

SPIRIT AND MATTER: ANDREI RUBLEV (ANDREI TARKOVSKY, 1966) AND HEART OF GLASS (WERNER HERZOG, 1976)

CHANTAL POCH

INTRODUCTION

In the opening sequence of *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966), a man who will be identified in the credits as Yefim climbs up to a hot-air balloon tethered to the top of a tower and embarks on a short flight that we will see from his perspective, looking down from a bird's eye view at the tiny figures of the people below as they watch the rudimentary invention float above them. Yefim shouts in excitement, but his elation soon ends when the deflated balloon crash-lands on the edge of a river. This sequence is an untitled prologue with no narrative connection to the rest of the episodes that make up *Andrei Rublev*: a first block comprising this sequence, followed by "The Jester" (1400), "Theophanes the Greek" (1405), "The Passion according to Andrei" (1406), "The Celebration" (1408) and "The Last Judgement" (1408), followed by a second part with "The Raid" (1408), "The Silence" (1412) and "The Bell" (1413). The first

sequence of *Heart of Glass* (Herz aus Glas, Werner Herzog, 1976), although related to the main story, also seems somehow separate from the rest of the film as it takes place during the opening credits. A man (whom we will later identify as Hias, a character who will disturb the townspeople with his visions of the end of the world), has his back to the camera as he gazes at a herd of cows in a foggy landscape. A frontal shot shows us his face, staring in engrossed contemplation; the use of time-lapse photography shows the fog rolling like ocean waves. In the next shot, Hias is reclining in the grass looking out over a foggy, mountainous landscape, stretching his arm out slowly and reaching with his hand into the distance. This will be followed by a series of apocalyptic visions narrated by Hias in a voice-over, accompanied by mysterious images of nature.

These two sequences bear a number of things in common. First of all, both offer a depiction of nature based on movement and mixture. From his

balloon, Yefim allows us to see a landscape where the elements alternate right up to the crash-landing: from river to field, back to river, and then to mud. The high-angle view of the water shows a sky seen entirely through its reflection. Similarly, the opening to *Heart of Glass* shows earth and sky playing at fusing together in the scene of a low fog, while air and water appear together in a thick mist that resembles an ocean tide over the landscape. In both cases, the landscape becomes a space where the classical elements are mixed together, offering a vision of nature as something that is sensed as being alive. Secondly, and along the same lines, both these prologues linger for a moment on the presence of animals. In *Andrei Rublev*, after the balloon's crash-landing we see a black horse lying on the ground, rolling around in the grass. In *Heart of Glass*, the cows that Hias contemplates are shown after their first appearance in a shot of their own, in which the only action is their grazing. The horse and the cows are thus shown as completely disengaged from human affairs, concerning themselves only with living. Nature carries on in its own way, oblivious to the story being told. And finally, in both Yefim's action of flying the balloon and Hias's gesture of reaching his hand out to the horizon we can identify a similar intention: to attain the immaterial, the far-off, by material means.

This last point will serve as the starting point for my analysis. The historian of religion Mircea Eliade points out a concern in this respect, in relation to what he calls modern man: "Tilling, or the firing of clay, like, somewhat later, mining and metallurgy, put primitive man into a universe steeped in sacredness. It would be vain to wish to reconstitute his experiences: too much time has elapsed since the cosmos has been desanctified as a result of the triumph of experimental science. Modern man is incapable of experiencing the sacred in his dealings with matter" (Eliade, 1978: 143). In this article I will argue that the loss of a connection between the sacred and the materi-

al, i. e., between spirit and matter as described by Eliade, is a central concern of these two films, and that ultimately this is the real loss hinted at by a narrative motif that the two pictures share: the loss of a secret of production. In *Andrei Rublev*, the last episode, "The Bell", introduces a new character, Boriska, the young son of a deceased master bellfounder, who to get a job claims to know his father's secret for casting bells, although in reality the secret is lost. In *Heart of Glass*, the whole film revolves around a similar situation: the only man who knows the secret behind a type of red glass that was the town's livelihood dies without passing the secret onto anyone. Like the mining and metallurgy that Eliade refers to, the production processes that appear in both films served a function of spiritual importance in their community in a pre-filmic past: the bell as an instrument for praising God; the glass that is identified in the film itself as what keeps the town alive. Their loss represents the breakdown of a relationship between people and gods or between people and the world.

