

Andrei Tarkovsky.
The Chamber of Wishes for Moral-Intellectual Freedom
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Content description

Part I ('FILIACTIONS')

Chapter 1 ('Andrei's Childhood') The Tarkovskys, a family of the literary Russian intelligentsia before and after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. **Keywords:** Arseny Tarkovsky. Marina Tsvetaeva. Boris Pasternak. The Russian Revolution and the intelligentsia.

Chapters 2-3 ('At the World's Oldest Film School', 'The Steamroller and the Violin (1961)') How AT entered the oldest film school in the world, created by the Russian Revolution. The Degree in Film Directing, as taught by Mikhail Romm.

Keywords: VGIK, Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Mikhail Romm. Film Directing Studies. Tarkovsky's *The Steamroller and the Violin*

Part II ('HE SUFFERED AS MUCH AS MOUCHETTE, BUT IVAN HAD MORE HOPE')

A coincidence left the film adaptation of the novel *Ivan* (Bogomolov, 1957) in AT's hands. The key to his script was to make the dreams of the child protagonist visible on the screen: both the nightmares and the memories of his innocent happiness. And to insert some documentary film footage, taken by the Red Army on the front lines of World War II. The film won the first Golden Lion for Soviet cinema, at the Venice Film Festival, 1962. AT becomes the young talent who can definitely raise Soviet cinema's international prestige at that time. **Keywords:** Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*. Childhood and war. Dreams in cinema. Venice Film Festival 1962.

Part III ('THE GENIUS AND HIS TIME'),

Chapter 1 ('Cinema and Cultural Tradition') The 6th centenary of Andrei Rublev's birth offers AT a great opportunity to link Soviet cinema with the great plastic and literary traditions of Russian culture, which he knows through family tradition. The unconditional prestige of the icon painter Rublev, and an unusual period of ideological openness after Stalin's death, favour the approval of AT's project. **Keywords:** The Thaw period in the USSR. Andrei Rublev. Icon painting. Medieval Russia. Stalin and Khrushchev.

Chapter 2 ('What Does Cinema Mean to Me?') AT reflected on what cinema and filmmaking are, and intended to apply his own principles to his new work. This is the origin of his book on cinema and film aesthetics, published under the title *Sculpting in Time* in 1984. **Keywords:** Film theory. Film aesthetics. Sculpting in Time. Direction of film actors.

Chapter 3 ('The Immortality of the Russian People') *Andrei Rublev's* screenplay is articulated around 10 *nouvelles* or chapters of the painter's life, in the midst of a Russia devastated by the invasions of the Tatars and the rivalry of the principalities into which the territory west of Kiev is divided. The icon of the *Trinity* emerges as an embodiment of the ideal of unity that the Russian people longed for at that time. Rublev was able to grasp it and give it expressive form in this icon, having suffered all the pains of the time, along with his fellow citizens. This is why he is the first artist of the Russian nation. His work is ahead of his time. **Keywords:** Andrei Rublev. Icon of the *Holy Trinity*. Artists of the Russian nation. Painting and cinema. Mongol horde.

Chapter 4 ('Tarkovsky and His Time') The film is completed at the same time as the Soviet regime closes in on itself again, with Brezhnev. *Andrei Rublev* is not accepted. Neither Tarkovsky's interpretation of history nor his artistic independence fit into the new ideological orthodoxy. The film is shelved. But the directors of Cannes and Venice, who have seen a first editing of the film, demand it year after year as a condition for admitting any other Soviet production to the competition. In Moscow, Tarkovsky launched his own battle for prestigious artists to defend the film before the government. After 6 years of struggle, its international distribution is authorized, although it cannot officially represent the USSR in any competition. International critics recognize Tarkovsky as the most important living Soviet director. In Russia the film is massively accepted by the public, which receives it as an unusual but transcendent work. **Keywords:** Brezhnev and cinema. Soviet cinema censorship. Cinema and History. Cinema and dissidence. End of the 'thaw'.

