is the third period which gives rise to a new life [and] is concerned to conquer and master the natural forces with a view to transforming them into a instrument of human interests and happiness.[116]

Tarkovsky, undoubtedly, was repelled by the view of nature that Berdyaev in his 'third period' considers endemic: not least, the appalling ecological consequences of such a philosophy were only too familiar to Soviet artists of Tarkovsky's generation. However, ecological issues, though important in Tarkovsky's films, were only one facet of the infinitely more complex problem of the growing disintegration, with contingent psychic and emotional consequences, of what the director considered to be mankind's proper relationship to the natural world.

This chapter has considered some general aspects of how such a worldview has manifested itself in the images of nature that appear in Tarkovsky's films. But nature's constituent parts - the earth, water, trees, plants and animals - each contain profound significance in Russian cosmology, and it is to these motifs of

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[116] Nikolai Berdyaev, Smysl istorii (Berlin, 1923), p.178.

Mother nature and their specific meaning in Tarkovsky's conception that we shall turn in Chapter Five.

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Chapter Five

Motifs of Mother Nature

'I am a slave of the Earth...'[1]
Andrei Tarkovsky

The aim of the previous chapter was to convey, in general terms, the image of nature as it appears in each of Tarkovsky's films. This chapter will concentrate on a more specific appraisal of individual emblems of the natural world - earth, water, fire, trees and animals - and will discuss the overall importance and the symbolism (or otherwise) that such motifs would appear to have in Tarkovsky's work, and how that relates to Russian culture as a whole.

EARTH

Of all nature's emblems, it is the earth which is conveyed with the greatest intensity, and which is invested with the deepest philosophical meaning in Tarkovsky's conception. A religion of the earth, Berdyaev asserted, 'lies at the foundation of the Russian soul'.[2] In Tarkovskian cinema the image of the earth is no less fundamental or imposing. Great Mother Earth gives birth to, nourishes, protects and provides a final resting place for all other living emblems of the natural world, and throughout his films Tarkovsky sought to convey such deeply held convictions using all the cinematic means at his disposal: long downward-pointing tracking shots, parables and monologues evoking the sanctity of the earth,

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[1] Cited in N. Ismailova, 'Vozvrashchenie Tarkovskogo', Izvestiya, 8 January 1990, p.3.

[2] Nikolai Berdyaev, Russkaya ideya (Paris, 1946), p.10.

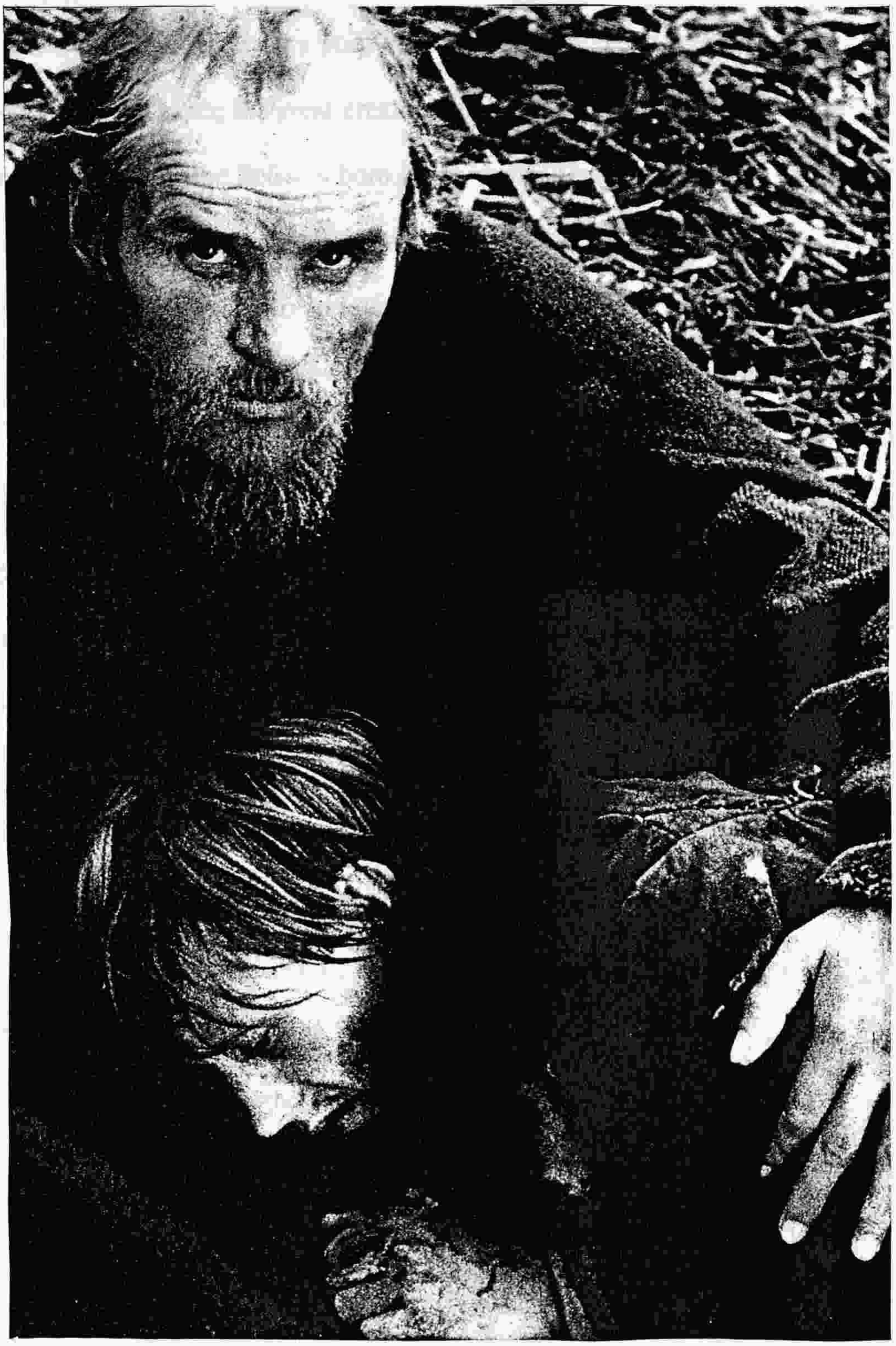
soundtracks rendering in the most meticulous detail the sounds of the earth, and the citation of great paintings testifying to the organic links between man and the soil. As suggested in the previous chapter, such an approach above all brings to mind the lyricism of Dovzhenkian cinema, from which Tarkovsky evidently derived much inspiration. He wrote:

> I share Dovzhenko's love for the earth, and because of that I feel that he is very close to me. Moreover, he made films as he would cultivate a garden: he watered them himself, made them grow with his bare hands. His love of the earth and of humanity meant that his characters grew, as it were, out of the earth itself: they were organically linked, complete... I should like very much to resemble him in that sense.[3]

This desire for 'completeness' between man and the soil characterizes the image of the earth as it appears in Tarkovsky. Indeed, one can say that the essence of each of Tarkovsky's heroes can be judged in terms of this rapport (or otherwise) with the soil. Thus Ivan, in the opening shot of Ivan's Childhood, is seen running barefoot on the damp earth; later he moves silently and effortlessly through a swamp in apparent harmony with his surroundings, in contradistinction to the soldiers who in comparison appear clumsy and noisy: in a literal sense they are out of their element. Ivan also makes use of the fruit of the earth in his espionage efforts: upon returning from a mission behind German lines he empties his pockets of leaves, twigs, grain, nuts and fruit, an aide-mémoire which enables

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[3] Cited in Michel Ciment, Luda et Jean Schnitzer, 'L'artiste dans l'ancienne Russie et dans l'URSS nouvelle: entretien avec Andrei Tarkovsky', Positif, 109 (1969), 1-13 (p.7).



41. Boriska's 'confession to the earth', in Andrei Rublev.

Ivan to complete his report on enemy positions. Boriska (Andrei Rublev) has a similar rapport with the earth; his great creation, and animistic symbol of Russian creativity and spirituality - the Bell - is born in the earth. The symbolism of this endeavour is not lost on Rublev: indeed, it will be the means of his salvation as an artist, compelling him once again to seek an organic basis for his art among the common people, the 'narod'. Two events associated with Boriska demonstrate the importance of the 'earth' motif in Andrei Rublev, and indicate some of the ways in which Tarkovsky tackled the problem of how to film the earth. Digging out the enormous pit in which the bell is to be cast (the other workmen have declined, rather contemptuously, to participate in this part of the work), Boriska's hands come across a root which, when he tries to pull it up, leads to a nearby tree. The camera follows the movement of the root as it is unearthed, proceeds in an upward movement to the top of the pit, climbs the trunk of the tree, rests for a few moments in the foliage and finally returns to Boriska, who is still standing, open-mouthed, in the pit. Further evidence of Boriska's standing as a 'man of the earth' is his emotional confession that he had never known his father's secret (of bell-casting). This he makes lying on the damp, muddy earth, amidst puddles and in isolation from the celebrations over the bell. Only Rublev is privileged to hear this 'confession to the earth', the first, though not the last, allusion in Tarkovsky to this ancient Russian ritual.

A similar rapport appears to exist between the heroes of Tarkovsky's later films and the earth. The Stalker's credentials as a 'man of the earth' have been examined in the previous chapter, but Gorchakov (Nostalgia) has his own

experience of the earth when, in the final symbolic scene, he is seated on the earth before the Russian dacha. This, in Tarkovsky's eyes, is the culmination of Gorchakov's spiritual and ethical searchings: in communion with the land, with his *own* land, the writer is finally at peace with himself. As one critic has commented:

> [In this scene] Gorchakov senses the earth with his whole body. The visible organ is the body, the spirit is the earth. The Tarkovskian universe revolves around this contact. The spirit is not an elevation but a descent to the earth, a descent of the whole body. Tarkovsky is perpetually in search of these spiritual exercises: falling to the damp earth in his conception corresponds to the attitude of prayer.[4]

In Sacrifice one finds that only those characters possessed of faith[5] and thus in a position to help save the world from catastrophe - Alexander, Little Man, Otto and Maria - have a rapport with the earth. Though all at various times in the film are seen sitting on the earth, it is perhaps Alexander's son who, in fulfilling his father's injunction to water each morning the dried-up tree, expresses most clearly Tarkovsky's hope for the future. Faith and love of the earth are the essential attributes of Tarkovsky's heroes (Sacrifice is dedicated to the director's son, 'with hope and faith'), and Little Man is associated with a motif that, throughout Tarkovskian cinema, signifies a particular closeness to the soil: like Ivan (Ivan's Childhood), Boriska and the Christ figure (Andrei Rublev) and the young Tarkovsky himself (Mirror), Little Man walks barefoot through the mud and

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[4] Antoine de Baecque, Andrei Tarkovski (Paris, 1989), p.44.

[5] This is considered more fully in Chapter One, in the context of a discussion of the *yurodivye*.

snow.[6]

If closeness to the earth in Tarkovsky's conception is a virtue, then alienation from the earth ultimately brings only suffering or death. Tarkovsky underlines the point in a number of his films in certain key symbolic scenes: the prologue to Andrei Rublev features the serf Efim, who, in trying to escape from the earth in a home-made balloon, is eventually killed when the entire contraption crashes into a field;[7] the astronauts on Solaris who have lost their humanity (Kelvin is saved by his return to Earth); the refugees from the Spanish Civil War in Mirror who, compelled to live in Moscow, dream only of their homeland; Gorchakov who dies of 'nostalgia' for his native earth (only in the final image, after his death, is Gorchakov reunited with his land). Some of these aspects of Tarkovsky's feeling for the earth come together in what is probably the director's most revealing commentary on the image of the earth in his films. It is here reproduced in full:

> What interests me above all is the earth, I am

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[6] The symbolism of this gesture was evidently important to Tarkovsky. Not long before his death he records in his diary: 'Yesterday I went for a walk and suddenly I was seized by a desire which I cannot explain ... I took off my shoes and walked barefoot through the cold earth. And all this while running a temperature, and with a cough and rheumatism ... I have just gone mad. I have sad thoughts in my head.' Cited in Ebbo Demant, 'V poiskakh utrachennogo vremeni', in O Tarkovskom, edited by Marina Tarkovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp.342-388 (p.385).