ANDREI TARKOVSKY AND WERNER HERZOG

The proposition of a possible connection between the filmographies of Andrei Tarkovsky and Werner Herzog is not new. Gilles Deleuze (2013: 105) most famously linked the two filmmakers when he used them as the clearest examples of his concept of the "crystal-image". What this article aims to do is to delve deeper into this connection between Andrei Tarkovsky and Werner Herzog, previously identified on a number of occasions but never specifically explored through a comparative analysis of two of their films which, as I will argue here, reflect certain thematic commonalities that are more than superficial, with a view to shedding light on some of the concerns that mark all their work. My hypothesis is that underlying the shared motif of the secret of a lost craft is the

same thematic core: the loss of the relationship between matter and spirit.

The only recorded reference made by one of these two directors to the other is the following statement by Herzog: "Figures like Tarkovsky have made some beautiful films, but he is, I fear, too much the darling of the French intellectuals, something I suspect he worked a little bit towards" (Cronin, 2002: 137). Despite this refusal to acknowledge Tarkovsky as an influence on his own work—a refusal consistent with his persistent dismissals of any type of influence that he himself has not identi-

fied—it is reasonable to expect that Herzog has at least had some contact with Tarkovsky's work, bearing in mind his interest in Russian culture, about which he has made three documentaries: *Glocken*

aus der Tiefe - Glaube und Aberglaube in Rußland [Bells from the Deep - Faith and Superstition in Russia] (Werner Herzog, 1993), exploring certain age-old religious traditions; *Happy People: A Year in the Taiga* (Werner Herzog and Dmitry Vasyukov, 2010), dedicated to the admirable work of the hunters of the Siberian woodlands (which, in what may or may not be a mere coincidence, includes Tarkovsky's nephew, Mikhail, among its protagonists); and *Meeting Gorbachev* (Werner Herzog and Andre Singer, 2018), the director's last film to date, based on interviews with the Soviet leader. In relation to this last film, Herzog remarked that he sought "to find something that is not only his own soul, but in a way the soul of Russia" (AFP News Agency, 2018). Any artist interested in the "soul of Russia"—a concept he has also referred to on previous occasions (Cronin, 2002: 252)—would necessarily have to be interested in the work of Andrei Tarkovsky, who has explored the theme so deeply.

**A SERIES OF COMMON THEMES EMERGE:
MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE,
MAN'S STRUGGLE TO EXIST IN THE
WORLD, AND A CONCERN WITH THE ERA
IN WHICH THEY LIVE.**

Both directors are frequently placed in the ambiguous category of cinematic modernity: the New East Cinema and New German Cinema, respectively. And both elude such categorisations, being studied as unique cases in their respective contexts. Both are classified as auteurs and have been widely studied by academics, while also achieving some degree of commercial success at different stages of their careers. If we leave aside the question of actual connections between the filmmakers to explore the places where the films themselves share common ground, a series of

common themes emerge: man's relationship with nature, man's struggle to exist in the world, and a concern with the era in which they live. Both directors would explore these concerns outside their films: the publication of Tarkovsky's book

Sculpting in Time (1985), as well as his diaries, poems, Polaroids, and many of his lectures, reveals a filmmaker who was also able to explore the issues that concerned him from a theoretical perspective; in Werner Herzog's case, *Conquest of the Useless* (2004)—essentially a journal of the filming of *Fitzcarraldo* (Werner Herzog, 1982)—and *Of Walking in Ice* (1978)—a kind of diary of his pilgrimage on foot from Munich to Paris on a mission to save Lotte Eisner—are texts with the same power as his films, to which we should add his interviews, press conferences and other appearances, which pile up year after year like reams of footnotes to his equally prolific filmography.

