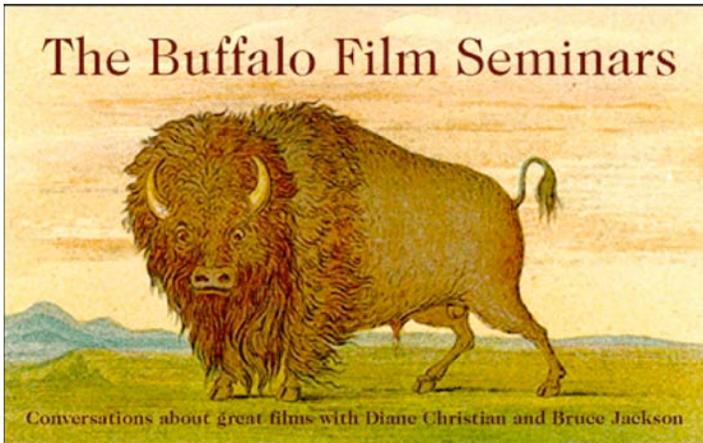


March 24, 2009 (XVIII:10)

Andrei Tarkovsky, NOSTALGHIA, 1983 125 minutes

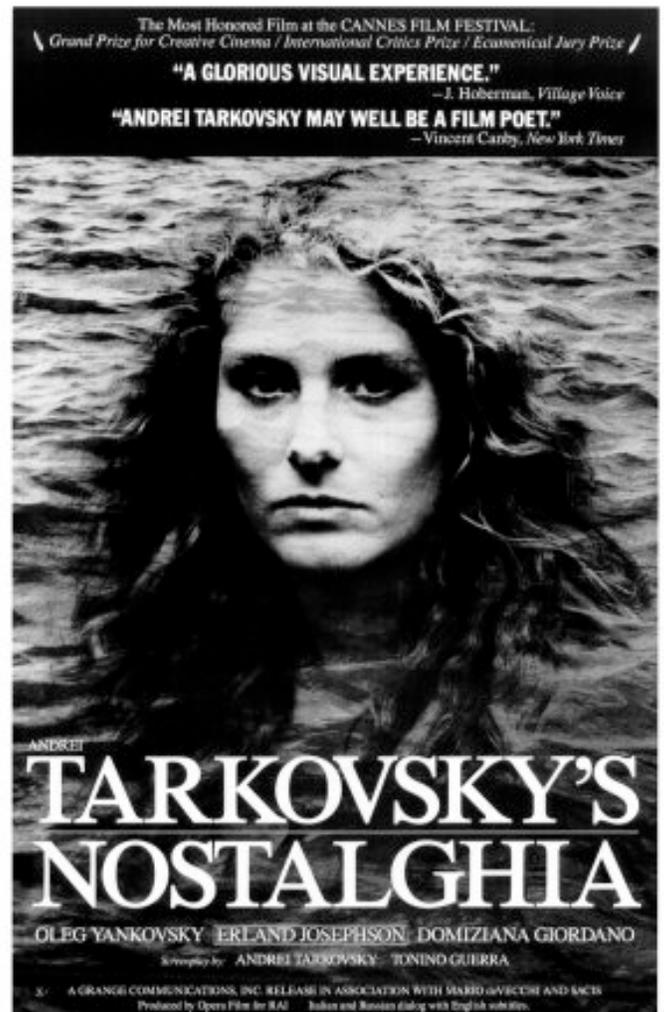


**Directed by** Andrei Tarkovsky  
**Screenplay by** Andrei Tarkovsky & Tonino Guerra  
**Produced by** Franco Casati  
**Cinematography by** Giuseppe Lanci  
**Film Editing by** Erminia Marani and Amedeo Salfa

**Oleg Yankovsky...Andrei Gorchakov**  
**Erland Josephson...Domenico**  
**Domiziana Giordano...Eugenia**  
**Patrizia Terreno...Andrei's Wife**  
**Laura De Marchi...Chambermaid**  
**Delia Boccardo...Domenico's Wife**  
**Milena Vukotic...Civil Servant**  
**Raffaele Di Mario**  
**Rate Furlan**  
**Livio Galassi**  
**Elena Magoia**  
**Piero Vida**

**ANDREI TARKOVSKY** (April 4, 1932, Zavrazhe, Ivanono, USSR—December 29, 1986, Paris, France, lung cancer) directed 11 films: *Offret/The Sacrifice* (1986), *Nostalghia* (1983), *Tempo di viaggio/Voyage in Time* (1983), *Stalker* (1979), *Zerkalo/The Mirror* (1975), *Solyaris/Solaris* (1972), *Andrey Rublyov/Andrei Rublev* (1966), *Ivanovo detstvo/Ivan's Childhood* (1962), *Katok i skripka/The Skating Rink and the Violin* (1961), *Segodnya uvolneniya ne budet/There Will Be No Leave Today* (1959), and *Ubiytsy/The Killers* (1958).