[7] Significantly, though Efim's aspirations lie upwards - towards the sky and the air - throughout this shot the camera is relentlessly pointed downards, towards the earth. The motif of flight, which occurs frequently in Tarkovsky's films, clearly has negative associations, invariably symbolising the alienation of man from the land. Tarkovsky himself was afraid of flying and avoided it wherever possible. As he summed up his feelings: 'Man can't fly, and shouldn't.' Cited in Natal'ya Bondarchuk, 'Vstrechi na Solyarise', in O Tarkovskom, pp.140-162 (p.157).

captivated by the process of growth of everything that comes from the earth: trees, grass... And all that leads towards the sky. This is why [in Andrei Rublev] the sky only figures as a place towards which rises everything that is born of the earth. The sky of itself has no symbolic meaning. For me the sky is empty. Only its reflections on the earth - in the river, in the puddles - interest me or are important for me. When the man flies in the first scene of [Andrei Rublev] one sees only the reflection of the sky on the earth, and for us that was a matter of principle. The relationship between the flying man and the earth was for us the only important one. There was no relationship between him and the sky. In general I love the earth. I never see mud, I see only earth mixed with water, the silt from which things are born. I love the earth, I love *my* earth.[8]

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WATER

Few motifs in Tarkovsky's films have been subjected to as much critical attention and speculation as water. In its many forms water is seen by numerous critics as central to his aesthetic, as well as being the most richly symbolic of all his emblems. Mark Le Fanu's conclusion is not untypical of this body of opinion: 'One cannot think of a director for whom the presence of water as an element is more important, than for Tarkovsky'.[9] The French critic Emmanuel Carrère has used similar language: 'In all cinema I do not know scenes more dense and

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[8] Cited in Ciment et Schnitzer, p.10.

[9] Mark Le Fanu, 'Thèmes et obsessions venus de l'enfance', in Andrei Tarkovski, edited by Gilles Ciment (Paris, 1988), pp.34-37 (p.35).

mysterious, than the water sequences [in Tarkovsky]'.[10] The omnipresence of water is indeed a striking feature of Tarkovsky's oeuvre, and the element is conspicuous in each of his films in such manifestations as rain, rivers and streams, pools, the ubiquitious basin and jug, wells, the water which streams down walls in Mirror, Stalker and Nostalgia, and in many other forms. Much attention has been devoted, inevitably, to the likely symbolism of such images, despite Tarkovsky's protestations that water is used in his films only for its peculiar aesthetic and cinegenic qualities. But water in many forms has long been a source of emblematic imagery: as a symbol of life,[11] and, in the form of rain, as representing 'a "love-union" between heaven and earth'.[12] More specifically, the Eastern Orthodox Tradition places great importance on water; in Philo's allegorical method, for instance, the rain-shower or snow signified the bestowal of God's blessings on man.[13] Water imagery is also prevalent in the early poetry of Pasternak, and of Vladimir Solov'ev, particularly in the latter's 'water poems', in which water, as Cioran has observed, 'offers the best means of elucidating the uncontained, disunited nature of the World Soul, which in its ceaseless motion reveals unrest and the striving towards unity'.[14] Notwithstanding its symbolism

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[10] Emmanuel Carrère, 'Troisième plongée dans l'océan, troisième retour à la maison', Positif, 247 (1981), 16-22 (p.22).

[11] On this subject, see Gaston Bachelard, L'eau et les rêves (Paris, 1981).

[12] Jolande Jacobi, 'Symbols in an Individual Analysis', in Man and his Symbols, edited by Carl Jung (London, 1978), pp.323-374 (p.338).

[13] See Andrew Louth, The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys (Oxford, 1989), p.30.

[14] Samuel Cioran, Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia (Ontario, 1977), p.58.

Solov'ev was also attracted by the beauty of moving water; as he wrote in 'Beauty in Nature':

> The beauty of life in the inorganic world is apparent, first of all, in flowing water in its various forms - streams, mountain rivers, waterfalls. The aesthetic significance of this living movement is enhanced by its boundlessness, which seems, so to speak, to suggest the insatiable longing of finite beings separated from the absolute all-unity.[15]

For Tolstoy, also, water was possessed of special qualities; the sudden, summer rainstorm which Nekhlyudov (Resurrection) witnesses standing on the open platform of a train as he begins his journey to Siberia, is described as beneficent or 'grace-giving' (*blagodatnyi*). '"More, more!" shouts Nekhlyudov, rejoicing at the sight of fields, gardens, and kitchen gardens reviving under the grace-giving rain'.[16] The 'grace-giving rain' marks the culminating point in Nekhlyudov's spiritual 'resurrection'. 'With the rain also comes a new awareness and a new acceptance' wrote Gustafson.[17] In Russian prose this willingness to make symbolic use of such an unambiguously religious metaphor as water is by no means uncommon. In Dostoevsky, though, one finds a unique understanding of the religious and philosophical significance of the motif: in The Possessed one of the most important predicates which the Cripple applies to the earth is 'dampness'.

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[15] Vladimir S. Solov'ev, 'Krasota v prirode', in Sobranie sochinenii, second edition, 10 vols (St. Petersburg, 1911-14), vi, pp.3-74 (p.50).

[16] Lev N. Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 90 vols (Moscow, 1928-58), xxxii, p.350.

[17] Richard Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger (Princeton, 1986), pp.172-173.

Her formula, that 'the Mother of God is the great mother - the damp earth' (*Bogoroditsa - mat' zemlya syraya*), underlines one essential truism: water signifies the vital, life-giving force of the earth, the necessary condition and symbol of all life. Correspondingly, water stands in contradistinction to dryness and dust, symbols of death. In Orthodoxy, the blessing of the water (at Epiphany) is thus one of the most important Church rites. As Zander has written most eloquently:

> In blessing the 'nature of water' the Church blesses all who 'touch it and are sanctified thereby', and that includes not only men, but all mammals, reptiles, fishes, and plants, down to the most elementary representatives of the organic world. The short formula 'the damp earth' contains therefore a whole philosophy, teaching of the bond between matter and life, of the unity between the earth and those who populate it, of all living creatures' dependence on the waters, upon the face of which the spirit of God moved before the creation of the world, and which now flow through myriads of channels, organising and vivifying the lifeless dust. Hence man's love for the earth is bound up with *moistening* it with his tears, his sweat and his blood, and is measured by that: 'When you water the earth with your tears a foot deep, you will rejoice at everything at once...'[18]

Such a tradition[19] provides a necessary basis for understanding Tarkovsky's apparent obsession with water, both as a symbol, and as a key element in his

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[18] Lev A. Zander, Dostoevsky (London, 1948), pp.44-45.

[19] The importance of tradition in some form - cultural or ancestral - in assessing the importance of water imagery in Tarkovsky is given further weight by the director's own suggestion that water in his films 'has subconscious echoes - perhaps my love of water arises from some atavistic memory or some ancestral transmigration'. Cited in Tony Mitchell, 'Tarkovsky in Italy', Sight and Sound, 52 (Winter 1982/83), 54-56 (p.55).

aesthetic. Both parts of the equation are valid, though the relative importance of the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of the motif will of course vary from image to image, and from film to film.

One should not underestimate the power of moving water as part of the iconography of cinema: water is possessed of great cinegenic qualities, providing movement, depth and colour. These and other aspects of water have been exploited by such directors as Kurosawa[20] (whom Tarkovsky greatly admired) in whose aesthetic 'unrelenting rain' is a key element. In his writings, Tarkovsky repeatedly stresses the aesthetic possibilities of water, denying any symbolic dimension: water could be 'expressive' but not symbolic. In Solaris, for instance, 'the rain is not a symbol, but merely something which, at a certain moment, contains a particular importance for the hero. But it is not symbolic. Rain expresses something. It is an artistic image'.[21] In Sculpting in Time Tarkovsky develops the argument along similar lines:

> Rain is after all typical of the landscape in which I grew up; in Russia you have those long, dreary, persistent rains. [...] Rain, fire, water, snow, dew, the driving ground wind - all are part of the material setting in which we dwell; I would even say of the truth of our lives. I am therefore puzzled when I am told that people cannot simply enjoy watching nature, when it is lovingly reproduced on the screen, but have to look for some hidden meaning they feel it

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[20] Tarkovsky in fact adopted one of the most familiar elements of Kurosawa's aesthetic: the images of horses in the rain.

[21] Cited in Irena Brezna, 'Entretien avec Andrei Tarkovski', in Andrei Tarkovski, edited by Gilles Ciment (Paris, 1988), pp.134-136 (p.136).

> must contain. Of course rain can just be seen as bad weather, whereas I use it to create a particular aesthetic setting in which to steep the action of the film. But that is not at all the same thing as bringing nature into my films as a symbol of something else.[22]

Notwithstanding the importance of the role of water in creating 'aesthetic settings' in Tarkovsky's films the motif has a considerably more complex function.

In general one can say that water in Tarkovsky is the *milieu par excellence* of meditation and contemplation, and a key tool in his own 'transcendental' film language. In Ivan's Childhood an image of water sparkling in bright sunshine is the prelude to the dream sequences; the slow movement of algae in a river current provides the backdrop to meditation or philosophical discussion in Andrei Rublev and Solaris; the appearance of objects metonymically arranged on river beds, under snow, or rotting in wells are familiar objects of contemplation in Mirror, Stalker and Sacrifice; and Gorchakov's chosen place of meditation is a flooded church where, knee deep in water, the poet spends hours in bitter private introspection. Water is also a key element in Tarkovskian symbolism. Nevertheless, it is unwise to attribute a single symbolic interpretation to Tarkovsky's images of water, and the precise meaning of such scenes, inevitably, has long been the focus of much speculation among film critics. However, one can distinguish at least two metaphorical uses for water in Tarkovsky's films: as a *divide* between different realms or realities, between life and death or between

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[22] Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), pp.212-213.

good and evil; and as a sign of *grace*. Crossing the spiritual or ethical Rubicon in Tarkovsky is invariably conveyed by the metaphorical crossing of rivers, streams, marshes or pools. On his last mission behind enemy lines (during which he is captured and executed) Ivan is compelled to cross a river - symbol, it would appear, of the divide between his own life and death; elsewhere in Ivan's Childhood the meeting point between the contingent and transfigured realities (the war and Ivan's dreams) is the well. In Andrei Rublev, in one of the most memorable scenes, the invading Tartar horsemen (evil/death) have to cross a river before sacking Vladimir (good/life); earlier a pagan girl (good) escapes her pursuers (evil) by swimming across a river. Mirror contains newsreel film of Soviet soldiers crossing the Sivash marshes (in the Crimea), followed by film of a Red Army unit attempting, with great difficulty, to cross a river. The three main characters of Stalker have to traverse a flooded room - the final obstacle on their journey to the Room. In Nostalgia Gorchakov fulfills Domenico's injunction to cross, holding a lighted candle, the almost empty spa pool of St. Catherine; having completed his task, the poet collapses and dies. As Alexander (Sacrifice) approaches Maria's remote farmhouse on his bicycle he is unable (despite his best efforts) to avoid falling into a puddle. In this case it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Alexander's immersion in water marks the conclusion of the first part of his life (a life spent in the contingent world) and the beginning, through the apprehension of a higher reality which he gains in the home of the 'witch', Maria, of Alexander's new life.

If water as a divide between two realities is a relatively tangible expression of

the metaphor, then the secondary level on which the motif appears to operate is more abstract. As suggested earlier, rain is of some importance in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition as a symbol of divine blessing or grace, and there is some evidence that rain or snow is used with similar intent in Tarkovsky's method. Rain is a feature of every Tarkovsky film, with the single exception of Sacrifice (though Alexander refers to it in a monologue); however, its use in each film is carefully conceived and sparing. Sudden rainfall drenches the Muscovites watching a demolition team in Tarkovsky's earliest (diploma) film, The Steamroller and the Violin; during Ivan's dream it soaks Ivan, the little girl and the lorry-load of apples; Rublev and his companions seek shelter from rain in the izba; for Kelvin it is associated with his most precious memories of Earth; in Mirror, Maria runs to the print-works through driving rain; the sudden shower which descends into the room containing the Stalker and his companions is our last image of the Zone; rain is seen through Gorchakov's hotel window and falls through Domenico's roof.

Rain imagery of this sort (and this is not an exhaustive list) can of course be interpreted variously; nonetheless its context within the narrative structure of each film strongly suggests that rain in Tarkovsky possesses redemptive, benedictory or revelatory qualities. The metaphor is particularly in evidence in Andrei Rublev. At the opening of the film, as Rublev and his companions leave the Holy Trinity Monastery, a sudden shower of rain provokes diverse reactions from the three monks: Rublev (the youngest) wants to protect himself from the rain under a tree; of the two older monks, Kirill prefers to seek shelter, whereas Daniil is unconcerned and tells Rublev 'not to worry about the rain'. Shortly after, in the

izba, the jester in a deliberate gesture takes off his shirt and stands unprotected under the rain. At the end of the first part of the film the deaf-mute girl (a 'fool-in-Christ') runs out of the Cathedral of Vladimir into the rain. In the final episode rain marks Boriska's discovery of the clay; it drenches Rublev, who now accepts his fate uncomplainingly, and it falls on Rublev's icons. The final shot is of horses in the rain, peacefully grazing on a water meadow.