The two auteurs have also produced a similar reaction among critics who have given special attention to the more Romantic aspects of their work. Tarkovsky has been identified as "one of the last Romantics", offering "depictions of man faced with the immensity of nature, in a spirit close to the nineteenth-century movement that had one

of its greatest visual models in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich" (Tejeda, 2010: 60), and his films would be noted for their many "privileged elements of Romanticism" (Arroyo, 2012: 115). Of Herzog it has been asserted that "he appropriates all the German Romantics (including their precursors)" (Carrère, 1982: 55) and that his films "re-imagine overlooked aspects of Romanticism" (Johnson, 2016: 2), a connection that Herzog himself, following its tradition, is averse to (Cronin, 2002: 135).

SPIRIT AND MATTER

The connection with Romanticism is more than merely aesthetic. Romantic philosophers and artists mourned over what they felt was an abandonment of the spiritual in favour of the rational. Considering this same concern, Tarkovsky would write: "I am convinced that we now find ourselves on the point of destroying another civilisation entirely as a result of failing to take account of the spiritual side of the historical process. We don't want to admit to ourselves that many of the misfortunes besetting humanity are the result of our having become unforgivably, culpably materialistic. Seeing ourselves as the protagonists of science, and in order to make our scientific objectivity the more convincing, we have split the one, indivisible human process down the middle, thereby revealing a solitary but clearly visible spring, which we declare to be the prime cause of everything" (Tarkovsky, 1989: 239-240). The idea of splitting the material and spiritual sides of things, also expressed in Alexander's monologues in *The Sacrifice* (Offret, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1986), in a way marks the life of Andrei Rublev, with his quest to find a means of expressing the invisible on a palpable canvas.

Heart of Glass examines the same issue. How can ordinary glass be turned into that ruby glass which, in the words of one of the townspeople, "contains the life of the town" and, in the words

of the prince, "protects us from the evils of the universe"? There is something divine in this glass that has been lost. The heart of men is no longer in the red glass; matter and spirit have been split in two. In the scene where a servant girl is invited into the prince's room, a painting underscores the matter: Saint Francis of Assisi receiving his stigmata, the divine leaving its mark on the flesh. Herzog's decision to subject the actors to hypnosis for their performances also creates the impression that the townspeople are living without souls. In their hypnotised state, their speech and gestures look strange, disengaged from their meaning. The split between the material and the non-material exhibits another symptom here: a speech pathology, also expressed in *Andrei Rublev* in the form of muteness.

The spatial configuration of *Heart of Glass* reflects this too: "a clear topographic and poetic realm in opposition to a philosophical, almost alchemical, bewildering realm. On one side, the town; on the other, the mountainous natural environment that surrounds it" (Carrère, 1982: 38-39). It is perhaps this parallel that gives rise to the need in the film to keep returning to nature, repeatedly observing it as if to show something else. Prominent in these scenes is the view of nature as something living, already hinted at in the prologue, marked by a special attention to the coexistence of and conflict between elements. The film's opening sequence could be read as an encapsulation of this: Hias contemplates the formation of a cloud as it grows thicker, until a fade turns the motion of the cloud into the motion of waterfalls with the same white and blue hues as the previous landscape. Then we are offered the image of a kind of boiling mud, a material reflection of the mixture of water and fire. This slow evolution of water into boiling liquid—and fire-water, as Bachelard (1966: 143) describes alcohol, will have an extremely important presence in the film as well—culminating in the fire that burns down the factory, a fury of flames in the night. The landscapes filmed in Yel-

lowstone Park, interspersed with shots of Bavaria, show smouldering lakes, lakes that belch fire and swallow trees, salt that looks like snow, earth that does not look like earth.