**OLEG YANKOVSKY** (February 23, 1944, Soviet Union) has 66 acting credits, some of which are "Anna Karenina" (2009), *Stilyagi/Boogie Bones* (2009), "Doktor Zhivago" (2006), *Bednyy, bednyy Pavel/Poor, Poor Pavel* (2003), *Lyubovnik/The Lover* (2002), *Prikhodi na menya posmotret/Come Look at Me* (2001), *The Man Who Cried* (2000), *Revizor/Inspector* (1996), *O-Roshiya-koku suimu-tan/The Dream of Russia* (1992), *Pasport* (1990), *Filyor/The Spy* (1987), *Kreytserova sonata* (1987), *Nostalghia* (1983), *Poslednyaya zhertva/The Last Victim* (1983), *Potseluy/The Kiss* (1983), *Polyoty vo sne i nayavu/Flights in Dreams and in Reality* (1982), *Priklyucheniya Sherloka Kholmsa i doktora Vatsona: Sobaka Baskervilley/The Adventures of Sherlock*



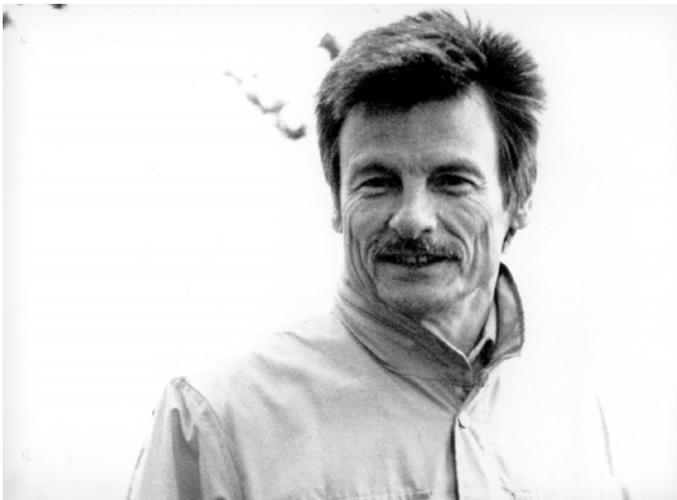
*Holmes and Dr. Watson: The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1981), *Tot samyy Myunkhgauzen/Theat Munchhausen* (1979), *Povorot/The Turning Point* (1978), *Moy laskovyy i nezhnnyy zver/A Hunting Accident* (1978), *Sladkaya zhenshchina/A Sweet Woman* (1976), *Sentimentalnyy roman* (1976), *Zerkalo/The Mirror* (1975), *Premiya* (1974), *Rasplata/Reckoning* (1970), and *O lyubvi/A Ballad of Love* (1966).

**ERLAND JOSEPHSON** (June 15, 1923, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden) has been in several Ingmar Bergman films. He has 98 acting credits, some of which are *Wellkåmm to Verona* (2006), *Dobro ustimani mrtvaci/Well Tempered Corpses* (2005), *Dag och natt/Day and Night* (2004), *Nu/Now* (2003), *Trolösa/Faithless* (2000), *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1995), *Pakten/Waiting for Sunset* (1995), *To Vlemma tou Odyssea/Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), *Den Ofrivillige golfaren/The Involuntary Golfer* (1991), *Oxen* (1991), *Prospero's Books* (1991), *Le Testament d'un poète juif assassiné* (1988), *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988), *The Legendary Life of Ernest Hemingway* (1988), *Offret/Sacrifice* (1986), *Saving Grace* (1985), *Bella Donna* (1983), *Nostalghia* (1983), *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), *Montenegro* (1981), *Kärleken/Love* (1980), *Höstsonaten/Autumn Sonata* (1978), *En och en/One and One* (1978), *Al di là del bene e del male/Beyond Good and Evil* (1977), *Ansikte mot ansikte/Face to Face* (1976),

*Trollflöjten/Magic Flute* (1975), *Scener ur ett äktenskap/Scenes from a Marriage* (1973), *Viskningar och rop/Cries and Whispers* (1972), *Reservatet/The Lie* (1970), *En Passion/A Passion* (1969), *Ansiktet/The Magician* (1958), *Svarta handsken* (1957), *Till glädje/To Joy* (1950), *Eva* (1948), and *Det regnar på vår kärlek/Man with an Umbrella* (1946).