Rublev's initial fear of the rain may suggest his inability to apprehend the 'more real' world: it is in order to acquire faith in this other reality that Tarkovsky has his hero leave the sheltered world of the monastery, exposes him to worldly suffering and violence, and brings him to faith by observing the selfless example of Boriska. In common with the jester and the deaf-mute girl, Boriska has faith; his acceptance of the rain is the clearest indication of this. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have written:

> The relationship between Rublev and the rain signals a conflict between the painter and his mission. The jester bravely accepts being drenched by the rain: he knows his role and accepts it. The appearance of the deaf-mute girl is a revelation for Rublev, and he rediscovers his faith in creation. Rublev's spiritual condition is restored in the image where the painter rushes out into the rain. In the case of Boriska, the rain ... becomes divine grace in action.[23]

In this manner the rain motif in Andrei Rublev reflects the interior narrative of the film - the possession, non-possession or, in the case of Rublev, the re-acquisition

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[23] Bàlint A. Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), p.80.

of faith.

Although rain performs a broadly similar role in other films, Tarkovsky employs water as a symbol of benediction in one final motif: the ceramic jug and basin. The motif is ubiquitous in Tarkovsky's oeuvre, but has particular significance in Solaris, Mirror, and Sacrifice. In Solaris, Kelvin dreams that his mother appears on the space-station and washes his hands with an old jug and basin; in Mirror the narrator dreams of his childhood, when his father would assist his wife in washing her hair using the same utensils;[24] the device reappears in Sacrifice when Maria washes Alexander's hands after he falls from the bicycle. The symbolism of this water is close to that of rain but more specific: water from the jug and basin is a privileged substance, a product of the 'transfigured world' (dreams, for instance), and is used to indicate blessing or approbation. Kelvin is thus blessed following his spiritual and ethical rebirth; Alexander is received into

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[24] The religious symbolism of water, the jug and basin, the feast of Epiphany and the notion of transfiguration are all elements which feature in Arsenii Tarkovsky's poem 'First Meetings', part of which is heard in Mirror, and which was of great importance to Tarkovsky:

> You awoke and you transfigured
> The words that people utter every day,
> And speech was filled to overflowing
> With ringing power, and the word 'you'
> Discovered its new purport: it meant 'king'.
> Ordinary objects were at once transfigured,
> Every thing - the jug, the basin - when
> Placed between us like a sentinel
> Stood water, laminary and firm.

From 'Pervye svidaniya', in Izbrannoe: stikhotvoreniya, poemy, perevody (Moscow, 1982), pp.168-169. English translation by Kitty Hunter-Blair in Sculpting in Time, p.101.

the 'other world' (the witch, Maria's house) and is immediately blessed in a similar fashion. As one critic has observed:

> This water is not of the world which [Alexander] has abandoned, but of the world in which he has arrived, the witch's world. He forgets his former world by the washing of hands and is united with the witch. The water which she pours him is from an old jug and basin. It is not everyday water from the tap, but belongs to her: it is from her jug, from her hands.[25]

Such a ritualistic use of the 'blessed water' almost certainly derives from the Orthodox tradition, and from the importance it attributes to water. One is again reminded of Zander's words 'In blessing the "nature of water" the Church blesses all who "touch it and are sanctified thereby".'[26] The special nature of this water stands in marked contrast to the water of the everyday world which, in Tarkovsky, appears invested with its own peculiar symbolism: it is confined to pipes and taps, is heard rather than seen (the Stalker's kitchen, Domenico's house), and is frequently unreliable (Maria's shower, in Mirror, which dries up). Such water suggests, not the beauty and mystery of nature, but nature's confinement and arbitrary control by civilization.[27]

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[25] Dmitrii Salynsky, 'Rezhisser i mif', Iskusstvo kino, 12 (1988), 79-91 (p.87). In general terms, Salynsky takes the view that water symbolizes the presence of death in Tarkovsky. This though is to ignore a Russian liturgical tradition which, through the ritual of baptism, posits water as a divide between death and life. As Ouspensky explains: '[In the symbolism of the Epiphany] water becomes an image not of death but of birth into a new life'. Leonid Ouspensky, 'The Baptism of the Lord or Epiphany', in The Meaning of Icons edited by Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky (New York, 1983), p.160 (p.160).

[26] Zander, pp.44-45.

[27] The despair at the de-humanization inherent in many aspects of modern civilization, including the modern home, is a familiar theme in Russian spiritual writings. Father

In conclusion, water has a privileged place in Tarkovsky's aesthetic and allegorical method. The element is an essential element, in all the forms it assumes in his oeuvre, in the task of slowing the narrative, inducing contemplation and aiding 'transcendental style'. Tarkovsky himself has characterized the peculiar and multifarious appeal of water in the following terms:

> In Russia one can see a great deal of water, much more than in Italy. I very much love water as a subject. In the first place it is an enigmatic substance. [...] But water is also very dynamic: it conveys movement, depth, change, colour, reflections. It is one of the most beautiful things in the world. There is nothing more beautiful than water. There is nothing in nature that cannot be reflected in it... Obviously in cinema it would be inaccurate to limit oneself to one aspect of water. I cannot imagine making a film without water.[28]

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Alexander Yelchaninov, for instance, writes: 'What special attraction can be offered by our modern "home" - a flat, one of a thousand other flats which are all alike, with central heating, electric light, water pipes instead of a well or fountain, a lodging devoid of all special characteristics, which can easily be exchanged for another. Thus modern civilization kills the sense of home, of family life, and opens the road to socialism, communism, anarchism in souls as well as in the social order.' Father Alexander Yelchaninov, 'The Teacher of Self-Examination: Fragments of a Diary', in A Treasury of Russian Spirituality, edited by George P. Fedotov (London, 1950), pp.417-485 (p.473).

[28] Cited in Aleksandr Gershkovich, 'Ispoved' Andreya Tarkovskogo', Kontinent, 42 (1984), 385-406 (pp.401-402).

FIRE

Fire has a powerful resonance in Russian culture. A fear of, and fascination with, fire is not, of course, unexpected in a people whose primary building material - in forest and city alike - has, until relatively recently, always been wood, and whose major settlements and towns have repeatedly been destroyed by flames.[29] In the symbolism of the Eastern Church fire has a special status, evoking the notion of divine enlightenment and the purgative fires of the Last Judgement. In a wider context, Bachelard has also pointed to the importance of fire as a symbol of purification.[30] In the Eastern Tradition certain aspects of the fire metaphor can be traced to Origen; however, it is the writings and allegorical methods of the fifth or sixth-century mystic Dionysius the Areopagite that have been most influential on Russian religious culture and its own prodigious use of fire as a religious symbol.

According to Dionysius:

> Visible fire is in ... every thing. [...] It cannot be looked upon. Yet it is master of everything. With kindling warmth it causes renewal. With unveiled enlightenments it grants illumination, yet continues to be pure and undiluted. [...] It is dynamic, powerful, invisibly present in everything.[31]

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[29] On the wider significance of the metaphor of fire in Patristic writings, and the impact of the latter on Eastern spirituality, see Robert Payne, The Holy Fire: The Story of the Fathers of the Eastern Church (London, 1958); James Billington's The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (London, 1966), pp.23-26, contains a useful discussion of the motif in a Russian context.

[30] See Gaston Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire (London, 1964), pp. 102-104.

[31] Dionysius the Areopagite, 'The Celestial Hierarchy', in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, translated and edited by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (London, 1987), pp.143-191 (p.184).

Russians have also placed great store by Christ's statement that 'I am come to send fire on the earth' (Luke 12. 49), and see significance in the fact that the Holy Spirit initially came down to man through 'tongues like as of fire' (Acts 2. 3). Fire was an important weapon for Russian religious fundamentalists - the Old Believers, for instance, many of whom sought ritual 'self-immolation', often with their entire family and friends, in wooden homes and churches. The near uniqueness of this surprisingly widespread practice to Russia has been pointed out by Berdyaev: 'Self-immolation, as a religious exploit [*podvig*], is a Russian natural phenomenon, which is almost unknown among other people'.[32]

Such a tradition at least partly explains the frequency and significance of the motif in Tarkovskian cinema. Each of the director's films contains, in a precise context, at least one manifestation of fire. Let us briefly enumerate the scenes in which fire appears significant. Ivan (Ivan's Childhood) is preparing to leave on a mission; in the background we see a fire burning through an opening in the stove. Rublev (Andrei Rublev) encounters fire at the pagan feast; Vladimir is set ablaze by the Tartars; huge fires heat the furnaces that produce the metal for the Bell; the final shot of Andrei Rublev, before the concluding colour sequence, is of embers of a fire. Kelvin (Solaris) burns old papers in a bonfire before his trip to Solaris; at the end of the film, when he has come home, Kelvin stands looking through a window as a fire burns in the background. In Mirror fire takes many forms: the conflagration in the barn, the bonfire in the field, the burning bush, even stoves

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[32] Berdyaev, p.9. On the history of Russian self-immolation, see also D. Sapozhnikov, Samosozhzhenie v russkom raskole (Moscow, 1891).

and oil-lamps. The Stalker (Stalker) lights an ancient water heater in his decrepit kitchen; its flames, clearly visible through an aperture, appear unusually prominent. In the Zone, in a curious incident, the three men come across the embers of a fire. Nostalgia features a crypt containing the 'Madonna del Parto' which is illuminated by a myriad of candles; a volume of poetry by Arsenii Tarkovsky burns by the side of a pool; Domenico carries a candle (which he later gives to Gorchakov), and in time kills himself in an act of self-immolation. Finally, in Sacrifice, Alexander's 'sacrifice' takes the form of his setting light to the family home.

In common with other motifs in Tarkovsky's films, fire can not be confined to a single interpretation or function. In the slowest-moving shots (the burning barn, the embers) it can be a further aid to contemplation, providing a pause in which recent actions or dialogue can be absorbed. But fire appears to have a number of other, specific, functions in Tarkovsky, the full range of which can feature even within a single film. In the earliest films, fire as a symbol or portent of violence is dominant: in the long, slow scene in which Ivan prepares to leave on a mission (on which he will meet a violent death) the twin images of Ivan and the fire dominate the screen, causing a perceptible rise in tension, and subtly suggesting the boy's imminent fate. As Kovàcs and Szilàgyi have suggested 'The accent on the fire allows us to understand that it is the metaphorical image of the threat that hangs over Ivan'.[33] In Andrei Rublev the link between fire and violence is equally explicit: fire is omnipresent in the episode entitled 'The Feast' where

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[33] Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, p.51.

violence is inflicted on Rublev by the pagans, who are themselves then attacked by the forces of a local prince; and destructive fire is the leitmotif in the most violent scene of the film - the sacking of Vladimir.

While violence is in part associated with the image of fire in later films, the motif progressively acquires a more concrete symbolism: as a metaphor for enlightenment, purification or sacrifice. The example of Alexander and Domenico most readily suggests an Old Believer preparedness for total self-abnegation and sacrifice: not only is their final sacrifice to be consummated by the flames, but both men have beforehand sought to remove their families from worldly evils (Alexander removes to the remote peninsula of Gotland, against the wishes of his wife; and Domenico holds his family captive for seven years). Tarkovsky also appears to employ fire as an indication of impending spiritual enlightenment, often following a journey or quest. The striking images of the Stalker preparing for his trip to the Zone, his face lit by flames from the old water-heater; of Kelvin standing alongside the campfire before setting off for Solaris; of Rublev contemplating the furnaces from which will come molten metal for the Bell (the creation of which brings his own spiritual resurrection); and of Gorchakov crossing St Catherine's Pool with a lighted candle, can all be seen in this context.

As Salynsky has intimated, even Mirror has many examples where fire is intimately associated with the notion of elevation to a higher, spiritual, condition: 'Every twist of the spiral composition of Mirror, revealing new facets of the spiritual life of the heroes, is linked with fire - conflagration, embers, lamps,

stoves and bonfire'.[34]

Finally, fire is associated with one further crucial element of Tarkovskian cinema: the theme of memory. The importance of memory, of anamnesis, to the moral and ethical development of Tarkovsky's heroes has been discussed in an earlier chapter. In the film *par excellence* of memory - Mirror - fire does appear to play this crucial catalytic role. During the telephone conversation between Maria Ivanovna and her Son, the latter asks his mother if she remembers the burning barn some forty years before; later we see the barn, and the boy and his mother calmly gazing at the fire in curiosity. 'This burning barn becomes a landmark in [Tarkovsky's] memory. It helps him to remember and, paradoxically, brings the past to life.'[35] In Solaris, too, fire is linked to the memory of childhood. When Kelvin enters into Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow', he actually builds a campfire in this winter landscape, in the process evoking memories of his childhood. Similarly, at the end of the film, fire is juxtaposed with the other motif that for Tarkovsky is forever bound up with childhood: the dacha. In all of the director's films memory plays a vital role, its presence or absence in a character denoting the potential, or otherwise, for resurrection.[36] To this end, the motif of

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[34] Salynsky, p.89.

[35] ibid., p.90.

