
MODERNITY CRISIS AND ITS REFLECTIONS IN TARKOVSKY'S NOSTALGHIA AND MIRROR

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Abstract

This article examines the modernity crisis and the phenomenon of nostalgia in the works of the distinctive Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky's films Nostalghia (1983) and Mirror (1975). Within this perspective this study not only investigates the term, nostalgia, and its typology in the films, but also focuses on the socio-cultural and political refractions in the background that shape the director's use of the concept. Tarkovsky's cinema, particularly his last films, reflects the consequences of modernity crisis. In this regard his films Mirror and Nostalghia play an important role. This paper suggests that the film Nostalghia was made by the director in Italy in order to reveal this crisis in the case of a poet. The film, Nostalghia, removes the frontiers that developed in the Mirror, and puts the phenomenon nostalgia in the centre of the modernity crisis. To analyse the relationships between modernity crisis and Tarkovsky's films, this study grounds its analytic perspectives on the qualitative-descriptive method. In this regard, the study will start with the general characteristics of Tarkovsky's cinema and examine the typology of nostalgia, and then focus on his Nostalghia. After a detailed analysis of Nostalghia within this perspective, the article will compare it to another of his films, the controversial Mirror, to examine the changes in the master's life.

Keywords: Modernity, Nostalghia, Andrei Tarkovsky

MODERNİTENİN KRİZİ VE TARKOVSKY'NİN NOSTALGHIA VE AYNA FİLMLERİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI

Öz

Bu makale modernitenin krizi ve nostalji olgusunu ünlü Rus film yönetmeni Andrei Tarkovsky'nin Nostalghia (1983) ve Ayna (1975) filmleri özelinde incelemektedir. Bu çerçevede, çalışma, nostalji kavramını ve onun türlerini söz konusu filmler içerisinde incelemekle yetinmemekte, aynı zamanda, yönetmenin bu kavramı kullanımına şekil veren arka plandaki sosyo-kültürel ve siyasal kırılmaları da incelemektedir. Tarkovsky sineması, özellikle son filmleri, modernite krizinin sonuçlarını yansıtan bir sinemadır. Bundan dolayı onun Nostalghia ve Ayna filmleri ayrı bir öneme sahiptir. Bu çalışma, Nostalghia filminin, Tarkovsky tarafından, modernitenin krizini bir şairin hikâyesi özelinde vurgulamak için, özellikle İtalya'da çekildiği tezini ileri sürmektedir. Nostalghia, Ayna'da geliştirilen sınırları kaldırır ve nostalji fenomenini modernitenin krizinin merkezine koyar. Çalışma Tarkovsky filmlerinin modernitenin kriziyle olan ilişkilerini çözümleyebilmek için, analitik perspektiflerini nitel-betimleyici araştırma yöntemini kullanarak geliştirmektedir. Bu çerçevede, çalışma önce nostalji türleri ve Tarkovsky sinemasının genel karakteristik özelliklerini incelemekte, ardından Nostalghia filmine odaklanmaktadır. Nostalghia'nın bu perspektif içerisinde ayrıntılı analizinden sonra makale söz konusu filmi Tarkovsky'nin diğer filmi olan, tartışmalı Ayna filmiyle, bir ustanın kariyerindeki değişimleri incelemek için karşılaştırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Modernite, Nostalji, Andrei Tarkovsky

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“We have created a civilization which threatens to annihilate mankind.”

(Tarkovsky 1987: 234)

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer accurate to define the term nostalgia only within the framework of longing for the past. Today, in contemporary culture and society, nostalgia, as a phenomenon, is connected to social and cultural changes in the background, as American cultural critic Fredric Jameson (1991) has noted. The contemporary human being, unable to live his life within the coherence of time and space because of the time-space compression in which he lives, turns his eyes to the past to construct shelters for himself. This, in fact, can be read as what Fredric Jameson (1991; 1998: 5-10) has also described, in a different context, as the “Crisis of the present”. Here, the past substantially has a conflict with the present. Today, cinema becomes one of the most important fields that represents this crisis and conflict.

Although studies have been made to answer the critical question, “how do western cinemas, including Hollywood, represent this situation?” only a few of them concentrate on its reflections in Russian cinema, particularly in Andrei Tarkovsky's films.¹ However, this paper will not study nostalgia within the boundaries of these postmodern debates, rather it will examine nostalgia as one of the important elements that reflect the changes and which reveals a fundamental crisis, modernity crisis in contemporary culture and society. At this point, one film comes to the fore: *Nostalgia*.

Nostalgia is an important film especially for two primary reasons: It reflects changes in contemporary culture and society (with its Russian components); and it also represents the changes in individual perceptions and attitudes in modern reality, no matter whether in the East or in the West. Therefore, the location of the film was consciously selected by the director: To emphasize this situation in a place where baroque and Renaissance, two important developments for the formation of the European modernity, took place. In this sense, names, geographies, and the boundaries, even the political systems, do not make a distinction, rather they refer to the same crisis that the modern rationality produced and became obvious especially in the twentieth century. *Nostalgia* is a film that touches both on the individual and the universal spheres at the same time within an eclectic structure. Tarkovsky (1987: 239) clearly expresses this significant point.

While *Nostalgia* tells of a poet's life in exile it leaves us in a conflicting situation between his memories and desires, ‘unique’ past experience and the ‘lost’ present, a failure of modern fragmented memory. This conflicting situation in the film, in fact, (and in some other of Tarkovsky's films) represents the impossibility of nostalgia (the film was shot in the west in a self-imposed exile), and inability to engage in active remembrance within this fragmentation. At this point, the eclectic structure of the film (Russian cultural motives with Italian Renaissance, and Baroque), actually, represent a degree of cultural amnesia, and

completes this impossibility, and in the end widens the scale, from Russian modernity to its roots, European modernity in which integrated experience –one of the crucial factors that shaped modern individual perception in modern times- collapsed. In this respect, modernity, as discussed below, leaves behind more or less the same experiences to the contemporary individual.