**DOMIZIANA GIORDANO** (September 4, 1959, Rome, Italy) has 16 acting credits, including *Il Quaderno della spesa/Household Accounts* (2003), *Canone inverso - making love* (2000), *Finalmente soli* (1997), *Machinations* (1995), "La Famiglia Ricordi" (1995), *Mario und der Zauberer/Mario und Magician* (1994), *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (1994), "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles" (1993), *Normality* (1989), *Zina* (1985), *Bakom jalusin/Behind the Shutters* (1984), *Nostalgia* (1983), and *Amici miei atto II/My Friends Act II* (1982).

**GIUSEPPE LANCI** (May 1, 1942, Rome, Italy) has 58 cinematography credits, including *No Problem* (2008), *La Masseria delle allodole/The Lark Farm* (2007), *La Spettatrice/The Spectator* (2004), *Nowhere* (2002), *Tierra del fuego* (2000), *La Balia/The Nanny* (1999), *Aprile/April* (1998), *Le Affinità elettive/The Elective Affinities* (1996), *Compagna di viaggio/Traveling Companion* (1996), *Fiorile/Wild Flower* (1993), *Johnny Stecchino/Johnny Toothpick* (1991), *La Villa del venerdì/Husbands and Lovers* (1991), *La Condanna/The Conviction* (1991), *Il Sole anche di notte/Night Sun* (1990), *Francesco/St. Francis of Assisi* (1989), *Zoo* (1989), *Good Morning, Babylon* (1987), *Every Time We Say Goodbye* (1986), *Diavolo in corpo/Devil in the Flesh* (1986), *Kaos/Chaos* (1984), *Nostalgia* (1983), *Stelli emigranti/Wandering Stars* (1983), *Gli Occhi, la bocca/Those Eyes, That Mouth* (1982), *Salto nel vuoto/A Leap in the Dark* (1980), *Con... fusione* (1980), *Maternale/Mother and Daughter* (1978), *Difficile morire* (1977), and *Violino* (1965).



### **ANDREI TARKOVSKY**

**from *World Film Directors, V. II*. Ed. John Wakeman. The H.W. Wilson Co., Inc. NY, 1988**

Russian director, born in Laovrazhe, Ivanova district, Soviet Union. He is the son of the distinguished poet Arseniy Tarkovsky

and the former Maria Ivanova Vishnyakova. Tarkovsky studied under Mikhail Romm at VGIK, the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. In the course of his studies he made two short films, *There Will Be No Leave Today* (1959), and his diploma piece, *Katok i skripka (The Steamroller and the Violin, 1960)*. The latter, which won a prize at the New York Film Festival, is about the friendship that develops between the tough driver of a steamroller and a frail boy violinist who as a consequence is drawn out of his comfortable but claustrophobic little world into one that is wider and more challenging. The story is told very delicately and imaginatively through the eyes of the child, with a "masterly use of soft lighting and ...subtle gradations of atmosphere." The photography is Vadim Yusov, a fellow-student who has been Tarkovsky's cameraman on all his films, and the script is the work of Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, another of Tarkovsky's contemporaries at VGIK and himself among the most promising of the young Soviet directors.

Tarkovsky graduated in 1960 and has been a Mosfilm director ever since. The harsh poetry of his unique vision emerged fully in his first feature film, *Ivanovo detstvo (Ivan's Childhood, 1962)*. Ivan, played by Kolya Burlayev, is an orphan working with a group of partisans during the Second World War. We first see this twelve-year-old waif returning from a scouting expedition, crossing no-man's-land, peering through mist and barbed wire, studying the swiftly flowing river that he has to cross to get back to his own side. His parents have been killed, his village has been destroyed, he has escaped from a Nazi concentration camp, and he lives only for revenge. He does not live long; years later in Berlin after the victory, his comrades find a folder recording his capture and fate.

A sense of almost unendurable tension is built up by the camerawork and editing, in which the grim reality of the present is intercut with flashbacks, so that war and childhood, war and nature, are constantly contrasted. The same sort of story has been told hundreds of times before, but Ivor Montague, pointing out that this is generally true of Tarkovsky's plots, goes on: "It is how they are presented that becomes a commentary on man, his experience and the universe.... The tragedy here, however, is much worse because more inescapable. Ivan's fate is sealed before ever the film begins.... From the moment we see the wide-eyed creature in the mist, the contrast between the skinny, hungry, sometimes blubbery boy and the expert spy, professional, authoritative, competent, indispensable, the two bound into a single being—a soldier who had known torture and triumph alike, a child on whom grown men depend—we know he cannot survive.... The film is not disfigured by the unnaturally cheery or the conventionally hysterical. With one blow it annuls a whole *cinémathèque* of the war films of all lands." *Ivanovo detstvo* won fifteen awards at international film festivals, including the Golden Lion at Venice and the Grand Prize in San Francisco.