[36] The link between memory and moral resurrection in Tarkovsky is discussed in Kovàcs and Szilàgyi, pp.131-132. The latter attribute this characteristic of Tarkovskian cinema to the influence of one of the greatest Russian philosophers, Nikolai Fedorov, whose writings on the theme of 'resurrection' have had a profound influence on Russian literary figures from Mayakovsky to Andrei Platonov, Mikhail Bulgakov and Pasternak.

fire can be seen not only as a key element in Tarkovsky's aesthetic, but as a crucial indicator of such potential in his heroes.

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ANIMALS

A persistent presence in Tarkovskian cinema, animal life, in its various forms, is one of the most telling indicators of the pantheistic principle that colours the director's world-view. The relative importance and symbolic meaning of different animals - horses, dogs, birds, insects - can be interpreted variously; however, some general points might first be made on the wider importance of animals to Tarkovsky's aesthetic.

For Tarkovsky, animals can be said to be the most perfect embodiment of a prelapsarian ideal of 'all-unity', harmony, simplicity and innocence (qualities which Tarkovsky also associated with children). The non-cerebral, emotional response to the world and its beauty, intrinsic to animal forms, held many attractions for Tarkovsky, and wherever possible he sought to convey a view of nature and of human activity from the unaffected perspective of non-human creatures. He wrote:

> I am more inclined to relate to the world emotionally or, rather, contemplatively. Rather than think, I contemplate, feel. My attitude to the world is rather that of an animal or a child, than of an adult, mature man who is able to reflect

and come to conclusions.
Children and animals are innocent...[37]

Thus, animals are representative of a primordial, untarnished world, and of an emotional world-view which, in the developed human world, is now largely lost to adults. As such, animals are the perfect embodiments and symbols of natural life.

A special relationship with animals, unsurprisingly, is characteristic of Orthodox saints, many of whom derived great inspiration from the life of St Sergei of Radonezh - the fourteenth-century mystic whose rapport with wild animals forms one of the most famous and well-loved episodes from the Lives of the Saints (a work with which Tarkovsky was familiar). Animals are also important to Solov'ev and have a central role in his philosophical study of the natural world, 'Beauty in Nature': 'The higher animals - birds and, even more, certain mammals (those of the feline family as well as deer, gazelles, etc.) - ... are, in their whole appearance, a beautiful embodiment of the idea of life: of graceful strength and harmonious co-ordination between the parts'.[38]

Of all the 'higher animals', horses appear to represent this ideal in Tarkovsky's films most naturally and consistently. Horses feature in Ivan's Childhood (the horses eating apples on the beach, in Ivan's dream; and the woodcut of Dürer's 'Apocalypse'), Solaris (in the garden of the dacha), Nostalgia (when Gorchakov dreams of the dacha), Sacrifice (in Leonardo's painting) and are omnipresent in Andrei Rublev. In the latter film, horses appear at every important

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[37] 'Ispoved' Andreya Tarkovskogo', p.398.

[38] 'Krasota v prirode', p.67.



42. Horses, in Ivan's Childhood.

juncture, the detached observers[39] of human cruelty or folly, and symbols *par excellence* of timelessness and of life itself. Thus, horses are the only witnesses to the peasant Efim's death, following his reckless adventure in a home-made balloon; horses observe the brutal blinding of the artisans by emissaries of the Prince of Vladimir; a horse perishes in a brutally explicit manner during the Tartars' sacking of Vladimir; the deaf-mute girl reappears on a white horse when the Bell sounds for the first time; finally, the image of horses in a field, standing under the pouring rain brings Andrei Rublev to a close. In these scenes it is apparent that horses symbolize the fragile nature of life; through the eyes of horses nature itself places in a wider context, and ultimately passes judgement on, the activities of men. Tarkovsky has offered the following, unusually revealing, consideration of the role of horses in his film:

> [Andrei Rublev] ends in an image of horses under the rain. We wanted to end on a symbol of life, because for me the horse symbolizes life. Perhaps this is my own interior, subjective vision, but the fact is that when I see a horse it seems to me that I have before me life itself. For the horse is at once beautiful, familiar and very indicative of Russian life. Many horses are present in our film. [...] Throughout the film the horse is therefore the witness and symbol of life. In ending on images of horses we wanted to underline that the source of all Rublev's art is life itself.[40]

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[39] One can, of course, find instances of horses being used in this manner in the films of those directors for whom Tarkovsky had the greatest regard. One thinks in particular of Dovzhenko's Earth and Shchors; Kurosawa's Seven Samurai (1954) and Macbeth (1957); and even Bresson's Au hasard, Balthazar (1965), in which the world is seen through the eyes of a mule.

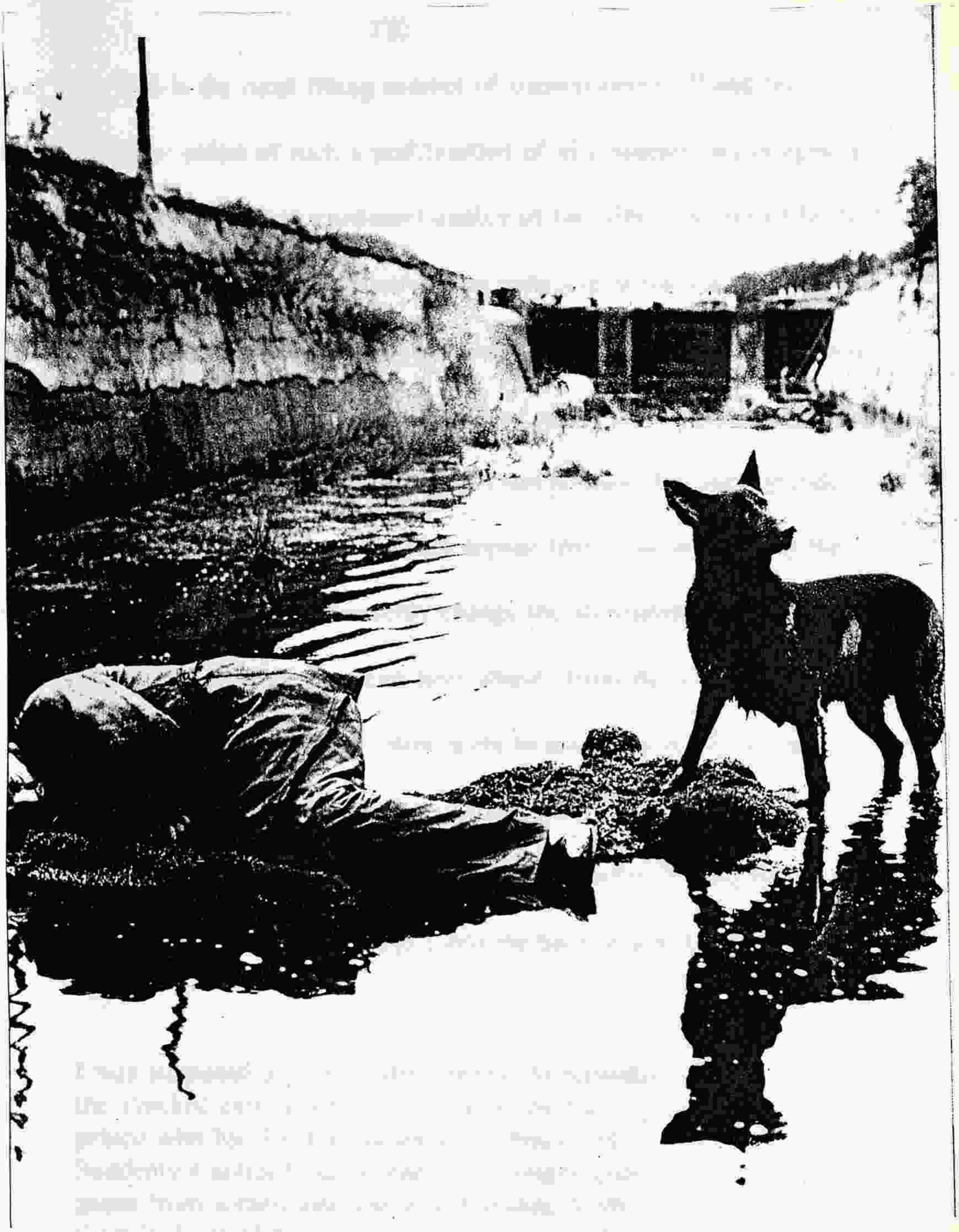
[40] Cited in Ciment et Schnitzer, p.10.

Dogs have a limited, though not unimportant role in Tarkovsky, and are confined mainly to two of his films: Stalker and Nostalgia. The large, black Alsatian dog that appears from nowhere, to accompany the Stalker and his companions to the Room, is similar to Domenico's Alsatian, which in a like manner accompanies his master and Gorchakov throughout their earthly ordeals, emerging both at Domenico's death by self-immolation, and in the transfigured reality (the roofless church) which follows Gorchakov's death. In this context and given Tarkovsky's view that dogs were the most 'humanized'[41] of all animals, it is likely that the dog in these two films can be taken as a guide, a Charon, whose function is to lead humans from the realm of reality, across the Styx to the 'more real' world.

Birds appear to play a more heterogeneous role, having both a transcendental and symbolic quality in Tarkovskian cinema, as well as being the dispassionate observers (like horses) of humans. We hear the sound of the cuckoo in Ivan's Childhood, Solaris, Mirror, Stalker and Nostalgia; of nightingales in Andrei Rublev and Mirror; we see geese and a swan in Andrei Rublev, a goldfinch in Mirror and cocks in Ivan's Childhood and Mirror. As Joseph Henderson has

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[41] One has to bear in mind Tarkovsky's great attachment to his own dog, 'Dakus' (also a black Alsatian), whose photograph the director carried everywhere, and whose apparent 'understanding' of humans was a matter of curiosity for Tarkovsky. He wrote: 'Perhaps I would like to be an animal that would cause the least possible evil. Our dog, Dakus, is very 'humanized', he understands words and feels emotions that are genuinely human. I am afraid that this causes the dog some suffering. When I had to leave Russia he remained motionless, and refused to look at me again'. Cited in Hervé Guibert, 'Le noir coloris de la nostalgie: entretien avec Andreï Tarkovski à propos de son film *Nostalgie*', Le Monde, 12 May 1983, p.13.



43. The dog as 'Charon', in Stalker.

pointed out, 'The bird is the most fitting symbol of transcendence',[42] and the immediate, self-evident effect of such a proliferation of bird sounds and images is to deepen the 'other-worldly', transcendental quality of the film. The use of birds in this manner, often in slow-motion sequences, is particularly ingenious in Mirror, where a bird lands on a boy's head, a man on his death bed throws a bird into the air, a cock comes crashing through a pane of glass; and in Stalker, where a flock of birds greets the three travellers as they emerge from the 'meat-grinder' (the tunnel). In Andrei Rublev the geese which appear from nowhere during the sacking of Vladimir completely and suddenly change the atmosphere of this sequence. As the camera surveys the scene from above, from the vantage point of the geese, the horrific events unfolding below seem to acquire a wider, cosmic meaning: in a single shot man's inhumanity is juxtaposed with an image of nature's harmony and eternity. Tarkovsky's cameraman, Vadim Yusov, has provided the following, most valuable insight into the background to this scene:

> I was supposed to film in slow-motion to accentuate the shocked expression on the face of the traitor prince who had led the enemy to his homeland ... Suddenly I noticed that Andrei had brought some geese from somewhere and was intending to throw them in front of the camera. But why, and where did the geese come from? This wasn't according to the rules - we hadn't planned this. I protested: after all, I knew that these tame fowl could not fly; they could only flap their wings helplessly, creating chaos in the shot. But we never argued on the set. I filmed while Andrei threw the geese ... On screen the geese looked extraordinarily inelegant and helpless - an effect emphasized by the slow-motion. A touching, plaintive

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[42] Joseph L. Henderson, 'Ancient Myths and Modern Man', in Man and his Symbols, pp.95-156 (p.147).

sight.

Why do I recall this rather unimportant event out of thousands of episodes? I don't know. Just as Andrei could not explain why he wanted the geese in the shot, but only repeated that they were 'necessary'. I can see them before me, falling in slow motion, helpless and realistic but transfigured [*preobrazhennye*] by art.[43]

Yusov, perhaps unintentionally, has pointed to one of the most persistent features of Tarkovskian cinema: a tendency to spiritualize natural beauty. Solov'ev, interestingly, considered this task to be one of the three essential aims of all art, though he saw it as the peculiar preoccupation of Russian artists. Birds have been adopted by Tarkovsky as signposts to other aspects of Russian folk or literary culture: the cock which smashes through a window in Mirror suggests the similar imagery of Nabokov's Pale Fire (the opening lines), described by the author as an 'eschatological shock';[44] when the dying narrator of Mirror throws a bird into the air, he is evoking an ancient Russian peasant custom, whereby swans or small birds - seen as the intermediaries of the gods of nature - were brought in for the cure of a dying man when a 'wonder-working' icon had failed.[45] Finally, the call of the nightingale, which presages both Rublev's encounter with the pagan 'witch' ('this is the night of love', she reminds him) and the love scene with Maria Ivanovna and Arsenii Aleksandrovich (Mirror) recalls Solov'ev's own use of the nightingale's song as a metaphor of love and expression of sexual attraction. 'That song is the transfiguration of the sexual instinct, its liberation from crude

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[43] Vadim Yusov, 'Slovo o druge', in O Tarkovskom, pp.67-76 (p.76).