This juxtaposition of elements is also a prominent feature in *Andrei Rublev*. Chion points out how in the opening sequence of the balloon a man “rises up from the earth and looks down from above to water thanks to fire, before falling down into the mud” (Chion, 2007: 17). During the pagan celebration witnessed by the protagonist the lit torches blur with the river, and just before the beginning of “The Bell”, a piece of burning coal suddenly gives off smoke when it is thrown to the snowy ground. The potential fire is thus put out by frozen water. The elements struggle against one another and come together; to look at them is to look at the possibility of union with the world, and the possibility of hitting upon the right mixture to make the ruby glass or the ringing bell. In both films, the attention to nature, its elevation to the category of landscape, reflects the definition that Georg Simmel gives of nature as a “spiritual configuration” (Simmel, 2013: 9, 20). The lingering on a scene of pure natural matter, the decision to present it and thus to compare it to the events in the film, imbues it with another dimension.

LOOKING BEYOND

In describing Werner Herzog’s films, Radu Gabrea writes: “[a] meditation on the inner/outer relationship, expressed through the here/there relationship, accompanies all his images. [...] What characterises his shots is an insistence of the gaze placed on the landscapes shown, a kind of lingering of the camera that here adopts a function of observation” (Gabrea, 1986: 184). This “function of observation” is made perfectly explicit in *Heart of Glass* through the character Hias, a prophet for his town. As Gabrea suggests, “his function of guarding [garder] the secrets of nature goes hand in hand with his role of observing [regarder]

them” (Gabrea, 1986: 184). From the beginning of the film, when we see him engrossed in his contemplation of nature, to the end, when he fights with a bear that only he can see, and with all his visions and the doubt over their veracity (“I only say what I see; whether to believe it or not is up to you”), Hias develops a whole dialectic of vision over the course of the film: Is what I see real? Does everyone else see the same thing? Hias, looking at the horizon, says: “I see a new earth.” This idea of a new earth, a new world, is an idea explored by both directors: in Herzog’s *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes, 1972), *Fitzcarraldo*, and all his “travel” documentaries; and in Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (Solyaris, 1972) and *Nostalghia* (1983). In Herzog’s exploration of the secondary levels of perception, Hias emerges as a bearer of the ability to see beyond, to see the earth as “new”, as if he were treading upon it for the first time.

About *Andrei Rublev* Tarkovsky would write: “The monk Rublev looked at the world through the naive eyes of a child and preached that we must not resist evil, that we must love our neighbour” (1989: 233-234). Andrei, like Hias, sees the world through new eyes. It seems reasonable to assume that what interests Tarkovsky about Andrei Rublev’s paintings is this very gift: in *The Sacrifice*, when Alexander admires some of the artist’s prints, he remarks: “What wisdom and spirituality, and childlike innocence too!” The ability to see as a child does is also the ability to perceive what others do not. Both Hias and Andrei maintain a special connection to the spiritual, a bond that those around them do not fully understand. In his exploration of cinema, Amedée Ayfre quotes the definition of the sacred offered by Malraux: “the presence of another world. Not necessarily infernal or celestial, not just a world after death; a present beyond this one. For the sacred, on different levels, the real is appearance and there is something else, which is not appearance and is not always called God” (Ayfre, 1969: 6). It is the vision of this other world, this new dimension beyond the

material, that both Hias and Rublev are reaching for; something that those around them have lost. The glass and the bell, without their secret, are mere appearance.

SPIRIT OR MATTER

Like Malraux's definition, Hias's and Andrei's gift goes beyond a specific religion. In both films we find an evident wariness of the Church. In *Andrei Rublev*, Theophanes the Greek displays a far from humanitarian attitude, while Kirill is shown to be terribly jealous. The film is sympathetic to the pagans, who are persecuted because of their faith. Moreover, Andrei himself expresses doubts about his own beliefs throughout the film. *Heart of Glass* portrays a superstitious town and a prince who, although surrounded by Christian iconography, mixes it with superstition and even cruelty. It is an artificial faith that is not inspired by humanity. In his prophesies of the end of the world, Hias mentions a crazed Pope who appoints a goat as his successor. The greatest act of faith in this context comes as spontaneously as Boriska's gaze to the sky while they are digging the pit for the bell; a gesture so powerful that the camera will follow him until he has become tiny in the shot. At that moment, all that remains in the frame are Boriska's gaze, a dove flying across the image and a tree.