Part IV ('CLEAR CONSCIENCE AND HONOURABLE INTENTIONS')

Chapter 1 ('The Possibilities of a Literary and Film Genre') The Soviet government has pressed AT over the interpretation of Russian history. But they think that a film adaptation of Stanislav Lem's science fiction novel *Solaris* will not offer any ideological problems. This is why they accept AT's new project, even before they have settled *Rublev's* distribution. But AT knows that science fiction can deal with humanistic issues, as Dostoevsky had already done in *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877). His film deals with some ethical problems that technological advances and sincerity in social relations pose for contemporary man, including the Soviet one. And also the beauty of planet Earth, which all the crew members of the space station long for with nostalgia. **Keywords:** Stanislav Lem. *Solaris*. Soviet science fiction. Ethics and technology in cinema. Kubrick's *2001 Odyssey*. Dostoyevsky's *The Dream of A Ridiculous Man*.

Chapter 2 ('Storytelling as a Lyrical Poem or as a Dramatic Narrative') AT builds the *Solaris* screenplay with greater dramatic unity than *Andrei Rublev's* script. From now on he will write scripts of two types: either more dramatically unitary, like *Solaris*, *Stalker* or *Sacrifice*; or more lyrical, articulated as intuitive poems on the basis of juxtapositions that are not dramatic but poetic. Such will be the films *Mirror* and *Nostalghia*. **Keywords.** Dramatic unity of the script. Cinema and poetry.

Chapter 3 ('On Tarkovsky's Moon') The beauty of the Russian land, around the *dacha* where the protagonist bids farewell to his family, will be one of his most nostalgic memories when he lives on the space station. Although the mission is a great technical achievement, the scientists orbiting Solaris encounter phenomena that they cannot explain. Some propose to act violently against the planet, unaware of the damage that may result from their actions. Others evade or do not have the psychological strength to face what they encounter. Kris faces his past head-on, and tries to give the personal, human and cordial response that he was unable to give years ago. His decision, although it enriches him morally, leads him to a dead end and he becomes ill. The situation is resolved when the loved one sacrifices herself for him. This lesson of love is a mental wake-up call for Kris, who returns to Earth without having accomplished his mission but transformed into another person.

Keywords: Ethics and science in cinema. Memory and consciousness in cinema. Nostalgia. Russian landscape.

Chapter 4 ('With Feet Rooted in the Earth') The new film's humanistic approach, and Tarkovsky's artistic amplitude to structure and resolve the story plastically, clash again with the Soviet government's ideological narrowness and the artistic narrow-mindedness of his colleagues at Mosfilm. The film opens up a new debate, because Tarkovsky has made a science fiction film like no one expected. Few have understood Tarkovsky's defence of open and honest social relations, which could heal the wounds of a society forced to lie and dissimulate for decades because of Stalinist terror. In the event, although the Soviet administration asks Tarkovsky to make some minor changes, it authorizes the participation of *Solaris* in the Cannes Film Festival and its subsequent international distribution. **Keywords:** The artist's freedom. Moral regeneration after the repression of the Stalinist regime.

Part V ('THE MOULD OF MY IMMORTALITY')

Chapters 1 and 2 ('Confession', 'A Film Out of the Author's Experience')

Tarkovsky wants to use his life experience in his new film, as a novelist uses his in a novel. He thus claims the filmmaker's right to speak in the first person. He believes that the more sincere and authentic the story shown on the screen, the more the audience will be moved. These are the artistic principles of his new project. Some, however, interpret them as a growing egotism on Tarkovsky's part. The filmmaker reflects on the relationship between the particular of an individual and his family environment and the universal of a country and a historical epoch. Tolstoy had already done this with the Rostov family in *War and Peace*, and Tarkovsky sets out to do it with his own family. This is why he includes some documentary film footage referring to the great events of the time. **Keywords.** Memory and cinema. The mother in film. War and cinema. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Chapter 3 ('As Andrei Lies Dying') *Mirror* tries to show on screen everything that goes through the mind of a dying man –Tarkovsky himself. His consciousness recalls scenes from the past, long ago forgotten. Most of them involve his mother, and her efforts to raise her children after she has already separated from her husband and never remarried. The present and the past mingle in the protagonist's experience,

which is highly subjective and has a moral tone typical of the proximity of death. He also recalls the hardest and most significant episodes for the whole nation, in the times he has lived through. And his desire to achieve a kind of immortality through art and culture, typical of artists such as Leonardo da Vinci. **Keywords.** Cinema and memory. Tolstoy's *Ivan Ilyich*. Leonardo da Vinci. Documentary film and fiction film.