[44] Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire (London, 1985), p.62.

[45] See Billington, pp.403-404.

physiological fact - it is the animal sex instinct embodying in itself *the idea of love'*.[46]

There remains one further animal-form whose metaphorical use appears to be confined to a single Tarkovsky film: the ant. Ants feature in Andrei Rublev, in the crucially important episode featuring the debate between Rublev and Theophanes the Greek: 'The Passion According to Andrei'. The argument opposes Theophanes' cynical 'Grand Inquisitorial' worldview, with Rublev's youthful optimism and love for 'the people'. 'Free will in a man only means he will commit some nastiness or other', the Greek lectures Rublev. 'The Last Judgement is nigh, and then we shall all burn like candles'. Theophanes 'serves God and not the people', and maintains that if Christ returned to Earth 'he would only be crucified once more'. Following the emotive crucifixion scene of a Russian peasant Christ figure, which is Rublev's response to Theophanes' charge, the action reverts to the forest: Theophanes is sitting on a log, his bare legs covered in a myriad of swarming ants; from time to time, trying to dislodge some of the insects, he makes an ineffectual gesture with a stick. In this context, the tie between Theophanes and the anthill has clear echoes of Dostoevsky, in whose works the image of the 'human anthill' was only one manifestation of the writer's widespread fascination with the insect world as a rich source of metaphor.[47]

Thus, both Theophanes and Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor (from The Brothers

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[46] 'Krasota v prirode', p.41.

[47] On the subject of insect imagery in Dostoevsky, particularly in Notes from the Underground, The Possessed and The Brothers Karamazov, see R.E. Matlaw, 'Recurrent Imagery in Dostoevsky', Harvard Slavic Studies, 3 (1957), 201-225.

Karamazov) regard free will as an impediment to man's attainment of happiness, cooperation and community: far better the imposed certainties of the anthill in which anarchic freedom of choice is subordinated to the harmonious and rigid organization of individuals towards the goal of collective happiness. The image of the human anthill, attacked so vociferously by Dostoevsky, was also important to Tolstoy, who however saw the task of achieving 'community' (*obshchestvennost'*) in less negative terms. The ant for Tolstoy is a being whose knowledge, in Gustafson's words: 'is not divided by the darkened urges of a reasoning mind. The ants and the bees yield to their inner law of life and attain "cooperation, communism, community". [...] Human beings [on the other hand] listen to their darkened reason and find themselves in discord'.[48] Tolstoy's youthful association with the 'Ant Brotherhood' (*muraveinoe bratstvo*) was in part an idealistic attempt to realize such a fraternity.

This dichotomy, presented by the two great writers in terms of insect metaphors, has of course a far wider resonance in Russian culture, revealing a long-standing and fundamental debate on the merits of personal freedom against the collective good: a polemic which obsessed Tarkovsky throughout his adult life. In his own image of the anthill, however, the director effectively posits the case for individual responsibility: the salvation of others is *a priori* contingent upon saving oneself. Tarkovsky wrote in his diaries:

> Saving oneself, one can ensure the salvation of

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[48] Gustafson, p.399.

everyone. In a spiritual sense, of course.
Collective efforts are fruitless. As humans we are deprived of the instinct of self-preservation [of our species] such as ants and bees have. However, in return we are given an immortal soul - a soul which mankind has spat upon with malicious glee. We have no instinct that can save us: such an absence is destroying us. Yet we spit on our moral and spiritual foundations.[49]

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TREES

Trees, standing alone or in clumps or woods, are a pervasive presence in Tarkovsky and play a not insignificant role in five of his seven main features. Ivan plays under a tree, in the opening sequence of Ivan's Childhood: the camera slowly mounts the tree to reveal the boy beyond, chasing a butterfly in the sunlit forest. In the final minute of the film, in Ivan's final dream, a sinister black tree enters the frame, again followed by a shot of Ivan running on a beach. During the film darkened trees have an equally unpleasant association: they carry the ropes on which are hung the corpses of the two Russian scouts, Lyakhov and Morozov. Trees, on the other hand, also feature in one of the most beautiful images of Ivan's Childhood: the birch-grove scene involving Misha and Kholin. Trees are prominent in Andrei Rublev, but conspicuously present in 'The Bell' episode where Boriska, digging the massive pit in preparation for the casting, comes across a large root; pulling the root it leads the boy to a tree which the camera

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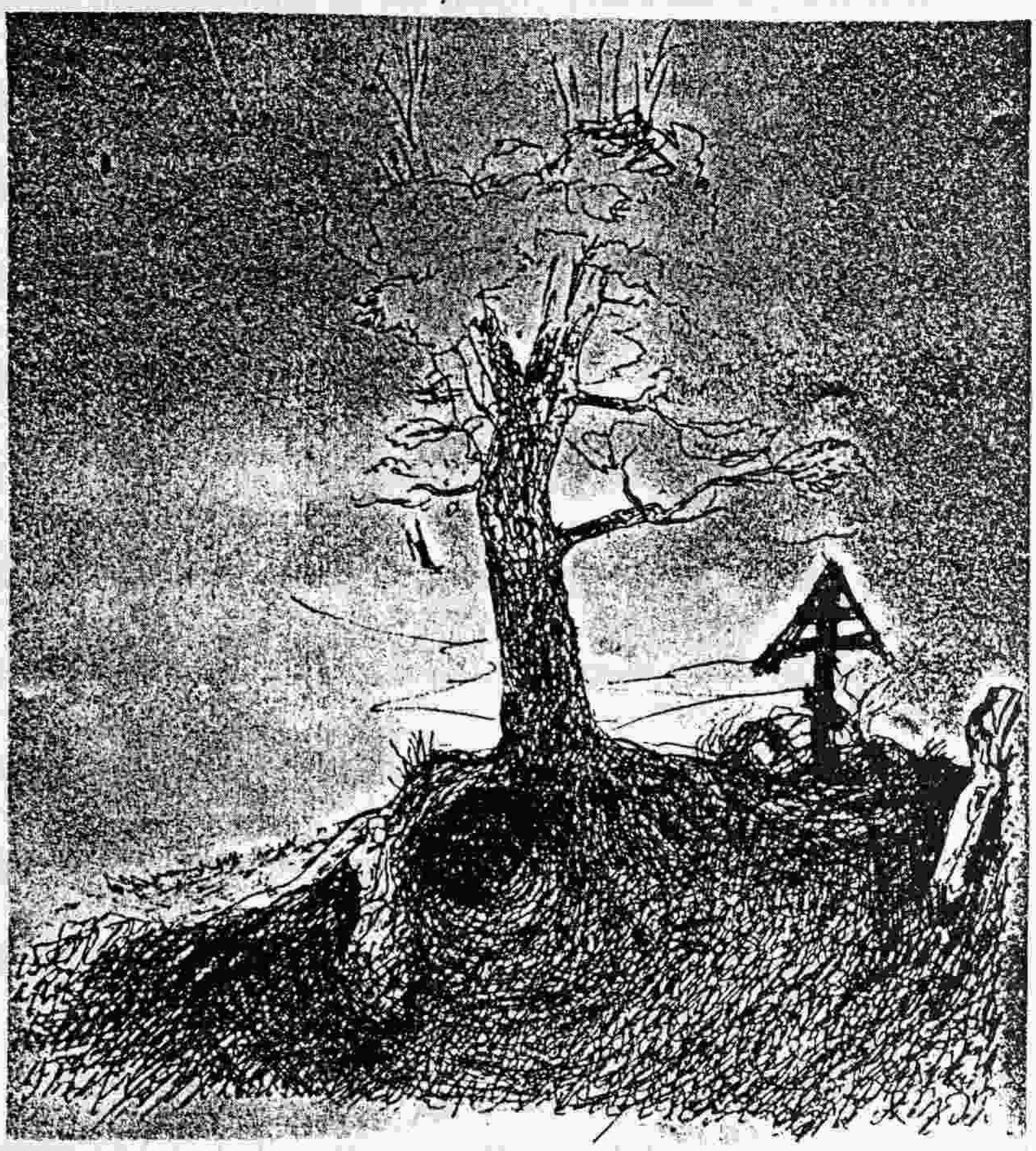
[49] Andrei Tarkovsky, 'Iz dnevnika', Kontinent, 57 (1988), 174-181 (p.180).

then slowly ascends, eventually swivelling round to focus on the surprised Boriska from the vantage point of the tree's crown. The prevalence of the forest motif in Mirror was suggested in the previous chapter; however, in Solaris, Mirror and Sacrifice individual trees are also important, in each case their appearance linked in some form to a painting. In the library of the space-station, Solaris, the camera dwells on the tree which stands conspicuously in the foreground of Brueghel's 'Hunters in the Snow'; in Mirror the same painting is evoked by the snowy landscape in which a bird, flying down from a tree which is reproduced faithfully from the painting, alights on a boy's head. In Sacrifice, a lengthy take of Leonardo's 'Adoration of the Magi' opens the film, and the painting later reappears at a critical juncture. The image of the Virgin Mary, sitting under a tree which the camera ascends in an already familiar manner, with the Christ child on her knees, will be imitated by Alexander, who adopts the same pose with his son Little Man in the opening scene of Sacrifice. Trees feature in two other important ways in Tarkovsky's final film: in the planting by Alexander and his son of the dried-up tree, to which Little Man returns at the end of the film in fulfillment of his father's injunction to water the tree each day; and in the form of the parable about the monk, Pavva, which provided the inspiration for the tree-planting ritual, and which Tarkovsky himself described as the 'most important [episode] of my whole career'.[50]

The citation of trees in such a wide range of contexts would seem to defy

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[50] Andrei Tarkovski, Le temps scellé, translated by Anne Kichilov and Charles de Brantes (Paris 1989), p.210.



44. One of Tarkovsky's last drawings (1986).

a single integral symbolic interpretation of the motif. Trees are a persistent motif in the poetry of Arsenii Tarkovsky, and clearly their powerful aesthetic appeal, as well as their great symbolic importance in Christian mythology generally, was not lost on Tarkovsky.[51] The two trees of paradise, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Reason (or of 'knowledge of good and evil') are familiar from Genesis 2. 9 and Revelation 22. 2-14. 'The first gives man immortality, the second, death'.[52] The likelihood that biblical symbolism exerted an influence on the director's reading of the tree motif has been underlined by Salynsky, in his own study of mythological elements in Tarkovsky. For Salynsky, the context in which trees appear in Tarkovsky's films suggest that their primary function is as a symbol of *unity* between life and death, and between the contingent and underground worlds:

> Life begins and ends like the growth of a tree, and through sacrifice culminates in immortality. Ivan [Ivan's Childhood] sees the first sunlit tree in a dream, and wakes up in the midst of war. The final tree (of death) also grows in the world of visions. [...]
>
> There is only one tree in which is united life and death and which has endured throughout the history of art as a symbol of the unity of good and evil, and as a symbol of sacrifice: the Tree of Life.[53]

As Salynsky has observed, the tree as a symbol of sacrifice is not unknown in

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[51] It may be significant that one of Tarkovsky's last drawings contains the image of a tree, under which stands a lone Orthodox cross. This image may have been influenced by the painting by Caspar David Friedrich entitled 'Crucifix in Mountain Scenery' (1807).

[52] George P. Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind: The Middle Ages - The 13th to the 15th Centuries (Harvard, 1966), p.118.

[53] Salynsky, p.86.

the Christian tradition: the Tree of Life is commonly associated with the cross on which Christ sacrificied himself to save mankind; indeed, in some Russian icons and medieval paintings Christ is actually depicted crucified on the Tree of Life. In Tarkovsky's final film, in which the theme of sacrifice is strongest, clearly the extent and variety of the tree motif carries suggestions of this ancient symbolism. Similarly, the concept of immortality which, according to the mythology surrounding the Tree of Life, can only be achieved by sacrifice, is linked in the same film to the tree motif: sitting under a pine in the opening shots of Sacrifice Alexander tells his son, 'Don't be afraid... there is no such thing as death'.[54]

Trees, then, can be taken as a convenient means of underlining and enriching the familiar Tarkovskian theme of sacrifice; of deepening the complex two-world duality of the films; and of hinting at a theme which is dealt with more explicitly by other means throughout Tarkovsky's oeuvre: immortality. In Sacrifice, though, the motif contains one further nuance: the parable of the dried-up tree, the most explicit metaphor in Tarkovsky of the need for faith,is a reference to the ancient Russian custom of planting dry birch twigs at Pentecost in the hope that, after copious watering, they will take root and grow into full-sized trees.[55] It is no surprise that the faith of Alexander's son (he executes his father's

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[54] Andrej Tarkovskij, Le Sacrifice, edited by L. Schirmer (Munich, 1987), p.58 (scenario of film).

