Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky
Screenplay by Fridrikh Gorenshtein and Andrei Tarkovsky
Based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem (novel "Solaris")
Produced by Viacheslav Tarasov
Original Music by Eduard Artemyev
Cinematography by Vadim Yusov
Production Design by Mikhail Romadin

Natalya Bondarchuk...Hari
Donatas Banionis...Kris Kelvin
Jüri Järvet...Dr. Snaut
Vladislav Dvorzhetsky...Henri Berton
Nikolai Grinko...Kelvin's Father
Anatoli Solonitsyn...Dr. Sartorius
Sos Sargsyan...Dr. Gibarian
Olga Barnet...Kelvin's Mother
Tamara Ogorodnikova...Aunt Anna
Georgi Tejk...Prof. Messenger
Yulian Semyonov...Chairman at Scientific Conference
Olga Kizilova...Gibarian's Guest

Cannes Film Festival
1972 Won: FIPRESCI Prize and Grand Prize of the Jury; nominated for Golden Palm


STANISLAW LEM (12 September 1921, Lwów, Poland [now Lviv, Ukraine]—27 March 2006, Kraków, Poland, heart disease).


sezon/The Dead Season (1968), Zhitiye i vozneseniye Yurasya Bratchika/The Life and Ascension of Yuras Bratchik (1968), Niekas nenorejo miri/Nobody Wanted to Die (1966), Marite (1947).


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 Buryayev, 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 blubbering 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 hyst erical. 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 Mikhailov-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 Tatars, 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 assets 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 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 Paradzhanov “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 Americas, 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 Filminsustru 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 Tegorkina.

Philip Lopate, “Solaris” (Criterion disk notes): Andrei Tarkovsky belongs to that handful of filmmakers (Dreyer, Bresson, Vigo, Tati) who, with a small, concentrated body of work,
created a universe. Though he made only seven features, thwarted by Soviet censors and then by cancer, each honored his ambition to crash through the surface of ordinary life and find a larger spiritual meaning: to heal modern art’s secular fragmentation by infusing it with metaphysical dimension. To that end he rejected Eisensteinian montage and developed a demanding, long-take aesthetic, which he thought better able to reveal the deeper truths underlying the ephemeral, performing moment.

Since Tarkovsky is often portrayed as a lonely, martyred genius, we’d do well to place him in a wider context, as the most renowned of an astonishing generation—Larisa Shepitko, Alexei German, Andrei Konchalovsky, Sergei Parajanov, Otar Iosseliani—which effected a dazzling, short-lived renaissance of Soviet cinema. All had censorship problems. In the early 1970s, Tarkovsky, unable to get approval for a script which was considered too personal-obscurantist, proposed a film adaptation of Stanislaw Lem’s novel, Solaris, thinking it stood a better chance of being green-lighted by the commissars, as science fiction seemed more “objective” and accessible to the masses.

His hunch paid off: Solaris took the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes. Tarkovsky had arrived on the world stage with his most straightforward, accessible work. While hardly a conventional film, Solaris is less long-take driven, and stands as a fulcrum in Tarkovsky’s career: behind him was his impressive debut, Ivan’s Childhood, and his first epic masterpiece, Andrei Rublev; ahead of him lay The Mirror (brilliantly experimental and, yes, personal-obscurantist), Stalker (a great, somber, difficult work), and finally, two intransigent, lyrical, meditative pictures he made in exile, Nostalghia and The Sacrifice. He died shortly after completing this last film, in 1986, at age fifty-four.

We know that Tarkovsky had seen Kubrick’s 2001 and disliked it as cold and sterile. The media played up the Cold War angle of the Soviet director’s determination to make an “anti-2001,” and certainly Tarkovsky used more intensely individual characters and a more passionate human drama at the center than Kubrick. Still, hindsight allows us to observe that the two masterworks are more cousins than opposites. Both set up their narratives in a leisurely, languid manner, spending considerable time tracking around the space set; both employed a widescreen mise-en-scène approach that drew on superior art direction; and both generated an air of mystery that invited countless explanations.