And yet, at the same time, the rational is shown to be useless, ineffective. Yefim's Promethean endeavour to fly will be punished with death. We can find a repetition of this theme of the punished flight with Icarus in *The White Diamond* (Werner Herzog, 2004), where the protagonist, Graham Dorrington, determined to fly over the Kaieteur Falls in an airship, tells of how his predecessor and idol died in a similar mission. Herzog had explored the human desire to fly previously in *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (Die große Ekstase des Bildschnitzers Steiner, Werner Herzog, 1974) and *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (Werner

Herzog, 1997). If these episodes tell us anything it is that technology is not infallible, that rational knowledge can fail. In *Andrei Rublev*, Boriska takes a little clay and squeezes it in his hand. He moulds it, brings it up to his ear to listen to it, breaks it in two, and puts it back together. His decision that it is no good for his purpose is not based on any kind of rational analysis; it is a sensory decision, made by his hands, eyes and ears. Both Yefim with his balloon and Graham Dorrington with his airship will fail. But that is because they have tried to fly rationally. At the beginning of *Ivan's Childhood* (Ivanovo detstvo, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1962), the little protagonist (who, significantly, is played by Nikolai Burliaev, the same actor who will later portray Boriska), rises slowly up off the ground and looks down laughing at the landscape below him. At the end of *Invincible* (Werner Herzog, 2001), the protagonist propels his little brother along until their hands break apart and he watches as his brother takes off in flight. In both cases this ascent into the sky, impossible in the realm of the real, becomes possible in the realm of dream and vision. The ascent occurs through the irrational world.

This wariness of both reason and religion places both films in the context of post-secular cinema, a label based on the philosophy associated with filmmakers like Terrence Malick, Lars von Trier, Ingmar Bergman and, of course, Tarkovsky (Caruana and Cauchi, 2018: 3; Bradatan, 2014: 10). Caruana and Cauchi describe the concept as follows: "The term captures the work of those filmmakers whose films explicitly hover over that grey zone that dissolves the strict boundaries that are often established between belief and unbelief" (Caruana and Cauchi, 2018: 1). Post-secularism questions the narrative of the contemporary decline of religion, but at the same time rejects the idea of a return to traditional religion. *Andrei Rublev* includes the following dialogue between the monk Kirill and Theophanes the Greek regarding Andrei's paintings:

—Remember what Epiphanius said about Sergius's virtue: "Simplicity without flourish." That's what it is.

It's holy. Simplicity without flourish.

—I see you're clever.

—Really? Wouldn't it be better to follow your heart's calling in the darkness of the irrational?

—Too much wisdom brings much sorrow.

—He that increases knowledge, increases sorrow.

Knowledge will not come from science or technology, or from religion. Then what are we left with? Personal faith; the inner force that has nothing to do with institutions. This "darkness of the irrational" is the place shared by Tarkovskians and Herzogians, people moved by a faith without an object, based simply on the believing subject. Amit Chaudhuri (2018: 16) associates *Andrei Rublev* with a concept developed by Harold Bloom, known as *belatedness*, the feeling of having been born at the wrong moment in history. Indeed, Andrei does not seem to fit into his historical period; he is a peaceful individual committed to his ideas, prepared to sacrifice everything for art in an age when the notion of the artist has barely even emerged. This drive to self-sacrifice is a testimony to the fact that these are not films in favour of religion, but of faith. Institutionalised religion is depicted as artificial, as an obstacle between man and his union with a sacredness that resides instead in nature. Hias and Andrei turn their backs on society; they are presented as solitary individuals pushing against the grain in a world viewed as dysfunctional. When we see Hias for the first time, nothing distinguishes him from Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. We cannot see his face: shown as an anonymous silhouette, he recalls the *rückenfiguren* so common in Romantic painting, figures with their back to the viewer, solitary and ambivalent according to Rafael Argullol, suggestive of "the devastating realisation of their own smallness in the face of the immensity" (Argullol, 1987: 47). These figures

with their back to the viewer appear frequently in the filmographies of both directors—such as the famous opening scene to *The Mirror* (Zerkalo, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1975), where the mother sits waiting on the border fence of the family home—and in its absence, other aesthetic resources suggest the same idea: emphasising the relationship between foreground and background, presenting the characters as tiny figures in the midst of a vast landscape or their disappearance in the distance.