[55] This practice is alluded to by Levin in Anna Karenina, in the course of his discussion with Koznyshev: 'Our self-government and all that reminds me of the little birch branches we stick in the ground on Trinity Sunday to resemble a copse... I can't for the life of me water those birch branches or believe in them'. Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, xviii, p.261. Tolstoi himself is buried in a location known as 'the place of the green stick'.



45. The 'Tree of Life', in Sacrifice.

orders to water the dried-up tree) is finally rewarded at the foot of a tree - position *par excellence* of prayer in Tarkovsky. It is here that Little Man recovers his voice, and utters the few simple words, though containing great meaning for Tarkovsky, that bring Sacrifice to a close: 'In the beginning was the Word ... but why, Father?'[56]

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In conclusion, one can say that motifs taken from the natural world have played a central role in the development of Tarkovsky's film language. The motifs of nature, as well as being an integral element of Tarkovsky's aesthetic and a principal means by which to achieve 'transcendental style', are also a profoundly expressive indicator of the director's indebtedness to Russia's folk, mythological and spiritual heritage. All true art, Tarkovsky believed, had of necessity a relationship with the natural world: it was precisely the absence of such a link, of the notion that a work of art need not refer outside itself for meaning, that Tarkovsky found most objectionable in, for instance, the doctrine of Modernism. For Tarkovsky one of the tragedies of modern life is that the great growth in scientific understanding has been accompanied by an equally spectacular process of de-spiritualization and of dehumanization, and of alienation from the symbols and rituals that held profound psychic significance for primitive societies. Carl Jung

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[56] Le Sacrifice, p.174.

has written eloquently on the loss of such motifs and symbols, and its effect on modern man:

> [Natural phenomena] have slowly lost their symbolic implications. Thunder is no longer the voice of an angry god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of a man, no snake the embodiment of wisdom, no mountain cave the home of a great demon. No voices now speak to man from stones, plants and animals, nor does he speak to them believing they can hear. His contact with nature has gone, and with it has gone the profound emotional energy that this symbolic connection supplied.[57]

The philosophical rejection of nature, and the aesthetic nihilism inherent in much of modern artistic currents was anathema to Tarkovsky. He turned, instead, to the rich imagery of a (predominantly Eastern) Christian tradition, to emblems possessed of a complexity of meaning that defies any single, simplistic interpretation. The multifariousness of the motifs of nature - the earth, water, fire, animals and plants - in itself gives rise to a degree of speculation, of ambiguity that Tarkovsky himself considered essential to serious art. Never in doubt, however, is the commitment to a cultural tradition that Tarkovsky always conceded would be the final arbiter of all of his deliberations. He wrote:

> In all my pictures the theme of roots was always of great importance: links with family house, childhood, country, Earth. I always felt it important to establish that I belong to a particular tradition, culture, circle

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[57] Carl Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', in Man and his Symbols, pp.1-94 (p.85).

of people or ideas.[58]

In this context, the motifs of Mother Nature can be considered central to Tarkovsky's purpose of working within defined cultural parameters towards the articulation, through art, of the Absolute.

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[58] Sculpting in Time, p.193.

Conclusion

'I don't doubt that whether I am filming in Africa or China, it will be clear that the film is made by a Russian artist'.[1]

Andrei Tarkovsky

The central contention of this dissertation has been that the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky is informed by ethical, philosophical and aesthetic concerns that have long dominated Russian culture. The starting point has been Tarkovsky's own assertion that his art represents 'a continuation of the classic Russian cultural tradition'; a verification of this statement represents the primary aim of the thesis. To those familiar with Tarkovsky's work, any affirmation of the 'Russianness' of his aesthetic will seem self-evident; yet there is a perception among many of Tarkovsky's admirers and critics, in Russia and elsewhere, that many aspects of his films betray an indebtedness to (and fundamental empathy for) Western culture.[2]

This polemic is occasionally presented in terms of the debate between the

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[1] Cited in Angus MacKinnon, 'Red Tape', Time Out, 729 (1984), 20-22 (p.21).

[2] To judge by the many informal discussions I have had with Russian viewers of Tarkovsky's films this perception is not confined to film critics. Moreover, a survey commissioned for the 'International Tarkovsky Symposium', held in Moscow in 1989, found that the majority of an arbitrary sample of Russian viewers questioned considered Tarkovsky's films to be 'more Western in spirit than Russian'. These and other findings from the survey are available in the (unpublished) conference handbook: Materialy k mezhdunarodnym 'chteniyam' posvyashchennym Andreyu Tarkovskomu, compiled and edited by P. Volkova (Moscow, 1989).

'Westernizers' (*Zapadniki*) and the Slavophiles (*Slavyanofily*) that took place in the 1840s. Thus, the frequent quotations from Western music, painting and literature, as well as the director's decision to settle in Western Europe, are taken as sympathy for the 'Westernizer' outlook. Yet this is to betray a basic misunderstanding of the historical debate: both 'Westernizers' and 'Slavophiles' grew out of contemporary European Romantic idealism, and both sought to borrow Western ideas without Western practices. Tarkovsky in fact is closer to the 'Slavophile' worldview in many important respects, including his tendency to idealize Russian history, as well as his avowal of the principles of *sobornost'* (communality) and *narodnost'* ('the spirit of the people'). More importantly, Tarkovsky also shares the Slavophile enthusiasm for German Romanticism (in both literature and painting),[3] which viewed the whole of history as a contest between spiritual and material forces. Russian poets sympathetic to this attitude (Tyutchev, for instance, whose poetry features in Stalker) saw the struggle in terms of opposition between *cosmos*, or the all-unity of nature, and *chaos*, the main principle of the carnal world. Later, such themes would also be reflected in the poetry and philosophy of Vladimir Solov'ev.

Tarkovsky, of course, was not only seduced by but also borrowed from many of the great pillars of Western culture, including Shakespeare's Hamlet, Dante's Divine Comedy, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Proust's In Search of Time Lost, the prose of Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Faulkner and Thoreau; the music of

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[3] Examples of this attitude are to be found Tarkovsky's regard for (and borrowings from) the stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann, and the painting of Caspar David Friedrich.

Bach; the painting of Bosch, Brueghel and Leonardo; and the cinema of Bresson, Bunuel and Bergman. However, it is misleading to construe this reverence for individual artists in terms of empathy for the general direction and philosophy of Western art,[4] or in terms of support for the specific worldview of the Westernizers. In common with that of many Russian artists, Tarkovsky's work manifests the influence of both the East and the West. Moreover (and this is an equally Russian proclivity) Tarkovsky's choice of Western art often underlines the essential 'Russianness' of his sensibility. One is again reminded of Vasilii Rozanov's observation (cited in Chapter Three) that the tendency of Russian artists to immerse themselves in Western works allows them to affirm certain 'Russian qualities of soul': they may acquire the external form of the foreign work of art, but ultimately come to 'exert a mysterious influence over that which they give themselves over to'.[5]

Hamlet is illustrative of this phenomenon. Tarkovsky staged the play for the 1975/76 season in Moscow,[6] and also cherished the idea of producing a film

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[4] One has to see Tarkovsky's admiration for specific works of non-Russian art in terms of his overall incomprehension of (and even distaste for) what he regarded as 'Western attitudes', as well as of general humanizing tendencies in Western history and culture. His critical writings are replete in comments of the following nature: 'The situation in the West gives us ample food for thought. Incontrovertible democratic freedoms exist side by side with a monstrous and self-evident spiritual crisis affecting 'free' citizens. Why, despite the freedom of the individual, does the conflict between the person and society exist here [in the West] in such an acute form?' Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1988), p.222.

[5] See page 234.

[6] Tarkovsky's Hamlet was first performed at the Teatr imeni Leninskogo komsomola, Moscow, in December 1975, and represents one of his few excursions into the world

version. Hamlet has always had a powerful resonance in Russian culture and remains, as Billington has observed, 'a source of unique fascination for modern Russian thought'.[7] Tarkovsky's passion for Hamlet (aspects of the play are reflected in speeches by the Stalker, Alexander and others) reflects a characteristic Russian preoccupation with the 'accursed questions', of which the famous monologue 'To be, or not to be' is held to be the most personal and metaphysical. This reasoning can be extended to other Western works of art that have informed Tarkovsky's art: Don Quixote (referred to directly in Solaris, but commanding a wider significance in Tarkovsky),[8] which was described by Dostoevsky as 'the last and greatest word of human thought',[9] had an extraordinary impact on nineteenth-century Russian literature and criticism.[10] The influence of The Divine Comedy (briefly cited in Mirror and referred to in Sculpting in Time) on Russian thought is also significant; and Florovsky has pointed to the exceptional

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of theatrical production. The reviews were generally unfavourable. See O. Remez, 'Gamlet na vse vremena', Izvestiya, 16 April 1989, p.4; and V. Sedov, 'Tarkovsky i shekspirovskii "Gamlet",' in Mir i fil'my Andreya Tarkovskogo, edited by A. M. Sandler (Moscow, 1991), pp.295-304.

[7] James H. Billington, The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (London, 1966), p.353. See also the section entitled 'The "Hamlet" Question', pp.351-358.

[8] Referring, for instance, to Sacrifice Tarkovsky wrote: 'In it there is something of Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, but also of Cervantes' Quixote'. Cited in Nicole Zand, 'Une villa tchékhovienne en Suède', Le Monde, 1 June 1985, p.15. Cervantes is discussed further in Sculpting in Time, pp.51-53.

[9] From his Diary of a Writer (Dnevnik pisatelya); see Fedor M. Dostoevsky, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 30 vols (Leningrad, 1981), xxii, p.92.

[10] On this subject see L. Turkevich, Cervantes in Russia (Princeton, 1950).

importance Dante may have for Vladimir Solov'ev.[11] Similarly, in Thoreau's Walden, in the painting of Brueghel, Dürer and Bosch, and in Bach Tarkovsky perceived spiritual motivations (often associated with such themes as nature mysticism and the apocalypse) that have a residual strength in Russian culture. It is possible, but not profitable, to pursue this line of argument into other areas; the conclusion remains unchanged: the many quotations from Western art in Tarkovsky's films do not detract from, and may even enhance, the 'Russianness' of his aesthetic.

The main focus of this dissertation, however, has been the examination of a small (though important) group of themes in Tarkovsky's work, and how these themes relate to specific antecedents in Russian culture. The division of the thesis, therefore, has been thematic, with each of the five main chapters devoted to one main subject area. This has not excluded (where appropriate) at least partial consideration of other themes and motifs. Let us then briefly recapitulate the dominant arguments and conclusions.

Chapter One is a discussion of Tarkovsky's aesthetic in terms of the critical method that has become known as 'transcendental style'. The aim of the chapter, and its main relevance to the thesis as a whole, lies in its central contention that

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[11] George Florovsky, 'Vladimir Soloviev and Dante: The Problem of Christian Empire', in For Roman Jacobson: Essays on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday (The Hague, 1956), pp.152-160. See also Pamela Davidson, The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov: A Russian Symbolist's Perception of Dante (Cambridge, 1989).

Tarkovsky's form, if it is to be considered against any external, critical framework, can most legitimately be defined in terms of 'transcendental style'. The argument contains two basic aspects: the primary motivation of the 'transcendental' filmmaker is the expression of his own (national) cultural and religious priorities; and the cinematic form of these directors (though each may have arrived at similar conclusions separately) evinces a common 'style'. The chapter delineates the three stages of 'transcendental style': 'the everyday', 'disparity' and 'stasis', and suggests how Tarkovsky's 'style' can be accommodated within this framework. Certain aspects of this critical method, it can be claimed, have a particular relevance to the Russian filmmaker, including the central importance of the 'fool in Christ' motif to 'disparity', and the confluence between the function and form of 'stasis' and that of icon painting. The chapter concludes that 'transcendental style' provides a useful analytical method within which to appraise Tarkovsky's cinematic form, notwithstanding certain inconsistencies. Quite crucially, the method also concedes the dominance of the respective cultural traditions to 'transcendental' filmmakers, and recognizes that (contingent upon local priorities) variations within the method will occur.