Unlike 2001, however, Solaris is saturated in grief, which grips the film even before it leaves Earth. In this moody prelude, we see the protagonist, a space psychologist named Kris Kelvin, staring at underwater reeds as though they were a drowned woman’s tresses. Played by the stolid Donatas Banionis, a Russian Glenn Ford with five o’clock shadow and a shock of prematurely white hair, Kris looks forever traumatized, slowed by some unspeakable sorrow. His father and aunt worry about his torpor, chide him for his plodding, bookkeeper-like manner. He is about to take off the next day for a mission to the space station Solaris, a once-thriving project which has gone amiss: it will be his job to determine whether or not to close down the research station. In preparation, he watches a video from a scientific conference (allowing Tarkovsky to satirize bureaucratic stodginess) about the troubles on Solaris.

Humans seem in thrall to machinery and TV images, cut off from the nature surrounding them (underwater reeds, a thoroughbred horse, a farm dog). In his haunting shots of freeways, Tarkovsky disdains showing any but contemporary cars, just as Godard did with the buildings in Alphaville. Why bother clothing the present world in sci-fi garb, when the estranging future has already arrived?

At Solaris, Kris finds a shabby space station, deserted except for two preoccupied if not deranged scientists, Snaut and Sartorius. A colleague Kris had expected to meet has already committed suicide, leaving him a taped message warning of hallucinated Guests who have “something to do with conscience.” Sure enough, Kris’ dead wife Hari materializes at his side, offering the devoted tenderness for which he is starved. Kris, panicking, shoves her into a space capsule and fires it off; but Hari II is not slow in arriving. As played by the lovely Natalya Bondarchuk, this “eternal feminine” is the opposite of a femme fatale: all clinging fidelity and frightened vulnerability. We learn that the real Hari had committed suicide with a poison Kris had unthinkingly left behind when he left her. The hallucinated Hari II, fearing Kris does not love her, takes liquid oxygen and kills herself as well. By the time Hari III appears, Kris will do anything to redeem himself.

Solaris helped initiate a genre that has become an art-house staple: the drama of grief and partial recovery. Watching this 169-minute work is like catching a fever, with night sweats and eventual cooling brow. Tarkovsky’s experiments with pacing, to “find Time within Time,” as he put it, has his camera track up to the sleeping Kris, dilating the moment, so that we enter his dream. As in Siegel’s Invasion of the Body Snatchers, to fall asleep is to risk a succubus’ visit. However, this time the danger comes not from any harm she may do the hero. True horror is in having to watch someone you love destroy herself. The film that Solaris most resembles thematically is not 2001, but Hitchcock’s Vertigo: the inability of the male to protect the female, the multiple disguises or “resurrections” of the loved one, the inevitability of repeating past mistakes.

The real power of the film comes from the anguish of Kris’ reawakened love for Hari—his willingness to do anything to hold onto her, even knowing she isn’t real. (Like Mizoguchi’s Ugetsu, this is a story about falling in love with ghosts). The alternation between color and black and white conveys something of this ontological instability, while the jittery camera explorations over shelves and walls suggest a seizure. Hari wonders aloud if she has epilepsy, and later we see her body horrifically jerking at the threshold between being and non-being. A gorgeous, serene floating sequence, when Kris and Hari lose gravity, offers another stylized representation of this transcendence borderline.

Meanwhile, Tarkovsky peppers the dialogue with heady arguments about reality, identity, humanity, and sympathy, buttressed by references to civilization’s linchpins—Bach, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Goethe, Brueghel, Luther, and Cervantes. The Soviet censors, who demanded that the filmmaker “remove the concept of God,” may have been mollified by the absence of the G-word; but Tarkovsky took the standard science-fiction theme of spacemen establishing “contact” with other forms of intelligence, and elevated...
it implicitly to Contact with Divinity (the planet’s ocean, granted sentient powers.)

Both the Eastern European Lem and Tarkovsky were critical of what they saw as Western science fiction’s shallowness, and wanted to invest the form with intellectual and emotional depth. Tarkovsky took much directly from Lem’s book, but he also expanded, reordered, and beclouded it. As it happened, Lem did not much care for Tarkovsky’s elliptical reworking of his material, and now looks forward to a remake by Steven Soderbergh. No matter. Just as Tarkovsky sought to reverse Kubrick and ended up multiplied the flow of the headlights and taillights of the passing cars, creating a veritable vision of a futuristic metropolis. Every shot in Solaris bears witness to the dazzling genius of Tarkovsky.