Chapter 4 ('Interviews') The radical artistic principles and formal audacity that Tarkovsky applies in *Mirror* definitely divide his admirers from his detractors. The latter included most of his colleagues, film directors at Mosfilm, who envy his creative powers. This is why they put pressure on the Soviet government's new Minister of Cinema, Jermash, to ensure that Tarkovsky is not given any pre-eminence. Yet Tarkovsky has it, because his films (including *Mirror*) are the most award-winning of all Soviet productions outside the USSR (and the least recognized in his own country). And also because they are the ones that bring in the most international currency for the Russian treasury, since they are all bought up by international film distributors. Their films are acclaimed by Western critics and cinephiles. **Keywords:** Interviews with Tarkovsky. Envy among artists. Tarkovsky's marginalization.

Part VI "AN IDIOT IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE OF CREATIVITY"

Tarkovsky feels morally bound to the cinema he makes; to do otherwise would be to betray himself. This is why he carries on, even if his way of behaving places him outside the main stream of Soviet cinema, its authorities and its awards. This is symbolically embodied by the protagonist of his new film, *Stalker*. Tarkovsky sets him against a scientist and a trendy writer, to further highlight the typical profile of each of them. Tarkovsky again turns to science fiction, this time with a story by the Strugatsky brothers, in order to deal freely with the personal issues that interest him most. In *Stalker* he further unifies the action and the time and place in which it takes place (the so-called 'Zone') in order to sculpt in time even more radically. **Keywords:** *Stalker*. Tales of the Strugatskys. Soviet science fiction. Sculpting in Time.

Part VII (SOBORNOST – UNIVERSAL FUSION OF ALL)

Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 ('Chaadayev's Nostalgia for Rome', 'Gogol's Nostalgia for Jerusalem', 'Herzen's Nostalgia for Europe', 'Dostoevsky's Nostalgia for Asia')

As befits its geographical position as a vast country between Europe and Asia, Russian culture has been divided between a more Eastern and a more Western vocation. This was of decisive importance for Pushkin, Chaadayev, Gogol, Herzen and Dostoevsky. Tarkovsky draws on the tradition of Russian poets' and novelists' travels and sojourns in Europe to create his new script based on his own experience as a Russian intellectual in Western countries. **Keywords.** Pushkin. Chaadayev. Gogol. Herzen. Dostoevsky. Westerners and Slavophiles.

Chapter 5 ('Andrei Arsenyevich, is He One of Us?') Since 1970 he has been writing a diary in which he reflects on the country in which he lives, Russian culture and his next film projects. The collapse of the Soviet state system is in the air, and

yet many of his colleagues act hypocritically, as if nothing were happening, in an attempt to gain as much personal profit as possible before the USSR disappears altogether. Tarkovsky's intuition is ahead of the *glasnost* era, he understands before most of his fellow citizens do that the Soviet regime is unviable. In these diaries he recounts the staging of *Hamlet* at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre in Moscow. And the various trips he made to Italy to prepare his next feature film, *Nostalghia*. On one of them he made his first 16 mm film, *Tempo de viaggio*. **Keywords.** Tarkovsky's diaries. Tarkovsky in Italy. Tarkovsky and *Hamlet*. *Tempo di viaggio*. Tarkovsky and *glasnost*.