At this point, *Nostalghia* completes an adventure started in the *Mirror*. There is little doubt that the *Mirror* was thoroughly an autobiographical film and is more connected with Tarkovsky's inner world. However, in *Nostalghia*, these boundaries are removed, and it tells a more general problem than the *Mirror*. If, as stated below, the *Mirror* shows the fragmented individual memory, its obstacles and impossibilities in an individual sphere in contemporary culture and society, *Nostalghia* takes this fragmentation, obstacles and impossibilities and makes them part of the modern world experience. Both of the films show this experience born in the modernity crisis: The one, the *Mirror*, reflects its consequences in a thoroughly individual sphere, the other, *Nostalghia*, widens it to enormous geography, to the centre of Europe.

All these facts are represented to us by a creative film director in a distinctive film language. What kind of language is this then? Shall we examine it only within the boundaries of film aesthetics or consider it as an important component of a film language representing the social changes and transformations (in Tarkovsky's case, in the Soviet Union) at the same time? In the case of Tarkovsky both of them become important.

However, before developing a descriptive method to examine these points, it is necessary to construct a general perspective on Tarkovsky's cinema and nostalgia within this point of view.

From *Ivan's Childhood* to *Nostalghia*

When Andrei Tarkovsky was introducing his first film, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), which he only made in five months in 1961 after graduating, no one probably in Russia knew that they would be watching a film from a promising film director in the new generation of Soviet filmmakers. After the screening at the Dom Kino, the Cinematographer Union's Club in Moscow, the audience perhaps thought that they had seen something extraordinary: After all, nothing like this had appeared on their screen before. At this time Tarkovsky had not yet turned 30.

Ivan's Childhood was a milestone in the talented film director's career. It used the themes that its director employed throughout his film career, so *Ivan's Childhood* constitutes a beginning in Tarkovsky's cinema career. The film is set during German occupation in the Soviet heartland. The central character of the film, the boy Ivan's family has been killed by the invading Germans. And the boy wants to take a revenge. *Ivan's Childhood* was made in black-and-white, which subtly blurs the line between reality, dream and memory. The boy, 12-year-old Ivan Burlayev's story not only shows an orphan's patriotic stance but also his complicated personal history, split in his consciousness which manifests itself in conflicting dreams and memories. After this extraordinary first film, which received numerous international awards, he turned his camera on a 15th century Russian painter in

his next film, *Andrei Rublev* (1966). This film was also saturated with dream and memory, the memory of a nation's past in the case of an icon and fresco painter, Andrei Rublev.

Tarkovsky had difficulties in making his films, due to the pressures from the authorities. His films do not fit easily into the prevailing ideology and beliefs. Six years after *Andrei Rublev* Tarkovsky decided to focus on a completely new genre, science fiction, to express himself in a symbolic level. In this genre he not only criticized the totality of the political system, but also the rationality of modern science that exclude itself from all beliefs, and spirituality. Tarkovsky made his first science fiction film, *Solaris*, in 1972. He adapted a well-known science fiction novel by Stanislaw Lem. However, he, as he does in his other films, he turned it into a new story which was different from that of Lem. His film style in this period was based on a mixture of black-and-white and color images and was open to different readings, which was new to the audience of the time both in the West, and in the East. Nevertheless, despite criticisms, he insisted on his style, and resisted pressure to adopt it in every way he could.

Under the influence of his personal memories he made another controversial film in 1975, the *Mirror*. He, as will be discussed below, continued from where he started in his first film *Ivan's Childhood* by focusing on the individual sphere, the sphere of dreams and memories, though in a very complicated and personal way this time. He also continued this unique style in his *Nostalgia* following a half mystical parable and a half science fiction work, *Stalker* (1979).

In an individual who is sensitive to his age and creative eyes and mind, the dosage of memories and dreams of the past intensified in many ways in a different culture, a different climate. Moreover, in Tarkovsky's case, if you consider censorship and funding problems along with ideological ones and the seventeen years 'unemployment' in the film industry at this time in the Soviet Union, the situation, as might be expected, became unbearable. However, ironically enough, after being officially sent to Italy to make the film *Nostalgia*, Tarkovsky refused to return to his home country. And from then on, as Volkov (2008: 239) has pointed out, his films were banned in the Soviet Union and his name disappeared from books on cinema. Before he ended up in the West he had made films, as we will see below, under the influence of what Boym (2001) called "reflective nostalgia".² After this departure, nostalgia became an important concept for his cinema. However, if we consider all Tarkovsky's films we come to see the level of the concept of nostalgia differs. In other words, we encounter mainly two types of nostalgia can be seen in his films. The types of nostalgia used in Tarkovsky's cinema indirectly show us the contemporary social crisis which is based on what Hutcheon (2013) has called in a different context, "cultural amnesia, inability to engage in active remembrance" because of the collapse of integrated experience and the temporal index in modern societies. Then, how do Tarkovsky's films represent this? How does he show this general crisis in modernity, in the particular case of a poet? The answers to these questions would be easier through discussions of the concept of nostalgia first. In this regard, we need to lay out the definition of nostalgia and its types.