ART

But without science or religion, where can man place his trust? In creation. What moves Andrei to create is the same thing that moves Yefim to fly: faith and science are two sides of the same quest for knowledge that is denied to us. France Farago defines Tarkovsky's filmmaking this way: "to make us guess and feel, to suggest the impalpable presence of Being, of God: such is the role he assigns to his art, the vocation he vindicates" (Farago, 1986: 25). Herzog, in *Tokyo-Ga* (Wim Wenders, 1985), offers what would be the best manifesto of his filmmaking: "Everything should be very simple and there should only be pure images. Looking at all those buildings, it is impossible to see them as solitary images. We would have to dig like an archaeologist, to dig... until we could find something pure in this decadent landscape." This decadent landscape is the landscape of empty matter, and the solution involves looking beyond, like Andrei and Hias; to dig with the gaze.

It is easy to see a metaphor for the filmmaking process in the production processes depicted in both films, as both are presented in their dual nature as technological processes and acts of creation. The processes shown in the fragments chosen are enveloped in a certain aura of occultism; in the bell this begins as molten metal, a metal that is a dream of strength, of excessive fire (Bachelard, 1994: 265), and culminating in a scene filled with luminous clouds of smoke

against which Boriska's complexion looks blackened, populated with hundreds of people in motion, throwing water over themselves, crossing the shot between light and shade, and with roaring machinery that forces the characters to communicate by shouting. *Heart of Glass* also features the imagery of the factory in operation, at once fascinating and dangerous, with the molten glass running red-hot and the (real-life) workers sweating, in an atmosphere that Heringman (2012: 256) identifies with the paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby and the industrial subgenre of Romantic painting. Both processes are shrouded in confusion and mystery, with the lost secret of production being substituted by an element that is beyond human comprehension: Boriska pretends to know the secret of the bell, which, by some miracle, will ultimately end up ringing perfectly; on the other hand, the secret of the ruby glass, according to the crazed owner of the glass factory, must involve the addition to the mixture of a virgin woman's blood. Instead of being the products of scientific knowledge, the bell and the ruby glass are both associated with a ritual creation, an archaic alchemical process to which the plots of age-old stories will contribute. As Eliade puts it, "[t]o make' something means knowing the magic formula which will allow it to be invented or to 'make it appear' spontaneously. In virtue of this, the artisan is a connoisseur of secrets, a magician; thus all crafts include some kind of initiation and are handed down by an occult tradition" (Eliade, 1978: 101-102).

The bell and the ruby glass are not just any objects. The bell, with its significance in the Christian imaginary (Herzog also revealed an interest in the instrument and its role in Russian culture in *Glocken aus der Tiefe - Glaube und Aberglaube in Rußland*), is suggestive of transcendence and as-

BOTH THE STEAMING LAKES AND BUBBLING MUD IN HEART OF GLASS AND THE MIRE THAT MARKS THE WHOLE JOURNEY OF ANDREI RUBLEV ARE ALSO, AND ABOVE ALL, HOT MOISTURE.

cent. The glass possesses the magic of transparency and the igneous force of the colour red, presented as having a narrative quality in the playful story that the servant girl Ludmilla constructs around a dining set made from this material: "How strange, a whole city made of glass, with people living in it. How can people live in glass houses? Here the church is made of glass. There are animals living in the church, all kinds of animals: hares, chickens, deer, birds, cows... But there are no people in the church. The streets are empty."