Chapter Two points to tangible parallels between Tarkovsky's film style and the art of icon painting. The first section of the chapter is devoted to a brief discussion of the image in Russian culture generally, and more specifically to aspects of icon painting that may have relevance to Tarkovsky. The bulk of the chapter is a consideration of Tarkovsky's films mainly in terms of three distinct aspects of icon painting: contemplation, the concept of transfiguration and

tradition. All of these conditions, it is suggested, are germane to Tarkovsky's aesthetic convictions and to many individual images and sequences in his films. Other, technical, correspondences between iconography and film are proposed; and the wider importance of generic iconic qualities (beauty, transfigured reality) to such writers as Dostoevsky and Solov'ev is cited as further evidence both of the intrinsicality of these attributes to Russian spiritual culture and to Tarkovskian cinema.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the importance of painting to Tarkovsky's aesthetic, and how far this demonstrates the 'Russianness' of his sensibility. The chapter contains the important caveat (also applicable to Chapter Two) that film is so intrinsically different from either iconography and painting that only tentative parallels can be attempted. Nevertheless, Tarkovsky's great love of painting, and his many direct and indirect quotations of individual canvasses, suggests that painting has played an exceptionally important role in the development of his film-language. The chapter considers a variety of painting genres and assesses the extent to which each is compatible with the primary argument of this dissertation. Thus, early Italian art is compared to icon painting; Tarkovsky's regard for Leonardo reflects a characteristic attitude of Russian religious philosophers, who similarly perceive Leonardo's work as exceptional to 'Renaissance rationalism'. In the paintings of Brueghel, Bosch, Dürer and the Van Eycks Tarkovsky found themes that have a residual strength in Russian culture: the apocalypse, sainthood, faith and nature mysticism. In the Nietzschean 'metaphysical void', in the exaltation of the 'magic object', in the 'surrealistic' transposition of reality, and

in other aspects of the painting of the painting of Chirico and Chagall (among others), Tarkovsky perceived equally compelling motivations. The chapter concludes that Tarkovsky's views on (and quotations from) such paintings can be taken as a vindication of his claim to represent 'a continuation of the classic Russian cultural tradition'.

Chapter Four considers the seminal importance of nature imagery in Tarkovsky, and how representative this is of Russian cosmology (pagan and Christian), in which nature is accorded a privileged position. The chapter begins with a general assessment of the importance of nature mysticism in Russia, and considers various manifestations of nature worship in the pre-Christian period. The considerable influence of Patristic thought on Russian Orthodox writings and ritual, and the importance of nature to the mystical teachings of Solov'ev, Florensky and Bulgakov, and to the prose of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi, is the main focus of the first section of the chapter. Section Two points to evidence of this tradition in precise elements of Tarkovsky's aesthetic. There is a brief discussion of the director's knowledge of, and affinity with, many of the views of such artists and philosophers. The remainder of the chapter, considering each film in turn, examines the image of nature in Tarkovsky, and points to many phenomena that have been highlighted in Section One: the motifs of 'Mother Earth', the forest, ditheism and 'all-unity'. The chapter concludes that Tarkovsky was not only acutely sensitive to what he perceived to be the growing disintegration, with profound psychic and emotional consequences, of mankind's proper relationship to nature, but was also greatly influenced by the prevailing image of a 'nature

transfigured' that pervades Russian culture.

Chapter Five is an appraisal of individual motifs (all taken from the natural world) that appear to possess great meaning for Tarkovsky. The principal motifs considered are: the earth, water, fire, and trees, as well as specific animals and birds. The overall importance (and symbolism) that such emblems of nature may have in the director's conception, and how this relates to Russian culture generally, forms the bulk of the chapter. Thus, the preponderance of earth imagery in Tarkovsky is linked, for instance, to the indigenous 'cult of Mother Earth'. Water and rain, it is suggested, are analogous to the water imagery in Russian poetry (Solov'ev and Pasternak, for instance), and are also accorded benedictory qualities in the Russian tradition. Fire may be associated with violence, and with the themes of sacrifice, the apocalypse and spiritual enlightenment. Animals are generally representative of a state of prelapsarian harmony and simplicity. They also feature in the writings of such philosophers as Solov'ev (particularly in his 'Beauty in Nature'). Tarkovsky considered horses to be 'indicative of Russian life'; bird imagery in his films has clear associations with peasant customs and folklore, and with Russian literature; and the ant motif may point to the similarly evocative imagery of the human anthill in Dostoevsky. The tree or forest motif, which also has forceful antecedents in Russian literature and in Russian culture generally, occurs frequently in Tarkovsky, and may be associated with the themes of faith and sacrifice. The chapter concludes that such motifs, by underlining Tarkovsky's indebtedness to a Russian folk and mythological heritage, vindicate the central argument of the thesis.

The above configuration of chapters makes no claim to completeness in terms of the evidence that might be cited in support of the 'Russianness' of Tarkovsky's aesthetic. One can point to other important themes and motifs that are apposite to the main argument, but which fall outside the specific subject areas of the chapters. Similarly, there are interesting and meaningful aspects of Tarkovsky's work that are entirely excluded from the field of inquiry of this thesis. In the first of these categories one might place the 'Father and Son' theme. The symbolic search of son for father has an important resonance in Russia, and is associated with the mutual incompatibility or 'war of the generations' dramatized by Turgenev in his famous novel Fathers and Sons. The theme also appears to function on this primary level in such films as Mirror, which is not only an account of Tarkovsky's personal, problematic relationship with his father, but may also be an allusion to the equally difficult attitude of the director's generation to its spiritual forefathers.[12] In Tarkovsky, however, the theme also assumes a spiritual dimension, which is most obviously exemplified by the relationship of Rublev and Boriska, the young bell-maker. In the final sequence of Andrei Rublev the 'spiritual father' (Rublev) and 'spiritual son' (Boriska) vow to unite their arts (image and sound), symbolically evoking the third person of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit. The suggestiveness of this image is underlined by the dramatic colour shot of Rublev's icon 'The Old Testament Trinity' which follows. It is likely that

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[12] The theme of fatherhood appeared in Tarkovsky's work at almost precisely the same time it emerged in the poetry of, for instance, Voznesensky. As Turovskaya has observed, 'The motif was typical of a whole generation'. Maya Turovskaya, Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry, edited by Ian Christie (London, 1989), p.161.

Tarkovsky here is referring to the Orthodox doctrine of *perichoresis*,[13] which stresses that in the historical world unity between Father (image) and Son (sound) is the prerequisite of the incarnation of the Spirit. As Bishop Kallistos has written: 'The final end of the spiritual Way is that we humans should also become part of this Trinitarian coinherence or *perichoresis*, being wholly taken up into the circle of love that exists within God'.[14]

Other pertinent Tarkovskian themes have been omitted: the motif of 'suffering Russia' and the related theme of the 'meaning of (Russian) history'; the theme of the mother; the theme of childhood and of reminiscences of childhood;[15] the theme of Russian messianism and the 'universality' of the 'Russian Idea';[16] and the theme of apocalypticism, with its many antecedents in Russian history and

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[13] See Richard Kearney's article, 'Mirrors of History: An Analysis of the Films of Eisenstein and Tarkovsky', Film Directions, 3 (1978), 4-7; the importance of this theme to Tarkovsky is considered in a Trinitarian context in Georgii Pomerants, 'Zrimaya svyatost',' Iskusstvo kino, 10 (1989), 32-39.

[14] Bishop Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way (Oxford, 1987), p.34.

[15] Tarkovsky has acknowledged the influence of Russian literature on this important aspect of his work. He wrote: 'There exists a very strong tradition in Russian literature, based on memories of childhood and adolescence, of achieving redemption through attempting to come to terms with one's past'. Cited in Antoine de Baecque, 'Portrait d'un cineaste en moine poete: entretien avec Andrei Tarkovski', in Andrei Tarkovski, edited by Antoine de Baecque (Paris, 1989), pp.106-111 (p.109).

[16] See Bàlint Andràs Kovàcs and Akos Szilàgyi, Les Mondes d'Andreï Tarkovski (Lausanne, 1987), pp.86-87. In common with Vladimir Solov'ev Tarkovsky towards the end of his life displayed an increasing interest in ecumenicalism, and became an active participant in the ecumenical Catholic 'Communion et Libération' movement. This is discussed in Guy Gauthier, Andrei Tarkovski (Paris, 1988), p.119; and more fleetingly in the journals La Croix, 3 December 1986, and Libération, 30 December 1986.

culture.[17]

As suggested above, other aspects of Tarkovsky's aesthetic, unrelated to this thesis, may provide equally valid points of departure for the interested viewer or critic. A detailed, comparative study of the films of Tarkovsky and Dovzhenko, Bresson, Bergman, Kurosawa or Pasolini would undoubtedly reveal many valuable and, perhaps, unexpected similitudes. Tarkovsky's views on certain technical aspects of filmmaking, set out prolifically in his Lektsii po kinorezhissure, are also deserving of greater consideration than has been possible in Chapter One. An examination of the influence of non-Russian literature on Tarkovsky's aesthetic (Proust, Mann, Hesse, Hoffmann, Faulkner, for instance) might prove fruitful. Nevertheless, it can be argued that a consideration of Tarkovsky's work in the context of a wider Russian cultural tradition provides the most legitimate path to any meaningful elucidation of his art. As Ian Christie has noted:

> [Tarkovsky] needs to be (re)placed in the Russian and Soviet contexts which produced him as an artist and, whatever the slings and arrows of bureaucracy, gave him a vast and appreciative audience throughout much of his truncated career.[18]

In the new atmosphere of openness that has prevailed in Russia since

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[17] One may also include the anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner in this context, as well as the specific 'apocalyptic' imagery of the train, city, horsemen, the colour white, and the practice of self-immolation. Many of these refer to distinct elements in Russian literature and painting of the 'period of apocalypticism' during the first two decades of this century.

[18] Ian Christie, 'Introduction: Tarkovsky in his Time', in Turovskaya, p.xxiii.

Tarkovsky's death in 1986, the publication of articles, books, belated obituaries and film reviews of his work[19] testifies to the veneration in which the director is increasingly held. A major retrospective of Tarkovsky's work, at which all the films were shown, was held at Dom Kino (the headquarters of the Filmmakers' Union) in May 1987, and may have signalled the first important evidence of changing official attitudes. The subsequent 'International Tarkovsky Symposium' (Pervye mezhdunarodnye 'Tarkovskie chteniya'), which was held in Moscow in April 1989, also attracted a large number of overseas scholars and led to the formation of a 'Tarkovsky Society', and to the first award of an annual 'Tarkovsky Prize'.[20]

It is to be hoped that increasing critical and academic interest will not obscure the uncompromising distinctiveness and simplicity of Tarkovsky's message, as well as the themes that he regarded as central to his work: the disruption of harmony in modern life; the despiritualization or spiritual alienation of modern man; the necessity for redemption through self-sacrifice; and the need to relate emotionally to art. The notion that in art, above all, is contained the hope of expressing and defining man's search for the transcendent (and the central, messianic role of Russian art in this regard) is the underlying motivation

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[19] Moreover, in 1987 the All-Union Research Institute of Film Art (VIIK) commissioned an index of non-Russian critical material on Tarkovsky; this is now available as an article by L. Alova, 'Zarubezhnaya pechat' o tvorchestve Tarkovskogo', in Khudozhestvennyi mir sovremennogo fil'ma (Moscow, 1987), pp.27-48.

[20] The first recipient of the 'Tarkovsky Prize' (whose purpose is to encourage young filmmakers) was the animator Yurii Norstein.

throughout Tarkovsky's opus. The artistic image, Tarkovsky avowed, represents the one thing that mankind has created in a spirit of self-sacrifice; and through that image is held out the possibility of restored harmony:

> It seems to me that art is always called to express the absolute freedom of man's spiritual potential. I think art was always man's weapon against the material things which threatened to devour his spirit. It is no accident that in the course of nearly two thousand years of Christianity, art developed for a very long time in the context of religious ideas and goals. Its very existence kept alive in discordant humanity the idea of harmony.[21]

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[21] Sculpting in Time, pp.223-224.

Appendix

Filmography

The credits have been compiled principally from the following sources: Anetta M. Sandler, Mir i fil'my Andreya Tarkovskogo: razmyshleniya, issledovaniya, vospominaniya, pis'ma (Moscow, 1991); Mark Zak, Andrei Tarkovsky: tvorcheskii portret (Moscow, 1988); and Maya Turovskaya, 7½, ili fil'my Andreya Tarkovskogo (Moscow, 1991). Abbreviations used follow the conventions of the British Film Institute's Monthly Film Bulletin: *p. c* - Production Company; *p* - Producer; *p. sup* - Production Supervisor; *p. manager* - Production Manager; *asst. d* - Assistant Director; *sc* - Script; *ph* - Photography; *camera op* - Camera Operator; *ed* - Editor; *a. d* - Art Director; *sp. effects* - Special Effects; *m* - Music; *m. d* - Music Director; *cost* - Costumes; *sd* - Sound; *l. p* - Leading Players.

Section A: Films Directed by Tarkovsky

The Killers (Ubyitsy)

Short film (based on Hemingway's novel) made at VGIK (1956).

There Will Be No Leave Today (Segodnya uvolneniya ne budet)

Short documentary film made at VGIK (1959).