The Concept and Typology of Nostalgia

The term nostalgia is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a sentimental yearning for a period of the past, a regretful or wistful memory of an earlier time, severe homesickness”. The word comes from the Greek words, *nóstos*, meaning ‘return home’, and a Homeric word, ‘álgos’, meaning ‘longing’ or ‘pain’.. Although the word originated in Greek, as a concept it gained its contemporary meaning in 19th century Europe (Boym 2001).³ However, nostalgia experienced an interesting historical development before gaining its contemporary meaning. Although it seems that it comes from Greek, it was coined by a 19-year old Swiss student of medicine, Johannes Hofer (1934), in his dissertation thesis, “Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia”, in 1688. He examined the term as “a lethal kind of severe homesickness” (Hutcheon 2013). Interestingly the term was used only in medicine in the 17th century. For this reason it was treated as if it were a ‘disease’, a medical disease category. Therefore some interesting methods were used in the treatment of this ‘disease’: Leeches, warm hypnotic emulsions, opium and a return to Alps (Boym, 2001: 27).

Although these treatments were used to cure individuals who were stricken by this disease, nostalgic feelings could not easily be eased and this situation, on the other hand, caused an increase in doubt about it. Supposedly it was believed that there were some symptoms provoking remembrance and they triggered some health complications in patients (Boym, 2001: 14). They believed that nostalgia changed the balance of the human body and made it a sphere of mystical diseases, diseases that needed to be examined in the concrete realities of the world.

The adventure of the term in the 17th and 18th centuries should be studied in the spirit of these centuries. After all, in these centuries, the 18th century specifically, are the centuries in which the Enlightenment emerged and intensified, and the concepts and symptoms were studied within the limits of positivist reason. The word, therefore, was examined through the concepts of physics and physiology, the main areas of the positivism of the time. One has to wait until the emergence of 19th century romanticism and mass culture to see the real interactions between collective and individual memories, the foundations of the concept beyond positivist medical explanations, as Hutcheon (2013) and Boym (2001: 16) have pointed out.

Although these two developments shaped the final meaning of the term by the twentieth century, nostalgia became generalized and psychiatrists had begun to become interested (Strobinski, 1966: 90). Nostalgia then became more of a psychological ‘problem’, a “disorder of imagination” as Strobinski (1966: 90) puts it, rather than a medical disease. The term slowly slipped into becoming a concept, the temporal, from the spatial. Thus, nostalgia became not simply a yearning to return home, but a longing for a place, a time, a specific time period in the past to regain what was lost in the clouds of the dissatisfaction of the present. Undoubtedly the impossibility of regaining the ‘lost’ (time unlike space cannot be returned to) with a withdrawal from the reality and shelter into the past is connected with the collapse of collective experiences and the social transformations of modern times. In other words, individuals of contemporary societies, no matter whether they are in the East or West, concentrate on some moments of the past to compensate for what is lost

in their real world. The more modern collective experience degrades, the more difficult it becomes to compensate for this degradation with memories of the past.

This impossibility, as will be discussed below, was first examined by an influential writer, a 'grandeur figure' of modernism, Marcel Proust (2005), who during his lifetime tried to search for lost time and shows us this impossibility at the end of his 'oeuvre', because of the collapse of the modern individual inner world. The type of treatments for the collapse is experienced in different ways. At this point if we take the analysis of Boym, we come across two types of nostalgia:⁴ "Restorative Nostalgia" and "Reflective Nostalgia".

Restorative nostalgia focuses on the first part of the compound, 'nostos'. It is connected with regaining the 'lost' on a wider scale. Thus it aims to reconstruct the lost home, often in association with religious or nationalist revivals (Boym, 2001: 41). The lack of coherent, integrated experience of the present and bitter images about present-day reality are intended to repair, to restore with an honorific journey into the past of national history. Not surprisingly this kind of nostalgia appears most perfect to individuals in society and the conflict level is at the minimum in this type. Collective identity seems complimentary to individual identity, thus no serious friction occurs between them. Although this type of nostalgia is rather experienced at moments of social crisis, it is a social emollient, an agency in adjustment to crisis which reinforces national identity when confidence is weakened and threatened, as Robert Hewison (1987: 18) suggests in a different context.

Reflective nostalgia, however, dwells on the second part, 'algia'. "If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym, 2001: 49). Individual remembrance becomes important here in reflective nostalgia. Past individual experiences and memories of them take the place of collective experiences. Therefore this type of nostalgia is concerned with longing and the "imperfect process of recalling" as Boym (2001: 4) puts it. The "imperfect process of recalling" though leaves a memory full of intensive internal conflicts and complexities behind. However, this has a potential to arouse most parts of the consciousness. Human beings have a dual part in their memory, which intersect and clash with each other from time to time.

Nostalgia in *Nostalgia*

The film *Nostalgia* tells the story of a poet, Andrei Gorchakov (Oleg Yankovsky) who came to Italy with his translator Eugenia (Domiziana Giordano) to research the life of the Russian serf composer Pavel Sosnovsky. It seems that Sosnovsky was not a fictional character, he led a normal life. He is known as a talented composer because of his successful musical works. However, when he got caught by an 'unavoidable' nostalgia he decided to return to serf-owing country Russia. Shortly after his return he hanged himself. Although he knew that there was no way out for him there he wanted to die in his home country.

There are similarities in the fates of the main characters, and the main characters live in similar atmospheres although they are from different climates, different countries: The opening scene, in this regard, is an impressive scene that stresses this 'similarity' in these

fates: The images in the mists in Italy resemble Moscow, Gorchakov's and Sosnovsky's home country, and degrade the borders between reality and dream, reality and dream are intertwined even in the very beginning in the film.

