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A PURIFIED SILVER:
ARSENY TARKOVSKY'S POEMS IN ANDREY TARKOVSKY'S FILM, *THE MIRROR*

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ABSTRACT

Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky is regarded as an unusual force in the history of cinema. Andrey's father, the poet-translator Arseny Tarkovsky, has yet to share his son's fame in the English-speaking world. Notwithstanding, Arseny's poetry was a catalyst for his son's cinematic vision as evident by the use of the father's poetry in a number of Andrey's films, a topic of growing interest as Arseny becomes more and more known outside of Russia. Besides a handful of short writings, however, no critical analyses exist which explore the usage of Arseny's poetry in Andrey's 1975 film, *The Mirror*, his most personal work. In regard to the greater discussion of Andrey and his poetic influence on cinema, the poetry of Andrey's father Arseny, I propose, was a mnemonic source of cinematic inspiration, subject matter, and structure for this film; this same source acts as a constant son-to-father, artist-to-artist dialogue, and places both Andrey and Arseny in the canon of Russian poetic tradition. This thesis acts as an introductory discussion of the poems in *The Mirror* and the artistic, poetic, even emotional connection between father and son. In addition to the respective biographies of both artists, information on their father-son relationship, and production history of the film, I present analyses of all four Arseny Tarkovsky poems featured in *The Mirror*, a scene-by-scene analysis of their use in the film, and I critically engage with past scholarship on the subject.

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Note on Transliteration

This thesis makes use of modified Library of Congress transliteration for Russian names and places (ex. Andrey, not Andrei/Andrej). These modifications also keep the popular English spelling of Russian authors (ex. Chekhov, Dostoevsky). The bibliography utilizes L.C. for all Russian titles.

Introduction

“...[they are] silver that is fired, tried in the earth, brought to sevenfold purity.”

–11th Psalm ¹

Though the psalmist writes of the words of the Lord, the image of melted silver contains associations with both the natural world (running water, fire) and the unnatural (flutes, metals, armor). A paradoxical union arises when one considers these associations, but none as striking as the idea of silver as words and cinema. The silver tongue makes words that stick in the mind, the silver screen is the occasional epithet of cinema. Both have properties of fluidity, sharpness, and also mark a state of change. As with molten silver, words and film are dreamt in a fiery impulse, and after a brief moment become solid. Let us take this image of silver not only as describing words and cinema, but the collaborative process among the arts. All arts (painting, poetry, music, etc.) have the same state of hot impulse, but their solid states differ. Thus, it proves a difficult task to form one art from two manifestations that have been cooled and hardened. Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky is a leading example of trying and succeeding to make many arts flow into one. He succeeds largely by his belief in cinema as successor to the older arts, and his fearlessness in maintaining the purity of his artistic vision. His own works pulse with a mysterious and beguiling profundity and form haunted philosophical musings on time and memory. These qualities, however, did not come to Andrey without a prototype. His father, the poet-translator Arseny Tarkovsky, was all the more profound and mysterious, with verses of haunting images that reach

¹ All subsequent numberings of the psalms are taken from the Greek Septuagint, as translated by Holy Transfiguration Monastery Press, Boston, MA. 2010.

into the deep tradition of Russian poetry. Arseny Tarkovsky's work not only brought together qualities of Russia's two poetic epochs (i.e. the Golden and Silver Ages) but expressed and dissected the atmosphere of the ever changing twentieth century.

Like his father, Andrey Tarkovsky wanted to express the world of the past as well as the present, pushing more and more for creative freedom within the confines and constrictions of Soviet censorship. He was a seasoned director by the time he filmed *The Mirror* (1975). Though considered his most difficult, this film is imminent proof of his striving and success in creative experimentation. In addition to its innovations of fragmented narrative and unique cinematography, *The Mirror* presents a candid look into the personal history of Andrey Tarkovsky himself. The film makes use of Tarkovsky's family, most notably his own mother as an actress and his father's voice reciting his own poetry.

Much can be said about Andrey Tarkovsky's relationship to his own parents and the correlation between said relationships and their manifestations in *The Mirror*, but what is of singular fascination is how Andrey made use of his father Arseny's poetry. Despite the growing wealth of academic writing on the much renowned director Tarkovsky, little scholarship in English has been devoted to the artistic relationship between son-director and father-poet, let alone to the poet's life or work. While using themes from Arseny Tarkovsky's poetry throughout his career, Andrey Tarkovsky made use of entire poetic texts most explicitly in *The Mirror*. These poems, I offer, form the structural backbone and source of imagery for the film.

This thesis will present a critical discussion of these poems in a scene-by-scene analysis, beginning with a brief survey of past scholarship on the subject. Following this survey are analyses of each instance, or 'scene', in which a poem is introduced (these scene delineations do not exclude other references present throughout the film). Before this analysis of the poems and their use in

The Mirror, we begin with the respective biographies of the poet and the director. This look into each artist's place in history forms a foundation to the analysis and forms possible explanations of the similarities and differences of style between them. The biographies conclude with an exploration of their relationship and how it may have influenced the outcome of their creative output. After the biographies and exploration come the four poems featured in *The Mirror*. A brief introduction to the film *The Mirror* itself leads into the central critical analysis, a scene-by-scene consideration of the individual, or overlapping, influences, poetic narratives, images, and allusions of the four poems in the film.

Biographies

Arseny Aleksandrovich Tarkovsky (1907-1989)

Arseny Aleksandrovich was born on June 25th in Yelisavetgrad (now Kirovohrad, Central Ukraine) to an aristocratic and progressive family of Polish ancestry. His father, Aleksandr Karlovich, was a theater actor as well as a Ukrainian nationalist at one time associated with the nineteenth century terrorist group, The People's Will/Народная воля. Aleksandr was repeatedly jailed in four different cities and sentenced to five years in East Siberia where he took up journalism. Arseny's mother, Maria Danilovna, was Aleksandr's second wife and a schoolteacher. Arseny was to become the only living child of the family when the oldest son, Valery, an anarchist who took part in the 1917 Revolution, was killed in 1919 during the period of the Russian Civil War (Tarkovskaya 1998, 5). Along with a streak for individualism and thinking against the grain, the family was consumed with reading and writing. Works of Dante, Goethe, and Leopardi sat comfortably next to collections of Russian poets such as Mikhail Lermontov, Fedor Sologub, and Konstantin Balmont. Growing up with the literary works of these famous writers and poets, the young Arseny, or 'Asik' as they called him, tried his own hand at writing with much encouragement from his parents. The poet himself humorously stated that he had been writing poems "since the pottie/с горшка".

In 1921, after the Civil War had tossed the Ukrainian lands into the iron grip of Soviet Russia, the teenaged Arseny and a group of writer friends published a satirical acrostic against Lenin, the man whose Revolution had made them all go hungry. For such defiance they were

rounded up and shipped off to be executed, but Arseny escaped in transit as the only survivor. He travelled from Kiev to the Crimea, friendless and penniless, before making his way to Moscow in 1923. He lived on odd jobs before being admitted into higher education for literary courses in 1925. At this time Arseny made many literary acquaintances as well as meeting Maria Vishnyakova, who became his first wife in 1928 (Tarkovskaya 1998, 6). One of the only things the two had in common was a love of writing and literature. Maria was as talented a writer as her husband (some of her friends called her a ‘Tolstoy in a skirt’), but she chose to quit her education and work in the State Publishing House as a proofreader after their marriage. The job was grueling and time consuming, forcing her to confine writing to diaries and letters (Tarkovsky 1999, ix) (Hunter-Blair 2014, 73). The couple at first lived on a State fund for young writers, but in 1929 Arseny’s school was closed in what was to become the period of Stalinist repression and arrests. In spite of the turmoil in academic circles, Arseny found outlets for writing as newspaper columnist and even a writer for radio, but where he really excelled was in the area of literary translation. From 1933 until his death, Arseny became known for his substantial translations of poetry from the ‘exotic’ reaches of the Soviet Union such as the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Crimea.

In 1937, after eight years of marriage, Arseny Tarkovsky and Maria Vishnyakova separated over Arseny’s affair with Antonina Bokhonovaya (who became his second wife in 1940), leaving Maria with two children, Andrey and Marina, and the family dacha (summer house) near Yur’evets. Not stopping his main source of income, Arseny continued to travel on translation assignments and in 1940 was admitted to the Soviet Writer’s Union, where his skill as a translator of poetry, and as a poet himself, was officially recognized (Tarkovskaya 1998, 8). This moment of literary praise would be quickly overshadowed by the invasion of Nazi Germany the following year, forcing Arseny and other writers to become army medics. During the evacuation from

Moscow in late 1941, Arseny Tarkovsky joined his second family in Chistopol, Tatarstan, but requested on numerous occasions to be sent to the front. At last going back to Moscow, Arseny acted as a war correspondent, but was called upon more than once to join in the fight. In this position of correspondent he was able to use his experiences in journalism and poetry to write battle reports as well as morale-boosting poems. After the war he received the order of the Red Star for his efforts, but his greatest reward was seeing fellow soldiers take copies of his poems and keep them with their personal documents and pictures of loved ones (Tarkovskaya 1998, 9-10).

In 1945, after the war, the poet-translator was sent to Tbilisi, Georgia, for work in translation and began assembling a book of his own poetry. The process was full of doubts, since the collection contained more poems dedicated to Arseny's literary friends of the past than to Lenin or Stalin. There were attempts to persuade him to publish his poems as 'translations', but Arseny Tarkovsky upheld his individualistic viewpoints. The publication of such a collection was eventually cancelled, much to the relief of all who knew it could have spelled literary suicide for the poet. After the convoluted publishing failure and a painful divorce with his second wife in 1947, Arseny got into the habit of keeping poison in his pocket, just in case (Tarkovskaya 1998, 12).

In the subsequent years Arseny Tarkovsky travelled throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus for translation work, in most cases treated to poor lodging and subject to the torrid, Asiatic climate. He married a third time in 1951 and moved into a writer's cooperative house in 1957. Now living in the time of the Khrushchev Thaw, the poet brought back the idea of publishing a volume of his own poetry. His first collection, *Before Snow/Перед снегом*, was published in 1962 to much critical acclaim and public interest, earning him honors, awards, and prizes for the remainder of his life. Arseny continued to publish other collections of his work, among them *To*

Earth Its Own/Земле-Земное (1966), *Messenger/Вестник* (1969), and *Collected Works: poems, long poems, and translations* (1982), the most complete collection of his output (Tarkovskaya 1998, 14-15). Arseny Tarkovsky passed away at the age of 82 on May 27th, 1989.

In the foreword to the 1982 verse collection, the Russian critic and publicist Sergei Chuprinin states the common themes of Arseny Tarkovsky's poetry:

“Poems of love and nature, philosophical and lyrical meditations outline the contours of the poet's [Arseny's] artistic world, they present a view unsplitable in its integrity and dialectical nature of a contemporary artist to reality”² (Chuprinin, 5).

Indeed, Arseny Aleksandrovich's style is praised for its craft and sublime quality, as well as its unflinching addresses to the past and present. Chuprinin goes on to say that the power of Arseny's verse lies not in “efficiency” but in the context of “eternal” inquiry of the individual and human society. His work is wide in scope, neither flowery nor minimalist, but a flow of densely packed thoughts in a lean, winnowed style. These qualities are what make him a poet of distinction alongside other poets of his time such as Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelshtam, Boris Pasternak, and Marina Tsvetaeva, all of whom Arseny knew and cared for personally.

According to scholar Kitty Hunter-Blair's research, Arseny Tarkovsky exhibited in his poetic technique precision of structure and diction and a musical marriage of rhythm and syntax. His work is likened to Bach, similar to Pushkin's work to Mozart (Hunter-Blair, 30-31). Hunter-Blair also cites Arseny's view that poets and scientists are the ones charged with discovering the world, much like Adam at creation (Hunter-Blair, 200).

² Стихи о любви и природе, философские и лирические медитации очерчивают контуры художественного мира поэта, представляют нерасщепимый в своей целостности и диалектичности взгляд современного художника на действительность (my translation).

Andrey Arsenevich Tarkovsky (1932-1986)

The early years of Andrey Arsenevich were spent near the town of Yur'evets, close to both Moscow and the Volga River. His father Arseny was just starting his long career as a translator and his mother Maria was in the middle of her proofreading job. From all accounts life at the time was idyllic and full of happiness, with several photographs showing a close-knit family of four enjoying nature and togetherness. But such idyllic living proved ephemeral. Eventually, the family moved back to Moscow proper, and the parents separated. Andrey was only three or four years old at the most, but the separation left a scar on the child's psyche and led to a realignment in the familial hierarchy: Maria, a headstrong mother, was at the head, followed by a grandmother, and Andrey and his sister, Marina. Andrey later remarked how he was raised in a matriarchal household, a remark echoed by his alter-ego Aleksey in *The Mirror* (Johnson and Petrie, 17).

The family spent the entirety of WWII outside Moscow and in Andrey Tarkovsky's hometown of Zavrazh'e. They lived in relative poverty at the dacha, amid the beautiful and forbidding Russian landscape which Andrey cherished all his life. In October of 1943, on a short leave from the front, Arseny Tarkovsky paid them a brief visit, a visit that was subsequently recreated in Andrey's film, *The Mirror*. Two months later, back at the front, Arseny would be wounded in the leg and have it amputated due to gangrene (an event vividly recounted in Arseny's poem "Field Hospital/Полевой госпиталь"). Andrey had a clear memory of his father coming back from the war, "with one real leg" (Turovskaya, 16). Despite the harsh circumstances and a fatherless household, Andrey and his sister continued their education in the arts, playing the piano and sketching (Tarkovskaya 1998, 16).