The processes shown are not artistic processes per se, but in this mystical depiction they are more than merely industrial. Between technology and art, as between the painter-magician and the cameraman-surgeon described by Walter Benjamin (2012: 48), there is a very blurred boundary and a single concept in common: the concept of creation. Creation as a concept is less cultural and more elemental than art, which

explains the importance that it has in the work of Tarkovsky and Herzog, both of whom reject the traditional definitions of art and are inclined to mock what they understand as "art for art's sake". In the films of both directors, creating is of greater importance than the end result. According to Farago, the secret of creation is one of the essential themes in *Andrei Rublev*, a film whose message he interprets to be "when the sacred dies, art expires" (Farago, 1986: 26). Every creation is the repetition of a cosmogony, a repetition of the first act of all; to lose the secret of creation is to lose our connection with this original sacredness.

Both the steaming lakes and bubbling mud in *Heart of Glass* and the mire that marks the whole journey of *Andrei Rublev* are also, and above all, hot moisture. In the words of Bachelard: "In many cosmogonies, hot moisture is the foundational principle. It is what animates lifeless earth and brings

living forms out of it" (Bachelard, 1978: 155). Water mixed with earth produces mud and clay, the primordial experiences of matter, yet to be shaped (Bachelard, 1978: 161), offering us a present-day view in the collective imaginary of the origin of the world, of its primal force. It is thus a landscape that is still taking shape (like the one suggested in *Fitzcarraldo*), promising a creation. The constant movement of nature in these films, its bubbling activity, speaks to us of an almost alchemical process. When asked about the possibility of this idea in *Heart of Glass*, Herzog replied: "I am wary of speaking of alchemy, but yes, there is a quest inside each one; it is what makes us human"¹. The result of this process is the union of Everything. After the miracle has occurred, the production of the bell without the knowledge of its secret, Boriska and Andrei embrace in the mud, as if fusing with it, in a gesture reminiscent of a Russian ritual of "confession to the earth" (Spidlik, 1986: 346, quoted in Muguiro, 2013: 31). As Tejeda points out, this moment is echoed when the protagonist hugs the earth in *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979) (Tejeda, 2011: 58), but it can also be seen in *Salt and Fire* (Werner Herzog, 2016), when Dr. Laura Sommerfeld, along with the two children who have been abandoned together with her in the salt desert, lies down to listen for sounds beneath the ground. Man and earth touch one another.

The quest in both films ends with new births: the appearance of Andrei's artwork in colour and the arrival on an island in the middle of the ocean. In both cases, these final visions begin with a pile of smoking wood, evoking the hearth, the place where the first tales were told. Andrei's paintings and the beginning of a new story about a group of men who decide to embark on a voyage into the unknown appear this way, as tales. If the production of the bell and the production of the red glass required the union of spirit and matter, the epilogues to both films seem to be telling us that this reconciliation occurs in art as well. ■

NOTES

- 1 Quoted from the audio commentary for *Heart of Glass* in the British Film Institute DVD edition.

REFERENCES

- Argullol, R. (1987). *La atracción del abismo: un itinerario por el paisaje romántico*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés.
- Arroyo, S. R. (2012). Andrei Tarkovsky: devolver a la naturaleza sus enigmas. *Argumentos*, 25(69), 111-127.
- Ayfre, A. (1969). *Cinéma et mystère*. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf.
- Bachelard, G. (1966). *Psicoanálisis del fuego*. Madrid: Alianza.
- (1978). *El agua y los sueños: ensayo sobre la imaginación de la materia*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- (1994). *La tierra y los ensueños de la voluntad*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Benjamin, W. (2012). *La obra de arte en la era de su reproducibilidad técnica y otros textos*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Godot.
- Bradatan, C. (2014). Introduction: Dealing (Visibly) in "Things not Seen". In C. Bradatan and C. Ungureanu (eds), *Religion in Contemporary European Cinema: The Postsecular Constellation* (pp. 1-10). London, New York: Routledge.
- Carrère, E. (1982). *Werner Herzog*. Paris: Edilig.
- Caruana, J., Cauchi, M. (2018). What is Postsecular Cinema? An Introduction. In *Immanent Frames: Postsecular Cinema between Malick and Von Trier* (pp. 1-20). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chaudhuri, A. (2018). *The Origins of Dislike*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chion, M. (2007). *Andrei Tarkovski*. Madrid: El País.
- Cronin, P. (2002). *Herzog on Herzog*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Deleuze, G. (2013). *La imagen-tiempo. Estudios sobre cine II*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Eliade, M. (1978). *The Forge and the Crucible*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Farago, F. (1986). La réalité plénière du spirituel: Andreï Roublev. *Études cinématographiques*, 46, 25-50.