The main character, poet Gorchakov, "watch other people's lives from a distance, crushed by the recollections of his past, by the faces of those dear to him, which assail his memory together with the sounds and smells of home" (Tarkovsky, 1987: 203). He dreams throughout the film, returning to his past, his family home. There he sees family members, his mother (Tarkovsky dedicated the film to his mother), and his children. While these scenes reflect the grief and worry within black-and-white images, the telephoto lens intensifies and folds these feelings for the poet in a foreign land. These scenes in the film contain both forms of nostalgia. Although Tarkovsky (1987: 202) explains that he wanted to express a Russian version of nostalgia the film uses the reflective type more often. They are not separate, rather they complete one another. Restorative nostalgia is experienced in Italy, in afar. Gorchakov observes the new Italian life from a distance with his own Russian eyes (he referred to as 'Russian poet' throughout the film). He is in despair and feels a sense of alienation.⁵ A feeling of emptiness in space adds a new dimension to this state, and this can clearly be seen in every frame. The characters are as if getting drowned in the new spaces. What remains after strong feelings of nostalgia, either reflective or restorative, intensifies this feelings of emptiness.⁶ In one of the scenes, for instance, Gorchakov is alone in his room, and is facing his despair in the middle of Europe. Only a black dog (this black dog frequently seen in Tarkovsky's films, especially in his *Stalker*) accompanies to this despair. There is little doubt that the black dog symbolizes both the impossibility of regaining the lost, and the protest of this impossibility.

He has difficulties to adapt his past experiences to new life experiences. In this regard, longing for Russian land, family and home is deeply felt thousands of miles away. He starts to realize that exile becomes an inexorable fate for the poet in a foreign land. He feels this, as he search of the life of the composer, Sosnovsky. Thus, his fate intersects with both his own life and with the composer Sosnovsky's life. Their attachment to their national roots, Russian culture, as Tarkovsky (1987: 202) pointed out, attaches them regardless of destiny may fling them. In this sense, it must be noted here that there are three pasts that complete one another in the film: Pavel Sosnovsky, as the representation of the distant past (he exists only in name, we never see his image), mystic Domenico as the figure of the near past (he lives in the near past, and, due to his thoughts on the apocalypse of the world, he locked up his family), and the poet Andrei Gorchakov who went to Italy to research Sosnovsky's experience (he meets Domenico and witnesses his story with his own eyes), as the representation of the present time. Korchakov suddenly realizes that his story has some parallel points with Sosnovsky's and Domenico's lives. In an explanatory scene, Gorchakov comes into the frame at a point where Sosnovsky is missing his home country: One character (Domenico) is in exile in his own land, others (Sosnovsky and Gorchakov) join this exile, far away from their own lands: The essence of life is the same in these intertwined life stories.

Gorchakov's journey while he searching Sosnovsky's life and while he sees his fate in the

composer's story, in fact, tells another story: story of the person behind the film, Andrei Tarkovsky. Gorchakov's life, significantly enough, reflects some of the points of the director's life. Both of them, alien to their environment, have to express themselves under the intense longing feelings in the far distance. The state of being 'alien', intrinsically causes a cultural conflict. The conflict in the film, as Mitchell (1984: 2-11) points out, arises from the clash between an innocent view of the world (many things seem innocent in the act of nostalgia) and the real conditions of life for a man outside his own country. Yet on the other hand these conflicts are only on the surface in the end. Tarkovsky seems to realize that his situation derives from a deep crisis and for this reason is beyond the boundaries on earth.

The cultural differences and the difficulties of harmony unavoidably generate restorative nostalgic feelings which desire a restoration of the 'lost' family home. All these feelings are ornamented with a sense of Russian in the film. Although Tarkovsky (1987: 202), in his book *Sculpting in Time*, which includes much of his sincere observations and thoughts on cinema, art, literature, politics and his life, explained that he wanted to describe the Russian version of nostalgia in the film, these restorative nostalgic feelings are only on the surface. The film problematizes the reasons that cause these feelings and, significantly enough, is more sensitive to the reflective ones.

It must also be noted though that Tarkovsky did not make an exclusively nostalgic film, as he did in all his other films. He generally avoided the strict boundaries of a single specific form and content and he constantly forced the cinematic tools he had. This is why he added the reflective form to the restorative one. Thus, while the film tells a story of a poet in a foreign land we witness conflicting memories inside him. An individual biography, as Zinchenko (2011: 84-87) points out, is characterized by the correspondence of the past, present and future. For this reason, emptiness in the spaces in the film are mixed with his conflicting memories and a sense of alienation to the new culture. These scenes are ornamented with a sense of impossibility of escape. Tarkovsky uses restorative and reflective feelings as a mixture and clashes them against each other. He expressed that he wanted to represent the despair and hopelessness that comes after restorative nostalgic feelings and the individual dilemmas that immediately appear after reflective nostalgic ones in *Nostalghia* (Tarkovsky, 1987: 204):

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 *nostalgia* provoked not only by his remoteness from home but also by a global yearning for the wholeness of existence.

The film goes one step further. While it basically tells the story of poet, it shows a general crisis that affects all the characters. Every main character comes together in the final sequence, and Domenico's speech summarizes the crisis.

What ancestor speaks in me?
I can't leave simultaneously
In my hand and in my body

That's why I can't be just one person
(...)
There are no great masters left.
That's the real evil of our time
The heart's path is covered in shadow
We must listen to the voices that seem useless
In brains full of long sewage pipes of school wall, tarmac
and welfare papers the buzzing of insects must enter
We must fill the eyes and ears of all us
with things that are the beginning of a great dream
Someone must shout that we'll build the pyramids
It doesn't matter if we don't!
We must feel that wish and stretch the corners of soul like endless sheet
(...)
Man, listen!
In you, water, fire, and then ashes
And the bones in the ashes
The bones and the ashes.