After a mediocre performance in secondary school, Andrey Tarkovsky entered the Institute for Oriental Studies in 1951, but left after his second year for a year-long geological expedition to East Siberia. Upon his return to Moscow in 1954, Andrey took the necessary entrance exams and was enrolled in the prestigious All-Union State Cinema Institute (abbreviated in Russian as VGIK). Among the faculty was his main instructor Mikhail Romm, one of the more radical instructors at the time. Romm encouraged the individual creative development of each student. Andrey's study at VGIK took place during a fertile time: the Khrushchev Thaw, an era marked by, among other things, the loosening of propaganda in the arts into a more humanistic vein. Another aspect of the Thaw was its influx of foreign film distribution. Non-Soviet directors such as Bergman, Kurosawa, and Fellini are only a few cited by Andrey Tarkovsky as being influential to his early output, but the music of life and nature were the true influences of Andrey's cinematic style and expression (Turovskaya, 19-20). His diploma shortfilm, *The Steamroller and the Violin/Каток и скрипка* (1960), earned him the highest mark possible; his debut feature film, *Ivan's Childhood/Иваново детство* (1962), was a critical success and garnered much praise for the young director. The film has since become a classic of the Thaw period (Johnson and Petrie, 20). Andrey would later discredit his time at VGIK as a necessary evil and a timewaster, since instruction was primarily divorced from production. One cannot be taught how to be a director, he said, but rather one must teach oneself (Tarkovsky 1993, 360). Like his father, Andrey was married twice, first to Irma Raush in 1957, then to Larissa Kozilova in 1970. He had two sons: Arseny Andreevich by his first wife, and Andrey Andreyevich by his second. Both personal and familial accounts state his fatherly fondness for his son Andrey Andreyevich, but practically no information exists concerning his first son, Arseny. One can only speculate how his treatment of his first son stems from his ever ambivalent relationship to the boy's namesake: his father, Arseny Tarkovsky.

Despite possessing an inexhaustible number of ideas for screenplays, as well as a stint as a dramaturg, Andrey made only five feature films in the USSR: *Ivan's Childhood/Иваново детство*, *Andrey Rublev/Андрей Рублёв* (1966, released in 1971), *Solaris/Солярис* (1972), *The Mirror/Зеркало* (1975), and *Stalker/Сталкер* (1979). The director himself attributed his small output to the constraints placed on him by Goskino Films. The constant bombardment of censors, countless refusals of script ideas, limited filmstock, and limited runs of his films added to Andrey's public persona as the martyr-artist (Goscilo, 248). Tarkovsky's life and work soon reached a wider audience, both at home and abroad, making his art appear inseparable from his biography. In actuality his persona was as private as it was public. Andrey's diaries attest to the intense struggle he faced at the hands of the Soviet film industry while striving to stick unerringly to his projects and artistic ideals.

After going abroad to Italy to film *Nostalghia* (1983), Andrey Tarkovsky announced his defection from the USSR. This announcement elicited a reprimanding and imploring letter from his father, Arseny, telling him that a Russian artist must work and suffer with his own people in the motherland. This letter, it turns out, was written at the prompting of Goskino officials (Tarkovskaya 1998, 15-16).

After filming his last feature, *The Sacrifice/Offret* (1986) in Sweden, Andrey died in Paris on December 29th, 1986, at 54 years of age amid struggles with Soviet authorities to allow his son, Andrey Andreyevich, to go abroad. The cause of his death was officially cancer (supposedly from radiation during filming of *Stalker*). One can only speculate that Andrey's premature death was a source of sadness and shock to the elderly Arseny Tarkovsky, who would die three years after his son. Marina Tarkovskaya, the poet's daughter and director's sister, even speculated that the news of Andrey's death was an unexpectedly heavy blow that brought about the onset of Arseny's fatal

sickness (Tarkovskaya 1998, 16). Andrey Tarkovsky's films were rereleased during Perestroika, the effectual end of the USSR, beginning a reassessment of his work in his homeland. This reassessment helped Andrey Tarkovsky to become one of the most celebrated film-directors of his time.

Though best remembered as a director with philosophical depth, historical acumen, and virtuosic filming, Andrey Arsenevich was a man of many interests including poetry, drawing, philosophy, literature, and theater. Cinema for Andrey Tarkovsky was an art with enough potential to surpass all other arts. Despite being in its infancy, Cinema was a living segment of captured, and a place where the world of reality and the world of dreams comingled. This approach to filmmaking explains Andrey's numerous long takes and emphasis on atmosphere over story. Despite having a high regard for film, Tarkovsky never strayed from paying homage to the other arts, such as music (esp. Bach) and painting (such as Breughel). He also sought inspiration in Russian history (from Medieval Rus' to WWII USSR), and especially his own family biography. In his films several images and motifs float in and out of dream-like sequences, coupled with the figure of the lone artist hindered and aided by the profundity of his art. Andrey Tarkovsky wanted his cinema to be a mirror to which the audience would see itself:

“When the conception of a film is given forms that are life-like, and the concentration is on its effective function rather than on the intellectual formulae of ‘poetic shots’ (in other words shot where the set is manifestly a vessel for ideas) then it is possible for the audience to relate to that conception in the light of individual experience.” (Tarkovsky 1986, 184)

In short, Andrey Tarkovsky strove to bring a clear sense of life itself onto the screen, a life that was first and foremost his own.

Relationship between Father and Son

The intensity of the father-son relationship has been disputed by critics, scholars, and family members. Most uphold that Andrey Tarkovsky felt closer to his father than to his aloof and stalwart mother, even so far as to imitate his handwriting in adolescence. The majority of critics concur, however, that Arseny Aleksandrovich's desertion was a constant point of trauma (Johnson and Petrie, 19).

Whenever there were visits at birthdays or holidays, Arseny Tarkovsky and his son would look at art books together, listen to music, and recite poetry, especially Arseny's poetry (Andrey was reported to carry his father's poem throughout secondary school). On the whole, Arseny Tarkovsky's role in the life of his first family was limited to financial support and appearances on special occasions. By all accounts, Andrey Tarkovsky's childhood never reached idyllic heights or golden tones after the separation. Undoubtedly the father's absence in early life had severe psychological effects on the young Andrey, spilling over into his artistic outlook and creative output. Nevertheless, his recollections were for the most part well-mannered and reserved, neither harshly condemning nor praising the adults in his life.

Though never criticizing his father or his father's work, Andrey himself noted that Arseny had a veiled emotional reaction when seeing *The Mirror* in its completed form. His father told Maria Vishnyakova, "See how he's dealt with us?/Видишь, как он с нами расправился?" (Turovskaya 71). Arseny said further that the "director of *The Mirror* was settling scores with his parents" (Goscilo 263). Indeed, the theme of family relationships (especially the tension found in such relationships) is a consistent one in the oeuvre of Andrey Tarkovsky, by and large due to the many twists and turns in his relationship with both his parents. A sense of abandonment by his

father continued remained in Andrey Tarkovsky's psyche into adulthood, and is quite evident in the subject matter of his films: a focus on and esteem of male characters which, says scholar Helena Goscilo, "overrides all social and political issues" (Goscilo, 250). Goscilo's essay, "Fraught Filiation: Andrei Tarkovsky's Transformations of Personal Trauma" (Indiana UP, 2010) takes a similar stance in linking the use of poetry in the films to the father-son relationship, but puts an even weightier emphasis on a psycho-oedipal thirst for relationship. This emphasis makes Andrey appear to be using his father's poetry as a means of further connection, which ultimately fails to connect either of them or flush out the personal trauma of the father leaving his family. For Andrey, the male figure personified the unknown, a lack/absence, and even an object of both desire and fetishization (Goscilo, 252). Goscilo, in bringing up the point of this separation, sees the tone of the poems, mostly loving and 'exultant', as undercutting the film's familial scenes of resentment and separation (Goscilo, 263).

Other outlets where Andrey expresses his thirst for a father include his choice of career as a 'poet-director' (following in his father's poetic footsteps), his attachment to the image of his father, an attempt at reconnection by using Arseny's poetry in several films (most notably in *The Mirror*), and even repeating his father's personal history (leaving his first wife for another woman). Andrey wrote in his diaries his thoughts on the matter:

I haven't seen my father for ages. The longer I don't see him the more depressing and alarming it becomes to go to him...it's a torment for him too, our relationship as it is. I know that for certain.³

³ Очень давно не видел отца. Чем больше я его не вижу, тем становится тоскливее и страшнее идти к нему... Ведь он тоже мучается оттого, что наши отношения сложились именно так. Я же знаю. Sept. 14th, 1970 (marked as Sept. 12th in Kitty Hunter-Blair's English version, *Time within Time*).

And on his complex about his parents:

It's patently clear that I have a complex about my parents. I don't feel adult when I'm around them. And I don't think they consider me adult either. Our relations are somehow tortured, complicated, unspoken. It's not straightforward, any of it. I love them dearly, but I've never felt at ease with them, or their equal. I think they're shy of me too, even though they love me.⁴

Andrey Tarkovsky goes on in this entry that even if he were to write his father a letter, the plea to talk openly about their relationship would never be addressed or answered. There remained in Andrey a need for affirmation, especially in relation to his work. In one interview Andrey mentioned that his father had made the remark that the films he made were not films, but things beyond films. These words, Andrey said, made it easier for him to live (Hunter-Blair, 32).

It is possible that the relationship was not one of father and son as much as master to apprentice. An example from Arseny Tarkovsky's poem "Theophanes the Greek/Феофан грек" (1975-1976) may aid in this supposition. In the third stanza unfolds the poetic speaker's resolve to become an apprentice to Theophanes, an icon painter of medieval Rus. This resolve stems from his sense of inadequacy as expressed in the first stanza. Thus the speaker may in fact be Andrey Rublev, an equally famous icon painter. Andrey Tarkovsky's film on the life and times of Andrey Rublev depicts an artistic rivalry between Rublev and Theophanes. This rivalry of sorts, in both poem and film, can reflect the feelings Andrey had toward his father (Lavery, 3-4).

⁴ У меня явные комплексы в отношении родителей. Я не чувствую себя взрослым рядом с ними. И они, по моему, не считают взрослым меня. Какие-то мучительные, сложные, не высказанные отношения. Как-то непросто все. Я очень люблю их, но никогда я не чувствовал себя спокойно и на равных правах с ними. По моему, они тоже меня стесняются, хоть и любят (same citation as above footnote).

Another example is a scene in the film *The Mirror* which offers a perfect, though veiled, illustration concerning the complex Andrey Tarkovsky had with his parents. The main character, Aleksey, converses (off-screen) with his mother, Maria, over the telephone. The camera lingers through his dark-lit apartment, from his bedroom to his living-room/study. The long-take ends in front of a curtained window, then transitions to a WWII flashback of the mother running to the printing house. If the viewer is attentive, on the wall of the bedroom, to the left of the doorway, hangs a black-and-white photograph of Andrey's real mother, Maria Vishnyakova. In the study, also to the left, hangs a photograph of Arseny Aleksandrovich. This placement of the mother in the bedroom and the father in the study offers a perfect and personal metaphor to the parent-son relationship, as well as a deeper insight to the father-son dynamic. The mother, who raised Andrey, would be kept and cherished in the room where he sleeps and rests. The father, the inspiring poet and distant family figure, is kept next to the writing desk, where Andrey works and furthers the maturation and fruition of his ideas into reality. The mother is the homemaker, the father the artistic instigator.

Despite their strained relationship, the son had a common gift with his father in the thirst to express the truth in art. Tarkovsky the director was known both inside and outside the Soviet Union well before Tarkovsky the poet, but the son is credited with inheriting his father's poetic talent despite not being a poet himself. Parallels between Tarkovsky the director and Tarkovsky the poet include common themes of nature as sensual and profound, transcendent potential of the inner self, and meditations on life beyond life in regards to humanity's imprint on time. Furthermore, while they in equal turns focus on the pain of life, they are just as apt to finding 'sheer happiness in being alive and being an artist' (Hunter-Blair 2014, 34).

The Four Poems

The Mirror contains four complete poems, three from the 1960s and one from 1941, making them, on the whole, rather late poems in Arseny Tarkovsky's career. The three 1960s poems are certain to have come from *To Earth its Own/Земле-земное* (published 1966), the poet's second collection. *To Earth its Own* contained poems from 1941 to 1966, so it is unclear whether the 1941 poem appeared originally in this 1966 collection or later in the 1982 Collected Works under the juvenilia section, *A Visiting Star/Гостья-звезда (1924-1941)*. If evidence appeared showing all four poems in one initial publication, then Andrey Tarkovsky's choice of them would appear more obvious. Andrey did, however, want to include more poems, such as "Ignat'ev Forest/Игнатовский лес" (c.1935-1938) and "I Became Ill in Childhood.../Я в детстве заболел..."(1966)

In general, the four poems are elegies in tone but lack any trace of the maudlin or sentimental usually associated with the genre. They are sober, meditative, prayerful, exultant, and rich in visuals. In addition to the use of these four unabbreviated poems in *The Mirror*, it is Arseny Tarkovsky himself who recites them. Since these recordings exist thanks to the film, they are invaluable to analyzing the verses. The disregard or adherence to the line breaks, the use of enjambments, and the author's pauses all add an effect and purpose to the texts. Such effects and purposes reveal their naturalism as well as their quiet depictions of heightened senses.

“First Meetings/Первые свидания” (1962)

Scholar Alexandra Smith postulates that neither Maria Vishnyakova nor Arseny Tarkovsky’s second wife, Antonina Bokhonovaya, were the dedicatee of this psalm of sensuality; Smith concludes that “First Meetings” may have been to his third wife, since it was written during Arseny’s third marriage (Smith, 54-55). However, the poet’s daughter, Marina Arsenevna, claims the impulse to write “First Meetings”, and some twenty other poems, came in 1932 when Arseny Tarkovsky heard news of the death of his former sweetheart, Marina Gustavovna Faltz (Tarkovskaya 1998, 8). Tarkovskaya elaborated on this woman in an interview: Marina Faltz was a widow of an officer who died in the Russian Civil War. She was also a music aficionado and patroness of Arseny Tarkovsky’s artistic circle in Yelisavetgrad. Arseny was passionately in love with this older woman, and she was quite fond of her ‘Asik’, even though he was the youngest in her group of talented artists. They eventually parted ways for unknown reasons, but Faltz continued to be one of Arseny’s muses for the rest of his life, even more so after her death from tuberculosis. “Fly away”, he wrote of her, “you take on your lips the cold taste of the damp earth”/ «Лети, уносишь на своих губах сырой земли холодный привкус» (Tarkovskaya 2004). These dedications to Faltz are also supported by scholar Kitty Hunter Blair (see introduction to *Poetry and Film*).