It was followed by *Andrei Rublev*, a film about the medieval monk who became the greatest of all icon painters. Tarkovsky wrote the film in collaboration with Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky and shot it in black and white, except for the coda in which Rublev's icons are displayed in all their richness. Completed in 1966 and shown at Cannes in 1969, it was not released in Russia until 1971, by which time it had acquired an enormous underground reputation. It is not clear why the film was shelved for so long—the religious-philosophical issues that may

have worried the Soviet censors remain intact at the center of the picture, while the criticism that it “does not correspond to historical truth” (the excuse for its withdrawal from the 1971 Belgrade Festival) is unconvincing, since almost nothing is known of the life of the real Andrei Rublev. Although Walter Goodman has pointed out that “*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the newspaper of the Communist youth organization, criticized Tarkovsky, a devout Christian, for depicting Rublev, a much-revered fifteenth-century monk, as a suffering, self-questioning artist rather than a native genius who helped bring about a Russian renaissance in the final decades of Mongolian-Tatar rule.”

The film consists of ten loosely connected episodes covering the most prolific years of the painter’s life, 1400-1425. Russia had not still been freed from the yoke of the Tartars, and the world Rublev knew was a brutal one of feudal violence and casual cruelty. The church itself was engaged in a ruthless campaign against the vestiges of paganism. The film dramatizes the conflict in the artist between revulsion and compassion toward the suffering around him. In one episode Rublev is invited by the venerable icon painter Theophanes the Greek to assist him in painting a new church, and we see that their professional rivalries are colored by religious differences. Against the traditional icon-painter’s emphasis on original sin, Rublev asserts his belief in the human being as the dwelling-house of God—a belief increasingly threatened by his own disgust at the horrors he sees around him.

Later, as he paints new murals for the cathedral, the Tatars and their Russian allies raid the town. They batter in the doors of the cathedral and slaughter everyone who has taken refuge there. Rublev, with his murals wrecked, at last takes violent action to protect a deaf-mute girl. He saves her life but cannot save her sanity, and she is born away by the Tatars. Taking a vow of silence, Rublev resolves to paint no more. His wanderings take him to a devastated village. The prince’s guard arrives, seeking a craftsman capable of casting for their master’s glory one of those gigantic bells that were considered the mystical voices of Russia. The village bell-founder has died of plague, but his son Boriska boasts that he knows the secret of casting. In fact, his only secret is a half-crazy belief that the task can be accomplished, but he drives everyone relentlessly until the new bell is triumphantly rung. This achievement restores Rublev’s faith in humanity and art, and he goes on to affirm that faith in the paintings that form the dazzling color montage at the end of the film.

Tarkovsky has said: “I do not understand historical films which have no relevance for the present. For me the most important thing is to use historical material to express Man’s ideas and to create contemporary characters.” And in fact, though *Andrei Rublev* was beautifully shot on locations in which Rublev

worked, and period details are meticulously observed, the film’s significance far transcends its localized historical setting. It is a universal political parable, in which the major human responses to war, disorder, and oppression are richly dramatized. It is also a meditation on the responsibility of the artist, and one of obvious relevance to Tarkovsky’s own situation in the Soviet Union. David Thomson praised the film for its portrayal of a world that is “as teeming a hell on earth as a Breughel—and quite as vivid and authentic,” but dismissed Tarkovsky’s thesis as “threadbare.” This was not the view of most critics, many of whom shared Nigel Andrew’s conviction that *Andrei Rublev* was “the one indisputable Russian masterpiece of the last decade.”

Tarkovsky’s screenplay for *Solaris* (1971) was adapted from a science fiction novel by the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem—one that concentrates not on gadgetry but on psychology. Scientists in a space station circling a remote planet find themselves subjected to an agonizing process of self-exploration, for the planet’s strange ocean has the capacity to punish intruders by materializing people and episodes out of their past lives, forcing them to relive their most painful mistakes and sins. Penelope Houston called this film “Russia’s answer to 2001, not in its display of space hardware but in the speculative quality of its ideas,” and Gavin Millar praised it as “an absorbing inquiry into the cause of love and the links between time, memory, and identity.” This “very beautiful and mysterious film” received the Special Jury Prize at Cannes.

The film (unlike the book) opens in a Russian country estate with lakes and gardens like a Turgenev setting, where the astronaut-psychologist Kris Kelvin (Donatas Banionis) is visiting his parents. From there we follow this rather stolid hero on his journey to the space station hovering above Solaris. The arrival has been widely described as masterly—the space station, seemingly derelict, is in fact inhabited by two scientists, each of whom is insanely absorbed in his own resurrected tragedy. Kelvin is himself soon confronted by his wife Hari (Natalya Bondarchuk), long dead by suicide, but now apparently alive again. Faced with the woman he has already failed, Kelvin at first tries to exorcise her. But since she is alive in his mind, from

whence Solaris has conjured her, he can no more destroy her than he can help her. Tarkovsky himself has explained that “the point is the value of each piece of our behavior, the significance of each of our acts, even the least noticed. Nothing once completed can be changed.... The irreversibility of human experience is what gives our life, our deeds, their meaning and individuality.”