The famous pool scene follows after this poem. Despair and lack of freedom, some of the main characteristics of the crisis of the modern alienated world, concerns all persons. When Domenico realizes this, he, like Sosnovsky, wants to commit suicide: He put himself on fire. "Domenico 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" (Tarkovsky, 1987: 208). At this point, the final part of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (which later became the European Union Anthem) is heard in the background in the scene and Italy with its magnificent ruins are no longer meaningful (Tarkovsky, 1987: 204-205):

Italy comes into Gorchakov's consciousness at the moment of his tragic conflict with reality (not merely with the conditions of life, but with life itself, which never satisfies the claims made on it by the individual) and stretches out 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 endeavour, a sign that mankind has taken a path that can only lead to destruction.

Thus when Gorchakov turns to his inner world he sees there the modern world which no longer offers him a meaningful, spiritual life, but instead dissatisfactions either for him or for humanity. Because the world is in a crisis and this crisis reflects in Gorchakov's spiritual crisis –he is unable to overcome this (Tarkovsky, 1987: 205).

The director indicates, as he also showed in his previous two films, *Solaris* (1972) and *Stalker* (1979) that the poet's contemporary "Spiritual crisis" (Tarkovsky, 1987: 205) is not due to his Russian character only, but whether to be a modern human being one has to live under modern life conditions. In this respect, Italy was intentionally selected by the director to represent this crisis.⁷ The location, as King (2008: 67) has stressed, indicates temporal and physical separation, the impossibility of return as in one of the scenes in

which Gorchakov persistently takes the burning candle to the other side of the empty pool: Returns will be as difficult as taking the candle to the other side in the wind. At this point, *Nostalgia* becomes a mirror-image of Tarkovsky's inner world far away from home (Tarkovsky, 1987: 202):

How could I have imagined as I was making *Nostalgia* 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.

The past casts shadows on the present-day reality. Although exile generated some patriotic feelings, these feelings are the signs of the searching of an individual, a searching for home, for the eternal meaning of life beyond spatial boundaries within modern life. Then what we encounter here is an exile on earth, not the life of an exile in a new land, Italy.⁸ Therefore Andrei's nostalgia is an exilic nostalgia. For this reason, in one of the scenes of the final sequence Andrei's appearance, which is shrunk by a telephoto lens, bears a universal meaning. His image is brought to close by the camera in the far land, signifying a message that the stories of individuals in the world are actually intertwined. In this sense the East and the West bear similar meanings for individuals: Sosnovsky, Domenico, and Gorchakov's stories are alike, as in the final scene where the Russian house appears in the middle of the Italian cathedral.

Nostalgia in the *Mirror*

Under the influence of Marcel Proust, Tarkovsky (1987: 58) writes: "[memory] makes us vulnerable, subject to pain". At this point, *Nostalgia* becomes like the second part of his earlier film, the *Mirror* which he also made under strong reflective nostalgic feelings in 1975. If one (the *Mirror*) is the root, the other (the *Nostalgia*) reveals the roots that appear in the rifts of consciousness.

In his thoroughly autobiographical film, the *Mirror* (1975) Tarkovsky starts a journey into his childhood, people whom he saw as important. This journey for Tarkovsky, as King (2008: 67) has correctly noted, "is the attempt through memory to regain what is lost". For him "personal memories are more real than any artificial resemblance or displacement" (Burns, 2011: 114). In this film then, where he forced the frontiers of creativity either narratively or visually, Tarkovsky uses reflective memories in their outermost boundaries. A director who writes "in a certain sense the past is far more real, or at any rate more stable, more resilient than the present" (Tarkovsky, 1987: 58) would not stop and wants to activate other parts of the consciousness with a heavy use of reflective feelings. One by one, memories are intertwined in the aggregated memory experiences. In this perspective, he approaches his own past, his own *sins* under the effects of the reality, the collective experience of his time. This style can also be observed in *Nostalgia*. However, in *Nostalgia* the frontiers are removed; the people are the same except their cultural differences (Gorchakov expresses in one of the scenes that the human beings can lift the boundaries and come together and know one another without any frontiers, and the arts can help this situation). Nonetheless, Tarkovsky is away from these thoughts. Thus, although the *Mirror* is yet a thoroughly biographic film in comparison with *Nostalgia* (Tarkovsky, 1987: 134):

Mirror was not an attempt to talk about myself, not at all. It was about my feelings towards people dear to me; about my relationship with them; my perpetual pity for them and my own inadequacy— my feeling of duty left unfulfilled.

Memories in the film, appear disconnected from each other like in a dream. It leaps from sequence to sequence without regard for chronology, as in a dream. As stressed above, there is a continuity between *Mirror* and *Nostalghia*. Lost in memories with the free associations in order to explore inner spiritual power gives the chance to reconstruct what is lost. There, in the flow of memories, “‘passed’ means for a person when for each of us the past is the bearer of all that is constant in the reality of the present” (Tarkovsky 1987: 58). Therefore when individuals find the core contents of their past they can make a significant step towards reaching the essence of life.