If the poems are indeed dedicated to Faltz, then we may consider “First Meetings” as founded on a love that was possibly consummated, but not everlasting. The speaker, presumably the poet himself, goes through a semi-dreamed description of seeing his female beloved in various settings and movements: rushing down a flight of stairs, sleeping on a throne, and awakening before his eyes. As the beloved, she transforms the world around herself and the speaker, setting

them at the forefront of creation in a fantastic procession reminiscent of Botticelli or Da Vinci. Fate, however, steals in at the end, ‘like a madman with razor in hand’.

“First Meetings” has a few echoes of works by Arseny’s contemporaries, most notably Pasternak’s “The Meeting/Свидание” (1949), a poem about a male speaker marveling at his lover during a snowstorm, and Mandelstam’s “an inexplicable sorrow.../Невыразимая печаль...”(1913), where sorrow opens its eyes and splashes the room with its crystal.

At 42 lines and seven uneven stanzas of iambic pentameter, “First Meetings” is the longest of the four poems, and the most captivating to hear Arseny Tarkovsky read. It contains quasi-biblical phrasing (especially from the Psalms or Song of Solomon), as well as tones of the Shakespearean (a possible influence on the use of iambic pentameter). In addition to its spontaneous stanza breaks, the poem makes ostensible use of different types of rhymes, from internal to slanted, and unpredictable alternations between feminine and masculine endings. One example, taken from the first stanza, yields an internal assonance of the first end rhyme (if taking into consideration how the author himself, as recorded in the film, adds a pause to the third line, which highlights its rhyming potential):

Свиданий наших каждое мгновенье А	We celebrated every moment of our
Мы праздновали, как богоявление, А	meetings, like Theophany,
Одни на целом свете (А). Ты была	alone in the entire world. You were ⁵

A clearer example of rhymes and sound interweaving is the fourth stanza:

⁵ All subsequent English translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

Ты пробудилась и преобразила <i>М</i>	You awakened and transfigured
Вседневный человеческий словарь, <i>n</i>	The day-to-day human lexicon,
И речь по горло полнозвучной силой <i>М</i>	And speech was brimming with a sonorous force,
Наполнилась, и слово "ты" раскрыло <i>М</i>	And the word "thou" revealed
Свой новый смысл и означало: царь. <i>n</i>	Its new meaning, and meant: 'king'.

As seen in the text the first line contains an internal assonance of ‘-илась’ and ‘-ила’, which is further emphasized in the author’s recording. The endings of the third and fourth lines, ‘-илой’ and ‘-ыло’, appear as slant rhymes to ‘-ила’ since slant rhymes were common in Russian Silver-age poetry.

The author’s recording, with its breaths and pauses, does not adhere strictly to the line breaks as written. As he follows the enjambments, Arseny Tarkovsky makes natural syntax of the sentences more pronounced, the rhymes casual and hidden, thus making poetry indistinguishable from prose. Take the second stanza of 11 lines (with the breath marks indicated by a slash):

Когда настала ночь,/ была мне милость	When night fell a grace was granted
Дарована,/ алтарные врата/	unto me, the altar’s royal doors were opened,
Отворены, и в темноте светилась	And nakedness gleamed
И медленно клонилась нагота,/	And slowly inclined in the darkness,
И, просыпаясь:/ «Будь благословенна!» –	And then awakened: “Be thou blessed!”
Я говорил/ и знал, что дерзновенно	I said, and knew that my blessing
Мое благословенье: /ты спала,/	was bold: you slept,
И тронуть веки синевою вселенной	And the lilac strained to you from the table
К тебе сирень тянулась со стола,/	to touch your eyelids with the cosmic blue,
И синевою тронутые веки/	And the lids, touched by that blueness,
Спокойны были,/ и рука тепла.	Were peaceful, and your hand was warm.

If this same stanza were written in conjunction with Arseny Tarkovsky's reading, the line breaks would be:

Когда настала ночь,
 Была мне милость дарована,
 Алтарные врата
 Отворены, и в темноте светилась и медленно клонилась нагота,
 И, просыпаясь:
 "Будь благословенна!" - я говорил
 И знал, что дерзновенно моё благословенье:
 Ты спала,
 И тронуть веки синевой вселенной к тебе сирень тянулась со стола,
 И синевую тронутые веки
 Спокойны были,
 И рука тепла.

Besides use of the biblical 'And', "First Meetings" contains many allusions to liturgical terms. For example, 'богоявление', also spelled 'богоявление', is the feast celebrating the baptism of Christ. In the Western Church this feast is known as Epiphany (also the name for the magi's visit to the infant Christ) while in the Eastern Church the more common term is Theophany, from the Greek. The 'алтарные врата', literally 'altar gates', refer to the doors of the iconostasis, or partition leading into the altar, found in Orthodox churches (these doors are also called 'royal doors'). The sphere held by the beloved is reminiscent of the globes of power wielded by monarchs, but the reference to the throne can also be liturgical as well as monarchical (ex. The bishop's seat). The verb 'преобразиться', meaning 'to transfigure', is reference back to the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ.

Continuing with the biblical references, the first two lines of the third stanza present psalmic allusions:

А в хрустале пульсировали реки,	While in the crystal vase the rivers pulsed,
Дымились горы, брезжили моря...	The mountains smoked, the seas glimmered...

The phrase ‘the mountains smoked/дымились горы’ refers to the 103rd psalm of creation which reads, ‘[he] who looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble; who toucheth the mountains and they smoke.’ Such references to the works of psalmist King David, especially the laments, appear in a few other of Arseny Tarkovsky’s poems (Hunter-Blair, 222).

Scholars Vida Johnson and Graham Petrie cite this poem as being about the ‘joys and transforming power of love and sexual passion’ (Johnson and Petrie, 117). Running parallel to the liturgical references are potentially veiled sexual/erotic images. The opened altar gates suggest a woman’s open thighs. There is mention of nakedness ‘inclining in the dark’ and the beloved sleeping on a ‘throne’. The line ‘And—righteous Lord!—you were my own’ suggests the breathtaking moment of arousal leading to the next image of the beloved awakening and transforming the everyday, as in the hypersensitivity of the torrid moment. While this is a poem relating to sexuality as well as spirituality, the speaker is never explicit about a moment of touch between himself and his beloved. In fact, the only explicit image of touch is from the second stanza, when the lilac strains to touch the beloved’s eyelids ‘with the cosmic blue’. Arseny’s reading does become more impassioned as the poem goes on, culminating at the last full stanza “and the skies unfurled before our eyes”, then slowing down in the last couplet, matching the subtle dynamics of a sexual encounter.

Ultimately, the poem’s jubilant tone leads to a final turn in a couplet of sober remembrance, ending the speaker’s visual journey:

Когда судьба по следу шла за нами,	While behind us fate tread on our heels
Как сумасшедший с бритвою в руке.	Like a madman brandishing a razor.

‘Идти по следу’, a fixed phrase in Russian meaning ‘to go in step’ or ‘to pursue’, bears a sinister connotation. Therefore, there had to be a phrase in English for this trailing with harmful intentions, such as ‘to tread on someone’s heels’, a more exact, though not literal, translation. In the end, it is the appearance of the madman’s razor that reigns most sinister.

2. “Since Morning I Waited for You Yesterday.../

С утра я тебя дожидался вчера...” (1941)

In stark contrast to “First Meetings”, this second poem is untitled and consists of only nine lines. These lines are split into two stanzas of four and one separated final line ending with an ellipsis. The subject centers around a speaker quietly describing how his beloved and he could not meet when the weather was good ‘like a holiday’, but only when it was overcast and rainy. The meter is a near consistent amphibrachic tetrameter (u_uu_uu_uu_) with all masculine endings. ‘Near’ consistent due to the pattern break at the seventh line phrase ‘late hour/поздний час’, showing special attention to the disruption of the meter coinciding with the disruption of the speaker’s ideal meeting (Skakov, 230).

While there is no clear rhyme scheme for these short lines there is a scheme for the succession of vowels within the poem. Consider the first stanza with its alternating rhymes of the

vowels [a] and [o], creating a rhyme scheme of a b a b. Besides these end rhymes, the first line contains four [a] vowels in succession, giving an initial feeling of unification and pleasing cadence:

С утра (<i>a</i>) я тебя (<i>a</i>) дожидался (<i>a</i>) вчера, <i>a</i>	Since the morning I waited for you yesterday,
Они догадались, что ты не придёшь, <i>b</i>	They guessed that you wouldn't come,
Ты помнишь, какая погода была? <i>a</i>	Remember what the weather was like?
Как в праздник! И я выходил без пальто. <i>b</i>	Like a feast day! I went out without a coat.

For the second quatrain there are three [a] vowel rhymes with one unrhymed [e] in the third line. It may be the case, though, that this [e] ending is meant to pair with the separated last line, but giving deference to Arseny Tarkovsky's recording, the break in the phrasing of the last line makes the infinitives 'унять' and 'утереть' rhyme in a slant. Keeping this idea of vowels in mind, here is a schema of the poem's stressed vowels:

С утра я тебя дожидался вчера,	[a] [a] [a] [a]
Они догадались, что ты не придёшь,	[i] [a] [i] [o]
Ты помнишь, какая погода была?	[o] [a] [o] [a]
Как в праздник! И я выходил без пальто.	[a] [a] [i] [o]
Сегодня пришла и устроили нам	[o] [a] [o] [a]
Какой-то особенно пасмурный день,	[o] [o] [a] [e]
И дождь, и особенно поздний час,	[o] [o] [o] [a]
И капли бегут по холодным ветвям.	[o] [u] [o] [a]
Ни словом унять, ни платком утереть...	[o] [a] [o] [e]

The initial sound of [a] is gradually overtaken by the sound [o]. A brighter sound is replaced by a heavier, greyer sound, matching the poem's content of lovers being apart in good weather and being able to meet only in bad weather. The mysterious last line, similar to the unsettling end couplet of "First Meetings", hints at a pessimistic turn of thinking, further fragmented by Arseny Tarkovsky's recorded pause:

Ни словом унять, / ни платком утереть...
No word can stop it, / no kerchief can wipe it away...

This poem is the only one of the four to include a specific date: January 2nd, 1941, five months before the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany. The personal circumstances surrounding its inception, however, remain unknown. Arseny Tarkovsky himself briefly mentions this poem in his posthumously published prose piece "What Constitutes My Understanding of Poetry" (c.1940s-1950s, published in 1991), mid-discussion of a poet's peculiarity:

The ancient idea "the poet is a prophet is a madman," is based on the fact that the poet is peculiar, like a madman, and an exceptional choice. Consider this type of story: "In the morning I was waiting for you yesterday" A phrase of a patient in a psychiatric clinic is simply translated in this poem, similar to a translation from a foreign language into Russian—something already given is rendered in verse.⁶(Tarkovsky 1991).

The above comment makes the poem all the more mysterious, raising more questions than providing answers. Who, then, could be the female recipient of these ghostly lines? If the speaker of the poem is a patient in a psychiatric ward, is the female 'you' his memory or his hallucination? Are 'they' the doctors and other patients, telling him she won't come? Such images

⁶ Старинное представление: "поэт — пророк — безумец" строится на том, что поэту свойственна, как и безумцу, исключительность выбора. Такова история: "С утра я тебя дожидался вчера" (фраза больного в психиатрической клинике в этом стихотворении просто переведена, подобно переводу с иностранного языка на русский, — нечто уже данное изложено стихами) (my translation).

call to mind Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" or Chekhov's "Ward Six" (a story referenced in *The Mirror*) with a figure of a poetic and dreamy man put in an institution. This poem is a thing of the past as well as the present, reminiscent of the Romantic fascination with the idea of the fragment text as well as the modernist fixation on the esoteric.

Is the use of 'they' somehow psalmetic? Throughout the psalms are references to the speaker's enemies in the form of an inexplicable 'they'. Such as the 3rd Psalm, 'O Lord, why are they multiplied that afflict me? Many rise up against me', or the 87th Psalm, 'They laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the shadow of death.'

Be it a romantic, psychiatric, or psalmetic poem, this use of 'they' is especially ambiguous and ominous due to its function as an 'anaphoric pronoun'. In Russian, pronouns can be omitted. Thus, if a pronoun is explicitly used (as it is in this poem), it denotes something or someone known by both speaker and addressee. This double use of pronouns is virtually impossible to translate. In the case of the poem, there is an inherent madness to the use of 'they' by the speaker who assumes that the 'you' he speaks to is aware of the identity of 'they'. Such linguistic ambiguity adds another dimension to Arseny's remark that the speaker is a psychiatric patient.

3. "Life, Life/Жизнь, Жизнь" (1965)

The third poem is the most philosophically dense of the four as well as the only one divided into three separate sections of varying lengths. Along with a consistent iambic pentameter (u_u_u_u_u_(u)), and an array of technical vocabulary, the poem holds themes of a more overt dialogue with the Great Patriotic War (the Russian name for WW II fought on Soviet land), an

event only hinted at by the date of the previous poem. Older, more renaissance images and allusions appear alongside contemporary war images, giving the speaker a command and a point of view as from eternity. With Arseny Tarkovsky's rhythmic reading, these verses become a war ballad, a poetic monologue, and a rumination on the span of the centuries.

“Life, Life” begins by playing on a strict confinement of words, such as in the lines ‘Есть только явь и свет, / ни тьмы, ни смерти нет на этом свете.’⁷ The Russian word ‘свет’ is a homophone for ‘light’ and ‘world’, and has phonetic similarities to the word ‘смерть’ or ‘death’. The author also plays off the Orthodox theological point of death as not an entity on its own, for death was not in the world before the fall of man, and is no longer in the world after Christ's incarnation.