The Steamroller and the Violin (Katok i skripka)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - A. Karetin. *asst. d* - O. Gerts. *sc* - Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsky. *ph* - Vadim Yusov. *ed* - L. Butuzova. *a. d* - Savet Agoyan. *sp. effects* - B. Pluzhnikov, V. Sevost'yanov, A. Rudachenko. *m* - Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *m. d* - E. Khachachurian. *cost* - A. Martinson. *sd* - V. Krachkovsky.

l. p - Igor Fomchenko (Sasha); Vladimir Zamansky (Sergei); Natal'ya Arkhangel'skaya (Girl); Marina Adzhubei (Mother); Yura Brusser, Slava Borisov, Sasha Vitoslavsky, Sasha Il'in, Kolya Kozarev, Gena Klyachkovsky, Igor' Korovikov, Zhenya Fedchenko, Tanya Prokhorova, A. Maksimova, L. Semenova, G. Zhdanova, M. Figner.

VGIK diploma film (1960). *Length* - 46 mins.

Ivan's Childhood (Ivanovo detstvo)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - G. Kuznetsov. *sc* - Mikhail Papava, Vladimir Bogomolov. *ph* - Vadim Yusov. *ed* - G. Natanson. *a. d* - Evgenii Chernyaev. *sp. effects* - V. Sevost'yanov, S. Mukhin. *m* - Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *m. d* - E. Khachachurian. *sd* - E. Zelentsova.

l. p - Kolya Burlyaev (Ivan); Valentin Zubkov (Captain Kholin); Evgenii Zharikov (Lieutenant Galtsev); Stepan Krylov (Corporal Katasonov); Nikolai Grinko (Lt. Col. Gryaznov); Valentina Malyavina (Masha); Irma Tarkovskaya

(Ivan's mother); Dmitrii Milyutenko (Old Man); Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky (Soldier with glasses); Ivan Savkin, V. Marenkov, Vera Miturich.

Production - 1961-62; *release* - 1962. *Length* - 95 mins.

Andrei Rublev (Andrei Rublev)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - T. Ogorodnikova. *sc* - Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, Andrei Tarkovsky. *ph* - Vadim Yusov. *ed* - Ludmila Feiginova. *a. d* - Evgenii Chernyaev. *m* - Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov. *sd* - E. Zelentsova. *Historical advisors* - V. Pashuto, S. Yamshchikov, M. Mertsalova.

l. p - Anatolii Solonitsyn (Andrei Rublev); Ivan Lapikov (Kirill); Nikolai Grinko (Daniel the Black); Nikolai Sergeev (Theophanes the Greek); Irma Raush (Durochka); Kolya Burlyaev (Boriska); Rolan Bykov (*skomorokh*); Yurii Nikulin (Patrikei); Mikhail Kononov (Foma); Yurii Nazarov (Grand Duke/his brother); S. Krylov (bell-founder); Bolot Beishenaliev (Tatar chief); B. Matysik, A. Obukhov, V. Titov, N. Grabbe.

Production - 1964-66; *release* - 1971. *Original length* - 185 mins; *released version* - 146 mins.

Solaris (Solyaris)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - Vyacheslav Tarasov. *sc* - Andrei Tarkovsky, Fridrikh Gorenshtein (based on the novel by Stanislav Lem). *ph* - Vadim Yusov. *ed* - Ludmila Feiginova. *a. d* - Mikhail Romadin. *m* - Eduard Artem'ev, J.S. Bach. *l. p* - Natal'ya Bondarchuk (Hari); Donatas Banionis (Kris Kelvin); Yuri Yarvet (Snaut); Anatolii Solonitsyn (Sartorius); Vladislav Dvorzhetsky (Burton); Nikolai Grinko (Kelvin's father); Sos Sarkisyan (Gibaryan); Tamara Ogorodnikova, O. Barnet, V. Kerdimun, O. Kizilova, T. Malykh, A. Misharin, B. Oganesyan, Y. Semenov, V. Statsinsky, V. Sumenova, G. Teikh.

Production - 1969-72; *release* - 1972. *Length* - 165 mins.

Mirror (Zerkalo)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - E. Vaisberg. *p. manager* - Y. Kushnerev. *asst. d* - Larissa Tarkovskaya, V. Kharchenko, M. Chugunova. *sc* - Andrei Tarkovsky, Aleksandr Misharin. *ph* - Georgii Rerberg. *camera op* - A. Nikolaev, Shtan'ko. *lighting* - V. Gusev. *ed* - Ludmila Feiginova. *a. d* - Nikolai Dvigubsky. *sets* - A. Merkunov. *sp. effects* - Y. Potapov. *m* - Eduard Artem'ev, J.S. Bach, Pergolesi, Purcell. *cost* - N. Fomina. *make-up* - V. Rudina. *sd* - Semen Litvinov. Poetry by Arsenii Tarkovsky.

l. p - Margarita Terekhova (Aleksei's mother/Natal'ya); Filipp Yankovsky (Ignat, aged five); Ignat Danil'tsev (Aleksei/Ignat, aged twelve); Oleg Yankovsky (the father); Nikolai Grinko (man at print-shop); Alla Demidova (Lisa); Yurii Nazarov (military instructor); Anatolii Solonitsyn (Dr Solov'ev/passer-by); Innokentii Smoktunovsky (voice of narrator); Larissa Tarkovskaya (Dr Solov'ev's wife); Tamara Ogorodnikova, Y. Sventikov, T. Reshetnikova, E. del Bosque, L. Korrecher, A. Gutierres, D. Garcia, T. Pames, Teresa del Bosque, Tamara del Bosque.

Production - 1973-74; *release* - 1974. *Length* - 108 mins.

Stalker (Stalker)

p. c - Mosfilm. *p. sup* - Aleksandra Demidova. *p. manager* - Larissa Tarkovskaya. *asst. d* - M. Chugunova, Evgenii Tsymbal. *sc* - Arkadii and Boris Strugatsky, Andrei Tarkovsky (based on the Strugatskys' story Picnic by the Roadside). *ph* - Aleksandr Knyazhinsky. *camera op.* - N. Fudim, S. Naugol'nykh. *asst. camera op* - G. Verkhovsky, S. Zaitsev. *lighting sup* - L. Kazmin. *asst. lighting* - T. Maslennikova. *ed* - Ludmila Feiginova. *asst. ed* - T. Alekseeva, V. Lobkova. *p. designer* - Andrei Tarkovsky. *sets* - A. Merkulov. *artists* - Safiullin, V. Fabrikov. *m* - Eduard Artem'ev, Beethoven, Wagner. *m. d* - E. Khachachurian. *m. sup* - R. Lukina. *cost* - N. Fomina. *make-up* - V. Lvova. *sd* - V. Sharun. Poetry by Arsenii Tarkovsky and Fedor Tyutchev.

l. p - Aleksandr Kaidanovsky (The Stalker); Anatolii Solonitsyn (The Writer); Nikolai Grinko (The Professor/ Scientist); Alisa Freindlikh (The Stalker's wife); Natasha Abramova (The Stalker's daughter); F. Yurna, E. Kostin, R. Rendi.

Production - 1979; *release* - 1979. *Length* - 161 mins.

A Time to Travel (Tempo di Viaggio)

p. c - Genius S.R.L. (Italy). *sc* - Andrei Tarkovsky, Tonino Guerra. *ph* - L. Tovoli. *ed* - F. Letti. *sd* - E. Rondani.

Production - 1982; *release* - 1982. *Length* - 65 mins.

Nostalgia (Nostalghia)

p. c - co-production Opera Film, Rome (for RAI TV) / Sovinfilm (USSR). *exec. p* - Renzo Rossellini, Manolo Bolognini. *p* - Francesco Casati. *p. sup* - Filippo Campus, Valentino Signorenti. *asst. d* - Norman Mozzato, Larissa Tarkovskaya. *sc* - Andrei Tarkovsky, Tonino Guerra. *ph* - G. Lanci. *camera op* - G. de Biasi. *ed* - Erminia Marani, Amedeo Salfa. *asst. ed* - Roberto Puglisi. *a. d* - Andrea Crisanti. *m* - Verdi, Beethoven, Russian folk songs. *m. consultant* - Gino Peguri. *cost* - Lina Nerli Taviani. *sd. rec* - Remono Ugolinelli. *sd. effects* - Massimo Anzellotti.

l.p - Oleg Yankovsky (Andrei Gorchakov); Erland Josephson (Domenico); Domiziana Giordano (Eugenia); Patrizia Terreno (Gorchakov's wife); Laura de Marchi, Delia Boccardo, Milena Vukotic, Alberto Canepa, Raffaele di Mario, Rate Furlan, Livio Galassi, Piero Vida, Elena Magoia.

Production - 1981-83; *release* - 1983. *Length* - 126 mins.

Sacrifice (Zhertvoprinoshenie / Offret)

p. c - co-production Swedish Film Institute (Stockholm) / Argos Film (Paris) / Film Four International (London). *exec. p* - Anna - Lena Wibom. *p* - Katinka Farago. *p. man* - Goran Lindberg. *asst. d* - Kerstin Eriksdotter, Michal Leszczlylowski. *sc* - Andrei Tarkovsky. *ph* - Sven Nykvist. *camera op* - Lasse Karlsson, Dan Myhrman. *ed* - Andrei Tarkovsky, Michal Leszczlylowski. *a. d* - Anna Asp. *sp. effects* - Svenska Stuntgruppen, Lars Hoglund, Lara Palmqvist. *m* - J.S. Bach, W. Shusho, Lapp folk music. *cost* - Inger Pehrsson. *sd* - Owe Svenson, Bosse Persson, Lars Ulander, Christin Lohman, Wikee Peterson-Berger. *interpreter* - Layla Alexander.

l. p - Erland Josephson (Alexander); Susan Fleetwood (Adelaide); Valerie Mairesse (Julia); Allan Edwall (Otto); Gudrun Gisladottir (Maria); Sven Wollter (Victor); Filippa Franzén (Marta); Tommy Kjellqvist (Little Man); Per Kallman, Tommy Nordahl.

Production - 1985-86; *release* - 1986. *Length* - 149 mins.

Section B: Other Projects; Films Co-Scripted by Tarkovsky

Turnabout (Polnyi povorot krugom)

l. p - A. Lazarev (Bogart); N. Mikhalkov (Claude Hope).

Radio-play, based on the story by William Faulkner (1965).

Hamlet (Gamlet)

artist - T. Mirzashvili. *m* - Eduard Artem'ev.

l. p - Anatolii Solonitsyn (Hamlet); Margarita Terekhova (Gertrude); V. Shiraev (Claudius); I. Churikova (Ophelia); V. Larionov (Polonius); N. Karachentsev.

Production of Shakespeare's play, staged at the 'Teatr imeni Leninskogo komsomola', Moscow (1977).

Boris Godunov

conductor - Claudio Abbado. *artist* - Nikolai Dvigubsky. *lighting* - Robert Brine.

l. p - Robert Lloyd (Godunov); Eva Randova (Marina Mnishek); Michael Svetlev (Grishka Otrep'ev); Patrick Power.

Production of Moussorgsky's opera, staged at Covent Garden, London (1983).

The First Teacher (Pervyi uchitel')

p. c - Kirghizfilm / Mosfilm. *d* - Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky.

Film, co-scripted with Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky (1965).

Tashkent the Bread City (Tashkent - gorod khlebnyi)

p. c - Uzbekfilm. *d* - Shukhrat Abbasov.

Film, co-scripted with Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky (1968).

One Chance in a Thousand (Odin shans iz tysyachi)

d - L. Kosharjan.

Film, co-scripted with L. Kosharjan (1969).

The End of the Chieftain (Konets atamana)

p. c - Kazakfilm. d - Shaken Aimanov.

Film, co-scripted with Shaken Aimanov (?), 1971.

The Ferocious One (Lyuti)

p. c - Kazakfilm. d - Tolomush Okeev.

Film, co-scripted with Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky and Eduard Tropinin (1973).

Section C: Unfilmed Screenplays

A Light Breeze (Svetlyi veter). Also known as The Renunciation.

Unpublished screenplay by Tarkovsky and Fridrikh Gorenshstein, based on Aleksandr Belyaev's Ariel.

Hoffmanniana (Goffmanniana)

Scenario, based on the life of E.T.A. Hoffmann. Published in Iskusstvo kino, 8 (1976), 167-189.

Section D: Other Intended (or Considered) Film Projects[1]

The Life of St Antony

Hamlet

The Master and Margarita (Mikhail Bulgakov)

A Raw Youth (Dostoevsky)

The Idiot (Dostoevsky)

Crime and Punishment (Dostoevsky)

The Double (documentary film on Dostoevsky)

The Death of Ivan Ilych (Tolstoi)

The Escape (on the subject of Tolstoi's final years)

Joseph and His Brothers (Thomas Mann)

Doctor Faustus (Thomas Mann)

Matriona's House (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)

The Plague (Albert Camus)

Joan of Arc

The Horde

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[1] The principal source of information for this section is Tarkovsky's diaries: Time Within Time: The Diaries 1970-1986, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (Calcutta, 1991), especially pp.14, 153 and 211.

Two Saw the Fox

Kagol (on the subject of Martin Borman's trial)

The House with a Tower

Deserters

Catastrophe

The Last Hunting Trip (or The Clash)

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