It might be argued that this is also the theme of *Zerkalo* (*The Mirror/A White, White Day*, 1975). This controversial film is



presented as a work of autobiography, showing Tarkovsky himself at different ages up to and including the present, but concentrating on his boyhood during the Stalinist terror in Peredelkino, the artists' village near Moscow. Tarkovsky's mother is portrayed by several actresses as she was at various ages, and his father's poems play an important role in tying together a film of great complexity. It is, as Herbert Marshall wrote, "many-layered, jumping back and forth in space and time, from objective to subjective visualisations." The material it draws upon ranges from the director's memories and dreams to newsreels of the Spanish Civil War and the Soviet-Chinese confrontations on the Ussuri river. It cuts without warning from black and white to color, from passages with background music to others with none.

Herbert Marshall sees the film as "a kind of inverted mirror reflection of *Ivan's Childhood*, that being an objective biography of a boy in the Stalin days." Marshall finds it often puzzling and enigmatic—"several films intertwined." In Russia, where its indictment of Stalinism caused great anxiety, it was harshly attacked by party critics as an elitist film. Even the veteran director Sergei Gerasimov, who recognized it as "an attempt to analyze the human spirit" by "a man of very serious talent," complained that "it starts from a subjective evaluation of the surrounding world, and this inevitably limits the circle of its viewers." It was released in Russia in 1975 but relegated to the "third category," which means that only a few prints were made for showing in third-class cinemas and workers' clubs, thus denying the filmmakers any financial reward.



Ivor Montague writes: "I do not think that anyone can 'enjoy' Tarkovsky's films. They are too tense, too agonizing, at their best too spellbinding....Remember, he comes of a generation that, in the years he was the age of the boy in his first feature, was losing in its homeland twenty million dead. But when one has seen any one of his films once, one wants to see it again and yet again; thoughts chase after one another like hares in March. David Thomson is one of a minority who think Tarkovsky is overrated—"the grandeur of Tarkovsky's films should not conceal the gulf between his eye for poetic compositions and any really searching study of people or society." But for the young Ukrainian director Sergei Paradjanov "Tarkovsky is a phenomenon...amazing, unrepeatable, inimitable and beautiful....First of all, I did not know how to do anything and I would not have done anything at all if there had not been *Ivan's Childhood*....I consider Tarkovsky the Number One film director of the USSR....He is a genius."

Turning once again to science fiction with social and psychological underpinnings, Tarkovsky made *Stalker* (1979), which was loosely adapted from a 1973 novel by Arkady and

Boris Strugatsky. The setting of the novel had been North America, but Tarkovsky transferred the story to a gulag-like industrial wasteland that, although the actual locale is never specified, is clearly meant to be in the Soviet Union (the film was shot on location in Estonia). The story unfolds in a mysterious realm known only as the "Zone," where there is a "Room" in which one's wishes or fantasies are fulfilled. However, the hazardous zone can be traversed only with the aid of a "stalker," who illegally guides travelers through the forbidden area.

Tarkovsky's first film to be made largely outside of the Soviet Union was *Nostalghia* (*Nostalgia*, 1983). Filmed near the Vignoni thermal baths in the Tuscan hills, *Nostalghia* is about exile, in part, and chronicles the life of a Russian who has gone to Italy to study the life of a Russian who lived there in the seventeenth century."Gortchakov (Oleg Yanovsky)," wrote Vincent Canby in his *New York Times* review, "does very little research and a lot of musing, which often takes the form of lovely flashbacks [and] fantasies....Loveliness, I'm afraid, is really what this movie is all about....Tarkovsky may well be a film poet but he's a film poet with a tiny vocabulary. The same images, eventually boring, keep recurring in film after film—shots of damp landscapes, marshes, hills in fog and abandoned buildings with roofs that leak."

Although critical of Tarkovsky, Yvette Biro in the *Village Voice* was more open to the film's beauty. "*Nostalghia*," she wrote, "is sumptuously—sickeningly, as mentioned in the film itself—beautiful, but partly for that very reason, suffers from disproportion and embarrassingly loses its way in the desperate hunt for

beauty." John Coleman asked in the *New Statesman* "whether the difficulty of [Tarkovsky's] work is justified by its rewards, whether all the enigmatic angst on display here is much more than the exteriorisation of a private depression...those mists, those pools, above all that obsessive driving rain....? The film won a special prize at Cannes.