As the poem meanders from the trumpet calls of the first stanza, its next two sections burst with unexpected complexity and technical terminology not commonly used in poetry. The second section goes into the speaker's declaration of generational and human solidarity, where ‘great-grandfather shares a table with grandson’. This reference to a shared table also comes from the psalms, specifically the 127th: “Thy sons [shall be] like young olive trees round about thy table”. This solidarity which revolves around the speaker, regardless of century, is also the hearth that ensures the security of the house, making the meal shared a communion of fire.

One stanza, in need of both untwisting and explanation, is a good example of ‘unpoetic’ words:

Я каждый день минувшего, как крепью,	Every day of the past, like shoring,
Ключицами своими подпирал,	I propped up by my clavicles,
Измерил время землемерной цепью	I measured time with a geodesic chain

⁷ En: ‘There is only reality and light, / no darkness, no death at all on this earth.’

И сквозь него прошёл, как сквозь Урал. And passed through it, as through the Urals.

Architectural and anatomical terms in this section include a *‘землемерная цепь’*, literally a ‘geodesic chain’. This word is an actual eighteenth century land surveyor’s instrument, and *‘крепь’* is a term for shoring or timber scaffolds. Later enters the phrase *‘все пять лучей’* containing the word *луч*, which can mean either ray (of light), radius (of the arm) or even digits (of the hand).

The third and final section seems to telescope the action from the monumental to the individual. The beginning section’s declarations against death have led to a passage on a more personal and quieter musing, as if in a memory:

Я век себе по росту подбирал.	I put on an epoch, according to my height.
Мы шли на юг, держали пыль над степью;	We were marching south, kicking dust over the steppe;
Бурьян чадил; кузнечик баловал,	The wild grass fumed; a grasshopper played around,
Подковы трогал усом, и пророчил,	Touched some horseshoes with his antenna,
И гибелью грозил мне, как монах.	and prophesied, threatening me with death, like a monk.

The second line *‘Мы шли на юг, держали пыль над степью’* suggests an army marching and a man’s memory of it, since the verb of motion used here denotes being on foot. This allusion could be the memories of Arseny Tarkovsky’s wartime fighting at the front bleeding into the text. But what are we to make of this strange scene of a grasshopper playing around and prophesying? The grasshopper is traditionally associated with music, poetry, and the Greek god Apollo (Hunter-Blair 2014, 209), but one can see in this insect an air of the *iurodivyi*. The *iurodivyi*, or holy fool, is a prominent figure in Russian devotional culture, with erratic actions and spiritual insights. One could say that the *iurodivyi* acts as the court jester in the heavenly order of

saints, with strange riddles and blunt sayings. This bluntness was directed to the ungodly, usually the noblemen and rulers of the Russian lands. This character of the holy fool finds itself in Russian literature as well, most notably in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Arseny Tarkovsky himself wrote a poem titled “The Iurodivyi in 1918/ Юродивый в 1918 году” (1962), a deceptively nonsensical speech about the executed Tsar Nicholas II. Likewise, Andrey Tarkovsky incorporated the holy fool into the heroes of his late films, such as *Stalker* and *The Sacrifice*.

The speaker counters the grasshopper’s prophesying by holding onto his epoch’s fate, ‘standing, like a boy, in the stirrups’. He then decides ultimately that, despite outward signs of death and displacement, his epoch measured to his height is the one he can bear best. The finishing couplet takes the trumpeting out of the previous two sections by expressing the speaker’s longing for stability:

Когда б её летучая игла	If only life’s flying needle didn’t take
Меня, как нить, по свету не вела.	me, like a thread, across the world.

Similar to “First Meetings” and “Since Morning I Waited for You...”, this poem’s ending is an ironic turn without irony, delivered subtly and gracefully without imposition. Despite its gracefulness, the ending has an entrapment that contrasts to the freedom and expanse at the poem’s beginning.

The dedicatee of this poem of militaristic and masculine imagery is, apparently, a woman, but this is understandable given this woman’s later oeuvre. The dedicatee, according to writer-poetess Evdokiya Olshanskaya, is none other than the renowned Russian poet Anna Andreyevna Akhmatova (1889-1966). Akhmatova and Arseny Tarkovsky were close friends since 1946, and as such, Arseny would have certainly known of Akhmatova’s troubles with censorship and her son’s imprisonment (Olshanskaya, 2002). The historic command present in “Life, Life” is matched

and surpassed in Akhmatova's poetry, most notably in "Requiem" (c. 1935-1940). Although he would later write a poetic cycle in memory of her, Arseny Tarkovsky appears to pay homage to her work in this poem. He even stated that her later poems were a prophetic vision of the future (Hunter-Blair, 30). "Life, Life" reflects Akhmatova's vision in the breadth of knowledge and experience it instills upon the reader and its shifts between the historic and the personal.

4. "Eurydice/Эвридика" (1961)

"Eurydice", the last of the four poems, is the most formally conventional: five stanzas of eight lines each and a strict iambic tetrameter with alternating rhymes (save four lines in the second stanza). These narrow confines carry a weighty concern for metaphysics and lyrical descriptions. Along with the classical Grecian imagery as hinted at by the title comes imagery of the late nineteenth century, such as the last stanza's 'copper hoop' which children would chase with a stick as a game. All of these structural and thematic elements, topped with the classical Greek connotation, make the poem a bit esoteric. When read by Tarkovsky himself, however, the elusive text of images and ideas sounds simple and airy, almost like a folk song.

"Eurydice" introduces in its first stanza the relationship between the soul and the body:

У человека тело	Man has but one body,
Одно, как одиночка...	as lone as a loner...

The word 'одиночка' derives from 'Одно' or the neuter term for 'one', thus it refers to the body, not the man. 'Man has but one body', and the soul can no longer bear the state of its partner: scarred skin on bones.

In the second stanza the soul appears to momentarily find respite from its confines, flying through the cornea of the eye into the fantastic (or as the poem calls it, ‘the icy wheel spoke of the bird-drawn chariot’). The upward movement finds reference in the psalms where the speaker likens himself and his soul to birds flying off to be at rest (as in the 54th Psalm) or the 83rd where the man whose help is from the Lord, ‘he hath made ascents in his heart, in the vale of weeping...’ This momentary escape is accentuated by the break in the regular rhyme scheme. Arseny Tarkovsky’s recording all the more highlights this particular stanza with its four identical end rhymes and its musicality and economy of diction:

Летит сквозь роговицу	The soul flies through the cornea
В небесную криницу,	To the well of heaven,
На ледяную спицу,	To the icy wheel spoke of
На птичью колесницу	the bird-drawn chariot,

The third stanza further elaborates on the tension of the body-soul relationship in citing the paradox of the soul being incomplete, even useless, without the body (a point echoed by Orthodox theology). Then the poet poses a ‘riddle without a key’:

Кто возвратится вспять,	Who will return again,
Сплясав на той площадке,	having danced on that stage
Где некому плясать?	Where there’s no one to dance/for whom to dance?

This riddle is also linguistically ambiguous in the last line, where the use of dative is either the recipient of the dance or the dancer himself. There is a desolation of the spaces that are no longer filled with people, and the keyless riddle, the speaker’s echoed quandary, goes unanswered.

The fourth stanza presents a sudden turn of thinking: the speaker dreams of ‘another soul in other clothing’. This enigmatic soul erupts in the imagery of transitory fire which both purifies and destroys, ‘flickering from timidity to hope’. Before it departs it leaves as a souvenir ‘lilacs on the table’, as a fire leaves scars or burns. The beginning is the speaker’s address to a nameless child:

Дитя, беги, не сетуй	Run, child, don't lament
Над Эвридикой бедной	Over poor Eurydice,
И палочкой по свету	And roll your bronze hoop
Гони свой обруч медный,	Around the world with a stick,
Пока хоть в четверть слуха	As long as, at a quarter of a sound
В ответ на каждый шаг	In reply to each step,
И весело и сухо	The earth roars in your ears
Земля шумит в ушах.	Both merrily and dryly.

The ironic turn of losses, so subtle in the denouements of the three previous poems, are now the centerpiece of this poem. This centralization of loss and elegy is especially felt in its title of the tragic heroine Eurydice, who was separated from her husband Orpheus when he tried to free her from the underworld. The last image, of the earth sounding in the ears of the boy, suggests the beginning of music. Since Orpheus was so grand a musician he could hear nature’s music. This sound of the earth, then, means being alive and of the living, whether one knows it or not, unlike Eurydice who now resides in Hades or Orpheus who was, for a time, separated from the realm of the living.

Is the speaker Orpheus? Is it Eurydice herself? Arseny Tarkovsky? Is this poem’s imagery that of a madman’s monologue? Indeed, “Eurydice” can possess a function similar to the iurodivyi’s speech at the end of Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*. Such a speech, which implores the

tears of Rus' to flow, acts as a period mark to the action and a promise of an action about to occur. This connection to *Boris Godunov* would have found rapport with Andrey Tarkovsky, since he would have been familiar with the story after filming a production of the opera for the Royal Opera House.

A more difficult question lies in how this poem relates the story of Eurydice. The poem is dedicated to Faltz, as attested by Marina Tarkovskaya. When going through her father's archives, Tarkovskaya found a thin notebook titled "As Forty Years Before/Как сорок лет тому назад (1940 – 1969)". The notebook contained eight handwritten poems in memory of Faltz, among them "First Meetings" and "Eurydice" (Tarkovskaia 2006, 272). While Arseny Tarkovsky appears to be mourning the loss of his first love, he hides the fact excellently by tying the verses with a broader concern.

After examining all four of Arseny Tarkovsky's poems, one can trace the following poetic images throughout them: nature (especially the four elements), music (sometimes synonymous with nature), ordinary life (such as objects or the household), spirituality/transcendence, movement, time or timelessness, relationships (especially love and family), the figure of the madman (and iurodivyi), and clothing and/or the naked body. Such images will prove helpful to analyzing their use in Andrey Tarkovsky's film.

The Mirror (1975)

Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* is a film of experimentation based on his goal to show cinema as equal to the other arts; perhaps this was not so much a conscious goal but an ongoing thought in Andrey Tarkovsky's mind during the years of ideas, scriptwriting, filming, and editing. Out of all the films in his career, *The Mirror*, says scholar Maya Turovskaya, is "the most concrete, but also the most indirect of [Andrey] Tarkovsky's film; the most documentary, while also the most poetic" (Turovskaya, 66). *The Mirror* also is a Tarkovsky film with the least straightforward production history. There remains no clear consensus on dates of drafts or when the initial idea came to the director. Shot after the release of the philosophical sci-fi film *Solaris* (1972) and before *Stalker* (1979), *The Mirror*'s initial stages were the result of an idea for a collaborative script between Andrey Tarkovsky and his new co-writer Aleksandr Misharin (Tarkovsky 1999, xix).

The first screenplay draft was from around 1968, dedicated to and focused on Andrey's mother, Maria Vishnyakova, whom he saw as a 'tragic figure' (Hunter-Blair 2014, 73). The screenplay was aptly titled *Confession/ Исповедь* with a heavy emphasis on character analysis and 'immortalizing' its heroine. The plan was to use hidden cameras to record the mother's reactions to questions posed by Andrey. These clandestine interviews would mix with newsreels and reenacted sequences of her personal past. The exhaustive list of questions mostly dealt with Maria's personal decisions, preferences, and even fears and shortcomings. Here are a few example questions:

1. When the war began, you and the children left Moscow. Do you remember the date? Who saw you off? How did you get there? Please try to remember.

12. After you split up with your husband, why did you not try to find someone else to support you, another husband?

37. I'm sorry for this slightly tactless question. Have you ever done anything so far to be ashamed of?

62. Do you have dreams? Tell me about one that made a particularly strong impression on you at the time.

75. Do you like Bach?

109. Do you think that the experience of your life could be of use to your children? Or do you think that it is individual and cannot be passed on?

116. Do you think you were pretty when young? I have seen old photographs of you: you were very pretty, really. Did you have many admirers? Did you ever envy any other woman's beauty? How did you feel about women who were not unattractive but not beautiful?

118. What is the meaning of life? Forgive my crassness.

(Tarkovsky 1999, 266, 267, 281, 300, 303, 317, 320)

The draft raised obvious ethical concerns as well as artistic ones. The hidden camera idea was eventually dropped in later drafts, being dismissed by the director as lacking in subtlety. Still, the questions reveal as much about Andrey as they would about his mother. Already from the beginning, Andrey was focused on himself and his family's past as well as a will to answer some mysteries in his own life (Johnson and Petrie, 112).

The second draft, appearing in 1973 and titled *Bright, Bright Day/Белый, белый день*⁸, focused on a nameless main character's childhood memories, especially memories of the Great Patriotic War (Turovskaya, 61-62). The title is taken directly from one of Arseny Tarkovsky's poems from 1942, which describes a childhood memory and lost happiness:

⁸ Also translated as *A White, White Day* by some sources.

Камень лежит у жасмина,	A stone lies by the jasmine,
Под этим камнем клад.	a treasure is buried beneath it.
Отец стоит на дорожке.	Father stands on the footpath.
Белый, белый день...	A bright, bright day...