Gorchakov, who lives in between the past and the present, makes sense of the present with the past. At this point, the influence of Marcel Proust (2005) can clearly be seen. An individual, as Zelechow (2004: 79-80) points out in his analysis of Proust, is not only understanding an act of recalling in remembrance, but combines the present with the past. Present time intertwined with the past, its essence exists in the past. This combination changed with new kinds of experiences. The combination of past and present transformed into an ontological step in order to overcome what Benjamin (1968: 194) has called “shock experience” after the collapse of ‘Erfahrung’ (integrated experience), as Benjamin puts it. Due to the change in the working of the consciousness (because its flow is divided by the shock experiences of modern life) the impressions, which are not completely enough to depict reality, enter ‘Erfahrung’ (Benjamin, 1968: 163). This shock defense mechanism is not characterized by the impressions and experiences within a coherent structure (this is no longer possible in modern societies though), rather concentrating on specific moments, for “assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness” (Burns, 2011: 115). This, in fact, is the crisis of the present time in which the modern individual constructs his experiences. The collapse of ‘Erfahrung’ in modern societies brought shocks, and according to Benjamin, shock experience became the norm. This experience can be seen especially when Gorchakov turns to his past. The scenes in which the audience hears the sounds of an iron cutting machine with the memories of Gorchakov remind us one of the characteristics of modern life, the individual experiences: The past cannot be adapted to the present completely, due to the shock experiences received in a fragmented structure of modern life. Past represents this inability. Then, the act of remembrance must be accompanied by the images. Therefore, it was not a coincidence for Tarkovsky to mix up personal memories and dreams with historical news footage in the film: The one reveals the shock experience in the individual sphere, the other depicts the dissolve of the integrated structure and shows it putting some precise points in the past at the cost of the integrity of the filmic structure.

The problem of disintegrated social experience occurs from mainly time-space compression in late capitalist societies, as Jameson (1991) and Harvey (1992) convincingly argue, after utilizing the main theses of Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs⁹ and German writer Walter Benjamin, becomes significant in Tarkovsky’s films, particularly in *Mirror* and *Nostalghia*:

They are, as noted above, the complementary chapters of a creative director's unique individual past and terrifying and unhappy present social experiences. *Nostalgia* fills the gap the *Mirror* had created. Then they both become parts of a stone sculpted in time. The parts of this sculpture consist of not only Tarkovsky's individual life experiences, but also those of Russia and modern life. Both of them depict states of entrapments, though one (Tarkovsky) being the descendant of the other.

As a universal artist who speaks a universal language, even in some purely Russian forms and themes, as in *Adrei Rublev* for instance, Tarkovsky and his cinema reflect this situation. While his films appear to be part of Soviet intellectual history, on the other hand, they are also the works of modern history. Isn't Soviet history essentially part of modern history?¹⁰ Even from the revolutionary period to the end of the Soviet Union. This is the question to be answered to understand the crisis of the modern individual in his filmmaking in a wider context, in relation to the characteristics of contemporary culture and society.

CONCLUSION

From Modern Hopes to Revolutionary Disappointments

It does not seem correct to separate Russian modernity from European modernity. Rather, Russian society was shaped under European modernity even in the prerevolutionary period, as Epstein points out. If we accept Marxism as one of the pinnacles, one of the 'grand narratives' of modernism, as the philosopher of postmodernism Lyotard (1984: 36) asserts, the October Revolution cannot be separated from it: "As expressions of highly utopian vision, the Bolshevik movement and October revolution also can be seen as modernist phenomena" (Epstein, 2013). It must be stressed that the revolution that emerged as a reaction and an alternative to the capitalist West was essentially modernist.¹¹ Similar analyses were developed by writers on Russian-Soviet history, and intellectuals, such as Buck–Morss (2000), Stites (1989) and Volkov (2008).

Buck-Morss (2000: 105, 110-11, 201) for example, convincingly expresses that American strategies and Taylorist techniques were used in the foundation of the Soviet Union. Moreover these techniques and strategies from the rival camp were defined as the important techniques and strategies for exalting the newly founded socialist regime, and this was clearly expressed by Lenin (qtd. in Buck-Morss, 2000: 309-310):

The Russian is a bad worker compared with the people in advanced countries...[as a result of] the persistence of the hangover from serfdom... The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analyzing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions... The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organize in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our own ends.

Lenin revealed this fact that developed in the pre-revolutionary period, as Stites (1989) clarifies. The transition from a feudal country to a socialist country was attempted through modernist means and methods. From the cult of 'human-as-machine', to Taylorist system, elaborated Moscow underground, and dreadful war technologies, the new 'alternative' revolution was, in fact, born in the centre of modernity. Although it was based on different ideology and production system, it was not far removed from the basic characteristics of modernity and capitalist production. They both, actually, developed from modern rationality.

What is 'modern', 'modernity' then? Although 'modern', as a concept, has a rather old history, 'modernity' came into focus during the eighteenth century (Habermas 1983: 9). The eighteenth century was the century of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment offered a special mode of thinking, a 'project'. That project consists of intellectual effort on the part of the Enlightenment thinkers "to develop objective science, universal morality, and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic" (Habermas, 1983: 9). The idea was clear: To liberate humanity from all religion, superstition, arbitrary use of power, and the dark side of human nature. All these factors are precise, concrete, and must be universal, and eternal. Thus, humanity can be developed only through such a project. Modernity arises from this project.

Marxism, with its endless attributions to the belief of humanity, progress, nature, productivity, and the material, can be considered as one of the approaches of modernity that reflect the spirit of the Enlightenment. Therefore, to change the production system in the field of economy does not mean to change the basis that gives its spirit to the production, the Enlightenment. The rationality behind the Enlightenment, as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) argue, lies in every act in production. Every act is predetermined and structured by this rationality, spirit of the Enlightenment, not only in the process of production, but also socio-cultural phenomena is shaped accordingly.¹² Thus, every place where tools of the Enlightenment are in practice, is shaped under the rationality of modernity.