Later in 1983 Tarkovsky directed a production of *Boris Gudonov* at Covent Garden in London. Then in July 1984, he defected to the west, saying that his application to Moscow for permission to extend his stay abroad had gone unanswered, and that he would not be allowed to make films upon his return to Russia. Discussing his past difficulties with the regime, Tarkovsky said: "I have worked for twenty-four years in the Soviet Union, for the state organization on which all movie activity depends, and have produced only six films. I can say that in those twenty-four years I have been unemployed for eighteen." He remained in Western Europe.

His last film, *Offret/Sacrificatio* (*The Sacrifice*, 1987), was filmed on location on Gotland, in the Baltic, with cinematography by Sven Nykvist. *Sacrifice* tells of an aging

intellectual and the act of faith by which he apparently saves the world. Alexander (Erland Josephson), his family, and their friends have gathered at his summer house on a primitive Swedish island to celebrate his birthday. The dinner is a revelation of domestic treachery and spiritual malaise. Exhausted, Alexander has fallen asleep when an unspecified catastrophe—possibly a nuclear accident—occurs. The air grows very cold, and an eerie glow illuminates a landscape transformed to hoarfrost, ooze, and rot. A visiting neighbor, the local postman, tells Alexander that if he spends the night with an island woman, a reputed witch, the world can be saved. Alexander does, and awakens the next morning to find the landscape restored to its summery beauty. What seems to have been an old man's nightmare may in fact have been a perilous journey of the spirit, but Alexander cannot tell us—he has lost his reason.

In a 1986 interview, Tarkovsky said of *The Sacrifice*, “The issue I raise in the film is one that to my mind is most crucial: the absence in our culture of room for a spiritual existence. We have extended the scope of our material assets and conducted materialistic experiments without taking into account the threat posed by depriving man of his spiritual dimension. Man is suffering, but he doesn't know why. I wanted to show that a man can renew his ties to life by renewing his covenant with himself and with the source of his soul. And one way to recapture moral integrity...is by having the capacity to offer oneself in sacrifice.”

*Sacrifice* was produced by Svensk Filmindustri with additional funds from Swedish and American television and from a French company. A visually beautiful, slow, and intensely personal work, it is also extraordinarily resistant to any purposes but its own: it could not possibly be exploited for either commercial or propagandistic ends.

A few months after *Sacrifice* opened at the New York Film Festival, Tarkovsky died in Paris of lung cancer. He had been married twice. He had a son by his first marriage to Trina Rausch, and one by his 1970 marriage to Larissa Tégorkina.



**Sculpting in Times Reflections on the Cinema. Andrey Tarkovsky. University of Texas Press Austin, 1986.**

I wanted to make a film about Russian nostalgia—about the state of mind peculiar to our nation which affects Russians who are far from their native land. I saw this almost as a patriotic duty in my understanding of the concept. I wanted the film to be about the fatal attachment of Russians to their national roots, their past, their culture, their native places, their families and friends; an attachment which they carry with them all their lives, regardless of where destiny may fling them. Russians are seldom able to adapt easily, to come to terms with a new way of life. The entire

history of Russian emigration bears out the Western view that ‘Russians are bad emigrants’; everyone knows their tragic incapacity to become assimilated, the clumsy ineptitude of their efforts to adopt an alien life-style. How could I have imagined as I was making *Nostalghia* that the stifling sense of longing that fills the screen space of that film was to become my lot for the rest of my life; that from now until the end of my days I would bear the painful malady within myself?

Working all the time in Italy I made a film that was profoundly Russian in every way: morally, politically, emotionally....

I have to say that when I first saw all the material shot for the film I was startled to find it was a spectacle of unrelieved gloom. The material was completely homogeneous, both in its mood and in the state of mind imprinted in it. This was not something I had set out to achieve; what was symptomatic and unique about the phenomenon before me was the fact that, irrespective of my own specific theoretical intentions, the camera was obeying first and foremost my inner state during filming: I had been worn down by my separation from my family and from the way of life I was used to, by working under quite unfamiliar conditions, even by using a foreign language.

I was at once astounded and delighted, because what had been imprinted on the film, and was now revealed to me for the first time in the darkness of the cinema, proved that my reflections about how the art of the screen is able, and even called, to become a matrix of the individual soul, to convey unique human experience, were not just the fruit of idle speculation but a reality, which here was unrolling incontrovertibly before my eyes.

But to return to when *Nostalghia* was first conceived and started....

I was not interested in the development of the plot, in the chain of events—with each film I feel less and less need for them. 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

literary and cultural traditions that are the foundation of his spiritual world. I am well aware that from a commercial point of view it would be far more advantageous to move from place to place, to introduce shots from one ingenious angle after another, to use exotic landscapes and impressive interiors. But for what I am essentially trying to do, outward effects simply distance and blur the goal which I am pursuing. I am interested in man, for he contains a universe within himself; and in order to find expression for the idea, for the meaning of human life, there is no need to spread behind it, as it were, a canvas crowded with happenings.