This addition of poetry shows the broadening of examination by Andrey that now included his father as well as his mother (and would involve them in the filming of *The Mirror*, using his mother as an actress and his father's poetry recordings). While there is not yet a concrete narrative or structure, the elements of childhood, character analysis, poetry, and documentary remain constant. The film's central point, however, remained to be found, as evident by Andrey Tarkovsky's struggle with finding an appropriate title:

I don't like *The Bright Day* as a title. It's limp. *Martyrology* is better, only nobody knows what it means; and when they find out they won't allow it. *Redemption* is a bit flat... 'Confession' is pretentious. *Why are You Standing So Far Away?* Is better, but obscure.⁹

Indeed, the choices of title show a wavering between public and private that is reminiscent of the psalms of David (Andrey's 'better but obscure' title seems inspired by a line from the 9th psalm: 'Why, O Lord, hast thou gone to stand afar off?'). Along with script related problems came problems with studio approval. After an initial rejection, Andrey Tarkovsky agreed to rewrite the script but was allotted a meager 622,000 Rubles and 7, 500 meters of film stock (with only a small amount of color stock). This filmstock shortage may explain the subsequent switches between the

⁹ Не нравится мне название «Белый день». Вяло. «Матиролог» — хорошо, но никто не знает этого слова; когда же узнают, конечно же, запретят. «Искушение» — как-то плоско... «Исповедь» — претенциозно. «Почему ты стоишь вдали?» лучше, но мутно. Feb. 4th, 1973 (Hunter-Blair's translation).

two stocks throughout the film (Johnson and Petrie 114, 304). Despite the obstacles, Tarkovsky and Misharin went back to rewriting. After both director and co-writer spent an entire month on the title alone, the title *The Mirror/Зеркало* at last appeared in 1973. Tarkovsky reportedly chose this title because of the way it looked when spelled out (Synessios 1999, 255). Filming was underway in late 1973 with the screenplay evolving as filming went along. Some scenes never went further than the writing stage, while others were added, such as expanding the role of Margarita Terekhova as both the mother and the ex-wife (which added to the complexity of the film's doubling) (Tarkovsky 1986, 131). Shooting ended in early 1974, but editing was the most laborious part of the film due to the fragmentary and disparate elements. The specific rhythm was found only by trial and error of some 20 rough cuts (Turovskaya, 71).

The final cut depicts images surrounding a non-chronological story of a main character, Aleksey, in contemporary 1970s Moscow. Aleksey (always off-screen) tries to cope with his childhood memories and current relationships between his mother, Maria, his ex-wife, Natalya, and his estranged son, Ignat. He constantly recalls events from his past, how his mother raised his sister and him at their family dacha, his absent soldier father, etc, and how his past connects to his present. This doubling of the past and present is emphasized by some characters in flashback scenes being played by the same actors as the contemporary setting. These memories and realities, shifting unpredictably between black-and-white and color, are coupled with Arseny Tarkovsky's four poems, newsreel footage (mostly Soviet history or WWII), stills of Paintings (such as Breughel and Da Vinci), and instrumental music (most prominently Bach). Past and present merge and fragment in these last five minutes, and the last lingering shot of the dark woods makes one feel as if the film goes on past the end of the reel, into the eternity of memory.

Andrey Tarkovsky went to great lengths during production to reconstruct his memories, even reconstructing his childhood dacha and dressing actress Terekhova according to photographs of his mother. He was just as eager to soften, or even hide the personal side to the film in later interviews. He originally wanted to show himself as Aleksey, but recanted to observations that it would have made the film too overtly autobiographical. There remains a brief shot of the director's chest and arm as he releases a bird into the air (Johnson and Petrie, 115).

Upon the film's limited release in 1975, public and critical reactions were polarized: official critics vilified it, the public flocked to it. Articles and reviews flung accusations of inaccessibility, ironic in the face of the number of people clamoring to see the film upon its release. Regardless of the reviews, Andrey Tarkovsky received the most varied fan mail over this film alone (see introduction to *Sculpting in Time*). Turovskaya, from her firsthand experience of *The Mirror's* premiere, cites some initial themes and unanswerable questions brought to the viewer: 'love' as a theme is tied to wider issues, the infinite and fragile choir of love and motherhood passes from generation to generation, memory is as a fourth dimension unlocked only through cinema, as well as the persistence of conscience and guilt. Turovskaya also remarks that the film has an openness, an un-Russian nakedness to its personal confession. This nakedness was rare and unusual during the era of populace-centered Soviet cinema (Turovskaya, 69).

What is remarkable about *The Mirror* is its dreamlike quality and sublime cinematic voice, at once intimate and public. Art and historical newsreels act as points of reference as the juxtaposition of timescales move with equal measure, leading to unusual and striking results (Turovskaya, 67). Temporal and special abnormalities become the film's signature style (Skakov, 100). Each scene interlocks in subtle ways with the next in an illogically logical rhythm and a concentrated poeticism. A shot of a hand in front of fire leads to a scene of a singed bedroom, or

the confetti of a victory parade link to the pages of an art book. The film became, what scholar Nariman Skakov calls the true definition of the word 'image': a simultaneous moving toward and away from a representation of reality (Skakov, 218).

The challenge of *The Mirror*'s non-chronological montage makes it all the more remarkable. Scenes and images flash and fade before the audience. Some repeat, some mutate, some are never seen again. Such a flow of images resembles one's own early memories which appear vivid, fragmented, filled with wonder and even fear. There is no wider, adult context for objects or actions, so the images stay in a limbo at once real and surreal. Undoubtedly the common childhood images (life on the dacha, wildflowers, billowing linens, lamps, jars, etc.) resonated well with audiences of Andrey Tarkovsky's generation (Turovskaya, 65). Tarkovsky himself said that since the inception of the idea for *Confession*, he had a reoccurring dream of his dacha. When work on *The Mirror* ceased, so did the dream of the dacha, perhaps signaling a peace made through the film (Johnson and Petrie, 136). This peace, however, did not mark an end to his artistic restlessness as he went further in his style, never to compose such a poetic confession again.

The Poetry in the Film: Previous Scholarship

While there is already a large body of work dedicated to studying Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* alone, this literature review focuses on a group of articles and book sections which discuss to some extent the use of Arseny Tarkovsky's four poems in the film. This narrower topic is addressed mainly by the following sources:

Vida Johnson and Graham Petrie's book, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (Indiana UP, 1994), is, as to date, the only thorough tome of information dedicated to the whole

of Andrey Tarkovsky's output. In addition to an overview of Andrey Tarkovsky's biography, themes, film plots, and analyses, the book contains a small section exploring the link between Andrey's films and literature, with a subsection on the actual use of Arseny Tarkovsky's poetry. This subsection is mostly focused on the link between father and son, and is clear in suggesting connections between the artists and their work, but does not delve into the possibilities therein. One marked observation made by Johnson and Petrie is the role of the speaker in Arseny's poetry and Andrey's film. The subjectivity of the lyrical "I", the elliptical air of a poem's 'plot', the use of emotional association are just some of the qualities passed from father to son (Johnson and Petrie, 258-260).

Though primarily a book on cinematic theory, Nariman Skakov's book *The Cinema of Tarkovsky: Labyrinths of Space and Time* (I.B. Taurus, 2012) contains a relevant chapter on *The Mirror* which incorporates a discussion of Arseny Tarkovsky's four poems. The poems, says Skakov, are the active agents in the film's exploration of spatio-temporal links (links of space and time) to human generations as well as submission to the flow of history (Skakov, 134). Using Dante's *Inferno* as a central metaphor for the film, this movie critique places death and childhood as the primary concerns for Andrey Tarkovsky's cinematic 'self-portrait'. In trying to express these inexpressible concepts, the director makes innovations in terms of the use of flashback and the blurring of genres.

Alexandra Smith's article, "Andrei Tarkovsky as Reader of Arsenii Tarkovsky's Poetry in the Film *Mirror*" (*Russian Studies in Literature Journal* 40, 2004) takes the use of the poetry to an even further psychoanalytical approach which includes a heavy amount of scholarly referencing, Lacanian analysis, as well as providing a foil to the analytics of Johnson and Petrie (which Smith calls 'facile'). Furthermore, Smith sees the artistic bonds of father-son as a shift between

modernism (father) and post-modernism (son). There is much merit in Smith's argument that Andrey Tarkovsky's montage was focused on the natural order to make the images flow organically, as if the film itself was a living, breathing thing. Thus, the seemingly disjointed use of the poems is not about placing them subordinate to the image, but giving them a life of their own alongside it. Smith further criticizes the 'limited' analysis of Johnson and Petrie due to their assumption of Eisenstein's montage theory being similar to that of Tarkovsky's. Smith herself does use her sources effectively, and presents a complex and heady web of how poetic word marries with poetic image.

A further aid in this group is the recently published book by Kitty Hunter-Blair, *Poetry and Film: Artistic Kinship between Arsenii and Andrei Tarkovsky* (Tate Publishing, 2014). While primarily a book of Arseny Tarkovsky's translated poems, it contains an introduction that presents Arseny as a poet in his own right and explores the artistic links of poetry and film. This introduction even addresses (in brief) the points brought up by both Johnson and Petrie and others in relation to the father-son relationship and trauma. Hunter-Blair offers a first attempt to delve into the life and work of Arseny Tarkovsky and how he echoes in all of his son's films. Hers is the only one of the sources to explore the poems in *The Mirror* as essential to understanding the film, and provides the four poems in the scenes in which they are recited with attention to each scene's details, from camera movement to sound. While it may appear to be a thorough exploration, the scene analyses are not exhaustive, and only prove that this topic is a new, fertile territory for scholarship.

The only sources available in which Andrey Tarkovsky himself speaks of his father's poetry are his published diaries (which also contains his published interviews), and his book *Sculpting in Time*, in which he makes way for the production of the film over the choices of poems in chapter five: The Film Image. While he is systematic and eager to discuss the filming process

in his book, Andrey Tarkovsky appears more strident and evasive in his 1975 interview. He decries the claims that his film contains symbolism and surrealist themes, and makes the claim that the purpose of *The Mirror* is primarily an autobiographical homily. There is no mention of his father's poetry (Tarkovsky 1991, 367). One direct example that Andrey Tarkovsky has left of his process of bringing a poem to the screen lies in an unfinished idea for a short film. This short film outline, published in *Sculpting in Time*, centers around his father's poem "I Became Ill in Childhood...", a poem describing a childhood memory of a hospital. The outline consists of five scenes and five primary shots. The shots are mostly outdoor and do not directly correspond to the action of the poem. The only actors are an angel, a father, a son, and a grandson. The poem's recitation (by the author himself) is confined to be heard from the beginning of the third shot to the end of the fourth. The rest of the scenes are enveloped in the finale to Haydn's *Farewell Symphony* (Tarkovsky 1986, 91-93). Here we see almost a sketchpad view of what elements and techniques Andrey Tarkovsky utilized in dealing with the potential problem of adapting his father's poems, including a translation of mood rather than image for image.

Scene-by-Scene Analysis

The poems of Arseny Tarkovsky are used as an axis of ideas, concepts, and a montage of visual sensations for Andrey Tarkovsky's film. Their function, however, is not in the strictness of cinematic adaptation, i.e., filming exactly what is written in the poem. Andrey, ever the inscrutably masterful director, takes the process of adaptation one step further into the realm of 'mood imitation'. The atmosphere of each poem is what is in focus, both figuratively and literally. Hunter-Blair brings up an interesting idea, from a word formed by Michel Chion, of 'acousmetric' use of

the poems. From the Greek word *acousma*, acousmetric refers to something heard ‘without the cause or source being seen’ (Hunter-Blair, 36). While it can be employed for suspenseful effects, its use in *The Mirror* is likened to the ripples from an epicenter or the gust of wind from a passed train. The poems act as the epicenters, their ideas rippling and spinning out in the fragments of Andrey’s cinematic universe. In fact, the order of Arseny Tarkovsky’s poetry in the film is what Hunter-Blair calls a ‘meta-narrative’, tracing a story from happy love long gone (“First Meetings”) to a personal drama of disappointment (“Since Morning I waited...”) to the unity of time and the power of human ties (“Life, Life”) to a final triumph over death (“Eurydice”) (Hunter-Blair, 56). One may take a step further and call it a meta-narrative of creation to incarnation, the first poem being a memory of Paradise and the last the state of the soul and body before the second coming of Christ.

As much as the scenes jump from one time to another, Andrey Tarkovsky must have considered the entire finished roll of film as one continuous take. Thus the four poems are no longer four separate works, but one distinct stream in four audible segments. Tarkovsky, in chapter 5 of *Sculpting in Time*, mentions the difficulty in using instrumental music as opposed to electronic which has the ability to absorb itself into the rest of the sound-world, much like a person’s breathing (Tarkovsky 1986, 163). This rapport of music to breathing coincides with his view of cinema. Perhaps Andrey Tarkovsky wanted to approach the use of his father’s poetry just as he utilized music: woven into fabric of the film as naturally as breath. Thus the use of Arseny Tarkovsky’s voice, as that of an epic poet or ballad singer, gives life to the poems that run both independently and beside Andrey’s images. This tendency for independent continuum between the four poems, carefully handpicked by Andrey, may explain Smith’s exploitation of the poems as an exposition for Lacanian stages.

Central to each scene/poem is the discourse, and occasional dichotomy, between poetic speaker and addressee. The lyric “I” has no bounds, but while Arseny Tarkovsky’s voice acts as a type of omnipresent narrator, the driving characters of speaker and addressee form an anchor for more complete and concise analysis. Further, Skakov proposes that the voice of Arseny, while disorienting and purposeful, fulfills its cohesion as the ‘disembodied voice’ of the film (Skakov, 108). Keeping in mind this idea of the discourse and voice, the images and themes from the poems (see Chapter 2), as well as the idea of acousmetric use, let us unwind the poetry in a scene-by-scene analysis. The four scenes from the film are the scenes in which the four poems are recited. The analysis, however, does not confine itself to these four scenes alone. Supplementary shots, ideas, and linking scenes are also taken into consideration given the tightly bound quality of *The Mirror*.