The real socialism, one of the influential projects of modernity, developed some 'incredible projects' in this direction in its early years in the Soviet Union. The main aim was obvious: To catch and pass the West. The ways and means, as explained above, were, more or less, the same; only the owners of the productive forces and ideology were different. These projects, eventually, produced a social life which was also highly fragmented and refracted as in the rival capitalist West. Then what did they have in common? The common experience was produced by modernity though: 'Shock experience'. Shock experience, as discussed above, destroyed the unity of the identity and collapsed the uniqueness of the inner life of the modern individual. In this sense, only the geographies are different, but the methods which shaped the rationality of modern production and productivity remain. "Alienation of the subject is displaced by fragmentation of the subject" writes Jameson (1984: 58). What we saw at the end in this context in Russia were only the Russian variants of the fundamental problems that have been experienced and discussed especially since the 1960s in the West.

On the other hand, it would not be correct to say that the October revolution did not

bear any revolutionary ideals. It bore a revolutionary spirit. The progressive forces and the critical intellectual perspectives about contemporary culture and society, and political and ideological systems (one of the best examples could be the Frankfurt School thinkers in the 1930s and 1940s) in the West, were inspired by this spirit and used it in resisting the conservative policies and perspectives. However, this revolutionary fever declined after the Second World War and withered away with the Stalinist policies. The revolutionary ideals were destroyed by the Stalinist dictatorship and what comes after this collapse was the pressure and terror over Soviet culture and intellectuals, as Volkov has pointed throughout his work. Nevertheless, it is also not logical to think that only the Soviet Union changed after the Second World War, as the capitalist western world also transformed. Crisis of modernity, in fact, has crystallized in this change. Mastery of nature of human beings was inscribed by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and this disastrous mastery completed with isolation, alienation, despair, and the collapse of the inner world in the individual sphere. It must be stressed here that art and literature took a desperate tone after this radical change, and criticism was radicalized by this development. It was not a coincidence that some of the well-known theses in which it was proposed that as the closure of society became apparent, human beings became one dimensional, were developed in this era.¹³ The consequences of modernity became obvious after the Second World War, and its crisis became visible in every field. Arts, literature and theory started to focus on some specific points that actually represented this crisis.¹⁴ These field are the litmus tests of what is constant, what is changing in the current time of history. Therefore, Michelangelo Antonioni's well-known trilogy (*The Adventure*, *The Night*, *The Eclipse*), for example, tell the crisis of modern individuals in a capitalist society in this respect. Similarly the best films of Bergman were also produced in the late 1960s and 1970s. And we know that these decades are the most productive years of the French New Wave. In those years, as Orr (2011: 18-19) points out, ironically enough, well known directors of the communist countries concentrated on the same themes. If the mood of the west in the late 1960s and 1970s is reflected in Antonioni's films, in Godard's *Alphaville* (1965), *Weekend* (1967) and Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), the gloomy moods of the east emerged in a different geography, in Tarkovsky's, Kieslowski's and Klimov's films (Orr, 2011: 38-39, 42). These directors reveal modernity crisis in their stories, in their characters that were shaped under the eastern type modern-communist order. Certainly they were not focusing their cameras on this point directly, rather their characters, stories, and their film aesthetics, reveal this indirectly.

The new generation Soviet filmmakers of the 1970s were affected by the West and this can be seen in their lifestyles, films, and writings. Western culture and lifestyle were reflected by this generation of Russian intellectuals especially in Scnittke, Klimov, Brodsky and Tarkovsky. However, Brodsky and Tarkovsky were the most 'infected' by the West among the Russian intellectuals of the time, as was suggested in the Soviet Union (Volkov, 2008: 230). These intellectuals "loved to wear elegant Western clothes (even though they didn't have the money for it) and sit in fashionable cafés, sipping cocktails and listening to western music, primarily jazz (later they developed a love of Bach and Haydn)" (Volkov, 2008: 230). Tarkovsky reveals these effects not only in his films but also in his book, *Sculpting*

in Time. It is noticeable that many of his theses on art, film and literature in this book were written under the influence of the Western 'auteurs', from Marcel Proust to Robert Bresson and Luis Bunuel. However, Tarkovsky was not an auteur-director who primarily developed a 'pure' sense of Western writer, or artist. He intentionally synthesized western forms with the Eastern sense, sometimes mysticism. That's why, where he mentions Proust he also refers to Dostoevsky and Gogol in the book. Similarly, when he turns his camera on a problem from modern life he uses some mystical sounds, the sound of tar for example, and mixes them with a love of Bach. In other words, the East, the Russian East and the West intertwined in Tarkovsky's works. This artistic orientation reflects its meaning in the changing face of the Russian Revolution.

The Soviet ideals and hopes ended with frustration: A frustrating final chapter from the intellectuals, such as Mayakovsky, Malevic, Kuleshov and Meyerhold, who wanted to see machines and revolutionary sounds everywhere and who saw them as the power of motion in poetry and art in order to synthesize creativity of art and necessity of science (they consisted of an important portion of the revolutionary ideals by the way), to the new Soviet intellectuals such as Solzhenitsyn, Brodsky, Tarkovsky and Klimov.¹⁵