Chapter 6 (“Nostalghia, by Andrei Tarkovsky) Russian intellectuals are terrible emigrants, as they usually end up feeling very homesick for their country. This happens to the character in Tarkovsky's film, who embodies the same state of mind the filmmaker suffers from when he is far from his country, his culture and his family. Nostalgia is an illness that sharpens the sense of compassion for suffering humanity. The protagonist projects this feeling onto an insane Italian who proposes a crazy scheme to prevent the end of the world. The Russian, who gives credence to what may be his last chance to perform an action of universal, albeit symbolic, scope, decides to carry it out. **Keywords.** Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*. Homesickness. Italy and Russia. Tarkovsky's faith.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 (“Between East and West”, ‘The USSR Is Trying to Make a Superfluous Man of Me’, ‘Against the Nationalization of Conscience’) The manoeuvring of the USSR representatives on the Cannes jury is for Tarkovsky an unmistakable sign of the Soviet government's definitive animosity towards him and his work. Still in Italy, he writes several letters to the head of cinema in the USSR Government, to the Communist Party and to the Filmmakers' Union, and receives no reply. In the West he has no shortage of work opportunities. He directs the staging of *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden, with Claudio Abbado. He is invited to participate in the Telluride Festival (Colorado, USA). Back in Italy, Tarkovsky calls a press conference to explain that he will remain in the West to continue working, because if he returns to his country he would not be able to do so. His only demand is that his teenage son be allowed to leave Moscow and join his mother and him. **Keywords.** Tarkovsky's exile. Tarkovsky and *Boris Godunov*. Tarkovsky and Abbado. Tarkovsky and Telluride Film Festival.

Part VIII (MAKE USE OF YOUR FREEDOM: DARE TO GIVE A GIFT TO ALL MANKIND)

Chapter 1 (‘Night is Coming’) Tarkovsky is not used to citizens' consumerism in the rich countries of the West. In Russia, instead of consumer goods (of which there are none), cultural goods are more appreciated. But in the West these are increasingly in the minority. Moreover, filmmakers, artists and intellectuals in the West seem to be afraid of dealing with ethical and humanistic issues, says Tarkovsky. His convictions of the need to personally contribute something to the humanity of one's own time, so that culture does not degrade, absorbed by stupid consumerist satisfaction or by a cynical lack of ethical commitment, are thus exacerbated. The only thing that Tarkovsky does not accept is that the State, or a political party or a religious

institution, dictates what each person must do in this respect. In freedom lies precisely the value of all personal moral action, and also its risk. **Keywords.** Tarkovsky and consumerism. Tarkovsky's spirituality. Tarkovsky and individual ethical responsibility.

Chapter 2 ('The Will') In Tarkovsky's filmography, *Sacrifice* is important, first, because lung cancer, diagnosed right at the end of the shoot, made this the Russian director's last film. Also, because he had set out to measure himself on that occasion against one of the filmmakers he most admired - Bergman. *Sacrifice* is also important because in order to work in Bergman's country, with his actors and his director of photography yet without ceasing to be Tarkovsky, he had to take his own conception of cinema to its ultimate consequences.

Sacrifice is thus extreme cinema in Tarkovsky's biography; it is extreme also because of the plastic demands it imposes on the cinematic medium; and extreme because it carries further than ever the moral-intellectual concerns characteristic of Tarkovsky's universe.

Sacrifice is a testament, which Tarkovsky dedicates to the son he has just recovered - Andrei Andreevich- and from whom he would soon be separated. **Keywords.** Tarkovsky's *Sacrifice*. Nuclear catastrophe and cinema. Tarkovsky and Bergman. Tarkovsky and Erland Josephson. Tarkovsky and Nykvist.

Chapter 3 ('Either Hamlet or Saint Anthony'). The Soviet government allows Tarkovsky's son to join his mother and his father, who is seriously ill, in Paris. Tarkovsky believes that this family reunification will give him the strength to overcome his illness. Moreover, the production of *Sacrifice* was a great victory for him against the USSR, as he proved to its Government that he could direct films without its authorization and without its funding. He is therefore thinking of new film projects, and has also been invited by several European production companies to make them. But the disease has progressed further than he thinks. Tarkovsky is unable to turn it around. **Key words.** Tarkovsky's illness. Tarkovsky's son is reunited with his parents. Tarkovsky's last projects. Tarkovsky's death.