Scene 1

After a meditative but melancholy organ solo by Bach, aptly titled ‘The Old Year Hath Passed Away/Das alte Jahr vergangen ist’ (1588), the first full scene opens with a shot of a lone woman sitting on a wooden fence at the edge of a wheat field. It is Maria at the family dacha in Yur’evets. We hear a voice-over of Aleksey (as voiced by Innokenty Smoktunovsky) speaking of his childhood spent waiting for his father to come back. From the field comes a man who calls himself a doctor. He approaches Maria and is both philosophical and a bit flirtatious. His advances, though, are quietly rebuffed by Maria. As the doctor walks away, Maria looks longingly in his direction, and a gust of wind blows through the wheat field, resembling waves on the seashore. Both this gust of wind and the ensuing poem act as an initiation, as crossing over into

the poetic dream world (Skakov, 111). Maria turns away from the stranger, her possibility of an empty tryst, and walks toward the dacha, and “First Meetings” rises organically with Arseny’s recitation, blurring onscreen and off-screen action (Hunter-Blair, 38). As Maria turns to the dacha, we see in the distance something fall from the windowsill. This falling object is matched later by a reoccurring black-and-white ‘dream sequence’ of the wind blowing in the forest. In said sequence there is a disorienting shot of a chicken knocking a piece of glass from a window. Nature, then, appears in connection, or conjunction, with the sublime (ex. water, birds, skies, woods), along with the modernist theme of transformation and life-creation through love and poetry. One may cite references to Pasternak’s poetry, that of lyric nature and human suffering, or even personifying humanity through melancholy nature: a jug, eyes, mirages, birds, ‘hard, thick water’ (Smith, 51). The movement of the speaker and his beloved match the slow, languid movements of the camera, with the image of the beloved, lighter than a bird’s wing, slowly becoming the poem’s heralding birds that escort the two lovers and the chicken in the window.

Smith expounds on this poem as a complex self-analysis for opening the film as well as a perfect illustration of the height of Jacques Lacan’s Mirror stage: assuming ‘the other’s’ identity. Smith views the poem as a representation of Lacan’s “symbolic order”, that is, the system of identities and meanings that form the self are both outside and projected onto the individual. Andrey Tarkovsky, says Smith, both views and controls his father’s voice in this scene, since it is interwoven with his own autobiography (Smith, 50).

As the poem goes on we see the two children seated at the table in a dark room of the dacha as Maria looks at them from the corner. The poem’s reference to the beloved’s nakedness in the dark finds no outward sympathy with the aloof Maria. She moves to the window, the camera reluctantly follows. For a moment there is blackness as we only see the covered window, which

Hunter-Blair likens to the closed eyelids of the beloved (Smith, 40). The fantastic elements of the poem find themselves not in the people of the scene, but more in the objects. The vase of cosmic blue with a crystal pulsing with mountains and rivers finds itself in a vase on a windowsill (the motif of flowers in a vase is quite common in Tarkovsky's films). The music of speech 'full to the brim with sonorous force' matches the music of the recitation, and speech itself, according to Smith, corresponds to water. Associating water with speech shows the influence of Russian poets Gavril Derzhavin and Marina Tsvetaeva (Smith, 56). The camera sweeps past Maria sitting at the windowsill, upon which lies an open notebook with lines written out as if in stanzas. This notebook originally played a more prominent role in the scene since Maria (Terekhova) was supposed to read "First Meetings" from its pages, but in the end the more abstract approach was adopted (Skakov, 112). Is this the original notebook in which Arseny Tarkovsky wrote "First Meetings"? Is it the absent husband's notebook, spilling its transfigured human lexicon into the room? We have no time to linger as the camera looks out onto the field and the rain comes down to blur the objects in the distance.

The poem's figure of the madman brandishing a razor comes at a close up of Maria's face streaked with tears. This close up of a character weeping reoccurs throughout the film, especially in conjunction with a poem being recited. This close up forms the climax to the recitation of "First Meetings" and give an aura of emptiness, loss, and the pain of futile waiting (Skakov, 112). A cat mews and a dog barks outside, as if signaling nature's sympathetic reverberation to her unexpressed emotion. Smith critiques this use of the madman in Johnson and Petrie's analysis of this scene in *A Visual Fugue*, as well as their analysis of "First Meetings", because they fail to liken the camera to the male gaze on the mother as she calls to mind the poem being recited in voice over. Johnson and Petrie see the scene as a sequence of verbal and non-verbal symbols, thus

the image of a razor-wielding madman links WWII violence to the poem's recollection of past memories. Smith, on the other hand, calls the madman with a razor the unpredictable movement of the camera forcing viewers to see things differently (as it is used in the film, not via the author's intent), exhibiting post-modern qualities of "indeterminacy, dialogism, polyphony, antimonumentalism, [and] openendedness" (Smith, 53).

Outside of the house we hear frantic shouting and exclamations. The mother goes out to investigate, then comes back to tell her children, "It's a fire, only don't shout." As they all go outside the shot lingers on the eating table as a glass vase falls from it (this table will appear in multiple black-and-white flashbacks along with the specific objects on it: a lamp, a cloth, bread, etc). The shot turns through the house to the scene outside: a neighboring dacha is set ablaze, with the people and children standing like statues in front of it. Water dripping from the roof in the foreground merges with the orange blaze of the background, bringing together Andrey Tarkovsky's preferred combination of fire and water (Skakov, 113). Maria casually walks over to a well and splashes her face. Is this fire the work of fate's brutal razor?

"First Meetings" continues to ripple out of this scene as the shot changes to a shot of child Aleksey sleeping in bed. The wind blows through the trees and the color changes to black and white (this shot repeats three times throughout the film, each time getting longer and longer). He sits up and whispers the word "Papa!" He jumps out of the brass bed as the scene changes to the husband pouring water over Maria's head. Her hair, like the roots of a tree, spreads out on the surface of a basin of water, concealing her face. She slowly rises and shakes her hands, as behind her the walls run with rain and the ceiling plaster slowly crashes to the floor, signaling the transfiguring of object by the beloved. For Andrey Tarkovsky, female sexuality is often linked

with long, loose hair (Johnson and Petrie, 220). Is this a fetishism of the beloved? Is it a child-like voyeurism?

As the rain falls inside the room, Maria walks slowly past a watery mirror and stone wall and looks off screen, curiously. A mirror is now in the center of the room, reflecting both a translucent landscape and an old woman approaching it. Is this the landscape of the poem's penultimate stanza, now visited only by the beloved, Maria? The woman (Maria Vishnyakova) reaches out her hand and sweeps over the reflection. An immediate cut goes to a fading picture of a hand in front of a fire, illuminated red, the warm hand of the beloved. The illumined hand of the previous shot leads to Aleksey's dark apartment bedroom. A phone is ringing. Aleksey answers it and begins an off screen conversation with his mother, Maria. He then tells his mother that he just had a dream of an event from his childhood, when the neighbor's had a fire (this may explain the previous segment as being part of Aleksey's dream). Maria says that the fire was back in 1935, the same year Aleksey's father left, which is approximately the same year Arseny left Andrey's family. Now that the audience connects the previous scene at the dacha with Aleksey's dream, there is a curious acousmetric tripling of remembrance (from poetic speaker to Maria to Aleksey).

In analyzing the scene in which we hear "First Meetings", Smith hosts a number of inaccurate descriptions, saying, for instance, that a boy and girl's mother 'enters the house' when in actuality we are not shown Maria's entrance into the dacha (Smith, 50). These descriptions lead to what she sees as the main purpose of the poem: to introduce the self as author of narrative. The female figure of the scene experiences a 'double framing': the gaze of poet (father) and camera/director (son). As the female-mother character in the scene, Maria is both poetic subject to the father and cinematic object for the son. Andrey 'appropriates' Arseny's words to name the symbolic order imposed on him in Lacanian terms (Smith, 51). Further in Smith's analysis is the

supposed central image of the poem: the woman with a sphere in her hand (obscured by other images of glass and water). By this woman with a sphere, Andrey invokes Mnemosyne, the muse of epic art, whose sphere becomes memorial space in the film (Smith, 53).

What Smith does not seem to take into account in her Lacanian analysis of the poem and scene are the different threads of time referenced in them. Hunter-Blair, pointing primarily to the Faltz dedication, highlights the multiple chronological layers in this one scene: the 1970s (when Arseny Tarkovsky recorded the poem), 1960s (when the poem was written), 1920s (the era to which the poem refers), and the 1930s (the time period of the scene). These different threads tie into what becomes the present for the audience, making it strange, beautiful, and sublime (Hunter-Blair, 41). Of course, Andrey was oblivious to the Faltz dedication. Perhaps thinking the poem directed towards his mother was why Andrey at first wanted Maria to read it from the notebook.

Scene 2

In their telephone conversation, the elderly Maria tells Aleksey that Yelizaveta Pavlovna, or “Lisa”, her old co-worker at the Publishing House during the war, has just died. The following segment, shot in black and white, depicts the mother's memory of Lisa. We see young Maria running down a street as it begins to pour down rain. She bursts into the printing press, looking for a misprint in the evening gazette (for proofreaders during the Stalin period, misspelling the names of high-ranking officials was punishable by shooting, and therefore a constant nightmare). Lisa, a stern but concerned co-worker (played by Alla Demidova), helps her in her maddening search. They run past the printing machines towards the archives cabinet. Maria pours through a proof,

then grows suddenly calm, and leaves the printing room. As Maria walks down the hallway, we hear Arseny Tarkovsky's reciting all nine lines of "Since Morning I Waited for You Yesterday".

Skakov cites this shot as neither action nor inaction since its 'laconic qualities' match the brief poem and place it past diegetic interpreting (Skakov, 118). Smith in turn has very little to say about this poem, but cites the poetic images of rain, weeping, and failed meetings. Nature appears in the descriptions of weather, and music as the raindrops running through the branches, like the rain throughout the scene. The line, "...I went out without a coat", refers to both the coat of the speaker and Maria's rain-soaked coat. It also hints to the recurring poetic image of the body disrobed. Maria's rain-soaked hair finds its link with the hair-washing scene from scene 1 (Skakov, 115). The movement of speaker and addressee toward each other is being blocked by the ambiguous 'they'. Time is a force against the speaker, just as time has Maria in a vice-grip. There is a timelessness of a psychiatric ward and perhaps a commentary of the timelessness in the endless work of the Soviet machine. The poem centers on a failed but hoped for meeting, the scene centers on a failed but dreaded catastrophe (Hunter-Blair, 44).

Back at their claustrophobic and darkly-lit office, Lisa comforts Maria, then comments that she looks like Maria Timofeyevna Lebyadkina, a character in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Demons*. In said novel, Maria is an invalid who orders around her alcoholic brother, Captain Lebyadkin, who in turn beats her. Lebyadkina is considered by some scholars to be one of Dostoevsky's iurodivyi (holy fool) characters due to her simple-minded intuitiveness (Hunter-Blair, 43). Lisa launches into a criticism about Maria's marriage, how she ordered her ex-husband around, and how he was lucky to escape. At the onslaught of Liza's criticism, the camera shoots a close-up on Maria's shocked face, her tearstained eyes, and her twisted, gaping mouth. A reverse shot goes to Liza, who takes out a handkerchief as her eyes well with tears at the mention of Maria's children. The

final, puzzling line of the poem, with its futile word and handkerchief, finds its way into this outburst brought about by shot nerves. Maria, now emotionless, goes to take a shower, telling Liza to stop playing the fool (the verb she uses—юродствовать—comes from the same root as iurodivyi, the holy fool) (Hunter-Blair, 43). Maria takes a shower, adding a visual nakedness to the nakedness of the beloved in “First Meetings”. As she does so the pipes shut off, contradiction the hair-washing scene in being unable to bathe without her husband (Skakov, 118). She laughs and cries all at once. An immediate cut to color shows a bonfire in the middle of the field as the screen goes black.

Smith also comments on the Arseny reading: “a woman in time of distress appears to speak in a male’s voice” (Smith, 58). The madman image and hysterical woman are inherited discourses from the past, Smith thinks, and are common in Andrey Tarkovsky’s films (Smith, 55). Smith appears to confuse poetic speaker with addressee (Maria). The figure of the madman, as argued by Hunter-Blair, is elusive and inconclusive looking at the poem alone, which leads one to see Maria as in the Tarkovskian mold of ‘iurodivyi’ characters (Hunter-Blair, 44). This characterization of the iurodivyi can be both speaker and addressee, that is, the voice of Arseny (the real-life absent husband) and Maria (in the film). A subtle connection to this idea of the female holy fool occurs in a later scene, when the son, Ignat, looks at an old art book of Leonardo Da Vinci prints. He stops at a page depicting a female ascetic being borne into the air by angels (apparently St. Mary of Egypt). The music of Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater* hums quietly in the background.

The bonfire shot which appears to interrupt the scene hearkens back to the fire of “First Meetings”, and links to the Old Testament images of the burning bush appearing to Moses. This biblical reference is found in a later scene (though it is phrased as an Angel appearing to Moses, mixing with the New Testament annunciation). In this later scene we witness an argument between

Aleksey and his ex-wife, Natalia, over custody of their son, Ignat. Natalia (also played by Terekhova) hangs her head and wonders why such an appearance of burning angel never happens to her. If we take Maria as the *iurodivyi*, then she, not Natalia, has seen both this burning bush and this messenger angel in her own life, within the confines of her country dacha. This supplanting of biblical iconography to a familiar landscape appears in other Andrey Tarkovsky films (most notably the crucifixion scene in *Andrei Rublev*).

As intuited by Johnson and Petrie, the printing press scene captures well the Stalinist atmosphere of ‘suspicion, terror, mistrust, and repression’, especially in depicting the psychological strain and mood swings of the proofreaders (Johnson and Petrie, 121). Thus the insertion of Arseny Tarkovsky’s poem, tied by the idea of the madman/*iurodivyi*, acts as an incomprehensible but effective oasis of memory, and a specter of intimate words which haunts Maria through the halls.

Scene 3

This scene begins as a war-time memory (either Aleksey’s flashback or one from Ignat’s imagination). Aleksey had been telling Ignat, over the phone, how he was once in love with a girl with red hair and chapped lips. A red haired girl suddenly passes the screen in a winter landscape (the actress is actually Andrey Tarkovsky’s step-daughter). A young Aleksey looks fondly at the camera, presumably after her (young Aleksey and Ignat are both played by the same actor, Ignat Daniltsev). Aleksey and a few other boys are at a training camp learning how to shoot at targets. The trainer, a stern war veteran, constantly criticizes them for their lack of enthusiasm. One of the boys, a slowwitted red-head named Asafyev, is an orphan whose parents died in the Leningrad

Blockade (a horrific stand-off with the Nazis lasting 900 days). Asafyev tearfully draws a grenade from his bag and throws it onto the rifle range. The instructor shouts for everyone to get down as he throws himself onto the grenade. For a long moment of tension, we hear nothing but his heartbeat, and see where his brain pulses through a hole in his skull. "It's only a dummy," says Asafyev dryly. The instructor rises slowly, muttering under his breath (Johnson and Petrie, 124-125). This scenario of the military instructor was not a late addition, since Andrey Tarkovsky had originally wanted to write a novella of his war-time memories of evacuation. His military instructor was to have been the main character. While it was to slim a plot to become a full-fledged story, the memory was made into this scene (Tarkovsky 1986, 128).