If an artist reflects both his uniqueness and his age, Tarkovsky as a distinctive film director, reveals his inner world and the spirit of his age in his films. If the Russian character constitutes his inner world, modernity crisis and its consequences reflect the spirit of his time in which he shaped his films. Modernity collapsed the unique individual experience and incorporated it into the collective, 'homogeneous', shock experience. This main characteristic can be seen in *Nostalghia* and *Mirror*. *Mirror* takes place entirely in Russia, *Nostalghia*'s spatial world is in a different land. The 'heroes' in both films and Tarkovsky himself were Russian. They realized that to be a man in the new world, either in the Socialist Soviet Union or in the capitalist West, in Italy, or in France is to be an exile on earth henceforth: Seeking a shelter, an eternal home, an eternal satisfaction beyond spatial and temporal limits and drawbacks of modern life. Andrei Gorchakov in the filmic space, and Andrei Tarkovsky in real life.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Here, at this point, besides Fredric Jameson's works, the works of David Harvey, who is well known for his critical perspectives on postmodernism, can also be examined. Both of the writers' works, especially Jameson's, concentrate on postmodern films that reflect the characteristics of late modern times. Although Jameson's examples are from the US, he also refers to the European filmmakers from time to time: He refers to Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* (especially to the final sequence) and develops perspectives on the aesthetics of the sequence and the current times.
- 2 On the other hand, after that 'great refusal' he came to be affected more and more by what Boym terms the "restorative nostalgia" with nostalgic feelings for the home country.
- 3 For an important discussion in addition to Hofer's thesis see the work of Strobinski (1966: 81-103) which provides a broad historical perspective on the term.

- 4 Although I will use Boym's analysis here, her main thesis on this issue, as Legg (2004) stressed utilized Fred Davis' seminal work (1978) on nostalgia.
- 5 Tarkovsky (1987: 202-203) expresses that he felt the same feelings abroad . Therefore the film can also be analysed as the sum of the experiences Tarkovsky lived in exile. In this respect *Nostalgia*, though not exactly like the *Mirror*, grasps at his biography. *Nostalgia* becomes especially important in understanding the director's story abroad.
- 6 The feeling of emptiness, as the theoretician of contemporary Russian conceptualism Ilya Kabakov has pointed out, is closely related to Soviet cultural life (Epstein 2013). There is little doubt that, Tarkovsky, who was born and grew up and started his film career in this culture, was affected by this society. Kabakov, in an elucidatory passage, argues that every individual living in this culture experienced it in two planes. While the first plane deals with relations with other people and nature, the second plane consists of individual's relations with the void: "On the level of daily life this split, bifurcation, this fatal-contiguosness of the 1st and 2nd planes is experienced as feeling of general destruction, uselessness, dislocation and hopelessness in everything; no matter what a person does, whether he is building or undertaking some other task, he senses in everything a feeling of impermanence, absurdity, and fragility. This life on two planes causes a particular neurosis and psychosis in every inhabitant of the void, without exception" (qtd. in Epstein 2013) This remained a dominant feeling within Soviet cultural life, and in fact, completes the feeling of despair that modern life left behind.
- 7 Tarkovsky reported to the Soviet authorities that he wanted to shoot *Nostalgia* in Italy. And after getting the official permission he went to Italy. But as soon as he made the film there, he declared in a press conference that he would not return to the Soviet Union, it was going to be a self-imposed exile for him. See Volkov (2008: 72).
- 8 Maybe, for this reason, Volkov's (2008: 238), who has exploratory books on Russian culture and intellectuals phrase, "martyrology", could be accurate to define Tarkovsky's last filmmaking, a filmmaking that intentionally and intrinsically wants to show individual destiny, though mostly in mystical and sometimes in religious forms and associations.
- 9 Although both of the writers do not refer to Lukacs specifically, the analyses that they develop are rooted in Lukacs indirectly. This is especially significant in Jameson's case. For a detailed discussion about the roots of "disintegrated experience in modern life" analysis, see Georg Lukacs (1963).
- 10 There is only 8 years between the *Nostalgia* and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Volkov (2008: 243) propounds with an accurate investigation that Tarkovsky's works can be read as "concluding chapters rather than the start of something new." These final chapters of the films signify some of the final sequences of the social history of the Soviet Union.
- 11 Epstein, at this point, goes one step further. According to him, the Soviet system bore postmodern elements even in the very beginning. He writes, "after Bolshevik revolution the simulative nature of reality, became even more pronounced." Thus, according to him, "this artificial reality was intended to demonstrate the superiority of ideas over simple facts" See Epstein 2013.
- 12 For this reason, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, there is no turning back, even for an improvement, no matter whether a socialist revolution is achieved or not.
- 13 Marcuse's groundbreaking work, *One Dimensional Man* was published in this decade, in 1964. See, Herbert Marcuse (2002).

- 14 In the 1960s, for example, Pop-Art became popular with Andy Warhol, and another theory which became influential in the next decade, postmodernism arose. It must also be noted that Georg Lukacs' (aesthetician and the philosopher of Marxism) famous theses against the characters and narratives of well-known modern literary works developed in the late 1950s and 1960s. Auteur directors of the 1960s and 1970s particularly focused on this crisis.
- 15 Ironically, Vladimir Mayakovsky committed suicide in 1930 (interestingly enough he was prized by Stalin after his death). Meyerhold, who was adored by the Soviet youth and who was also the teacher of one of the internationally acclaimed Russian directors, Sergei Eisenstein was arrested in 1930. Unfortunately, he was sentenced to death by firing squad in the beginning of 1940 by an order from Stalin. Similarly, Malevich was arrested for a time in 1930 and he died in 1935 just before being notified that his request for a pension had been turned down. The fates of other revolutionary avant-garde artists were not very different. The visionary revolutionist generation of artists were eradicated by the gears of an oppressive system. Consequently, the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s, which shook the world with revolutionary ideals, collapsed. What remained after that, not surprisingly, was a deep frustration and its reflections everywhere in the East and the West. The consequences were not limited to literature, but perceived in other fields. Later generations of the Soviet artists, literary figures, and filmmakers had to produce in this cultural climate (Volkov 2008: 65, 118-19).

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