It would perhaps be superfluous to mention that from the very start cinema as American-style adventure movie has never held any interest for me. The last thing I want to do is devise attractions. From *Ivan's Childhood* to *Stalker*, I have always tried to avoid outward movement, and have tried to concentrate the action within the classical unities. In this respect even the structure of *Andrey Rublyov* strikes me today as disjointed and incoherent....

Ultimately, I wanted *Nostalghia* to be free of anything irrelevant or incidental that would stand in the way of my principal objective: the portrayal of someone in a state of profound alienation from the world and himself, unable to find a balance between reality and the harmony for which he longs, in a state of *nostalghia* provoked not only by his remoteness from his country but also by a global yearning for the wholeness of existence. I was not satisfied with the scenario until it came together at last into a kind of metaphysical whole.

Italy comes into Gorchakov's consciousness at the moment of his tragic break with reality (not merely with the conditions of life, but with life itself, which never satisfied the claims made on it by the individual) and stretches above him in magnificent ruins which seem to rise up out of nothing. These fragments of a civilisation at once universal and alien, are like an epitaph to the futility of human endeavor, a sign that mankind has taken a path that can only lead to destruction. Gorchakov dies unable to survive his own spiritual crisis, to 'put right' this time which—evidently for him too—is 'out of joint'.

The character of Domenico, at first sight somewhat puzzling, has a particular bearing on the hero's state of mind. This frightened man to whom society offers no protection, finds in himself the strength and nobility of spirit to oppose a reality he sees as degrading to man. Once a mathematics teacher and now an 'outsider', he flouts his own 'littleness' and decides to speak about the catastrophic state of today's world, appealing to people to make a stand. In the eyes of 'normal' people he appears mad, but Gorchakov responds to his idea—born of deep suffering—that people must be rescued not separately and individually but *all together* from the pitiless insanity of modern civilisation....

In one form or another all my films have made the point that people are not alone and abandoned in an empty universe, but are linked by countless threads with the past and the future; that as each person lives his life he forges a bond with the whole world, indeed with the whole history of mankind....But the hope that each separate life and every human action has intrinsic meaning makes the responsibility of the individual for the overall course of human life incalculably greater.

In a world where there is a real threat of war capable of annihilating mankind; where social ills exist on a staggering scale; where human suffering cries out to heaven—the way must be found to reach another. Such is the sacred duty of each individual. Gorchakov becomes attached to Domenico because he feels a deep need to protect him from the 'public' opinion of the well-fed, contented, blind majority for whom he is simply a grotesque lunatic. Even so, Gorchakov is not able to save Domenico from the role he has implacably assigned himself—without asking life to let the cup pass him by...

Gorchakov is taken aback by Domenico's childlike maximalism, for he himself, like all adults, is guilty of a measure of compromise—that is how life is. But Domenico makes up his mind to burn himself alive in the crazy hope that this final, monstrous publicity act will bring home to people that his concern is for them, and make them listen to his last cry of warning. Gorchakov is affected by the total integrity, almost holiness of the man and his action. While Gorchakov merely reflects on how much he minds about the world's imperfections. Domenico takes it upon himself to do something about it, and his commitment is total: his final act makes it clear that there was never any act of abstraction in Domenico's sense of responsibility. By comparison,

Gorchakov's agonising over his own lack of constancy can only appear banal. It is of course arguable that he is vindicated by his death, since it reveals how deeply he has been tortured.

I said that I was startled to find how accurately my own mood while making the film was transferred onto the screen.: a profound and increasingly wearing sense of bereavement, away from home and loved ones, filling every moment of existence. To this inexorable, insidious



awareness of your own dependence on your past, like an illness that grows ever harder to bear, I gave the name 'Nostalghia'....All the same I should advise the reader that it would be simplistic to identify the author with his lyric hero. We naturally use our immediate impressions of life in our work, since these, alas, are the only ones at our disposal. But even when we borrow moods and plots directly from our own lives, it still hardly ever means that the author could be said to be the same as his subject. It may be a disappointment to some to realise that an author's lyrical experience seldom coincides with what he actually does in real life...

An author's poetic principle emerges from the effect made upon him by the surrounding reality, and it can rise above that reality, question it, engage in bitter conflict; and, moreover, not only with the reality that lies outside him, but also with the one that is within him. Many critics consider, for instance, that Dostoevsky discovered yawning abysses within himself and that his saintly characters and villains are equally projections

of him. But not one of them is completely him. Each of his characters epitomises what he sees and thinks of life, but not one could be said to embody the full diapason of his personality.