We see the red haired girl again, only this time with a split lip. She touches the blood with her finger and gives a surprised smile at the camera. This enigmatic girl, as postulated by Johnson and Petrie, is a contrast to Andrey Tarkovsky's usual portrayal of female sexuality as a threatening or intrusive force. She is linked to a precocious sexuality, one that is perhaps entangled with the director's own ambivalent views of his own sexual desires (Johnson and Petrie, 246-248). This girl does appear in another scene, when Aleksey watches spilled milk drip slowly from the shelf, then glares at himself in a mirror on the wall. The scene immediately changes to a hand closing a closet mirror door. In the mirror a man buttons his army coat then walks away from the red haired girl in a white shift. She looks pensively and sadly at the camera as she holds her hand above a fiery poker from the fire stove, giving it a red glow (this is the same shot from the first dream of Aleksey's childhood in "First Meetings"). This spilled milk and supposed tryst give a further feeling of sexual frustration and dissatisfaction to Maria's own situation from scene 1 on, as if marking the end of youthful sexuality in "First Meetings".

The shot of the red haired girl and her bloody lip suddenly switches in and out of Soviet news reels of soldiers, both clothed and naked, trying to cross a river. The sounds of feet wading in the river combine with timpani beats and a hushed choir. The newsreels are of the Lake Sivash crossing of 1943. Arseny Tarkovsky's begins to recite his poem on the interconnections between earthly life and immortality, and the span of time. These themes contrast with the war footage commonly associated with death, suffering, and the brevity of time. Andrey Tarkovsky himself stated that "Life, Life", with its images of immortality, acted as the consummation of the newsreels because it 'gave voice to its ultimate meaning' (Tarkovsky 1986, 130). Skakov calls this sequence, the 'most remarkable combination of Arseni [sic] Tarkovsky's poetry and Andrey Tarkovsky's cinematic techniques'. Preexisting footage is made fresh and living by its careful matching with the contemporary recitation. Furthermore, the topic of human suffering is shown to be general due to the displacement of the newsreels from their historical context (the audience does not immediately know the when, where, or why). These newsreels also act as a 'collective memory' which contrasts to the subjective memories of Aleksey and Maria (Skakov, 122). Indeed it is startling to imagine how the soldiers who wade the Sivash couple so well with Arseny Tarkovsky's poem of those who are at the shores, net in hand, waiting for the shoal of immortality

Despite the frigid climate coupled with Aleksey's youthful longing of the training scene, the poem that complements it is not even subtly sexual. The only anatomical terms, such as 'clavicles' and 'putting on an epoch' as one chooses and puts on a coat and raising one's five digits, are all on a displaced set of descriptions across the stanzas of the poem. If a body appears in this poem, it is one that is active and linked to the support of humanity as a whole, not reclining or inclining as in "First Meetings". "Life, Life", which couples with the movement of the troops and the newsreel footage, also speaks of time and timelessness, humanity's relationship to

mortality and transcending mortality. Hunter-Blair finds a rhythm to the subject of specific lines and the cuts of the newsreel shots. For example, when the poem speaks of clavicles as prop-ups the news reel shows men marching with heavy loads in their backs (Hunter-Blair, 49).

At the poem's description of the prophesying grasshopper, the shot changes to a composed panorama of the snow-covered hillside dotted with children at play, reminiscent of the painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder (Johnson and Petrie, 125). The mood, however, is not innocent. The orphan Asafyev stumbles uphill in the foreground, and approaches the camera into a close-up. He whistles with tears in his eyes then looks away. A newsreel shot of an explosion follows. The figure of the madman, in the form of the grasshopper prophesying death, is further amplified by the images of war and their damage to the young psyche.

For Smith, the speaker of "Life, Life" acts as a mythical storyteller technologically equipped to all spaces and centuries. His is a poem in 'transhistorical space'. There is a rapport between a transhistorical specter and the little Asafyev. The boy, Smith says, is Andrey Tarkovsky's camera itself, the 'kino-eye' that gazes into the future and turns away from the past. This doubling of the male figure in this scene blend of speaker and boy is related to the overall doubling of father and son (Smith, 59). Unfortunately Smith mistranslates the line "I am like a boy standing in the stirrups" into "and now I am a little boy who gets up and speaks to you from the future", assumedly in order to combine two ideas from the same stanza into one sentence (Smith, 58). Asafyev, the figurative boy in the stirrups, lies in the vein of the lonely, bitter children of the time whose innocence was destroyed by war (much like Ivan in *Ivan's Childhood*). "Life, Life" ultimately links to him, and his unspoken desire for a 'reliable corner of constant warmth' but life has pulled him across the earth, like a needle pulling a thread, his attempt at controlling this needle

becomes his pulling of the dummy grenade's pin. More news footage on the wars of the twentieth century follows the poem. We lose ourselves in the images of war.

This scene appears the most removed from the "storyline" of the family as it deals with the undercurrent of military history. However, after the long interlude of war footage, we go, quite unexpectedly, to a scene where Aleksey's father returns. After a shot of Maria (Terekhova), looking off camera then turning away, we see Aleksey, his sister, Marina, and the father embracing in tearful silence. We hear a loud recitative from Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, told at the moment of Christ's death: "And behold, the curtain in the temple was rent in two, and the earth shook, and the rocks split..." We see a close up and zoom-out of Leonardo De Vinci's painting "Genevra de Benci"(c.1474), a portrait of a woman who bears an uncanny resemblance to Maria and her complex stare of resentment and regret. Andrey Tarkovsky, in his discussion of the use of this painting, calling it "at once attractive and repellent" and a good introduction of a timeless element and a juxtaposition of portrait and heroine, "to emphasize in her...the same capacity at once to enchant and repel... (Tarkovsky 1986, 108). At the beginning of the discussion, Tarkovsky also mentions the ability of Da Vinci's portrait, like the works of Bach or Tolstoy, to examine an object from outside and above. These austere principles of observation apply to his view of Arseny Tarkovsky's "Life, "Life". It is a poem that looks down on the ages as well as inward, forming the perfect complement to the newsreels, the orphaned Afasiev, and the father's jarring return.

Scene 4

Maria and young Aleksey appear at the dacha of the doctor's wife, Nadezhda Petrovna (played by Andrey Tarkovsky's second wife). Nadezhda mentions that while her husband, who is

not home yet, has the money, she suggests a freshly killed rooster as payment. She asks Maria to kill it herself. Nadezhda then brings her the axe, the block, and the rooster. Feathers fly. The deed is done. Maria smiles slightly, then looks straight at the screen, the lighting cast from underneath (Andrey Tarkovsky said that this was the only shot he regretted leaving in the final cut as it was 'too obvious') (Tarkovsky 1986, 109). Water runs down the walls, similar to the hair-washing scene.

As if in a sudden reverie, a shot/reverse shot changes to a black and white close up of Maria's husband. He looks directly at the screen, then turns to stroke the hand of a sleeping Maria. The shot draws back slowly to reveal Maria floating above her bed, her long hair flowing, hearkening back to both the hair-washing and the beloved of "First Meetings" sleeping on a throne. A white thread hangs down from her hip as a reference to "Life, Life" and life's needle that leaves men vagabonds. Her off-screen voice mentions how she only sees her husband whenever she is not well (a reference to the second poem's non-ideal meeting). A dove flies above her, her soul flying to the well of heaven (as in the fourth poem). Her husband's voice calls to her, as she is in a feverish sleep. "Don't you understand," answers Maria's voice, "I love you." This segment of fantasy acts as the ripple of the previous poems as well as to the poem about to come. Maria appears ghostly, almost dead, and echoes the plight of Eurydice in Hades. Her husband calling to her acts as the attempt of Orpheus. Previous references to desires, such as the red haired girl in Aleksey's thoughts from scene 3, are met and amplified by the appearance of the absent husband in Maria's reverie. Both are distant dreams that will never be realized but forever remembered, and are called to mind either in preparation of killing (training scene) or after (the rooster's off-screen decapitation).

The dream ends as Maria and Aleksey hurriedly leave Nadezhda's dacha. Maria declines selling her earrings, as if they were a gift from her husband with which she cannot part. As Maria and Aleksey walk along the muddy riverbank, we hear the poem's first stanza, musing on the oppositional partnership of the soul to the body. The body, 'all scars', finds sympathy with the poorly clothed and presumably hungry bodies of Maria and young Aleksey on their way back to the dacha without fulfilling their errand.

The shot lingers on Maria before the poem continues in the third stanza with the appearance of its 'riddle without a key'. The black-and-white dream of the wind blowing through the trees and knocking items off the table appears for the third and final time in a slightly modified version (there are more items and a bird is seen flying). The flowers left on this table links back to "First Meetings" as well as the dream of wind and the table. Music as the trumpets of the seven seas and the earth sounding in the boy's ears now manifest as the lasting sounds of wind after the poem's recitation.

The last shot in the sequence shows the child Aleksey entering the dacha. Inside white illuminated linens hang on clotheslines and billow in the dark. Such billowing makes the sheets resemble spirits of the dead where Orpheus entered in search of Eurydice. The shot weaves through the linens to a mirror, which reflects Aleksey as he drinks tentatively from a pitcher full of milk. A dog barks, and young Aleksey pauses in remembrance of the bark coming before the fire in scene 1. The shot switches to color and another memory: child Aleksey swims in a green pond towards his mother, who is washing clothes. After this flash of memory we return to the linen in the room as the last one parts to reveal the sun lit kitchen of the dacha. The shot moves past a dog trapped on top of a bureau drawer to the window (the same window in the same room as "First Meetings"). Outside, child Aleksey walks past trees to the edge of a field where a woman sits on

a log. Her back is towards us (we presume it is young Maria). The child goes up to her and tells her the stove is burning. The woman turns around and gives him a puzzled look. We are surprised to see that it is Maria as an old woman (Vishnyakova). She turns around and casually puffs on a cigarette. Past and present have converged. Later we see both young Maria and her husband at the dacha, in a state of newlywed bliss. He asks her if she would like a boy or girl. Maria gives no answer, but smiles and cries all at once, making her close up with tears the fulfilments of both the opening and closing poems.

Johnsons and Petrie claim that Andrey Tarkovsky makes no effort to match the poetic images with the cinematic presentation, but focuses on similar ideas of the soul being trapped in an indispensable body (Johnson and Petrie, 259). The circular images of a wheel and a copper hoop signal a continuation and even a back-looping of the poems to the narrative of the film. Smith states that in the poem creativity becomes the fluidity of identity and life's perpetual renewal. From the poetic speaker, be he Orpheus or otherwise, comes a plea not to feel nostalgia for lost identity: "run, child, and do not lament over poor Eurydice". The use of Arseny Tarkovsky's recited poetry poses problems to historical authenticity of experience or ways of communication. The juxtaposition of word and image appears as doubling and purposeful mockery by meta-textuality (Smith, 59). Is it, however, a true meta-textual mockery? Skakov calls this sequence, as well as the accompanying poem, a simultaneous celebration and lament which expounds on the centrality of childhood and death for the film, with the unconventional sequence of shots as a way of touching the infinite (Skakov, 130, 132).

Hunter-Blair says that "Eurydice" is about poetry itself. It is a reflection on human limitations and the power of the imagination to escape them. The 'stage' for dancing mentioned in "Eurydice" is the place where poetry comes into being, which lies in non-being. Like Orpheus,

only those who are willing to take poetry from non-being to being are those who return. There is a further paradox: the only way Eurydice will come into the realm of the day is by Orpheus' descent into the depths of night. Orpheus, however, longs for her in that darkness in which he himself cannot stay. Ultimately, what Orpheus brings back with him is not Eurydice herself, but his memory of her as she was in that darkness (Hunter-Blair, 55).

The poetic addressee of the speaker, though, is neither Eurydice nor poetry itself. It is the boy who runs off from lamenting over Eurydice. If the speaker is Orpheus, or someone familiar with his story, then his instruction to run through the earth and abandon lamentation resembles a poet instructing the young not to write poetry for fear of having to go to that place of non-being, of darkness, and losing the sound of the living earth. This poet, though he be adamant that none follow his example, possesses a subtle wisdom that if one follows him and succeeds in bringing poetry into being, one will hear the earth more fully and love it all the more after being separated from it for a time. The boy as poetic addressee is also matched in Andrey Tarkovsky's shift of focus which travels from young Maria (Terekhova) to child Aleksey to elderly Maria (Vishnyakova). Much like the framing of his father's poetry within the scenes, the appearance of Aleksey is framed within Maria's past and present. At the end of the film, which is the true end scene 4, past and present converge as Vishnyakova walks with the child Aleksey and his sister through the countryside of their past as the young mother and husband are together at the dacha and the abandoned Maria stands smoking in the distance. The last childhood dream begins with a mother's feverish reverie and ends with her wrinkled reality.

As revealed in these scene-by-scene analyses, Andrey Tarkovsky chose a more complex means of adapting Arseny Tarkovsky's poetry by making his own poetic links and cues. Fire, water, milk, close ups of the weeping Maria, women's hair, etc., all become the visual expressions

and acousmetric ripples emanating from the four source poems. This cinematic system makes the poems indispensable from the overall structure and presentation of *The Mirror*.

Conclusion

Their paradoxical union made purer, Andrey and Arseny Tarkovsky continue to inspire our observations and commentary through their respective lives, father-son relationship, and especially upon close examination of their output. By engaging in these facets of these two artist's lives and works, one can hope to make their artistic dialogue clearer. The fiery moment of inspiration, though hardened into Arseny Tarkovsky's verses, never cooled, for it ignited the output of his son Andrey into living, breathing cinema. While this analysis is by no means comprehensive, it acknowledges the need for further scholarship in studies of both Andrey Tarkovsky and Arseny Tarkovsky.