Many find Tarkovsky difficult to grasp, but I disagree. Tarkovsky just has a keener sense of intuition than the rest of us.

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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.

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. 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 epitomizes what he sees and thinks of life, but not one could be said to embody the full diapason of his personality.

I should not want to impose my views on cinema on anybody else. All I hope is that everyone I am addressing (in other words, people who know and love the cinema) has his own ideas,
his particular view of the artistic principles of film-making and film criticism.

A mass of preconceptions exists in and around the profession. And I do mean preconceptions, not traditions: those hackneyed ways of thinking, clichés that grow up around traditions and gradually take them over. And you can achieve nothing in art unless you are free from received ideas. You have to work out your own position, your individual point of view—subject always, of course, to common sense—and keep this before you like the apple of your eye, all the time you are working.

Directing starts not when the script is being discussed with the writer, not during work with the actor, or with the composer, but at the time when before the interior gaze of the person making the film and known as the director, there emerges an image of the film: this might be a series of episodes worked out in detail, or perhaps the consciousness of an aesthetic texture and emotional atmosphere, to be materialised on the screen. The director must have a clear idea of his objectives and work through with his camera team to achieve their total, precise realisation. However, all this is no more than technical expertise. Although it involves many of the conditions necessary to art, in itself it is not sufficient to earn for the director the name of artist.

He starts to be an artist at the moment, when, in his mind or even on film, his own distinctive system of images starts to take shape—his own pattern of thoughts about the external world—and the audience are invited to judge it, to share with the director in his most precious and secret dreams. Only when his personal viewpoint is brought in, when he becomes a kind of philosopher, does he emerge as an artist, and cinema—as an art.…. Every art form, however, is born and lives according to its particular laws. When people talk about the specific norms of cinema, it is usually in juxtaposition with literature. In my view it is all-important that the interaction between cinema and literature should be explored and exposed as completely as possible, so that the two can at last be separated, never to be confused again. In what ways are literature and cinema similar and related? What links them?

Above all the unique freedom enjoyed by practitioners in both fields to take what they want of what is offered by the real world, and to arrange it in sequence. This definition may appear too wide and general, but it seems to me to take in all that cinema and literature have in common. Beyond it lie irreconcilable differences, stemming from the essential disparity between world and screened image; for the basic difference is that literature uses words to describe the world, whereas film does not have to use words: it manifests itself to us directly.…. 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 organisations 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 concentrates 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 make everything to do with it. What is the essence of the director’s work? We could define it as sculpting in time. Just as a sculptor takes a lump of marble, and inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not part of it—so the film-maker, from a ‘lump of time’ made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need, leaving only what is to be an element of the finished film, what will prove to be integral to the cinematic image.…. Cinema should be a means of exploring the most complex problems of our time, as vital as those for which centuries have been the subject of literature, music and painting.
his moral position. Because betrayal in this situation means to remain at the former level, not even attempting to rise to a higher moral level. And Kelvin pays a tragic price for this step forward. The science-fiction genre creates the necessary premise for this connection between moral problems and the physiology of the human mind.

**COMING UP IN BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XIX:**
- Nov 17 Arthur Penn *Night Moves* 1975
- Dec 1 Bela Tarr *Werckmeister harmoniák/Werckmeister Harmonies* 2000
- Dec 8 Mike Leigh *Topsy-Turvy* 1999

**PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE FOR BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XX:**
- Jan 12 Buster Keaton, *The General* 1921
- Jan 19 Fritz Lang, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* 1933
- Jan 26 Albert Lewin, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 1945
- Feb 2 Jules Dassin, *Night and the City* 1950
- Feb 16 Kon Ichikawa, *The Burmese Harp* 1956
- Feb 23 Sam Peckinpah, *Ride the High Country* 1962
- Mar 2 Costa-Gravras *Z* 1969
- Apr 6 Werner Herzog, *Fitzcarraldo* 1982
- Apr 20 Michael Mann, *Collateral* 2004

**CONTACTS:**
- email Diane Christian: engdc@buffalo.edu
- email Bruce Jackson bjackson@buffalo.edu
- for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: [http://buffalofilmseminars.com](http://buffalofilmseminars.com)
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*Pieter Bruegel Hunters in the Snow 16th c.*