In *Nostalgia* I wanted to pursue the theme of the ‘weak’ man who is no fighter in terms of his outward attributes but whom I nonetheless see as a victor in this life. Stalker delivers a monologue in defense of that weakness that is the true price and hope of life. I have always liked people who can’t adapt themselves to life pragmatically. 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). Such people are often rather like children, only with the motivation of adults; from a common-sense point of view their position is unrealistic as well as selfless. ...

Like Stalker, Domenico works out his own answer, chooses his own way of martyrdom, rather than give in to the accepted, cynical pursuit of personal material privilege, in an attempt to block, by his own exertions, by the example of his own sacrifice, the path down which mankind is rushing insanely towards its own destruction. Nothing is more important than conscience, which keeps watch and forbids man to grab what he wants from life and then lie back, fat and contented. Traditionally, the best of the Russian intelligentsia were guided by conscience, incapable of self-complacency, moved by compassion for the deprived of this world, and dedicated in their search for faith, for the ideal, for good; and all these things I want to emphasize in the personality of Gorchakov.

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. For the only alternative to that way is, alas, the one that leads to spiritual degeneration; and our everyday existence and the general pressure to conform makes it all too easy to take the latter path....

As to my next film, I shall aim at even greater sincerity and conviction in each shot, using the 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.

Of late I have found myself addressing audiences, and I have noticed that whenever I declare that there are no symbols or

metaphors in my films, those present express incredulity. They persist in asking again and again, for instance, what rain signifies in my films; why does it figure in film after film, and why the repeated images of wind, fire, water? I really don’t know how to deal with such questions.

Rain is after all typical of the landscape in which I grew up; in Russia you have those long, dreary, persistent rains. And I can say that I love nature—I don’t like big cities and feel perfectly happy when I’m away from the paraphernalia of modern civilisation, just as I felt wonderful in Russia when I was in my country house, with three hundred kilometres between Moscow and myself. 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 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. ...



I would concede that the final shot of *Nostalgia* has an element of metaphor, when I bring the Russian house inside the Italian cathedral. It is a constructed image which smacks of literariness: a model of the hero’s state, of the division within him which prevents him from living as he has up till now. Or perhaps, on the contrary, it is his new wholeness in which the Tuscan hills and the Russian countryside come together indissolubly; he is conscious of them as inherently his own, merged into his being and his blood,

but at the same time reality is enjoining him to separate these things by returning to Russia. And so Gorchakov dies in this new world where things come together naturally and of themselves which in our strange and relative earthly existence have for some reason, or by someone, been divided once and for all. All the same, even if the scene lacks cinematic purity, I trust that it is free of vulgar symbolism; the conclusion seems to me fairly complex in form and meaning, and to be a figurative expression of what is happening to the hero, not a symbol of something outside him which has to be deciphered....

Clearly I could be accused of being inconsistent. However, it is for the artist both to devise principles and to break them. It’s unlikely that there are any works of art that embody precisely the aesthetic doctrine preached by the artist. As a rule a work of art develops in complex interaction with the artist’s theoretical ideas, which cannot encompass it completely; artistic texture is always richer than anything that can be fitted into a theoretical schema.

And no that I have written this book I begin to wonder if my own rules are not becoming a constraint.

*Nostalgia* is now behind me. It could never have occurred to me when I started shooting that my own, all too specific, nostalgia was soon to take possession of my soul for ever.

Why do people go to the cinema? What takes them into a darkened room where, for two hours, they watch the play of shadows on a sheet? The search for entertainment? The need for a kind of drug? All over the world there are, indeed, entertainment firms and organizations which exploit cinema and television and

spectacles of many other kinds. Our starting-point, however, should not be there, but in the essential principles of cinema, which have to do with the human need to master and know the world. I think that what a person normally goes to the cinema for is time: for time lost or spent or not yet had. He goes there for living experience; for cinema, like no other art, widens, enhances and concentrate's a person's experience—and not only enhances it but makes it longer, significantly longer. That is the power of cinema: 'stars', story-lines and entertainment have nothing to do with it.

— We're programming our Fall 2009 series, BFS XIX. Please send your suggestions to [suggestions@buffalofilmseminars.com](mailto:suggestions@buffalofilmseminars.com)

### FOUR MORE TO GO IN BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XVIII:

March 31 Larisa Shepitko THE ASCENT/VOSKHOZHDENIYE 1977

April 7 Warren Beatty REDS 1981

April 14 32 SHORT FILMS ABOUT GLENN GOULD

April 21 Pedro Almodóvar ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER/TODO SOBRE MI MADRE 1999

### This Thursday in 3x3@AKAG

Federico Fellini's JULIET OF THE SPIRITS. 7:30 p.m., Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Details at [HTTP://3X3.cc](http://3X3.cc)



Piero della Francesca, *Madonna del Parto*, Monterchi (c. 1460)

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