Despite the current lack of thorough scholarship in comparing Arseny Tarkovsky's poems to his son's film, there are increasing signs that interest is in fact growing. This growth is not confined to the academic world. In addition to Hunter-Blair's book *Poetry and Film*, there is a more recent publication from translators Philip Metres and Dmitrii Psurtsev: *I Burned at the Feast: Selected Poems of Arseny Tarkovsky* (Cleveland State U Poetry Center, 2015). This book is the first of its kind, that is, a bilingual edition of Arseny Tarkovsky's poems containing the original Russian texts side-by-side with English translations; it also contains a biographical foreword on Arseny Tarkovsky's life and inspirations, presenting him as not a 'lesser' Russian poet, but a poet of the world with a unique voice. Neither book is published for scholars or experts in Russian, but with an English speaking reader in mind. Additionally, both books only use Andrey Tarkovsky as a means of presenting Arseny's work. The fact that two American editions of Arseny Tarkovsky's poetry were published within two years of each other is a promising indication that this poet is slowly, but surely, coming into his own in the English speaking world.

Upon this deeper analysis, one sees that *The Mirror* is, as Arseny Tarkovsky said, no mere film. As one investigates the background of the film and its spider web of connections and allusions, one sees it as an artistic dialogue between father and son. Several questions arise, then, in relation to the idea of dialogue: why did Tarkovsky choose this cinematic medium for expressing this dialogue with his father, that is, at the point of the lyric speaker, the “I” in the poems and film? Why does art enable Andrey Tarkovsky to speak with (or to) his father? What makes this artistic dialogue different from a face-to-face conversation?

A crucial key to answering these questions lies in *The Mirror* itself. The scene of Aleksey’s off-screen conversation with Maria reveals much about their mother-son dynamic. The comments they give each other are terse and without affection, despite no open hostility. At one point Aleksey muses how words cannot accurately express a person’s thoughts or feelings. In an unexpected breach of their talk at arm’s length, Aleksey asks his mother why they always argue. He asks for her forgiveness. A pause. The dial-tone sounds. Who, one may wonder, ended the call first? Was it Maria, unable to face her son’s frankness? Was it Aleksey, embarrassed by his attempt at reconciliation? This exchange and the slight comment on words sheds much light in terms of Andrey’s thoughts as to why he made the film the way he did.

If we recall how Andrey Tarkovsky had wanted to write a letter to his father explaining his grievances (see chapter 1), he wrote the only way he knew how: by film, since montage is writing ‘in cinematic terms’ (Smith, 51). *The Mirror* is Andrey’s letter to his father, as well as a ‘poetic tribute to his [father’s] founding influence’ (Smith, 59). The terror and wonder of childhood is at last expressed through an adult voice by means of poeticism and the lyrical “I” of father and son alike. Arseny and Andrey Tarkovsky had marked difficulties in prompting an honest conversation about their shared grievances. The meeting place of their dialogue is found in their work, in the

lyrical “I” of the poems and the subjectivity of the film. Andrey himself said in an interview that if the world were perfect art would be of no use. Man would be living in harmony, not striving for it (*Un Poeta Nel Cinema*, 1983). Art, then, allows memories and dreams to be seen, since memory is the thing in between realities and dreams (Skakov, 102). Art enables one to see the world through another’s eyes and express the world’s imperfection and ultimate perfection.

The point made in “Eurydice” of going from non-being to being also applies to the visualizations of memory as presented by both Arseny Tarkovsky and Andrey Tarkovsky. Unlike presupposed confessional interior studies there is no cynicism or bitterness or blaming in Andrey Tarkovsky’s portrayal of his family. He wanted to understand his parents, not blame them or put himself as the authority. In fact, the harshest portrayal is of himself as Aleksey. By presenting a personal study, Andrey Tarkovsky transcends himself and makes the subjective appear objective. As intimate and as distant as the music of Bach, the artful dance between father and son never loses its stateliness no matter how painful the subject becomes. Ultimately, Andrey wanted to understand and be understood by his father, an understanding synonymous with love.

All things considered, it appears that Andrey Tarkovsky was not aiming to make the use of his father’s poetry historical, like the newsreels, but collaborative in the sense of seeing his father’s work as contemporary to his own. The words of his father are given life by the son. Andrey was even more revealing about his own life and creative process on this film than perhaps he himself realized. The director had an affinity for the horse as both an image and motif in his work. Thus it is fitting to call *The Mirror* a two-horse carriage, the two horses being the poetry of the father and the images of the son. After some time, one is not able to distinguish if the poetry begat the images, or the images begat the poetry. One thing is for certain: the rush of the carriage moves

so swiftly, so sublimely, that it blends into a fiery rush of legs and manes. A purified silver of both sound and sight illuminates the screen, and remains a fluid art.

APPENDIX

poems and translations¹⁰

ПЕРВЫЕ СВИДАНИЯ

Свиданий наших каждое мгновенье
Мы праздновали, как богоявление,
Одни на целом свете. Ты была
Смелей и легче птичьего крыла,
По лестнице, как головокруженье,
Через ступень сбегала и вела
Сквозь влажную сирень в свои владенья
С той стороны зеркального стекла.

Когда настала ночь, была мне милость
Дарована, алтарные врата
Отворены, и в темноте светилась
И медленно клонилась нагота,
И, просыпаясь: "Будь благословенна!" -
Я говорил и знал, что дерзновенно
Мое благословенье: ты спала,
И тронуть веки синевой вселенной
К тебе сирень тянулась со стола,
И синевую тронутые веки
Спокойны были, и рука тепла.

А в хрустале пульсировали реки,
Дымились горы, брезжили моря,
И ты держала сферу на ладони
Хрустальную, и ты спала на троне,
И - боже правый! - ты была моя.

Ты пробудилась и преобразила
Вседневный человеческий словарь,
И речь по горло полновзвучной силой
Наполнилась, и слово "ты" раскрыло
Свой новый смысл и означало: царь.

FIRST MEETINGS

We celebrated every moment of our
meetings, like Theophany,
alone in the entire world. You were
bolder, lighter than a songbird's wing,
like dizziness you ran down the stairs,
down every other step, and led the way
through dewy lilacs to your realm, beyond
The other side of the mirror's glass.

When night fell a grace was granted
unto me, the altar's royal doors were opened,
And nakedness gleamed
And slowly inclined in the darkness,
And then awakened: "Be thou blessed!"
I said, and knew that my blessing
was bold: you slept,
And the lilac strained to you from the table
to touch your eyelids with the cosmic blue,
And the lids, touched by that blueness,
Were peaceful, and your hand was warm.

While in the crystal vase the rivers pulsed,
The mountains smoked, the seas glimmered,
And in your palm you held a crystal sphere,
And you slept on a throne,
And – righteous Lord! – you were my own.

You awakened and transfigured
The day-to-day human lexicon,
And speech was brimming with a sonorous force,
And the word "thou" revealed
Its new meaning, and meant: 'king'.

¹⁰ All English translations in this appendix are my own.

На свете всё преобразилось, даже
Простые вещи - таз, кувшин, - когда
Стояла между нами, как на страже,
Слоистая и твердая вода.

Нас повело неведомо куда.
Пред нами расступались, как миражи,
Построенные чудом города,
Сама ложилась мята нам под ноги,
И птицам было с нами по дороге,
И рыбы подымались по реке,
И небо развернулось пред глазами...

Когда судьба по следу шла за нами,
Как сумасшедший с бритвою в руке.

Everything was transfigured in the world, even
Simple things – a washtub, pitcher, - when
Between us water stood, as if on guard,
Layered and hard.

We were lead to somewhere unknown.
Like mirages, miraculously built cities
made way, parting before us,
The spearmint laid itself under our feet,
And the birds were with us all along the way,
And the fish swam upstream,
And the sky unfurled before our eyes...

While behind us fate tread on our heels,
like a madman brandishing a razor.

«С УТРА Я ТЕБЯ ДОЖИДАЛСЯ ВЧЕРА...»

С утра я тебя дожидался вчера,
Они догадались, что ты не придёшь,
Ты помнишь, какая погода была?
Как в праздник! И я выходил без пальто.

Сегодня пришла и устроили нам
Какой-то особенно пасмурный день,
И дождь, и особенно поздний час,
И капли бегут по холодным ветвям.

Ни словом унять, ни платком утереть...

Since the morning I waited for you yesterday,
They guessed that you wouldn't come,
Remember what the weather was like?
Like a feast day! I went out without a coat.

You came today, and they arranged for us
An especially overcast day:
Both rain and a terribly late hour,
And raindrops that run through cold branches.

It can't be stopped with word, or wiped away
with a kerchief...

ЖИЗНЬ, ЖИЗНЬ

1

Предчувствиям не верю, и примет
 Я не боюсь. Ни клеветы, ни яда
 Я не бегу. На свете смерти нет:
 Бессмертны все. Бессмертно всё. Не надо
 Бояться смерти ни в семнадцать лет,
 Ни в семьдесят. Есть только явь и свет,
 Ни тьмы, ни смерти нет на этом свете.
 Мы все уже на берегу морском,
 И я из тех, кто выбирает сети,
 Когда идет бессмертье косяком.

2

Живите в доме - и не рухнет дом.
 Я вызову любое из столетий,
 Войду в него и дом построю в нём.
 Вот почему со мною ваши дети
 И жены ваши за одним столом, -
 А стол один и прадеду и внуку:
 Грядущее свершается сейчас,
 И если я приподымаю руку,
 Все пять лучей останутся у вас.
 Я каждый день минувшего, как крепью,
 Ключицами своими подпирал,
 Измерил время землемерной цепью
 И сквозь него прошел, как сквозь Урал.

3

Я век себе по росту подбирал.
 Мы шли на юг, держали пыль над степью;
 Бурьян чадил; кузнечик баловал,
 Подковы трогал усом, и пророчил,
 И гибелью грозил мне, как монах.
 Судьбу свою к седлу я приторочил;
 Я и сейчас в грядущих временах,
 Как мальчик, привстаю на стременах.

Мне моего бессмертия довольно,
 Чтоб кровь моя из века в век текла.
 За верный угол ровного тепла
 Я жизнью заплатил бы своевольно,

LIFE, LIFE

1

I don't believe in premonitions, and of omens
 I'm not afraid. I run from neither slander nor poison.
 On earth there is no death:
 All are immortal. All is immortal. No need
 to be afraid of death neither at seventeen
 nor at seventy. There is only reality and light,
 no darkness, no death at all on this earth.
 All of us are already at the shore,
 and I am one of those who hauls the nets
 when immortality comes swimming in a shoal.

2

Live in a house, and the house won't collapse.
 I can summon any century,
 I'll enter into it and build a house in it.
 That's why your children are with me
 And your wives all share the same table -
 And one table for both great-grandfather and grandson:
 The hereafter is being accomplished now,
 And if I lift up my hand,
 All five digits will remain with you.
 Every day of the past, like shoring,
 I propped up by my clavicles,
 I measured time with a geodesic chain
 And passed through it, as through the Urals.

3

I put on an epoch according to my height.
 We were going south, kicking dust over the steppe;
 The wild grass fumed; a grasshopper played around,
 Touched some horseshoes with his antenna,
 and prophesied, threatening me with death, like a monk.
 I strapped my fate to the saddle;
 I am still in the times of the hereafter,
 Like a boy, I stand up in the stirrups.

For me my immortality is enough
 To make my blood flow from age to age.
 For a reliable corner of regular warmth
 I would have paid high-handedly with my life,
 If only its flying needle didn't take
 Me, like a thread, Across the earth.

Когда б её летучая игла
 Меня, как нить, по свету не вела.

ЭВРИДИКА

У человека тело
 Одно, как одиночка,
 Душе осточертела
 Сплошная оболочка
 С ушами и глазами
 Величиной в пятак
 И кожей - шрам на шраме,
 Надетой на костяк.

Летит сквозь роговицу
 В небесную криницу,
 На ледяную спицу,
 На птичью колесницу
 И слышит сквозь решётку
 Живой тюрьмы своей
 Лесов и нив трещотку,
 Трубу семи морей.

Душе грешно без тела,
 Как телу без сорочки, -
 Ни помысла, ни дела,
 Ни замысла, ни строчки.
 Загадка без разгадки:
 Кто возвратится вспять,
 Сплясав на той площадке,
 Где некому плясать?

И снится мне другая
 Душа, в другой одежде:
 Горит, перебегая
 От робости к надежде,
 Огнем, как спирт, без тени
 Уходит по земле,
 На память гроздь сирени
 Оставив на столе.

Дитя, беги, не сетуй
 Над Эвридикой бедной
 И палочкой по свету
 Гони свой обруч медный,

EURYDICE

Man has but one body,
 as lone as a loner,
 The soul has had enough of
 This sheer shell
 With ears and eyes
 the size of fivepense coins
 And skin, all scars,
 hung on the skeleton.

The soul flies through the cornea
 To the well of heaven,
 To the icy wheel spoke of
 the bird-drawn chariot,
 And through the bars
 of its living prison, it hears
 the rattle of forests and fields,
 the trumpet of the seven seas.

the soul without a body is piteous,
 like a body without a shirt, —
 stripped of intent, or deed,
 design, or strophe.
 A riddle without a key:
 Who will return again
 having danced on that stage
 Where no one's left to dance?

I dream of another soul,
 in another garment:
 It burns, flickering back and forth
 From timidity to hope,
 Turning to flame, like alcohol, it departs
 With no shadow, through the land,
 Leaving gathered lilacs
 On the table, as a souvenir.

Run, child, don't lament
 Over poor Eurydice,
 And roll your bronze hoop
 Around the world with a stick,

Пока хоть в четверть слуха
В ответ на каждый шаг
И весело и сухо
Земля шумит в ушах.

As long as, at a quarter of a sound,
In reply to each step,
The earth roars in your ears
Both merrily and dryly.

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