- Filmmaker Werner Herzog on new documentary Meeting Gorbachev [Video] (2018). *AFP News Agency*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCW00pQiFcU>
- Gabrea, R. (1986). *Werner Herzog et la mystique rhénane*. Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme.
- Heringman, N. (2012). Herzog's *Heart of Glass* and the Sublime of Raw Materials. In B. Prager (ed.), *A Companion to Werner Herzog* (pp. 256-279). Oxford: Wiley & Blackwell.
- Herzog, W. (Production and Direction). (2014). *The Herzog Collection: Heart of Glass* [DVD edition by the British Film Institute]. Germany: Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.
- Johnson, L. R. (2016). *Forgotten Dreams: Revisiting Romanticism in the Cinema of Werner Herzog*. Rochester, NY: Camden House.
- Muguiro, C. (2013). *Estética de la naturaleza en el cine ruso y soviético. El tercer paisaje*. Doctoral thesis. Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- Simmel, G. (2013). *Filosofía del paisaje*. Madrid: Casimiro.
- Tarkovsky, A. (1989). *Sculpting in Time*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Tejeda, C. (2010). *Andrei Tarkovski*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- (2011). 25 años sin Andrei Tarkovski. De itinerarios y caminantes. *Dirigido por...: Revista de cine*, 416, 60-67.

SPIRIT AND MATTER. ABOUT ANDREI RUBLEV (ANDREI TARKOVSKI, 1966) AND HEART OF GLASS (WERNER HERZOG, 1976)

Abstract

Andrei Rublev (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966) and *Heart of Glass* (Werner Herzog, 1976) both explore the theme of the loss of a secret of production: casting a bell in the first case; making ruby glass in the second. In this article, I will argue that behind this thematic coincidence lies a shared concern with the separation of spirit from matter.

Key words

Andrei Tarkovski; Werner Herzog; Creation; Vision; Post-secular Cinema; Spirit

Author

Chantal Poch holds a Bachelor's Degree in Audiovisual Communication and a Master's Degree in Contemporary Film and Audiovisual Studies. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis, a comparative study of the work of Tarkovsky, Herzog and Malick through the concept of the Fall of Man, at the Centre for Aesthetic Research in Audiovisual Media at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Contact: chantalpr@gmail.com

Article reference

Poch, C. (2020). Spirit and Matter. About *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovski, 1966) and *Heart of Glass* (Werner Herzog, 1976). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 29, 165-176.

ESPÍRITU Y MATERIA. SOBRE ANDREI RUBLEV (ANDREI TARKOVSKI, 1966) Y CORAZÓN DE CRISTAL (WERNER HERZOG, 1976)

Resumen

Andrei Rublev (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966) y *Corazón de cristal* (Werner Herzog, 1976) coinciden temáticamente en la pérdida de un secreto de fabricación, el de una campana en el primer caso y el de un cristal rubí en el segundo. En este artículo argumentaremos que detrás de esta coincidencia temática se esconde una preocupación común por la separación entre espíritu y materia.

Palabras clave

Andrei Tarkovski; Werner Herzog; creación; visión; cine postsecular; espíritu

Autor/a

Chantal Poch (Mataró, 1993) es graduada en Comunicación Audiovisual y máster en Estudios de Cine y Audiovisual Contemporáneos. Actualmente trabaja en su tesis doctoral, un estudio comparativo de la obra de Tarkovski, Herzog y Malick a través del concepto de la Caída del Hombre en el Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los Medios Audiovisuales de la Universidad Pompeu Fabra. Contacto: chantalpr@gmail.com

Referencia de este artículo

Poch, C. (2020). Espíritu y materia. Sobre *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovski, 1966) y *Corazón de cristal* (Werner Herzog, 1976). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 29, 165-176.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com
